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## **WOMEN DOING A MAN'S JOB: GENDER AND AUTHORITY IN CROATIAN ETHNOLOGY**

The text deals with the phenomenon of the prominent prevalence of the female authority in Croatian ethnology since the mid-20th century up to the present day. Nevertheless, the lack of the typical features of "female writing" indicates that we should search for the "gender" of these ethnographies somewhere deeper in the social moment of the local scientific circumstances.

Keywords: the gender of ethnological theory, Croatian ethnology of socialism, cunning intelligence

*The social power allocated to the male gender selects and constitutes quite different perceptions than those of women, whose spiritual core lies in emotional life. In that area, the man is barred from a flight of thought, and again a full concentration inclined to objectivity, while the women can not so easily cling to a system of thought other than the one influenced by the emotions (Klothilda Ferbers, "Zadatak višje djevojačke škole u razlici od mužke" / The Task of High Schools for Girls Compared with Those for Boys, 1886)<sup>1</sup>*

*From the aspect of human resources renewal in scholarly and research activities, results indicate a strengthening of undesirable trends present previously: reduction in the share of the new scholarly generation, and its excessive feminisation and eliteness in relation to social origin (Katarina Prpić, U potrazi za akterima znanstvenog i tehnološkog razvoja / Searching for the Protagonists of Scholarly and Technological Development, 2000).*

The fact that I am here taking an explicit gender perspective for the first time — and *in full possession of my faculties* — in otherwise long-term research into the social backdrop to ethnographic writing and in spite of

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<sup>1</sup> *Hrvatski učitelj* 4 (1886), according to Župan 2001.

the even more durable fact that I am of female gender,<sup>2</sup> would seem to be something that requires a proper auto-referential introduction. It is not so much the need to seek out whether this is a case of bowing to the confirmed relevance (and *currency*, the favoured explanation) of gender issues in scholarship, or an unexpected "raised gender awareness" in the writer of these lines. Instead, this is an attempt to characterise and place in context the gender traits in scholarly (ethnographic) writing referring to the entire matter that I am discussing. For now only an "interesting feature", while towards the end, I hope, something like a plausibly presented "characteristic phenomenon" of Croatian ethnology, I am focused here on the extreme predominance of female authority which has ruled it since the mid-20th century up to the present day — particularly regarding the fundamental research areas and the institutional atmospheres that are somewhat less influential than the University, *himself*. Women's authority does not represent here a silenced minority, or an renegade, insubordinate fringe; rather, despite, or thanks to, the fact (since this is something which has yet to be established) of the unexpressed nature of its gender subject, it manages to bring out an integral, very complex period in the social and scholarly history of this discipline.

The fundamental obstacle to the rationale comes from the domain of the entangled relations between the dualistic authorities that struggle for the primacy or the gender attribute of the "neutral" — cultural, and hence — scholarly subject. In other words, the question arises as to the right to advocacy in the subsequent enrolment of the *gender consciousness-heightened*, or at least the unexpressed texts in the contemporary field of gender hallmarked anthropology. What are the yardsticks applied by that contemporary, terminologically and conceptually certified viewpoint in the reading and re-inscription of ethnographic texts which are non-identifiable in that sense, but are, nonetheless, *definitely written by women*?

Almost twenty years ago, a direct call was made for adopting *the female perspective* in Croatian ethnology (c. Sklevicky 1983).<sup>3</sup> If there has not been any considerable preponderance of feministic ethnographical texts since then, or those in which gender issues have been the fundamental, or at least the subordinate, preoccupation, it is obvious that the reason should not be sought in so-called lack of awareness or lack of knowledge of the issue's importance. Under such circumstance, it would be additionally opportune to avoid that type of "teleogenetic" procedure that is based on the "genderisation" of those texts in which it has been previously established that they display that very lack of an explicit gender voice or perspective, leaving the question of the foundation on which the

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<sup>2</sup> Although Carver appeals for an end to the equating of "gender" and "woman" (1996), and/or gender studies with women's studies, the fact is that for the time being, due to well-known historical reasons, feminist texts prevail overwhelmingly in that field (cf. Škokić 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Only a few years after the beginning of feminist anthropology. On the status of American anthropology regarding the chronology of gender issues see Morgen, 1989.

initial identification of those two textual areas takes place, and that this is not the mere (and notorious) argument of the identical sex of the writers. Further, even if one manages to reconstruct identical gender positioning, and then the comparability of the methodological preferences and/or similarity of social interest, there still remains the questions of what can now provide the basis upon which one may speak of *neutrality* or even the *inaugural nature* of one of them, hence its susceptibility to the re-inscription/re-writing and "improvement" of the autoreflexive and gender aware discourse, and that it not be a sheer argument of chronological precedence.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, if one were not to give up immediately in face of this question, by which feature would one recognise that mysterious quality,<sup>5</sup> that "female hand" in the practice of the non-feministic writing in Croatian ethnology, a hand which often does not give itself away by facilitatory autoreferential signals, as if it always has "more pressing business", as if it has assigned itself the execution of a completely *male job*?

### **The yearning for knowledge vs. the yearning for creation**

Thanks to various circumstances that have actualised gender issues both in the textual and in the social practice of the Croatian ethnological, and the broader scholarly community, as will slowly become visible here, today's discussion with its described objective still has at its disposal one alleviating element. The necessity is mitigated that, already at the stage of elementary identification of the execution of Protean *non-feministic female ethnographical writing*, one retracts all the active ontological "gender troubles", admittedly perhaps in favour of the less "heroic" but still legitimate possibility of the criteria of such identification being found to be secondary, in the context of texts for which there exist similar *certain-*

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<sup>4</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that other opinions exist on this point, concretely in connection with the unexpressed subject, but thematically engendered "anthropology of women" and "feminist anthropology" as a primarily auto-referential discourse. Henrietta Moore (1988:6) asserts that the former, as "the study of gender, of the interrelation between women and men, and the role of the gender in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems, and political structures" was, in fact, the precursor of the latter (*Feminism and Anthropology*, according to Morgen 1989:8). Moore and Lamphere (in "The Struggle to Reshape Our Thinking about Gender", 1987) claim that that connection undoubtedly exists since "if the anthropology of women demonstrated that ethnographic description and theory was woefully incomplete without understanding women and women's lives, contemporary feminist anthropology goes further, revealing the centrality of gender as an analytic concept in understanding human culture and society" (according to Morgen 1989:8). Diane Elam discusses this question of principle when the relation between feminism and deconstruction is in question i.e. the question of what is precedent or subsequent to what here: "does feminism have to be deconstructed or does deconstruction have to be feminised?" Hence, the question is not how they *go together* but how they *go side by side* (ibid.) (1994:1).

<sup>5</sup> "Some fundamentally mysterious problem usually related to the alleged mystery of all things feminine" (Butler 1990:vii).

*-but-not-also-credible* indicators that they *are not female*, or, in other words, in the context of gender "neutral" texts which have definitely been written by men. I shall justify in a number of ways my calling for help from a valuable recent comment in this vein, despite its apparently incidental nature, and perhaps its complete failure to fit into the entirety of my problem-oriented, thematic and methodological objective. Namely, not only has the contextualisation of one's own scholarly starting point long been considered both a legitimate and typical reflexive procedure, particularly when the female author subject is in question, but a considerable part of recent discussions of the sex and/or gender category in the social and humanistic sciences is based precisely on the detection, social identification and discursive (critical) processing of the direct or "coded" reaction on the *malestream* (Harding 1987). Whether "annoyed" at the attribution of subsequent and reactive character of the female textual output (as an attainment of the general history of gender engagement and the intellectual division of labour), or perceive it as, finally attained, the differential identity of the *female master of the domestic discourse*<sup>6</sup> (but equally if they *cannot decide* whether this has been, historically and evaluationally, the extorted or consciously modelled differential characteristic of "female writing"), the numerous female participants in this meta-scholarly discussion now can at least establish that they have succeeded in something. In other words, after several decades of feministic scholarly practice, "male" writing itself has been increasingly acquiring similar characteristics, answering hypothetical and controversial questions, defending itself back and forth and battling with the invisible representatives of the opposite sex. Therefore, I shall have no hesitation in referring to a luscious example, not only because of the fresh date of its publication (which confirms the currency of what has been a fairly hushed-up matter in domestic scholarship), but also because of the delight that the social connotation of the signatory's signature could invoke, since he is, otherwise, the tolerant and well-disposed director of a scholarly institution which is, at the same time, probably also the largest hothouse of *female scholarly disorder*<sup>7</sup> in the country, an atmosphere in which — if the sexual components in the concept of gender still hold as a cultural and not biological "genre" — the male is in the minority! However, I shall admit

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<sup>6</sup> To a certain extent one could say that the problems of gender identification as a cultural category (and thus also "women's writing") suffer from chronic contraindication with chronological-ontological questions. The notion of contingency, the unique moment, is what prevents them in this. "There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains 'integrity' prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there" (Butler 1990:145).

<sup>7</sup> "Female disorder" was Rousseau's syntagma for the source of all the vices which can finally "destroy the State", which the man resists with his knowledgeability about the stultifying, but not also heinous, enjoyment of wine; it is adopted by Carole Pateman in the multiple and ambivalent meaning of criticism of "male order" in allocating subversive character to female reflexion and activity in general (cf. Pateman 1998:24).

that I am linked with that author by a similar inexplicable discomfort and hesitation when situations are involved in which it is said that it is necessary — if *gender* issues are in question — clearly to "call a spade a spade", because of which, finding ourselves on the foreign soil of the ostensibly direct nature of the link between gender and domination in scholarship, we both try in a similar fashion to save ourselves with "third-sex" humour.

In any case, perhaps the possibilities for empirical self-persuasion about the conclusions on the sexual division of labour in scholarship really are lost at the very outset when "female" scholarly environments as just described are in question, in which the complicated system of social domination is distributed almost exclusively in a uniform sexual-gender environment with, in my opinion, at least two consequences. One is that, in the local same-sex framework of execution of the socio-intellectual authority, the gender paradigm is considerably disempowered, if not completely deprived of sense and even overturned. However, the second consequence is that the probability increases for its not having simply "disappeared", but rather that it is implemented just as a *conceptual internalisation* of scholarly-gender relations of the broader scholarly, and then also the social, community. Namely, not completely insignificant arguments and conflicts of concepts also take place within "same-sex" scholarly environments, because of which not only does contemporary Croatian ethnology fail to act according to some imaginary unified interest and the harmonious principle of "female sisterhood", but, to the contrary, it seems as if the possibility of shaping the disciplinary scene according to the principle of (conceptual, theoretical-methodological) adherence, affiliation and *schools* is reduced even further. The decree that the paradigmatic relation between the scholarly conceptions and authorial subjects is implemented here in the ratio of one against one: "one woman — one conception of ethnology!" (cf. Čapo 1997), supports the hollow ring and/or untransparent nature of functioning in keeping with gender interest. However, the same situation can also be demonstrated in the world of the democratic ideal of diversity, the abandonment of the educational stereotype of the student-acolyte in the scholarly-research medium, just as, indeed, the fact that "ethnological thought (...) does not tend to a school nor does it conform to any school of theoretical thought" is taken as the key condition for "diversification of the theme and the theoretic approach and, of course, more abundant output", when the "female" institute referred to as the main standard-bearer of contemporary Croatian ethnology is in question (cf. Rihtman-Auguštin, Muraj 1998:114). All of this, admittedly, can figure only as an argument about the minimal and marginal nature of the ethnological scholarly community, particularly if the fact is taken into account that the major division according to the gender principle has long since been carried out here, and is still in place today.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> To reiterate: if it is impossible to foresee the predominance of the *female scholarly element* (both by sex and by theoretical-methodological and thematic preferences) at

However, all this does not take away from the fact that we are faced with the paradox of scholarly oases where the external notion of the fundamental conflict solution is attained at the expense of the internal structure, which necessarily and unceasingly re-thematizes the conflict, but no longer as a fundamental one (which is now outside its symbolical scope) but precisely in an extremely arbitrary, strangely unfounded, and sometimes also completely unbearably quarrelsome "female" manner. I believe that any mature scholarly context demands a sufficiently "oblique" approach to the gender issue that keeps it sufficiently distanced from cognitively pleasant or comforting symmetry, and equally from idealisation or sacrifice of the gender category *per se*, far even from the necessity of any recognition whatsoever of self as an individual subject in the determination of these links, since that link is not primarily contingent and empirical on the level of everyday experience, but is relational and metaphoric.<sup>9</sup> What brought out into the open, among other, that very effort of female theory, is the fact that we can not enrol as subjects in this suprasubject connection simply because we are *male* or even female.

If I return to the colleagues with whom I am bound by indecision on whether our small profession is ruled over by "patriarchal" or "matriarchal" relations, then is probably clearer now why that decision is not an easy one to make, for which reason the perspective of the "oasis-like" male subject can make some erroneous everyday conclusions as can be made equally from the perspective of the female subject enmeshed in the same conflicting while seemingly asexual structure.

But here, finally, is that promised quotation from which it is possible to reconstruct instructions in relation to *gender and methodology, gender and the selection of a theme, gender and an inclination to theory, gender and an inclination to history...* in Croatian ethnology and folkloristics.

For decades now, prejudices about the indivisibility of thematic and theoretical paradigms have ruled in our small ethnological-folkloristic profession — as if dealing with *historical themes* and *early strata of culture* immediately means a return to culturo-historical, positivistic methods in research, as if diachronics and the village are the inviolable preserve of respecters of Gavazzi's authority, while the upcoming anthropological theories may be checked only on the synchronic urban asphalt (often precisely on those same themes that are also written about by leading world theoreticians). This is an unwritten rule I have always contravened with delight since the difficulties encountered over long-term research of folklore presentation (and carnivals, particularly) very quickly taught me eclecticism. (...) I am far from 19th century

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research institutes and in local museums, then the same holds for the male element in the institutionally more powerful university departments, as well as on the antique boards of Academies of Science.

<sup>9</sup> Proving general attitudes on the basis of individual everyday destinies here would be equally as uncertain, for example, as convincing oneself through everyday experience of the statistically proven current growth in transitional Croatia's gross social product.

faith in science: knowledge is not once and for all; it, too, is subject to change and interpretation, but I would not exchange the yearning for knowledge about traditional culture for an alignment on a daily basis of my own starting points with scholarly trends. To me, to deal exclusively with theory is teleological escapism — in the humanities, theory is not only an objective but also a means: a tool that has to be maintained, modernised and changed when it wears out, but we also have to use it. (...) By definition, theory is inactive, it is asked about the essence of the existing, it is only an aspiration or a will for implementation? There is no approach to the Other from theory, and without the Other there is neither a dialogue nor an answer. However, let us leave theory and return to the issues in this book (Lozica 2001:8).

There is an evident *ressentiment* here in relation to certain ethnological practice, despite the fact that the uninformed would find it quite difficult to define, starting out to reconstruct it according to this list of transgressions, since the scale unifies barely hidden epigonic nature and frivolous fashionability with the escapist compulsion to theorise "emptily", a tragically unsuccessful desire for activation. If that ambivalence is placed in gender defined scholarly terms, then we are obliged firstly to follow influential feministic thought in that the division of labour in scholarship, particularly in anthropology and ethnology — since they are characterised by radical differences between the theoretical and descriptive discourse — are ruled by a simple principle: the male discourse belongs in the realm of more difficult and sophisticated theory, the female is the contemplatively lighter but labour-intensive field of description. In the book *Women Writing Culture* which appeared as a gender-aware response to the famous *Writing Culture*, the postmodern turning point in the anthropological discipline, Catherine Lutz had the following to say on this point:

Theory has acquired a gender insofar as it is more frequently associated with male writing, with women's writing more often seen as description, data, case, personal, or, as in the case of feminism, 'merely' setting the record straight (1995:251).

Where then can one locate the foregoing complaint about "the terror of female theory" in the atmosphere of the complaint against the overall male occupation of theory. Is this really a case of the "gender truths" controversy, or a specific difference in an endemic scholarly tradition, or even a devastating irreducibility of concepts, including, among other, the concept of theory on the one hand, as a carefully maintained, non-durable "tool that must be used", while on the other it is an oxymoronic theoretical "will for implementation", doomed from the outset, which by a paradox culminates in its female disability (lack of identity and individuality).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> There can be no question of the dichotomy in the comprehension of "theory" in the humanistic sciences: according to one concept, theory is a shaking off of the need to be reflected or "proven" in empirical experience, it is something which is thought independently and is placed in the role of a "supervisor" over empirical scholarly

And finally, what is the specific of the scholarly community in which the complete ideological backdrop, which feminism reconstructs around the male preference for the theoretical discourse, suddenly relocates in the hostile gender camp where it becomes refined female ideology viewed from the male horizon?

It is time that reformed assertions be introduced about the "gender of theory", ranges which are more extremely limited by the partial nature of the conditions of those unsystematic and unsuspected changes in the principles for evaluation of scholarly work. If, as feministic instructions have it, theory, unlike ethnography, is of "male gender", it can be parried by the cultural mythification of direct (field) experience which has been the characteristic of individual periods or, generally, of individual scholarly and cultural traditions.<sup>11</sup>

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notions, similarly to the abstract, philosophical discourse. This is a notion of theory which originated from the realm of literary theory, and became independent of it during the 1960s, and, at the level of meta-theory, brought down "the borders between the previously diverse scholarly paradigms" and, from the 1970s, gave zest to the "strange mixture of their ingredients" (Biti 1995:109). The second concept of theory originates more directly from the notion of scholarly methods, theory is the argumentational and hypothetical backdrop which is proved empirically by the individual methodology. However, in order to be "transportable" into empirically diverse contents, theory must once more be identified as a "process in which statements are denuded of their origin in a writer and his or her experience or are stripped of their reference to a concrete phenomenal world of specific contexts and history" (Dorothy Smith, 1974. "Theorizing as ideology", in *Ethomethodology: Selected Readings*, ed. Roy Turner, Penguin Books, quoted according to Lutz 1995:253).

<sup>11</sup> Part of the reason for constant "resistance towards theory" in national ethnologies, apart from those already known, can also be found in the paradigm "two cultures" as the receptive framework of ethnographic writing, one, the culture of a national elite, the other, of the illiterate or at least poorly-educated common folk to which ethnology has felt (and still does) obliged as the addressee. Therefore, the tacit rules have been oriented, largely up until the present day, towards "understandability" and "concreteness" and similar parameters for clipping the wings of excessive intellectualisation. The paradox is that ostensibly "from the native point of view" the searching out of these parameters often aims at a completely fictive, below average reader, which Radić noticed and condemned long ago as the phenomenon "of cleansing texts to the level of slops for peasants" ("A book for gentlefolk is selected, and then everything is thrown out of the book which is nicer and cleverer, and what is left, that bare bone, that buttermilk, that swill, that hogwash — if you will excuse me! — let the peasant know on and swallow it", (1937:1). You will be cold-bloodedly rejected, too, by the contemporary Croatian "for broad consumption" media if you offer a text which contains "too much theorising", as if the idea has obstinately persisted that it is easy to think abstractly (clean hands, no physical exertion, and "in the shade"). Apart from such a system of values which is probably connected with a general guilt complex because of the transition from (land)working to service and intellectual occupations, as one of the fundamental social transitions of the 20th century, the possibility must also be taken into account that the value of experience (and, thus, that from the field) is measured by the repeatedly confirmed feeling that — "in these regions" — experience traditionally carries a *high price* and that it "is easy to talk" but difficult to do, or, generally, to live.

In other words, unlike theory, experience resists the dehumanisation and academic routine to which disciplines succumb in their human practice, so that it turns out that the "resulting tension between the demands and value of experience and abstraction/reflection can reverberate with the tension of gender politics" (Lutz 1995:256).

So fieldwork, too, can be coded by masculinity, heroism and adventurism, whereby "theory" crosses over into the domain of women. Gender occupation of socially opposed regions in anthropological scholarly practice, according to Judith Okeley, has long, therefore, been led by a permanent mechanism of balancing out and rearrangement, but once again to the benefit of male domination.

Where the specific is described as 'hard', scientific and objective fact, its opposite is 'airy fairy' speculation, emotional and soft-woman's domain. In another context where fact is equated with 'vulgar empiricism' and its opposite is theory, women are seen to be the fact gatherers and men the theoreticians... whatever 'female thought' may be, it is the one which is undervalued (1975:174).

### Cunning Intelligence

*Metic intelligence is generally used in situations which are transient, shifting, discovering and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation or rigorous logic (M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, 1978).*

It is as though, instead of unshakeable arguments, strong opposition emerges to the extension of general conclusions on the gender determination of scholarly activity outside the narrow sphere into which it has been herded by certain, obviously more powerful, determinants of the historical and/or local context of individual scholarly communities. In the same way, it is obvious that hasty conclusions about the sexual hierarchy inside a particular, that is, the Croatian ethnological (folkloristic, culturo-anthropological) communities are obstructed by the differences in markedly discontinued social and historical contexts.<sup>12</sup> When speaking of the period of *socialist ethnology* that was crucial for recent Croatian ethnology, I shall try to include those differences in more detail in keeping with the hypothesis that it was, thus, precisely the *ethnology of socialism* (methodologically directed to the objective of theorisation of research and representation of everyday life) that was the bearer of the *gender*

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<sup>12</sup> According to Butler's radical thesis, moreover: "There is no ontology of gender on which we might construct a politics, for gender ontologies always operate within established political contexts as normative injunctions, determining what qualifies as intelligible sex (...). Ontology is, thus, not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground" (Butler 1990:148).

*hallmarks* of scholarly writing, whether it was testified to or not, by the explicit nature of the expressed subject or any other explicit "evidence".

That discourse, namely, thanks precisely to the "wise hand" which led it, managed to emancipate itself through the process of externalisation and transfer of its social (and ideological) context to a legitimate scholarly subject and interest, so that now it can largely also be characterised as an autonomous and socially aware, although quantificationally — — thematically and textually — relatively unrealised *ethnology of socialism*. If that attainment was realised, among other, by the introduction — at least in principle and declaratively — of the policy of all manners of equality, and thus, sexual equality with a certain reduction in the pressure from *social folklore* permitting this attainment to continue to be "contravened with delight", that still does not mean that some other battle was not taking place beneath the surface equality in the intellectual division of labour.

Although I shall not be developing it in any detail, I point to the convincing assumption that the relatively unfeeling, "syntagmatic" dispatch of Croatian ethnology *into the female substance* actually took place then through other paradigms of power. Indeed, one of them, still active and also one of the most successfully masked hierarchies that determines scholarly activity, relates to the *age paradigm*, which, similarly to that sexual-gender one, is very impractical for presentation in the contingency of social life since biological and cultural parameters again compete deceitfully in the notion of "scholarly youth". In the aura of science, *youth* is comprehended in the terms of positivist *cumulatively*, Hegel's *maturing of essence*, or even as the ethnological and folkloristic imperative of empirical (field) "charging", an *a priori* temporary handicap, but still an equally *a priori* and temporary predisposition in the Kuhn view of scholarly paradigmatic replacements,<sup>13</sup> the modernistic demands for research innovation or postmodernist demands for *search* exhaustiveness and/or the social endurance of the scholarly social peripheries.<sup>14</sup>

In the late-modern scholarly context, additionally marked by the radical social "replacement of the paradigm", when female Croatian ethnologists applied themselves to direct criticism of academic, culturo-historical ethnology and "fans of Gavazzi's authority" and *took power* in the scholarly-research interdisciplinary field (ethno-anthropology, ethnology and folkloristics), perhaps more than as women, they did so as

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<sup>13</sup> "Research interests set in motion the finding of Lehman's famous research projects, according to which the majority of scientific discoveries have been the work of young people. These results are reinforced with Luhn's no less known claim that the creators of new scientific paradigms are almost always young scientists or newcomers into some scholarly field". (Prpić 2000:25).

<sup>14</sup> Study of the up-and-coming generation in the Croatian scholarly community at the end of the 20th century shows that "two thirds of the younger scholarly generation express a tendency to abandon scholarship, while only somewhat less of them are prepared to leave the country and go abroad" (Prpić 2000:12).

representatives of enthusiastic, scholarly and social *youth*, standard-bearers of innovative approaches and closer contact with the actual scene of life. When the role of the conveyor of "foreign" and "modern" anthropological theory is in question, that metaphor is particularly effective in parrying the given model of generation change in science for which *maturity* provides an alibi for deceleration of generalisations, long-term and even permanent postponement of scholarly writing in the name of that empirical charge which is attained through the reputed, self-sufficient and self-effacing, *sojourn in the field*.<sup>15</sup> All in all, the important and characteristic period of initialisation of Croatian ethnology as a modern(istic) European discipline bore the hallmark of female roles, at that time non-stereotyped and different female ethnologists with scant reverence for the entrenched interpretative traditions, above all for the controversially "anchored" female ethnologists, authors who, generally speaking, betrayed the *work in the field* holy of holies in the name of an overwhelming feeling of ongoing "participatory self-observation" in ordinary, street and home testimonies of that *culture of the everyday* which they drew into their author horizon. It was that new discourse, equipped for a more direct — above all "written" manner<sup>16</sup> — of reporting on their own referential framework, that the controversial *female theory* of Croatian ethnology hid itself, the ethnology that imperceptibly and almost involuntarily laid down the foundations of the disputes which appear (or are shown) between the remainder and gender theory. Namely, although ethnographic critical political utterances as well as other attempts at direct social engagement were achieved largely through "softer", more fragmented and subjective texts, in fact it was a case of an *outburst of discursive power* in the then quiet and self-effacing, culturo-historical ethnology of prevailingly male authorship. Here the scholarly interpretation facility was frozen in constant evocation of *some better* historical times which would finally serve as a fitting interpretative context of ethnographic phenomena — for the moment somewhat futilely collected, described, and classified. In the meantime, it was left to "impatient" female ethnological practice to deal with unpleasant social experiences, the ugly, banal and hybrid cultural phenomena, in the obviously less influential — primary research practice.

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<sup>15</sup> "The young still have to see and feel a lot of field before they can begin to arrive at any sort of conclusions. Analogously with that, it is said that the entire orientation of ethnological activity in Croatia has to be towards the collection of material, while the future generation, which presumably won't have anything left to collect, will be obliged, owing to the circumstances, to start thinking and synthesising what we have left to them as a legacy" (Supek-Zupan 1976:32).

<sup>16</sup> According to the most recent and, to an extent, revised insights (Rihtman-Auguštin 2002), in the atmosphere of "hostility towards theory" of earlier Croatian ethnology, theory was communicated orally to students at lectures and in the ethnological field (ibid.:128), because of which "a friendly attitude" to that theoretic body remains an irreplaceable loss for those who were born too late, or perhaps for some other reason, (?!), missed the opportunity to be present on such occasions.

If we were to turn for a moment to the issue of the sexual division of scholarly work, it would be important to draw attention to the fact that the movements for renewal or — literally — the transfer of ethnology, as an old, 19th century discipline, to the post-war European social and scholarly context, was achieved largely by a very specific discursive mixture, the speech of cultural criticism which was derived through scholarly (professional, epistemological and conceptual) self-criticism — in other words, through more or less fundamental and more or less sincere abandonment of traditional ethnological concepts. Even despite the serious differences between the practice of ethnology in the eastern and/or western part of the Continent, the debt from the time of later modernism was unanimous in its ambivalence towards the notion of the *folk*, and/or to national, folk culture (as is today's subject of ethnology, too — but has survived all the general and individual demands for political and other correctness). This ambivalence was related to the process of transition from the traditional peasant into the desired modern, urban form of life and, as a form of generally accepted cultural concepts, ethnology was the most affected of all the social sciences, with the imposition of the most important project of that time — which was literally the project of professional and scholarly survival. Within such resistance regarding the cultural material and cultural discomfort in which ethnology was taking place, an interesting paradox was produced. Namely, as the last of the modern social and humanistic sciences of the 20th century to manage to obtain a coherent theoretical framework of scholarly practice, ethnology, before any of the others, encountered the necessity for radical self-criticism of its own traditional concepts, which were even more radical when the pressures were greater on individual *locations of culture* for clarification of the connotation of romantic, native concepts.

So that risky form of fundamental self-criticism and a liminal state of notions, the imperatives of ethnological post-modernism, together with the fragment, subjectivity, essayism, eclecticism of theory and the "minimalist" cultural perspective — are here more consequences of the struggle for institutional survival than an elegant epistemological or aesthetic decision. There are many more arguments, in other words, for such features of the discourse to be linked with the character of the scholarly communities and the scholarly authors themselves in an environment of multiple and disparate social demands, in which the history of the discipline develops thanks to the tactical practices of the so-called *cunning intelligence*, due the performing practice of professional communities with potentially threatened institutional positions which, according to Certeau (1984), are characterised by the carnival skills of the hybrid collage, inversion and adaptation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In the same article (1995), V. Biti observes "the institutionalisation of semiotics in domestic academic life", among other, in the context of the tactical practice of the domestic intelligentsia, practice towards which he is extremely ambivalent. On the one

The social and political context of ethnological practice in socialist Croatia was marked by the same basic theme — *the people in transition* towards full modernity — and by the cultural (self)criticism which was soon shown to be hypercritical thanks to the ambivalent stance towards the peasantry and, potentially, the nation-bearer population segment which was supposed to represent the *body* of folk culture. That eternal subject of ethnology, due to its unlimitedly extensile nature, was then gripped in a suspiciously prolonged transition from "the idiotism of rural life" — — otherwise a legitimate syntagma of the sociology of the time (cf. Šuvar 1970)<sup>18</sup> — into a modern urban society. However, an uncritical adoption of western consumerism, undoubtedly the most easily transmissible and most pleasant aspect of the "modernisation process", somehow strayed into and became stuck in that transfer, which was proclaimed as a way to leave the backwardness of the old regime. Bearing that in mind, it can be said that what we could call "the sly element" in the survival-oriented nature of the Croatian ethnology of that time, was a performance manoeuvre of *ostensible* cultural criticism of the contemporary, hybrid modernising folk through *actual* criticism of the traditional ethnological concept of the folklore folk, a people with an imaginary past, in which process a new ethnological subject of new consumer customs was forming and/or the so-called folklorism as an aesthetically relativised, but empirically fully certain phenomenology of modern mass/folk culture against the neutral backdrop of so-called cultural everyday life. In Croatian ethnology — and also in the majority of European national ethnologies which undertook similar manoeuvres to modernise the subject — this created a discourse which is an almost paradigmatic example of the peripheral discourse of interiorised, cultural differences (Herzfeld 1987, Lass 1989). Lass is ironic when speaking of the two-faced stance of ethnology, as the official national discourse, towards "our old folk customs". In the sense of the connection with superstition and paganism and other irrational behaviour, the people should abandon them while at the same time retain them as a link with our forebears, our historical heritage which gives us a feeling of durability/permanence. Ethnology and folkloristics use the same framework of folk concepts as a metaphor of their own discourse in which the genre-image of folklore heritage is represented, *the national treasure chest*,<sup>19</sup> but, at the same time — when the time comes — the same concept of the folk serves as a venue for presentation of contingent and evidenced

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hand, the adoption of theories as the "constitutive essences" in the peripheral aura of European academia is the same as their caricature; on the other, there would not even be any theory as an international and interdisciplinary mixture of paradigms if there had not been that "descent".

<sup>18</sup> Although we have no reason to behave towards that fact with too much derision or satisfaction because of possible contemporary attainments in the overall cultural stance towards the peasantry.

<sup>19</sup> "They researched the antiquity and aesthetic values of largely festive folk costume, but not the working clothes or, indeed, the awkward parts like panties (if the women wore them at all!)" (Rihtman-Auguštin 2001:276).

events of historical reality. This is the paradigm of the people as, on the one part, the folklore, metaphoric folk of the Carnival and street jargon, and, on the other, the people as the historical and culturally nameable subject of social changes, the paradigm which was spoken of so impressively by David Carrol in his narratological analysis of the history of the historiographic and ethnographic discourse (1992).

If we now return to the question of occasional changeovers from the descriptive to the abstract level, or the quality of the ethnological discourse which we have also taken as being key to the discussion of the gender issues in scholarly practice, then it becomes clearer that at the concrete time, at the concrete place and for the concrete intention, there are always more favourable moments for showing folk culture as a "theoretical metaphor", and those more suited for its presentation as a describable historical subject. One of the recent and persuasive examples of this can be found in the efforts of the Croatian ethnography of war at the beginning of the 1990s to free itself of representations of the conflict in grandiose — both internal and external — folklore metaphors of tribal mentality, the conflict of civilisations, or the geomantic damnation of that bulwarked and retainer-walled part of the world, voluntarily or otherwise called the Balkans — and to enter into the more risk-laden, more real and less enticing discourse of historical and social realities, and to try to present the experience of the so-called ordinary, common man as its subject. This is perhaps the time for us to venture guesses about possible happenstance when speaking of the presentation of the risky discourse in Croatian ethnology through female authorship, since it was also numerically and qualitatively pronounced and ubiquitous in the wartime ethnography which marked the first half of the 1990s.

However, let us return to the matter of the survival-project of modern ethnologies at the mid-20th century, so that we can conclude: the ethnological discourse of female authorship appeared at the juncture of threatened disappearance of the notion of the folk as the bearers of any identifiable cultural narration whatsoever, which would also have consigned the "dependent" academic discipline to the dust bin of history. Under such an imperative, this discourse found its way by invention of the describable character of what is otherwise the almost colourless nature of ordinary, everyday culture. That culture of the everyday thought which re-established late-modern ethnology was something whose description, to be frank, especially "from the native point of view", was nearer to the narrative and cognitive zero or nought. Hence that effort which Croatian ethnography of everyday life from the 1970s onwards developed further over the modest material, called attractively, though with strain, the cultural everyday life, could be equated with and found adequate to literary plots of deviant themes and styles of estrangement and the use of mundane boredom in intense narrative constructs.

This strange treatment of the definitively un-strange phenomena in the ethnology of modernity managed to draw drab forms of culture into

the continuity of the ethnological discourse, stripping away the previous coating of the genre-based comprehension of folklore culture. It was possible to realise the construct of the new subject in textological terms through the regular practice of criticism of traditional scholarly notions, something that was mandatory in all texts on the ethnography of everyday life, since it was their own scholarly tradition which played the role here of the "textual reference", the surreal nature of the traditional foundation upon which the reality of modern phenomena is implemented, the full existential status of the new ethnographic subject. Suspended in the metaphor of tradition squeezed between national demands and prohibitions on the one part, and the socialist myth of modernisation on the other, the ethnology of the everyday returns the subject to the people in texts of soft, subjectivist discourse which notice apparently unimportant details, but unexpectedly use them to attack the cultural stereotypes, the fictions of the past and of the future. That is the measure of mild, "moderated intellectual criticism" which does not resort to any clear and glamorous political or ethnical-aesthetic proclamations, but is oriented to the undervalued corporeal nature of everyday life, the traditionally female, maternal domains of rear-guard cultural reproduction. If, however, we also include in that scene the symbolic flip side of stereotyped femaleness fixed on her objectionable fairy- witch-like nature, then it would relate to the described efficacy such as was shown by female ethnological practice in mutual confrontations between the official ideological discourse and the ossified tradition of the ethnological discipline. The image of the wondrous and monstrous conjunctions of modernised folklore and folklorised modernity was the banner with which both sides could wave, while its field authenticity contained nothing to which one could object. Perhaps as never before — nor subsequently — the ethnological discourse, thanks to the tactical and pragmatic "female" intelligence ensured a prolific critical position, completely within the borders of the political correctness of the time — between elitism and populism, high and low culture, between sentiment and resentment towards traditional heritage, between global perspectives and the domestic content of culture.

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## ŽENE OBAVLJAJU MUŠKI POSAO: ROD I AUTORITET U HRVATSKOJ ETNOLOGIJI

### SAŽETAK

Tekst razmatra fenomen izrazitoga prevladavanja ženskoga autorstva u hrvatskoj etnologiji od polovice 20. st. do danas. Nedostatak tipičnih feminističkih tekstualnih obilježja u tim etnografijama upućuje na to da nam je "rod" ove etnografije tražiti negdje dublje u socijalnoj i znanstvenoj pozadini lokalnoga trenutka.

Ključne riječi: rod etnološke teorije, hrvatska etnologija socijalizma, lukava inteligencija