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WHEN THE STAGE LIGHTS GO DOWN: ON SILENCED WOMEN'S VOICES, DANCE ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS RESTITUTION

The author's reflections on her own research into dance events on the islands of Lastovo and Korčula are presented in this paper. Her research has been focused on casting light on female roles and components: the veiled *bula* [Muslim woman] in the Korčula *moreška* sword dance and the *lijepa maskare* [lovely masques] in the Lastovo Carnival happenings. During the process commencing from field research, through its positioning in relation to the existing literature and authoritative narrations on these phenomena, to writing the ethnographic text and returning it to the community to which it refers, numerous dilemmas appeared, along with the need for multiple negotiations. The author pays particular attention to the issue of scholarly accountability and the restitution of scholarly approaches, descriptions and interpretations.

Keywords: gender, dance ethnography, restitution, Korčula, Lastovo, Croatia, *bule*, *lijepa maskare* [lovely masques]

Two phenomena that represent the cornerstone of the identity of the island communities of which they are a part – the Korčula *moreška* event and the Lastovo Carnival, which both come under the sword-dance type ethno-choreologically – have been well researched to date and are widely known in literature. Written from the perspectives of diverse disciplines, texts about the Carnival and the *moreška* have largely been the work of male authors who based their stories on the statements of male respondents (members of the Carnival and *moreška* groups), guided by the conclusion that they were the most meritorious for preservation of the Carnival custom and the *moreška* and

transmission of knowledge about them.¹ Therefore, the male perspective of both male researchers and those being researched dominates in literature.

In my own research of the Lastovo Carnival, I tried to avoid the trap of exclusivity, which often accompanies utterances on gender identities, and I equally observed and noted down statements, impressions and personal observations among the male and female participants in the happenings, who form two separate Carnival processions, to come together finally in the concluding dance event. It was important to me to include as many details as possible of that stratified event, in which the participants' gender roles are strictly divided, which also characterises a host of parallel events. Because of the complexity of the Lastovo Carnival, my field research spread over three years and encompassed participation at three Carnivals, and also a field trip during Autumn before preparations for the next Carnival had even started. I utilised that trip for conversations with male and female participants in the Carnival events who, still not encumbered by next year's Carnival, were pleased to remember the last one (which I had also witnessed) as well as all the preceding ones. In that way, I was able to obtain a host of data and stories from various perspectives to compare with my personal insights, and data and interpretations from existing literature, and was able to check at the next Carnival anything that had remained unclear to me after these comparisons. In my Master's thesis that was written on the basis of my research into the Lastovo Carnival [*poklad*], along with my own interpretation and thinking, I set out the various perspectives of my interlocutors: the male Carnival participants [the *pokladari* pl.], and the female *lovely masques* [*lijepa maske*]. (Niemčić 2002a). Indeed, the voices of my interlocutor-dancers dominate in individual chapters that contain dense descriptions of the dance figures, since they are the bearers of the dance, while my voice joins them only in order to clarify the statements. In that way, my intention was to obtain the most authentic depiction possible of the dance event in the spoken/written medium, and closely to examine the awareness of the external quality of my own

¹ Nikola Bonifačić Rožin (1960), Ivan Ivančan (1959, 1972), Ivan Lozica (1984, 1997), Melko Lucianović (1877), Josip Miličević (1977), Antun Jurica (2001). Sanja Puljar D'Alessio has also researched the Lastovo Carnival and, together with Ivan Lozica, has written the scenario for the film *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* [The Lastovo Carnival and its Changes] on the basis of her findings, as well as her Master's in which she focuses not only on the Carnival itself but also on its diverse realities (the realities of custom and performance, television and ethnology, as well as onlooker reality) (Puljar D'Allessio 2000). Vinko Foretić, Ivan Ivančan, Zoran Palčok, Zlatan Podbevšek, Marinko Gjivoje, Igor Lozica and others, have researched and written about the Korčula *moreška* (see Jeričević 1974). Since 2000, female scholars have also started to deal with the *moreška* and write about it (Elsie Ivancich Dunin 2001, Grozdana Marošević 2002, Lada Čale Feldman 2003). In the process, Lada Čale Feldman also focused particular attention on the unarmed female personage – the *bula* – in a comparative symbolical-anthropological interpretation of the attire and structural dramaturgy in historically diverse performances of the *moreška*.

interpretation in the context of the events that define, to a considerable extent, the power relations and diverse views of the events internally. For, as Tvrtko Zebec has said: "anyone who has ever started to dance in their life, is aware that the change of medium inevitably omits many experiences and feelings that we actually only try to conjure up through words" (Zebec 2005:15), so that, by the procedure of introducing a poly-perspective, the reader is supplied with forceful circumstances for his/her own understanding of events (cf. Čapo Žmegač 2006:224).

In my research into the *moreška* on the island of Korčula I focused intentionally only on the perspective of the *bula*, the sole female personage in the event, who has been denoted by the marginalised nature of her voice in field research of that dance event to date.² I found the cornerstone for such an approach in the views of the new ethnography. Namely, however hard researchers may try to be professional during their conversations with interlocutors and attentively report the flow of the conversation (Nahachewsky 1999:183), we must be aware of the arbitrary nature of the ethnographic text and/or the large role played by the researcher in forming the conclusions. Here I agree with all those who believe that "all ethnography is an individual and unique ethnographer's product, determined by his/her scholarly interest, methodology, personal characteristics but also (among other) by the relations created in the field" (cf. Šantek 2004:13). A particularly sensitive fact in this process is that ethnologists often research the subaltern community (the impoverished, marginalised, exploited, weaker members of the community), and largely speak through their own voice and authority in the name of socially weaker subjects (cf. Giordano 1998:36, according to Čapo Žmegač 2006:215). However, in the case of ethnochoreology when it deals with culturally and nationally distinctive dance events, the situation is partly the reverse. Researchers largely select the representative parts of customs, while the subjects of the research are, in the majority of cases, dominant participants in local efforts to preserve tradition: they are the bearers of the main roles, lead dancers, heads of the societies, organisers and – most frequently, men. One should also add the ethnochoreologists acting as observers, and the researchers of dance events who, in keeping with the demands of the profession, "research dance in the context of performance" (Zebec 2006:172). As witnesses, they are to a certain extent themselves interlocutors/subjects of the happenings, who create and legitimise the individual interpretation (cf. Čapo Žmegač 2006:225) according to their own experience, and not only through integration of the direct bearers'

² One of the former *bulas* praised my interest with the words: "Wonderful, this is an excellent move and I like the idea that there will be more about the *bula*, on the dancing of the *bula*, on the opinion of the *bula*, and generally more about the *bulas*, because really little is written and little is known [about them]. Merely a list of who has been a *bula* is not enough" (cf. according to Niemčić 2003:16).

experiences. According to Zebec, ethnochoreological texts depend essentially on the person notating them – as the transmitter of the dance as a non-verbal event in a completely different medium – while that multiple conveyance of the message is destined in advance to partiality (Zebec 2006:167).

After personal experiences of field research into dance events, much pondering and many ethical dilemmas, I inclined to the scholars and researchers who believed that one should research and write and speak out about all the occurrences and phenomena that one encounters. We need to find the space in our texts also to give prominence to the supporting actors in the events, particularly those whom researchers before us, by chance or through lack of awareness, regarded as marginal out of their own unfamiliarity with the integral event, or because, for example, female participants in the event did not enter into their sphere of interest, while the research approach reached only as far as the representative parts of the custom. In such a way, we will probably also succeed after a time in influencing the awareness of people working in the field in keeping with research done to date and respecting the authority of researchers and the profession (not to mention on this occasion the entire system of power relations and the production of knowledge in society), have created for others and for themselves a story that allows only representative parts of the events into their framework.

The role of the *bula*

Let us return to the island of Korčula and my field research into the Korčula *moreška*, a dramatic-dance stage form in which textual, musical and choreographical elements intertwine. There are four personages in the textual part that precedes the well-known sword-dance³ and represents the narrative context of the performance: the Black King, the White King, Otmanović – father of the Black King, and the *bula*, the sole female (and sole unarmed) personage over whom two armies do battle, in virtuoso dance steps and with powerful striking of swords. The introductory dramatic part, in which the main roles belong to the *bula* and the Black King, is followed by the sword-dance, structured in eight choreographic wholes and performed by twenty-four male *moreška* dancers [the *moreškanti*], twelve on each side (cf. Foretić 1974; Ivančan 1973:209-222; Marošević 2002).

The role and significance of the *bula* has been largely analytically ignored to date, although she is a key figure in the *moreška* narrative, a symbol of goodness for whom the *moreškanti* fight. Just as the *bule* [pl.] themselves say: whether the *moreškanti* want to admit it or not, the *bula* is the

³ There are also brief dialogues in between the individual parts of the dance and again at its end.

leading role, battle is done because of her, and there would be no *moreška* without her (cf. Niemčić 2003:24).

In co-operation with Elsie Ivancich Dunin, editor of the book *Korčulanska moreška* (2006), I accepted the idea of researching the role of the *bule* in the Korčula *moreška*, and writing a text about them for that publication. The book contains texts about the *moreška* published previously in the period from 1890 until 2002, and two commissioned texts that were obliged to pass local review and be accepted by the local editorial board. As an ethnochoreologist who focuses on the gender perspective in dance events, I was able in that way to give the *bule* space to present their insights into the *moreška*. In that context, at my prompting, a meeting was organised for the first time between former and current *bula* personages of all generations, with the objective of uncovering and compiling the story of their role in the Korčula *moreška*. By that alone, my entry into the local community was facilitated, contacts with the *bule* were announced and arranged ahead of time, and I was received most cordially and with great expectations.

The *bule* regard their role as the greatest recognition that a young woman of Korčula can receive and as a life-long honour. As one of the participants in the meeting referred to above said: "to be a *bula* is still a lovely thing, for all the young [women] who have been chosen – that is ever so privileged and pleasant" (cf. Niemčić 2003:14). To become a *bula*, a girl has to be graced with a fine voice, beauty and stature. Even today, to be a *bula* is a sign of "pride, honour, courage, beauty, love for Korčula and everything beautiful" (ibid.:16).

The importance of these roles and the overall significance of the *moreška* to all the inhabitants of Korčula created demanding circumstances for local acceptance of my work.⁴ The people of Korčula regard the *moreška* as one of the major keystones of their identity, and do not agree to its relocation away from the original context, space and performers – for any reason whatsoever.

My article about the *bule* (Niemčić 2006a) was commissioned by the local community for publication in a representative publication about Korčula and, in addition to my specific interest, it was expected to indicate the unique nature of the *moreška*, the attractiveness it gains through its symbolism of heroism, manliness, and the victory of Good over Evil. The doubts that appeared

⁴ The Korčula dancers rarely perform the *moreška* away from the island and strongly oppose the idea that it be performed by anybody else. Authorisation is even withheld from the Lado professional dance troupe, which performs the songs and dances of all of Croatia, in that way presenting Croatian artistically arranged traditional heritage all over the world. Although the choreography of the *moreška* exists in the Lado's repertoire, it has only been performed a number of times, precisely because of the strong resistance of the people of Korčula, who protested in the press and had appealed for protection of the Korčula *moreška* as a cultural monument.

in that process were related to my twofold accountability: towards the scholarly community that obliges one to write in a critical way, on the one hand, and towards the local community that had enabled my research on the other, which itself must keep in mind the expectations of tourists, visitors and aficionados of Korčula and its heritage – who are, at the same time, the primary addressees of the publication. This is a case of multiple and also partly conflicting authorial responsibility (cf. Čapo Žmegač 2006:216), which is why I chose the less "invasive", descriptive approach, using largely local concepts and reducing the volume of my own interpretations. My compromise was also guided by the circumstances under which the monograph was being written and/or the fact that the texts were to be accepted and approved by the local editorial board, in which the main arbitrators were *moreška* dancers – but not one single *bula*. In a word, leaving in the background my wish for gender-based treatment of the material (without provoking, in the process, the firm patriarchal worldview of the *moreškanti*), I presented in that article only the statements of the *bule* as participants in the event. I believed that even such an approach would be beneficial in extracting their role from its position of invisibility, and that an important step forward had been made in the fact itself that the local community had approved and commissioned the text about the *bule*, who had been given only a line or two in various written sources until then. Although, in my opinion, having several diverse interpretations does not mean that they exclude each other but, to the contrary, that various perspectives enrich the interpreted phenomenon, I thus omitted my own scholarly interpretation in the name of freeing up space for the interpretations of the female participants in the Korčula *moreška*. In any case, conditions were improved in this way for local reception of the text with reduction in the distance between the scholarly and the cultural community.

Zebec is of the opinion that, by writing about dance and dance events, we convey messages in multiple ways, while our awareness of that fact cautions us to "establish whether and to what extent our attitudes and interpretations are acceptable to those of whom we write, that is, those who, along with our scholarly curiosity and interest, are the basic incentive for the emergence of those texts" (Zebec 2006:168). On that path, I decided on multiple emic voices, aware of my presence that was only invisible at first glance in the text. That is how the ethnographic text about the *bule* came about which did, however, respect the well-established procedure of introducing with a brief description the author's arrival in the field and the encounter with those to be researched, "but when the 'dense description' begins, the author disappears completely from the text" (cf. Zorić 2004:47).

Such a procedure was definitely the outcome of the above-mentioned circumstances that the text had to pass local "review". The French ethnologist, Françoise Zonabend sees in restitution – submitting our interpretations/texts for consideration – "... subsequent control of the research; restitution is

informing ourselves of the consequences that our own observations and analyses have on people, the actors of the research, on whom that objectification of themselves is focused" (Zonabend 1994:4, according to Čapo Žmegač 2006:221). In the example of the Korčula *bule*, an aggravating circumstance was the fact that all the local reviewers were men, while it was the female role that was being researched. Therefore, I took the liberty of ignoring the reviews that entered into the area of female interpretation and imposed the male perspective. My choice as the author was clear: to facilitate the perspective of the sole female role in the *moreška*.

The muffled voice of the *bula*

I shall briefly underscore the key points of gender domination in the Korčula *moreška*. Already from the first meeting with the *moreška* and the attempt at its field research, we encounter the leading people deserving the credit for preservation and verbal presentation of the *moreška*, who are all *moreškanti*. Their stories, as could have been expected, were dominated by themes such as swords, heroism, the virtuosity and demands of the dance, the unique nature of the phenomenon within Croatia, and interpretation of the traditional practices that accompany the *moreška* dancers. The *bula* was not completely invisible in their story, but she was mentioned only in passing. It was only in the meeting with the *bula*, which did not go without saying but was agreed and announced as a new contribution in the research into the Korčula *moreška*, that the details, rules and other insider views of the *moreška* were revealed.

The *moreškanti* want to depict the *moreška* in the way they see it or want to see it, presenting the so-called model (cf. Rajković 1974:133) and/or the conceived order (cf. Rihtman-Auguštin 1982:35) that they do not wish to burden with actual problems, avoiding speaking about the commercialisation of the *moreška* and all that it adds to and subtracts from it, although it is a historical fact that it also leaves its mark on the drama-dance stage work itself. On the other hand, conscious of the researcher outsider and the future reader outsiders, they control their story and present only the ideal variant (on this point, cf. Agelopoulos 2003:80). At the same time, we, too, must be aware that the leading *moreškanti*, the so-called experienced interlocutors, are accustomed to speaking with ethnologists, ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists working in traditional Croatian ethnology and folkloristics and/or to the long established stance of the profession that only the earliest, dominant strata of tradition should be sought (cf. Zebec 2005:19). Therefore, as has long been known, "in meeting the ethnologist or journalist" they "choose the manner of narration or the theme, often depicting it in the way that they think we expect of them" (Zebec 2006:171-172). It is also possible that, regardless of the presence of the outsider, they simply do not want to leave any trace in the written media about the problems of today's *moreška*.

The *bule* have their own female conception that differs from that presented to researchers and authors of tourism brochures by the *moreškanti*.

Since stature, beauty and voice are the main criteria in selection of a new *bula*, each new *bula* has been and is now always chosen by men – the leaders of the *moreška*, that is, the Black and White King. And apart from being responsible for the selection of a beautiful girl, the long-term practice is that the Black King coaches the *bula* in how to move on stage and how best to master her role. Since the revival of the *moreška* after World War II, there has been only one female teacher of the *bule*, Tinka Tedeschi, herself a former *bula*, who, according to how she is remembered by people from Korčula, left her mark on the *moreška* during the 1920s with her characteristic style. According to the *bule*, she was a very talented actor (cf. Niemčić 2003:4). It is probably not by chance that she has been the only official teacher of the young *bule*. Most of the *bule* with whom I spoke never saw Tinka's performance, but they said that Tinka and her acting were always mentioned and that they tried to give a performance as similar as possible to hers when they were on stage. Apart from Tinka Tedeschi, men, mostly Black Kings, were the teachers of the young *bule* from very early on. Tinka taught and corrected the young *bule* until the mid-1970s, but then her role as teacher was fully taken over by men, usually the Black King, Frano Depolo, while he for his part was succeeded as teacher of the *bule* by today's Black Kings and leaders of the societies. During the 1980s, only some of the *bule* sought additional advice on their own initiative and called on Tinka, who was then already an old lady and moved with difficulty. However, she taught them how to use their voice, told them how they should move on stage, and helped them generally with her advice and experience.⁵ The *bule* were aware that they could receive considerably better and more complete training for their roles from a former, experienced *bula* than from their male colleagues, who only looked at their role from the sidelines and that exclusively while they were together on stage, each of them concentrated on their own performance.⁶

⁵ According to one of my interlocutors: "The fact is that we learnt very well, Tinka was a very good teacher and taught us very well how we should speak. I don't think they do that with today's girls, and I don't like the way in which they speak. That *bula* is a personality, not some frightened little girl. As far as I am concerned, the *bula* is a personality who knows exactly what she wants, not to be kidnapped by some idiot, but to fight and protect herself. These girls whom I have been listening to in recent years, they only miaow, but you have to show that you are a strong woman who knows what she wants and you have to show that by your voice. I am afraid that these more recent generations in that role don't show that by their voices, they are far too helpless, [just] miserable girls whom someone has kidnapped" (quoted. from Niemčić 2003:8-9).

⁶ "... At a particular moment I found myself humouring those men who wanted the *bula* to be loud, to be heard. And then I would say, wait a minute, the *bula* is not the one who should be shouting; especially when foreigners appear, there is no longer any need to be understood. Because she has no idea what you are saying, not understanding Croatian, which means that

However, they rarely talk about this, and I even think that the majority of the *bule* accept this state of affairs without many questions or opposition.

The process itself of learning and preparing the *bule* roles provokes polemics among the main actors in that process. The *bule* consider that not enough attention and training is given to them and their roles in the *moreška*; as they themselves say, the *bula* has rehearsals with the *moreškanti* only prior to her first performance and appearance on stage and then, although the *moreškanti* continue to hold rehearsals, the *bule* only appear at the performances according to the schedule agreed ahead of time (which they read on the notice board of the societies). In keeping with that, the *bule* bear considerable responsibility because they learn the text of their role alone, while their movement on stage, which is interrelated with that of the Black King, is subject to improvisations and/or adaptation on the part of the Black King and his momentary inspirations during the performance. Or is it that the *bula's* role is so much overshadowed by the skilful and brave *moreškanti* that no additional engagement is necessary in relation to the diction, acting, mimicry and the stage movement of the *bula*? For their part, in response to the concrete and unanimous complaints of the *bule* concerning the fact that there are no more rehearsals for them after the first performance, the *moreškanti* comment that perhaps that could have been the situation previously (without defining the time!), but not today.

Further, the *bule* speak out in their fashion about the commercialisation of the *moreška*, calling all the *bula* generations from the 1970s to today *tourist bulas*. In other words, the *moreška* has been performed every Thursday during the summer season since then, in order to enrich the town of Korčula's tourism offer, and also to facilitate securement of a source of funding for preservation of the *moreška*. The *moreškanti*, too, are dissatisfied with the frequent performances since, in that way, the *moreška* loses its quality, and its uniqueness,⁷ but primarily, its exclusivity. However, since they do not want to raise this issue in official verbal representation in tourist brochures and representative publications intended for the broad public, they are demanding that the adjective "tourist" be either altered or even omitted altogether.

Women have been omitted for years from communications about the *moreška*, they have never spoken about their role to people who were not

she has to make some sort of gesture to him, something that will make him understand that something is going on here..." (quoted from Niemčić 2003:26).

⁷ There are two societies in Korčula today that are active in *moreška* performance. They are the "Moreška" Culture and Art [C & A] Society and the *St Cecilija* Croatian Music Society [CMS]. The "Moreška" C & A Society was founded as a Republic C & A in 1950, and has been performing the folk dances of other regions since 1971. The *St Cecilija* CMS was founded in 1883 and performed the *moreška* from the beginning of the 20th century until World War II, and then from 1991 when it was revitalised. These two societies alternate performance of the *moreška* during the summer months.

directly connected with the *moreška*, and no-one has ever asked them about their own story, so that they feel themselves to be irrelevant and not particularly interesting.⁸ Thus, they have not had interlocutor experience until now. They do not have the right to decision-making or selection of the new *bule*, even within their Society, and, for years now, the young *bule* have been trained for their first performances by men. All of that is probably the reason for the *bule* being much more open and sincere in stating their views and the facts, for their having a much clearer picture and seeing every detail more keenly, and for them having created the syntagma *tourist bula*. Primarily, they present their role and, indirectly, the entire *moreška*, in a way that is nearest to its actual effectuation, without excessive calculation about what sort of light that could throw on the immaculate Korčula *moreška* as it appears in the written media. The Black and White Kings, former and current chairpersons of the societies, are the ones who are officially entrusted with description and interpretation of the *moreška* and conveying its story, already told so many times that is transmitted to the new generation like an echo, while, in time, they will be passing it on again to some future researchers. For their part, since the *bule* had not had an opportunity to tell their story until now, they had not composed an ideal description of the *moreška* for the public, so they also spoke out about their problems, of how they were neglected and were not on an equal footing [with the men] in the event. In a word, they do not have control of their story (cf. Agelopoulos 2003:80). Talking with the *bule* about their role – despite the above-mentioned insider differences of opinion – I learnt quite a lot of details concerning certain rules and traditional practices connected with the Korčula *bule*, about which little has been said previously in written sources.⁹

⁸ "I think that it's really wonderful, that we, each one of us, is honoured, that we could perhaps talk about it, but you have caught us unawares. So that I see that each of us has been giving all of it some thought. Perhaps some new visions and some new thinking about it all will come out of it now when you have given us some prominence" (quoted from Niemčić 2003:29-30).

⁹ The *moreška* puts on its ceremonial performance very year at the end of July. During the socialist period, this was given on July 27, Uprising Day in Croatia, while today it is held on July 29, the feast of St Todor [St Theodore of Amasea], the patron saint of Korčula (that was also the date of the festive performance of the *moreška* from the 1880s until World War II). That performance was signified by the solemn occasion of collecting the *bula* from her parental home. The custom of departure to the *bula's* house is only touched upon in literature (Foretić 1974:52, Ivančan 1973:216, Ivančan 1974:98). The *moreškanti*, dressed in the costumes of the black and white army, passed through the town to the accompaniment of a small tambourine and went to the house of the *bula*. Already dressed in her costume for the performance, the *bula* was waiting for them and offered them cakes and drinks. After a brief pause for socialising, the *moreškanti*, moved off together with the *bula* in festive procession through the town with all the town watching and support given by the public and the local inhabitants, until they reached the stage where the ceremonial performance was to be given. With time, the prepared spread became richer and more plentiful, and each household tried to

Along with all the dilemmas and multiple negotiations between the standard-bearers of tradition, the local community, authoritative and silenced voices, and scholarly canons and scholarly accountability, the text about the *bule*, as has already been mentioned, was published in a book about the Korčula *moreška* (Niemčić 2006a). Although my voice, the voice of the author, remained largely inaudible, I did not accept the comments that came from the positions of canonised narrations about the *moreška*. In that way, I was able at least to support the *bule* in a quiet, understated way and leave a written trace of their role and their perspective of the *moreška*. On the other hand, representation of their voice was re-enforced by the fact that the text did not come out in a scholarly journal that is read by a modest number of members of a limited public, but instead in a representative monograph issued by a local publisher – the Tourist Board of the Town of Korčula – in the Croatian language, intended for a broad circle of readers, with the purpose of promoting tourism on the island and in the town of Korčula.

About the lovely masques

For purposes of comparison with the role of the *bule* in the Korčula *moreška* and/or 'lack of interest' in it in research to date, I shall add my research into the Lastovo Carnival [the *lastovsko poklad*]. It had drawn my researcher curiosity as a whole, but finally also led to a specific researcher perspective, that of the Lastovo *lijepo maske*. When I spent time on Lastovo the first time,

prepare a more impressive feast. They say that it is like a small wedding breakfast today. That is why the visit to the *bula's* house has been moved to a day or two before the performance, since it is impossible to dance the *moreška* after such ample wining and dining. The procession moves in two parallel lines, the black army led by the Black King in one line, and the white army led by the White King in the other. The *bula* walks between the two kings. The *bula* was collected from her home every year only on the day of the celebratory performance. Since the 1970s, when the growing commercialisation of the *moreška* began, together with the emergence of more active *bule*, a new house has been visited every year, that is, the house of the newly-selected *bula* for that year. The ceremonial performance also marks the introduction of the new *bula*. After the festive arrival of the *moreškanti* who have come to lead away the *bula*, which is an exceptionally important event in her family, and after the ceremonial performance, the new *bula* becomes a part of the active cast of the *moreška*. It used to be the custom that the *moreškanti* gave gifts to the *bula* when she married, which was very often also linked with the end of her career as a *bula*, although some of today's *bule* continue to be active even after their marriage and the birth of a child. Prior to World War II, the *bula* was given the gift of a gold ring, bracelet or a brooch two days after the ceremonial performance. This gift-giving custom was lost after the war, but since 2001, all the active *bulas* receive Dalmatian earrings from the *moreškanti*, these being traditional jewellery. On the one hand, we can follow the traditional role of the *bula* in the family that was passed on from mother to daughter, or from an older sister to a younger one, and then on to their daughters, although one could also become a *bula* even if no-one in the family had had any connected with the *moreška*. In that case, it often happened that a tradition was commenced, so that it carried on to the daughters and sons of the *bulas* and the *moreškanti*.

I spoke with the people responsible for the Carnival, men from the *pokladar*, or male Carnival participants, procession. They informed me in detail about the entire custom, but only from the perspective of the part in which they themselves participated. In keeping with their instructions, I followed the procession of the *pokladars* responsible for the most representative moments in the Carnival, such as the procession through the village with the Carnival puppet, Poklad, riding a donkey, the *culjanje* custom and, finally, the *pokladar kolo*, or circle dance, and the burning of Poklad the Puppet. On my return to Zagreb, I saw that I had spent that entire Shrove Tuesday "running" through the village with the *pokladars*, but that I had seen the *lovely masques* procession only in the distance, since those two processions must not meet in doing the rounds of the village. I realised that in following the instructions of the people who know the most about the Carnival and its history, I had found out nothing about the *lovely masques*. At the end of that Shrove Tuesday, I paused in face of the question as to why the *lovely masques* had remained on the margins of that stratified and picturesque event, even in literature. I do not know how individual authors conducted their research and whether they participated at all in the Lastovo Carnival events (or only enquired about them from their interlocutors at some other season of the year), but I do know that I encountered diverse interpretations in my conversations with the *pokladars*. My field experience does explain to an extent why that was so. To the *pokladars*, their story is the most important one, so that they barely mention those female *lovely masques*. Similarly to the *moreškanti*, they speak proudly about all the details connected with their procession and Poklad the Puppet. In their minds, the *lovely masques* are irrelevant: they do not speak about them unless someone gives the initiative, but they have always been present in memory. I assume that something similar – interlocutors offering partial stories as complete ones – also happened to researchers who had studied and written about that theme prior to me. I followed the *lovely masques* procession in the next year and it was only then that I learnt about the similarities between it and the *pokladars*' procession, as well as about the specificities of the female part of the custom. If I had not been personally convinced of their existence parallel to the *pokladars*, I, too, would probably have continued the adopted researcher practice and written only about the *pokladars* and their *kolo*-dance, while the unique phenomenon of the female chain-dance would have remained completely invisible and unrecognised by the scholarly community.

Similarly to the Korčula *bule*, the Lastovo *lovely masques* were also willing to talk with me, honoured that they, too, were being perceived as participants on an equal footing in the events, and that someone wanted to hear about their story, thinking and the problems they encountered in the preparations for and performance of the Carnival custom. They were also happy to talk about their menfolk, the *pokladars* and/or their part in the

happening, in the way that they saw it – when taking part in their preparations. By my interests and gender identity, I was closer to the female *lovely masques* with whom I was able to achieve easier, more pleasant and open communication, while, despite their undoubted co-cooperativeness, I nevertheless spoke in a more official way with the *pokladars*, accompanied by the perceptible effects of deliberate infiltrations into the researched group (cf. Gulin Zrnić 2005:165).

I feel obliged, both towards the scholarly and local communities, to publish a book about the Lastovo Carnival, as the result of several years of research and participation in the Carnival events. It will contain a dense description of the researched happening, but in such a way as to include equally the *pokladar* procession and the procession of the *lovely masques*, unlike all the descriptions and approaches to the theme of the Lastovo Carnival events to date. Thinking about the reading public for whom our texts are intended, "does not mean that we have to act against our convictions in order to please the broad public, but rather that we systematically create awareness of the need for dialogue and the possibility that the voice be heard of all the participants in the cultural processes that we observe, interpret, and in whose realisation we ourselves participate" (Zebec 2006:169). My interpretation of the Lastovo Carnival has yet to confront its restitution, which could perhaps be an inspiration for the continuance of this text, intended primarily for the scholarly reading public.

And it should be said in conclusion that, despite efforts to obtain a comprehensive overview of complex dance events, such as the Korčula *moreška* and the Lastovo Poklad, both these events are continuing their festive life in the local communities with the aspiration and endeavour to achieve recognition at the global level. So it is that the Korčula *moreška*, having met the UNESCO criteria for protection of non-material heritage, has been entered into the List of Protected Cultural Assets of the Republic of Croatia. By that document, the *moreška* and/or all the people of Korčula have received one more confirmation and recognition of their originality and worth. It follows that the role of the *bule* has also been protected as non-material cultural heritage so that, by her beauty, stature and voice, Miss Korčula competes for the title of Miss World.

The people of Lastovo have only recently submitted their application for granting protected non-material cultural asset status to their Lastovo Carnival. I had an opportunity to participate in their application by writing the text about the Carnival, in which I took advantage of the chance it gave me also to emphasise the "parallel" procession of the *lovely masques*. As a specific value and one more reason for protecting the Lastovo Carnival as a cultural asset of particular importance, I singled out the *kolo*-dance by the *lovely masques* as a unique phenomenon – a female chain dance.

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KAD SE SVJETLA POZORNICE UGASE: O UŠUTKAMNIM GLASOVIMA ŽENA, PLESNOJ ETNOGRAFIJI I NJEZINOJ RESTITUCIJI

SAŽETAK

U radu se iznosi autoričina refleksija na vlastita istraživanja plesnih zbivanja na otoku Lastovu i Korčuli. Fokus im je bio na osvjetljavanju ženskih uloga i sastavnica: *bule* u korčulanskoj *moreški* i *lijepih maskara* u lastovskom pokladnom zbivanju. U procesu od terenskog istraživanja, preko njegova odnosa prema postojećoj literaturi i autoritativnim naracijama o ovim fenomenima, do pisanja etnografskog teksta i njegova vraćanja zajednici na koju se odnosi, nadaju se mnoge dvojbe i potreba za višestrukim pregovaranjima. Naročitu pozornost autorica posvećuje pitanju znanstvene odgovornosti i restitucije znanstvenih pristupa, opisa i interpretacija.

Tragajući za ženskim identitetima i perspektivama te ujedno propitujući i svoj identitet žene istraživačice, autorica je nailazila na brojne prepreke i etička spoticanja oko pitanja kako lokalnoj zajednici predstaviti njima novu, drukčiju žensku perspektivu i time možda narušiti dugogodišnju sliku o njihovom plesnom običaju.

Nakon osobnih iskustava terenskih istraživanja plesnih zbivanja i mnogih promišljanja autorica se priklonila znanstvenicima koji smatraju da treba istraživati, pisati i progovarati o svim pojavama i fenomenima koje susrećemo. Smatra da u svojim tekstovima i interpretacijama moramo osloboditi prostor te istaknuti i sporedne aktere zbivanja, a naročito one koje su istraživači prije nas zanemarili, bilo zbog svog nepoznavanja cjelovita zbivanja ili stoga što npr. ženske sudionice nisu ulazile u njihovu sferu zanimanja, a pristup istraživanju dozeo samo do reprezentativnih dijelova običaja. Tako ćemo vjerojatno nakon nekog vremena uspjeti utjecati i na svijest ljudi na terenu, koji su u skladu s dosadašnjim istraživanjima i pod utjecajem autoriteta istraživača i struke (ne ulazeći ovom prigodom u cjelokupni sustav odnosa moći i proizvodnje znanja u društvu) kreirali priču za druge, ali i za sebe, koja u svoj okvir pripušta samo reprezentativne dijelove zbivanja.

Ključne riječi: rod, plesna etnografija, restitucija, Korčula, Lastovo, Hrvatska, *bule*, *lijepa maskara*