

ALENKA JENSTERLE DOLEŽAL

Slovene Women Writers at the Beginning of the 20th Century



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Alenka Jensterle Doležal

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at the Beginning
of the 20th Century**

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Slovene Women Writers at the Beginning of the 20th Century

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Introduction

Overview to the “moderna” period

At the turn of the 20th century, Slovene lands were situated on the periphery of the Habsburg Empire. This period witnessed considerable economic and social transformation, with the expansion of industrialization – along with other social and political changes – leading to the growing problems of poverty in rural areas, resulting in the mass exodus of Slovenes to America and Germany. Society was politicized, as reflected in the culture: Slovene intelligentsia began to propagate the notion of the Slovene nation, while germanization exerted great pressure. At the same time, the idea of Slavic reciprocity and the idea of South Slavic unity began to gain ground, and in other parts of the Monarchy, the feminist movement appeared; the nascent feminist tendencies then were simply directed at obtaining fundamental human rights. In the strictly Catholic society of the time, the political power of the Church and the priestly intelligentsia grew, further complicating the nation’s political geography. Language and literature played an integral role in the history of the nation, due to the historical instability of the Slovene lands.

The literary “moderna” movement reflected the artist’s attitude toward a new social reality marked by the Industrial Revolution, political friction, nationalism in multinational state ideology, migration, and changes in gender relations. (Mahnič 1964: 18–33) The main aim of the Slovene intelligentsia in the political world was to form a national identity. Because of their poor social origins, Slovene writers dealt with social insecurity. Before the breakdown of the great empire and the emergence of the smaller Slavic culture on the periphery, the period was characterized by a great deal of political pressure and insecurity. As Agatha Schwartz noted: “The dramatic changes that many women experienced were but a reflection of a deep-rooted upheaval in Austria-Hungary. The rosy surface of a world of stability, security, and progress for the bourgeoisie as it is depicted by Stefan Zweig in *Die Welt der Gestern* (*The World of Yesterday*, 1942), started to crumble with the aspirations for cultural and national independence of the non-German and non-Magyar ethnics. The political landscape [...]

with various combinations of ideologies, such as liberalism, anti-liberalism, nationalism, and anti-semitism, added a further element to a general feeling of insecurity.” (Schwartz 2008: 5)

The Slovene “moderna” period (1889–1918) marked the beginning of Slovene modernism in literary history, as characterized by a shift towards modern literature. It began with poetry – in 1899 when two anthologies (Oton Župančič’s *Čaša opojnosti* [*The Goblet of Inebriation*], and Ivan Cankar’s *Erotika* [*Erotics*]) were published – and ended in 1918 with the death of the prominent modernist figure Ivan Cankar. Despite arriving later than other Central European movements,¹ the “moderna” had a significant impact on the evolution of Slovene literature.² As was the case with other European cultures at the time, it encompassed all literary varieties, including lyric, epic, and dramatic. Slovene culture has always been situated between various cultures on the borderlines; nevertheless, prior to the 20th century, its political circumstances were mostly influenced by the German (Austrian) world. This multicultural space was strongly reflected in the Slovene literature.

The Slovene “moderna” was part of the Central European art movement and exhibited all of the characteristics of this movement. Through the creative process, the authors demanded autonomy in art, emphasizing the author as an individual. In the process of writing, they sought to free themselves from the stereotypical social and didactic roles to “escape” from the ties and methods of the 19th century. At the turn of the century, ideas of individualism appeared in art, similarly to other Central European “modernas”, as early as 1898. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 48, 49) The most prominent male authors of the Slovene “moderna” were: Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), Oton Župančič (1878–1949), Dragotin Kette (1876–1899), and Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901). Franc Zadravec refers to the work of the four representatives as “subjectivism”, a term which he used to describe the change in the author’s perspective from the realistic depiction of an external reality to the inner world – a modern interpretation of the term “soul”. (Zadravec 1999: 15) This was an informal, heterogeneous literary

¹ “Moderna” is a common name for a literary movement in different national literatures of the Central European area. It first appeared in Austrian culture and then spread elsewhere. In this movement, we find different styles such as Decadence and Symbolism. It marks the beginning of modernism.

² The Croat “moderna” lasted from 1892 until 1914, the Czech “moderna” from 1895 to the beginning of the 20th century, and the Polish “moderna” from 1890 to 1918.

circle that spanned Ljubljana, Vienna, and other parts of the Monarchy. Not only is the thematic range of literature in this period very rich and varied, but so too are its formal inventions. Simultaneously, writers maintained a strong connection to the idea of the Slovene nation. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 38, 39)

The group deviated from the prevailing Naturalism and Realism of the time and experimented with various facets of Modernism, including Symbolism, Impressionism, and Decadence. In his review of turn-of-the-century Vienna, historian Carl Schorske wrote of the movement that they “challenged the moralistic stance of 19th century literature in favour of sociological truth and psychological – especially sexual – openness.” (Schorske 1981: 212) This could also be true for Slovene writers. Especially important for researching the discourse of “moderna” – and also for women writers – were the themes of intimacy which prevailed in that period and were interwoven with ideals, values, and philosophical concepts. In *fin-de-siècle* literature, “intimate relationships are the central scene where the contradictions of modernity take place, the so-called private sphere, often portrayed as an area ruled by natural and timeless emotions, largely involved in modernization patterns and processes of social change” (Felski 1995: 3). At the turn of the century, gender roles were also problematized. Authors in a highly patriarchal and Catholic environment experienced sexuality and carnality as traumatic. It was also a time when transformations of gender roles impacted literary representations of the gendered subject and society. The images of women fluctuated between two myths: the femme fatale and the idealized woman (sometimes femme fragile). The body was associated with femininity and female and it was denigrated as weak, immoral, or decaying. Writers understood the realm of the erotic in the context of Christian morality – as a source of great suffering and sin.

Slovene literature was, for the first time, intensively exposed to European influences, making connections with other “modernas” in this part of Europe. It is possible to discover many forms of influence and echoes of other European contemporaries in their literary works (cf. Pirjevec 1964, Kos 2001, Čeh Steger 2003: 124–131, Jensterle Doležal 2014, Mihurko Poniž 2014a, Grdina 2018). Slovene modernists were connected mainly with the Austrian, Czech, and Croatian “moderna” (as parts of the monarchical movements in Austria-Hungary) as they were nomadic personalities not solely connected to Ljubljana as the centre of Slovene culture. The monarchical cities played a special role in this; Vienna was the capital, but there were also Prague, Budapest, and Zagreb. (See also Vajda 1994) The

Slovene “moderna” did not develop in a geographically and ideologically isolated space; it was part of the Habsburg myth and thus belonged to Central Europe. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 381) The bonds between the authors of the Central European “modernas” revealed the measures of solidarity and collaboration, as well as the spread of philosophical concepts and artistic tendencies that generally circulated in this area, giving Central European literature a recognizable stamp. Connections with the Viennese moderna (“Jung-Wien”) was particularly important, as Vienna provided Slovene authors a cultural and spiritual space, as well as a space of freedom, allowing them to escape from the limited, Catholic-dominated Slovene conditions.³ Five members of the Slovene “moderna” lived for some years at the beginning of the 20th century in Vienna: Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Josip Murn-Aleksandrov, Vida Jeraj, and Ljudmila Poljanec.

The relationship was also crucial within Croat modernists, with whom Slovene writers shared a spiritual affinity across generations; the authors were even bound by ties of friendship. In the wider context, the connections were mainly driven by geographical proximity, but also resulted from a shared historical situation: they were part of the same state. Given that the younger generation in Slovene culture did not have their own newspapers, and was not formally organized, they collaborated with their Croatian colleagues for publication in Croatian newspapers.

The Slovene authors of the 1890s took the Czech “moderna” as a model, reflecting the long-standing tradition of Slovene-Czech relations in the Habsburg monarchy. Indeed, Czech cultural models were especially influential in the Slovene literary community during the 19th century. (Urbančič 1995)

A shared reception area was also usually seen in Central European “modernas” within the framework of the Habsburg monarchy: modernist texts were both published and critically discussed in Slovene, as well as Croatian and Czech cultures. A classic example of this was the reception in Czech culture of the literary work of Ivan Cankar, who was already the most renowned author in the Slovene “moderna”.

Most of the Slovene poets at the turn of the century were still bilingual: they were educated mostly in German, and as Slovenes, they chose to

³ See the connection between Slavic authors and the Viennese “moderna” in the book by Stefan Simonek. (Simonek 2002)

compose in Slovene.⁴ The Slovene writers of the “moderna” period were very mobile and cosmopolitan: potential “immigrants”. Csáky emphasized the hybrid identities of writers in the “moderna” period throughout the Monarchy, as the population and the individuals of the Monarchy lived in polyphonic, hybrid environments. (Csáky 2019: 78)

Intertextual relations demonstrate various literary influences from the Slovene tradition and the European one. Intertextuality in the texts is clearly manifested in the poetry, the poems communicate with one another, which was also a reflection of their spiritual and stylistic affinity. This was not only a matter of originality and potential influences but also the deliberate adoption of a particular communicative code, a mode of expression, and aesthetic solutions.

Slovene women writers in the 19th century

Who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet’s heart when caught and tangled in a woman’s body? Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*

In 1977, Elaine Showalter’s book *A Literature of Their Own. British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* highlighted the importance of female predecessors in the development of women writers. According to her, there is a “female literary tradition” which follows the pattern of development of any literary subculture, consisting of three stages: imitation, critique, and self-discovery. (Showalter 2009/1977: 11–12, 13) In 1979, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar introduced the range of forgotten and neglected British female writers of the first half of the 19th (Gilbert – Gubar 2000/1979) and later the 20th century (Gilbert – Gubar 1989). Reflecting on female writers of the 19th century, they wrote about a “distinctively female tradition”, a tradition, that had been appreciated by many female readers and writers, yet had not been fully defined. They described this tradition as consisting of “images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as social surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of

⁴ Very characteristic is the case of the poet Kristina Šuler (1866–1959), who started writing German poems at the age of 14 under the influence of the German school in Škofja Loka. At this teacher’s school, with only one hour of Slovene per week, she acquired a knowledge of this literary language through her own diligence and reading which allowed her to begin writing poems in Slovene. See www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi676502/ (Accessed 10. 3. 2023).

physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors”. (Gilbert – Gubar 2000/1979: XI) In contrast to English female writers, the Slovene nation had a very poor tradition of women writers; in the period of 1848–1890, only two women writers, Luiza Pesjak (1828–1898) and Pavlina Pajk (1854–1901), produced written work of sufficient artistic quality. In the Anglo-Saxon context, a gendered form of subjectivity had developed into a feminine discourse as early as the 18th century in both literary and non-literary texts, whereas in Slovenia such discourse only emerged in the last two decades of the 19th century.

The first Slovene female poet, Fanny Haussman (1818–1853), published her first poem in October 1848 (“Vojakov izhod” [Soldier’s Entrance]). Luiza Pesjak wrote both prose and poetry, and her poetic works are often interwoven with patriotic sentiments, yet her poetry also contains intimate themes and modern depictions of nature, landscapes, and changing time periods.

From intimate to public spaces

In Slovene culture, women started appearing in public life as late as the 19th century. (Vodopivec 1994: 30–40) Following 1848, the number of women who participated in public life (e.g., in reading societies) increased considerably. According to Marta Verginella and Irena Selišnik, the entrance of Slovene women into the public sphere during the Habsburg Monarchy went (in line with processes that were occurring all over Europe at the time) in tandem with the development of national movements and revolutions in 1848. (Selišnik – Verginella 2018: 106) In the first study on Slovene women writers, Fran Erjavec and Pavel Flere noted that during this era, Slovene women ventured out of their homes and church for the first time, appearing at social events, parties, and public gatherings as writers, painters, actors, singers, etc. (Erjavec – Flere 1926: XIII) Occasionally, female writers published in the journals *Ljubljanski zvon* (*Ljubljana’s Bell*) and *Kres* (*St. John’s Fire*). In 1890, the newspaper *Slovanski svet* (*Slavic World*) introduced women’s column.⁵ In 1901 in Ljubljana, “Splošno žensko društvo” (The General Women’s Society) was established: feminist issues

⁵ The articles and other texts about women also helped with the introduction of women into public life (see Erjavec – Flere 1926: XIV – WV), especially in the main Slovene newspaper after 1848: *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (*Agricultural and Handcraft News*, 1843–1881, editor Janez Bleiweis).

were discussed through meetings, lectures, courses, and articles in the newspapers. This was all the result of crucial social, national, and cultural changes during the “moderna” period, which also saw an increase in the number of authors and readers.⁶

In the latter half of the 19th century, female writers adapted their writing to the Slovene national movement. Female authors such as Josipina Turnograjska, Luiza Pesjak, and Pavlina Pajk championed the notion of a Slovene nation and language in their works. On 23 August 1865, Luiza Pesjak published a poem “Materin jezik” [Mother’s Tongue] in the newspaper *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (*Agricultural and Handcraft News*), in which she expressed her conviction that the Slovene language was the most vital tool for a Slovene writer:

You are a source of virtue, my mother tongue,
a rich source of harmony, my mother tongue!
In the origin of these, you sculpt along a benign vein,
You thunder into the proud river, my mother tongue!
[...]
Now you could force the stranger with your honour into new fights
with the beauty of the spiritual fruits, my mother tongue!⁷

The shift to modernity for Slovene women writers occurred at the turn of the 20th century with the periodical press. In the second half of the 19th century we see the opening of new genres for male (and female) writers, especially in prose: in 1866 appeared the first Slovene novel (Josip Jurčič, *Deseti brat* [*Tenth brother*]), short stories, and village stories as well as travelogues, biographical portraits, essays, and literary and art reviews... These new periodical genres in the period of “moderna” gave rise to the modern woman of letters and her new self-construction (e. g., Zofka Kveder).

Katja Mihurko Poniž conducted the first significant study on Slovene women writers from 1848 to 1948, focusing primarily on Slovene prose writers in the 19th century and the “moderna”: Josipina Turnograjska, Luiza Pesjak, Pavlina Pajk, Marica Nadlišek Bartol, Zofka Kveder, Marija Kmet, Ljudmila Poljanec, and Vida Jeraj. She described the “literary field of the other sex”, which Slovene literary history had mostly overlooked.

⁶ See also Budna Kodrič 2003: 268–277.

⁷ “Izvor si ti kreposti, materin mi jezik, / bogat izvor soglasja, materin mi jezik! / V izvoru tem kipiš po blagorodni žili, / Grmiš v ponosno reko, materin mi jezik! .../ Zdaj tujca z novih bojem v svojo čast prisili / v krasoti dušnih plodov, materin mi jezik!” (Pesjak 1926: 53)

In her research, she used comparative methods and looked for European authors who had influenced them. She found that the female “companions” of Slovene realists and modernists had entered the literary space, owing to the specific position of women of that time and their unique female experiences. Nevertheless, she concluded that their literary texts brought interesting themes, characters, narrative strategies, and other formal and stylistic peculiarities that would be worthwhile to reveal to modern readers. She particularly highlighted those female authors who have enriched Slovene literature with different motifs and themes, as well as formal and stylistic innovations. (Mihurko Poniž 2014a)

Praising intimacy in lyrics: Female writers around *Slovenka*

Agatha Schwartz, in her book about monarchical Austro-Hungarian female writers, stressed that the turn of the 20th century was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating cultural and literary periods in the history of Central Europe. Three major elements of *fin-de-siècle* modernity were the presence of strong and organized women’s movements, the rise of feminism, and the rise of the new generation of female writers. (Schwartz 2009: 2) This was also true in Slovene culture. In 1897, the first Slovene newspaper for women entitled *Slovenka* began to be published in Trieste.⁸ *Slovenka* played an important role in the development of Slovene female literature and the emancipation of Slovene women. (Budna Kodrič 2003: 268) The emergence of Slovene female voices was connected to the feminist movement and to new ideas about the position of Slovene women in society and art. The circle of Slovene women writers around *Slovenka* proved that Slovene women writers during the *fin-de-siècle* period created not only new literature but also a new culture of their own: there was also a community in which authors consciously related to each other’s works. Their metaphors and literary words were sometimes defined by male authors, but they also created poems based on the female experience.

⁸ *Slovenka (Slovene Woman)* was the first Slovene women’s newspaper, and it had the subtitle *Newsletter for Slovene Women*. It was published on January 1, 1897, in Trieste, first as a fortnightly supplement of the Trieste political newspaper *Edinost*, and from 1900 as an independent monthly. Until 1899, the editor was Marica Nadlišek Bartol, and after that year, Ivanka Anžič Klemenčič. After six years, *Slovenka* ended publication at the end of 1902. (Boršnik 1962, Verginella 2017, see also [https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenka_\(%C4%8Dasnik\)](https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenka_(%C4%8Dasnik)))

Around *Slovenka*, a powerful community of female prose writers, as well as poets, was formed – which corresponded to the fact that in 1899, the Slovene “moderna” also began with poetry. Some of these poets became central poetic representatives of their era: Kristina Šuler (1866–1959), Franja Trojanšek Dekleva (1867–1935), Marica Strnad (1872–1953), Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948), Vida Jeraj (1875–1932), Ljudmila Prunk (1878–1947) and to a lesser extent Mira Mokriška (Anica Žemlja, 1875–1922) and the only representative of the older generation, Matilda Tomšič Sebenikar (1847–1933). Slovene poets Simon Gregorčič (1864–1906) and Anton Medved (1869–1910) helped the first editor Marica Nadlišek Bartol (1867–1940) edit and select poetry, which allowed them to regularly and abundantly publish their poetry, thus providing a valuable public platform for their writing, which was not entirely taken for granted in society at the time. The entrance of female poets into the literary field and the related discourse on femininity is highly important in understanding the transformations of intimacy in poetry in literary discourse. The magazine also connected them generationally, amicably, and intellectually, and the emergence of *Slovenka* influenced the formation of their authorial identities. Among female prose writers, Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) published the most prose texts, some dramatic scenes, and the drama *Pravica do življenja* (*Right to Life*). Generally, it was in this Slovene periodical from which emerged the modern conception of the New Woman and also a “woman of letters”: the writer whose critical thinking about culture and society rose above the commonplace.

The transition from the private sphere to the public, and the decision of female writers to become writers, was an incredibly difficult process in a highly patriarchal society, influenced by the growing power of the conservative Catholic Church. Male colleagues presented obstacles to female writers, hindering their professional advancement and public presence. In 1945, in the opinion poll *Anketa za ženske ob prvih volitvah v ustavodajno skupščino* (Survey for Women at the First Elections to the Constituent Assembly), Slovene female poet Kristina Šuler outlined the introduction of female writers into Slovene public life at the end of 19th century as a battleground. Her recollections rekindled the spirit of womanhood and sisterhood that had nurtured the early years of the *Slovenka* newspaper, as well as the strict action of the Catholic Church against it and the hostile reactions of some male colleagues – writers:

During the time of *Slovenka*, we women paved the way for the cultural field by showing women how oppressed and neglected they were in public life and by raising women’s awareness that they have the right to intervene in life outside the home as well. But

we were ostracized and exposed to the furious attacks of the Catholic Church of that time. We wanted to awaken women's national consciousness and interest in reading. We were primarily involved in the literary field, but this was done in a fierce struggle with officially recognized authors, most of whom considered everything written by a woman to be inferior. Exceptions were: Cankar, Aškerc, Medved, Finžgar, and the younger authors, Kette and Murn.⁹

The introduction of the female writer into Slovene culture and their emergence in the public sphere created a battleground, to quote Shari Benstock:

[...] Women seemed to be agents of an alien world that evoked anger and anguish, while to women in those years men appeared as aggrieved defenders of an indefensible order. Thus both male and female writers increasingly represented women's unprecedented invasion of the public sphere as a battle of the sexes, a battle over a zone that could only be defined as a no man's land. (Benstock 1986: 4)

Female writers in the “moderna”: “The anxiety of authorship”¹⁰

The problem of domestication in the poetic language is the problem of going beyond conventions, expressing the invisible, expressing emotional power in an artistically disciplined form.¹¹

In the post-postmodern era, influenced by gender studies, feminist literary studies, and feminist criticism, we have altered our approach to the Slovene “moderna”, in which only male writers were traditionally acknowledged in the process of canonization; this resulted in the trap of remembering

⁹ “Za časa *Slovenke* smo si žene utirale pot za kulturno polje s tem, da pokažemo ženi, kako je zatirana in zapostavljena v javnem življenju in da dvignemo v ženi zavest, da ima pravico poseči v življenje tudi izven doma. Toda bile smo osmaljene in izpostavljene besnim napadom takratnega mračnjaštva. Hotele smo v ženah zbuditi narodno zavest in zanimanje za čtivo. Prvenstveno smo se udejstvovala na literarnem polju, toda to v hudi borbi z uradnimi priznanimi literati, od katerih je večina smatrala vse, kar je napisala žena, za manjvredno. Izjeme so bile: Cankar, Aškerc, Medved, Finžgar in mlajši literati, Kette, Murn.” (Kristina Šuler, *Literary inheritance of Erna Muser*, Ms 1432, folder 108). Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive of National library in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

¹⁰ Gilbert and Gubar extend this male-oriented model of the American critic Harold Bloom to incorporate a female “Anxiety of Authorship”, whereby a *lack* of predecessors makes the very act of writing problematic. (Gilbert – Gubar 2000)

¹¹ “Problem udomačovanja v pesniškem jeziku je problem preseganja konvencij, izrekanja nevidnega, izražanja čustvene silovitosti v umetniško disciplinirani obliki.” (Novak Popov 2004: 189)

and discussing only four main authors in the Slovene “moderna”: Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), Oton Župančič (1878–1949), Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901), and Dragotin Kette (1876–1899). The twentieth century scholars reflexed only few men’s literary peaks, and those male-orientated markers often prevail even today. The models of Slovene literary history were heavily male-oriented and necessarily patriarchal: visualized as the passing on of generations of fathers and sons. However, what about the mothers and daughters? In the 21st century and the post-modern era, we are now deliberately focusing our research not only on the prominent male figures of the Slovene “moderna”, but also on parallel female writers from the same era: Zofka Kveder, Vida Jeraj, Lili Novy, and Ljudmila Poljanec, who have all been unfairly neglected and whose works were forgotten and unfairly excluded from the canon of Slovene literature. For all of the 20th century, readers were presented with them as a marginal phenomenon. One of the first questions of this study pertains to the contextualization of the position of Slovene female writers in the Slovene “moderna”. In our literary analysis, we are also attempting to investigate the new poetics of Slovene women writers at the turn of the 20th century.

According to Novak Popov, the history of Slovene female poets is a “story about searching for female identity and the quest for the appropriate poetical language. It is the story of how women perceive, observe, experience, and think about themselves and the world”.¹² However, for female poets and writers, it also involved a process of recognition within society: it was about gaining self-confidence as an author in a small literary community. Slovene women writers of that period were not confident enough to publicly declare their identity; instead they used only their first names. They wanted to remain anonymous, concealed, and unexposed to the public – and they wanted to establish intimate relationships with their readers. Moreover, their poetry was lyrical and personal, thereby stylizing their ties to their audience.¹³

¹² “To je zgodba o vzpostavljanju ženske identitete in iskanju njenega ustreznega pesniškega jezika, zgodba o ženskem načinu zaznavanja, opazovanja, doživljanja in razmišljanja o sebi in svetu.” (Novak Popov 2004: 186)

¹³ In the beginning, Franica Vovk signed her texts with only the name Vida, and later with her married name Vida Jeraj. Ljudmila Poljanec authored her poetry mostly with the pen name Nataša. Even though the Slovene poet Kristina Šuler (Schuler), along with Vida Jeraj, was considered one of the best poets, she signed her poems just with Kristina, as she was not confident enough to use her last name.

These women were semi-professional, primarily involved in the teaching profession. While, they demonstrated a business-like approach in dealing with publishers, and actively pursued literary careers, but they were unable to attain significant financial gain or widespread recognition within the limited Slovene marketplace, so their authorship couldn't be classified as a full-fledged "profession".¹⁴ Authors pursued their writing in the leisure hours after fulfilling the obligations of traditional, learned profession (teaching).

When we look at the publication and achievements of Slovene women writers at the beginning of the 20th century, only Zofka Kveder successfully published her work extensively. Alongside Ljudmila Poljanec, Vida Jeraj was the sole female poet from *Slovenka* who succeeded in publishing a book (Poljanec in 1906, Jeraj in 1908). Lili Novy published her only anthology in 1941.

During this era, women writers were subject to criticism from their contemporaries, but more tragically, their literary work was forgotten and consigned to oblivion in the 20th century, when they were not mentioned in Slovene literary history. However, with new readings of their texts, this is revealed to be an oversight. Our understanding of modernity has fundamentally changed. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the uniqueness of these female writers is recognized, as well as their exceptional openness to the "common European spiritual space". The analysis of their literary work highlights the mutual interdependence between them, with references to other books, texts, and literary systems in the network of Central European writers of the "moderna". We can appreciate their revolutionary generational breakthrough, which was a sign of spiritual closeness and solidarity, as well as their openness. We admire their co-existence in a unified Central European space, which was also a feature of the Habsburg myth.¹⁵

The period of Slovene "moderna" (1899–1918) was a period in transition. The beginning of the 20th century is defined by turbulent change in Slovene society and with literary and social novelties, which broke with traditions and succeeded in paving the way to modernity. That was the period distinctive to new aestheticism, modernism and Slovene women's writing.

¹⁴ The only professional writer in the beginning of the 20th century was Ivan Cankar.

¹⁵ Feminist literary theory in Slovene literary studies began after the political change in 1990s. Silviya Borovnik wrote the first book on Slovene prose women writers in 1995 (Borovnik 1995). Of particular importance to the research of poetry is the anthology of Slovene female poets (1825–1941) (Novak Popov (ed.) 1, 2, 3, 2004), (for the study on Slovene female poetry, see Novak Popov 2004: 181–190).

Organization of the monograph

The monograph consists of comparative analysis of Zofka Kveder, Vida Jeraj, Ljudmila Poljanec and Lili Novy (eleven studies), with the aim of restoring them to their rightful place in the development of Slovene literature in the 20th century. The studies historicize Slovene New Women prose writers, poets and feminists, mapping the locations and writing traditions in which they emerged. This book is organized chronologically, with sections focusing on writers of the modernist period as prose writer and dramatist Zofka Kveder – the first female professional writer in Slovene culture, and three other poets from the community centered around the newspaper *Slovenka*: Vida Jeraj, the most established female poet; Ljudmila Poljanec; and the later poet Lili Novy, who, despite entering Slovene public life in the 1930s, is still connected to the “moderna” movement due to her poetic style. Apart from Zofka Kveder, this volume seeks to explore the development of poetic creativity and the imagination among female poets, thereby contributing to the literary and cultural studies of Slovene and Central European women writers. The advances that Slovene women writers of this period made in poetry are less widely recognized than those in short stories.

Throughout this monograph, I endeavoured to bring to light the works of some forgotten, neglected, and “under-read” female Slovene writers who began their careers during the *fin-de-siècle* period, including poets, journalists, and novelists.

Within the scope of cultural and literary studies, I thoroughly examine Slovene-Croat woman writer Zofka Kveder’s place within Czech culture and the influence of Czech literature, as well as Prague itself, on her work. I chose this topic also because I have been a Slovene-Czech researcher in the Czech academic field for thirty years. In the case of Slovene female poets of the “moderna” – Vida Jeraj, Ljudmila Poljanec, and Lili Novy – I analyzed typical features of their poetics in comparative studies. In addition to this contextualization, I emphasized poetical problems present in their poetry.

This study provides an overview of the “multicultural crossroads” of Central Europe, with a particular focus on the literary lives of female Slovene writers in Slovenia, Vienna, and Prague during the first half of the 20th century. Through their creative works and actions, they explored the multi-ethnic Central European dimensions of the New Woman, traversing between different cultures and often traveling between different places. Zofka Kveder was also an emigrant, having left the culture of her origin. This study will investigate how the various experiences of “loss” (of

countries, languages, and national identities) are reflected in these female writers' creative processes and how they reconstructed "the new identities of their selves". I will also examine their relationship to the national idea, as well as their understanding of cosmopolitan ideas and transnational processes, and I will explore how this affects their understanding of literature and art.

In general, the time period was one of turbulent historical changes. I will explore the varied intersections of the female writers' generation, gender, ideas, and artistic styles, and the different trajectories of historical time. In exploring the forgotten realm of female Slovene writers at the beginning of modernism, I aim to reconstruct the lives and literary work of an extraordinary group of women and chart new pathways for the study of literary studies, subjectivity, cultural transfer, and memory in the Central European space. The writings of Slovene women must be recovered and explored from a variety of perspectives through a literary theoretical approach.

In contextualizing Slovene women writers and analyzing their poetics from this period, I worked with ego-documents, particularly the corpus of their correspondence, which provided a wealth of material for research. This is also due to the historical conditions of the "moderna" period in the Slovene lands, where there was a lack of public organs (newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, etc.) for the new generation to present their theoretical concepts of art or discuss new approaches to literature.

The key query for me was the gendered reception of the literary works of female writers in the Slovene literary society at that time, which largely impeded their writing processes and curtailed their careers; thus, I contextualized and examined the reception of their books published during their lifetimes.

More broadly, I endeavoured to visualize and analyze the position of Slovene female writers within the literary community of Slovene culture, as well as other cultures. There were no definite answers to how these women writers perceived their cultural role or how they strove for self-definitions. This monograph seeks to draw attention to the broad array of female writings that remain largely unpublished. The texts of these women writers could be seen as "palimpsestic depictions of cultural memory or carefully coded works of propaganda awaiting detection" (Gavin – Oulton 1988: 12) – or simply works of art: interesting examples, in their own right, of female poetics.

ZOFKA KVEDER

Slovene-Croat Woman Writer Zofka Kveder and the Creative Inspiration of Czech Women Writers, Editors and Critics¹⁶

In this chapter, we will consider the narrative of friendship, solidarity, and artistic collaboration among female Slavic writers in the culturally diverse atmosphere of cities such as Prague at the end of the Habsburg monarchy. Specifically, we will focus on the complex formation of the writerly identity of Zofka Kveder (1878–1926), “the first Slovene women writer of artistic, feminist-tinged literature” (Borovnik 1996: 59) at the beginning of the 20th century in Central Europe, and on the productive impact of Czech women writers on her writings.

The Slovene and Croatian writer, translator and editor Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) was a Central European intellectual, balancing between different cultures.¹⁷ In her traveling through different places, she lived in Prague from 1900 to 1906 and then moved to Zagreb.¹⁸ Her work was successfully published in Czech and well known to Czech culture until the outbreak of the First World War. The cooperation of Central European Slavic Women writers at the end of the Habsburg era in Prague was immense. Kveder was a cultural transmitter between different cultures. (See Mihurko Poniž 2020: 1–24) She was known for her cultural hybridity: she changed identities and switched language codes very often and was bilingual from her childhood: she knew the Slovene and German languages, later she learned Czech; half of her literary work is in Croatian and she also translated from

¹⁶ First version of the English chapter in Jensterle Doležal 2016a: 268–284.

¹⁷ See several studies and books on Zofka Kveder: Govekar and Nadlišek Bartol 1927: 1–6; 33–40; 65–69; 97–102; 12–135; 161–166; 193–197; Boršnik 1962: 319–333; Borovnik 1995: 47–59; Mihurko Poniž 2003; Jensterle Doležal – Honzak Jahič 2008.

¹⁸ From 1897 she worked in Ljubljana. In 1899 she moved to Trieste. From Trieste she travelled to Bern where she enrolled in the university, but was unable to support herself financially and headed for Munich and then Prague.

other languages into Slovene and German. Regarding this, Moritz Csáky, a literary historian, is convinced that all Slavic writers living in the Habsburg Empire were bilingual or multilingual and multicultural, a fact that encouraged their artistic power and creativity. (Csáky 1995: 215) That could be proved in Kveder's case. Because of her poor social background, she didn't get formal education, but never the more: she was very well self-educated. She was also a translator: Zofka Kveder is known as a translator of works by Czech, German, and Croatian authors into Slovene and German and by translations from Slovene into German and Croatian.

Zofka Kveder was a professional prose writer: she published three novels and several autobiographical short stories (in different collections). According to Katja Mihurko Poniž, she made the most recognisable contribution to Slovene autobiographical discourse: "Even her earliest texts were autobiographical, and only a few of her short stories have no such background. The writer derived from her own feelings and emotions even in texts that are apparently quite fictional." (Katja Mihurko Poniž 2014a: 203) In her texts, she was a rebel against traditional understanding of women in the society, she fought against stereotypes and prejudices, and she introduced subversive themes and motifs in her literary work. (See also Boršnik 1962: 319–333; Borovnik 2008: 35–47) She wrote about women from different sections of society. In her critical observations of the place of women in the patriarchal society she depicts her different cultural roles. She wrote about emancipated women, who were looking for a new role in society and they didn't want to deny their sexuality. On the other hand, she also described the life of the prostitutes. She also wrote about the problems of the middleclass society as were pre-arranged marriages. She introduced problematic topics as abortion, violence against women and suicide.¹⁹ She also published several theatre plays: first in the Slovene and then in the Croatian language.

¹⁹ Kveder published three collections of short stories, two books of theatre plays, and the novel *Njeno življenje* (*Her life*, 1914) in the Slovene language. Additionally, she published two collections of short stories, the novel *Hanka* (1918), and four romantic historical dramas in Croatian. Moreover, she published short stories, travelogues, and feuilletons in newspapers in German. (See Birk 2016: 284–301) Lastly, she published some short stories and a novel *Ze života zahřebské služky* (*From the Life of a Housemaid from Zagreb*, 1908) in Czech.

The oeuvre of Zofka Kveder has been published in two editions in Slovenia. The first was an eight-volume edition published by Belo-modra knjižnica (Kveder 1938–1940), edited by Marja Boršnik and Eleonora Kernc. The second edition was a five-volume collection edited by Katja Mihurko Poniž (Kveder 2005–2018).

She began in the realistic style and then turned to impressionism and decadence and at the end she experienced expressionism. She also turned her writing from realistic descriptions and stories to the inner life of their characters and subjectivism.

In my paper I would like to focus on her first period of writing at the beginning of the 20th century (that means on her period in Prague and on her first years in Zagreb before the First World War). That was also the period of Austro-Hungarian “monarchical” culture. In the year 1900 in Prague, she also self-published her literary debut *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*) in the Slovene language.

Living in the modernist Prague

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Prague was one of the liveliest cultural cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with a rich cultural life and a lot of intercultural connections. György M. Vajda wrote that although there was never a cultural, literal and historical entity or a compact community in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there remained thousands and thousands of complicated interrelationships, cultural exchanges, spreadings of ideas, connections and similarities within these differences. (Vajda 1994: 12)

With its historical, geographical and demographic situation Prague has all the characteristics of a prominent cultural center of Central Europe. Since the late Middle Ages, it has been a multi-national city. As a result, the cultural works created there continued the literary traditions of different nations and social environments. Prague was also from the 19th century a distinct center for pan-Slavism. It was the source of inspirations for all Slav writers and also for Slav women writers.²⁰ (Fournier Kiss – Jensterle Doležal – Tarajło-Lipowska 2016: 279–296). Zofia Tarajło-Lipowska stressed the work of the author Honorata Zapová (née Wiśniowska) (1825–1856), a Polish gentlewoman living in Prague during the mid-19th century. Her work is one of the meeting points uniting Polish and Czech literature. (Tarajło-Lipowska 2017: 77–89)

At the beginning of the 20th century Prague was the center of Czech modernism, the place where the Czech and German communities were,

²⁰ The first female author living and working in Prague is thought to have been Elisabeth Jane Weston (1581–1612), a neo-Latin poet originally from England. (Fournier Kiss – Jensterle Doležal – Tarajło-Lipowska 2016: 279)

despite political conflicts, in a cultural space that communicated with each other. During that period the city was also one of the centers of European modernism, as Bernard has emphasized in his book: it was the city of the European avant-garde, where at the beginning of the 20th century the Czech symbolist and decadent movement was successfully (and literally) incorporated into Czech life. (Bernard 2010) Even so, the movements had already reached their peak. In Prague literary society, the national idea and also pan-Slavism were no longer so important as they had been at the beginning of the national revival movement in the 19th century. Patriotism in Czech literature was simply no longer considered modern.

During her residence in Prague, Kveder explored the lively and rich atmosphere of the city and played a role in its cultural life in cafes (Union, Slavia) and student clubs (Slavia). She was the first modern Slovene female professional writer, journalist, editor, translator and one of the first Slovene feminists and a great mediator between different cultures. It was typical that her first article published in Czech was a report about the Slovene women's movement. (Kveder 1899–1900: 462–465) She associated herself with the Czech women writers and feminists. (Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 176–185, Orožen 1978: 220–232) At the beginning of the 20th century in Prague, the third generation of Czech women writers surfaced: they were also the first self-proclaimed feminists. To use the words of Libuše Heczková – in Czech society it was the time of the birth of the gender equality and a New Woman writer and a critic as well. (Heczková 2009: 263)

Kveder's cultural hybridity is part of the Habsburg myth. Her personal charisma was filled with enthusiasm, power and life energy. She became passionately involved in Czech cultural life also because of the tradition of Slovene-Czech connections inherited from the 19th century. Her willingness to accept Czech models proved that the literary work of the Czech writers was known to Slovene culture at the end of 19th century: the main Slovene newspaper, *Ljubljanski zvon* (*Ljubljana's Bell*), published modern Czech literature, as well as articles about the Czech "moderna". Czech literary life – especially women's writing, was much more developed than in Slovenia, so she was also influenced by Czech models of writing.

In Prague, Zofka Kveder absorbed the productive atmosphere of Czech culture, greatly influenced by such leading figures as Tomáš G. Masaryk, and published articles, translations, essays and travelogues in Czech newspapers. The Prague period was her most productive period: she constructed a network of literary connections with different national literary circles present in Prague. Kveder participated in different national communities

in Prague: mostly Slovene and Croatian ones. She had contacts with the Croatian “moderna” through her husband Vladimir Jelovšek (1873–1931); she was in touch with Josef Svatoopluk Machar (1864–1942) – the central figure in Czech “moderna”, the man who introduced Czech “moderna” to Austrian culture; and above all she translated Ivan Cankar (1876–1918) – the great Slovene author of modernism – from Slovene into German. She also had connections with the famous, recognised group of German-Jewish authors including Oskar Wiener (1873–1944), a member of the literary circle of Paul Leppin (1878–1945), and Franz Werfel (1890–1945).²¹ She also published her German translations from Slovene in Prague’s German newspapers *Politik* (*Politics*, German magazine published in Prague) and *Agramer Tagblatt* (*Zagreb’s Daily Newspaper*, German magazine published in Zagreb).

At the outset of her tenure in Prague, she had already declared herself a feminist. In her first article, she discussed the feminist movement in Slovenia and also the report on *Slovenka* and her editors. (Kveder 1899–1900: 462–465) By autumn 1901, she had returned from Prague to Ljubljana, where at the inaugural meeting of the Slovene General Women’s Association (“Splošno žensko društvo”) she gave a lecture on the topic of women in society and the family. (Mihurko Poniž 2003: 177)

Moreover, she also began to report to readers of Croatian, Slovene and German newspapers: for *Ljubljanski zvon*, *Nada* (*Hope*), *Agramer Tagblatt* on cultural life (on exhibitions of painters and sculptors) in Prague. As a transmitter “she crossed geographical and linguistic boundaries and operated multiculturally and transnationally, which places her in a special and not so very large group of cultural transmitters of her time.” (Katja Mihurko Poniž 2020: 2)

We wish to underline specific literary relationships between Zofka Kveder and Czech women writers and intellectuals. Each and every one of these women was part of her “communication web”, and these connections were crucial to the constructing of her professional writer’s self-consciousness and gender identity.

²¹ For some time, she was also an active part of the German-Jewish community. In 1906 they published a new newspaper *Wir* (*We*) and they presented her as their frontline author, with her short stories from *Misterij žene* (*Mystery of a Woman*) in German. (Kveder 1906: 3–4).

With a bilingual identity, Slovene and German,²² Zofka Kveder came to the multicultural, open city of Prague at the beginning of the 20th century, as an aspiring writer with a feminist orientation and certain editorial experience,²³ as she participated in Trieste's *Edinost* and wrote populist articles on the issue of women in society, especially in *Slovenka*. After 1900, she became a valuable member of the society of Czech women writers in Prague, which had a much more well-developed literary scene than in Slovene society, with a rich tradition of female writers. Her years in Prague (1900–1906) were her most productive ones: there she was able to find her own model of female writing, as we know that until a certain period her heroines were primarily women. During her Prague period she became a bilingual author: she decided to write also in the Croatian language.²⁴

“Bilingual” writer Zofka Kveder also formed a literary and communicative network of female authors in Czech culture because of the historical tradition of Slovene-Czech contacts from the 19th century. In the background, the idea of Slavic reciprocity was still dormant, which also led to the acceptance of works by Slavic authors with greater sympathy in Prague at the turn of the century. Prague itself also played a role in constructing her literary identity – a culturally open city as a crossroads of European avant-garde and at the same time a special, inspiring space in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where different ideas and thought flowed and where different cultural communities were very active. Similar to Vienna rich cultural life, which bloomed in cafes, clubs, theatres, and concerts... presented at that time all the faces of modernity.

Kveder absorbed the productive atmosphere of the Czech culture, which was mostly under the influence of Masaryk, by publishing articles, translations, essays and travelogues in Czech newspapers and magazines, mostly those run by female journalists and concentrated on women readers – *Nové pařížské módy* (*New Fashion from Paris*), *Ženský svět* (*Women's World*), *Právo lidu* (*Right for People*), *Jitřenka* (*Morning Star*), *Ženský obzor* (*Women's Horizon*), etc. – and rarely in the important Prague newspapers such as *Narodní politika* (*National Politics*) and *Národní listy* (*National*

²² She was Slovene by origin. The official language of the monarchy was German. She was educated mostly in German. She was a Slovene writer, but she also wrote some texts in German and she often translated Slovene literature into German.

²³ Before Prague, she stayed for some time in Trieste, Zürich, Bern, and Munich.

²⁴ She was a member of the Slovene and Croatian “moderna”. Her first husband, decadent poet Vladimir Jelovšek, was a Croat.

Papers). Kveder published extensively in the newspaper *Ženský obzor* – edited by Jan Ziegloser (1875–1955) and Anna Ziegloserová (1883–1942) – and *Nové pařížské módy*, whose editor was the critic and writer Olga Fástrová (1876–1965), as well as in the newspaper *Eva*, edited by Bedřich Kovářik.

Kveder published most of her stories and essays in women's newspapers and was especially connected to the Czech editors of this newspapers: she new and read the literary work by the writer Teréza Nováková (1853–1912), editor of *Ženský svět*, and later to a friend, Miloslava Sísová (1883–1941)²⁵, editor of *Vydrovy besedy* (*Vydra's Words*). She, in addition to R. Svobodová, H. Malířová, and B. Benešová, also published Kveder's texts and wrote reviews of her texts. Kveder also developed a close literary friendship with Ziegloserová and Sísová. After the abolition of this magazine, Sísová ran *Ženský svět* from 1915–1930 and published her texts there, as well as texts by other female Czech authors – for example, Malířová regularly sent them there.²⁶ Sísová also introduced Kveder to the publisher and industrialist František Vydra (1869–1921). In 1904 he chose Kveder to become an editor of his revue, *Domači přítel* (*Home Friend*).²⁷ Each of them published her translations in the newspapers. They praised Kveder's work, especially in *Ženský svět*, as the work of a distinguished, modern writer. For example, the renowned critic and literary historian, Arne Novák (1880–1939), wrote very positive critical notes on her short stories in 1906. (Novák 1906: 261)

Her real success in the Czech culture came after 1906 – after her move to Zagreb. Her work was extensively published in Czech literary sources until the First World War, which was also partly the result of the existence

²⁵ Sísová met Kveder at the Slavia student club, and they became friends on trips to the Czech hills of Šumava in 1904. She described the trip and the beginning of their friendship: "I remembered how you were young at the time and so excited about life. And I also remembered our trip to the mountains. Such a trip was among the most beautiful ones: how we lived with nature!" Miloslava Sísová to Zofka Kveder. The archive of Zofka Kveder, fond 1113, D 222. Literary archive – Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

²⁶ Sísová remained faithful to female authors even later, when she left Czech culture. In Paris she dealt with the phenomenon of female art and wrote reviews on painting for the Czech press.

²⁷ Kveder edited it from 1904–1914. That was also the source of her making a living for a long time.

of a common book market across the Austria-Hungarian Empire.²⁸ She was so popular in Czech culture that after the translation of her short stories *Vesnické povídky* (*Village stories*), fifteen critiques were published. (Miklavčičová 1998: 64–65) The *Ženský svět* critic, Pavla Maternová, praised her work in 1907 as a “literal concert of full-blooded modernism.” (Maternová 1907: 239) From 1903 to 1939, they published 183 of her literary works in Czech newspapers. (See Bečka – Ulbrecht 2008: 317–329) Some of them – as was the novel *Ze života zahřebské služky* (*From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb*) were published only in Czech. Nine of her books were published in Czech translation before the First World War. Paradoxically, especially during the first period, reactions to her work were much more positive than in Slovenia.

Kveder followed new women’s critics and women’s active politics in the newspaper and in literary works. All her best friends were critics, editors, and writers, and she published most of her articles in women’s newspapers. The construction of the identity of the female writer and critic took place during her Prague period. In the first years of the 20th century, the first sovereign and distinct generation of Czech female writers and critics was formed in a favourable environment of Czech culture. In their writing, a type of the New Woman – a liberated intellectual – emerged: they were the third generation of Czech women writers and the first generation of declared feminists.

The female authors had a special, honourable place in Czech literature, and – like Karolina Světlá (1830–1899) and Teréza Nováková (1853–1912) – also occupied an important place in the realism of the second half of the nineteenth century and also in the circumstances of *fin-de-siècle* literature. According to Dobrava Moldanová, the new Czech generation of female authors at the turn of the century was to broaden the horizons of Czech prose. Czech women writers discovered a new type of story and a new type of posture on the issue of representation of women. In prose, they shifted the view from a simple, short story to a broad analysis of internal causes and causation in narrative. In their stories, they depicted the modern

²⁸ We register responses to the publication of Zofka Kveder’s works in the Slovene, German, Czech, Croatian, Serbian, and Bulgarian speaking areas. She was known also in a wider European area: Katja Mihurko Poniž emphasised, that “it is not clear how her texts came to be published in Polish and Lusatian Serbian, but it is possible to follow the responses to her works in the Bulgarian and Serbian cultural spaces”. (Mihurko Poniž 2020: 3)

psyche and presented a new psychology of women, while also depicting a critical image of women in the bourgeois society. (Moldanová 1980: 175)

Kveder carefully monitored Czech female authors, most of whom she also knew personally,²⁹ and their works. They were great personalities connected also to the feminist movement.³⁰ In the Czech environment, according to Libuše Heczkova, male anxiety was overcome by Masaryk's critique of modernity and Šalda's idealization of women in the time of the birth of female individuality and the appearance of female critics. (Heczková 2009: 263) Women's newspapers were published, such as *Ženský svět* (*Woman's World*), run by the writer Teréza Nováková (1853–1912), whose prose Zofka Kveder also read.³¹ The newspaper formed a profile of women's literature and they also publish her work and reviews.³²

Zofka Kveder formed the most deep and lifelong connection with the Czech Zdenka Hásková (1878–1946), who was not so much a writer but more a journalist and critic – and her translator.³³ Hásková introduced her to the Czech women writer's circles. Because of her translations, Kveder's work was also intensively published in the Czech public life. Hásková participated in various magazines. According to Jarmila Mourkova, Hásková was “one of the most educated Czechs at the turn of the century, who devoted herself to the emancipation movement and was also a great literary

²⁹ In the Slovene literary tradition, there were not many female writers, Kveder's foremothers. We know that Kveder read and appreciated the writings of Pavlina Pajk (1854–1901) as an innovator of “female stories”. Kveder was actually the first professional Slovene writer.

³⁰ She also established many contacts with feminists from various countries of Central and South-East Europe. She was in contact to the Austrian feminists Martha Tausk (1881–1957) and Marie Lang (1858–1934).

³¹ It is no coincidence that Zofka Kveder also named her magazine in Zagreb *Ženski svet* (*Woman's World*, 1917–1920) – and tried to create the concept of an open women's newspaper for culture and literature with it; then, under the influence of the Yugoslav idea, she renamed it *Jugoslavaska žena* (*Yugoslav Woman*).

³² After the death of Nováková, Kveder asked her son Arne Novák for her books, to write an in-depth essay on her work in Croat newspapers. See the letter from Zofka Kveder to Arne Novák, 6. 12. 1912: “I knew her a bit, I also followed her editorial work from newspapers available in Zagreb.” The archive of Arne Novák, fond 3183, Nb. 6/91. Literary archive, Památník národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

³³ Both wanted to write a novel about the friendship: Kveder started writing it in the form of a diary that Slovene writer Fran Govekar sent to Hásková (it was lost later). Hásková thought about it, but after the death of her husband, the writer Viktor Dyk, she was preoccupied with taking care and publishing his inheritance. (See Pánek 1976: 58–79)

talent: she wrote short prose, articles, and essay reviews, especially at the beginning”. (Mourková 1975: 195) According to Libuše Heczkova, she was an important figure in Czech culture in the early twentieth century. As an university-educated Czech woman with one of the first female doctorates, she represented the type of the New Woman in Czech society – a critic, an intellectual, who believed in women’s writing as an expression of the typical “female being, searching for new values” (Heczková 2009: 186) that would give meaning to women’s efforts. She also devoted herself to translation, mainly from Croatian (her translations of I. Vojnović, V. Car Emin, and V. Nazor were published in newspapers) and Slovene. From 1914–1919, as a critic of the *Ženský svět*, she generally reviewed only the literature of women writers. From 1910–1918 she was the editor of *Pražské noviny* (*Prague Newspaper*) and from 1918–1926 she worked in the newspaper *Československá republika* (*Czechoslovak Republic*). In her newspaper articles, she wrote about culture, especially theatre, criticism, and feuilletons. Due to her literary-theoretical insight, she also became the main critic of the Kveder’s literary work.

In addition to countless articles, reports, and feuilletons on culture and theatre criticism, Hásková has also published 15 short stories in newspapers and two literary works in book form. Her first work is the autobiographical story *Mládí* (*Youth*, 1909) about the maturing of a young girl in the bourgeois society, a story about “finding the image of a New Woman” (the words of Libuše Heczkova) who must eventually take responsibility for her own destiny. In the story of growing up, she emphasizes the controversial themes of sexuality and love. Hásková dedicated her only poetry collection *Cestou* (*On the Road*, 1920) to Zofka Kveder. In her first poem, “Věnování” [Dedication], she described their first meetings in the revolutionary student club Slavia, which was also attended by Yugoslav students. In the idealized description, she emphasized Zofka Kveder’s unusual personality with romantic superlatives and in the sentimental discourse of the time.

Judging by Zdenka Hásková’s letters in Viktor Dyk’s legacy, Kvedrova mainly hung out with Czech women writers of her generation, whom she met through Hásková at the Slavia student club: Hásková’s best friends were women writers: Helena Malířová (born Nosková) (1877–1940) and the slightly younger Marie Majerová (1882–1967). She also introduced Kveder to the literary salon of Růžena Svobodová (1868–1920).

Her main connection with Czech culture became her Czech friends: Zdenka Hásková, Helena Malířová, Miloslava Sísová, and also Růžena

Svobodová – Czech writers and feminists with whom she maintained contacts even later. During the period of her stay in Prague she had contacts with Czech female writers and feminists mostly through Zdenka Hásková, her translator, also a writer and a literary critic, who introduced her to a group of Czech women writers, especially to the famous women writer Růžena Svobodová, who was successfully running a literary salon at that time.

A women writer as a role model: “Princess of the spirit” Růžena Svobodová

Malířová, Kvedrova, and Hásková visited the salon of the slightly older Růžena Svoboda, a well-known Czech writer at that time. In her *fin-de-siècle* writing we could find a typical representative of the transition period between realism and modernity. Her salon in Prague was marked by big names such as František X. Šalda (1867–1937), the greatest Czech modern critic, and the actress Hana Kvapilová (1860–1907).

Svobodová was a great teacher for budding young writers. Jarmila Mourková pointed out that she had a great gift for discovering young talents and she also knew other important intellectuals who helped her to promote the idea of women’s equality in the wider cultural environment. (Mourková 1975: 164) The talented and self-confident Czech author, already established at the beginning of the 20th century, formed a generation of young Czech female authors whose writings were influenced by her. Her influence on Slovene Zofka Kveder was for a long time unexplored, but obviously it was very fruitful.

Helena Nosková (Malířová), who later became a well-known writer, kept in touch with Svobodová all her life, she was a great literary role model for her, Malířová called her “a princess of the spirit” and “the protector of ironic and sentimental talents”.³⁴ Despite conventional courtesy, we feel boundless allegiance to the great idol in her letters. Malířová also brought Hásková and Kvedrova to her literary salon. Hásková became a

³⁴ See the correspondence of Helena Malířová to Růžena Svobodová. The archive of Růžena Svobodová, file 1275–1314, Nb. 39/66. Literary archive – Památník národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

great friend of Svobodová, and in the second decade they also started collaborating.³⁵

Svobodová followed the literary life and the work of Zofka Kveder with undisguised sympathy. Even after Kveder's departure from Prague to Zagreb, Svobodová asked Hásková in letters to bring her both her letters and books.³⁶ Zofka Kveder, in her Prague period, read the books of Růžena Svobodová with adoration.³⁷

For Zofka Kveder, especially at the beginning, every reading was also a model for her writing, and Svobodová's books also influenced Kveder's literary work. Svobodová was older than the others, an established writer's personality, and acted and behaved as a mentor to other younger women writers.³⁸ At the beginning of the 20th century, she was already a respected literary personality, writing in the impressionist and symbolist style. With her personal and professional charisma, she strongly influenced the others, especially inspiring Kveder with her prose collection *Pěšinkami srdce* (*Footpaths of the Heart*, Svobodová 1902). From a letter³⁹ Hásková wrote to Svobodová (in 1902), we know that Kveder read this work twice and was deeply impressed by it. Like *Footpaths of the Heart*, Zofka Kveder's first short stories also dealt with unhappy marriages and the problems of

³⁵ These female authors wrote some autobiographical books about their turbulent life in the beginning of twentieth century, full of creative energy, when they were fighting against taboos and prejudices: Zdenka Hásková, *Mládí* (*Youth*), sv. 5, Praha: Nákladem Grosmana a Svobody, 1909; Růžena Násková, *Jak šel život: Paměti a zápisky* (*How the Life went on: Memories and Notes*), Praha: Orbis, 1953; Helena Malířová, *Deset životů* (*Ten Lives*), Praha: Evropský lit. klub, 1937).

³⁶ In 1920 she also published the travelogue *Barvy Jugoslávie* (*Colours of Yugoslavia*). She spent holidays at Croat beaches with Hásková.

³⁷ Zofka Kveder attributed a paragraph in a letter from Hásková to Svobodová in 1902, in which she writes about reading her stories from 1902 *Pěšinkami srdce* (*Footpaths of the Heart*). (Zdenka Hásková to Růžena Svobodová, the letter without a date, the sealing of the student's club Slavia (ca. 1902). The archive of Růžena Svobodová, file 496–562, Nb. 39/66. Literary Archive – Památník národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

³⁸ Her biographer J. Mourková stressed that Svobodová helped young Czech women writers such as Helena Malířová, Růžena Nosková-Násková, Zdenka Hásková, Marie Majerová, Eva Vrchlická and Marie Hennerova-Pujmanová to become a part of Czech literary life. (Mourková 1975: 164)

³⁹ Zofka Kveder wrote some sentences about this on the second page of the letter which Zdenka Hásková wrote to Růžena Svobodová, letter without date (1902?). *Pozůstalost Růženy Svobodové* (The archive of Růžena Svobodová), fond 496–562, nb. 39/66. Literární Archiv LA PNP, Literary Archive at Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

independent women while, as a feminist writer, she particularly emphasized the problems of women within bourgeois society.

Svobodová in the collection *Footpaths of the Heart* depicts the tragic fate of women in Czech patriarchal society, torn between their feelings and demands of society. The author also problematizes the sense of a marriage for a woman. We can find visible parallels between the story *Co mluvil domov* (*What home meant to her*) from Svobodová's collection: and the short story *Obisk* (*Visit*), which Zofka Kveder published in 1903 in the Slovene newspaper *Slovenski narod* (*Slovene Nation*). Both stories are full of sentiments and melancholic moments. In both plots a female hero after many years returns home to the village, where she meets a former lover from her youth. Both women are types of the new women and they represent womanhood. At the end both of them leave the village place in order to forget the old feelings: the musician Milada Polomová in the story of Svobodová returns to the big city, because she wants to continue successful artistic career, the narrator in the case of Zofka Kveder returns to her husband and family in the city. Svobodová in her story tends to be more modern in the presentation of a new woman: she wants to show a new emancipated woman with a great artistic career in a big town as the only alternative for a new female intellectual. Kveder is in her narrative solutions more traditional.

We can also assume that in the same year as *Pěšinkami srdce* Zofka Kveder also read Svobodová's well-known secessionists novel in two parts *Milenky* (*Women Lovers*, published in two books, 1902), marked by her turn to symbolism and secession. In the novel, Svobodová seeks a type of a new, liberated woman who does not submit to a man: who, under patriarchal conditions, does not want to be just his dependent mistress. Emma, who represents a new generation of women, consciously places her all-conquering love at the service of social utility – similar to what the heroine Hanka will do in Kveder's novel from 1915. In fact we find very similar narrative and motifs in Kveder's Slovene novel *Njeno življenje* (*Her life*) from 1914. In the first book of *Women Lovers* the narrator introduces two plots: the main story of lady Stradenová and the other of Marie Benešovská. Marie Benešovská is presented as a victim: a mother with small children suffers all her life because of the immoral life of her promiscuous and wasteful husband. At the end two of her children get ill and die and she dies too. In Kveder's novel *Her life* the story of Tilda Ribičeva is very similar to Maria Benešovská from *Women Lovers*: Tilda gets married to a prodigal, promiscuous person who wastes her money. Because of him she experiences

social degradation. She has several children with him and three of them die because of illness. At the end she kills the last son – because he behaves immorally like his father. She commits suicide afterwards.

We could also estimate the influence in the style of impressionistic writing of Ružena Svobodová on Zofka Kveder's work. Svobodová has very brilliant impressionist style of writing, thick woven with poetic metaphors, where the images of nature intervene the fragments of reality. Subtle lyrical passages with impressionistic moments are very typical also for the short prose of Zofka Kveder.

It is difficult to find similarities between the neo-romantic, Art Nouveau, lyrical rhythm of Ružena Svoboda's prose and the realistically relentless, unadorned expression and truncated rhythm of Zofka Kveder's early prose. Parallels might be found only in the authors' views, emphasizing fragmentary impressions and impressionistic writings. Similarities can also be recognised in the thematic orientation. The typical conflict in Ružena Svoboda's prose between the great emotions of women who could not be realized due to the patriarchal position of women in both bourgeois and village society at the time, and social demands, greatly inspired Kveder in conceiving the problems of her heroines. Svobodová was more familiar in describing bourgeois salons and high society, while Kveder was more convincing in describing lower society, village life, proletarians, and craftwork society. Ružena Svobodová was also able to teach the young beginner an in-depth description of the psychological feelings of mainly women, artistic painting of moments and atmosphere, as well as a plastic description of nature and space in writing.

Ružena Svobodová wrote her best literary work *Černí myslivci* (*Black Hunters*) in 1908, but we can't find its influence on Kveder's work. We could assume that after her departure for Zagreb, Kveder did not have much opportunity to follow Svobodová's writing directly. Nevertheless, Kveder never forgot her great inspirer: even later, she wrote about Svobodová's work and influence in Croatian newspapers. (Kveder-Demetrović 1918: 317–318)

Central European women writers connecting in correspondence and prose fiction

Zofka Kveder was already a declared feminist when she moved to Prague. She was active in the feminist movement also in the period of *Slovenka*

(*Slovene Woman*).⁴⁰ It is also not a coincidence that her good friend was an Austrian politician and journalist Martha Tausk (1881–1957). Kveder as a political person also tried to influence Czech public area and to make contacts to the politically active Czech feminists. As a cultural mediator and an author with more language identities, Kveder also translated Czech authors into German:⁴¹ for example short stories of the well-known Czech feminist, Božena Viková-Kunětická (1862–1934)⁴² who fought for women emancipation, for the Austrian magazine *Dokumente der Frauen* (*Dokuments for Women*, 1899–1902). In the year 1902 she contacted her. In the first preserved letter Kveder announced her, that she wrote a critical article about her work for *Dokumente der Frauen* and she also asked her if she could translate her short story *Srazit* (*To crush*). In the second letter from 27. 4. 1902,⁴³ written in German, she described to Kunětická her personal life and her “engagement” in Czech literary and cultural life.

Czech women writers Marie Majerová, Zdenka Hásková and Helena Malířová (neé Nosková) were best friends in the beginning of their careers, when they were forming their writers’ identity. Later Zdenka Hásková began to be closer to Zofka Kveder, even though she never lost contact with the others. Zofka Kveder appreciated their colleagues, but we can’t say she was greatly influenced by them, because they were both quite young. All three of them were still searching for their style when Kveder came to know them. Because of the atmosphere of “Zeitgeist” we could find similarities in their style of writing and narrative methods. Their prose depicted most common themes and motives of the women writers’ prose of their time: the “Bildungsroman” of a young girl in patriarchal society, unhappy marriages, aspects of the body in the text, to “female” perceptions of childhood, maternity and adulthood...⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Magazine *Slovenka* (1897–1902) was the first Slovenian women newspaper, published in Trieste, vivid, multicultural metropolis of Habsburg empire. Kveder worked for the editorial board for some time. They also published the first stories and plays of Kveder.

⁴¹ She translated some Slovene authors to German too.

⁴² See a letter of Zofka Kveder to Božena Viková-Kunětická, 27. 4. 1902. Pozůstalost Božena Viková-Kunětická, The archive of Božena Viková-Kunětická, file Nb. 59/55. Literary archive – Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁴³ Zofka Kveder to Božena Viková-Kunětická, 27. 4. 1902 (in German), Pozůstalost Božena Viková-Kunětická, The archive of Božena Viková-Kunětická, fond nb 55. Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Literary archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁴⁴ See the article by Milada K. Nedvěďová (2008: 71–78).

During her Prague period Zofka Kveder constructed a social web of women writers, feminists, and friends. After her departure from Prague to Zagreb, Zofka Kveder also corresponded with many of them – especially with Zdenka Hásková. Zofka Kveder also remained close friends with the Czech writer Helena Malířová, as we could find Kveder's name mentioned several times in the letters of Hásková to Malířová. In the first decade of twentieth century, Helena Malířová (born Nosková) (1877–1940) developed into a recognizable Czech writer of short prose during the beginning of the century. She had a very complicated life story: between the Serbian – Turkish War in 1912 she was a journalist and a medical sister in a hospital in Belgrade where she helped wounded soldiers, so she witnessed a great deal of suffering in the culturally and nationally mixed society of the hospital. From 1910–1912 she wrote many letters to Zdenka Hásková:⁴⁵ she was inspired and shocked by the hard war circumstances in a distant Slavic culture. That was also the peak of their friendship. Later she lived in Vienna.⁴⁶ She might have been a role model for Zofka Kveder's nonconformist and female intellectual Hanka in the novel with the same title, written in 1915.⁴⁷ Czech prose writer Helena Malířová, with her courage, intelligence, and uncompromising attitude in the Balkan wars in 1912, became a role model for the main heroine Hanka in Zofka Kveder's novel, who also works as a nurse in a Prague war hospital for suffering soldiers of different nationalities and reflects on suffering and sacrifice. In the novel the Polish woman Hanka divorced from her husband and separated from her two children, throughout most of the novel she lives alone in Prague – during the First War apocalypse and the breakup of the Habsburg empire. At the edge of the dramatic circumstances in Prague she works in the hospital and helps wounded soldiers of varied nationalities. The military hospital in Belgrade, as a crossroads of nations and the prototype of “multicultural chaos”, comes to life in the premises of the Prague hospital of Kveder. (Kveder 1918) She

⁴⁵ See the archive of Viktor Dyk, letters from Helena Malířová to Zdenka Hásková, file nb. 131. Literary archive – Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁴⁶ She had very unconventional relationships with men. Her first husband died. After 1913 she lived with the writer Ivan Olbracht in Vienna. He was the editor of Czech newspaper *Dělnické listy* (*Workers Papers*) in Vienna, where he also published articles by Zofka Kveder.

⁴⁷ Hásková surely transmitted information from letters about Malířová's adventurous, hard life in a Belgrade hospital to Kveder. Hásková letters to Kveder from that period are unfortunately not preserved.

read the books of her Czech female friends as well as acquaintances also in Zagreb. She might also have read Maliřová's two autobiographical novels about this period *Srdce nemá stání* (*The Heart has no Abode*) from 1912 and her next war novel *Popel* (*Ashes*, 1914).

We also find several similarities in themes and motifs in the literary work of Maliřová and Kveder. Both are very autobiographical and centred on a heroine. A similar turn in Maliřová's and Kveder's literary works is also interesting: in the last period after the First World War, both switched to tendentious literature and clung to socialist ideas, with Kveder also embracing the Yugoslav idea.⁴⁸

Literary critic and translator Zdenka Hásková and Zofka Kveder: "the meaning of eternal friendship"⁴⁹ in cooperative work. The phenomenon of double authorship and exchange of language codes

Zofka Kveder's stories are characterized by realism, inspired by rich fantasy, a plastic depiction of nature and natural phenomena and an intuitive view of the state of the human heart. For extensive novel narrations, she lacked the peace and ability to design a longer narrative structure.

Z. Hásková on Zofka Kveder's prose⁵⁰

Hásková and Kveder met in 1900 as very young intellectuals and together began translating Kveder's texts. We can assume that, at least at the beginning, they translated Kveder's literature from Slovene to Czech together (with the dictionary), because Hásková didn't know Slovene and Kveder knew very little Czech. Later, perhaps Hásková corrected only the spelling of the texts and the style of the narration.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Yugoslav idea – the faith in the state existence of South Slaves (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) also on behalf of the erasing different cultures and national identities, very much spread before the First World War in all three domains.

⁴⁹ The formulation of their friendship in the letter of Zdenka Hásková to Růžena Svobodová, 3. 6. 1919. The archive of Růžene Svobodove, file 495–526, nb. 39/66. Literary archive – Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁰ She characterised Kveder's literature with these words after her death. (Hásková 1927: 31).

⁵¹ Hásková described the fateful meeting of a timid student with a beginning writer. She underscored Kveder's energy and naïve openness, in which she sees something

Hásková established herself within Czech culture as a prominent critic of women writers and yet, in the case of Kveder, remained her main critic all her life. Both of them wanted to write an autobiographical novel about their friendship, but the circumstances were against that: the dairy of Kveder got lost, Hásková after the tragic death of her husband Viktor Dyk (1877–1931) dedicated all her time to the literary inheritance of him.⁵² Jarmila Mourková wrote “that Hásková was at the beginning of the century one of the most educated female Czechs, who devoted herself to the emancipation movement and that she herself was also a great literary talent: specially in the beginning she wrote short stories, articles, essays and critics.” (Mourková 1975: 195) Also Libuše Heczková stressed that she was an important person in Czech culture, who formed the “women part” of Czech art criticism. (Heczková 2009: 187) She was one of the first graduates of the famous female grammar school Minerva, later in her life a distinguished editor in different newspapers,⁵³ a journalist and a writer. As one of the first women in the Monarchy she finished the doctorate of natural science. Later she also made her living with translations from South Slavic literatures (from Croatian and Slovene language).

Hásková began to translate the literary work of Kveder. In the beginning they worked together, because Hásková didn't know Slovene. Hásková most often didn't sign herself as a translator, because in that way they could get more money. She was the primary translator of Kveder's books and articles and we might imagine they not only translated, but formulated texts together (Kveder's texts in Czech were mostly published as originals, not translations). We might even speculate about a collective authorship especially in the beginning of their work when Kveder was learning Czech and Hásková Slovene. Mostly because of her translations Kveder experienced great reception in the Czech culture before the First World War: until the year 1910 Kveder published seven books in the Czech book market which was a great success. They also published a lot of Kveder's short stories, travelogues and essays in the Czech periodical press of that time.

Translations to Czech done in the first Prague period can be understood as a “collective” authorship of two authors, as the boundaries between the

ingenious. Here, too, she expressed Kveder's strong “elan vitale” – “a living ray of childish faith in life, goodness, and beauty flowed.” (Hásková 1923: 1–2)

⁵² Zdenka Hásková to Fran Govekar, 2. 2. 1927. (Pánek 1976: 64)

⁵³ She was an editor of *Ženský svět*, *Pražské noviny* (*Prague Newspaper*) and *Československá republika* (*Czechoslovak Republic*). Between years 1914–1919 she wrote critics about women writers in *Ženský svět*.

original and the translation are blurred. Kveder also changed language codes very often and she didn't connect her language identity with her writer's identity. In Prague she already wrote in four languages: Slovene, German, Croatian, and Czech. Only Zofka Kveder signed the translations as the author, which was their marketing trick. According to Chlapec-Djordjević, both editors and readers knew about this mystification and accepted it,⁵⁴ because this was the only way that publishers and editors could pay them a higher fee out of solidarity with the poor girls.⁵⁵

Because of Hásková, Kveder also experienced her Czech reception “boom” – by 1910 she had published seven book translations.⁵⁶ The culmination of their joint cooperation was the book *Vesnické povídky (Village Tales)*, which Hásková translated in 1907 for the prestigious Ottové nakladatelství (Otto's Publishing House), (fifteen reviews and reports on that). At the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to Hásková, Zofka Kveder was one of the most translated Slovene authors in the Czech Republic, along with Slovene writers Ivan Cankar and František K. Meško.⁵⁷ After the First World War, this collaboration almost disappeared – Hásková published just a few of Kveder's short feuilleton and articles in the newspaper *Československá republika*.

From Zofka Kveder's incompletely preserved Czech manuscript *Episoda (Episode)* from 1906,⁵⁸ in which we recognize the writing of Zdenka Hásková, we can conclude that the final form of the texts, after her move to Zagreb, was done by Hásková: she certainly guided her style and corrected spelling mistakes.

Hásková was the translator from Croatian and it is not a coincidence that in January 1915, when Kveder began to write her Croatian novel *Hanka*, she wrote to a friend that she would write the novel in Croatian (not in

⁵⁴ Hásková described their collective work in the article years after that. (See Hásková 1923: 1–2)

⁵⁵ See Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 179.

⁵⁶ There were also other reasons for Kveder's success in Czech society. She was a good writer with an interesting style. One of the reasons was also her membership in the Social-Democratic Party: she published in their newspapers and their publishing houses, writing about Czech culture.

⁵⁷ The other translators of Kveder's texts were Otto Lazar, Jan Novák, Josef V. Tichý, Tereza Turnerová a Eugen Stoklas. Most of their translations are lost.

⁵⁸ Zofka Kveder, Czech manuscript *Episoda*, the archive of Josef Miroslav Hovorka, originally published in the newspaper *Dámské Besedy (Ladies Clubs)* 22, in 1906, found in the archive of Zofka Kveder. Literary archive, Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP) at Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

Slovene!), as this would make it easier for Hásková to translate it.⁵⁹ After the First World War, due to the loss of the Habsburg common book market, Kveder's translations were not published anymore in the Czechoslovak Republic. The main reason why Hásková stopped translating Kvederova could also be found in the poorer quality of Kveder's later works. As an exceptional critic and subtle evaluator of her work, Hásková critically rejected the propaganda and lower-quality texts written in her Zagreb period in the twenties. It was her sharp criticism in the letters that was an attempt to direct Zofka Kveder's writing away from ideology and generalized realism.

The critic Zdenka Hásková and the construction of Kveder's autorship

Zofka did not love anyone in the world as much as you, because you were her best sister at heart and soul. You were her aesthetic teacher, her literary mentor. It is largely to your credit that Zofka has become a serious writer, that she has abandoned generalization and typification, and that she involved psychologically individualized modernity in her texts.⁶⁰

Fran Govekar to Zdenka Hásková, January 10, 1927⁶¹

Hásková was not only the main translator of Kveder's text; she also took on the role of being her literary critic. That was her profession. She was a sharp critic of art in different spheres in the Czech magazines and newspapers, in which she worked as an editor. She also criticised the literary works of her friends, Marie Majerová and Helena Maliřová.

After Kveder left Prague and moved to Zagreb, extensive correspondence developed between her and Hásková, and sometimes they also visited each other. The correspondence⁶² is an important document for us, because it

⁵⁹ Zofka Kveder to Zdenka Hásková, letter nb. 40. Literary archive – Arhiv hrvaškega društva pisateljev HAZU, Zagreb, Croatia.

⁶⁰ All translations of quotations from Slovene into English by Alenka Jensterle Doležal.

⁶¹ Pánek 1976: 62.

⁶² At the Archive of the Institute for Croatian literature in Zagreb, there are sixty-three letters of Zofka Kveder to Zdenka Hásková left, written in the Czech language (the last one five days before her death). (Narodni arhiv HAZU, Literary archive in Zagreb, Croatia) We find some correspondence from Hásková to Kveder in the Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Literary archive at Strahov in Prague (Czech Republic), thirty-five letters from Hásková to Kveder in Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive in Ljubljana (Slovenia).

shows that this was not just the relationship between two young women, when Kveder sent to Hásková handmade Bosnian lacework for Christmas, but also the connection between the writer and her most important critic. When Kvedrova sent Hásková hand-embroidered Bosnian pillows for Christmas, it was the relationship not only of two trusted youthful friends, but also of two artists and intellectuals exchanging books and manuscripts and expecting critical dialogue. In their letters, they looked for a real response on the other side and emphasized the power of writing against national differences and language and cultural barriers, in intercultural dialog. The letters, which travelled between Ljubljana, Prague, and Zagreb, also revealed the spiritual and emotional life of both women. The reconstruction of a certain historical period and space is possible precisely with the reconstruction of the most personal space of intimacy in the correspondence, cultivated by Zofka Kveder with a friend from her youth.⁶³ According to the letters, they met in Slovenia, Trieste, Zagreb, the Croatian seaside, and Prague.⁶⁴ It was a spiritual connection but also a journey through different places, crossing different borders. Zdenka Hásková writes in her article that it was Zofka Kveder who paved the way for her to the south (to the Balkan) and that she got to know Zagreb, a part of Carniola, Primorska, and Dalmatia because of her.

Hásková expressed herself as a distinguished critic of her friend's work. Kveder all her productive work period searched for an acceptance of her work at the Other – the first reader Hásková.

Their vast lifelong correspondence is a great source of information about their personal and professional life and also – in Kveder's case – an ambitious literary work: in her letters she tried to write in her distinguished impressionist literary style. Kveder also wrote to her friend about the autobiographical motifs in her writing and explained her narrative strategies. In the letters she explained the construction of her two important figures in her novel *Hanka* (1915, 1918): of the main character Hanka and her love Staszyński. She also informed her about the decision to use Croatian language instead Slovene – she wanted that Hásková would translate the novel from Croatian language.⁶⁵

On the contrary Hásková intervened in the letters as an important critic of Kveder and was therefore able to establish her writer's identity. She

⁶³ See Jensterle Doležal 2008: 241–245; Kodet 2008: 237–241.

⁶⁴ See Hásková 1927: 2.

⁶⁵ See Jensterle Doležal 2008: 125–143.

attempted to form Kveder's style and expression. She taught her the narrative strategies; she demanded from her profound psychology of the figures and in as a female critic she was conscious of the gender strategy. In their later correspondence before the First World War, we find Hásková's critical reflections on Kveder's tendency towards ideological works. She criticized her narrative strategies and especially the lack of psychology of her characters.⁶⁶

Unfortunately, only the letters of Hásková to Kveder after 1912 have survived, as Hásková, around the year 1911, burned all their correspondence to date.⁶⁷

In Kveder's letters to a friend, we find also the explanations of her narrative solutions: she often described autobiographical elements in her prose, and also she revealed narrative strategies to Hásková. Hásková began to criticize Kveder's decline to proletarian ideology and her persuasion of the Yugoslav idea – which was very quickly seen in her prose work. Literary principals were not important anymore for Kveder, she tried more to persuade by ideas. Hásková didn't approved of her heroic, naive romantic plays with the myth of the Yugoslav union in her late writing. She answered her friend – with silence – and didn't correspond with her for some time. She also didn't care to translate her any further after the First World War: she translated only some of her short stories in the *Československá republika* magazine. After Kveder's tragic end Hásková praised former friend's work with great respect.

Those letters can also be taken as a literary-theoretical document: on the other side, the critic Hásková formed the writer's identity of Zofka Kveder. Precisely because of that, the space of the letters was later the space of conflicting meetings. The critical remarks in that correspondence began the conflicts between them. In a letter from 5. 12. 1911 Hásková criticized her short story *Matka (Mother)* (Hásková 1911: 1), which she translated in 1910. (Kveder 1910/11: 1–2) The story was for Kveder an introduction to her novel *Njeno življenje (Her Life, 1914)*, written in Slovene. In the same

⁶⁶ See the letter of Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, 14. 5. 1913 and the letter of Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, 7. 12. 1914. Literarna zapuščina Zofke Kveder, The archive of Zofka Kveder, fond Ms 1113, D 81, nb. 14. Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

⁶⁷ That could happen because of the conflict between them in 1911. See the letter of Zdenka Hásková to Fran Govekar, 15. 2. 1927. (Pánek 1976: 66)

letter she expressed the fear that her friend had already forgotten the art of creative writing and had gone to the route of tendency and generalisation.⁶⁸

In the letter, Hásková explains to her why she shortened the text for publication. In the second part of the story, she finds artistic incompleteness, but she also accuses her of superficiality in shaping the psychology of her characters. As a conscious critic of her time, she declaratively places the aesthetic function of artistic work before the mimetic principle: “But for God’s sake, the only criterion of the story is that it is not just supposed to be realistic. It’s supposed to also be a work of art, isn’t it? Otherwise, you could publish a brochure and not an anthology of stories.”

For Hásková (as for Kveder), the feminist idea was also important, and thus the construction of gender in literature. Hásková accuses her of a false, imaginary approach in the construction of gender in this text: on her opinion Kveder often writes about men too generally, her women also speak too stereotypically and they are much generalized figures. She warns her that this “goes against women movement”. It is interesting that she compares her writing to Helena Malířová’s, who also began to write tendentious literature during this period. According to her, it is precisely among writers who belonged to the Social-Democratic Party that the transition to the tendentious writing is perceptible.

However, they experienced a real split in their joint work in 1913 – after the translation and publication of the autobiographical book about Kveder’s children *Vlada a Marja* (*Vlada and Marja*, Kveder 1913), where again Hásková was not introduced as a translator. Hásková not only translated the original, but also corrected its style and she also deleted some fragments and shortened individual passages. (Kveder 1913) Zofka Kveder, as the author, was very affected by this and wrote critically about it in *Besedy Času* (*Words of Time*). (Kveder 1913: 145–147) She even had the text corrected by someone else, which upset Hásková very much. In the letter, Hásková explains to her why she deliberately shortened the work: she wanted to reach a higher artistic level. According to her, the narrator emphasizes herself too much, even though *Vlada a Marja* is primarily a book about children. This stretch also upset the balance in the book. In the letter, Hásková refers to other editors whose authority was also indisputable

⁶⁸ Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, 5. 12. 1911, Zapuščina Zofke Kveder, The archive of Zofka Kveder, fond Ms 1113, D 81, nb. 9. Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

for Kvedrova: to the well-known critic František X. Šalda and the writer Růžena Svobodová, who wanted the text to shorten even more.⁶⁹

In the Croat period in Zagreb (from 1906 to 1926), Kveder experienced two more peaks of prolific writing: at the beginning of the First World War she wrote and published her best work: two novels, *Njeno življenje*, *Her Life* (1914) in Slovene, and *Hanka* (1915, published 1918) in Croatian, which marked a turning point in her search for literary identity. In a letter to Kveder on 7. 12. 1914 Hásková critically assessed *Her Life*, which Kveder published in Slovenia that year and sent it to her as a gift.⁷⁰ To Hásková, the work seems particularly drawn out at first and too long; some passages are, in her view, repetitive. Again, she accuses her of an unfinished narrative strategy, an unformed approach to the rhythm of storytelling, and a lack of deeper psychology in the construction of persons. According to her, Kveder's work is also disturbed by the artificial application of hereditary theory and the related psychologically in-depth construction of the mother.

Hásková criticized her work once more during this time – a collection of Croat short stories *Ratne slike* (*War Pictures*) from 1914. In an undated letter she accuses her of a generalized illumination of certain concepts (for example, homeland) and tendency in writing.⁷¹

After this critical period, Hásková no longer translated books for Kveder, which can be understood as a certain distance from Kvedrova's tendentious writing in twenties in the Zagreb period. The true sharpness of Hásková's critical thought and her attempt to influence the writer because of the lost material cannot really be assessed, especially not in the first period (1906–1911). Not all letters have survived in the War and post-War period; we assume that they may have been lost due to the difficult historical and personal conditions that Kveder was going through. After the First World War Kvedrova was exhausted, the main blow to her mental balance was struck by her daughter's death in 1920.⁷² The incredible idealism and emotional enthusiasm of this “uncut pearl” (the formulation of Svobodová) sank

⁶⁹ Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, 5. 12. 1911, The archive of Zofka Kveder, file Ms 1113, D 81, nb. 9. Literary archive – Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

⁷⁰ The letter of Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, 7. 12. 1914, The archive of Zofka Kveder, file Ms 1113, D 81, nb. 19. Literary archive – Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

⁷¹ Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder, without date, The archive of Zofka Kveder, file Ms 1113, D 81, nb. 18. Literary archive – Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a v Ljubljani.

⁷² Her daughter Vladimira (Vladoša) Jelovšek (1901–1920) died of Spanish flu in Prague, where she stayed as a student.

into disappointment and a great crisis of life in the early twenties. After this crisis, she clung to political idealism in a dramatic form in which she also generalized and moralized a lot. She also accented Yugoslav idea in these literary texts. Her third productive peak was in twenties, when she wrote five romantic historical dramas and a prose collection *Po putevima života* (*On the Paths of Life*), all in Croatian. From her letters to Hásková, we learn that in a few months in 1922 she wrote five sentimental romantic dramas coloured by her believe in Yugoslav idea⁷³, which she absorbed along with the political beliefs of her husband Juraj Demetrović (1885–1945), a Yugoslav politician and also an editor of the *Jugoslovenska njiva* (*Yugoslav Field*) and *Moderna biblioteka* (*Modern Library*). She tried to persuade Hásková to translate her texts from Croatian to Czech and because of that for the first time in letters to her friend she explained in details construction of dramatic conflicts, she shed light on the dramatic heroes and analyzed the dramatic plot in great details. “Propaganda plays” (as she called them) can be understood as a tax on time and its idealism.⁷⁴ These plays did not reach the artistic level of her previous works; they had no success either in her lifetime in Croatia or later. Kveder sensed that romantically sentimental historical dramas are ideological also for her friend and thus less artistically convincing, but she persuaded herself and Hásková that they are good: “I am satisfied with my work. The second part is more propagandistic, but it also has many beautiful places, I know that. In general, it was my duty to do at least something like that for the ‘Unity’ of our tribes.”⁷⁵

Hásková didn’t reply. The dialogue between a writer and a reader/literary critic ended in silence. We suspect that Hásková didn’t accept these dramas because of their open tendency. She apparently did not want to translate them, as they did not seem good enough to her. Zofka Kveder, therefore, wrote two letters to Hásková about the end of their friendship.

In the period of Kveder’s long illness and before her sudden death⁷⁶ they were friends again, even though Kveder did not consult her writing with Hásková anymore. In her last letter, Zdenka Hásková with nostalgia and

⁷³ Andrea Feldman described in her study the phenomenon of Croatian female intellectuals, influenced by the Yugoslav ideology (Feldman 2004: 235–246).

⁷⁴ She described her plots of the plays, all written in her late Zagreb period: *Sukob* (*Fight*), *Unuk Kraljevića Marka* (*The Grandson of King Marko*), *Prelazne generacije* (*Generations in the move*), and *Mrtvi grad Karlobag* (*Dead City Karlobag*).

⁷⁵ Zofka Kveder to Zdenka Hásková, 1. 4. 1922, The archive of Zofka Kveder, letter nb. 39. Literary archive – Arhiv hrvaškega društva pisateljiv HAZU in Zagreb, Croatia.

⁷⁶ She committed suicide.

sadness wrote to Kveder that she was in the Union Café⁷⁷ – a symbolic place where modern Czech authors and artists often met at the beginning of the century: it was also the space of their creative cooperation and friendship in Prague.⁷⁸

In a kaleidoscope of letters, Kveder and Hásková expressed themselves as two intellectuals looking for a style of writing and creating in the mirror of time. Both of them overlapped in private and public spaces, and both tried to maintain a great, timeless friendship on the banks of great historical changes. Hásková as a sophisticated critic (and a translator) helped shape Kveder as a writer, who in her dialogue reflected her writing. She revealed her motifs, sought new narrative possibilities, and criticised her style in terms of critical sharpness and literary recognition. Above all, Hásková criticised Kveder's turn to tendentious writing and ideology. In a letter to Govekar dated 26 February 1927, Hásková underlined that as a critic she wanted to take into account more demanding literary and aesthetic criteria in Kveder's work.⁷⁹

Their correspondence also hides blank spaces with letters that were lost or never written, with a dialogue that continued elsewhere in reality. Before the War and immediately after it they also travelled and met somewhere in the Central Europe: they talked in person, but these discussions weren't recorded in the form of letters. Their friendship was an union of a modern, knowledgeable literary critic, a feminist with a wide range of intellectual spirit, and an open and a sensitive writer, also a feminist, with intense social feelings.

Conclusion

In Prague, at that time the crossroads of Czech and German culture, in the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Kveder absorbed the new role of a woman – an intellectual in modern society. It was a transnational and transcultural experience: Kveder, as a Slovene writer – and later a

⁷⁷ The Union Café was the center of the Czech cultural life at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. A prominent Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek (1893–1923) also visited it.

⁷⁸ Zdenka Hásková to Zofka Kveder (1926, without date), The archive of Zofka Kveder, letter nb. 39. Literary archive – Arhiv hrvaškega društva pisateljev HAZU in Zagreb, Croatia.

⁷⁹ Letter of Hásková to Govekar, 28. 2. 1927, in: Pánek 1976: 67.

Croatian writer – accepted the role of being a mediator between different cultures. She was a member of different national communities and she had close contacts with Czech women writers. Perhaps even more important than their literature was, for her, the existence of the new role model of a conscious, unconventional, self-confident female intellectual, a writer, journalist, and an editor. The influence was on both sides: Zofka Kveder inspired the community of the Czech women writers with her incredible energy and idealism. However, after moving to Zagreb, she maintained a real connection with her translator and critic, Hásková.

As is evident, female authors from the Prague were connected to each other by personal sympathies as well as gender solidarity. The phenomenon of Zofka Kveder was part of the intellectual feminism at the beginning of the 20th century in Prague and the Czech lands. Her writer's and also gender identity was constructed in Prague. She was fluently presented in Slovene and Croatian modernism, she has connection also to Czech modernism and she followed the ideas from Austrian modernism. As a writer she moved from and to cultural centers as Ljubljana, Trieste, Prague, Vienna and Zagreb. She was influenced by several European writers from her time: Ivan Cankar, Vladimir Jelovšek, Stanisław Przysbyszewski and the others. She read Slovene authors as well (for example realistic authors Josip Jurčič and Janko Kersnik and Pavlina Pajk).

Katja Mihurko Poniž in her study underlines Kveder's connection to German writers: Franziska zu Reventlow (1871–1918), Elsa Kotányi (1876–1943) and Elsa Asenijeff (1867–1941). Franziska zu Reventlow depicted the place of the women in the middle-class society, their unhappy life and their revolt. Elsa Kotányi in her prose described the tension between the body and the soul in the story *Venus am Kreuz* (*Venera on the Cross*, 1899) and Elsa Asenijeff in the novel *Tagebuchblätter einer Emancipierten* (1901) depicted the story of an emancipated woman. (Mihurko Poniž 2003: 42, 43)

In 1906, Kveder moved with her family in Zagreb, where she lived until her untimely death. She was well accepted in the Croatian culture.⁸⁰ (See also Tucovič 2006: 83–96) However, the most important influences for her writing were Czech ones. From that point of view all her main influences from her Prague period were Czech women writers, feminists and journalists. Czech women writers exercised an influence upon her writing and

⁸⁰ Following the First World War, she became the first lady of Croatia, due to her husband, a Yugoslav politician, Juraj Demetrović. Her work and political activities were met with some controversial and hostile reactions.

had a great ascendancy over her public role. One of the main influences on her work was an impressionist writer Růžena Svobodová. Kveder was also inspired by female authors from her generation (Zdenka Hásková, Helena Maliřová and Marie Majerová). The main translator and also critic of her work was Zdenka Hásková. At the beginning of the 20th century Kveder in Prague formed a literary ‘Czech communication web’, which lasted and it didn’t change until the First World War.

On the other side she – as a distinguished critic and a skillful writer – became a great inspiration for the others. In the Prague published journal *Domači prijatelj* (*Home Friend*, which she edited from 1904–1914) she encouraged young Slovene writers of that time such as Prežihov Voranc and France Bevk. Coincidentally she also became a big influence for other Central European writers who got to know her. The story of Kveder as a great woman of letters hid to the literary work of the other, she became “a mythical person” for the other women writers (for example for the Serbian Julka Chlapec-Djordjević in her novel *Jedno dopisivanje*, 1932).

Between Prague and Vienna: Zofka Kveder and Her Literary Connections with the Czech Poet Josef Svatopluk Machar⁸¹

At the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Prague was a vibrant cultural metropolis of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a multicultural city that was the main subject of the Czech nation. In Prague's political life, there was the opposition between the Czechs and the Germans. In the cultural sphere, though, the different identities of the city were not separated, but rather they openly communicated with one another without many problems. (Bernard 2008: 15) As most Czechs were bilingual, there was no language barrier separating them from the Germans. According to Lehár et al, at the beginning of the 20th century, the symbolist and decadent movements were successfully (and literarily) incorporated into Czech life. Even so, by then these movements had already reached their peak. (Lehár, Stich, Janáčková, Holý 1998) This was also the period of the Czech "moderna", which broke down immediately after their manifesto was published in 1895 in the journal *Rozhledy* (*Views*), a prominent platform of the ascending literary generation. The author of the first draft, the poet Josef Svatopluk Machar, formulated this manifesto in connection with the European modernist literary movement and drawing inspiration from Hermann Bahr (1863–1934). Important additions, though, were made by future leading literary critic František Xaver Šalda (1867–1937). Of the twelve signatories, some were literary critics and writers (F. X. Šalda, F. V. Krejčí (1867–1941), J. S. Machar (1864–1942), A. Sova (1864–1928) and O. Březina (1868–1929)). It was very soon understood to be the most important attempt towards an aesthetic and civic synthesis of the "1890s generation". It was also regarded as one of the milestones of modern Czech culture, determining, in a sense, the cultural, as well as political, agenda of the first decades of the 20th century. As such, it remains a significant point of reference in Czech literary and social history to this day. For them, the main principle in artistic creation was that of "individualism", stressing the freedom of expression and personal

⁸¹ First version in Slovene. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 109–122)

opinion as the only true precondition for the creation of genuine art, as well as the role of criticism. (See also Papoušek et al. 1910)

Zofka Kveder (1878–1926), the first Slovene professional female writer, was a journalist, editor, and translator, as well as one of the first Slovene feminists. In her twenties, she moved from Slovenia to Prague (where she lived from 1900–1906), which during that period was a hub of European modernism and a city of the European avant-garde, as Michel Bernard has emphasized. (Bernard 2008) During this period, she became a cultural mediator, introducing Czech culture to Slovenia and introducing Slovene authors to the German and Czech cultures in Prague. She was a strong-willed, self-educated writer, full of charisma and personal energy, and willing to be part of the new emerging movements. She was renowned for her cultural hybridity: she changed her identity and frequently changed language codes. She belonged to the phenomenon of the cosmopolitan “Habsburg writers”.

During her time in Prague, Zofka Kveder established a literary network. Her first contacts were with the Slovene “moderna” movement. As we found out in the previous chapter, the most important contacts for her were Czech women writers and journalists. She also had contacts with the Croat “moderna” through her partner – and later husband – Vladimir Jelovšek, who introduced the decadent movement to the Croat “moderna.” (Švabić 2008: 117–137) She published in the Croat newspaper *Nova nada* (*New Hope*), where she was also an editor. At the beginning of the 20th century, Kveder, as a Slovene and Central European writer, also established cultural and literary contacts between Vienna and Prague – between the centre of the Monarchy and the “Slavic periphery,” between West and East Central Europe.⁸² During her Prague period, she established contacts with two writers in Vienna: Ivan Cankar, the main Slovene writer of that time and the main influence on the other authors of Slovene “moderna”; and Josef Svatoopluk Machar, the central power in Czech “moderna” and modernism, the man who introduced the Czech “moderna” into Austrian culture. (Kostrbová 2011) Kveder was the one who initiated both of these contacts. The beginning was her reading of their work: both of them wrote critically about the position of women in bourgeois society. (See also Jensterle Doležal 2014: 100–122)

⁸² Vienna was a political, social, and cultural centre of the Monarchy. For Kveder, it was also a stop in her travels back to the south: to Ljubljana (Slovenia) or to Zagreb (Croatia). She could stop there for one or two days on her way home.

Contemporary Slovene critics denied the artistic merit of her first work, *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*). Among the few critics to defend her was the Slovene writer Ivan Cankar (1876–1918). He lived in Vienna from 1899–1909. In Prague, she translated the literary work of the great Slovene author of modernism from Slovene to German. These translations were the first ones of his work into German.⁸³ She also introduced his work to German and Jewish society in Prague, in the newspaper *Politik*, which was at that time one of the most important organs for both the German and the Czech communities.⁸⁴ Her translations were one of the reasons why later on, Ivan Cankar's work was so well accepted into Czech society. (Berkopec 1969a, b: 247–277; 365–390, the same 1970: 299–315; the same 1971: 474–478; Moravec 1963) Kveder also helped his play *Za narodov blagor* (*For the Good of the Nation*, 1900, 1901) to be staged at the Pištěk's People's Theatre in 1905. She arranged for her friend Zdenka Hásková to translate the play. She visited him several times, first in Vienna and then in Ljubljana. From her letters, we know that she visited him for the first time in the summer of 1902 in Vienna.⁸⁵

Josef Svatopluk Machar (1864–1942), one of the great influences on Czech modernism, was a bank accountant in Vienna from 1889 to 1918, but nevertheless he was also one of the leading figures of the Czech “Moderna”. He introduced Czech literature and poetry into Hermann Bahr's Austrian newspaper of “Young Vienna”, *Die Zeit* (*Time*). Machar had great success with his second book of poetry, *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*, 1891–1894),⁸⁶ which highlighted the passive and sad position

⁸³ Even though Cankar lived for some years in Vienna – in the centre of the Habsburg Empire – his work during his lifetime was not really accepted in German and Austrian culture. (See Koestler 2006: 169–176)

⁸⁴ The first one was: *O člověku, ki je izgubil prepričanje* (*About the Man Who lost His Conviction*). (Ivan Cankar 1900: 1–4) From 1900 to 1903, she translated twelve short stories from his collection, *Vinjete* (*Vignettes*, 1899), his first volume of prose. (See Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 181). From September to December 1903, she published the German translation of Cankar's best-known novel, *Na klancu* (*Am Steilweg*, *On the Hill*) in *Politik*. Later she wanted to publish it as a book. (Koestler 2006: 171–175)

⁸⁵ A great correspondence started between them. We do not know if all the letters have been preserved. Nevertheless, we do know that Cankar wrote twenty letters to Kveder between March 1900 and February 1914, while Kveder wrote eleven letters to him between April 1900 and March 1914. See their letters in Cankar 1972: 133–159.

⁸⁶ This very successful poetry anthology was published in 1894 in Prague by the publishing house Šimáček, and between then and 1939 there were nineteen reprints. (See Lehár, Stich, Janáčková, Holý 1998: 403–408)

of women in a patriarchal society of that time. In his next book of poetry, *Magdalena* (1894), Machar, in his sceptical realistic style, writes about the fate of the prostitute Lucy, who cannot be saved in a hypocritical bourgeois society. Czech literary historian Libuše Heczková has argued that Machar played a crucial role in the emancipation of intellectual women in Czech society, as his writing sought to emancipate woman as an erotic object and treated her instead as a free individual. (Heczková 2009: 127)

Zofka Kveder came to Machar's work through Vladimír Jelovšek, a successful Croat poet in his own right with a proclaimed individualistic style, which was well known in Croat and Czech literary society at the turn of the 20th century. Kveder read his Czech literary work, the volume of poetry, *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*) in 1899 in Trieste. Jelovšek translated Machar's literary work for her: he was at that time a great reader and follower of Machar's works. Kveder liked his poetry because of its themes and motifs, particularly his writing about women. In 1899, Jelovšek, deeply inspired by Machar's work,⁸⁷ introduced it to the young female writer. Machar's poetry was Kveder's first experience reading Czech literature.⁸⁸

Zofka Kveder met Josef Machar on two occasions. She was initially introduced to him by Ciril Dušek, the editor of the newspaper *Čas*, in Prague in 1903. Subsequently, she visited him in Vienna with Ivan Cankar. She wrote about those visits in the Czech newspaper *Čas* (*Time*) on 24 February 1904, in an article entitled *Troje setkání s Macharem* (Three Meetings with Machar).⁸⁹ (Kveder 1904: 2) She expressed her admiration for his work and personality, about Machar (about "that fire without flames"), along with his lifestyle in Vienna. In 1905, Machar enthusiastically defended her place in Czech society and her contribution to Czech culture. (Machar 1905: 44–45) After these meetings, Kveder and Machar stayed in contact and he sent

⁸⁷ See the letter from V. Jelovšek to J. S. Machar, 4. 12. 1900. 28/B/6. Literary archive of J. S. Machar 59/48. Literary Archive – Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁸ "*Zde by měly kvést růže*, byla první česká kniha, kterou jsem četla, Machar první český básník, kterého jsem poznala. Vážím si oné knihy a miluji jí také pro té vzpomínky, které jsou mi tak drahé i pro její obsah, jehož nikdy nečtu bez hlubokého pohnutí." ("*Here the Roses Must Blossom* was the first Czech book I read, and Machar the first Czech poet whom I got to know. I appreciate this book and I like it so much, because of the memories, which are so dear to me and also because of the content of the book. When I read it, I am always deeply touched." [Kveder 1904: 1]).

⁸⁹ The last meeting with Machar was just imaginary.

her copies of his books. There are two letters from Kveder to Machar in the Czech Literary Archive.⁹⁰

At the start of her artistic career, Zofka Kveder was in Prague seeking out models of new literary paradigms, ideas, and narrative possibilities. We may consider the possible impact of Machar's *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*) on her short story collection *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*). Machar's anthology (comprising 15 poems) was dedicated to various important women in the Czech bourgeois society of the era, and the poems were subtitled as "lyrical dramas". These lyrical depictions portray the various, mostly tragic, fates of women in bourgeois high society. The narrator identifies himself with the different female figures of that special *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere.

Machar portrays contemporary female society as a victim of the past, interpreting their disappointment because of the unfulfilled lives. The sentimental and melancholic atmosphere of the lyrical narratives is characteristic of the *fin-de-siècle* period, incorporating motifs of dance music (Strauss's waltz) and aristocratic locations, strong perfumes, reflections of dancing couples and dreamy figures in mirrors, flowers in the women's hands, and letters of assurance. Behind the splendour of wealth, the narrator exposes the concept of wasted time for the women, who are trapped in unhappy marriages.

Kveder's collection of short prose *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*) shares many motifs and themes with Machar's *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*). Her collection consists of 28 impressionistic, untitled stories depicting the tragic lives and destinies of women in a patriarchal society. These narratives are interspersed with poems in free verse. Ultimately, the women in the stories are left with no meaningful prospects in such a culture, and they become mothers who do not wish to be mothers or are trapped in loveless marriages. The main distinction between Kveder and Machar's works is that Kveder's primary themes are seen through a different social lense, as she writes about women of lower social standing, and her stories deal with brutal, realistic occurrences among women who are proletarians, workers, craftswomen, and farmers from small cities and villages. The style of her prose is also more realistic than Machar's, with naturalistic presentations of love and relationships.

⁹⁰ Two letters from Z. Kveder to J. S. Machar, 21. 1. 1905 and 2. 5. 1919, I, 20/9; 28/B/6, The archive of J. S. Machar 59/48. Literary archive – Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP), Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.

The Serbian feminist writer and philosopher, Julka Chlapec-Djordjević, who lived in Prague in the 1920s and 1930s, suggested in 1935 that Kveder's play *Strti* (*Crushed*)⁹¹ which was later republished in a theatre anthology *Ljubezen* (*Love*), was influenced by Machar's poem "List" (Letter) from the poetry anthology *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*). (Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 179) Božena Orožen also advanced this notion in 1978. (Orožen 1978: 232) Machar's poem depicts a woman writing a sentimental farewell letter to her husband, as she is leaving him, no longer wanting to be his slave. The essential problem of their marriage is the disparity between the sensual and the spiritual, the longings of the "female soul" crushed by the aggressive husband's behaviour. The brutality of the sexual act, from their very first lovemaking, made their love morally tainted and tragic for her.

In Kveder's one-act play, *Strti* (*Crushed*), the main character Ana was formerly subordinate to a man, and had endured a brutal and sadistic experience of sensual and brutally carnal love with her husband. For her, as it was for Machar's unnamed heroine in "List", a sexual act was a "fall into the mud." The dialogue between the two characters, laden with tensions and psychological conflict based on past events, concludes in reconciliation. Unlike the woman in Machar's poem "List", the woman in Kveder's play returns to her husband, as she is ill and unable to cope with her loneliness.

In 1911, Kveder wrote a short story (with the characteristics of feuilleton and essay), *Zde by měly kvést růže* (*Here the Roses Must Blossom*), and published it several times only in Czech. The work is a homage to Machar and his above-mentioned poetry anthology of the same title. It is believed that the translation from Slovene was done by Zdenka Hásková. The feuilleton was printed six times in regional Czech newspapers (three times in 1911 and three in 1917). (Kveder 1911: 2–3, Kveder 1911b: 1–2, Kveder 1911c: 5–6, Kveder 1917a: 1–2, Kveder 1917b: 1–2, Kveder 1917c: 2–4)

In the narrative structure, she follows Machar's themes and focuses on the lives of women, although her feminist edge and sharpness are not as evident. Her two female characters sacrifice their lives for the benefit of their respective husbands, who are both important men – one a translator, the other a writer. The narrator portrays these women as victims of the accepted status quo and explores the situation in the essay that accompanies

⁹¹ The play was first published in Trieste in the Slovene feminist newspaper *Slovenka* (Kveder 1901: 120–124). It was translated immediately into Czech. (Kveder 1902: 163–166)

the short story. The first-person narrator also expresses sympathy for women from the lower, proletarian classes due to their difficult lives. The conclusion of the story conveys a strong ideological, socialist sentiment, which is consistent with her political orientation in the latter half of her writing career.

The Shift to Modernity: Czech Motifs in the Literature of Zofka Kveder⁹²

In the afternoon, we visited the inn called the “Small Well”. A small inn, high up under the wall of the royal castle. Artists hang out here, because the view of Prague from the little garden is magical. The red mountains of the rooftops of the Mala Strana palaces glow in the air, the Vltava glitters silvery, and the colourful city with a hundred towers spreads out. [...] You stand thoughtfully there, high above the city, and you are stunned by the beauty, full of romantic dreams.⁹³

The Slovene and Croat writer Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) was a Central European intellectual whose life was balanced between different cultures. She began to write in the context of the transformation of Central European culture, of which Slovenia was a part until the end of the First World War. Kveder belonged to the generation of young Slovene cosmopolitan writers who broke through in the *fin-de-siècle* period in Slovene society, which at that time was on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They opened their literature to European literature and thought. They were called the “moderna” circle, and the most prominent author of them was Ivan Cankar (1876–1918). Kveder was also part of the Slovene “moderna” circle and part of the “Habsburg myth”—half of her professional life she lived in Prague and the other half in Zagreb. The topics of my literary analyse are Czech motifs and the representation of Prague in her literary work. (See also Orožen 1978: 220–232; Chlapec Djordjević 1935: 176–185; Mihurko Poniž 2014b: 63–76; Kavčič 2014: 43–53)

⁹² First version in English in Jensterle Doležal 2021: 63–84.

⁹³ “Popoldne smo hodili k Malemu studentu. Mala gostilna, visoko gori pod zidom kraljevega gradu. Umetniki se shajajo tu, zakaj pogled iz malega vrtiča na Prago je čaroben. Rdeče gore streh malostranskih plač, srebrno se blešči Vltava in z njo se razgrinja bogato mesto s stoterimi stolpovi. [...] Zamišljeno stojiš gori visoko and mestom, ves omamljen od lepote, poln romantičnih sanj.” (Kveder 1906: 70–71)

I.

Already in her early career Kveder moved between different cities in Austro-Hungary and experienced various cultures.⁹⁴ In her writing, she respected realistic tradition. Her literary work was from the first beginning very autobiographical and showed the great impact of different cultures. She was a language polyglot and a typical “Habsburg intellectual” for all of her life, and she switched between languages as often she changed her cultural identities. She began her career in Slovene. In her Prague period she wrote some texts in German, and later she learned Czech. Half of her literary work is in Croatian and she also translated from other languages into Slovene and German. Because of her poor social background, she didn’t receive a formal education, but nevertheless she was notably self-educated.

In March 1900, she moved to Prague, where she lived from 1900 to 1906 before moving to Zagreb. At the beginning of the 20th century, Prague was one of the liveliest cultural cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with a rich cultural life and many intercultural connections – like the metropolitan city of Vienna, at the turn of the century becoming a modern city with a prosperous future. Prague was also the centre of Czech avant-garde, as M. Bernard has emphasized in his book on the city of Prague as the centre of European avantgarde. (Bernard 2010) It was a place where at the beginning of the 20th century, the Czech and German communities were, despite political conflicts, in a cultural space that communicated with each other. At the turn of the 20th century, in Czech culture also existed a strong tradition of Slovene-Czech relations. (Urbančič 1995: 21–42) “Golden Prague” was also the popular place for Slavic communities. Czech writer Josef Svatopluk Machar wrote in one article that the beginning of 20th century Prague was a Mecca for all Slavs. (Machar 1905: 44–45) A lot of Slovenes at that time also studied in Prague. Kveder became passionately involved in Czech cultural life also because of the tradition of Slovene-Czech connections inherited from the nineteenth century. The literary work of the Czech

⁹⁴ In 1897, Kveder found work in Ljubljana. In 1899, she moved to Trieste and worked at the magazine newspaper *Slovenka*, where first of the Kveder’s short stories were published. In Trieste, the feminist Kveder became part of that circle of young Slovene female writers of prose and poetry. After Trieste, Kveder went to Switzerland – to Zurich and then to Bern, where she enrolled in the university but was unable to support herself financially.

writers was known to Slovene culture at the end of 19th century: the main Slovene newspaper, *Ljubljanski zvon*, published modern Czech literature, as well as articles about Czech “moderna”. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 53–67)

During her lifetime, Zofka Kveder published three novels, several autobiographical short stories (in different collections) and dramas. She wrote about women from different strata of society. Her reception in Slovene culture was in the beginning very negative, even though that was true for all authors of Slovene “moderna”. Slovenia was at that time a small, semi-urban catholic society with culturally backward mentality. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 151–167)

The year 1900 was symbolical and crucial also for her new life. From the beginning of her residence in the big metropolis,⁹⁵ Kveder was eager to involve herself in the Prague cultural life of the beginning of the 20th century and to be part of Czech culture.⁹⁶ She was working very hard to become a professional writer, an editor, and a journalist. Already in June 1900 she self-published her literary debut: the book *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*) – written in Slovene, the anthology of short stories about the tragic condition of women in the patriarchal society.⁹⁷

During her residence in Prague, Kveder explored the lively and rich atmosphere of the city and played a role in its cultural life in cafes (Union, Slavia) and student clubs (Slavia⁹⁸). She attended the literary salons of Marie Wodwářková-Neureutterová (1864–1915),⁹⁹ who in that period organised

⁹⁵ Her first address was Palackého třída 53/III, Vinohrady.

⁹⁶ In Prague, Kveder often moved. She lived in six different addresses in Prague, three of them in the Vinohrady district. Her daughter Vladimira was born in Prague in 1901. Kveder wanted to stay independent and most of her time was self-supportive and didn't live with her partner Vladimír Jelovšek. From her letters we could assume that the most beautiful places in Prague for her were Mala Strana and Hradčany district.

⁹⁷ Three short stories from this collection were published by the Viennese magazine *Documente der Frauen* (*Documents of Women*).

⁹⁸ It was also the club for young Czech writers: Viktor Dyk (1877–1931), František Skácel (1873–1944) and Zdenka Hásková (1978–1948). Hásková was a president of the student's club and Kveder's future translator. South Slavic students and emigrants also attended the club. (See Kavčič 2014: 45)

⁹⁹ From her correspondence, we can presume that Kveder also lived in the house of Neureutterová for a while (in the street of Karolina Světlá, nb. 21). (Letter to Fran Zbašnik, 10. 3. 1903, Literarna zapuščina Zofke Kveder, The archive of Zofka Kveder, fond Ms 1113. Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive in Ljubljana, Slovenia.)

the salon for South Slavic intellectuals, artists, and students. Kveder also attended the celebrated literary salon of Růžena Svobodová. Her real success in Czech culture came after 1906 – after her move to Zagreb. Her work was extensively published in Czech literary sources until the First World War, which was also partly the result of the existence of a common book market across the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Her Czech reception also implied political dimensions: her work was extensively published in the journals and publishing houses of Czech Social Democrats. (Jensterle Doležal 2016: 272) In 1903–1904, the suburban Prague theatre Urania staged her play *Ljubezen* (*Love*).

There were specific literary relationships between the feminist and writer Zofka Kveder and Czech women writers and intellectuals. The Czech women writer's movement was at that time much more developed than in Slovenia. In that period, the third generation of Czech women writers and critics had already become active in Czech public life. (Heczková 2009: 165–231) They related to the rise of national idea. According to Robert B. Pynsent, in the Bohemian Lands at the *fin de siècle* period, Czech culture had ceased trying to catch up with Western Europe. Mass political parties were growing, and the three great ideologies of the last two centuries were together informing the Czech political scene. Nationalism or critical patriotism was firmly established; Social Democracy was increasing in popularity; and the third ideology, feminism, had begun to take up almost as much space in intellectual journals as discussions of the “social question”. (Pynsent 1996: 83) Each and every one of these female intellectuals was part of Kveder's “communication web”, and these connections were crucial to the constructing of her professional writer's self-consciousness and gender identity. Kveder published most of her stories and essays in women's newspaper and was especially connected to the Czech editors of these newspapers. Kveder's relations with Zdenka Hásková (1878–1946) were especially fruitful. (Jensterle Doležal 2008: 241–244, Jensterle Doležal 2014: 134–147). As a poet and writer, as well as Kveder's translator Hásková had a special intellectual taste for modern literature and remained Kveder's best friend, as well as her main literary critic, throughout her life. Mostly because of her translations, Kveder experienced great reception in Czech culture before the First World War: until the year 1910, Kveder published seven books in the Czech market which were greatly successful. Hásková also introduced Kveder to the literary students' club Slavia and initiated relationships with her friends – other Czech women writers. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 122–123, Jensterle Doležal 2016: 273–279)

After 1906, Kveder lived in Zagreb,¹⁰⁰ where she began to write texts in the Croatian language. The epistolary war novel *Hanka* (1915, 1918) marked the peak of her career in the Croatian language. It was a text of an experienced writer (she wrote the novel *Njeno življenje (Her life)* – her most successful Slovene novel just one year prior to that). From the beginning of the First World War, her style was coming close to expressionism (for example in the novel *Hanka*).

Her style of writing shifts from realistic into modern, impressionistic, and sometimes also decadent.

II.

The story of literary approaches to urban facts or symbols is mainly one of attraction and repulsion, integration and evasion. [...] the literary city, more often than not, is both Heaven and Hell, good and evil, real and imaginary. (Hulin 1979: 9)

We focus in our study on Kveder's writing using Czech motifs and the representation of Prague in her literary work. Her work was from the beginning very autobiographical. In her first Prague period of writing, she often retrospectively wrote about the hard provincial life of farmers and workers in Loški Potok – in the Slovene countryside and the place of her origin. She described her unhappy childhood and youth in a long story *Moja prijateljica (My Friend)*, 1901). In a long story *Studentke (Female Students)*, 1900) she depicts also her turbulent student life in Switzerland. In the year 1900, in Prague, she published her literary debut *Misterij žene (The Mystery of a Woman)*, one of the artistically best profiled work in her career, in which she describes the life stories of women from different social spheres in Trieste. According to Katja Mihurko Poniž she also gendered the capitals: "In her writing, Kveder transgressed traditional boundaries between the male and the female spaces, as well as between urban and rural/local spaces. Using the capitals for the setting of her stories, Kveder imbued her texts with a modern representation of womanhood. Her female characters explore the city." (Mihurko Poniž 2014b: 2)

In Prague, Zofka Kveder absorbed the productive atmosphere of Czech culture, greatly influenced by such leading figures as Tomáš Gearique

¹⁰⁰ In Zagreb she became the editor of a supplement to the daily newspaper *Agramer Tagblatt (Zagreb's Daily Newspaper)* called *Frauenzeitung (Women's Newspaper)*.

Masaryk,¹⁰¹ and published articles, translations, essays, and travelogues in Czech newspapers. The Prague period was her most productive period: She constructed a network of literary connections with different national literary circles present in Prague. She was a cultural mediator: she wrote about important Czech painters and sculptors' exhibitions and theatre life for Slovene and Croat newspapers and vice versa: she presented Slovene literary life and culture in Czech newspapers and magazines. In that period Kveder began to write about Prague.

In the beginning we must underline of several representations of Prague in the Czech and German-Jewish Prague literature. In 19th century we find pictures of Prague in Czech literature from K. H. Macha to Jan Neruda. (See also Hrbata 2005: 315–510) In the short stories of Neruda, we gain an accurate representation of the everyday life of people living in the district of Prague during the mid-19th century. His characters are always described in meticulous detail, and the exact topography of Malá Strana, where the stories take place, is also of great importance.

Very impressive is the imaginary topography of Prague in the work of German-Jewish authors from the beginning of the 20th century. The most impressive are the pictures of mystical Prague presented in the Gustav Meyrink's novel¹⁰² *The Golem* (original German title: *Der Golem*, 1915), which endured the scenery of the mystical Prague and the monster Golem as a physical manifestation of the ghetto's inhabitants' collective psyche. We could also follow the topography of the gloom mystery, lethargy and hidden fascination of the city on the Vltava in the prose of Franz Kafka (1883–1924).

Kveder was deeply impressed by the city from her first beginning. She published two travelogues about Prague. (Kveder 1904, 1906) In them, she introduced the Slovene public to the historical geography and social topography of a modern city. In an imaginary travel through its main places, she depicts picturesque scenes from the Prague of that period with all of its symbolical dimensions and cultural codes. The most important was her reportage "Zlata Praga" ("Golden Prague") published in the magazine *Domači prijatelj* in 1906 – with 50 pages of full text on Prague. (Kveder 1906: 15–18; 39–43; 70–74; 96–101; 121–124, 146–150; 181–184; 201–204)

¹⁰¹ Masaryk sympathised with the new role of women in Czech society and supported female intellectuals (see Heczková 2009: 201–203).

¹⁰² Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932).

Her view of the city is panoramic. She describes the new metropolis in the beginning of the 20th century as a modern city, which (like other big European cities – and Prague was also an important city of the Habsburg Monarchy) experienced a great architectonic boom. On one side, she pictures in details an important bourgeois city – the pride of the Czech nation – with all the imposing palaces, new buildings, theatres, wide streets, new roads and beautiful gardens:

When we step from the black tower to the open world, there the city of Prague extends before us in all her beautiful wholeness. Next to us we can see the gardens of Malá Strana, and palaces, churches, towers. You get the open view into all the sides and your heart beats with the silent passion.¹⁰³

Prague, for her, is the city of the Czech nation. She depicts Czech history in the symbolical geography of the city and emphasizes it for Slovene readers. In accenting Czech history, she is very romantic and patriotic, but on the other side her picture of the modern city, built on the memories of the past, is very modern, presented with picturesque scenes, turbulent with street life. The moments of urban life are spaces of the intense perception of the city: of seeing and being seen, of looking around and hurrying on. The dialogue between the modern city and the modern subject defines the urban definition of proximity and distance of the young voyager – the narrator. The narrator puts special emphasis on the fragments of the city, which becomes half real – half a literary construct. Prague is in her eyes a turbulent multicultural modern city, full of colours and movements, with clear borders between centre and periphery: the city pulsates in the fast rhythm of modernity.

On the other side, the urban squares in her view mean also places of social differentiation and social diversity: therefore, the narrator with the social empathy introduces also the scenes of social discrimination and poverty. She mentions completely new surroundings and places occupied by the new social classes as was the proletariat in the suburbs (Žižkov). In her representation of modern Prague, she doesn't forget to underline the dark side of the modern city: growing social and national problems. She depicts the city with many national tensions (the main one being between the Czech and German nations) and unsolved social questions of the poor.

¹⁰³ “Ko stopimo izpod črnega stolpa na odprt svet, razprostira se Praga pred nami v krasni svoji celoti. Pod teboj vrtovi Male Strane, pa palace, cerkve, stolpovi. Na vse strani imaš odprt pogled in srce ti zatrepče v nemem navdušenju.” (Kveder 2018: 425)

She is also conscious of Jewish society, which was at that period especially important and characteristic for the Czech metropolis.¹⁰⁴

III.

Zofka Kveder constructed her literary and feminist identity in Prague. She lived in Prague for six years – from 1900 to 1906 – but in the first beginning we don't find Czech topics in her work so often as we would expect, considering how often she wrote about what a strong impression “golden Prague” had made on her. (Orožen 1978: 229–232; Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 176–185)

In her Prague period, she wrote mostly collections of short stories and sketches. Most often she retrospectively depicted the life of Slovene villagers, farmers and workers as she knew it from her youth or she described her life in Trieste. However, her Prague period was also the time when she began to write more about the city, as her writing ascends to modernity and subjectivity. The prototype of the modern metropolis with all its social and cultural varieties of life became – Prague. In that period, her “realistic attitudes” toward art were shaken by Decadence and Impressionism.

Prague is the place for romantic feelings for the Croat students in the short story *Ivan in Ljubo* (*Ivan and Ljubo, Edinost*, 1899), written at the beginning of her career, before moving to Prague.¹⁰⁵ The story has a simple, classical plot told from two gender perspectives: male and female. Ivan escapes from tragical love with Julija from Zagreb to Prague and there he meets his friend Ljubo. His meeting takes place in Slavia – a celebrated Prague coffee house for students and artists. On the other side, the story of Ljubo's ex-girl Julija presents the deeper social and patriarchal problem of their separation: she left him because she had to temporally accept marriage for money to save her father's future. At the end, they solve all the obstacles and they reunite once more for their bright and happy future. More interesting than the simple, this naïve romantic story of lost-and-found love is the atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Prague, with scenes in the coffee houses very similar to Viennese ones. The narrator shows the critical view of the

¹⁰⁴ At that time, the demolition and sanitation of the old Jewish part in Prague began.

¹⁰⁵ She was already connected to Prague through her partner, Croat poet Vladimir Jelovšek, who studied medicine there.

Croatian decadent movement in Prague:¹⁰⁶ “There, some old acquaintances sit around the round table. They were talking about mystics and satanism in the modern poetry. The room was as overly smoked as a chimney, when the fire is lit in the fireplace [...] Franjo asked them, if they really want to be bored to extinction.”¹⁰⁷

In her short prose (and also in plays of that period) we could find new social motives of prearranged marriages, which she describes with a lot of compassion and empathy for the woman – and with feminist sharpness (*Odlomek iz dnevnika* [*Fragment from the Diary*], *Edinost*, 1901).

A very subversive narrative is the story of a young woman who decides to leave her husband and escapes into the wide world. (*Onkraj morja* [*On the other Side of the Sea*], 1902) Her feminist ideas were explicitly presented also in her other work, sometimes in the essayist discourse. Very autobiographical is the short story *Auf der Klinik* (*On the Clinics*, *Die Zeit*, 1906), first written and published in German. The narrator describes one of the Czech maternity wards and so for the first time she moves in her description from the open space to the narrowed rooms and it is also a path from hope to despair and disaster. The story from the hospital is autobiographical – at one time, Kveder wanted to change profession and become a midwife. In the dark narrative we follow the story of seven unmarried pregnant women who don't want to have their babies. The hopeless situation with brief moments of their lives ends in final tragedies; one angry and depressed female teacher suffocates her baby. (See also Orožen 1978: 250)

Very characteristic for Kveder's new imagination and sensibility is the portrait of a young decadent women as part of the metropolitan life in the short story *Ena iz množice* (*A Woman from the Crowd*, *Edinost*, 1901) The main heroine is presented as a female dandy who feels nauseated and bored by life, who flirts with a man and later gets ill with tuberculosis. As a decadent, estheticized personality, she accepts her dying as a social event and she wants to arrange it as an artistical act. In the perspective of narration, we could find a slight irony of the author which shows distance to

¹⁰⁶ Because of political reasons, half of the Croatian “moderna” worked and lived in Prague; the other half was active in Vienna. When Vladimir Jelovšek lived in Prague, he introduced decadence to Croat culture.

¹⁰⁷ “Tam je sedelo nekoliko znancev ob okrogli mizi. Pogovarjali so se o misticizmu in satanizmu v modernem pesništvu. Soba je bila zakajena kot dimnik, kadar gori na ognjiščih [...] Franjo je vprašal, ali nameravajo gospodje še dolgo krasti Bohu čas.” (Kveder 2010: 331)

that time very popular decadent movement and to the imagined stereotype of the typical decadent.

Typical motifs from the rich cultural Prague life are the varied pictures of the artists of different nationalities and social classes in her literary work of that time.¹⁰⁸ She depicts a vivid life of the “arts and literary salons” in the short story *Najlepše priznanje* (*Best Confession, Na novih poteh*, 1902). The narrative is situated in the multicultural Prague of that time. The Russian singer is presented as a “flâneuse”, traveling through the different parts of Prague. The narrator again describes Prague as a romantic place with historical codes. Concrete topography of Prague is focused into garden Obora, where the Russian singer meets her Czech admirer. In the short story *Črtice* (*Sketches*, 1904) the narrator from Prague, in the manner of an essayist, discusses the poor position of a Slovene painter who must work in a foreign land, because he is not accepted in his homeland.¹⁰⁹

Very interesting is also the long novel about the Czech painter Novak (*Slikar Novak, Slovan*, 1905)¹¹⁰. In the classical narrative, the narrator presents the painter who has lost his inspiration and his artistic power and therefore he must rethink a sense of his existence. In the first part of the novel he reflects on his loss of power and his *raison d'être* in the vivid, colourful place of a Czech pub full of young artists. In the second part of the novel, his thoughts about art and his position are interwoven with the images of Prague in his “flânerie” with his pupil through the night scenery of Hradčany and Malá Strana. The beauty of Hradčany with its historical codes and eternal truth of symbols opposes the concrete moments and thoughts of the doubtful and depressive painter.

The late short story *Slučaj* (*Coincidence*, 1910) is based on memories from Prague life (Kveder already lived in Zagreb), where she had many connections with different types of artists. The main hero is a Czech artist from Prague’s artistic society – a young, talented violinist whose hand was hurt so badly by a drunken officer that after that he was not able to play

¹⁰⁸ She wrote about being the part of the Prague artistic society in her correspondence: “Pestra družba nas je bila. Par literatov, nekaj glasbenikov, igralec, dve igralki, dva vseučilišna docenta, nekaj kiparjev [...] Vsi smo živeli, kot da živimo samo za te večere.” (“We were a varied society. A couple of writers, a few musicians, an actor, two actresses, two university associate professors, a few sculptors [...] We all lived as if we lived only for these evenings.”) (Kveder 2018: 654)

¹⁰⁹ Ivan Cankar in his prose often presented the problem of the painter rejected in the Slovene society. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 220–230)

¹¹⁰ Translated immediately to Czech in 1906. (Kveder 1906: 290–292, 305–307, 325–326)

the violin anymore, and at the end he commits suicide. His bad luck in life means also the tragical end of his romantic love. The narration begins in the first person singular and it modifies in the first plural just to underline the life of one generation of intellectuals and artists in the multicultural Prague at the beginning of the 20th century. Kveder identifies with the narrator and she indicates that the story is a retrospective one: she describes the ateliers and societies of the young artists she knew in her youth as a specially stimulating place: “Rada se spominjam na praške ateljeje. Osebito na tiste v novih hišah starega mesta, ki imajo tako krasen razgled na Malo Strano in Hradčane.” (“I like to remember Prague ateliers. Especially those in the new houses of the old town, who had such a beautiful view of Malá Strana and Hradčany.”) (Kveder 2018: 654)

In her Prague period, Kveder also introduced Jewish motives into her writing, for example into the story of *Miriam in Nafis* (*Miriam and Nafis*) (*Slovan*, 1905/1906). The young proletarian mother, a widow from Cracow, wants to find the solution for the illness and indisposition of her son Nafis by means of supernatural sources – in the graveyard of her husband.

Kveder pictures very realistic impressions from Prague in her autobiographical sketches, in which she depicts her life with her daughter Vladoša when she was a young child. In the educational stories for young readers, she very realistically describes different moments from the Prague district where they lived for some year.¹¹¹ Prague is in them a colourful scenery for her narratives. They were published in the magazine *Domači prijatelj* in Slovene¹¹² and later in Czech as a book edition. (Kveder 1913) She also presented some fragments of her Prague life in her correspondence – not fictional texts where she stylized herself as an emancipated sensitive woman and a modern wonderer through different parts of Prague. (Mihurko Poniž 2007: 43–55)

In her Prague period, she also became more conscious of her special position as a young female emigrant with all of its social and cultural implications – she was a poor woman from a small Slavic nation living in a big foreign city, trying very hard to financially survive and support her and

¹¹¹ From 1905 until 1906 she lived in Slezská třída 32, Vinohrady.

¹¹² They were the stories: *Moja mala* (*My dear Child*, 1903), *Naša mala* (*Our dear Child*, 1904), *Vladoša* (1904), *Epizodice* (*Episodes*, 1905), *Otroci* (*Children*, 1905), *Učenje* (*Learning*, 1905), *Vladoša dela komedije* (*Vladoša is messing around*, 1906), *Najin dan* (*Our Day*, 1906).

her child with writing and also to become active in the Czech culture.¹¹³ It was during her long stay in Czech culture that she first experienced the foreignness and the distance from her homeland Slovenia as a personal and cultural experience. It is not a coincidence, then, that her best drama, *Amerikanci* (*Americans*), published in 1908, is about Slovene emigrants in America.¹¹⁴

IV.

After 1906, Kveder lived in Zagreb. She began to write texts in Croatian language.¹¹⁵ The epistolary war novel *Hanka* (1917), written in Croatian, signifies the peak of her career in the Croat language. It is also a novel about Prague, because the main location of her heroine is Prague. *Hanka* – the young Polish intellectual and historian – is an alter ego of Zofka Kveder. The epistolary novel consists of fictional letters which the first-person narrator Pole Hanka writes to her male friend: the Polish historian Staszyński.

Her best Slovene work, the novel *Njeno življenje* (*Her Life*) from 1914, is shaped by the author's sense of a woman's passivity, and the only solution for the heroine who is so disappointed with her motherhood and unhappy married life is to commit suicide. But after one year, Kveder in *Hanka* constructed a completely different type of modern woman: an active and emancipated one – a "New Woman".¹¹⁶ In her style we could follow the beginning of Kveder's expressionist turn.

Hanka in the novel is not happy in her marriage to the pragmatic and rational German, with whom she has two daughters. After she discovers the

¹¹³ According to Katja Mihurko Poniž: "Zofka Kveder je svojo emigrantsko izkušnjo in poglede na problematiko izseljenstva preoblikovala v več literarnih besedilih. V njih je prikazala izseljence, a prav tako tudi ljudi, ki bodo to šele postali; upodobila je njihovo potovanje v novo domovino." ("Zofka Kveder transformed her emigrant experience and her view to the problem of emigration into literature in several texts. She wrote about the emigrants and also about the people, who want to become that; she even pictured their travel to the new homeland.") (Mihurko Poniž 2013: 985)

¹¹⁴ Escudos of poor people from Slovene villages was a big social problem for a small Slovene nation at that time.

¹¹⁵ The collection of short stories *Iskre* (1905) already included some stories written in the Croatian language.

¹¹⁶ See the definition of the "New Woman" of Sally Ledger. (Ledger 1997)

infidelity of her husband, she separates from him. In the shadow of great historical changes, she settles in Prague (she rents a room in one palace in Malá Strana) and becomes a nurse in the Prague hospital. The war brings suffering, death, chaos, and a great move of nations. These apocalyptic pictures are depicted in the frame of the Prague hospital. The narrator for the first time focuses also to the closed rooms (to the inner spaces). In the war novel, Prague is also depicted as a crossroad for the migration of nations, for hopeless people trying to escape somewhere. Hanka moves through the real and the fictional topography of Prague during the First World War very smoothly. Between private and public spaces she seeks redemption, between her rented room and the hospital she experiences oblivion: the death of her brother, but on the other side also sisterhood and compassion. The city becomes the stage for the inner spiritual life of the heroine. She is possessed by horror and anxiety and in the metaphysical space, her reality changes into dreams. At the end, she discovers her solution in working for society: she establishes a nursery for working women in Poland.

This novel got Bubanović's praise in Croatia, but afterwards it was accepted very politically in the Croatian society: the Polish heroine Hanka was interpreted as a symbol of a woman that held Yugoslav ideals in her heart. (Fužir 2011: 74)

V. Conclusion

The phenomenon of the Slovene-Croat writer Zofka Kveder was a part of the first wave intellectual feminism at the beginning of the 20th century in Central Europe. Kveder, born in Slovenia, was a cultural nomad and a typical Habsburg intellectual. She depicted different social and cultural aspects of multicultural Prague life at the beginning of the 20th century in her short stories, written in Slovene. In that period, she also became more feminist conscious, and she often reflected the position of a foreigner as well. Czech motifs and themes also led to her shift into the representation of the metropolis and her turn to modernity. In her literary work we find impressive stories of the sculptors, painters, musicians and writers finding their way of living and creation in the modern Prague and on the other side in her impressive stories for children she presents the realistic scenery of Prague. The most literary is her representation of the fictional First World War-era Prague in the Croatian novel *Hanka*, in which she depicts the city as an imagined space for a new emancipated woman, the place

for her modernity, her longing for freedom and salvation from pain, and the dreamy place for accepting the reality of death in dreamlike images.

With her literary and feminist work, Kveder formed the intellectual life of women writers in Prague and Central Europe in the first half of the 20th century, and thus she strongly contributed to the development of South Slavic literatures and feminist thought. In her literature, she also launched social criticism and recorded women's lives. Therefore, she broke silences in expressing notions of women writers and gender identity. She was always acting between cultures, seeking to re-signify and re-examine national identity, native language, and culture. This provides proof of the transnational cultural exchange of her work.

She spent the most important part of her life in Prague. This was the period when she constructed her literary and gender identity. The city of Prague became an obvious place for her narrative. She introduced Czech themes and motifs after the first years of her stay, but also later into different genres of her Slovene and Croatian writing: short stories, essays, travelogues, and in a novel.

Intercultural and Interlingual Dialogue in the Literary Work by Zofka Kveder (*Ze života záhřebské služky, From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb and Hanka*)

In this chapter, we analyse intercultural and interlingual dialogue in the literary work and writing of the female Slovene-Croat writer Zofka Kveder (1878–1926). She created a multicultural dialogue in literature in different periods of her life and with that she answered the question of her complicated literary personality and also her complicated authorship. She was a typical cultural nomad of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The dialogue also shows her personal affections for accepting different identities throughout her life. She moved from one culture to another very often – even though she stayed mostly on the edges of Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the borders of Central Europe. The most important locations for her professional development and creative expansion were her stays in Ljubljana, Trieste, Prague, and Zagreb. She was bilingual and trilingual since childhood: her mother tongue was Slovene, and she was educated in German. She knew the Slovene and German languages, and later she learned Czech.¹¹⁷

Most importantly for our research are two periods: she lived from 1900–1906 in Prague and then she moved to Zagreb (1906–1926). Half of her literary work is in Croatian and she also had some German publications (some reportages, essays, and also short stories in the lingua franca of the Central European intellectuals of that period).¹¹⁸ She changed her identity from Slovene to Croat and had already begun to write books in Croatian during her Prague period. She also translated from other Slavic languages into Slovene and German. It was typical for her to communicate with

¹¹⁷ We can conclude that from her correspondence.

¹¹⁸ Her education was in German, and she finished it in 1893 in Ljubljana. In Croatia she edited the women's supplement *Frauenzeitung* of the newspaper *Agramer Tagblatts* in Zagreb. She also published in other German newspapers in Central Europe.

different literary and national communities.¹¹⁹ She was also very social personality and lived in different societies. In her work we can recognise different cultural codes, symbols, and elements from different societies in Central Europe.

The focus of our interest is on two literary works, very characteristic for the multicultural features of her work. The first one is the novel published just in Czech with motifs from Croatian Zagreb *Ze života záhřebské služky* (*From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb*, Kveder 1908) and the second one is her the most interesting modern novel *Hanka*, featuring a Polish hero, first published in Croatian in Zagreb, later translated to Czech and Slovene. (Kveder 1918)

During the *fin-de-siècle* period, Slovene Zofka Kveder already broke through and won recognition in the area of the monarchy as a feminist and female writer. Her first feminist book *Misterij žene* (*Mystery of a Woman*), written in Slovene (with motifs from the Trieste period), was published in Prague and was reviewed in the Slovene, Croatian, and Czech press.

The creativeness of Zofka Kveder is part of the monarchical myth: her work and feminist views were recognised in Slovene, Croatian, and Czech culture and also in the wider Central European space during her lifetime and afterward. She began her writing career among a group of cosmopolitan Slovene authors, who opened Slovene literature to contemporary European movements. Both texts are connected to her Prague period. From 1900–1906, Zofka Kveder lived there, where she collaborated with Czech writers, feminists, and editors, then moved because of her husband to Zagreb. In Prague she also changed her identity. Her partner and later husband was the Croat Vladimir Jelovšek, whose poetry and decadent writing style also influenced her first book of short stories *Misterij žene*. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 100–106) That was her most important period for constructing her literary style. In Prague she became a mediator between different cultures and a translator for Prague newspapers.

The intense reception to her literary work in Czech culture before the First World War was a special phenomenon of that time and proof of the

¹¹⁹ She was one of the editors of the Croatian newspapers of “moderna” during the *fin-de-siècle* period. She was very acquainted with Austrian and German authors (she published in the Viennese *Die Zeit* and *Dokumente der Frauen*). She also published in German in the Prague German newspaper *Politik*). In Prague she had close contacts with the Slovene “moderna”, the Croat “moderna”, and the Czech literary community, especially female Czech writers. She even had some contacts with the circle of German Jewish authors in Prague.

rich multicultural connections in Austria-Hungary, when a kind of common book market existed before the breakup of the monarchy.¹²⁰ Even though we can't speak about the common culture of the monarchy, by the words of Csáky, we can discover for different cultural spaces that there existed thousands upon thousands of connections and cultural exchanges (Csáky 1995: 215). Zofka Kveder came to Prague as a promising writer with feminist ideas and editorial experience: she got her first editorial experience in the newspaper *Slovenka*, which published some popular articles of hers on the topic of the position of women in society. (Verginella 2017)

In the modernist and avant-garde Prague, in Czech culture with its strong tradition of the women writers (which was by the way much stronger than in Slovene literature), at that time also connected with the feminist movement, Zofka Kveder learned the narrative strategies of her writings and also models for constructing her literary and editorial identity, especially because we know that for all of her writing period she narrated about the position of women in society, and most of her heroes were women.¹²¹ She also followed the new Czech women critics and active female politics in newspapers, even though she knew all her main female editors of the newspapers. A great influence on her writing was the literary work of Růžena Svobodová (see Jensterle Doležal 2014: 122–134) and also the Czech “moderna” of Josef Svatopluk Machar, who at that time lived in Vienna (see Jensterle Doležal 2014: 109–122).

II. Interlingual and intertextual dialogue in the Czech novel *From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb*

In the beginning of her career Zofka Kveder was very strong in writing short literary texts: short stories, essays, feuilletons and sketches, mostly published in Slovenia, Croatia, and Austrian newspapers. There is a fascinating fact, that Zofka Kveder published so many texts in the Czech

¹²⁰ The successful reception of her work in the Czech environment also had political reasons: it was – similarly to the Czech reception of Cankar's works – associated with the Czech Social Democratic Party. As many as three of her books: *Povídky*, *Nada*, and *Ze života zahřebské služky* were published in Prague by the publishing house of this party.

¹²¹ Female Czech writers have a special, honorable place in Czech literature. Writers such as Božena Němcová (1820–1862), Karolina Světlá (1830–1899), and Teréza Nováková (1853–1920) also occupied an important place in the realism of the second half of the nineteenth century.

language and some of them are published just in the Czech language. Between them we can find the longest text – published just in Czech – *Ze života záhřebské služky* (*From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb*, 1908).¹²² She wrote the text when she had already been settled for one year in Zagreb, where she moved with her Croatian husband and two children, but still this work was written only in the Czech language, published only in Prague (never in Slovenia or Croatia).

The literary opus of Zofka Kveder is highly autobiographical, which is also the case with this text. As a nomadic person, Kveder lived among multiple cultures, so we find the representation of other cultures and people from different nations from her first literary works connected to her stays: for example in Trieste and in Switzerland. Very charismatic is her depiction of the Russian decadent student Saša Timotejevna (from Petrograd), the daughter of a Russian woman and a Spaniard man, presented in the long story *Študentke* (*Female Students*, 1900) from the Switzerland period. The author also describes very autobiographically her meeting with a Bulgarian friend in the short story *Spominjajte se* (*Let's remember It*, 1905). Also autobiographical are stories mostly inspired from Trieste in the collection *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*, 1900). Czech motifs began to appear in her literature during the Prague period. (Jensterle Doležal 2021a: 63–84) In her literary imagination the images of the city and stories about artists and the diverse artistic society in Prague appear. The most well-known is the Czech story about the painter Novak (*Slikar Novak*, 1905). We could see the influence of the multicultural Prague society in the motifs and plot, and in the forming of literary heroes from various national communities from Prague – for example Slavic. From this point of view, her short stories are often autobiographical. In the texts from her Prague period, next to Slovenians we find Croats and Czechs (for example the short story about the Czech violinist in the short story *Slučaj* (*Coincidence*, 1910), and also a Russian opera singer (*Najlepše priznanje* [*The Most Perfect Recognition*, 1902]), and Polish Jews (in the socially critical story *Mirjam in Nafis* [*Mirjam and Nafis*, 1905/1906]).

The narrator in the title of the literary work *Ze života záhřebské služky* uses Croatian motifs, but for literary history the most important fact is that this is the longest literary work published only in Czech language (and completely unknown to Slovene or Croatian readers). Regarding the year

¹²² Kveder never classified this text. Due to its length (number of pages: 150p) and extensive storyline with intricate character design, this text can be described as a novel.

of publication, we could presume that Kveder wrote it in her “transitionary period” before or closely after her relocation from Prague to Zagreb (Croatia).¹²³ In writing and deciding on “Zagreb motifs” she could have in mind Czech readers and their expectations: the Croatian topic was in that time for Czech reader appealing, not very exotic – not too near and not too far. The Croatian community was vividly present in Czech culture (part of the Croatian “moderna” was settled in Prague, and they even publish their newspaper there).

The text raises several questions. The main question, which remains unanswered because of a lack of information and sources,¹²⁴ is: in which language was the original text written? Above all, we can’t find the answer to the question of whether the published version is a translation or an original – since the author could have written it already during the period when she already knew Czech.

It is probable that the original text was in Slovene or Croatian.¹²⁵ But did she write the text, along with Hásková, in Czech (Hásková could also just correct her Czech)? Or did she leave the translation from Slovene or Croatian to Czech to her best friend?¹²⁶

The questions of the language of the original and even of the authorship or probable translation, however, are not the only questions that arise as we read and analyse the novel. As we already stressed at the beginning, the prose of Zofka Kveder is mostly autobiographical. The text *From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb* reveals her complex attitude towards the formation of a “writer’s identity” as well as her feminist position: we know Kveder as a hybrid intellectual with multiple cultural identities, who in her lifetime often changed language codes. It is written in a realist style, focused on the community of the poor.

When we analyse the text thematically, we find out that the so-called Croatian motifs (with the main motif of a Croatian maid in Zagreb) are only a mask for a sharp feminist critique of the subordinate position of urban women from the lowest social class, which could be in any Austro-Hungarian city at the turn of the century: Kveder in realistic style pictures declassified women from the proletariat and craftsmen, and she could be

¹²³ She lived in Zagreb for two years.

¹²⁴ There is no original text found of either the original or the translation.

¹²⁵ She already began to write in Croatian during her Prague period. First, she published some short stories in Croatian.

¹²⁶ Most of her originals are lost.

inspired with that problem anywhere in the cities, where this cosmopolitan author lived: but mostly in Ljubljana, Trieste, Prague, and Zagreb.

Sporadically, only in some sections of the text, does Kveder emphasize Zagreb locations as places of literary action, but that could be also a picture of Prague: before Zagreb she lived in Prague for many years, she had to write the text immediately after moving to Zagreb, still under Prague impressions.¹²⁷ She could also received a number of impulses from her past in Trieste, whose social misery and difficult situation of women from the lowest rungs of society she described in 1900 in *The Mystery of a Woman*, a collection of Slovene stories published in Prague.¹²⁸

In the story, Kveder gives an uncompromising critique of the poor social position of women in a patriarchal society. The narrative consists of a classic realistic story with events in chronological order. An omniscient, authoritarian narrator with relentless precision but also empathy depicts the difficult lives of people (mostly women) from the lower social class and from the urban environment of the city at the turn of the century in Austro-Hungarian spaces. Images of dark hopelessness prevail between maids, craftsmen, and poor students. The author even introduces in the scene the homeless and criminals. At the turn of the century, future social changes related to the organized proletarian movement (represented by Leo and Antonín in the novel) are already being indicated also in the novel.

At the beginning, the main character is Katuša, then the narrator's attention turns to her husband Antonín. In the beginning of the novel, Katuša loses her job as a maid and she is unemployed. At the forefront is the girl's search for a romantic partner and a new, independent life in difficult social conditions. The actions and reactions of persons are conditioned by a traumatic understanding of eroticism and the position of women at the turn of the century. The writer shows well that a lower-class woman (a maid and an unemployed woman) did not have open opportunities for development in society and that she often had to help herself with prostitution in order to survive. It also thematises the duality of social morality and the prevailing lie of society, which punished women for sexual transgressions more harshly than men. Her characters are insecure and inconsistent before the demon of eroticism and they adjust their morals to their advantage.

¹²⁷ Even if this was a translation, it could take even more time to be prepared for publication.

¹²⁸ In comparison, we discover many motif parallels as well as a similar feminist-sharpened perspective.

Christian morality is present somewhere in the background, but only as a form of social coercion and an organ of power. Behind the realistic descriptions we find very drastic motifs: the hidden prostitution of young maids, women who deliberately starve a new-born child to death, people trafficking in illegal abortions that also result in the deaths of pregnant girls, violence against men and women, rape of women in the immediate family and men who infect women with syphilis...

In the narrative, the writer nevertheless shows the moral development of people towards awareness, compassion, and education, and gradually also their growing sense of responsibility. In this regard, only Antonín and his friend, the student Cyrill, are formed and educated; Katuša is presented as not smart enough and does not have enough will. The labour movement in which Cyrill is involved is said to have played a special role in changing this situation.¹²⁹

We could find one more reason why Kveder published this interesting and critical text only in Prague – in Czech culture. Czech society was much more open than conservative Slovene or Croat society and, without major prejudices, also accepted feminist ideas as well as depictions of erotic and also sexual and other violence.¹³⁰ In this novel, Kveder takes as an example how to “form a human being from a woman” (as she expressed in one feminist essay in 1899).¹³¹ The author depicted women from the lowest strata of society, because for the narrator it was a tragic rule that poor women from that period had a much harder time emancipating themselves than wealthier ones.

The work was relatively well received in Czech society – even though in the newspapers just for “the working class”.¹³² One anonymous critic praised

¹²⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century the labour movement also appeared and had a great impact on society. In all the great cities of the monarchy a struggle for universal suffrage also took place.

¹³⁰ Zofka Kveder certainly did not forget the moralistic attacks of Slovene critics on the publication of *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*, 1900), as well as the negative reviews in Slovenia of *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* (*The Ward of Mary Help of Christians*, 1904) by Ivan Cankar, due to the novel’s explosive erotic motifs and depiction of sexual violence against children.

¹³¹ Zofka Kveder, *O ženskem vprašanju* (*On the Women Question*), *Slovenka*, 1899. (Kveder 2018: 232)

¹³² There were two reviews in the local newspapers *Nová doba* (*New Era*, Anonymous 1908a: 8) and *Věstník dělnické akademie* (*Journal of the Worker’s Academy*, Anonymous 1908b: 3) and one in the Czech press in Vienna: *Dělnické listy* (*Worker’s Press*, Anonymous 1908c: 6).

her work, writing that the novel was indeed a “valuable literary work” and that it “meets the requirements of an accessible, healthy, and artistically demanding reading for the people”, “with a deep understanding of their pain, weaknesses, and suffering”. (Anonymous 1908a: 8)

The story has a lengthy narration and inconsistent structure. The author changes the protagonist midway through the story, perhaps because she wants to present to the reader the psychology of a woman and a man. This disrupts the rhythm of narration as well as the basic thread of events and tests the concentration of the reader. The inappropriate narration solutions could also be explained by the fact that in that time a longer story could still cause her (a young author) problems. The novel does not possess much artistic merit, and Kveder’s return to the critical description of society is accompanied by an overly political text; the emphasis placed on the socialist idea within the plot is also disconcerting.

The Croatian motifs and the description of Zagreb locations are of no great importance in the narration: they act more as an optional décor for the critique of social conditions and also for the author’s focus on a shocking story. The realistic story with social motifs and feminist approach in dealing with narrative strategies presented with the scenery of a big city was completely forgotten and it is not mentioned nor in the Slovene literary history neither in the Croatian one.¹³³

III. The picture of the Polish woman and Polish motifs in the novel *Hanka*

Kveder wrote the epistolary novel *Hanka* in 1915 in Croatian – and published it in 1918 in Zagreb (Kveder: *Hanka* 1918).¹³⁴ From her correspondence we can conclude that in the beginning she wanted to write it in Slovene and later she decided on Croatian.¹³⁵ Here, too, Kveder did not connect

¹³³ Kveder is even not mentioned in Czech literary history, even though she had a success in the Czech bookmarket during her life time.

¹³⁴ The novel was also very quickly translated into Czech (*Hanka: válečné vzpomínky*, 1927) and into Slovene in 1938 (translated and edited by Marja Boršnik and Eleonora Kernc).

¹³⁵ She had some reasons for that: she was surrounded by Croatian culture. One of the reasons was that she could also imagine that Hásková was a better translator from the Croatian language. The co-work of two friends in translation was also not possible after Kveder lived in Zagreb. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 134–147)

the issue of linguistic identity with the national aspect. Again, we can only speculate about her decision to write it in the Croatian language. She wrote the most well-known Slovene novel *Njeno življenje* (*Her Life*) a few months previously. She might have chosen the Croatian language because of the predominant influence of the new language environment, or perhaps also because she hoped that Hásková would translate it into Croatian more easily. (Jensterle Doležal 2010: 12)

The novel *Hanka* is, among her Croatian texts, her most modern and innovative one. The protagonist is a type of an intellectual and an awakened “New Women”¹³⁶ who during her lifetime moves from intimacy into the public space and at the end, as an awakened feminist, tries to help other women by establishing a nursery. Her national identity is part of her personal identity and her intellectual life. Hanka is Polish. But the interesting fact is that Kveder used different national identity for the main character of the novel, the nationality which she didn’t experienced it.

The novel is not built on a classic story but on fragments. The linear events are fragmentarily “lost” in the letters. The story of the heroine’s inner life, her ideas, images, visions, and dreams are presented and discussed, and everything becomes subjective. The real time of narration and the past are mixed, and the inner world of the heroine penetrates to the forefront. For the first time, Kveder autonomously presents the world of female intimacy; her emotional and intellectual maturation (Jensterle Doležal 2008: 57–67), and the issue of national as well as gender identity and the demands of the modern woman are also highlighted. The novel already bears the characteristics of expressionist style: the reality of the space turns into a dream and often stops with essayistic sections and sometimes philosophical meditations.¹³⁷

The psychological narrative is situated in the apocalypse of the First World War, so the text could also be understood as a war novel. The protagonist, the Polish woman Hanka, falls in love with the Polish historian Staszyński, to whom in 1915 she sends fictitious letters to the battlefield. In the meantime she splits with her German husband, who does not

¹³⁶ The expression “The New Woman” is taken from the work of the literary feminist Ledger who used it for the picture of a new, awakened women in the English *Fin-de-Siècle* literature. (Ledger 1997)

¹³⁷ In her correspondence and inheritance in different archives, we don’t find any traces that Kveder had contacts with Poles and Polish culture. Nevertheless she could have met them in multicultural Prague or even in Zagreb, but we just don’t have any evidence of that.

understand her, and she flees to Prague. The war city becomes a kind of military gathering place for refugees of various nationalities.¹³⁸ There she gets a job at a hospital. After two personal tragedies and Staszyński's death, Hanka returns to the idealized Polish village below the Tatra Mountains and tries to help the Polish people there: she establishes a nursery for female employees. In the frame of the events, there is a focus on the inner life of the protagonist, her personal development, and her growth into having an independent personality.

Already in the first chapter, Hanka, in communication with her husband, raises the question of the gap between her (an emotional Polish patriot and intellectual) and her husband (a cold German) so she leaves him. Her patriotism during the war circumstances grows enormously. She feels the suffering of the Polish nation "stretched between East and West... in this terrible war with painful tension."

She is also well acquainted with Polish history. She is aware of the tragic split of the Polish nation between the three countries¹³⁹ and she consciously follows Polish political situation just before and during the First World War (she is moved by the refugees from Galicia and the involvement of Polish soldiers on various battlefronts). Regarding her persuasion, Irena Samide – even though she underscores that Kveder's text is one of the most interesting pacifist war novels – pointed out that the author in the novel *Hanka* overgeneralized the political situation in Europe and that in the geopolitical space she overemphasized the split between the Habsburg-Slavic world and the Imperial Slavic world (Russian culture); and a stereotypical contrast between Germanic culture and Slavism is also present.¹⁴⁰ (Samide 2018: 7)

Hanka is also familiar with the main trends and political power in Polish society: she reflects on the great influence of the Catholic Church (her mother is a staunch Catholic) and also takes a stand on the problem of Judaism in Polish society.¹⁴¹ All of her important contacts are with the

¹³⁸ In the novel, the main setting for the hero is Prague: we have a very profound description of Prague locations and an artistic representation of the multicultural city of that time.

¹³⁹ In the depiction of the Polish fratricidal split, there may be an allusion to the South Slavic situation: most Slovene and Croatian soldiers were in the monarchical army at the beginning of the war. There was Austro-Hungarian political discourse against Serbs at that time.

¹⁴⁰ The stereotypical black-and-white evaluation of Sloveneness (Slavishness) and Germaneness is known from Slovene literature of the 19th century.

¹⁴¹ Here Hanka represents herself as an anti-Semite and an intellectual who is against the Jews. (See Vittorelli 2007: 48–63)

Poles. Her “Polish consciousness” intensifies with the war. She is a great pacifist and humanist: she shows the most sympathy for the Polish people in wartime (for example, refugees from Galicia).

Her awakened national sense is emphasized also by the fact that before the war Hanka was a historian who collected material in Krakow and in other libraries. Polish patriotism and ideas are also supported by concrete points of her travel and meetings: Hanka meets Staszyński in a small village below the Tatra Mountains, where there is a monastery with a library. They often work in the library together in Cracow, a symbolic city of the Polish nation. Their last meeting before the war was at a restaurant and at a train station in Warsaw. After all the vicissitudes and war images, the existence of the Polish land – fields, mountains, and forests – gives her hope: the Arcadian space of Polish nature under the Tatra Mountains gives her an idealized asylum. She ends her travels in her mother’s house in a remote village below the Tatras.

Hanka’s Polishness functions importantly in the novel as part of her public identity. Through it, she also defines her pacifism to the world. Her commitment and existential orientation shows her concern for the future of Europe in an apocalyptic time. Her national identity is connected with her feminism and pacifist ideas.

By writing the novel in Croatian, Kveder hoped to present the novel throughout Central Europe.¹⁴² In the politicized Croatian situation, Croatian critics understood the question of Polishness in *Hanka* as a mask for the Yugoslav question and Yugoslav patriotism. By contrast, Slovene critics focused on the psychological perspective of this war novel. In the newspaper *Dom in svet* in 1918, Ivan Dornik did not even notice the fact that Hanka is Polish and mainly criticized her for the “overly female psychology of the main character” (Dornik 1918: 162–163). Anton Debeljak emphasized the artistically successful pictures of the war in the novel (Debeljak 1918: 291).

The monumental picture of a Polish female intellectual is unique in her literature. In the last period, Zofka Kveder once more – only occasionally and sporadically – portrayed Poles in her last short stories. In the last collection of sentimental stories about the different life destinies of mostly deceived women, *Po putevima života* (*On the Paths of Life*) from 1926, Polishness is synonymous with otherness in the story *Dva lječnika* [*Two*

¹⁴² Zvonko Kovač is convinced that with her decision to write in the Croatian language, Kveder targeted a wider South-Slavic audience. (Kovač 2014: 121)

Doctors], where one of the doctors is from romantically distant Poland. In the short story *Švelja* [*The Seamstress*], the Polish woman is negatively presented as a callous coquette who takes over the main character's husband.

IV.

Ultimately we can conclude that the existence of the two analysed texts where intercultural dialogue is established reveals Kveder as a nomadic, hybrid writer with several cultural identities, who wanted to spread her texts throughout Central Europe. Intercultural dialogue is expressed in the choice of language, in the politics of publishing, in the internal structure of literary works, and in the choice of motifs and themes – and it echoes also in the reception. We can follow the picture of the other nation in the text and in the representation of another nationality. This kind of multicultural dialogue in her work also unravels non-literary issues as a book market issue for publication related to the issue of language and translation.

The feminist text by the Slovene-Croatian author of *From the Life of a Housemaid from Zagreb* may have been written for a Czech reader, so she published it – albeit with some Croatian motifs – only in Czech in Prague. At the turn of the century, the critical picture of the life of poor women in a Central European city surprises with drastic motifs in which the author depicts the hopeless situation of a poor woman in a certain time and space with a great deal of compassion. The text can be reconstructed in the cultural context of the monarchical culture of her time and marked with different codes from literary fields. The picture of the other nationality figures just as a mask for artistic goals.

A completely different example of intercultural dialogue is the novel *Hanka*, in which Kveder understood the nationality – Polish – of her heroine as a key feature of her awakened personal and public identity and also her concern for the future of the national community and for her responsibility for what was happening in Europe. The sensitive modern intellectual on the brink of a wartime apocalypse becomes an astonishing personality: she reflects and formulates her most intimate experiences in the discourse of letters. The author depicts how Hanka transforms herself into a Polish patriot and pacifist in the best sense of the word. The construction of her Polishness is very important and it is part of her identity as a modern woman who is conscious about her intimate life and also about the traumatic historical situation. This is also a subversive war novel, full

of pacifist thoughts: as a pacifist and patriot, Hanka feels responsible for the nation and all the world.

The Slovene-Croat author Zofka Kveder was a hybrid writer and important person in the feminist movement and among female writers in the first part of the 20th century in Central Europe. Kveder, with her literary work and mediator activities, represented a kind of phenomenon: she wrote in different languages and her work was translated into various languages. There are many pictures of the Other – people from different nations and cultures – in her work. Multicultural dialogue is part of her writing strategy, with different functions. The dialogue also shows the cultural context of her writing. Intercultural dialogue in the author's oeuvre is also the part of the authorial voice and creative charisma of the Slovene Zofka Kveder, who – as a typical monarchical and nomadic author – was a writer with several linguistic identities and a mediator between different cultures, successfully publishing her books throughout Central Europe.

Female Desire in the Epistolary Novels of South Slavic Women Writers: *Hanka* by the Slovene-Croat Writer Zofka Kveder and *Jedno dopisivanje* by the Serbian Writer Julka Chlapec-Djordjević¹⁴³

In the novel *Some Correspondences*, the protagonist Marija wrote to her male lover: “Sometimes it seems to me that the main source of my sensitivity is not so much erotic hunger as longing for life in general.” (Chlapec-Djordjević 2004: 18) The novel was written at the end of the 1920s by the Serbian writer Julka Chlapec-Djordjević and this one sentence describes the new phenomenon of intimacy presented in the female literature of the early 20th century: also women writers in Central Europe began to depict the phenomenon of love and dialogue with the opposite sex as the main problem of human existence. I will focus on the images of women and their desire in the literary work of two South Slavic writers living in the first half of the 20th century in Prague as part of the Austro-Hungarian “intellectual displacements and intellectual movements”. Their “immigration” to Prague was due to historical changes in Central Europe and also due to their personal situation.

The article deals with the representation of intimacy and love (female desire) in two novels: *Hanka* (1918) by the Slovene-Croat writer and the feminist Zofka Kveder (1878–1926), and *Jedno dopisivanje. Fragmenti romana* (*Some Correspondences. Fragments of a Novel*, 1932) by the Serbian writer and the feminist Julka Chlapec-Djordjević (1882–1969). We could follow in their self-representative text “the discursive practise between truth, gender, and identity.” (Gilmore 1994: XIII) Both South Slavic women writers and feminists were cultural nomads with more identities and

¹⁴³ This work was fully supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project number IP-2018-01-3732. It was also realised as part of the basic institutional research programme Cooperatio created for the development of science at the Charles University in Czech Republic, section Literature/Medievistica.

mediators with more language identities, connected to the Czech feminist movement. They lived for some time in Prague, the hub of European modernism and avant-garde in the first half of the 20th century. (Bernard 2010) Both of them were active in Czech culture and society and were also very much inspired by it in their literature. They were cosmopolitan intellectuals, always moving between places and cultures, “willingly” displaced,¹⁴⁴ with multiple language identities. Their connections to women writers and feminists were crucial to the construction of their self-consciousness as professional writers and their gender identity.¹⁴⁵ During their lifetime, their work was successfully published in the Czech and Central European regions. Their good reception was also due to the tradition of Slavic solidarity and reciprocity. After their deaths, they were unjustly forgotten in Czech literature and in their national literatures until the 21st century.

In their writing, we could follow the link to modernity. We could anticipate that in their transnational discourse they were more open to the Other and more open in describing gender problems than their Central European contemporaries, who were “solidly grounded just in their national literatures”. Both female writers in these two novels constructed a picture of a New Woman connected with the representation of Prague. The vibrant and modern city of that time was the right place for the new emancipated woman represented in their novels, in which we can find a new understanding of human existence, gender roles, and modern psychology. In this article, we will focus on the representation of female desire, intimacy, and topics of romantic love pictured in these novels. With their literary work Kveder and Chlapec-Djordjević formed the literary life of women writers in Prague and in the broader of Central Europe area in the first half of 20th Century. Both contributed to the development of the South Slavonic epistolary novel.

II.

Anthony Giddens described in his book *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* how much intimacy

¹⁴⁴ Perpetually, the movement of Central European writers in geographical places of the Monarchy was a social and historical phenomenon and a part of the monarchical culture before the First World War, but in their cases, it was also due to personal situations (being married and following the partner).

¹⁴⁵ Agatha Schwartz underlined the connection between women writers and feminist movement in the Austro-Hungarian empire. (Schwartz 2008)

has changed in modern societies in the last hundred years. He emphasised the category of romantic love and its importance in modern societies in the 20th century, underscoring that, from its earliest origins, romantic love has raised the question of intimacy. (Giddens 1993: 45) The complex of ideas associated with romantic love for the first time connected love with freedom, both being seen as normatively desirable states. Passionate love has always been liberating, but only in the sense of generating a break from routine and duty. It was precisely this quality of “amour passion” that distinguished it from existing institutions. Ideals of romantic love, on the contrary, inserted themselves directly into emergent ties between freedom and self-realisation. (Giddens 1993: 40)

Considering this category, we must be aware of the limits of the patriarchal society of that period: regarding the social, historical, and cultural context of that period, the expressions of intimacy had very strict rules, especially for women. There still existed many prohibitions for them. A woman became what cultural rules and gender prejudices demanded. Thomas Laqueur, in his book *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* demonstrated that even at the beginning of the 20th century, in the patriarchal discourse of Western Civilisation, they believed that erotic pleasure and the realisation of the sexual drive was not possible for women. (Laqueur 2017: 265–340)

Therefore, it was difficult for women writers and intellectuals of that time to express romantic love in literature. But the times were changing. According to Rita Felski: “In the early 20th century, the figure of the New Woman was to become a resonant symbol of emancipation, whose modernity signalled not an endorsement of an existing present, but rather a bold imagining of an alternative future.” (Felski 1995: 45)

III.

The first Slovene professional writer and a feminist Zofka Kveder (1878–1926)¹⁴⁶ belonged to the second wave of Slovene women writers and until now she is a symbol for the first independent female writer with distinguished poetics, not being afraid to persuade her career. The most important was her Prague period (1900–1906). As Katja Mihurko Poniž underlined, the contacts she made in the Czech capital (1900–1900) benefited her in

¹⁴⁶ On her life and work see the book by Mihurko Poniž (Mihurko Poniž 2003).

the Croatian cultural space when she moved to Zagreb in 1906. Her desire to discover new worlds and establish contacts with representatives of foreign cultures was a trigger for many activities in the field of cultural transmission. (Mihurko Poniž 2020: 1–26) She was also a mediator of ideas: feminism, Yugoslavism, and ideas about coexistence and mutual respect between different cultures.¹⁴⁷ Kveder began to write texts mostly in the Croat language in her Zagreb period.¹⁴⁸

As a typical cultural nomad, she was part of the Habsburg myth, exploring cultural life in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Monarchical space was a special cultural, social, and historical area – a phenomenon that Csáky formulated in the postcolonial discourse as a third place, with many meanings and modes of representation: “Vielfältige Repräsentationen”, a fluid and flexible space for many contexts, great cultural exchange, and cultural transmissions. (Csáky 2019: 35)

After Kveder’s tragic end Hásková in Czech press praised her former friend’s work with great respect. From the correspondence we know she wanted to write a book about Kveder, but unfortunately – after her husband’s death she took care of his writer’s legacy. The first one who wrote a profound study about Kveder’s role in Czech society was a Serbian writer and feminist Julka Chlapec-Djordjević (1882–1969), who lived from 1922–1945 in Prague. Correspondence between her translator Zdenka Hásková and Slovene writer Fran Govekar (1871–1949) claims that, after Kveder’s death, Chlapec-Djordjević wanted to write a book about her.¹⁴⁹ She had collected material about her and interviewed those who knew her in the Prague period. Finally, she simply published an article in Serbian concerning her role in Czech culture: *Iz praških dana Zofke Kvederove (From Prague’s Days of Zofka Kveder)*. (Chlapec-Djordjević 1935: 176–185).¹⁵⁰ Chlapec-Djordjević wrote about Kveder’s role in Czech culture and about her life and successful career in Prague, researching her texts and development

¹⁴⁷ Kveder living in Prague constructed a network of connections with different national literary circles: Croat, Czech, German Jewish and Slovene. Prague was at that time also the center for Czech and European modernism, where at the beginning of the 20th century the Czech impressionist, symbolist, and decadent movement was successfully (and literally) incorporated into Czech life. From the circle of Prague German Jewish authors also raised Franz Kafka, who published his first short story in 1908.

¹⁴⁸ The collection of short stories *Iskre* (1905) already included some stories written in Croatian language.

¹⁴⁹ See Pánek 1976: 58–79.

¹⁵⁰ She anticipated that the readers will be from Yugoslavia – in this state Kveder was already well known as a Slovene-Croat writer.

as a writer. She was the first to praise Kveder's cultural transfer activities, researching her networking in the context of symbolic cultural exchanges during the early 20th century in Prague. She discovered that the political, intellectual, cultural (feminist) and literary environment in Prague society during the early years of the 20th century "gave the young, self-educated Slovene more stimulation, influence and acceptance than was possible in any other city" and that in Prague Kveder was "surrounded by people with the same ideas, motivation and intellectual openness".¹⁵¹ When analyzing her literary work, she criticized her feminism, which in her view was only half-committed, theoretical and not sharpened enough.

Julka Chlapec-Djordjević was deeply inspired by Kveder's work especially by her novel *Hanka* as is clearly seen in her only novel, *Jedno dopisivanje. Fragmenti romana*.¹⁵² In her case we find very inspiring story of the influence of one women writer to another. There are vivid similarities in the narrative strategies, but also differences between two novels. Barbara Fužir, in comparing the two novels, analyzed the motifs of suicide, the depiction of the female intellectual, and the issue of marriage and love. (Fužir 2011: 61–77) In the narratives of two novel, both authors also portray intimate themes.

The main theme in both novels is the problem of contrasting the gender identity, the relation to the body and sexuality, to the other sex and the construction of the new sexual ethics. On the other hand the novel *Hanka* is much more "literal" than *Jedno dopisivanje*, which is more essayistic, sometimes in the persuasion of ideas more didactical. Zofka Kveder was at the peak of her creation, *Hanka* is a very modern novel with a distinctive style and very characteristic expressionistic poetics. The plot is very wide structured, it depicts a complex "intimate and public" life of the main heroine. It also includes a lot of different people and their psychological portraits. Kveder is also a master of describing lyrical details, moments, mosaics of lives, fragments of nature: she already developed special impressionistic

¹⁵¹ Her period in Zagreb was not completely successful, the life during the First World War was very difficult for her. After the War she lost her oldest daughter. In 1920s she also lost her inspiration.

¹⁵² The novel is a homage to Zofka Kveder, encoded in the beginning in the story. In the novel the main character Marija Prohaskova writes a novel about Z. K. (Zofka Kveder?) and collects the material about her. She is in contacts with Z. H. (that could be Kveder's friend and translator Zdenka Hásková?) and F. G. (the writer Fran Govekar?). She initiated the contact with the future lover because of that quest.

style in her short stories. Chlapec-Djordjević as a writer is not so complex and not so distinguished. She defines the category of love, marriage, the relation to children and sexual politics. Her description of the world is more realistic and documentary: with sharp eyes she depicts the existential crisis of two people, presented in an Central European urban space in the inter-war period. (Jensterle Doležal 2016: 1–7)

The representation of the Female Desire in the Epistolary Novels of South Slavic Women Writers

In the monarchy at the turn of the 20th century, gender problems became vivid and widely represented in literature. Women were unhappy with the rigid patriarchal system and the division of power, but on the other side at that historical period, men, in their gender roles, were also unsecure and full of uncertainty and fear. Writers often thematised the relation between the two sexes as a problematical one. Especially, the erotic and carnal were a space of great trauma, which was due to the strict morality of the Cristian faith and the Catholic predominance as part of the patriarchal discourse of that time.

In 1900 in Prague Kveder published her literary debut *Misterij žene* (*The Mystery of a Woman*), the anthology of short stories about the tragic condition of women in the patriarchal society. During her lifetime, she published three novels and several autobiographical short stories (in different collections).

Nemec ranks her among the female authors of the new Croatian realism in the interwar period: Mara Ivančan, Fedy Martinčić, Zdenka Jušić-Seunik, Ema Božičević, Gina Altaras, Marija Radić, Marica Vujković, Mara Švel-Gamiršek. (Nemec 1998: 164) Also, in Croat literary history, Kveder has a place also at the beginning of the avant-garde. (Detoni-Dujmić 1998: 187) According to Detoni-Dujmić, her contribution to Croat literature was a combination of a psycho-naturalistic interest in the inner world of the characters with several pre-avant-garde dynamic innovations in narrative structure. (Detoni-Dujmić 2008: 47–57)

During her long literary career, from her literary debut *Misterij žene* (1900) to the novel *Hanka* (1918), we can follow the change of her language identity and the shift to modernity in her narrative solutions, as well as the shift to intimate motifs and themes. (Jensterle Doležal 2008: 82–99, Jensterle Doležal 2011: 125–143)

The epistolary war novel *Hanka* (written in 1915, published 1918 in Zagreb) signifies the peak of her career in the Croatian language. It could be understood as a war novel or an intimate female diary – an autobiographic diary of the turbulent war time, where wartime Prague is the right place for her heroine. A classical story is erased, the fragments are depicted under the sign of the inner time. Detoni-Dujmić finds three types of discourse in the novel, and she underlines complex, modern antithetical composition. (Detoni-Dujmić 2008: 53). Narrative is written in Ich-form. A young Polish intellectual and historian Hanka is an alter ego of Zofka Kveder. In the narrative, we follow the representation of romantic love and female desire as a new space of freedom. Kveder in *Hanka* constructed a completely different type of modern woman: an active and emancipated one, a “New Woman”.¹⁵³

The autobiographical intimate story is interwoven with the historical narrative – the beginning of the First War. The novel consists of fictional letters which the first-person narrator Pole Hanka writes to her male friend the Polish historian Staszyński – her possible lover. Hanka is not happy in her marriage to a pragmatic and rational German, with whom she has two daughters. After discovering the infidelity of her husband, she separates from him. In the shadow of great historical changes and the First World War, she settles in Prague and becomes a nurse in the hospital. War brings suffering, death, chaos, and great move of nations. The situation of her love for him ends with the news of Staszyński death. At the end, she discovers her solution to working for society: she establishes a nursery for working women in Poland.

The reality of the narrated time and space is disappearing in the foggy, dream-like world of the novel: in the discourse predominates the expressionist world of visions and symbols. The narrator thematizes Hanka’s intimacy. The realization of the erotic desire is possible for her just in symbolic dreams. There is not just the problem of geographical distance: Staszyński is mostly far away, he is a soldier in the frontline, and dies in the battle.

Hanka also possesses inner “metaphysical borders” and principles: love for her could be expressed just symbolically; desire is depicted in a sublime way. The expressions of the carnal and physical love are forbidden. Love ends at the kiss. There is a great tension between the desire for love and hope for intimacy and suppressed emotions. The heroine must not go

¹⁵³ See the definition of the “New Woman” of Sally Ledger (Ledger 1997).

behind the imaginary border.¹⁵⁴ One of the reasons why Hanka doesn't want to realise their love is that future life with one's partner means the possible burden of daily reality, which could ruin her idealised picture of the imagined Other. The realisation of their life on the other side implies also "the power of the patriarchal rules":

Even if I were completely free today, I would not want to be your wife. The feeling I feel for you cannot stand the banality of everyday life. [...] I have placed you high above all other people. [...] And now, that hero of all heroes would become my legitimate husband, which means for example, he snores or he is grumpy, if the soup is too salty or if the socks are not well patched! Ha-ha! These are trivial things, but they would certainly be detrimental to the idol, which I created for myself from you and which I need, because it makes my life higher and more valuable.^{155 156}

Between private and public spaces, Hanka seeks redemption from her great erotic desire and sexual drive for Stasyński, the intellectual and spiritual friend and her potential lover. Love ends in death and oblivion: it is war time and the reality doesn't give a lot of opportunity to realise this enormous "passion amorous" and it looks like also the woman is not prepared for that – she is in some way satisfied just to express longing for a man in an ideal form.

Kveder showed the emancipation process of women also in the field of her intimacy: her woman has the right to be an individual with feelings and longing – and erotic desire. She presented these emancipation ideas about the new position of women in the changing society also in her essays and articles: during and after the First World War, she published numerous essays on the role and position of women in *Agramer Tagblatt* (*Zagreb's daily News*) in German, in the new state in the magazine *Ženski svijet* (*Woman's World*), later renamed *Jugoslavenska žena* (*Yugoslav Woman*) in Croat.

¹⁵⁴ Kveder's almost philosophical approach to understanding love was influenced by Ivan Cankar's 1912 symbolist drama *Lepa Vida* (*Beautiful Vida*), in which the longing of male characters for a beautiful woman is formulated not just as an erotic desire but also as an ontological principle of existence.

¹⁵⁵ "Kad bih danas bila sasvim slobodna, ne bih poželjela, da budem Vašom ženom. Čuvstvo, što ga osjećam za Vas, ne podnosi banalnost svakidašnjosti. [...] Stavila sam Vas visoko nad sve druge ljude. [...] A sada da bude taj junak sviju junaka pravi moj zakoniti muž, pa da primjerice hrče ili da bude zlovoljan, kad bi juha bila odviše slana ili kad ne bi čarape bile dosta fino zakrpane! Ha, ha! To su zapravo sitnice, ali svakako bi one bile na štetu idolu, što sam ga od Vas stvorila sebi i što mi je potreban, jer mi čini život višim i vrjednijim" (Kveder 1918: 162–163).

¹⁵⁶ All translations of quotations from Slovene into English by Alenka Jensterle Doležal.

IV.

Julka Chlapec-Djordjević (1882–1969) inherited the legacy of Zofka Kveder in Prague.¹⁵⁷ A philosopher, a feminist, and a writer was of Serbian origin, ‘also part of the Habsburgian culture due to her education and living in Vienna’, but nevertheless for most of her writing career she lived in democratic Prague (1922–1945) and participated in open Czech society before the Second World War. At that time and place, she – already in her forties – became an outspoken feminist and a writer. In her essays she “encyclopedically mapped the discourse about women and femaleness in her position acting between the cultures.” (Djurić 2014: 4–5)

After her Austrian – Habsburg period in Vienna Chlapec-Djordjević experienced a period in Prague (from 1922 until 1945) after the First World War. The Czechoslovak First Republic was successfully formed after the First World War under the rule of T. G. Masaryk (1850–1937). The new Republic founded its identity on progress, modernity, and democracy. The equality of man and woman was declared by the constitution; with the right to vote, women officially gained the right to their own voice. In that period, Prague was still an open, multicultural, intellectually rich, very inspiring city, flourishing with new ideas and art approaches. The literature of the interwar period reveals the political crisis and the crisis of gender identity.

In her philosophical theory and sociological analyses (in five theoretical books in essay genre), Chlapec-Djordjević invented new ideas and philosophical and cultural approaches. She explored topics such as abortion, female identity, her relationship with the body and sexuality, the problem of

¹⁵⁷ The Serbian philosopher and feminist Julka Chlapec-Djordjević (1882, Stari Bečej, Vojvodina–1969, Ústí and Labem) was hailing from a rich upper-class family in Stari Bečej, Vojvodina (in the northern part of Serbia – after the First World War part of Yugoslavia). She was educated in Vienna (as one of the first women in year 1906 completed a PhD in philosophy in Vienna), where she stayed until the collapse of the monarchy, so in her youth and adulthood she absorbed the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the complex transnational rich cultural relations of that time in the monarchy – and particularly in Vienna as a cultural metropolis. She married a Czech officer, Zdeněk Chlapec (who was first employed in the monarchical army, later in the new Czech Army, where he became a general) and got two daughters with him. She pursued her writing career in her forties after settling in Prague, where she lived from 1922 until 1945. She published several theoretical books on feminist theory, one novel: *Jedno dopisivanje* (*Some correspondences*) and travelogues in Serbian and Czech language. After the change of the regime, she moved to the provincial town Ústí and Labem with her daughter and died there completely forgotten.

family and motherhood, new sexual ethics, new methods of birth control, women's rights, the problem of feminism and fascism, feminism and communism, feminism, and pacifism. (See Slapšak 2004: 153–170)¹⁵⁸ She was very transnational: she wrote books in the Serbian and the Czech language and published them in Belgrade, Ljubljana, three of them also in Prague. In all of them she was exposing her profound knowledge of philosophy and culture, between national ideas and transnational context answering to the gender problems in the context of the politic of the national identities and cosmopolitan ideas. (See also Jensterle Doležal 2020: 1–26) According to Magdalena Koch, she was the most active, determinate Serbian feminist and essayist with brilliant mind and sociological thought in the interwar period. (See Koch 2019: 176–184)

Chlapec-Djordjević also wrote a novel and four travelogues. Her Serbian epistolary novel *Jedno dopisivanje. Fragmenti romana (Correspondences. Fragments of a Novel)* published in 1932 (written in the late 1920s) is a homage to Kveder's artistic achievements. The construction of the plot and the motives are also influenced by Kveder's *Hanka*. (Jensterle Doležal 2016: 1–7) According to Magdalena Koch the novel *Jedno dopisivanje* is the first real Serbian epistolary novel written in letters, as a work of literature. It was influenced by the tradition of 18th century European prose writing. Chlapec-Djordjević's text was a very modern modification of the traditional form because of its subversive motives and themes, which became popular already in the beginning of Serbian modernism. (Koch 2007: 149–153)

The writer also depicts gender relations – female and male intimacy in fictive letters between Serbian female hero Marija Prohaskova living in Prague (Czech culture) and her lover, Slovene doctor Oton Šrepan from Ljubljana. Dialogical form is more modern than in the Kveder's novel: the second protagonist is a man. The novel is also more open in other gender reproaches: it depicts not only emotional struggles of a woman, but also the emotional chaos and the “explosion” of the male intimacy. The main theme in the narrative is a secret heterosexual love affair between two married people from middle-class society from different nationalities. The narrative focuses on female and male erotic desire and their fulfilling, even though we have also other gender motives exposed: for example, the problem of a

¹⁵⁸ In the 1930s, Chlapec-Djordjević was one of the prominent figures of the Czech feminist movement – near to Františka Plamínková (1875–1942) and Milada Horáková (1901–1950). She also wrote articles for their journal *Národní rada (National Advice)*.

marriage and a family, gender roles, infidelity of the partners, the relations between parents and children. Intimacy is the main postulate of life.

The simple narrative is presented in a realistic, intellectual style with a lot of intertextual allusions and essayistic fragments. It depicts a secret love affair between a man and a woman, who are married and not young anymore: the Serbian intellectual Marija Prohaskova and the Slovene doctor Oton Šrepan, who continue their story from their student years in Vienna. The love story and the representation of romantic love, which has many retrospective passages, ends inconclusively: it is suggested that in the end Oton Šrepan commits suicide.

Also here, the construction of the main female hero is very autobiographical: we have a middle-age Serbian woman intellectual, living in Prague with three children and a husband – a soldier living somewhere else. Marija is balancing between different cultures, and she is an altruistic, enthusiastic feminist, interested in gender, emancipation, world problems, and cultural transfers. An intellectual discourse on love of the new woman is full of doubt. The narration runs as a flow of ideas and contradictory feelings:

Our relation is unclear. The paths of our future lie in a heavy fog. If we were ten years younger, it would make sense to think about becoming a couple according to our mentality and understanding of life. If we were ten years older, certain wishes and aspirations would not have disturbed us anymore. We are both young and old, and we do not even know if we are more friends or lovers. All this makes us insecure. We are afraid that we will not tarnish the clean memories of our past with forcefulness and compromise, while the experience of each day pushes us to take advantage of the moments and not postpone the joys for tomorrow, because we may not experience them.¹⁵⁹

In the novel there are passages in which the narrator describes two main cultural situations of Chlapec-Djordjević's life: first life in Vienna before the First World War and then life in interwar Prague.¹⁶⁰ In the letters of

¹⁵⁹ "Nejasna je naša uzajamnost, u teškoj magli leži putevi naše budućnosti. Da smo deset godina mlađi, imalo bi smisla misliti na izgrađenje zajednice po našem mentalitetu i shvaćanju života. Da smo deset godina stariji, izvesne želje i težnje ne bi nas uznemirivale. Mi smo i mladi i stari, i ne znamo ni sami da li smo više prijatelji ili ljubavnici. Sve to pravi nas nesigurnima. Bojimo se da usiljenošću i kompromisnošću ne uprljamo čiste uspomene na svoju prošlost, dok nas iskustvo svakog dana goni da iskoristimo trenutke i da ne odlažemo radost za sutra, jer ih možda nećemo doživjeti." (Chlapec-Djordjević 2004: 70)

¹⁶⁰ Here we could find an autobiographical experience: Julka Chlapec-Djordjević attended her PhD in 1906 in Vienna. She lived in Vienna until the end of the First World War, then she moved with the family to Czechoslovakia.

this modern epistolary novel we can discover the construction of the prototype of the ‘modern woman’: an active, intellectually (but not financially!) independent woman with modern ideas on the position in society and also on sexual ethics, living in open multicultural Prague, with all her energy absorbing its rich cultural life. The typical nomadic character of a Central European intellectual of that time is hidden in the metaphor of traveling, which for two lovers signifies the place of freedom. Marija is freer and a stronger personality than her partner: she is not so dependent on duties, demands, and prejudices of the patriarchal society of that time. The narrator is also female gendered: she is emotionally and morally on the side of Marija.

Compared to Kveder’s representation of romantic love, Chlapec-Djordjević is unafraid to show the meaning of erotic for the human condition and also the importance of the individual to fulfil erotic desire – not just to dream about it. At one point, Marija still accepts the double moral of patriarchal society and its hypocrisy: she wants to follow her lover, but because of her children, she refuses to divorce her husband.

Chlapec-Djordjević continued with the new ideas on gender roles as part of her feminist theory on women emancipation in the early 1930s. She persuaded the idea of the necessary women liberation also in her theoretical work, where she expressed the idea that women have the right to be sexually free. She insisted on birth control, and she affirmed female sexuality outside the reproductive context.¹⁶¹ She underlined contraception as one of the liberation methods for women and their erotic life – which was in her time very original and subversive.

V.

In one article I compared Julka Chlapec-Djordjević’s novel *Jedno dopisivanje* (*Some Correspondences*) with the novels of Czech women writers of that time (Helena Malířová, Marie Pujmanová). As a writer, Chlapec-Djordjević was not as talented and artistically skilled in writing as her Czech contemporaries, who came from a long tradition of women writers. In this way, we could compare her Serbian novel, in terms of finding new ways of intimacy and love, as well as models of the “New Woman”, to the Czech novels of this period. For example, Helena Malířová’s (1877–1940) novel *Deset životů* (*Ten Lives*) from 1937 also addresses the issue of female

¹⁶¹ She was the member of some European and American associations for birth control.

identity in her relation to the male sex in Czech patriarchal society, which was shaken by the new ideas of communism – and feminism. Even more interesting is the comparison of Chlapec-Djordjević's novel with the 1931 novel by Marie Pujmanová (1893–1958), *Pacientka dr. Hegla* (*The Female Patient of Dr. Hegel*). The narrative also takes place in Prague and it depicts a middle-class girl who has a fiancée but is romantic with a married doctor. Although Pujmanová's novel is more modern in its narrative strategies, more complex in its narrative composition, and more artistically compelling, the novel by Chlapec-Djordjević is more radical in its construction of a modern female intellectual confidently following impulses of erotic desire and imperatives of love. In the 1930s, she was surely quite subversive in presenting the new woman as a free, autonomous, complex human being with a rich inner world and the right to experience romantic love and to realise her erotic desire – unafraid of her body or her feelings. (Jensterle Doležal 2022: 9–21)

VI. Conclusion

In their novels, both authors depict romantic love and female desire as the main part of their narrative. There is also a clear motif of secret love in both novels – a motif which was, according to Elisabeth Frenzel, one of the most productive in world literature. According to her, this motif, at the end of the 19th century, formed as a secret relationship that became the main solution for a previously unfulfilled or a previously senseless life. (Frenzel 2015: 455) Also in the analysed novels, we find the main belief that secret love, its realisation, and intimacy constitute the only possibility for human existence, specifically female existence. Fictive letters form a psychological picture of the New Woman in literature.

In their autobiographical novels, both South Slavic women writers – cosmopolitan intellectuals with more cultural identities – depict intimate geographies of life, love, and death in one historical period. Among other Central European women writing after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they represented an original narrative and a new female experience: the story of a woman in love who doesn't want to be silent anymore in the "first-person form" – a novelty, according to Leigh Gilmore, because "the women's self-representation describes territory that is largely unmapped, indeed unrecognizable, given traditional maps of genre and periodization." (Gilmore 1994: 5)

This article encompasses the female writers and ideas that challenged the established understanding of the status of women in literature. The shift to intimacy, which we can follow in the literary work of both South Slavic writers, was not just a problem of literary style and searching for new narrative solutions; it was above all a search for the “New Woman” and her way to find freedom. Both women writers strove to represent in their literary work a new female personality, an intellectual, with the right to have a complex inner world with rich yet contradictory emotions and the right to love. Love became, for them, a synonym for new freedom.

VIDA JERAJ

Discovering Intimacy in Impressionist Poetry: The Voice of Slovene Vida Jeraj¹⁶²

In this study I explore the poetry of Vida Jeraj (Franica Vovk, 1875–1932). The fate of the talented poet is the tragic story of a female writer of the small Slovene patriarchal society making her way through life, balancing writing, love, and living at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in the shadow of great historical and political changes in Central Europe: the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, the First World War, and the beginning of the new Yugoslavia, of which Slovenia was a part after the end of the war. In her lyrical discourse I will focus on intimacy in connection with time and space.

My reflections on the topic of intimacy in Jeraj's poetry will begin with the speculations of the philosopher Henry Bergson, the poet's contemporary, who, with his theory of nature and his subjective perception of time and its relation to space, had a profound influence on the generation of Slovene novelists and poets at the turn of the century. Already in his early work, he focused on a special perception of time and space:

We involuntarily fix at a point in space each of the moments which we count, and it is only on this condition that the abstract units come to form a sum. No doubt it is possible, as we shall show later, to conceive the successive moments of time independently of space, but when we add the present moment to those which have preceded it, we are not dealing with these moments themselves, since, they have vanished forever, but with the lasting traces which they seem to have left in space on their passage through it. (Bergson 2001: 79)

In the impressionistic poetry by Vida Jeraj we find a very similar perception of special moments and a new understanding of time and space connected

¹⁶² The author acknowledges financial support by the Slovenian-Czech research project Transformations of Intimacy in the Literary Discourse of Slovene "Moderna" (GAČR project 21-47320L). The first version of the article was published in 2023. (Jensterle Doležal 2023: 180–194)

to intimacy. In her modern perception, Jeraj believed and wrote about the qualitative, special moments related to space. Her close connection between time and space can be expressed as a chronotope – the interconnectedness of temporal and spatial literary relationships (literary “time space”) as formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin.¹⁶³ Her experience of the close connection of time and space in poetry was gained through intense sense perception, including her emotions. In searching for a new poetical language and choosing the right expressions, style, forms, and words, she was also searching for her inner self: the poetical language of emotions.

Intimacy is a category with a lot of meanings and aspects: psychological, philosophical, sociological – and literary ones. I will study this phenomenon in the literature of Vida Jeraj according to the concept of intimacy as defined by Donovan and Moss: intimacy as a long-term emotional connection with, a familiar awareness of, or a deep attachment to someone or something. (Donovan – Moss 2017: 4) In this article, I will point out the historical dimensions of intimacy as part of the European culture of the *fin-de-siècle* period. In Jeraj’s autobiographical poetical discourse, intimacy connecting to the “poetical chronotope” will be analysed. In her lyrical confessions, I will examine her awareness of herself, her relations to the other and to the world generally. The problem of gender and intimacy will also be underscored. Her themes were love, nature, and reflections on existence and death. We know that the perceptions of love and the erotica were at that time traumatic for both sexes.

Her understanding of intimacy and close relations with contemporaries can be traced in her correspondence (with friends, colleagues, love partners) – here we must emphasize the relations with her best friend Zorana Trojanšek Dekleva (1867–1935) and Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901). Nevertheless, in the study I will focus mainly on the expression of intimacy in the poetry of the female poet, who showed in her texts an impassioned relation to the world. Generally, I will also follow her turn – through her poetical discourse and through the themes of intimacy – into modernity.

¹⁶³ Bakhtin analysed the inseparability of space and time in the novel; the word *chronotope* literally means “time space” (a concept he refers to that of Einstein) and is defined by Bakhtin as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.” Nevertheless, it is possible to use his terminology for poetry as well. (Bakhtin 1990: 84)

The beginning of Jeraj's poetry: The period of the "Slovene Woman"

The history of Slovene female poetry is not very long. The first Slovene female poet was Fanny Haussman (1818–1853), who published her first poem in October 1848 ("Vojakov izhod" ["Soldier's entrance"]). In the second half of the 19th century, two distinguished Slovene poets, also prose writers, tried to pursue careers: Pavlina Pajk (1854–1901) and Luiza Pesjak (1828–1898). In the 19th century, only some female writers appeared in Slovene culture, but they were isolated and had no predecessors. Jeraj's foremothers connected their writing to the national appraisal: in their writing, they supported national ideas. The poetic expressions of L. Pesjak were often interwoven with patriotic feelings, but nevertheless in her poetry we also find intimate themes and modern descriptions of nature, landscapes, and changing time. Her poetical expressions were often interwoven with patriotic feelings.¹⁶⁴

In the *fin-de-siècle* period, Slovene women writers were no longer silent and hidden. Women authors were full of life and energy. They were part of the Central European movement and the beginning of modernism in Europe. Vida Jeraj, the first Slovene female poet who voiced intimacy in her work, was the most distinguished poet from the female circle of *Slovenka* (*Slovene Woman*, published in Trieste, 1897–1902), the circle of young female writers of prose and poetry, which was founded even before the organized Slovene feminist movement in 1901. Among them were poets such as Franja Trojanšek Dekleva (Zorana) (1867–1935), Vida Jeraj (1875–1934), Kristina Šuler (1866–1959), Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948), Marica Strnad (1872–1953), and Ljudmila Prunk (1878–1947). They created a new model of a female writer. An important aspect of *fin-de-siècle* modernity was the existence, as well as appearance, of a strong women's movement and a new generation of female authors. Under the guidance of two editors, Marica Nadlišek (1867–1940) (later Nadlišek Bartol) and Ivanka Anžič Klemenčič (1867–1960), this circle of women writers developed a new

¹⁶⁴ In Slovene literature there also existed a strong tradition of "male" intimate poetry from the Romantic era until the period of realism and the end of the 19th century: the greatest Slovene Romantic poet, France Prešeren (1800–1849), wrote love poems with the motifs of tragic love interwoven with patriotic feelings. In Slovene literary society at the end of the 19th century, the national idea and also panslavism were no longer as important as they had been at the beginning of the national revival movement.

type of modern woman – a cosmopolitan intellectual within the Slovene space with a distinct attitude towards herself, others, and her body, as well as a cosmopolitan approach in her work. (Žerjal Pavlin in Verginella 2017: 53–65) Selišnik – Verginella emphasised the emotional culture and the concept of friendship that was fostered by the young and progressive segment of the Slovene female intelligentsia at the turn of the 20th century. (Selišnik – Verginella 2013: 101–120) They wrote, collaborated, critiqued, and supported each other with immense new self-confidence. They also travelled to the different places within the Habsburg monarchy and were passionate readers of contemporary European authors of the time.

Jeraj – in contrast to her Slovene foremothers – searched for language and authenticity in expressing the feelings of her autobiographical lyrical subject. In her expressions of intimacy in poetry, we can follow the identity construction and also the construction of the authorship of the young writer. Vida Jeraj was a nomadic Central European person, part of the “Habsburg myth” with a bilingual, hybrid identity: Slovene and German, as with all other Slovene modernists.¹⁶⁵ Jeraj received a German education and wrote some German texts in the beginning, but thereafter – as with other Slovene modernists – she decided to write in Slovene and to identify with Slovene culture.

Jeraj had problems getting her literary work recognized: she published just one collection of poetry, *Pesmi* [*Poems*; 1908] during her lifetime and she was never really accepted into Slovene literary history. The Slovene literary historian Marja Boršnik, in 1935, wrote the first positive review of her poetry: “She is the first woman who dared to go public with relatively courageous erotic lyrics”. (Boršnik 1935: 65)

Jeraj was also connected to the leading figures of the Slovene “moderna” circle in Ljubljana. This generation appeared on the Slovene scene in 1899 with two anthologies of poetry (O. Župančič, *Čaša opojnosti* [*The Goblet of Inebriation*]; Ivan Cankar, *Erotika* [*Erotics*]). The first wave of Slovene

¹⁶⁵ She was educated in Vienna (1887–1891). At the end of the 19th century for some years she succeeded in financing herself as a teacher and independent writer. She was part of public life in the strict conditions of the narrow-minded Catholic Slovene society. After her marriage to the musician Karel Jeraj (1874–1951) in 1901, she moved to Vienna, where, with her husband, she established a literary salon for Slovene artists. (See Jeraj-Hribar 1992) After 1918 she returned with the family to Ljubljana. In 1932 she committed suicide. Her most creative period lasted for little more than ten years: from 1896 to 1908.

modernism consisted mainly of intimate, erotic poetry, which was also the topic of the texts of the first female Slovene poets during the *fin-de-siècle* period, breaking away from the nineteenth-century habits of thought and writing.

In her work, we can recognize the traces of traditional Slovene poetry from the 19th century and also the influence of Jeraj's Slovene and European contemporaries. However, the main influence on her writing was Heinrich Heine (1797–1856). Jeraj read Heine and translated his poetry throughout her life. Since Jeraj mostly translated Heine's love poems, the great German author was able to teach the young Jeraj how to express her loving feelings and how to be in a dialogue with the Other: how to express the spectrum of different, often also conflicting and discordant feelings in lyrics.

Poems by Vida Jeraj – “Passions of the Heart”

From the beginning of her writing Jeraj's relation to the world generally was erotic and full of desire (in her case, we could speak about Eros as a philosophical phenomenon in a wider sense, a kind of equivalent to “life power”). In her literary confessions, she always tried to go beyond herself and form a communion with “the Other”. She sharpened her lyrical voice in the classical form of confessions in a time of ascending modernism, when in Central Europe the new poets – and also female poets with delicate voices – appeared with completely different, more modern poetics. Modernist poetry did not want to express feelings anymore. In the words of Hugo Friedrich, modern poetry showed dehumanization: poetry without emotions, a “rational escape” from feelings, poems knowing “neither joy nor sorrow” (Friedrich 1972: 196) and also poetry without human dimensions, without a lyrical subject in his/her form being present. On the European cultural scene, some avant-garde women writers were already present and active with that kind of poetry and they deconstructed lyrical confessions in their texts, but experimental poetics was nothing for Jeraj. She preferred traditional confessions. Nevertheless, for Slovene circumstances, her poetry was also innovative: the expressions of her feelings were very modern, and she was brave enough to find her lyrical voice: the first female poet to express her personal feelings – with sometimes traditional poetics. She tried to find original images of the outside world to describe the reality of her inner world, and she looked upon the world through a

lens of intimacy. These intimate spaces of her language in short poems written in a classical form, constitute her originality. Her typical intimate form was also a dialogue with the Other: with her lover. In her later poems she was also in intimate dialogue with the great negater – death. (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 31–107; Jensterle Doležal 2017b: 47–58; Jensterle Doležal 2018: 21–33; Jensterle Doležal 2019: 5–17)

Jeraj prefers short verses, clear, short expressions and a simple but very melodic way of communicating with the reader. Her impressionistic, sometimes decadent poetry is highly autobiographical: her poems represent a diary of her turbulent life. Writing was for her a kind of self-discovery of her rich emotional life. She was looking for a new discourse for all the nuances of her colourful “spiritual and emotional landscape”. In her poems she inhabited nature with her feelings.

The lyrical subject is presented mostly in the first person singular. Her perception of the world is full of uneasiness and restlessness. With a modern sensibility she describes a spectrum of modern feelings in lyrical impressions: from ecstatic fragments of happiness and contentment with life to expressions of a “sick soul”, and feelings of nausea and tiredness, melancholy and sadness.

Light, ethereal poetry full of tender feelings proclaimed the new credo and the philosophy of ascending modernism in Slovene poetry. She often portrays nature in an impressionistic manner. With a modern sensibility, she employs lyrical confessions to express modern sentiments and lyrical impressions. In impressionist writings, subject and object resonate in the sensual and the often even melodic experience of the moment. She depicts the new uncertain position of the subject in the world through the new perception.

In her first poem in 1896, she identified her voice with the collective and the construction of the national idea [“Rojakinjam”, To my Compatriots], but she quickly discovered that her strength and lyrical expression lay somewhere else: in her subjective perception of the world and emotions. Already in the second issue of *Slovenka* in 1897, she published the love poem “Slutnje” [Premonitions]. She revealed her intimate world as a special entity and category. She used the term in the modern sense: this is the expression of the spiritual and emotional inner life – of the soul, which was the term used also by the other members of the “Slovene moderna” group.

Her sensibility was typical of the *fin-de-siècle* period. We can also recognize in her writing at the turn of the century the “identity crisis”, a

personal crisis and, by all means, the crisis of her gender and cultural roles. (See also Lorenz 1995) For Jeraj, as for other artists, the holistic concept of the world was gone, and she was only able to perceive fragments of reality. She often expressed contrasting feelings, depending on moments and her perception of time. Sometimes she felt estranged from reality: the subject-object relation was disconnected. In her most well-known poems she wrote about moments in nature and the blessing of the meetings of lovers, but also about parting and death. Jeraj expressed the moments when she was intimate with herself in the night landscape and also the moments when she felt close to a man, in a dialogue with him. At the end she tended to be in a dialogue with the death. As mentioned earlier, very characteristic for Jeraj's poetry are her impressionist poems about nature, when the speaker describes the world of nature and the variety of different landscapes with the patterns of her feelings. Nature in Jeraj's case becomes the place of her feelings: she tries to express "the landscape of the soul" with authentic poetics. Often she paints ecstatic moments in time – in connection with the space (nature landscape). With all her senses, she absorbs small details and various motifs. In texts, she notes special movements and as a careful "painter" depicts the variation of light found in space, often in dramatic contrasts. The elements are combined to reveal new colours, shapes, movements, and fragrances. The worship of the moments is followed by a great appreciation for nature, where her neo-romantic subject escapes to find harmony and solitude. For Slovene poets of the "moderna" – as for Jeraj – nature played an important role in the literary imagination: the standard metaphors they used applied to nature. For the first time in the Slovene literary imagination, nature becomes a valuable category and a typical space for the lyrical subject. Moments in nature were special for Jeraj: in nature she was truly conscious of the human existence and the metaphysical aspects of being. Sometimes, the poet also interweaves motifs from nature with religious reflections, and she expresses her belief in God, as in the poem "Blešči se v solnci vsa poljana" [All the Landscape is Sparkling in the Sun]:

All the landscape is sparkling in the sun
and the villages all around,
the power of my will is strengthened.
God rises from my soul.

Thus the chalice of the flower opens,
so the seed sprouts from the earth,

so the falcon rises into the blue morning
solemnly rises from dewy soils.¹⁶⁶

Precious moments of peace and concentration in nature provide an intimate experience of place and also of God. The lyrical subject is closer to God and is also in harmony with herself.¹⁶⁷ Even in her turbulent life in Vienna, she tried to turn her memories into homeland and nature, “Doma” [At Home].

Essential to her intimate poetry are her love poems. In her poetry we may trace an autobiographical story of love and separation from the lover, all presented in myriads of different moments: for example, in the playful, light simple poem “Jaz nimam dijamantov” [I Don’t Have Diamonds]:

I don’t have diamonds –
who’s sorry about that? I have a red flower,
he gave it to me!

He is not a prince nor the king of
the land of blue,
but he has a sweet mouth
and black curls.¹⁶⁸

For the lyrical subject love means the highest level of intimacy, which she achieves only in the beginning of the relationship, and it means also erotic closeness. Love is only a matter of certain exceptional moments, a temporary, instantaneous phenomenon.

These emotions may prove quite violent: anger, certain varieties of joy, sorrow, passion and desire. Time here is presented as a great negater: great moments of time are very quickly gone, feelings of separation, estrangement, and loss prevail in her late “dark poems”. The most interesting and innovative language-wise are the poems dealing with the parting of lovers and expressions of sorrow and pain, for example in the poems “Spomin” [Memory], “Ne misli, da ločena sva sedaj” [Don’t Think that We are Really

¹⁶⁶ “Blešči se v soncu vsa poljana / blešči vasi so naokrog, / kipi mi volja okrepcana / iz moje duše vstaja Bog. // Tako odpre se kelih roži, / tako iz zemlje vzkljuje kal, / tako se sokol v sinje jutro / slovesno dvigne iz rosnih tal.” (Jeraj 1908: 4) Free translations of poetic quotations from Slovene to English by Alenka Jensterle Doležal.

¹⁶⁷ Her education was Catholic and she was religious like some of Slovene authors of that period – for the example female poet Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948), the first Slovene lesbian poet, ended up writing religious poems.

¹⁶⁸ “Jaz nimam dijamantov, – / komu to žal je? / Jaz imam rdečo rožo, / to on mi dal je! // On ni princ in kralj ni / dežele modre, / pa ima sladka usta / in črne kodre!” (Jeraj 1908: 18)

separated], “Pojdi v sever med samotne bore ...”, [Let’s Go to the North among the lonely Pines ...]. In those poems, her voice sharpens, becomes more minimalistic and abstract, and the verses end with three points as in the poem “Tam zunaj, tam daleč je moja mladost” [There Outside, Far in Distance my Youth stays], where the abstract feelings of happiness on the one hand, and bitterness and loneliness without hope on the other, are presented in the distance of time (present, past) and space (here, there):

There outside, there far in distance
my youth stays,
here inside, here near all my bitterness.
– There the sacred sun shined once,
here night is without mornings, without evenings is night;
there the flowers looked up at the sky
and the thirsty chalices opened
here the last lights fade,
the desert, – the mists above it are risen.
There only blissful moments, here last beats of the heart!¹⁶⁹

Happy moments of intimacy with the Other are lost and they belong to the past. The lyrical subject distances herself from the world, and her existence loses a sense of meaning. In these very suggestive poems we do not find a direct confession any more. Her emotions escape into metaphors, sentences shorten, noun phrases with few words dominate. Through the new perception she depicts the uncertain position of the subject in the world, filled with unfulfilled metaphysical longing on the one hand and a philosophy of disappointment on the other.

The crucial problem in the writer’s modern existence, presented also in her poetry, is her attitude to erotic and carnal love, expressed in the unresolved relation to her own body and the body of the Other. As was the case with her Slovene contemporaries, she was very uncertain about expressing erotic themes. From her writing we presume that she understood erotica traumatically. She was apprehensive of formulating erotic desire openly in the austere Catholic atmosphere and in a time of the double standards of patriarchal society. Her passionate meetings with her lover always stop with a kiss: the erotic belongs to a forbidden sphere. This suppressed space

¹⁶⁹ “Tam zunaj, tam daleč / je moja mladost, / tu notri, tu blizu vsa moja bridkost. / – Tam sonce je božje hodilo nekoč, / tu noč je brez juter, brez večerov je noč; / tam rože v nebo se ozrle so / in kelihe žejne odprle so / tu lučice zadnje pojemjo, / pustinja, – megle nad njo dremajo. / Tam sami preblaženi hipi so, / tu srca najzadnji utripi so!” (Jeraj 1908: 56)

is hidden between words. Erotic love in her poetry is also expressed in allegorical situations or with metaphors (very often with the motif of a flower associated with the sky, sun, or moon).

Don't ask me what I sense now.
Just love, just love.
Drink tears from my face,
comfort my heart with kisses.

With the flame of your happy eyes
penetrate into the bottom of my eternal soul
and write in it forever
happy moments of these two lives.¹⁷⁰

In her late poems, the most intimate partner for her is death. Melancholy and depression are interwoven into the atmosphere of her dark poetical landscape. In some poems, eluding death is present, and the lyrical subject is conscious of the existence of “demons from the unconscious and from the past”. The motifs of death announced decadent tendencies in her writing. (Jensterle Doležal 2019: 5–17) At the end, the real and the imaginary united in her world: in 1932, she committed suicide. Very suggestive is the poem “Pri mojih durih čaka smrt” [At my Door Death is Waiting], where the lyrical subject is in intimate dialogue with death. Jeraj uses repetition and the symbolic number three from folklore as a stylistic device. All the poems are simple, but very musical.

At my door death is awaiting
and saying: I plod the garden,
where I comfort the souls,
where white stones guard.

– There three iron locks are
open them, three latches, death, for me!
She waited at the door all day, she knocked at it all night.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ “Ne vprašuje me, kaj zdaj slutim. / Samo ljubi, samo ljubi, / solze mi izpij raz lice, / teši mi srce s poljubi // S plamenom oči veselih / v dno prodri mi duše večne / in za veke vanjo vpiši / dveh življenj teh hipe srečne!” (Jeraj 1908: 26)

¹⁷¹ “Pri mojih durih čaka smrt / in govori: jaz orjem vrt, / kjer duše se vtolažijo, / kjer beli kamni stražijo. // – Ključavnice železne tri, / zapahne tri mi smrt odpri! / Ves dan tako čakala je, vso noč potrkávala je.” (Jeraj 1908: 51)

Escape from intimacy to quasi folk poetry and poems for children

From the very beginning until the end of her life, Jeraj identified herself and her poetry with the figure of “Lepa Vida” (Beautiful Vida) from a well-known and often-cited Slovene folk poem from the 19th century.¹⁷² This mystification also expresses the poet’s philosophical stance and explains her modern and complicated attitude towards the world, broadly characterized by existential uncertainty and nostalgic thoughts and desire. Typically for Slovene writers in the *fin-de-siècle* period and also for Slovene modernism, and as in the folk story of Lepa Vida, in her philosophical approach Jeraj expresses longing and dissatisfaction with existence.

All through her creative period, Jeraj changed her lyrical voice: in the beginning her main lyrical strategy consisted of expressions of intimacy. Later on, she changed her ways: in some poems we find only a description of light, idyllic moments in nature written in simple verses – without much personal involvement. In her only book *Pesmi* (1908), one third of her poems are also quasi folk poems, written mostly for children, representing idyllic country life. Here she often uses folklore motifs, being inspired by folk poems.¹⁷³

There is a different sort of intimacy in her children’s poems: there, the perspective of the innocent child presents the intimate relation to the world “in the time of innocence”, where everything is possible in the realms of fantasy, intensified by feelings of absolute freedom. The imaginary is on her side also in these poems: she uses suggestive images, sometimes animal stories and myths. The author in those poems also likes to repeat verses and parts and exaggerates certain phrases. Typical stories in the world of fantasy are idealized tales of the lives of anthropomorphized animals and fantastic creatures. She also works with anthropomorphized motifs of flowers. All of those poems are very melodic and they sometimes look like lullabies and children’s songs.

¹⁷² This widely known Slovene poem inspired a lot of Slovene literary works in 19th and 20th century; novels, plays, songs; each with a new perspective. The most known is the Cankar’s play *Lepa Vida* – an adaptation of Beautiful Vida written in 1911.

¹⁷³ The influence of folklore and folk songs – also for children – was generally great in Slovene literature at that time. Normally in the poetry of different poets we can follow the escape from personal poems to the description of traditional village life and collective images (e.g., her great influence, Josip Murn-Aleksandrov).

It can be established that at the turn of the century Slovene artists' escape into the folklore tradition was the philosophical, post-romantic answer to complicated, isolated modern life and the disillusion of modern man, to the unsolved "I" (Mach's "unrettbare Ich", Lorenz 1995: 111–117).

In that period, Slovene writers sought Slovene identity in a tradition of folk songs and motifs. For male poets, the influence of folk poems and the folklore tradition was just a phase of their writing and a great influence on their motifs, language, and style; for Jeraj, it was a crucial decision in her life. Her female authorship was very fragile and the construction of her writer's identity was very unstable. Her voice was losing its lyrical power, authenticity, and legitimacy.

In her last poem, "Sappho", published in 1922 in the main Slovene newspaper, *Ljubljanski zvon*, Jeraj described the tragic situation of the female poet in the Slovene society of the time. The poem, written in free verse, is a homage to Sappho, one of the first female poets, and generally to the female poetic tradition that extends back to Sappho. At the end of the poem Jeraj concluded that she, as a poetess, did not receive any appreciation in Slovene society.¹⁷⁴ Using metaphorical style, she expressed the idea that exclusion had ruined not only her career but also her life: "All the poems have already been pronounced. The poetess sacrificed herself to the merciless gods in the middle of an empty sanctuary" (Jeraj 1922: 220).¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

According to Henri Bergson the poet develops feelings into images, and the images themselves into words which translate them while obeying the laws of rhythm. In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in our turn experience the feelings which were, so to speak, their emotional equivalents: but we shall never realize these images so strongly without the regular movements of the rhythm by which our soul is lulled into self-forgetfulness,

¹⁷⁴ As mentioned above, she only published one collection of poems (*Pesmi [Poems]*, 1908). Her second book, *Izbrane pesmi [Collected Works]*, was published after her death in 1935. The first anthology was not very well accepted in Slovene literary society: her work was treated differently than that of her male contemporaries, and her poetry was defined by male paradigms. Her response to the misogynist critics of her first book was silence. She also started writing just for children.

¹⁷⁵ "Pesmi so bile izgovorjene. Ona sama se je žrtvovala neusmiljenim bogovom sredi praznega svetišča."

and, as a dream, thinks and sees as the poet (Bergson 2001: 15). We can transpose this very description of poetry to Jeraj's version of poetry. In her intimate poems, she abolished established conventions and shaped her lyrics according to the rhythms of her emotions. Light, ethereal poetry full of tender feelings proclaimed the new credo and the philosophy of the ascending modernism in Slovene poetry. Jeraj's poems are transportive, intimate, and powerfully imaginative. The poems contain short lines and traditional rhyme and structure. Nevertheless, her poems were not just innovative in their content: in very short verses and in a concentrated form with rhythm, she looked for new strategies in poetry. She made a great effort to discover a new style and in some poems she succeeded in that. She was searching for special moments, which she thought were important for her existence. She sought intimacy in nature, in the dialogue with the male counterpart, and at the end in death.

The category of time and space were very important for her impressionist poetical discourse. Jeraj presents the moments of time and emotions with spatial dimensions. We can also recognize the historical dimensions of her emotions: in her poetical discourse on intimacy it is possible to recognize typical *fin-de-siècle* feelings. She expressed herself as an often dissonant, nervous person, with "a malady of the soul". That was her response to the spiritual uncertainties of the time. Her perception of the world was breaking apart, but she was always authentic, full of passion, searching for her true self, eager to "embrace the world".

Jeraj's poems uncompromisingly depicted female experience, ambivalence, and also grief: she discovered intimacy through her original lyrical voice. Even though her intimate poetry promised to offer one of the most original, courageous lyrical poetics in Slovene culture, after her death Jeraj was almost forgotten in Slovene literary history until recently. Unfortunately, also in this case "poetics is politics" (Benstock 1986). She did not get the place she deserved in the Slovene patriarchal culture during her lifetime, so her voice ended in silence. In expressing her intimacy and feelings full of paradoxes in her very original poetry Jeraj represented herself as part of the European culture of the *fin-de-siècle* period. Her poetical imagination and especially her love poetry suggest a very special poetical voice in the Central Europe of the time.

“Next Door, Death is Waiting”: Decadent Features in the Poetry of Vida Jeraj¹⁷⁶

The focus of the chapter is on the decadent tendencies in the poetry and life of Vida Jeraj (Franica Vovk, 1875–1932), the first Slovene female lyricist, who was a vital part of the Slovene modernist network (“Slovene moderna”)¹⁷⁷ in Slovenia and Vienna.¹⁷⁸ Our literary analysis will be centred on the motifs of death and suicide.

In a letter to Vika Juvančič on 4 September 1901, Jeraj clearly articulated the new sensibility of artists at the turn of the century; a feeling of crisis, a consciousness of the end of one era, and an awareness of her inner disharmony and nervousness. She emphasised the experience of a dissatisfied, hypersensitive existence in the modern, ever-changing world at the end of the 19th century, and in that context, she also expressed a modern understanding of time, which formed the foundations for her impressionist poetry:¹⁷⁹

There is no harmony above us, as it is above the forests, above the fields, above the vast deserts. In our souls, we do not have this harmony! We live as if we would like to rush hastily, hastily, as if we want to meet the end of our happiness as soon as possible ... And in all of us, who, alas, were taught to think, there is this dissatisfaction, it is expressed in our entire generation.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ First version in Slovene. (Jensterle Doležal 2019: 5–17)

¹⁷⁷ In various Central European literatures, the literary movement of “moderna” announced the beginning of modernism.

¹⁷⁸ Some writers of the Slovene “moderna” at the beginning of the 20th century stayed in Vienna (Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Ljudmila Poljanec).

¹⁷⁹ Jeraj expressed very similar philosophical attitudes in her letters to Marija Reisner, roj. Ogrinc. The archive of Vida Jeraj, Ms. 1213. Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a, Literary archive in NUK in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

¹⁸⁰ “Harmonije ni nad nami, kakor je nad gozdovi, nad poljanami, nad širnimi pustinjami. V naših dušah ni tiste harmonije! Mi živimo, kakor bi mogli hiteti naglo, naglo, samo da nas preje sreča konec [...] In v vseh nas, ki so nas, žalibog, učili misliti, je to nezadovoljstvo, v vsej naši generaciji se izraža.” (Jeraj in Boršnik 1935: 283)

Jeraj was part of a generation of young, cosmopolitan Slovene female writers who emerged during the *fin-de-siècle* period in Slovene society, then a periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She began to write in the context of a transformation in Central European cultures that ended with the collapse of the former joint state. The emergence of female voices was connected to the feminist movement and new ideas regarding the position of Slovene women in society and art. Agatha Schwartz, in her book about Austro-Hungarian monarchical writers, noted that the turn of the 20th century was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating cultural and literary periods in the history of Central Europe. (Schwartz 2008: 5) A key aspect of *fin-de-siècle* modernity was the presence of strong and organised women's movements, as well as of a whole new generation of female writers. This began with the newspaper *Slovenka* (*Slovene Woman*), which was founded in Trieste in 1897, even before the organised feminist movement in 1901.¹⁸¹ This circle of young female prose and poetry writers established their gender and gender identity through a new style of behaviour in society, becoming the prototypes of the "New Woman".¹⁸² The most distinguished poet in this circle was Vida Jeraj. She was nomadic and had a bilingual hybrid identity, Slovene and German (Austrian), as with all the other Slovenian modernists. She lived in various parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was educated and active and artistically matured between Ljubljana, Vienna, and Trieste, between the centre of events and the periphery. Like the other members of the "moderna", she chose to write in Slovene. For a few years, she successfully established herself as an intimate lyrical poet.

The first distinctly lyrical Slovene poet was also a vital part of Slovene modernist circles, first in Slovenia, then in Vienna. (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 49–56) She was a friend and cowriter of the "moderna" circle, linked to leading figures living in Slovenia (Zasip near Bled) and Vienna. She had a particularly strong bond with Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901), who, although some years younger, was her literary mentor and a friend. In Vienna, alongside her husband, she even cultivated a kind of literary salon for Slovene artists. (Jeraj Hribar 1992: 23)

¹⁸¹ It lasted until 1902.

¹⁸² The term "New Woman" for the type of the new emancipated female intellectual, also a writer, came into use first in English literary history. (See Ledger 1997)

New poetics

In the anthology *Pesmi (Poems, 1908)*, she published the best of her poems from the previous period. Her writing shifted away from nationalism and patriotic sentiments to individualism, attempting to portray her inner emotional life. The topics of her poetry combine love dialogues, separation and death, depictions of nature, the role of writing and of women in society.¹⁸³

In poems published in *Slovenka* (41) and in other newspapers, she autobiographically depicted all the controversies of the lover's diary: the expressed ecstasies of the first meetings and also the despair of separation. Eroticism is merely implied and concealed with other motifs – in the representation of the body, she stops with the motif of the kiss. In her lover's discourse she was not as distinct from the most renowned love poet of the Slovenian “moderna”, Dragotin Kette (1876–1899).

Jeraj's poetry presents a balance between traditional and modern elements, sometimes embracing Slovene folk culture, and at other times favouring modern life in cities. In her depiction of love, she captures the well-known ellipse of love experience: from the initial ecstasies and meetings to moments of divorce and despair. Her most innovative works language-wise are her poems dealing with the parting of lovers and expressions of sorrow and pain. The poet expresses changing moods from hope to despair. The subject's depression intensifies into “cold, cynical resignation” in her poems of love separation. In her literary work, we will concentrate mostly on poems expressing motifs of death. The poems written mostly in the classical “Ich” form of confession are also autobiographical stories of decadent love and death.

The figure of a decadent woman

Vida Jeraj began to publish as a poet in *Slovenka* in 1897. She was part of the generation of cosmopolitan, nomadic Slovene writers who were active on the fringes of a conservative, small society of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the *fin-de-siècle* period, nevertheless during her life also traveling

¹⁸³ Slovene literary historians in the 20th century mentioned her poetry in few sentences. The only profound study of her work was written by Marja Boršnik in the introduction of her poems (Boršnik 1935: 7–65). (See also Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 31–107)

between center and the periphery of the Monarchy.¹⁸⁴ For only a few years (1895–1901) she worked as a teacher (just like most of the first Slovene women writers) and a writer and began to write intimate poetry, which she tried to publish in Slovene newspapers. Her “sisterhood connection” to young intellectuals around the *Slovenka* newspaper also helped her professionally and was immensely important for her writing.

During her “period of being an independent young intellectual” in Zasip (1896–1901), she behaved as an extravagant and decadent female artist. The definition of her gender role in the rigid patriarchal society under the rules of Catholic morality was of very important to her writing career and authorship, and was also sometimes devastating. A few years after her death in 1935, Marja Boršnik edited her selected work. In the introduction, she defined the new sensibility of Vida Jeraj as decadent. This term described philosophical fluctuations and psychological contradictions in the personal profile of the first Slovene female lyric poet:

Everything that is unexpected, new, beautiful can only shake her to the peak in the first moment, excite her, inspire her. Later she passes by the reality with coldness, she is immediately bored. Supports that would permanently have stopped her oscillations, which would have directed her split, destructive life force into unity, she can't find it anywhere. All these basic traits of her nature are so typically decadent that we could not find to such an extent in any Slovene representative of this era ... Because of these characteristics, Vida will be condemned to endless searching and aimless wandering.¹⁸⁵

Erwin Koppen defined *decadence* as a complementary term for tendencies within the framework of the literature of the 19th century and the *fin-de-siècle* which were also embodied by certain authors. Decadent authors, sought to shock the bourgeois society of the time with their subversive ideals and behaviour, as well as with strange and even morbid literary images, which questioned the moral norms of the bourgeois system. (See Koppen 1973) Decadence in performance could also be seen in the case of

¹⁸⁴ She was educated in Vienna from 1887 to 1891. At that time, she lived in the family of her uncle. After her marriage with Karel Jeraj, she again lived from 1901 to 1910 in Vienna, later in its periphery. In 1918, she returned with her family to Slovenia.

¹⁸⁵ “Vse, kar je nepričakovanega, novega, lepega, jo zmore le v prvem hipu do dna pretresti, razburiti, navdušiti, kasneje gre mimo vsega hladna, dolgočasna. Opre, ki bi za trajno ustavila njena nihanja, ki bi enotno usmerila njeno razcepljeno, uničujočo se življenjsko moč, ne najde nikjer. Vse te osnovne poteze njene narave so tako tipično dekadentske, da bi jih bilo težko najti v tolikšni meri še pri kakem slovenskem zastopniku te dobe ... Ob njih bo Vida obsojena na neprestano iskanje in tavanje brez cilja.” (Boršnik 1935: 22)

Slovene poets, who expressed their rebelliousness through their behaviour and, in certain moments, a life attitude. The poets' special sensitivity was connected with feelings of boredom, nervousness, depression, loss, anxiety, and an awareness of the crisis of the century and the end of an era. We can also find these features in the individuality of Vida Jeraj.

Decadent attitudes associated with rebellious behaviour can already be found during Jeraj's youth, in the beginning of her writing, during her quest for an independent life in Zasip (1896–1901). In that period, she socialized with Slovene intellectuals of the time, especially representatives of the “moderna”, who liked to visit her in Bled. Her unconventional and extravagant behaviour shocked the narrow-minded Slovene society at the time, as confirmed by her correspondence and by the letters of others. A young, confident girl with a “Viennese way of thinking”, an Austrian upbringing, and bohemian behaviour was bound to disturb the small village community, even though it was in the vicinity of fashionable Bled.¹⁸⁶ The young poet provoked the village surroundings in provincial Zasip at the turn of the century with her unusual appearance and provocative behaviour, and even with her “challenging” style of dressing. The painter and graphic designer Avgusta Šantel (1876–1968), on 31 May 1901, wrote to her elder sister Henrika Šantel (1874–1940)¹⁸⁷ – a future painter – about Jeraj's unusual appearance and eccentric behaviour:

I saw a teacher in Bled, she caught my eye because 1.) she was wearing terrible lipstick and the underside of her eyes were painted, and 2.) she was dressed in a “secession” style – very strange. Later I found out that it was she who writes under the name “Vida” for *Slovenka* ... You might be interested, right?¹⁸⁸

In 1935, Slovene literary critic Marja Boršnik described, from the memory of her contemporaries, Jeraj's unusual appearance and behaviour in Bled at the turn of the 20th century, which stood out in the company of other, male writers:

¹⁸⁶ Myths about her unconventional behaviour in Zasip and Bled lived on even after her death.

¹⁸⁷ Henrika Šantel was a Slovene realist painter. She studied in Munich at the Women's art academy. Later she painted a portrait of Vida Jeraj.

¹⁸⁸ “Na Bledu sem videla neko učiteljico, padla mi je v oči, ker je bila 1. grozno šminkana in pod očmi barvana in 2. oblečena ‘secession’ jako čudno. Kasneje sem izvedela, da je to tista, ki pod imenom ‘Vida’ za *Slovenko* piše ... Tebe bi bila morda zanimala, kajne?” (Grief 2014: 185)

It happens that, in moments of enthusiasm, she spends her entire monthly salary in one afternoon with the company she likes. She does not care that she will starve the whole month; in extreme playfulness, she launches her shoe into the air; she could be without it, it is possible. She is drunk on herself! In the middle of the road, she plays with a cigarette paper and taps with her foot, and the cavaliers dance around her. She achieved her goal, she dominates them! The way they worship her is peculiar: instead of carpets, they spread their miserable commoners at her feet so that she walks on them like a queen. Vida is blissful in the midst of this frivolous bohemianism devoted only to the moment.¹⁸⁹

The semantics of her pseudonym (pen name) reveal that the poet identified with the story of Lepa Vida (Beautiful Vida). In the folk ballad, the longing for a new life for the beautiful Vida is unfulfilled, her suffering and longing is senseless and tragic, resulting in a fatal disappointment. Vida Jeraj was able to express metaphysical longings, which is evident in this folk ballad, throughout her life. Furthermore, tragic disappointment was also the fate of Vida Jeraj, who began with great hope and a desire to write poetry. In the end, instead of the beautiful Vida, she highlighted the character of Sappho as a poet who did not succeed in her personal life or in her artistic endeavours. (Jeraj 1922: 222)

For several years, she had attempted to establish herself as an independent poet in the Slovene space, but her authorship was also a product of the weak tradition of female authors, very insecure.

In the context of philosophical disappointment and “defeated dreams” – a failed attempt to establish herself as an independent, free intellectual in the Slovenian public space – we must mention her crisis at the turn of the century, in 1900–1901, which on a personal level and from a gender perspective expressed conflicting tendencies and often unsuccessful efforts to achieve freedom in the Slovene society that women writers faced at the turn of the 20th century. Her personal crisis coincided with the general crisis at the turn of the century. The pre-marriage agreement of her family with the musician Karel Jeraj (1874–1951) in 1900 marked the end of her freedom. Jeraj broke off the engagement after a few months in the beginning

¹⁸⁹ “Zgodi se, da v hipni navdušenosti zabije z družbo, ki ji je všeč, v enem popoldnevu vso svojo mesečno plačo. Kaj ji je mar, da bo stradala ves mesec; v skrajni razigranosti zažene čevljev v zrak; tudi brez njega je lahko. Pijana je sama sebe! Sredi ceste igra ‘na kempel’ s cigaretним papirjem in udarja z nogo – kavalirji plešejo okrog nje. Dosegla je svoj cilj – dominira! Svojevrsten je način, kako jo časté: namesto preprog ji pogrnjajo pred noge svoje bedne površnike, da stopa po njih kot vladarica. Vida je blažena sredi tega lahkomiselnega, samo trenutku posvečenega bohemstva.” (Boršnik 1935: 22)

of 1901. For the first and last time in her correspondence, she expressed the rebellion and the uncertainty of the subject whose personal identity, because societal pressure ends in crisis. The desperate letters she wrote to Vika Juvančič (1876–1944) and Franja Trojanšek-Zorana at the end of January 1901 reveal that she was facing a major crisis in her life and that she wanted to escape from a restrictive situation:

And now I feel like a refugee who has just freed herself from the black and unbearable walls and shackles of the prison ...

Where.

I don't know the goal, but my whole being screams with salvation:

To freedom!

My soul needs space, a lot, endless space! Onwards – into the night, anywhere!¹⁹⁰

One 27 January 1901, she wrote something similar to Franja Trojanšek-Zorana:

I have been through a severe mental crisis for the last few days; now I am saved, and my life has changed in a single instant. This is how God has always wanted me. I shook all the considerations off, together with all lies and all hypocrisy. That is to say, now I am a new personality and free. [...] I was engaged in the summer to get married in July ...

I am planning to go to Russia during the holidays. My soul needs space – to be without limits, to take a break!¹⁹¹

Jeraj wanted to escape from the arranged marriage, which she articulated with the metaphor of a journey to Russia as an imaginary land of freedom.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ “In zdaj mi je kakor begunu, ki se je ravnokar osvobodil jetniških črnih zidov in neznosnih okovov ... / Cilja ne vem, a vse moje bitje vriska polno odrešenja: / V svobodo! / Moji duši je treba prostora, veliko – neskončno! Naprej – v noč, kamorkoli!” (Jeraj to Juvančič, 23. 1. 1901 in Boršnik 1935: 31)

¹⁹¹ “Zadnje dni sem prestala hudo duševno krizo; zdaj mi je odrešeno, in moje življenje je dobilo v enem samem silnem hipu novo smer. Tako me je hotel bog od nekdanj. Otresla sem se vseh obzirov, zajedno vseh laži in vsega hinavstva. To se pravi, zdaj sem jaz in svobodna. [...] Poleti so me zaročili, da se julija omožim ... Jaz pa nameravam v počitnicah na Rusko. Moji duši je treba prostora – brez mej, da si oddahnem!” Letter of Vida Jeraj to Franja Trojanšek-Zorana. The archive of Vida Jeraj, Ms. 1213. Rokopisni oddelek v NUK-u v Ljubljani (Literary Archive), Ljubljana, Slovenia.

¹⁹² Russian culture had a special meaning for the young Slovene generation of “moderna” and also for Slovene women writers. Female writers in the circle of *Slovenka* corresponded with each other in the Russian and the Cyrillic alphabet, symbolically creating a world of secret connections and joint efforts. (See electronic collection of letters by Slovene female writers from this circle: <https://pisma-rch.ung.si>).

She never went to Russia and she never became a professional writer. After the crisis, she married the musician Karel Jeraj on 3 September 1901, accepted the patriarchal role of a wife, went with him to Vienna, and gave birth to four children. After that, she wrote fewer poems, and she compensated her desire for art not just by writing but also by spending time with writers, painters, and musicians, who attended her informal literary salon in Vienna.

In 1908, she published her only poetry collection *Pesmi (Poems)*, which she had carefully prepared for several years. However, because of the negative, misogynistic reception of this collection and personal reasons, her voice after the year 1910 almost fell silent, and after the First World War her creative energy died out. The identification with the first female poet, Sappho, which she made in 1922 in her last poem, written for *Ljubljanski Zvon (Ljubljana's Bell)*,¹⁹³ was not accidental; she had wanted to become a professional writer, despite her incredible courage and visible talent, she failed. Unfortunately, after the First World War, she was forgotten as a poet in the Slovene public space, and her confession of a “beautiful soul” rang out into the void; the poetess had “sacrificed herself to the merciless gods in the middle of an empty sanctuary”. (Jeraj 1922: 221)

However, her letters and autobiographical poems reveal that her emotional and intellectual life remained turbulent and full of contradictions and neo-romantic tensions even later on.¹⁹⁴

Decadent style in poetry

At the turn of the 20th century, small literary societies in Central Europe were open to decadent movements, including such decadent authors as Jung-Wien (Young-Vienna). Multilingual Viennese authors were exposed to various Romance, German, Slavic, and Hungarian influences. Their main representative, Hermann Bahr, propagated foreign-language decadent literature and impressionist literature in the press. (Lorenz 2002: 60–62). Dagmar Lorenz points out that Viennese authors – especially Hofmannsthal – accepted European decadence as a theoretical concept critically (e.g., the question of the primacy of art over nature, as posed by Charles

¹⁹³ The main organ for Slovene culture and literature in that period.

¹⁹⁴ See her life and work in: Škerjanc Kosterca 1959, Hlebanja 2003, Štaus 2011.

Baudelaire or the phenomenon of artificial worlds, “paradis artificiels”. (Lorenz 2002: 64–65)

The very intense decadent movement can be found in Czech and Polish culture. Czech decadents Karel Hlaváček (1874–1898) and Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic (1871–1951) wrote decadent verses under the influence of Baudelaire and Verlaine and were even the only editors of the successful and most prominent modernist decadent magazine *Moderní revue* (1895–1925). Croat decadent poet Vladimir Jelovšek (1879–1931) successfully spread the ideas of Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927) from Polish and Czech culture (he lived in Prague in 1897–1905) to Croatia. In Poland, in the context of the *Młoda Polska* (*Young Poland*) movement, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (1865–1940) published the famous poetic work “Koniec wieku XIX” [End of the Century XIX], and Stanisław Przybyszewski wrote a dialogue with the devil and evil in both Polish and German prose and drama.

The Slovene “moderna” established itself in the Central European area relatively late, in 1899, with the publication of two poetry anthologies: Cankar’s *Erotika* (*Erotics*) and Župančič’s book *Čaša opojnosti* (*The Goblet of Inebriation*), written in a decadent tone and decorative art nouveau style, strongly influenced by the decadent movement. The two books marked the beginning of modernism in Slovene literature, caused a controversy.¹⁹⁵ The confessional verses, which depicted love motifs, lyrical subjects were presented in the atmosphere of the night, music, and dance. Unusual feelings of love accompanied typical *fin-de-siècle* representations of women and their bodies, the flowers of evil were also mystical, ideal flowers of love. (Jensterle Doležal 2009: 149–160) Slovene poets embraced intimate lyricism, bravely writing about erotic, carnal love, and exploring gender and attitudes towards one another (women). Frustrations were linked to the modern crisis of the subject and its relationship to the other gender; the concept of life was still modulated by Catholic modernity. Poetic expressions also moved into decadent positions, especially the representation of love. Women were portrayed as ideal, as spiritual beings, sometimes also decadently – as the pictures of the sin.

In that period in the main Slovene newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon*, translations of poems by Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine were published, with some Slovene poets also reading them in the original. In the same

¹⁹⁵ Most issues of Cankar’s *Erotika* were bought by the bishop of Ljubljana Anton Bonaventura Jeglič (1850–1937) and destroyed.

newspaper they also presented some poems from symbolist and decadent Czech lyric poetry, which had a great impact on the poetry of the new Slovene generation. A free translation of the leading article on decadence by the Czech theorist and critic František K. Krejčí (1867–1941) was also published there. Nevertheless, in the small Slovene society, from the beginning, decadence as a phenomenon was received with much negativity and prejudice, so much so that even authors with decadent tendencies refused to label their works with this term. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 59–64)

In Slovene literature, the decadent stylization of the lyrical subject was generally evident in the confessional lyrics of that period in the perception of the other sex, in love poems. In Vida Jeraj's poetry, we find a decadent atmosphere in "attractive pictures of death".

Motifs of death and suicide in Jeraj's poetry

In the second issue of *Slovenka* in 1897, Vida Jeraj published the poem "Slutnje" [Pronunciations], in which she began a poetics of inner feelings, declared individualism, and changed her sensibility away from patriotic statements and the ideology of Slavic reciprocity. In her work, she oscillated between impressionistic descriptions of nature and landscapes and records of love experiences. In the record of moments, the poetess involves her own emotions and even adds reflexive-philosophical glimpses and religious confessions. Similarly to the other representatives of modernity, in her philosophical approach to the world we find a kind of internal division, a persuasion of disintegration, and an uncertainty of the subject. The lyrical subject is beset by internal tensions and a fragmented experience of the world, which is Jacques Le Rider called a "crisis of identity" for Viennese modernity (Le Rider 1990). The lyrical subject also loses certainty in self-perception and perception of the holiness of the world. The lyrical subject is also traumatised in the search for identity, trying to understand the complexity and fragmentation of the modern world.

The temporal sequence of the subject's perception is broken, with only moments, nuances, and fragments depicted, as well as nuances in landscape perception. The lyrical subject in her poetry is similar to that of J. Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901), who also expresses distinctly conflicting feelings. Its form, which adhere to the traditional model of a short poem with a clear rhythm, we sense her shy attempts at modernity. The tension between modern expression and the canon of folk song is also reflected in

the layout of her only poetry collection, which she published in 1908: half of the verses are written in the style of a pseudo-folk song.

Her mature autobiographical poems could be interpreted as confessions of already well-understood decadent themes of love and death. In formally classical form, Jeraj's poems express the whole spectrum of modern feelings: from ecstatic moments to the states of a "sick, tired soul" as expressions of decadence mentality. In the poems, we find feelings of boredom, a loss of meaning and spleen,¹⁹⁶ and a prevailing atmosphere of melancholy and sadness.

In Jeraj's poetry, we find decadent tendencies in her intimate poems on death and suicide. (See also Jensterle Doležal 2017c: 99–100) In these poems, the longing for a new life quickly turns into a longing for death.

She wrote her longest poem "Mrtvemu pesniku Aleksandrovu" I, II [To the Dead Poet Aleksandrov I and II], consisting of two poems, after the death of the poet and friend Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (first published in *Ljubljanski zvon* in 1901). (Jeraj 1901: 533) The poem portrays dying and the death of the poet. The loss of poetic genius in the first poem is thematized across two temporal spaces: in the first three stanzas she describes the morning in nature after the poet's death, with the image of the "calm indifference" of the flowering nature in contrast to the poet's death. In the three following stanzas, time shifts to the past: she focuses on her visit to the dying poet and her painful, almost unbearable experience of the process of dying: her suffering strengthens also because of his strong will to live up until his final moments. (Jeraj 1935: 84, 85) The second poem is more impersonal, and it deals generally with the myth of the poet who is supposed to be in love with suffering and pain because of his complicated destiny¹⁹⁷ – and because he is a poet. "What, you were really in love with suffering / in your hard, unhappy days?"¹⁹⁸ Even in the second, general part, she characterises Murn as a poet of nature who came from poverty "to be moved into the blue azure" (Jeraj 1935: 85). In the poem, the author portrays a myth of the poet's genius by emphasising

¹⁹⁶ Charles Baudelaire first wrote about the experience of spleen in his verses in the anthology *Le Fleurs du Mal* in 1852.

¹⁹⁷ The main Slovene romantic poet France Prešeren (1800–1848) in his poem "Pevcu" [To the Poet] from 1838 encoded the myth of the poet's genius and the idea that the poet is condemned to suffering, and that is the only way he can write poetry.

¹⁹⁸ "Kaj, da si zaljubil se v trpljenje, v svoje težke, nevesele dni?" (Jeraj 1935: 85)

a belief in his immortality. The poet mythologises his personality as one of the main ones of his generation.¹⁹⁹

The philosophical outlook is largely influenced by the concept of nature, which is also the main value category for both the poet and the lyrical narrator. In her own lyrical method, she arranges metaphors in juxtaposition to time and space. Images of the poet's death are contrasted – similarly to Jenko's "*Obrazi*" (*Portreys*)²⁰⁰ – with the soulless nature in springtime bloom, which seethes with a "calm indifference" and is unconcerned by the poet's death.

In the poet's obituary, it paints a vivid picture of the poet's dying and death, which already convey an attraction to death. Representatives of the Slovene "moderna" were, in terms of poetic and philosophical ideas, the heirs of romanticism; in their understanding of the existence, they could also represent the morbidity of existence. Death was an important theme for the romantics (e.g., in Prešeren's poetry). In the Slovene "moderna", death became one of the main concepts of existence, and the modernists experienced it as a positive phenomenon (e.g., the main figure of Slovene "moderna" Ivan Cankar [1878–1918] in his literary works).

In the case Jeraj, the subject's experience of that topics sharpens into a confession of cold, cynical resignation and approaching death in the two late love poems written in 1908: "Tam zunaj, tam daleč je moja mladost" [Out There in the Distance, My Youth Remains] and "Pojdi v sever" [Let's Go to the North]. In the poem "Tam zunaj, tam daleč je moja mladost" the end of the love story is expressed in a very metaphorical way. The dualism of two time periods (the opposition of the present and the past) is organised with the adjectives of place, and it also represents a space for hope in the past and despair and death in the fictive present.

It is precisely in the strictly condensed poem "Pri mojih durih čaka smrt" [Next Door, Death is Waiting], also from 1908, that the poet thematises

¹⁹⁹ France Prešeren already presented the belief in the immortality of the poetic genius in his poem "Neizrohnjeno srce" [Unbroken Heart], as well as other poems. At the same time as Jeraj Slovene modernist Oton Župančič (1878–1949) thematised the poet's immortality in the well-known cycle "*Manom Josipa Murna-Aleksandrova*" (*Homage to Josip Murn-Aleksandrov*) – a cycle of eight poems also written after Murn's death (written from 1901 until 1903).

²⁰⁰ The Slovene poet Simon Jenko (1835–1869) in his cycle of 21 poems (from 1859) imagines the fate of humankind where nature is represented in contradiction to human acts and sometimes a tragic form of destiny. In the foreground are images from nature in relation to man or life in general. It shows the insignificance of man and his efforts in the world compared to the life of nature.

the proximity of death as a physically experienced figure in the reality of space. The loss of a loved one and the unwelcome separation of the lyrical subject intensifies the longing for death, and the poet expresses this in sparse words and in a minimized form. The verses evoke a Gothic imagination; the lyrical subject awaits death, as it is the death that will open the door into the open cemetery (the metaphor for freedom!), locked with three locks. The descriptive statement in the first stanza gives way to an invocation of death in the second stanza, as the lyrical subject invites it into a confidential proximity:

Next door, death is waiting
and saying: I am ploughing the garden,
where souls are comforted,
where white stones guard them.

– O death, could you open three iron locks,
three bolts! –
She was waiting for this all day,
all night she was knocking at the door ...²⁰¹

Throughout her poetic development, Jeraj wrote some poems with the motif of suicide in the water.²⁰² Thoughts of suicide followed her in real life as well, as she herself had even attempted suicide in her youth. On 29 November 1892, her friend and cousin Tone Svetina, with whom she had a romantic relationship, shot himself.²⁰³ This was the motif that returned to her in different stages of artistic creation, even just before her death. She exposes the most decadent feelings of the subject in the motif of suicide in the water in the poems: “Balada I” [Ballad], “Bičje zašumelo je” [The Rush has Rustled], “Jezero mojih dni” [Lake of My Days], and “Pod bregom” [Under the Banks].

²⁰¹ “Pri mojih durih čaka smrt / in govori: jaz orjem vrt, / kjer duše se vtolažijo, / kjer beli kamni stražijo.– Ključavnice železne tri, / zapaha tri mi, smrt, odpri! – / Ves dan tako čakala je / vso noč potrkovala je ...” (Jeraj 1935: 120)

²⁰² Not all of these poems appeared in her collected work in 1908.

²⁰³ She depicted the reality of that event in the poem “Spomin ob Savi” [Memory Near Sava River, *Ljubljanski zvon* 1897]. The poetic confession recalls love and also the death of a dear friend with whom they occasionally met by the Sava River in a basin named Ljubodol. In a fit of emotion, the boy shot himself right on the banks of the Sava ... The poet depicts her disappearing after the death of a close friend, with the baroque metaphor of a boat that has lost its orientation on the ocean.

In the poem “Balada I” [Ballad I, *Ljubljanski zvon*, 1904], the lake attracts a lost soul to the bottom. Written in the style of popular folk poetry, the ballad reflects the idea that, after the initial uncertainty, the soul willingly submits to the watery depths.

In the first stanza, the baroque construction is evoked, depicting a forlorn soul coming to the lake to speak with God. The landscape that surrounds the lake and the space above it, even heaven with its stars, seems to be beckoning the soul to death, to nothingness, as the ultimate destination for eternal rest. In the second part of the poem, the situation of death in the water grotesquely illustrates and evokes a gentle lullaby sung by the lake to the lost soul before death. A stylised lullaby, sung by a loving mother to her child, intensifies the tragic tones of the confession:

The lake took
the stars into its lap,
and sang and rocked them:
ay, ay, ay, ay – //

What have you lost, /
my child, here,
that the lonely way brings you into this dark place?

[...] The lake took
the soul into its lap, it sang and rocked it
ay, ay, ay, ay –²⁰⁴

The poem “Jezero mojih dni” [Lake of My Days, manuscript 1914]²⁰⁵ has three quatrains that succinctly convey the message of the poem in a minimised form. The main image is that of a post-suicide scene, which is introduced in the first stanza with a question that could suggest the very depth and already dark incomprehensibility of the self as a bottomless lake. The second stanza depicts the dead body in the water; the picture of the drowned man at the bottom of the lake is in the forefront of the lyrical images.

²⁰⁴ “Jezero je vzelo / zvezde v naročaj, / pelo in zibalo: / aja, aj, aj, aj – // Kaj si izgubilo, / dete moje, tod, / da te v noč privela / je samotna pot? // ... Jezero je vzelo / dušo v naročaj, pelo in zibalo / aja, aj, aj, aj – “(Jeraj 1935: 101, 102)

²⁰⁵ Vida Jeraj to Ivan Cankar in an undated letter with the year 1914. Zapuščina Ivana Cankarja, Ms 819. The archive of Ivan Cankar. Rokopisni oddelek v NUK-u v Ljubljani (Literary Archive), Ljubljana, Slovenia.

With his death, the lyrical subject feels mystically connected: the world of the dead attracts her because oblivion is also a place of salvation. The genitive expression in the title of the poem expresses a metaphorical layer of the poem; a lake is a metaphor for the inner core of the self, hence the lake of her days. It is also a place of death, thus the connection between the subject's attitude and the external space is both destructive and desirable.

The confession continues with the constitution: the world of premonitions and memories scares the subject, the horror of human existence pursues her, she stands between reality and dreams: "Premonitions, a wave of memory / scares me as in a dream." (Jeraj 1935: 130).

The poem has a strict semantic structure: in the second stanza, it paints a concrete image that is complemented by a contrasting dramatic arrangement: on the one hand, the horror of the dead in the black depth, and on the other, the beauty and limitlessness of the space, which is emphasised by the reflections of sunlight and stars on the surface of the lake. Here, too, the author uses spatial oppositions in her poetic strategies and contrasting images in the semantic composition, which reflect the metaphysical structure of the poem: on the one side, the motif of the dead in a black abyss of water, and on the other, the colourful nature of the landscape that expands into an infinite cosmos. Death is surrounded by the beautiful scenery of the lake's banks – and also by the infinity of the horizon, which we could understand not just as an opposition but also a continuation of the image.

The lake of my days,
where is the bottom, what is the bottom?
A premonition, a wave of memories
The whole thing scares me like a dream.

Dead on the black bottom ...
but on the amazing banks,
when the sky opens
It pours down the sunshine, the stars!!²⁰⁶

Here, we could discuss the representation of a beautiful death, which is enveloped by the harmony of the universe. A metatextual comparison of

²⁰⁶ "Jezero mojih dni, / kje je dno, kaj na dnu? / Slutnja, spomina val / straši me kakor v snu./ Mrtvi na črnem dnu ... // a do bregov prelest, / ko se razpne nebo, / sonca nasuje, zvezd!" (Jeraj 1935: 130)

the poem with Cankar's text *Milan and Milena* is inevitable,²⁰⁷ which also ends similarly with the representation of the tragic end of one man and a woman who are in death finally united in harmony with the world and the infinity of space.

The final stanza is a lyrical decrescendo and a calming of dramatic contrasts, as well as an acknowledgement of the defeat of the lyrical subject. In a typical impressionist poem that builds on moments, the expansive nature of the environment awakens a certain psychological state inside of the subject. In the impression of a walk by the lake, the motif of birches stands out, emphasising the loneliness of the subject, who reaches a dead end. The past is too strong and associated with grief. The basic, dominant feeling of the lyrical subject is sadness.

Quiet evening route,
birches two, birches three ...
Grief rocked
all the days passed.²⁰⁸

Considering the poem was first noted in the letter that Vida Jeraj sent to Ivan Cankar in 1914, she emphasised in the poem the connection to Cankar's text *Milan and Milena*, and the poem was influenced by the ending of this short novel and a positive response to Cankar's text. The poem, which shares a very similar imaginary to that of a novel, could be understood as a tribute to Cankar's work and their spiritual friendship.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Ivan Cankar (1878–1918) first published the novel *Milan in Milena* in the newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon* in 1913. The story describes the life of a man and a woman from their youth until the end of their lives. Life is depicted as unbearable, the only solution being death. The narrator in that modern tale underscores the gendered perspective and the tragic meaning of eroticism in their life path. Because of the moralistic, narrow-minded society, both characters commit suicide in the water and their bodies are united at the bottom of the lake. Their bodies finally find peace.

²⁰⁸ "Tiha večerna pot, / brezi dve, breze tri ... / Žalost zazibana / vseh prebolelih dni." (Jeraj 1935: 130)

²⁰⁹ Ivan Cankar included the motif of a beautiful death in the poem "Na zemljo dahnil je večer" (The Evening Breathed to the Earth, in the cycle *Helena* in the book *Erotika*, 1899), where, in a dreamlike reality, the desired girl appears to the poet on the mortuary stage, surrounded by people who are praying. In 1906, the Croatian poet Antun Gustav Matoš (1873–1914) expressed a similar motif in the poem "Utjeha kose" [Comfort of the Hair]. In a dreamlike reality, the lyrical subject addresses a dead lover lying on the mortuary stage in a "hall presented with beautiful death" (Matoš's expression) – only luxurious hair is "alive" on the girl's beautiful corpse.

She also depicts suicide motif in the poem “Konec” [The End], published in 1924 in *Ljubljanski zvon*. In short, minimalized verses, she evokes the transience and immediacy of human life as the deepest acknowledgement. Here, too, the lyrical situation is presented in contrasts and in the grotesque hiatus in the picture. Already in the first stanza, the image of a man walking into the blue spring morning, adorned with trumpet flowers, is disrupted by the announcement of death. The motif of suicide, together with the motif of a pistol, triumphs over the images of life. Death is depicted in the ornamentation of flower trumpets as an image of a beautiful scene in the midst of a yellow and blue-coloured spring.

And so a man goes in the blue morning, ...
(trumpets everywhere) ...
He will be saved from life
and spring
– with a pistol.²¹⁰

Nature is no longer an independent entity; rather, it only functions in contrast with suicide. The grotesque conclusion implies that death is a solution. In the second stanza, the rhetorical question is posed, asking whether suicide is an act of power or foolishness, an act of a wise man or a foolish one.

In the last poem with a suicide motif, “Pod bregom” [Under the Banks], the poet again portrays the suicide of her best friend Tone Svetina in the past and its effects on her attitude toward life and death. She conveys the death of the friend in a concrete landscape. A poem which evokes the end of all expectations under the banks of the Sava River was published in 1932 in the newspaper *Ženski svet* (*Women’s World*), only after Jeraj death, and it was not included in the poetry collection in 1935. The initial autobiographical confession is a variant of the older text written thirty years earlier (“Spomin ob Savi” [Memory near the Sava River], Jeraj 1897: 38) in a much longer form. In a personal, sentimental confession, the poet follows the strictly formal requirements of metre and rhyme. She adjusts the discourse to the realistic norm of expression. Compared to previous poems, we miss the height of lyrical suggestions and metaphorical level of the poetry.

In the atmosphere interweaving the past and the present, the poet repeatedly expresses feelings of despair and resignation. With indefinite

²¹⁰ “Gre ti človek v sinje jutro, ... / (cvetje primul čez in čez) / da odreši ga življenja / in pomladi – samokres.” (Jeraj 1935: 127)

questions, she turns to her inner world, hinting at what she perceives to be the only solution to an unbearable existence: suicide.

How to break out of the immense pain?
How do we get rid of all our troubles?
He showed me the way to Ljubodol,
Beneath the “banks” –
The clear waves of Sava play! ...²¹¹

Her poetic inspiration, suffocated by personal pain, expresses how poem is strongly influenced by Prešeren's diction from the philosophical poem “Kam” [Where, 1838]. In the first stanza we hear the philosophical question of the uncertainty of human existence asked by her relative almost a hundred years earlier. The last stanza is a repetition of the first.

A longing for death was too strong in her life.²¹² By the end in her story, reality and fiction had tragically connected: on the twenty-fourth anniversary of the death of her son, on 1 May 1932, Vida Jeraj committed suicide.

Conclusion

The poetry by Vida Jeraj can be rightfully classified as a triumph of the Central European movement of “moderna”. When analysing her work, it becomes clear that she was not only a master of depicting nature and inner feelings, moments of love, passion, and emotional intoxication as well as loss and separation, but in her autobiographical poems she held very modern contradictory feelings, expressing the end of one world and one period and her longing for death.

Her ideas of death and her experience with the meaningless world could be compared to verses by other decadent writers. For example, Polish poet

²¹¹ “Kako iztrgati neizmerno bol? / Kako rešiti vsega se gorja? / Pokazal sam mi pot je v Ljubodol –, / Pod ‘bregom’ – / Save bistre val igra! ...” (Jeraj 1932: 201)

²¹² The idea that she belongs more to “the other side of the living and dead”, had developed in her mind before the tragic event. On 31 September 1931, she wrote to Zorana, her best friend and relative, also a poet: “Kako ti je? Jaz sem samo še stroj, ne več duševnost. Oči upiram samo v kraj počitka in miru – četudi ljubim to lepo zemljo čez vse!” (“How are you? I feel just like a machine, no longer a soul. I only fix my eyes on a place of final rest and peace – even though I love this beautiful land more than anything!”) Letter of Vida Jeraj to Franja Trojanšek – Zorana. The archive of Vida Jeraj, Ms. 1213. Rokopisni oddelek v NUK-u v Ljubljani, Literary Archive in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (1865–1940), in his poem “Koniec wieku XIX” [The End of the Century, 1894], presents a dramatic confession on nonsense in the life of a human. Also, in other poems he sees the only hope in the vanishing in nothingness, and he wishes for the disappearance of his existence. In the poem “Nie wierzę w nic” [I Don’t Believe in Anything] he writes:

I don’t believe in anything, I don’t want anything in the world
I abhor all deeds, I sneer at all zeal:
I knock the statues of my dreams off their pedestals
and devastated, I throw them into the oblivion of the trash ...²¹³

At the same time, Czech poet Karel Hlaváček (1874–1898), in his poem “Mstivá kantilena” (Cantilena of Revenge, 1898), declaratively denies all the values of the human existence:

Unfortunately everything is dead,
everything is dead, the landscape is no longer breathing,
pride and rebellion went away,
the roar of revenge will not sound again here in the dead silence.²¹⁴

Compared to other decadent poets, Jeraj’s discourse was also one of death, but not so declarative and reflexive in the philosophical articulation of the ideas, nor as clear in its persuasion. She tried to persuade with the force of her imagination. The poet was captivated by death in the same way that Odysseus was by the song of Sirens, who enchant all who come near them. As a decadent writer, she was attracted to death, “bewitched by the sweetness of its song” in some of her love poems, where longing for life sometimes brought about longing for death. In her short, minimalistic poem “Pri mojih durih čaka smrt” [Next Door, Death is Waiting] she depicts the nearness of death with almost gothic imagination.

She was not a stranger to decadent tendencies, expressing typical *fin-de-siècle* sentiments, often thematised with motifs of death and suicide. The

²¹³ “Nie wierzę w nic, nie pragnę niczego na świecie, / Wstręt mam do wszystkich czynów, / drwię z wszelkich zapałów: / Posągi moich marzeń strącam z piedestałów / I zdruzgotane rzucam w niepamięci śmiecie ...” (Przerwa-Tetmajer, “Nie wierzę w nic”, 1894: 1).

²¹⁴ “Již mrtvo vše, již mrtvo vše, kraj ani nezavzdychá – a marno vše a marno vše – ten tam je vzdor a pýcha, ryk msty již nikdy nezazní zde do mrtvého ticha.” (Hlaváček, “Mstivá kantilena”, 1898: XII)

images of death in her poems are aestheticized and connected with motifs of nature and concepts of spatiality and temporal categories.

Despite being overlooked and underestimated by the broader literary world because of the limited reception of her work in the cultural space of her time as well as in Slovene literary history in the 20th century, Vida Jeraj, with her intimate poetry, brought about a significant shift in Slovene poetry. To this day, her distinguished lyrical poetry of thoughtfully short verses can be discovered as a new voice in Slovene and Central European modernity.

Becoming a Slovene Poet at the Turn of the 19th Century: Male Censorship of the Vida Jeraj's Poetry²¹⁵

The 21st century has seen censorship become a very real phenomenon; however, in terms of theory, there is no clear consensus on what the term actually signifies. Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler have offered useful theories on this subject. Helen Freshwater proposed an inclusive definition that takes into account the diverse experiences of censorship and its sociohistorical specificity. This definition acknowledges that censorship is a process realised through the relationships between censorious agents, rather than a series of actions carried out by a single authority. Furthermore, to reflect the ethical complexity of speaking for the silenced, this definition of censorship is based on the inclusive logic of “both/and”, rather than the censorious modality of “either/or”. (Freshwater 2014: 217) This theoretical concept can also be applied to the Slovene context.

Gendered censorship in the Slovene context

Intellectuals and writers from Slovene culture, which was a part of the Habsburg monarchy, experienced very tough political censorship throughout the 19th century, from the era of Romanticism to the end of the century. During this period in particular, there were numerous political agents who promoted different types of ideological systems in the small, provincial Slovene land as part of the larger monarchical state. The writers had to contend with three main sources of power: the political ideology of the monarchy, the ideology of the Catholic Church, and later the ideology of

²¹⁵ The author acknowledges financial support by the Slovene–Czech research project Transformations of Intimacy in the Literary Discourse of Slovene “Moderna” (GAČR project 21-47320L). The work was also supported by the Cooperatio program, Research area Literature/ Mediävistics (project of Charles University, Czech Republic).

the Slovene nation. Marijan Dovič and Luka Vidmar established that from 1790 to 1848 the monarchical censorship in Slovene culture was primarily characterised by a centralised and comprehensive pre-publication censorship, which was further intensified by restrictiveness (a system of granting concessions), economic constraints (i.e., taxes and deposits), and severe penalties. (Dovič – Vidmar 2021: 36, 37) They also highlighted the existence of retroactive censorship after 1848, which lasted until the beginning of the First World War. (Dovič – Vidmar 2021: 37–41)

Nevertheless, at the turn of the 19th century, gendered censorship was also present in Slovene culture as an implicit form of censorship; this was connected to the emergence of the second wave of Slovene women writers.²¹⁶ Judith Butler highlighted that implicit and powerful forms of censorship suggest that the power of censorship is not exhausted by explicit state policy or regulation. She emphasised that such implicit forms of censorship may, in fact, be more effective than explicit forms in enforcing a limit on speakability. (Butler 1997: 130)

The socio-political climate in Slovene culture during this period reflected a divided, polarised society with considerable tension in gender relations, and the suppression of women in the cultural sphere. Society and public spaces at that time were clearly divided; the main writers, critics, and editors of major literary and cultural publications were all male.

The entry of women into the public sphere in Slovene culture as part of the Habsburg monarchy occurred in tandem with the growth of the national movement and feminism, which was typical of the contemporaneous processes across Europe. (Selišnik – Verginella 2018: 1–17) The public activities of young intellectuals took place within the framework of the multi-ethnic and multinational empire of Austria-Hungary, which was destabilised in the 19th century by numerous nationalist movements, seeking to consolidate their national identities.

Along the author's journey, there were numerous challenges for the young female poet to advance her career and have her works published in Slovene newspapers. As Slovenia was part of the conservative Austro-Hungarian monarchy, women's roles were greatly restricted. Within the framework of the patriarchal power and the existing discourse, women

²¹⁶ In the 19th century, only some female writers appeared in Slovene culture (the most distinguished Pavlina Pajk (1854–1901) and Luiza Pesjak (1828–1898)), but they were isolated and had no predecessors. They were also connected to the national appraisal: in their writing, they supported national ideas.

did not have many opportunities to voice their opinions. According to Greene and Kahn, “The oppression of women was both a material reality, originating in material conditions, and a psychological phenomenon, a function of the way women and men perceive one another and themselves.” (Greene – Kahn 1985: 3)

As with all European *fin-de-siècle* writers, Slovene writers sought to explore new literary styles. They introduced Impressionism, Symbolism, and Decadence into Slovene literature. According to Felski, since they were “caught between the still-powerful evolutionary and historical models of the nineteenth century and the emergent crisis of language and subjectivity which would shape the experimental art of the twentieth, the turn of the century provides a rich textual field for tracking the ambiguities of the modern.” (Felski 1995: 30)

During this period, a big generation clash occurred in Slovene literary culture, which paved the way for writers to embrace modernity in Slovene culture. It was a time of great transformation; *fin-de-siècle* writers approached writing with a new found nervousness. In their works, they delved into subjectivity by employing new psychological and philosophical approaches to the question of existence.²¹⁷ Imaginative writing was predominant in literature, as evidenced by the symbolist and decadent works, which depicted discordant emotions, as well as themes of anguish and anxiety.²¹⁸

The young generation of Slovene writers, the circle of Slovene “moderna”, tended to encounter difficulties in terms of the reception of their initial literary works within the inflexible cultural milieu of the past, wherein realistic standards had been the norm and the readership of the narrow Slovene society had become accustomed to them.²¹⁹

The emancipation of women in the Slovene territory led to increased equality in rights and opportunities. At the turn of the 20th century, Slovene female writers tried to transition their careers from the private to the public sphere. This was reflected in the establishment of the first Slovene women’s journal, *Slovenka (Slovene Woman)*, in 1897 in Trieste, and the emergence of a group of young Slovene women writers, of which Vida

²¹⁷ Franc Zadavec declared in the texts of Slovene “moderna” the turn to subjectivism. (Zadavec 1999: 15)

²¹⁸ Literary historians also deliberately named this period “New Romanticism”.

²¹⁹ The first texts of the Slovene “moderna” originally received negative public reception. In their critical reflections, the critics of the major Slovene newspapers repeatedly used moralistic criteria, ideological norms, and prejudices. They also reviewed literary texts with the criterion of mimesis. (See Jensterle Doležal 2017d: 151–167)

Jeraj was a member. The journal was founded before the organised Slovene feminist movement in 1901. Among them, Jeraj was considered to be the most talented female poet.²²⁰

At the end of the 19th century, the topic of intimacy was prevalent in Slovene literature. The beginning of Slovene modernism (the so-called Slovene “moderna”) was marked by the emergence of erotic poetry, with the dialogue of love between the sexes being the primary focus of male poets, and female poets following suit. This “moderna” generation began in 1899 when two anthologies (O. Župančič’s *Čaša opojnosti* [*The Goblet of Inebriation*], and Ivan Cankar’s *Erotika* [*Erotics*]) were published.²²¹

On 5 January 1901, the prominent Slovene impressionist poet, Josip Murn-Aleksandrov, wrote to his female colleague and friend, Vida Jeraj: “Being a writer is not so easy, especially for a woman. In ourselves, a certain distrust a priori exists for women inherited by nature.”²²² This paper aims to analyse the gendered censorship that was visible in the correspondence between Vida Jeraj (1875–1932), the main Slovene female poet of intimacy at the turn of the 20th century, and her male colleagues, who were also writers. This had a great impact on the poetic strategies of the young and promising poet. Gendered censorship in this case was a problem of discourse and language.²²³ The study of Jeraj’s ego documents demonstrates how gendered prejudices formed the poetic career of this talented young writer with promising impressionist poetics, who was recognised by Slovene public organs, such as newspapers and revues, at the beginning of the century. (See also Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 35–107)

This case study of Vida Jeraj will show that for Slovene women it was almost impossible to break through and to persuade the literary audience

²²⁰ Jeraj, in the view of Slovene literary historians, was recognised as the most original and talented. (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 74–77) Joža Mahnič wrote that Jeraj’s original and free lyrics is, among the Slovene female poets of that time, the most prominent. (Mahnič 1964: 207)

²²¹ The most prominent male authors of the Slovene “moderna” were Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), Oton Župančič (1876–1946), Dragotin Kette (1879–1899), and Josip Murn Aleksandrov (1879–1901).

²²² “Pisatelj biti ni tako lahko, zlasti pa še za ženske ne, do katerih nam je že a priori od narave vcepljeno neko nezaupanje.” (Murn 1956: 174)

²²³ This correspondence is, for researchers, the most visible form of communication between them. There were also other forms: things they said and did also expressed performative acts and showed patriarchal power, and unwritten norms of behaviour in the society. The other expressions of male power in communication also merged the intimate and public spheres of writers.

that their work was worthy and valuable. Jeraj was nomadic and cosmopolitan, with a bilingual, hybrid identity: Slovene and German, like all the other members of Slovene “moderna”.²²⁴ As the others of the “moderna” group, she wrote in Slovene. As she was establishing her poetics, she had to justify her place in the Slovene literary system. This was a shared difficulty amongst the modern generation of writers at the turn of the century, but for the first real Slovene generation of female writers, it was almost impossible.²²⁵ Furthermore, the topics of intimacy that were featured in the lyrical confessions of female poets were also subject to censorship.

She wrote and published her poems as part of the “Habsburg myth” and in the shadow of great historical and political changes in Central Europe: the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, the First World War, and the emergence of the new kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), of which Slovenia was a part after the end of the war.

Ambitious and unconventional poet... Willing to respect the authorities?

Vida Jeraj broke through into the public arena at the end of the 1890s (at the turn of the 19th century). She published primarily in *Slovenka*, yet she was also able to publish some of her poems in the main newspaper, *Ljubljanski zvon*. We are particularly interested in the initial period of her career, when she resided in Zasip, near Bled (1897–1901), striving to establish her career in the Slovene public arena as an independent teacher and unconventional writer. When we analyse her correspondence with her contemporaries, we find a surprising fact. It was difficult for Vida Jeraj, as a female poet, to make her mark in the Slovene literary milieu, not only due to the numerous gendered prejudices in society and its misogynistic critics, but also due to the “soft” gendered censorship of her close male colleagues and friends.

²²⁴ She was partly educated in Vienna (1887–1891), where she lived with her uncle. From 1901 to 1910 she lived in Vienna with her family.

²²⁵ Jeraj was a friend and fellow writer of the “moderna” circle, connected to the leading figures (Josip Murn-Aleksandrov and Ivan Cankar), living in Slovenia (Zasip, Bled) and Vienna. At the beginning of her career as a teacher in a small village near worldly, famous Bled, she was a self-supported, independent intellectual, which would have a big impact on her patriarchal position later: being only the wife of a celebrated musician (Karel Jeraj) and a mother of four children in Viennese bourgeois society.

In her formative writing period, two writers had a profound influence on her style and the trajectory of her poetic career: her friend Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901); and the renowned poet Anton Aškerc (1856–1912), a leading figure in Slovene poetry of the time, a mentor to all young Slovene poets, and the editor of the main Slovene newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon*.

From the time when Jeraj was almost unknown to the public, there exist five letters from May to September 1897 that Anton Aškerc,²²⁶ an epic poet, wrote to the young, talented female poet. Aškerc had an impressive facility for storytelling and preferred realistic poetics and traditional forms of expression, often incorporating social motifs into his poetry, and favouring epic themes. His realistic poetics merged with post-romanticism. His most renowned anthology, *Balade in Romance (Ballads and Romances)* from 1890, featured themes drawn from history, folklore, and contemporary life, and his poetry conveyed patriotism, religious criticism, and a critical view of society. Furthermore, his poetry demonstrated both great imagination and knowledge of other cultures.

Throughout their correspondence, Jeraj was a novice, publishing his first love poem in *Slovenka* on 16 January 1897. (Jeraj, “Slutnje” [Premonitions], 1). It is a brief, intimate love poem. An autobiographical confession is composed in a straightforward traditional style and a love dialogue is depicted between the first person of the lyrical subject and the love object (you). The subject expresses intense emotions, is haunted by dreams and longs for a great future realization.

A thousand sweet premonitions
candles my soul,
when your eyes
meet mine.

Blessed and happy
I look at you

²²⁶ Aškerc was a Catholic priest who at that time lived in a small town near Velenje (1894–1898). He was the main Slovene poet at the end of the 19th century, the most respected in literary circles. From 1895, in *Ljubljanski zvon*, he was responsible for young talents: the main editor Viktor Bežek entrusted him with editing the literary portion of the newspaper. He remained an editor of the newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon* until 1902. After 1899, he was a co-editor of *Ljubljanski zvon* with Anton Mikuš, and from 1900 until 1902, the main editor.

and I dream about the never-ending happiness in life
and about the golden days.²²⁷

Even in subsequent intimate poems, the autobiographical lyrical subject with modern sensibility uses lyrical confessions to express modern feelings. Subjectivity is articulated in brief, evocative poems with symbolic implications. The confession of the lyrical subject generally stops in time to look for a sense of purpose.

It was already evident in his letter that Aškerc read her first poems in *Slovenka*. Jeraj's lyrical poetry at this time was a great mosaic of modern emotions; it was in some ways rather ethereal and subjective. Aškerc did not approve of this; instead he suggested she could change her writing style and focus on "prose or short stories" that were more grounded in reality. He asked her directly: "Are you not interested in social issues?" His primary recommendation was to "stick to the solid ground of reality".²²⁸

She held his advice in high esteem and sent three poems in an epic style to Aškerc in his capacity as an editor of the newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon*: "V stolici" [In the Capital], "Stava" [A Bet], and "Rojenice" [Witches].²²⁹ In the third letter, he advised her to submit the two last romances with social commentary to *Slovenka* rather than to "his" *Ljubljanski zvon*.

He was the principal Slovene professional "poeticus arbiter"; therefore, in his second letter (8 June 1897) he proposed to her some novel poetic solutions. He emphasised the significance of poetic imagery and metaphors in poetry: "To say as much as possible with images – this is one of those secret solutions that make up a poetic style."²³⁰ He also advised her to use a more varied and relaxed verse by alternating between masculine and feminine rhymes. He additionally advised her not to incorporate fantastical elements into her poetry and to shift towards realism.

He expressed his fear that he may have been too authoritative in his initial letter to the young poet, thus recommending that she should compose with the principles of her own subjectivity; that is, she should discover her own style and language with sincerity of emotions.

²²⁷ "Tisoč sladkih slutenj / Dušo mi objame, / Če oko se tvoje / Z ókom mojim vjame // V blaženosti svoji / Zrem zaupno na-te, O življenja sreči / Sanjam dneve zlate." (Jeraj 1897: 2)

²²⁸ "Držite se trdnih tal resničnega življenja!" (Aškerc 1999: 48)

²²⁹ She didn't include them in the anthology in 1908.

²³⁰ "Povedati, koliko se največ dá v podobah – to spada med tiste tajne momente, ki činijo poetični slog." (Aškerc 1999: 49)

He also sought to demonstrate an appreciation and empathy for gender issues; he wrote about the lamentable position of women in Slovene society, which, in his view, could be ameliorated through education and civil rights. At the same time, he also expressed patriarchal opinions and prejudices about that problem: “Considering myself, if you will allow me one remark, I was until now very sceptical about the poetical texts and poems of the female writers.”²³¹

He felt superior to the other sex from the standpoint of male authority; eventually, he proclaimed that he favoured beautiful women over a beautiful poem. Consequently, in the third letter (13 October 1897), he praised the image of the attractive woman (Jeraj had sent him a photograph, which frequently occurred in communications during this period), and his conclusion was that she was so beautiful that she did not need to write poetry.²³²

In the last two letters, he encouraged her to write. At the end of 1897, however, they stopped writing to each other. One potential explanation for this could be Jeraj’s declared lyrical poetics; she had established herself as a lyrical poet, and her writing tended towards subjectivity, intimate expressions, and emotional confessions, which was far removed from Aškerc’s poetic discourse and poetics.²³³ His censorship could also be interpreted as a productive force: Jeraj eventually discovered that epic poetry was not her style. Nevertheless, it was only for a brief period that the great poet tried to persuade her to change her lyrical poetics. Aškerc’s advice hindered Jeraj’s creativity, yet later it also helped her articulate issues related to intimacy.

Jeraj was not the only female poet whom Aškerc tried to shape in terms of poetic style.²³⁴ Seven years later, he revealed his misogynistic views about female poets in a letter to another Slovene female poet, Ljudmila Poljanec.²³⁵

²³¹ “Kar se meni tiče – dovolite mi še to opazko – bil sem dozdej sila skeptičen glede poetičnih spisov in pesmij izpod ženskih peres.” (Aškerc 1999: 50)

²³² “Ta podoba kaže, da Vam ne bilo treba baš pisati poezije”. (“This photograph [of beautiful you] shows that you don’t need to write poetry.”) (Aškerc 1999: 52)

²³³ That silence could have concrete reasons: Aškerc in 1898 had great problems with the Catholic institutions.

²³⁴ The younger generation later turned his back on him – that happened after his arbitrary editorial work on the poems by Dragotin Kette (1876–1899), published after his death in 1900.

²³⁵ See Aškerc’s letter to Ljudmila Poljanec, 5 October 1904: “Proti ženski poeziji imam, kakor sem Vam menda že povedal, hude predsodke.” (“I have terrible prejudices about female poetry, I think I have told you that already.”) (Aškerc 1999: 215)

Women can't write poetry? The power of written words and prejudices ...

Vida Jeraj met Josip Murn-Aleksandrov (1879–1901), who was five years her junior and at that point still unknown to the greater Slovene public, though his colleagues recognised him as a promising figure of the generation.²³⁶ From February 1900 until his death in May 1901, Murn wrote Jeraj nineteen letters (unfortunately, Jeraj's replies to him have been lost). They also met in Bled, Ljubljana, and Kamnik (where another female poet, Zorana²³⁷ – Jeraj's cousin – resided). During this period, she was one of his best friends. In his letters, he detailed his life and work, his travels, and he also wrote about their mutual acquaintances, cultural events, and books; however, surprisingly, he did not discuss poetry much. As such, we can presume that he was quite indifferent to her poetry, despite knowing that she was striving to become a poet.²³⁸

In his letter from 17 December 1900, Murn was critical of Jeraj's poetry, claiming that her poems were not personal or emotional enough. He implored her to “go inside of herself”, to discover what she wanted to write and then attempt it. Thinking about her poetry, he expressed his prejudiced views about “unreliable” women: “You women have a big heart; it's just erratic, and it's so fickle and so blurry that a man can't know what it is inside.”²³⁹ For the first time, he also advised her to write only for children.²⁴⁰ He confessed that he would be disappointed with her writing if he would not read her poems for children, which he considered the most beautiful thing that “could be created from a woman's hurt”.²⁴¹ He continued by expressing his idealistic concepts of an artist's integrity, writing about the “clearness” of the poet's mind and his abilities and skills. According to

²³⁶ At that time, Murn-Aleksandrov lived in Ljubljana – it was already after his stay in Vienna. He occasionally visited Bled and Vipava because he wanted to cure himself from tuberculosis.

²³⁷ Her real name was Franja Trojansšek-Dekleva (1867–1935).

²³⁸ Perhaps she was also afraid or not confident enough to show him some of her poems.

²³⁹ “Ve ženske imate sicer veliko srce, samo nestalno in tako motno je, da človek ne more vedeti, kaj je v njem.” (Murn 1954: 171)

²⁴⁰ On 6. 12. 1900, Murn wrote to the poet Oton Župančič about the high quality of Jeraj's poems for children. (Murn 1954: 145).

²⁴¹ Original: “Tudi bi izgubil o tebi že zdavnaj vse veselje, da nisem bral tvojih otročjih pesmi, ki se mi zdijo nekaj najlepšega, kar sploh zamore ustvariti žensko srce!!” (Murn 1954: 171)

Murn, the artist must be in a “clearly defined mood” and their art must be highly ethical. Through his words, Vida Jeraj could infer that it was not possible for a female writer to reach the high standards he suggested for the artist’s personality.

We can presume that he did not believe in her poetry, even though she had been one of his closest friends. Women, in his view, were incapable of writing poetry. He gave her the only real advice about poetics in his letter dated 9 January 1901. He again advised her to write poetry specifically for children. He suggested changes for the children’s tale in verse “Orjaki na Ajdni. Gorenjska pravljica” [Monsters from Ajdna: The Tale from Gorenjska] – which she later included as the last poem in her anthology. He believed that the last verses were overly constructed in a Germanic style. (Murn 1954: 175)²⁴² He encouraged her to add three new verses at the end of the poem, so that it would sound more poetic and musical. She respected his poetic authority, so she changed those parts of the poem before publishing it in her anthology in 1908.

However, Murn did not make any reference to either her impressionist poems for adults or her subtle love poetry.²⁴³ On the other side, we have letters containing detailed “instructions” about poetry and poetic solutions that Josip Murn-Aleksandrov wrote to an unknown poet, Janko Polak (1878–1971).

Murn’s sudden death in the spring of 1901 was a great shock to Jeraj, a kind of “epistemological wound”. On this occasion, she wrote a cycle of poems (“Mrtvemu pesniku Aleksandrovu, I, II” [To the Dead Poet Aleksandrov I, II]) in which she mourns the death of one of the most eminent poets of the generation. She then published the cycle in the renowned *Ljubljanski zvon*.²⁴⁴ The year 1901 also saw Jeraj experience a personal crisis, and she gave up her independent life, opting to marry and relocate from a small village to the bustling metropolis of Vienna.

²⁴² It reveals the socio-historical context: Slovene writers during this period were bilingual, as German culture and language was still influential. (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 69)

²⁴³ Perhaps she also didn’t persuade him with her poetry, because she published many lyrical poems after his death.

²⁴⁴ That was the decision of Anton Aškerc.

Reception of her anthology (1908)

Jeraj published just one anthology of poems (*Pesmi [Poems]*, 1908)²⁴⁵ at the main Slovene publishing house, Schwenter.²⁴⁶ It was not well received in Slovene literary society, and the critics applied misogynistic criteria when evaluating her poetical world. (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 70–74) They denied the merit of her poetry, her ambition for the poetical language, her concentration on searching for right words in verse and her disciplined effort for formal arrangement. They wrote more about her as a woman than about her poetry. They were ironic, cynical, and paternalistic in their attitude towards her personality. They ironically referred to the young writer as “a beautiful female gardener” and “a cute fairy on the Slovene Parnass”. They wrote almost nothing about her poetry, but more about women in general as second-class citizens, who were in their opinion on the same level as children. The words of the critic Pam Morris, who analysed Robert Lowell’s comments on Sylvia Plath’s poetry fifty years later can be applied here: “Comments continually blur Plath’s person with her poetry, this (con)fused identity is persistently described in gender stereotypes.” (Morris 1993: 45) In their view, a woman could not be a true writer because she was not an adult personality. For example, critics of Jeraj’s poetry wrote that “she was just skimming the surface, not going deep”. Her poetry was for them “a dwarf who possesses women in the years when they are neither a woman nor a child anymore.” (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 72)²⁴⁷

The reception was a great source of disappointment for her. She bitterly expressed her frustration to her Viennese friend Steffi Löffler,²⁴⁸ stating:

²⁴⁵ That was her success in the broader sense. Next to Ljudmila Poljanec, she was the only female poet from *Slovenka* who at the beginning of the 20th century succeeded in publishing a book. (Poljanec in 1906, Jeraj in 1908)

²⁴⁶ Her second book, *Izbrane pesmi (Collected Work)*, was published after her death in 1935 (the editor was Marja Boršnik).

²⁴⁷ According to Rita Felski in the late 19th century, “to demonstrate women’s lower position on the evolutionary chain [...] they [the women] are being invariably compared to [...] children or savages.” (Felski 1995: 40)

²⁴⁸ Steffi Löffler was at that time the fiancée of Ivan Cankar and Jeraj’s friend and therefore part of the same Viennese circle of Slovenes as Vida Jeraj.

“My husband sent me one review of my poems [Zvon] ... Not a single useful sentence! Just phrases and nonsense! But that doesn't bother me!”²⁴⁹

That was one of the reasons why she stopped writing poetry for adults and started writing just for children. Her answer to the misogynist critics of her first book was silence. Following the negative reception of her only anthology in 1908, she broadly followed Murn's advice and began to write poetry just for children. The “soft”, implicit censorship of Murn-Aleksandrovič had a great impact on her writing.²⁵⁰ From 1909 onward, she wrote very few works for adults, and her poetry became less personal, with a greater focus on social and war themes.

In 1922, she published her last poem in *Ljubljanski zvon* (“Sappho”), which could be understood as a symbolical gesture with a “message” for Slovene society. The poem represented a great contrast to her first love poem in *Slovenka*: “Slutnje” [Premonitions], published in 1897, and demonstrated a shift in her themes. (Jeraj 1922: 220–221) One of her first public poems was a celebration of the joy and love wishes – the apotheosis of intimacy – whereas her last published poem, more than twenty-five years later, was a lament of life's defeats. It expressed the tragic position of the female poet in Slovene society, who experienced a great disparity between herself as a poet and an inhumane, indifferent and misogynist society.

She also used a completely different form for that confession (the poem “Sappho” is written in free verse, and Jeraj in some way disregarded the traditional forms of strophes and verses she had used before). In this poem, she also incorporated the myth of the first poetess, Sappho, to express her tragical fate without any personal or professional success:

She went into crowds of people. In bacchanalian drunkenness, she reached for the strings of the golden lyre and embroidered them with the beauty of a woman's soul in a garland of words.

She became a living manifestation of his name.

²⁴⁹ Original citation: “Mein Mann samte mir eine Kritik über meine Gedichte (“Zvon”) ... Nur eine einziger, vermischter Satze! Nichts als Phrasen und Gewischt! Aber das macht mir nichts!” (Vida Jeraj to Steffi Löffler, 2 September 1908. The archive of Vida Jeraj, Ms 1213. Rokopisni oddelek NUK-a v Ljubljani, Literary archive of National library, Ljubljana, Slovenia. She wrote about the critique of their view by the respected philologist Josip Tominšek (1872–1954) in the most prominent Slovene newspaper, *Ljubljanski zvon*. (Jensterle Doležal 2017a: 71)

²⁵⁰ She published her second book – just for children, *Iz Ljubljane čez poljane* (*From Ljubljana through the Fields*), in 1921.

She was selling her heart for applause and cheers.

The poems were spoken. She sacrificed herself for merciless gods in the midst of an empty sanctuary.²⁵¹

The poem conveys the problem of expressing intimacy in her early poetry – the problem of her lyrical poems, which were met with disapproval from society due to its gendered view.

After all of the negative experiences on her path to becoming a writer and an autochthonic poet within the gendered world of Slovene literature, Jeraj bitterly and sardonically concluded in an epigram in 1926 that a woman at that time had no chance of entering the Slovene literary world. (Jeraj 1935: 142–145)²⁵² In 1932, she ultimately took her own life.

By the end of the 20th century, she was completely forgotten in Slovene literary society.

In 1929, in England, Virginia Woolf wrote about an imaginary sister of Shakespeare – a highly talented poet who, due to the restrictions of her time, was never given the opportunity to pursue her craft and was thus forgotten by history, but her afterlife will come when gendered relations are no longer necessary for human existence:

We go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (Woolf 1929: 95)

Conclusion: Silenced voices

Implicit gendered censorship was a destructive form of male dominance in relation to Jeraj's writerly identity and authorship. Also, in that case the formation of the subject "has everything to do with the regulation of

²⁵¹ "Šla je v množice ljudi, v bakhantski pijanosti je segla v strune zlate lire in vezala je v girlande besed krasoto ženske duše. / Postala je živ akord njegovega imena. / Za krohot in za aplavz je razprodajala svoje srce. / Pesmi so bile izgovorjene. Ona sama se je žrtvovala neusmiljenim bogovom sredi praznega svetišča." (Jeraj, "Sappho", 1922: 220–221).

²⁵² In 1926, when the Slovene Pen Club was founded, she wrote the epigram, full of anger and cynical indignation: "Tu so vrata v Pen-klub, stoj! Ženska, n a š a vrhu tega!?! Moški tu smo med seboj in še to le radi tega, da slavimo svoj obstoj! Ženska, tu je Pen-klub: stoj!" ("Here is the entrance to the Pen – club, stop! A woman, even more: our woman!?! Here just we men can enter and we are here to celebrate our existence! O woman, here is the Pen Club – stop!")

speech” (Butler 1997: 133) – and also, we might add, of poetic speech. As Judith Butler has noted, censorship as the “performative with the agents of power also means psychological injury, which affects the bodily ‘doxa’, that lived and corporeally registered set of beliefs that constitute social reality.” (Butler 1997: 159) Censorship is, in her words, crucial for the subject and his position in the society. According to Butler, this social performance is “a crucial part not only for the formation of the subject, but also of the ongoing political contestation and reformulation of the subject”. (Butler 1997: 160) Gendered censorship, in the case of Vida Jeraj, caused a reorganization of her subjectivity and a decline in her writing, leading to her eventual silence.

In their correspondence, Jeraj’s colleagues and male friends provided her with advice on poetics, as well as what was deemed appropriate for a female poet to write. Behind all their gendered prejudices, Aškerc and Murn-Aleksandrov believed that a woman could not become a poet. They also tried to persuade Jeraj that she could not write poetry due to her gender. Male censorship of the young female poet signified the beginning of self-censorship, as her authorship was fragile at the outset of her career.

It was a significant challenge for a female writer from a small, narrow-minded, patriarchal and deeply Catholic nation on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Central Europe at that time to become a poet and to break through with new poetics. There are many similar stories of female writers in Central Europe at that time, most of which – as in the case of Jeraj – ended tragically.²⁵³ For a woman to become a poet in a Slovene (small Slavic) culture of that “monarchical” time was a great sacrifice and a struggle akin to Don Quixote’s battle against the windmills. Examining her life, we can appreciate Jeraj’s courage, her determination and creative power, her quest for words, and her experimentation with language: writing poetry in an environment that was not conducive to her efforts. The obstacle was not only the poor reception of her work; in the process of writing,

²⁵³ If we look at Slavic literature in the period of the “moderna”, the exclusion of women from the poetry was common for a long time also in other “Habsburgian” nations. Here it is possible to mention the Czech decadent and impressionist writer of prose and poetry, Luisa Ziková (1874–1896), who after her tragic death from tuberculosis was not well received nor mentioned in the history of Czech literature like her male colleagues were. (Topor 2005: 3) In the history of the Croat “moderna” from 1979, not a single female poet is mentioned. (Šicel 1979: 268–305)

she was subordinated by male authorities and ultimately silenced.²⁵⁴ The female poet found herself neglected by her close colleagues, who did not encourage her work enough because of her gender.

Vida Jeraj was a highly promising poet and a cosmopolitan – a nomadic person who traversed between different cultures. Unfortunately, her status as a woman worked against her and she was nearly excluded from literary history and Slovene literature, of which she had so desperately wanted to be a part. Nevertheless, her legacy is not forgotten: after one hundred years, her poetry is finally becoming part of the Slovene canon.

²⁵⁴ According to Judith Butler: “Silence is the performative effect of a certain kind of speech, where that speech is an address that has as its object the deauthorization of the speech of the one to whom the speech act is addressed. [...] Power is exerted by a subject on a subject; its exertion culminates in a deprivation of speech.” (Butler 1997: 137)

Slovene Poet LJUDMILA POLJANEC's Representation of Lesbian Love²⁵⁵

Lesbos, terre des nuits chaudes et langoureuses,
Qui font qu'à leurs miroirs, stérile volupté!
Les filles aux yeux creux, de leur corps amoureuses,
Caressent les fruits mûrs de leur nubilité;
Lesbos, terre des nuits chaudes et langoureuses ... (Baudelaire, Lesbos)²⁵⁶

I. The discourse of the intimacy

The foundational work of the lesbian literature is the poetry of the Ancient Greek poet Sappho of Lesbos, who focused on the beauty of women and proclaimed her love for girls. Unfortunately, not much of Sappho's poetry remains. The lesbian theme was addressed in poetry by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), representatives of French Decadence, as early as the middle of the 19th century. In the early 20th century, lesbianism was even fashionable in French society. In Paris, there was a circle of American lesbian authors, dominated by Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), who encoded her lesbian experience into writing of avant-garde texts. (See Benstock 1986) In the English literature, the lesbian author Amy Lowell (1874–1926), who also lived with her chosen love, the actress Ada Russel (1863–1952), created some of the most dedicated poems with a lesbian theme and depictions of her partner. In her autobiographical poems, she writes of her companion. (Faderman 1981: 395–399) At the turn of the 21st century, some scholars analysed literature from the 19th century in the light of lesbian relationships that would not have been labelled as such

²⁵⁵ The author acknowledges financial support by the Slovenian-Czech research project Transformations of Intimacy in the Literary Discourse of Slovene "Moderna" (GAČR project 21-47320L). The first – shorter – version of the article in Jensterle Doležal 2021b: 69–77.

²⁵⁶ Translation: "Lesbos, the land of warm and languid night, / Where gazing in their mirrors as they dress / The cave-eyed girls, in barren, vain delight, / The fruits of their nubility caress. / Lesbos, the land of warm and languid night ..." (from Roy Campbell, *Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952).

before due to different conceptions of intimacy and sexuality (e.g., the poetry of Emily Dickinson).

In Slovene literature, it was poetess Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948), who in her autobiographical poems, at the turn of the 19th and in the beginning of 20th century very carefully articulated a completely new theme in Slovene literature. In this article, we will analyse the representation of lesbian love in her poetry.

II. First Slovene female poets and the thematisation of love

Although Slovene literature began in the sign of the romantic poetry of France Prešeren (1800–1849), the history of Slovene female poets is not very long. Women writers appear relatively late in Slovene literature. In the 19th century, women names are only occasionally found. The first Slovene female generation of poets connected their patriotic writing – as in the other Slavic states of that time – with the rising national movement and the idea of Slavic reciprocity in the conditions of the Habsburg Monarchy. Their texts were often very stereotypical and written in a mixture of realistic and romantic styles. Slovene aristocrat Fanny Hausmann (1818–1853) was the first woman, who in 1848 published a poem in Slovene. She published moralistic, patriotic, and love poetry in contemporary journals in the late 1840s. She was followed by Pavlina Pajk (1854–1901) and Luiza Pesjak (1828–1898). The poetical expressions of L. Pesjak's poems were often interwoven with patriotic feelings, but nevertheless in her poetry we also find delicate descriptions of nature and changing periods of time. She also depicts deep feelings of the mother towards her child. However, neither of these pseudo-romantic writers with idealistic orientation wrote or published in sufficient quantity to secure a place in the Slovene history of poetry.

The second generation of women writers, their literary daughters, were also connected to the generation of 'moderna' and the beginning of modernism, which began in 1899 when two anthologies (O. Župančič *Čaša opojnosti* [*The Goblet of Inebriation*], Ivan Cankar, *Erotika* [*Erotics*]) were published. The first wave of Slovene 'moderna' consisted mainly of intimate, erotic poetry, which was also the topic of the texts of the first Slovene women poets at the *fin-de-siècle* period, breaking away from the 19th-century habits of thought and writing and discovering intimacy in their writing.

In the words of Donovan and Moss: "Intimacy takes many forms. It can be a long-term emotional connection with, a familiar awareness of,

or a deep attachment to someone or it could relate to a life partner” (Donovan – Moss 2017: 3). In search of intimacy, female Slovene poets – like their male counterparts – began to write love poetry in the form of lyrical confessions of the subject. Under patriarchal conditions, it was difficult for them to express and formulate intimacy in different modes and to find their new language of love. Erotic at that time was also the area of trauma and repression.

Sometimes Slovene female poets used realistic style in depicting the man as an object of desire; sometimes they invented more modern styles of writing. For one of the Slovene women poets, the discourse on intimacy was even more complicated, and more frustrating: poet Ljudmila Poljanec, in her lyrical confessions, expressed the problem of searching for gender identity differently – she chose the women as an object of her desire. Regarding the *fin-de-siècle* context, Juhasz underscored: “Gender is especially crucial for lesbian love and desire, if only because, as I have suggested, this kind of relationship enables important renegotiations of conventional gender positions. [...] Traditional gender roles and power arrangements might be avoided, altered, redefined, and even played with in a relationship between two women.” (Juhasz 2003: 22) As we shall see, Ljudmila Poljanec thematised in her poetry the desire for a woman in a very cautious, suppressed mode. In her intimate lyrics, she discovered her gender identity and the structure of her desire.²⁵⁷

The formation of female voices was the process connected with the feminist movement and new ideas about the position of Slovene women in art and society. Agatha Schwartz, in her book about Austro-Hungarian monarchical writers, stressed that the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was one of the most fascinating cultural and literary periods in the history of Central Europe. In her words, one major aspect of *fin-de-siècle* modernity was the presence of a strong and organised women movements as well as of a whole new generation of women writers (Schwartz 2008: 3–20). The starting point for the new Slovene generation of women writers was the appearance in 1897 in Trieste of the newspaper *Slovenka* (*Slovene Woman*), which was founded even before the Slovene organised feminist movement in 1901. (Verginella 2017: 6–15) Poets, prose writers, and essayist, the young and progressive part of the Slovenian

²⁵⁷ It remains unclear whether she ever experienced real erotic relation with some of her female friends or there was just emotional closeness and the intimacy of the friendship.

female intelligentsia, formed the new model of the woman writer, also the ‘New Women’. (See Ledger 1997: 9–35) They expressed the new emotional culture and the concept of ‘sisterhood’. In 1897, Ljudmila Poljanec even published a poem entitled “Sestram” [To Sisters], in which she encouraged young female artists to contribute to the newspaper for women, (to support the “sisterhood solidarity”) also because it was the Slovene newspaper (to support the national idea). (Poljanec 1897: 1) First, they established their writer and gender identity in the new style of behaving and acting in society. (Žerjal Pavlin 2017: 53–65) They wrote, co-wrote, criticized, and supported each other with enormous new self-esteem. Lillian Faderman thus points out that in the generation of young intellectuals at the turn of the 19th century who advocated the type of a new Modern Woman, close romantic relationships between women were often formed, – also out of solidarity and due to the difficult conditions women had in patriarchal society. These relations were not necessarily of a physical nature. Some European and American feminists also subsequently chose to become lesbians, sometimes not so much out of erotic desire as out of a belief that they did not want to become part of a patriarchal society. (Faderman 1981: 178–190)

The poet Ljudmila Poljanec discovered her lyrical voice in the period of the *fin-de-siècle* modernity. In that period, she was next to Vida Jeraj the only Slovene woman poet who succeeded in publishing her poems in book form: in 1906 she published her only anthology *Poezije (Poems)* with the Slovene publisher Lavoslav Schwentner (1865–1952).²⁵⁸ She was a cosmopolitan, cultural nomad, and also – as with many other Habsburgian authors – she had two cultural identities: Slovene and monarchical Austrian.²⁵⁹ As with the first Slovene writers, she was all her life a teacher.²⁶⁰ She began to write in the context of the transformation of the Central European culture of which Slovenia was a part until the end of the First World War. First, she published mostly in the newspaper *Slovenka*. Later, she also published

²⁵⁸ He was the publisher for almost all the authors of Slovene “moderna”, also the publisher of the prominent writer Ivan Cankar.

²⁵⁹ As all Slovene modernists she was under the influence of Viennese culture. From 1908 to 1911 Poljanec studied in Vienna German and Slavistics.

²⁶⁰ That could be one of the reasons, why Ljudmila Poljanec preferred close contacts and romantic friendships with the women: Slovene teachers were obliged to respect celibate until 1920. Her biography see Koblar, France: Poljanec, Ljudmila (1874–1948). In: Slovenska biografija. Ljubljana: SAZU, ZRC SAZU, 2013. <https://ukm.um.si/poljanec-ljudmila>, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi446882/>. (See also Safran 2004: 100–107; Samide 2018: 221–242)

in the main Slovene newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon*, and the conservative one *Dom in svet (Homeland and World)* ... From 1902 to 1905 she published in *Slovan (Slav)* and in the newspaper *Domači prijatelj (Homefriend)*. She published poems for children in *Angelček (Little Angel)* and *Zvonček (Little Bell)*. She used mostly pseudonyms – female first names.²⁶¹

Until 1901, she published five love poems. Her first intimate confessions expressing the love for a woman were also dedicated to women (“Zvezdi. Prijateljici A. M. E.” – [To a Star. To a Girlfriend A. M. E.]; “Prijateljici”, [To a Girlfriend]; “Sestanek na grobu. + Ivanki,” [Meeting on a Grave, To + Ivanka]; “Ob dragem grobu. + Josipini” – [Next to the Dear Grave. For + Josipina]; Milotinke. Posvečeno prijateljici A. T. Š., [Poems of Sorrow. Dedicated to A. T. Š.]).²⁶² These first homoerotic poems were very stereotypical. Sentimental confessions were written in realistic style and with romantic imagination. The main poetical scene depicts the death of the loved woman. The lyrical subject, in the first person singular (“I”), addresses a dead female friend, possibly her lover. The lyrical structure consists of two-time dimensions, happy love is a fact of the past, and the fictional present consists of lamenting the situation after the death of the love object. In present the poet articulates the death and the romantic motifs of the graveyard, the grave, and life after death, followed by the Christian belief in the resurrection.²⁶³ The poem is not without erotic motifs of hugs, kisses and pictures of physical closeness. Poljanec adapts the choice of words and short statements to the requirements of rhythm and rhyming. The traditional form is very important and sometimes narrows her imagination. The sentences are sometimes conventional and stereotypic confessions of love.

Look even deeper
Shine into her heart.
Let's see – if the heart is still
in love
and beats for me?²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ She published in *Slovenka* under the pen names: X, Y, Mirka, Zagorska or Bogomila, in the newspaper *Dom in svet* under the name Posavska and Ljudmila.

²⁶² She published them in all three important Slovene newspapers: in the prominent *Ljubljanski Zvon*, in the conservative *Dom in svet* and in *Slovenka*.

²⁶³ She wrote autobiographical poems; however, we don't have information about the tragical death of her female friend or lover.

²⁶⁴ “Poglej pa še globlje! / Posijaj ji v srcé. / Pogled – li v ljubávi / za mene bije še?” (Poljanec 1899: 396)

Poljanec was sceptical about these first verses and she didn't include them in her poetry collection in 1906.

III. Poetry by Ljudmila Poljanec and the representation of the lesbian desire

In 1906, Ljudmila Poljanec published her only anthology *Poezije (Poetry)* at the prestigious Schwentner publishing house in Ljubljana (Slovenia). The collection of poems is divided into four cycles: *Pesmi in romances (Poems and Romances)*, *Intermezzo*, *Ob Adriji (At the Adriatic Coast)*, and the last *Epilog (Epilogue)*. In the view of the development of Slovene verse, she stays traditional: poems often consist of classic form of stanzas with three or four verses. There is a kind of tension in her writing: she oscillates between using the traditional lyrical forms and expressions from the 19th century and on the other side we see the new impressionist style. In her poetry, she tries to describe special moments and erotic feelings with all her senses, while exploring “the life of the soul”. Erotic descriptions of the love object are sometimes decadently treated, with contradictory characteristics. (See Jensterle Doležal 2018: 21–33) With the new sensibility, she uses a similar dictionary and similar expressions as other Slovene modernists. (See also Jensterle Doležal 2014: 263–294)

Already in the first cycle of *Poems and Romances*, the central theme is love, presented in a quasi-folk romance, also with formal affinities with folk poetry.²⁶⁵ In epic romances with typical verse schemes predominates sombre, ballad-like atmosphere. In the epic narrative she depicts the love between girl and a boy in the countryside with all the emblems of traditional village culture. The lyrical subject is mostly a young girl, but the choice of gender changes in the confession, sometimes it is unclear to whom the desire is addressed. Love in the narratives is also melancholic, dark, mostly unresponsive, with a tragic ending, pain and fear appear in the spectrum of emotions. This is the place where “[...] lilies, flowers, and rosemary / are covered with white snow.” (“Trubadurska”, [Troubadour Poem], Poljanec 1906: 16) and where “[...] love falls like a plant / under the sharp scythe [...]” (“Tam v temnem lesu”, [There in the Dark Wood], Poljanec 1906: 19).

²⁶⁵ All Slovene modernists were very much influenced by the Slovene folk tradition.

In the *Intermezzo* cycle, the poet focuses on the love dialogue between a man and a woman. Sometimes the author uses the voice of a man, or love desire is vaguely expressed without mentioning the gender. Here, too, Poljanec thematizes modern pictures of the restless love, full of longing and pain, the lyrical subject commits herself to the moment, to instantaneous love situations as a “melody full of sighs.” In the poems there appear typical phrases to picture intimacy in the *fin-de-siècle* period: the main phenomenon of the inner life is the restless “soul”,²⁶⁶ full of longing and unfulfillment. “Peace in your eyes? – Perhaps, / there is no peace in the soul – / longing breathes in it, / love trembles in it”.²⁶⁷

In the cycle *Ob Adriji (At the Adriatic Coast)*, there are seventeen poems in which the poetess thematizes homoerotic theme of love and longing for a woman. There is no doubt and no concealing of the gender: a woman writes about the fact that she is falling in love with a woman.

In her love confession, the poet romantically chooses a foreign place, a fashionable city along the Adriatic coast, and she presents a meeting with a stranger, an idealised woman from the high society and from the foreign Slavic nation: a Russian. These love poems are mostly dedicated to the Russian baroness and written in the form of dialogue between “I” and “You.” In those poems, the object of desire and the lyrical situation are concretized in the exotic place: the fashionable, foreign Habsburgian city Opatija, the popular place for the high aristocracy with tree-lined avenues, parks, touristic trails, and restaurants, and the expanse of the sea, which also becomes the important metaphor of this cycle.²⁶⁸

Sensual impressions and visual images of a love situation with descriptions of the sunlight enlightenment in the spring nature predominate. The dynamics of the space is described by verbs (in nature everything is “trembling, moving, and shaking”). Human action moves into nature with the

²⁶⁶ The modern definition of the soul was at that time crucial: all writers had subjective perceptions of the world and were focus on their inner lives.

²⁶⁷ “Pokoj v očeh? – Nemara; no duši pokoja ni – / V njej diha hrepeneje, / ljubezen v njej drhti ...” (Poljanec 1906, VII: 52)

²⁶⁸ The story is autobiographical: Ljudmila Poljanec visited Opatija – the prestigious resort for the monarchical aristocracy of Austro-Hungary near the seaside – (in modern-day Croatia) in 1904. 16. 3. 1904 Ljudmila Poljanec wrote the letter to the unknown correspondent: “Opatija is full of strangers. Life is here beautiful.” The literary archive of Ljudmila Poljanec, Ms 210, 239. Univerzitetna knjižnica v Mariboru (University library in Maribor), Slovenia.

In 1904 she also published fragments of the future cycle *To the Baroness Sonja* in the newspaper *Ljubljanski zvon* (Poljanec, “Sonji” [To Sonja], 1904: 540).

verb metaphors and typical adverbs (see Marič 2021: 48–57), also the picture of nature is eroticized. The love passion accompanied by inner turmoil and nervousness of the lyrical subject in love corresponds to the motifs of the seaside area. The main metaphor of the prevalence of love is the infinity of the sea space. Poems are hymns celebrating life energy and vitalism.

Already in the first song “V Opatiji” [In Opatija] she begins with the hymn of nature and orgasmic excitement over space: in the special moment she depicts the glow of the sun and the sea:²⁶⁹

Oh, it's you... Is this your power?
You southern sun, which shines so gently!
Lungs, just breathe in the fragrant air,
just drink this beauty, tired eye!²⁷⁰

The poet's voice, in describing the other female, becomes ecstatic and hymnal, with the necessary imperative:

Let's listen to the song of wild music,
let's listen to the hymn of nature, oh, ears!
Let's give the place the voices of the heart.
– The new poems will spring out because of you!
And sea waves loud chord?
Maybe they sing a requem to me ...²⁷¹

In the poem “Carmen Silva”, the lyrical subject articulates the fictive meeting with the Romanian queen in the Mediterranean.²⁷² The poem can be understood as a hymn dedicated to the exceptional woman and to women writing in general.

²⁶⁹ In some poems we find allusions to the concrete places in Opatija and its surroundings: “V Angiolina parku” [In the Angiolina Park], “Na poti pod cipresami” [On the Valley of Cypresses] ...

²⁷⁰ “Ah to si ti ... Tvoj žar je to? / To južno solnce le sijaj ljubó! / Le dihajte prsi vonjavi zrak, / le pij to krasoto, trudno oko!” (Poljanec 1906: 72)

²⁷¹ “Le slušaj te pesmi, ta divji zbor, / prirodne himne slušaj uho! / Daj glasom tem prostora srce, – / Iz tebe naj nove pesmi privró! / Nemara sije meni v slovo! / In morskih valov glasen akord? / Nemara le requem meni pojó ...” (Poljanec 1906: 72).

²⁷² Romanian queen Elysabeth of Wied (1843–1916) was the Queen of Romania as the wife of King Carol I, widely known by her literary name of Carmen Sylva. As “Carmen Sylva”, she wrote with facility in German, Romanian, French, and English. She visited Opatija in 1896 with her husband the king Carol. One of the tourist trails near Opatija is named after her (“šetališče Carmen Sylva”).

And on the rock
in golden hieroglyphs
shines
the song of Queen Carmen Silva..."²⁷³

In this cycle, six poems are titled "Baronesi Sonji" [To the Baroness Sonja]. In them, she writes about the experience of the lesbian love to a concrete person: the Russian baroness Sonja.²⁷⁴ For the first time, she depicts love dialogue in her poetry as a fact of the blessed moments of existence, connected to time and space. She is also a walker, a stranger, who meets another stranger and who focuses on the depiction of emotions in the geography of the landscape. The most important is the different perception of the "flâneur." We can formulate that situation in the words of Walter Benjamin: "It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose mode of life still surrounds the approaching desolation of the city life with the propitiatory luster." (Benjamin 1986: 156)

In this cycle, the lyrical subject does not hide love for the same gender anymore. The love object is an idealised and mythicized femme fatale, her figure is described with angelic attributes. The love figure awakens life in nature. The music of the Mediterranean place is the source of the essential life energy of the poet and of all the world – and love also awakens poetry. The lyrical subject compares herself to the poet Orpheus, who can sing only because of love.²⁷⁵ Poljanec compares the object of her love to the queen: here the poet uses the intertextual historical reference of the Romanian queen Carmen Silva about whom she wrote in the previous poem. "A fairy-like beauty, a girl with heavenly eyes", the lyrical subject also compares to a goddess. The poems are a Bacchant song of the female beauty, filled with Dionysian excitement over the grace of a woman under the sunny Adriatic horizon, among palm trees, myrtles, cypresses, aloes, laurels, and before the images of the endless sea.

A sensual description of a beautiful woman is presented, emphasising her eyes:

²⁷³ "In na skali / v hieroglifih / zlatih se blesti / spev kraljice Carmen Silve [...]." (Poljanec 1906: 76)

²⁷⁴ Samide declares that the poems are dedicated to her Russian friend Sonja Knoop. (Samide 2018: 237) Poljanec did not necessarily describe a concrete person.

²⁷⁵ At the same time we can find the picture of the Mediterranean place similarly connected to the love passion and vital life energy in the cycle of Dragotin Kette *Na molu San Carlo* (*On the pier San Carlo*, 1900) and also in the sunny poem "Cvrček" [Cricket, 1909], dedicated to the Mediterranean nature and love, by Vladimir Nazor.

Those eyes were drinking
the beauty of the celestial stars...
The legs did not walk
never on bitter paths,
never thorny roads.²⁷⁶

The poem ends with a comparison of her eyes to the sea and to the sky in the form of two questions. The infinity of love emphasizes the immensity of space:

Is it in them
where all the beauties are found,
this blue sea,
this clear sky?²⁷⁷

The third poem of this cycle continues to explore the erotization of nature, with the poet selecting verbs that suggest an erotic act. In the fourth stanza, the elevation of sensuality to spirituality is suggested with the motif of eyes as mirrors of the soul, although there are still allusions to eroticism with vivid metaphors: “With golden stars / in the blue sky / your eyes are kissing.”²⁷⁸ In this poem, the lyrical subject – a woman – “unveils” herself and clearly formulates her desire for another woman. She “moves” from an indefinite description and from an indefinite pronoun into the first person: the lyrical subject is in love with the object of her admiration. Unfortunately, that is also the moment when she begins to feel love as a Christian sin, and feelings of guilt overwhelm her. In the sixth stanza, the lyrical subject again praises the beloved woman and is enchanted with her, even though love’s suffering and pain are carefully hidden from the first-person singular to an indeterminate third-person. The indefinite pronoun “almost anyone” is repeated three times. (Poljanec 1906: 32)

The object of love is an idealized and mythologized woman: a femme fatale. Her figure is described in the *fin-de-siècle style* and with perfect, angelic attributes. The rhythm of the flow of words is hymn-like, almost biblical. In the sacred, blessed situation, the lyrical subject is compared to the poet Orpheus. When she describes the other woman – the poet’s voice becomes an ecstatic eulogy.

²⁷⁶ “Te oči so pile / krasoto nebeških zvezd ... / Noge niso hodile / nikoli po bridkih poteh, / nikoli trnjavih cest.” (Poljanec I, 1906: 79)

²⁷⁷ “Deklica zala! / Kje se napilo / sladke milobe / je tvoje oko? // Ali je vanje / ves kras razlilo / to sinje morje, / to jasno nebo.” (Poljanec II, 1906: 80)

²⁷⁸ “Z zlatimi zvezdami / tam na azurju / se poljublajo tvoje oči.” (Poljanec 1906: 81)

The eroticization of the situation is very subtly portrayed, mostly implied and veiled, with the eroticism being transferred to the realm of nature, whereby the concrete individual is mythicized into an ideal. The declaration of love is accentuated by the bright, sunny arcadia of the Mediterranean landscape.

In her story of love, the tonal voice is not fulfilled and ends in pain and senseless longing. The last cycle is the decrescendo of the love voice into silence – and religious poems. In one poem she introduces the biblical figure Magdalena, praying for forgiveness in the church. The persona expresses a deep awareness of sin and the feelings of guilt due to her erotic desire. Poljanec was a religious person and sensual love for a woman became for her a great trauma.

In the last part, *Epilogue*, there are some nice poems expressing deep religious feelings and love – for God.

The final poems mean serene farewell to love and to the Other in the firm expectation of an afterlife. She found solace in the Christian faith. In her cycle “Carigrajske vizije” [Visions from Istanbul] from 1908, she depicts the farewell to love confessions: the soul of a woman in the grave finally finds peace in the god’s love and blessing. (Poljanec 1908: 102–104; 396–398)

IV. Reception of her poems

The reception of Poljanec’s book was very typical for the small, conservative Slovene society of the day: her book did not receive any good reviews. The critics did not mention her original new voice and they ignored her poetics. (See Tominšek 1906: 506–507; Lampe 1906: 441) Furthermore, the critics did not even mention the clearly presented homoerotic theme in the *To the Baroness Sonja* cycle.²⁷⁹ This can be explained by the fact that even in Catholic Slovenia at that time the romantic relationship between two

²⁷⁹ But we presume, that Slovene readers recognised the new theme. The main Slovene poet from the old generation Anton Aškerc (1856–1912), her teacher and a friend, mentioned it in the letter to Poljanec: “Just love. You are in love with a *woman!* How is this possible?” Anton Aškerc to Ljudmila Poljanec, 5. 10. 1904. The archive of Ljudmila Poljanec, Ms 210, 239. Univerzitetna knjižnica v Mariboru (University library in Maribor, Slovenia). The paradox of those notes was the fact that he was a retired Catholic priest in his old age, who was perhaps in love with the young, beautiful poetess.

women was still not a taboo theme and it was not related to the sexuality of women. Lillian Faderman notes in her book that romantic friendships between two women in European and American society from the 16th to 19th centuries were supported and idealized (women were understood as beings without sexual desire). A breakthrough in the notion of this phenomenon was brought about by German theories at the turn of the 20th century, which began to understand women's relationships as pathological and unfeminine.²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the topic was still accepted and allowed in Europe and the United States until the First World War due to a lack of information. The phenomenon of female friendship was stigmatized only after the First World War, when, in the light of new medical and sociological studies, lesbianism began to be associated in Europe with disease, immorality, and obscenity. (Faderman 1981: 239–254)

Poljanec was silenced after 1909²⁸¹ and later she wrote mostly for children.²⁸² We do not know what happened to her as a person or as a poet after 1908, when she stopped writing for adults – perhaps her sexuality and erotic desire for the same sex shifted, or perhaps her romantic encounters with the women she described so sensitively, passionately, and intimately, were only one phase of her life, as modern theories reveal to us that it could be. One concept of the gender identity does not necessarily last forever, and the subject can change his or her gender identity, and also sexual desire – homoerotic love could change to heteroerotic. In modern theory, there are no stable concepts of gender, the desire, and sexual drive in the fields of corporeality and sexuality. (Butler 1999/1990: 23) Perhaps Poljanec simply decided not to write poems for adults anymore – because she was not encouraged enough in her society.

The type of intimate lyrics continued in the 1930s in the poetry of Lili Novy (1886–1958), the late representative of the Slovene 'moderna' generation, a member of the post-symbolist wave, who was also the first woman poet who was properly accepted in the Slovenian literary history

²⁸⁰ In that context two books were important: R. von Krafft-Ebing and his book *Psychopatia Sexualis*, 1882 and H. Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversions*, 1897. Both books showed the love between women in a morbid light and described romantic love between women on a purely sexual basis as an illness. Also, Freud's theory began to underline sexuality as the main area of the human existence. (See Faderman 1981: 239–254)

²⁸¹ In 1908, she moved to Vienna and stayed there for three years.

²⁸² The escape to silence and to writing for children was also the tragical fate of the other talented Slovene poetess of intimacy of that time: Vida Jeraj.

in the 20th century. In her poetry, Novy showed the real shift to traditional lyricism, the central theme of her first collection of poems *Temna vrata* (*Dark Door*, 1941) is also love.

Conclusion

Ljudmila Poljanec was a poet of love, and she expressed this in her autobiographical poems. In the beginning, she confined herself to a troubadour, romantic description of an idealized female subject, obscuring some motives in this context. In the cycle *At the Adriatic Coast* and *To the Baroness Sonja*, the love theme is eroticized and given a modern, impressionistic form. Also in her case an exploration of the lesbian desire serves as the narrative thread for the construction of the identity. (See also Juhasz 2003: 168) Because of her deep religious conviction, this theme is later associated with a sense of guilt and sin. The tension between love and erotic and Catholic moral obligation were typical also for other Slovene writers of this period.

Even though Ljudmila Poljanec enriched the Slovene language of love poetry and invented new representation of intimacy in Slovene lyrics with the completely new themes and motifs, she was not accepted in Slovene literary history and science, neither in her lifetime nor later in the 20th century. Only a small number of Slovene literary scholars analysed her work, even though her poetry was also a vital part of Slovene 'moderna' movement and the beginning of Slovene modernism in poetry. She never became part of the Slovene poetic canon, even though she attained the poetic originality of her male counterparts. Despite her original poetics and authentic lyrical expression and despite of her enormous lyrical opus, she still has no place either within Slovene literature or in the Central European or wider European context. During her lifetime her poems did not receive a response in the small, orthodox Slovene society, so she too fell silent. The reception of her literary work was marked by three limitations: she was from a small culture, she lived and wrote in the Slovene patriarchal society at a time when women's creations were not taken seriously – and the third fact, she was a poet. The fourth limitation was of her internal nature: as a deeply religious person Ljudmila Poljanec in her poems also expressed very contradictory feelings about erotic and romantic love for women. Like all Slovene representatives of 'moderna', she experienced erotic love as a sin and guilt.

In contrast to her being so long neglected as a poet, in the 21st century, there is a growing interest in the phenomenon of the first Slovene lesbian poet in cultural and historical studies. Within the framework of conscious feminist theories, one study has been published (Samide 2018: 221–242), which explore her place in Slovene society. It was Grief and Velikonja who enthroned her as the first lesbian poet in Slovene literature (Grief 2014: 135; Velikonja 2014: 220).

Her original lyrical voice speaks of her relevance not only within Slovenian literature, but also in the wider European literary context.

The Crisis of Identity: Doppelgängers in the Early Poetry of LILI NOVY²⁸³

Ere Babylon was dust, / The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child, / Met his own image walking in the garden. / That apparition, sole of men, he saw. / For know there are two worlds of life and death: / One that which thou beholdest; but the other / Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit / The shadows of all forms that think and live / Till death unite them and they part no more ...

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, lines 191–199

The poetry of Lili Novy (1886–1958), a member of the Slovene post-symbolist wave and a late representative of the “moderna” generation, exemplifies the continuation of intimate discourse in female poetry. Novy, a German-Slovene female poet with a mixed cultural identity and a nomadic character, was an exceptionally educated female intellectual and translator who lived in Ljubljana.²⁸⁴ (See Jensterle Doležal 2010: 402–413; Jensterle Doležal 1914: 357–377) In contrast to Zofka Kveder, her literary work has never truly been rehabilitated in Slovene literary history.²⁸⁵ Her lyrics focus on the crisis of identity, expressed through the myth of Narcissus and the motif of the doppelgänger, both of which she connects with the metaphor of the mirror.

At the outset, we must emphasize Novy’s dual-hybrid identity, her nomadic subjectivity, and the multicultural and intertextual aspects of her writing, as she was of German descent.²⁸⁶ Ljubljana at the end of the 19th century was the hub of Slovene culture. Nevertheless, in all of the

²⁸³ The first version in Slovene in Jensterle Doležal 2017c: 107–142.

²⁸⁴ In the modern cultural theory after Lacan and Kristeva regarding question of subjectivity the theoreticians speak about the nomadic subjects. They believe, there is not just one “linguistic identity”. (See Braidotti 1994: 13)

²⁸⁵ The two female Slovene writers are similar in many ways: they both were nomadic writers with multicultural identities at the beginning of the 20th century. They both created an original poetic/writing opus and also took on the role of cultural mediators. And they both brought other cultures into the Slovene space and vice versa.

²⁸⁶ Lili Novy was born in Graz as Lili Haumeder to a German father and a Slovene mother. She was from an aristocratic background, which was very rare among Slovene writers of that time.

monarchical cities – including Ljubljana at the time – there were enclaves of the German culture²⁸⁷ that Novy was a part of. The small Slovene nation, on the periphery of the monarchy, had been a crossroads between the “dominant” monarchical (German) and the national Slovene culture for centuries. The Slovene “moderna” was also heavily influenced by Austrian modernism. Four of the main Slovene writers – Oton Župančič, Ivan Cankar, Ljudmila Poljanec, and Vida Jeraj – lived in Vienna during the first decade of the 20th century. The creative work of Jung-Wien (Young Vienna) enriched the domestic cultural landscape with new literary achievements. Even in provincial Ljubljana, Slovene intellectuals such as Novy felt the influence of Vienna as a monarchical metropolis. Before the First World War, when she had already started writing in German, she was part of the monarchical culture, and she visited Vienna several times.²⁸⁸ She was influenced by the Weimar aesthetics of La Belle Époque. She read the texts of Austrian authors, and was thus very much inspired by the authors of Jung-Wien: Detlev von Liliencron (1844–1909), Richard Dehmel (1863–1920), Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), Stefan Zweig (1881–1942), and Hermann Bahr (1863–1934); this was highlighted by the Slovene writer and critic Jože Javoršek (1920–1990) in the only biography of her life and work, from 1984. Among the German poets who influenced Lili Novy, he also mentioned Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), Paul Valéry (1871–1945), and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843). (Javoršek 1984: 76, 77; Kos 1987: 213) Before the First World War, she was part of the aristocratic society on the periphery of the monarchy. She was very well educated and exceptionally well versed in the world of her European contemporaries.²⁸⁹ Although she had not yet connected with the representatives of the Slovene “moderna” before the First World War, her symbolistic poetics of writing was close to them. She cooperated most closely with Oton Župančič (from 1913 onward), who became her friend and encouraged her to write in Slovene and to translate from Slovene to German. Her first translation of Župančič’s poem “Telesa naša” [Our Bodies] was published in the Prague newspaper *Prager Presse* in 1925. (Javoršek 1984: 95–96)

²⁸⁷ The most well-known German writers from this context are Franz Kafka and Rainer Maria Rilke.

²⁸⁸ She stayed there with her aunt, Bella Schleiner, for several months.

²⁸⁹ As a well-educated individual, she knew French, English, and Italian, as well as Czech (she had a Czech husband).

In 1933 she compiled an anthology of Slovene “moderna”: *Blätter aus der slovenischen Lyrik* (featuring Iv. Cankar, D. Kette, O. Župančič, J. Murn-Aleksandrov, V. Jeraj, and A. Gradnik). With this, she recognized the Slovene modernists in German culture and demonstrated a generational sense of solidarity with their work.²⁹⁰ In 1952, Novy and Lino Legiša edited a selection of texts by “moderna” authors in Slovene (Novy – Legiša 1952).

Hybrid identity

Her first poems were in German.²⁹¹ She wrote them after the First World War, most intensively in the 1920s. It was very difficult for her to declare herself as a female writer, but it was even more difficult to have a mixed identity in such a politically complex and divisive period.²⁹² At that time, the generation of Slovene “moderna” had ended, followed by the powerful Slovene expressionist movement. She wrote in both languages throughout her life.²⁹³ In the interwar period, her German poems were published in Central European German periodicals: *Westermanns Monatshefte*, *Die Bühne*, *Mod. Welt*, *Prager Presse*, and *Morgenblatt* in Zagreb. In 1929, Lili Novy presented a manuscript of her German poems, titled *Lilys Gedichte (Lili’s Poems)*, to her friend, the Slovene female poet Vida Novak (1894–1984).²⁹⁴

In the 1930s, when she was in her mid-forties, she began to involve herself in the Slovene literary scene and to publish in Slovene literary magazines. She chose to identify herself more with Slovene culture, as the meaning of the various cultural models and patterns in Central European

²⁹⁰ Regarding her connections with the members of Slovene moderna see Poniž 1985: 72.

²⁹¹ All Slovene authors in the “moderna” were educated in German and could also write in German. Nevertheless, for Novy, because of her social background, German was her first language and her first culture. Her opus in German is impressively immense and very high quality (until now, unpublished as a book). In her literary estate, we find 813 Slovene and 679 German poems (see the archive of Lili Novy, Ms 1386. Literary archive in NUK in Ljubljana [Slovenia]). Her intimate correspondence is only in German.

²⁹² Yugoslavia, at that time, was a totalitarian monarchy (after 1929 a dictatorship) and Slovenes didn’t have political rights; so national identity was a very sensitive theme in that era.

²⁹³ Slovene literary historian Slodnjak emphasized that she wrote in both languages all of her life. (Slodnjak 1968: 454)

²⁹⁴ Nowadays, her German poems are preserved as manuscripts in the Slovene Literary archive in Ljubljana: only a few of them were published in her bilingual anthology in 2005. (Novy 2005)

had changed, with Slovene culture now dominant in the new state. Writing in Slovene for her also marked a transition from the private to the public sphere, as she became a public figure. As a translator and author attended literary salons, inns, and other gatherings for Slovene writers in Ljubljana, most of whom were male. At the same time, she introduced Slovene literature into German with translations (Jensterle Doležal 2014: 364–365) and started writing in Slovene (the first poem in 1933). She was also a great mediator between cultures – and part of the Central European movement. She began to connect with the community of Slovene writers, also because of her translation work in the 1930s.²⁹⁵ She published her translations in *Prager Presse* in Prague; *Morgenblatt, Die Bühne, Volkszeitung* in Vienna; *Marburger Zeitung* in Maribor; and *Tagespost* in Graz.²⁹⁶ She joined the cultural pulse in Ljubljana, which, for female authors in a strictly patriarchal society of male intellectuals, required special courage, as well as a kind of rebelliousness.²⁹⁷ Novy had an important male defender who helped her to publish her poems: Josip Vidmar (1895–1992), one of the leading figures in Slovene culture, edited both her anthologies and helped her withstand political pressure after the Second World War, when Novy, with her aristocrat background and “German identity”, had problems with the new political power.²⁹⁸

She only published two anthologies of Slovene poetry: one during her lifetime, *Temna vrata* (Dark Door, 1941), which received a lacklustre response, with only two reviews written about it. (Ludvik 1941: 243–245; Javoršek (Brejc) 1941: 223–224) Her second anthology *Oboki* (*Arcades*, 1957) was published posthumously one year after her death and was praised by the younger generation of poets. The poor reception of her literary work was due in part to the historical context in which they were released; the first was published at the beginning of the Second World War, the second

²⁹⁵ Her German translation of the prominent Slovene poet France Prešeren is prized to this day (Prešeren 1929).

²⁹⁶ Occasionally she expressed the “feminist” persuasion: in 1936 she prepared an anthology of translations of female Yugoslav poets into German for the Congress of the International Council of Women in Dubrovnik.

²⁹⁷ Her figure aroused different prejudices and roams in Slovene society, both in her lifetime and afterward: for decades, there circulated the myth of a crazy countess who wrote poems on pieces of paper.

²⁹⁸ In an undated letter to him, Lili Novy wrote: “You are responsible for all my appearances in public life.” (Novy: The archive of Lili Novy)

in the post-war socialist society, which favoured collective culture. (See Jensterle Doležal 2017: 114–118)

Novy's poetics

According to her style of expression, her Slovene poetry is most often classified as late symbolism, which developed in poetry mainly during the “moderna” period and in the 1920s in the poetry of Catholic authors, especially Anton Vodnik (1901–1965) and France Vodnik (1903–1986). Her poetry is characterised as “the balance of spiritualism and primal vitalism”. (Paternu 1967: 28) Her verse in the traditional form symbolizes the longing for metaphysical ideals and spirituality. Her Slovene poetic language is not as complex as German, and the language – especially at the beginning of her Slovene writing period – is simpler, but it remains a “dark symbolist poetry”, searching for the other world and symbolic meanings (as she writes in one of her poems). The poet, who had two identities – Slovene and German – mastered the symbolistic manner of writing, and her dark, symbolic poetry is rife with rich metaphors and symbols. Her Slovene poetic discourse is not as avant-garde and modern as its German counterpart; rather, it is more traditional and confessional, very subjective and emotional – although she always attempts to avoid being personal or sentimental.

Within the framework of Lili Novy's poetic space, her work is mostly composed of first-person singular reflections, focusing on themes of love, loneliness, pain, aging, and death, as well as the crisis of identity. She also pioneered the inclusion of new themes in Slovene poetry, such as aging and a dialogue with death. Consequently, her work has been compared to that of Georg Trakl (1887–1914) – the poet who often wrote about death and the past. (Novak Popov 2004: 181–182)

In her love poems, we find sensual, but also powerful, sometimes destructive, erotic themes. Through her poetry in both languages, enriched with visions and imaginary motifs, we find Chekhovian nostalgia for days gone by: her imagination was shaped by the imagery of melancholy. Her poetry presents the “world of the yesterday” – also the title of the 1943 novel by Austrian author Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern* (*The World of Yesterday*). She is also the painter of her personal grief and loss.²⁹⁹ Her

²⁹⁹ Her love story with her husband ended tragically. In her lifetime, she lost one daughter, and after the Second World War she had to support her two grandchildren.

poetry is a lyrical monologue: she expresses her “burning, exposed self”. Her lyrical subject is cursed with loneliness and suffering. The lyrical subject in Novy’s poetry often – as in the case of romantics – escapes from reality into the past, especially to the idyll of childhood.

Her new aesthetics was very typical of the intellectual poetry of central European modernism of that time. Thinking about her poetry, we can speak about the crisis of identity – and that is the expression that Jacques Le Rider used to interpret Austrian movement Young-Vienna. (Le Rider 1990) The problem of disintegrated existence is the central theme of her poetical discourses. She is aware of the finitude, (in)completeness of subjectivity. Nevertheless, in the beginning the lyrical subject is typically neo-romantic and individualistically emphasized, full of pain and metaphysical wounds.

The Doppelgänger

The frequent use of the doppelgänger motif in connection with Narcissus in Novy’s early Slovene poetry, such as in her first period of writing in her first anthology *Dark Door*, and in her German writing from the 1920s, demonstrates her poetic imagination and its interaction with other motifs. The myth of Narcissus is associated with water and mirrors, as well as dreams. The power of these narratives could be defined by the words of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. In 1942, he analyzed various images of water and dreams, as well as the myth of Narcissus and images of narcissism in French and English literature. He was convinced that a poet can dream when the material allows him to do so, and for him that helpful element was water. He argued that the poetic experience is dependent on the experiences gained from dreams. (Bachelard 1997/1942: 32)

The classical variation of the myth of Narcissus, as recounted by the Latin poet Ovid (43 pr. n. 1.–18 n. 1.) in his collection *Metamorphose*, tells of the hunter Narcissus, son of the river god Kéfis and the nymph Leioropé, who spurned Echo’s love and celebrated love in a special form. Nemesis, the goddess of revenge, noticing the unrequited love and suffering of Echo, decided to punish Narcissus. One summer day, as he was getting thirsty after hunting, the goddess lured him to a pool, where he leaned upon the water and saw himself in the bloom of youth. He was so captivated by the image of himself that he could not move. He tried to grab the image but he couldn’t, which made him all the more infatuated with himself. Not

realizing it was merely his own reflection, Narcissus fell deeply in love with it, as if it were another young man. Unable to leave the allure of his image, Narcissus died. When the nymphs searched for his body, all they found was a flower in his place.³⁰⁰

The fatal infatuation with the self-image in the mirrored pool is described in *Metamorphoses* with distinguished verses:

While he is drinking he beholds himself
reflected in the mirrored pool—and loves;
loves an imagined body which contains
no substance, for he deems the mirrored shade
a thing of life to love. He cannot move,
for so he marvels at himself, and lies
with countenance unchanged, as if indeed
a statue carved of Parian marble. Long,
supine upon the bank, his gaze is fixed
on his own eyes, twin stars; his fingers shaped
as Bacchus might desire, his flowing hair
as glorious as Apollo's, and his cheeks
youthful and smooth; his ivory neck, his mouth
dreaming in sweetness, his complexion fair
and blushing as the rose in snow-drift white.
All that is lovely in himself he loves,
and in his witless way he wants himself:—
he who approves is equally approved;
he seeks, is sought, he burns and he is burnt. (Ovid 1922: 3: 337)

The essence of the myth of Narcissus is a story of a delusion with tragic consequences. In the story, which tells of a fatal, destructive infatuation with one's own reflection, we can find the falsity and absurdity of desire in which the subject and the object of longing are the same. The narcissist can no longer abandon the beauty of his own image, so he goes to the "shadow underworld" – to death – for he is sick of longing. The myth thus encapsulates an excessive focus on the requirements of the self – i.e., the beauty of one's own external image, which destroys the subject. The narcissistic personality is too aware of herself/himself and thus ends up in death; it is therefore an ideal metaphor for the heightened individualism and an identity crisis of the late 19th century, and consequently, the poetic expressions of the modernist Lili Novy. The motif of water can be understood as a mirror with depth, into which it is possible to sink and discover

³⁰⁰ In the context of Greek mythology, we find many other interpretations of this myth (see Zamarovsky 1965, Hautzager 2003, Fink 2004, Kubiak 1997, and Csapo 2005).

the hidden abysses of the subject. (Kopaliński 1990: 250) The surface of the water means a hidden border between the conscious and unconscious worlds of subjectivity, between visible reason and irrationality, while at the same time revealing the split between the real world and world of dreams, and also the poet's imagination and past experiences.

Novy introduces the motif of the *doppelgänger* as part of her fluctuating personalities. Through this, she tries to express her other personal identity, the other world, also the world of the past, and the hidden mysteries of the Psyche. The *doppelgänger* (the double self) is a frequent feature in her early Slovene and German poetic works. In the poem "Zrcalo" [Mirror] the first-person lyrical subject, a woman, engages in dialogue with her lover, addressing him and remembering their past encounters. To her, past love was a sensual act, but also a sin and sacrifice without "security" (passionate love being associated with pain, sadness, and alienation). In her descriptions of a woman's bodily awakening in the past, she thematizes images of sensual eroticism (with senses of smell and touch).

The object of love provided her with a reflection of her past self; in it, she could see and recognize herself and become reacquainted with her past sensual devotion. Her woman is not obsessed with her beauty, nor is she preoccupied with narcissism: she is fixated on her lost herself and wants to reunite with the lost part of her identity.

I have already sinned when I fell in love with you
because you held the mirror for me.
I drank the thick juice of joy before it,
my body recognized all the ointments,
sweet fumes crowned it.

And then I saw a crack in the mirror
on a winter morning, sober and sad.³⁰¹

The mirror has a characteristic symbolic meaning: it is used as a metaphor for the subject's spiritual depth. In the mirror and in the view of the loved one she seeks to find the unconscious half of herself. In the third, fourth, and fifth stanzas, however, she formulates the separation of the lovers; the

³⁰¹ "Grešila sem že, ko se te vzljubila, / zato ker mi zrcalo držal si. / Pred njim sem gosti sok omam izpila, / mi je telo spoznalo vsa mazila, / so sladki dimi ga ovenčali. // V zrcalu sem zagledala razpoko / ob zimskem jutru, treznem, žalostnem." (Novy 1941 /1998: 17)

love is gone and the mirror is broken.³⁰² The mirror here is also a symbol of a former love bond; when they separate, a crack also appears in the mirror. Split, as in the beginning of love, has metaphysical implications. Without love with a close person, the lyrical subject also loses the ability to “look into the mirror”, and loses the possibility of self-discovery and self-reflection.

In the lyrical structure, the poet uses the motif of the mirror, drawing on the myth of Narcissus. This scene corresponds to the myth: the mirror is a metaphor for the deepness of her soul; she is a Narcissus glancing at an irrational, lost self; lost action; and a lost lover, longing for the past. The transposition of the myth is obvious. Unlike the ancient Narcissus of myth, her woman is not obsessed with her beauty and is not in love with her beautiful image. A look into the depth is a look into the truth and the essence of love; the lyrical subject is in a dialogue with herself and with her lover. Lili Novy understands the mirror in her own unique sense as a mirror for the state of her soul and also as a mirror of the other.³⁰³

The mirror motif could symbolize gender limits, and it also confirms the thesis of feminist Luce Irigaray in her book *Speculum of the Other Woman*. According to Irigaray, the woman is understood only as a mirror reflecting the male subject; when it is gone, there is no longer a subject, no longer any possibility of mirroring, since the female subject is unable to recognize her own differences. The gaze is therefore destructive for her. (Irigaray 1974)

The lyrical subject sees her double from the past as a dead body (“living dead!”) in the poem “Mrlič” [Dead]. The poem consists of seven two-verse stanzas, its minimalized sentences evoking a dark message. Because of her suffering, the lyrical subject sees herself as a doppelgänger, as a corpse. This image has a symbolic meaning as part of the postromantic imagination. This surrealistic motif of the dead within her is a materialization of her past and her visualized dreams, especially her great love disappointment, which she compares to a corpse at the bottom of the sea. The living dead of her past is a ghost that haunts her in the present, as well as a sign of a sombre future.

³⁰² In the folklore of various nations, the mirror often reflects the soul of a person, their parts, memories, feelings, evoking images of people who existed before the person in the past. (Kopaliński 1990: 207)

³⁰³ As a symbol, the mirror is anchored “in the depth of every culture.” A mirror is a symbolic archetype in the Jungian sense. (Lukavec 2010)

Someone lies at the bottom of my heart.
As a dead man at the bottom of the sea.

As the water rocks his arms,
he reaches up, but he is not allowed to reach the light.³⁰⁴

Occasionally, Novy also uses the motif of the *doppelgänger* in her German poetry. In the poem “Der Schlaf” (Sleep), the poet again evokes her situation in life through a surrealistic image inside her: the dreamy picture of the sleeping maniac/patient with a flower of dreams that blooms from the heart of existence. (Novy 2005: 39) In a sleepwalking scene, the past merges into an indefinite, endless present, and reality and dreams become one. The value of dreams indicates a very complex understanding of life:³⁰⁵ the moment of timelessness is depicted as a crack through which infinity shines.

In the poem “Vrnitev” [Return], the main motif of the poem is the *doppelgänger*. At the dreamy hour between night and dawn, the lyrical subject enters the room and sees a woman – the younger self – lying in bed:

And strange – as if she is lying there,
she, who came back at that moment,
in an instant, I have suddenly seen myself
as in the glass of the mirror.

Before me a young woman dreams,
neither old nor young,
with a faraway expression,
as she loses her look,
lost at an overgrown garden.³⁰⁶

The lyrical subject in this dreamy scene is in dialogue with the *doppelgänger* – “sleeping beauty” – from her past: she gazes at her as if into a mirror. The situation in the room³⁰⁷ is widened with the picture from her

³⁰⁴ “Nekdo leži mi na dnu srcá / kakor mrlič na dnu morja. // Kakor da voda ziblje mi roké, / sega navzgor, a do luči ne sme.” (Novy 1998/1941: 18)

³⁰⁵ Dreams have an important function in Novy’s poetry. A dreamy atmosphere permeates most of her poems. The motif of dreams is repeated several times also in this poem: the woman dreams and also the lyrical subject is lost “on the paths of her own dreams”.

³⁰⁶ “In čudno – kot bi tam ležala / ta, ki je zdaj prišla nazaj, / sem kakor v steklu ogledala / na mah uzrla se tedaj. // Pred mano sanjala je žena, / ne mlada, ne starejša, z izrazom, / kot da je zatopljena, / v zaraščen vrt izgublja se.” (Novy 1998/1941: 25)

³⁰⁷ The scene could be taken from a psychology of schizophrenia: *heautoscopy* is a term used in psychiatry and neurology for the reduplicative hallucination of “seeing one’s own body from a distance”.

past: her doppelgänger visited the garden with the fountain, overgrown with the climbing ivy, and there she gazed at her own reflection. Alluding to the myth of Narcissus, she is enchanted with herself in the mirrored water of the fountain.

The motion of eternal time is highlighted by the melancholic atmosphere and poetic immobility of the world: the world is frozen in an “arctic” time.³⁰⁸ Ultimately, the lyrical subject seeks to reunite with her double as one: she throws herself into the embrace of the dreamy creature. A lyrical subject is in discourse with her doppelgänger, ultimately merging with her, with the lost part of her own individuality.

A fantastic scene happens in the solitude of one room, which expands its boundaries with the imaginary garden and the picture of the fountain: only she and her double are present. The process of awareness and the conquest of the lyrical situation could be defined as positive, idealized narcissism with all the sublime phantasms. (Bachelard 1997/1942: 33)

A static, melancholic representation of a woman gazing at the water in a fountain evokes Caravaggio’s painting of Narcissus,³⁰⁹ marked by a tragic fate. The static image, laden with deep symbolic value, has an almost visualized character in the painting. The mirror of the water is a metaphor for her interior state. The poet accentuates the infatuation and narcissism of the self, albeit in this case it acquires a positive significance in the lyrical event.³¹⁰ Katja Mihurko Poniž cites this poem as evidence of Lili Novy’s divided self. (Mihurko Poniž 2014: 127) The metaphor of a mirror also implies invoking one of the key concepts at the beginning of Anglo-American and French feminist literary criticism.

In the poem “Srečanje” [Meeting], the poet manifests the doppelgänger as the wild part of herself and her longing for freedom with the motif of escape. The confession in the eight-verse stanzas is direct, the lyrical subject being again in the first person singular, thereby emphasizing the

³⁰⁸ The fictional world is here in a dialogue with the story of Snow White, who was locked in a glass coffin, waiting for a prince to rescue her. In this case, the present self must save herself from the trap of the past she was condemned to years ago.

³⁰⁹ *Narcissus* is a painting by the Italian Baroque master Caravaggio, painted circa 1597–1599. In this melancholic picture, an adolescent page is leaning with both hands over the water as he gazes at this own distorted reflection. The figure of Narcissus is locked in a circle with his reflection, surrounded by darkness.

³¹⁰ In 1966, the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman made the film *Persona*, in which the mirror is again a metaphor for the split personality of the actress, for her ill part. In the film, she is condemned to look at herself and face her own disease”, i.e. knowledge of a double identity.

identification with the poet and her attitudes. The opening scene in the first stanza begins with an eroticized and anthropomorphized springtime nature. The lyrical subject, in the first person singular, sees her wild self, which wants to flee like a wild beast from the familiar place into the anonymity of the night and the unlimited dimensions of the universe.

Something is moving in my heart
dark, wild, and strong.³¹¹

The springtime south-wind motif has a crucial function in the poem, providing her with a means of escape from the oppressive reality in which she does not have enough freedom.³¹² The lyrical subject, who is lonely and foreign in the world, again meets her double self in the realm of freedom and becomes her.

She, who was dying in forgottenness,
gazes at me, and she is alive again.
I am meeting with her with wonder
when I am hurrying with her to the restless night
to be with her, to unite with her
in a foreign land.³¹³

The motif of gazing at herself is presented in the opposite way: the other one is looking at her. Freedom could be understood from a gendered perspective: as the glorification of free love and carnality, which was suppressed and even forbidden for women in the patriarchal society of Novy's time. The neo-romantic conflict between a "beautiful soul" and a restrictive reality, the lyrical subject chooses to escape as the only possible solution from unbearable reality, in which the subject does not have enough freedom; she chooses the ultimate freedom.

We find similar images and motifs in her German poems from this period. A woman finds herself in a reflection in the mirror. In the poem "Einsamkeit" [Solitude], her personality is duplicated in the thousand reflections of the mirror and is then broken into pieces. This short three-part poem, composed of orderly, five-line stanzas, sounds like a cry of despair

³¹¹ "Nekaj se mi v srcu giblje, / mračno, divje in močno." (Novy 1998/1941: 35)

³¹² The archetype of the wild woman is a special phenomenon in the feminist literary theory: compare Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992).

³¹³ "Ta, ki mrla je v pozabi, / ta me gleda, ta živi! / Ž njo se čudežno srečujem / in v šumečo noč hitim, / da se ž njo na svetu tujem / spet posestrim in spojim." (Novy 1998/1941: 35)

and a very personal confession of loneliness and suffering. For the lyrical subject, her solitude also means being trapped inside herself. Solitude is defined as a curse of dual meaning; on the one hand, it is desired, and on the other cursed. Awareness of the “burning self” is her curse, and her dual nature is also her destiny. (Novy 2005: 56–57) The lyrical subject is in dialogue with its doppelgänger, torn between foreignness and feelings of familiarity. Understanding the self is even more complex. She understands her inner world as a reflection in a thousand mirrors (“*Tausendfach gespiegelt*”). The identity of the subject expands and at the same time disappears: the subjectivity manifests itself in thousands of fragments; she multiplies herself and at the same time vanishes.

In the Slovene poem “Črepinje” [Shards], published in the revue *Sodobnost* in 1939, Novy for the last time used the motif of the broken mirror as the picture of her personal (di)sintegration and problematic interactions with the world. The broken glass suggests tragedy and a bad destiny, a period of broken relations, the end of integrity, a state of “non-wholeness” of the subject, and the fragmentation of the world:

Like glass objects, all my fortune went to hell,
the wicked hand reached for the fragile, glittering mirror,
she grabbed it and threw it with a clatter onto the floor and against the wall
and between the groaning of the shards, someone laughed venomously.³¹⁴

The “evil hand”, which marks the intervention of inevitable irrationality in the world, mercilessly threw a mirror to the floor and against the wall. The whole entity turns out to be a fraud and an illusion, so in the last stanza, the lyrical subject accepts the situation as a closed, urgent state of existence.

Conclusion

Lili Novy remains an undiscovered and under-recognized modern poet in the history of twentieth-century Slovene poetry. The lyrical poet in her confessions depicts the myth of Narcissus, together with the doppelgänger motif and the motif of the mirror, in her Slovene poetry collection *Temna*

³¹⁴ “Kakor stekleni predmeti so vse moje sreče šle k vragu, / roka hudobna je segla po krhkem, bleščečem se blagu, / ga pograbila in vrgla z žvenketom ob tla in ob steno / in med ječanjem črepinj se nekdo zasmejal je strupeno.” (Novy 1941/1994: 32)

vrata (*Dark door*, 1941) with the poems from the 1930s, when she thematized a new understanding of the relation between subjectivity and the world, together with a new understanding of human existence. Her initial “self-obsession” and glorification of the “beautiful soul” ultimately leads to the gradual erasure and disappearance of the subject and the process, which the female poet expresses metaphorically with the breaking of the mirror into a thousand pieces.

In motifs and imagery, the poet shows a different perception of modern subjectivity. With this theme, she proclaims the mysterious nature of the modern human “psyche”, caught between rational and irrational impulses. Her poems reflect the new sensibility and modern psychology of individualism, which is torn between consciousness and unconsciousness and is fraught with philosophical dilemmas and the contradictions of human existence. Encountering a doppelgänger, for her, means reuniting with her past self. She often manifests her ideas in surrealistic pictures and bridges her melancholic world of the past to themes of love, separation, and the loss of a lover. In this particular historical and cultural moment, she also interrogates the uncertainty of gender roles and addresses female confinement and dissatisfaction, as well as a hidden anger regarding her position in the world within the boundaries of a patriarchal system.

Various explanations of the motif of the doppelgänger in European literature can be found in the literature of the Romantic Period: in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem “Prometheus Unbound” (1820), the concept of the doppelgänger is described as a counterpart of the self. Edgar Allan Poe’s story *William Wilson* (1839) presents a double with sinister, demonic qualities. Lord Byron used doppelgänger imagery to explore the duality of human nature, and in 1886, Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson, who had long been intrigued by the idea of how human personalities can reflect the interplay of good and evil, envisioned this problem in the Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Lili Novy’s approach to the doppelgänger does not emphasize the duality of human nature; instead, she underscores the disintegration and “abysses” of modern subjectivity – and also emphasizes the problem of the modern personality with various identities. Her sombre imagination constructs the surrealistic poetical world, which suggests many interpretations. She also connects the motif of the doppelgänger with a new interpretation of the myth of Narcissus. In her poetry, the doppelgänger symbolizes the longing for a different, *other* self – and even more, it explains the paradoxes of the “soul”, the existence of an inner, lost self, perhaps unconscious, with whom the poet wants to reunite

and integrate into a whole.³¹⁵ This motif also illustrates the disintegration of the lyrical subject and the identity crisis so often featured in the Central European *fin-de-siècle* literature at the turn of the 20th century.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ “Her poetic quest” could be compared to the process of Jung’s individuation: the process by which the individual self develops out of an undifferentiated unconscious – seen as a developmental psychic process during which the innate elements of personality, the components of the immature psyche, and the experiences of the person’s life become, if the process is more or less successful, integrated over time into a well-functioning whole. (Stevens 1994: 2001)

³¹⁶ There are different variations on the myth of Narcissus by the Austrian writers of Jung-Wien (Young Vienna). (Le Rider 1990: 69) In Novy’s case, the use of the myth confirms her connection to the Central European ideas and styles of that period. Regarding Narcissus’s love with his own image being a metaphor for the search for identity, we also find an interpretation in the theory of Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861–1937), a writer and psychoanalyst of Russian origin. In 1921, she published the psychoanalytic essay “Narzissmus als Doppelrichtung” (Narcissism as a Double Orientation). (See Le Rider 1990: 63)

Biographies of the Slovene Women Writers

Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) was a Slovene-Croat writer, playwright, translator, and journalist who is widely regarded as one of the earliest Slovene writers and feminists. She was born in Ljubljana and spent most of her childhood in the countryside. In 1897, she left her family and found work in Ljubljana. In 1899, she relocated to Trieste, where she became a member of the editorial board of the *Slovenka* newspaper and published her first texts. She then moved to Bern, where she enrolled at the university, but was unable to support herself financially and subsequently relocated to Munich and then Prague. It was there that she met her future husband, Vladimir Jelovšek (1879–1930), a Croatian decadent poet who studied medicine. She stayed there from 1900–1906, before moving with her husband to Zagreb. The marriage resulted in three daughters. Kveder later divorced and remarried a prominent Croatian politician, Juraj Demetrović (1885–1945). Her eldest daughter, Vladoša, a student, died of Spanish flu in Prague in 1920, which had a devastating effect on her. From 1920, she was mostly ill, and in 1926, she committed suicide in Zagreb.

Kveder wrote three novels and published many short stories, feuilletons, and plays. She wrote half of her work in Slovene, half in Croatian, with some texts also in German and the Czech language. In the Slovene language Kveder published three collections of short stories, *Misterij žene* [*Mystery of a Woman*, 1900], *Odsevi* [*Reflections*, 1901], *Iz naših krajev* [*From our Places*, 1903]; two books of theatre plays, *Ljubezen* [*Love*, 1901] and *Amerikanci* [*Americans*, 1908]; and the novel *Njeno življenje* [*Her Life*, 1914]. In the Croatian language, she published two collections of short stories, *Jadanaest novela* [*Eleven Short Stories*, 1913] and *Po putevima života* [*On the Paths of Life*, 1926]; one novel *Hanka* [1918]; and four romantic historical dramas, *Unuk Kraljeviča Marka* [*The Grandson of King Marko*, 1922], *Mrtvi grad Karlobag* [*Dead City Karlobag*, 1922], *Arditi na otoku Krku – četiri slike* [*Ardits on the Island Krk: Four Pictures*, 1922]. In German, she published short stories, travelogues, and feuilletons in newspapers. (See Birk 2016: 284–301) In Czech, she published some short stories and a novel *Ze života zahřebské služky* [*From the Life of the Housemaid from Zagreb*, 1908].

She was also a central figure in the Slovenian women's rights movement. She established many contacts with feminists from various countries of Central and South-East Europe, including the Austrian feminists Martha Tausk and Marie Lang. She also worked as a translator from Slovene to German (some literary works of Ivan Cankar) and Croatian.

Her collected works were published twice in Slovenia: an anthology of her oeuvre (comprised of eight books) was published by the publishing house Založba Belo-modra knjižnica, which was run by noted feminist and publisher Minka Krofta (Kveder 1938–1940, edited by Marja Boršnik and Eleonora Kernc). The second compilation of Zofka Kveder's works was edited by Katja Mihurko Poniž (five books, Kveder 2005–2018).

She was also an editor of various periodicals, including *Domači prijatelj* (*Home Friend*, 1904–1914), published in Prague; *Frauenzeitung* (*Women's Newspaper*, a supplement of *Agramer Tagblatt*), *Ženski svet – Jugoslovenska žena* (*Women's World, Yugoslav Woman*, 1917–1920); and *Almanah jugoslovanskih žena* (*The Almanac of the Yugoslav women*), published in Zagreb in 1921.

Vida Jeraj (1875–1932), born Frančiška Vovk, was a Slovene poet and lyricist whose father was the nephew of the poet France Prešeren. Her childhood was unhappy, and in her youth she was partially educated in Vienna, where she stayed with her uncle before returning to Ljubljana to complete her teacher training at a college, graduating in 1895. She then worked as a primary school teacher (for five years, 1896–1901, she was a teacher in Zasip near Bled, trying to support herself and be independent), and she began to publish her poems in Slovene newspapers. She was part of the “*Slovenka* circle”. In 1901, she married Karel Jeraj, a violinist with the Vienna Court Opera, and moved to Vienna. Some of her poems were put to music by her husband, particularly those which were aimed at children. The marriage, however, was an unhappy one, and on 1 May 1908, her son died of scarlet fever. After this, her work became very sombre. In 1910, she moved with her husband and three daughters to the suburbs of Vienna. After the First World War, Jeraj moved to Purkersdorf, where she helped run a charity for those blinded in the conflict. In 1919, she moved back to Ljubljana when her husband was appointed to the newly founded Ljubljana Conservatory. After the First World War, she wrote poems mostly for children.

As a poet, she was not recognized in Slovenian society during her lifetime; she published only one anthology of poems *Pesmi* [*Poems*, 1908, edited by Marja Boršnik] by the main Slovene publisher Lavoslav Schwentner

(1865–1952) and one book of poems for children [*Iz Ljubljane čez poljane (From Ljubljana into Fields)*, 1926]. In 1932, she committed suicide. Her collected work was published in 1935 [*Izbrane pesmi Vide Jerajeve (The Collected Works of Vida Jeraj)*, edited by Marja Boršnik].

Lili Novy née **Haumeder** (1885–1958) was a Slovene-German poet and translator of poetry. She is widely regarded as one of the most important female Slovene poets of all time. Hailing from an aristocratic background – a rarity among Slovene modernists – she was born in Graz as Lili Haumeder to an ethnic German father named Guid Haumeder and a Slovene mother Ludvika Ahačič. She was educated privately and began writing poetry in German. As a well-educated individual, she also knew French, English, and Italian and she learned Czech (due to her marriage).

She married to a Czech man and got two daughters. Her love story with her husband ended tragically. She lost one daughter, and after the Second World War she had to support her two grandchildren.

In the 1930s, she began to engage with the Slovene literary community and began translating the poems of the Romantic Slovene poet France Prešeren from German into Slovene and vice versa and also began publishing in literary magazines. Additionally, she translated a lot of Goethe into Slovene. First, she wrote poems in German, but gradually, under the influence of the Slovene poet Oton Župančič in the 1930s, she began writing her own poetry in Slovene. Because of her aristocratic origin and German–Slovene identity she was not well accepted in the new socialist society after the Second World War. She supported the family with translations and corrections.

During her lifetime only one collection of her poems, *Temna vrata (Dark Door)*, 1941) was published, edited by Josip Vidmar, with the other, *Oboki (Arcades)*, 1959) being published after her death (also edited by Josip Vidmar). Novy also wrote poems, plays, and short stories for children.

Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948) was a Slovene poet and playwright who attended teacher training college in Maribor and Ljubljana from 1894–1898. She was a part of “*Slovenka* circle” and had close contact with Vida Jeraj and Kristina Šuler. She is considered as the first lesbian poet in Slovene culture.

Moreover, she was friends with the teacher of the Slovene “moderna” poets, Anton Aškerc (1856–1912). From 1899 to 1920, Poljanec worked as a teacher in a small town, Kapela, in the northeast of Slovenia, and later

in Maribor. From 1908–1911, she temporarily left teaching and studied Slavistics, German studies, and pedagogy in Vienna. Due to financial difficulties, she couldn't finish her studies.

As a very independent person, she liked to travel to different places in Europe. Very inspirational were her trips to Opatija (Croatia), where she travelled due to her poor health. (See her cycle *Ob Adriji, At the Adriatic Coast*, 1906) Most notably, in 1906, she travelled to Istanbul with the Slovene painter Ferdo Vesel (1861–1946). *Carigrajske vizije (Visions from Istanbul)* was her last cycle of poems (*Ljubljanski Zvon*, 1908).

She published only one poetry anthology, *Poezije (Poems)*, by the Slovene publisher Lavoslav Schwentner in 1906. Later, she self-published some stories and plays for children.

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Abstract

Slovene Women Writers at the Beginning of the 20th Century

Alenka Jensterle Doležal

The monograph *Slovene Women Writers at the Beginning of the 20th Century* consists of eleven literary studies and an appendix containing biographies of the authors. This comparative research focuses on Slovene female authors at the beginning of Slovene modernism (the so-called “moderna” period). In Slovene literary history, four key authors from the “moderna” period (Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Dragotin Kette, and Josip Murn-Aleksandrov) have historically been showcased, while a select few female authors with innovative voices, who tried to pursue their careers in Slovene culture during this period very hard, have been neglected. This monograph attempts to bring into focus forgotten female Slovene writers from this period, thus offering a critical view into the creations of Slovenian female authors of the “moderna” era (with reference to the broader *fin-de-siècle* period).

The literary-historical and literary-theoretical view of texts is complemented by other approaches, especially feminist literary studies and methods of contextualization. The interdisciplinary research extends to the field of cultural studies and history. Ego-documents (research of the correspondence and literary archives of the authors) provide a great help in the research of the context and also in the research of their literary work. The research reveals their creation in a broader context, since the literary texts of female authors cannot be researched outside of the cultural-historical context. As such, we are also interested in the reception of their works by

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their contemporaries, which, in the patriarchal environment of the day, was restrictive and unfair to their unique voices.

This monograph focuses on the work of four key Slovene female authors of the “moderna” period: female prose writer and feminist Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) and the female poets Vida Jeraj (1875–1932), Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948), and Lili Novy (1885–1958). For female authors of the era, it was very difficult to assert themselves in the patriarchal, narrow-minded, and conservative Slovene environment. The authors (with the exception of L. Novy) came from the generation of Slovene women writers who started publishing and developed as writers in the literary circle around the newspaper *Slovenka* (*Slovene Woman*, 1897–1902). The research also reveals an intercultural and multicultural view of their creation, since during the Austro-Hungarian period, Slovene female authors were bilingual cultural nomads with multiple identities. In the first five chapters, we present writer and feminist Zofka Kveder and her involvement in Czech culture (1900–1906). Czech influences in her literary work, which later would be key to the formation of her authorial identity, are particularly emphasized. We also analyze intercultural elements in her literary work. A special chapter is devoted to the comparison of her literary work with the work of Julka Chlapec-Djordjević – a Serbian writer and feminist who worked in Prague during the interwar period and continued Kveder’s legacy. In three chapters, the poetic discourse of Vida Jeraj, the sharpest female lyrical poet of this time, is analyzed. A special chapter is devoted to male censorship in the development of her authorship. We also research intimate love themes in the poetry of Ljudmila Poljanec. The poetry of Lili Novy, who switched in her writing from the German to the Slovene language, is also highlighted. We are interested in the thematization of the motif of the *doppelgänger*, related to the myth of Narcissus, and the motif of the mirror in both her Slovene and German poems.

The present monograph sheds light on Slovene female authors ignored or insufficiently researched in Slovene literature at the beginning of the 20th century. Research on Slovene modernity in the literary work of Slovene female authors is also important for the representation and description of Central European literary movements. The book thus brings new insights into Slovene and Central European studies and comparative literary history, as well as spreading knowledge about the literary works of Slovene female authors in the wider scientific space.

Povzetek

Slovenske pesnice in pisateljice
na začetku 20. stoletja

Alenka Jensterle Doležal

Monografijo *Slovene Women Writers at the beginning of the 20th Century* sestavlja enajst literarnozgodovinskih študij in dodatek – biografija avtoric. V ospredju so komparativne raziskave o slovenskih avtoricah na začetku 20. stoletja v obdobju moderne. V slovenski literarni zgodovini so se iz obdobja moderne poudarjali štirje ključni avtorji: Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Dragotin Kette in Josip Murn-Aleksandrov, pozabljalo se je na avtorice, ki so se v slovenskem prostoru prvič množično začele pojavljati prav v tem obdobju in so se zelo težko uveljavljale v slovenskem patriarhalnem, ozko konservativnem okolju tega obdobja. Knjiga tako nudi kritičen pogled na ustvarjanja slovenskih avtoric na začetku 20. stoletja v obdobju moderne (z navezavo na obdobje *fin-de-siècle*).

Literarnozgodovinski in literarnoteoretični pogled na tekste se dopolnjuje z ostalimi pristopi, predvsem s feminističnimi literarnimi študijami in z metodami kontekstualizacije. Raziskave so ponekod interdisciplinarnega značaja in segajo tudi na področje kulturologije in zgodovine. Veliko pomoč pri raziskavah konteksta in tudi ustvarjanja nudijo ego-dokumenti: raziskave korespondence in literarne zapuščine avtoric, saj literarnih besedil avtoric ni mogoče raziskovati izven kulturnozgodovinskega konteksta in prostora. Študije razkrivajo njihovo delovanje in ustvarjanje v srednjeevropskem prostoru, V tem smislu nas zanima tudi recepcija njihovega dela, ki je bila v patriarhalnem okolju omejujoča in nepravilna.

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Monografija se osredinja na ustvarjanje štirih ključnih avtoric: prozaistke Zofke Kveder (1878–1926) in treh pesnic: Vide Jeraj (1875–1932), Ljudmile Poljanec (1874–1948) in Lili Novy (1885–1958). Avtorice (razen L. Novy) so izšle iz generacije slovenskih pisateljic, ki so začele izdajati in so se pisateljsko oblikovale okrog časopisa *Slovenka* (1897–1902). Pri raziskavah se razkriva tudi medkulturni in večkulturni pogled na njihovo ustvarjanje, saj so bile v obdobju Avstro-Ogrske slovenske avtorice dvojezične in celo kulturni nomadi. V prvih poglavjih se posebno poudarja vpetost Zofke Kveder v češki prostor in češki vplivi, ki so bili ključni za oblikovanje njene avtorske identitete. Analizira se večkulturnost v njenem ustvarjanju. Posebno poglavje je posvečeno primerjavi njenega literarnega dela z ustvarjanjem Julke Chlapec-Djordjević – srbske feministke, ki je medvojnem obdobju tudi delovala v Pragi. V treh poglavjih se analizira poetični diskurz Vide Jeraj, najbolj subtilne lirične pesnice v tem času. Posebno poglavje je posvečeno moški cenzuri v njenem ustvarjanju. V posebnem poglavju se analizirajo ljubezenske teme v poeziji Ljudmile Poljanec. V zadnjem poglavju se poudarja ustvarjanje Lili Novy, ki je iz nemškega ustvarjanja prešla v slovenščino. Zanima nas tematizacija dvojnika, povezanega z mitom o Narcisu in motivom zrcala v njeni tako slovenski kot nemški tvorbi.

Pričujoča monografija osvetljuje v slovenski literarni vedi prezrte ali ne dovolj raziskane avtorice in njihovo ustvarjanje na začetku 20. stoletja. Raziskave o slovenski moderni in slovenskih avtoricah so pomembne tudi za študije o srednjeevropski literaturi. Knjiga tako prinaša nova spoznanja v slovenistično vedo in primerjalno literarno zgodovino kot tudi v širšem znanstvenem prostoru širi vednost o ustvarjanju slovenskih avtoric.

Shrnutí

Slovinské spisovatelky na počátku 20. století

Alenka Jensterle Doležal

Monografie *Slovene Women Writers at the beginning of the 20th Century (Slovinské spisovatelky na počátku 20. století)* se skládá z jedenácti literárněhistorických studií a přílohy – životopisů autorek. Ve studiích je v popředí srovnávací výzkum slovinských autorek na počátku 20. století, v období slovinské moderny. Kniha nabízí kritický pohled na tvorbu slovinských autorek na počátku 20. století v moderní době (s důrazem na období fin-de-siècle). Ve slovinské literární historii byli zpravidla zdůrazňováni čtyři klíčoví autoři z tohoto období: Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Dragotin Kette a Josip Murn-Aleksandrov, přičemž autorky s originální poetikou, které se ve slovinském prostoru v tomto období poprvé začaly ve větší míře prosazovat, byly v kritických recepcích ve 20. století často opomíjeny.

Literárněhistorický a literárně teoretický pohled na texty doplňují další přístupy, zejména metody feministické literární vědy a kontextualizace jejich tvorby. Takto pojatý interdisciplinární výzkum umožňuje přesahy do oblasti kulturologie a historie. Jsou to zejména ego-dokumenty (korespondence a literární pozůstalosti autorek) poskytují velkou oporu při zkoumání kontextu a také odhalují nové aspekty k rozboru jejich tvorby. Studie též poukazují na místo autorek ve středoevropském prostoru. Proto jejich tvorbu nelze zkoumat mimo kulturně-historický kontext a prostor: zkoumané autorky tvořily ve výrazně patriarchálním a katolickém prostředí „malé“ slovinské kultury v kontextu „velké“ habsburské monarchie. V

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tomto smyslu nás zajímá i již zmíněná marginalizující recepce, která byla v patriarchálním prostředí k jejich jedinečnému hlasu často omezující a nespravedlivá.

Monografie se zaměřuje na tvorbu čtyř klíčových autorek; prozaičky a feministky Zofky Kveder (1878–1926) a tři básnířek: Vidy Jeraj (1875–1932), Ljudmily Poljanec (1874–1948) a Lili Novy (1885–1958). Kromě L. Novy pocházely tyto ženy z generace slovinských intelektuálek, které začaly publikovat a autorsky se profilovat v revue *Slovenka* (česky *Slovinka*; 1897–1902). Výzkum především zdůrazňuje interkulturní a multikulturní rozměr jejich tvorby. V době Rakouska-Uherska byly slovinské autorky zpravidla bilingvní, a daly by se označit za kulturní nomádky s vícero identitami. V prvních kapitolách monografie se zaměříme na angažmá Zofky Kvederové v českém prostředí a budou konkretizovány české vlivy v jejím díle, které byly klíčové pro utváření její autorské identity. Problému multikulturalismu v její tvorbě je věnována samostatná kapitola. Další je věnována srovnání její literární tvorby s tvorbou Julky Chlapec-Djordjević – výrazné srbské feministky, která v meziválečném období též působila v Praze a pokračovala v jejím literárním odkazu. Poetický diskurz Vidy Jerajové, nejsubtilnější lyrické básnířky této doby ve slovinské kultuře, je rozebírán ve třech kapitolách a jedna z nich je věnována mužské cenzuře při utváření její autorské identity. Studie věnované poezii Ljudmily Poljanec se zabírají tématy lásky a intimity. Poslední kapitola je věnována tvorbě Lili Novy, která ke slovinské kulturní identitě přešla z německé. Zaměříme se na tematizaci dvojníka, související s mýtem o Narcisovi, a motivem zrcadla v její slovinské i německé tvorbě.

Předkládaná monografie představuje sondu do tvorby slovinských autorek z počátku 20. století, které byly dosud ve slovinské literatuře buď přehlížené nebo nedostatečně prozkoumané. Výzkum slovinské moderny a slovinských autorek je podstatný i pro studium středoevropské literatury a slovanských literatur. Předkládaná kniha umožňuje nové pohledy na slovenistiku a srovnávací literární historii a zároveň také rozšiřuje poznatky o tvorbě slovinských autorek v širším vědeckém kontextu.

Reviews

I.

Monografijo, ki obsega preko 180 strani, sestavlja enajst literarnozgodovinskih študij. Avtorica dr. Alenka Jensterle Doležal že več kot dvajset let predava slovensko književnost na Katedri za balkanistične in južnoslovanske študije Karlove Univerze v Pragi in se je že v svoji predhodni monografiji ukvarjala s slovensko moderno. Knjiga je napisana v angleščini.

Avtorica je izrisala nov pogled na vprašanje obdobja slovenske moderne in to umestila tudi v širši okvir. Knjiga nudi kritičen pogled na ustvarjanja slovenskih avtoric na začetku 20. stoletja v obdobju moderne (z navezavo na obdobje fin-de-siecle), saj so te začenjale na koncu 19. stoletja. Pisateljice (razen L. Novy) so izšle iz generacije slovenskih pisateljic, ki so začele izdajati in so se pisateljsko oblikovale okrog časopisa *Slovenka* (1897–1902).

V ospredju so komparativne študije. Literarnozgodovinski in literarnoteoretični pogled je dopolnjen s študijami spola. Veliko pomoč pri tem nudijo ego-dokumenti: korespondenca in literarna zapuščina avtoric. Osredinja se na ustvarjanje štirih ključnih avtoric: Zofke Kveder, Vide Jeraj, Ljudmile Poljanec in Lili Novy, ki so v prozi ali v poeziji oblikovale nov avtorski diskurz. Monografijo opredeljuje razmišljanje o avtoricah v srednjeevropskem prostoru. Kljub kvalitetnim in umetniško bogatim tekstom so bile avtorice v slovenski literarni zgodovini, v kateri je dostikrat prevladoval patriarhalni pogled, pozabljene in izbrisane (rehabilitacijo je do sedaj doživela samo Zofka Kveder: v 21. stoletju je izšlo več študij o njenem opusu). Monografija izpolnjuje po svoji novosti vrzel v slovenski literarni zgodovini, ki je pozabljala na avtorice v obdobju moderne in se je osredotočala samo na štiri ključne avtorje: I. Cankarja, O. Župančiča, J. Murna-Aleksandrova in D. Ketteja. Avtorica monografije izhaja iz literarnih besedil in analizira tako literarnoteoretične kategorije kot tudi razmišlja o ustvarjanju avtoric v kontekstu patriarhalne slovenske kulture, ki je negativno vplivala na oblikovanje njihove avtorske identitete. Poudarjena je tudi recepcija njihovih besedil, ki je bila večinoma negativna in je bistveno zaustavila njihov pesniški razvoj (večinoma so potem utihnile). Pisateljice so bile dvojezične in so ustvarjale v slovenskem prostoru, a tudi v večkulturnem

okolju habsburške monarhije. Avtorica monografije posveča zato posebno pozornost pisateljicam z dvojno literarno identiteto. Avtorica se tako v literarnozgodovinskih analizah usmerja tudi na prestopanje kultur, razmišlja o kulturnem posredništvu, o potovanju knjig in idej. Pri raziskavah različnih pojavov si avtorica pomaga tudi z njihovo bogato korespondenco.

V uvodnem poglavju Alenka Jensterle Doležal prikaže pregled razvoja slovenskih avtoric v 19. stoletju in nakaže glavne teme, na katere se osredotoča monografija. Drugo poglavje sestavlja pet podpoglavij o ustvarjanju in delu slovensko-hrvaške pisateljice Zofke Kveder, ki je kot nomadska avtorica delovala v različnih kulturnih okoljih. V prvih prispevkih avtorica monografije razmišlja o njenem praškem obdobju in o čeških vplivih na njeno ustvarjalnost. Njeno ustvarjanje umešča v češki kontekst. V tem delu se posveti medkulturnemu dialogu med Zofko Kveder in češkimi avtorji (secesijsko avtorico Ruženo Svobodovo in glavnim predstavnikom češke moderne Josefom Svatoplukom Macharjem) ter prevajalko in kritičarko njenih del Zdenko Háskovo. Analizira tudi medliterarne in medkulturne prvine njenega edinega romana, ki je izšel samo v češčini, *Iz življenja zagrebske služkinje*. V zadnji študiji o tej avtorici primerja roman *Hanko* z romanom srbske feministke Julke Chlapec-Djordjević. V poglavjih o pesnici Vidi Jeraj razmišlja o treh temah: o Vidi Jeraj kot impresionistični avtorici (analizira razumevanje kategorije časa v njeni poeziji), o dekadenci v njeni poeziji in o moški cenzuri, ki je oblikovala njeno avtorsko identiteto. V poetološkem diskurzu Ljudmile Poljanec jo zanima tema ljubezni do ženske. V poeziji Lili Novy pa analizira mit Narcisa, povezanega z motivom vode in zrcala. Način citiranja je takšen, kot ga zahteva Univerzitetna založba. Jezik je prilagojen za znanstveno monografijo.

Znanstveno delo Alenke Jensterle Doležal pomeni aktualen in izviren prispevek k slovenski literarni in kulturni zgodovini. V študijah je poudarjen medkulturni koncept literarnih študij, ki prinaša nova spoznanja tako strokovnemu bralcu kot tudi širši javnosti. Predlagana monografija z literarnoteoretičnimi pristopi (tudi z uporabo feministične literarne teorije) in z interdisciplinarnimi posegi v kulturološke študije predstavlja bistveno novost v razmišljanju o moderni v slovenski literarni zgodovini.

Maribor, 29. 4. 2023

Red. prof. dr. Silvija Borovnik

II.

Znanstvena monografija Alenke Jensterle Doležal *Slovene Women Writers at the Beginning of the 20. Century* se ukvarja z ustvarjanjem slovenskih pesnic in pisateljic v obdobju moderne, časa velikih družbenih sprememb tudi za ženske, ki so se v tistem času prvič pričele uveljavljati v literarnih krogih. Delo obravnava pomembne avtorice tako za slovenski kot tudi za širši srednjeevropski literarni sistem, ki pa so bile – tako kot žensko avtorstvo nasploh – v literarni zgodovini pogosto zapostavljene. Njihove dosežke monografija Alenke Jensterle Doležal jasno izpostavi s komparativne perspektive v enajstih študijah, kjer se ukvarja predvsem s prvo slovensko poklicno pisateljico Zofko Kveder (1878–1926), ki je delovala tudi kot urednica, in pesnicami Vido Jeraj (1875–1932), Ljudmilo Poljanec (1874–1948) ter Lili Novy (1885–1958). Z izjemo zadnje gre za avtorice, ki so pričele ustvarjati v krogu prvega slovenskega ženskega časopisa *Slovenka*, ki je izhajal med letoma 1897 in 1902 ter je imel pomemben vpliv na formiranje ženskega literarnega avtorstva v slovenščini. Znanstvena monografija Alenke Jensterle Doležal podrobno prikaže zahtevne razmere, v katerih so se pesnice in pisateljice uveljavljale, ter natančno mapira njihova prizadevanja. Udejstvovanje avtoric je bilo v literarnem polju, kjer so tedaj prevladovali moški, že v času njihovega življenja zapostavljeno. Tudi same so lastno identiteto ustvarjalk šele iskale – povedano z besedami raziskovalke: »hotele so biti anonimne, zakrite, skrite pred javnostjo«. Pozneje so bile v slovenskem literarnem kanonu pozabljene ali je bilo njihovo delo prikazano kot nepomembno, zato pričujoča znanstvena monografija pomeni še en izjemen prispevek k razumevanju njihovih dejavnosti. Pokaže namreč, da so bile v svojem času v stiku z naprednimi literarnimi smermi iz širše regije.

V obdobju moderne je bil slovenski prostor del Avstro-Ogrske monarhije, kjer so sobivali in se prepletali različne kulture ter jeziki, čemur daje delo posebno pozornost, ko z veliko mero občutljivosti za zgodovinske in kulturne specifikke razčlenjuje raznorodne literarne in jezikovne vplive. S tega vidika daje monografija poseben poudarek na kontekstu literarnih ustvarjalk in izpostavlja doslej manj znana literarnozgodovinska dejstva, delovanje Zofke Kveder na primer predstavi kot preplet različnih kulturnih vplivov ter prostorov, od Češke prek Dunaja do Hrvaške, kjer se je povezovala z drugimi avtorji in avtoricami, uredniki ter urednicami in kritiki ter kritičarkami. Pisateljčino mrežo študija natančno predstavi, med drugim pa se posveti tudi njenim povezavam s češkim pisateljem,

publicistom in politikom Jozefom Svatooplukom Macharjem. Primer študije o pesniški identiteti z vidika jezika je poglavje o Lili Novy, ki je iz nemškega ustvarjanja prešla v slovenščino.

Poleg tega se Alenka Jensterle Doležal v monografiji ukvarja s sicer redko izpostavljenim področjem ženske ljubezni in spolne želje v literaturi, in sicer med drugim v primerjavi besedil *Hanka* Zofke Kveder ter *Jedno dopisivanje* srbske avtorice Julke Chlapec-Djordjević in v analizi reprezentacij lezbične ljubezni v poeziji Ljudmile Poljanec. S primeri pokaže vznikanje emancipatornih teženj in spreminjajočih se vlog žensk v družbi v tem obdobju, ki se kažejo na različnih nivojih literarnega in drugega javnega udejstvovanja obravnavanih ustvarjalk. Poleg relevantne vsebine delo odlikujejo izvirne raziskovalne perspektive, tj. metodološki sinkretizem, ki obsega različne pristope k literarnim besedilom, od primerjalnih in interpretativnih do interdisciplinarnih. Študije se posvečajo tudi intimnim vidikom družbeno-kulturnih sprememb v obdobju slovenske moderne, saj so analize literarnih del in njihovega kulturnega ozadja poglobljene s primeri iz korespondenc avtoric, kar je pomembno posebej z vidika reprezentacij ženskosti.

V Ljubljani, 8. 5. 2023

Red. prof. dr. Milena Mileva Blažič

Quotations from the reviews / Úryvky z recenzí

“Alenka Jensterle Doležal’s scholarly monograph is an up-to-date and innovative contribution to Slovene literary and cultural history. In her studies, the intercultural concept of literary studies is emphasized, which brings new knowledge to both experts and the wider public. The presented monograph, with its literary-theoretical and interdisciplinary methodology (also using feminist literary theory) and with its interdisciplinary interventions in cultural studies, represents a significant innovation in the research of Slovenian modernity in Slovenian literary history.”

„Vědecká monografie Alenky Jensterle Doležal je aktuálním a inovativním příspěvkem ke slovinským literárním a kulturním dějinám. Ve studiích je zdůrazněn interkulturní koncept literárních studií, který přináší nové poznatky jak odborníkům tak širší veřejnosti. Předkládaná monografie má jak literárně teoretické přesahy (čerpajícími také z feministické literární teorie), tak interdisciplinární přesahy do kulturologie a představuje nový pohled na výzkum slovinské moderny ve slovinských literárních dějinách.“

Prof. Dr. Silvija Borovnik

“In addition to relevant content, this monograph is characterized by original research perspectives, i.e., methodological syncretism, which encompasses different approaches to literary texts, from comparative and interpretive to interdisciplinary. The studies are also devoted to intimate aspects of socio-cultural changes in the period of Slovenian modernity, as the analyses of literary works and their cultural background are deepened with examples from the authors’ correspondence, which is especially important from the point of view of representations of femininity.”

„Kromě relevantního obsahu se monografie vyznačuje originálními výzkumnými perspektivami, tzn. metodologickým synkretismem, který zahrnuje různé přístupy k literárním textům, od srovnávacích a interpretačních, po interdisciplinární. Studie se věnují i intimním aspektům sociokulturních proměn v období slovinské moderny, neboť rozbor literárních děl a jejich kulturní pozadí jsou prohlubovány o příklady z korespondence autorů, což otevírá důležité aspekty reprezentace ženskosti.“

Prof. Dr. Milena Mileva Blažič

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Doc. PhDr. Alenka JENSTERLE DOLEŽAL, CSc. vystudovala Univerzitu v Lublani (Slovinsko), obory slovinský jazyk a literaturu, srovnávací literaturu a filozofii. V roce 2000 zde obhájila doktorskou práci věnovanou Antigone v jižních a západoslovanských literaturách po druhé světové válce. Od roku 2002 přednáší slovinskou literaturu, slovanské literatury a literární vědu na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy. Zabývá se problematikou mýtu v literatuře, slovinskou modernou ve středoevropském kontextu, slovinsko-českými vztahy, literaturou slovinských spisovatelek a také genderovými otázkami. Je autorkou pěti vědeckých monografií, které byly publikovány ve slovinštině a češtině. Poslední dvě jsou: *Ključí od labirinta: O slovenski poeziji (Klíče od labyrintu: O slovinské poezii)* a *Mezikulturní dialog: Slovinské stopy v českém prostředí*. Publikovala více než devadesát vědeckých článků a studií v češtině, slovinštině a angličtině. Editovala několika kolektivních monografií, zatím poslední z roku 2019 je *Z Lublaně přes Vídeň do Prahy: Ivan Cankar a jeho současníci*. Na Filozofické fakultě UK organizovala pět mezinárodních slovenistických konferencí a vědecky se podílela na řadě fakultních a mezinárodních projektů. V současnosti je spoluředitelkou slovinsko-českého projektu „Transformations of Intimacy in the literary Discourse of Slovene ‚Moderna‘“. Kromě toho je také spisovatelkou, vydala řadu autorských básnických sbírek a dva romány.

Dr. Alenka JENSTERLE DOLEŽAL je na Univerzi v Ljubljani diplomirala iz slovenskega jezika in literature (A), primerjalne književnosti (B) in filozofije (B). Leta 2000 je na Univerzi v Ljubljani zagovarjala dizertacijo O Antigoni v južno- in zahodnoslovanski dramatikii po drugi svetovni vojni. Od leta 2002 je zaposlena na Filozofski fakulteti, Karlovi univerzi v Pragi. Poučuje slovensko književnost v slovanskem kontekstu in literarno vedo. Njena znanstvena področja so: mit v književnosti, slovenska moderna, slovensko-češki odnosi, slovenske avtorice in feministična literarna veda. Je avtorica petih monografij. Zadnji dve sta: *Ključí od labirinta : O slovenski poeziji*, *Mezikulturní dialog : slovinské stopy v českém prostředí (Medkulturni dialog : slovenske sledi v českém kontekstu)*. Objavila je več kot devetdeset znanstvenih člankov in študij v slovenščini, češčini in angleščini. Je tudi sourednica treh zbornikov in urednica dveh kolektivnih monografij. Zadnja se imenuje: *Z Lublaně přes Vídeň do Prahy: Ivan Cankar a jeho současníci (Iz Ljubljane preko Dunaja v Prago: Ivan Cankar in njegovi sodobniki)*). Bila je tudi glavna organizatorica petih znanstvenih konferenc na fakulteti. Vključena je v češke, slovenske in evropske projekte, deluje v slovensko-češkem projektu »Transformations of Intimacy in the Discourse of Slovene moderna«. Je tudi pesnica in prozaistka: objavila je pet pesniških zbirk in dve prozni deli.

