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ON A TYPE OF IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTION IN SERBO-CROATIAN

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The language of the Serbian writer Momčilo Nastasijević (1894-1938), who had a great impact on modern Serbian poetry, was described and defined by linguists even while he was alive. Undoubtedly the most important of these linguistic definitions involved the statement that Nastasijević's language was marked by a clear disruption of the Serbo-Croatian literary norm.[1] Also noted was the trend towards an intensive restoration of folklore narrative elements in his prose. In this article, a set of impersonal structures in his writings will be analyzed.

It is true that the normative grammar of Serbo-Croatian presents constructions like *govori se, priča se, služi se* as quite usual, and defines them as impersonal constructions which "are used when the agent of an action is not known, or is not wanted to be known, in a word: when the name of the agent is not given."[2] From that point of view, their occurrence is nothing unusual. Nevertheless, an obvious concentration of this kind of construction in a specific context is unusual, as in the narrative text of Nastasijević's *Hronika moje varoši*[3]:

> U vreme kad *se naredi* preseljenje (14). — Zna Bog, ako ljudi neće, na dobro *se ushtelo* (14). — I *uvide se*, ne pomaže lupati razlogom o tvrde glave (15). — *Oseti se* to (20). — I niti *se čulo*, niti *pitalo* za njih (33). — Na poslednjeg Vampira, sina, i *ne pomisli se* (34). — I kažu, *vekalo* tu noć odonud iz požara (22). — Dušu bih dao, *nije* ga ozgo *pogodilo* (23). — I *pevalo je* kad mi sestricu andelskog lika poneše da ukopaju (18), and so on.

Unusual, too, is the appearance of infinitives in syntactic constructions like:

> A odatle tek, priraslo li samo srce, *očupati se* ljuta je tuga (16). — Zarad blagog pomena *prećutati* je šta se tada počini (48).

All this suggests both a linguistic intensification of the impersonal meaning, and a tendency on the part of the writer to mark the vehicle of his message with a clear folkloric connotation.[4]

The same may be said for the same writer's frequent use of impersonal sentences whose elements are a noun functioning as an adverbial predicate, and the subject of the sentence in the accusative. This construction appears in two sub-types:

> (1) as a sentence-idiom, with the nouns *stid, želja, briga, strah:*
> *Stid me* (TV 105)[5]. — Kad *me divlja koja želja* (TV 105). — Ako su, *šta me briga* (TV 115),

where the lexical units, by their very limitation in number, create the impression of normalcy in the writer's language, as in everyday language; and

> (2) as a sentence-free idiom, i.e., not restricted to connotations with specific nouns:
> Možda takav budem kad *me glad* (TV 105). — Ali, pusto, *jeza me* (TV 147). — A ja ne mogu, *groza me* (TV 169). — Kao pilad zaokupe me, da *me žalost* poginuće nedužni (TV 162). — A *radost me* što je glomazan (TV 145). —

Sumnja me sve veća, *jeza* (HMV 24). — *Náda me* čika Janka ću naći (TV 88). — Čisto *te tuga* pucati (TV 113). — *Strepnja me* da li sam kadar obaviti (TV 35). — *Predosećanje me*, srešću ga (TV 92). — U srcu *čežnja me* za njim (TV 88). — *Bunilo me neko* i *muka* (TV 114),

where the relative lexical freedom restores the possibility of unlimited usage to the given constructions, 'throwing' them out of the set of petrified language vehicles, but imposing an impression of unususualness on the neoštokavian language sense (which, as is well known, is the basis of standard Serbo-Croatian). Naturally these nouns' lexical freedom does not mean that they are to be treated as no longer having the ability to behave like verbals within adverbial predicates. It is quite impossible to use, in this function, a noun marked with the semantic feature [REAL], i.e., things, objects, concrete nouns.

The whole set indicates dominance of the two elements: the euphemism, often defined as the figure expressing "superstitious fear . . . born of the phenomenon of inhibition,"[6] and folklore forms which (by definition) are found in the linguistic expression of more than one literature[7] and which, surely, have a strong connection with the euphemism.

Generalizing, it may be said that in these phenomena, as in others, one may use the language of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić—the basis of the modern standard language—as a starting point. With statements, for example, that "in Vuk's style we find, in great number, folk elements, folk reminiscences, and folk idioms, or folkloric ways of formulating them," and that "a very important ethnographic richness lives in Vuk's subconsciousness,"[8] linguists quote the whole set of categories of this kind, including syntactic constructions which have become stabilized forms, which have indeed become idioms. As a whole, Vuk's language *is* a language-type, and, as is apparent, it reaches far into succeeding literary epochs and their linguistic attitudes.

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REFERENCES

1. See *Naš jezik*, n.s. 16. 1-2 (1967) 49-62.
2. M. Stevanović, *Savremeni srpskohrvatski jezik II* (Belgrade 1969) 548; cf. also 84-91.
3. M. Nastasijević, *Hronika moje varoši* (Belgrade, 1938), abbreviated as *HMV*.
4. Regardless of dialect, since in this context all that is relevant is that this is a folklore category, M. Šimundić states, "If the subject is not known or if the subject is only suspected, [in this dialect] the impersonal construction such as *ubilo ga u putu; poplašilo ga je noći kasno* . . . is used," ("Sintaksa govora Imotske krajine i Bekije," *Zbornik za filologiju i lingvistiku* 13.1 (1970) 217, 224.
5. M. Nastasijević, *Tamni vilajet* (Belgrade, 1938); abbreviated as *TV*.
6. H. Morier, *Dictionnaire de poétique et de rhétorique* (Paris, 1961) 167-68.
7. R. Jakobson, "O ruskim bajkama," *Lingvistika i poetika* (Belgrade, 1966) 32-53.
8. M. Pavlović, "Stil Vuka Karadžića," *Južnoslovenski filolog* 26.1-2 (1963/64) 42.

POVZETEK

O TIPU NEOSEBNE KONSTRUKCIJE V SRBOHRVAŠČINI

Avtor obravnava slovnične oblike, ki izražajo pomen 'zadržana omenitev dejanja ali stanja'. To sooblike tipa čulo se, prećutati je, želja mi; *analizira jih v jeziku srpskega pisatelja Momčila Nastasijevića (1894-1938).*