

## RECONSTRUCTING CULTURE THROUGH LINGUISTICALLY CODED GENDER STEREOTYPES – THE CASE OF PETAR II PETROVIĆ NJEKOŠ PHRASEOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper explores phraseological manifestations of gender stereotypes in the language of Petar II Petrović Njegoš, with special views to reconstructing socio-cultural context shaping them. Drawing on the tradition of Slavic ethnolinguistics, and taking the idea of organic unity of language and culture as the starting point, we apply historico-ethnographic approach in analyzing the cultural content of phraseologisms, integrating linguistic and extralinguistic data in the process. The results obtained indicate that gendered differences concerning physical features and participation in public/private realms, as translated by linguistic means, reconstruct the social reality of the nineteenth-century Montenegro in a relatively reliable way.*

**Keywords:** Petar II Petrović Njegoš, phraseology, sex roles, stereotypes, private/public binary

## RICOSTRUENDO LA CULTURA ATTRAVERSO STEREOTIPI DI GENERE LINGUISTICAMENTE CODIFICATI – IL CASO DELLA FRASEOLOGIA DI PETAR II PETROVIĆ NJEKOŠ

### SINTESI

*Il presente articolo ha per oggetto le manifestazioni fraseologiche degli stereotipi di genere nella lingua di Petar II Petrović Njegoš, con particolare riguardo alla ricostruzione del contesto socio-culturale in cui sono collocate. Basandosi sulla tradizione dell'etnolinguistica slava e partendo dall'idea dell'unità organica della lingua e cultura, nel presente lavoro viene applicato l'approccio storico-etnografico all'analisi del contenuto delle frasi idiomatiche, integrando i dati linguistici ed extralinguistici. I risultati ottenuti indicano che le differenze di genere inerenti le caratteristiche fisiologiche e la partecipazione alla sfera privata/pubblica della vita sociale, ricostruite in base ai dati linguistici, riflettono in maniera affidabile la realtà sociale del Montenegro dell'Ottocento.*

**Parole chiave:** Petar II Petrović Njegoš, fraseologia, ruoli di genere, stereotipi, dicotomia privato/pubblico

## INTRODUCTION

**Language approach to stereotypes**

The present paper seeks to explore phraseological manifestations of gender stereotypes in the language of Petar II Petrović Njegoš, with special views to the socio-cultural context shaping them. Language, as one of the universal semiotic systems, both materializes stereotypes as social representations, and acts as their source by reinforcing, or rather *»communicating stereotypes in such a way that they are likely to be reproduced perpetually in a society«* (Lyons et al., 2008, 61). Stereotypes arise in the process of socialization, and thus, inevitably, in a language-based communication as well. The fact that language, as the primary means of sharing beliefs, has a fundamental role to play in transmission and maintenance of stereotypes, was long recognized and explored within the field of social psychology (e.g. Lippman, 1991). The central question this study asks is how linguistic signs shape and reflect stereotypes, and to what extent is their semantic content related to extralinguistic, socio-cultural context. Taking the view that phraseology is a part of lexicon profoundly influenced by the cultural patterns, we aim to access the underlying structures of cultural knowledge coded in phraseological motivation. Given that interpretation of phrasemes in terms of their relation to culture features more prominently in phraseology since the turn of the 21st century, our research is carried in line with these tendencies. So far, Njegoš's phraseology has mostly been studied either from the structural point of view, or in terms of semantic reconstruction of those opaque units that provoke debate in scientific circles. At the same time, culture semantics of Njegoš's phrasicon has remained largely understudied. In that respect, the research focus of the present study shifts from the description of phraseologisms – their structure, properties and varieties (Pejanović, 2010) or (syntactic and) semantic analyses (Stevanović (1990), Marojević (2005) to exploring their potential to store and transmit the 'cultural memory' of a speech community. To that end we consider interrelation of phraseology and culture within a broader framework of interdisciplinary research, extending to different sources of knowledge and approaches of different culturally oriented academic disciplines. Moreover, having in mind the profound impact that gender has on the way individuals perceive and interact with the society at large, it is surprising that no previous research exists that specifically explores this dimension of either Njegoš's or Montenegrin folk phraseology. The results of the

present study will therefore provide some preliminary findings on cultural foundation extrapolated from gender specific phraseology in Njegoš's language and add to the growing field of inquiry into phraseology as a cultural phenomenon.

**Stereotypes: Lippman's »pictures in the head« and the socio-cultural orientation**

Historically, the first definition of a stereotype could be traced to the American journalist Walter Lippman, who saw it as a culturally derived mental construct: a *»picture in the head«* not based on experience, but derived culturally (Lippman, 1991). Given that experience is *»too big, too complex and too fleeting for direct acquaintance«*, due to human limitations in acquisition and cognitive processing of information, we need to reinterpret it *»on a simple model before we can manage with it«* (Lippman, 1991, 16). In other words, stereotypes arise from the need to simplify perception and interpretation of reality. In that vein, stereotypes could be considered to be relatively fixed fragments in cognitive structuring of external reality, operating within the constraints of a certain culture. Lippman's claims and understanding of stereotypes still seem to be valid, more so having in mind that *»he touched upon precursor of major orientations in the study of stereotypes«* (Kleng, 1993, 139) and in this regard, of socio-cultural orientation as well. According to Ashmore and Del Boca (1981), his contribution to the socio-cultural orientation was twofold. First, he suggested that stereotypes rationalize the existing societal arrangements, which was later developed through the *»conflict theory«*.<sup>1</sup> Second, he pointed to society as the source of many individual *»pictures in the head«* which is related to the structuralist-functional view, the other important perspective within the socio-cultural orientation (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, 3). In a structuralist-functional view that is adopted in this paper, stereotypes constitute a part of a cultural pattern institutionalized within a society. Individuals who are socialized into that culture internalize the pattern and model their conduct upon it: stereotypes are, therefore, cultural phenomena.

The properties of stereotypes that make them cultural phenomena, according to Lyons, are: prevalence in a large group of people,<sup>2</sup> relative stability over time and social learning as means of transmission (Lyons et al., 2008, 60). If we also add that stereotypes mainly perform value-expressive function both on individual and societal level, the following definition could be reconstructed: Stereotypes are culturally shared and socially learned beliefs that are characterized by nor-

1 Stereotypes justify the existing patterns of intergroup relations: eg. the notion that the poor are lazy and incompetent justifies differences in socio-economic status.

2 cf. Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) who make distinction between stereotypes (individual level) and cultural stereotypes (societal level).

mativity, stability, evaluative nature, and prevalence within large groups/communities.

As regards to stereotypes related to gender – socially and culturally constructed identity based on natural sex, they are mostly defined taking into account either personal traits of men and women (e.g. Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979), or the distribution of sexes in social roles (e.g. Eagly, 1987). As it was already stated, we approach gender stereotypes from the socio-cultural perspective, i.e. as related to social roles and the associated behaviors of men and women. In other words, we treat femaleness and maleness represented in phraseological verbalizations as cultural constructs.

#### PHRASEOLOGY: DEFINITION, CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Phraseology was established as an autonomous linguistic discipline at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet to this day it is »bedeviled by proliferation of terms«<sup>3</sup> and definitions (Cowie, 1998, 210). The multi-faceted nature of phraseology is to be accounted for the fact that providing a clear-cut definition and proposing unified terminology still remains an elusive endeavor. Phraseology, in the broadest sense, could be defined as »the study of the structure, meaning and use of word combinations« (Cowie, 1994, 3168), yet to delimit the field, it would be necessary to define what kind of multi word units make up the phraseological spectrum. In general, most phraseologists agree on the following defining criteria: polilexality, semantic and syntactic non-compositionality, frequency of co-occurrence.

Having defined the phraseological unit (further – PU) in terms of its semantic and syntactic structure, we proceed to discuss its cultural aspects. Phraseologisms are considered to be effective means of studying cultural phenomena for two reasons: for offering insight into extralinguistic codes of culture underlying them, and for reflecting the ways of metaphorical conceptualization of different domains of experience. In other words, phraseologisms encode cultural world vision of a community and serve as a »linguistic repository of a number of cultural traditions that are specific to a given language« (Colson, 2007, 201). Phraseologisms »mirror« national culture through myths, legends, rites, rituals, elements of collective and folk belief, stereotypes, cultural symbols, archetypes, etc. underlying their semantic structure.

In terms of studying stereotypes, phraseological units seem to be a fruitful point of focus for several reasons: 1) due to their axiological nature: much like stereotypes, phraseologisms are evaluative categories that reflect emotional-evaluative attitude; 2) they cast

light on both linguistic and extralinguistic factors in the processes of linguistic coding of stereotypes; 3) allow insight into culture-bound content of stereotypes.

#### AIMS AND METHODS

With a view to analyzing stereotypical sex roles as verbalized in Njegoš's phraseoexicon, we assigned the PUs denoting men and women to two groups: physiological features and social roles within the public/private sphere. As we set out to investigate (phraseological) language units in their organic unity with culture, we apply historico-ethnographic approach in analyzing the cultural content of PUs by integrating linguistic and extralinguistic data, relying also on the methodology of ethnolinguistics (method of linguistic reconstruction of culture) in the process.

Even though there is no study to date that has investigated gender-related stereotypes reflected in Njegoš's phrasicon, we rely on the prior extensive research in field, both in terms of determining the phraseological status of certain expressions, and with regard to their semantic reconstruction. In that respect, we draw on the findings of Stevanović (1990), Marojević (2005), and most notably on the seminal work of Pejanović (2010) that remains the most comprehensive study on the phraseology of the *The Mountain Wreath* to date, addressing the structural and the semantic aspects of the given units, their conceptual structure, as well as the strategies employed in translation of such fixed expressions to Russian language.

#### CORPUS

The corpus is composed of the gender-marked PUs retrieved from *Dictionnaire de la langue de Petar II Petrović Njegoš* (1983) that includes all his works written between 1833 and 1851. Reasons motivating the choice of corpus are twofold. First, from the linguistic point of view, Njegoš's language appears to be a rich source of both folk and authorial phraseology. Second, due to the active role Njegoš played in creating national culture: both his work, and Njegoš himself stand out as the pillars of Montenegrin cultural identity.

#### WOMAN: SOCIAL ROLES – THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Analysis of the phrasemes within this group clearly reflects the ideology of patriarchy that a woman, her primary function being reproduction, is (biologically) destined for the roles of mother and wife. Within the group of PUs denoting woman in her social roles, only one is (vaguely) related to her appearing in the public sphere, the fact that, given this group is also the most

3 In this paper, the terms phraseologism and phraseological unit will be used interchangeably.

numerous, speaks for itself. Socio-cultural context is in this case well translated by phraseology, which is also validated by the relevant ethnographic data.

### The private sphere

#### Mother

The cult of motherhood, as a construct of patriarchy, »reflects a long-standing assumption that childcare is an essentially and exclusively female activity; a naturalized constant that has provided a vital underpinning of the cultural supremacy of the male« (Freeman, 2008, 114). Being further fostered and sacralized in religious context,<sup>4</sup> motherhood becomes a woman's most defining role. Moreover, according to the psychologist Todor Baković (1985, 151), glorification of motherhood in Montenegrin cultural context could be seen as manifestation of the Oedipus complex:

*An environment with a mother as sole tutor, often a war widow, generates ideal conditions for the development of a strong oedipal complex. In adult Montenegrin males, the oedipal complex was transformed into a symbiotic projection of love, respect, consideration and obedience toward mothers, rarely seen to such a degree in other cultures.*

In the PUs retrieved from the corpus, mother epitomizes:

- **creation:** *rodila majka* (mother brought one into this world) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 235), (*takve*) *jošt majka rodila nije* (lit.<sup>5</sup> mother didn't give birth to such person yet – such person doesn't exist) (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 490);
- **upbringing and heritage:** *zadojen majčinim mlijekom* (to suck something with one's mother's milk) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 446), *stidjeti se majčina mlijeka* (lit. to be ashamed of mother's milk – to be ashamed of one's origin); (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 346);
- **closeness/bond** with a child: *rodna/mila majka* (lit. mother who gave birth to one – one's own mother; dear mother) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 423, 530; 1983b, 366) *jedinac u majke* (mother's only son) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 312).

While the PUs in the previous group could be regarded as universal or at least widespread across a

number of languages, culture-bound expressions are those gathered around the image of a grieving mother and/or mother connoting identity:

*kukala/žalosna mu majka* (lit. woe to your/his mother – you are in a difficult position) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 209, 423; 1983b, 382); *ostala ti majka kukavica* (may your mother wail for you – may you die on your mother) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 391).

The image underlying both phrasemes could be traced to folk belief. Vuk Karadžić (1837, 47) wrote that it was the custom in Montenegro to carve the cuckoo birds on burial crosses - a cuckoo bird for each female relative who would grieve for the deceased:

*»This custom drew from the folk tale that cuckoo bird used to be a girl who mourned her brother for so long, that God, growing weary of the lament, turned her into a cuckoo bird [...] hence the expression 'kuku mene' (woe to me).«*

One's national and religious identity could also be associated with »the mother who brings one to this world«:

*rodila Srpk/Crnogorka/kaurka/vlahinja/bula* (lit. Serbian/Montenegrin/Christian/Muslim woman brought to this world – one is a Serb/Montenegrin/Christian/Muslim) (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 335, 343, 490; 1983a, 91).

Multitude of expressions denoting motherhood clearly illustrates the socio-cultural reproductive expectations and points to childbearing as the core mission in life of a Montenegrin woman. Unlike mothers who were celebrated, childless wives were shunned and believed to be cursed, or even suspected of witchcraft:

*This can become ugly, for women without children are almost automatically suspected of being witches. A Montenegrin witch [...] »eats the souls« of the children in her extended family. Her motive is jealousy, and her mode of locomotion is winged; she can assume the form of a moth or a bird and enter a house to kill her relative's children* (Boehm, 1995 in Milich, 1995, xxix).

Needless to say, women were to be blamed for the couple's infertility. Montenegrin with »a barren wife« was not only allowed, but even encouraged to be a bigamist. The sterile wives had to return to their birth

4 In Slavic context, it could be traced to mythological representation of the soil Mat (Syra) Zemla (lit. Damp Mother Earth) and veneration of the goddess Mokosh, one of the oldest and most important Slav deities. With the adoption of Christianity, the cult of Slavic Mokosh becomes identified with, and then transformed into veneration of the Virgin Mary.

5 literal translation.



*Figure 1: Černohorka s dítětem (Jaroslav Čermák, 1865) (Wikimedia Commons).*

families: »if he (the husband) chased her away, he had to give her 60 thalers, but in most cases she would allow it (to be sent away)« (Bogišić, 1984, 44). Such was the pressure of the community that some women married off their husbands and continued living with them and their then wives as »sluge« (lit. servants), waiting on them and taking care of their children. These women were glorified, which in turn fostered cultural expectations.

### Wife

The PUs within this group illustrate the implications of the honor code for a woman's role in marriage. Whereas expressions *vjerna/divna/mlada ljuba/ljubovca* (lit. a faithful/wonderful/young wife) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 416, 418, 534, 580); *nevjesta mnogostidna* (lit. a demure bride/young wife) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 448) denote virtues and traits construed as feminine and valued across different cultural contexts – beauty, youth, fidelity, shyness and modesty, they are also illustrative of the »honor culture« framework in which female fidelity and chastity appear as central to masculine public reputation and integrity. Cultural emphasis on male honor gives rise to the chastity-centered ideal of female virtue: »Honor norms require men to be hypersensitive to insults and threats to their reputation, and a key component of the masculine reputation is the good name of a man's female partner« (Vandello & Cohen, 2003, 999). Viewed from that perspective, preservation of »narok« (chastity and/or fidelity) is not simply a concern for a woman's reputation, but rather a matter of the collective honor of the family and the clan, and it's a man's duty to protect it:

*Her adultery represents not only an infringement of his rights, but the demonstration of failure in his duty. He has betrayed the values of his family, bringing dishonor to all the social groups who are involved reciprocally in his honor: his family and his community* (Pitt-Rivers, 1966, 46).

In consequence, the honor culture places value on male toughness and their ability to protect the family, while the »norms for females stress modesty, shame, and the avoidance of behaviors that might threaten the good name of the family« (Vandello & Cohen, 2003, 998).

### Shyness: *nevjesta mnogostidna*

In the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Montenegro, shyness was both a culturally valued personality trait and the first »pedagogy« for girls. With the awareness of their sexuality, girls (were taught to) develop shyness

in the presence of the opposite sex: »The girls are much more shy than the boys; they would not look at you directly« (Jovičević, 1901, 86). Moreover, the concept of shyness appears as a salient organizing theme in some of the marriage traditions and customs: »as a bride, a young woman had to be totally *skromna* (modest) and *stidna* (bashful). At the wedding she could meet no one's eyes and as a young wife she could neither smoke, nor curse, with the choice words reserved for men« (Boehm, 1995 in Milich, 1995, xviii). Unsurprisingly, »shyness« has a role to play in marital intimacy and the customs related to consummation of marriage. Writing about marriage customs, Vuk Karadžić (1837, 36) states that »according to old traditions and proverbs, the newlyweds in Montenegro and Herzegovina did not sleep together for the whole first year of their married life; the bride slept with her mother-in-law, and the groom stayed with the cattle«. Such practice, according to Karadžić (1837, 38), also stems from »shyness«: »It still happens in Montenegro that a bride, being shy, can not bring herself to sleep with her husband for weeks«. In a similar vein, Mary Durham (1928, 208) writes: »To defer the consummation of marriage was considered honourable [...] the longer, the more honourable [...] sometimes deferred for a year or more. The explanation offered for this practice was that the bride was *stidna* (shy)«.

### Fidelity: *vjerna ljuba*

Cultural expectations of shyness for a girl and a bride gave ground to admiration of loyalty and fidelity for a married woman. Montenegrin woman »as a girl [...] had the finest and the most fearful shyness [...] as a wife she developed the cult of marital fidelity« (Frile & Vlahović, 2001, 132). What gave rise to such »cult« was the strict moral code of honor culture on the one hand, and the legal sanctions against female infidelity on the other. The norms of honor that apply to female fidelity were, therefore, both the implicit social rules and normative expectations as discussed above, and the codified legal rules. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Montenegro, both female and male infidelity was criminalized, yet there were stark gender-based differences when it comes to legal punishment. Whereas men could be sentenced to several months in prison for having a child born out of adultery, penalties for women included banishment, mutilation and capital punishment. The Article 72 of The General Law of the Land from 1855 (The code of Danilo I) states that if a married woman was found guilty of adultery, her husband had every right to administer the law himself: »Should it happen to any Montenegrin [...] that his wife is not faithful to him, and he apprehends her in the act of adultery, he is then allowed to kill them both (the wife and her partner): in case that she ran away, she has no place in (is to be banished from) our Land«

(in Nelević, 2011, 122). Furthermore, a husband as a victim of infidelity had the right to cut his wife's nose off. On December 29, 1852, Montenegrin Senate issued a ruling sentencing Krstinja Ostojić, who had been unfaithful to her husband Zeko Prelov Ivanišević, to banishment. Moreover, it was stated that *»should any of the Ivaniševićs apprehend her, they are free to cut her nose off«* (in: Nelević, 2011, 122). The expression *otkinuti nos (kome)*<sup>6</sup> (lit. to cut one's nose off – to bring shame and disgrace upon yourself/your kin), motivated by such practice, is still widely used in Montenegro.

### **Daughter – »a snake was born«**

Ethnographers and travelers through the 19<sup>th</sup> century Montenegro recorded that the birth of a daughter was seen as a misfortune, a bad omen for the family. A father who only had daughters was believed to be punished by God, and he was feared, for *»his curses were thought to have magical powers over those more fortunate«* (Milich, 1995, 26). The parents, when asked about their newborn, were *»apologetic«* if it was a daughter: *»In response to the question about the sex of his newborn, a father would say [...] 'Forgive me, we had a daughter'«* (Frile & Vlahović, 2001, 144); *»a snake was born to our house«* (Boehm, 1995 in Milich, 1995, xxiii) To this day, daughter is often referred to as *»tuda večera/sreća«* (lit. a stranger's supper/luck), implying that parents are investing into daughter's upbringing, only for her to be of use to her husband's family. Another verbalization of that stereotype found on the lexemic level – the word *»odiva«* is used to denote a married daughter of the family, while such distinction is not made for a son. The stereotype of a daughter's progeny being *»tanka krv«* (lit. thin blood), a distant kin, is also reflected in the PU *zatrijeti sjeme u odivu* (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 246) (lit. destroy the seed in the womb of a married daughter) that metaphorically implies complete obliteration of a certain family, to the extent that there is no one left, not even the distant relatives.

### **The public sphere: »Stopanica« – the invisible one**

Aside from being indicative of the universal stereotype – masculinity associated with strength as opposed to femininity associated with weakness, the proverb *ljudi trpe, a žene nariču* (lit. men endure (pain), women wail) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 212) refers to *»naricanje«* – a mourning lament performed ritually at funerals. It was performed by the female members of the deceased's family and the 'professional' (female) mourners, and it was the only opportunity for a woman to appear as the agent, rather than just the observer

in public life. Tužbalice/naricaljke (wailing songs/laments) were, on the one hand, poetic articulations of insufferable pain of losing a family member and a way to cope with the loss, and, on the other hand, a woman's form of expressing herself as a member of community: a woman wailing *»had the right to judge events and men, thus gaining social position and the power to express herself [...] through the role of an educator, she admonished people to protect and fulfill familial, tribal and national ideals. In epic poetry, she is depicted as one who inspires warriors to continue their struggle for autonomy. Her words are as significant as those of men – perhaps more so«* (Vujačić, 1980, 150). Laments were, therefore, the female voice of the oral poetry, and the female voice heard in the public context.

With the exception of her role in funerary customs, woman was marginalized from public life. Her public persona was to remain invisible and mute both in the presence of her husband, and in political matters:

*women don't come to the public meeting(s) (zbor) even if there isn't a man at their home, they rather send some male relative. It is true that if the meeting is on a saints feast day, and it's nearby, a few of them would gather and sit near the meeting place, yet they do not interfere into meeting, but discuss their woman's business* (Bogišić, 1984, 270).

When in public, a woman had to *»exercise extreme caution as to neither undermine her husband in public, nor subvert his authority«* (Milich, 1995, 13). She was not allowed to walk with her husband, but always behind him, so she was often referred to as *»stopanica«* (lit. the one following (her husband's) footsteps).

### **Physical features**

#### **Physical appearance**

With the exception of the idiom *bijela vila* (lit. white fairy – a beautiful person) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 78), female associated, yet applicable to both genders, all the PUs in this group have woman as a referent. Male appearance stereotypes are not verbalized, which is in turn indicative of the culturally universal tendency to construct femininity in terms of physical appearance.

Lexical collocations *bijelo čelo/ruke* (white hands; white/pale face) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 24), *crna kosa* (black hair) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 138) reveal some information concerning the stereotypical feminine beauty ideal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Montenegro, as epitomized by fair complexion and dark hair.

6 For an in-depth analysis of the topic, see Pejanović, 2018.

Contrary to stereotypes, it was Montenegrin men, rather than women, that were praised for their physical appearance in the ethnographic writings from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. They were often portrayed as being »*physically among the finest and largest people in Europe*« (National Geographic magazine, 1908, 783 in Čagorović & Carmichael, 2006, 59), and as Čagorović and Carmichael (2006, 60) rightly observe, »*at times the way in which men were described were almost erotically charged, with their muscularity and height being frequently remarked upon*«.

Impressions of women, on the other hand, appear to be rather contradictory. Medaković (1860, 20) described them as women to whom »*God has given the natural beauty that cannot be taken away*«, having a pleasant, often beautiful face and black lustrous eyes »*shining bright like a crystal*«. On a similar note, Holeček 1995, 37) wrote: »*What embellishes her (a Montenegrin woman) the most are the big, black, sparkling eyes with long eyelashes [...] The eyes of Montenegrin woman are irresistible*«.

Majority of authors, though, wrote of the toll that excessive work took on a woman, making her prematurely aged, with rough, wrinkled face and the sun-baked skin: »*their youthful freshness disappears early, their skin becomes rough, facial features lose their softness, complexion loses the freshness, and by the age of 30 they already look old and unattractive*« (Gopčević, 2008, 96). Their deteriorating physical appearance was »*hardly similar to that of the handsome mountaineers*« (Markov, 1995, 331). In her anthropological travel journal *Dalmatia. The Land where East meets West*, Maude Hollbach (1910, 177) wrote:

*The Montenegrin market..., interested me greatly and I longed for an artist's brush to reproduce the splendid figures of the men in colour, but was sorry to see that these noble looking individuals left the hard work of carrying their produce to market to the overworked, prematurely aged women, whose existence seems to be little different to that of a beast of burden.*

### Age

In a similar vein, Sigfried Kapper 1999, 47) wrote that Montenegrin men, unlike overworked women, aged gracefully: »*there are very few beautiful old women in Montenegro, yet quite a few handsome and well-favored old men*«. It is probably that image of an aged woman (which stands in stark contrast to that of a man) that underlies the PU *ka(o) babetina* ((ugly) as an old wife) (Stevanović et al, 1983a, 12), applicable to both genders.

### MAN – THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The most prominent social roles of a man verbalized in the PUs of the studied corpus are those within the public sphere, based on his main »occupations« – warfare and feuding. Montenegrin man of the 19th century was primarily a warrior and the protector of the family and phratry. Institutionalization of war-like practices reflects on the private realm as well, giving rise to the »son cult« as the most obvious manifestation of male supremacy and dominance.

#### The private sphere: Son

Multitude of PUs grouped around lineage and (male) progeny clearly indicate its importance in the socio-cultural setting of the 19th century Montenegro. As many men were lost to warfare and feuding, Montenegrins were constantly confronting the threat of population decimation and even extinction. Being surrounded on all sides by a far more powerful enemy, they were acutely aware of the preservation of their own world – biological and cultural. The fear of imminent extinction that Montenegrins felt so keenly is translated well into phraseology through a number of PUs denoting extermination of a family/nation. In the context of the strongly patriarchal Montenegrin society, it primarily meant the extermination of the male progeny that was supposed to continue the 'family name' and uphold traditions (Pejanović, 2010, 130–131).

*trag utrijeti/zatrijeti/iskopati* (lit. obliterate every trace) (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 391),  
*pogibe, bi poginulo (kome) ime* (lit. one's name would die out) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 288),  
*kuću iskopati* (lit. dig out someone's house) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 394),  
*svijeću ugasiti* (lit. to put out someone's (patron saint) candle) (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 268).

There are two sources potentially underlying the phraseologism *ugasiti svijeću*. First, it could be motivated by the ritual celebration in honor of the family's patrilineal saint (slava/krsno ime). The image underlying PU is associated with the special »slava candle« that is lit on the occasion. The actual meaning thus conveys the message that there is no male posterity left to uphold the tradition of celebrating slava, or, in other words, the end of a male line. Second interpretation is linked to Slavic conceptions of light and dark in the afterlife. According to folk belief, the deceased needs light to be able see in the Otherworld. Therefore, a candle is lit next to his deathbed, and every year on Zadušnice (All Souls Day), to prevent the departed from remaining in the dark. If there is no posterity, there is no one to light the soul candle



(zadušna svijeća), so this interpretation also implies extermination of a family.

The importance of male progeny is probably reflected best in the optative constructions - idiomatic formulae of cursing. For a Montenegrin man, the worst curse involved either the loss of honor, or inability to produce male progeny:

Željela mu kuća muške glave (lit. May his house wish for a male head – May he remain sonless) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 114).  
Dabogda se trag zatro (lit. May God make your traces obliterated – May your/his male line perish) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 428).

It is worth noting that communicative phrasemes (in this case idiomatic formulae of cursing), representing language »in action«, could prove to be a significant source in the reconstruction of extralinguistic cultural content. In other words, a curse itself, as a type of social interaction, allows a significant insight into the value system of a community. By invoking the worst misfortunes and adversities as the punishment for wrongdoing and sins, the curse uncovers the moral concepts of 'good' and 'evil', and the comprehension of justice (Pejanović, 2010, 131).

Another group of gender-marked PUs indicative of the social concepts and value hierarchies of a traditional patrilineal warrior society includes expressions denoting a male as the epitome of value:

(valja) mušku glavu (lit. worth a male head – of the highest value) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 114), *ka' jednoga sina* (lit. as the only son – to the highest degree possible) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 310).

### Public sphere

#### **Warrior: the heroic ethos**

Montenegrin heroic code, and its core values »čojstvo i junaštvo« (honor and heroism) that originally were to be adhered to and upheld by warriors, became inextricably woven into the moral fabric of the entire society. The concept of čojstvo – a manly virtue, is a complex one: it is centered around, yet not limited to honor. It »emphasizes the need to act with integrity and rectitude, to treat adversaries with dignity, to show humility and respect for others, to behave fairly to other human beings, and most of all to be willing to sacrifice oneself for other members of the community« (Cole, 2011, 267). According to Christopher Boehm (1987, 73), it stands as a kind of antithesis to heroism, complementing it at the same time: »[It is] the highest level

of moral behavior in which the demands of heroism are tempered by a sense of humanity that is extended to one's enemy«. Heroism in its turn was considered to be a pinnacle of male excellence and virtue; it was »what made a Montenegrin man a man« (Marmier, 1853, 315). Phraseologisms denoting a man in his role of a brave warrior (junak) are plentiful:

*sivi soko* (lit. grey falcon) (Stevanović et al., 1983b, 279),  
*sivi orao/hitri orao* (lit. grey eagle/fast eagle) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 586),  
*gorski/mrki vuk/od planine* (lit. mountain/dark wolf) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 108, 126; 1983b, 228),  
*ljuti laf* (lit. angry lion) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 419),  
*gorski/silni/ljuti/ognjeviti zmaj* (lit. mountain/mighty/angry/fiery dragon) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 261, 556).

The standards to be observed in order to attain heroic status – the ultimate ambition of a Montenegrin man, were defined by the code of honor: bravery, honesty, strength and honor (čojstvo) were the fundamental values a Montenegrin lived by. Noteworthy is the fact is that these values are reinforced in phrase-olexicon through the opposition male-female:

*kao ženetina* (lit. as a woman<sup>7</sup> – dishonorably) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 212);  
*živjeti pod maramom* (lit. live under a kerchief; wear a kerchief (like a woman) – to live dishonorably) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 427);  
*priparati žensku opregljaču* (lit. to put on a woman's apron – to be dishonored) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 584).

The code of honor also calls for heroic death, for the only thing more important than the honorable and heroic life, to a warrior, is his glorious death in the battlefield. A Montenegrin »had been living his life, having in mind one special day: the day of his very own funeral when the 'whole Montenegro' would have come and salute him as the man of honor and heroism« (Stefan, 2016, 60). The concept of heroic death is also reflected in phraseolexicon:

*ženski pomrijeti* (lit. die like a woman – die dishonorably) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 212),  
*Glave muške ne kopa od puške* (lit. May you never bury a male member of the family who is killed by a rifle – May you never have male posterity that would die (honorably) in war) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 114).

7 The original expression is intensified by the use of a pejorative term denoting a woman.



*Figure 2: Raněný Černohorec - Wounded Montenegrin (Jaroslav Čermák, 1865) (Wikimedia Commons).*

Anything but heroic death is a form of emasculation, thus all the negatively connotatively charged PUs appear to be female associated. The famous Serbian linguist Vuk Karadžić recorded that when one tribe was challenged by another, a common insult would be *»we know you and your family: all your ancestors died in bed with their wives«* (Karadžić 1837, 113). Marko Miljanov (1996, 47) wrote of Neda, the wife of Đuro Martinov from Medun, who didn't grieve for her sons who died in battle. The defeat of the enemy and heroic death was more than enough compensation for her: *»When I saw the Turks defeated...any son of mine who died – as if he was born again [...] that is exactly what I want, I want them to die [...] for if they didn't die, they would be called daughters, not sons, and their line would be disgraced«*.

### **Brother: Blood feud and the code of honor**

Equally important to being distinguished heroically was the duty to uphold the honor of the clan – the political organization based on extended family, in which each man was *»a brother«*. Moral status and the collective reputation of the clan was to be maintained by acting in conformity to the ethical standards, and protected should it, in any way, come under attack of the other clans. This particularly applied to the blood feud – the communal responsibility of retribution in case a member of the clan was murdered. Blood feud was inextricably linked to Montenegrin moral perspective and demands of honor: should a clan fail to retaliate homicidally, the social pressure they faced was enormous:

*Indeed it was blood feuds that placed an entire clan under the greatest moral pressure. When a feud began, the clan had to uphold its collective reputation in a very public way in a context that made it highly vulnerable to social evaluation and, if its members were too slow in trying to take vengeance, to being condemned as cowardly* (Boehm, 1987, 74).

On the other hand, once it gets initiated, the feuding turns into a seemingly endless chain:

*Though the life of my family is not completely typical of my homeland, Montenegro, it is typical in one respect: the men of several generations have died at the hands of Montenegrins, men of the same faith...My father's grandfather, my own two grandfathers, my father, and my uncle were killed, as though a dread curse lay upon them. My father and his brother and my brothers were killed even though all of them yearned to die peacefully in their beds beside their wives. Generation after generation, and the bloody chain was not broken* (Đilas, 1958, 9).

The multiplication of reprisals, in turn, threatened to involve and affect the entire community. In extreme cases, such feuds could result in destruction of one side by the other (Zlatar, 2005, 27). Consequently, it was necessary to control the otherwise devastating power of blood feuds and tribal wars: Njegoš himself, much like his uncle and predecessor Prince-Bishop Petar I, *»ranted and raved, in his letters and missives to the various tribal leaders and prominent men, against protracted blood feuds, proffered advice, offered his mediation, and showered anathemas if they proved obdurate or failed to listen«* (Zlatar, 2007a, 26). In his epic *The Mountain Wreath*, we see Bishop Danilo constantly tormented by *»the possibility total extermination of the Montenegrins, both Christian and Muslim, in an enormous blood feud«* (Zlatar, 2007b, 611). That being said, the feuds that went too far were commonly settled through reconciliation of the parties involved: when the consequences of a protracted blood feud became rather far-reaching and threatened to disrupt everyday social relations, pacification process would be initiated to conclude hostilities.

Phraseologism *bratsko mito* (lit. brotherly bribe – blood money) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 442) refers to the custom of settling a blood feud by paying compensation to the aggrieved party. Other mechanisms that were used to pacify blood vengeance involved creating family ties through marriage, or making alliances such as *kumstvo* (godfatherhood) or *pobratimstvo* (blood brotherhood). In that respect, feuding, as Andrei Simić (1967, 92) claims, also *»served to manifest and strengthen the ties of kinship«* which might be reflected in the PUs *bratska ljubav* (brotherly love) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 416), and *Bog ti i bratska (ljubav)* (lit. in the name of God and brotherly love – In the name of God) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 39).

Despite the fact that Montenegrins, *»deeply attached to manly honor and sensitive to insults«* (Zlatar, 2007a, 26), preferred to take blood as compensation, there were numerous instances where a long-standing feud led to a non-violent conflict resolution, often achieved through the intervention and mediation of the community. Being largely embedded in the honor-shame dynamics, a blood feud invariably involved the point of *»honor balance«*: *»In order to replace the loss of honour, material compensation was not enough, but rather there was a need for spiritual and emotional reparation, as every injustice caused humiliation and shame of the injured party«* (Darovec, 2017, 73). Pacification process and the ceremony of peacemaking itself were *»dictated by the injured party and publicly demonstrated with symbolic words, gestures, and objects. The rituals consisted of self-humiliation (gift and counter-gift, homage), friendship (faith, truce), and the establishment of lasting peace (compensation, love, forgiveness)«* (Darovec et al., 2017, 410–411). It is precisely in the ritual of gift exchange and (self)

humiliation that women had a prominent role. Firstly, the practice of compensatory marriages was very common: fundamentally, such unions were, as Darovec (2019, 736) claims, »*the exchange of blood for blood and life for life [...] Ritual marriages were gifts of women, who by giving birth to new life compensated for the life lost*« and united the feuding parties into kin. Moreover, women played an important part in the ritual of humiliation: they actively intervened in the conflict resolution by performing the act of humiliation either as *kume*, the peace carriers – the group of up to twelve or fifteen women who would kneel on the ground while holding the new-born babies and pleading the injured party for mercy (Ergaver, 2016, 109), or sometimes resorted to acts such as chaining themselves to the fireplace in the victim's house to ensure the opening of peace negotiations (Darovec, 2017, 81).

Despite being the most prominent, the role in mediation was not the only responsibility a woman could assume in feuding. According to Vlahović and Dančetović, (1961, 96–98) a woman's role in blood revenge was threefold: she was a) an instigator, b) an active participant c) a mediator. As far as retaliatory killing is concerned, responsibility of revenge rested on the victim's male relatives, yet there were instances when women too, took upon themselves the avenging of a family member. Moreover, the authors claim that women resorted to exacting retribution only in cases of absolute necessity, when there was no one else to assume such responsibility, yet they provide dramatic illustrations of female revenge in the form of Albanian folk songs *Hasimja* and *The Betrayal of Beyto Sula and the Revenge of his Wife*. Rather than the perpetrators, women were more likely to become the instigators of revenge. They would, for example, keep a blood-soaked piece of the victim's garment and keep showing it to their male relatives until blood is taken in return, or claim that the soul of the killed cried to them at night and would only rest when blood is paid for by blood (Zlata, 2005, 116).

### The private sphere

Phraseologisms denoting a man in the private sphere are mostly associated with his role of a son. Father, much like husband, appears only once in the corpus of PUs under study. The private sphere is a sphere of woman's influence: »*a man is a soldier and a guest in the house, woman is the head of household and that is why the burden of work and care falls mostly on her. She knows that the house doesn't rest upon the ground, but it rests upon a woman. She works tirelessly*« (Nenadović, 1975, 78). Therefore, Montenegrin husband is not a traditional breadwinner – his primary role is that of a protector of his family. The honor code requires male precedence, toughness,

and the ability to protect members of the family – their lives and honor, though rarely in that order:

*Muž je branič žene i deteta* (A husband is meant to protect his wife and children) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 47).

Father (along with mother) appears in the PU denoting inheritance and upbringing. Notwithstanding the negative context, mother's role, once again, overshadows that of a father:

*od zla oca i od gore majke* (lit. descending from a bad father and a mother even worse – the dregs of society) (Stevanović et al., 1983a, 237).

### CONCLUSION

Departing from the premise that culture-oriented perspective in studying phraseology renders it possible to uncover cultural knowledge that is inherited and passed down from generation to generation in the form of metaphor patterns, the present study focused on the units reflecting perceptions of gender roles in the 19th century Montenegro. In trying to spot the cultural traits in the semantic layer of phraseological representations of men and women, we did not rely on a purely linguistic approach: quite the contrary, we set out to explore the relationship of language and culture in the light of their organic unity, integrating both linguistic and the data or knowledge inherent to culture codes other than language - customs, beliefs, folklore, legends, myths, etc. Accordingly, the aim of the study has been to contribute to the growing field of inquiry into phraseology of Petar Petrović Njegoš and Montenegrin folk phraseology in several unique ways: by bringing both a gender perspective and a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to discussion, and by shedding new, yet familiar light on the culture semantics of the units under study.

The study has argued that the examined verbalizations of gender stereotypes synthesize different forms of cultural knowledge and offer an insight into different dimensions of culture – modes of evaluating, interaction and social behavior. Supportive evidence is provided for the thesis that phraseology reflects conventionalized ways of construing phenomena within a speech community, serves a »cumulative function« by storing culturally relevant information, and, in general, reveals the culture-central concepts and values.

On a narrower scope, the findings of the study imply that gendered differences and stereotypes as translated by phraseological means reflect the social reality of the nineteenth-century Montenegro in a relatively reliable way. It particularly applies to phraseology denoting men and women in their social

roles. Woman's roles, as expected in any patriarchy, are closely tied to her reproductive function and childcare. Man's roles are those defined by the cultural keywords: a warrior, a protector of his family and phratry in the public, and the role of a son, the epitome of value and male superiority, in the private sphere. Stereotypical notions of physical characteristics and the corresponding verbalizations appear as equally indicative of both the given socio-cultural context in case of PUs grouped around age, and of universal tendencies in attribution of sex roles when it comes to physical appearance.

What lends a tentative corroboration to these findings is both the concurrence of ethnographic data with the results obtained from linguistic analysis,

and the fact that the studied phrasemes reflect the »key terms« of culture. Those keywords grounded in Montenegrin cultural framework – obraz, čast, junak, junaštvo, krvna osveta and čojstvo, emerge as the fundamental concepts in the analysis of the phrasemes as well.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of gender specific units in Njegoš's phrasicon as carriers and transmitters of cultural knowledge, and of gender dynamics within the given social and cultural structures. With this in mind, we believe that the findings might bear relevance for further research and be of interest to those concerned with gender, phraseology, or interface of language and culture in general.

REKONSTRUKCIJA KULTURE SKOZI JEZIKOVNO KODIRANE SPOLNE STEREOTIPE –  
PRIMER FRAZELOGIJE PETRA II. PETROVIĆA NJEGOŠA

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## POVZETEK

*Izhajajoč s stališča, da jezik kot univerzalni semiotični sistem skozi sporazumevanje materializira in perpetuira stereotipe, pričujoči prispevek obravnava vprašanje, kako frazeološke enote kot jezikovni znaki odsevajo stereotipe ter na kakšen način in v kolikšni meri je njihova semantična vsebina povezana z zunajjezikovnim, družbeno-kulturnim kontekstom. Z raziskovanjem spolnih vlog, kodiranih v frazemih, ki smo jih pridobili iz dela Dictionnaire de la langue de Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1982), smo skušali orisati črnogorsko družbeno in kulturno zgodovino 19. stoletja. Pri preučevanju jezikovnih enot, organsko prepletenih s kulturo, smo vsebino frazemov analizirali z uporabo zgodovinsko-etnografskega pristopa in združevanjem jezikovnih in zunajjezikovnih podatkov, pri čemer smo se opirali tudi na metodologijo etnolingvistike (metodo jezikovne rekonstrukcije kulture). Pridobljeni rezultati kažejo, da razlike med spoloma z vidika udeležbe in sodelovanja v javni in zasebni sferi družbenega življenja, rekonstruirane preko jezikovnih sredstev, natančno odražajo dani družbeno-kulturni kontekst: ženski je dodeljena vloga matere in žene, moškemu pa vloga bojevnika in varuha bratstva in družine v javni sferi ter vloga sina v zasebni sferi. Stereotipno pojmovanje fizičnih lastnosti in pripadajoče frazeološko izrazje orisujeta družbeno-kulturni kontekst, a sta hkrati tudi izraz univerzalne težnje pripisovanja spolnih vlog.*

**Ključne besede:** Petar II. Petrović Njegoš, frazeologija, vloge spolov, stereotipi, dihotomija javno/zasebno

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