

The Beauty of Convention

The Beauty of Convention:
Essays in Literature and Culture

Edited by

Marija Krivokapić-Knežević
and Aleksandra Nikčević-Batrićević

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

MARIJA KRIVOKAPIĆ-KNEŽEVIĆ
AND ALEKSANDRA NIKČEVIĆ-BATRIĆEVIĆ

This collection of papers is the result of the conference *The Beauty of Convention* organized by the Department of English Language and Literature (Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Montenegro) and held at the National Library in the Montenegrin cultural capital, Cetinje, on October 4-6, 2012. The scholars were considering the intriguing issue of the place and role of convention in the post-postmodern world.

Addressing the beauty of convention, we have not assessed it with an attempt to recapitulate the established values (as, luckily, in literature and culture, there are not absolute beauties that serve everyone and always); we were not intent on the draw of the centre that the alternative, or avant-garde, or simply odd, has always experienced in its attempt to pose itself as a valid art (or other) material; least of all was it a standard, or an average, set of rules or absolute necessities, or lack of imagination, desire to conform or play it safe by sticking to what has always worked that we wanted to promote. Most of all, it was an attempt (in a format of the new millennium revisit) at an aesthetic appreciation of a form as a keeper of meaning and at an ethical post-cynical metadiscourse on human dependence on symbolic interaction and generic conventions. Therefore, we were inclined to look more into the artificial, invented, the optional side of the term's ambiguity (as Nelson Goodman defines it, cf. 1989: 80). Some of the questions we addressed were: What is beauty (truth and good) by virtue of convention? How does convention generate beauty? How does it happen that a convention acquires a normative force? What is the nature or the "logic of situation" (literary, linguistic, social, historical, psychological) that leads to the arbitrary conventions? How are alternative conventions made? What is inertia and what real joy or belief ensures the stability of convention? Is there a natural correctness that enables the stability of convention? How does convention determine linguistic meanings—and can it do so? Can interpretation avoid convention (as intention, preference, and expectation)?

Making the grounds for more particular issues that will follow, the book opens with a paper titled “Interpretation of Conventions or Convention of Interpretation? The Anthropological Puzzle,” a paper by Maja Muhić from the South East European University in Tetovo, Macedonia. This paper looks at the complexity and the traps of applying conventions that appear in the process of anthropological interpretation. The main focus is placed on the interpretive/symbolic anthropology. It, therefore, offers an overview of this anthropological paradigm established in the second half of the 20th century and its attempt to offer a *thick description* of one’s culture, by deeply immersing in it. Its main representative was the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz. This anthropological paradigm highlights the importance of symbols and social conventions as the enabling factor for the interactions of people within a community. However, the very insistence on interpretation of cultures, and the web of symbols people are intertwined in, as the only true way of understanding the “natives’ point of view,” brings into light another paradox that was brought to the public with the rise of post-modern anthropology, namely can anthropology really reveal and interpret something beyond its own conventions. Therefore, Muhić looks at the problems of interpretation and ethnography in general, especially focusing on the Balinese cockfight essay by Clifford Geertz as well as the post-modern crisis in anthropology, which came about in the 80s. This marked the period where ethnography and the role of the anthropologist as an interpreter were brought into question. The so-called *crisis of representation* has questioned ethnography in general, criticizing it as a practice, a mode of *writing a culture*, that is, a tool, which can impose conventions regarding how a culture is understood and interpreted, since it can itself be, under deep influence of the cultural conventions of the ethnographer/interpreter. It was also believed that it can impose itself as the epistemological dictator, that is, the source of interpretation of the *Other*. Taking into consideration these tectonic changes that happened to anthropology in the 80s, and looking at its contemporary engaged and dedicated work, this paper is an attempt to argue in favor of the pragmatically justified need for the continuation and existence of anthropology.

After this, Albanian scholar Bavlola Shatro, from Aleksandër Moisiu University, Tirana, discusses and compares two classic world dramatists. Her paper “Beauty and Pain, and the Escape from Convention in Tragedy (*Oedipus Coloneus* by Sophocles and *King Lear* by William Shakespeare)” aims at analyzing the relationship between beauty and pain as the essence of tragedy in the work of Sophocles and Shakespeare. The ancient tragedian reinforces the conventions of classical Greek tragedy while the

latter successfully escapes the conception that his own epoch had about this genre and returns to Sophocles' model of tragedy. Shatro believes that through these two actions, that of simultaneously conveying and avoiding convention, these two tragedians create a clear concept of this genre that it is nowhere to be found with that clarity and vigor in any of their other tragedies—except in *Oedipus Coloneus* by Sophocles and *King Lear* by Shakespeare—and, to a considerable degree, in any other tragedy (written in Western literature). The paper asserts that in Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*—one of his tragedies that critics have traditionally avoided—lies the essence of ancient Greek tragedy as a relationship between pain, death and beauty.

On the other hand, Shakespeare's *King Lear* is the only Renaissance tragedy which bears a clear resemblance to the ancient Greek tragedy and brings back to us the complex reality of this genre and the way it shaped Western literature and philosophy. Further on, the paper focuses on how *Oedipus* and *Lear* are related and also shows that these are "human condition" tragedies rather than tragedies of characters. Oedipus and Lear share the same agonizing fate, which is not that of dying, but that of being born. Therefore the paper analyzes their decline not as connected to an idea(1) but, rather, as a consequence of the human condition. That is how Shakespeare and Sophocles provide us with a deep and keen insight into the beauty of the work of art itself.

In her paper "Objectivist Poetry and Its Conventions in the Context of Modernist and Postmodernist American Poetry," Dubravka Đurić, from the Faculty of Media and Communications of the Singidunum University in Belgrade, positions the study of poetry with regards to literary studies in general. For that purpose, she uses Joseph Harrington's essay "Poetry and the Public: The Social Form of Modern U.S. Poetry," in which Harrington states that "'poetry studies'—even studies of American poetry—remained distinct from 'American literature'." Harrington points to the fact that during the 1990s, modern poetry criticism, or at least some parts of it, despite its domination by a narrowly defined modernist canon, inched a little closer to "cultural studies." It is indeed interesting to note, as Harrington does, that at a time when historical scholarship has become the norm in American literature criticism, "American literature" continues to neglect poetry, and the paper joins Harrington in asking: why? He further notes that the textualist poetics of high modernism maintained its influence in English departments throughout the 1990s, not only among poetry critics. In fact, as Alan Golding points out, the problem is that much New Americanist work implicitly perpetuates the historical essentializing of poetry as the least "social," most "transcendent" of genres, treating it by

default as a private space untouched by the material and historical determinants shaping literary production in other genres.

“In Dublin’s Fair City”: Joyce, Bloomsday, *Dubliners* and the Invention of Tradition,” by Benjamin Keatinge from the South East European University, Macedonia, attempts to trace some inter-textual relationships between James Joyce’s volume of short stories *Dubliners* (1914), and some examples of more recent stories related to the city of Dublin which have an explicitly acknowledged debt to Joyce. In doing so, it identifies a “mini-tradition” in the post-Joycean Irish short story which echoes the urban realism of Joyce’s stories. The essay also shows how Joyce’s treatment of social customs and conventions in *Dubliners* has found contemporary resonance in a much-changed urban environment of the 1990s and 2000s. It also points to the importance of Joyce’s representation of Ireland’s capital city in later works, notably *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939) both of which have had a revolutionary impact on the novel. In the case of *Ulysses*, we have a work of fiction which has inaugurated a social tradition in Dublin, and internationally, known as Bloomsday (16 June 1904), the day on which *Ulysses* is set and on which it is annually celebrated. This essay therefore examines, on a number of levels, how Joyce’s work revolves thematically around customs and conventions while also stimulating the invention of social and literary traditions in his native country.

Staying within the time frame of modernist literature, Nadežda Stojković and Slađana Živković, from the University of Niš, Serbia, present the first of their co-authored works in this book—“The Liberation of the Self through a Self Imposed Exile.” Drawing from Northrop Frye’s theory of archetypes, they maintain that the story of the loss and regaining of identity is the framework of all literature. This is the archetypal quest myth in which the goal of the hero’s endeavors is identical with the idea of a paradisaical world. In modern literature, but not unknown in earlier periods, the emphasis shifts from describing the end of the quest towards more accurately presenting the world which urges the hero to set out on a journey, thus producing a severe critique of modern civilization. It all serves to describe the hero’s feeling of separation, disillusionment, opposition to the culture they belong to. Thus, many of the modern quest myths are often essentially concerned with internal, psychological quests. This paper uses the example of James Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to emphasize that the socio-historical environment influences and to a large extent shapes the perception and behavior of individuals. Yet, there is argumentation on those liberation forces within an individual that help make an inner shift in the sensibility and allow for a

different perception of one's identity. Finally, the focus of the paper is to show that a modern individual, as illustrated by the character of Stephen Dedalus, an artist, is capable of seeking and realizing their identity within the full complexity of contemporary life, by relying on the knowledge and sensibility gained through the insights of art, and is so capable of discarding all the stifling and diminishing forms of identity that a society imposes.

Unconventionally titled, "*Lord Jim@Oedipuscomplex.convention*," by Armela Panajoti from the University "Ismael Qemali" in Vlora, Albania, focuses on the way this insightful Conrad novel searches for those aspects of self that can be corrected and uses the convention(s) of Freud's oedipal model to read father-son relationships in *Lord Jim*, while the interrelationship between the three (Oedipus complex, convention, *Lord Jim*) is hinted at through the electronic metaphor in the title of the paper. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that despite the controversy surrounding Freud's work, his theories have still been the ground for many critics working either in psychoanalysis or elsewhere. In this way, Panajoti sees Freud's Oedipus complex as informing certain conventions in literature and as such reaffirming itself every now and then.

Janko Andrijašević, from the University of Montenegro, turns towards metaphysical convention in another great modernist, i.e. Aldous Huxley's *Time Must Have a Stop*. Andrijašević claims that one of the major strands of this novel follows posthumous experiences of Eustace Barnack, a hedonist and art-connoisseur, who passes away at the very beginning of the novel. The out-of-body workings of Barnack's mind are given in about a dozen hermetic interpolations, which took more than twenty years for the critics to figure out. In the late sixties, Peter Bowering connected Huxley's text with the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and discovered that the previously impenetrable chapters were essentially very precise renderings of the Buddhist-Lamaist spiritual convention about the mind's journeying in the BardoThodol in between two incarnations. This paper attempts to explain the necessity of imposing order and norm on phenomena of metaphysical nature, as illustrated in this novel.

"Self and Selfness in the Modern Scottish Novel," by Božica Jović from East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, demonstrates the value of different kinds of conventions, both inside and outside the texts of the novels the author has chosen for discussion. The outside "conventions" are shown to be the conventions of tradition, history and themes within contemporary Scottish novel, and especially through the vision of Cairns Craig on the matter. Whereas, the inside "conventions" are dealt with through discussion of the organisation of William McIlvanney's *The Kiln*

(1996); the struggle for a kind of convention in the world of Alasdair Gray's fictitious young artist in *Lanark* (1982), and the horror of convention in *Poor Things*.

The work of Dijana Tica, from the University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, moves us to other particular issues of the period, inviting a chapter of the book related to gender politics. She explores conventions in the presentation of women in Victorian literature, since this historical period was famous for its strict adherence to rules as well as for its precise division between male and female spheres. The author argues, that even in the earliest literary works, in which female characters hardly appeared, their presentation was the reflection of the roles they were assigned and it served to teach women what their patriarchal society, represented by male authors, expected of them in terms of both their physical appearance and their manners and behaviour. Those heroines who performed their given roles in the best possible way and who perfectly fitted the currently predominating ideals of both external and internal beauty were considered conventional and were mostly rewarded with a happy ending, which usually meant a successful marriage and a prosperous family. Those who dared to be different and assume the roles generally associated with men were described as unconventional and punished either by the loss of reputation or untimely death.

In his paper "Emily Dickinson and the Challenge of Convention," Arben Bushgjokaj, University of Shkodra, Albania, shows how Emily Dickinson responded to the cultural and conventional pressures which shaped the lives and works of writers and poets in the nineteenth century, especially when it came to female writers and poets. When most female writers tried to engage in the ideologies that defined the writer or poet of the time and yet stayed within the conventions indicated, Dickinson ventured beyond the imposed conventions. This appears to increase rather than diminish the mystery of Dickinson as a poet and her greatness in later literary scholarship. Dickinson's style deserves observations concerning the thin line between poetry and prose in her letters, and about the complex and integral relationships between the two genres throughout her writing. Readers and literary scholars seem to be invited to read letters as poems and to read poems as letters, exploring the ways in which Dickinson's work challenges traditional notions of the boundaries of genre. Although, for the most part, Dickinson is perceived as challenging convention, there is a fine thin thread of convention in her poems, especially in her borrowings from the rich culture and heritage of hymns. In such instances, Dickinson enriches the conventional form of hymns and

reinvigorates them with the fine new touch of the modernist avant-garde poet.

“Breathtaking Beauty: Gender and Race Conventions in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*” is a paper authored by Aleksandra Izgarjan from the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. Izgarjan shows how the novel *The Bluest Eye* explores the ways conventions of gender and race are created and perpetuated in African American and American society. Morrison uses the ideal of female beauty imposed by the media featuring blonde, blue-eyed seductresses to show how it is used by the dominant white community for manipulation and subjugation of ethnic minorities which are labeled as different and therefore unfit. When African Americans adopt these ideals, which are for them impossible to attain, they feel inadequate, which leads to their entrapment in the vicious cycle of domestic violence. Marginalized by the dominant society and consigned to invisibility and contempt, they find it impossible to rebel against the conventions they have internalized or those who have imposed them. Instead they react by turning their anger towards themselves for not being able to fulfill the ideals of white beauty. Morrison deconstructs conventions of gender and race through postmodern literary strategies such as polyvocality of the text, magic realism and historiographic metafiction in order to show instability of such categories and their dependence on mutual consent of people who make a nation and a culture.

Jeanine Belgodere, from Le Havre University of France, discusses convention, transgression, and beauty in Martha Graham’s choreography. Belgodere first presents how Graham developed her unconventional dance expression and then illustrates how she transgressed the thematic and stylistic balletic norms through examples of major works that she created in the late twenties and thirties. At the time, Graham’s choreography was considered as outside the norm. However, Belgodere points out that transgression belongs to the realm of the normative. It is only a phenomenon that gives rise to a negative judgment. Gradually, Graham’s dance form came to be widely accepted and recognized by the dance world and audiences. Graham’s transgressions became a new normative language. Eventually, Martha Graham’s choreographic adventure reveals the complexity of conventional beauty and that, indeed, it is grounded in a history where yesterday’s transgressions are not alien to today’s norms.

In her paper “American Contemporary Art: A Look into the Rhetoric of Artistic Convention in Classical Sculpture,” Claudine Armand examines Fred Wilson’s handling of artistic conventions in his appropriation of archetypal figures of classical art and in his assessment of the traditional criteria of beauty. Armand first deals with the historical perspective—

bearing in mind the teachings of Antiquity, the development of aesthetics and the eras of classical revival—and then highlights the concept of artistic convention in relation to the quest for ideal beauty. She focuses on Wilson's rereading of art history and on some of the strategies he uses to subvert those conventions. Finally she sheds light on a few other contemporary artists who have taken up the classical model.

Aleksandra Žeželj Kocić, from the University of Belgrade, explores the issue of convention in the postmodern fictional world of Julian Barnes's *Before She Met Me* (1982), *Talking It Over* (1991) and *Love, etc.* (2000). His palimpsest-like texts disclose interpretation that simultaneously avoids and perpetuates the conventions of not only a love-novel genre, but emotional relationships as well. Furthermore, this essay poses several questions: whether the above-mentioned novels turn against their postmodernist bases in order to reveal an aesthetic appreciation of a form as a keeper of meaning; if there is stability of convention or not; what are the situational specificities that lead to the arbitrary or alternative conventions; and finally, whether particular comprehension can avoid convention. Just as modernists break the Victorian tradition, postmodernism can be said to build on a few modernist characteristics, ensuring the stability of convention in its very appellation, choosing to be named merely in terms of its opposite, whereby modernism is the norm while postmodernism is a deviation. Žeželj Kocić's essay also draws from John Barth who discusses the human tendency to place things into categories that are nothing but *indispensable fictions*. The labeling of literary achievements with prefixes high-, late-, proto-, and post- becomes a need, even though it is not always easy to differentiate between the tenets of any chosen opposing poles. The author gives the example of the modernist beliefs that are said to have undergone crisis in the age of postmodernism are "critical, magical and utopian impulses." So, it is still possible for the ethos of modernism—i.e. dissolution of surface, routine and convention in the name of passionate quest for what is concealed, suppressed or prohibited—to prove every so often alive almost a century after its awakening. Taking into account that the debate on postmodernism has been an ongoing process, which in its very definition does not welcome closures, let alone proposes them, some of its basic principles will still be outlined hereafter, putting special emphasis on its ideas as embraced by Julian Barnes's fiction.

This time, in order to comprehend the phenomenon of beauty, in their paper "The Concept of Beauty in Postmodernism and the Digital Media as in Howard Gardner's *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed*," Živković and Stojković assert that in today's society, the concept of beauty has

become mostly a technical matter and, therefore, ask if in the age of digital technology, in which computers and the Internet predominate in various aspects of our lives, anyone perceives and values *beauty*. They elaborate how globalization has changed our lives and our view of the world, and that, therefore, beauty has a completely different role and is defined in a more flexible way, something that is interesting, memorable, and worthy of revisiting. From here they pass onto analyzing *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed* (2011) by Howard Gardner who explains how our conceptions of this virtue have shifted over time. Gardner argues that despite constantly changing world, beauty should remain a cornerstone of our society, the crucial bedrock of our existence, even in the light of technological advances. He sheds some light on how the concept of beauty may be reframed, reformulated in the next century, and thus, it will remain essential to the human experience and, of course, to human survival.

Ukrainian scholar Olga Veliugo deals with “Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love*: A Lover’s Discourse as the Conventional Form of Love.” Her paper discusses contemporary reconsideration of conventional love discourse, a universal verbal code lovers use to communicate their feelings, in Ian McEwan’s novel *Enduring Love*. The traditional discourse of romantic love, originating from medieval courtly love, still enjoys great popularity, although it represents a rather conservatively codified type of narration. Men and women, the sane and the insane, practice quite similar love discourses, eventually the binary opposition of good and evil, Eros and Thanatos becomes decentralized. Love discourse constructs its own linguistic reality of love and thus becomes a form love can take. Meanwhile love discourse may be in total discrepancy with the extralinguistic reality where lovers demonstrate a pitiful lack of empathy towards each other. Despite the possible reduction of love to the realm of discourse only, the latter cannot be denied inherent beauty of its own, which consists in the simple fact that it is through discourse that love asserts itself as a key human value, the best experience ever possible, the sense of human life. This idea is popular in contemporary fiction which demonstrates a shift from postmodern aesthetics to postpostmodernism, marked by a turn from postmodern cynicism to human feelings.

The book closes with the paper “The Beauty of Operatic and Postmodern Convention(s) in Michael Berkeley and Ian McEwan’s *For You* (2008)” by the French scholar Jean-Philippe Heberlé from the Université de Lorraine. The paper aims at examining how the beauty of convention(s) is at work in *For You*, an opera by English composer Michael Berkeley and English novelist Ian McEwan, which premiered in October 2008 at the Music Theatre Wales in London. Beauty points at the formal aesthetic qualities of

an artistic or literary work as well as at the pleasure and joy stemming from the work itself and from its fabric while convention underlines the “traditional” and “conventional” methods or styles used for the conception and elaboration of the work itself. In *For You*, the beauty of convention(s) lies in the aesthetic quality of the opera, most particularly in Berkeley and McEwan’s use of operatic and/or literary postmodern conventions as well as in the pleasure of playing with these conventional forms and genres. Heberlé studies the way Berkeley and McEwan play with the listeners’ or spectators’ expectations through operatic conventions and references to key works and genres of western literature and opera as well as through typical postmodern conventions (self-referential and meta-artistic comments, literary and operatic intertextuality, stylistic and generic hybridity, elements of high and low culture, etc.). Through the interaction/interplay between beauty and convention in *For You*, Heberlé ponders the following questions: How does convention generate beauty? Is this interplay a simple postmodern game or is it an apt means to express Man’s postmodern condition and conception of art?

The papers gathered in this book are diverse and speak for themselves, yet, in their different ways they address a common core of questions arising from the nature and virtue of convention. Without an intention to impose a one meaning onto the reader, we have tried to understand the stability of convention and how convention generates beauty employing numerous contemporary reading strategies and diverse cultural, ethnic, gender, psychological, and textual perspectives. Our interest is focused on the literary texts ranging from the early classics to modernism and contemporary writing, but also on some other forms of human expressions, such as music, dance and sculpture. Therefore, we trust that we have met our primary aim and that this book will contribute to the on-going discussion about the ambiguities inherent in the concept of convention and, thus, give scholars and students of literature and culture alike the opportunity to share results of a very successful international cultural event, as well as stimulate intellectual confrontation and circulation of ideas within the field.

INTERPRETATION OF CONVENTIONS OR CONVENTION OF INTERPRETATION? THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PUZZLE

MAJA MUHIĆ

Introduction

This paper analyses the complexity of the process of interpretation and the dangers of applying conventions along the process. The main focus for this analysis has been placed on interpretive/symbolic anthropology. The goal of this anthropological paradigm established in the 20th century is to offer a *thick description* of one's culture, by deeply immersing in it. Its main representative was the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz. In general terms, interpretive anthropology studies the symbols, and processes (ritual, myths, etc), through which people give meaning to the events that surround them. Hence, it highlights the importance of symbols and social conventions as the enabling factor for the interactions of people within a community. Because of this, it insists on the exclusiveness and uniqueness of cultures, as well as on the absolute authenticity of one's culture worldview, which can be understood only through a thick and thorough interpretation.

On a number of occasions, throughout his fieldwork, Geertz has argued that culture is a

historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life.¹

It was therefore his deepest conviction that the analysis of culture should not be "an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretative one

¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 89.

in search of meaning.”² Geertz, understands all phenomena that we call art, religion, etc. as expressions of culture, or as kinds of photographs that freeze, solidify, and express the modes of existence of a community that we need to analyze hermeneutically as text. This text will use several examples from anthropological fieldworks, and essays (Joseph Fabian, David Schneider, Clifford James), and pay special attention to Geertz’s interpretation of the Balinese cockfight described in his famous and most frequently cited essay *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*. This essay is probably the most plastic representation of his *thick description* as way of immersing oneself into the culture one studies and trying to understand the natives’ point of view. It will also provide us with a solid foundation to discuss the problem of convention and interpretation.

However, the very insistence on interpretation of cultures, and the web of symbols people are intertwined in, as the only true way of understanding the authentic, that is, the “natives’ point of view,” brings into light another paradox. The so-called *crisis of representation* has questioned anthropological interpretation as well, criticizing it as a practice, which can impose conventions regarding how interpretation is carried out, under the deep influence of the cultural conventions of the interpreter. It was also believed that it can passivize cultures and impose itself as the epistemological dictator, that is, the source of interpretation of the Other. Taking into consideration these tectonic changes that happened to anthropology, and looking at its contemporary engagements, this paper is an attempt to argue in favor of the pragmatically justified need for the continuation and existence of anthropology.

Some Notes on the Rise of Interpretive Anthropology

The transformation of the discipline in the 20th century was actually located within the ethnographic process of study and was defined by two key elements. The first one refers to the locating of cultural differences existing predominantly among the non-industrial (non-western) societies, while the latter contained a cultural critique of the anthropologist’s culture.³ This transition and reorganization of anthropology from a study of people and humanity, towards ethnography as its constituent element, practically marked the end of generalizations and grand theories (existent

² *Ibid.*, 5.

³ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Antropologija kao kritika kulture* (Zagreb: Naklada Breza, 2003), 36-37.

and vibrant in the previous anthropological paradigms). The holism in anthropology has shifted the ground and the anthropologists' striving for universal claims, has been replaced with the endeavor for a more precise and more complete representation of the life of a certain community. This caused further problems in that it provoked a new ethnographic motivation.

Ethnography now aimed at documenting the authenticity of those cultures amid the devastating force of the galloping *westernization*. This aspect of ethnography as being something that has a saving mission has now been abandoned, due to the fact that the very existence of an authentic culture that has not been in contact with modernity is now being contested. Modernity, on the other hand, is also something that is heavily scrutinized and considered far more complex than the term would have us think⁴. Hence, the big dose of realism that was existent in the ethnographies of the 60s, has been substituted with the attempt to explore the realm of mental culture, that is, to understand the natives' viewpoint, the experience, and the attitude towards life. It is in this endeavor, that one can see the sprouts of interpretive anthropology. The premises, upon which interpretive anthropology rests, claim that culture is neither neutral nor univocal. On the contrary, cultures are always poly-vocal, unrepeatable, and unique. The epistemological relativism became the dominant mark of interpretive anthropology. The main representatives of interpretive anthropology were the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, also considered as its founder, along with Victor Turner, Mery Douglas, Terence Turner, Nancy, Mun, David Schneider, and, later on, Sherry B. Ortner. Ortner brings into focus an interesting observation regarding the transformation of the discipline in the second half of the 20th century. She argues that it was the attempt of the newly trained anthropologists to strengthen the previous anthropological thoughts that were dominant until the 50s (the British structural-functionalism, the American psycho-cultural anthropology, and the American evolutionist anthropology), that led to the establishment of symbolic/interpretive anthropology, cultural ecology, and structuralism. All of these authors offered a fresh breeze in the interpretations and study of cultures. As Marcus and Fisher point out, the parameters of the western thought, according to which, politics, economy and the individual interests stood at the center of social life, demanded that every approach, which wanted to look into the symbolic of cultural and social organizations instead, had to first look at the materialist explanations about culture.⁵ It

⁴ See more in the insightful study of modernity by Eisenstadt Shmuel Noah, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129 (2000).

⁵ Clifford and Marcus, *op. cit.*, 164.

was because of this that the main aim of these thinkers was to question the materialist and utilitarian principles of western thought in understanding and interpreting social life. One of the greatest changes, which marked this anthropological thought, was its distancing from materialist, positivist and functionalists interpretations, according to which, culture is merely a means for the adjustment of people to nature. In addition, instead of reifying culture and isolating it from the individual, as something objective and existent in and of itself, this anthropology started emphasizing the importance and role of the individual in shaping culture.⁶ The most exclusive marker of this anthropological stream was, rather, the focus on symbols and the symbolic character of culture, and hence, the *meaning* of symbols. It was because of this that *interpretation* became the only reasonable approach to understanding the multilayered meanings of symbols that constitute cultures. The anthropologist is on a mission to immerse him/herself and try to read-as-text the web of meanings created by the members of the community.

The Crisis of Ethnographic Representation in Post-Modern Anthropology and Contemporary Anthropological Trends

The postmodern discourse, which dominated in the 80s, led to a global crisis in the reception of anthropology and brought into question the relevance of this discipline. The anthropologist was also scrutinized and it was uncertain whether he/she informs about other cultures or, rather, *writes a culture*, that is, writes an autobiography. The crisis of ethnographic realism was diagnosed in 1982 with the Marcus and Cushman publication of *Ethnographies as Texts* in the *Annual Reviews of Anthropology*. These tectonic changes were certainly a result of the social processes, both in the discipline itself, but also in the societies/cultures that anthropologists addressed in their writings. These processes have mainly been marked by the terms post-modernization, globalization, commodification of culture. The postmodern authors were clearly epistemological anti-realists, leaning towards lingual, cultural, as well as cognitive relativism, unlike their critics, who were proponents of the more rationalist, methodological

⁶ Jerry D. Moore, *Uvod u antropologiju: teorija i teoretičari kulture* (Zagreb: Naklada Jasenski i Turk), 280.

models.⁷ In America, this crisis was a consequence of the social circumstances, namely, the deconstruction of the paradigms after WWII. The general qualification for this period is that of a crisis of paradigms and previously solidified totalizing theories, which lost their legitimacy under the pressure of the newly-created fascination with local experiences and reactions, and with the unpredictability of life as a whole. These circumstances have also influenced the terminology of the social sciences and humanities. The term *post-paradigm* was put to use. It marked the overall distrust in all forms of meta-narration and grand theories, which were contrasted with contextuality and unpredictability of the human life, contrary to the previous focus on continuity, that is regularity in the phenomena observed.

One of the key changes that happened to anthropology in this stage was the newly created crisis of representation, which resulted from the distrust in the validity of everything described with the key methods of this discipline, first and foremost, ethnography. The political-methodological crisis of trust in this primary method used in the anthropological production of knowledge was most fervently manifested in the 80s. It was predominantly, interpretive anthropology, which differed greatly from the other anthropological streams in that it started questioning the validity of ethnographic interpretation.⁸ As was previously mentioned, interpretive anthropology abrades greatly from the positivist approach in the understanding of societies and cultures, as it focuses on the fact that the social life must be understood, and hence, analyzed as a network of meanings. Similarly, Geertz heavily criticized the practice of an allegedly neutral scientific perspective. He insisted on the fact that cultures are created from webs of meanings that the anthropologist must interpret and read as a text. Culture should not be seen as an objective, homogenized entity, but rather as a web of symbols, which give meaning to people and help them understand and deal with the world. It is in this sense, that this anthropological

⁷ See more in Philip Carl Salzman, *Understanding Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theory* (Illinois: Waveland Press), 2001. Among other things, he points out that the postmodern epistemology, exemplified by the subfields of symbolic and feminist anthropology, brings into focus the importance of moral responsibility, the worth of positional relativity as well as the subsequent subjectivity it produces, hence challenged the stoic ideal of the unbiased view (Salzman 2001).

⁸ This is clearly brought to attention by Marcus and Fischer who claim that interpretive anthropology acts at two levels: it gathers information about the other worlds from the inside, but at the same time, it ponders upon the epistemological foundations of such information.

thought has, in a manner of speaking, sabotaged itself. Built upon such fundamentals, it seemed as if it generated the postmodern critique, which brought into question the survival of anthropology and the anthropological subject in general. It was the insistence to understand culture primarily as a complex system of meanings, that in due course resulted with the motive to question the process of interpretation of these meanings. This marked the birth of postmodern anthropology, within which, ethnography questioned itself.

The problems surrounding the authenticity/subjectivity of interpretation are also tightly related to a debate, which arose during the 1980s, predominantly with the publication of several works, among which is the edited volume *Writing Culture* by Clifford and Marcus and Clifford's *On Ethnographic Surrealism*, published in 1981. This debate marked the beginnings of a crisis of the reliance on, certainly, one of the crucial tools of anthropological study—ethnography. This debate, which brought into question the purposeness of ethnographic method is usually marked as post-modern anthropology. George Marcus, Michale Fischer, Renato Rosaldo, James Clifford, Vincent Crapanzano, etc, are among some of the key figures who are considered responsible for this anthropological shift in the second half of the 20 century. They are the founders of the theory of ethnography, which deals with the problem of *writing culture*. They brought into light several problems regarding ethnography as a method as well as the previous anthropological paradigms. They pointed out the ethically problematic position of ethnography and field work, emphasizing the fact that describing the world always presupposes a certain theory, a convention of some kind, as well as, the fact that writing about the other is always writing about the Other.

The Anthropologist's Burden

In his introductory text to the edited volume *Writing Culture*, titled "Introduction: Partial Truths," Clifford points out that ethnography is always involved in the *invention*, rather than *representation* of cultures.⁹ According to him, ethnographic truths are inherently *partial*. In his essay, *Notes on (Field)notes*, Clifford decenters the process of description in ethnography, by analyzing the fieldwork of three anthropologists (Bronislaw Malinowski, C. G. Seligman, and Joan Larcom). According to these

⁹ James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in *Writing Culture: The Politics and Poetics of Ethnography*, eds. Clifford James and Gerge E. Marcus (Berkeley, U of California P, 1986), 2.

photos, he differentiates between three ethnographic moments—*inscription*, *transcription*, and *description*. The first denotes the moment of taking mental notes, when the ethnographer returns to some previous list of questions and hypotheses that he/she needs in order to create some kind of observation. The second is the moment when the ethnographer merely poses questions and writes down the answers of the local inhabitants, a practice opposed by Malinowski, who insisted on a more subtle amalgamation of the anthropologist with the natives. Hence the *description* photo, by which Clifford means a more or less coherent representation of the cultural reality. He will use this to criticize Geertz's observation that the ethnographer is actually *writing*. If such is the case, Clifford believes, then the process of ethnography will merely be boiled down to inscription and interpretive description. He also realizes that the whole process of fieldwork is actually infinite. One can simply not draw the line, which would specify that someone has talked to the local inhabitants sufficiently, has learned their language or has gotten into the secret zones of indigenous people's life.

This is precisely where the problem of interpretation comes to the fore. As Clifford points out, descriptions about another culture are almost never interpretations only, but they are always *written rhetorical constructions*.¹⁰ In the *Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz specifies that the ethnographer inscribes the social discourse, that is, he *writes it down*. Hence, that which the ethnographer pins down transforms from a transient event, which exists only during the time it is happening, to a note, which is inscribed, and to which, we can return times and time again. It is here that we can ponder the question of what actually the anthropologist is inscribing. Are these authentic stories of the natives or is the anthropologist inscribing his already made conventional discourses and beliefs? Clifford actually points out to this dilemma by stating that the ethnographic work is very often not even close to catching and putting down on paper some spontaneous, "transient moments," but it is rather a process of transcribing an already formulated discourse. Moreover, describing something always presupposes a rhetorical, historical, and politically mediated relation with the culture one studies. The reduction of anthropology's methodology to ethnography, which occurred in the 80s, meant that anthropology has to strictly deal with culture (something that goes back to Talcot Parsons), and that culture has to be treated as text. Geertz was considered the main culprit for this reduction. Many anthropologists have criticized this culture-as-text approach, including Mark Schneider. In his work *Culture-as-text in the*

¹⁰ James Clifford, "Notes on field(notes)," in *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1990), 57, 67.

Work of Clifford Geertz, Schneider wonders if reading Geertz one really sees the web of meanings existing in the culture studies, or whether, actually, in his attempt to textualize culture, he creates something that is to a great extent a result of his personal inclinations and literary imagination.¹¹

Similarly, David Schneider brings into question the problematic cultural matrices and conventions that are likely to blur our interpretation of cultures. In *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* Schneider also awakens us to the fact that what is considered a natural category in Euro-American societies might in the end not be a natural category at all, but a cultural construct created from particular social circumstances. He tried to show that more often than not that which is considered to be a natural category in the European-American societies is perhaps not natural at all, but rather, it is a cultural construct that comes out of a specific society, in his case, western-European society. His study refers to the problematics of kinship and he is triggered to conclude that, at the very beginning, the ethnographer who comes from these (western) cultural milieus inevitably “contaminates” the study of kinship with American prejudices as to what kinship means, and especially so with the ideology for the absolute importance of biological/blood ties, which so strongly resonates among Americans, but might not be the case among the society that the anthropologist is studying.

Perhaps, one of the most lucid critiques that brought to the surface the inevitable cultural conventions that anthropologists often project on the object of their study is Johannes Fabian.¹² In his *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, he criticizes the *temporal* dimension according to which anthropologists posit that they are “here and now,” while the object of their study is always “there and then.” This resulted in conclusions that promoted the idea that the “other” exists in a time which does not overlap with our, that is the anthropologist’s time. In this sense, as Bunzl points out, *Time and the Other* is a kind of meta-analysis or the anthropological project, but at the same time, a deconstruction of its temporal framework. The Other is, according to Fabian, never an immediate partner in the cultural exchange, but is always spatially as well as temporarily dislocated from the anthropologist.

The repercussions of this critique are multilayered, but they culminate in the awareness that anthropology is a project, which is far from neutral. Anthropology is, for Fabian, an inherently political discipline, which has

¹¹ Mark A. Schneider, “Culture-as-Text in The Work of Clifford Geertz,” *Theory and Society* 16 (1987): 811.

¹² Fabian Johannes, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002).

defined and constituted its objects through a temporal lens. “Moreover, it also subordinated the temporal to the visual, i.e. spatial.” Hence, to show, for our particular case, that interpretations are often a result of previously structured matrices of thought, we can point to Fabian’s argument that the 19 century evolutionary paradigm, used the concepts such as “primitive culture,” wanting to describe it as something primary, before us, from a distant time. Representing the physical and cultural differences as temporal differences is the key to the distortion of cultures. Fabian terms this the *denial of coevalness* between the object and the researcher. Anthropology emerged out of the specific circumstances of the 19-century western societies, which imbued this discipline with the doctrines of evolutionism, scientism, enlightenment ideals for progress, and ethnocentrism. This clearly explains the developmental phases (savagery, barbarianism, civilization) that Taylor and Morgan talked about. Fabian criticizes the hegemony of positivist-pragmatic philosophy present in the social sciences and humanities. This line of thinking drew its ideas from the pre-Kantian metaphysics, which kept promising objective truth with the use of standardized methods.

He notices this same distortion in the interpretive/symbolic anthropology as well, which albeit far more refined in its study of cultures, inevitably freezes the Other both spatially and temporally. At the same time, it imposes itself as the observer and interpreter. Hence, it lacks *dialectic confrontation* and, instead, wraps both the indigenous cultures and his/her own culture in protective shields. The obsession with the symbolic prefers to see the anthropologist as the observer who deciphers the cultural “texts.” The Other again remains just an Object, albeit at a much higher level than the one given by the previous paradigms.

Geertz and the (Un)conventional Interpretation of the Balinese Cockfight

Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight is Geertz’s essay published in 1973 as a part of his *Interpretation of Cultures*. It is considered one of the greatest achievements of anthropology, but has at the same time been a subject to severe criticism. It starts with Geertz’s confession that in 1958 he and his wife, suffering from malaria, arrived in a small Balinese village with around 500 inhabitants. He underlines that it was precisely his participation in the cockfight and a police raid, which followed it, that marked the transformation from being invisible to becoming visible to the local population. This has been a subject of critique by Crapanzano, who ridicules Geertz’s ethnographic position since now the hero, the

anthropologist, is not certain of his own identity and is lost between two worlds. Crapanzano ridicules this looking back at Geertz's statement, according to which they were invisible among the local Balinese population, but that invisibility was rather studious. Hence, Geertz says:

The indifference, of course, was studied; the villagers were watching every move we made, and they had an enormous amount of quite accurate information about who we were and what we were going to be doing. But they acted as if we simply did not exist, which in fact, as this behavior was designed to inform us, we did not, or anyway, not yet.¹³

It is precisely in this description that Crapanzano finds some serious discrepancies. He argues that there is a difference between being a non-human, a specter, or invisible man, on one hand, and being treated with a "studied indifference." Moreover, according to him Geertz and his wife were indeed there. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to be informed about their "nonexistence."¹⁴ At the level of the general problem treated in his essays, namely the way too frequent and often unconscious implementation of the anthropologist's subjectivity and/or cultural conventions, Crapanzano alarms us to see that Geertz blurs his own subjectivity, that is his personal experience of himself, with the subjectivity and intentionality of the locals. We could argue that perhaps, Crapanzano is being way too sharp in laying out such a critique, thus failing to acknowledge the advantages of such self-examination and questioning of one's personal role as an ethnographer in a foreign culture. In this sense it is worth mentioning that Geertz does not forget to point out that it is only in Bali that he faces this kind of indifference by the local population. His experience has led him to conclude that in all other places, including Morocco, the inquisitive dimension with which the local population examines the newcomer was far greater.

The essay is clearly one of the greatest manifestations of Geertz's obsession with treating culture as text and performativity. Inglis brings to our attention the fact that it is through this essay, that Geertz so lucidly brings closer to us the symphony and poetic dimension of the cockfight, which is imbued with passion and melodrama.¹⁵ This fight is threaded with

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*, 412-13.

¹⁴ Vincent Crapanzano, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. Clifford James and Marcus George, E. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), 70.

¹⁵ Fred Inglis, *Clifford Geertz: Culture, Custom and Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 89.

the masks of tragedy and comedy, and is open only to those men, who have a certain social status and money to become part of the *deep play*. This fight, then, is not so much about the money as it is a symbol of moral importance. What is really being gambled with are respect, status, and reputation of the Balinese man. The cockfight is merely a scenography, through which Bali and its people manifest itself. With such an interpretation of the fight, Geertz enters shaky grounds and renders himself vulnerable to the post-modern anthropology's critique of ethnography. Geertz is certain that the cockfight really puts at stake the eternal themes of life, death, masculinity, anger, pride, loss, happiness. The fight is therefore, a social drama, full of metaphors. He believes it thus serves an interpretive purpose in Balinese society, whereby the locals interpret and understand the concepts of passion, anger, life, and death.

It is here that Crapanzano once again intervenes by pondering if the cockfight is really a dramaturgical form through which people's daily experience is being articulated or it is rather Geertz's personal experience that is being ascribed to the locals. Moreover, Geertz's comparison of the purpose of the fight as a means for the Balinese people to understand the complex stages and emotions that life brings, with the effects that reading of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* has on us, causes further problems. From the perspective of post-modern critique, which brought about the crisis of representation, Crapanzano wonders if perhaps the ethnographer speaks more of his personal experiences and projects their cultural milieu than of the experiences of the locals whom he studies. Do the anthropologists in their quest to understand cultures do nothing else but merely incorporate their subjectivity as well as the norms and conventions of their culture, and can we speak of some kind of true understanding, and/or interpretation of cultures, that Geertz so fervently tried to achieve?

Inglis makes an immensely important point when amidst all the post-modern critiques of ethnography, including the work of Geertz, he sees something illuminating. For Inglis, the way in which Geertz interprets the cockfight carries the weight of a methodological lesson about the mission of contemporary researchers in the area of humanities and social sciences. This essay, according to him, should make them realize that, beyond anything else, their role is that of being literary critics, art historians or jurisprudentialist, rather than plain mechanics who merely wonder how something functions, a surgeon or a cryptographer.¹⁶ In a similar fashion, while critical at many levels against this particular essay, Schneider brings into light another important point that can be applied as a general defense

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

of interpretive anthropology in general and the work of the anthropologist in particular. Namely, what he notices is that Geertz restrains from analyzing the fight through the lens of plain functionalism. Nowhere are we led to think and look at the cockfight as a fight or a war. On the contrary, its “function,” as Geertz shows, is placed in a different, divinely filled arena in which the “Balinese sensibility is materialized for the sake of contemplation, edification and cultural instruction.”¹⁷

The problem of generalization, whereby the cockfight is spread among many cultures and is thus not exclusive for Balinese society, brings into question the validity of treating such a material as a serious foundation upon which one can build interpretations about the ethos and sensibility of a culture, as Geertz did. Perhaps, even Geertz himself did not have a solution to this problem. What matters, however, is that his self-reflexivity and awareness of the problems he faced as an anthropologist led him to the conclusion that, in a way, his interpretation cannot be by any means final. Moreover, he points out that in the process of reading cultures one can start and end with any part of the cultural repertoire of forms. Yet, the principle remains the same. Societies, same as lives, he believed, contain their own interpretations. We just have to learn how to approach them. The lucidity, nobility, and illuminating strength of Geertz’s thought and understanding of cultures cannot be but noticed here. It is here that he also defends the grace and dignity and importance of anthropology. In the words of Rosaldo¹⁸, Geertz was dedicated to the mission of approaching the study of any culture by first attempting to understand how people understand and see themselves. As such, his mission is tantamount to a serious, ethical project, which needs to open our eyes in front of the fact that none claims a monopoly over the truth.

Concluding Remarks

This paper looked at the mechanisms of interpretive anthropology and the traps of applying conventions that appear in the process of ethnographic study so heatedly debated about within post-modern anthropology. One of the main points of departure was interpretive anthropology and her main representative, Clifford Geertz, with his essay on the Balinese cockfight. Giving both the positive as well as negative criticisms to his interpretation,

¹⁷ Schneider, *op. cit.*, 816.

¹⁸ Renato Jr. I. Rosaldo “A Note on Geertz as a Cultural Essayist,” in *The Fate of “Culture”: Geertz and Beyond*, ed. Sherry B. Ortner (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999), 31.

this paper looked at the problems of interpretation and ethnography in general through the lens of the post-modern crisis in anthropology, which came about in the 80s. The so-called *crisis of representation* has questioned ethnography, criticizing it as a practice that can be under deep influence of the subjectivity and cultural conventions of the ethnographer. Yet, more than any other anthropological school, interpretive anthropology realized that culture is, in the final instance, a result of a consensus among the participants of that culture and that the community preserves the cultural norms and matrices because these give meaning to life.¹⁹ The importance and meaning of anthropology have been brought into question with the contemporary post-modern dilemmas about the validity of its study. Yet, the contemporary engagements of anthropologists are a clear proof that it is a discipline of utmost importance.

To name but a few among the contemporary anthropological problems so skilfully vivisected by anthropologists today we can point to the complex themes such as: cultural borders, diasporas, migration, violence, fluctuation of capital, political fragmentation, the regimes of social and moral control, the neoliberal reforms, the new modes of pharmaceutical industry, information technology. All of these themes are approached systematically and competently by contemporary anthropologists such as Ong and Collier²⁰. Anthropologists today do not approach the omnipresent process of globalisation in a similar fashion as other social scientists. Instead of looking at globalization through the lens of grand narration announcing the new world order, or through the analytical lens that studies more the versatility of “local” reactions and resistance to global forces, these anthropologists look at the specific phenomena through which these changes are being manifested. Among these phenomena there is technoscience, the systems of administration and/or control, as well as the ethical and value regimes. These phenomena are, according to Ong and Collier, *global* in the sense of being mobile and dynamic, moving and reconstructing society, culture, and economy. Yet, these global phenomena articulate themselves in specific situations and, hence, Ong and Collier refer to them as *global assemblages*. These approaches specific of the contemporary anthropological scene, as well as the problems they deal

¹⁹ One can clearly argue that this assumption omits the power mechanisms so vividly discussed by Asad. See more on the power mechanisms that shape social life in Talal Asad “Anthropological conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz,” *Man*, 18 (1983), 237-259.

²⁰ See more in Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, eds. *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

with, reveal a new, mature side of anthropology liberated from the traps of conventional interpretations of cultures and events that were problematized above.²¹

Agreeing greatly with Milenković,²² it should be pointed out that it was precisely this assiduous scrutinization of anthropology by anthropologists themselves that has taught the anthropologists of today more about the role of science in culture and culture in science than the previous generations. It is because of this that today the anthropologists can speak up with a full public and critical authority in the scientific and cultural wars, debates, and other forms of critique. This, as Milenković points out, is due to the fact that for decades now, anthropologists have been part of a discipline which has discussed “irrationality,” “objectivity,” and “neutrality” of itself. It has therefore carried out a long process of auto-therapy, a self-reflexive journey. It is because of this legacy, that anthropology has the full right to continue working and carrying out scientific interpretations of different phenomena, themes, processes, objects, and so forth. Taking into account the unremitting changes, redefinitions, reshaping of the conditions in which we live, as well as of our understanding of life in general, together with the evolved, matured face of anthropology today, one cannot but argue in favor of the pragmatically justified need for the continuation and existence of this discipline.

²¹ Among their illustration for the global assemblages and the new anthropological approaches to studying cultures, free of the conventions and cultural matrices of the ethnographer's culture, we can point out to Ong and Collier discussion on a text by Sara Franklin, who talks about stem cell research as a “global biological” activity. The whole apparatus of scientific and technological study of cells takes place in a transnational, global space, related to what can be referred to as the global capital. Yet, cell research can be organized in any kind of cultural, social, and economic context, while the repercussions would be global. Even the way in which we understand and intervene in life will change. The key infrastructural premises for the stem cell research are, according to Franklin the specific distribution of scientific expertise and global capital. At the same time, the ethical regulations implemented through the political contexts of the individual countries are a key segment of the assemblage of elements through which, such a research can be articulated. Finally, the genetic research will have serious repercussions on the ways life is understood in general. Hence, such research can lead to a revision of the long-term established assumptions about the irreversibility of aging. In addition, the advancement of therapeutical methods can lead to problems in the sphere of political regulations and ethical applicability on both the individual and the collectively.

²² Miloš Milenković, „Teorija etnografije u savremenoj antropologiji (1982-2002)” (PhD diss., University of Belgrade, 2006), 258.