

George J. Marvan (Charles U in Prague/J.E. Purkyně U)

Łysohorsky's Poetic Lachian – a Museum Exhibit or a Message for the Future?

It is remarkable how the notion of Lachian, a language advanced in the interwar period single-handedly by one man and, on top of that, by a poet and means of poetry, anticipated some basic principles of a discipline called socio-linguistics.

Perhaps its uniqueness in the context of (Slavic) micro-languages can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The speakers (and the intended addressees) of the new language represented not a rural population but the “proletarians” of a highly industrialized country (as, e. g., miners and steelworkers).
2. Due to Łysohorsky's German school experience and education, Lachian was created not in an *ausbau* process based on Czech but as an *abstand* language.
3. Łysohorsky's Lachian was meant to be neither insular nor border entity but a bridge between Czech and Polish.

Being the source of controversy since the first days of its existence, Lachian and its poet have their opponents up to now. They might claim that (cf. above) today there is no feedback from the “target” audience (virtually no native Lachian knows Łysohorsky's work), the poet himself had eventually to recognize Czech as the *Dach* language for Lachian (“*Dach* Czech” served for centuries as a point of departure for the future standards of Polish, Sorbian, and Slovak), and his attempt to bring Czechs and Poles closer through his Lachian turn out to be counterproductive – due to this attempt he was branded as a secessionist and renegade.

Once the interest to his poetry reawakened in the 1980-s due to the appearance of his collected works *Laško poezija*, the question was raised: is Łysohorsky's project just “a museum exhibit or a message for the future?”

To answer this question, one can perhaps start with the words of a prominent Czech critic welcoming his first collection: “he adjusted and betrothed his inner spiritual rhythm to the external melody of a speech listened to, for the first time, for that purpose from living lips.” And eventually, in the end, we can close with a claim that the impact of the Lachian poetry was prophetic itself — it foreshadowed by three generations, in its unique way, the idea of European linguistic solidarity and linguistic euro-integration the politicians and linguists are trying to define only now.

It is quite typical for poets and their role as mediators (no matter what they might mediate) that their work is open for more than one understanding and interpretation,

not only by different readers and different generations but by the authors themselves. That is the case with Łysohorsky, maybe even more so, as we deal in his work with a new language. Lachian surprised the poet in its later stage of “development”, notably in the timeless environment of Bukhara and Samarkand – proving to be itself timeless.

Łysohorsky, the solitary Lachian poet, died 25 years ago. Yet Lachian, his *idiolingu*, *idiopoetry*, as we will see, is still present and, in the context of contemporary sociolinguistics, it has still a potential to contribute to understanding and interpretation of this discipline.