

# “UN BEL MORETTO”

## LINGUISTIC INTERWEAVINGS IN SONGS FROM THE PRIMORSKA REGION

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*“Lan sem biu u Gorici” (Last Year I was in Gorizia) is the most frequently transcribed bilingual song in which Slovenian and Italian dialect texts are interwoven. Unlike variants from Goriška Brda and Venetian Slovenia, where the song has largely been forgotten, the variants in Istria are experiencing a revival and are referred to as typical Istrian songs. The article traces the meandering transitions between different linguistic variants and local appropriations of this song.*  
Keywords: bilingual songs, Goriška Brda (Gorizia Hills), Venetian Slovenia, Istria, musicians, widespread general melodies

*»Lan sem biu u Gorici« je najpogosteje zapisana dvojezična pesem, v kateri se prepletata slovensko in italijansko narečno besedilo. V nasprotju z variantami iz Goriških brd in Beneške Slovenije, kjer je pesem večinoma pozabljena, doživljajo istrske variante preporod in so označene kot tipično istrske. Članek sledi meandrom prehodov med različnimi jezikovnimi različicami in lokalnimi prilastitvami te pesmi.*

Ključne besede: dvojezične pesmi, Goriška brda, Beneška Slovenija, Istra, godci, splošno razširjene melodije

“Ma, in what language is this?” asked one society member after the meeting of the Slovenian-Venetian Mountain Association (Sln. Planinska družina Benečije), as they sang at my request – some by heart, others with the help of text on their mobile phones – a song that has been transcribed numerous times among the Slovene-speaking inhabitants of what is now Italy, as well as in the region of the Gorizia Hills (Sln. Goriška brda, It. Collio) in what is now Slovenia.<sup>1</sup> The song, most commonly referred to in these places as “Lan sem biu u Gorici” (Last Year I was in Gorizia), was sung in different variants in the Slovenian-Italian border area. It is the only text with non-exclusively Slovenian lyrics published in the latest songbook of the Slovenian-Venetian Mountain Association in Italy, the same association whose members I asked to sing it, assuming they would be familiar with it as it is featured in their songbook. The fact that this song, a love song with erotic connotations, was of all the songs combining dialectal versions of the Slovene and Italian languages transcribed most frequently among the Slovenian-speaking population by folklorists can be taken as evidence that it was popular and widespread among the Slovenian-speaking population along the present-day Slovenian-Italian border.

In addition to the above society member, a participant of the Alpe-Adria summer workshop for multilingual songs,<sup>2</sup> originally from the region of Lombardy in Italy, likewise wondered upon hearing the “Italian” words in the songs – as to the meaning of these “Italian” words;

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<sup>2</sup> Held in Bovec in July 2022.

their meaning, at least, to the Slovenians who sing these somewhat obscene Italian lyrics. In this article, therefore, I question the uses and meaning of singing bilingual or multilingual songs in an area where different-speaking peoples meet. I focus on the regions of Goriška Brda and Venetian Slovenia (Sln. Beneška Slovenija), where the changing demarcation of borders and political regimes have greatly influenced not only people's lives but also cultural production. Ventures in the search for the song's trace also led me to Istria. The history of this area in its entirety, the Primorska region in present-day Slovenia, has been a story of frequent changes in geographical and political contexts over the past centuries. The areas of Goriška Brda and Venetian Slovenia were a historically united region, which after the plebiscite of 1866 fell under different state entities. Today, they are found on different sides of the Slovenian-Italian border. However, despite the political and administrative borders, there were no boundaries for the circulation of cultural commodities. As elsewhere, flows across linguistic and ethnic boundaries do not mean that the borders have disappeared. Thus, I do not consider borders as mere demarcations of sovereignty presented as naturalized and static territorial lines but rather apply the understanding of the borderscape as the set of dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation that allow for "a productive understanding of the processual, de-territorialized, and dispersed nature of borders and their ensuing regimes and ensembles of practices" (Brambilla, 2015: 22; cf. Pisk, Ledinek Lozej, 2023: 136–137).

Within this borderscape, the meaning of language and language switching in folk songs and folk music is examined. I trace the story of "common" artistic practices in different languages as evidence of intercultural communication and as an element of the region's daily and festive life of the different language groups (cf. Ther, 2003). By focusing on these "common" practices, we identify the commonalities of the region's folk and popular musical history, and the cultural flows closely associated with musicians performing in different parts of this area. Tracing the dynamic musical pathways in the region makes for an essential contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of social and cultural life, explaining the incoherent use of language in songs in the region (Feichtinger, Cohen, 2014). As these songs do not occur in their entirety in any of the clearly defined languages, they have not been explored by national folkloristics as they were neither Slovenian nor Italian nor Friulian but had an identity all their own (Marty, 2004: 203). These practices have therefore been insufficiently researched and excluded from authorized folkloric discourses, even though they have significantly shaped the cultural production and social life of the people in this area. Today, this identity is recognized and branded as "regional" and is therefore increasingly desired in the current socioeconomic situation (Pettenati, 2023).

Following Frith's thesis (1987) that content analysis tends to trivialize the musical context and assert simplistic relationships between a lyric and the social or emotional condition it describes and evokes, we will not only focus on the linguistic interweavings in the song but also consider broader contexts and the musical aspects that make these linguistic entanglements possible.

MUSIC WITHOUT A PASSPORT<sup>3</sup>

In recent decades, several articles have been published (e.g., Juvančič, 2005; Kovačič, 2012; Pisk, 2012, 2013; Kozorog, 2014; Šivic, 2016; Klobčar, 2020) acknowledging that the collection and public efforts supporting Slovenian folk songs and music in almost all their performative forms in past centuries was associated with the building of a “national consciousness,” and is used today in cultural and political ceremonies, as well as in tourism advertising celebrating “indigeneity” (Juvančič, 2013). In the environment of the “nationalistically charged parameters of the folk song idea, multilingual songs were once regarded as disturbing linguistic impurities rather than welcoming representatives of national song heritage. Accordingly, they were rarely recorded by earlier ‘folk song’ collectors” (John, 2015: 159). Cultural goods, however, have constantly circulated, sometimes in multiple regimes of value, sometimes simultaneously, and they are not only nationally bound. They continually move between contexts, reorganizing and adopting the values of each context (Taylor, 2015: 103). The national bond is assigned primarily through the language of the song lyrics. The choice of language used in song lyrics became highly important in times of changing political contexts, which were very common in the region under consideration in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The region’s short history reveals the complexity of the decisive historical moments. When Venetian Slovenia became part of Austria in 1797, the autonomous rights that had existed for centuries under the aegis of the Venetians were abolished. Therefore, during the Garibaldian Uprising in Friuli, the population of Venetian Slovenia sided with the Italians. After Austria lost the war with Italy, all of Venetian Slovenia came under Italian rule following the peace treaty, but the Italians decided to hold a plebiscite anyway. At the plebiscite in October 1866, in which only a quarter of the inhabitants were entitled to vote, the result was almost unanimously in favor of annexation to Italy. On the other hand, the nearby Goriška Brda remained firmly within the Austrian Littoral, a special crown land created in 1848 after the abolition of the Kingdom of Illyria. It included the border county of Istria, the princely counties of Gorizia and Gradisca, and the free city of Trieste, where it also had its seat.

Belonging to different states also affected the state’s linguistic domination over the languages of its ethnically diverse inhabitants, which was enforced through compulsory education and the state apparatus. In politically tense times, the use of a particular language, as well as individual phrases and code-switching, signified important ethnic and often social positions (cf. Brusila, 2015: 9). These connotations have also carried over to the realm of public singing of folk songs. When discussing language choices, whether

<sup>3</sup> The allusion to Vruja group and Dario Marušič’s CD titled *Brez pašaporta Bez putovnice Senza passaporto No Passport*, published in 2013, is of course intended not only because of the similar connotations but also because of the inclusion of the song “Ona mi je rekla” (She Told Me) in the Istrian trilingual, Slovenian-Italian-Croatian dialectal version of the song under discussion.

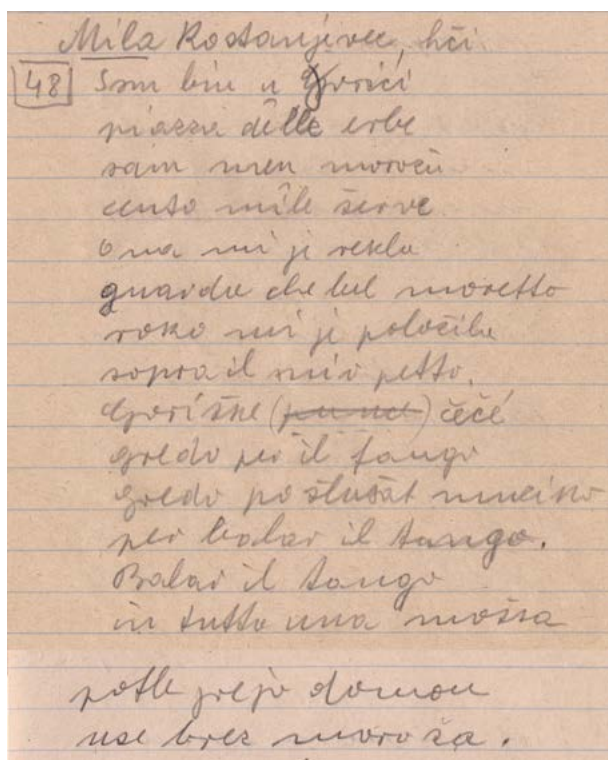
reflexive or non-reflexive, three dimensions of language must be “nuanced” in relation to song lyrics: language as a means of communication, language as an aesthetic element of musical expression, and language as a component of social construction (ibid.: 10). These three dimensions are also considered in analyzing the most frequently written Slovenian-Italian bilingual song.

#### “LAST YEAR I WAS IN GORIZIA”

The song “Lan sem biu u Gorici” (Last year I was in Gorizia) was first published in “Canti popolari Sloveni in Friuli” (Slovenian Folk Songs in Friuli) in 1932 by the Friulian folklorist Renata Steccati, who was researching the folk culture of the Slovenians in the period of the strongest fascism when Slovenian singing was forbidden in public places. It is a short variant transcribed in the municipalities of Tarcento (Sln. Čenta) and Attimis (Sln. Ahten). As the only bilingual song in her book – and the only published Slovenian-Italian bilingual song before World War II – it was described as “an exceedingly popular song interspersed with Italian verses” (Steccati, 1932: 323). She also heard “some other songs with similar interpolations” (ibid.), but she did not publish them, so it is not possible to focus on the common characteristics of the songs within this group or speculate on the quantitative size of this group of bilingual songs. The language of the song is partly in dialectal Italian, a language poorly understood by children in Venetian Slovenia. At that time, and even decades later, they spoke only the Slovenian dialect when playing with their peers and everywhere outside of school (D’Aronco, Matičetov, 1950/51: 326). The first foreign language a child learned in Venetian Slovenia at that time was Friulian: it was the language in which parents and other adults communicated with merchants, clerks, priests, or elsewhere in the market or town. Thus, Venetian-Slovenian children were more familiar with Friulian than with the Italian language (ibid.). This insufficient knowledge of Italian by the majority of the population and the normal process of oral transmission of folk songs, characterized by forgetting and substitutional creative change, is evident in the last stanzas *Anica, gasdica, / Lerin, lerin lera*, in which onomatopoeic syllables are introduced. The fact that lines in Slovenian and Italian dialects are exchanged in the song, yet only the Italian lines are rhymed, suggests the original Italian text.

A few years after World War II, when the demarcation between Italy and at that time Yugoslavia was ratified, two variants were transcribed in Goriška Brda on the Yugoslav side of the border. The variant sung by Mila Kostanjevec,<sup>4</sup> transcribed just a few days after the variant from Biljana sung by Milka Zorzut, is phonetically and dialectally better preserved but remained in the field notes of Radoslav Hrovatin, the ethnomusicologist responsible for the collection of folk songs as part of the field research of the Ethnographic Museum team

<sup>4</sup> GNI ZRC SAZU Archive, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Fieldwork 10, Dr. R. Hrovatin III: 44–45.



It is unclear whether the singer herself first used the standard Slovenian *puncce* (girls) and later changed it to the dialectal word *čecé*, or whether it is a hypercorrect notation of the transcriber (GNI ZRC SAZU Archive; SEM Documentation, Fieldwork 10, 1953, Dr. R. Hrovatin III, inv. nr. 24).

led by its director Boris Orel. This team conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork in various parts of Primorska. The area belonged to the Kingdom of Italy for more than two decades and was inaccessible to Slovenian ethnographers, including Goriška Brda. Among the speculations as to why this well-preserved version was not transcribed, it seems most likely that it was impossible to provide musical notation because the sound recordings on the copper wire were mysteriously lost.

Consequently, the song was not included in the Slovenian folk song register at the ZRC SAZU Institute of Ethnomusicology, unlike the version from the Biljana in the Goriška Brda (GNI R 25.500). The experts of the Institute of Ethnomusicology categorized this variant as a love song, while the composer and collector of the folk song tradition of Slovenians in Italy, Pavle Merku, considered it a military song (Merku, 2004: 238). Here the eternal dilemma of folkloristic classification becomes clear, as the content analysis often does not coincide with the classification according to function and bearers (Klobčar, 2010). In the cataloged variant (GNI R 25.500), some uncertainties in the Italian wording can be detected, probably due to the transcriber's insufficient knowledge of the different linguistic levels of the Italian language. The most challenging aspect of approaching bi- or multilingual songs, and even songs in different dialects, being the inability of folklorists to comprehend all linguistic codes fully, is evident in the fact that the catalog of Slovenian

folk songs, the authoritative canon of Slovenian folk songs, contains the variant of this song with the most obscene lyrics of all the variants performed in public. The non-cataloged variant from Goriška Brda ends with young people going home without their lovers after a tango dance; the cataloged variant implicitly illustrates the girl going home after a sexual encounter. The expert(s) who transcribed the songs were not sufficiently familiar with obscene expressions in non-Slovenian dialects, so they had no qualms about transcribing this text. On many occasions, people are embarrassed or visibly uncomfortable singing such texts in the presence of a researcher, so one may wonder about the context and the experts' role in the transcribing process. The longstanding paradigm in Slovenian folkloristics of non-transcription of bi- or multilingual songs has also led to a failure to describe the contexts of this type of singing. Long after the text-context controversy (e.g., Ben-Amos, 1975 (1972); Paredes, Bauman, 1975 (1972); Pisk, 2008), the conceptual consequences of an exclusive focus on the text without organic connection to the performance context are once again apparent.

The variant from the village of Montemaggiore (Sln. Matajur) in Venetian Slovenia is also the only bilingual song in the collection of folk traditions of Slovenians in Italy by the renowned researcher of the folklore of Slovenians living in Italy, Pavle Merkù. The singer Gilda Gosnach called this song *barzoleto*, which means a joking song, "half Italian, half Slovenian" (Merkù, 2004: 238). Merkù recognized as obviously modern in origin a song sung by villagers in military service, so he classified it as a military song. In the common military services, songs were often transmitted from one language group to another (Klobčar, 2012, 2020), sometimes translated, sometimes in the original language, sometimes as an adaptation, but in most cases, somehow bastardized or changed. The lyrics of the song match the lyrics of the non-cataloged variant from Goriška Brda, the only notable change being that the girls going to the dance are referred to as "German girls," while in the version from Goriška Brda are addressed as "girls from Gorizia". The hidden allusion might suggest that only German girls go dancing with soldiers. There is a long history of reports of Slovenian girls being warned against dancing with soldiers, a cultural dictum that shows both moral and nationalistic connotations.

The hand edition of the songbook *Strani Matajurja – pesmarica Planinske družine Benečije / Canti popolari raccolti e selezionati della Planinska družina Benečije* (The Sides of Matajur – Slovenian-Venetian Mountain Association' Songbook) was published in 2015 and reissued in 2017 to provide song lyrics for the members of the Slovenian-Venetian Mountain Association when singing together and socializing. The songbook is divided into three sections: folk songs, partisan songs, and church songs. The version of "Lan sem biu u Gorici" is the only one among Slovenian folk songs that combines two languages and the one with the most erotic content of all. The version differs only by minor phonetic and orthographic differences from the version transcribed by Merkù. Despite its selection and inclusion in the published songbook, the song is no longer as widespread among singers as it initially was. Here, however, its story only begins.

## THE ISTRIAN VARIANTS

The song's first stanza, with the geographical indication of the town of Gorizia, prompted me to research the song in the broader area of Gorizia and its surroundings. But when Marino Kranjac and Gabriel Križman performed it as an Istrian song titled "Ona mi je rekla" (She Told Me) at the concert *Zajuckaj in zapoj* (Shout and Sing) in October 2020, it became apparent that the song was not as locally bound as it first seemed, but was known in the broader area of the once-Austrian Littoral. Despite the differences in rhythm, a clear musical link was established with the bilingual song "Lan sem biu u Gorici." By omitting the first stanza of the song mentioned above, this variant begins with the second stanza and is therefore entitled "Ona mi je rekla."

To understand the history of this reemerging song and its place in the social life in the studied borderscape, I checked my assumptions with Marino Kranjac and Dario Marušić, two of the leading figures of the Istrian folk revival movement. They confirmed that the song was very well known in northern Istria among both Slovenes and Croats and was sung by these two and Italians (Kranjac, 2022; Marušić, forthcoming). When performed by choirs and folk revival groups, such as Šavrinske pupe en ragaconi, each chose its selection of verses. Kranjac also made a selection of verses in Slovenian, Italian, and Croat dialects and performed them with Vruja group with instrumental accompaniment in a dance rhythm, with the rhythmic pattern derived from the *balun* or *balon* dance (Kranjac, 2022). The song without instrumental accompaniment and with the first stanza preserved is still sung spontaneously by older people in Slovenian Istria, whether at home, in the *osteria*, in the canteen, or at other gatherings (ibid.). As such, it was recorded in 1987 in Nova vas by Rožana Koštial. In the Gorizia hinterland, the song begins with the verse "Last year I went to Gorizia"; in the Istrian villages, it starts with the Italian verse "Quando iero a Fiume" (When I was in Fiume). The localization is interesting: both in Gorizia and Rijeka (It. Fiume), the meeting place is assigned as Piazza dele Erbe (Herbs Square), though in Gorizia there was the Market Square. We can therefore assume that the variant referring to the coastal city of Fiume in the Italian dialect is an adaptation of the song in which Gorizia is mentioned. While the first stanzas are identical, the continuation is different. A young man succeeds in his marriage endeavors despite the opposition of his relatives, but when he conquers his loved one and brings her home, he realizes it was a mistake. In the same folk song collection, edited by Rožana Koštial (1996), another variant from the Istrian hinterland refers to the city of Trieste with its merchant Goldoni Square. In this variant, performed by the female singing group Šavrinke, there is no dialogue between the potential lovers; instead, the girl gives the boy a handful of sweets (Koštial, 1996: 141).

The creative power of melody to unite different lyrics into a single song is best apparent in the variant "Ona neče pit kafe" (She Doesn't Want Coffee) transcribed in Pomjan in 1995 (Koštial, 1996: 140):

*Ona neće pit kafe,  
Ku samo čokolajo,  
Ona mi je rekeja,  
Da šono inamorato.*

*Ste mule contadine,  
che mena la karjola,  
o jebenti boga,  
boga madjarskoga.*

*Ni kontenta, ni kontá,  
Moja neće biti,  
Aj po Boga svetoga,  
Ja te ćon traditi.  
Ja san bija u Fjume,  
Piazza dele erbe,  
tamo ja san vidija,  
più de tre mila šerve.*

*Da bi jimela puško,  
ja te macerija,  
al te bi zadušija,  
al te bi pojija.* (Sung by Anton Peroša, b. 1922)

The Italian song “Filomena la va al mulin” has likewise been given a new life in Istria united with bilingual Croatian-Italian and Slovenian-Italian lyrics, which creatively merge with the song “Ona mi je rekla” in the last stanza. This creative potential of the song melody and its adaptation to suit different texts is well seen in the variant from Pomjan, where the lyrics of two (or even more) probably originally separate songs are merged into one piece.

In these cases, one might even assume that it is a collection of songs sung in succession to the same melody, sometimes performed by musicians. The song is essentially a party song, and it happened that when the company sang spontaneously, the singers would add verses they knew, singing as long as someone knew another verse. Folk singer Liljana Peroša noted that the song has always been considered a song of the *scempios* – the odd folks. She described that her late husband and his friends sang the song when they drank a glass of wine, even though they had no musical ear (Lukač, 2018: 14).

The proof of the wide distribution of the song is its contemporary appearance: the Šavrinske pupe group also sang the verses in the Croatian dialect, and in the towns, it is sung in the Istrian-Venetian, i.e., Italian dialect (Kranjac, 2022). In the Istrian-Venetian dialect, on the same melody, the text “Fioi come noi” is also known with the variants:

*Fioi come noi, la mama no li fa piu,  
se ga roto la machineta,  
se ga roto la machineta,  
papa no torna piu,  
papa no torna piu.* (Kranjac, 2022)

The song, sung in a polka metrum, plays jokes about having no more children because the father’s little engine is malfunctioning. In Croatian Istria, this popular song is performed by the Istrian singer Lidija Percan (1938–), who sings in both Croatian and Istrian-Venetian.



## FILOMENA

6 Oj Fi - lo - me - na la vain mu - lin, oj Fi - lo - me - na la vain mu - lin, oj

12 Fi - lo - me - na la vain mu - lin col sa - cco ro - tto. Col sa - cco ro - tto

18 span - di la fa - ri - na, oj Fi - lo - me - na, vien con miin can - ti - na

22 Ni kon - ten - ta ni kon - ta mo - ja ne - češ bi - ti, oj po - bo - ga sve ti - ga, ja te čon tra - di - ti

o - na mi je re - kla, da sem bel mo - re - to, o - na mi je da - la, e - no man sull pe - to.

The Italian lyrics of “Oj, Filomena la va in mulin” were creatively combined with the songs in Croatian and Slovenian dialects (Lukač, 2018: 14).

In her performances, the song always follows the song “Le mule de Fiume” in a kind of unity. Among the Slovenes in Trieste and its surroundings, on the other hand, various versions of the song “Ona mi je rekla” are widespread (Saksida, 2021).

## THE SONG AS AN EMBLEM OF ISTRIAN MULTICULTURALISM

In the wake of the flourishing folk revival movement, the song “Ona mi je rekla” with its bilingual lyrics went from being a casual, fun song to an emblem of multiculturalism in Istria. It was performed by most of the groups of the Istrian folk revival wave, such as the groups Šavrinski godci, Moja mati kuha kafe, the Šavrini from St. Peter, Istranova, Šavrinske pupe en ragaconi, Rudi Bučar, the 7 Plus singing quartet, etc. “Practically all the interpreters of Istrian folk music from Slovenian Istria performed it, each according to their music setup, either only a cappella or with instrumental accompaniment” (Kranjac, 2022).

As a typical song of Istria, it was creatively included in the unaccompanied mixed choir arrangement “Istrska reštica, a cycle of Istrian folk songs” by composer Andrej Makor. In this arrangement, the song is geographically placed in Šavrinija, the northern hinterland of Istria, since the text enriched with a jocular note is based on the versions known in Šavrinija.

The opening and closing verses resemble other recorded Istrian variants, while the major chord depicts a humorous plot in which the darling chokes on a radicchio leaf.

*Ona mi je rekla, da sen bel moreto,  
druga mi je stavila, eno man sul peto.  
Sen imela drazega, lepega fantiča,  
ma se mi zadavu je, s peron od radiča.  
Soto quele brajdice noi se mastruzavimo,  
mama nas je gledala, ma noi non bazilavimo.  
Ćola, ćola Bepi che la že belina,  
la scova la cužina, la grega il fogoler. (Makor, 2009)*

The melody, as a “typical Istrian melody,” also attracted the composer Aldo Kumar to include it in his well-known and performed “Istrska suita” (Istrian Suite) (1990).

Folk song collector Rožana Špeh, a native of Istria, noted that the songs in dialect versions of three languages (Slovenian, Italian, Croatian) are used as a matter of course in this area and do not represent an obstacle to communication but rather bring the locals together. Therefore, the interweaving of these languages in the songs also belongs deeply to Istria. Most traces of contact between Slovene and Italian-speaking Istrians can be recognized in the love songs: sometimes, there are just a few Italian words; elsewhere, they are almost bilingual (Špeh, 1999: 101). This is not surprising since the normality of everyday life has produced most of the cultural practices of the in-between (Feichtinger, Cohen, 2014).

The structure that makes this amalgamation of different linguistic variants possible concerns, above all, the music to which the changing lyric is successfully adapted. This musical structure seems to be of recent origin since there are no repetitions as it is common in older folk songs (see also Vodušek, 2003; Merku, 2004; Kranjac, 2022). The musical composition appears to be inspired by the genre of Schlager, present and popular in the region at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. With its light melodic lines, Schlager established itself in folk music and found its way into the repertoire of local music bands. This musical composition was one of the most famous melodies circulating among the musicians and the people of the Austrian Littoral, each of them modifying it slightly in their way. Among these “general melodies” or the standard repertoire of the region is the song “Moja mati kuha kafe” (My Mother is Making Coffee), which is not only popular but also emblematic of today’s Istria, the Karst, and Gorizia. The melody of the songs “Lan sem biu u Gorici,” “Ona mi je rekla,” and other variations mentioned above certainly originate in the same source. Interestingly, the musical pattern varies from 2/4 and 3/4 to 6/8 time, but the lyrical verses consist mainly of hexameters and heptameters. Vodušek has noted that for many ancient musical periods, most songs with the same verse meter were just variants of the same melodic type (Vodušek, 1969: 6). All lyrical songs from Resia likewise know only one metrical model, which follows the pattern *Da hora tä Kaninovä*. Thus, in one

village in Resia, there were only a few different melodies which are inevitably similar in their melodic structure and numerous different song lyrics (*ibid.*). A similar process can be traced in religious contexts; the new religious folk song adapted the familiar melody when it first appeared to be easily remembered. Thus, the linguistically hybrid lyrics to the same melodies of the Slovenian-Italian borderscape could be a product of both improvisation and adaptation to the new context. In the stage performances of the folk revival groups, the language in the songs is predominantly socially and regionally symbolic and typically of little communicative function (*cf.* Trudgill, 1983: 159). Therefore, this type of song plays an emblematic role in the narratives of Istrian multiculturalism due to its language hybridity.

### BILINGUALISM IN SONGS

In the realm of popular music, bilingualism has long been a staple, especially in linguistic borderlands. In contrast to modern attempts to incorporate “multilingualism as a musical-aesthetic concept where direct code-switching in many different facets plays a central role” (John, 2015: 176), bilingualism was used spontaneously as part of everyday life in the songs of the former Austrian Littoral. When these songs were perceived as a heritable cultural asset, they were staged (*cf.* Hafstein, 2018) and carried to a broader public often unfamiliar with this language use. Following Frith (1987), listeners can appreciate such songs even if they are unfamiliar with the language, and the words are open to numerous interpretations (Brusila, 2015: 10–11). The combination of music and language provides polysemic opportunities that musicians can use to express humorous, ambiguous, or sexually implicit ideas that only a portion of the audience understands (Brusila, 2015: 28). The sparse archives on bilingual songs also present in Slovenian folkloristics of the 19th and 20th centuries reflect only selective collecting practices, not the actual existence of such songs. Wherever, whether in geographical or social spaces, different linguistic areas intersected, there were also bilingual songs (John, 2015: 159), despite the folkloristic assumption of cultures as fixed identities rather than dynamic configurations (*cf.* Laarse, 2019: 80).

Nowadays, due to bottom-up initiatives such as the inclusion of bilingual or trilingual songs in local songbook collections, *e.g.*, *Ljudske iz Šavrinske Istre*, listed under the heading mixed (mišjanca) / trilingual, the heterogeneity of culture in the Slovenian-Italian borderscape is publicly considered a factor that makes the “region so rich, beautiful, and interesting” (Saksida, 2021: 7). Consistent with this non-hegemonic discourse on local culture, the content analysis prevalent in folklore studies, which “treats texts too simply” by focusing on what the words describe – situations and states of mind – and not “on how they describe, on their meaning as language” (Frith, 1989: 79), needs to be complemented by a fuller consideration of the complexity of musical and contextual factors. So, instead of studying a song as a traditional artifact, we substitute this with studying the vernacular repertoire in a given community, including its complexity and all the inconsistencies and

heterogeneities that occur. The example of the song “Ona mi je rekla” shows how bilingual songs, omitted by folklorists in the corpora of national folk songs in the past, enrich the repertoire of a particular community and give it the cultural assets to present itself in a globalized world. In Istria, this attempt succeeds to a great extent.

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»UN BEL MORETTO«:  
JEZIKOVNA PREPLETANJA V PESMIH S PRIMORSKEGA

“*Lan sem biu u Gorici*” je najpogosteje zapisana dvojezična pesem v različnih narečnih oblikah slovenskega in italijanskega jezika, kar dokazuje, da je bila ob današnji slovensko-italijanski meji precej priljubljena. Zaradi zamejenega razumevanja kulture so večjezične pesmi v starejši glasbeni folkloristiki veljale za moteče elemente, zato so jih le redko zapisovali. Pesem je leta 1932 prvič objavila furlanska folkloristka Renata Steccati in jo je opisala kot zelo priljubljeno. Nekaj let po 2. svetovni vojni sta bili v Goriških brdih zapisani dve različici. Ena od njiju je bila transkribirana in kot ljubezenska pesem uvrščena v register slovenskih ljudskih pesmi, čeprav ima najbolj seksualno implicitno besedilo od vseh javno izvajanih variant. Različico iz Matajurja v Beneški Sloveniji je pevka označila za šaljivo, zbiralec Pavle Merku pa za vojaško. Prav tako kot v Merkujevi zbirki je tudi v pesmarici Planinske družine Benečije to edina dvojezična pesem. Čeprav se v prvem verzju pojavlja omemba Gorice, pesem ni omejena na to območje, pač pa je poznana tudi na Krasu in v Istri. V nasprotju z variantami iz Goriških brd in Beneške Slovenije, kjer je pesem večinoma pozabljena, doživljajo istrske variante preporod. Ker se pogosto začenjajo z drugo kitico, so naslovljene »Ona mi je rekla«, pojejo pa se v slovenskih, hrvaških in istrskobeneških narečjih, geografska označba Gorice pa je nadomeščena z Reko ali Trstom. Pesem brez instrumentalne spremljave spontano pojejo starejši ljudje bodisi doma, v oštariji, v kantini ali na drugih srečanjih, izvajajo pa jo tudi številni interpreti istrske ljudske glasbe iz slovenske Istre z ali brez instrumentalne spremljave. Kot značilna istrska pesem je vključena tudi v zborovske priredbe in »Istrsko suito« Alda Kumarja.

Glasbena struktura ji omogoča združevanje različnih jezikovnih različic, ustvarjalno dodajanje novih kitic in spajanje z drugimi pesmimi. Zgleduje se po žanru slagerjev, ki so bili na območju Avstrijskega Primorja priljubljeni konec 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja in so našli pot v repertoar lokalnih glasbenih skupin, vsaka od njih pa jih je nekoliko spremenila.

Jezika v teh pesmih ne smemo razumeti le kot sredstvo komunikacije, temveč tudi kot estetski element glasbenega izražanja in sestavino družbene konstrukcije. Danes je zaradi lokalnih pobud, kot je vključevanje dvojezičnih ali trojezičnih pesmi v lokalne pesmarice, jezikovna heterogenost pesmi na slovensko-italijanskem obmejnem območju obravnavana kot zaželen element in kot izraz regionalne identifikacije. Primer pesmi »Ona mi je rekla« kaže, kako dvojezične pesmi, ki jih folkloristi v preteklosti niso vključevali v nacionalne korpuse ljudskih pesmi, bogatijo

*repertoar določene skupnosti in ji v sedanjih družbenoekonomskih razmerah dajejo osnovo za regionalno samopredstavitev v globaliziranem svetu.*

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