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REALITIES OF THE CARNIVAL EXPRESSED BY ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

The starting point of this paper is the idea that the ethnographic film, perceived as a visual expression, shows a certain standpoint about the phenomenon it presents, and enables distinguishing of the layers of meaning that the author, subjects and the viewers attribute to it. By analyzing three films about the Lastovo carnival, the author distinguishes meanings expressed in them, and names them the realities of the carnival: custom-performing reality, ethnologist's reality, television reality and audience reality.

By distinguishing the realities from custom-related and film appearance of the Lastovo carnival, the author describes several components of a process: annual custom performances of the Lastovo carnival, films made during those performances, and the impact and interpretation of the audience and performances and films on new custom performances.

This rounds up an inseparable entity of carnival events on Lastovo, whose basic characteristic is receiving and transmitting messages in the communication chain that extends through time and media.

Keywords: ethnographic film, realities, carnival

I

Every ethnographic film¹ perceived as a visual expression, represents, just like verbal evidence, a certain standpoint on the phenomenon it presents. Thus different films about the same custom provide different interpretations of it, and express different connotations attributed to it. Also, it is possible to distinguish the layers of meaning that are attributed

¹ Since I write mainly about ethnographic film in the paper, I will from now on use the term "film" instead of "ethnographic film". Should I mention feature or documentary film, I will fully name them.

to the custom and its performance by the author of the film, the subjects² and the viewers. This repeatedly emphasizes the interpretive approach to anthropology, which was used as an attempt to express the native's point of view (Geertz 1983), and to clarify the impact of cultural constructions on the perception of social reality.³ Namely, we are no longer interested solely in the native's point of view or the viewpoint of the subjects of the film, but also in the viewpoint of the filmmakers and the viewers, and the scientists who attended the filming as scriptwriters (or independent cameramen). By mutually agreeing on the meanings they all contributed to the form of the filmed event. Joint shaping of the filmed event lasts throughout the process consisting of performing the custom, filming the performance, interpretations of the viewers while watching the film, and during the new, next year's performing of the custom.

By analyzing the films about the carnival on Lastovo, I will distinguish the meanings attributed to it by different participants of the observed process, and will call such grouped interpretations *the realities* of the carnival. Recognition of this multiplicity of realities of the observed phenomenon is important because it enables the scholar to examine it thoroughly, and relate it with the social and cultural context. I will deal with three means of public communication, each mediating (transmitting and expressing through the nature of a certain media) the text of the carnival custom: *performance* of the carnival custom, *film* about that custom, and *television* screening of the film. Film medium will thus take a central role in the entire process of transmittance, understanding and reinterpretation of the meaning of the carnival custom — equally on the part of the performers and of the audience.

The argument about the realities of the Lastovo carnival is based on the analysis of films about the carnival — ethnographic films. The films in question are the television film *Lastovski karneval* (1970), research film *Lastovski poklad 1981*. (1981), and *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999),⁴ filmed in television-scholarly collaboration. It should be stressed that these films present the activities of a community of people in a very specific temporal, spatial and cultural context, that the filmed community wanted to express. This activity was filmed, described by the sequence of takes, sequence of different standpoints of the film author. With the

² By subjects of a film I mean persons or the community that the film shows. I call them "subjects" (instead of "objects") because I regard their role in creating the film as active work with great impact on the final look. Subjects of the ethnographic film decide what they will perform in front of the camera, and the director, scriptwriter or cameraman can choose what to film only after such selected performance.

³ By social reality I mean socially accepted ways of existence of a certain phenomenon or event. For further readings see Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann: *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth 1985.

⁴ "Poklad" is a local term for carnival. Therefore these titles could be translated as follows: *Lastovo Carnival* (1970), *Lastovo Poklad 1981* (1981) and *Poklad of Lastovo and Its Changes* (1999).

meanings viewers contribute to them, films are the points of negotiations on meanings. This way films collaborate in constructing the meanings of the carnival itself which they show.

II

I will shortly present each of the three mentioned films about the Lastovo carnival.

Lastovski karneval, 1970

Exactly one decade after the folkloristic and ethnologic research of the Lastovo carnival,⁵ the Zagreb Television crew made a film about it (1970) based on the script by Ivan Ivančan. Ivančan spent several days on Lastovo prior to the film's crew arrival, talking to the locals in order to make preparations for the filming. During these conversations, the locals described how the carnival was currently performed, how it was performed in their childhood, recalling also their elders' stories. This way they provided an opportunity for the researcher to write a script he thought most appropriate.

Igor Michieli, the director of the film, added several scenes to Ivančan's script in order to adapt the story for television. According to Michieli, twenty percent of the final material was a result of the author's freedom, and eighty percent was really performed by the inhabitants of Lastovo, or at least they had it in their memory. *Lastovski karneval* thus, in the hands of the director Igor Michieli (who spent all his working years filming traditional dances, songs and customs) became an example of standard television approach with all accompanied features: it presents the story with its introduction, plot and climax in the end, fulfills institutional thirty-minute timelines, and gives the impression of objectivity and argued approach led by the voice of "omniscient narrator".⁶ The

⁵ Stjepan Stepanov, Ivan Ivančan and Nikola Bonifačić Rožin (collaborators of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, then Institute for Folk Art) observed carnival events on Lastovo in 1960. This comprehensive research resulted in Bonifačić's handwritten collection deposited in the documentation of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (Bonifačić Rožin 1960). Carnival was, in their manuscript collections, described also by other researchers of Lastovo: Valtazar (Baldo) Bogišić in the collection *Narodne pripovjetke i dr* [Folk stories and other] from the Bogišić's library in Cavtat (Bogišić 1953), Maja Bošković-Stulli in the collection *Narodne pjesme, priče, predaje i drugo sa Šipana i Lastova* [Folk poems, stories, traditions and other of Šipan and Lastovo] (Bošković-Stulli 1953), Ivan Ivančan in collections *Folklor Lastova i Mljeta 1959. god.* [Folklore of Lastovo and Mljet in 1959] (Ivančan 1960) and *Plesni običaji otoka Lastova* [Dance customs of the island of Lastovo] (Ivančan 1972) and Josip Milićević in the collection *Etnološka grada otoka Lastova* [Ethnological material of the island of Lastovo] (Milićević 1965).

⁶ Voice of the narrator explains every action in the film — also the ones whose meanings are clear from the picture. For example, scenes that show the preparations for the making

locals and the performers of the custom on the other hand, do not give a single statement with which they would express their interpretation of the displayed matter during the entire film. Takes are strictly controlled, filmed from different angles, but the action in the film remains uninterrupted, which clearly indicates frequent discontinuity during the filming and the performance of the custom.

As a final product, the film derives from four components :

- 1) researcher's impact on the awakening of collective memory of the local population,
- 2) director's effort in shaping the television story
- 3) carnival, as it exists in its altering way
- 4) willingness of the locals to participate in the making of the film.

Depending on the interaction, but also on the prevalence of certain components, different realities will be recognized in the film.

Lastovski poklad 1981 (1981)

Folklorist and teatrologist Ivan Lozica filmed the Lastovo carnival during one of his field researches with a S8 sound camera. The film was edited⁷ without any verbal explanations by the narrator (only the original sound of the presented event is used), and without the intention to create any specially structured story. It simply follows the flow of the carnival events, announcing only the more important ones by inserting inscriptions between the sequences, such as : "Monday, 2.3.1981, making of carnival masks in the assembly room of the community centre in Lastovo". If a part of the carnival was not filmed, a new inscription is shown instead of it: "Monday, 2.3.1981, after lunch — procession of ugly masks [*grube maske*] was not filmed due to the rain" or "Tuesday, 3.3.1981, burning the Carnival was not filmed due to the lack of material". The researcher tried to show everything he witnessed in this film, and that caused abrupt interruption of one action and transfer to the other simultaneous action. I have already pointed out that the film was not accompanied by any verbal explanations, and as the structure itself is not firm, sometimes the meaning of the presented activities is not clear (for example, why do carnival participants visit and honour a certain house with dance and song). However, Lozica published a paper called "Lastovski poklad 1981" in the edited volume *Folklorni teatar u balkanskim podunavskim zemljama* [Folk

of the Carnival, are separately named one after another, as they appear: "carnival group brings the player of the lyre", "they go to fetch the donkey" and similarly.

Explanation of each action by magical reasons also seems over the board: "primitive bombs will be used for scaring off evil ghosts", "magic formula that they shout (*uvo*) expresses the wish for a good harvest", or "magic dance with swords".

⁷ Short films (3 min) were hand-edited (cut and pasted), and everything that was filmed was used for the final version of the film, except for two or three technically unsuccessful takes.

theatre in Balkan-Danube countries] (1984) and several papers on the research of Lastovo afterwards, and it is sufficient to take these texts as accompanying written material of the film (or vice-versa), and both reports will become more complete in different media.⁸

Lozica's and Michieli's film approaches are quite contrary. As opposed to presenting an ideal pattern of a custom (Michieli's film), the approach of a research film (Lozica's film) inclines to analyzing one, specific performance in its context, which can later be compared to the former or the following one. Unless something unpredictable happens, such as the rain, and prevents the filming, the researcher will not ask the locals to do the procession some other day, but will state in the film that the representation is not complete. Certainly, for further explanation or informative additions, the scholar can always use other media, such as letters, to describe and analyze events that were not shown in the film.

Films filmed with a television camera and those filmed by researcher's camera are completely different works: they present voices intended and aimed at completely different discourses. Lastovo inhabitants can communicate with each other in the film, but they also (directly) communicate with the researcher that is filming them; however, by means of television camera, they communicate not only with each other, but with thousands of viewers that can and do not have to have any connection with Lastovo.

Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene (1999)

The last mentioned film was also a television production. The filming itself began at the initiative of Aleksej Gotthardi Pavlovsky, editor at Croatian Television. Knowing about my interest in films about the carnival on Lastovo, and their impact on further performance of the custom,⁹ he suggested I write a script for the film that would deal with the changes in the custom. Having accepted the offer, I turned to Ivan Lozica, longtime expert and researcher of the Lastovo carnival, asking him to write the script with me, and that we, as researchers and scriptwriters, take part in the making of the film in 1999. This was done accordingly. In the introductory remark to the script we explained the cinematographer's approach as we imagined it.

⁸ Lozica also filmed the carnival with a still camera, and the event was also documented with a series of slides. Finally, he also taped conversations with the informers, and so presented field reports in every media.

⁹ I talked about the influence of television filming on the performance of the custom at the scholarly conference "Pomen vizualnih informacij v znanosti" organized on the occasion of 15 years of existence of "Avdovizuelni laboratorij Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti", that was held on 27 and 28 October, 1998 in Ljubljana.

Introductory remark: Scriptwriters forecast three dimensions in the film. The first dimension is Melko Lucianović's description from 1877, that will be shown in the background. The second dimension is imagined as encrustation of the parts of Michieli's film from 1970. The most informative parts should be chosen. The third dimension consists of our footage, that show the present state of the custom. This third dimension was imagined by scriptwriters as the most "artistic", therefore a tangle of slow motion, play of the colours in foreground etc. We want to give space to "atmosphere" takes, we want to emotionally colour new footage and oppose them to the "educational documentarity" of the older materials.¹⁰

It can be observed that the film enables different voices to talk about the same custom. Except for several performers, Melko Lucianović's text from 1877, director of the film *Lastovski karneval* (1970) Igor Michieli, and researcher and scholar Ivan Lozica are also talking about the custom. In this way the film expresses different personal experiences of the same custom, and enables the viewer an active role in its interpretation necessary for the creation of his own (viewer's) reality of the Lastovo carnival. Lasting thirty minutes, the film offers an opportunity for the performance of the custom to represent itself visually, and people who participated and still participate in the life of the performance, to talk about it using words and feelings.

¹⁰ From the script for the film *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999).

III

Whose story was it? Was the film our story or his? By what means can we distinguish the structures we inscribe in films from the structures that are inscribed upon them often without our knowing, by their subjects?

David MacDougall (1992:29)

Contrary to MacDougall's polemical tone, an enthusiasm with the possibilities to clearly and unquestionably present reality by means of the new discovery, film, was spreading in the end of the 19th century. Boleslav Matuzewski was among the first who was seriously concerned and wrote about documentarity of the film: in the pamphlet *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire* (Paris, 1898), he admits that the film might not present "the whole story" (something we would today call broader context), but certainly offers unquestionable and absolute truth. It is a true witness and it is infallible; shows the distance between two events in the take with mathematical precision, and can check verbal reports if people deny them or argue about them. Matuzewski ends with a wish that other historical documents also have the same degree of precision, testimony and certainty (see Macdonald & Cousins 1996:13-14).

Enthusiasm with film documentarity still lasts, even though absolutely disputing all the characteristics Matuzewski was thrilled about. As pointed out before, the present understanding of a documentary and ethnographic film implicates expressing numerous voices which totality enable the viewer to have his own opinion about the presented phenomenon. Polyphony, however, implicates numerousness of their realities (or ways of perceiving).

By distinguishing realities from the films about the Lastovo carnival, a process appears. This process begins with annual customary performance of the carnival on Lastovo, and continues with films made during these performances, and interpretations of the viewers of the performances and the films.

On the level of custom practice, carnival events on Lastovo create a a) custom-performing reality. Films present, apart from the performers' realities, other realities out of which I distinguished b) television reality of the carnival events on Lastovo in *Lastovski karneval* (1970); c) ethnologist's (scholarly) reality of the same events in *Lastovski poklad 1981*; and both television and scholarly reality in the film *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999), both clearly represented in the attempt of expressing polyphony. The locals in the role of audience of the customary performance and the audience of films with their interpretation create a d) reality of the viewer. Concordance in realities of the observed process are especially interesting if we perceive them as constants in perception of the custom, and as its possible ideal model. In interpretative detachments, it is

possible to read the levels in which the custom exists, and whose interreaction makes it real.

**a) Custom-performing reality.
Lastovo carnival on the level of custom practice**

Talking about folklore performances, Ivan Lozica emphasizes that they are not unique or single: they repeat with variations, and in that very repetition, series of performances through time, a communication chain is realized (Lozica 1990:286). Talking about the Lastovo carnival on the level of custom practice, I will narrow the general term "performance" replacing it with "custom performance". Furthermore, by performance communication chain I will not only imply a series of performances in time, but also their series in different media, and the Lastovo carnival on the level of custom practice is only the first performance in that series. The following one takes place in television (and/or film) media, for unlimited number of times, and then new ones take place in the carnival time, in spontaneous custom-performing way. Viewers of one performance (film) are performers of others (custom), so the communication chain works in that sense too. However, it is my task to analyze custom-performing reality as one of the unities that build the observed process of the Lastovo carnival performance. Custom performance is the first one in the observed process, and it distinguishes from the other performances (like each of them separately) among other things by a unique context. The uniqueness of context of every new performance is determined by a somewhat changed group of performers, by a new way of performance, and different viewers with new interpretations — different reality. Every new customary performance expresses a new reality.

According to performance theory, viewers of the performance are necessary participants in the understanding of it as a totally specific expression of culture, and reading and interpretation of the messages it communicates; they are, together with performers and context of performance, a constituent part of the performance and creators of part of the custom-performing reality (Bell 1992:42). Interpretation of the custom through the prism of the performance imposes the category of audience, not as a separate body that judges the performance, but, on the contrary, as a constituent part of the performance that partially shapes it with its existence. Or, more precisely, shapes custom-performing reality. Jean Alter explains this phenomenon as shaping the texts of reception of the performance that is read, among others, by the performers. Performers shape custom performance by anticipating the horizon of the viewers' expectancy that is noted in the texts of reception (Alter 1991:211). This completes the unseparable unity of custom-performing reality whose main

quality is receiving and transmitting messages in the communication chain that extends through time (and partly through media).¹¹

Communication in custom performance of the Lastovo carnival is carried by:

- annual performance of carnival events that takes place in a totally specific space and time context, and is accompanied and supplemented by the activity of the present audience,
- building of texts of reception that the audience transmits to performers so that they would read them and interpret them,
- new custom performance that integrates performer's interpretations of last year's receptive texts, new temporal and social context, somewhat changed structure of audience and possible changes in the structure of performers, which determine changes in performing, and
- repeated making and transmitting of reception texts from the audience.

By analyzing the communication chain of the custom performance change appeared as one of its main characteristics. With every new performance, new receptive and production texts develop that influence one another and the future performances. In understanding the custom performance it is necessary to distinguish the elements that regularly repeat. In every new performance, such, traditional elements, are being supplemented by changing elements, sometimes hardly noticed changes that can, by slow process also become traditional elements. Balance of interrelations of changes and traditional elements create the uniqueness of certain performing realities.¹²

In the attempt to understand custom-performance reality, we should, therefore, distinguish the meanings and messages that certain custom performance produced by taking place in a certain context. The Lastovo carnival in 1997 and 1998 (or any other year) is not the same event; it is the same custom, but in different custom performances, and, with different realities. Apart from traditional and changing elements, the reality of one custom performance incorporates everything that the viewers and

¹¹ In some cases, custom — performing reality can partly be transmitted through film medium (as in the example of *Lastovski karneval*). Then the communication chain widens in the place of building of receptive texts on the side of audience. Except for the viewers of the custom performance, viewers of the film about the custom performance are also included in the chain, and they also send their perception texts to the performers of the new performances.

¹² In my master's thesis *Lastovski poklad u filmskom mediju* [Lastovo poklad in film] I presented traditional elements of the customary performances from 1970, 1981 and 1999 that were registered in films, and those from 1998 and 1999 that I recognized personally being present at the performances. Also, I distinguished the changes in the custom played in the period between the oldest saved description of the Lastovo carnival (description of Melko Lucianović from 1877) and my last stay on Lastovo when I was for the second time present at the custom performance of the carnival (Puljar D'Alessio 2000:93-95, 96-98).

performers, and participants on any other level experienced through its progress.

Still, I will not go into analyzing this in detail, because my primary intention is to point to the existence of many realities of one event.

b) Television reality

In the text with a significant title *Television and Anthropology: An Unhappy Marriage?* Marcus Banks speaks with discontent about ethnographic films that mostly fill television pointers about documentary film: staged conversations with narrators, use of "set", leaving out of long takes, and generalized presentation of the custom of "people with no past" (Banks 1994:36). Many papers have been written with the attempt to answer why this is so, and answers were searched for in the conservatism of television medium, in its responsibility to demands of the mainstream audience, in emphasizing the fun and informativity as basic institutional roles of television. Personally, I think that one of the problems of television presentation of reality is its attempt to discover universality of essence, the idea of a shown phenomenon or event. By presentation of one idea of the phenomenon, film shows only one reality of many possible ones to the audience, but also one of the most dangerous, because it is considered as complete and the only one.

Furthermore, according to Aleksej Gotthardi Pavlovsky, the aim of the film is to attract the viewer, and it is filmed and shown for anyone who pays television subscription (which implicates a wide scale ranging from uneducated to highly educated) (oral communication by Pavlovsky, see Puljar 1997:41). Such placement of films within frameworks that are defined mainly by the levels of ratings is characteristic for media and commercial understanding of ethnographic films. Television medium primarily educates viewers to accept a certain pattern of films, shows, or news, and then that same television presentations cannot be detached from it to maintain the ratings. The basis of the cultivation theory is creating a unique way of observing phenomenon and events through media systems of messages, thus enabling standardized ways of understanding the world. By supporting the dominant ways of watching and understanding the phenomenon, media offer homogenous versions of social reality, getting the audience to accept only these (McQuail 1987:99). So the uniformity of ethnographic films becomes necessary, because the audience would not accept a different approach, but would simply choose another program to watch. Variety and totality of the phenomenon and events that ethnographic films show have to be reduced to television language understandable to all. *Lastovski karneval* (1970) completely satisfies the grammar of that language: in the frame of the set time it led us into the story about the magical roots of Lastovo carnival ("magical" will always attract the viewer). Then the omniscient narrator introduced us into the most important events, not dealing with any individual one for too long so

as to sustain quick pace and the level of interest necessary for a average viewer (whoever that may be?). The end of the film is marked with culmination of the event: burning of the Carnival and magnificent carnival round dance [*kolo*] on the main Lastovo square. Structure with which the director "delivers" television reality to the viewer seems like a bunch of nicely and meaningfully arranged takes, accompanied by verbal explanations of the same takes, and everything together represents one story about "them" that our medium transmits to "us". We found out and saw everything that is important about Lastovo carnival that could be expressed visually.

We are awakened from this dream that the pictures like windows show the world as it is by Bill Nichols who reminds us of their nature of analogous or iconic sign.

Many films encourage the delusion that they visually show the physical world as it really is using realistic style. Nichols points out that the appearance of the sign itself speaks about the absence of what that sign means, and that films should be understood as mediators to the physical world, mediators that with its activities give and take primary meanings of the phenomenon (Nichols 1981:21). Thus the film with its presentation mediates between physical reality and the audience, and like a filter lets only some peculiarities and components through. It is interesting that the audience expects television to present the social reality, but simultaneously allows it certain criteria in the way it presents and selects only some components of that reality. They learned to read media messages with expected types of approaches, depending on the types of programme. It seems that the audience realized that "despite the film's 'real world' origins, it can be argued that the processes of selection and editing create a unique world that only really exists on the television screen" (Wright 1992:274).

Television programmes that deal with ethnographic themes can be put into categories depending on the level of remaking the social reality. Some films are more, and some less "personal", or "television" (with all the meanings that I attributed to that quality so far), some express polyphony, and some are portraits. In the multitude of approaches that the director can choose in presenting the phenomenon viewers can orientate themselves, as they are "educated" television viewers.

But, the difficulties do not appear so much in the viewer's recognition of the approach with which film presents its reality, but in unvaried presence of several of them.

Igor Michieli, director of *Lastovski karneval* (1970) speaking about the filming of the ethnographic film undoubtedly describes television shaping of reality: film has to have its base in the certain phenomenon or event from which according to the logic of dramaturgy a story is then shaped. Possible absence of some of the components should, according to the logic, be noticed. In that case, a phenomenon has to be stage-managed, shaped, and filmed as if it existed (Michieli, verbal communication, 1998).

A finished film is an interpretation shaped from the interaction of the author and sum of many different versions of a constantly changing phenomenon, and framed by institutional regulations on duration, structure and profoundness of the film expression. A careful reader could remember that part of the experience and understanding of the phenomenon from people who live it, is too small in television film, but such characteristics of television reality can always be explained by aspiration for "objective" and distanced presentation of social reality and the world.

It seems that removing the television smoke screen and thus enabling the viewer to discover his individual conception of the carnival events on Lastovo was made difficult in the circumstances that were forced on him by *Lastovski karneval*. But, the fact is that this film was never intended for viewers who would search for their own understanding of the carnival events on Lastovo in it. The film was supposed to show a phenomenon supplemented, shaped into a story, staged and objectively shown. Such film expression desperately needs script and firm direction, and the locals and the performers of the carnival events have to, often, obey the director's orders concerning the time and the way of performing certain acts. A television ethnographic film that is so burdened with the characteristics of a feature film loses the value of both ways of expression.

The reality of a television ethnographic film about the carnival on Lastovo thus becomes one of many, and one of those in which the author invests great effort of making and shaping. The problem of that same reality is that it negates such meaning with the way of expression, and tries to present it to the audience as the only objective one.

c) Ethnologist's, scholarly reality

Asen Balikci in the text *Anthropologist and Ethnographic Filmmaking* wonders what the anthropologist's message is and what the role of ethnographic film is in its spreading. Relying on the Boasian tradition, he explains anthropological message as descriptive approach to the culture with the viewpoint of the cultural relativism, and considers ethnographic film more than appropriate for its transmittance (Balikci 1988:40).

Film expression really enables descriptive approaches to the culture with its characteristics; generally, expression through films is primarily descriptive. Many ethnographic films have shown that their basic aim can be spreading anthropological message, and that cultural relativism is most frequently expressed through polyphony, or by letting the subjects of the film speak for themselves. Trying to present the standpoint of the film subjects about their own way of life, these films come closer to the ethnological aim of understanding the world of Others. With such an approach they express the reality of ethnologist with which the scholar, time and again, wants to grasp and understand the reality of cultural and social phenomenon (that he is observing) and its actors.

Lastovski poklad 1981 and *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999) express, among other, a scholarly reality. Ivan Lozica, filming *Lastovski poklad 1981* approached carnival events in a scholarly descriptive manner, and simply followed the phenomenon with the camera, relying on analogous signs of picture, and describing it. Furthermore, trying not to impose, and in any way change the flow of events, he tried to let them speak for themselves. Unfortunately, a deeper personal approach (at least of some) performers is non-existent in the film, but mutual agreements and performing of events give us insight in their experience. Certainly, with his framing and deciding which scenes should be filmed and which not, Lozica inevitably expressed his reality of the carnival with this film. Without deeper insights into personal experience, without television filming with its regulations, film is certainly expression of the scholarly reality of a custom performance.

Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene expresses scholarly reality in a different way. Less with the approach of noninterference, and more with getting into personal discourse, scriptwriters tried to, using the method of conversation, express personal experiences of participants and witnesses of the carnival events. Furthermore, scholarly reality is expressed with problematic approach to film expression, showing the change in the custom, instead of its pure description.

Two examples of the scholarly reality expressed in two films speak different languages. One is a language of noting down the data with much less personal interference. Using it, the scholar tries to express the phenomenon as it is in its natural and cultural surrounding almost positivistically. The other language is the language of encouragement, or

provoking reactions with questions conceived and made based on the basis of personal scholarly idea on observed phenomenon (changes in the custom). Bill Nichols explains coexistence of different languages of the scholarly reality understanding the ethnographic films as scholarly studies based on personal field research. With such conception he gives them the role of solving the eternal contradiction between "objective" knowledge and personal experience on which they were, as field reports based on (Nichols 1992:49). It seems that the two films, *Lastovski poklad 1981* and *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999), with their different approaches expressed two final points of the scientist's expression of reality. Film as a data source enables interpretative analysis of the content, and problematically made film enables interpretative analysis of discourse. A vast amount of film works bridges a gap between such expressed scholarly realities. However, it has to be pointed out that each one of the vast amount of realities, as these two final ones, is equally important in surveiling the obstacles that inhibit visual anthropology in accepting and understanding visual expressions of different approaches.

d) Reality of the viewer. Interpretation of the audience

In the time characterized by custom and ritual events, as carnival time is, an analysis of television and custom-performing reality in the light of their extremely performing nature is being imposed, and that later enables observation of taking and changing of the roles of performers and viewers in different contexts of the performance of the Lastovo carnival.

Namely, this is about already mentioned process in which the audience unites custom performance of the carnival, television filming and showing of the film of the carnival, and new and always different next year's custom performance. Beside understanding the audience as co-makers of text (performance or film text) in the frames of the viewer's role, I will also speak in this part about the audience that is simultaneously the subject of ethnographic film and performer of the custom performance. The audience is reading meanings from the performance text and the film text and also, in the role of performer and subject, is giving further meanings to the same two texts.

It is possible to observe interpretation of both performance and film texts parallelly since the theories of reception are equally primarily developed with the readers of written works.¹³ And only then are they in force on the audience of theatrical and other performances, and films. New paradigms have given the leading role in the making of meanings to the reader of written, theatrical and film texts. Reception theories have, thanks

¹³ Iser, for example, feels that the reader is included in the text, and so he calls him "implicit reader"(1974) and Eco talks about "model reader" that the writer projects in the text or about "ideal reader" that partakes in the creation of the text (1979).

to the attention they give to the social process of communication, been accepted in the observation of public media, and thus television as well.

In the observation of films about Lastovo carnival, and interpretation of the meanings they give to the viewers, it is possible to apply Eco's theory of "open" and "closed" texts (1979). Open texts implicate a communicational and interpretational dynamics, and strong interaction between the reader and the text. Such texts were created with "ideal reader" in mind, to whom they open a multiplicity of possible interpretations of meanings. Closed texts on the other hand carry within the notes on the ways in which "model reader" can interpret them. Just like open texts put certain limitations to the meanings they provide, closed texts are not totally specific; it would be more precise to say they have a firm significant frame (Eco 1979:9). According to such division, I classified the film *Lastovski karneval* (1970) as closed text, and *Lastovski poklad 1981* and *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999) as open ones.

A closed and firm structure of the complete text, the voice of the omniscient narrator that provides the viewer with one, reasonable and convincing explanation in each scene, and the lack of expressed different conceptions of the carnival events, are the characteristics that classify *Lastovski karneval* (1970) as a closed text. Inside the firm frame individuals can always interpret something new and different from the author's conception, but general message sent to the viewer about conception of Lastovo carnival will not be unnoticed.

Lastovski poklad 1981 is characterized with the lack of any commentary, narrator's explanation or verbal expressions of the performers themselves. Also, this film does not have a firm structure that would send a certain message to the viewer; it is rather a personal visual concept of some event on the level of collecting data, after which their interpretation can follow. Stated characteristics classify the film in Eco's category of the open texts.

I also classified the film *Poklad lastovski i njegove mijene* (1999) as an open text. My reason for doing that is its openness to a multitude of readings, and interpretations of the custom performance they show. Polyphony that speaks through it, should enable or encourage the reader to express his own voice. This characteristic is sufficient for classifying the text as open.

In the films perceived as texts I explicated the position of the possible reader, the one that the authors of the texts have in mind during their making. But, as Martínez warns, possible reader of the film text should be separated from the actual one, and he suggests nominal difference of the "possible audience" (*viewers*) and the "actual audience" (*spectators*) (Martínez 1997:74). In the analysis of ethnographic films both categories should be included, because only in this way it is possible to interpret their entire meaning. By analyzing the reception of the possible audience that the film creator had in mind, as the one of the actual

audience, a wave of meanings that the film transmits spreads. Therefore I will further, in order to complete the vision of the reality of the viewer, ponder upon actual audience of the performance and films about the Lastovo carnival.

Theory of the reception of the theatrical performance necessarily includes the performance and the audience. Interaction between the stage and the audience is the base of all reception theories (see Sauter 1988:6). It is possible to spread this conception to the custom performance during which, as in theatrical performance, the audience is unique in each performance, and with their interaction with the performers meanings are created. The difference between two performances is in the place of performance, which is static in theatrical performances (stage), while custom performances can and do not have to be performed in one place: the border between the audience and the performers is not so distinguished by space, as it is symbolically (for example with dressing or acting). When the carnival parade goes around Lastovo, spectators can be anywhere, bearing in mind only not to cross the parade's path. Carnival costumes (red and black uniforms) clearly distinguish the performers from the audience, and their festive behaviour, singing, dancing in front of certain houses, and the final performance of *Pokladarsko kolo* [Carnival round dance] on the square of Dolac, separates them from the other locals without the need for the stage.

Communicational circle of the theatrical performance can also be applied to the custom performance. In five different relations between individuals and groups of people that communicate within the frame of the theatrical performance (or custom performance) the significance of the audience is obvious in total shared experience. Communicational chain is opening a) with the interaction with which the performers create a separated small world, and it continues b) with the relation between the audience and that world. Communication is realized also with c) interrelations of the performers, and d) interaction of the audience and the performers, and ends with e) interaction within the audience itself (see Bennet 1990:76). Audience in the communicational chain of the performance (and thus custom performance as well) does not act only as a unique body, but as a group of individuals of which every one can separately participate in the creation of the meaning of the performance. Still, as a member of the group of spectators, an individual inevitably shares his meanings with the other spectators, influences their perception as they influence his, and with this mutual influence the communication circle of the performance concludes. Once again the Lastovo carnival provides clarification of theoretical interpretations. Conversations of the locals in which they evaluate the making of bombs, dance performance, and the seriousness of the performers, are the example of the interaction within the audience. With exchange of impressions a special atmosphere is created, and after a while people from Lastovo remember certain performances according to general ratings of the carnival events. Carnival

participants will know straight away how their performance was rated, and will certainly apply that knowledge in the next year's performance.

During the television screening of the film about a certain performance, interaction of audience and performers will be absent, and with it it will lose the characteristic of public event or performance.¹⁴ Interruption of the communication circle of the audience and performers is one of the basic differences that separate the television screening of the performance from its "live" option. Furthermore, audience of the television expression of the carnival is different from the audience of "live" option because of the absence of public participation of the event, and quite decreased control of power on its reception. I remind that next year, part of the audience of the television expression will become the audience of the custom performance, and in that way blur the difference in two ways of participating; but precisely the double role of the audience is a specialty of some ethnographic films, and thus of the films about Lastovo carnival. This presupposes that film maker replaces the responsibility towards the subject of the film and to the audience, with the responsibility towards a larger body that unites the subject, performers and the audience. In the intertwining of performing, making of films and repeated performance of the Lastovo carnival, a merging of the performers, audience and the subjects of ethnographic film into a unity took place. The audience thus, as a part of this complex body, gets an even more prominent responsibility during the creation of meaning in ethnographic film, than it would otherwise have only as reader of film text. Performers who subsequently were the audience of at least one of the films about the Lastovo carnival have certainly received the film's messages, but they also attributed new meanings; and certainly used them in the new customary performances. But, in the sole making of the film, performers/subjects certainly were not a passive group of people that expects the director to tell them what to do; they participated in the making of film, and thus made impact on future annual performances of the carnival.

Trying to get to the bottom of the reality of the viewers of the Lastovo carnival, I observed viewers themselves as the readers of performance or film texts that are the participants in creating their meaning, and thus their own reality. Then I pointed out the uniqueness of the totality of the process that sometime develops during the making and screening of ethnographic films: the audience of the film and of the performance is frequently the subject of the film and the performer of the performance. Rethinking the reality of possible reader that the author has in mind during the creation of the (performance or film) text, as well as the reality of the actual reader that the text interprets, I indicated

¹⁴This is relevant only to the situations in which the viewers of the film expression of the performance will not be performers or co-makers (in any way) of some of the next custom performances.

multiplicity of meanings that interchange in observed communication circle.

Have I with this approached one, relevant interpretation of the Lastovo carnival? No. I approached the understanding of multiplicity of interpretations and appreciations of each one of them. As, according to Mark McCarty, the mission of ethnographic film is to grasp the feelings, sounds and language of the culture from the intimacy of the ones who are part of it, and show the culture to the others for serious and reasonable evaluation (1995:74), so is, among other, the mission of ethnologist to understand the interpretations of such culture; not only interpretations of others, but also its own members.

IV

By separating four spheres of reality from the custom and film manifestations of the Lastovo carnival, I described several components of a process: annual custom performances of the Lastovo carnival, films made during those performances, and the impact and interpretations of the viewers of the performances and the films on new custom performances. With this, an unseparable unity of the Lastovo carnival events is rounded, and its basic characteristic is receiving and transmitting the messages in the communication chain that spreads through time and media.

Understanding the reality of the custom performance as everything that the viewers and performers, and *participants on any other level* experienced during the event, I was able to include scholarly or television making of films as the constituent part of the process of carnival events. I observed the viewers as the readers of performance or film texts, as participants in creation of their meanings, and thus their own reality. Since some of the viewers of the films are the performers of the carnival events, meanings that they create get more spontaneously and quickly to the new performance, than it would be possible if they stayed only in the viewer's role. By media entering the process, thus, roles of some participants multiply, and transmittance of meanings intertwines and accelerates. Still, in all three cases of the filming of the Lastovo carnival, the scholar who intertwined his way of understanding the observed phenomenon in film expressions (and thus in the whole process) was also present, in this or other way.

By pointing to intertwining of described realities that can be read in the ethnographic film expressions, and in the total observed process, I want to stress two ideas:

- 1) It is possible, by careful observance, to separate many realities and many meanings from the ethnographic film. Doing so its role in the scholarly analysis could be much bigger. Ethnographic film, thus, expresses realities.

2) Making an ethnographic film makes an impact on the observed phenomenon, event, or culture, and becomes part of the new social reality, and sometimes causes the chain of new events and meanings in the process. An ethnographic film, thus, creates realities.

By understanding the ethnographic film as means through which more than one reality is expressed, and as a cause of creating new realities, the question with which visual anthropologists have been dealing with for a long time, and which Timothy & Patsy Asch shaped, does not seem so crucial:

Is film more about the people filmed or more about the filmmaker?
How subjective or objective is the specific information? (Asch & Asch 1995:336).

A film talks about its subjects, and about the filmmaker, but not only about them. It talks about each viewer through its interpretation, about media limitations, about new circumstances for the observed phenomenon that appeared during the making of the film. Thus multiple realities expressed with ethnographic film lessen the importance of the question of its subjectivity and objectivity. For all participants of the film process (performing-filming-screening-watching) their own experience of the film is the most important one, and whether it is the only and objective one, is not that important. For ethnologists, however, such explicated multiplicity of experiences of ethnographic film and multiplicity of realities it expresses, can only be useful. It enables them to observe the phenomenon the film shows in much wider context than it was the original intention of the filmmaker.

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ZBILJE POKLADA ISKAZANE ETNOGRAFSKIM FILMOM

SAŽETAK

Svaki etnografski film shvaćen kao vizualni iskaz izražava, poput verbalnog iskaza, određeno motrište o pojavi koju prikazuje. Tako različiti filmovi o istome običaju pružaju njegove različite interpretacije, te iskazuju mnoga značenja koja mu se pripisuju. Analizom triju filmova o lastovskome pokladu autorica u tekstu izdvaja njima iskazana značenja i naziva ih zbiljama poklada: običajno-izvedbenom zbiljom, zbiljom etnologa, televizijskom zbiljom i zbiljom gledateljstva. Nadalje, razumijevanje običajne izvedbe kao sukusa svega što su gledatelji i izvođači, te *sudionici na bilo kojoj razini* doživljavali tijekom njezina odvijanja, omogućuje uvrštavanje znanstvenog ili televizijskog snimanja filmova u sastavni dio procesa pokladnih zbivanja. Izdvajanjem zbilja iz običajne i filmske pojavnosti lastovskoga poklada, autorica opisuje nekoliko sastavnica jednoga procesa: godišnje običajne izvedbe lastovskoga poklada, filmove snimane tijekom tih izvedbi, te utjecaj i tumačenja gledateljstva i izvedbi i filmova na nove občajne izvedbe. Ovime je zaokružena nedjeljiva cjelina lastovskih pokladnih događanja, čije je osnovno

svojtvo primanje i odašiljanje poruka u komunikacijskom lancu koji se proteže kroz vrijeme i medije.

Znanstveni interes za motrište ljudi istraživane kulture ili subjekata filma u ovome se tekstu širi i na motrište filmskih stvaratelja i gledatelja, te znanstvenika koji su kao scenaristi (ili samostalni snimatelji) prisustvovali snimanju. Svi su oni u međusobnom dogovaranju o značenjima pridonijeli oblikovanju snimljenog događaja. Filmovi tako postaju poprišta pregovaranja o značenjima, te time sudjeluju u gradnji sustava značenja poklada.

Ključne riječi: etnografski film, zbilje, poklad