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Cultural elemens in the texts of Sanja Pilić

Izvirni znanstveni članek

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POVZETEK

Prispevek se ukvarja s kulturološko percepcijo v književnih delih Sanje Pilić. Metodološko se članek navezuje predvsem na tipologijo Raymonda Williama, v kateri avtor utemeljuje tri kategorije kulture: idealno, dokumentarno in socialno. Na podlagi izbrane tipologije smo analizirali vrste kulture v treh mladinskih romanih Sanje Pilić, in sicer *Drobtinice iz dneвне sobe*, *Sem se zaljubila?*, *O mamah vse najboljše*.

Ključne besede: idealna, dokumentarna in socialna kultura, besedila Sanje Pilić

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses some cultural views of the literary works of Sanja Pilić. Her methodological approach is based on the Raymond Williams' three-part typology of culture: ideal, documentary and social. Guided by Williams' classification of culture, the paper attempts to investigate how specific characteristics of each particular type are reflected in Sanja Pilić's texts for children and youth.

Key words: ideal, documentary and social culture, texts by Sanja Pilić

About culture

Culture, a word so frequently (and sometimes too lightly) used in daily and professional communication, is one of the most complex terms to define semantically. Terry Eagleton, in the introduction to his work *The Idea of Culture*, points out the material origin of the word "culture": "We derive our word for the finest of human activities from labour and agriculture, crops and cultivation. Francis Bacon writes of 'the culture and manurance of minds' in a suggestive hesitance between dung

and mental distinction. 'Culture' here means an activity, and it was a long time before the word came to denote an entity" (Eagleton, 2002:7).

Thus "culture", both as a word and a concept, along with the historical evolution of humanity, shifted from a material process into the affairs of the spirit¹, i.e. it was metaphorically transposed from soil cultivation and house building into soul cultivation and mind building. Eagleton also points out the paradoxical nature of this semantic shift, which is still evident at the present time: "*But the semantic shift is also paradoxical: it is the urban dwellers who are 'cultivated' and those who actually live by tilling the soil who are not. Those who cultivate the land are less able to cultivate themselves. Agriculture leaves no leisure for culture*" (Eagleton, 2002: 8).

One of essential problems of cultural studies, resulting directly from the complexity of the term "culture", is the question of defining the scope and methodology of research. Raymond Williams, in the chapter *The Analysis of Culture* in his book *The Long Revolution*, suggests three general categories for defining culture: ideal, documentary and social culture. Each of these categories has its own approach to and methods of research. According to the ideal definition, culture is "*a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values*" (Williams, 1961). The documentary approach defines culture as "*the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded*" (Williams, 1961). According to the social definition, culture is "*a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour*" (Williams, 1961). Put in this way, these definitions offer a fairly consistent approach to the analysis of culture. The main objectives in analyzing a culture perceived as ideal are the discovery of a timeless order and a search for the ideal universal human condition, which is manifested in each work of human hands. The analysis of documentary culture is based on the activity of criticism by which "*the nature of the thought and experience, the details of the language, form and convention in which these are active, are described and valued*" (Williams, 1961). Williams notes that such an approach to culture can be very close to that of the "ideal" analysis, i.e. both of them may search for the best that has ever been written or thought of the world. On the other hand, the documentary approach to the analysis of culture may focus its criticism on a particular work that is being analysed, explained and evaluated. Documentaries are a tool for historical criticism in which the analysed works (not necessarily the works of art) are associated with and

¹ The semantic shift from the material into the spiritual domain is the most evident and, one may say, the most explicit in the concept of the word «cult». Cult, a fundamental religious term, is the peak of the human ability to abstract, and is one of the levels of human existence. However, in this modern, hectic, technology-driven world of internetisation and supermarketisation, that has really started to live up to the Nietzsche's widely quoted statement "God is dead", the term «cult» "just as the idea of culture itself in the modern age comes to substitute itself for a fading sense of divinity and transcendence." (Eagleton, 2002: 8).

placed in the context of certain traditions and societies that have produced them. The analysis of social culture seems to deviate the most from the prototype-based concept of cultural studies. In addition to the analysis of specific traditions within certain societies, it also analyses social characteristics such as *“the organisation of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate”* (Williams, 1961). Such an analysis comprises the elements of the first two as well. In the analysis we search for ideal meanings and values in society and documents, clarify and evaluate them and analyze the mechanisms of their changes in order to identify the general laws of social and cultural development.

All this considered, culture can be defined as a particularly complex term, covering the entire social heritage of a group, learned patterns of thinking, feeling and acting of a group, a community or society pursuing a certain ideal, as well as the expressions of such patterns in material objects. The purpose of this work is to show how the determinants and manifestations of such conceptions of culture are reflected literature, particularly those works intended for children and youth. I have selected the literary works of Sanja Pilić and have analysed them from a cultural viewpoint (in terms of the ideal, documentary and social culture). Before that, some other elements have to be considered, since an analysis of them are also important for this paper.

One of the most important characteristics of culture is that it is based on symbols². Symbols are something that distinguishes one culture from another and also something that we must learn within the cultural environment we belong to in order to behave in a “cultured” manner. Language is the most important system of symbols developed by people and very often the affiliation to a language group is identified with the affiliation to a particular culture. Symbols are learned and they determine “cultured” behaviour within a society. In order to be considered as a member of a society, an individual has to follow the rules set by its respective structure of symbols. Complying with learned social rules (symbol interrelations) is a desirable behaviour and the set of such rules is called the social norms. Not all the norms are considered equally important and, by analogy, breaching of different social norms is subject to different sanctions. The mildest sanctions are those applied to a breach of the norms called folkways, which include patterns of conventional behaviour³. Mores make a set of rules to which

² Symbols, and thus culture, are learned. They are common and integrated into a single whole that determines a particular society in terms of space and time. Symbols may be either tangible or intangible and a set of symbols within a particular culture is a complex structure where all elements are interdependent and a change of one element leads to a change in another or the change of an entire structure.

³ These patterns are manifested, for example, in shaking hands when being introduced, in appropriate clothing or placing a hand over the mouth while yawning.

great importance is attributed and that are considered the principles of social life, and violation of them causes abhorrence and indignation⁴.

The highest level of prohibition corresponds to taboos, which mean absolute prohibition⁵. With the development of societies from tribes into multinational states, formal and unwritten rules of conduct could no longer satisfy the criteria for the systematization of life under complex circumstances. As a result, laws were introduced as institutionalised and legitimised forms of norms. The form and way of sanctioning unacceptable behaviour are now determined by laws, but unwritten norms have also retained their importance in universally accepted practices of social communication. We will conclude with the thought that „*culture and society are highly interconnected and closely related. There is no culture without society, i.e. without people who adopt the culture and behave accordingly. Equally, no society (in terms of human society) is possible without culture.*“ (Fanuko, 1988: 19).

Culture-related details in the text

Maybe the best way to start an analysis of the culture-related details contained in the stories by Sanja Pilić is to quote her own words: “*My style of writing is a fairly humorous one, I neither patronize nor lecture although, frankly speaking, I am a pure conservative when it comes to any advice sneaking through the story. What is important to me is to achieve educating and edifying effects – do not forget that I am a mother of two grown-up children and a rather strict one – in my own way. I do not support unhealthy ways of behaviour in children’s literature ... (Books should) contain a positive message.*” (Hranjec, 2006: 240). It is just these last two words that should define our approach to the understanding of the determinants of culture as our permanent search for the ideal, as the ongoing improvement and aspiration for the absolute. Yet, we should always keep in mind Raymond Williams’ warning that absolute values should not be taken as something set from the outside but that they themselves are the essence of human evolution both in terms of the general growth humanity and the directions of our evolution. According to Williams, absolute values, when understood as meanings and values discovered in particular societies and by particular individuals, kept alive by social inheritance and manifesting themselves in specific ways of behaviour, are a universal human characteristic in the sense that when they are learned, they can contribute radically to the growth of people’s powers to enrich their lives, to regulate their society and to control their environment.

⁴ Those violating mores, such as killers, rapists or pedophiles, are considered immoral and are excommunicated.

⁵ These are not even spoken of and certain languages do not have a word to denote them (among other things, taboos include cannibalism and incest).

It is because of such “ideals” that we shall look at the novels of Sanja Pilić. In the process, we shall not investigate the trends of development towards the positive as something permanent and externally set, but focus on her “positive message” as something immanent to the culture to which Sanja Pilić belongs. In other works, we will not treat the positive as an end but as a means to achieve an undefined goal. However, as Williams warns us, to analyse cultural determinants only in the light of the ideal culture is not acceptable: “Thus an ‘ideal’ definition, which attempts to abstract the process it describes from its detailed embodiment and shaping by particular societies – regarding man’s ideal development as something separate from and even opposed to his ‘animal nature’ or the satisfaction of material needs – seems to me unacceptable.” (Williams, 1961). Therefore, in the prose of Sanja Pilić we shall search for the characteristics of documentary and social culture as well, in particular, we shall look for the general structure, the social character (Fromm), the cultural sample (Benedict) or structures of feeling (Williams). We shall try to identify cultural characteristics in their overall inter-relations in Sanja Pilić’s novels for children and youth: *Crumbs From the Living Room*, *Have I Fallen in Love?*, *All the Best about Mums*.

The novel *Crumbs from the Living Room* was published in 1995, and its main theme is suggested by the title itself – crumbs being a metaphor of daily family life. It is just in the concept of family that certain cultural values can be best recognized, because family is the oldest and the most important of all social (cultural) institutions and the most basic unit of a society. In the culture in which Sanja Pilić grew up, the same culture where her characters live, family is seen as a community based on feelings, devotion and the closeness of its members. But, from sociological literature one can learn that such family structure is just a relative novelty in the development of the human society, which emerged after the sentimental revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries (until then the family had been based either on economic foundations or family lines). Relations among family members strongly marked by emotions and loyalty, personal freedom and happiness, values and desire for privacy – these are the principal characteristics of the family structure prevailing in our culture. And the family that we meet in the novel *Crumbs from the Living Room* is one of such families. It consists of the father Džozef, mother Jaca and children Marina and Janko. They are interconnected by the ties of love:

She came close and kissed me fourteen times. I hardly escaped with life and limb. We all hugged each other. We felt so good. We often hug each other. Jaca says it is good for our health. I thought how my old folks turned out just fine. Life with them is never boring. They often smile and, when they are in a good mood, they hold hands (Pilić, 2003: 64)

Mum got up and started to yawn. Then she hugged Džozef. It appeared to me as a lovers’ embrace, like in a movie. Marina’s eyes were closed, I kissed her good-night. Everything seemed kind of sugary. (Pilić, 2003: 50)

Family is a place where one learns about values, the best place to study culture viewed as aiming for the ideal. Values are not only learned through explanations and speech but primarily by following one's parents' example. Some of the fundamental values taught by Sanja Pilić through the actions of her characters are love, harmony, equality, faithfulness, freedom from anything that corrupts one's soul and a respect for human rights:

You know, we are all different by race, sex and religion and yet, you know, we are all one, like it or not, it is simply like that ... (Pilić, 2003: 97)

Mum Jaca says there are no class differences but there are first class fools. (Pilić, 2003: 123)

Jaca always struggles to save the weaker. The stronger ones can fight for themselves, says she. (Pilić, 2003: 80)

One should look for happiness in small things. (Pilić, 2003: 59)

But those values that are, or at least should be, a prototype for a family as viewed in the culture we live in are not indicated by a common family image. Namely, the family described by Sanja Pilić differs a lot from an average family, the family most people would have in mind if asked to visualize a family picture featuring the above mentioned values. In the literary family presented in the *Crumbs from the Living Room* everything slightly deviates from the average. The father Džozef is an unemployed philosopher (a graduate, not in the figurative meaning of the word), a long-haired hippie, who wears ear-rings, always sits with his legs on the table and makes trinkets for living. He is anything but a typical model for his son. The mother Jaca favours alternative approaches to life and, unlike her husband, cuts her hair short. The daughter Marina goes to art school, everyday paints her nails a different colour and dresses in a "stratified" style. Janko, the youngest but in a way the most serious member of the family, writes for a children's paper *Modra lasta* (Blue Swallow) about Robotko, a robot that comes alive in the end of the novel. They are a non-standard, we could say a modern family, and in any case break the norms (folkways) associated with the idea of a family. They are fully aware of that, but they are also aware of the fact that breaking the norms can entail consequences that are not pleasant and therefore wittingly and appropriately submit themselves to such norms in their social contacts:

Considering that this is the only festive dress for weddings, baptismal f tes, funerals and official visits, I think it's quite OK – said Džozef taking his ear-rings out and gathering his hair into a tail to look manly and self-confident, like somebody who knows his mind.

Marina removed a half a kilo of make-up and she looked three to four years younger, while I toiled in my overgrown suit. If there is anything I really hate it's going on visits. Particularly with my dad who pretends to be polite on such occasions. He does

not drink and wipes his mouth with a serviette. Unbelievable! (Pilić, 2003: 20)

Behave yourselves – he hissed – Don’s you see I want to charm them? All people fall for happy families and good children. (Pilić, 2003: 22)

Departing from norms is a typical reality of life in which we can observe the characteristics of social culture. But the cultural types in the novel of Sanja Pilić are not manifested only as a violation of the norms (violation of laws and taboos is here out of the question, after all, this is literature for children and youth and one of the tasks of such literature is to educate the young to have values in the spirit of the culture in which they grow up), but also through the positive evaluation of universally accepted social patterns of behaviour, one of which is offering a seat on the tram to elderly people. Of course, consistently with the prevailing tone of the entire novel, Sanja Pilić did not elaborate directly on the act of offering a seat to elderly people on public transportation, but speaks of it in a fairly humorous way through the character of the father Džozef:

Look, I have passed my fourth decade and I still have to recover from stepping into my middle age. It really hit me where it hurts most. Today, a little girl offered me a seat in the tram and said “uncle”. I don’t want to be called “uncle” ... (Pilić, 2003: 44)

In the context of analysing the social aspect of culture, focusing on the relations both within society and privately, and at the level of institutions controlling society, Sanja Pilić almost ironically commented on the power of media in our culture. The power of media is so emphasized that they have become one of the most powerful institutions, capable of tailoring a picture of culture:

People no longer believe what they see with their eyes, they believe what they read in newspapers. At least it’s my impression. Deep in his heart, Džozo was disappointed. (Pilić, 2003: 139)

One of the characteristics of the culture in which Janko’s queer family lives is obsession with money and material things. Materialism and possession and symbols representing similar values have become universal and widely known in the modern global culture and might become a measure of adulthood and affiliation to a particular social group:

You will become a real man only when you get an American Express Card. (Pilić, 2003: 52)

Yet, in this novel the ideal of love is presented as superior to money:

Before, Jaca used to buy me tennis shoes at the outdoor market-place, and the cheapest ones, so my feet waded in sweat and I ruined my Achilles' heel. She almost made me an invalid by saving. Money is really simpler when you have it. Although, let's make it clear, love is what counts most!! (Pilić, 2003: 88)

The documentary aspect of the cultural approach to this literary work is most evident in the casual notes, miniature themes and motifs running through the whole text – from the symbols of mass culture to the comments on the penetration of English words into the Croatian language. It's just this latter motif that takes one of the most important places in contemporary Croatian culture (particularly if we have in mind the note made in the first chapters about the connection between language and culture):

I have hardly got used to Džozef's hippie-period and mum's mild punk-look. I hope I have spelled these words correctly. Everything is riddled with some kind of Englishism. My tongue gets entangled, my fingers slip towards w's, y's and x's. (Pilić, 2003: 41)

In a subtle way, Sanja Pilić indicates the trends prevailing in literature for children and youth, in which foreign cultures (mostly market-oriented, capitalistic and sensation-mongering) are penetrating into Croatian culture:

To write about someone who is good, it's a pure nuisance. Imagine a hero who washes his teeth, has all straight A's, helps his mother and father, everybody likes him, neatly combed hair, oh, I am already bored to death. A perfect boy, the mere thought of it makes me sick. (Pilić, 2003: 58)

The involvement of Croatian culture in the global cultural scene is evident through the names of persons and products that have become "brands". Such names that appear in the novel include Aryton Senna, Coca-Cola, Lego blocks, saxophonist Clinton, Green Peace, Elvis Presley, Asterix, walkman, American Express. Sanja Pilić has not fallen prey to the general trend in modern Croatian society (culture) to increasingly give preference to imported values and ideals, while disregarding or neglecting its own. In this novel, shoulder to shoulder with the above mentioned world "brands", stand some Croatian ones too: Dražen Petrović, Goran Ivanišević, Modra Lasta and Kviskoteka.

In her novel *Have I fallen in Love*, published in 2006, Sanja Pilić elaborates the aspects of the ideal culture in the light of her intention to exert positive influence on the readers. Her commitment to universal values is most clearly seen through the story of the novel. A small girl Zlatka reaches the age when she becomes interested in boys, when love makes the world go round, but also when one begins to learn

how to behave in complex social relations. The novel presents social and cultural relations within a group of young people on their way to maturity:

For the nth time that evening I came to think how life is weird, particularly when you are thirteen and you are still a small girl transforming into a young woman. Weird, entirely, entirely weird. (Pilić, 2006: 137)

One of the basic social divisions that Sanja Pilić describes in her novel is the division of mod dressers and renegades. Mod dressers are those who are trendy and follow the dictates imposed by mass culture and materialism, while renegades could be defined as a group composed of those who have been raised in accordance with “old” values. We must not forget the group of those who would like to be mod dressers but cannot afford it. This division, which is becoming increasingly emphasised in our culture, is one of the themes used at the very beginning of the novel in the scene at the school dance:

We spent the first thirty minutes looking around. One did not need binoculars to note the usual division to mod dressers and renegades. (Pilić, 2006: 23)

The only thing that the mod dressers are interested in is sitting idle in coffee bars and discussing clothes:

And you are sitting in such a loathsome place? Instead of going to Tkalča Street?
What’s there in Tkalča?
Our school gang ...
And what are they doing?
Talking.
About what? Threads?
Yes – said Ljiljica. – What else should we talk about? (Pilić, 2006: 43)

The following sentences are the best comment on the shallowness of such behaviour and egocentricity of the contemporary culture:

Everybody would like to talk about themselves. Everybody does talk only about themselves. (Pilić, 2006: 51)

Yet, there is a difference between reading Shakespeare and listening to newly composed folk music. (Pilić, 2006: 127)

In this novel, like in *The Crumbs from the Living Room*, mass culture “brands” are mentioned. However, since the character Zlatka is a bit older, such mass culture

“brands” are mentioned more frequently, while the domestic ones appear only sporadically. This is typical both for Zlatka’s age group and for the developmental trends in Croatian culture. The novel *Have I fallen in Love* is full of foreign names. Young people talk about Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Burt Simpson, Julia Roberts, Eddy Murphy, they buy their clothes at Benetton or Gas and watch MTV, Friends and Northern Exposure. The young dress themselves like their idols, yet, through Zlatka’s mouth the author expressed her attitude towards such behavioural patterns:

I get sick when I see boys wearing the trousers in which their behind looks as if it were dragging along the ground and their legs seem some ten centimetres long. Besides, they put caps on their heads and hang some iron all over and they would like to be taken seriously ... no way. (Pilić, 2006: 25)

Sanja Pilić also comments on the music that the young people listen. They party with the music of Destiny’s Child, Eminem, Robie Williams and Britney Spears. Again, she expresses her opinion through Zlatka who is, in a certain way, the spokesperson of her opinion about culture:

I have got it straight that talking music makes no sense. I have been going to music school for five years now and I only know that I am from a different world. Britney makes my hair stand on end. (Pilić, 2006: 25)

One of the typical characteristics of the modern culture is IT addiction. Hurried development of technology, which had started in the preceding century, resulted in the development of ever more complex but also more amusing, cheaper and generally available electronic devices. Some of them have many advantages, such as the cell phone:

That’s why I have a new cell phone (I have lost my old one) – to be able to communicate with the tribe. My mum said that the cell phone had been invented because of her need to check where we are (Pilić, 2006: 31)

However, while the role of cell phones is to establish contacts between people at any time, some electronic devices directly affect communication and the process of socialisation. For many years now experts have been warning us that IT technology leads to alienation and dehumanisation, that new generations have been facing ever increasing problems in communication (in spite of having at their disposal much more means for its realisation than any generation before), that such devices turn young people into just passive participants in a communication process. Regretfully, such processes may reflect on the culture in which Zlatka lives. Sanja Pilić is aware of such processes and makes such themes directly in her novel:

OK, I admit, I didn't feel like staying there any more. The problem with birthdays is that people stretch out in front of a TV or computer and play games. (Pilić, 2006: 133)

The influence of media, transmitted by the capabilities of modern technology, is also evident in the everyday speech of the young. In her novel *Have I Fallen in Love*, Sanja Pilić does not speak so directly against the Anglicization in the speech of the young people (and not only them), but records their speech in a documentary way. They greet each other with *hi* and *give me five*, they use the words *cool*, *sister* and *beats*. The relationship between culture and language can be observed in the contrast between the speech of older people and that of the young, the relationship between the past and contemporary culture. An example of such an approach can be found in the novel *All the Best about Mums*, published in 1990. German words such as *gros mama*, *rolšuhe*, *šlafrok*, *šnajderica* and *cigar-špic*, symbols of some past cultural patterns in which German culture had a stronger influence on Croatian culture, are in direct contrast with the present processes of Anglicisation.

The novel *All the Best about Mums*, which differs from the first two because it was written in the postmodernist style and the main character is not a young person but a mother in her thirties, equally reflects the characteristics of the culture in which it was created. So, in this novel again we find the "brands" of modern culture and also the moral values that are universal and to which we should live. One of them, and the most important, is love. The mother Karamela "gives a command" to her daughter Naranča:

Number 5: You shall love your little brother. Love is a medicine, not a poison. (Pilić, 1990: 20)

In this novel the ideals and values are also presented through a non-typical family composed of the mother Karamela, the father Valdemar, the daughter Naranča and the son Lastan. It seems to be a specialty of Sanja Pilić to promote cultural values and ideals through characters that somehow belong to subcultural circles. Such an approach could be interpreted as an attempt to present culture in the light of its best virtues while certain norms, imposed by the present-day society, are presented only as less important, incidental features. It is just such an approach that makes the families in her novels so amiable and likable. The values promoted by them are presented as universal bringers of happiness. Ideals are not just a superficial compliance with the norms, creating a perfect image of us and our families, even though present-day culture imposes such an approach. Therefore, the mom Karamela asks herself:

What's life after all? How should we live it? Is there any chance of growing happiness? How to get money? How not to get corrupted under conditions favourable for corruption? How not to be sad? How to raise children? Is it normal to sleep in the same bed with Lastan? Is it normal not to want to work from seven a.m. to three p.m.? Is it normal to sit at home and be happy? To be obliged only when you must be obliged. (Pilić, 1990: 20)

The relationship between real values, supported by Sanja Pilić in her novels, and those imposed in present-day life, can be excellently read from her thinking about literature:

I can no more read something that has been written just because it is written, because the only reason it was written was that it could be written. (Pilić, 1990: 69)

Conclusion

Cultural elements in the texts of Sanja Pilić are visible at all levels, both on the level of the story (including the topic and the motif) and at the level of the structure (semantics and style). This paper focuses on an analysis of the relationship between culture perceived as an ideal and the social and documentary terms of reference, which determine the conception of the ideal. In her novels, Sanja Pilić consistently highlights values that should be pursued. These values are primarily derived from the fundamental ideal of love. Love as an ideal is what the Croatian cultural structure has always valued as a part of its heritage. Christianity has also promoted the ideal of love and has always valued it. However, at some other levels one can read about the risk of exposing this ideal to the assaults by foreign systems of values that place emphasis on materialism and possession, where money determines one's happiness. Although this is not expressly said in the novels, it can be read "between the lines" in Sanja Pilić's attitude towards the trendiness of modern society. It is important to point out that in her novels emphasis is always placed on the ideal of love as opposed to mere compliance with norms. The principal tool used by the author to emphasise this contrast is the presentation of non-typical families and characters. They all stand out from the typical behavioural pattern that is in a certain way prescribed by the norms and rules of behaviour. Yet, all her characters are gathered together in happy families where all the family members love each other.

Cultural elements in Sanja Pilić's works, whether on the ideal, social or documentary level, make a coherent single whole - a system determined by complex interrelationships and external influences. Through her atypical portrayals, one can get a picture of the entire culture of Croatian society. The novels *All the best about Mums*, *Have I fallen in Love* and *Crumbs from the Living Room* reflect a complex

picture of Croatian culture (with all its components) in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century.

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Kulturološki elementi v delih Sanje Pilić

Kultura je termin, ki se pogosto uporablja v vsakdanji in strokovni komunikaciji, a je kljub razširjeni uporabi precej večplasten in posledično tudi eden tistih pojmov, ki jih težko enopomensko opredelimo. Ena od osnovnih težav kulturoloških razprav, ki izhaja ravno iz večpomenskosti in večplastnosti termina kultura, je vprašanje predmeta raziskovanja ter ustreznih raziskovalnih metod. Raymond Williams (1961) v monografiji *The Long Revolution* deli kulturo v tri splošne kategorije, ki jih poimenuje idealna, dokumentarna in socialna kultura. Pojem ideala v kulturi je »stanje ali proces človekovega izpopolnjevanja v odnosu do absolutnih ali univerzalnih vrednot« (str. 19). Dokumentarizem kulturo razume kot »interakcijo uma in domišljije, pri čemer so, zelo natančno in na različne načine, zapisane misli in izkušnje ljudi« (str. 21). Po socialni definiciji je kultura »opis posebnega načina življenja, v katerem se določeni pomeni in vrednote ne izražajo zgolj v umetnosti in mišljenju, temveč tudi v institucijah in v vsakodnevnem vedenju« (str. 35). Tako postavljene definicije omogočajo vsaj do neke mere konsistenten pristop k analizi kulture.

Teoretične opredelitve kulture, ki smo jih predstavili v članku, so omogočile analizo kulturoloških elementov v izbrani mladinski prozi Sanje Pilić, in sicer v realističnih romanih *Drobtinice iz dneвне sobe (Mrvice iz dnevnog boravka)*, *Sem se zaljubila? (Jesam li se zaljubila)* in *O mamah vse najboljše (O mamama sve najbolje)*.⁶

Mrvice iz dnevnog boravka (1995) je roman, v katerem je tematika razvidna že iz naslova – drobtinice so namreč metafora vsakdanjega družinskega življenja. Morda se ob prikazu družine celo najbolj prepoznajo nekatere kulturološke vrednote, saj je družina najstarejša in najpomembnejša družbena (kulturološka) institucija, ki predstavlja osnovno enoto družbenega ustroja. V kulturi, v kateri je odrasla Sanja Pilić, ta pa je identična kulturi, ki jo oziroma kakor jo živijo njeni literarni liki, je družina razumljena kot skupnost, katere temelji so čustva, pripadnost in bližina družinskih članov. V obravnavanem romanu so člani družine oče Džozef, mama

⁶ Sanja Pilić, velikokrat nagrajevana hrvaška (mladinska) pisateljica, velikokrat nagrajevana hrvaška (mladinska) pisateljica, je pravnikinja Zofke Kveder. Med izbranimi deli, predstavljenimi v članku, je v slovenščino preveden le roman *Sem se zaljubila? (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2009)*. Je pa pred tem v slovenščini že izšlo delo iste avtorice *Dobil bom bratca (Ljubljana: Karantanija, 2006)*.

Jaca, otroka Marina in Janko. Odstopanje od povprečja je tisti del družinskega življenja, ob katerem lahko spremljamo odlike socialne kulture. Socialna kultura v romanu Sanje Pilić ni prisotna zgolj ob prikazu kršenja norm (nespoštovanje zakonov in tabuji v romanu niso niti omenjeni, kar se sklada z dojemanjem, da je v otroški književnosti vzgojnost v duhu obstoječih vrednot in kulture do neke mere pričakovana), temveč je razvidna tudi skozi pozitivne veljavne splošno sprejete sociološke obrazce vedenja.

V romanu *Jesam li se zaljubila* (2006) Sanja Pilić z namenom pozitivnega vpliva na mladega bralca tematizira vidik idealne kulture, pri čemer skozi zgodbo podaja univerzalne vrednote. Deklica Zlatka prihaja v leta, ko se vse vrti okrog ljubezni, hkrati pa je to obdobje učenja sprejemljivega vedenja v različnih socialnih odnosih. V romanu se zrcalijo sociološki in kulturološki odnosi, ki vladajo znotraj skupine mladostnikov na njihovi poti odrasčanja. Temeljna sociološka delitev med mladostniki ima dve skrajnosti: šminkerje in odpadnike. Šminkerji želijo biti modni, upoštevajo trende masovne kulture in materializma, odpadniki pa so tisti mladostniki, ki so vzgojeni v »starih« vrednotah. Nikakor ne smemo prezreti skupine, ki želi pripadati prvim, torej šminkerjem, a si tega ne more privoščiti. V tem romanu stopa v ospredje tudi sodobna tehnologija, ki vpliva na najstnike, pisateljica pa dokumentarno beleži govor mladostnikov.

V romanu *O mamama sve najbolje* (1990) – delo je napisano postmodernistično, glavni lik ni otrok, temveč mati v tridesetih letih – se prav tako kažejo temelji kulture, v kateri je roman nastal. Roman razkriva smeri nove kulture, hkrati pa vsebuje tudi univerzalne moralne vrednote, po katerih naj bi se živelo. Najvažnejša vrednota je ljubezen. Ideali in vrednote so predstavljeni skozi netipično družino, v kateri živijo mama Karamela, oče Valdemar, hči Naranča in sin Lastan.

Sanja Pilić v svojih mladinskih delih kaže na kulturološke vrednote in ideale ob izbranih literarnih likih, ki nikakor niso tipični, še več – na nek način njeni liki pripadajo subkulturi. Tovrstne postopke bi lahko razumeli na način, da želi avtorica prikazati kulturo v sijaju vseh njenih vrlin, norme pa, ki jih diktira sodobna družba, so pravzaprav marginalne in nepomembne, morda celo prehodnega značaja. Kulturološki elementi v izbrani mladinski prozi Sanje Pilić, ne glede na to, ali pripadajo nivoju idealne, sociološke ali dokumentarne kulture, tvorijo celoto, ki povezuje medosebne odnose in zunanje vplive. Čeprav so tovrstni postopki značilnejši v književnosti za odrasle, je mogoče v analiziranih romanih prikazati celotno kulturo hrvaške družbe. V romanih *Mrvice iz dnevnog boravka*, *Jesam li se zaljubila* in *O mamama sve najbolje* se zrcali kompleksna slika hrvaške kulture (v vseh kategorijah) zadnjega desetletja 20. stoletja in prvega desetletja 21. stoletja.

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