

Vinac by Marijan Jaić A Prayer Book or an Item of Household Inventory?

*In this article I tried to show that many concepts could and should be re-defined and re-interpreted in accordance with the contemporary situation. Marijan Jaić, probably the most published Croatian writer, was on the margins of the research of Croatian literature. Jaić might not have been a writer in the strict sense of the term. He was a writer-theologian whose works, especially *Vinac*, were published and sold in large editions. *Vinac* was more than just a collection of poems or a prayer book – it was a part of the household heritage. Even though the interest in Jaić's work has increased in the last decade, there is still room for additional research.*

Key words: Jaić, prayer books, philological analysis

Introduction

Interdisciplinarity! So much has been said about the necessity for the interdisciplinary work in science. And what does this really mean? Return to the Renaissance? We can safely say that when we talking about a scientist who truly used different types of knowledge, we go back to the time of Leonardo da Vinci. His knowledge and various interests covered almost all that could be found in the science of that time. The difference is only that Leonardo was also an artist, not only a scientist. Today, a man who works in science also has to pay attention to anything that is happening in other scientific fields. I am referring here to an article by Lydia Sklevicky, I will quote it a bit later, which included the explicit directions by Dunja Rihtman – Auguštin on what a scientist-ethnologist

should know. Practically everything.¹ He/she should be familiar with all the scientific niches which are linked to ethnology and which help him/her reach conclusions. Right or wrong ones – doesn't matter at the beginning. What is important is the subsequent work on a subject, and only through narrowing and distilling of the obtained data and through their multiple revalorization and analysis, we can get to something which can, but does not have to, be correct. But, by all means, it can serve to another scientist-ethnologist who will observe the data from his own subjective point of view and then, equipped with his/her own knowledge and methods, offer another answer or confirm the existing one.

An ethnologist deals with an individual and with a group. His/her subject of interest is wider than in any other scientific discipline which deals with human culture – old and new, and with its dynamic changes. And this is the only continuity on which an ethnologist can count - that nothing is eternal and that the facts in folk culture are changed on a daily basis and that they should be studied over and over again.² Therefore, there will never be enough knowledge. All the segments of life, customs, politics, historical data and, I could go on forever, are important for an ethnologist and his/her work. Regardless of his/her narrow specialty (researching only specific segments of human life), an ethnologist has to know more. Why? To understand cycles and changes, to understand why people (communities, groups) change certain ancient (old) customs we are so fond of, or preserve just a segment of them, or, on the other hand, seemingly neglect and discard certain other customs. And now the

¹ I would just briefly move away from, or maybe move closer to the subject of this article, and mention the words of Professor Milivoj Solar from the Department of Comparative Literature of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb who, during his lectures on Modern literature, said that the person who does not know Bible, can barely understand what the modern writers are writing about. He also said that at the exam he reserves his right to ask anything, from any scientific discipline and outside of it. This was my first contact with intertwining of different sciences and disciplines. Only a person with a very broad education should, according to professor Solar, obtain a university degree. The same words were spoken by Professor Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin during her lectures on postgraduate study.

² Dunja Rihtman Auguštin was propagating the openness of ethnology to other disciplines and she was constantly emphasizing that point. Her words were nicely discussed by Lydia Sklevicky in her work *Profession of ethnologist, an analysis of the status of the discipline*. On page 56 she says that ethnology can only benefit, and in no way suffer, from the openness to other disciplines. She wanted to point out that an ethnologist has to be prepared to cooperate with scientists from other fields, not only historiographic. She mentioned sociology, social history, psychology, modern linguistics, semiotics, cybernetics, and we can also add computer sciences, psychiatrics and many more. Since time and historical circumstances are responsible for the appearance of certain new disciplines, I asked the psychiatrist and writer Bartul Matijac, the Head of the Department of Psychiatry, Ethnopsychiatry and Anthropology of the Martix Croatica in Zagreb, what exactly is ethnopsychiatry (even though the term was older). He told me that the usage of this word was very important during the Homeland War. It was the answer to the public appearances of Jovan Rašković, a psychiatrist and his colleague whom he knew well. By using this word he just wanted to, as he explained himself, to 'return tit for tat' and nothing more. The term itself was, in his opinion, a concept adjusted to the prevalent political ideas of the time and has no meaning today. My opinion is that it has. Similar term, even though different in connotation and origin, appeared in the USA where Marcia Escher introduced the term ethnomathematics (see: Asher, M (1991): *Ethnomathematics: A Multicultural View of Mathematical Ideas*, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co).

logical question: why such an introduction for such a small book? Because of these new trends.³ Or, to be more precise, are we here talking only about a breviary or about a household item – a book which served for a religious education but also for spiritual interlude in the moments when the peasant/worker could rest for a while. Here is an example from literature. Iso Cepelić in his novel '*U Taborjancima*' said: 'old Jozo almost secretly, in his sensitive soul so modest and polite and yet generous and kind, sneaked out of the common room and silently crept into his own bedroom. The family said he was now going to pray from his hundred-years old prayer book, from Jaić's *Vinac*, one half of which he knew by heart (Cepelić 1994:49).⁴

Marijan Jaić – short biography

Each period had its discoveries and so did our own. Eventhough he was one of the most widely read and popular Croatian writers of all times, little, or better to say nothing, is known about Marijan Jaić. The reason is that we are rather unsystematically dealing with our own history and that different opinions and views were prevalent in different periods of time. In his Introduction to *Jaić's Collected Works*, Academician Stjepan Babić compared Jaić to Andrija Kačić Miošić and Matija Antun Reljković. He explained the omission of Jaić's name from encyclopedia and lexicons as the consequence of the fact that his works were evaluated through literary-esthetic criteria and not from the aspect of the 'regions in which they were created and periods in which they were written and in which they lived' (Babić 1998:9). I consider this quote to be especially important for the evaluation of Jaić's work from the ethnological aspect as well, or, in other words, I see his work as the incentive for future ethnographers in Slavonia, although Jaić himself was probably not aware of that.

Antun Barac characterized Jaić's work as worthless (Babić in his Introduction to *Jaić's Collected Works* (Babić 1998:9) quotes Barac, but does not mention the source), and to proclaim Jaić's most famous work, a prayer-book-collection of poems *Vinac*, which was printed in 27 editions and, according to some data, sold in 120 000 copies, worthless is, to say the least, a bit audacious.

A work which is very interesting, in my opinion even from the perspective of everyday life, is *Croatian Philosophical Terminology in the Manuscripts of Marijan Jaić* written by

³ Because of the same reasons why each new period requires new translations of literary classics, such as Homer or Shakespeare. I deliberately chose them because of the on-going debates whether they were real persons or whether these works were written by a group of authors. But, let's leave this to the literary historians.

⁴ It is important to mention that the original title of the book is *Vinac*. The book was later called both *Vienac* and *Vijenac*. It is almost certain that Illyrian movement had something to do with the change of title. Namely, the ikavian form *Vinac*, which was used in Slavonia, was changed to iekavian form – *Vienac*, when standard Croatian language was being created.

Zvonimir Kornelije Šojat.⁵ The title itself clearly reveals what the text is all about, but what is especially interesting is the table in which the author compares Jaić's translation: Latin-German original and the Croatian terms common at the time. Here are some of the examples: mindgraphic meant logical, cleverspeaker was dialectician, mindsense – concept, naturelogy – physics, humanology – anthropology, verisimilitude – realism, mindpicturesqueness – idealism, etc. This examples point to Jaić's interest in other scientific disciplines and, what is important to us ethnologists, he also mentioned anthropology.

Fra Marijan Jaić was born on July 4, 1795 in the village of Brod on the Sava River, from father Šimun and mother Klara and was given the name Stjepan. From 1807 to 1816 he was educated and studied in Brod, and in the towns of Našice and Mohač. He became a priest on May 7, 1812, in the town of Bač and was given the name Marin, and on July 7, 1816, he took the vows in the town of Vukovar and he became Marijan. Jaić was a person of broad education and scope of work. He engaged in music, spiritual work, Church ethics, liturgical issues, philosophy, linguistics and other related branches of science and theology. Furthermore, he was appointed to several high church offices. He also taught as a teacher at the elementary school in Vukovar and in 1821 he was appointed the parish priest of the Vukovar parish, its honorary preacher, librarian and organist. He was also the Head of the Franciscan Order in the town of Budim, a Guardian of the Franciscan Monastery in the town of Osijek, the Principle of Osijek Gymnasium and the prefect of the weaving section. In 1843 he built the Monastery library in Osijek, after which he returned to Budim where he was re-elected as the Head of the Franciscan Province of St. John of Capistrano, and he retained this position until 1854. After his return to Croatia, on July 12, 1858, he took a boat trip to Budim and he died there on August 4 of the same year. As written in an obituary which Kajo Andrija Adžić composed in his honor: '...death ... this merciless enemy of human race with its insatiable blade ... hit suddenly, as a robber, our kindly honored father, the ex-Minister of Province, Marijan Jaić, and stuck him with a stroke...' (Adžić 1998:247).⁶ Marijan Jaić was buried in the Franciscan church in Budim.

Jaić's *Vinac*

Jaić's most important work is *Vinac*, or, as he titled the first edition *Poems for Praising God to be Sung during the Holly Mass or on Different Festive Occasions; Collected from Vari-*

⁵ Šojat, Z.K. (1998): *Hrvatsko filozofsko nazivlje u rukopisima Marijana Jaića*, Zagreb, pg. 90-105.

⁶ Adžić, A.K. (1998): Nekrolog ocu Marijanu Jaiću, *Jaićev zbornik*, Slavonski Brod, pg. 247-250. The obituary was translated by Dr Josip Barbarić and the original is kept at the Archives of the Franciscan Monastery in the town of Našice under the name *Protocollum circulatium provinciae Sancti Ioannis a Capistrano cum Bulgaro-Valachica canonice ab anno 1855-1879, vol 7, pg 82-85.*

ous Books. The spirit of *Vinac* and its extreme popularity among people were well explained by Luka Marjanović: ‘We should not be surprised that Jaić’s *Vinac* achieved such popularity. After all, it clearly reflected Kanižlić’s influence in most of its parts. And whatever was the enterprise of Antun Kanižlić (1699-1777), it was all thorough and well-thought. We could even say: maybe even too sophisticated for the folk. The Franciscans were in that respect rather simpler and therefore closer to the common people. They ‘grounded’ high theology.’ (Marjanović 1998:128).

That *Vinac* relied on Kanižlić’s work is obvious from the poem *Mary! Mary!*, with Kanižlić’s version being the following:

Mary! Mary!
Flourish in Glory, Under your Worry,
To Slovene folk, O Mary!
Bring Light, Bring Night
To Turkish Folk!

Jaić’s version is only slightly, but significantly different:

Mary! Mary!
Flourish in Glory, Under your Worry,
To Christian folk, O Mary!
Bring Light, Bring Night
To Pagan Folk! (Ptičar 1998:114)

Kanižlić speaks of *Slovene folk* and Jaić of *Christian folk*, at the end, Kanižlić mentions *Turkish folk*, while Jaić ends the poem with the term *pagan folk*. Even these slight differences point to different periods and political and historical circumstances in which people in the same regions lived. The poem was simply adjusted to new times and circumstances.

Peter Burke wrote: ‘During the eighteenth century, popular pamphlets, broadsheets and popular booklets were found more often than before, because a greater number of them were printed in this period or rather because the majority of them were preserved. A large percentage of the items which are kept in the museums of the folk art originated from the eighteenth century onwards ... only at the end of the eighteenth century we have systematic collection of oral literature – stories and ballads, as well as the systematic descriptions of folk customs and festivities. Therefore, we have clear reasons for writing-up the history of folk culture backwards, where the late eighteenth century could serve us a starting point for the analysis of the more fragmented accounts from the seventeenth and the sixteenth century (Burke 1991:74).

We could hardly compare *Vinac* with broadsheets because it was primarily created for liturgical purposes. It contains songs to be sung in the church and not accounts from Saints’ lives and similar stories. Its aim was not entertainment, but religious education and, if we are to trust Cepelić, spiritual contemplation, thinking about one’s own life. It might sound a bit bold to talk about meditations of a common peasant who,

besides *Vinac*, did not know any other book, except maybe for some fragment from the Bible. This is another question to which an ethnologist should find, or try to find, an answer. How can such a small book determine one's worldview, and, therefore, one's attitude towards past and imminent future?

Vinac also served as a religious manual – a textbook from which children at home learned church songs: 'The extent to which the collection of religious songs *Vinac* by Marijan Jaić was part of everyday life, can be seen on the example of Đakovo and Srijem Diocese. In these regions, the word 'vinac' was a synonym for prayer-book and collection of songs generally. Older people would still use the term 'my vinac' to refer to their prayer book, which showed how well known and popular that book was (Zečević 1998:89-90).⁷

However, the most important information connected to the Jaić's *Vinac* is that this book was placed in the coffin next to the deceased. I have not found any other information that a book (any book) was placed in a coffin next to the dead person. Branko Đaković mentioned that, next the deceased, people used to put tools, pipes and smoking equipment, musical instruments, drinks (wine or brandy), commonly a cap or a hat, a cane. Women were buried with their distaffs, spindles, sawing equipment, some jewelry or a dear memory (Đaković 1985:13-14). I could not find other data related to this topic in the well-known *Ethnography*, nor in Gavazzi's famous work *Vrela*, which, in some chapters, deals with burials. In the town of Petrovaradin, they used to put Jaić's *Vinac* in the coffin next to the deceased for many years. The only comparison I can think of is with placing of the holy pictures next to the deceased, which the dead person should take with him/her to the other world and hand them over to his/her dead cousins. Maybe *Vinac* was also placed in the coffin so that the living would grant some help (*obol*)⁸ to the deceased during his/her final voyage. In any case, I think that this example should be researched and analyzed in more details. Why *Vinac*, and not some other prayer-book and collection of songs? Why not the Bible? The answers should be searched for in the field, because *Vinac* is still read, not only in Croatia and Vojvodina, but also in Hungary, and especially in Rumania, in the regions inhabited by Croatian population. Besides, it would be interesting to find out whether Jaić's life work – *Vinac* – was also placed next to his dead body, which however does not seem very probable, because we are, after all, speaking of some sort of a pagan cult.

⁷ Divna Zečević in the book titled Nineteenth Century Folk Song Collections of Croatia emphasized: 'In Jaić's *Vinac* we do not find anymore threatening images which could be found in Kanižlić's collection of songs from 1773 edition, in the *Song of Hell*. In the same song, Jaić omitted five verses of drastic threats with tortures of hell.' (Zečević 1987:89-90). Some contemporary theologians also wrote on the subsequent changes, mentioning the 'empty hell'.

⁸ The word *obol* comes from the Greek word *obolos*, which referred to silver coins (one sixth of a dragma) which was placed under the tongue of the dead person so that (s)he could, according to Greek mythology, pay Heron the ride through he underworld. Here I used it for two reasons: because its meaning is distorted in everyday language, but also to point to the possible connection between pre-Christian and Christian beliefs.

At the end, let me return to the thoughts from the beginning of this text. For an ethnologist to really be an ethnologist, (s)he has to possess a broad and wide knowledge. This, especially when researching Croatian culture, refers also to the knowledge of Christian religion and theology. Placing of Jaić's *Vinac* in the coffin is probably a relic of pre-Christian beliefs. But this custom also shows how old habits change in time and obtain new characteristics. The same, and yet different. Or, paraphrasing the idea of Hobsbawm and Ranger, we are talking about the new discovery of an old tradition or about the establishment of a new one. This is the area in which ethnologists should really feel at home. Because, every other approach, no matter how novel it might sound, would only take us in the wrong direction.

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