

Carnival as a Catholic morality mirror in old Kajkavian literature

The carnival represents a folk custom which brings disorder to everyday life – a revolution of good and evil, spiritual and physical, real and magical, religious and pagan. Differences between the “contrasts” are seen as possible elements in the interpretation of carnival customs. The mixed manifestation of these “contrasts” during the carnival period is a reflection of folk religion, which sought to find meaning and to understand the world through supernatural forces, interweaving various traditions of religiosity, magic and mythology. But in the Catholic religious system this resulted in adverse attitudes towards the carnival in different historical periods, generally expressed verbally and declaratively through sermons. This paper examines three carnival sermons, written by three prominent representatives of old Croatian Kajkavian literature – Hilarion Gašparoti (1714 –1762), Štefan Zagrebec (1669 – 1742) and Mihalj Šimunić (cca. 1660 – 1669). The sermons are presented as possible interpretations of the carnival by the Catholic church and provide evidence about various church interpretations of carnival customs. The analysis of these sermons demonstrates a rhetoric of carnival rejection, as well as advice and instructions on how to spend carnival days. The sermons served to educate folk in accordance with the Catholic morality, whose focus is on the avoidance of bad and sinful behavior. Carnival customs are presented as a means of disseminating truths of the Christian faith by drawing boundaries of desirable behavior.

Key words: carnival, folk and Catholic religiosity, sermon, Hilarion Gašparoti, Štefan Zagrebec, Mihalj Šimunić, Catholic morality, teaching.