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## A SEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SONG *MOLITVA*<sup>1</sup>

In view of the popularity it gained by winning last year's Eurosong festival and by the controversial reactions it provoked in the media, the pop ballad *Molitva (Prayer)* – written by composer Vladimir Graić and lyricist Saša Milošević Mare, and performed by Marija Šerifović – lends itself to semiological analysis. Given the variety of techniques and the possibilities of the semiological interpretative model,<sup>2</sup> its application in this analysis of *Molitva* will be carried out in two ways: *text* analysis and *context* analysis. Text analysis implies establishing the categories of text and style<sup>3</sup> into which the song *Molitva* falls on the one hand, and identifying the laws of its syntactic structure and *generative music grammar*<sup>4</sup> on the other. In context analysis, the meanings of the song *Molitva* are discussed in relation to the chain of music signifiers within music as an auto-referential system of signifying, but also within the surrounding system of established cultural practices. The significations are also discussed in relation to the expressive values of music and the modes of its realization; in relation to the content of the song's lyrics and the manner in which they combine with music; and finally, in relation to the function, place and manner of performing in a given socio-historical context. In short, text analysis is primarily marked by the application of the methods of syntactic analysis<sup>5</sup>, while context analysis is for the most part carried out using methods of semantic analysis.<sup>6</sup> Even so, bearing in mind the high degree of compliance perceived between the

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written in my first year of interdisciplinary studies at the University of Art in Belgrade, in the subject *Introduction to Popular Culture Studies*, under the mentorship of Docent Vesna Mikić, PhD.

<sup>2</sup> See the study of popular music by Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Culture*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 172-246.

<sup>3</sup> Music texts differ in the degree of recognizability or expressiveness of the codes used. In that regard, a distinction can be drawn between the so-called *overcoded* texts, with the familiar and predictable code patterns upon which they rest, and *undercoded* texts, with newly-coined or incomplete, ambiguously or unpredictably used codes. The former group of texts creates styles that are founded on the existing system of rules and conventions (*grammar-orientated styles*), while the latter category of texts is grouped into styles in which emphasis is laid on the individualization of the elements of music expression and/or the system of tone organization (*text-orientated styles*). Cf.: Richard Middleton, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> The method of generative music analysis presupposes the concept of a structure that comprises not only paradigmatic choices and syntagmatic series, but also a *functional hierarchy* that rests beyond what we can hear. In the analysis of popular music, principles of generative music theory are applied in the domain of harmony (key scheme), melody and rhythm. For more details, see: Richard Middleton, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> Three methods of syntactic analysis have been developed within the semiological interpretative music model: 1) method of paradigmatic analysis, 2) commutation test and 3) method of generative analysis. Paradigmatic analysis is carried out with reference to inner grammatical rules of music syntax, commutation test analysis with reference to meaning or context, and generative analysis with reference to deep structures in which specific details are placed (notes, rhythms, basic semantic units of music expression). Ibid, pp. 188-189, 192.

<sup>6</sup> In semiological theory, semantic analysis is linked to the field of denotation and connotation. Since there is no system in music of objective references to the contents and concepts from the outside world (except in rare cases of

available semiological methods of analysis, the proposed methodological approach, in which text and context analyses are carried out as two separate analytical processes, should be taken as tentative. In addition to the following analysis, the structural scheme of the song *Molitva* is attached at the end of this paper.

### *I. Text Analysis*

The song *Molitva* can be classified as falling under ‘pre-coded’ texts and, by extension, ‘grammar-orientated’ styles. Since the existing system of grammatical rules and predictable music patterns are most evidently manifested in popular music on the level of Style music codes,<sup>7</sup> the song *Molitva* should primarily be interpreted as operating within the context of pop music.<sup>8</sup>

Bearing in mind the criteria for the segmentation of music in popular songs (the repetition criterion, close connection between words and music, the ending signal, music-stylistic characteristics of the pop music code), the following elements of structure can be established in the *paradigmatic analysis*<sup>9</sup> of *Molitva*: instrumental introduction – strophe 1 (*A*) – strophe 2 (*A*<sub>1</sub>) – strophe 3 (*B*) – refrain (*C*) – instrumental intermezzo – strophe 4 (*B*<sub>1</sub>) – refrain (*C*<sub>1</sub>, *C*<sub>2</sub>) – coda.<sup>10</sup> The *integrating principle* (or *semantic gesture*) of this music structure cannot be explained in terms used in the formal analysis of classical music (such as phrase, period, fragmentary structure), rather we can speak of the music as being based on the variational repetition of music phrases grouped into symmetrically structured segments: *a a*<sub>1</sub>, *a*<sub>2</sub> *a*<sub>3</sub>, *b b*<sub>1</sub> etc., (see attached scheme). However, certain music phrases build structures similar to the (classical or open) period: in the pair of phrases *b b*<sub>1</sub>, *b*<sub>2</sub> *b*<sub>3</sub> (open period), that is, *d d*<sub>1</sub>, *d*<sub>4</sub> *d*<sub>5</sub> (classical

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direct use or imitation of natural sounds), the term denotation is explained as direct semantic correlation with structural elements of music syntax. In order to avoid terminological confusion, this level of meaning is designated in music by the term *primary signification*, while the connotative level of meaning is termed *secondary signification*.

<sup>7</sup> In Stefani’s hierarchical model of music codes, intramusical levels – which this theoretician designates as *Music Techniques (MT)*, *Styles (St)* and *Opuses (Op)* – are based on *Social Practices (SP)* and *General Codes (GC)*. The *SP* level consists of codes which establish connections between all social practices of a certain culture, including practices of music life. The *GC* level comprises all basic categorization schemes, which are applied in music and other symbolic systems: sensory-perceptive (e.g. high/low), logic (e.g. same/different), formal/textural (e.g. circular/directed at one specific goal; melodious/strident). While the *SP* level is available to all the members of a social group, the *GC* level is accessible to all members of the human race [Ibid, p. 175].

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the different aspects of pop music (such as music characteristics, thematic content, system of production and distribution, target group) go to: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop_music)

<sup>9</sup> Paradigmatic analysis is a method of music analysis based on the concept of *equivalence*. The main idea of this concept is that of emphasizing the principles of *repetition* and *change* (i.e., variational repetition) as the key factor in building music structure. For more details, see: Richard Middleton, op. cit., pp. 183-189.

<sup>10</sup> See the structural scheme attached.

period), the latter phrase is established as the ‘more complicated’ through procedures of internal expansion, altered progression of the principal melody in the final segment and, correspondingly, richer harmonic sequence. In addition, an interesting procedure occurs on the structural plane of the song, creating the effect of a graded music flow: the ambivalence of the music phrase  $c_4$ , which at once signals the ending of the preceding pair of phrases  $d_2 d_3$  within the refrain and the beginning of the ensuing pair of phrases within the re-entry of the refrain, contributes to the density and breadth of the song.

With regard to key and harmony, the song *Molitva* begins in the Aeolian mode, gradually transposing from the initial tonal area of D up a major second, to E and finally ending in the tonal area of F sharp. In terms of generative music analysis, this would mean that the structure of the song is atonic: that is, dominated by modal and fourth-oriented harmonic connections.<sup>11</sup> The great importance of Aeolian harmony in the song is indicated on the one hand by the use of chords derived from the Aeolian mode (principally Im [ $t$ ], °III, IVm [ $s$ ], Vm [ $d$ ], °VI and °VII), and on the other by the specific harmonic relationships which they form (t-°VII-°VI and t-s-d, combined in different ways).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, much of the song is based on the successive repetition of two harmonic patterns (riffs): the first riff is placed in the instrumental introduction and serves as a harmonic basis for the first two strophes of the song ( $A A_1$ ), while the second (t-S<sup>°III</sup>-S<sup>°VII</sup>-°VII [ $d$ ]) is used as a basis for the refrain ( $C C_1$ ).

The thematic plane of *Molitva* is coordinated with the basic principle of structuring the song’s development. This means that the fundamental thematic elements, with several motives of the leading (vocal) melody (whose marks  $a b c$  and  $d$  correspond to the marks of the music phrases<sup>13</sup>), conforms to the variation principle.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, a comparative analysis of the song’s principal motives shows that their common feature is upward melodic motion, and that this motion either changes its direction (i.e., is subject to inversion) in the principal motive of the melodic phrases  $d$  or has a delayed entry (as in the case of melodic phrases  $c$ , where it first appears in the extended form of the principal motive).

The application of Schenker’s method of generative melody analysis<sup>15</sup> confirms the significance of tonic triad tones in structuring the melodic phrases of *Molitva*, and even of the presence of the so-called *Urlinie* (i.e., gradual descending motion: 5-4-3-2-1) at the end of the second strophe. An even more important observation that stems from this kind of analysis is that *Molitva*’s melody has a binary structure, which means that in phrasing and harmony it is marked by an arch melodic contour and *away/home* symmetries.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, the melody of the first two strophes, stated in the tonal area in D,

<sup>11</sup> The harmonic idioms based on subdominant relations are recurrent in the song.

<sup>12</sup> According to Alf Björnberg, the said chords and harmonic idioms derive from blues, specifically from the minor pentatonic blues scale: I-°III-IV-V-°VII. Cf.: Richard Middleton, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that motive  $d$  is produced by dividing (the extended variant of) motive  $c$ , in the structural scheme it has been assigned a new mark for an easier following of the grammatical rules of phrasing within the song.

<sup>14</sup> The term “variational principle” is used here to designate the set of procedures for thematic work, such as relative melodic changes, relative rhythmic changes, sequential repetition, division and extension.

<sup>15</sup> According to Schenker, tones of a typical tonic triad and the so-called *Urlinie* (i.e., gradual descending motion from a tone of the tonic triad to the tonic 3-2-1, 5-4-3-2-1 or 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1) represent the basis (*deep structure*) of melodic phrasing in the field of tonally functional music. Cf.: Richard Middleton, op. cit., pp. 192-196.

<sup>16</sup> The definition of the binary category of melodic structure is quoted from Richard Middleton, op. cit., p. 205.

circles around the fundamental of the tonic triad, the melody of the third strophe ends with the chord of the subdominant on the V degree of the same scale, while the melody of the refrain returns to the tonic and the I degree. However, Schenker's method disregards the significance of the song's modal basis and, by extension, of the melodic scale motion °VII-I.

This type of analysis inevitably touches on the question of the *noteframes*<sup>17</sup> under which the melody of *Molitva* can be classified. Given its circling between two central tones,  $d_1$  and  $a_1$ , whose structural importance is underscored by the upward shift of fourths ( $a - d_1$ , that is,  $e_1 - a_1$ ), this is clearly an oscillating melody. However, when the oscillatory principle is applied within the melodic phrases (as in phrases  $a$  and  $c$ ) or to the level of their connection (as in phrases  $b b_1$  and  $d d_1$ ) thereby building a specific form of questions and answers, open/closed frame melodic structures are created. With regard to their role and importance in building the song's overall structure, they can be attributed the status of a semantic gesture.

Although *Molitva*'s rhythmic structures are primarily characterized by syncopation (both in the melodic line of the voice and the instrumental accompaniment, as far as the beginning of the third strophe / $B$ /), they are nevertheless based on a stable 4/4 metrical foundation. However, the constant shifting of primary (and even secondary) accents is not only due to irregular syncopated structures within a bar, but is also a result of the semiquaver upbeat that marks the beginning of certain melopoetic entities. On the other hand, adapting the melody of the voice to the metrorhythmic structure of the text produces a similar effect on the stability of the music flow, simultaneously causing a constant overlapping of music phrases. In addition to describing the procedures employed to establish the specific order of accents in the song, also deserving of mention are the so-called *kinetic ideas*,<sup>18</sup> which characterize its metric structure. They are *tempo ballads* (which generate said rhythmic patterns) and *tempo marches* (which appear upon the introduction of drums in the second entry of the refrain).

Based on the results of the syntactic analysis of the song *Molitva* (which combines paradigmatic and generative approaches), conclusions can further be made about the *positional implications*<sup>19</sup> of its music segments. Thus, the effect of repeating the original harmonic riff, which, reflecting the variant structure of the melody, is transposed from the instrumental introduction onto the first two strophes of the song ( $A A_1$ ), suggests the meaning of the introductory improvisation of the music material stated. On the other hand, the third and fourth strophes ( $B B_1$ ) function as transitions and generate connotations of contrast. That also defines the refrain as the culminating point of the song, the intensity of which increases proportionally to the number of its repetitions (which means that the highest degree of

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<sup>17</sup> Applying the method of generative analysis to the melodies of popular songs, different *noteframes* are established, i.e., melodic types whose structural tones are organized into several basic forms. They are chant tunes, axial tunes, oscillating tunes, open/closed frame tunes etc. For more information, see: Ibid, pp. 201-211.

<sup>18</sup> In the basic system of hierarchical organization of the experience of time in the manner of binary oppositions *weak-strong*, that is, *accented-unaccented*, a whole series of kinetic ideas (equivalent to the melodic types of structural gestures) is identified. They are often termed "slow waltz", "moderate rock", "tempo ballads" or "fast boogie" and generate metric deep structures in the reverse process. [Ibid, pp. 211-212].

<sup>19</sup> Term taken from the same source, p. 232.

culmination is achieved in the last entry of the refrain). In this regard it should be mentioned that the successive interpretation of the second and third entries of the refrain (*C C<sub>1</sub>*) further produces connotations of limitlessness or uninterrupted activity. Finally, after the first, secondary culmination (within the first entry of the refrain) comes a break in the form of an instrumental intermezzo, while after the third, primary culmination (within the third entry of the refrain) comes a coda that symbolizes a specific conclusion or final calming, which is manifest through a fading out of sound.

The proposed meanings of *Molitva*, according to the structural position of its music segments, also suggest a possibility of interpreting the semantic units of the song by employing the mythical pattern of reconciling differences.<sup>20</sup> The term difference in the song *Molitva* is determined in two ways: 1) as a metaphorical opposition *individual/collective*, which is articulated in the song through processes of confrontation of opposing music ideas (such as tempo ballads/tempo marches, chamber sound/symphonic sound, soloist/vocal ensemble, transitions/riffs, sequencing of new materials/repetitiveness of the refrain etc.); and 2) as a set of applied compositional procedures that disturb the established regularity and balance of the music structure (which is manifest throughout the song by the absence of recapitulation of the introduction and the first two strophes [*A A<sub>1</sub>*], as well as through the absence of a tonally rounded out ending). However, the said differences are integrated, (or reconciled) by the presence of music constants in the song (which refer to the elements of harmonic and thematic planes) and the presence of a coda that conjures up, by the “sound fade-out” technique, the main mood from the beginning of the song, thus closing its symbolic circular form.

## *II. Context Analysis*

If the semantic interpretation of the song *Molitva* is carried out with reference to different signifying practices in music (which are, therefore, determined outside of the source system of signifying in *Molitva* itself), the following analytical procedure will then involve following the *metonymical relations* established between certain music elements of the song on the one hand and certain music styles on the other.<sup>21</sup> Thus, for example, the singing technique of the leading vocalist – particularly in the melismatic sections of the song, where the virtuosity of the voice most fully indicates intensified emotionality – hints at the paralinguistic singing techniques in soul music. In addition, the manner of performing characteristic of the relationship between the leading and back vocals (now unison, now antiphonal singing), but also the stage arrangement of the performers themselves (the female ensemble is standing behind the leading vocalist) clearly represent performing conventions typical of gospel music. We should also mention the

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<sup>20</sup> The analysis that aims to organize semantic units of music structure into different “mythical” patterns originates from Levi-Strauss’s theory of myth: ‘Myth is a structured system of signifiers whose inner networks of connections serve to ‘map out’ structures of other sets of connections; the content here is infinitely variable and relatively irrelevant.’ [Ibid, p. 222].

<sup>21</sup> The term *metonymical relation*, i.e., a relation established with musical elements outside the analyzed work and in which *a part is taken for the whole*, was introduced by theoretician B. Gasparov. Ibid.

music elements of *Molitva* that are adopted from the spheres of ‘unpopular’ music.<sup>22</sup> Namely, the use of pipe in the instrumental intermezzo evokes the world of folk music, while the use of classical instruments (piano, acoustic guitar, string ensemble, percussion), as well as certain arrangement procedures (sophisticated combinations of instrumental timbres), reference the world of classical music.

In terms of genre, the song *Molitva* can be classified under *ballads*, as evidenced by many elements of its overall structure: down tempo, expressive character of music (to be discussed in more detail in continuation), content of the text (in which the song’s heroine articulates through prayer her heartache over losing her loved one), highly conventionalized language forms (manifest in the use of standard rhymes such as *san/dlan* [dream/palm], *gubim/ljubim* [lose/love], or in the use of different rhyming patterns, whose change is coordinated with the organization of the music structure), as well as a specific relationship between lyrics and music (in which they are amalgamated into unique emotional phrases). This also means that the correlation between lyrics and music<sup>23</sup> in the song is first and foremost organized according to the *affect* model (in which lyrics are used as expressions, with a tendency to meld with melody, while the voice gravitates towards the song, i.e., the intoned emotion), with occasional references to the *gesture* model (in which lyrics are treated as sound, with a tendency to be absorbed into music, while the voice tends to be equated with the instrument). Therefore, it can be concluded that music here functions mostly as a means to communicate the leading performer’s intimate confession, which she directs – judging by the personal mode of her verbal message: ‘I still love YOU’ – at the individual (and lonely) listener.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, the word ‘prayer’ stands out as the keyword of the song.<sup>25</sup> This means that it has the status of a pure signifier, achieving its own autonomy within the overall meaning of the text due both to the way that it echoes in the song and to its expressive superiority to other, prosaic words from the text. The status of this word results primarily from the position it holds in the song’s structure (i.e., in the refrain), but also from the correlation achieved between its intonational aspects and the music means employed. In other words, the way in which the word ‘prayer’ is accented in everyday speech is achieved through the basic forms of accentuation in music. Thus the first syllable is emphasized by a note of longer rhythmic duration and by its entrance on the accented beat. All this, coupled with the mechanical rhythm of the word ‘ponovila’ [repeated] (from the refrain) and supported by (variant) repetition of the melodic

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<sup>22</sup> The theory of different worlds of music (i.e. discursive practices in music) was formulated and elaborated by Simon Frith in his study *Performing Rites on the Value of Popular Music*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> In the hybrid practices of today’s popular songs, correlation between music and lyrics is organized according to the following tripartite model: 1) *affect*, 2) *story*, and 3) *gesture*. Cf.: Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 231-232.

<sup>24</sup> According to Dave Laing, this form of direct speaking to the individual listener (through a song’s lyrics) points to the meager emotional life of the individual in late bourgeois society and his retreat into the world of sentimental fantasy. [Interpreted according to: Richard Middleton, op. cit., p. 237].

<sup>25</sup> The term *keywords* in the context of word analysis of popular songs was introduced by theoretician A. Hennion. Taken from the same source, p. 230.

phrases in the voice (that is, of the harmonic riff in the accompaniment), produces a connotative effect of the very ritual of praying, which is itself based on the act of repetition.

Besides the meaning of the text's verbal content, a series of conventionalized music effects equally participates in the building of *Molitva*'s expressive character (which is directly related with *emotional connotations* produced by the song). Thus the gradual transformation of the song's expressive character – from soft, yearning and sentimental to hymnal, solemn and ecstatic – can be followed in parallel with the development of its overall music structure: from the Aeolian harmony to the transposition of the song's tonal structure up a second; from the developmental exposition to the consecutive repetition of the refrain; from the lulling effect of the oscillating melody of the voice to the melismatic parts of emotional catharsis; from the syncopated rhythm specific to jazz ballads to the complex rhythmic combinations and gradual amplification of sound of the entire rhythmic basis; from the calm and articulately harmonized singing in *piano* dynamics to the expressive and dynamically intensified vocal performance; from the chamber sound of the instrumental accompaniment to achieving full orchestral sound and incorporating the female vocal ensemble.

Finally, it is also necessary to identify the significations of *Molitva* that stem from the *homological relations*<sup>26</sup> (between certain elements) of its music structure or stylistic conventions with the social, political, ethnic, or gender functions which they represent, in the context of the general socio-historical situation in our country, but also in the specific context of its performance and purpose (*Eurosong 2007*).

If arch contours of the vocal melody (the binary principle) and 'periodic' structuring of music phrases (the *open/closed* principle) are designated as the *integrating principle* or *semantic gesture* of the song's music structure, then the 'bourgeois song' (as termed by theoretician J. Mukarovsky<sup>27</sup>) can be identified as the starting point of its social significations. The social functions associated with this type of song are manifested in the form of recitals, organized in concert halls for the enthralled audience. Supporting the statement that *Molitva* has exactly this kind of (disinterested) function is not only the mentioned properties of its music structure but also the overall expressive character of the song which allows for the expression of the vocal skills and virtuosity of the (leading) voice, the participation of an impressive vocal-instrumental ensemble, and the demonstration of the diversity and dynamic force of its sound. Moreover, the invisibility of the orchestra in the stage performance of *Molitva*, as well as the arrangement of the singers with Marija Šerifović as the ensemble leader<sup>28</sup> points, on the one hand, to the key role of the pop star in today's chain of the proliferation and mass consumption of popular music and, on the other, to the possibility that a capable and/or talented individual could rise spectacularly to

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<sup>26</sup> For more details on the conceptualization of the term secondary signification in music from the standpoint of *homology* (i.e., the manner of establishing semantic relationships between music and social structures), see: Richard Middleton, op. cit., pp. 237-239.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted from the same source, p. 224.

<sup>28</sup> Marija Šerifović shared the stage with a group of five female backing vocalists, namely Ivana Selakov, Ksenija Milošević, Ana Milenković, Sanja Bogosavljević and Suzana Dinić.

prominence in the existing neoliberal, postcapitalist society. Understood as part of the total system of culture industry, the pop ballad *Molitva* can also be interpreted through the performing, entertaining and identificatory function of popular music.

In the semantic interpretation of certain elements of the song *Molitva* (and its music voices) as representative of specific social factors, we should first and foremost consider the context of its performance. Given that this song was Serbia's first independent entry at the prestigious European music competition *Eurovision Song Contest*, considerable effort was made and funds invested to promote the song both in the country<sup>29</sup> and the region<sup>30</sup> in the period leading up to the contest, and to polish its sound arrangement and visual image for the upcoming performance in Helsinki, the contest venue. The involvement of the Serbian state television (RTS) and distinguished figures from the field of art and culture in both the preparation for the contest and at *Eurosong* (for example, director Gorčin Stojanović and choreographer Ivica Klemenc took part in the creation of *Molitva*'s stage performance) is proof of how seriously this event was approached and how willing Serbia's political and culture elite was to support the performance. Bearing this in mind, the song *Molitva* as well as its presentation at *Eurosong* should, first and foremost, be interpreted in terms of the representation of national identity. In keeping with the sociopolitical situation in Serbia (the transition period) and the ever-present fluctuation of its development between the conservative-nationalist and neoliberal-proEuropean orientations, the display of national identity at *Eurosong 2007* is founded on the conflict of two core values: traditional and proEuropean.

Thus, the archaic tone of the solo pipe in the instrumental intermezzo conjures up the image of a rural, agrarian, old-fashioned albeit self-sufficient(-complacent) Serbia, whose citizens live in full harmony with nature and members of their tribal community, observing the hierarchy of stable and fixed social roles and relations that are established within it. The supporting of traditional values in *Molitva* is also seen in the presence of certain elements with religious connotations. The song's title itself points to that, together with the overall denotative meaning of the lyrics (e.g., 'I can't lie to God while I'm praying'), and the grouping on the stage of the back vocalists, which, in addition to their antiphonal singing, refers to the performing conventions of gospel music and, by extension, the original religious signification of this music style. The Aeolian foundation of the song, which originates from the system of church modes (albeit in the tradition of western-European music), could also work in favor of this

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<sup>29</sup> 'Marija Šerifović, Serbia's contestant at the Eurovision Song Contest, was awarded the prize for extraordinary music achievements *Sportska zvezda* by members of the major-league basketball club *Mega Basket* on Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at the Sports Centre *Šumice*. The same day she appeared on RTV Pink's show *Da predemo na ti*. The topic of the show was her victory at the *Beovizija 2007* festival and her going to Helsinki' [Source: <http://www.marijaserifovic.net/> June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007]. In addition, RTS invested 60.000 euros in the shooting of a promotional film running to 55 minutes which, besides the video clip, contained footage of Marija Šerifović's preparation for her upcoming performance at the contest in Helsinki. [Source: <http://www.pressonline.co.yu/vest.jsp?id=9605> June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007].

<sup>30</sup> On her promotional tour Marija Šerifović visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Switzerland and Greece, and on March 28<sup>th</sup> she appeared on the Turkish CNN television. [Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marija\\_%C5%A0erifovi%C4%87](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marija_%C5%A0erifovi%C4%87) June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007].



interpretation. At the same time, all the numbered elements, coupled with the tempo and rhythm of a march, into which the song progressively grows, as well as with the repetition of harmonic riffs that produce the openness of the music flow (the *open-ended* principle), could be linked to the function of collective identification.

On the other hand, the voices of the vocal performing ensemble, which was visible to the audience, can be heard (and read) as social voices of a pro-European Serbia. However, these are not only voices of our women who plead for equal status of the sexes in patriarchal Serbia, they are also voices of the deprived and marginalized gay population in our society. This is suggested by the presence of several elements of gay iconography in the visual image of our contestants at *Eurosong 2007*: Marija Šerifović's mannish looks, further emphasized by her lackluster black hair, cropped hairdo and square angular glasses with striking black frames; the uniform style of the back vocalists, built on butch esthetics (black male suits, white shirts and ties); and their overall stage performance, described in the media as 'a pseudo-lesbian dance'<sup>31</sup> or as 'a slow-motion lesbian porn film'.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these elements, it seems that the meaning of the song's verbal content, coupled with the polyphonic behavioral aspects of performing (female interpreter/all-woman group of back vocalists) as well as with a bizarre detail in the stage choreography, where women from the background gently touch Marija Šerifović's shoulder at the moment when her heartache reaches its climax, manifest through a demanding vocal coloratura, affirms the acceptance of conventional gender roles in society, which are reflected in the solidarity of women (and/or lesbian community) in moments of crisis. In summary, the gay image of the Serbian song at *Eurosong 2007* met with mostly positive reactions worldwide,<sup>33</sup> which only confirms the well-thought-out promotion of proEuropean values in the visual presentation of the song at the competition. If we add to this the statement that Marija Šerifović's individual voice also represents the voices of national minorities in Serbia (Roma Union of Serbia),<sup>34</sup> then the country's projection of a proEuropean image at *Eurosong* becomes multi-faceted.

On the other hand, the proEuropean identity of *Molitva* is indicated by its genre-stylistic orientation (pop ballad), which is indisputably of Western provenance. Even Ian Traynor, correspondent for the renowned British newspaper *The Guardian*, had words of praise for the pop sound of *Molitva*, interpreting its victory as 'a blow against the ear-splitting mélange of Balkan rhythms, electronic pounding, and stridently nationalist lyrics of turbofolk'.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, the representation of this song at *Eurosong* also enables its key word, prayer, to be attributed connotations of the ritual of praying for the status of Serbia in the context of the European Union. In that context, both the transposition of the song's

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted from: <http://illyriangazette.blogspot.com/search/label/serbia>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Part of the quote from a BBC report is cited in: Rex Wockner, *World Round Up* (May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007), <http://windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=14975>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Reuters commented that Marija Šerifović's victory at *Eurosong 2007* offered the weak and endangered gay community in Serbia a chance of a brighter future. Or, according to a patron of a Belgrade gay club: 'A huge victory for Serbia, a small step for gay rights!' Quoted from: Rex Wockner, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Marija's mother and uncle are affiliated with the Roma Union of Serbia, which Marija herself campaigned for on the eve of this year's state elections. Source: <http://illyriangazette.blogspot.com/search/label/serbia>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

tonal structure up a second and the striking gradation of its music flow can be understood as symbolic gestures for a Serbia that rushes forward, Europe-bound; all the more so as the president of the Parliament Tomislav Nikolić, a representative of the anti-Western oriented Radical Party, was removed on the eve of Serbian victory at the European music contest. In view of such events on the local political scene, eminent politicians, high state officials (many even from the ranks of EU, for example Olli Rehn), and newspaper reporters hailed the Serbian song's triumph at *Eurosong 2007* as the victory of a 'European' Serbia.<sup>36</sup> Even so, this victory caused protests among many countries of the western-European bloc (above all Great Britain, Malta and Germany), although these were not aimed directly against Serbia, but the voting system itself (televoting and SMS voting), which allowed for the convincing domination of eastern-European countries in the overall ranking of the contestants.<sup>37</sup> So the victory of the Serbian song has given Europe cause not only for readings of the proEuropean identity of our country and the affirmation of the general process of European integration (and, by extension, the affirmation of European cultural identity), but also for readings of nationalism (and correspondingly the nonexistence of European cultural identity) as the main driving force behind both politics and music across the Old Continent.

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Thanks both to the mutual support of the neighboring countries (especially those formed after the fall of the Berlin wall), which give each other the maximum number of points in the voting, and to the votes of the immigrants from the eastern bloc who live in western-European countries.

**STRUCTURAL SCHEME**  
of the song *Molitva* (Prayer) by Marija Šerifović

LYRICS	FORMAL SCHEME	melopoetic phrases	STRUCTURAL SCHEME	KEY SCHEME
	<b>instrumental introduction</b> (b. 1 - 4)		2 + 2	<i>in d</i> (Aeolian): VI – d <sup>7</sup>
I'm wide awake An empty bed drives my dreams away Life melts like ice Disappears in the twinkling of an eye.	<b>A – 1<sup>st</sup> strophe</b> (b. 5 - 9)	<b>a</b> (b. 5 - 7)	2 + 2	<i>in D</i> : d <sup>7</sup> – t
		<b>a<sub>1</sub></b> (b. 7 - 9)		
I'm losing my mind, Pushing reality out of sight Our lips are touching softly You're the one I believe blindly.	<b>A<sub>1</sub> – 2<sup>nd</sup> strophe</b> (b. 9 - 13)	<b>a<sub>2</sub></b> (b. 9 - 11)	2 + 2	<i>in D</i> : d <sup>7</sup> – t
		<b>a<sub>3</sub></b> (b. 11 - 13)		
I walk around like crazy Falling in love frightens me Days are like wounds Countless and hard to get through.	<b>B – 3<sup>rd</sup> strophe</b> (transition) (b. 13 - 17)	<b>b</b> (b. 13 - 14)	2 + 3	<i>in D</i> : VI – d – c
		<b>b<sub>1</sub></b> (b. 15 - 17)		
Prayer, It burns my sore lips like a fire Prayer, Thy name is something I admire Heaven knows just as well as I do So many times I have cried over you Heaven knows just as well as I do I pray and live only for you.	<b>C – refrain</b> (b. 17 - 27)	<b>c</b> (b. 17 - 19)	2 + 2	<i>in D</i> : s – d – t
		<b>c<sub>1</sub></b> (b. 19 - 21)		
		<b>d</b> (b. 21 - 23)	2 + 4	
		<b>d<sub>1</sub></b> (b. 23 - 27)		
	<b>instrumental intermezzo</b> (b. 27 - 33)		<b>2 + 2 + 2</b>	<i>in E</i> : d – t
I can't lie to God as I kneel down and pray You're the love of my life That's the only thing I can say.	<b>B<sub>1</sub> – 4<sup>th</sup> strophe</b> (transition) (b. 33 – 37)	<b>b<sub>2</sub></b> (b. 33 - 35)	2 + 2	<i>in E</i> : VI – d – c
		<b>b<sub>3</sub></b> (b. 35 - 37)		
Prayer... (2 x)	<b>C<sub>1</sub> – refrain</b> (b. 37 - 49)	<b>c<sub>2</sub></b> (b. 37 - 39)	2 + 2	<i>in E</i> ... <i>in fis</i> : d – t
		<b>c<sub>3</sub></b> (b. 39 - 41)		
		<b>d<sub>2</sub></b> (b. 41 - 43)	2 + 2 + 4	
	<b>d<sub>3</sub> + c<sub>4</sub></b> (b. 43 - 49)			
	<b>d<sub>4</sub></b> (b. 49 - 51)	2 + 4		
	<b>d<sub>5</sub></b> (b. 51 - 55)			
... I pray and live only for you.	<b>coda</b> (b. 55 - 57)	<b>d<sub>6</sub></b> (b. 55 - 57)	<b>2 •</b>	<i>in F sharp</i> : °VII – t

• For easier reference the overlapping of melodic phrases, which takes place during most of the song *Molitva*, has not been marked in the attached structural scheme.

