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„Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло“ и преработката на Гюка Гергулов за банатските българи

Резюме: В статията се разглежда стихотворението „Я кажи ми“ („Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло“) на Ран Босилек и преработката, която прави за банатските българи поетът от Стар Бешенов Гюка Гергулов. Той променя частично текста и добавя към него още четири стиха. Заложена е хипотезата, че преработката на Гюка Гергулов съдържа важни за банатските българи внушения, свързани с тяхното историческо минало. За поета от Стар Бешенов общото носталгично звучене на творбата на Ран Босилек не е достатъчно, той търси начини да го усилва, да допише части, които да подчертаят мъката от раздялата с родното място. В контекста на това, че банатските българи се оформят като общност, след като напускат българските земи в края на XVII и началото на XVIII век, стихотворението „Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло“ трябва да изпълни друга функция, като ги отведе по обратния път към изгубената родина. За изтерзания от преселения и мъки банатски българин, живеещ с разказите на предците си за трудностите и изпитанията, е задължително в такъв тип творба като „Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло“ да присъстват и родното място, и родната къща, да присъства родът като опорна точка – спасен от миналото и продължен напред във времето чрез оживяването в литературата.

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„Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло“ and Gyuka Gergulov's Reworking of the Song for the Banat Bulgarians¹

Abstract: The article discusses the poem *Ya kazhi mi* (hereafter *Ya kazhi mi, oblache le byalo*) by Ran Bosilek and its reworking for the Banat Bulgarians by the poet Gyuka Gergulov from the village of Star Beshenov. The poet partially changed the text and added four verses. The hypothesis is that his reworking contains important messages related to the historical past of the Banat Bulgarians. For Gyuka Gergulov, the overall nostalgic mood of Ran Bosilek's work was not enough; he looked for ways to amplify it, to emphasise the grief of separation from the homeland. In the context of the need for Banat Bulgarians to shape themselves as a community with its own identity after leaving the Bulgarian lands in the late 17th and early 18th century, the poem *Ya kazhi mi, oblache le byalo* had to fulfil another important function, taking them back to their lost homeland.

Keywords: Ran Bosilek, Gyuka Gergulov, Banat Bulgarians, songwriting, Banat Bulgarian poetry, Banat Bulgarian literature

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The literature of the Banat Bulgarians originated on the basis of their dialect, the Banat speech, in the middle of the 19th century. The first printed work is considered to be "Mananchija kathekismus za katholicsanske paulichane", published in 1851 by Imre Berecz (Berecz 1851). Starting out as strictly religious, the literature of the Banat Bulgarians transcended these boundaries and broadened its scope over the years of its development. To this day, representatives of the community still create, in dialect², works of various genres - poems, stories, travelogues, etc. One of the most respected contemporary writers among them is Gyuka Gergulov, born in 1941 in the village of Star Beshenov, Romania. In addition to being a writer, he is a translator and editor, a prominent figure in his community and a champion of the study of the mother tongue and the preservation of ancestral memory.

The subject of this article is the poem *Ubadi mi, oblače*, published in Gjuka Gergulov's book *Mojte gudini* (Gergulov 2018), which collects the bulk of his poetic work. In *Ubadi mi, oblače*, a part of Ran Bosilek's famous work *Ya kazhi mi, oblache le byalo*³ is recognizable (Gergulov 2018: 175), yet nowhere is it indicated that its author is not Gyuka Gergulov. The poem is placed in the *Pesmite na B.S.P* section, which suggests that texts of different authorship would fall there. "B.S.P" (short for "Bišnovski svirci i pejače") is a musical group from Star Besenov, Romania, founded by Gyuka Gergulov himself, which still exists today. The ensemble has a rich repertoire and is well known in the community of Banat Bulgarians in Romania.

Important is the transformation that Ran Bosilek's work *Ya kazhi mi, oblache le byalo* undergoes to become a song of the Banat Bulgarians, because a reading reveals that the original poem has not only been adapted to the peculiarities of the Banat literary variant of the Bulgarian language, but has also been partially changed in meaning and supplemented with four new verses. In order to illustrate my following reflections, I juxtapose first the poem by Ran Bosilek in Bulgarian and then the reworking by G. Gergulov.

Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло	Ubadi mi, oblače
Я кажи ми, облаче ле бяло, отде идеш, де си ми летяло? Не видя ли таткови ми двори и не чу ли майка да говори: „Що ли прави мойто чедо мило, С чужди хора чужди хляб делило?“ Ти кажи ѝ, облаче ле бяло, че жив и здрав си ме видяло. И носи ѝ от мен много здраве.	Ubadi mi, oblače ti belu, Di si blo, pu di si se vartelu, Blo lo si u mojtu rodnu mestu, Za delečni milni znaš li neštu? Cela li-j još rodnata mi kašta, Mámá stára ni li pita tažna: „Bož, kako-j sas mojtu čadu milu Megju lucčí di li se-j pudbilu“? Ubadi ji, oblače ti belu, Žuv i zdráv ti méne si videlu, I me mači karvavata rána,

² The Banat Bulgarians called their language "Palken", because in the past, before they converted to Catholicism, part of them were Paulicians. The terminology is not uniform in scientific circles, although attempts have been made in this direction. The language in which the Banat Bulgarians created literature is described as "Banat-Bulgarian literary language", "created on the basis of the dialect (i.e. Banat speech - my note) regional written Banat literary variant of the literary Bulgarian language", etc. See Abadzchieva 2023.

³ Since this poem is present in various versions on the Internet, I should specify that, for the purposes of this study, I used the text published in *Poetry for Children and Adolescents. Anthology*, Sofia, 1974 (Anthology 1974).

Много мина, мъничко остава. Наближава в село да се върна, да се върна – майка да прегърна.	Ci sám sam biz дума biz máma. Zanesi-j ud méne mlogu zdrávi, Da tarpí, još máлку da burávi, Skoru pá u sélu za se varna, Za se varna májéca da pregarna.
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In its original form, Ran Bosilek's poem consists of six stanzas of two verses each, i.e., twelve verses in total, while Gyuka Gergulov's reworking structures the text in four stanzas of four verses each, i.e., sixteen verses in total. Those added in the version for the Banat Bulgarians can be extracted. These are the last verse of the first stanza (*Za delečni milni znaš li neštu?*), the first verse of the second stanza (*Cela li-j još rodnata mi kašta*) and the last two verses of the third stanza (*I me mači karvavata rána, / Ci sam biz дума biz máma*). I set out to examine what Gergulov's added section expresses, how it relates to the overall message of the work, which focuses on nostalgia for the lost homeland, and whether there are significant changes to the main corpus of verses (beyond the additions) in the version about the Banat Bulgarians. It is also necessary to compare the topoi used to refer to the homeland in the original text and in the reworking.

The hypothesis that I am positing in this comparison is that Gyuka Gergulov's reworking contains important for the Banat Bulgarians suggestions related to their historical past. For the people of this community, who left the Bulgarian lands more than 300 years ago seeking salvation after the Chiprovo Uprising of 1688⁴, the preservation of the memory of their Bulgarian roots is a fundamental existential goal on which their self-discovery and their self-assertion in the foreign cultural and linguistic environment of Banat depend. This process, which began in the past, continues to this day, and Gyuka Gergulov's reworking can be a small touch in support of this claim.

Dad's Courtyard

In Ran Bosilek's poem, the space of the birthplace is delineated by dad's courtyard and the image of the mother, which comes to life through the dialogue between her and the lyrical hero, mediated by the little white cloud. The celestial messenger transcends territorial limitations and from the height of its existence connects the real world of the hero and the desired world to which he longs to return - that of his birthplace. Ran Bosilek's poem begins with four questions to the cloud, whereas in Gergulov's reworking there are two more:

отде идеш, де си ми летяло? /
Не видя ли таткови ми двори /
...../
...../
и не чу ли майка да говори:

Di si blo, pu di si se vartelu,
Blo lo si u mojtú rodnu mestu,
Za delečni milni znaš li neštu?
Cela li-j još rodnata mi kašta,
Mámá stára ni li pita tažna:

One can clearly see which verses have been added:

⁴ For more on the migration of Bulgarian Catholics after the Chiprovo Uprising of 1688 see Miletic 1900, Miletic 1987: 182-483, Georgiev 2010, Spisarevska 2018: 193-233.

Za delečni milni znaš li neštu? (Знаеш ли нещо за далечните ми обични хора?⁵);
Cela li-j još rodnata mi kašta (Цяла ли е още родната ми къща?).

It is noteworthy that *my dad's courtyard* becomes *mojtu rodnu mesta* (my birthplace) in the reworking. Due to the accumulation of more questions, in Gergulov's text the lyrical hero's anxiety about his home takes on greater dimensions and is amplified. The topos of dad's courtyard from the original is transformed into *birthplace*, and then it is further heightened by the figure of speech *birthhouse*, which appears in the added part. In this way, the work moves out of the personal space of "dad's" and expands to the birthplace, the centre of which is the hero's house. Here is the change in tabular form:

Original text	Reworking
dad's courtyard	birthplace birthhouse

The thought and care for the future of the community of the Banat Bulgarians is, in my opinion, the reason why the poet Gyuka Gergulov makes this change in the text. It is true that dad's courtyard is directly associated with the birthplace and accommodates the whole idea of the homeland, but for the displaced and tormented Banat Bulgarians, living with their ancestors' stories of hardships and trials, it is imperative that the homeland and the birthhouse are both present in a work of *Ya kazhi mi, oblache le byalo*'s type, that the family is present as an anchor point - rescued from the past and carried forward in time by coming alive in literature.

Sv. Karadzova, who explores the modalities of the literary in the culture of the Banat Bulgarians, writes that "in the community of the Banat Bulgarians, writing was an act that took place not so much for the sake of the process of writing and expressing insights as for the sake of the needs of the community" (Karadzova 2023:113). This is the explanation for why the family (community) had to find a place among the poetic images in Gyuka Gergulov's reworking, and this was achieved through the placement of the *birthhouse* in the space of the *birthplace*.

The Mother

If dad's courtyard in Ran Bosilek's poem is the static space with which the lyrical hero makes a connection through the little white cloud's vision ("Didn't you see my dad's courtyard"), the mother is the dynamic image through which the place comes alive with words and messages ("And didn't you hear my mother speak"). Therefore, I assume that the *distant dear ones* who appear in the added last verse of the first stanza in Gergulov ("Za delečni milni znaš li neštu?"), should be examined along with her. The transformation of paternal space that I discussed above also occurs with the image of the mother. To her the relatives are added - these are precisely the *distant dear ones*, i.e., the whole community again. The personal is for the second time extended to the scope of the birthplace:

Original text	Reworking
mother	distant dear ones mamma

⁵ I present the quotations in a free translation into modern Bulgarian literary language with Cyrillic alphabet.

I will also briefly discuss the adjective *distant* in the above phrase. In the original text of Ran Bosilek the distance between the lyrical hero and his dad's courtyard is only felt but not specifically mentioned. In Gergulov's reworking, we already have a named distance, which for the Banat Bulgarians could also be the native Bulgarian land from which they separated centuries ago. Sorrow for the homeland must be distant, because only in this way does it express the hardships and trials of the past. To this must be added that the image of the mother is more heightened in comparison to its presence in the original poem, with two more verses added in the third stanza of the reworking to delineate it:

I me mači karvavata rána,
Ci sám sam biz дума biz máma.

(И ме мъчи кървавата рана,
че съм сам без дома, без мама.)

For the poet Gyuka Gergulov, the overall nostalgic mood of Ran Bosilek's work is not enough; he is looking for ways to amplify it, to add parts that emphasize the grief for his birthplace. This is achieved not only through lexical repetitions and accumulations, not only through transformations from the personal to the communal, as we have seen above, but also through metaphors and definitions which should express the suffering experienced. The phrase *karvavata rána* (the bloody wound), which is added in Gergulov's reworking to denote the pain of the Banat Bulgarians from their continuing journey between reality and history today, points to this. The epithet *sad* sounds similarly in relation to the mother in the second verse of the second stanza: "Mámá stára ni li pita tažna" (the original text is "didn't you hear my mother speak").

The bloody wound that tortures the hero is not only the life away from his birthplace - it is the whole burden of the time spent in wandering, in an attempt to preserve the connection with the original homeland which the Banat Bulgarians left more than three centuries ago. Thus, the return to the village in the original poem and in the reworking takes on different dimensions. In the first case, only the way back home is overcome. In the second, the road is much longer, because it leads not only to the birthplace in reality, but also to the first homeland, lost in the past for the Banat Bulgarians.

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