

Social, Religious and Patriotic Motives in Vinko Nikolić's Poetry

Vinko Nikolić (1912 – 1997), the long-time editor (47 years!) of the “Croatian Review“, also experienced the fate of the writer – displaced person like so many others in Croatian history that linked emigration with the Croatian homeland and called for forgiveness and reconciliation of all Croats. A poet of the sea and rocky landscape, bread and wine, loneliness and nostalgia, religious motives, memories of the homeland and the longing for freedom and community, Vinko Nikolić is in love with the Croatian word, and is the embodiment of the tragic fate of the Croatian people but also an example of devotion and loyalty to his homeland. Even though the weight and uncertainty of the daily cross are deeply woven into Nikolić's body of work, the poet rarely expresses doubts about the existence of God and his help. From family prayer meetings to the Way of the Cross and days of exile, Christ is his constant companion (and fellow sufferer). His companions along his life journey are physical and mental suffering, bitterness, existential anxiety, nostalgia and longing for the homeland, but also a strong patriotism. In his prayers of gratitude and repentance, and his psalm-like and supplication poems, he calls on Christ and Mother Mary for help. He dreams of and believes in his return to Croatia. The rhythm of his poems is often reminiscent of our ancient bugaršticas and his blank verses are thoughtful, referential and appellative.

The everyday life and creative work of this poet and critic, essayist and editor, professor and publisher, received new content with his going into exile, but fortunately, after the democratic changes, was enriched by his return to his origin, and Nikolić's love and sacrifice, faith and hope, love for God and humaneness are deeply rooted in the Croatian literary tradition.

Key words: little man; prayer; exile; Croatia; Christ