Rokeri s Moravu and the Politics of Parody in Socialist Yugoslavia

Tanja Petrović

THE RADICAL INTERVENTION OF ROKERI S MORAVU

The band Rokeri s Moravu (Rockers from the Morava River) first appeared on the Yugoslav stage in 1977 and stayed there until the end of Yugoslavia in 1991.[1] The group consisted of four male musicians: Boris Bizetić (the group's founder and leader), Zvonko Milenković, Branislav Anđelović and Branko Janković. They recorded 200 songs, all written and produced by Boris Bizetić, 19 LPs, and performed at 2000 concerts in Yugoslavia and abroad.

When Bizetić formed the Rokeri, he was already well known in the Yugoslav entertainment world as writer of light-pop songs (*šlageri*,

1 The group got together again in 2007 and released the album *Projekat* (*The Project*), but stopped playing shortly thereafter because of the death of singer Zvonko Milenković.

i.e. schlagers),[2] and a writer of soundtracks. Throughout his entire music career, which was decisively framed by what he achieved as a member of Rokeri s Moravu, Bizetić was eager to emphasize more artistic (and more serious?) aspects of his work.

Rokeri s Moravu made a radical intervention in the Yugoslav popular music and entertainment industry and are a unique phenomenon within that industry. Their music was characterized by a radical shift from the then-dominant style of newly-composed folk music,[3] which in its earlier phase had insisted on the reproduction of the ideal, nostalgic and romantic image of the Serbian village and its pastoral world.[4] Newly-composed folk music was a genre that had emerged in the 1950s as a consequence of major changes in Yugoslav society, including its modernization, urbanization and hybridization, in order to feed the cultural needs of the emerging working class and other cultural "mongrels", who represented the largest part of the population. According to Ana Hofman, newly-composed folk music "with its roots in traditional folk music (...) was a reflection *par excellence* of the socialist transformation from a rural to a modern industrial society" (Hofman 2013: 293). Exploring the lyrics of newly-composed folk music, Ivan Čolović interprets the relationship to folklore as an ideal model and this music as deviation from this ideal from a different vantage point; for Čolović, newly-composed folk songs are part of "the tradition of literary folklorism, singing in the folk spirit which has been present for more than two centuries" (Čolović 2000: 153). The dramatic changes taking place in socialist Yugoslavia in the second half of the 20th century were for a long time mainly ignored in this musical genre: according to Čolović, the early phase of the newly-composed folk-music was characterized by

> songs that are thematically and linguistically related to the village, its life and language. Many of these songs retained the traditional, idyllic

---

2 'Ako jednom vidiš Mariju' ('If You Ever See Mary'), performed by Miki Jevremović, is the first recorded and probably the most famous song by Bizetić in this genre. On his website one can read that his songs have been recorded and performed by (among others) Đorđe Marjanović, Radmila Karaklaić, Dragan Stojnić, Olivera Katarina, Anica Zubović, Ljiljana Petrović, Ivan Bekjarev, Lane Gutović, Silvana Armenulić, Hanka Paldum, Mira Barjaktarević, ansambl "Tamburica 5", Mira Beširević, Vera Matović, Boban Zdravković, Rade Vučković, Miša Marković, Rale Ćajić, Halid Muslimović, Ajnur i Muhamed Serbezovski, Zorica Marković, Izvorinka Milošević, Maja Nikolić... (Bizetić n.d. a).

3 For more on this genre see Dragićević-Šešić 1994; Rasmussen 2002.

4 It would be wrong and misleading to treat newly-composed folk music as a homogenous genre, since it was characterized by the coexistence of very different musical, thematic and ideological tendencies throughout its history. Despite this internal diversity, it is nevertheless possible to argue that newly-composed folk music has remained limited within stereotypical thematic frameworks.

> and pastoral image of the village;[5] however, they were joined by an increasing number of songs that also contained some rough, realistic elements, that confronted ideas about the village with its real modern life. (Čolović 2000: 157)

A deeper look into the lyrics of these "realistic" songs, however, reveals that places such as *kafanas* (alcohol and coffee bars) or urban streets are only slightly indicated in these songs (Čolović 2000: 172), functioning merely as a background for illustrating personal dramas, most commonly caused by lost or unrequited love. Life in a city as such, or life in a village which has been significantly changed by modernization,[6] are not the main topic of these songs.[7]

Although the newly-composed folk songs offered an idealized, rustic image of village life and values, and emanated nostalgia for their loss, the language of these songs remained the neutral, standard idiom, and not the local dialects which would be more obviously "authentic" expressions of the locality and ruralness these songs eulogized. In its Serbian renditions, it did not reflect the variety of dialects found in Serbian villages and their linguistic authenticity (although it was at the same time romantically idealized by linguists, ethnographers, folklorists and others engaged in describing traditional life and customs). These songs were written in a neutral, standard Serbian idiom; the geographical affiliation of these songs was signalled by the specific lexicon, designating elements of traditional culture, but not on other linguistic levels.[8] Ivan Čolović also emphasizes the fact that the lyrics of the newly-composed songs "only exceptionally transcend the framework set by the Serbian standard language" (Čolović 2000: 186).

---

5 As Ljerka Rasmussen points out, in its early phase, newly-composed folk music drew heavily on existing recordings of folk songs (2002: 31), while the label *izvorna muzika* ("original music") suggested authenticity and a clearly defined geographical and social background of these songs.

6 Here is how American anthropologist Joel Halpern describes the rapid transformation of a Serbian village in the 1950s and 1960s, which he observed during his fieldwork in Orašac: "The village clerk earnestly discusses means to get better reception on his TV screen, commenting that with all the good late shows it is hard to be at work at seven mornings. The school director polishes his 1952 Opel, recently acquired to replace a motocycle, and says he must manage to get to Belgrade to buy new reflectors for the headlights" (Halpern 1967: 304). "In 1966 the teachers, the agronomist, the priest, the health service attendant and some of the tractor drivers had all been in the village for but a short time (the village clerk and four state farm employees are of the village)" (Halpern 1967, 307).

7 There is a large body of literature that discusses the role of music in (de)stabilizing the urban-rural dichotomy in Yugoslav society both during the Yugoslav period and in its aftermath. See e.g. Rihtman-Auguštin 1984; Prica 1988; Muršič 2000; Kos 1972; Dragićević-Šešić1985, etc.

8 While they were not dialectologically inflected, these songs, on the other hand, clearly belonged to regional musical "dialects" and were classified into several "melodic dialects" (Bosnian, Montenegrin, Šumadian, South Serbian, East Serbian etc.) (Čolović 2000: 165).

The radical intervention of the group Rokeri s Moravu is therefore two-fold: both thematic and linguistic, and was indicated by the group's very name: they were "rockers" who intruded into the pastoral rustic world of the Serbian village in the Morava River Valley. And they consistently performed their songs in the dialect of this area – that is why the group is called Rokeri s Moravu (and not "Rokeri s Morave", which would be standard language form of the group's name).

Rokeri destroyed the idyllic, pastoral image of the Serbian village by bringing in elements of and references to global popular culture and singing about the modernizing, hybrid reality of the village life of the time. Their appearance and performances were characterized by eclecticism, hybridity, and a mixture of folklore elements with references to global culture that was increasingly present in the everyday lives of the citizens of socialist Yugoslavia in both towns and villages (*ja Tarzan a ti Džejn, lele dunje ranke...* [I am Tarzan, you are Jane...]). In their stage and media appearances, they combined traditional Serbian *šajkača* caps with fur coats, high-heeled shoes, pants with the pattern of the US flag, giant eye-glasses and baby dummies... Thematically, the songs of Rokeri s Moravu spoke about the big changes that were taking place due to the modernization of Yugoslav society: new technologies, TV shows, changes in traditional behaviour patterns, encounters with "western culture" upon leaving Yugoslavia to work abroad, etc. In their performances, they embodied "the Serbian peasant" and in their songs they described his rapidly changing world – but in a distinctively parodic way.

Parody was a central element of Rokeri's performances.[9] It is virtually impossible to misunderstand it for real/earnest content – both because of the "impossible" combinations in their texts, the way they dressed and their visual aesthetics,[10] and because of the language of their performances. Most of their lyrics were in the Kosovo-Resava

---

9 On the global scale, Rokeri's appearance and performances may be related to the parody bands of the 1970s such as The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band.

10 However, this does not imply that performances and lyrics of "serious" performers of newly-composed folk music were totally free of parody and self-irony: in 1970, Lepa Lukić was photographed for the cover of the magazine *TV revija* dressed as a queen, with a crown on her head and traditional Serbian *opanci* shoes on her feet. This photo was also used for the official poster of "Belgrade estrada". Lepa Lukić commented on this photo in the following way: "It was not me who crowned myself, nor did I do that seriously. And even if I did, I still have *opanci* on my feet, and that means something" (in Luković 1989: 208). With this statement she refused to take a clear position regarding the "seriousness" of this act and left readers with multiple possibilities to interpret it.

dialect of central Serbia. According to Boris Bizetić, he based the "language and pronunciation" of Rokeri on the idiom spoken between the towns of Ćuprija, Paraćin and Kruševac (Luković 1989: 256). Such a linguistic strategy was a major and unprecedented innovation in the musical landscape of the time. They were the first Yugoslav band to consistently use this dialect, and the first to sing about the world of the Serbian peasant using his own idiom. Paradoxically, this linguistic strategy did not contribute to providing an authentic image of that world, but, on the contrary, produced parodic distance and a humorous effect. Nikolas Coupland (2001: 350) notes that "since their performer needs to cue frame-shift and emphasize dissonant social meanings, stylized utterances are often emphatic and hyperbolic realizations of their targeted styles and genres". However, this is not the case with the performances in dialect by Rokeri s Moravu. While in visual terms their performances were exaggerated, caricaturized and as such signalling a clear distance from assumed authenticity (most clearly expressed by performers of newly-composed folk music dressing in traditional folk costumes), Rokeri's use of dialect is not characterized by strong stylization and is quite close to the general perception of how the "Morava dialect" sounds. In a way, they even insisted on authenticity in their use of dialect: Bizetić often points out that he was born in Belgrade, but that all his relatives come from the Pomoravlje ("near the Morava") region, and that Zvonko Milenković, the second most important person in the group, was born in the village of Kukljin near Kruševac.

In spite of the absence of any salient modification of dialect and exaggeration of its use in songs and performances, the language of Rokeri contributed to the parodic effect no less than the way they dressed and acted on stage. Their "Morava dialect", although neutral and even "authentic" to an extent, clearly indicates their distance from the performed content and the gap between the actors on stage (*altera persona*) and who they really are (*propria persona*) (see Coupland 2001). There are many reasons for this unexpected parodic effect of the local idiom. First, we need to view the performances of Rokeri s Moravu within the broader context of newly-composed folk music, which was at the peak of its popularity at the moment they appeared on the scene. Rokeri's parodic performances offer a critical commentary on the representational models of the Serbian village in newly-composed folk music. The use of the dialect, uncharacteristic for this genre, also functions as a distanced critique.

One also needs to keep in mind the specific status of the Kosovo-Resava dialect within linguistic landscape of Serbian society. This

dialect, together with other old-Štokavian dialects[11] of south-eastern Serbia, is considered an index[12] of rurality, but also a marker of low culture and a linguistic marker of the unsuccessfully urbanized and modernized rural masses (Petrović 2015). The label "southern dialects" is usually attached to them in colloquial Serbian. Although these dialects cover a geographically wide area and differ significantly from each other and belong to different groups according to linguists' classifications, they are all characterised by their divergence from what is perceived to be the Serbian standard idiom. The differences mostly lie in the reduced flective or predominantly analytical case system (vs. seven cases in standard Serbian), different position of emphasis and reduction of the system of accents (a pitch accent or two descending tones vs. four different accents in standard Serbian). Seen as distant from the standard and geographically peripheral, these dialects are subject to the "usual" processes through which unequal power relations between the centre and periphery are exercised. However, through the cultural processes taking place during the modern history of Serbia (from the beginning of the 20th century onwards), a firm link between these territorially defined idioms and low cultural taste had been established.

In the period of rapid modernization, the "southern" dialects of Serbia became signifiers of failed modernity, semi-urbanity and the impossibility of the (rural) masses to ascend the ladder of social prestige. Two iconic embodiments of these social perceptions were the figure of the peasant who moves from village to town and the Gastarbeiter, a person who left a rural area to work in a Western European country. These figures symbolically marked the period of Yugoslav socialism in the second half of the 20th century, characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization and population movements. In the subsequent era of dismantling the socialist system, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the global wave of deindustrialization, another figure that joined the previous two in the gallery of "rurban mongrels" (*rurbani polutani*) is the figure of the morally corrupt, uneducated, grotesque businessman/politician, trying to navigate the muddy waters of the Serbian "transition".

---

11 Štokavian dialects are divided into new-Štokavian, old-Štokavian and middle-Štokavian. The system of accentuation is the basis for this classification: new-Štokavian dialects have four accents while old-Štokavian dialects only contain two falling tones. Middle-Štokavian dialects have only one, a pitch accent (see Okuka 2008).

12 My use of index here draws on the concept of *indexicality* that refers to ability of language to reveal "contextual factors about speakers, settings, attitudes, orientations, stances, etc." (Cavanaugh 2012: 9). According to Jillian Cavanaugh, "indexes are like delicate anchors that connect the non-referential forms of language and the context, both the immediate micro-context of speakers' relationships and unfolding histories, and the larger macro-context of politics, economics, and institutional power" (Cavanaugh 2012: 9).

In popular culture, this figure is personified by Srećko Šojić, a character in several TV series and films from the 1980s onwards. He was created by Siniša Pavić and interpreted by the actor Milan Gutović. Šojić comes "from the provinces", speaks a "southern dialect" and is involved in murky business dealings and bizarre political projects. His lifestyle is characterized by an absence of good taste and his continuous but futile attempts to become part of "high society" are funny and grotesque.[13]

"Southern" dialects are symbolically linked to these three figures as their means of expression and the index of their social status. These three figures, however, may also be seen as cultural personifications of the hybrid, in-between, ambiguous states in which the majority of citizens of both socialist Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslav post-socialist societies could easily recognize their own position. The modernization and de-agrarization of Yugoslavia and the introduction of modern technologies affected not only the peasants moving to the towns, but virtually everyone. These changes came hand in hand with cultural and other influences from the West, to which Yugoslav socialist society was more open than the rest of the Eastern Bloc. In addition, late socialism, as Alexei Yurchak (2006) argues, was characterized by a large gap between form and content, which opened a space for very different inscriptions of meanings that did not necessarily imply absolute distancing/critique or identification/support. And when socialism ended and Yugoslavia disintegrated in the early 1990s, most of the citizens of the new states faced a reality in which, just like Srećko Šojić, they had to invent survival strategies and find their way in the chaotic, muddy world of local politics and economy.

When Rokeri started their career in the 1970s, "southern dialects" were absent from the public sphere.[14] The TV series *Ljubav na seoski način* (*Love in the Country Style*, Lazić 1970), Dragoslav Mihailović's novel *Petrijin venac* (*Petria's Wreath*, Mihailović 1975) and Srđan Karanović's film based on that novel (Karanović 1980) introduced "the Morava dialect," in which the Rokeri also sang, to popular culture and literature, but these filmic and literary works did not challenge the established language ideology and did not depart from the familiar and expected representations of village life and its

---

13 The cinematic biography of Srećko Šojić makes him unique character on the popular culture scene in Serbia: he figures importantly in several TV series and films over a period of more than 30 years, from the movie *Laf u srcu* (*A Great Guy at Heart*) (Pavić 1981), to popular series of films *Tesna koža* (*A Tight Spot*) (Pavić 1982–1992), to the recent TV series *Bela lađa* (*The White Ship*) (Pavić 2006–2012).

14 In an interview, Boris Bizetić states that "in the 1970s, there was a dispute in the city [of Belgrade] about whether the language of the Rokeri's songs really existed or not" (Grujić 2000).

protagonists. Rokeri s Moravu not only brought this dialect to popular music and made it "visible" in the public sphere, they also introduced it to audiences all over socialist Yugoslavia (see Bizetić n.d. b).

Rokeri chose to perform in a clearly ideologically positioned dialect that triggered a predictable set of culturally rooted associations and values (ruralness, backwardness, premodernity, etc.). Establishing a direct link between such a distinctive way of speaking on the one hand and the modernization, hybridization and globalization of everyone's lifeworlds in the second part of the 20th century on the other further contributes to the parodic and grotesque character of Rokeri's performances.

Despite the fact that Rokeri's parody was deeply linked to the ideologies, regimes of representation and power relations ingrained in Serbian society, they were essentially a pan-Yugoslav phenomenon. In the biography of this group, there are several facts that suggest that their meaning and importance largely surpassed both the contemporary local Serbian cultural context and the "usual" dialectics between urban centre and rural periphery. On the Yugoslav level, Rokeri s Moravu were selling more copies of their vinyl records than any other band from Serbia, and their concerts were attracting the largest audiences. They received their first "Oscar of Popularity" award in 1982, and also the "Jugoton Golden Bird" award, for their first million LPs sold (Southentik crew 2013).

One important reason for the popularity of Rokeri s Moravu and their presence in the homes of citizens throughout socialist Yugoslavia was their frequent appearances on TV programmes. Their performances had a very significant visual aspect, and that certainly influenced their popularity across Yugoslavia. Although they mainly played with the prevalent stereotypes about Serbian peasants and their experiences with modernization, Rokeri's repertoire also included songs about other Yugoslav nations and nationalities: as noted on a Slovenian blog, Rokeri "were the first and by all means the most important band which had ever mentioned Šentilj in a song" (Pigac 2011).

Boris Bizetić also stressed that "Rokeri were not a local product, and that it was no coincidence that they lasted so long". He emphasized the pan-Yugoslav dimension of their popularity:

> We were received in Serbia with the same enthusiasm as in Zagreb. There we once had two concerts with an audience of 14,000 in a single day. In Belgrade, we had concerts every day for a week – this shows that I managed to 'resonate' with the soul of ordinary people. But these were not just low-culture people. A lot of intellectuals were happy to hear us, they liked our music. (After Luković 1989: 256)

Although parody is quite easy to detect in the performances and appearance of Rokeri s Moravu, it is far from easy to unambiguously judge what their intentions were and what effects their performances had on their audience. The main interpretations of what they did during their two decades long career can be classified under two basic narratives. The first narrative criticizes and ridicules the "cultural mongrelness" of those who constituted majority of Rokeri's audience: the "peasants" who left their villages for the cities, and those who stayed in the villages but embraced a new eclectic lifestyle; the "gastarbeiters" who left for Western Europe in order to find work. In the second narrative, music production of Rokeri's music is interpreted as an unwelcome deviation from the ideal image of rural life and as an insult to the traditional culture which lies at the core of the Serbian national soul. According to Petar Luković, Boris Bizetić has been accused by many of "vilifying the Serbian peasant, the Serbian village and the Serbian soul" and of "consciously caricaturing 'brave' and 'fearless' people" (Luković 1989: 253). At the same time, Rokeri were frequently accused of Serbian nationalism because they wore parts of the Serbian national costume, despite the fact that they combined them with pants patterned with the American flag, giant sunglasses and baby's dummies.

A person who has crossed, but never completely and definitely, the physical and ideological line between village and city, between the premodern and the modern, is simultaneously the main subject and the target audience of Rokeri's performances. Bizetić himself said that

> ...his business strategy was based on an old theory of Djordje Marjanović's, who was saying that kids leave villages and go to towns for high school, then they go to the big city for college. That gives you ten years to tie them to your music. (In Grujić 2000)

According to this interpretation, the main consumer of Rokeri's parody is simultaneously the object of that parody. The band itself was subject to this same ambivalent attitude: everyone agreed that there was a critical and parodic distance in their performances, but despite that, Rokeri were frequently equated with the values they parodied: they were considered musical "trash" and an expression of bad taste.

Parody as a discursive and performative tool opens up a space for various "inscriptions" of values and different relationships between the authors, the objects of parody and the audience. As Nikolas Coupland says, stylization results in utterances whereby "we speak 'as if this is me' or 'as if I owned this voice' or 'as if I endorsed what this voice says,'"

but "the reassessment of whether this utterance is 'really mine' rather than 'me playing' or 'me subverting' can often be left deliberately unclear" (Coupland 2001: 349). For this reason, critics and interpreters of Rokeri's music have seen them in different, often conflicting ways: for some, they were "trash" and "collective psychoanalytical therapy where fresh city dwellers are getting rid of their rural background, led by their guru Boris Bizetić" (Nebojša Pajkić), while others compared them with the Sex Pistols (Vlatko Fras) and considered their music punk (Željko Bebek), or thought that they were the leaders of a rural hippy movement (Zlatko Šćepanović) (see Grujić 2000; Pančić 2005; Šćepanović 2009).

The traditional Serbian *šajkača* hat, the folk costume and direct references to traditional culture in combination with elements of global pop culture, and also the dialect which they used, provided a basis for "accusations" of "ridiculing Serbian language and tradition" (Grujić 2000; see also Pančić 2005). Rokeri s Moravu were labelled by many as a "public embarrassment and the instrument of someone's anti-Serbian politics" (Luković 1989: 256).[15] With their songs, appearance and performances, Rokeri s Moravu deconstructed the idealized image of the Serbian village and opposed the "kitschy idealization of the village as such, of *zavičaj* (birthplace)[16] understood in the most narrow sense, of everything domestic and familiar, but abandoned due to cruel destiny and constantly dreamed of" (Pančić 2005). Such idealization was a constant in the academic endeavours of dialectology, ethnography, and folkloristics (Plas 2007), but also in the most widespread form of popular culture, namely newly-composed folk music. The idealized image of the Serbian village was quite disconnected from the hybrid forms of actual village life. Because of this, the parodic, somewhat grotesque image of Serbian peasants offered by Rokeri was more "real" than the "recycled clichés produced by both high Academic National Culture on the one hand and newly-composed folk music on the other" (Pančić 2005). This "realness" of parody further complicates the complex principles of identification and distance, critique and sympathy that characterize any parodic discourse. They also show that none of prevalent

---

15 Writing about the "atrophying" of folk literature in Montenegro, Novak Kilibarda (2012: 441; first published in 1985) maintains that Rokeri s Moravu are a synthesis of "modern day ridiculing of rural life" and that "the rock and roll spirit has infiltrated into all realms of Montenegrin villages. It efficiently expels not only traditional folk songs, but also all other spiritual norms that shaped our rural culture. Rokeri s Moravu are a synthesis of the process that is taking place in Montenegrin villages more than in any other part of Yugoslavia. Rokeri s Moravu are not the cause of that process, but its consequence."

16 For discourses on *zavičaj* in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav popular music, see Baker 2015.

narratives about Rokeri s Moravu can thoroughly explain the meaning of their music – it can be reduced neither to bad taste (and its critique) nor to ridiculing folk traditions and the Serbian national soul that inhabits the traditional Serbian village.

ROKERI'S PARODY AND THE YUGOSLAV SOCIALIST CONDITION

The characters of the Serbian peasants that the four entertainers played in their performances cannot be reduced to one-dimensional, grotesque characters who are exclusively subjects of laughter and ridicule. They are also witty, and essentially modern in their hybridity: Rokeri included globally known references in their performances, and expressed a style of humour that exceeds the affinities of "aspiring semi-urbanites". Their style and look, which combines the recognizable traditional clothes and moustache of the Serbian peasant with Beatles-style fur jackets and leather bags, but also transgender clothing, point to a complex relationship between the performers and characters they play, and warn that the identification between them is never absolute and unambiguous.

In my view, this is the place to look for an explanation for their popularity which greatly surpasses the local Serbian context and encompasses the whole of former Yugoslavia (and the Yugoslav diaspora of the time), and for the fact that people far away from the context of specifically Serbian linguistic and cultural stratifications very much enjoyed their performances. Watching Rokeri on stage and listening to their parody, they could simultaneously distance from and identify with what they saw and heard. They could enjoy ridiculing what was being subjected to parody, but also recognize their own world and condition in that subject.

Researchers of parody and related discursive means point to ambiguity, which lies at the core of their functioning, and the multiple possibilities for establishing a relationship between the author, the subject of the parody and its audience. Humour, which is an important ingredient of Rokeri's performances, alleviates critiques (see Fernandez and Taylor Huber 2001; Molé 2013; Oushakine 2011) of "bad taste" and "civilizational mongrelness", simultaneously enabling a certain kind of intimacy (see Klumbytė 2011; Mbembe 1992; Wedeen 1999) between the critic and the object of critique. The dynamic, unstable and ambiguous relationship between the

author of a parody and the object of that parody opens up a wide space for negotiation of additional and alternative meanings and cultural references.

In the hybrid and parodic performances by Rokeri s Moravu, the citizens of socialist Yugoslavia recognized their own reality and their position within that reality. Rokeri's music and performances offered citizens both critical, humorous distance, and intimacy and sympathy, which was a positioning quite characteristic of citizens of late socialist societies (Yurchak 2006; Boyer and Yurchak 2010). This explains their nationwide popularity and long-term success: if Rokeri had been only about ridiculing the localized Serbian "rural mentality", their popularity would have been exhausted in a much shorter time. The unusual vitality of the TV and film character Srećko Šojić can be explained in the same light: in this character, many recognized their own "transitional" reality and position. Therefore, Šojić's popularity outside the borders of post-Yugoslav Serbia comes as no surprise.

Rokeri s Moravu's performances were part of a broader tendency in Yugoslav popular culture at the time to use the stylization of dialects to parodically expose and interpret the social, political and cultural realities of Yugoslav socialism. They provided the citizens of socialist Yugoslavia with the possibility to distance themselves from their reality and to laugh at it through parody, while simultaneously enjoying the hybridity and eclecticism of that reality. The specific dialect in which Rokeri performed their songs played important role in this process of simultaneous identification and distancing. It became an index of grotesque and hybrid reality; the fact that this dialect was highly distinctive and quite different from the standard language enabled simultaneous detachment (and parodic distance) and familiarity and intimacy. This use of dialect as a means to express a double, ambiguous positioning and to grasp the ambiguities and hybridity of the modern age is somewhat unexpected, given its fixed position in the prevalent language ideology in Serbia, where it is linked to ruralness, backwardness and premodernity. Thanks to Rokeri s Moravu, the old-Štokavian dialects spoken in south-eastern Serbia have become a tool for expressing essentially postmodern views and perceptions and to effectively capture the postmodern condition in a framework that significantly exceeds the geographical area where these dialects are spoken.

REFERENCES

BAKER, CATHERINE 2015 'Spaces of the Past: Emotional Discourses of 'Zavičaj' (Birthplace) in Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Popular Music.' *Southeastern Europe* 39: 165–191.

BIZETIĆ, BORIS n.d. a Boris Bizetić website. Internet source: <http://borisbizetic.com>, 4.12.2015.

n.d. b Boris Bizetić website. Internet source: <http://borisbizetic.com/?page=biografija>, 5.12.2015.

BOYER, DOMINIC AND ALEXEI YURCHAK 2010 'American Stiob: Or, What Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody Reveal about Contemporary Political Culture in the West.' *Cultural Anthropology* 25(2): 179–221.

CAVANAUGH, JILLIAN 2012 *Living Memory: The Social Aesthetics of Language in a Northern Italian Town*. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

COUPLAND, NIKOLAS 2001 'Dialect Stylization in Radio Talk.' *Language in Society* 30: 345–375.

ČOLOVIĆ, IVAN 2000 *Divlja književnost*. [*Wild Literature.*] Second edition. Belgrade: XX vek.

DRAGIĆEVIĆ-ŠEŠIĆ, MILENA 1985 'Pokušaj definisanja dominantnih i produktivnih modela kulturnog života u Jugoslaviji.' ['An Attempt to Define Dominant and Productive Models of Cultural Life in Yugoslavia.'] *Potkulture 1*. Novi Beograd: Istraživačko-izdavački centar SSO Srbije. Pp. 13–21.

1994 *Neofolk kultura: Publika i njene zvezde*. [*Neofolk Culture: The Audience and its Stars.*] Sremski Karlovci, Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića.

FERNANDEZ, JAMES AND MARY TAYLOR HUBER 2001 'The Anthropology of Irony.' In: *Irony in Action: Anthropology, Practice and the Moral Imagination*. James Fernandez and Mary Taylor Huber, eds. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1–37.

GRUJIĆ, JELENA 2000 'Znam šta leti, a šta puzi.' ['I Know What Flies, and What Crawls. An Interview with Boris Bizetić.'] *Vreme* 472, 22. 1. 2000.

HALPERN, JOEL 1967 *A Serbian Village: Social and Cultural Change in a Yugoslav Community*. Revised edition. New York, Evanston, London: Harper Colophon Press.

HOFMAN, ANA 2013 'Ko se boji šunda još? Muzička cenzura u Jugoslaviji.' ['Who is afraid of Šund: Music Censorship in Yugoslavia.'] In: *Socijalizam na klupi: Jugoslavensko društvo očima nove postjugoslavenske humanistike*. Lada Duraković and Andrea Matošević, eds. Pula, Zagreb: Srednja Europa , CKPIS, Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli, Sa(n)jam knjige u Istri. Pp. 281–316.

KARANOVIĆ, SRĐAN (DIR.) 1980 *Petrijin venac.* [*Petrija's wreath.*] Yugoslavia.

KILIBARDA, NOVAK 2012 'Stanje narodne i narodske književnosti u Crnoj Gori danas.' ['State of the Folk and Folklorized Literature in Montenegro Today.'] *Lingua Montenegrina* 5/1(9): 437–467.

KLUMBYTĖ, NERINGA 2011 'Political Intimacy: Power, Laughter and Coexistence in Late Soviet Lithuania.' *East European Politics and Societies* 25(4): 658–677.

KOS, KORALJKA 1972 'New Dimensions in Folk Music: A Contribution to the Study of Musical Tastes in Contemporary Yugoslav Society.' *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 3(1): 61–73.

LAZIĆ, DRAGOSLAV (DIR.) 1970 *Ljubav na seoski način*. [*Love in the Country Style.*] Yugoslavia.

LUKOVIĆ, PETAR 1989 *Bolja prošlost: Prizori iz muzičkog života Jugoslavije 1940–1989*. [*A Better Past: Scenes from Music Life of Yugoslavia 1940–1991.*] Beograd: Mladost.

MBEMBE, ACHILLE 1992 'Provisional Notes on the Postcolony.' *Africa* 62(1): 3–37.

MIHAILOVIĆ, DRAGOSLAV 1975 (1981) *Petrijin venac*. [*Petrija's Wreath.*] Forth edition. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga.

MOLÉ, NOELLE J. 2013 'Trusted Puppets, Tarnished Politicians: Humor and Cynicism in Berlusconi's Italy.' *American Ethnologist* 40(2): 288–299.

MURŠIČ, RAJKO 2000 *Trate vaše in naše mladosti: Zgodba o mladinskem rock klubu*. [*Trate: The Story of the Rock and Youth Club.*] Ceršak: Subkulturni azil.

OKUKA, MILOŠ 2008 *Srpski dijalekti*. [*Serbian dialects.*] Zagreb: SKD Prosvjeta.

OUSHAKINE, SERGUEI 2011 'Introduction: Jokes of Repression.' *East European Politics and Societies* 25(4): 655–657.

PANČIĆ, TEOFIL 2005 'Poetika gedžovanluka.' ['The Poetics of *gedžovalnuk*.'] *Vreme* 762, 11. 8. 2005.

PAVIĆ, SINIŠA (SCRIPT AUTHOR) 1981 *Laf u srcu*. [*A Great Guy at Heart.*] Yugoslavia.

1982–1992 *Tesna koža*. [*Tight Skin.*] Yugoslavia.

2006–2012 *Bela lađa*. [*White Boat.*] Serbia.

PETROVIĆ, TANJA 2015 *Srbija i njen jug: "Južnjački dijalekti" između jezika, kulture i politike*. [*Serbia and its South: "Southern Dialects" Between Language, Culture and Politics.*] Beograd: Fabrika knjiga.

PIGAC, MARKO 2011 'Rokeri s Moravu – Moj fantek in Šentilj.' ['Rokeri s Moravu – My Boy and Šentilj.'] Internet source: <http://www.pigac.si/2011/12/07/rokeri-s-moravu/>, 5.12.2015).

PLAS, PIETER 2007 'Voicing Folk for the Academy: Interdiscursivity and Collective Identity in a North Dalmatian Ethnography, 1899–1900.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 2244–2272.

PRICA, INES 1988 'Mitsko poimanje naroda u kritici novokomponovane narodne muzike.' ['Mythical Understanding of Folk in the Critique of Newly Composed Folk Music.'] *Kultura: Časopis za teoriju i sociologiju kulture i kulturnu politiku*. Pp. 80–93.

RASMUSSEN, LJERKA 2002 *Newly Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia*. New York, London: Routledge.

RIGHTMAN-AUGUŠTIN, DUNJA 1984 *Struktura tradicijskog mišljenja*. [*The Structure of Traditional Thinking.*] Zagreb: Školska knjiga.

SOUTHENTIK CREW 2013 'Southentik Crew: Najgore iz vlasotinačku kanalizaciju.' ['The Worst from the Vlasotince Sewage.'] Terapija.net, music portal. Internet source: <http://www.terapija.net/mjuzik.asp?ID=17371>, 5. 12. 2015.

ŠĆEPANOVIĆ, ZLATKO 2009 'Rokeri s Moravu – srbijanska deca cveća i kič folk muzika.' ['Rokeri s Moravu – a Serbian Children of Flowers and kitsch folk music.'] Internet source: <http://www.bastabalkana.com/2009/06/rokeri-s-moravu-srbijanska-deca-cveca/>, 5. 12. 2015.

WEDEEN, LISA 1999 *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

YURCHAK, ALEXEI 2006 *Everything was Forever, until It was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.