

Vučinić-Palašček, Gordana. 1995. *Position of Woman & Atitudes in Croatia*. Zagreb: CEMA - Centar za istraživanje marketinga (na osnovu ankete: Žene. OMNIBUS anketa u Hrvatskoj. 1995. Zagreb: CEMA - Centar za istraživanje marketinga).

Žena i društvo. *Kultiviranje dijaloga*. 1987. Zagreb: Sociološko društvo Hrvatske.

PICTURING THE TIMES OF WAR: THE SUFFERERS AND HOPE

SUMMARY

The paper deals with the sufferers of the war in Croatia (1991–1995) and a female journalist who was engaged both professionally and personally in helping the sufferers. She was one of the editors and a host of the radio show "Hello! - Good morning, Croatian Radio speaking". She has become the symbol of the show with time, and the show has been identified with her. She gained the reputation of a humane person who is willing to offer sufferers hope, compassion and many sorts of concrete help. She connected, through the show, the ones who needed help with the ones who were willing to offer it, ranging from collecting necessary things to searching for missing people, connecting members of refugee-families separated by the war, mediating in achieving the refugee rights and hospital treatments. The show found its way to displaced persons and refugees in Croatia, to the ones who stayed on the occupied parts of Croatia and in camps, but also to the ones outside Croatia, in neighbouring countries.

The sufferers and other people phoned during the running of the show, searching for information and/or help. They wrote letters entitled to many people, and to the journalist personally. She is called by the pseudonym Hope (*Nada* in Croatian) in this paper. Hope published two collections of selected letters and her journalist writings on the war and the sufferers. The shows and letters describe the sufferers as people who are frustrated by the official forms of humanitarian aid, they talk about their unsatisfactory communication with the officials and with bureaucratic way of behaviour they often encounter. The weak points in world system of taking care of displaced people and refugees, that is, in the concept of "humanitarian aid" is also to be recognized in the Croatian experience: the low-worthy status of a sufferer -- a victim who is a burden for others, sufferers as objects of care instead of being subjects of creating their own destiny, help as moral and material superiority of the helper and a source of further frustration of sufferers and an obstacle for their integration into a new surroundings. Letters show the sufferers as proud, ashamed, but also grateful people, who think about their destinies, who fight the passive role of a victim, and who are ready to accept every offered hand and comforting word in order to part with their despair and resignation. They are critical towards the world, especially European, but also Croatian politics, especially towards the misuses of humanitarian aid. Some of them give priority to the achievements of national aspirations, in spite of the enormous suffering they had gone through, and it helps them to accept and bear their sacrifice.

The published letters are precious accounts of the individual, personal destinies, and some of them also contain information on the life of a village before refugees had to leave it (history, traditions). Majority of the published accounts are a part of the genre of documentarist prose, that is, autobiographic literature, which means that they can be scientifically analysed using different approaches of literary theory. Hope also read selected letters in her shows, more often only parts of the letters. Listening to the show and reading mail, it becomes clear that the show managed to connect many people, unite sufferers and the ones who had not been directly hurt by the war, but had suffered because

of other people and the difficult destiny of their homeland. The show was a sort of therapy for the both, and the role of the host was important here as well.

It is interesting that the show also motivated writing about the sufferers. The show and the two books mentioned earlier made public essays and poems inspired by suffering, exile, and patriotism. They were written by the sufferers themselves, but also with the compassionate people who suffered because of the destruction of their regions or the whole country. Certain folklore elements and formulas can be recognized in those poems and essays.

People who suffered by the war in any way were also searching for a warm voice and a compassionate look, a good heart and soul, encouraging of their faith and hope for the future, obtainable help -- they were searching for a humane relationship and love. The show and the sufferers' letters their observances describing the journalist show us they have found all of it in Hope. All of these characteristics have melted into one single person or symbol, derived from the philanthropy in its best female version which is, according to the traditional perception, maternity, so that Hope has also got nickname "Mother of Refugees". Although the metaphor of maternity was to be used in order to praise publicly a modern, professional and humane woman, the survived rhetoric and the use of stereotypes and female symbols still testifies of the non-recognition of women and their potential in our present times.

In autumn 1995 Hope was offered a high political position. She accepted the challenge and she takes care of war sufferers in her new job as well. Hope is a trustful person and a shoulder to cry on, but also more than that -- she is the mediator between the weak and the powerful. The power of mass media (radio and television) is embodied in a philanthropist and approachable person, who is at the same time a woman, who encouraged the sufferers to trust her, to speak to her freely and who offered them the possibility of their claims to be transmitted further, even to the utmost power, the governmental power. It is not by chance that a woman plays this role and that the solidarity network started by her was largely female. Now she is "power", she is not expected to mediate, but to make decisions, and she is most probably going to be responsible for any oversights she makes.

(Translated by Sanja Kalapoš)