

## PHENOMENOLOGY OF NATIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHIC-MEMOIR TEXT – INTERPRETIVE EXERCISE OF SCHUTZIAN PERSPECTIVE\*

**Abstract:** The main source of inspiration in writing this experimental essay comes from ideas of Alfred Schutz collected in his capital work *The Problem of Social Reality*. Comprehensions and analytical categories of this major theorist served me as a unique methodological guidebook in analyzing and interpreting the idiosyncratic text (native autobiography proper; ethnobiography) of my ethnographic informant from Montenegro. My intention is to treat this native text of local *bricoleuse* as a laic report of and primary resource for description of the particular cultural version of the everyday world in phenomenological terms. The goal is to understand on this concrete example how the writer as the subject of the narrative places herself in her social world, starting from her biographic situation and using the supply of available knowledge. The anthropological interpretation of the meaning of text should be focused on the actor, i.e. her writing as intended action and its motives within a given socio-cultural context and time perspective.

**Key words:** native autobiography as ethnobiography, social phenomenology of A. Schutz, everyday world as lifeworld, socio-cultural context, time perspective, writing as intentional action, subjective motives and goals (*that-is-why* and *in-order-to*), meanings of the text.

If it is true that social historians and anthropologists have only recently tried to write life histories of “ordinary people”<sup>1</sup> (Zeitlyn 2008, 157), then it is also true that such ordinary individuals and laymen are one step ahead of them

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1 Actually, this genre appeared already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in American ethnographic-anthropological writing (Paul Radin, Leslie White, Leo Simmons and others).

or stirring them to do so, people who owing to their own personal reasons decide to “write” their own lives. Subject of this experiment is a case like this, the personal life-historical testimony of an older Montenegrin woman from the Bay of Kotor. *Here* of the subject is defined by the place of her residence, Orahovac, municipality of Kotor, and affiliation with the local community; that, summarized, is her *world of life and work*. *Now* from which she narrates about her “life in the past”, her growing up during World War II, social changes and the daily routine in the period of Yugoslav socialism to the breakup of SFRY,<sup>2</sup> is defined by personal, internal and the social, standard time: April 1, 1999, a week after the family celebration of her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and the beginning of NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

I should clarify why I categorized this native autobiographic-memoir text, which emerged independently, prior and separately from ethnographic research, as “ethnobiography”. There are several reasons for this: first, because it was discovered and won within the research itself; second, more importantly, owing to the fact that as a personal narrative it possesses certain structural features which make it similar and comparable to other types of personal testimony (life history; oral history; family chronicle) and autobiography in social-cultural anthropology; third, its essentially non-fictitious character and referential function make it a heuristic source for anthropology, historiography, cultural and gender studies, etc. Milena belongs to the calendar generation of 1929 and “cultural-historical generation” (Litvinović 2001, 72–73) which grew up in the cultural epoch of prewar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, lived through the World War and matured in the new, modern epoch of postwar FPRY, in times of country’s renewal and building of a new, socialist social system.

Therefore, I decided, of course with the permission of the author, to make the document available to the public by first of all publishing it entirely in the monograph about Orahovac (Gorunović 2014, 209–270), in order to analyze it later on by focusing on the autobiographic strategy of this self-taught writer and the idiosyncratic features of her text (cultural, gender, personal), viewed as part of the genre in ethnographic-anthropological writing (Gorunović 2015). The expression “unintentional ethnobiography”, which is most likely more correct, represents a compromising solution and results from the realization that the intention of the writer, the meaning which she ascribes to her writing, differs from the meaning and use of text in the reception of an anthropologist as a reader, editor and interpreter (Krupat 2007, xv).

Finally, the fact that I know its author, that we were in a direct relation, face-to-face, inevitably affects also my relation to her text. It is not anonymous to me or an abstract speech of another, as it may be experienced by some other reader, but as spirited, concrete and idiosyncratic in the measure in which I can, while reading

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2 It was not possible to present and analyze the entire document; therefore I focused on those parts of the narrative in which the author describes her childhood and early youth.

it, bring it to life from my memory of the colour of the voice and intonation of the narrator, as well as faces of other people and images of aforementioned localities. Reading of an informant's text is for the ethnographer an act or series of acts which include evoking previous experiences in mutual communication and specific "local knowledge" won by observing, interviewing, etc.

The time dimension of my formal and informal talks with Milena and reading of her story is not the same: while conversation implies presence of both parties at the same time—a situation defined as "common living present of the We-relation" in the Schutzian phenomenological vocabulary—the situation in which I, on my own, interpret the outcome of the communication of the Other, its written form, while not being present in the current process of communication acts can be defined as "quasi-presence" (Šic 2012, 8). The space is no longer shared, common, either: while Milena is *there*, I am *here*, i.e. her *here* is for me *there*, and vice versa.

Writing is a form of work in and on the world, but it is also a symbolic modeling/creation of a special world *in* text. Therefore, the original text can be viewed as a work of language and analyzed with appropriate literary, linguistic and semantic means. There are few intertextual references in Milena's text: most of them are implicit and originating from her cultural tradition, folklore (oral poetry, proverbs and bywords) and the written Montenegrin literature. As well as in the case of artistic work of authors, their identification is conditioned by the literary culture and interest of the reader. Influences can be recognized in the form of free quotations and paraphrases of folkloric texts of Marko Miljanov (2001), the duke from the Kuči tribe, who learned to write at the age of 50, and then wrote down "what he was telling half his life" (Bečković 2001, 6); and maybe also influences of the works of the author Mihailo Lalić (1992, 1995). If Miljanov "writes as he sings" with *gusle* (fiddle), and "demands musical literacy from his readers, as if they were listeners" (Bečković 8), Milena writes as she speaks, that is in the way she does speak, vernacular.

Under these influences she defines her autobiography as "only a small part of remembering, singing and lamenting. But what is remembered longer. The saying goes: good deeds are remembered for a long time, but bad ones even longer". However, the only explicit reference in the narrative is poet Njegoš: Milena interprets the famous verse from his *The Mountain Wreath*, "Blessed is he whose name lives forever/A good reason had he to be alive!" in her own way, „and I say that every man is lucky whom the people gladly remember and mention for his kindness“.<sup>3</sup>

Despite modest claims, her text is more complex and deeper in the factual, structural and semantic respect than it appears on the surface. One of the keys to understanding this personal life document is for the reader to take it and

3 Compare Miljanov (2001, 14): "He who does small acts of kindness shall do big when able"; "Benevolence is our free teacher ...[...]. This teacher you carry in your sense [...]".

evaluate as description of “everyday life as the lifeworld”, *Lebenswelt* (Husserl 1991, §33, §34; Spasić 2004)<sup>4</sup> in the way presented in the narrative, that is, from the “native’s point of view” (Geertz 2000).

The main objective of social phenomenology is to analyze and describe the daily life and states of mind connected to it. Expressions “common sense world”, “world of everyday living”, “everyday world” refer to the intersubjective world which every individual inhabits and experiences within the *natural stance*. The world of everyday living in which we are born is from the beginning “of intersubjective nature”, which means that it is always *already* or interpreted in advance (Šić 2012, 55).<sup>5</sup> It is the world of culture, a universe of meanings for us, “texture of meanings” which we have to interpret in order to harmonize with it and find our place within it. Even though this world is one in a myriad of “bounded fields of meanings”, it is yet “the ultimate”, supreme reality for every person.

According to Schutz’ analyses, the world of everyday living has a special cognitive style whose universally valid features are the following: special tension of the *consciousness* which he calls “complete alertness” or full focus on life; special *epoché*, *epoché* of natural stance, which contrary to Husserl’s method of doubt within transcendental phenomenology “puts into brackets” doubt in the reality of world itself; the prevailing form of *spontaneity*—purposeful acting based on a project and marked by intention to realize the imagined, projected state through action in the outer world; a special experience of your own *self*; a special form of *sociality*—the common intersubjective world of communication and social action; and special *time perspective*, the standard social time as universal time structure of the intersubjective world (Šić 2012, 284–289).

Before I allow Milena to present herself, I wish to say that she is now 90 years old, a widow for 28 years and living in her house in Orahovac together with her middle daughter and son-in-law. Modern Orahovac is a local community in the municipality of Kotor, bordering with Perast. It consists of the suburb of Donji Orahovac at the sea coast, Gornji Orahovac and Dražin Vrt. Gornji Orahovac, from which Milena originates, is the common name for six small villages in the rural, mountain hinterland of the Bay of Kotor and Risan. Milena’s description of her birthplace in the narrative refers to the time before “that first evil day for entire Gornji Orahovac” in February 1942, when the Italian punitive expedition burned villages due to cooperation of peasants with partisans:

Houses were built of stone, some in a den, half ground floor, half first floor—it was done to use cattle in the inn, to have more dryness under one roof. Most of them were covered with brick, others with hay. Inside they were

4 See Spasić, “Everyday Life as Lifeworld: Phenomenology and Existentialism” (Spasić 2004, 54–117).

5 See Schutz, “Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation in Human Action” (Šić 2012, 47–94).

nically arranged, because people of these villages of ours went throughout the world, and mainly to America, to Argentina. Each house was well equipped: all that a household needs for a Slava, wedding and funeral.

After the war, in times of socialism, these upper villages were gradually abandoned due to intensive migrations to the littoral. Donji Orahovac is now a residential area, as well as tourist place in summer months. According to archive sources, Orahovac dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the oldest public building in it, as well as the most important cultural historical monument is the small Orthodox church of St. George on the rock (near Milena's house), mentioned in historical sources mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the Venetian era.

## Writing as Action and Intentionality of Actor

Milena's printed document is titled "A Day for Cheating, April 1, 1999, and I Write History [crossed out by hand and added: Truth]", which is at the same time a polysemous, antithetic and ambivalent title that realizes in the given context spontaneously and convincingly an ironic effect.<sup>6</sup> That is achieved by explicit contrast between the meaning of the date, the Joke Day, and intention to write "truth". Ambivalence, which also contains a grain of irony, refers to the very project of writing about your own life: "history" or/and "truth", what will it be now? Besides, the ordinary reader who falls into the category of *contemporaries* and *consociates* —Schutz' ideal types of "community members"<sup>7</sup> within the world of everyday life—could directly, so to say telegraphically "catch" the meaning of information in the title because he/she is familiar with the implicated and tacit context: he/she was "there", "then" when the bombs were falling and alarm sirens screaming.

Interesting question in regard with this case is why did a woman who defines herself as a "semiliterate housewife and shepherdess with four grades of primary school" suddenly decide to replace her usual modus of expression and communication—speech and talking about her life—with writing? Even though transition from oral to written, from talking to writing, is not a precedent, but normal and expected flow of events in all literate cultures, writing about your own life in this case is potentially one and reveals actor's intentionality, the significance ascribed by her to her writing as a meaningful, intended action. In this phase a common-sense thesis imposes itself, that the immediate cause for it was the present situation—the NATO aggression against FRY and the

6 According to historian Hayden White (Vajt 2011, "Introduction: Poetics of History", 15–53, 48), favorite tactics of ironic discourse is catachresis, "prominently absurd metaphor created to stir ironic thinking of the nature of the characterized thing or inadequacy of that characterization itself".

7 For a flexible interpretation of mutual relations of these classes of persons as social and cultural constructs see Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali" (Gerc 1998, 153–157).

defense war in the country. When a major crisis in life pushes us to “sit down and take a break”, as Schutz says, to rethink our problems, when we experience some existential “shock” or “fundamental anxiety” a “leap” occurs from the *natural stance* of the everyday world of actions into another “bordered field of meanings” that bears an “overtone of reality” (Šic 2012, 289, 303).<sup>8</sup> It could be an excursion to transcendental planes (religion, metaphysics) or simply theoretical contemplation as a different stance, another kind of “tension of our attention” focused on life, which is not necessarily deprived of pragmatic intentions and goals.

War, therefore, is that radical breaking point in the usual flow and order of the world of everyday living which resonates in the presence with the already interpreted apprehension of World War II and the National Liberation Fight in the experience of a female subject:

“I remember well those first days of war”, she writes later on in her narrative, “the airplanes and whistles of grenades and above all the fear on faces of elderly who already knew what lies ahead of us. Old men and women were wailing; young men went to reserve units and military service. As a twelve-year old girl I have no clue what is going on, in the first couple of days airplanes were passing by, shots were fired from battleships, smoke went up in the air, and pieces of steel were falling on the ground...”

In that field of past events (*modo praeterito*) is where *that-is-why* motive or motives of her writing as action in the presence should be sought.<sup>9</sup> Namely, already in the introductory scene of the narrative, description of the family feast, the narrator uses simple words to skillfully set the stage of the main event which threatens to destroy default frames of a normal, organized domestic life, in which rhythms of everyday work and celebration alternate:

Today is April 1, so let me start writing about my life in the past, because I turned 70 on March 25. So my daughters and sons-in-law, grandchildren, brother and sisters, prepared a dinner for me, bought presents, secretly from me, to surprise me, and everything was nicely organized and prepared. But, NATO bombers were faster and surprised everyone and started demolishing. I came from shepherding and found my closest, more than 20 persons, at the table, and for me it was a big surprise to see them together, and to everyone else that a war is waged. The dinner was well prepared, but eaten in sadness, with the beginning of the war. We took photos together as mementos of my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and the beginning of evil at the end of the second millennia.

This brilliantly written introductory micro-narrative is a unique vignette, illustration of contents or at least leading themes and recurring motives in the entire narrative, which have an eschatological note, like: unity and solidarity of the family embodied in the feast as unquestionable social value; the end of

8 See also Schutz, “On Multiple Realities” (Šic 2012, 402–409).

9 See Schutz, “Choosing Among Projects of Action” (Šic 2012, 115–145).

millennia, “evil” and war as its ultimate emanation; discrete allusions to the metaphor “evil spring” and likely “last supper“. Framed group photography taken that day serves as a sign—inter-subjective reminder (or mnemonic tool) of an event from the personal and family history at the background of a bigger and more general event—the beginning of a new war (the NATO campaign against FRY was launched on March 24, 1999).

The aforesaid literal allusion to “evil spring” is a reminiscence of the homonymous war novel of Mihailo Lalić (1953, 1983) about the bombing of Belgrade on April 6, 1941 and the situation in Montenegro at the beginning of war. Milena was a twelve-year old girl at the time of the April war and breakdown of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. She lived in her village, helping her mother, grandmother and uncle with chores, taking care of five younger children, working in the farm together with adult members of the wider family, looking after the cattle and picking woods. In October 1940 her father was mobilized as a military reserve, only to return home before the capitulation of “old Yugoslavia”, in his uniform, with a rifle and 20 bullets.

On that day, April 12, 1941—Milena tells her tale simultaneously in the present and past tense—she was on her own “driving” woods on a rented donkey from her village Ubalac to the city of Perast for sale, “then one load of wood was 8 dinars, 4 kilos of flour”. Unaware that “Yugoslavia has capitulated and that our army was giving ground” she watched confused “this miserable army walking on foot, one going to Kotor, the other to Perast and Risan”:

I came in front of a house and left the wood and took another’s donkey aside so that the army doesn’t take it with them, and then went to a store to ask what is going on. That merchant, Gojko Vujačić, explained everything to me, that the state is ruined and asked where my mother was, to go to Risan to take flour, I replied that we have no more money, that we bought one bag of 50 kilos. Then I learned that the storage was opened and that everyone took what he could and did what he wanted. I left, took the donkey to go home. I hear lamenting, windows and doors closing; now the Italian army is coming.

Memories of local events, participants and personal experiences she lived through the World War II take relatively lots of space in Milena’s narration (Gorunović 2014, 222–241), hence the conclusion that the war is “the great story” in her discourse (see Abot 2009, 86–90) intrinsically connected to the problem of evil in the social world. Another big theme in her reflection of human existence is destiny, as a general designation for unfathomable causes which, like transcendental forces, govern people.

Besides documentary, the text contains also a strong didactic component—morals—like “work and unity always conquer”; “this is how it was done and now, who will demolish more, *zeman* builds, *zeman* dissolves;<sup>10</sup> “trouble is successive”, “every reign perishes”, etc.—and a more general meta-message about a hard, but morally upstanding life.

10 *Zeman*—time, from Tur. *zeman*, Ar. *zāmān* (Škaljić 1966, 651).

## Biographic Situation, Experience of Self among Others and Worldview

Common-sense reality or perspective is given to everyone in historical and cultural forms, but the way in which these forms are translated in our individual lives depends on the total experience which each of us gains through his/her concrete existence (Natanson 2012, 24). Milena's current situation as an actor, i.e. someone who starts writing her history/truth retroactively, has a history of its own; it is made of layers of all of her previous subjective experiences. She experiences them as "unique and subjectively given to her and her only", to paraphrase Schutz' words, yet presumes that her lived experience can be close or at least understandable to others. Because she knows that the world she is living in is not her private world, but a joint environment of her consociates and closest, as well as historically given—that it existed before she was born and will continue to live after her death. From "the world of her real reach" and "manipulative sphere" Milena selects and chooses those facts, events, persons and objects which she considers crucial.

Main *predecessors* in her narrative are family ancestors, as well as the paradigmatic "ancestor" and founder of Montenegrin literature, Prince-Bishop Peter II Petrovich Njegosh. That is natural and expected taking into consideration the configuration of Montenegrin cultural tradition, in which a large significance is given to historical narration and epic, group memory and public identity of person based on ancestry and kinship. This congregation of sagas and genealogies, as a "bounded area of meanings", determines a special system of relevance for members of the community and society. Among ancestors, her paternal grandfather takes a prominent spot in family memory, the emigrant to Argentina (Argentina and America are "there"):

My grandpa Četko Dabižinović left to America, Argentina in 1903, he lived there and worked for two years and lost his life, he was buried there at the cemetery in Buenos Aires, where our people were used to be buried. And my father Radivoje was born 3 months after the departure of his father to America, so that his mother and lame grandmother were raising him.

Many named and unnamed *consociates* are those persons with whom relations are established directly, face to face: first of all "my closest", Milena says, then relatives and neighbours—often they are the same taking into consideration that kindred families were living in her birthplace; brotherhood and village make primary communities and the Montenegrin world of consociates *par excellence*—as well as the teacher and pupils in the rural primary school (1936–1940): "At that time there were 6 grades in one classroom, one teacher taught them all. His name was Krsto Djurović, born in Bjelopavlići, he was right and a good man, communist, he taught also catechism". Then, friends and comrades, illegal persons and partisans with whom she shared tasks, misfortunes and atrocities as a cove, guide in the



field and partisan courier in “long” years under Italian and German occupation. Her role models were members of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia and partisan fighters, particularly female, who inspired her to join “the brigade”, but “I was weak, and work had to be done at home, too”. She carried messages whenever needed, took partisans and even foreigners, insensitive English officers in the military mission,<sup>11</sup> to show them paths and German positions. After war, Milena’s consociates are members of her secondary family, godfathers, friends and acquaintances from “the former [“great”] Yugoslavia”: “We have them, thank God, a lot, over a hundred, may they be safe and sound”, she writes.

Like any other person, Milena has a certain, unique “biographic situation”, conditioned by who her parents were, what the features of the social-cultural environment and socialization were in the formative period of her life, etc. Despite of her being a layperson in the literary business, she leaves the impression of knowing the significance of certain topics and order by which they need to be presented. In other words, her “supply of available knowledge” determines her “system of relevance”:

I spent my childhood in misery and poverty, the oldest of eight children, three brothers and five sisters. We lived of the land and cattle. A little bit of land, cattle even less, as there was no space, nor pastures for more cattle, because everyone suffered then, there were no salaries, no pensions. My parents were illiterate, as then there was no school in Gornji Orahovac. [...] My father was an orphan with mother and grandmother. When he started school he was supposed to walk for 3 hours. Then children killed a boy and his mother who already buried the older son, did not wish to send him to school, besides they had no means either, it was before the beginning of World War I. My mother was from the wealthier house of Petar Vukasović. But she was the tenth child, 2 sons and 8 daughters. Girls did not go to school then. And so were my parents Radivoje and Ana, following the rites of that time, of their fathers and uncles, against their will, married in January 1927 and so their troubled life begun.

Milena’s biographic situation defines the manner in which she is locating herself both within the everyday world and her own text about life in this world. By her choice of biographic mode of self-presentation she is announcing a more common problem of initiating the self, in a text and otherwise, as an essentially narrative phenomenon: “Now I can begin from my birth. I was born on March 25, 1929 in Gornji Orahovac, in the hamlet of Ubalac, as the first child of Jane and Rade Dabižinović”. Yet, even though a biographic start (“from my birth”) is conventional in autobiographies, Milena’s descriptive elaborating of the primal scene of birth in the icy spring of a “hungry” 1929—continuation of the winter described in Yugoslav and European press as one of the longest and coldest<sup>12</sup>—

11 “Then the Englishmen opened their satchels to prepare food for themselves. White bread, tins, cheese, fruits. I stood hungry and watched. When they had enough, they took the remaining food and threw it away, and no one offered me even a piece.”

12 *Politika* daily, January 18–April 18, 1929, No. 7441–7518.

is far from conventional procedure and is specifically hers, in the sense that it is the constitutive element of her life story and personal identity (particularly, development of resilience), but which she can appropriate only through others, i.e. through interpretation of her fellow family members:

When I was born, it was bitter cold and snow was high, something never seen in these parts of ours, this is what my parents and grandmother told me. Everyone was surprised that I survived such cold. Women were giving birth at home then, there was no doctor or midwife, only some older woman who has already given birth to lots of children and had knowledge and courage to help others. Mine were telling me then that I was so exhausted that on the same day they went to the other village to get a godfather, to place me in a small cross, so that I don't die without a cross, that was the custom at that time. And the day after the priest arrived and baptism took place and here I am, greeting my 70<sup>th</sup> year.

This quote testifies, and confirms a more general conclusion, that we as individuals do not own our life completely, that others are co-authors of our histories of ourselves (Zeitlyn 157–158), i.e. that our so-called subjective and personal stories are intersubjective creations from the very start. Or, as Schutz (Šic 2012, 373) said, “The unique biographic situation in which I am in the world at every moment of my existence is only to a small extent my personal creation”.

In Milena's social world, “sad and difficult days” were an integral part of infant's experience “from the early age”. One of the first, if not the first memory in her life, is

Mother's grief when my first brother Nedeljko died, I was three and a half years old, and to this day I remember this wretched event, not all of it. In 1941 my uncle of 37 died, the war was coming; his old parents were left on their own, his sick wife and three minor children. Mom's sorrow and crying I feel even today, after mom's death, mom's grief and sadness is unforgettable.

As the oldest daughter in a large rural family, Milena was from early childhood carrying a heavy burden of labour duties and responsibilities she was not up to. She started looking after the cattle when she was five or six years old, and they registered her in school only at the age of 8. Primary school for all children in Gornji Orahovac was in the hamlet of Kljavići:

I had to walk an hour and a half when the weather was nice, and when there was snow, I was not going, because there were no pupils from my village [...]. In autumn, September and October, I was supposed to look after the cattle, because parents were finishing farming works. So I was going for a few days, when the weather was nice, which was also in spring when the farming and other things start. At the class in school and in the evening, against the fire or a bit of lamp, if there was kerosene, is when I was studying.

I was an excellent student, but my brother and sister were supposed to go to school, and I was already a strong worker, 11 years old [irony]. There were more important affairs at home. The numerous family members had to be

fed. Medical proof had to be brought, that I am sick and cannot go to school, 4 grades are enough, and I know all letters. That is my second time that I went to Kotor with mother and grandfather Petar to see Doctor Filip Lazarević, godfather of my grandfather and he gave me confirmation that I am incapable of attending school. I completed four grades and couldn't go further.

Growing up in times of war, Milena sees, hears and learns that the world within her “real and potential reach” is divided, fighting and belligerent; that injustice, violence and plunder exist in it, deportation from her homestead and refuge (Stoliv 1942 and Perast 1944), prisons and concentration camps in Italy and Albania; that hunger, danger, ambush and death lurk at every step. She personally experienced it firstly “on that hard day in August” 1941 when she was taken hostage together with other children, shepherds, while the Italian army was searching through the village, looking for hidden weapons and looting along. They spent almost the entire day without food and water, “in fear and misery”, and when the soldiers finally released them, Milena had such a terrible headache that she barely made it home. Since then severe headaches combined with nausea were troubling her “due to any excitement and injustice and evil”, until her 60s.

Issues of injustice, evil and destiny appear rather early in her reflection on the experience she lived through, at the age which we conventionally refer to as childhood, and which in the given social world and historical time does not exist, in fact. When after the uprising on July 13, 1941, she learned that in the neighbouring village Ledenice a young man was arrested, tortured and shot, “one brother among five sisters”, whom she knew personally, Milena could not understand “how come that innocent people suffer, too”. More than a half a century later she admits, “Since that day this injustice stands in me. Is there no justice in this world?” Similar to old Duke Miljanov, she cries out in disbelief, “Why did God create men to do such evil deeds?”<sup>13</sup> And similar to Lalić replies laconically, “I suppose because the Earth is turning, so when it reaches the point from which it started, everything goes all over again”.<sup>14</sup>

Her empathy refers even to those murdered German soldiers whose torn bodies she saw on a meadow in November 1944 when she was together with her mother and other peasants carrying ammunition for the National Liberation Army: “more than four hundred bled, without arms, legs, heads; a horrible scene. Why should right people suffer for someone's reign?” “Everyone regrets one's own”, she writes when “the liberty came”, “but I regret them all, I've been like that since birth and will regret to the day I die. Why must the good people suffer? Now when I hear the learned people say that history will tell, I ask myself, when will that history of justice come for the wretched people?”

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13 “But worst of all is when you remember someone's crime. [...] And now God seems sinful, how could he allow man to do such evil!” (Miljanov 2001, 14–15).

14 “Returns were also in the past philosophically explained and adopted as an unavoidable law, something eternal, the image of eternal turning of the Earth, Sky and misterious pendulum of history” (Lalić 1992, 8).

Milena ends her story with a melancholic contemplation about life's transience, remembering many of her closest and dearest she cried for, buried and outlived, and with the experience of old age as "waiting time": "Days go by, old age comes. Sadness stands still; it cannot be wiped off with a tissue like tears. Now I do not know what it is I am waiting for and why I live". Then, in a realistically visualized pastoral scene of her most ordinary everyday life, she offers a reflection on death as a process of decomposition which leads to final nothingness:

I go to these goats, watch them browse and graze this forest and grass, then think, who is a bigger animal, people or cattle? Cattle feeds for the benefit of us feeding, and only maggots benefit from people, upon which they feed. We turn to nothing and end as nothing (comp. Rapport 1997, 51–52).

This is a radical step outside of the *natural stance*, a different perspective with an overtone of actuality marked by doubt into the reality of those beliefs which she subjectively tried to reconcile her entire life and practice in her private and public actions—Christian Orthodox faith and philosophy of justice and equality: "I only believed in justice that everyone has to live and that everyone was created equal on this Earth". There is no mention of a soul or some "higher" purpose of our earthly existence; only a bitter, nihilistic image which conveys us that we are truly "equal", or equally helpless, at the beginning and at the end. Milena's writing, in the writing category "of those who do not write", is a contemplative response to facing the loss of sense and fundamental anxiety (old age and war) and an attempt of permanent "filing in time" by which the actor is actually expressing her unacceptance of transience, oblivion, meaninglessness and entropy.

To conclude briefly, a kind of will, *epistola senilis* and letter from a "foreign country" of the past<sup>15</sup>, this life document is primarily intended for family use—surely it was not written to be published and presented to the public—but is addressing "all of those who may be concerned", including *successors* who fall in the potential, anticipated, but unknown and "un-arrived" future. The category of successors can comprise current generations of descendants (Milena's daughters, 7 grandchildren and 11 grand-grandchildren), but in the strict sense of this word they are those who are yet to be born, who will come after her (Krupat 1985). From the perspective of someone who is aware that by growing older she is gradually and irreversibly moving to the category of *predecessor* for her younger entourage—the time of waiting is a "transition time" to that final status *postmortem*—they are perhaps the main "readers" to whom her text/legacy was implicitly devoted. This reflects *in-order-to* motive or goal of writing as projected action aimed at the future (*modo futuri exacti*). *Verba volant, scripta manent* or like the Montenegrin idiom, "what was countless of times told is for the first time born and said—then when it is recorded" (Bečković 6).

15 „The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there“ („Prologue“, in Hartley 2002, 17).

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## FENOMENOLOGIJA NATIVNOG AUTOBIOGRAFSKO-MEMOARSKOG TEKSTA – INTERPRETATIVNO VEŽBANJE ŠICOVSKE PERSPEKTIVE

**Apstrakt:** Glavni izvor inspiracije u pisanju ovog eksperimentalnog ogleada predstavljaju ideje Alfreda Šica, sabrane u njegovom kapitalnom delu *Problem društvene stvarnosti*. Shvatanja i analitičke kategorije ovog velikog teoretičara poslužili su mi kao svojevrsno metodološko uputstvo u analizi i interpretaciji idiosinkratičkog teksta (autobiografije, odnosno etnobiografije) moje etnografske informantkinje iz Crne Gore. Uprkos skromnim pretenzijama, njen tekst je u faktografskom, strukturalnom i semantičkom pogledu mnogo složeniji i dublji nego što izgleda na površini. Odatle proizlazi i mogućnost u tumačenju: da se njena etnobiografija tretira kao laički izveštaj koji pruža materijal za fenomenološku deskripciju posebne kulturne verzije sveta svakodnevnog života kao krajnje ili vrhovne stvarnosti. Jedan od ključeva za razumevanje ovog ličnog životnog dokumenta jeste u tome da čitalac pojmi i vrednuje opis sveta života onakav kakav se ukazuje u narativu iz emske perspektive aktera, pripadnika i učesnika. Antropološko tumačenje značenja teksta treba da bude „orijentisano na aktera“, na pisanje ženskog subjekta kao čin delanja i njegove intencije (motive i projektovane ciljeve).

**Ključne reči:** nativna autobiografija kao etnobiografija, socijalna fenomenologija A. Šica, svet svakodnevnog života, društveno-kulturni kontekst, vremenska perspektiva, pisanje kao intencionalno delanje, subjektivni motivi i ciljevi (*zato-što* i *da-bi* motivi), značenja teksta