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Review

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Chakavian Poetry in Istria

From Saving a Dialect to Preserving Identity

Micro world of belonging to a certain region is a starting point towards the wider, macro world. Poetry, as a universal phenomenon, enables the opening of all borders in the most noble, most intimate way. Istrian dialectal poetry and chakavian poets have insured the survival of different language idioms of the Istrian peninsula which would have disappeared if transmitted only through oral forms, together with the villages in which they were spoken. Even today, from their verses, we gain knowledge on the specificities of lives of our forefathers, in the same way in which future generations will discover us through our, contemporary, poetry. However, there are examples when Istrian poetry becomes sufficient in itself and this idea of preservation of language and tradition seems to serve as an excuse for a complete disregard of any esthetical elements.

The theme of this article is Chakavian dialect and dialectal Chakavian poetry as keepers of modern ethnic identity of Istria, without evaluating its artistic achievements and poetic value. The aim is to point to the fact that, irrespective of the artistic value, dialectal poems and their creators contribute to the better understanding of traditional culture, as well as to the preservation of dialect.

Key words: Chakavian poetry, dialectal literature, ethnic identity, Istria

On dialect

In order to speak about dialect and dialectal poetry, we should firstly define 'language'. Under the term 'language' we usually refer to the standard language used in state institutions and ma-

jority of publications, which has a defined norm and is stable in a period and over a region (Brozović 1998:171).

In the system of traditional values the most prominent is, no doubt, language. It is the language which is the dominant sign of identity, easily detected through speech and therefore expressing dichotomy between ourselves and the others. Furthermore, written or sung forms of a language serve as central issues of displaying one's feelings of belonging to a certain identity.

There are many definitions of dialects. Linguistics defines dialect as a specific type or form of spoken language, which is used over a certain region, with marked phonetic, grammar or lexical characteristics, which distinguishes it from other dialects of the same language. Pointing to the difference between dialect and standard language, the dialect is defined as a specific form of a language used on specific locality or geographical area and which is sufficiently different from standard language in pronunciation, grammar or idiomatic usage of the words, that we can consider it as a distinctive system, even though it is not significantly different from other dialects of the same language (Simeon 1969: 882, 883).

Linguistically speaking, a dialect contains all the elements of a standard language and yet, it was constantly marked as an inferior, i.e. 'pointing to something less valuable, economically and educationally backward and rural' (Grbić 1998:186). This is one of the reasons why people frequently change their speech, depending on a situation, which is determined by intimate, social, political and economic reasons. Dialect as regional element over national. Dialect as a way to quickly recognize 'your' people. Dialect as the basis of identity. Except as a means of communication of systems of signs used in mutual conversation, it becomes an element of power. Through its symbolic values, it is bestowed with the power to express belonging to a certain regional identity. In this case, Istrian identity.

It is assumed that the Chakavian language entered Istria with the first wave of Croatian settlers at the end of the 6th century. Even though suppressed by the standard languages of the conquerors, it managed to survive on the Croatian borders. Through language, or, to be more precise, dialects, we can determine specific ethnic groups which together form a 'melting pot' of the Istrian Chakavian dialect, or, in a wider sense, the identity of the 'Istrians'. The model of the 'melting pot' refers to a strategy which is trying to 'melt together' cultural and ethnic differences (Živković 1995:29). However, in the case of the 'Istrian pot' one identity or one dialect is created, 'melted together' and serves as representative towards the outside world (*over the Učka Mountain*). Popular culture also uses it, for example the popular Istrian singer Alen Vitasović as well as the most popular and most represented regional Istrian political party – *Istarski demokratski sabor (Istrian Democratic Assembly)*. Inside Istria, there are many local identities, and simultaneously, many local dialects. Tendency of the local cultural and political authorities is to popularize those local dialects through local newspapers and cultural festivals. However, because of the modern way of life, Istrian dialects unavoidably get more in contact with each other and 'the dialectal

differences are becoming smaller and the specificities which were present in isolated villages and uncontaminated by neighboring language idioms are slowly being lost' (Šimunović 1985: 66). This 'melted' Istrian dialect, which Kalapoš, from Šimunović, calls 'Istrian koine' (Kalapoš 2002:105) is used in Istria in popular publications, as well as the satirical newspapers of the *Glas Istra* and the Istrian Calendar *Franina and Jurina*, even though in these type of publications specific sub-dialects are also emphasized, and the most common one is *labinjonski* (chakavian dialect of the Labin region). The inhabitants of Istria quickly learned, motivated by rich historical experiences, the languages of the 'masters' (Italian, German, and Standard Croatian). But in their homes they would always speak Croatian – *our way*. And all these Istrians, when they would meet, for example, on a fair, would speak one compromised, never systematized but yet accepted version of a universal chakavian dialect, a kind of 'esperanto'.

Dialectal (chakavian) poetry of the 20th century

Istrian dialectal poetry was in its beginnings created not out of the wish to create a specific type of literature, but out of the need for cultural and spiritual survival in the regions of Istria, where the processes of de-nationalization threatened to destroy the ethnical roots of Croatian population (Rabac-Čondrić 1993/94: 207).

The first poem in Chakavian dialect in the 20th century was written by a Gradišće Croat, Mate Meršić Miloradić in 1903. In 1906, Vladimir Nazor wrote his *Galiotova pesan* (Stojević 1987:253). In the next hundred years, chakavian poetry had its good and bad times. Its persistence through the last century is a proof of its value and necessity. The reasons for the existence of a dialectal poetry can be explained from different aspects, 'starting from pathetic-psychological-autobiographic, through linguistic-stylistic-experimental and social to anthropological and ideological' (Rota 2000:3), but also from political ones, like when Vladimir Nazor was fighting for Croatian identity during Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, or Mate Balota during the reign of fascist Italy. All these reasons are woven into Istrian dialectal poetry. Dialectal poetry is based on the feelings of regional belonging, and this should not refer only to the geographical region, but also to a spiritual space and the historical embeddedness. The problems of the dialectal Istrian poetry in the past and today are not the same. During the Italian government, the Croats in Istria were forbidden to speak their mother tongue, and after the Second World War, 'under the influence of the old ideologies that the language norm is a basic national value signifying true cultural and national identity, they found themselves in an embarrassing position when they had to be ashamed of their own chakavian mother tongue (Črnja 1978:127). The existence of this dialect during the course of the last century speaks originally and authentically of the fate of one people linked by common language, which, through its specificity and variance, forms a part of the globalizational mosaic. By linking dialectal poetry to a certain geographic region, we diminish its value.

Why should someone's poetry be exclusively Istrian, when it is also Croatian and European? Is there a problem of writing in a spoken language in the context of this language being understood by the rest of the world? Does dialectal poetry have to be shifted from local to global level or is it written for specific audience? 'If you think that their wishes and actions, their passions and trespasses, their joys and sorrows can be interesting to other, learned people outside Istria, I guess in the same way, if not more, these will prove interesting to their lives and to themselves? If you are to write for them, you should write from the inside, on a dialect, as spoken at homes, in the villages... (Valić 1944:56). In the past, people used to write in a dialect so that the people whom and for whom they were writing about could understand what it was written, today it is done out of a conscious attempt to write down a spoken language so that it would continue its life in a different form, on paper. Micro world of belonging to a certain region is a starting point towards the wider, macro world. Poetry, as a universal phenomenon, enables the opening of all borders in the most noble, most intimate way. Embedded in poetry, a dialect, which was, for centuries, the only language people spoke, a speech tasting of mother's milk, a language testifying of your origin, which makes you special and points to the difference between you and the others – enables us to perceive the dualism between regional/universal in a completely different, inherent way. Or, by returning to dialectal, regional poetry 'we do what we can to encourage resistance, in this disturbed balance between the polis and the ecumenism, to the global standardization (homogenization) of forms, ideas and thoughts, as well as the resistance to the chaotic movements of the crude mechanical forces which are, in the great spiritual Diaspora of our times, even trying to make art lose its homeland (Črnja 1978:10, 11). And at the end, is dialectal poetry, after all, determined by the poets' attempts to express, in the best possible way, their states, emotions, values, needs, or, in other words, is their dialect really their only true language, language in which they dream and in which they can shape their most intimate thoughts? I recently asked one Istrian poet why he wrote on a dialect. He said that it was his mother tongue.

But here I am also quoting the opinion of Nelida Milani Kruljac, Istrian writer and translator of Italian origin, as to why should a dialect be used for writing poetry. According to her, one of the motifs is vernacular. She thinks that the poets would primarily chose, almost as if they were born with them, simple and clear motifs which she classifies as lyrical-nostalgic-elegiac poetry dedicated to intimacy, childhood, customs. Opposed to that, the second tendency is expressionistic and it has the same goals as the poetry written in the standard language. In the conclusion of her article, she says that the function of dialectal poetry is 'to broaden the emotive sphere, express feelings that may not be expressed any more through the usage of worn-out, grey, dull, corny, banal, alienated and bureaucratic standard language' (Milani Kruljec 1997:140). Eventhough expressing of emotions in dialectal language sounds very touchy and emotive, I have to mention that I have heard a totally opposite opinion from the Istrian dialectal poet, Drago Orlić. He claims that it is difficult to write about emotions in the Istrian dialect, which is a reflection of traditional culture, i.e. that it is not possible, verbally or textually, to explain emotional states which, in the con-

text of cultural norms of the time, were not discussed at all.¹ While talking about the same issues with Danijel Načinović I, however, learned: 'A linguist, for example, has to be very careful with my poetry because I construct words, I combine them, take them here and there, quite commonly. This is allowed, it is difficult to express one's emotions in a dialect, for example the verb *zgubiti se* (to lose oneself), and I needed this feeling of losing oneself, actually I needed a space where things get lost, so I constructed a word *zgubina*, for which, if somebody saw it, could claim that an old man might have said that, I tried to make all my constructions linguistically logical in the context of the language. So this *zgubina* probably did not exist in the traditional language, no one would say that, but I as a writer have the right to say it. Dialect can not be found on television, it can not be found where language is grounded, where its 'modern elasticity' is formed.

Many studies were written on the topic of Chakavian poetry. Construction and systematization of Istrian identity through centuries is a challenge for many scientists.² The simplest chronological systematization of Chakavian poetry of the 20th century includes the period between the two World wars, while the post-War period is divided according to different generations of poets. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, many Istrian reformatory poets appeared, and the most famous representative is Matko Laginja. At the beginning of the 20th century the reformatory movement in Istria began to fade, the end of the Austro-Hungarian reign was approaching and Vladimir Nazor appeared on the literary scene: 'In the period after 1914, Vladimir Nazor wrote his first Chakavian poems and this announced the onset of an international Chakavian poetry revolution' (Strčić 1989:18). Drago Gervais and Mate Balota were publishing in the period between the two Wars. Social themes were dominant in this period (Stojević 1987:298). Chakavian poets wrote about Istria, including all of its components into their works: childhood, landscape, life on Istrian land, from Istrian soil, 'whose identity card is its entire historical heritage, together with the language which is a part of this identity' (Strčić 1989:22). At the end of this period, Zvane Črnja appeared on the scene, who anticipated the fascism and announced *šćavunstvo* and national uprising. During the Second World War and the immediate post-War period, he was considered to be, in the contemporary literary circles, the most famous and influential Istrian poet. If we try to list the poets according to the years when they were born, and assume that their inclusion into three most important studies of Chakavian poetry testifies to their quality,³ then the representa-

¹ I remember that my nana Fuma, while we were living together, did not give me my birthday presents personally, but would always leave them on the table. Similarly, when I would be leaving her at the end of the school year, she would never come to say goodbye and greet me in potentially very emotive moment, but only by waving through the window. When I would be leaving, she would always stay in her bedroom.

² See works by Milorad Stojević, Ivo Rudan, Boris Biletić, Zvane Črnja and Mirjana Strčić.

³ Stojević, Milorad (1987) *Čakavsko pjesništvo 20. stoljeća*, Antologijska studija, Izdavački centar Rijeka; Biletić, Boris (1997) *I ča i što i kaj*, Iz suvremene hrvatskoistarske lirike, Sveučilišna knjižnica u Puli, Istarski ogranak Društva hrvatskih književnika i Strčić, Mirjana (1989) *Istarska pjesmarica*, Antologija hrvatskog pjesništva Istre XIX. i XX. stoljeća, Čakavski sabor Pula.

tives born during the 1930-ies were: Rudolf Ujčić, Miroslav Sinčić, Ivica Pilat, Milan Rakovac; during the 1940-ies Drago Orlić, Zdenka Višković-Vukić, and born in the 1950-ies, Daniel Načinović. In more recent periods, important poets were Tomislav Milohanić, Denis Kontošić, Nada Galant, Evelina Rudan, etc.

The characteristic elements of Chakavian poetry can be most easily recognized in the works of Zvane Črnja. He strongly emphasized the local landscape through the motifs of rural, peasant ambiance and through spiritual heritage of Istria. Črnja speaks about values which are, as much as local, equally universal: that we are all equal before death, about estrangement, loss of identity. The similar problems of the impact of alienation on their own rural environment are tackled by M. Sinčić and M. Rakovac (Strčić 1989:37). It is indicative that, and we can observe this at majority of Istrian poets, including song-writers, that 'amidst the waves of mixed poetics and generations, always returns a refreshing hum of the folk song, from Nabor and the first writers in the post-War period through Črnja, to Danijel Načinović, as a leading representative of the current wave' (Strčić 1989:38). Therefore, it is exactly these recognizable elements of Chakavian lyrics, which speak of local tradition, which can serve as a constant source of inspiration for ethnological research.

Contemporary dialectal poetry in Istria

Those few known 20th century Chakavian poets from Istria were, on the onset of the new millennium, suddenly joined by (too) great a number of modern dialectal Istrian poets.

The need to institutionalize the attempts aimed at the preservation of Chakavian poetry (which might be one of the reasons for such a great number of contemporary poets) was voiced in Žminj, on May 8, 1969, when the Assembly of Chakavian Poetry was founded, 'which was primarily organized as a cultural and scientific festival dedicated mostly to the questions of preservation of Chakavian poetry' (Ladavac 2000:5). Soon the need appeared to expand and strengthen the movement and on February 5, 1970, Chakavian Assembly was founded and it spread its activities to the regions outside Istria, to Hrvatsko Primorje and Dalmatia.⁴ The founder and main organizer

⁴ Chakavian Assembly is organized in project-territorial chairs, which should, according to their specificities, aim at completing the project goals. Presently there are 24 Chairs: 1. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Buzet, 2. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Cres-Lošinj, 3. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Grobnik, 4. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Klana, 5. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Kornić (island of Krk), 6. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Kostrena, 7. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Labin, 8. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Mošćenička Draga, 9. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Novigrad, 10. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Novi Vinodolski, 11. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Opatija, 12. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Otočac, 13. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Pazin, 14. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Pinezici (island of Krk), 15. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Poreč, 16. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Rab, 17. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Rakalj, 18. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Rijeka,

of the Chakavian Assembly was Zvane Črnja. His primary aim was to synchronize the requirements of cultural and scientific activities in Istria with the fast and rapid material development. In the past 37 years of its existence, the program orientation and achievements of the Chakavian Assembly could be divided into several main groups of activities, i.e. categories: cultural-artistic program, scientific conferences and publishing.

Publishing included the publications of the collections of conference papers, monographic editions, anthologies, documents, collections of poetry and music, while undoubtedly the most important publication is the edition *Istra kroz stoljeća (Istria Through Centuries)*, which was, on the meeting of the committee of the Chakavian Assembly, assessed as the project and mission of the century: 'This major edition, based on the idea of Zvane Črnja and his associates, should have documented not only the persistence of Croatian roots for a thousand years, and the cultural-historical specificities and multi-cultural character of these regions, but also the fact that we moved with these regions, during historical changes, in spite of crises and turbulences, as crucial and living cultural witnesses and these regions have a lot to contribute to the national as well as European cultural and spiritual heritage and synthesis.' (Tončinić 2005:13). In total, 11 editions were published containing 64 books, 10 of which were collections of poetry, and the 12th edition is currently under way.

In the first few years of the existence of the Chakavian Assembly, the main activities were dedicated to defining and evaluating Chakavian poetry. Chakavian poetry contests are organized and topics like older Chakavian poetry and literary-historical significance of Chakavian speech are being tackled again; as well as the topics such as Croatian dialectal poetry, dialects and modern literature, dialectal components in the works of Miroslav Krleža, regional literature in classroom, etc. Such attempts have certainly contributed to the uprising of Chakavian word, Chakavian speech and dialect from the 'communicological and territorial margins' (Tončinić 2005:14) and without such an initiative they could find themselves in the paradox of oblivion like many other folkloric attempts. So, almost forty years after the initial qualitative attempts, cultural elements of Istrian peninsula are gaining mass identification with the initial goals. Dialectal writing, rich and fruitful, leaves traces of identity of the multicultural Istrian space inside the frameworks of today's understanding of culture. Even today, Chakavian dialect does not lose its importance in everyday, but also artistic and scientific, contexts, which is proven by many festivals, contests (for children and adults) and scientific conferences.

19. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Roč, 20. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Ronjgi, 21. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Svetvinčenat, 22. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Škrlevo, 23. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Zagreb and 24. Chair of the Chakavian Assembly Žminj.

Chakavian poets' gatherings and chakavian poetry contests as bases for preservation of dialectal writing

This large number of new poets is rather puzzling. We can easily establish that the entire Istrian culture motivates the artistic expressions of the inhabitants. On every village feast or festival, regional poetry is presented, even the writing attempts written by elementary and high-school students.

Writing poetry in mother tongue is encouraged from earliest elementary school days even on the state level through the Festival of Literature, Drama and Journalism for the elementary and high-school students called LiDRaNo. One of the main tasks of LiDRaNo is raising appreciation for Croatian language, including its dialectal variants, through promotion of literary writing.

Chair of Chakavian Assembly from the town of Žminj, in cooperation with children's magazine *Modra Lasta*, organizes a contest *Di ča slaje zvoni*, and students from all over the country writing on Chakavian dialect can apply. In 2005, 42 schools entered the contest, with more than 170 authors with 222 poems.

Almost every Istrian county encourages and promotes dialectal poetry, presenting it on the gatherings of Chakavian poets or publishing collections of poems, etc. One of the most important festivals of Chakavian poets is *Histrijada*, which has been organized in Vižinada since 1994. Every year, a collection of poems written by the participants of *Histrijada* is published under the title *Verši na šterni*. In the twelve years of *Histrijada*, more than 70 authors were presented in *Verši* and 657 poems were published. In the last printed *Verši*, the editor, Miroslav Sinčić, wrote, in the introduction titled *Pjesnici na šterni traže osveženje, ali povremeno i šterni treba sveže vode* (*Poets are seeking fresh water from the well, but sometimes the well needs fresh water itself*), that out of the 227 poems he received to be included in the collection, he chose 71 poem. He mentioned that the number of authors is increasing each year, but he could not say 'that the quality of writing is increasing with the increasing number of the poets and poems' (Sinčić 2005:6). In the introductions to previous collections he also wrote that 'there is a big difference in quality between the proposed poems, and on one hand there are the poets who know what to do with their intimate worlds and do not achieve this only through talent but also through hard work and reading of other good poets as well as through critical attitude towards their own writing, while, on the other hand, there are poets who do not lack motivation and persistence, but whose ambitions are stronger than talent and who are not critical (enough) towards their own work' (Sinčić 2005:6).

In the past, Boris Biletić⁵ also dealt with the problems of dialectal poetry in Istria. He claimed that certain poets could not realize their artistic potential, not even under the alibi of writing regional, i.e. dialectal poetry (Biletić 1999:8).

⁵ He was also the editor of the fifth collection of poems *Verši na šterni*.

Chakavian poets can also send their work to the *Spring Contest Sveti Servul*, organized by Open University Buje, for the 11th time this year. The contest is divided into three categories: for elementary school students, secondary schools students and adult poets.

The Open University of Labin also organizes a literary contest titled *Ca je Ča*, to which elementary and secondary school students could send their work for the 14th time, and since 2005, adult citizens of the Labin region could also participate. One collection of poems written by the elementary, and in smaller number, secondary school students, was published from this festival.

In Rovinjsko selo, an evening of Chakavian poetry is organized, under the title *Seljanski susreti (Village Gatherings)* and in 2006, the 15th such gathering will be organized. In the town of Rovinj, during Šoljan's Days, poetry is also read, as well as on the Literary-scientific conference *Tomizza i mi*, which will be organized in 2006 in the town of Umag for the 7th time. A festival *Štijući i kantajući* is also a part of this conference, and here regional poets are given an opportunity to read their work.

It is interesting to mention that a Literary Club *Uljanik* has existed in the town of Pula since 1979. They have published eight collections of poems so far. Literary Club is organized in the largest Istrian Company and one of the largest Croatian shipbuilding yard, 150 years old *Uljanik*. The Club gathers literary amateurs, professionals and folk artists to whom, according to Kontošić, '(overtly) serious literary institutions hardly open their massive doors, because they recognize only professional authors' (Kontošić 1999:8). Around forty members of different educational backgrounds and coming from different professions – from metal workers and fishermen to nurses and retired people of different nationalities, write poetry in Croatian, Italian and in their own dialects.

The Istrian County organized in 1997 yet another dialectal poetry contest called *Histria*. In accordance with prevailing political interests and marketing, the emphasized trans-regionalism of Istria is reflected in the cultural festivals, so the contest was open to 'the authors coming from all regions, from Slovenia, Italy, Kvarner region, Dalmatia and to all those who wish to participate and who have accepted dialect as an instrument of their poetic expression' (Rota 2001:3). The idea was to organize a festival one year and to publish the collection of poems the next year. However, as in other dialectal poetry contests, the whole concept of the contest is questioned and discussed in relation to socio-political agendas and (non)literary values (Biletić 2001:3). Besides these two key moments important in evaluation of dialectal poetry and all the related activities dedicated to dialects, we can also observe the discovery of a need for belonging to a certain identity and 'a wish to celebrate it in the language of everyday life and dreaming' (Bonanno 2003:9). The aim of this contest was to establish contact and enhance understanding between different ethnic groups near the borders, through the universal concept of dialectal poetry.

Very important festival entitled *Susreti na dragom kamenu* in the village of Rakalj, which was organized to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Mate Balota, has, unfortunately, disappeared. It was organized for the first time in 1968 when both economists

and poets gathered at that first meeting. With great intermissions, it was organized for the last time in 2004.

Even though up to 70 poets apply to certain dialectal poetry contests, it is interesting to point out that the Istrian branch of the Croatian Writers' Society (DHK) has only 38 members, out of which only 15 are permanent members and the others are so-called candidate members. We have to bear in mind that some dialectal poets do not want to be members of this professional organization, as well as that all the members do not write in dialect. No matter how reliable these statistical data are, we can see that only a small number of the poets are recognized from the established social institution which, as the primary criteria form the acceptance of future members, evaluates the quality of literary work and not its ethno-regional sentimentality.

Stojević claimed that during the 1980-ies there were around 400 Chakavian poets in Croatia and that today this number might be quadruple (Stojević 2005). He emphasized that the production of these poets was very intensive, but without any significant reverberation, because these works were published mainly through different organizations (*zadruga*), and rarely by prominent publishers. He also noticed that these publications frequently contained introductions and epilogues discussing the values and importance of preservation of language or vocabulary, while artistic achievements were put in the second place. Or, to put it directly, 'We are talking about poetic ignorance masked by the plead for language preservation' (Stojević 2005).

Will there ever be a balance between poets who know their craft and 'aggressive amateurs' as Biletić calls them (Biletić 1999:8), who write and publish under the pretence of saving their own regional identity? Maybe this dichotomy does not have to achieve a balance. Maybe so called high or elite culture should stay apart from popular culture. Exactly in the popular culture, liberated from the high artistic values, we hear the voice of a 'little man', who is the object of ethnological interest. Therefore, even in children's dialectal poetry we can trace changes of traditional life happening over time.

Thematic analysis of poems

The collection of poems *Čakavčiči* contains children's work created in the period from 1972 to 1992 and it is followed by the collection *Čakavčiči pieti*.

Until 1974 the students mostly, in their poems, wrote about topics such as nature, work in the fields, reapers, and different animals – cows, calves, donkeys, pigs, mice, dogs and various birds (owls, crows, partridges, cocks). They also wrote about weddings, carnivals, traditional dishes such as *palenta*, or described *čripnja* and barrels. They also wrote about topics which were more prevalent in the later period, for example love, especially towards mother, father, grandmother, grandfather.

In the period from 1974 to 1978 prevalent topics, next to animals, now to a lesser extent, and family members, were card games, *kažun*, but also television, tourists and village modernization:

In the period from 1979 to 1982 they wrote mostly about love, happiness, nature, *baldur*, animals, and family members. Country was a characteristic topic in this period.

In the period from 1983 to 1986 we can again find a mixture of topics: from animals, family members, love, *kažuni*, land, to deserted houses and ancient customs, but country is again the prevalent topic.

Children's poetry in the period from 1987 to 1990 was characterized by the same prevalent motifs as the previous periods, but certain new topics, such as Italian pensions and computers, also appeared.

In the period after 1994 the youngest Istrians were concerned, among other things, with the Homeland War.

Besides all the above mentioned topics, in the collections from the period from 1995 to 1997, a song on the renovation of the unused railway line Trieste-Poreč was also included.

In the last collection of poems *Kako ča zvoni va Žminje* from 2005, the students are again writing about nature (the wind, spring, animals, old olive trees), family members, especially their grandmothers and grandfathers, about *kažuni*, *konobe* or traditional musical instruments.

Notwithstanding whether a child writes about traditional instruments, his/her great-grandparents or *nanaI*, or a nurse, cook and poet Nevenka Erman.

A renown Istrian poet Danijel Načinović about musicians.

In each of these poems we can detect traditional local heritage seen through the eyes of a child, a woman, a man. And it is exactly these different perspectives that contribute to the richness and multi-layeredness of ethnographic accounts. A large number of dialectal poets enables the preservation of many Istrian dialects, even when dialectal writing, under the pretence of preservation of identity and dialects, turns into kitsch, like it happened with, for example, the performances of female poets who promoted their collection of poetry which was composed only because they all share the same first name – Marija. But even this example of *Marijada* speaks of the true need of people not to forget their local speech, which forms the basis of identity of one region, but to place it next to high, universal poetry.

In my conversations with Danijel Načinović, I discovered his opinion on the question of the presence of elements of local heritage in dialectal poetry: 'For example, they write *motika* or *ulika*, for example Remido Sošić writes in this way, I think a very interesting way. He preserved his Rovinj dialect, he has this obvious need to write down and explain to the future generations how did *boškarin* look like and this is very nice, but this is not the task of poetry... If a dialect does not have its literature, it is lost, because literature collects another kind of ethnography and these are the minute vibrations of emotions'. This opens up the question of the future research of traditional emotional heritage which could join together ethnology and dialectal literature.

Translated by Tanja Bukovčan