Oscillating between parody and authenticity: Public entextualizations of Serbian Southeastern dialects

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Analyzing public entextualizations and mediated stylizations (Coupland 2001) of elements from southeastern Serbian dialects as they appear in popular music, journalistic discourse, and literary texts, the paper argues that there are social meanings ascribed to these dialects that transcend predictable center-periphery power relations. These meanings, principally conveyed through parody, are informed by different ideologies of authenticity (Bucholtz 2003, Coupland 2003), among which nationally framed authenticities play the most prominent role. The paper pays particular attention to ideological processes which made territorially defined dialects of Southeastern Serbia a means of social stratification: they became an index of bad taste and low-level cultural habits. It furthermore explores both causes and consequences of such ideological transfer, arguing that the inability of these dialects (and their speakers) to fit in the national imagery – due to their ”impurity” and oriental nature – is a central feature that defines them. This unfitting poses challenges to speakers of these dialects who are faced with the problem of linking own idioms with the notion of modernity, but simultaneously opens a space for de-localization of these dialects and for a plethora of meanings created in order to grasp essentially modern conditions of hybridity, in-betweenness, ambiguity and simultaneous detachments and identifications.

Keywords: parody, Serbian dialects, stylisation.