

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORITY IN A “FEMALE” DISCIPLINE

TRANSITIONAL ETHNOLOGY UNDER THE “RULE OF WOMEN”

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Abstract: The supremacy of female authority in field such as ethnology or cultural-social anthropology, is here strongly related to the situation in European *transitional* scholarly communities. With a main example of “the rule of women” in Croatian ethnology from the mid-20th century up to today, it will be analysed as a matter of profound contextual causes which, when Eastern European setting is in question, reach as far as the paradox of “socialist national ethnologies” itself.

Keywords: female authority, ethnology in socialism, transition

“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)

Generally accepted opinions perceive the *feminisation* of some scientific discipline as a clear sign that it is, if not “the common sense itself”, gradually losing funding, social influence and academic pertinence. On the contrary, the female authority and ethnological practice will here be approached as an evidently functional and thus potentially affirmative scholarly characteristic. It is, as we hope to show, a vital element triumphing – sometimes in an almost “amusing” way – over the serious crisis of the discipline from the turn of the 20th century.

We are not, nevertheless, supported in such cheerful idea by some favourably inclined dimension of local scholar conditions. In fact, the obscure explanations of the “trend of feminisation” seems to culminate in the transitional scientific communities and general state of mind. Supported by a whole scale of ideologically and “ontologically” mixed social values, the explanations of “surplus” of women in par-

ticular discipline is finally taken as a real symptom of its epistemological deficit. Social and professional cynicism, as the prevailing state of affairs, here makes any statistical increase or decrease equally “suspicious”, although in the collapse of the credibility of any autonomous scholarly indicators, the reason never becomes completely clear. Taken out of the “glamorous” context of post-modern theory, the subject of *scientific authority* is finally pragmatically reduced to *a job*, and placed within a frame of references where her/his *gender* is only one of the objective indicators such as pay, years of service, age and – as we will soon see – somewhat mysterious “social origin”.

Thus, a recent research of the state of Croatian scholarship showed that:

“From the aspect of the renewal of human resources in scholarly research activities, results indicate a strengthening of *undesirable trends present earlier*: reduction in the participation of a rising new generation, *excessive feminisation and elite status in relation to social origins*” (PRPIĆ 2000: 21).

In other words, Croatian scholarship is currently ruled by middle-aged women of elite social lineage, but survivors of “earlier present trends”, which is causative to the fall in the elite position of scholarship in today’s society (!). This extraordinary analytical conclusion leads us to the adequate questioning of the entangled circumstances that pool age, gender and social origins in adversely evaluation of these curious scholarly “aristocrats”. How does it follow that a *lack of youth* is adequate to show an *excess of women*? What is the relationship between the factor of social origins and the “factor of the menopause”? Is, in other words, social descent exhausted in accordance with *biological* or the *political time* and how does one ensure its “termination of validity” among the new generation? Finally, where have the *males in their prime* disappeared to in all of this? Were they not the standard-bearers of the scholarly social elite, the sacrosanct interpreters and prophets of social reality?

“Perhaps privileged white men and poor exploited men are in different genders as political subjects”, wrote correctly CARVER (1996: 7), but what sort of *gender trouble* are we in if, as in our case, the socially privileged female scholar is placed in the position of the detrimental political subject?

Deduced contextually, this can only be a matter of the thesis on “the continuity of the socialist elites”, together with the stubborn and incurable *socialist mentality* – the argument dominating all the judgements on the current state of *nations in transition*. The majority of today’s social, economic and political problems, including the scientifically pertinent brain-drain, are interpreted in that corpus as a problem carried over “from yesterday”, as a problem of unbridgeable state of mindset that prevents the birth of the new, transitional human. When the public debate in Croatia is in question, the *heritage of socialism* functions with equal success as a rationale for social criminality and “resourcefulness”, on one hand, and the social inertia of the “non-entrepreneurial spirit”, on the other. The thesis developed by the prominent Croatian sociologists (cf. ŽUPANOV 2002; ROGIĆ 2002), claims that the late Yugo-

slavian socialism, characterized mainly by social conformism and idleness of all the social classes, totally deprived the intellectuals of their professional credibility and dignity. While the workers functioned as "bogus manikins in bogus factories",¹ intellectuals, social scientists, and Humanists particularly, undertook shameful forgeries from the authentic sources and objectives of their profession, or, at best, languished at universities copying faded but safe quotations from their free, Western colleagues. The braver and more capable ones were faced with the fact of "how Croatian society was far too poorly researched for even slightly more imaginative or witty interpretation, while we won't even mention precision. In such a context, only a skilful writer of essays had any chance of surviving as an author" (ROGIĆ 2002: 7).

The question now is how the women managed to endure through the times of cynical falsification of social reality?

THE FEMALE "FLIGHT INTO THEORY"

According to influential feminist opinion, the division of labour in scholarship, particularly in anthropology and ethnology – which is characterised by a radical difference between the theoretical and the descriptive discourse – is ruled by a fairly simple principle: the more difficult and sophisticated theory has its place in the male discourse, while reflectively less demanding but more labour-intensive description pertains to the female discourse. Writing about this division in the book *Women Writing Culture*, which appeared as a gender-aware response to the famous "Writing Culture", the post-modern crossroads of the anthropological discipline, Catherine Lutz had the following to say:

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

Still, at the end of the scholarly century that, particularly in its second half, enthroned the predominance of the meta-theoretical discourse, ethnography occupied a paradoxical position. Under the taboo of representations in social sciences and Humanities, an entire scholarly practice was reduced to a position that we can conditionally call *female*. The subordination comes down to the essentially overriding and subsequently deduced *second-class quality* of descriptions in the entirety of the process of producing knowledge. However, since empirical scholarship can never fully develop into the Theory, ethnography becomes a contraband vital element in the entirety of social sciences – on the seesaw of the imperative post-modern charac-

¹ All functioned, according to the thesis, as "manekins of the Epoch-making Programme of Liberation, who thought that "every triviality they concocted must be very expensively remunerated" (ROGIĆ 1998: 44).

ter of anthropological theory and the obstinate *modern* character of every cultural reality encompassed by scholarship.

So if we now are witnessing a return to more direct, more descriptive and more empirical ways of writing in ethnology and anthropology, it is merely a foreseeable change in the tension between scholarly demands and the evaluation of the experiential data, on the one hand, and textual reflections on the other. If theory can sometimes successfully oppose the mystification of straight field experience, so can ethnography sometimes act as resistance to bureaucratic academic work in which the so-called *armchair anthropologist* used to be regarded as the representative of a more discerning professional aspect than that of the mud-spattered pedestrian and manual collector of the material which “sprouts” in the field. But if experience is intended to resist the dehumanisation and academic routine, the fieldwork, too, can be coded by masculinity, heroism and adventurism, whereby theory crosses over into the domain of women. In that way, the relationship between fact and theory can be changed whenever somebody or something requires it, so it is inevitably linked with some particular power policy. Indeed, according to Judith Okeley, that power policy is precisely and always gender-denoted.

“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 undervaluated” (OKELEY 1975: 174).

Although persisting in her view on the disparagement of female thought, she thus recognises a more structured mechanism which, sometimes and somewhere, rule over the *market status* of “material” and “interpretation”, and their gender allocated roles. It is thus obvious that hasty conclusions about the sexual hierarchy inside a particular scientific community are obstructed by the differences in markedly discontinued social and historical contexts.

When speaking of socialist period, crucial for the recent transitional disciplines, I shall try to include those differences more detailed, keeping with the hypothesis that is was precisely the *ethnology of socialism* (one which was directed to theorisation and representation of everyday life), that was the bearer of the gender hallmarks of scholarly writing. It is on that behalf that we return to the undertaking from the beginning: to observe the issue of the construction of female authority in the concrete social and scholarly context of a small, European, national and, at the same time, (post)socialist ethnology.

Thanks to the “wise hand” that led it, Croatian ethnology managed to emancipate itself both in terms of gender hierarchy of knowledge and the capricious social and political conditions. The move was carried out in an almost paradoxical manner: through the transferring of the social (and ideological) context to a legitimate scholarly subject and focus of critical interest. The “secret covenant” was based on the

tacit *avant garde* position of critical ethnology under the conditions of proclaimed "self-criticism" in socialist culture. In that way, the autonomous and socially aware *ethnology of socialism* was gradually created, although it was largely programmatic and empirically unrealised. Namely, the latent political utterances and other attempts at direct social engagement were realised largely through a "textual experiment", through fragmentary, literally inspired and more subjective ethnographic texts which, long before post-modern criticism, the distanced and mystified *field research* conveyed into their own everyday experience. We do not even have to mention that there was actually more than willingness to allow that "soft" female practice to deal with the persistent cultural discomfort of socialist modernisation, unattractive, banal and hybrid cultural phenomena, in obviously less influential, primary research practice (whose insights might well wait for decades to be proclaimed from the chair of academic departments). In any case, such evidence of *folk culture* in its ordinary, even ugly face, unfolded simultaneously with its treatment as a priceless "treasure chest". So the needed discontinuity between the "two folks", one the standard-bearer of national tradition and identity and the other, carrying out the non-descript practice of socialist ordinary life, was well preserved in Croatian ethnology of the socialist period.

Speaking generally, all the movements of renewal or – literally – surviving of ethnology, as an old, 19th century Romantic-Enlightenment discipline in the post-war European scholarly context, were achieved by a specific melding of the scholarly and critical discourse. Specific in the way that the parlance of social criticism was largely accomplished through professional, epistemological and conceptual self-criticism – a more or less fundamental, more or less sincere abandonment of traditional ethnological concepts. An interesting paradox was produced here: European "national ethnology", which was until deep into the 20th century, thanks to its non-theoretical nature (also anti-theoretical nature, according to BAUSINGER 1968–1969), balancing at the very edge of academic scholarship, was then, and before the other social discourses, confronted with the necessity of "deconstruction prior to deconstruction". It relates particularly to those national disciplines which were encountering strong pressure to clear away the romantic heritage of the *Heimat* concepts and their expanded political connotations. That form of fundamental self-criticism to which, permanently stigmatised with latent nationalism, the Croatian discipline was also subjected, lead to a risky liminal state of scholarly terminology, so that the near-death state of the discipline in the traditional sense lay precisely the atmosphere of new "female theory" and post-modernism as a social scholarly imperative. Essay, eclecticism, the temporary state of interpretations, awareness of the constructed nature of reality – all these were more consequences of the struggle for institutional survival than some elegant epistemological or aesthetic decision. In other words, there are many more arguments for such features of the discourse being linked to the character of the scholarly communities themselves and their authors in an environment of multiple and disparate social demands, and conditions that provoke the tactical, collage-like and fickle practice of the so-called cunning intelligence.

The mentioned idea of the indescribability or even complete “absence” of social reality within the socialist discourses was certainly one of the factors pushing some scholarly orientations towards the “female” modes of writing. One of the basic characteristics of contemporary Croatian ethnology – apart from its numerically expressible “collective feminisation” – is surely sort of individualism and personalisation of the scholarly subject. This is also the reason why it is difficult to present this “national discipline” in a way that would speak in favour of some unified disciplinary or “national” spirit. On the contrary, the very non-existence of a unified and dominant school of thought or authoritative stance, and even a specific lack of systematic quality, was what gave propulsive power to this ethnological community. Especially when the credo of the Zagreb Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research is in question, the fact that “ethnological thought (here) does not tend to being a school nor follows any school of theoretical thought” is in fact the main condition for “diversification of the themes and theoretical approaches in that profuse output” (cf. MURAJ 1998: 41).

Continuing to develop largely as the practice of what can be referred to as “called-upon individuals”, thus of what are, in principle, “detached” author concepts gathered from time to time around certain common projects, Croatian ethnology has of late also been more strongly perceived in its gender character. According to the signifiers of the vacillating consensus that rules here, which does not insist on harmony about the idea of the profession’s identity, it turns out as if it has been directed long-term and successfully by the principle of “one woman – one conception of ethnology” (cf. ČAPO ŽMEGAČ 1997: 192). The causes of such polycentric formation of the scholarly community can be sought in various places, but all of them would probably point to one common source: a complex of epistemological, historic and social circumstances in which, since the middle of the 20th century – particularly in its eighth decade – its fundamental transformation has taken place. The modernisation project here implied resolute squaring of accounts with the scholarly past and, in the context of what were then Yugoslavian ethnologies, established what was definitely the most radical discontinuity between contemporary insights and the ethnological heritage of the first half of the 20th century. The lively criticism of the terminology, methodology and objectives of the local, academically dominant culturo-historical school unfolded parallel with the placement of a demandingly broad, almost unlimited field of new interest that was concealed in the deceptively harmless concept of *everyday cultural life*. So the simultaneous opening up of two critical “fronts” was to result in a absence of sorts of a regular scholarly apparatus. During that period of “discourse in quotation marks” and the temporary use of ambivalent, “doubtful” or newly-coined concepts, research-based critical ethnology turned to the detection of numerous epistemological traditions and “scenes” (Anglo-Saxon, German, Italian, Russian), which not only carried diverse national denominators but also bore the traces of interpretation of their local contexts, contributing to the eclectic aura and tentative character of scholarly conclusions reached (cf. PRICA 2001). Above all, a specific type of theory application, concentrated on remarkable interpretative effects and diversity of interpretation as the main outcome of its appli-

cation to *domestic material*, opened the way for smaller texts with a forceful point and the stamp of author selection, abandoning the practice of "rounding out" the subject areas of projects upon which anonymous generations of professionals would write themselves out. Interpretations with a *name and surname* strengthen the stylistic and literary aspects of writing and speech in the first person, by which this type of ethnography draws nearer in part to the journalism genre and even to essay-like documentation science. However, rejecting the bans but also the security of the "transcendental" authority of the discipline, and particularly the monolithic structure of methodology and the "only fitting" objectives, has, since then, also exposed this type of ethnography to criticism which, ranging from comments such as "unscholarly" through "modish theorising and selection of themes" to the ultimate "betrayal of the essence of the discipline" (an objection which would also await it in its contemporary neo-positivistic relapse), was to be the constant atmosphere of its development. The broadly cast "competition" for seeking out the concepts within which it would be more convincingly identified, named and interpreted a scale of phenomena in the cultural transformation of that time – while not satisfying itself with platitudes about "modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation" – disrupted the traditional comprehension of the ethnological subject and methodology, rejecting also the very imperative of the "fundamental unity" that was considered decisive for maintaining the identity of the discipline. At the same time, this is a process which was largely to stabilize under the name of its "anthropoligisation", although polemics about difference and similarity, local predestination on individual traditions of thought and, particularly, nominal discussions about administrative reallocations continue here to the present day. One of the reasons why it is not possible to categorise the modernisation project of Croatian ethnology during the socialist period into any "constitutive entirety" of the anthropological discipline, lays in the above-described practice of experimental examination and patch-working of methodology and concepts from various ethnological and anthropological traditions. Additionally, theorisation of the profession, set as a primary task by several programmatic authors of the 1970s (cf. SUPEK 1976; RIHTMAN-AUGUŠTIN 1974, 1976), finally assumed a relatively selective, local stance towards the "importation" of theory. Against a backdrop of clear commitment in favour of the German critical school (ČAPO ŽMEGAČ 1997), caution prevailed during the 1980s regarding anthropological structuralism and semiotics, resulting from their, allegedly "ostensible inadequacy in respect of the European heritage to which we are drawn by our historical interest" (RIHTMAN-AUGUŠTIN 1987: 126). In this way, despite more robust critical reception of American anthropological postmodernism and cultural studies from the early 1990s, the trail was blazed for a specifically local, but also typically modern, development of European ethnology.

PREDICAMENT OF “CUNNING FOLK”

Anyway, the phenomenon of predominant female ethnological authority appears at a time of the threatened disappearance of “folk” as the standard-bearers of any type of separable cultural narration. The social and political context of ethnological practice in socialist Croatia was characterised by the basic theme of *a people in transition* towards full modernity, in which the indications of the initial, historical and cultural stations from which some of its parts “set out” would gradually disappear. Socialist *folk* was thus a cultural construct by definition, a temporary, subject-lacking category of an unnameable, fictional human state without precedence. On the other hand, the *ordinary man* was the real, existentially determinable basic subject of the cultural “self-criticism” practiced on a daily basis. Caught up in the suspiciously prolonged transition from “the idiotism of peasant life” into modern urban society, that temporary subject of the common folk missed out even in identifying with his historical model, the working class, since he “became stuck” with time in the adoption of western consumerism – as the most pleasant and easily imitated aspect of the “modernisation process”.

What we can entitle the *cunning element* in the survival mission of the socialist ethnology was exactly the adoption of such unattractive but credible voice, the utterance of the protagonists of cultural flatness, of drab reality of industrialised villages and the rusticated towns. Sufficiently “us” but then again sufficiently “other”, that culturo-historical unclassified, fugitive subject, underscored in the backdrop of the scholarly text, spoke out in the form of unusually convincing “deconstruction” of the traditional, ethnological folk. Installing herself as the supervisor of the ambivalent staging of potential ethnological subject – the *dancing peasants* on folklore stages and socialist festivals, and the eradicated socialist folk of “peasant-consumer mentality” – the ethnologist was able to bear the “self-critical” evidence of the socialist cultural stopgap solution, with relatively little pain in respect of her own social survival. This manoeuvre on the part of socialist ethnology created an almost paradigmatic example of what Michael Herzfeld sees as the peripheral practice of interiorised cultural differences, the socially adaptable *petit* disciplines which, in the name of external demands, are split internally: “their Other has come inside” (cf. HERZFELD 1987). In a similar fashion, Andrew LASS (1989) will speak of the ethnologies of the *autochthonic Other*, but these two authors differ in their fundamental evaluation of scholarship from the European fringes. As is known, Herzfeld undertook research into modern Greek ethnology and the way in which the domestic discipline necessarily falsified the image of its own culture according to the demands of European centres (in this case, a Hellenistic projection which could not come to terms with the fall of the ideal of Antiquity in the modern Greek state). For this author, the position of internal differentiation and awareness of the seed of Otherness around which the cultural and national identification is formed, is pure cognitive and ethical profit – the advantage of a discipline that is shaped largely as “self-scholarship”, being unable to afford itself exteriorisation of cultural differences and cultural unease. For his part, Lass is nearer to the insider, self-critical dimension of

this epistemological position, when he speaks of the history of Czech ethnology as the paradigmatic social framework of ethnologies in continental Europe. Harnessed in the mechanism of creating national identity that the elites implement by cultural taming of a feral and voiceless internal element – peasants as culturally and nationally unformulated population – local ethnological competences are in the service of a process of cultural colonisation *on a small scale*. *Difference in itself* in the context of national culture and national ethnology, always comprehends someone or something in that role, the position of the *domestic Other* – while the ethnologically ambiguous concept of the folk and folk culture is actually perfect for the twofold standards of the enlightened elite towards the uncivilised heritage of the past. Therefore, Lass is being ironic when he speaks of the hypocritical stance of (socialist) ethnology towards "old traditions", the irrational behaviour which the masses should abandon but also retain as a bond with "our forebears", which give us a feeling of continuity. Ethnology as an "official discourse" utilise the framing concept of the folk as a metaphor within which the genre-image of folklore heritage is represented, while – when the right moment arises – the same metaphoric context serves as a place for metonymic presentation of historical reality and its recorded events. That is how the vigorous performative of folk functions: as the metaphorical masses of Carnival and street jargon, on the one hand, and as the historically and culturally chosen subject of social changes on the other (see also CARROL 1992, on this point).

If we now go back to the question of occasional transitions in the ethnological discourse from the descriptive to the abstract level – important for temporary criteria of currency in ethnographic writing, and in that way also key for the gender redistribution of scholarly authority – then it becomes clearer that, at specific times, in specific places and with specific intentions, there are always better moments for presenting popular culture as a theoretical metaphor and those that are better suited to its presentation as a describable historical subject. Determined to clarify the concept of a fictional *folk of tradition*, female ethnologists found out ways to present the subject of their own, the "female culture" of mundane life. In those small, personally coloured, almost "housewifely" reports, themes such as throwing rubbish through the windows of flat blocks and the creation of shortcuts across grassy areas became unexpectedly important to diagnose the cultural state of things.² However banal, plain or trivial its examples may be, the ethnology of everyday life is making an unexpectedly powerful attack on cultural and scholarly stereotypes in mild, "moderated" intellectual criticism that does not aim at any "glamorous" political or ethical and aesthetic proclamation, but is oriented rather to the disparaged substance of everyday life, the traditionally female domain of rear-line cultural reproduction. Unquestionably topical and field-based *ordinary everyday life* was, in fact, the theoretical arena where the "voice of the people" was re-established along with the authority of the ethnology of late socialism. By the extraordinary treatment of

² Both examples are taken from research by the most eminent promotor of the ethnology of everyday life, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (see for example RIHTMAN-AUGUŠTIN 1988).

“far from extraordinary” phenomena, the ethnology of contemporary everyday life managed to drag nondescript forms of culture into the continuity of the ethnological discourse, gradually removing the previous layer of genre-anchored comprehension of folklore culture and installing the new, “realistic” one. In the terms of epistemology, the construct of the new subject could be achieved solely through practice of the habitual criticism of traditional scientific terminology. So one’s own scholarly tradition played the role of “ethnological other”. Inert and mystifying, it was an ideal foundation, “the textual referent” upon which the reality of today’s phenomena, the full existential status of the new ethnographic subject, are realised. We must not forget that the “trick” was done under conditions in which “it was foreseen that, all the *little histories*, particularly the national ones, would disappear under the pressure of the Marxist *grand récit*” (BITI 1995: 111).

Thus the cunning efficacy in mutual confrontation between the official ideological discourse and the ossified tradition of the ethnological discipline, re-establish a conceptual space for the *folk as ethnos*, one which could again – as the future would soon show – play a role of identifiable historical subject.

If we consider the theoretical anchorage of the textual and cultural practice described, then the mechanism of *bricolage* becomes obvious – the practice of *domestic masters* of ethnology who, keeping in mind their ultimate goal, combine from accessible theoretical material, despite whether we call such theoretical work eclecticism, resistance towards theory or even an adaptation or domestication of canonical theoretical thought. Although the ethnology of everyday life was in great need of a theoretical foundation in order to start “from nothing”, there was never any recourse here to the so-called constitutive entireties of any of the anthropological or ethnological theories. Instead of that, small ventures were undertaken in testing the interpretative “recipes” and evaluation of their broader cultural echoes. We can also refer to such a procedure as an interpretative poly-perspectiveness, if we prefer, but it is certain that it served a more fundamental, vital purpose – the “manufacture” of the ontological conditions of the modern ethnological subject. The arbitrariness of interpretation functioned in favour of the certainty, substance and experiential nature of the phenomena of everyday culture, and the broadest spectrum of its exponents, meaning and range. It was not only through pragmatic patch-working and juxta-positioning, along with a slightly indifferent stance towards the credibility and constitutive nature of the “male” paradigms, but also through the enormous growth in the competence of *the science of everything existing*, prepared to transfigure for every new and unforeseen circumstance.

Possessing the skill of tactical writing that DE CERTEAU (1984) proverbially ascribes to the so-called *cunning intelligence* of socially unstable and strained scholarly auras, they appeared as “chattering” witnesses, arbiters or simply as *estrangers* of the so-called neuralgic points of the everyday in the Croatian society of the time.

It is essential to reiterate in conclusion that the described turnabout was not achieved in some legitimate feminist mode: rather than as *women*, these modern female ethnologists acted as representatives of spirited, scholarly and social *youth*,

the standard-bearers of innovative approaches and attempts to bring ethnology closer to the actual scene of life. Above all, that metaphor was effective when speaking of the role of the conveyors of "foreign" and "modern" anthropological theory and parrying with the encountered model of the generation change in scholarship, for which *maturity* was the actual alibi for a "slowing down" in generalisations, and the long-term and even permanent setting aside of scholarly writing in the name of that empirical recharging that was achieved by the well-known, self-sufficient and self-abnegating *sojourn in the field*.³

However, the relatively imperceptible, "syntagmatic" conveyance of Croatian ethnology *into a female substance* actually took place at that time through the same, *age paradigm* that is imposing so much "stepmother-like" accountability upon it today. Similarly to that of sex and gender, the age paradigm is very impractical for presentations within the facts of social life, since biological and cultural parameters compete again in a deceptive manner in the concept of "scholarly youth". Within the aura of scholarship, *youth* is comprehended in the terms of positivistic *cumulative-ness*, the Hegel-like *maturity of essence*, or, for its part, the ethnological-folkloristic imperative of experiential (field) "re-charging". Thus it can be an *a priori* and temporary handicap, but, an equally *a priori* and temporary predisposition – if one is speaking of Kuhn's view of the scholarly paradigmatic rotation, modernistic demands for innovativeness in research or post-modern demands for *search-engine* exhaustiveness. However, when we are speaking exclusively of the social endurance of the scholarly periphery where "two thirds of young scholars show an inclination to abandon science, while only a somewhat lower number of them are prepared to leave the country and go abroad" (PRPIĆ 2000: 12), then it becomes clear that today's image of "middle-aged feminisation" in scholarship is merely a consequence of the fact that, unlike youth, gender (in most cases) *does not pass* with time.

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³ "Young people (as it was suggested), must see and feel a lot more of the field before they can start to draw any sort of conclusions. Analogously to that, it is said that the entire orientation of ethnological activity in Croatia should be the collection of material, while future generations, who probably won't have anything left to collect, will be obliged owing to the circumstances to start to think and synthesise what we bequeath to them" (SUPEK 1976: 52).

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