

Miroslav Vilhar, Author of Original and Translated Farces

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Abstract

Miroslav Vilhar (1818–71) is known as an author of original and adapted or translated comedic plays that were popular events on the stages of nineteenth-century Slovene reading clubs. Three original and three adapted comedic plays are found in the collection of Vilhar's self-published plays. Especially in view of the fact that the author consistently used the term *šaloigra* (comedic play) for them and did not opt for the genre term "comedy," following his more prominent Slovene predecessor, Anton Tomaž Linhart, we conclude that he was conscious of writing in a much simpler, less demanding comic genre characterized by key mix-ups, implausible endings, exaggerations, spicy content, and coarse humor. The brevity of the dramatic texts is another noticeable formal feature, on the basis of which we can compare it to jokes. Given the German-language tradition, from which he drew, the term *burka* (farce) or local farce (*Lokalposse*) suggests itself. The sub-genre local farce suits Vilhar's original works, which are recognizably set in the Notranjsko region and have dramatic personages with regionally, dialectally colored speech. This is also the main feature distinguishing them from the author's translations of farces or comedic plays. This article will show that Vilhar wrote original dramas and translated at the same time, as is seen on the levels of motif and theme, content, and form and structure. Contrary to the generally accepted view that plays for reading club stages based on foreign palimpsests were modified for Slovene conditions, the article will show that in his adaptations and translations, Vilhar preserved a foreign spirit, instilling his original plays with a Slovene one.

Key words: nineteenth century, reading clubs, comedic play, farce, local farce (German *Lokalposse*), translations, adaptations

1. Vilhar's plays, original and translated

This article considers Miroslav Vilhar (1818–71) as an adapter and author of comedic plays (sing. *šaloigra*), which were part of the repertoire of reading clubs, especially in the 1860s.¹ The focus will be Vilhar's plays that

¹ Vilhar was also a favorite on reading club stages as a patriotic poet. He was recited and declaimed at meetings. His person "fortuitously combined political activity (he was elected as a parliamentary representative in 1861) and literary creativity" (Perenič 2010: 120). According to the periodicals *Novice*, *Slovenec*, *Naprej*, and others, the poem "Sercu," which begins "Dom te vabi, dom te

appeared in a collection of three original and three adapted comedic plays. The original ones are *Detelja* (The clover, *Vilharjeva igre 1*, 1865a), *Župan* (The mayor, *Vilharjeve igre 2*, 1865b) in *Poštena deklica* (An honorable girl, *Vilharjeve igre 6*, 1866); Vilhar also adapted the plays *Filozof* (The philosopher, *Vilharjeve igre 3*, 1865c), *Igra Piké* (Games of pique, *Vilharjeve igre 4*, 1865d),² and *Servus Petelinček* (Hello, little rooster, *Vilharjeve igre 5*, 1865e), based on English, French, and German models.

In attempting to evaluate the collection of Vilhar's plays (1–6), it is in particular necessary to consider the contemporary situation in publishing and production of original and adapted dramatic works or plays. Vilhar's collection, printed by Rozalija Eger, nicely filled the lacuna that had appeared between Slovene stage plays edited by Janez Bleiweis (1864–65) and printed by Blaznik,³ and the comprehensive collection of dramatic works in the series Slovenska Talija, which the Ljubljana Dramatično društvo (Drama Society) began publishing in 1867. The latter included the comedic play *To sem bil jaz* (That was me), which Vilhar had “adapted” from the German.

kličé” (Home invites you, home calls you), “Po/Na jezeru,” “Vodniku,” “Zagorska,” and others were read in reading clubs, along with verses by Lovro Toman, Simon Jenko, Valentin Vodnik, and others (Perenič 2010: 124–27).

² In order to give a full overview of Vilhar's dramatic works, the list must include *Jamska Ivanka: Izvirna domorodna igra s pesmami v treh djanjih* (Jamska Ivanka: An original native play with songs in three acts; 1850), which he dedicated to the Slovensko društvo (Slovene society) in Ljubljana. It is set during the Crusades, in which the Maligrad Knight Marko takes part, attacking a Ravnach knight, who dies along with his wife. But Jama Knight Vladimir saves their son Bogomil. The Kalc Knight Miroslav also appears. He must, as a knight, honorably resist his desire for Vladimir's daughter Ivanka, who promised herself to Bogomil. Vilhar set the play in his native Notranjsko (certainly at the Ravnach estate on the fork in the road for the villages of Šmihel, Narin, and Pivka. The Kalc Knight is from the castle Kalc. The action is set in proximity to the Predjama Castle near Postojna.) In 1863, Vilhar published the comedic play *Slep ni lep* (Blind is not nice) in the *Sloga* almanac. Josip Marn notes the following plays that remained in manuscript form: *Danila: Izvirna žaloigra v treh delih* (1871), *Na kmetih: Izvirna šaloigra v dveh delih* (1871), *Korčovski: Izvirna igra v dveh delih*, and *Kdor prej pride, prej melje: Šaloigra v enem delu* (1886: 82).

³ The first of five volumes came out in 1864. It contained *Domači prepir: Kratkočasna igra v enem aktu* (A domestic quarrel: An entertaining play in one act), which Jakob Zabukovec “Slovenicized,” and *Županova Micka: Kratkočasna igra s petjem v dveh aktih* (Županova Micka: An entertaining play with singing in five acts), which the editor Bleiweis reworked based on Linhart. *Bob iz Kranja: Vesela igra s petjem v enem djanji* (A Kranj bean: A one-act humorous play with singing) based on a Czech model, *Strup* (Poison), and *Svitoslav Zajček* (both one-act, humorous plays), which Luiza Pesjak “slovenicized,” appeared in 1865.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the Slovene literary tradition of drawing room comedy, especially both of Linhart's reworkings of 1789 and 1790.⁴ Like Linhart, who relied on Beaumarchais's *Le mariage de Figaro* and Josef Richter's *Die Feldmühle*, Vilhar⁵ wrote and adapted from foreign-language models. Yet it would be an erroneous generalization to say that he adapted foreign models to domestic circumstances. If we look at him from such a standpoint, then of the three adaptations in Vilhar's collection, the comedic play *Servus Petelinček*⁶ is the most modified for Slovene circumstances. Based on the mention of the Hotel Slon, we conclude that the Zaletel house is located somewhere in Ljubljana (time undetermined), while we learn about the Petelinček father and son that they arrived by train from Celje.⁷ The comedic play *Filozof* contains only the characters' Slovenicized names and is otherwise no further defined or adapted temporally or spatially to Slovene circumstances. The play *Igra Piké* completely preserves its French "spirit," with a Paris setting linked to chapters of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French history. Its characters are from the middle class and lower nobility. The term "Slovenicized," which appears on the title page of all three adapted publications, must clearly be understood to mean "translated" rather than "adapted."

It would be at least as erroneous to claim that the comedic plays on which the author put an original stamp were but the fruit of his imagination, and to completely ignore his simultaneous translating activities. Although all three "original comedic plays" in the collection closely hone to domestic conditions and have a marked local geographic tint, it is impossible to miss their similarities to the modified plays that show certain influences. The Slovene nature of the original plays is surely apparent in the setting, which relates to a real geographical space in the Slovene countryside; by the dramatic personages' class affiliation, which is for the most part with the

⁴ Due to the censorship, the comedy *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi* was staged only in 1848. The comedy *Županova Micka* was also a favorite on club and reading club stages. Leopold Kordesch's article in *Ilirski list*, 28 November 1848, reports on the plays staging (Perenič 2010: 191).

⁵ In addition to Vilhar, translators or adapters for the reading club stages were Matija Prelog, Sebastijan B. Žepič, France Rebec, Jurij Kosmač, Jožef A. Babnik, Ivan Navratil, Mihael Lendovšek/Bogoslav Rogački, Bernard Tomšič, Janez Globočnik, Josip Drobnič, Anton Kos Cestnikov, Josip Cimperman, and Viktor Eržen (Perenič 2010: 203–205).

⁶ Damir Globočnik (2013) hints that Vilhar may have influenced the title of the "illustrated newspaper for entertainment," *Petelinček*, which Gašpar H. Martelanc began publishing in Trieste in 1870.

⁷ From this perspective, the mention of Triglav is significant. It could be a national symbol here. When France Petelinček will not be convinced to return to the box, we read: "Ne grem več v to skrinjo, če mi dva Triglava obljubite" (I won't get in that box again if you promise me two Triglavs" (Vilhar 1865e: 17).

peasantry; by their stage speech. At the same time, we can quickly identify certain parallels with the modified plays. In all six comedic plays, there is a love theme or amorous mix-ups (and substitutions),⁸ which involve almost all the personages and help create the central intrigue; in all cases there is also a happy ending in the form of a wedding or at least promise of one. Besides motifs of (double) engagement or marriage, all the plays have a conspicuous motif of deception, arranged in different ways. In most of the plays we find the motif of unity among young people who work towards a common goal. The motifs of relations between parents and children and infidelity are also pronounced.

Because of these similarities and because Vilhar conceived of and published the original and adapted plays together—the original play *Poštena deklica* was the last to come out, and the only one in 1866, after two original and three adaptations—the thesis is that they also took shape by cross-fertilization. This is evident on the motivational and thematic, content, and formal, structural levels. Therefore, it makes sense to treat them as mutually connected.

2. Comedic play or farce?

When speaking of plays' formal characteristics, we must note the conspicuous genre feature of the comedic play, which Vilhar faithfully employed in his collection. He clearly used it to emphasize the humorous, funny, entertaining, and spicily pointed content of the plays. This feature was quite common at the time; the terms *vesela igra* or *veseloigra* (humorous play) and entertaining (musical) play were used synonymously, along with the term *veselica* (humorous piece). Surprisingly, the term *burka* (farce) is rare (Perenič 2010: 203–205).⁹ By comparison, Linhart subtitled his *Županova Micka* and *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi* (1790) as comedies. We can only guess as to whether he actually had a genre distinction in mind. However, it would indeed be more suitable to categorize Vilhar's plays and reading club dramas as comedic plays in light of their content and structural patterns. These are stage texts based on mix-ups, funny, improbable coincidences, and unusual exaggerations that function as course comedy. In addition, the term comedic play could refer

⁸ We might think of the prototypical *Comedy of Errors* by William Shakespeare or the significantly older *Menaechmi* by the Roman playwright Plautus.

⁹ A review of the publications that are a part of the larger collection *Slovenska Talija* (1867–96), made up primarily of translations, leads to the following rare genre and sub-genre classifications: (*dramatična gluma* ([dramatic] trifle), *igrokaz* (theatrical play), (*narodna, bajna igra* ([national, folktale] play), *opereta, šaljivi prizor* (humorous scene), *slika* (picture), which is similar to *podoba* (image), and *drama*. The terms *žaloigra/žalostna* (tragic/sad) or *resna* (serious) *igra/tragedija* (play/tragedy) are quite rare.

to the length of the texts. All of Vilhar's plays are short texts that have all of one act or two at most. They are divided into speeches (scenes). Therefore, on the basis of content and structural patterns, the term farce seems apt.¹⁰

A great deal in German was reworked especially for reading club stages, which gives us the term *Posse* (Slov. *burka* [farce] or *farsa*).¹¹ The German literary historian and theater theorist Volker Klotz¹² suggests the sub-genre *Lokalposse*. He loosely defines it as a humorous stage play featuring a small-town setting that is partly treated in the spirit of the Enlightenment and partly critically. In addition to the recognizable setting, it is also significant that the lower- and middle-class dramatic personages speak a language that is regionally or dialectally colored. Among this dramatic genre's most recognizable characteristics is its (nationalistic) political coloring, as shown in scenes of reading political newspapers and personages' (tavern) conversations,¹³ which have a comic or farcical effect (Klotz 1984: 88ff.).

All three of Vilhar's original comedic plays or farces have such comic, farcical, and especially local color. They are marked by blatant national-educational jesting. In them, Vilhar let the local speak.

3. *Detelja*, *Župan* and *Poštena deklica* as examples of original local farces

The "original comedic play in one act" *Detelja* (the action comprises ten so-called speeches) takes place in Notranjsko, entirely in the Klanec house.¹⁴ The landowners and neighbors Tine Gaber and Tone Klanec agree between themselves to marry their four children. We witness a kind of comedy of errors, a humorous situation involving substitution, which at the end of the

¹⁰ Among the few works in the collection *Slovenska Talija*, which in the nineteenth century have this genre designation, there is *Zmešnjava na zmešnjavo: Burka v petih dejanjih* (1880), which Josip Cimperman "translated" from August von Kotzebue's work *Der Wirrwar*.

¹¹ In his book *Farsa: Poskus genološke opredelitve* (2003), Darinko Kores explains the meaning of *farsa* and *burka* in greater depth, yet in treating the tradition of farce in Slovenia, he offers Linhart as an example of Slovene secular and in part "farcical" drama. As regards reading clubs, he mentions only "nezahtevn[e] in kratk[e] komičn[e] komad[e] domačih in tujih avtorjev" ([Kores 2003]; light and short humorous comedies by domestic and foreign authors), among which Vilhar is not to be found.

¹² See: Klotz (1984: 88–151).

¹³ In the German-speaking space, the tradition was nurtured especially in the pre-March era. Among the prominent authors were, for example, Malss, Stolze, Bäuerle, Nestroy (Klotz 1984: 92).

¹⁴ For a brief time we find ourselves in Ljubljana through the conversation between Tine Gaber and neighbor Breza and Tone Klanec's lines.

comedic play the neighbor Breza resolves. Klanec's daughter Metka, who is promised to Gaber's Jože, in the end gets together with Gaber's Štefan, who was originally intended for Klanec's daughter Ciljka. The latter embraces Jože, who her father originally intended for Metka. The title refers to a four-leaf clover that some cunning fellow sells to the avaricious Klanec as a lucky charm for getting rich. Later, when Klanec loses a large sum at billiards in Ljubljana, his neighbors Breza and Gaber help him see what has happened.

The comedic play has definite geographic coordinates, since the author placed it in the historical land of Carniola, and more precisely, in Notranjsko. It can certainly also be read as a metaphor of a union between two neighboring peasant households represented by the relatives Klanec and Gaber and their four children. We also see this in Klanec's lines, in which he addresses this point:

It's all for you! Listen to me, our beloved children. In the name of godfather Gaber and mine as well, I will now briefly and plainly explain our intention! We two, caring fathers have agreed to marry the four of you, so that our riches won't go elsewhere, possibly into unworthy and thankless hands. Are you satisfied with this or not?¹⁵ (Vilhar 1865a: 47)

From the standpoint of national consciousness, setting events in the very recent past—*Detelja* takes place in 1850—is quite indicative. We are well aware that the national movement grew significantly stronger from the middle of the nineteenth century. To be more precise, the comedic play takes place in the post-March era and before the onset of Bach's absolutism, in which centralizing policies were important. We can also read Breza's words against this background: "Everything was different under the French!" ("Pod Francozi je bilo vse drugače!" Vilhar 1865a: 29, 31). On the one hand, they exhibit sympathy for the French;¹⁶ on the other, they are an implicit criticism of the Austrian royal house. Klanec's conviction that, "there's a lot of French ducats below our ground, and he should find a treasure" ("da pod našo zemljo je polno francozkih cekinov in on mora najti zaklad"; Vilhar 1865a: 24).

¹⁵ "Vse za vas! Čujte me, ljubi naši otroci! V imenu botra Gabra in tudi v svojem naj Vam zdaj razodenem kratko in gladko najin namen! Mi dva, skrbna očeta, sva se zmenila, vas vse štiri poročiti, da najino blago ne pride v drugo, ne mara nevredne in nehvaležne roke. Ste tega dovoljni ali ne?"

¹⁶ After Austria's defeat in 1809, a decree by Napoleon established the Illyrian Provinces with Ljubljana as the capital. The Austrians then had to cede a considerable part of the ethnically Slovene territory to the French (Carniola, Goriško, Trieste, a part of Carinthia, and Istra).

Vilhar set the action in the original comedic play in two acts entitled *Župan* in 1866. As a spatial setting, he chose a room in the village of Šiška, close by Ljubljana, in the house of the main character, Mayor Jaka Dolinar. The play is divided into two acts with nine or fifteen speeches. In the first speech of the play, we meet the mayor, a *purgermajster*, who speaks broken German. His (native) Slovene, containing many Germanicisms, is no better. At the request of his neighbor Tomaž Vrh, he composes two *cajgnusi* (sing. *cajgmus*, Germ. *Zeugnis* 'official affidavit') in German, although the former asks him to write in “familiar [Carniolan] language” (“v domačem jeziku”; Vilhar 1865b: 7). The mayor’s daughter Ančka, her fiancé, the neighbor Janez, and son Miha oppose the mayor’s German sympathies even more. The son Miha in particular feels ashamed when the affidavits his father writes for Tomaž fall into his hands. In the second act, we see the mayor reading the *Laibacher Zeitung*, when he receives letters from Miha and Janez. His son explains the mistakes his father made in German and what embarrassment he would have caused had he (i.e., the son) not destroyed the two in time. His future son-in-law asks him immediately to resign as mayor. When the old Dolinar then does just that, Janez and Miha step out of the cupboard where Ančka had hidden them, and the young people celebrate their victory.¹⁷

In comparison with the comedic play *Detelja*, in which criticism of authority is not straightforwardly expressed (it is implicit in the reference to the French), Vilhar allowed himself sharper criticism in *Župan*, especially by making fun of hidebound German sympathizers, as embodied in the character of Dolinar. Dolinar gives his view as mayor on the role of German in the bureaucratic sphere and its relations with Slovene at the outset:

That’s good! That’s how it’s written! Why do some of our young bucks *anštregajo* [*sich anstrengen*] so they can *ajnfirati* [*einführen*] a new *špraha* [*die Sprache*]! Thank God I’m used to reading and writing German so good! Now I’m a man the likes of which are few! Go to the dogs, you dunderheads. You want everybody to whistle the same tune! And if today some *purgermajster unterfonga* [*der Bürgermesiter; sich unterfangen*] to write something in Slovene, tomorrow the authorities will tell him: out *bek!* *Krucitirken* [*weg Kruzitürken*]! Oh, how German words roll

¹⁷ Certain similarities to Linhart’s play are apparent: the figure of the rural mayor; personages’ names (both mayors are named Jaka, the fiancés are Anže in Anže’s Janez); Janez and Anže take the side of the sincere peasants, not the foreign person in charge (Janez clearly tells his future father-in-law that he does not want him at the wedding); the frequent motif of betrothal is shared, although the figure of the aggressive Tulpenheim in Vilhar lacks a parallel.

out! And now I'm supposed to learn to write Slovene, when I have a son and daughter to marry?¹⁸ (Vilhar 1865b: 5–6)

National awareness among the peasants seems to him a bad thing, because it would engender a negative attitude towards German: “We’ve come a long way! Those lousy Slovenes have worked up and *frdirbali* [verderben]our *pavri*¹⁹ so much that they’d rather starve than hear a German word! That’s *frkêrte belt* [verkehrte Welt]! (“Daleč smo prišli! Ti salamenski Slovenci so naše pavre že tako zdražili in frdirbali, da bi rajši skoraj od glada umrli, kakor še ktero nemško besedo slišali! To je frkêrte belt!”). His entire speech provokes laughter, because his German is full of mistakes, and his Slovene is full of German expressions. It borders on vulgar language, by which he unwittingly shows his lack of education and ignorance. Although he tries to be convincing, he fails to elicit trust; on the contrary, he stands out as the most comic character.²⁰ The height of the comedy is when his son explains that in an official affidavit he wrote that

¹⁸ “Dobro je! – Takó se piše! – Kaj se nek naši mladi rogovileži anštrengajo, da bi novo špraho ajnfirali! Bogá zahvalim, da sem se navadil tako fajn nemško brati in pisati! Zdaj sem mož, da malo tacih! Pojte rakom žvižgat ve prenapete, prazne butice, ki hočete, da bomo vsi v vaše rogove plozali! Pa tudi naj se denes en purgermojster unterfônga, kaj kranjskega pisati, jutri mu že reče gospôda: marš bek! Krucitirken! Oh, kako gladko teče nemška beseda! Pa zdaj bi se jaz učil kranjsko pisati, zdaj, ko imam že sina in hčerko za ženitev?”

¹⁹ A vulgar word for peasant (Germ. *Bauer*).

²⁰ Vilhar published an article in the newspaper *Naprej* in 1863 (vol. 42: 167) entitled “Kaj se nekterim zdi ravnopravnost” (What some see as equality), in which he cites the experience of mayors in the Ljubljana area in 1862. They conveyed a demand to the provincial government for the use of Slovene in official documents. Among other things, we learn that some mayors cannot even read Slovene: “[R]avnopravnost zahtéva, naj bi se jim slovenski dopisovalo, ker sicer ne morejo umeti, kaj se jim pošilja iz pisalnice, ker nekteri ne znajo čisto nič nemškega jezika, drugi pa malo; še menj od njih pa znajo njihovi sosedje; ali slovenski pa vendar beró, če ne sami, pa vsaj njihove žene ali otroci” (Equality demands that they be written in Slovene, because they cannot understand what is sent to them from offices, since some know no German whatever, and others little; their neighbors know even less than they; but they read Slovene, or at least their wives or children do). Vilhar criticized not only the authorities’ argument that official business in Slovene might bring in more money, but also at the “Slovene peasant’s praiseworthy ‘practicality’” (“slavn[o] ‘praktičnost’ kranjskega kmeta”), because the most important thing for him is to get by in life as easily as possible. In addition to the use of Slovene in the bureaucratic sphere, the Vilhar supports the necessity of using it in schools, in so-called national classrooms, which would only mean actualizing a constitutionally granted right. The fact should be recalled that Vilhar himself was mayor of Knežak for a very short time. (“Zgornjim Pivčenam,” *Novice*, 22 August 1849).

Tomaž's son died from *roboti* (robots), not the childhood illness *rabat*, and that as mayor he robbed him.

Vilhar combined speech comedy, which is a standard device in the genre of comedy, with another kind of comedy, which is situational (as in the play *Detelja*), using it in the second act of the play. It is play with hiding places. While the mayor reads their letters, Janez and Miha hide in the cupboard. When the mayor then gives in, Ančka opens it.

One more original comedic play, entitled *Poštena deklica* and set in Vipava, follows the three adaptations in book 6 of Vilhar's plays. Based on its content and ideas, it could be assigned a place somewhat closer to *Župan*, because it is an arrow directly aimed at Germanized Slovenes. Among comic devices, situational humor involving play with hiding places stands out. The names of the married personages also have a humorous effect: Kikla, Koklja, Kikelj, and Kokelj. The title character is the thirty-year-old seamstress Tinica, who is still without a fiancé. As is readily seen from the title, her chief virtue is respectability. She promises to help the ladies (Kiklja and Koklja), who order clothing from her and complain that their husbands are no longer excited about them. We learn from Tinica's godparent Frluga that Tinica has turned the husbands' heads. When later the unfaithful husbands confess their love to her, Tinica locks the two in a room and goes off for their wives. The husbands are shamed, and Frluga asks for Tinica's hand.

In this comedic play with situational comedy and word play (in thirteen speeches or scenes), Vilhar again remains within the geographic space of Carniola and Notranjsko. Although he did not closely define the time, it can be deduced from the content. In this regard, Tinica's self-description is of interest, when she underlines her respectability to the two men: "Gentlemen, know that gray Nanos will topple into our valley before my honorable soul betrays itself" ("Gospé, bodita si v svesti, da se prej sivi Nanos zvrne v našo dolino, predno se iznevéri moja poštena duša," Vilhar 1866: 17). Frluga's locally colored speech probably points most obviously at the setting. Let us consider an example from the beginning of the play, where her godfather tells her how two gentlemen were speaking German and Italian in the tavern, making fun of his appearance, and they looked like Kikelj and Kokelj:

Heah, Tinica! I go to the tavern across the bridge, sit down at a table, call for a majolica of the best, and no sooner do I finish the first round than two bearded gentlemen walk in, call for a jug of wine, talk German, laugh, joke, and then make fun, *horpo dela struna!* of my shaggy cap, silver buttons, short, baggy pants, and long socks. When I had enough, I jump up and curse both of them like two kids; they've been around as long as me. A little more and I would have grabbed a chair

and beat them. *Božja oberca*, how wrong is that? What the heck is that?²¹ (Vilhar 1866: 9)

The newspaper *Novice*²² commented on the style of the comedic play that it “must have been suited to a Vipavsko, Ajdovščina, or Trst reading club given its language” (“[č]italnici vipavski, ajdovski in tržaški utegne zavoljo lokalizmov [...] najprimerniša biti”). If we compare this play about an honorable girl with the two earlier original plays, we see the difference in the depiction of the male character, because Frluga, who Tinica perceives as wise and just (Vilhar 1866: 12), has no real parallel in *Župan* or *Detelja* (Tone Klanec reforms in the end; Tine Gaber is not a clearly characterized, although his actions are wise and just, and as such he presents a contrast to Jaka Dolinar.) The aforementioned article in *Novice* also defined *Poštena deklica* as a “play within a play”; Kikelj and Kokelj unknowingly play roles in it, first in Tinica’s eyes, and then in the eyes of Frluga and both wives. We again recognize certain similarities with Linhart’s comedy *Županova Micka* in the area of situational comedy that relies on play with hiding places. The motif of an unfaithful upper-class husband is notable. Just as in Linhart, Lady Šternfeld and Micka together expose Baron Tulpenheim, the women in *Poštena deklica* unite to thwart the two unfaithful imposers, who are, moreover, under foreign influence, further strengthening the national idea in the play. In both plays, the young people and sincere, simple peasants, as represented, respectively, by Anže and Micka, Frluga and Tinica, are the sympathetic characters.²³

All three of these texts deserve to be assigned to the literary genre of farce or its sub-genre of locally colored farce based on their significant national political content, settings in recognizably Slovene small-town or rural milieu that also enable us to determine the temporal setting, their dramatic personages’ regionally or dialectally colored speech, and the predominance of situational and language-related comedy.

²¹ “Eko, Tinica! Pridem v oštarijo unkraj mosta, sedem za mizo, pokličem majolčico najboljšega, in komaj pijem prvi pot, prikorakata dva gospôska bradača, pokličeta polič vina, parlirata tedeško, smejeta se, šalita, na zadnje zabavljata, horpo dela struna! zastran moje kosmate kučme, srebrnih botonov, kratkih, širokih bregeš in dolgih calcét. Kadar mi je preveč, poskočim in okregam obá kakor dva fantalina; tudi nimata menj križev na hrbtu od mene. Poko je manjkalo, da ne zgrabim kontrege, da ja natépem. Božja oberca, kaj se to spodóbi? Kaj je to krjanica?”

²² 14 November 1866.

²³ In the comedy *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi*, the situational comedy is somewhat more complex (almost all are involved: Tonček, the lady, Nežka, the baron, Matiček and Jerica), leading to a real confusion of concealment and dressing.

4. Vilhar's translated farces

Vilhar's translated plays are also justifiably categorized as farces—though not “local”—because of the same characteristic features and their simultaneous origin, as is especially seen on the level of these works' motifs and themes. Vilhar's adaptations—or better, translations—cannot be said to have been adapted to the domestic, Slovene context, which is the well-established view concerning reading club plays based on foreign models.

In the comedic play *Filozof*, which Vilhar Slovenicized or translated from an unknown English palimpsest, the central action revolves around an amorous mix-up involving Dr. Frko, the philosopher; his father Muha, Minka, and godmother Komarjeva. Worrying about his father, whose frivolity recalls old Klanec in *Detelja*, Frko hits on the idea of finding him a suitable mate. He selects the young Minka, who unexpectedly arouses unfamiliar feelings of love in the young Frko. Nonetheless, they agree that she will take his father, and as compensation for her sacrifice, he will marry godmother Komarjeva (the motif of an aged match has a parallel in the aged fiancé in the comedic play *Poštena deklica*). But father and son have similar aims. In order to turn his son away from books, which have muddled him, the father agrees with Komarjeva that Minka and Frko will wed, and the father decides to ask the godmother's hand, complicating things. Since the godmother was already excited about Frko's proposal, she first rejects Muha, who knows nothing of it, and then she declares that she did not have serious intentions with Frko. As in *Detelja*, the play ends with dual proposals: Frko proposes to Minka, and the aged Muha to godmother Komarjeva. In adapting the play, Vilhar did not opt to adapt it to domestic spatial, temporal, or other circumstances, aside from Slovenizing the names. We only read in the beginning that the play takes place in “Dr. Frko's room, full of books, maps, etc.” (“[d]r. Frkovej sobi, polnej knjig, zemljevidov i. t. d.”).

Neither did he care to define the time precisely in his adaptation *Servus Petelinček*, though it is possible to conclude that the botanist and physicist Dragutin Zaletel's house, in which everything takes place, is in Ljubljana. Vilhar appears to have Slovenicized a German palimpsest, which is stated on the title page, although this information is not quite accurate. It is true that he probably relied on the German farce of his contemporary, the Viennese author of comedies and librettos, Karel Giugno (pseud. for Karl Juin, 1818–91), but it must be added that the Giugno based his *Servus Herr Stutzer!* (1852) on a French palimpsest, and collaborated with Louis Flerx²⁴ (also Ludwig Flerx, 1825–90).

²⁴ We read on the first page of the German edition that the premiere was on 2 February 1852 in the Carl-Theater, and that it was met with great applause.

Mix-ups abound in the fifteen speeches (the play has only one act). In the first scene, Zaletel's wife Barba, his niece Isabela, and the servant girl Jera crowd by a window, each thinking that a wooer is singing to her. We learn that Dragutin Zaletel has promised his niece to a certain Petelinček, whom she has not even met. Zaletel appears in the second speech (scene). He comes to tell Barba that he has just succeeded in concocting a "magical medicine" in his home laboratory. We also learn that an overdose can be fatal. After he hides it in the cupboard, two servants appear carrying a box sent by Dr. Čebula supposedly containing a corpse for laboratory experiments. Zaletel goes to get Jera to help him put the box in the laboratory, Barba enters the room, and France Petelinček jumps out of the box. He takes advantage of Barba's naivete and flirts with her (the motif of an aged woman enthralled by a young man repeats) so that she will help him get to Isabela. As soon as Barba leaves the room, Petelinček fills the box with Zaletel's books and jumps out the window. Then Zaletel and Jera appear to carry the box into the firewood room, but they hear Barba and put the box on the window sill, from where it falls into a stream the flows behind the house. This causes another mix-up, because we see how Barba and Zaletel confusedly explain themselves to one another: He thinks that Barba knows about the corpse, and she thinks he knows about the young wooer. When they figure out that a live person appears to have been in the box, they hurry off to save it. Thereupon Zaletel meets Petelinček in the house. At first, he thinks that he was sent from the court, but when Petelinček introduces himself as the son of a Celje merchant, Zaletel is relieved. Jera serves both of them wine to mark the happy occasion, but Petelinček collapses. It seems that the servant girl served them the "magical medicine." This causes a new twist and another mix-up. While Zaletel and Jera drag young Petelinček's "corpse" into the seat of a sofa, Petelinček's father knocks on the door. He has come to discuss a betrothal. Zaletel fearfully and coolly greets his friend, "servus, Petelinček," which seems odd to the elder Petelinček. He asks Zaletel if he can spend the night. When he falls asleep on the sofa in which his son is concealed, Jera and Zaletel sneak into the room to get Petelinček out. Zaletel's lantern falls on the sleeping Petelinček, who wakes up. He sees Jera with a knife and thinks the two want to kill him. Everything becomes clear in the final speech, and an engagement is planned. Of all six plays, *Servus Petelinček* has the most farcical elements and coarse joking.

There is less of this in *Igra piké*, but there is a similar motif involving a dangerous liquid, chloroform, which the son uses to temporarily drug his father in order to reach a betrothal. This play is the least adapted to domestic circumstances. Vilhar Slovenicized it from a still unidentified French palimpsest. "It takes place in Paris at Mr. Mercier's" ("Godi se v Parizu pri gosp[odu] Mercier-u."). The action revolves around the marriage of Mercier's daughter Roza to Rocheferrier's son Žan. In addition to being

set in the metropolis of Paris, the play is distinguished from the others by the fact that the personages are middle class and of the lower nobility, which means that in his adaptation, Vilhar decided not to transfer it into a lower social sphere. The time is not quite clear either, although Mercier hints at the present when he tells his daughter that Žan's grandfather saved his more than eighty years prior, before the Second Republic (Vilhar 1865d: 13)²⁵—that is, before 1792 or even before the French Revolution in 1789. We also learn that Baron Rocheferrier and Mercier met after Napoleon's exile to St. Helens, or after 1815, when Mercier offered a friendly hand and took him in. Now the already aged friends often play the card game, which is likely *pique*, a game for two that was especially popular in France. During the game, they quarrel and return to the almost finished letter about the betrothal. The baron does not want to accept the justifications of the repentant Mercier, so Mercier, Žan, and Roza decide to deceive him. The doctor son drugs him with chloroform. When the baron awakes, all three assure him that there was no argument and it was all a dream. The betrothal is sealed.

Because of the basis in French history, which the author was clearly fond of, *Igra Piké* is the closest of the original plays to *Detelja*, the content of which is connected to the historical chapter of the French in Slovenia. On the background of Vilhar's entire collection and in connection with the views expressed in the original farces, Francophone sympathies function as an antipode to the dominant German culture. The criticism of current conditions is likely only superficially comic and farcical, but in truth pointed and serious.

5. Conclusion

In view of the similarities between the original and adapted plays or farces, and especially on the level of their texts' motifs and themes, it is possible to state that Vilhar originally composed and adapted or translated in parallel, and that his original and adapted or translated plays in fact developed together. Evidence for this is the consistent length of Vilhar's plays—they are characterized by brevity and composed of one or at most two acts divided into speeches—and the equally consistent use of genre markers. Unlike his prominent predecessor Linhart, who subtitled his works comedies, Vilhar throughout used the term *šaloigra* (comedic play). Thus, the conclusion that he must have been conscious of the genre differences in his stage works, which are justifiably termed farces or local farces. With

²⁵ Mercier's father served in the imperial guard. He stabbed a cadet who tried to steal his betrothed, and Žan's grandfather got him a reprieve and entrusted him with the care of a number of his estates. Rocheferrier lost all of his possessions when the republic was established.

this in mind, Vilhar's works acquires a different significance. He could have become an important, if not one of the leading figures in the Slovene farcical literary tradition in the mid-nineteenth century. He differs significantly from Linhart in not having adjusted his adaptations or translations to actual Slovene circumstances nearly as much; however, he provided a Slovene spirit and local dimension to the original portion of his stage writing, which was very popular with audiences at reading clubs.

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POVZETEK**MIROSLAV VILHAR KOT PISEC IZVIRNE
IN PREVEDENE BURKE**

Miroslav Vilhar (1818–1871) je poznan tudi kot pisec izvirnih in prirejenih/prevedenih šaloiger, ki so bile priljubljene točke na odrih narodnih čitalnic v 19. stoletju. V zbirki Vilharjeve igre, ki jo je sam založil, so izšle tri izvirne in tri prirejene šaloigre. Zlasti zato, ker je avtor zanje dosledno uporabljal vrstno oznako "šaloigra" in se ni odločil za vrstno oznako "komedija" po vzoru svojega najvidnejšega slovenskega predhodnika Antona Tomaža Linharta, sklepamo, da je pri njem obstajala zavest, da ustvarja preprostejšo, manj zahtevno komično vrsto, za katero so značilne zmešnjave, neverjetna naključja, pretiravanja, pikra vsebina in že groba komika. Opazna formalna poteza je tudi kratkost odrskih besedil, ki jih zato lahko postavimo v bližino šale. Na ozadju nemške jezikovne tradicije, iz katere je črpal, se kot primeren ponuja izraz burka oz. lokalna burka (nem. Lokalposse). Podvrsti lokalne burke ustrezajo Vilharjeva izvirna dela, umeščena v prepoznavno okolje Notranjske in s krajevno/narečno obarvanostjo govora dramskih oseb. To je tudi tista glavna značilnost, ki jih razlikuje od avtorjevih prevodov burk oz. šaloiger. V razpravi pokažemo, da je Vilhar dramsko snoval in prevajal skupaj, kar se kaže na motivno-tematski, vsebinsko-sporočilni in formalno-oblikovni ravni. V nasprotju s splošno uveljavljenim stališčem, da so se igre za čitalniške odre, ki so nastajale ob tujih predlogah, prirejale za slovenske razmere, pa pokažemo, da je Vilhar v priredbah/prevodih ohranjal tujega duha, slovenskega duha pa je vdahnil izvirnim igram.

Ključne besede: 19. stoletje, čitalniška dramatika, šaloigra, burka, lokalna burka (nem. *Lokalposse*), prevajanje, prirejanje