

# CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTION OF FAMILY IN CROATIAN NOVELS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS BY MEANS OF THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVELS BY JASMINKA TIHI-STEPANIĆ

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**Abstract** Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić is a contemporary Croatian author for children and young adults. She successfully depicts childhood, growing up and youth in the 21st century and brings various current issues that surrounding contemporary childhood and adolescence. In her novels she depicts different family types and family (non)functioning effects on identity formation of children and youth. Family pictures in novels of Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić emphasize the importance of the family community and the importance of the role of parents in the life of the child and young adult.

## Keywords:

Jasminka Tihi-Sterpanić, contemporary children and young adult literature, family in children's literature, identity formation, family type

# SUVREMENA OBITELJSKA KONCEPCIJA U HRVATSKOM ROMANU ZA DJECU I MLADE NA PRIMJERU ROMANA JASMINKE TIHI-STEPANIĆ

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**Ključne riječi:**

Jasminka  
Tihi-Stepanić,  
suvremena  
književnost za  
djecu i mlade,  
obitelj u dječjoj  
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formiranje  
identiteta,  
tip obitelji

**Sažetak** Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić suvremena je hrvatska književnica za djecu i mlade koja u svojim djelima uspješno oslikava djetinjstvo, odrastanje i mladenaštvo u 21. stoljeću. U svojim romanima oslikava različite tipove obitelji te obiteljsko (ne)funkcioniranje utječe na formiranje identiteta djece i mladih. Slika obitelji u romanima Jasminkne Tihi-Stepanić naglašava važnost obiteljske zajednice i ulogu roditelja u životu djece i mladih.

## 1 Introduction

Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić is a contemporary Croatian author for children and young adults who builds up stories on situations from everyday life and psychologically profiles the characters of children and adults in her novels. She talks about current issues that occupy and surround contemporary childhood and adolescence, and the subjects that appear in her novels are related to the challenges that children and young adults face during adolescence and identity formation, such as issues of integration into society and vices that teenagers encounter during adolescence (alcohol, pliability), body image, the role and dangers of social networks, addiction to computer games, issues of homosexuality, etc. The author belongs to the generation of contemporary authors who successfully depict childhood, growing up and youth in the 21st century and is well received by implicit readers. Her literary work has been on the lists of most read titles in recent years, and she has also been recognized by critics and has repeatedly won national and regional awards for best novel.<sup>1</sup>

In all of Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić's novels, the family appears as an important socioeconomic narrative figure. Although her novels are not defined as family novels, depiction of the family and its (non)functioning is associated with the formation of secure or insecure youth identities, so the image of the family influences the behavior of children's characters, especially adolescent characters characterized by "we - they" opposition (Flaker 1983: 47).

The corpus of analysis of this paper presents six novels published so far by Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić: *Do you Have the Face?* (2011), *I'll Throw your Computer out the Window* (2013), *My Enemy Ana* (2015), *Home Behind the Wire* (2017), *Summer on Lake Čiču* (2018) and *Where's Beata?* (2020).

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<sup>1</sup> With her novels, Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić entered the shortlist of several regional and national awards for children's literature, and she won the following awards: the "Mato Lovrak" award for the novels *Do you Have Face?* (2011) and *Summer on Lake Čiču* (2019), the "Anto Gardaš" Award for the novel *My Enemy Ana* (2015), the "Grigor Vitez" Award for the novel *Summer on Lake Čiču* (2019) and the "Little Prince" Regional Award for novel *Summer on Lake Čiču* (2019). With the novel *Summer on Lake Čiču*, she was included in the IBBY Honorary List for 2020. (<http://dhk.hr/clanovi-drustva/detaljnije/jasminka-tihi-stepanic>).

<sup>2</sup> Title translation by Vedrana Živković Zebec.

According to Vrcić-Mataija (2018), children's characters build their personality under the strong influence of family relationships and parental characters, finding within them patterns of their actions or opposing them, often taking on gender-typed roles. Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić's novel corpus shows the appearance of different family relationships and types of families, which correspond to the image of the family in modern society, and this paper will show which types of family appear in her novels, how the image of the family influences the formation and destiny of the children and young adult characters, and what values tend to be projected.

## **2 The importance of the family in the lives of children and young adults**

Sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues and other experts who study the importance of the family emphasize the importance of the family community, but they also notice the changes in that community. The family is the first community in which an individual acquires their first knowledge and experiences, and it is the place of realization of their first relationships and emotions. It is „(...) a social community that has changed and adapted to socio-economic relations throughout history.” (Maleš 1995: 431). In today's context of modern society, the family is increasingly moving away from its conservative understandings. Thus, in addition to traditional nuclear families, completely new family forms appear in all spheres of society (single-parent families, single parents who are not a reflection of social unhappiness, divorced parents who start new families and various other family forms). The family is also subjected to internal turmoil and problems caused by lack of parental time and business preoccupation, and therefore, children spend a lot of time alone or with technology (Rečić 2003).

## **3 Family in children's literature and literature for young adults**

The depiction of the family in children's literature and literature for young adults can, on one hand, be a reflection of the state of society and, on the other, a reflection of literary trends or conventions. Children's literature and literature for young adults differ in established conventions because literature has a greater tendency to portray the ideals of the concept of home and the nuclear family, despite the fact that different family forms appear in children's literature (according to Alston 2008). In literature for young adults, a common occurrence is the opposition “we - they” and

the resistance of young adults to authorities; it could be to parents or other members of adult culture, but the image of the family portrayed in literature for young adults has a significant impact on teenage characters' behavior and choices, interests and problems.

Therefore, in both children's literature and literature for young adults, adults and parents appear as an important element in constituting the identity of characters. Vrcić-Mataija (2018) states that the family worldview is important in building the identity of children's characters and influences the formation of different identities of children and young adult's characters.

#### **4 Types of family and family upbringing in Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić's novels**

The family is a special social creation that has its own characteristics and greatly affects the functioning of all individuals, especially children and young adults. In modern society, there are different types of families and different factors that affect the (non)functioning of the family, and such diversity is reflected in children's literature and literature for young adults. Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić's novels depict different types of families, but the type of family and the type of upbringing can be connected with the problems that the characters of children and young adults go through.

##### **4.1 The nuclear family**

Two subtypes of the nuclear family appear in the analyzed novels, and these are the ideal nuclear family and the modern dysfunctional nuclear family.

###### **4.1.1 Ideal nuclear family**

In the novel *Do You Have the Face?*, in the background of the plot, two types of families can be seen in the two protagonists of the novel, and the types of families influence the behavior of the characters and the construction of their identity, pointing to the importance of the family community in the growth of children and teenagers. The emergence of an ideal nuclear family affects the formation of a secure

individual. Kate's family shows a trusting relationship between children and parents and attention and respect in the relationship between father and mother; this family performs two basic family functions (according to Parsons 1991), which are to protect and socialize children and provide children with emotional experiences which prepare them for further life. Svilar Blažinić (2014) talks about how it is certain that good partnerships have a positive effect on children and their development, while bad partnerships have a negative effect on children and their development.

The girl, Kata, is in her formative years and, despite her mature attitudes and responsible behavior, falls under the influence of her peers and teenage temptations, which Živković Zebec and Zbožil (2019) see as the hesitation of her identity between peer groups and parents. The relationship between the child and the parents is based on trust, which helps them overcome the temptations and problems in which the girl found herself. Through Kata's family we recognize the type of postmodern family that Elkind (1994: 211) calls the "vital family," which can be both a nuclear and a single-parent family, but its strength in human development and adaptability to change is important.

#### 4.1.2 The modern dysfunctional nuclear family

The type of modern dysfunctional nuclear family appears in several novels by Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić (*Do you Have the Face?*, *My Enemy Ana*, *Summer on Lake Čiču* and *Where is Beata?*), and the problems affecting these families manifest differently and can often be related to the situation in extra-literary reality. Children in these novels do not receive the necessary emotional support which affects their choices and their behavior, sometimes with tragic consequences.

In two novels, *My Enemy Ana* and *Where's Beata?*, a family depicted on the outside tries to give the impression of ideal relationships, but internal relationships in the family reveal the impossibility of family functioning and a family model in which the child grows up with feelings of loneliness and misunderstanding while parents try to meet their career or intimacy needs (outside the primary family) or try to meet their needs to prove themselves to society through their children. Both families depicted in the novels are well-situated families and high on the social ladder, with respectable parents, or successful fathers. In both novels, there is a "model of separate areas"

(Čudnina-Obradović and Obradović 2006: 163), and families function so that men (fathers) have a public sphere; they are the breadwinners while mothers live in a private sphere and care for the household and children, i.e., women do all the unpaid work within the family. In both novels, fathers are dedicated to their jobs or political career development, and they are not emotionally or temporally committed to raising their children. Aware of their non-involvement in this part of family life, they practice a permissive type of upbringing and try to make up for emotional absences with material ones. Mothers are left to take care of their children, and this is manifested in these novels in two ways. In the novel *My Enemy Ana*, the mother does routine housework and takes care of her daughter; but in time, she becomes more and more preoccupied with thoughts of dissatisfaction with herself as an unfulfilled person who has neglected her career due to motherhood and family. Her daily work at home is “invisible” and underestimated and she has very few opportunities for self-affirmation and any form of recognition she really craves. According to Gruden and Gruden (2006), a mother who is tied only to the household does not have the ability to expand her psychic horizon in order to confirm her personality, and therefore becomes irritable, depressed and aggressive. The mother solves her dissatisfaction, which culminates for a long time, by finding a job and moving to another city.

The parenting style of the parents in the novel is contradictory and they do not have the same considerations and obligations on the issues of upbringing, which sometimes results in the daughter's manipulative behavior in order to turn the situation in her favor.<sup>3</sup> The father's parenting approach is dominated by a permissive parenting style where he agrees to her demands without critical thinking, while the mother nurtures an authoritative parenting style that gives emotional support in necessary situations, but the boundaries and rules she sets were well known. Ella is in her formative years when she is torn between constantly striving for resistance and necessary parental support, and in the relationship between mother and daughter there is a typical opposition in the relationship between children and adults, and Ella's disrespect for her mother's authority appear. But when the situation arises that her mother wants to start a new, self-centered life, the girl again encounters

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<sup>3</sup> "I could easily persuade Dad. I wrapped him around my little finger anyway. Mom was a tough nut to crack and there were no jokes with her. She claimed that my dad fulfilled all my wishes just so that he would not be bothered with anything other than his job and damn politics". (Tibi-Stepanić 2015: 14)

misunderstanding and a sense of rejection. Neither father nor mother, preoccupied with their own problems, notice the most important thing – the eating disorder and the disease that Ella got. Juul and Øien (2011) talks about how, for a person on the path for developing anorexia, a very important effect could be bringing the whole family together and getting everyone to express fears about what is happening in the family; and that is what Ela was missing. Despite the non-functioning of the family, the female private sphere is recognized in the mother-daughter relationship, but also, the maternal relationship, where the woman remains the "guardian" of the family and the one who takes care of the child despite her own problems. Despite the ruined marriage and relationship with her husband, the mother remained consistent in her upbringing of her daughter, and when she sees the problem, she supports her emotionally in her recovery.

Furthermore, in the novel *Where's Beata?*, the mother belongs to the private sphere and takes care of her daughter's upbringing. Although they are materially well-off and part of the social elite thanks to their father's business success, the mother is dissatisfied with her life's circumstances. She left college and a possible promising career because of the children, which is one of the causes of her dissatisfaction; and on the other hand, she is caring for her mentally disordered daughter and has misunderstandings with her teenage daughter Beata and dissatisfaction with her husband's indifference to family life. Her type of upbringing is not the same for both daughters because one sister is autistic and requires special care and an accurate routine. The mother's attitude towards her is almost masochistic and her efforts to help and "cure" her affect the whole family, especially the teenage girl Beata. In the background of such a relationship lies the mother's guilt, as she had had an abortion during her studies and believes that her mentally disordered daughter came as a form of punishment. She has a different type of upbringing towards her daughter Beata, through whom she tries to project her unfulfilled wishes. The mother's upbringing of Beata is authoritarian, without warmth and support, but only with the goal of making Beata the best in everything, especially in ballet, which she failed to do when she was young. The mother tries to control everything - what she reads, what she does, what she eats, constantly checking grades - just to achieve her set ideal. This type of upbringing leads to mutual misunderstandings, Beata's dissatisfaction and secret resistance, while still having an ideal image for her mother and still doing what she wants without her mother's knowledge. Disturbed relationships and



misunderstandings result in running away from home, which puts Beata in serious danger. The diary entries reveal a picture of Beata, about which the mother, guided only by her idea of an ideal child, knew nothing.

The criminal background of the novel, i.e., the escape in which Beata is in danger for her life, affects the family situation and the awareness of the parents, which is very important. Social prestige and a false image of perfection become irrelevant while the child is gone, and the parents agree to do everything just to find her. The end of the novel emphasizes the importance of a family community that is together again, and despite problems and misunderstandings, only family is important. Therefore, this novel also advocates the importance of the family community and growing up in a family filled with understanding and parents that primarily understand teenage interests. The novel also opens a topic that is still taboo in our society - living with a mentally disordered child and their placement in institutions.

The dysfunctional nuclear family appears as a contrast to the ideal family in the novel *Do you Have the Face?*. In this family, parental as well as private - public roles are replaced in relation to the expectations common in a patriarchal society.<sup>4</sup> The father has a private sphere and the mother a public sphere, which causes disagreements in their relationship. The father is tormented by an existential crisis because he is not the one who earns money for the family. The mother decides to act in the public sphere because she neglected herself as a young woman due to the birth of a child; and now, when her daughter is an adolescent, she does not want to do it again. Nataly grows up without parental authority and emotional support, which she tries to substitute by hanging out with peers and looking for friends and emotional connections on social media. Nataly, in one period, lives in the so-called “empty nest,” as both parents leave home for work. The larger financial resources she has thanks to her grandmother and her permissive and neglectful family upbringing affect the teenager's behavior in both real and virtual environments, and ultimately bring her in danger.

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<sup>4</sup> Pateman states that, in a patriarchal society, there are different expectations regarding the role of a woman or a man with regard to the private and public sphere: "(...) the way in which men and women are placed differently within private life and the public world is a complex issue, but beneath the complex reality lies the belief that the nature of women is such that they should be subordinate to men and that their rightful place is in the private, domestic sphere. Men should be in both spheres and rule in them." (Pateman 1998: 114)

Regarding the example of novels depicting dysfunctional families, we can see that parental dissatisfaction with emotional and business life affects the behavior and feelings of children; negative examples point out the importance of an ideal family, as well as parenting and relationships with children and their importance of self-examination.

#### 4.2 An incomplete and neglected single-parent family

*Home Behind the Wire* (2017) is a novel for young adults that shows a picture of modern childhood and family functioning in which violence has influenced the formation of insecure children, and later on, youthful identities. According to Vukasović (1994), the family from this novel belongs to an incomplete family, because one of the parents is missing, and to a neglected family, because the boy is neglected by his mother and is often on his own. The mother, Ljiljana, and the boy, Gabriel, live in a modest tenant apartment in poor conditions for the child's growth and development. The mother tries to make money and stay employed in various ways, but she does not succeed. At the same time, the son spends time alone with a sense of neglect, thinking about new things, warm clothes and shoes, a cell phone and food. Bad family relationships lead to juvenile delinquency and, ultimately, to life in a foster family and a home institution for neglected children. The absence of same-sex authority, his father, also affects the formation of an insecure young individual. Although Gabriel meets his father during his stay in a foster family, where he is housed while his mother is in prison, his father does not want to have a close relationship with him.

The family depicted in the novel is a single-parent family, and that kind of a difference from a nuclear family that is considered "ideal" is typical of the so-called western countries and countries of Eastern and Central Europe (according to Puljiz 2002). In this geographical area, there is a strong increase in the number of single-parent families, which is a consequence of the increased number of divorces, but also, the increased number of children born out of wedlock.<sup>5</sup> Ljiljana has children born out of wedlock. Gruden and Gruden (2006) state that, in such situations,

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<sup>5</sup> In Croatia in 2001, 15% of all families were single-parent families, of which 80% were single mothers. If this development direction continues, it is clear that more and more children in our country will live in single-parent families. Retrieved: Census (2001) Central Bureau of Statistics.

children are most often born against the will of their parents, so they are a burden to mothers, while fathers often do not even know about them. Therefore, a child raised in such circumstances grows up without love, and he or she is exposed to a negative attitude of their environment; they are often raised by unknown people in a foster family or in a children's institution. That is the situation in Gabriel's family. The fourteen-year-old grows and develops in a home that is full of violence, both physical and mental, and daily neglect. He lives with his mother, but she is lost and very naive in decision making. They do not spend time together and mistrust and mutual blame prevails in their relationship. An individual who grows up in such a family develops into an insecure and delinquent young man, behind which lies a desire for parental reaction and emotional support that he does not receive. The absence of same-sex parental authority also affects the development of an insecure individual. Biddulph (2006) says that boys who grow up without a father are more likely to get into trouble, have poor school performance, and often become members of teenage gangs. Precisely because of the insufficiently developed relationship with his father, Gabriel does not have a male figure in his life and is not ready for the "outside world". The only person who supports Gabriel in his life is his neighbor Prahir, who represents a 'substitute' parent because, in many situations, she replaces his mother, takes care of Gabriel, and gets temporary custody of him.

Gabriel's life in his own family, in a foster family, as well as life in a institution for neglected children is full of coldness, neglect and misunderstanding and he does not get the support he needs while growing up. Nevertheless, the author in the novel tries to show the importance of the concept of family, so the novel has a happy ending. The family unites and problems and challenges are resolved, preceded by Gabriel's acquaintance with the sister his mother gave up for adoption before his birth, as well as his mother's awareness of her own mistakes after she ended up in prison.

### 4.3 Extended and truncated families

In the novel *Summer on Lake Čiču*, the nuclear family consisting of father, mother, son and daughter is extended to include a grandmother who takes care of the children. The family in the novel can also be seen as truncated because the parents leave home in an emergency to look for work and are not present as primary educators. Čudina-Obradović and Obradović (2006) state that economic changes in most countries of the world reject the sustainability of the traditional model of separate areas, and for this reason, the male/foster and female/housewife family form is becoming more rare and the double foster family is increasing. That kind of family situation can also be seen in the novel *Summer on Lake Čiču*. The problem of economic migration, which the writer uses as the main problem of the family from the novel, is extremely current in contemporary Croatian history, and Croatia has recorded a negative migration balance in the past decade.<sup>6</sup> The departure of parents from home leads to a deterioration of relations with children and alienation, and the opposition “we-they” and “the conflict between adult culture and youth culture” (see Flaker 1983 :47) is expressed in the relationship between the grandmother and the girl, Lucija. This relationship is permeated with misunderstandings and quarrels, and the grandmother's style of upbringing is authoritarian – rigid and strict. She sets limits and rules, and as a consequence of violating them, penalties follow. Children, on the other hand, find ways to do what they want, from completely basic things like eating sweets to an uncontrolled departure from home to Lake Čiču, which ultimately ends in a family tragedy.<sup>7</sup> Grandma's upbringing lacks the proportion of love and warmth her grandchildren need. She is torn between caring for her grandchildren and maintaining their home, caring for her mother who is in the nursing home and her own life and her own interests. Her dissatisfaction dates back to the time of Lucija's birth, which she did not approve of because of her mother; although she an excellent student, she gave up college and her career, which ultimately resulted in a worse job and financial insecurity. After the birth of the child,

<sup>6</sup> According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia, in the period from 2005 to 2008, Croatia had a positive migration balance, while from 2009 to 2014, it had a negative migration balance – which is constantly increasing. (<https://www.dzs.hr/>)

<sup>7</sup> Lucija and Janko went to Lake Čiču despite their grandmother's bans. Janko drowned in a lake during one such adventure. After Janko's death, Lucija struggles, thinking about her guilt regarding this great tragedy and thinks about her role in her brother's life. "I wanted to please my brother, to breathe into his life a breath of freedom that my grandmother restrained; I wanted to encourage his curiosity, be the main person, be a responsible big sister who knows better than adults, be more sensitive and considerate, and I was just a child who had to rebel to direct somewhere." (Tihi-Stepanić 2018: 176)

the mother was given the private sphere of the family and the care of the children, which resulted in a bad economic situation in the family.

Although Lucija perceived her grandmother negatively throughout most of the novel, it was her grandmother who was in an unenviable situation and who was constantly torn between caring for her grandchildren and living her own life. She neglects her job, life and her habits<sup>8</sup> in order to dedicate herself completely to her grandchildren while their parents are away from home. No matter how hard the grandmother tries, she fails to fully achieve the affection of her grandchildren, which further complicates her already sufficiently demanding role.

The interaction between children and parents lacks togetherness. The children contact their parents by telephone, and this is the only way for them to communicate, with the present desire to meet in real life, which cannot be achieved until the tragedy.

Furthermore, in this novel, one can see an advocacy for the importance of the family community. Problems arose when the family was not together - they were separated - which leads to a deterioration of relationships, misunderstandings between generations, and ultimately to a great tragedy. After their son's death, family relations are further deteriorated by the mother's difficulty coping with the tragedy, but over time, the family decides that they must continue living together in Germany<sup>9</sup>. It can be concluded that the author emphasizes the importance of the family community and the growth of children in a family in which they will be cared for and under parental care.

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<sup>8</sup> The grandma is characterized as a person of modern attitudes who also advocates for women's education, which can bring about financial independence; a healthy diet is important to her; she has a job that is important to her, etc.

<sup>9</sup> The relocation of the family to Germany also corresponds to the extra-literary situation because the economic migrations of individual family members resulted in the departure and permanent relocation of entire families.

#### 4.4 A single-parent divorced family

The new life circumstances in which the young man Luka finds himself in the novel *I'll Throw Your Computer out the Window* after his parents' divorce affect the events in his life - changing schools and coming to a new peer group affect his relationships with peers, and his behavior is influenced by the fact that his parents have new partners after their divorce. These facts cause dissatisfaction and insecurity in the young man, and he begins to develop an addiction to computer games in which he finds a substitution for the world in which he is dissatisfied. Changes in his family relationships also cause poor performance in school and getting bad grades.

In a new situation, the position and financial situation of his parents change, and the mother has to work harder to provide everything necessary for the material functioning of the family. This causes less control on the habits and behavior of the young man. The mother notices that Luka has problems, but tries unsuccessfully to help him because the same-sex parental authority is important to him in his teenage years, which he loses due to the broken relationship with his father. The care of the child is also given to the mother in this novel, and although she is not to blame for the father starting a new family, she feels a sense of guilt for everything that happens to Luka, which allows him to manipulate her.

Luka feels insecure and rejected; he lacks the demonstration of feelings and family security he had when he was little. In certain situations, there is a desire for the absence of "narcissistic shift" (Rudan 2004: 38), which is characteristic of his age, and he wants to exchange tenderness with his mother again, as when he was little, but now he cannot because he is a teenager and it is "not appropriate".

In the new family situation, the children, Luka and his younger sister Maja, try to find their place and are often left to take care of themselves and spend time with the media. The children look at the new situation and parental behavior differently, and their reaction is related to their age. The young man is critical of the actions of his parents, especially his father, whom he blames for everything, while his sister Maja, who is younger and has not yet entered adolescence, adapts more easily to the new situation and new family relationships. Luka does not accept his mother's new

relationship either, which results in a broken relationship with all family members, thus expressing disagreement with their decisions.

Furthermore, in this novel, the importance of the family community and the support the child receives in the family is emphasized. A conversation with his mother in which there are no raised voices shows Luka that the family is a safe heaven, and he also begins to realize that the situation his parents found themselves in is not easy for them, but they tried to enable them to have a normal life. Given that the number of divorces in modern society is large<sup>10</sup>, the novel does not condemn parents for such behavior but resolves the family crisis so that children accept the new situation, accept their parents' new partners and their right to happiness.

## 5 Conclusion

Jasminka Tih-Stepanić's novels on the issue of depicting family issues correspond to the extra-literary reality in which a large number of divorces, economic migrations, neglect of children for the purpose of careerism, etc. are observed. The author's poetics clearly indicates the importance of the family community and contrasts the ideal nuclear family with several family types in which family issues manifest themselves in various ways, from neglecting a child due to business ambitions, own unfulfilled ambitions, economic migrations, raising and caring for children after divorce to neglect and raising an "unwanted" child. Characters growing up in an ideal, nuclear family ruled by harmonious relationships leads to the formation of a secure individual who, although facing the challenges of growing up, successfully overcomes them. On the other hand, families with more or less family pathology, neglect of children, permissive upbringing caused by parental indifference, absence of same-sex authority, or absence of both parents shape either problematic individuals who have a harder time growing up and facing challenges themselves, or dissatisfied teenagers who can't cope with parental ambitions. Also, the absence of parents due to increasingly present economic migration leads to a great tragedy. Establishing order at the end of the novel and uniting the family in possible frames depending on the plot of the novel, emphasize the importance of the family

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<sup>10</sup> According to the statistics of the Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of developments in the period 2019-2020 is rising. Statistics show that one third of the total number of divorced persons remarry with other partners. <https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/important/Interesting/articles/Ljubav%20kroz%20statistiku.html>

community and emphasize the importance of the role of parents in the life of the child and young adult.

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### **Suvremena obiteljska koncepcija u hrvatskom romanu za djecu i mlade na primjeru romana Jasminke Tihi-Stepanić**

Jasminka Tihi-Stepanić suvremena je nagrađivana hrvatska književnica za djecu i mlade koja u svojoj djelima progovara o problemima koji okružuju suvremeno djetinjstvo. U radu je proučena koncepcija obitelji u šest autoričnih romana te se uočava pojavnost različitih obiteljskih odnosa i tipova obitelji što korespondira sa slikom obitelji u suvremenom društvu. Tip obitelji i način funkcioniranja obiteljskih odnosa utječu na ponašanje likova i izgradnju njihova identiteta. Obitelji prikazane u romanima zaokupljaju različiti problemi poput zaokupljenosti poslom i zanemarivanja obitelji, poremećenih odnosa među roditeljima, razvoda, ekonomskih migracija, slabo situiranih jednoroditeljskih obitelji, nezadovoljstva vlastitim životnim postignućima i drugih problema, a svi se problemi prelijevaju na likove djece i tinejdžera te se manifestiraju okretanjem medijima, odnosno društvenim mrežama i opasnostima istih, problemima s prehranom, delikvencijom, bijegom od kuće ili neposluhom koji ima i tragične posljedice i dr. Dihotomija privatno-javno pri čemu muškarcima pripada javna sfera, a ženama privatna bez sudjelovanja u javnoj sferi, kao i zamjena, za patrijarhalno društvo tipičnih, muških i ženskih sfera, u roditelja, prije svega majki, uzrokuje nezadovoljstvo i osjećaj neispunjenosti i neravnopravnosti. Ipak, romani ne teže ostaviti sliku „sebičnih“ roditelja koji gledaju samo vlastite interese nego se želi naglasiti potreba za ravnopravnošću i na privatnom i na javnom planu za sve članove obitelji. U romanima Jasminke Tihi-Stepanić uočavana se težnja za afirmacijom važnosti obiteljske zajednice i razvijanjem komunikacije na relaciji roditelj-dijete te prevladavanja problema.

