Go East!

LGBTQ+ Literature in Eastern Europe

Zbornik prispevkov s konference
Na vzhod! LGBTQ+ književnost v vzhodni Evropi

Edited by
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Ljubljana, 2020

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Contents

Foreword

In late October 2018, 27 scholars, researchers and activists gathered in Ljubljana to present 25 papers at the first international conference on LGBTQ+ literature in Eastern Europe to be organised in Slovenia: **Go East! LGBTQ+ Literature in Eastern Europe / Na vzhod! LGBTQ+ književnost v vzhodni Evropi**.[1]

Today, due to the remarkable progress made in recent years, it may seem that LGBTQ+ literature has been safely mainstreamed and commodified. Moreover, the impressive work by LGBTQ+ historians, theorists and writers has been widely recognised and institutionalised. At least in the West. What about the East? How have LGBTQ+ literary production and scholarship developed in Eastern Europe and why has Eastern Europe been (perceived as) less accepting of sexual and gender non-normativity? What are the literary depictions of non-normative sexualities and gender identities by authors from Eastern Europe? What is the place and function of LGBTQ+ literature in Eastern European literary systems and cultures? What about LGBTQ+ literature for young readers? What are the national canons of LGBTQ+ writers and the relationships between LGBTQ+ rights movements and literature? What has been the reception of LGBTQ+ texts at home and abroad? What are the linguistic and discursive features of these texts?

These are just some of the issues that the participants who decided to go east examined in their papers, 20 of which are published here in revised and extended versions. The papers are organised in alphabetical order by authors' names, and Professor Gregory Woods's keynote speech is published as the introduction.

1 The conference took place on 25 and 26 October 2018 at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and it was co-organised by Škuc Ljubljana and the Faculty of Arts. The scientific and organising committee consisted of Prof Dr Roman Kuhar (Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana), Prof Dr Alojzija Zupan Sosič (Department of Slovenian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana), Prof Dr Vojko Gorjanc (Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana), Suzana Tratnik (MA, writer, translator, activist), Brane Mozetič (writer, translator, editor, activist), Dr Andrej Zavrl (independent researcher, teacher, translator).

LGBT Literature in Eastern Europe: A View from the West

Gregory Woods

Out of Ignorance

Western ignorance of Eastern European cultures is often at its most conspicuous during moments of apparent rapprochement, when the magnanimous westerner decides to show an interest. We might think of Allen Ginsberg in 1965, having just been expelled from Cuba, interacting with the young people of Prague like a bull in a china shop, before the authorities put him on a plane to London. Gay sex was not illegal in Czechoslovakia, but Ginsberg's very public affirmations and recommendations of gay pride, and the openness of his serial sexual encounters with young Czech men, were more or less unthinkable. His biographer Barry Miles concludes the account of this episode: 'Allen played straight into the hands of the Stalinists, who were using any excuse to stem the tide of liberalism. Although Allen was acclaimed for his chutzpah—no one else would have *dared* to behave as he did—for his friends and acquaintances in those countries [Cuba and Czechoslovakia], his visits were not a conspicuous success' (Miles 368). The obliviousness was not all Ginsberg's—neither the organisers of the event in which he was crowned 'King of May', nor the authorities, had anticipated the huge crowds that would turn up—but Ginsberg's arrogance is instructive. Looking eastward from the West, such moments should give us pause. It is, at least, worth noting that, while Czechoslovakia had decriminalised homosexual acts in 1961, many of the United States continued to criminalise them well into the twenty-first century.

If western gay writers often speak about the East from positions of ignorance, that ignorance is not often diminished by the available text books. In my own *History of Gay Literature*, the only Eastern Europeans, apart from Russians and Germans, are Franz Kafka, Max Brod, Tadeusz Borowski and Wiesław Kielar (Woods 1998). Knowing, therefore, that my own work has not been exactly comprehensive in its coverage, I have consulted my reference books in LGBT studies to see how they compared. Of the Eastern European nations, Wayne Dynes' two-volume *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*

(1990) has a separate entry only on 'Russia and USSR', by Simon Karlinsky (1133-1138). Claude J. Summers' *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* (1995) has only an item on 'Russian Literature', also by Simon Karlinsky (611-618), plus shorter items on a few individual writers: Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Kuzmin, Sophia Parnok and Marina Tsvetaeva . Despite its ambition for universal coverage, Louis Crompton's massive book *Homosexuality and Civilization* contains just one sentence on Russia: 'Russia, where male relations seem to have been surprisingly open in the 1600s and 1700s, did not have a sodomy statute until 1832' (321).

Neil Miller's major historical survey, *Out of the Past*, is more forthcoming, but still almost wholly confined to the one nation: it has a chapter called 'Czars and Commissars: Homosexuality in Russia'. Its main subjects, seen within the context of continuous social change, are Gogol, Tchaikovsky, Kuzmin, Eisenstein; and a discrete section on 'Diaghilev, Nijinsky, and the Ballets Russes'. The chapter ends with a brief extract from Vasily Grossman's *Forever Flowing*, on lesbian relationships in the labour camps (199-214). Later, Miller mentions the 1993 decriminalisation of male homosexual acts by Boris Yeltsin's government, and briefly adds: 'The newly independent Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia repealed their sodomy laws as well' (485). Unusually, in addition to the obligatory item on 'Russia', as well as a separate item on 'Russian Literature', George Haggerty's encyclopaedia *Gay Histories and Cultures* has others on 'Czech Republic', 'Slovenia' and 'Yugoslavia'.[1]

Even as recent a volume as *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature* (2014) has only an item on 'Russian Gay and Lesbian Literature', by Brian James Baer. This appears in a section called 'Geographies of Same-Sex Desire in the Modern World', the purpose of which, according to the introduction by the volume's editors, is 'to make manifest' that 'LGBTQI literature … is not some marginal, peculiarly European phenomenon' (McCallum 8). This would suggest that they do not believe Russia is properly in Europe.

Dictionaries of prominent LGBT individuals are not much more reliable in their coverage. Take three examples published by Routledge at the beginning of this century. In Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon's *Who's Who in Gay and Lesbian History: From Antiquity to World War II*, out of a total of 489 individuals, there are one Hungarian (Károly Mária Kertbeny), eight Polish (Jósef Czechowicz, Jarosláw Iwaskiewicz, Jan Lechoń, Tamara de Lempicka, Stanisław August II, Karol Szymanowski, Vladislas III of Varna, Stanisław Witkiewicz), thirteen Russian (Serge Diaghilev, Sergei Eisenstein, Erté, Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Kuzmin, Serge Lifar, Vaslav Nijinsky, Sophia Parnok, Vasily Rozanov, Poliksena Solovieva, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Pavel Tchelitchev,

1 Will Petersen & Martin Vodražká, 'Czech Republic' (233-234); Kevin Moss, 'Russia' (755-757); Kevin Moss, 'Russian Literature' (757-759); Zoran Milutinović & Will Petersen, 'Slovenia' (823-824); Zoran Milutinović & Will Petersen, 'Yugoslavia' (964-965).

Marina Tsvetaeva), and one Ukrainian (Ol'ha Kobylians'ka). In the same editors' *Who's Who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day*, out of a total of 511 individuals, there are four Polish (Jerzy Andrzejewski, Witold Gombrowicz, Grzegorz Musiał, Sławek Sławoska), three Russian (Yevgeny Kharitonov, Valery Pereleshin, Gennady Trifonov), three Slovenian (Bogdan Lešnik, Brane Mozetič, Suzana Tratnik), and one Ukrainian (Roman Viktiuk). In Gabriele Griffin's *Who's Who in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, out of a total of 443 individuals, there are just one Hungarian (Erszébet Galgóczi), and five Russian (Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Kuzmin, Sofia Parnók, Tat'iana L'vovna Shchépkina-Kupérnik, Marina Tsvetaeva).

The one cultural figure who most reliably appears in such encyclopaedias, generally in an item of his own, is Sergei Diaghilev, perhaps the most influential Eastern European homosexual of the last century. Although born not far from St. Petersburg, Diaghilev was often spoken of in the West, perhaps understandably, as if he came from far beyond the Urals. His Ballets Russes capitalised on a Western association of Russia itself with lands east of the Urals and times prior to the Industrial Revolution. Orientalism of this kind was big box office: the exoticism of 'Slavic' looks and styles, Léon Bakst's costumes, Nijinsky's face … And yet, even in the supposedly *Russian* Ballets Russes, Sergei becomes Serge, Mikhael becomes Michel Fokine, Myasin becomes Massine, and so on. The exotic Far East was all very well, but Eastern Europe was expected to westernise.

LGBT Critical Tasks

The simplest part of the job of LGBT literary scholars, and also, perhaps, the most pleasurable, is to read a lot and identify what might be of interest to other LGBT readers. We read with all our queerness sensors on full alert. We develop an ear for a revealing turn of phrase, an eye for a minor character with telling mannerisms, a nose for a suspiciously suppressed fragrance. This is how any of us might first have identified, in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, the two officers whom Yashvin sneeringly calls 'the inseparables', and whose fleeting role in the novel seems to be to highlight the relatively safe masculinity of the bond between Yashvin himself and Vronsky (193-194). In Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, while discussing the new governor of a town in Siberia (who, we know from an earlier chapter, was sent there after being accused of the crime in Article 995 of the penal code, a homosexual crime), Mariette says something 'so funny' that Catherine Ivanovna cannot 'control herself for a long time' (283-284, 291-293). We gay readers know the kind of thing that has been said, for we ourselves are still familiar with the hilarity of homophobic gossip. The straight reader may well be oblivious to this.

Hearing of lesbian or gay authors on our own tantalising grapevine, we trawl their works for lesbian or gay texts. Conversely, having stumbled across lesbian- or gay-seeming texts, we scrutinise the biographical details for lesbian or gay authors. We reassess,

in the light of liberationist principles, LGBT texts which were previously undervalued or ignored. We identify past representations of what we now call LGBT people and take what we can learn from them about their social contexts. We perform queerings, or queer readings, of canonical texts, thereby estranging them, making them new in the light of our fresh understanding of sexual identities and their modes of speech. We are alert to the eccentricities of spinsters and bachelors. We appreciate the charms of masculine women and feminine men. We perform close readings of the gravestones of pairs of friends. To sum up, we insert ourselves into histories in which we had never been thought present; we *re*insert ourselves in histories from which we had been erased.

Since the history of homosexuality is also that of homophobia, we identify, and read critically, homophobic texts. We seek out past scandals because we know they will give us glimpses of our own history. The transcripts of prosecutions for obscenity may give us our only insight into censored texts. We pay close attention to complaints about a certain, unacceptable kind of independence among women; the court reports of nocturnal activities in parks; medical records of outbreaks of particular types of sexually transmitted disease; outbursts of religious and/or nationalist fervour directed against any form of unconventional behaviour … Social attitudes become audible in the tones of voice of press reports—even in their punctuation, as when a trans individual's self-presented sex is put in inverted commas: 'man'/'woman'. We are alert to the ways in which official records and press reports misrepresent everyday life. Moments when trans individuals become visible in the historical record arise when they get involved with public institutions—hospitals, army barracks, prisons—rather than when going about their ordinary routines in public and private spaces. Some, indeed, have been outed by death.

The Hidden and the Lost

Many LGBT scholars are engaged in tasks that can be grouped in the category of 'recovery research'—that is, quasi-archaeological tasks of recovering texts which have become lost or been hidden. In the opening sentence of the 'Editor's Preface' to his anthology *Out of the Blue*, Kevin Moss writes: 'Given the pervasive sexophobia in Soviet culture, it is no wonder gay people and gay literature appeared to be completely absent' (*Out of the Blue* 9). Hence his book's subtitle, *Russia's* Hidden *Gay Literature*. He is referring not only to the difficulty of seeing gay literature within the USSR itself, but also to the suppression of 'gay evidence' in pre-Soviet Russian literature. The hiding may be done by gay authors themselves, to get around censorship or to avoid scandal and worse. In some cases, their work is not published at all, or not within the USSR; in others, gay content is sublimated, either consciously or unconsciously—to be revealed in later analysis by gay readers and critics. Generation after generation of lesbian writers have vanished into the black hole of a presumption of 'innocence'—that is, of sexlessness. Even more than

in the case of men, the lives of woman-loving women have demanded a detailed and nuanced mapping of the borderlands between friendship and love. Collectively, we deny that there could ever be a clear boundary between the two. It can be open to question, whether certain literary techniques, styles or mannerisms are modes of concealment or revelation. This question might apply, for instance, to Camp; or to strategies of metaphorical complexity or obscurity.

As well as the 'hidden' there is the lost—literature that has been erased by homosexual history in particular (the burning of papers by one's family might be the most common modes of erasure, but who knows how many authors have destroyed their own work, who knows how much work remained unwritten?). And there is literature that has been erased by the convulsions of wider historical forces. For instance, we lack Nikolai Klyuev's unpublished writings, which he had left with his ex-lover Nikolai Arkhipov when he was sent into exile in Siberia, but which were lost when Arkhipov, in turn, was arrested and exiled. We lack Karol Szymanowski's novel *The Ephebe*, the manuscript of which was destroyed during the German bombing of Warsaw in 1939.

All too aware of the past disappearances of texts, we may also be sensitive to the possibility that our own work, our scholarship, may itself vanish or *be* vanished. We all find ourselves, to a greater or lesser extent, involved in a struggle against censorship—the threat that even our own voices will be silenced, will become lost. This struggle takes place not only in the broader, public arena, but also within our own academic institutions, and perhaps within our own families. There may even still be an inner censor, discouraging us from within. In terms of public life, the history of censorship differs profoundly from nation to nation, political context to political context, religious context to religious context, and so on; and it may be, precisely, when addressing our own local variations on these matters, that we are ourselves most at risk of being gagged.

Overlapping Cultures

West and East alike, we deal with many similar themes, tropes, structures. Such similarities need to be acknowledged, and perhaps questioned—but not assumed. For instance, in public discourse, the modern city is often represented as an anti-human space, isolating and alienating. But to many LGBT individuals, they are places in which to disappear from certain kinds of close scrutiny. In the possibility they offer of anonymity, they may offer a level of reassurance that was previously available only in the closet. Mikhail Kuzmin's 1903 novel *Wings* begins as many later gay novels do, with a journey from the provinces to just such a place, the metropolis. A wide-eyed young person arrives in the city and is taken under the wing of a more experienced older person, crucially not a family member, who will serve as a guide into an adult life in a queer subculture, often connected to a wider community of artists and intellectuals. One of the fascinating tasks

of the LGBT critic is to compare different versions of such narratives as they emerge from distinct historical moments within very different cultures. Compare the beginning of *Wings* with that of Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* of 1978 …

So we must remember that our cultures overlap, West and East, even as we resist the temptation to assume they are identical. Take a key moment in British gay culture, in some ways *the* key moment, the trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895. Evgenii Bershtein has argued that 'Wilde's biographical legend shaped the formation of sexual identities and ideologies in *fin-de-siècle* Russia' (Bershtein 285). He is thinking of Mikhail Kuzmin and Vyacheslav Ivanov. The reporting of the Wilde scandal, and the subsequent reception of his works, have operated as a useful barometer in the climates of homophobia worldwide. As was the case, also, in Latin America, the reporting of Wilde's trials gave a rare opportunity for public discussion of homosexuality, albeit within a context of criminality and scandal; and the figure of Wilde himself became an icon of the outcast aesthete, a model worth following, if you had the courage. For homosexual men, and to an extent for lesbian women too, Wilde was both a model and a warning. After the publication of *Wings*, Mikhail Kuzmin was sometimes known as 'the Russian Oscar Wilde' or 'the northern Wilde'. But he himself eventually rejected the Wilde myth in favour of something more positive. In his diary entry for 6 June 1906, Kuzmin called Wilde 'that snob, that hypocrite, that bad writer and faint-hearted man, who besmirched that for which he was put on trial' (Malmstad 105).

When news of Wilde's conviction was met with hostility to him in the Czech press, the journal *Moderní revue*, whose literary editor was Jiří Karásek, defended Wilde in a way that was taken to be a broader defence of homosexuality itself. The journal's subsequent development of a specifically Czech brand of Decadence was as strongly influenced by Wilde as by French Modernism. Moreover, as Zdeněk Beran puts it, 'The controversy surrounding Wilde's imprisonment became an impulse for introducing his works to Czech readers'—an impulse acted on by *Moderní revue*. Issue 3 was initially planned to be wholly dedicated to Wilde, and not just for his sake. Karásek said 'This whole number of the *Moderní revue* is the first defence in Czech literature of the problem of the sexually inverted'. Wilde's name 'never disappeared from the pages of the magazine', Beran writes: 'His iconic status among the Decadents who gathered around the *Moderní revue* was indisputable' (259, 260).

Speaking of productions of Wilde's plays in Hungary in the first decade of the twentieth century, Mária Kurdi has argued that 'Wilde's work tended to be either condemned for its moral dangers or admired for its daring originality. This division reflected the clash of opinions on the national stage' (247). That is, opposed attitudes to Wilde's plays reflected a broader debate between conservative and progressive attitudes to Western Modernism. Later, in Nazi Germany, shorn of their social critique, his comedies were played as frothy romances like operettas. In the Soviet Union, they could be

performed as critiques of the British class system, with their decadent individualism downplayed: Wilde could be read as a critic of capitalism.

Nation, Language, Cosmopolitanism

Similarly, as Kārlis Vērdiņš has shown, Latvian media responses to the Eulenberg scandal in Germany (1907-1908) were largely determined by attitudes to German power rather than to homosexuality itself. Indeed, the relationship with Germany could be said to have prevented a potentially illuminating public discussion of homosexuality by pre-determining the story as being about decadence and effeminacy in the German aristocracy. There is good evidence that articles in the Latvian press not only accepted but actually demanded censorship of the topic. Intimations of German homosexuality were repeatedly published in Latvian papers during times of tension between Latvians and Baltic Germans. Similar hints were dropped at the outbreak of the First World War. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the association of Germany and homosexuality was duly applied to the rise of Nazism (Vērdiņš 123-133).

The Icelandic novelist Halldór Laxness noted, in 1925, that Reykjavik had finally acquired all the trappings of modernity: 'not only a university and a movie theatre, but also football and homosexuality' (Jóhannesson 100). Homosexuality was a modern topic, and, up to a point, the willingness to discuss it was a sign of a modern society. But such discussions were generally more acceptable if they referred to somewhere else. Just as, in France and then Britain, 'buggers' were thought to come from Bulgaria, as often as not, homosexuality has raised questions of nationality and nationalism.[2] Magnus Hirschfeld, the great pioneer of sexology, lectured in Riga on 18 May 1926, and then again on 27 and 29 April 1929. His lectures were important enough to be raised in the press, but, as Ineta Lipša comments:

> The press did not reflect the views of Hirschfeld in the Latvian context; it did not indicate how his views were perceived by medical doctors and lawyers in Latvia, and did not attempt to establish whether there was a homosexual subculture in Riga, whether a homosexual community was developing or whether it had any leaders whose views might be worth ascertaining. Thus, in reporting on the views of Hirschfeld that homosexuality should be decriminalized, the press gave the impression that they bore no relation to the reality of life in Latvia. (Lipša 150)

There was indeed a queer subculture in Riga, sometimes known as the Black Carnation Club. But if you read the press reports you could be forgiven for thinking Hirschfeld

2 '*Bougre* derived from the Latin *Bulgarus*, meaning native of Bulgaria, where the Manichean and Albigensian heresies were known to flourish. The term Bulgar or *Boulgre*, contracted to *bougre*, was gradually applied to all heretics, and from being an abusive term term for heresy in general *bougrerie* (buggery) became the common appelation for the supposed sexual habits of heretics and usurers' (Hyde 49).

was an anthropologist, returned from an expedition to the other side of the world, rather than a politically engaged scientist with a recommendation of law reform specifically relevant to the population of Riga; indeed, to the people in the room.

The central character of Jiří Karásek's 1900 novel *A Gothic Soul* is led by his sense of difference to question his national status. His spiritual and sexual impotence, both, have their root in a troubled sense of what it means to be Czech. He is culturally normative in his broader cosmopolitanism: 'He thought in German and French. He was interested in the French and German peoples. He felt, breathed, and lived in German and French.' Although he recognises that this is a pose, when he emerges from a long reverie to hear Czech being spoken in the streets around him, he is indeed alienated from the speakers and what they are saying: 'There was no one he could love. Everything left him indifferent. He stared at everything apathetically'. When he encounters one of his mesmerisingly glamorous Doppelgangers, all the bells of Prague, identified one by one, begin to ring in celebratory ecstasy. It is as if male love were being welcomed home (Karásek 53, 56, 59-64). But he does not recant his cosmopolitanism; and besides, he is left all alone when the bells fall silent.

Karol Szymanowski was able to reconcile nationalist pride, as a Polish patriot, with the ideal of 'pan-Europeanism', which had developed especially around his love of Italy, and of Sicily in particular. But gay men and lesbians have rarely been trusted in this regard. The same questions kept coming up: does the homosexual's cosmopolitanism transcend and overrule any patriotic allegiance? Are such people more likely to serve each other's interests, across national boundaries, than those of their own compatriots? Blacklists of homosexuals were often compiled as pre-emptive lists of potential spies. Is the 'Homintern' a threat to the home or homeland? (Woods, *Homintern* 1-30).

Of course, cosmopolitanism, so often associated with homosexuality, both as one of its virtues and one of its sources of risk, tends to be routed through Western cities (privileging the already privileged cultural centres); and the cosmopolitanism of such Eastern cities as St. Petersburg and Budapest and Prague tends to be measured by the extent to which they look westward. How much of our supposed internationalism is truly international? For instance, is Camp the international language of queer style that is often claimed of it; or is it an instrument of cultural imperialism, designed to coerce us all into over-praising American musical theatre? If it is, how did this happen?

'Catching Up' with the West

The situation in the East is often construed, in the West, as one of having to 'catch up' with the more advanced and progressive West. We have tended to remember Soviet dismissal of homosexuality as an import from the 'decadent' West, and similar Soviet denials during the early years of the AIDS epidemic. Even in the face of ample evidence

(for instance) that various Eastern European nations decriminalised male homosexual acts earlier than ours did,[3] we in the West tend to overstate the extent to which our own societies have modernised, and to forget how recently all our own official discourses were strongly homophobic. We in the West—in the USA, in the UK, in the European Union—have often preached to Eastern European countries about the need to achieve LGBT equality, even while struggling to achieve it ourselves. In the USA, same-sex sexual activity was illegal in fourteen states until as late as 2003. In the UK the ages of consent were not equalised until 2001, and marriage equality was not achieved until 2013. Britain's discriminatory law Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was not fully repealed until 2003, after several failed attempts. Russia's gay propaganda ban, imposed in 2013, seems to have been modelled on Section 28. Indeed, Britain has form in this respect: one of its most lasting exports to its empire was its homophobic laws, which gay movements across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean are still struggling to reform.

This theme of catching-up is most awkwardly embodied in one event in the early 1930s, a visit of Marina Tsvetaeva to the Paris salon of Natalie Barney. One of the heroic figures of queer Modernism, Barney prided herself on her cosmopolitanism: 'I was an international person myself … and as I had a nice house I thought I should help other international people meet. The other literary Salons weren't international'. One of her guests said, 'The universe came here … from San Francisco to Japan, from Lima to Moscow, from London to Rome' (Rodriguez 180, 183). However, visitors tended to be accepted, or not, on distinctly Parisian terms. When Marina Tsvetaeva read the French translation of her poem 'The Swain' ('Mólodets') at Natalie Barney's salon, the occasion was not a success: wrong text, wrong clothes, wrong impression. In Simon Karlinsky's account of the occasion:

> The reading ended in a complete fiasco: the listeners had no idea of what it was Tsvetaeva was trying to do. In addition to the complexity of Tsvetaeva's style, the theme of the poem—a woman sacrificing herself, her mother and her child, for the sake of a vampire she loves—could not have been very congenial to the predominantly lesbian audience. (Karlinsky 1986, 208)

Tsvetaeva and Barney represented versions of lesbianism that were chronologically out of step with each other: the Russian had brought into a self-preeningly Modernist setting the residue of *fin de siècle* Decadence. Karlinsky adds: 'It boggles the mind to imagine Tsvetaeva—impoverished, shabbily dressed and totally unknown except to Russians—at one of those gatherings' (209). She was thought to be wallowing in the

3 Not that such apparently crucial historical moments in the public history of sexuality are necessarily crucial moments in the history of literature. As Jan Seidl has pointed out, 'Generally speaking […], the decriminalization of homosexuality in Czechoslovakia [in 1961] did not have an impact on the ways it was thematized in art. In works intended for publication references to homosexuality were still impossible, and authors who wanted to talk about it still had to resort to various indirect strategies' (Seidl 190).

unhealthy miasma of vampirism by an audience who were more used to the imagery of liberated and liberating Amazons. She had no experience of the smart conversation of the salon. She was treated as a throw-back, and as such more or less ignored. Yet her poem had raised an issue of genuine, practical concern to her, as a lover of both women and men, who was also a mother. She wrote a 'Letter to an Amazon', addressed to Natalie Barney, in which she argued that a woman would have to make a choice between lesbianism and motherhood. Even a lesbian couple whose love lasts until death is surrounded by a void, that of childlessness. 'Only for this and for no other reason are they a race of the damned' (211).

Where Now?

In an essay on the year 1991 for the US gay magazine *The Advocate*'s history of the gay and lesbian movement, *Long Road to Freedom* (1994), Masha Gessen speaks of going back to Russia for that country's first gay and lesbian conference and film festival, of which she was a co-ordinator. She adds: '*The Advocate* had launched an international section that year. This was one of the many signs that the international gay and lesbian movement, until then largely limited to Western Europe [and the USA, of course], was expanding. Now it would include the countries of the collapsing Eastern bloc and the Americas' (Gessen 375). The idea is that Western-style 'pride' will be a suitable model for progress in both Latin America and Eastern Europe. (But note that Gessen does not go so far as to mention Africa or Asia.) All it would take would be time. In other words—although Gessen does not put it quite so crudely—'they' would catch up with 'us'.[4]

The transitional post-1989 period saw commentators in the West attempting to discern what had already changed in the East, and to predict what else might change there. Was the situation getting better or worse for LGBT people? Consider the example of Russia. With Gorbachev in mind, Simon Karlinsky ended his item on 'Russia and U.S.S.R.' in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (1990): 'As the historical record shows, Russia's past gives indications both of hope and despair' (1138). With Yeltsin in mind, he ended his 'Introduction' to the anthology *Out of the Blue* (1997): 'Despite the present chaotic conditions in Russia, the recent decriminalization of [male] homosexuality by Boris Yeltsin's government suggests that the future of Russian gay literature might well turn out to be promising' (25). Kevin Moss ended his item on 'Russian Literature' in *Gay Histories and Cultures* (2000) with a tentative prediction: 'Thus far little writing has been

4 Other than in Gessen's essay, *The Advocate*'s history has hardly any references to East Europe. Its listings of events include, for September 1990: '*The Advocate* reported that nearly 900 cases of AIDS were diagnosed in Romania following the ouster [*sic*] of Nicolae Ceausescu, who had denied the existence of HIV in his country' (360); and, for December 1990: 'The unified German government abolished Paragraph 175, a 118-year-old law banning homosexuality' (361). Romania does not appear in the book's index, and neither do other East European countries, Russia apart.

published chronicling the recent boom in gay life in Russia, but such work may well appear in the coming years' (759). And Brian James Baer began the closing paragraph of his account of 'Russian Gay and Lesbian Literature' in *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature* (2014): 'Despite the general homophobia, gay and lesbian literature in today's Russia is alive and well' (Baer 436). Observing at a distance from both Russia and these commentators, it was hard for the general reader to imagine the complex realities behind such valiant but necessarily fragmentary and uncertain summaries. More detailed and settled information might take some time, and would have to come from those on the spot.

Certain authoritative publications, though, have to take a stand against time and fix themselves as representations of the point that has been reached. In this context, it is worth returning in more detail to the most recent of the reference books I have been referring to, *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, which quite reasonably flaunts the authority of the *Cambridge History of …* series to which it belongs, a library of 350 volumes in ten disciplines. At just under 750 pages in length, this volume consists of forty essays, including the editors' introduction. A blurb prior to the title page (and on the flyleaf) announces its aspiration to present 'a global history of the field' and 'an unprecedented summation of critical knowledge on gay and lesbian literature that also addresses the impact of gay and lesbian literature on cognate fields such as comparative literature and postcolonial studies'. Offering 'new critical approaches', it 'will not only engage readers in contemporary debates but also serve as a definitive reference for gay and lesbian literature for years to come'. As a summation of prior critical knowledge, the book fails conspicuously. It ignores or overlooks many important previous works of lesbian and gay scholarship. I trust it is not too narcissistic to mention, as a characteristic example, that my own substantial *History of Gay Literature* is not even listed in any of the volume's forty bibliographies, let alone engaged with. There are other, no less perplexing omissions.

As I have mentioned, the book's East European coverage amounts to an essay on Russian literature. It is hard to tell whether the editors had deliberately decided to await further information (not that they mention any such approach) or that, again, Eastern Europe had merely been overlooked. However, one of the reasons for the book's thin coverage of the region, rather than passive negligence, appears to be that its editors have been actively directing their attention elsewhere. Most of the conspicuously fresh research in the book is developed around questions of non-white ethnicities and post-colonial cultures. Its coverage of people of colour is varied and innovative: Part III ('Enlightenment Cultures') has an essay on 'African American Writing Until 1930'. Part IV ('Queer Modernisms') has a history of the literature of woman-loving women in the Caribbean. Part V ('Geographies of Same-Sex Desire in the Modern World') has essays on African literatures, queer politics in South Asia and its diaspora, 'Female

Same-Sex Subjectivities in Contemporary Chinese-Language Contexts', Mesoamerican myth-making, Native American literatures and 'African American and African Diasporic Writing'. This reflects the major broadening of the focus of Western queer studies that has taken place in the last couple of decades, perhaps initiated by the adjustments, in the 1990s, of studies in the AIDS epidemic, representations of which had initially focussed so intensely on the experience of white gay men. If we take this book as being representative of current trends in queer studies in the Western academy, we may, after all, find that we can speak of Eastern Europe as having been left behind, or perhaps, simply, as having been forgotten in a globalising urge that has proven somewhat less than global. Postcolonial theory is likely to be a crucial repositioning factor—a crucial weapon, if you will—not only with regard to the direct or indirect influence of the Soviet Union on the past and present in Eastern Europe, but also when it comes to placing Eastern European LGBT studies in relation to the power dynamics of the discipline's development in the West.

Where are we now? In order to conclude with a question-mark rather than a full stop, I take guidance from a useful passage in Vitaly Chernetsky's paper on Ukrainian queer culture at the conference *Queer Narratives in European Cultures*, held at the University of Latvia, Riga, in June 2015. He asks a series of questions, among which are the following: 'What are the specific challenges of the unique overlap of the post-Soviet and post-colonial condition for the development of queer cultures in recent years? How do these challenges affect the ties of a formerly colonized nation with the former colonial power, as well as hopes for European integration? […] How can imperialist practices be avoided in the interaction between globalized queer culture and the local/national context?' (Chernetsky 207). We might add to this the related question of how such practices can be avoided in the interaction between the English language, in which globalised queer culture tends to be shaped and transmitted, and the local/national language(s).

Where are we now? I have other questions to ask, more sentimental, perhaps, because emotionally concerned with the lives and books of LGBT individuals. Is Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' still to be found in the back pockets of teenagers in Yerevan? How would a play about lesbian lovers be received in Chişinău? Do bookish gay boys still read Gennady Trifonov to each other in the cafés of Tbilisi? What can we learn from the accumulated wisdom, or even the mistakes, in the diaries and letters of an elderly gay couple from the suburbs of Astrakhan? What do we know of lesbian poets in Baku? Do we look further eastward, and southward, with fellow-feeling or in a spirit of incomprehension and anxiety? Do we welcome, and if so *how* do we welcome, the queerness of migrants, and of migration itself? How do we adjust our own identities and dreams to the developing world order? It is because I speak from a position of relative ignorance in these matters that I feel able to conclude with the optimism of unanswered questions.

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Comparative Analysis of Two Texts for Young Adults, *Dečki* [*Boys*] and *Fantje iz gline* [*The Clay Boys*]

Milena Mileva Blažić

Abstract: The article presents a comparative analysis of the search for identity in (youth) literature, especially (homo)sexual identity. The fairy-tale type/motif of changing clothes/gender is well-known in literary history (ATU 514 and 884) and modern picture books. It appeared in Slovene (youth) literature in 1895. Literary texts with the theme were not negatively accepted, as literary critics mostly affirmatively expressed themselves about the "youth" theme or "puberty" or "transitional" period, which was mainly placed in marginal social spaces, e.g. hospital, boarding school and orphanage. Next follows a comparative analysis of two youth novels dealing with (homo)sexuality: *Dečki* [*Boys*] by France Novšak, 1938, and *Fantje iz gline* [*The Clay Boys*] by Janja Vidmar, 2005.

Keywords: problem topic, search for identity, gender identity, criticism of society

Introduction

Global social changes are also affecting Slovenian youth literature, among others with the problem topics characterized by the search for identity. This can be a search for biological, cultural, gender identity, etc. Problem topics also include other topics, such as refugees, illness, otherness, culture, violence, poverty, death, sexuality, dying, war, abuse and mourning. Search for identity is a constant in youth literature, only the emphasis on the way of the search differs, but usually this topic is grouped into a broader topic. In modern times, the topic of searching for (gender) identity can also be traced in crossover picture books, mostly written from the perspective of an adult (adult-centrism). The characteristic of canonical texts in children's/youth literature is the so-called crosswriting, meaning that such texts are mostly written for children, but the context is intended for adults. The search for different types of identities, including gender, is a contemporary topic, presented in the form of short contemporary fairy tales in the picture-book

form for young children in pre-school and first educational periods. The topic is most often presented with anthropomorphized and/or personalized animals.[1]

Gender Motif in Picture Books

The topic is present in a number of contemporary fairy tales in picture book, for example Slovenian B. Mozetič, *Prva ljubezen* [*First Love*], 2014; *Dihurlandija* [*Skunklandia*], 2016, A. Spacal, *Mavrična maškerada* [*Rainbow Masquerade*], 2013, *Kako ti je ime*? [*What's Your Name?*], 2018, or translations L. Schimel, *Neighbors and Friends*, 2008; A. Maxeiner, *All Our Families!*, 2012. The authors are aware of the crossover openness and intentionality, as the picture books are aimed both at children and adults.[2] In picture books by L. Newman, *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989); M. Willhoite, *Daddy's Roommate* (1991), and pictorial writing (M. Lupša, *Očka* [*Two Daddies*], 2012) the adult-centric perspective is highlighted, while children are the secondary literary characters. B. Cole's picture book *Mummy Never Told Me* (2003) also deals with individual (sub)topics from the point of view of the child (child-centrism): adoption, appearance, childbirth, conception, homosexuality, pregnancy, surgery, sexuality, etc.

Gender Motif in Fairy Tales – ATU[3] 514 and ATU 884

In the international Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index of folk tales, the motif of *disguised women* is classified as the ATU 514 "*shift of sex*" motif, although the motif of *shift of gender* would be more appropriate. The basic motif has several variants, beginning with the emperor/ father/ king/priest who has a daughter/infant son but wants a male offspring to succeed the empire/kingdom. The father sends his daughter to war (e.g. *Mulan*). In some variants, the queen pretends that the daughter is a boy. A disguised woman may perform heroic deeds in the service of a king (e.g. *Joan of Arc*). The king's daughter (sister) falls in love with the disguised woman and wants to marry her (*Kamar al Zaman and the Chinese princess Badur*). The disguised woman rejects the marriage (*Vasilisa Popova*) in order to remain independent. In some variants, she also undergoes a test of whether she is male or female, e.g. with bathing, food, handiwork, jewellery, meeting in the garden. At the end of some variants, the disguised woman turns into a man by magic or by accident, while in some variants parents are happy to have a son, even though it is really a girl who is raised as a boy.

1 For example, skunks (Mozetič, *Dihurlandija* [*Skunklandia*]), penguins (Parnell, *And Tango Makes Three*), snails (Spacal, *Mavrična Maškerada* [*Rainbow Masquerade*]), pigs (Hobby, *Toot & Puddle*, *A Present for Toot*), etc.

2 "I put a lot of specific LGBT symbolism into the picture book, which is reflected in both the textual and the visual part of the book. […] Although I am aware that certain codes are understandable to adults only" (Spacal 72).

3 The abbreviation ATU is an international designation, an acronym based on the surnames of three folklorists (A. Aarne, S. Thompson, H. J. Uther) who published an internationally classified folktale type index (Uther 2004, reprint 2011).

Fairy tale type ATU 884 is a combination of different types and different episodes, e.g.: (1) The motif of disguised women (*Joan of Arc, Mulan*); (2) The test of masculinity or femininity (*Vasilisa Popova*); (3) Separation of lovers (*Rožmanova Lenčica* [*Rožman's Lenčica*]); (4) The wife finds her lost husband (*Makalonca*) before marrying another (*Turki odpeljejo Srebrno* [*The Turks take Srebrna*]) (Radešček); (5) The girl in modest disguise in court (*Joan of Arc*); (6) Forgotten fiancée/wife (*The Turks take Srebrna*); (7) Identifying the lovers by the picture (*Bela in črna nevesta* [*White and Black Bride*]) (Grimm); and (8) The prince marries his first fiancée.

Gender Motif in Slovenian (Youth) Literature

Josip Stritar wrote the poem *Glavan* with a homosexual topic in 1894 which falls within the scope of literature for adults[4] (Zupan Sosič, "Zadrge" 167). In eight parts of the feuilleton titled *Institutka* [*The Boarder*], Govekar wrote a text about 17-year-old Ida, sent by parents to the boarding school "Sacre coeur" in Vienna ("daughters ... with short skirts ... who are still half *boys* in their appearance"). Before returning back home to Slovenia, Tilka comes into her bed. The composition of the *The Boarder* is very similar and at the same time different from that of Novšak's *Boys*. Initial scenes of homosexual experiences in the boarding school are followed by trials and the traditional conclusion (marriage out of gratitude).

Ivan Cankar, *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* [*The House of Mary Help of Christians*], 1904.

Cankar describes various issues in the text, but intuitively took into account the basic premise of (youth) literature that the writer should be on the side of children, to feel empathy for the child being victimized. In the text Cankar describes the fates of fourteen girls and their agony in an orphanage. The problem topic is multifaceted and diverse, while eroticization takes on the forms ranging from the cult of Mary, maternal love, to other forms (e.g. child abuse, incest, homosexuality, paedophilia, prostitution, voyeurism, etc.).

All these (youth) novels that deal with the search for identity, including gender and sexual identity, depict love and/or attachment respectfully and with empathy for children, regardless of the unjust social conditions of capitalism, which because of its wanton greed eats its children, in this case workers/orphans. In Cankar and Novšak, in addition to describing the search for identity the central topic is social critique: Cankar uses the example of a poorhouse, while Novšak criticizes boarding schools and the Catholic Church. The suffering in this novel is the result of unresolved social (and consequently family) relationships (Zupan Sosič, "Ljubezen" 63). The motive for the sexual abuse of a

4 "How I loved him, and he loved me! / He put his arm around my neck – / oh that was a soft, good hand! –[...] / A woman came to us the next morning, / his mother. [...] / I was not made to love a woman." (Stritar 1894: 94)

child is presented, depicted in Cankar's *The House of Mary Help of Christians*, followed by the motif of homosexuality between two girls.[5] A. Zupan Sosič points out the following characteristics of the time of the publication of the book (1904): "For the bourgeois world at the time the novel was published, the sexualization of childhood and motherhood and their demythization were highly innovative (of course, undesirable) approaches that undermined and even demolished bourgeois ethics." (Zupan Sosič, "Ljubezen" 67).

Ljudmila Poljanec, *Baronesi Sonji* [*To the Baroness Sonja*], 1906

Ljudmila Poljanec (1874–1948) studied in Vienna and lived in Belgrade, Constantinople, Paris, Prague, Salzburg, etc. She dedicated many of her poems to her friends (Marica H., Friend A. M. R., Friend), and because of (self-)censorship she used pseudonyms (Bogomila). Also included in the titles of her poems are textual metaphors and allusions: Gypsy ("*If only I could hug you, sweetheart! / Give me your love!")* (Poljanec 22). Lj. Poljanec christened her songs and implicitly tried to affirm "holy love", including same-sex inclinations and/or love, by intertextually referring to the biblical style of the *Song of Songs* (bosom, eyes, palm, etc.).[6]

A. Zupan Sosič also writes about new emotionality and special sincerity, an autoreflective interplay of male and female categories with subtle intertextuality ("Spolna identiteta" 93) and speaks about the biological, social and psychological gender which is more represented in adult literature, while in children's and/or youth literature it is literary and metaphorized and placed in picture books in the world of personified animals. Both are accompanied by frustration; however, the latter is "quieter" in female homosexual allusions, evolving from scenes of female friendship as an upgrade and extension of friendship (Zupan Sosič, "Homoereotika" 6), which can also be found in the form of close and distant associations in children's and/or youth literature. She also makes a distinction between female and male homosexuality, as is evident in the crossover novel *Boys* (1938).

In his novel for young adult readers, entitled *Človek mrtvaških lobanj: kronika raztrganih duš* [*The Man of the Skulls: A Chronicle of Torn Souls*], 1929, B. Kreft discussed a boarding school and also addressed the topic of homosexuality of adolescents which he combined with criticism of the church. The novel received the response of leading literary historians, F. Vodnik, J. Vidmar, and J. Jurančič. Kreft was convicted and fined for the novel, and the novel was banned as "anti-communist" (Zadravec 44). The novel also provides a critique of clericalism, religious institutions, and abuse. Due to censorship, Kreft was unable to continue his trilogy, so he devoted himself to drama.

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5 Father laughed and grabbed her arm. "Well, go on, baby, don't be afraid of me!" She could barely defend herself [...] (ibid, 100). "Your breasts are as pure as baby's and white as snow!" Lucija leaned down and kissed her on the breast and made Tončka shiver." (Cankar 134)

6 Although the *Ob Adriji* [*By the Adriatic Sea*] [...] On the contrary, she is fond of the Romanian poet Carmen Silva and is erotically fascinated by the Russian baroness Sonja (Mihurko Poniž 581).

Alma Karlin, *Najmlajša vnukinja častitljivega I Čaa* [*The Youngest Granddaughter of the Reverend I Cha*], 1948, 2016

Slovenian writer Alma Karlin spent much of her life traveling and living abroad. She published between the First and the Second World Wars, mainly in German. Some of her works are crossover, including the fairy tale *The Youngest Granddaughter of the Reverend I Cha*, published in German in 1948 and translated into Slovene in 2016 (by Jernej Jezernik). The fairy tale is intertextually linked to the fairy tale types ATU 514 and 884. Comparative analysis and application of the theory by S. Žižek confirms the hypothesis that Karlin's fairy tale relates to the literary tradition from Antigone to the present and that the fairy tale expresses the characteristics of the literary heroine's subjectivization, which is an international fairy tale type, while Karlin added features of Chinese culture. In this fairy tale, she also discusses the search for a (gender) identity[7] on a metaphorical level. Žižek says of Joan of Arc, a medieval heroine, that she represents a new character of women's intervention in politics. The youngest granddaughter of the reverend I Cha in disguise as a man is similarly not a symbol of unstable gender identity. Crucially, she acts as – a woman (Žižek 57). She consciously enters politics for political and personal reasons, as a woman, the youngest granddaughter, dressed as a man – a son and a grandson.

Franček Bohanec, *Knjižne police za otroke* [*Bookshelves for Children*], 1958

References to homosexuality in literary history dealing with youth literature are rare. Bohanec writes affirmatively about erotic poetry which in his mind constitutes an ingredient and represents an appropriate reading for a growing child: "Erotic lyric poetry is especially necessary for sensitive young people. In addition to erotic poetry, social song is of great importance for education", "the path to healthy sexuality" (Bohanec 1958). Bohanec understands lyrical, erotic and social poems as equally important for children growing up.[8]

France Novšak, *Boys*, 1938

Although F. Novšak (1916–1991) focused on the identity topic as the central topic in the young adult novel *Hudobni angeli* [*The Wicked Angels*], it was already fully taken into account in the crossover novel for young adults *Boys*, published in book form in

7 He didn't yet manage to free himself from ancient Chinese customs or from ancient superstition. Nevertheless, he sternly asked, "Were you so unvirtuous in your previous life that you were born again as a woman?" (Karlin 9-10). [...] "Like women from the West, I will learn a lot and walk through my life as a man, as your actual grandson" (ibid. 23-4).

8 "The child is in the "homoerotic" phase at this age (12-13 years). [...] In comics, thus, adventures intertwine with secrets based on the child's homoerotic complex. [...] It is true that the hidden urges that draw a child to comics are real and perfectly sound. … He needs to acquire the ideal of man" (Bohanec 64).

1938. Extracts had already been published in 1937 in the *Ljubljanski zvon*, which means that detabooization happened over eighty years ago. Since its publishing, the novel has received a great deal of attention and significant literary reviews from leading literary critics of adult literature between 1918 and 1941, when the literary criticism addressing young adult literature was just emerging.

The first reaction was by D. Šega in 1939, in the *Sodobnost* magazine. Šega affirmed the novel.[9] The second article on this topic was written by M. Javornik, in 1939.[10] The third response was written in 1939 by V. Pavšič, under the pseudonym of Matej Bor, who wrote affirmatively about the novel and the love between the two boys.[11] Another response was written by A. Zavrl, in an article entitled "*Dečki* med erotiko in moralo: telo, spol in spolnost v prvem slovenskem homoerotičnem romanu [Boys between Eroticism and Morality: Body, Gender, and Sexuality in the First Slovenian Homoerotic Novel]", 2009. He focuses on the representation and terminology of the body, gender and sexuality. He emphasizes the conclusion of the novel in the first (the tragic end for one and the heterosexual exit for the other protagonist) and the second edition (the "maybe" exit to heterosexuality). He also analyzes the terminology used by Novšak for a homosexual relationship ("such a relationship").

Comparative Analysis of the Novels *Boys*, 1938, and *The Clay Boys*, 2005

Janja Vidmar (1962) is a Slovenian writer for youth who deals with problem issues throughout her literary oeuvre. One such work is the complex youth novel *The Clay Boys* which addresses, inter alia, homosexuality, but the topic is complex because it covers family and social issues through the perspective of searching for gender identity, therefore the novel has an open or tragic end, which is actually a new traditionalism.

Methods

My comparative analysis uses a descriptive research method and a qualitative research approach based on the application of literary criticism on young adult fiction established

9 "Novšak's text is not merely a psychological and analytical account of the life of adolescents, but more; it was supposed to be a rebellion against the encroachment of young life between the four walls, by the dry, mechanical rules of the boarding school and by the narrow-minded norms of Catholic education" (Šega 101).

10 "With *Boys*, Novšak wanted to write the so-called 'generation tragedy' which were so common in that shattered and anarchic era when expressionism died down and a new reality began, which started the decline of European literature into a tendency. [...] But if Novšak intended to write a story of his own genus, he should be ruthlessly told that his purpose had been distorted into the first longer homosexual piece in Slovenian literature." (Javornik 230). [...] "An instrumented love, introduced into Slovenian literature by Novšak, develops between Papali and Castelli" (ibid. 231).

11 "For the whole boarding school is only an image of a failed life system with wrongly set life goals" (Pavšič: 312).

by Igor Saksida in the article "Tabuji v mladinski književnosti [Taboos in Youth Literature]", 2014. In the article, he defines and classifies (topic, perspective, story, literary figures, language, mood, and subjective perception) the theory of taboo or problem literature and defines its basic characteristics. Saksida distinguishes between problems, which he defines as a content feature, and taboos, which are defined as a reception feature.

Results

The elements of the comparative analysis between the two youth novels and employing Saksida's theory are as follows: (1) topic, (2) perspective, (3) story, (4) literary figures, (5) language, (6) mood, and (7) subjective perception in the works *Boys* and *The Clay Boys*.

1. Topic – detabooing the perspective of a safe childhood, as contemporary topics portray pain, otherness and distress. Saksida also ranks disability, homosexuality, etc. among the topics of otherness, i.e. the topics that deviate from traditional youth literature and the horizon of expectation. *Boys*, a novel intended for young adult readers, addresses several topics. The author often and explicitly thematizes "Catholic feudalism", violence (various types of violence against children), paedophilia and sadism, which is directly shown, unlike indirectly represented homosexuality (love, intoxication, kisses).
2. Perspective – the central perspective is represented by refusal or the child's rebellious attitude toward the world. Regarding perspective, it would make sense to distinguish between the perspectives presented in children's (picture books) and youth (novels) literature. The youth novel *The Clay Boys* features a distinct rebellious perspective, resisting traditionalism with markedly derogatory expressions characterized by style, i.e. vulgarisms and insults.

Papali was offered the lips of the lovely Zdenko Castelli, finely carved and warm. The bodies were pinned to one another. A wave of heat passed from one to the other. (Novšak 117)	I was wearing sneakers. Original. 22,999 Slovene tolars. My heart pumped in Puma T-shirt, 13,990 Slovene tolars. (Vidmar 38)
[This] doorman [is] an utter tyrant. [Such] people are sadists? (Novšak 1938: 18) [...] So he swung from fanatical kneeling in church to paedophilia (ibid., p. 20). He became a sadist. (ibid. 41-42)	It's not really about not wanting to be gay. But I am bloody well not one of them. (ibid. 207)

3. Story – the text contains a conflict; a child or an adolescent in *Boys* is portrayed as a victim of the boarding school and the system, while in *The Clay Boys* by J. Vidmar

the context of self-inflicted injury (death, deathbed, suicide) appears. Novšak's novel also contains a basic plot, e.g. an introduction by the writer, written in May 1937 in Belgrade, a promise to a friend on his deathbed – to reveal his secret.

He [Nani] sat at his desk thinking that this world is so strangely arranged that people are not allowed to love whatever they want and that they have to be ashamed of themselves. (Novšak 95)	Love is the strongest, even when it develops between people of the same sex, I blurt out thoughtlessly, pick up a notebook and hide in the steps that separate me from the door. (Vidmar 145)

4. Literary figures are different, they are presented descriptively and narratively in the context of trials.

For the first time, he kissed the boy more than just a friend. He pressed his own lips to his. (Novšak 117)	As long as we drink, smoke, and have sex, no worms enter the body. (Vidmar 126)

5. Language – frequent use of swearwords, vulgarisms and other linguistic elements that characterize literary figures and the plot by style, especially in young adult fiction, and less so in children's literature. Elements of foreign languages are also present. Language has the function of provocation. In *Boys*, the union between Nani and Zdenko is rapturously or even solemnly described (blessing, flower (of youth), gift (of day), (dear) child, (always) dear, gospel (of peace), (reverend) sir, (exalted) gentleman, I bow to you (Lord Headmaster), overlord, glory (of martyrdom), shrine, etc.).

"Nani, let me kiss you!" – "No, no! You make me too dizzy! [...] Zdenko was amazed when Papali then grabbed his hands and pressed them to his lips." (Novšak 157)	I'm not gay. I just ain't. Not that I don't want to be. I don't want to be. I don't care. (Vidmar 77)

6. Mood – it is related to the emotional response to the text, especially through the description of suffering, sexuality, etc. In the novel *Boys*, the descriptions are positive and uplifting, in addition to the situation itself, the emphasis is on the new sensibilities, emotional and social elements of the union of the two boys, but the text also describes the affliction, the stifling mood, physical violence, sexual violence of the headmaster and the doorman.

Something has been going on in his body since he met Nani Papali. This boy totally chained him to himself. In his vicinity, he felt happy. (Novšak 71)	By the way, doctor, do you treat homos? Can you turn me into a hetero? (Vidmar 131)

In the novel *The Clay Boys*, however, the mood is described in vulgar words and homosexuality is expressed "per negationem" through denial ("I am not gay." "I hate the word faggot." (Vidmar 55); vulgarisms like shit, whorish, balls, etc.), and thus the novel creates an image of dystopia.

7. Subjective perception – readers have subjective ideas about childhood and the functions of reading. The point of the novel *Boys* is presented as the finding of the boy Nani Papali, unlike the point in the novel *The Clay Boys*, where there is also doubt and self-irony.

However, there was no more incense for Zdenko Castelli, no institution, no God, nothing but love. (Novšak 151)	Everybody is bugging me and I am fed up. Why do I have to live among jerks who are not even able to grasp the greatness of my personality? (Vidmar 26)

Having said that "there is no god, that there is only love" (Novšak 151), it is necessary to add that in the novel *Boys* (homo)sexual love between boys is tragically final, but conversely, paedophilia, sadism and abuse in the boarding school are not sanctioned. In the novel *The Clay Boys*, literary characters are also victims of their own egoism, of competitiveness, and of defining themselves on the basis of the great other, i.e. society.

Discussion

The topic of homosexuality in the discussed novels *Boys* and *The Clay Boys* also has a socio-critical significance in terms of resisting the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church (*Boys*) and society (*The Clay Boys*), since dealing with various topics and practices in the 20th century gradually changed the point of view of society, not because the topic of the search for (homo)sexual identity is placed in marginal and closed spaces (e.g. hospital, boarding house/school, shelter, etc.), but because it is verbalized in the wider context of a closed society. From the very beginning, these works were presented to the readers as obscene and not as a critical insight into a clerical society that is not disturbed by things such as abuse, paedophilia, sadism, merely due to the fact that they are being represented in youth literature.

In addition to all these topics, which are central but by no means the only ones, other topics are also presented, e.g. topics of sexual abuse of children (Cankar and Novšak). It is important that both authors critique society and affirmatively present homosexuality on the one hand, while on the other hand exerting critical attitude toward sexual abuse of children; that they defend children and took the side of children as victims. The authors describe homosexuality affirmatively and child abuse critically as well as with empathy, unlike some contemporary adult texts addressing the problem of child abuse, incest, rape, suicide, sodomy, violence, without advocating for the child, who is a victim,

while promoting the adult novel as an "excellent youth novel" that lacks even the basic starting point – being on the side of the child (Blažić, "Mestna knjižnica").

Conclusion

The paper consists of three parts, the first part presents picture books and fairy-tale types that focus on gender. The second part presents a historical outline of the motif of (homo)sexual identity in Slovenian (youth) literature from Stritar, Govekar, Cankar, and Poljanec to this day. The third part of the article presents a comparative analysis of the central youth novels *Boys* and *The Clay Boys*. Homosexuality is portrayed in the novel *Boys* as a love relationship with the elements of emotional and physical love, and in the novel *The Clay Boys*, the subjective representation of (homo)sexuality is portrayed through denial, vulgarism and rebellion. Novšak portrayed the main literary figures affirmatively, aware of entrapment in tradition and love that is even above "God". In Vidmar's novel, adolescents are portrayed as wounded rebels, perverting their emotions, showing sensitivity as anger, homosexuality through denial. The authors contributed a great deal to the detabooisation of the topic, not only by addressing the subject, but above all through quality writing, and in more than a century of development, the topic has become part of youth literature. The topics are presented in a broader motif-thematic part of the search for identity in the family and society and have contributed to academic research at all four Slovenian universities.

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In Search of Territories of Freedom: Ivan Kozlenko's Novel *Tanzher* and the Queer Challenge to the Ukrainian Canon

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Abstract: Ivan Kozlenko's novel *Tanzher* (Tangier) became one of Ukraine's biggest cultural events of 2017, vigorously debated in the country's media and shortlisted for multiple prizes. This was unprecedented for Ukrainian literature: a queer-themed novel whose plot centers on two pansexual love triangles, one taking place in the 1920s, the other in the early 2000s, did not provoke a torrent of homophobic abuse. Its presentations were not picketed by right--wing extremists, the way this happened on multiple occasions to other recent gay-themed publications, most notably the 2009 anthology *120 storinok Sodomu* (120 Pages of Sodom). Set in the city of Odessa, the novel constructs an alternative affirming myth, reinterpreting the episode in the city's history when it served as Ukraine's capital of filmmaking in the 1920s and seeking to reinsert this queer-positive narrative into the national literary canon. This article analyzes the project of utopian transgression the novel seeks to enact and situates it both in the domestic sociocultural field and in the broader contexts of global LGBTQ writing, countercultural practices, and the challenges faced by postcommunist societies struggling with the new conservative turn in national cultural politics.

Keywords: Ukrainian literature; Odessa; queering the canon; postmodernist intertextuality; pansexuality

In recent years, discussions of Ukrainian culture often sought to combine two seemingly opposite trends: an emphasis on unity, in the face of attempts at fracturing the nation along political, regional, generational, linguistic, and other lines, and the thesis that its diversity can be seen as a source of its strength. This can definitely be observed in the discussion of its cultural, and especially literary, canon: spurred by George Grabowicz's challenge to rethink the history of Ukrainian literature (1981) and Marko Pavlyshyn's

influential essay on the politics of Ukrainian literary canon (1991), a number of scholars and practitioners of Ukrainian culture sought to revise and reconceptualize the canon and the criteria on which it is based. Among the most notable examples of this kind have been efforts of Solomiia Pavlychko and Tamara Hundorova. Thanks to the work of these and other scholars, we have begun to think of the Ukrainian cultural canon not as a static "iconostasis" but as a dynamic system.

In exploring this dynamic system, both the spatial and the temporal axis have been investigated. Thus, Yaryna Tsymbal's series of anthologies *Nashi dvadtsiati* (Our Twenties) brought a rethinking of Ukrainian 1920s writing to a broader audience, as did the campaigns to mark the anniversaries of the Futurist poets Mykhail' Semenko and Geo Shkurupii, both of them victims of Stalinist terror. At the same time, regional dimensions of the canon have been explored as well, such as in Irena Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz's *Modernism in Kyiv* (2010), John Czaplicka's volume on Lviv (2005), or the 2015 conference *Kharkiv: City of Ukrainian Culture* at Columbia University. In the context of literary activity of recent decades, it has become commonplace to speak of distinct literary schools associated with specific Ukrainian cities, such as Ivano-Frankivsk or Zhytomyr. There has also been a distinct fascination with geography in post-Soviet Ukrainian writing, as discussed, for example, by Pavlyshyn and, elsewhere, by this author.

Within this overall trend, the city of Odessa has been curiously marginalized, even though it played a notable role in Ukrainian culture of the past two centuries, especially in the late nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century, when it was the largest city on Ukraine's territory. The city's ambiguous position as a seaport, literally located on the country's edge; its heterogeneous population; and later, as it went into cultural decline, the obsessive clinging by many members of the local intelligentsia to a reductive and aggressively Russophone version of its cultural myth have tended to obscure and downplay its role as a Ukrainian cultural hub. The most remarkable manifestation of this role came in the mid- to late 1920s, when Odessa served as the capital of the booming Ukrainian film industry, and many notable Ukrainian writers, artists, theatre actors and directors got engaged in this ambitious project. 2017, a year rich with cultural events in Ukraine, also brought the long-awaited book publication of arguably the most ambitious intervention seeking to rethink the city's place in Ukraine's cultural history and create an alternative cultural myth affirming its contribution to the Ukrainian narrative, Ivan Kozlenko's novel *Tanzher* (Tangier).

The book generated lots of public discussion and was among the titles shortlisted for the BBC Ukrainian book of the year prize.[1] The launch of a film adaptation of the novel was announced in October 2017; it is currently in development, with plans for

1 See https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-42234612, accessed 1 May 2019.

filming in 2019 and release in 2020.[2] *Tanzher*'s road to recognition, however, was by no means smooth.

Ivan Kozlenko has achieved acclaim as an enthusiastic reformer and transformational leader of the Alexander Dovzhenko Center in Kyiv, where he served for three years as deputy director, and since 2014, as director. In leading this institution, Ukraine's premier film archive, he has demonstrated that ossified state cultural institutions in Ukraine can in fact be rethought, reinvigorated, and made socially and creatively relevant. He is also at the moment Ukraine's most prominent cultural figure who is comfortably out as gay. The novel was written in 2006, when he made a decision to leave Odessa for Kyiv. Prior to that, Kozlenko was an active participant in the city's artistic circles as a young writer and cultural activist. A version of the novel was published in the journal *Kyivs'ka Rus* in 2007, in a special issue focused on Odessa, but generated relatively little response at the time.[3] The author later indicated he was unhappy with the editorial "cleaning up" of the text that sapped it of local color, and revised the manuscript several times before the 2017 book publication. The latter is also accompanied with explanatory footnotes, an author's afterword, and several primary and secondary texts dealing with Ukrainian Odessa in the 1920s.

The novel, of course, is not just about Odessa. It is also a book about coming of age and the shedding of illusions—a paradigmatic narrative through much of Western literature. It is named after Tangier, a city that from 1923 to 1956 was a so-called international zone, under joint administration of multiple European powers, before being reincorporated into Morocco. During this period and subsequent years, Tangier had a reputation for diversity and tolerance, both religious and sexual. It was famous as a home for expatriate writers and artists, most notably Paul Bowles and William Burroughs, who wrote his *Naked Lunch* there. The novel opens with an epigraph from Burroughs. While critical of Odessa's present, it reaches into the past for a reimagining of the city as a "territory of freedom."

The book's structure is complex. It is organized around two triangular relationships, one set in the mid-1920s, the other at the beginning of the 2000s. There are distinct and conscious parallels between them. Structurally, the novel borrows this device from Michael Cunningham's award-winning novel *The Hours* (1998), which is organized as a complex intertextual dialogue with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the case of Kozlenko's novel, the dialogue is with Yuri Ianovs'kyi's *Maister korablia* (The Shipmaster, 1928), a novel iconic in the context of modern Ukrainian literature, with addition of other intertexts (fiction, memoirs, historical documents) that describe Odessa during

2 See http://dergkino.gov.ua/ua/news/show/1241/roman_yvana_kozlenka_tanzher_bude_ekranizovano.html, accessed 1 May 2019.

3 See http://shron2.chtyvo.org.ua/Kyivska_Rus/2007_N02_XI_Khvyli.pdf, accessed 1 May 2019.

the years 1917–1927 (including both Ukrainian-language authors, like Volodymyr Sosiura, and Russian-language ones, like Teffi, Ivan Bunin, and Aleksei N. Tolstoi). There is an important precedent of the use of this device in innovative Ukrainian literature, when Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi borrowed the basic plot structure of Maupassant's *Bel Ami* and transferred it to the 1920s Kyiv in his *Misto* (1928). Crucially for Kozlenko, *Maister korablia* is a book by a young author: Ianovs'kyi was only twenty-five when he wrote it, and this youthfulness is what for him unites the two plot lines

In *The Hours*, we have three interconnected plots: one is about Virginia Woolf herself; the other about a person reading *Mrs. Dalloway* in the 1950s; the third about a 1990s person who seems to be reliving the plot of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Crucially, the present-day part is set among members of the LGBT community: Clarissa Vaughan is a lesbian in a long-term relationship; her best friend, Richard, is a gay poet dying of AIDS-related complications; however, in their young days they were part of a happy triangular relationship with another man. Cunningham's success in presenting their experiences as universal and relatable not only for queer readers but for a much broader general public is one of the reasons the book enjoyed such broad acclaim, winning its author the Pulitzer and the PEN/Faulkner award and leading to a star-studded film adaptation. In Kozlenko's novel, we have a retelling of the central plot premise of *Maister korablia* (the relationship between ToMaKi [based on Ianovs'kyi himself], Sev [based on the film director Oleksandr Dovzhenko], and Taiakh [based on the ballerina Ita Penzo]) with the names of the 1920s participants restored and some details reimagined; the contemporary triangle of Orest, a young writer (who shares some features both with Ianovs'kyi and with Kozlenko himself), Seva the experimental film director (whose name is a clear allusion to Ianovs'kyi's Sev), and Marta, Seva's companion; and the historical background of Odessa during the 1917–1920 revolutionary events (struggle between the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Bolsheviks, the Denikin army, the Austro-German troops in 1918, the Franco-Greek troops in the winter of 1918–1919, and the independent warlords like Nykyfor Hryhor'iev) and of the early years of Soviet rule, when it attracted many young ambitious writers, some locally born, others transplants (both Russophone, like Isaac Babel, Eduard Bagritsky, Il'ia Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, Valentin Kataev, Semen Kirsanov, Yuri Olesha, and Konstantin Paustovsky, and Ukrainophone, like Mykola Kulish, Mykhail' Semenko, and Ianovs'kyi), visual artists, like Anatol' Petryts'kyi and Vasyl' Krychevs'kyi, and actors, like Amvrosii Buchma and Natalia Uzhvii, not to mention Ukraine's leading avant-garde theater director, Les' Kurbas, and Dovzhenko himself, who transformed in Odessa from an ambitious yet little-known painter into a major film director. Kozlenko relishes the ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradictory nature of that history in both the documented (to the extent we have documentary evidence) and the mythologized versions. The warlord Hryhor'iev emerges as a symbolic embodiment of this ambiguity: "What should one do with Hryhor'iev,

for example? Is he a hero or a scoundrel? A savior or a traitor? There are far too many questions" (29).

Odessa in the novel is a hybrid, transitional space both in the 1920s and the early 2000s, and its beauty can be found in unexpected places some would term ugly (like the notorious and sprawling "7th Kilometer" market, the site of a major plot development in the present-day section of the text). The narrative pointedly attacks the narcissistic belief of many Odessans in their city's superiority and their condescending attitude towards Ukrainian culture—a feeling shared by many in the local intellectual elite both during the 1920s and during the post-Soviet era. In both periods, the text seeks to uncover ephemeral spaces that served as points of attraction for bohemian artistic circles and their sexually liberated ways. The 1920s section seems to have a distinctly Weimar touch, as if portions of it stepped off the pages of Christopher Isherwood, although he is never directly acknowledged in the novel as an inspiration.

Rethinking and highlighting the role of gender and sexuality concerns in Ukrainian literature has been a prominent phenomenon during the post-Soviet era. However, in a number of instances, including Solomiia Pavlychko's writing on Lesia Ukraïnka and Ol'ha Kobylians'ka and Grabowicz's writing on Taras Shevchenko, it has often caused controversy among the more conservative members of Ukrainian cultural establishment, both in Ukraine itself and in the diaspora. Later, the 2009 publication by Krytyka of a scholarly anthology of queer writing that bore a title challenging old-fashioned norms, *120 storinok Sodomu*, resulted in violent attacks on the contributors and other panelists by right-wing extremists at several public events associated with the book's launch, and eventually the torching of Ya Gallery in Kyiv, the site of one of them, by arsonists (see Chernetsky, "Ukrainian Queer Culture," 216-17).

In retrospect, Kozlenko's novel shares more with Pavlychko's efforts in the 1990s than with the militant queer activist practices of the more recent years. Half a year before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Pavlychko published her groundbreaking essay "Chy potribna ukraïns'komu literaturoznavstvu feministychna shkola?" ("Does the Ukrainian Literary Scholarship Need a Feminist School?"), which launched a powerful school of feminist literary criticism in Ukraine (1991). Trained as a scholar of Anglo-American literature, Pavlychko builds, among others, on a classic essay by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship" (1979), outlines the dilemmas of authorship for writing women. Gilbert and Gubar emphasize the alterity of the writing woman within the literary tradition through challenging Harold Bloom's theory of literary history that postulates the artist's "anxiety of influence," the "warfare of fathers and sons," as the key to its dynamics (see Bloom). They argue that in reaction to the hegemonic masculine authority of the tradition, the female poet/artist experiences an "'anxiety of authorship'—a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor' the act of

writing will isolate and destroy her"; the female artist, they continue, "must first struggle against the effects of socialization which makes conflict with the will of her (male) precursors seem inexpressibly absurd, futile, or even . . . self-annihilating." She has to react to the tradition with a revision that is far more radical than that performed by her male counterpart—frequently by actively searching for a female tradition which, "far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible" (49). Hence for women writers and artists, and—I would argue—for artists representing other non-hegemonic identities (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.), a crucial step is to seek out allies and precursors that can be seen as hallmarks of an alternative, resistant canon—which makes Kozlenko's lengthy list of literary influences in the biographic note to the novel's journal publication a perfect representation of this paradigm.

Within it, the appearance of V. Domontovych next to Ianovs'kyi, the main intertext of Kozlenko's novel, is telling. In Pavlychko's monograph on Ukrainian modernism, she highlights in particular the theme of sexuality in the work of several writers who sought to create new modern urbanist Ukrainian prose, Valerian Pidmohyl'nyi (1901–1937) and V. Domontovych (pen name of Viktor Petrov, 1894–1969). In the case of the former, it was an interest in nineteenth-century French literature (especially Balzac and Maupassant), as well as a fascination with Freudianism, that brought him to discuss homosexuality (interestingly, not so much in his own fiction writing, but in critical essays about other authors, especially the nineteenth-century classic realist author Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi). However, an even more radical and fascinating case is presented by V. Domontovych. As Pavlychko notes, in his novel *Doktor Serafikus* (written 1928–29, published in emigration in 1947) we see the first "posing of the question of love between two men in the Ukrainian context" in a work of literature (*Dyskurs modernizmu* 227). While this is but one of the many plot lines in the novel, its presence in a work that draws a memorable portrait of Kyiv intelligentsia in the 1910s–1920s is hugely consequential.

In this context, the brief but vividly portrayed scene of lovemaking between Ianovs'kyi and Dovzhenko was probably the most potentially controversial element of Kozlenko's novel. Later, several scenes with the two of them and Ita Penzo continue indicating that this is a happy pansexual relationship of three equals united as one. In the present-day plot line, Marta, in one of her remarks, calls Orest to treat his body not as something that imprisons him, but as something that has its own language and freedom; this exploration likewise leads him to open to pansexuality. All the more remarkable, given the enduring presence of homophobic attitudes in contemporary Ukraine, that the publication of the novel did not provoke homophobic abuse or physical attacks at any of the multiple public events associated with its launch over the course of the spring and summer of 2017.

The question of sexuality and the radical reimagining of the role of Odessa in modern Ukrainian culture thus stand as the two equal pillars of Kozlenko's ambitious text. What is also notable is that the novel was written during the time when the author made a conscious decision to switch from the Russian he spoke in his childhood and youth (similarly to many fellow Odessans) to Ukrainian. The novel thus also served as a documentation of the author's refashioning of his own identity. Paradoxically (and he is very much aware of this paradox), given Kozlenko's fascination with the Beat generation writers and their theory of spontaneous writing, his own literary practice was far from spontaneous, and indeed the novel took many months to write and later underwent multiple revisions. I would argue that we have here a productive conflict between the aesthetics of spontaneity and a "difficult," intertextual form, documenting the desire to master a means of expression. Its yearning for utopian transgression, one could argue, resonates profoundly with the Ukrainian culture of public protest and the creation of short-lived utopian spaces at the Maidan square in Kyiv, both in 2004 and in 2013. Perhaps this is the answer to the question why the novel's reception has been overwhelmingly positive, the potentially controversial plot elements notwithstanding.

Sadly, Kozlenko's *Tanzher* for the moment remains a vision of an Odessa and of Ukrainian queer culture that could have been. But one is hopeful that the newfound recognition that the novel is experiencing may be able to trigger, at long last, a rethinking of the queer potential within Ukrainian culture that the author is calling for. Recent reconsideration of homosexuality as key to the identity and creative work of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi, Ukraine's leading Orientalist scholar of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century and a pioneering poet of same-sex love, both in his original work and in his translations from Classical Arabic and Persian, are telling. Transformed cultural spaces are in fact appearing in the city where the novel is set; the return to Odesa of major figures of the older generation, like the artist Oleksandr Roitburd, who recently became the director of the Odessa Fine Art Museum with an ambitious plan for its transformation into a vibrant globally and locally relevant cultural hub, and the successful holding of Pride festivals in the city now for three years demonstrate that the impulse for experimentation and subversion portrayed by Kozlenko in his novel with a tinge of loving nostalgia for the economically poor but culturally fluid 1990s is far from extinguished. Zones of freedom can appear in the most unexpected circumstances—one just needs to be able to see them.

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Queer Emotions? The Narrative Shape of Feelings in *Noben glas* by Suzana Tratnik and *Eskorta* by Michal Hvorecký

Matteo Colombi and Alenka Koron

Abstract: This contribution aims to explore the narrative potential of emotions in two texts, the short story *The Big Burden* by Slovenian writer Suzana Tratnik and the first part of the novel *Escort* by Slovak writer Michal Hvorecký. Regarding the connection of emotions with human actions as manifested in narratives, it is informed by Patrick Colm Hogan's claim in *Affective Narratology* "that story structures are fundamentally shaped and oriented by our emotion systems". Moreover, it focuses particularly on queer emotions involving the questioning or subversion of heteronormativity and gender binarism, and dealing with the fluidity of sexual identity in its social dimension and in the existing mechanisms of power. As it turns out, the queer emotions of the protagonist in Tratnik's story are capable of producing a turning point in the text and a new kind of action for the plot, which is not the case in Hvorecký's novel that does not lead to such a narrative pattern, perhaps questioning its practicability in the time of late capitalism.

Keywords: theory of emotions, queer theory, narratology, Suzana Tratnik, Michal Hvorecký

This contribution consists of four parts, all of which may need further elaboration and more detailed argumentation: firstly, an outline of the theoretical framework; secondly a reading of the last short story from the collection *None of the Voices* (*Noben glas*, 2016) by Suzana Tratnik (*1963) entitled *The Big Burden* (*Veliko breme*) as the first case study; thirdly a reference to the first part of the novel by Michal Hvorecký (*1976) *Escort* (*Eskorta*, 2007) as the second case study, and a comparative conclusion as the final part of our text.

The two texts were chosen for several reasons, but above all we wanted to reflect on East-Central European authors and texts with a different regional background. So we

thought of a Slovene-Slovak comparison – and we found it intriguing to compare a writer like Tratnik, who clearly positions herself and is positioned by others in the context of queer literature, with a writer like Hvorecký, who partly deals with non-heteronormative literature but neither presents himself nor is considered as an author of queer literature.[1] The authors will, anyway, play no further role in our analysis, which is much based on the readings of the texts. It is important to highlight that both works focus on children's emotions – and this has been a second reason for us to choose them since we wanted to observe queer emotions in the first period of life, when individuals begin not only to sense themselves but also to give themselves a sense.

I

The study of emotions covers today a whole range of research fields and relationships in theory and it has a long tradition also in philosophical and aesthetic thought since ancient times. For the use here, the connection of emotions with actions based on the work of Nico Frijda (*The Emotions*) should suffice. This connection with human actions, of course, also binds emotions with narratives. The source of emotions is, if we return to Frijda, in the perception and evaluation by the self of certain changed situations in an environment that evoke, for example, threat, desirability, danger, etc.; emotions are therefore manifested as a form of action response of the self to the situation, and they are a form of awareness of the importance of a changed situation (cf. Andringa 139). Emotional processes, experiences and the shaping of action tendencies are linked up by various factors, for example reactions such as flight, fight, laughter or a sense of powerlessness, frustration, and repressed anger; emotions can also vary in terms of strength and duration (sadness, despair, loneliness, rebellion). It is very important for our further analysis to point out that emotional life has several dimensions: it can be collective or individual, bodily or spiritually shaped, based on a (however given) disposition or rather culturally coded, unconscious or reflected – and of course something in between. This variety of emotional experiences does have a significant impact also on narratives: in fact, the shaping of their plot can vary according to their way of representing emotions. Every narrative follows a certain logics of emotions: for example, some narratives present them as short body-led outbursts, which are incapable of influencing the story development in a consistent way, while some other narratives treat the very same outbursts as turning points of the plot – eventually as something that has the power to shake off a long lasting state of the mind, a crystallized emotion that has taken control of the subject and their actions. This manifold narrative potential of emotions has been highlighted by Patrick Colm Hogan in his

1 See Hvorecký's profile in the English language by the Slovak Literary Information Centre (http://www.litcentrum.sk/en/slovenski-spisovatelia/michal-hvorecky) (07.05.2019). *Escort* has been translated into German (*Eskorta*, 2009) but not into English.

study *Affective Narratology* (2011), a book that also informed our theoretical framework: the book is largely grounded on the results of cognitive research and parts from Hogan's contention "that story structures are fundamentally shaped and oriented by our emotion systems" (1). An incomplete list of emotion systems would include, as he claims, fear, anger, attachment, disgust, hunger, and lust, one of the main issues of his book being "the relation of emotion systems to recurring story patterns" (11, cf. also 18). He also argues that narrative time that has its spatial dimension is fundamentally organised by emotion. Therefore incidents (the smallest units of the story) and hierarchized larger units, "events, episodes, general story structures, works, and genres are a function of emotional processes" (237), connected by reader's causal attributions that are always inferred.

And what about the queer emotions and the narrative logics they produce? What could they be? Above all they seem to be emotions which are being reflected in queer theory because they involve in one way or another the questioning or subversion of heteronormativity and gender binarism, dealing with the fluidity and discontinuity of sexual identity in its social dimension and in the existing mechanisms of power – as we shall show analysing Tratnik's *Big Burden* and Hvorecký's *Escort*.

II

Leaving home and normalcy involves emotion in Hogan's view, and conversely, being at home involves an avoidance of risk. The protagonist, the first-person narrator of Tratnik's last story in *None of the Voices*, a twelve-year-old girl, is also met in the incipit of *The Big Burden* accompanied by her mother and aunt on the way from home to Serbia. The journey out of home develops for the girl into a complex emotional journey out of normality. In Pirot, where her other aunt owns an inn, she is having fun working in the kitchen (she is ashamed to serve the guests), learning to swim in the nearby river and exploring the room of the absent male, her cousin Rale, with whom she identifies and whose big black sunglasses and leather jacket she borrows for her boyish image. She also begins recording in Rale's notebook what is going on during her stay. The only person who somehow seems to sense the importance of this identification play for the protagonist is a local drunkard, who speaks with her as if she were a boy. She befriends him despite the initial disgust, hate and fear of the unknown she feels at their first meeting. However, the girl turns down her aunt's offer to stay in Serbia and go to school there, claiming that she and her mother have a big burden back home in Slovenia. This big burden, the one of the tale's title, refers to the fact that the girl and her mother have a difficult family situation: the grandparents have recently died and the girl's father has left his family for another woman. The reader perceives as paradoxical that the girl wants to leave Pirot, a place where she feels well, to go back to Slovenia, where burdens are waiting for her. Yet the whole story is exactly about the difficulty to abandon bad

emotions for good ones since the ties between people and their burdens can sometimes be very strong. But *The Big Burden* is a tale with an emotional turning point, in which the protagonist refuses to be part of the emotional world of her mother and chooses her own path breaking off the chain of burdens imprisoning her. This decision, or action, originates in a strong emotional outburst with a strong involvement of the body. During their way back home, in a park near the Belgrade railway station they meet an old man who wants to give the girl a puppy, because as he says, it has become a big burden for him. The girl would, of course, like to have the puppy, but her mother, sad as always, does not allow it. Yet, the child's reaction to her mother's words this time overcomes any sense of guilt or solidarity: she puts on Rale's black eyeglasses, and loudly yells that they could have taken this little dog since they do not have anything at home and that this is a big burden to stand. Although her mother asks her to calm down and not become a burden to her, the girl runs away, jumps into the pond and starts swimming. And then suddenly, which is a very symbolic conclusion of a story with a postmodern time loop – such as one can find, for example, in another story from Tratnik's collection entitled *Ida's cube* – there appears to be the very same friendly drunkard from Pirot running around the pond, and he is loudly encouraging her to swim. The black notebook remains on the bench and the wind slowly turns its already densely written pages.

The role of emotions in this story is clearly remarkable. The represented kinship in this short story is not a patriarchal family with Oedipal relations. It seems that the girl, having an absent father, attempts to imitate a boy to protect her mother, but her actions are determined by emotional impulses that are much stronger. The conclusion of the story could be interpreted as a girl's open acceptance of emotional impulses that are more suited to her queer identity in becoming. The formal role of the story's title and at the same time its recurring pattern, the refrain "big burden", is also interesting, as it intertwines artistic narrative cohesion and the girl's understanding of this concept, which is actually part of the adult world, but she apparently interprets it in her own way, and perhaps in the end rejects it in favour of freedom.

III

We shall now analyse the first part of Hvorecký's *Escort*, whose protagonist, Michal, tells in the first person the story of his childhood and adolescence in Prague, Bratislava and Western Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s. The characteristic of the novel which is most relevant to the purposes of our analysis is that the world of the protagonist seems to be one in which emotional turning points like the one concluding *The Big Burden* are impossible and, more than that, in which emotional outbursts capable to shake off body and mind do not really exist. Indeed, Michal's world is a world of drives but these drives do not belong to the protagonist, who seems to be immersed in an emotionless spleen that never leaves him.

Hvorecký plays in his novel with the subversion of a very common situation we know from queer literature on childhood: the life environment of his protagonist is not heteronormative but, on the contrary, quite homonormative. In fact, both Michal's parents are homosexuals who have married and had a child together in order to disguise from the homophobic Czechoslovak socialist regime. They actually never try to force their son to homosexuality but their (male) friends do repetitively attempt to seduce him when he is a teenager. Michal is not completely exposed to sexual harassment because his parents protect him sometimes yet they also have, in general, a kind of an absent-minded relation to their child who grows up in Prague amidst their sexual parties, drinking alcohol and smoking joints from the age of five. The parents even do not seem to bother that their child has to stand many interrogations by the secret police, constantly lying to protect his family. The situation changes when the family moves to Bratislava as a result of the severe repression politics of the late 1970s: The parents try to behave straight so that Michal can go to high school although his mother is nevertheless put in prison because of her past and the neglect of her maternal duties. The family moves to Western Berlin when Michal's mother comes back from jail and stays in Germany until her death, a consequence of her difficult life. At the same time, the Berlin Wall falls and Michal and his father return to Bratislava where Michal, who feels attracted by women, begins his activity as a sexual worker for extremely rich ladies (for this first part of the novel – from Michal's childhood until his return to Bratislava – see Hvorecký (5-67)).[2]

Michal's childhood and adolescence are quite tragic, yet he recounts them in a way very different from the protagonist of Tratnik's *The Big Burden*: he describes everything in a cold and detached mood, including his emotions. He rarely characterizes them through the sensations of his body: on the contrary, he stresses several times that his body is suspended in a kind of a lethargic state. The readers find only a few short hints to emotions described from the inside of a feeling character: for example the mother and son crying together when she returns from jail (33) and his incredulity when she dies (45). Moreover, Michal experiences his emotions not only in a detached but also in a very passive way: he feels bad about going back to Bratislava in 1989 but he nevertheless follows his father there (45-46). In his childhood and youth he never comes to an emotional turning point leading to new actions in his life like for example the one lived by the girl of *The Big Burden*.

We will not deal here with the subsequent parts of the novel, yet it is worth looking at the end of the story since it represents, at least apparently, a radical turning point. Michal transitions and becomes Michaela – neither as a result of a real decision nor through an operation, but in form of a metamorphosis due to an overdose of hormones that transform him – rather magically – into a woman of heterosexual orientation: the transition pleases her, yet she describes it in the same detached and clinical way she had

2 Page numbers always refer to the novel's original edition in the Slovak language.

to speak about emotions when she was a man. The readers may be quite puzzled by this ending since it seems that Michal/Michaela does not find an intimate way to feel any sexuality: he tries first to kill his feminine side by becoming a professional women's lover, and he manages later on to kill his masculine side by becoming a woman (see the fourth part of the novel (214-235)).

IV

The comparison of *The Big Burden* and *Escort* shows from a narratological point of view that different approaches to emotions can lead to different narratives. Children's emotions are represented in Tratnik's tale – by means of her first-person narrator – as energies from the inside that are capable of turning the narrative: in fact, they produce a new kind of actions for the plot. On the contrary, Hvorecký's first-person narrator seems to alienate himself from his child's emotions, describing them from the outside without much participation: emotions in the first part of *Escort* do not lead to a new kind of actions. Nevertheless, both the powerful and the powerless emotions of the two texts can be considered as queer emotions insofar as they refer to typical emotional patterns of queer life (in general and of queer children in particular). We would like, as a last consideration, to point out these patterns relating to two interrelated studies by the queer theoretician Sara Ahmed: *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) and *Willful Subjects* (2014).

Ahmed is in a way speaking for Tratnik's protagonist when she considers that being "happily queer" often means to stand the unhappiness of beloved people, like for example mothers, who are not able to accept the queerness of their children (*The Promise* 115-120). Being happily queer means thus to resist the reproach of being a willful child, that is a child wanting the wrong thing – a thing that according to the mother (or the father or society) is ultimately going to make the child unhappy, too, since a common assumption on queerness is that it cannot make people happy (*The Promise* 88-114 and *Willful* 1-21). Ahmed would therefore recognize and praise the willfulness of the girl from *The Big Burden* when she challenges her mother to be unhappy. Indeed, this emotion and the subsequent action in the tale are not explicitly directed to a queer self-affirmation by the child in relation to her orientation, gender or sexual identity (which the reader can assume will occur later in her life). Yet Ahmed tends, as many other queer theoreticians, to understand queerness as a metaphor for every phenomenon which is based on twerk, turn, twist, thwart, transverse, perverse and cross, opening with such transgressions to the possibility of something new and inspiring (*Willful* 11).[3] In this sense, the main character of *The Big Burden* feels and acts queerly when she brings her relation with the mother to a twist, willfully deciding to swim in the pond.

3 Ahmed explicitly refers to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (xii).

The situation of the young Michal in *Escort* can also be considered through Ahmed's theory. This character does not seem to be willful at all in his passivity – and one has the impression that this passivity is also a way to cope with the system he is growing in: in fact, Michal learns how to be passive in the interrogations with the Secret Police. Yet there is surely more behind Michal's passivity: for example, his reluctance to go into sexual desire when he is a teenager can be read as a reaction to the overwhelming sexuality of his parents' world (which is an interesting hypothesis since reluctance can be for Ahmed a form of indirect willfulness: *Willful* 140-141) – but it might be also connected with his incapability to find a way into the complexity of sexuality. The end of *Escort* is interesting as a counterpart of the *The Big Burden*: in fact, it shows that not every turning point of a story leads to a new quality of actions. That is to say – if we now leave the language of narratology for the language of politics – that not every turning point is emancipative. Michal's life becomes apparently "queerer", in a strict sense of the word, when he becomes a woman, but she appears to feel also in her new condition as passive and uninspired as before. A partial exception to this state is her motherhood, for Michal's magical transformation gives her the possibility to have a child (see the fourth part and the epilogue of the novel: Hvorecký (236-238)). Yet the analysis of Michaela's love for her daughter would require another long article dealing with a fundamental question that *Escort* raises up through its plot – from Michal's work as a professional lover to Michaela's experience as a woman with child: Are emancipative emotions still possible in the time of late capitalism?

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Wartime Memories from East and West: The Construction of George Faludy's Gayness

Gábor Csiszár

Abstract: The young, bisexual Faludy wrote homoerotic poems closeted behind historical masks till having come across two homosocial scenes, Morocco and the American Army, during the second world war. Faludy continuously rewrote his memoirs and poems, so we can follow the development of his gay persona in his oeuvre. The first publications, including the canonised English version of *My Happy Days in Hell*, only hinted at man-to-man relations, contrary the later Hungarian editions. I demonstrate the rewriting of his history with parallel citations, furthermore, I attempt to reconstruct the real events with contemporary letters, diary entries and posterior testimonies. His many poems leave the homosexual dimensions in gloominess till the English translations, when the language clarifies the specific gender. Finally, a new, stable homosexual partnership, the North American environment and the gay liberation movement together helped Faludy to come out of the closet at the end of the eighties.

Keywords: Faludy, memoirs, Morocco, shaping of the image

George Faludy (1910–2006) was called the Ulysses of the 20th century since he lived for forty years as an emigrant. Many of his works were translated into English, as was his best-known autobiography, *My Happy Days in Hell*, besides three volumes of his poems (*East and West*, *Learn This Poem …* and *Selected Poems*).

Despite his many works, we do not know many facts about his life. Faludy rewrote his memoirs, as well as his poems: he frequently reconstructed the events. He could eternize the same night implying he was making love with a dancer girl or chatting with a soldier, hand in hand (Faludy, "Pokolbéli" *Menora*; *Pokolbéli* 1987, 97-101). He mystified not only his literary sources but his own life as well.

Even though Faludy had four wives, his many poems, autobiographical novels and statements reveal his attraction to men. After some peripheral mentions of the subject,

cloaked in historical allusions, his first published homoerotic poem appeared in 1940 in a Transylvanian left-wing magazine, describing a young, nude Sicilian fisherman and his petrified admirers (*Elfeledett* 203).

When this poem was published, Faludy had fled the ever more fascist Hungary and later Europe. Subsequently, he found two homosocial environments: the Arabian culture in Morocco and the army in the United States.

When the Nazis invaded France, Faludy left Paris, where he had spent one and a half years, and escaped to Morocco. While his friends preferred colonial Tangier and Casablanca, Faludy lived in the souk of Marrakesh, wore local costumes, travelled to the countryside accompanied not by his wife, but by an Arab.

This man was immortalized in Faludy's oeuvre as Amar, mentioned in several poems and his autobiography. He was a living person: in the Hungarian Literature Museum they keep the diary of an emigrant fellow of Faludy, Endre Havas, who wrote down the full name of Amar – Amar ben Nassir – as in many evenings he made the suggestive remark: "George–Arab". We can imagine what George did with the Arab, regarding a letter that Faludy jokingly wrote to his diarist friend, when they separated: "Write me again precisely how the supplies are in Tangier concerning a) women, b) Arab boys, c) goats, since a globe-trotter needs to discover everything." (Letter to Kellermann and Havas). Another communist emigrant comrade, László András, later reported to the secret police: "I first heard in Tangier that Faludy had a homosexual attitude. He wears very flamboyant and feminine clothes" (my translations).

Faludy placed articles about his Arabian nights in news media during as well as after the war; he published his autobiography in English in 1962, which was rewritten in Hungarian twice. The first four publications, including the canonised English version of *My Happy Days in Hell*, only hinted at man-to-man relations, contrary the later Hungarian editions.

On the evidence of this late coming-out we observe an episode about a blond Berber youth. Faludy first wrote about him in 1946, in a Hungarian weekly. The article describes a funny, exotic, even mildly erotic tale.

> It was the blond Riffkabil, who had attracted my attention at first sight due to the colour of his hair and his blue eyes. Without speaking a word, he pushed his mat next to me, he covered it with his burnous, laid close to me, surrounding my neck with his arms and he pulled me vertically close to him. He fell asleep the next second. His balanced breathing, the warmth of his body soothed me at once and I fell asleep soon. (Faludy, "én …"; my translation)

However, in 1962, in the English version of *My Happy Days in Hell*, they did not sleep separately, but under the same blanket:

> Soundlessly, at a snail's pace, he slid towards me, pushing himself forward now with his hip, now with his elbow, until he slipped out from his blanket

> and under mine. His body emanating a light but penetrating perfume, that of withered flowers in an arid field; I felt this perfume not only in my nostrils, but in my throat and further down in the ramifications of the bronchia, right into the apex of the lungs.
>
> We started early at dawn." (*My Happy Days* 129)

This remains the final English version to this day.

Nevertheless, in 1987 a newer and more explicit version of his autobiography was published, but only in Hungarian.

> He came so close that I felt his sigh on my face. He pressed his breast to mine; his two nipples were hard and sharp as if he would desire to scratch me with them. He slipped one of his arms below my neck, stroked my hair with his other hand and tenderly kissed me. His lips were dry, choppy, and sweet. Then he began to laugh. He knew exactly what I was afraid of. He kissed me again, closed his eyes, bent his head onto my shoulder and pressed his lap into my hipbone. He may have told me that I should not be afraid of rape: if either of us were to seduce the other, it could be only me. He even did not open his eyes until many hours afterwards and helped me out only with some fast, wild moves when I did not know, or I did not dare to know how I could do it with a sixteen-year-old Visigoth boy. (*Pokolbéli* 1987: 139, my translation)

Actually, the Riffkabil boy may not have been a real person. There are parallels in the description of him and of Amar, such as the fair skin and the adoration of a gay icon, Alexander the Great. The Riffkabil wore a medallion; Amar had the same ring (*Pokolbéli* 1987, 138-139; *A Pokol tornácán* 16). It is noteworthy that the Riffkabil was a carried over persona for the sexual part of Amar, projected to another, imaginary character.

In his poetry, Faludy wrote some neutral poems praising Amar without any sexuality, and especially from the seventies onwards wrote erotic poems about sexual actions not mentioning the gender of his partner.

Interesting examples are three poems about a Chleuch dancer. They represent a dancer in the market of Marrakech who pays attention to a cowardly Faludy but who is finally killed by a lover and whose body the poet mourned ("Slőh táncos a téren", "A slőh táncos halála", "Rekviem a slőh táncosért", *Versek 1926*, 189-193).

The mentioned face, the shoulders, the arms, the fingers and the eye are all gender-neutral and together with the nightingale-like voice the description of the admiring men evokes a dancing woman among heterosexual readership. Conversely, for non-heterosexual readers the harsh profile, the muscles as well as the possible distinction between dancers and dancing-girls in the Hungarian language develop another reading about a dancing boy.

Three years after the Hungarian publication, in 1978, the last one of the poems, the "Death of a Chleuch Dancer", appeared in English in the Canadian Faludy-book of

East and West. Due to the gender representation of the English language there was no space for the delicate word play. In the translation by Dennis Lee, the masculinity of the dancer is clear: Lee used the pronouns he and his. There is even a note for the English readers: "Chleuch Dancers are dancing boys of the Chleuch tribe in Morocco" (49).

Nonetheless, in Hungarian Faludy always kept the delicate gender uncertainty. Which could be the author's original intention because even today the dancers in the main square of Marrakech are cross-dressed boys.

After 13 months in Morocco Faludy successfully travelled to America, where he first worked as a journalist. In February 1943 he joined another homosocial environment: the U.S. Army.

Faludy rarely wrote about his years as a soldier. Still, there is one forgotten novel, which focuses on this period. In 1947, when he finished his autobiography about the Arabian memories, having described the arrival in the United States, he continued with another memoir about his military service. Among his fellow soldiers he presented Terence Wilde. "His name was Wilde, like the poet, though he pronounced it as 'veelthe' in the introduction. He was about twenty years old and very handsome, so handsome that the other soldiers would treat him with a mixture of some envy and anger" (Faludy, *Mars*, 25 Oct).

For homosexual writers it is a familiar method to mention gay icons, referring to the works of the gay canon. During the first half of the 20th century Oscar Wilde was the most well-known LGBT person in Hungary (Takács 92). In addition, we find multiple references to the homosexuality of Terence Wilde. Lines like: "'How many good-looking women stroll here,' added Karl keeping his eyes open. 'And how many good-looking boys,' said Wilde closing his eyes." (*Mars*, 8 Nov) They set off for the Aleutian Islands together, whereas we shall never know the ending – due to the changing expectations during the communist takeover the tabloid abruptly ended the series at the end of the year.

With these lines and some scattered, later references we can reread his soldier-poems from a homosexual perspective. The refusal to visit female prostitutes ("Brothel-Going") or the thought crime of the naked soldiers "(Katonafürdő a Kígyó-folyónál": Soldiers' Bath at Great Snake River) both open a new horizon for homophile readers.

Having encountered the two homosocial scenes concluded to the first, and for another forty years the only, coming-out poem. In "Nel mezzo del cammin" in 1947 he described a sexual conquest from his sixteenth year, with a look-alike boy. "Our loins were facing as reflections in mirrors," using a well-known figure of homosexual literature (*Őszi* 15, my translation). If the Doppelgänger Other besides a classical gay icon were not enough for us to decode the situation, Faludy recorded, in a unique way in Hungarian poetry, a

description of masturbation. Faludy dared republish it only half a century after the first publication, still more explicitly rewritten.

Although the English version of *My Happy Days* barely contains any homoerotic fragments, it was enough to attract some readers' attention. According to an archived letter, an Australian youth offered his services to Faludy as a gay secretary (Ch…'s letter). After all, a different person did this: Eric Michael Johnson (1937–2004). The rather mysterious dancer and poet, Johnson, invented different personas about himself for different acquaintances, Lithuanian, Latvian, Icelander origins, though he came from Indiana. "I've spent my whole life trying to be invisible when more or less forced to perform publicly, to hide behind as many masks as I could find," he wrote to a friend.

Having read *My Happy Days*, he fell in love with the foreign author and the two masked artists finally met in Malta, in 1966, and lived together till 2002. These 32 years makes this the longest lasting relationship Faludy had. For the readers Eric remained only the secretary of the writer, notwithstanding that he earned money for both since Faludy wrote works that were never published and cared for nothing else. What is more, Johnson was the co-author of a book of essays, *Notes from the Rainforest*, which appeared in Canada as a work by Faludy.

Finding a stable gay partnership, facing the gay liberation movement, and living in North America, in Toronto next to the Gay Village, led Faludy to come out of the closet at the end of the eighties.

In 1987 a samizdat version of his autobiography *My Happy Days* appeared in Hungary. Its Moroccan part is abundant with homoerotic stories as opposed to the English editions. Making love with the blond Riffkabil and Amar, talking with Amar about sodomy, gay secondary characters such as a Sudanese merchant, admiration of the beauty of the young and emphasizing their feminine tones. It is interesting that Faludy intended the original version without homoeroticism for the international public, but the newer, more homoerotic version for the Hungarians (Letter to Csiszár). Thence all the later English editions of *My Happy Days* follow the older text.

In 1988 he published a vast anthology of world poetry, including 90 openly homosexual authors. Some of the poets in this book may be personas of Faludy such as the mysterious Liu Teh-Zsen, whose biography contains only the years of birth and death, who was never mentioned in the literature, his name was misspelled and on top of that he would have written only four-line homoerotic poems. (*Test* 674) In 2017 Zoltán Csehy studied the homoerotic translation of Straton of Sardis; according to this, Faludy used existing poems, condensed some or rewrote them in a rougher, more explicit way.

In 1990, Faludy published *200 Sonnets*, among them the love poems to Eric Johnson. Before Eric Faludy preferred long forms or cycles to express love. However, in the 14 lines of a sonnet there is no place for a long description, only a qualifier. Without

the distinction between he and she in the Hungarian language, mentioning eyes, bodies, shoulders and even muscles do not break through the heteronormativity. The most obvious clue is the marked social outsider status of the relationship. Like "I always knew that our love was impossible. This is the reason it is so nice." In the same way here: "for our loves, this inconceivable magic I abandoned everybody and everything" ("Fényképedet írógépemre tettem": I Put Your Photo onto the Typewriter, "Foghúzás előtt": Before the Extraction of a Tooth, *Versek. 1956*: 85, 80, my translations).

During the nineties in his new collections of poetry he wrote many erotic poems and hinted at the old ones written decades before. Possibly at about the same time, Faludy wrote some pornographic queer themed poetical cycles, too. They were never published during his life, but he gave some taped manuscripts to his close friends. When I collected his poetry, I managed to find one, "Ali Baba". The 36 items' topic is the endless sexual activity of a group of Arabian muggers (*Elfeledett* 91-112, 217). The poems must have been written between 1989 and 1994. The fourth wife of the poet guards another pornographic homosexual cycle, however due to the controversy between her and the owner of the author's rights it has never been published, nor could I read it.

In 2000 the sequel to *My Happy Days* appeared, with the title *Pokolbeli napjaim után* (After my Happy Days in Hell). It would be about the happy third marriage of Faludy, but it is full of homosexual representations.

In fact, Faludy's status as a Hungarian homosexual icon was coming to an end then. In 2002 he married his fourth wife, Eric left them and committed suicide in Nepal. On top of that the more than ninety-year-old Faludy declared that he had always been attracted to women.

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Sappho Was Not a Poet: The Sonoric Character of Poetry and Its Emancipatory Potential

Nina Dragičević

Abstract: The name Sappho represents a cornerstone of lesbian cultures – though mostly for white lesbian communities. Sappho is commonly known as "the first lesbian poet". But, a correction is in place as far as our need to categorise artists on the basis of their medium of expression is concerned: Sappho was a composer. The article focuses on a great abyss which has developed through a disregard for the unpreservable historical artefacts, and which places poetry (as a separate artistic category) at the basis of lesbian cultures, even though poetry is inseparable from its sonority, e.g. music (as a category which does not discriminate between the verboentric and semiotically unstable audible constructs). Through sound and music theories, seminal thoughts by lesbian theoreticians and examples of poetry by writers from both Yugoslav and global contexts, I point to the nuclear character of sound in the context of sexual difference and lesbian subjectivation, as thematized in literature. In addition, by stressing the inseparability of poetry and sonority, the sonoric character of poetry will be shown as a primary constituent of lesbian communities as potent political bodies.

Keywords: lesbian poetry, sound, sonority, emancipation

"Now I will sing this beautifully / to delight my companions," Sappho declares (Sappho, Rayor and Lardinois 83). Or, to be precise, she *composes*. And we ought to be precise in order to capture the history of lesbian cultures of a certain space in what it is, not in what was left of it.

In the end, it all comes down to language, to the dominant categorizations. The earliest known beginnings of lesbian literatures in Europe seem to be in the so-called *East* – with Sappho, who is often said to be *the first lesbian poet*, and as such represents a basic reference for White lesbian cultures. In their book *The Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary* (1979), Monique Wittig in Sande Zeig devote an entire page to Sappho.

It comes as no surprise that the page is blank; for we know little. But broad conclusions are made on the basis of material knowledge and history, on the artefacts available for examination. These exclude what is intangible and evasive – namely, sonority –, thereby reducing history through visual bias.

What has *remained* as a historical artefact is what makes Sappho "solely" a poet. However, once we apply a more comprehensive methodological approach to lesbian histories, once we include in our examination of lesbian histories precisely what has rendered lesbianism non-existing – invisibility *and* inaudibility –, we discern that Sappho was *a composer, a sound artist*, and her *sapphic stanza* a rhythmical invention, as well as a reference point – not for readers, but for *listeners*. Her art is first and foremost *sonic*.

The same goes for all the history of poetry, of *lyricism* as an artistic practice. Lyricism has its etymological root in the Greek word *lyrikus*, which signifies that which refers to the lyre (gr. *lura*) as a *musical* instrument. Lyricism is a *sonoric performance* which takes place when thought is given specific sound attributes (intonation, amplitude, tempo, rhythm, timbre). Especially where literacy is scarce, when no compositional signs and codes exist, poetry exists where there is or is not a reader, but where there certainly is a *listener.* A step further: all poetry is in its core sonoric, and it occurs in a performance: be it on stage or within the reader herself, who equips what is read with sonoric conventions (or subversions), and therefore does not interpret fragments, but a wholesome sound composition.

Sappho's works were intended for a *sound performance* using a lyre, which will *delight her companions*. That we are talking about art, exhibited in its inherent, however arbitrarily interpreted sonority, is crucial, as the subject's right to be audible (recognized as heard, as existing) is a ground point for the construction of social hierarchies. In several Slavic languages, *the right to vote* is *the right (to produce) a voice* (e. g. *pravo glasa*). In those languages, the word for a poem or song is the same (e. g. *pesem*, *pjesma*, *pesma*).

In order to recognize the frontal presence of sonority in earliest known poetries a feminist perspective is required. Such that does not seek presence in bare materiality, but rather recognizes it as *possible* there where it seems to be absent. The same approach applies to sonorities. The inseparability of poetry and sonority ("music", if you will) was common at least until the 14th century. Maria V. Coldwell writes that there were many women poets-composers who worked under the patronage of aristocratic women. They seem to have composed mostly monophonic compositions (poems), as polyphony required master technical studies which were not available to them, but were "increasingly the art of clerics" (Coldwell, 42). And yet, there were women sound creators, such as *trobairitz* among the noble women, and *jougleresses* among the lower class. Some travelled in a typically male attire, carried their instruments, darkened their faces with herbs and dyed their hair in order to pass as male minstrels. They mostly created within courtly love narratives, but – quoting Coldwell – "necessarily had to transform that tradition to stay

within its limits" (ibid.), meaning that they did not appropriate the position of a troubadour appraising his beloved one, but remained in the role of objects of desire. But not all of them. Bieris de Romans, a troubadour from the 13th century, neglected all socially acceptable behaviour of her time (or any other, for that matter) in her poem "Na Maria, pretz e fina valors" she writes and *sounds* from her position of a woman, and her *subject* (not object) of desire is also a woman. She sings praise to Maria, who causes her to *sigh*, she speaks of her incredible *intelligence* and *refined beauty*, asks her not to ever *give her heart to a lying suitor*. That poem is *a canto* – a poem meant to be sung, audible, listened at.

In the local area, we can also find an example of a troubadour composition with implicit lesbian narration – with the somewhat overlooked, or rather overheard author Ana Gale, who lived in the first half of the 20th century (1909–1949) not far from Ljubljana (now in Slovenia). At the college of education she became close with her classmate Anica Pizzulini, and in 1927 wrote a troubadour epic poem *To a girl. The Troubadour songs*. The work, dedicated to Pizzulini, speaks of a troubadour's travels, his search for closeness, which he at last finds with his *lover* at the Ljubljana Castle, where Anica Pazzulini actually resided. What she as a troubadour and her poetic-sonic composition bring is a public expression and social existence of specific identities, standpoints, difference; those works are not merely *somewhere*, not in *a room of one's own*, but resonate in the very core of society. Through the biographical examination of the poet-composer and through *listening* to her poetry a whole sonoric, that is *social* space changes – as an immanently *sonic* space it becomes open for a settlement of a lesbian desire.

For the world is *for hearing*, as Jacques Attali wrote (2009); sound is a navigator of social dynamics. If some situations, people, images can be avoided, sounds cannot. They can be a means of terror, dehumanization and annihilation. Or a means of resistance against oppression. As I already elaborated in *Med njima je glasba: Glasba v konstrukciji lezbične scene* (2017): When an oppressed and marginalized group or individuals recognize sounds not to be a given, but that they are created from a vital organism and constitutive of social space and its dynamics, when they realize that sonorities are not only destructive means of silencing through loudness of power, but that they can be used precisely to resist destructive sonorities, then the effect of a certain sonority can be emancipatory. Innovative (non-dominant) sonorities allow for an exit from the dominant systems of expression and interpretation; they can expand or surpass, reject and even terminate a connection with the dominant semiotic frame, or even dismiss a semiotic frame as such.

Consider women of lament in Ancient Greece. They were professional sound artists, and their role a loud, prolonged expression of woe, a performative praxis of a body-machine, which – while performing – is not in a productive function, and yet it produces something. Of course, one should not fail to notice that the role of women in lamentation was to address the *dead*, not the *living*. However, it was still a sonoric expression of a mourning poem, a composition of emotion, which was, in its *sonic performance*, also

an *interpretation*. Similar practices can be found in Balkan cultures. There are *narikače* and *tužbaljke, jaukalje, plakavice* and *bugarilje*. Just as with Greek lamentations, we are again dealing with women *composers*, who create *with* and *within* their audibilities, their voices – voices as such, vowels as such, this is a sonoric expression of thought, and that expression is both long and grand, for the pain is also enormous and unstoppable. Most of all, it is *unspeakable*. However, it does sound, especially in a sense that for its performance it is neither possible nor desired to use established or dominant discourses, but it is, on the other hand, needed to use a discourse which interrupts the destructive reality (namely, death or termination of any sort).

In time, loudness was replaced with silence – mostly through religious commands regarding gender difference. With methods of silencing it was precisely sounding that became the ultimate tactic for emancipation. One need only to think of the strategies of African American women and lesbians used to escape absolute annihilation: consider slave poetry; consider Audre Lorde's "silence will not protect you"; consider the art of the African American blues artist Gladys Bentley, who expressed her lesbian identity not specifically through *writing* about her lesbian desire, but by *sounding* it in *blues*; consider *spoken word* by Jayne Cortez, the works by Alice Dunbar Nelson, who addresses her subject directly, by her name, and says: "You! Inez! / … / Red mouth; flower soft / … / You! Stirring the depths of passionate desire!" (Dunbar Nelson 85). She calls her, she shouts, passion is loud and *that* is the content of desire, which – as lesbian history shows – can exist in sonority even when it seems invisible. It should also not be overlooked that one of the first releases of the lesbian-feminist record label Olivia Records was an album of poetry; performed and recorded in 1976 by Pat Parker and Judy Grahn, it allowed the latter to declare: "[Y]es ... that is how resistance sounds." Pat Parker recorded "My lover is a woman" for the mentioned album, in which she says: "i never think of / my families' voices –/ never hear my sisters say –/ bulldaggers, queers, –/ … it's ok with us / but don't tell mama / it'd break her heart/." She must hide from the parents' *ears*. That is precisely why the poet needs to *sound* the words where lesbianism is meant to be inexistent. Her poem is a loud constructive appeal, arising from "the awareness that no discourse is adequate here or that our reigning discourses have produced an impasse," to quote Judith Butler (215). The inadequate, oppressive discourse needs to change. She – the lesbian poet, the lesbian sound artist – needs to offer her own discourse, for silence is for her equally unacceptable. Her poem is not (only) (to be) read, but to be made with and in sound, through which the individual is (self-)interpellated, subjectivated, emancipated; and, through that process of being sonically present she can start to form a collective, which might become a vital political body.

All this is not to be dealt with in some metaphysical sense, but through the basic character of sound: its apparent becoming and at the same time departing, where departing does not mean leaving, but rather constant presence. Sound as an inexterminable social mass, and space itself. As Salome Voegelin explains: "Sound … is the permanence of

production that uses the permanence of the monument and discards it by gliding over its form to produce its own formless shape." (169) Therefore, what is needed – as a suggestion from a lesbian-feminist perspective – is an intense extension of the definition of poetry in a way that, when thematizing women and lesbian poets, we recognize poetry as sonority, and sole sonority of a piece as already subversive. What is in becoming is perhaps an "invisible" presence, ever more invisible with the departure of a body, which still became a body – a sounding, active, and disruptive body – precisely through sounding.

In that sense, the history of lesbian cultures and literatures requires a teleological approach, often disregarded in literary theory and philology as well. Through *singing to delight her companions*, Sappho *de facto* created a social and socializational structure of a space. Her poem – her *composition* – created a lesbian by placing her in a social or societal space. To be precise: she did not create lesbian subjects (including herself) only through writing, but primarily through an instalment of sound- and sounding content in social space, populated with those who in her image and sound expression of a lesbian desire recognized their own, thereby starting to become lesbian.

Sappho's poems did not survive in material terms by the survival of the papyrus fragments and translations, but because they – as a whole, as a sound composition only partly preservable in written text – are engraved in the architecture of the social space through their sonority. In that sense, the history of the artistic expression of lesbian desire needs a radical redefinition; such that finds presence not solely in tangible materiality, but in the core of all that is society – in sound. In order to delight our companions.

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Jozef Pronek's Underwear: Displacement, Queer Desire, and Eastern European Masculinity in Aleksandar Hemon's *Nowhere Man*

Denis Ferhatović

Abstract: Aleksandar Hemon's first novel *Nowhere Man* (2002) repeatedly expresses in gendered and sexualised terms the degradation of its protagonist, Jozef Pronek, due to his cultural and linguistic displacement as an immigrant in the United States. Dislocation, queer desire, and masculinity in crisis converge in Pronek's interaction with his American girlfriend Rachel and her gay roommate Maxwell. Still, Pronek's immigrant position does not account entirely for his humiliation. Even in the pre-war Sarajevo, Pronek embodies unconventional masculinity, as evident in the humorous descriptions of his first clumsy sexual experiences. Despite his continuous status as an awkward outsider, the protagonist sometimes appears as an object of erotic fantasy. In another part of the novel, Pronek is desired by Victor, a closeted Ukrainian-American graduate student working on a queer topic. Victor's fantasies of Pronek might relate to the Western gaze on Eastern Europe, but they look different in the context of the former's multiple identities and the latter's representation throughout the book. By looking at Hemon's complex portrayal of Pronek, I suggest that we can find some gay inspiration in the unlikeliest of places in Eastern European literature today.

Keywords: Aleksandar Hemon, *Nowhere Man*, Jozef Pronek, displacement, queer desire, masculinity

Aleksandar Hemon is an important and prolific Anglophone immigrant author, of Ukrainian-Bosnian-American background, working in the United States today. His first novel, *Nowhere Man*, presents the life of Jozef Pronek, a thirty-something from Sarajevo living in Chicago, in seven chapters covering much of his life. The plot has autobiographical elements: both Pronek and Hemon are born in Sarajevo, spend time

in Ukraine, and must stay in Chicago when the war breaks out. Almost all chapters have a different narrator, which gives them a different tone. They unravel in many places and times, ranging from the eighties Sarajevo to the nineties Chicago to the early-twenty-first-century Shanghai. Hemon constantly strips his immigrant male protagonist and crushes him. Frauke Matthes and David Williams notice that unlike Joseph Brodsky who found American exile to be 'the ultimate lesson in humility', Pronek's experience 'inevitably proves a lesson in humiliation' (28). This humiliation has a strong gender and sexual component, especially when combined with the character's cultural and linguistic displacement. But Pronek's immigrant status is not the only contributing factor. He has been an awkward man uncomfortable with his position in the world and his body all along. Moreover, his Otherness does not always mark him as a loser; sometimes, inexplicably, even Pronek becomes an object of queer desire.

Cultural displacement and bodily discomfort come together in sexual situations in *Nowhere Man*. For example, Pronek's foreplay with his American girlfriend Rachel consists of her correction of his English:

> 'Can I turn off light?' Pronek says.
> 'The light.'
> 'What?'
> 'Can I turn off *the* light?'
> 'Turn off the light.'
> Rachel turns off the light.
> (…)
> 'What is that?' Pronek says.
> 'Nothing. It's okay. Come here.'
> 'I heard something.'
> 'It's nothing. Let's fuck.' (Hemon 202-203)

When the light goes off, Pronek is distracted by some noises. The picture that the narrator paints for us, or rather the sound recording he creates, is somewhat animalistic and not very flattering. Rachel is at first squealing, then roaring; Pronek does not make a noise equally powerful, but seems to be in pain, as though punched in the chest. At last it becomes clear that they both achieved orgasm. Whatever release of tension that Pronek experienced is gone afterwards. Even when he is not tense, he is not relaxed. He is 'untense' (203). The author implies that tension is the character's normal state of being. He cannot control his feelings or his body or his surroundings. When Rachel's roommate Maxwell comes into the room to ask to borrow a condom, Pronek falls to the ground. His actions bespeak at once clumsiness and terror.

Pronek cannot be allowed to enjoy sexual fulfillment with Rachel for long. After another night with her, he goes to the kitchen in her apartment, where he encounters her naked gay roommate Maxwell:

> Maxwell was washing a throng of wineglasses, naked, his springy dreadlocks falling on his shoulders.
>
> 'Good morning, Maxwell,' Pronek said, but was not sure that he heard him.
>
> 'Hey, good morning,' Maxwell said, glancing at Pronek, but not turning toward him. Pronek wanted orange juice, but all the glasses were being washed by the naked Maxwell, so he sat at the kitchen table, trying not to look at him. But his shoulders were wide, the blades resembling armor plates; his biceps shapely and round, twisting toward his elbows, the morning light absorbed by their brownness; his spine curving into a shallow valley above the half-moons of his butt. He turned toward Pronek.
>
> 'You've never seen a black man's body, have you?'
>
> Pronek was terrified – he didn't want Maxwell to think he was gay.
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'It's beautiful, isn't it.'
>
> Pronek felt an urge to run out of the kitchen, toward the safety of the bedroom, but was paralyzed. Maxwell's body was beautiful. (…)
>
> 'Would you like to touch it?'
>
> He made a step toward Pronek, who leaned back, glancing around, pretending that he didn't see and didn't care. Maxwell's thighs were thin, curls strewn over their curves.
>
> Aaron walked in, naked, his penis dangling, long and thick, his skin pink. Pronek looked away, at the friendly blank wall. (206)

But even before being forced to face a male body comfortable enough in its surroundings and in its appearance to be nude so openly, Pronek exhibits his usual awkwardness. He is walking barefoot on a cold floor. Hemon does not describe Pronek's body in that scene; the reader only learns that he is 'tiptoeing like an elephant ballerina to protect his soles from the cold' (205). Maxwell's soon-to-be-glimpsed body provides a contrast. If Pronek is physically awkward and uncomfortable, Maxwell is the opposite because his every movement exhibits grace. He is 'washing a throng of wineglasses' rather than prosaically doing the dishes. Pronek cannot greet him in an audible voice. The reader, like Pronek, might not wish to look at Maxwell, out of bashfulness or fear. The author announces the need to look with a 'But'. 'But his shoulders were wide …' Pronek does not want to look, afraid of his own reaction or Maxwell's possible reaction. However, the character's corporeal perfection requires a detailed appreciation. Hemon's description follows Pronek's gaze which moves from Maxwell's arms down his back to his buttocks. Maxwell's live body, jiggling and shimmering in all the right parts, contrasts with our hero's paralysis. The black man's beauty is intimidating, his masculinity beyond question, whatever his sexuality. His shoulder blades look like 'armor plates', indicating that even fully naked, Maxwell feels strong, protected, as if wearing full armour. This foreshadows his aggression towards Pronek, turning towards him and asking to be touched, a playful

type of aggression that Pronek, not understanding the linguistic and cultural code of this milieu, takes seriously.

Some sense of threat remains, however humorous, as an American literally at home in his body moves towards a confused, clumsy immigrant. The conventional relationship of power between men is reversed here because a heterosexual feels out of place and intimidated while a homosexual teases him. It is clear from elsewhere in the novel that Rachel's roommate and his boyfriend's mocking of Pronek can be cruel. Maxwell underlines his racial difference to the frightened and paralysed Pronek who desires a retreat to Rachel's bedroom. Hemon acknowledges, once again, Maxwell's beauty. As he approaches Pronek, the hapless protagonist tries hilariously to show his lack of interest. The narrator again describes what the character sees: Maxwell's crotch, shapely and covered with curly hair. Here Hemon both escapes having to describe a black penis and subtly indicates that Pronek avoided looking at the organ. But at that moment, Maxwell's boyfriend, a white man named Aaron enters, and Pronek cannot avoid catching the glimpse of his full-frontal nudity. Even in its flaccid state, Aaron's member is 'long and thick', its size adding to Pronek's insecurity.

Pronek's physical instability fits well with his psychological disintegration that scholars often link with the physical falling apart of his homeland, former Yugoslavia. His immigrant situation is, unsurprisingly, related to his awkwardness and discomfort. Yet Pronek's lack of understanding of codes, cultural as well as linguistic, is not the only factor to blame for his tragicomic behaviour. Even before he was an immigrant, when his country was still intact, our hero did not fit the stereotype of a confident man at home in his body and in control of his sexual performance. This is the first scene in which Pronek attempts to lose his virginity:

> Here is the winter pleasure inventory: blue skies, white snow, suntanned faces, crisp air, speed, slopes, fireplaces, warm rooms (…). It was in a Jahorina cabin (…) that Pronek climbed to an upstairs room with one Aida. She was willing to let him explore 'the jungle below the equator.' Pronek, however, got completely lost in the jungle: he kept banging his knees against the sides of the bed, and his head against the wall. He had great difficulty pulling off Aida's tight jeans (...). With his underwear stranded at the Antarctica of his feet (the room was unheated, save for their cumbersome passion)[,] he attempted to penetrate her panties, convinced that he was up against a sturdy hymen. It was an unmitigated fiasco – she started laughing uncontrollably, when Pronek, in the middle of it all, said: 'Let me just love you.' (50)

The passage begins with an invocation of an idyllic winter landscape, Jahorina near Sarajevo, in the eighties, often imagined as the golden age of former Yugoslavia culminating in the Sarajevo Winter Olympics (1984). Two geographical terms, the jungle and the Antarctica, underline the incongruous hot-cold dynamic between the couple.

The language of exploration and conquest to refer to sexual activity, with the man in the position of power, occurs commonly in literature. But here Hemon subverts such tropes. Pronek does not explore because he is not a macho adventurer who bravely enters the wild, never-before-penetrated landscapes; he gets lost in there. '[T]he jungle below the equator' seems out of place in a winter resort, in a room heated only by two human bodies. Again, Pronek is not only unable to take possession of a female body, but he also cannot control his own. He bumps his knees on the bed and his head on the walls. The narrator imagines the man's body as a landscape, not only the woman's. Pronek is an absurd kind of a globe or a world map with his feet standing in for the Antarctica. His actions are desperate and ungraceful. He can only undress his sexual partner incompletely and with difficulty. Far from being a great explorer, Pronek can hardly carry out the act of undressing *himself*; his underwear is 'stranded' at his ankles. Aida shows amusement at his endeavour, as Pronek's uncontrolled body inspires an uncontrolled laughter in her. His failed attempt at smooth talking, 'Let me just love you,' crowns the deed or its lack.

We have so far only looked at passages showing Pronek as an awkward man uncomfortable with his body, his usage of language, and his place in the world. There is another point of view, rare and misleading, but not without a certain charm or even beauty. It comes from the chapter containing Pronek's adventures in Ukraine during the country's transition in the nineties. Chapter 3 titled 'Fatherland/ Kiev, August 1991' is narrated by one Victor Plavchuk, a Ukrainian-American professor of English literature, who was a graduate student writing on Queer *King Lear* when he met Pronek in Kyiv. Victor searches for his identity, trying to deal with his Ukrainian father's fraught legacy. He also happens to be a closeted homosexual who falls in love with the unlikeliest of candidates:

> I did not want to fuck Vivian (…). Even as she talked, I kept imagining Jozef in his bed, in his shorts, absentmindedly curling the hair around his nipples. Ah, get thee to a nunnery! (107)
>
> Wide awake, I would stare at the ceiling camera, wishing I could get my paws on those tapes and watch Jozef waking up in the morning, his skin soft, with crease imprints, the fossils of slumber, on his bare shoulders; or see him making out with Andrea. I would close my eyes, and my mind would wander with my hand across his chest, down his abdomen. I would stop it on the underwear border, forcing myself to think about Vivian – you have to understand that I had never been attracted to a man before. It frightened me, and it was hard sometimes to discern between fear and arousal: the darkness throbbed around me, in harmony with my heart. (109)
>
> … I felt a cramping urge to locate Jozef and break the news to him, to produce wonder in his heart and excite him. So I flew upstairs (…). I burst into the room without knocking, and Jozef was naked. I could not help noticing – and I was

> too excited to try – a hair vine crawling up from his sooty crotch to his navel, and curls spiraling around his nipples.
>
> 'There's been a coup!' I nearly hollered.
>
> 'What?'
>
> 'There's been a coup!' I hollered.
>
> 'What is coup?' It was rather annoying, his ignorant calm, his boxers sliding up his alabaster thighs. (113)

For Victor, our protagonist is attractive due to his perceived exoticism. Because he comes from Eastern Europe, he seems more confident, more carefree, and, finally, more masculine. Slađa Blažan attributes this attraction to a typical case of 'the Western mystification of the Balkans', stating that 'Jozef Pronek is a screen onto which Victor projects his fantasies in a very conscious manner' ('How Sexy Is It?'). While true to a degree, her view needs to be qualified and Victor's fantasies about Pronek need to be analysed in the context of the entire work. Blažan does not take into account Victor's vulnerability: his own complicated relationship to Ukrainianness and his repressed homosexuality. Nor does she find humour in the situation. Victor and Pronek are roommates during their stay in Ukraine. Pronek, ever the Balkan macho, spends his time in the room frolicking in his underwear. Through Victor's eyes, these undergarments look quite different from those that used to hang, abandoned around the Antarctica of Pronek's feet in the mountain lodge. The shorts reappear in Victor's musings. Every detail of Pronek's body that stays in Victor's memory seems precious. How could this be the same person who is so physically uncomfortable in the rest of the novel? Victor's language becomes poetic, and this poeticism does not carry the sting of irony that we witness in depictions of Pronek's deflowering earlier. It carries a nostalgic yearning.

Though the image of Pronek playing with his chest hair could appear comic, the imagining of his morning glory, 'his skin soft, with crease imprints, the fossils of his slumber, on his bare shoulders' (109) comes as a surprise. Victor spins small imperfections of a beloved torso into something sublime. '[T]he fossils of his slumber' invoke a larger-than-life, preternatural quality of an ordinary person's sleep. We can read the later scene in *Nowhere Man*, the morning light playing against Maxwell's naked body in the kitchen while Pronek feels trapped, as an inversion of this situation: Victor, tormented with a desire that he cannot accept, observes his roommate's supposed superiority. Whereas Pronek sees the naked body he does not expect and might not wish to see, Victor has to imagine the one he yearns for. He can only allow himself to go so far. His imagination, for the moment, stops 'on the underwear border' (109). Victor is terrified by his longing, protesting too much when he tells the reader that this was his first time finding a man attractive. We are witnessing the power of a projection. '[T]he darkness throbbed around me, in harmony with my heart,' says Victor. Jozef Pronek gets to be the very Heart of Darkness in somebody's feverish mind. Like Blažan, we can talk here

about the fantasy of Eastern European savagery. But we can also see the phenomenon, at least in this case, as a proof of the power of imagination. Everyone, no matter how pathetic, might have a chance to star in someone else's wet dreams and nightmares.

Furthermore, Pronek's shortcomings, for instance his imperfect English, appear to Victor's mind like signs of strength. After he finds out about the coup happening in Kyiv, Victor barges into their room to catch Pronek in the nude. This is another scene which will repeat itself later, but in reverse, when Pronek encounters Maxwell. No trace of self-consciousness is found in the Ukrainian scene. Victor has enough time to ogle his roommate, to notice his delectable 'treasure trail'. Pronek does not panic as he does when Maxwell suddenly enters Rachel's room in Chicago. He does not understand the word *coup*, he does not use English articles properly, and even when he gets a sense of what Victor is talking about, he is unmoved. According to Victor's memory, Pronek is not a paranoid, displaced character. This may be because he is not an immigrant yet, but Hemon has allowed us to glimpse Pronek in his Sarajevo days, enabling us to question Victor's depiction.

The fact that a 'nowhere man' could inspire admiration and fervent desire indicates potential inherent in a character, however hapless, however clumsy. Pronek, like anyone else, has more sides than apparent at first glance. He is absurd, a caricature, and, at the same time, warmly human. He might yet become a queer icon, despite himself.

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(Post)Communist Queer Identities in Uroš Filipović's *Staklenac* and Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown*

Jelena Jović

Fine. On closer inspection,
it isn't entirely true.
- Jessica, *Lovetown*.

Abstract: Published around the same time, both Uroš Filipović's *Staklenac* and Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown* came to be recognized as the first gay novels in their countries and have since acquired a cult status there. After establishing the historical, political and cultural contexts from which the two texts produce similarities in representing and narrating queer identities, the paper will then focus on those aspects in which they begin to produce differences. One of the main points of intersection is the repressive communist societies of former Yugoslavia and Polish People's Republic, yet it is the modern, post-communist societies of Poland and Serbia, with their promises of democracy and liberalism, that – paradoxically – bring those identities into a crisis and mark the crucial point separating these texts.

Keywords: Polish literature, Serbian literature, Yugoslavia, cruising, non-normative sexualities

If disclaiming this paper's abstract at the very beginning of its presentation, given in Ljubljana at the Go East! conference – however deliberate and limited to its opening sentence – seemed like an odd way to delve into the suggested matter, the ending deconstruction of one's own proceeding's title – it, too, wilfully left here unchanged – might come across as even more uncommon an approach. Yet it is both these authors' theoretical awareness and authoritativeness, and the texts' resistance to any easy categorization, especially when confronted or compared, as well as their protagonists' inability to neatly fit into the Western historical and analytical models of homosexuality and masculinity, that embolden, if not compel such a *queer* reading.

Written less in haste than with hesitance that *Staklenac* can at all be subsumed under the rubric of Eastern European literature, the abstract proposed what the title introduced, and the paper will hope to show: how, were one to try and pin them under the same, "Eastern" experience, the two books will reveal differences and show similarities where one would least expect them. For, not only does it cover the period of Yugoslavia's non-alignment and the so-called soft communism, but it was issued well after the federation's demise, by which time the former, Southern European republics had come to be referred to as the Western Balkans; *Lovetown*, on the other hand, was automatically relegated to the "dark" side of the pink curtain, since its principal focus is on the deepest communism of the Polish People's Republic, whilst forgetting, for a moment, that its publication followed the III Rzeczpospolita's accession to the EU and doing injustice to its long endeavour to be recognized as Central-Eastern Europe. Moreover, were one to try and assert the utopian position of a *non-aligned* scholar and point out the conference's critically unquestioned East-West dichotomy, both texts will (re)affirm it with their (dis)similar representations of the lives of homosexuals under and after communism, each on its own, rather unpredicted side of the divide.

Neither of the novels' publication would have been possible had it not been for the favourable socio-political conjuncture. In Filipović's case, it was the October 5 revolution and the overthrow of Milošević, with its promise of democracy and the pressing need for all minorities' equal rights, as well as the efforts of the publisher, which had then started the first queer series in Serbia in support to the LGBT population (itself a political act); although being against the then dominant gay activism for its sensationalist, and therefore counterproductive discourse, in an interview added to the book he denied having any anarchic intentions and stated that the political situation and the historical events were merely the hazy backdrop of a personal drama. The historical moment in which Witkowski printed his first novel, gave rise to the LGBT identity politics and sanctioned the growing visibility of sexual minorities in Poland at the turn of the century with the fresh EU membership after a decade-long process of economic and cultural transition, but it was the mainstream, politically correct media discourse on gay marriage and adoption, with its inauthenticity and ideologization that he protested against in the book's digital foreword, opting for a (re)turn to intimate stories and private experience (Witkowski 2005).

Both authors reach for the "lower strata" to uncover a deeply hidden homoerotic subculture of former Yugoslavia and communist Poland, portraying men who roam railway stations, bus depots and parks at night in search of same-sex pleasure and meet in relatively concealed, tacitly tolerated public toilets. They both choose toponyms for their novels' titles. *Staklenac* (Eng. *glasshouse*), takes it after a comfort station in a down-town Belgrade underground passage, with its urinals surrounded by huge glass shop windows. *Lubiewo*, translated into English as *Lovetown* (but in the second chapter as *The Lewd*

Beach), is a pun on the name of a Baltic seaside resort, a cognate of the insatiable lust and libido (Pol. *lubież*). This queer community, which flourished during socialism and whose glory days were ended with the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia in 1991 and the final withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Poland in 1992, is represented via analogous meta-fictional narrative strategies, a subversive play with the writers' autobiographies, highly covert in *Staklenac* and utterly overt in *Lovetown*. Doubtless insiders, they take on the roles of ethnographers of a lost era, attesting to the existence of a homosexual subgroup which otherwise would have disappeared, while building the authenticity of their texts through a collection of radically intimate diary entries and oral histories.

Doubly subtitled as *Notes from an underground passage/Diaries of a different seducer,* and tasselled with literary and philosophical epigraphs spanning from Kiš to Kierkegaard, *Staklenac* is structured around the chapter called *Diarium Sodomitae* (1985–1993), which is preceded by memories from the earliest childhood and the initiation into manhood, *Via Dolorosa* (1955–1969), and followed by an appendix in the form of an undated Orientalist travelogue, titled *Nil nova sub sole*. As Filipović explains in the lengthy interview – conducted by the book's editors and integral to the entire text – out of the initial, Barthesian empire of signs, a complicated system of squares, crosses, triangles and circles he started out of fear for his own life after a friend got diagnosed with AIDS and committed suicide, grew an irregular, telegraphic record of Uroš's sexual activities and erotic adventures, which he kept until eventually emigrating to London and indulging in radical hedonism and self-oblivion. The endless encounters during those eight years and the necessary verbal ritual which served him as sexual overture, are described with an amputated style of oral-anal repetitions and intertwined with sexological theorisation or speculation on the (genetic) origins of homosexuality, man's innate bisexuality – as are the latter memoirs with anachronistic Freudian analysis of his own earliest sexual inclinations. With the breakup of Yugoslavia drawing near, an infinite line of usually harmless episodic characters (and a few near-deadly affairs) – naive youths lost in the big city, students and provincial intellectuals, Romani and Muslim street cleaners, (bi)curious militiamen, cadets from all over Yugoslavia, Russian marines and refugees from Lebanon, etc. – gets disrupted by an inflow of mobilizees, war volunteers and murderers. The economic sanctions and inflation infused organized crime and provoked juvenile gangs, intensifying the anti-gay oppression and making cruising highly unsafe, but also coinciding with Filipović's growing midlife frustration.

Witkowski's ageing heroines, the queens of communism, some of them thieves and prostitutes, some retired hostesses, orderlies, cloakroom attendants or German teachers now barely scraping by, are watching the little that is left of their world being bulldozed by capitalism and consumerism. Casualties of Poland's transition to neo-liberalism – "What can a bag lady like me do? Lay into Big Capital with my walking stick? Hit it over the head with my handbag?" (*Lovetown* 8) – they have been mourning over Russian

soldiers for a decade, left with nothing but military paraphernalia and confabulation, and driven by an unparalleled urge for storytelling: "queens will tell you anything about anyone, for them nothing's sacred" (221). Such are the bitter and bitchy Patricia and Lucretia, who in an interview to a young reporter share their memories of picking up men at the Soviet army barracks, headquarters and parks of former Breslau – only to quickly take over the narration, *outing* the journalist along the way as an aspiring novelist called Michał Witkowski, a bit older than *Lovetown*'s author and already known to the "ladies (gentlemen?)" (10) since his teens as Snowflake. Their cruising history, *The Book of the Street*, recounted in the first section of the novel, soon turns into "a faggy Decameron" told by a cacophony of voices and co-written over the phone by half the Wrocław picket line playing Chinese whispers and making the young *literato* a mere proofreader.

Uroš Filipović's biography of a PhD in architecture and a professor at the Belgrade University, also supplemental to *Staklenac*, is identical to its narrator's. His name, however, is just one amongst many pseudonyms he uses to acquire more freedom in anonymity and give more truthfulness to his prose, while repeatedly denying it any literary ambitions, calling it collateral profit and himself an amateur writer (366). Yet a series of contradictions, most evident in the interview, reveals the author to be as fictional as his narrator. The activist phase he briefly got into, holding debates for students before leaving the country in 1993, could not have been possible until 1994, when the first ever campaign against homophobia was launched in Yugoslavia – to mention but one of the structural inconsistencies and highlight his identity as crucial to this reading. Still, "Filipović's" Filipović is of almost the same age as the Wrocław queens (the writer behind the alias is known to the local gay scene as "the patriarch of Belgrade cruising"). An upper-middle class intellectual from a pre-WWII capitalist family, a self-professed *citoyen du monde*, a hellenophile and an americanophile (hence an anti-communist) – he could not be further from them on the social divide. Moreover, while continually identifying as a gay man (only on occasion as bisexual in order to attract the more sceptical potential partners), and without ever referring to the terms of either *gender* or *queer*, he insists on how he "hate[s] all that camp transvestism and feminized behaviour. Men disguised as women repulse me sexually and disgust me" (*Staklenac* 87).

Despite everything, there is a certain, correspondingly homonormative alignment. Witkowski's queens deem themselves the founders of the so-called Wrocław school which, compared to the one in Legnica, a small town a little further to the west and closer to the German border, "wasn't tranny at all": "The Legnica queens would stroll by the barracks all tarted up like women. At first they actually pretended they *were* women" (*Lovetown* 45). For Patricia and Lucretia, two queens together would be "lezzing", while for Filipović, "homosexuality is in some pure ideal form the mutual attraction felt by two masculine, rather than two feminized men or transvestites" (*Staklenac* 364). As disapproving of the queens as he is unable to understand women who seek companionship

or pleasure among gays, Uroš is even more puzzled by the discovery that a guy he met at the cinema frequented by fags is, in fact, a young and attractive short-haired girl, dressed as a man.

What he and Witkowski's queens undoubtedly have in common is the object of their lust. All fond of using atavistic metaphors of hunt for cruising and wild forest or jungle for parks, these "nocturnal beasts" pray on a specific "species" of "straights". Unnamed yet ever-present in *Staklenac*, fixed in gender yet sexually ambiguous, in *Lovetown* they are called grunt, for these "drunken Orphei" are uncultured, often cruel working-class men and low-rank soldiers, and "there are dozens of stories of straight grunt willingly going off with some queen, playing the homosexual in bed, and only afterwards turning violent, stealing, murdering" (*Lovetown* 12). Juxtaposing their Balkan pendant with the "usual, blasé homosexuals", Filipović describes it as a raw, marginal, but wild and much more passionate type, which defies the category of "self-conscious, ghettoised and ideologized" gays (*Staklenac* 370).

A strong demarcation line is drawn – and symbolically marked by a defunct radar and a red flag that the sea tossed upon the shore just up the Polish-German border – between the pre-emancipatory queers and post-picketatory gays from Ahlbeck and Poznań. When, armed with books on cultural criticism, she hits the lewd beach to hustle queens for more stories, Michalina La Belletriste runs into a group of straight-acting, butch men, with their talk on marriage, adoption, monogamy, safe sex and friendship. While the ancient divas, with only their noses covered by maple leaves, have long fled the scene, exposed and overcome by the body-waxed, plastic masculinity of the younger gays, Witkowski is being persuaded into writing pro-equal rights articles for glossy magazines and asked to join their team. Instead of siding with his peers – "you'd fit in perfectly", they say – he rushes back to the pre-1989 Poland, turning into an intolerant camp queen, deaf to their obsessive discourse "like a communist-era butcher at six in the evening" (*Lovetown* 162-164). An array of both lascivious and morbid, yet ever-nostalgic anecdotes, as well as post-communist complaints on how the absence of prohibition erases all the filth and wrongdoing, leaving no place for the imagination in the neo-liberal reality, is now completed by *The Theory of Swish*, and *The Great Atlas of Polish Queens* is open. In it, amongst the endangered old queens, mock-grunts, numerous permutations (ballet, opera, pantomime queens) and hybrid combinations (art fag + style queen = gallery queen), or rarer species of press spokespersons for the LGBTIQQ – are also the demi-queens, like the lads from Poznań, whose deep-voices and masculine pronouns hardly conceal their orientation.

Lacking the self-irony of *Lovetown,* unless read as meta-ironical towards its own narrator, who is personally disinterested in bridge species but equally inclined to taxonomies – e.g. bio-political half-breeds such as a Serbian-Muslim narc-fag or gay fathers – whilst not refraining from a slightly, and similarly, (auto)pathological rendering of

homosexuality, in what could as easily be called *The Great Atlas of Yugoslavian Grunts*, *Staklenac* displays the politics and poetics of macho-homosexuality as a punishment to the repressive society (Perišić) – or even psycho-political pornography (Maljković) – via Filipović's desire to humiliate, desacralize and devirilize straight men and take symbolical revenge on heterosexual masculinity.

Witkowski's "Witkowski", on the other hand, is sympathetic to the effeminate, submissive fairies he gives voice to. Although apolitical, anti-asimilationist and "ardent in their adoption of old-fashioned female characteristic" (307), his "dancing Eurydices" are well aware of the fictive character of their transgressions and metamorphoses: "they don't want to be women at all; they want to be swishy men: pretend femmes" (6-7). Is it sex or gender – he asks and, breaking the Butler theory (or re-naturalizing the social constructs?), replies: "Because if it's gender, queens should by all rights be turned on by butch lesbians. But that, alas, never happens", since their view of women is conditioned by the fact that "queens are still men after all" (307).

What these sexual dissidents and erotomanes seem to be less aware of – Filipović, too, together with the class privileges he is so unwilling (but still able) to waive that he will flee the country – is not just the messy dialectics and the constructedness of sex and gender, but of their position in society and the places they cruise being a sign of discrimination (as much as their desire is tightly knotted with dread). For, the essential question of their identity lies not so much in being condemned and bound to the wrong, as much as to the impossible identity in manifestly patriarchal countries.

Hiding under the radar during communism and having the bare necessities secured by the subsidies of socialism, the queens are happy to compromise and accept the "luxury" of the available, straight Soviet soldiers and the safety of army barracks; for the rest they compensate with their imagination. After this relatively secure, however (willingly) unrecognised and even abject existence that ended with the demise of communism, the elderly queens had not just been doubly marginalized – "first, you're poor; second, you're a poofter" (Witkowski 92) – and more threatened by the growingly dangerous, criminalized grunt, but also reduced to an almost non-existence, a non-identity. No longer able to hold on to his superior, masculine-gay identity, built on distancing and dis-identifying himself with the society he always despised, nor to ultimately dominate the already dominated and re-assert some portion of power that he had been denied, Filipović had by then escaped the horrors of the nineties without ever lamenting for Yugoslavia's liberal eighties. Yet, it is not until the post-communist demand for social definition in Poland which, paradoxically, increased hostility, and the clash between the communist queers and the modern gays, that this "rift" in the homosexual population (unwillingly) gained visibility and identity – by dis-identifying with them.

Locked in binarisms – non-normative in relation to the heterosexual norm and heteronormative in relation to homosexuals, and both anachronistic in respect to the

contemporary identity politics – neither Filipović nor Witkowski's queens can therefore be called queer in the anti-identitarian sense of the term, even if one would catchily call them "queer-before-gay" (Warkocki). Therefore the title of this paper hides several oxymora, but perhaps the genuinely queer (queerest?) is, in fact, the grunt, whose both sexual and gender identity remains entirely unquestioned.

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"If a Cutie, Then Always Misha": Evgenii Kharitonov's Queer Masculinities

Tatiana Klepikova

Abstract: In the history of queer Russian literature of the late Soviet era, Evgenii Kharitonov's name (1941–1981) stands out most vividly for his openly homoerotic poetry and prose. This paper analyzes one of Kharitonov's works, "Vil'boa i drugie veshchi, stikhi" [Vilboa and Other Things, Poems], as a text where he explores the concept of masculinity through the idea of imperfection. It discusses various dimensions of imperfection that his masculine characters demonstrate and argues that for Kharitonov, a "perfect" object of homoerotic desire is defined through minor failings that make him more real and enhance the narrator's attraction to him.

Keywords: literature, Kharitonov, imperfection, masculinity, Vilboa

An iconic representative of late Soviet gay literature, Evgenii Kharitonov (1941–1981) is known for the play "Ocharovannyi Ostrov" [Enchanted Island] that he staged at the Theater of Mimicry and Gesture in Moscow and for his collection of works *Pod domashnim arestom* [Under House Arrest] that he compiled shortly before his untimely death in 1981 and that was officially published in 1993 by the Glagol publishing house in Moscow. Despite the fascinating aesthetics of Kharitonov's literary works and their open and proud homoeroticism unheard of in Russia since Mikhail Kuzmin (1872–1936), only a few researchers have so far focused on his oeuvre, with some of them emphasising the role of binary models in the analysis of his literary legacy.[1] Many of Kharitonov's short stories and poems have also been interpreted through the dynamics between dominant

1 On dichotomous models in Kharitonov's texts, see, e.g., Beliaeva-Konegen; Witte. For studies on Kharitonov in general, see essays that accompany his texts in the 1993 collection (reprinted by Glagol in 2005); Beliaeva; Dark ("Tri lika russkoi erotiki"; "V odnom iz mirov"); Gol'dshtein; Rogov ("'nevozmozhnoe slovo'"; "Ekzistentsial'nyi geroi"); Shatalov; Moss ("The Underground Closet"; "Voploshchenie gomoseksual'nosti"); Leupold; Bernshtein; Kayiatos.

and submissive gay masculinities; and his most famous work, "Dukhovka" [The Oven] has sometimes been read in terms of the relationship between hegemonic heteronormativity and marginalized homosexuality, in which the latter is "frightened" to manifest itself to the hostile environment and is, therefore "doomed to a tragic existence" (Schmid 45; Witte 146-147).

In my paper, I will focus on one of Kharitonov's works that has been rarely discussed— "Vil'boa i drugie veshchi, stikhi" [Vilboa and Other Things, Poems]—and will offer a different approach to the queer imaginary that Kharitonov creates in his works that can and will be discussed here independently of the heteronormative world. My interpretation places Kharitonov's universe into a "parallel reality" that is neither submissive to heteronormativity, not overcoming it—it simply is, and its only purpose is to be a laboratory where Kharitonov can explore male corporeal beauty. As Oleg Dark writes, "[t]he existence of Kharitonov's character is an infinite chain of halted moments of beauty" ("Tri lika russkoi erotiki" 226).[2] In doing so, I argue that by focusing on the perfections of the imperfect and the imperfections of the ideal (alongside other themes), Kharitonov turns sublime imperfection into one of central aspects of male beauty in his universe.

"Vilboa and Other Things, Poems" is a multigenre literary work that is built up by pieces of prosaic and poetic text that experiment with form, contents, and language. Other than the title "Vil'boa" at the beginning and intervals between pieces of the text, nothing separates "Vilboa" from "Other Things" and "Poems"; they are a single whole – Vilboa, Other Things, and Poems – as announced in the title, which is why I will further refer to all these pieces as simply "Vilboa." It is, however, clear that each piece separated by an interval is a text that stands alone, has a different narrator, a different dynamic, and a distinctive aim that it pursues. Within "Vilboa," Kharitonov seems to be changing masks and testing new ground in each of the pieces – a typical device of his that Svetlana Beliaeva connects to his general interest in and engagement with theater performance (149). The texts that "Vilboa" comprises are all relatively short; they range from four lines to a couple of pages. The title refers to the Russian nineteenth-century composer and conductor Konstantin Vil'boa, whose duo *Moriaki* (The Sailors, 1872) is one of the popular music pieces that is being played at a public concert where the narrator of the first piece of Kharitonov's text finds himself. The homoerotic reference implied in the title of this song—the sailor[3]—starts to develop in the following lines, where the homoerotic vein of the text is confirmed by the hero's interest in a young boy who performs a dance on stage together with a girl:

2 "Существование харитоновского героя – бесконечная цепь остановленных мгновений красоты […]."

3 On the figure of the sailor in homoerotic art, see, e.g., Goldman.

И ближе к делу, номер:
мальчик и девочка лет по тринадцати, пляска.
Все одинаково смотрят,
мальчик пляшет, девочка пропускается.
Глаза в большинстве на него.
Хрупкий зародыш мужества трогает.
А он просто, должен плясать и пляшу, как положено
Не закоренел, складный на редкость.
Не зря отцы хотят сыновей. (39)

The narrator's gaze falls onto the boy and singles him out of the duo, just as, according to him, everyone's gaze in the crowd does, too. He thus directs the readers' attention to the boy, in a cinema-like move of the camera that zooms onto him and leaves the girl out of its sight, which is no wonder, considering the boy's unique physique ("складный на редкость"). At the same time, while the sailor (whose figure looms over this piece) is often viewed as a paragon of masculinity, this boy represents a *promise* of masculinity *to come*, still fragile and touching ("Хрупкий зародыш мужества трогает"; "Не закоренел"). For the narrator, the boy's beauty, therefore, lies in his imperfection that resides in the lack of wholeness that characterises many of Kharitonov's heroes who strive to complete it.[4] The boy is like a piece of clay, out of which anything can be shaped—a platform for infinite possibilities for development, which leaves enough room for imagination. Yet, the material that lies in front of the sculptor is already above average and, therefore, promises to deliver a great product in the end. Kharitonov thus plays with the ambiguity of the situation, in which it is unclear whether the narrator is fascinated by the boy, or by the idealised image of the boy in his later years that he envisions to himself, by the result of the boy's maturing that is now only sketched.

The sailors' (and, therefore, masculinity) theme continues in the sailors' dance performed later by three "brothers" (the narrator will find out later that only the twins are brothers, and the third, older boy who captures his attention, is unrelated to them). "[E]veryone in the audience is excited about" this dance ("все предвкушают, я не один"):

третий на них не похож,
все хороши, третий особенно,
он их постарше, на переломе,
братики, все одной крови, все хороши,
но третий –
бедра ремнями затянуты, сердцевина программы. (39)

Again, just as it was with the first boy, the dancer who captivates the narrator is in the process of maturing—a boy who is turning into a man ("он их постарше, на переломе").

4 Aleksandr Zhitenev asserts that Kharitonov's version of homosexuality is about chasing one's own completeness, see Zhitenev 193.

Even without describing his appearance, only by referring to the tight position of the belts on the boy's hips Kharitonov visualizes his muscular body that impresses the narrator so much that he follows the dancers to another venue, where a different concert with their participation should take place and is quite disappointed when it is cancelled. The narrator is doomed to go back home, where some girl who is staying at his place (a visitor of his flatmates) serves as a reminder of this unattainable beauty. At the same time, she provides yet another hint at the narrator's sexuality, as he voices his lack of interest in women that has already become clear from his account of the boy and the girl's dance: "О, Вильбоа, только домой, / где спит незнакомая девушка. / Подари, девушка, сына, а сама уходи гулять" (Kharitonov, "Vilboa i drugie veshchi, stikhi" 40).

The veneration of a young body resurfaces in the second piece of "Vilboa" set in a venue that connects to the sailors' theme of the first piece by breathing homoeroticism and homosociality—a public bath. A visitor of the bath, the narrator recounts his observations of the male genitals that he witnesses in abundance at this place, while he is particularly impressed with the ones of younger boys:

> Событие: показали феномена,
> такая длина впервые.
> При том, что обладатель почти ребенок,
> только что вытянулся, в пропорциях не установился.
> Но размера такого не видел.
> Тоже сначала мылись дети, моложе его, двое,
> тоже у них по-взрослому развито:
> у одного такой крепенький темного цвета,
> как будто бы повидал виды, с прикрытой головой,
> у другого потоньше, но по длине хорошо […] (40)

The piece exploits the already familiar types of characters: a young man on the verge of becoming a paragon of masculinity, who is, however, not quite there yet ("почти ребенок, только что вытянулся, в пропорциях не установился") and the narrator who is desperately chasing the dream that seems really close in this case (he would clarify at the end of the piece that his chances to invite this young man over were quite high, yet he missed the opportunity).[5] Unlike the previous texts, this piece demonstrates the traditional Kharitonovian openness about discussing physical details of the genitals and of sexual acts: Evgenii Popov would recollect that Kharitonov's narrative could "scare off many readers" by its "deliberately shameless" style [*narochito besstyzhii*; 104]. Kharitonov's haptic aesthetic resides in his visually and linguistically touching and caressing the object of desire: Igor' Iarkevich notes in this regard that

5 "Сам не из Москвы, здесь в ремесленном, / какой билет в лотерее: / здесь в общежитии, смело позвать / деревенский и ничего не знает, / выигрыш раз в десять лет – / упустил." (41).

> Стилистика Харитонова бесконечно, запредельно чувственна. Его персонажи агрессивно демонстрируют свою чувственность в отношении не только самих себя и субъектов своей любви, но буквально всего, что их окружает. Познание мира для них абсолютно сенсорно, ни о какой рациональности в принципе не может быть и речи. Их душа словно бы спрятана в кончиках пальцев, которыми они пробуют и щупают мир. (Iarkevich 169)

The bath scene is a perfect example of the author's approach, for the penis that he witnesses is the only part of the boy's body that raises no doubts in the narrator about the boy's perfection (it is quite clear that the "phenomenon" about which the author speaks is the penis, not the boy) and he gladly shares all the details about it with the reader:

> какой-то коленчатый, как бамбук,
> как будто дорос до хорошей длины,
> и дальше решил, на второе колено,
> и зарубка видна, до которой вначале.
> А на пределе –
> если даже в два раза, непостижимо,
> как распрямляется – собственная тяжесть не даст,
> закон рычага. (41)

Naturalistic descriptions that abound in tiniest detail are softened by the irony that Kharitonov weaves into his text that also hints at the only imperfection that this part of the male physique bears, in narrator's view—the wrinkles:

> если смотреть в отдельности, возраст не определим.
> Единственная деталь по которой годы не опознаются.
> По любой другой можно, а эта и так в морщинах. (40)

Just as the dancer, this bath boy slips away from the narrator (the former—due to inopportune circumstances, the latter—due to a lack of decisiveness on the narrator's part). The motif of chasing a beautiful young man without a happy end is central to Kharitonov's texts. It is often the reason of the suffering, a tragedy of life, and bitter disappointment of his narrators, and has been addressed in research on several occasions (Dark, "Tri lika russkoi erotiki" 225-26; Shatalov 56; Moss, "Voploshchenie gomoseksual'nosti" 192-194). This motif of escape falls in line with Kharitonov's fascination with the imperfect: the unattainability of the objects of desire is part and parcel of their sublime imperfection. While the narrator would find it perfect to be together with an object of his veneration in many different ways—from observing him to having a love relationship with him; he is consistently deprived of this pleasure, and it may be for the better, as this failure leaves him with an illusion that he has constructed for himself, it preserves the perfection that he imagined by leaving the imperfection in place.

An imperfect connection between the narrator and the object of his desire often comes from an emotional distance that grows between lovers, where the narrator is substituted by a new lover; sometimes due to his own fault:

Не верь, милый друг, как я тебе не верю.
Просто целуем, перебираем друг друга.
Какая сухая осень. Цветы у метро с рук.
Ты охладел, потому что я охладел.
Я разжился на Толю и нового Мишу.
Как красавец, так обязательно Миша.
Почему ты не взял у меня его место?
Почему я тебе не запал весну назад?
Лучше ты слева он справа на обе руки,
чтобы никто не пропал.
Там еще Слава из ЦСКА без звонка. (58)

On other occasions, the distance grows in connection to an untimely death, often brought about by the war, about which Kharitonov ponders in a digression in the first piece on the sailor dancers:

Война с вами точно обходится, не дает переспеть,
запечатлевает в канун расцвета,
чтобы у всех разрывались сердца.
Гибнет мальчик в тельняшке, спадает со щек румянец,
не распустившись в окоп,
губ никто ему не раскрыл. (39)

Death at a young age locks young beauty forever, preserves its perfect imperfection that will now never achieve perfection and, therefore, will never become imperfect.

One more dimension of imperfection that goes beyond the ones that I described above in that it acquires shape through multiple levels on which the imperfection is not only represented, but also performed, is the language. "Vilboa" contains a piece that is constructed as recollections of a (young) man about his boyhood. In this piece, Kharitonov's narrator does not dwell on young boys but assumes a role of a young boy upon himself in striving to reach the sublime imperfection that, in his view, resides in them. Yet, in doing so, the narrator does not only reinvent himself as a young boy who recollects his youth, but he also starts to act like one, at least on the level of the language that with each line disintegrates further under the pressure of the immature orthography and punctuation:

Они мне дом, они мне деньги,
разбаловали, дарагии,
адивают абувают, а я про это напишу,
маленькими буковками хорошо писать,
ломать буду язык как бутта савсем маленький […]. (44)

The letters grow small (although only acoustically, not on paper), and so does the narrator who visually transforms into a young boy in front of the reader together with the language of the text. However, even in this role that may be the closest approximation that the narrator can experience to the objects of his desire he fails to feel perfection: he places himself into circumstances where, instead of celebrating the beauty of his young body, he is torn by remorse that his family will forever see him as incomplete, as imperfect:

> Мамачка, бумаги прочла, будит типерь пра миня думать
> никакой надежды на симью на внукав
> […]
> Уеду за то что прочла, мамачка будит плакать
> ни спать зачем уличила
> дело тонкае разви можна […] (44)

The discovery of the narrator's homosexuality by the family is never presented through the eyes of the family in this piece, we only learn about the narrator's idea of their idea of him—a line of logic that is flawed from the beginning, imperfect just as the narrator thinks he is to his relatives. He self-deprecates himself to the extent of imagining himself in their minds as "nothingness," a failure: "из миня ничиво ни будит" (45). He achieves imperfection, but it is of a kind that does not elevate him to the same level to which he raises the objects of his own desire: on the contrary, he falls even lower than he initially was due to the intricate games of his own mind, while the text, on the other hand, rises to perfection through the imperfection that creates it.

We can, therefore, look at Kharitonov's texts not as a compendium of binaries of young and old, strong and weak (which may be emphasized in some of his texts, such as "Odin takoi, drugoi drugoi" [One is Like This, the Other is Different], where one is necessarily perfect and the other flawed), but as a palette of forms and shapes that reveals different degrees of imperfection combined with perfection that are hidden within each of his characters and narrators.

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The Subversive Construction of Gender in the Poetry of Kristina Hočevar

Vesna Liponik

Abstract: The article focuses on places in the poetry of Kristina Hočevar that perform gendered positions by subverting existing conventions. In her texts, the latter is carried out in such a manner that the lesbian body acts as an expression of all genders. The speaker unites both "a little boy" (*Naval I* 34) as well as "a little / not so little girl" (ibid.). Monique Wittig asserts that a lesbian is not a woman, since the category of gender only has meaning in the heteronormative matrix. The lesbian position exits the gendered matrix and erodes the category of gender. The use of gendered labels in her poetry does not only destabilize gendered roles, but allows, in an anti-ageist manner, for a different reading of age-specific expressions. This textual strategy can already be observed in Hočevar's third book of poetry *Little Tails* (2008), the poet further develops and uses it in her fifth book *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips* (2012), and in her latest book *Rush* (2017).

Keywords: Kristina Hočevar, lesbian poetry, gender, linguistic masquerade.

Genderdness

In her essay *One Is Not Born a Woman*, Wittig asserts that "the category 'woman' as well as the category 'man' are political and economic categories" (105). The economy within which they operate is heterosexual. The category of sex[1] is therefore a political category that founds society as heterosexual. Wittig writes that as such it does not concern beings but relationships. Heterosexuality grips our minds in such a way that we cannot think outside of it (*The Category* 3).

Zimmerman in her essay *Lesbians Like This and That: Some Notes on Lesbian Criticism for the Nineties* questions herself: "In what way, then, can the lesbian, lesbian desire,

1 Butler explains that "for Wittig there is no distinction between sex and gender; the category of 'sex' is itself a gendered category, fully politically invested, naturalized but not natural" (*Gender* 112).

or lesbian textuality exists outside this system?" (6) And even more importantly: "but does the lesbian, metaphorical or otherwise, exist 'outside' anything" (ibid.)?

It is no doubt Monique Wittig has attacked this question "most forcefully" (Zimmerman 6). The outside imagined by Wittig, her only outside, is lesbian. Wittig asserts that a lesbian is not a woman, since the category of gender only has meaning in the heteronormative matrix. In this sense Wittig reinstates homosexuality as radically separated from heterosexuality.[2]

Wittig's thought was later criticized from an anti-essentialist perspective for changing one signifier (phallus) for another (the lesbian body).[3] Butler wrote that "Wittig's radical disjunction between straight and gay replicates the kind of disjunctive binarism that she herself characterizes as the divisive philosophical gesture of "*the straight mind*" (*Gender* 121). The consequence is to rob and deprive lesbianism "of the capacity to resignify the very heterosexual constructs by which it is partially and inevitably constituted" (128).

So what exactly are our chances in the world "where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms" (Butler, "Critically" 23) and how can we use language to work for us as a *war machine* as Wittig puts it ("*The Trojan*" 45).

Zimmerman quotes Meese, who claims that "existing in relation to an institution is not quite the same thing as existing in" (6) and continues with questioning herself: "Might this not be a model for conceptualizing the lesbian difference? To be sure, in order to disrupt heterosexuality one must engage with/in it. But one must also maintain separateness, a difference, an outsideness, or simply be devoured by the dominant term, or culture" (ibid.). At this point relation must be recognised as a springboard for "subversive and parodic redeployment of power" (Butler, *Gender* 124).

Historically there were several different strategies of the lesbian *inside-outness*, with butch-femme couples of the working class certainly being at the forefront. Grosz writes about "butch-femme relations as those which, when lived out by women's bodies, constitute a transgression of the naturalizing effects of heterosexual 'gender roles'" (170). Sue-Ellen Case, Susan Sontag and many others emphasize camp aesthetics: "costume, performance, mise-en-scène, irony, and utter manipulation of appearance" (de Lauretis 150). Literature represents a platform for various vivid gender destabilizations and articulations of lesbian existences, lesbian desires, it is one of the privileged fields in which the repressive aspect(s) of language can be displayed, redeployed and exceeded. The distinct genderdness of language can represent an obstacle and at the same time, a place to overcome, to deal with this obstacle as Hočevar's poetry shows us.

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2 Beside Wittig also some other lesbian feminists in the 1970's tried to present "lesbianism as an attack on heterorelations, or heterosexuality" (Zimmerman 6). Among them Charlotte Bunch, Marilyn Frye and Adrienne Rich (ibid.).

3 Beside Butler, Zimmerman in the above-mentioned essay quotes Meese, Fuss and Shaktini.

Linguistic Masquerade

Kristina Hočevar is a Slovenian poet. She has written six books of poetry: *V pliš* (*Into Plush*, Cankarjeva založba 2004), *Fizični rob* (*The Physical Edge*, Cankarjeva založba 2007), *Repki* (*Little Tails*, Škuc 2008), *Nihaji* (*Oscillations*, Cankarjeva založba 2009), *Na zobeh aluminij, na ustnicah kreda* (*Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips*, Škuc 2012) and *Naval*[4] (*Rush*, Škuc 2017). She has been nominated for several awards and won the Jenko and Golden Bird Award.

In this paper I will focus on the phenomenon in her poetry which I briefly name *a linguistic masquerade.* The method of linguistic masquerade can be divided in two interconnected groups. The first method appears as *a dialogical position* and the second as *a juxtaposition*, although their interconnectedness works on the basis of juxtaposition of both methods and this is the crucial point where all the excitement of Hočevar's use of gendered labels is produced. The textual strategies of Hočevar's linguistic masquerade can already be observed in her third poetry book *Little Tails* (2008), the poet further develops and uses it in her fifth book *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips* (2012), and in her latest poetry book *Rush* (2017).

English when compared to Slovene has the reputation of being almost genderless, while Slovene passes for a distinctly gendered language. Hočevar takes advantage of exactly this aspect of the Slovene language.

So, in order to make my point clear, I will sometimes have to use both languages when quoting her poems. Some translations are available on Versopolis and have been made by Županič, Zavrl and Eckman, others are my modest approximations used only for this purpose.[5]

Dialogical Positions

In Hočevar's love poems there are several different dialogical positions, speaking positions. Verb suffixes make it clear that on a linguistic level a love statement is directed from a woman to a woman, which appears to be the prevalent dialogical position. Although in parts the situation blurs when the second person singular is introduced. The speaker positioned in the second person singular addresses a non-gendered instance in such a manner that it remains unclear whether the speaker addresses herself or someone else. I will illustrate this situation with a verse from *Rush*: "(you change a person, you jump and you withdraw into it, you are replacing it into yourself)" (*Naval I* 35)[6]

The strategy produces the blurring of boundaries between subject and object, self and other. Zimmermann quotes Farwell: "Confusing the boundaries between subject/

4 *Naval* (*Rush*) consists of three books.

5 Unless stated otherwise, the translation is by the author of the paper.

6 "(spreminjaš osebo, skačeš in se umikaš vanjo, vase jo nadomeščaš)" (*Naval I* 35)

object and lover/beloved undercuts the heterosexuality which is based on this dualism. The point in the narrative where this deconstruction begins is what I would call lesbian narrative space" (10). It is possible to add: not only heterosexuality but the Western thought in general.

In the following example of a dialogical position, a love statement is directed toward a non-gendered instance, I want to emphasise the content of the statement in which the speaker wants to share with the other person "all my genders, / all my sexes / all my hands / and all my famished, all insatiate mouth".[7] A similar moment of *many genders* also appears in *Little Tails*: "a scene of variations on theme of boys and girls. all percentages of them and all my percentages of genders" (*Repki* 119).[8]

Hočevar plays with "the complex and nonlinear relations between gender and sexuality" (Butler, "Critically" 28). Heterosexuality "requires that identification and desire are mutually exclusive" (ibid.). Hočevar's poetry focuses on their "complex interimplication" (ibid.).

The latter could also be read in the context of "what Deleuze and Guattari have described as 'a thousand tiny sexes': to liberate the myriad of flows to proliferate connections, to intensify" (Grosz 184). And this is desire, desire as intensification, "it experiments; it makes: it is fundamentally aleatory, inventive" (180). Similarly Audre Lorde has positioned desire outside of psychoanalytic coherence between desire and identification. Lorde understands desire as "a creative force for revolutionary change" (Abelove 339). Or as Lorde puts it: "And there is, for me, no difference between writing a good poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman I love" (342).

Age-Specific Expressions

Hočevar prefers to use age-marked gender expressions, related to the manifestation of gender in a certain lifetime, and hence to a certain age-prescribed gender role with corresponding attributes. The age-specific gender expressions she uses are: a kiddo (mulc), a boy (fant, fantek), a girl (punca, deklica), a doll (punčka). Thus, in relation to gender, we are faced with another problematic construct – age – and ageism, discrimination on the basis of age. Explicit problematization of the preference of youth, especially in the capitalist socio-economic system, can be read in the following verse: "sipped is youth, while wrinkles, / lines of emotions and work, are levelled" (Hočevar).[9]

In general the use of gendered labels does not only destabilize gendered roles, but allows, in the anti-ageist manner, for a different reading of age-marked expressions; another example from Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips: "wrinkled and grey-haired,

7 "delila bi / s tabo vse svoje spole,/ vse svoje sekse, / vse svoje roke, / in vsa svoja zlakotnjena, vsa nezadostljiva usta" (*Naval I* 22).

8 "scena variacij na temo dečkov in deklic. vseh odstotkov njih in vseh mojih odstotkov spolov" (*Repki* 119).

9 "srka se mladost, medtem ko se gube, / črte čustev in dela, ravnajo" (*Aluminij* 65).

/ the dolls don't outgrow the chairs" (Hočevar).[10] The destabilization of gender norms is in her poetry interconnected with the destabilization of age-specific expressions. In her poetry the boy, the girl, the doll lose their *age,* or rather the speaker plays with their age.

Juxtaposition

The next juxtapositional method of linguistic masquerade illustrates a poem from *Rush* in which the speaker unites both "little boy" as well as "little / not so little girl". The following poem is an eloquent example of how to make use of the distinct genderdness of language, an aspect that is lost if I translate the poem to English:

> majhna pred mehkobo polnega telesa
> živo nahranjen fant majhna.
> to telo je nahranilo tvojo majhnost. tvojega majhnega fanta
> in tvoje malo manj majhno dekle" (*Naval I* 34).

A similar example from *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips*: "a husband / you were walking beside her – your / husband your tearful woman" (Hočevar).[11]

In the untranslated poem above the speaker is a boy (fant) and it marks (her)self in the contradiction to the adjectives that accompany the noun boy. So, we have a noun which is in masculine form and two adjectives that refer to the noun boy but are one in masculine and the other in feminine form.

In both examples the speaker changes persons and also uses third person for (her) self, which functions as alienation, an inner break, "the clot and fissure"(Rich). And again, we can't determine whether the speaker refers to some third person or to (her)self or possibly both, to (her)self as some third person.

The strategy upsets the structure itself and its functioning. Through the juxtaposition both terms "lose their internal stability and distinctness from each other" (Butler, *Gender* 123) and begin to "multiply possible sites of application of the term[s], to reveal the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified, and to destabilize and mobilize the sign (122) and "[i]t is precisely this dissonant juxtaposition and the sexual tension that its transgression generates that constitute the object of desire. […]. [T]he object [and clearly, there is not just one]" (123) is based on "the destabilization of both terms as they come into erotic interplay" (ibid.). The juxtapositional method constitutes a "highly complex and structured production of desire" (ibid.). The strategy resembles that of Akerman in her *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974). "Akerman establishes pronouns *je, tu, il, elle*

10 "gubaste in sivih las // punčke stolov ne prerastejo." (*Aluminij* 59).

11 " mož / si stopala ob njej – svojem / možu svoji solzni ženski". (*Aluminij* 30) Husband in the translation is not completely adequate, because *mož* in Slovene is not only a husband, but also a man – the translation somehow narrows the meaning.

in relation, at the same time, all the pronouns are comprised in Julie/Akerman, in the main character itself. With fragmentation of pronouns she cuts into heterosexual symmetry, similar to what Monique Wittig did in *Le Corps lesbien.* Akerman deliberately remains ambivalent – we never know exactly who the pronoun *you, tu* refers to" (Šepetavc 888). In the case of Akerman this strategy positions the subject "at the same time inside and outside the patriarchal culture, in the spaces of interposition" (Šepetavc 889-890).

What Wittig tried to achieve in *Le corps lesbien* can be understood, not only as "a specifically lesbian deconstruction of heterosexuality" (Findlay in Zimmerman 11) but also again with Grosz's alternative comprehension of desire as surface and decomposition effects: "[i]n order to understand this notion, we have to abandon our habitual understanding of entities as the integrated totality, and instead focus on the elements, the parts, outside of their integration or organization, to look beyond the organism to the organs that comprise it"(182). Wittig decomposes the lesbian body in order to re-establish it, or better establish it, and with this erogenises lesbian subject as a whole. Hočevar's texts are focused on details and shaped into sharpened and impetuous fragments. Her poetry eliminates the possibility of total control and redirects one towards facing metonymical details. And the main possible advantage of "fragmentation, difference and mutability is to undermine the monolithic notion of the Lesbian self" (Zimmerman 9).

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Reconceptualising the Russian LGBTQ+ Community: The Impact of Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Laws on LGBTQ+ Discourse

Maruša Maligoj

Abstract: Russia's regional and federal 'gay propaganda' laws adopted between 2006 and 2013 have had a significant impact on the Russian LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+ discourse. The laws contain ideologically marked expressions whose aim is to reconceptualise the social image of LGBTQ+ people by reshaping the language used in reference to the community. Both federal and regional laws utilise ideologically-laden expressions that link homosexuality with pathology and criminality, and erroneously try to present it as an ideological concept or a political strategy that can be influenced by the media, fashion trends and propaganda. By establishing a new opposition between 'traditional/natural' and 'non-traditional/unnatural', this discourse has reconstructed homosexuality as a modern phenomenon completely alien to Russian society and in contradiction with the country's traditional values. As a result of this discourse having been employed by the authority that has the power to determine what language be regarded as legitimate, all non-heterosexuals have become regarded as inner enemies Russia needs to fight against.

Keywords: gay propaganda laws, LGBTQ+ discourse, discursive practices, homophobia, sociolinguistics

Introduction

Language and society are two closely related terms connected to each other in various different ways. There are several possible relationships between the two, with one of them being that linguistic structure and/or behaviour may influence society (Wardaugh 10). According to the Linguistic relativity hypothesis, the grammar of each language is not only "a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of

ideas" (Whorf in Wardhaugh 222). Our impressions of the world are organised by our minds, or rather the linguistic systems in our minds, which is why our perception of the world is always limited, determined and filtered by the language we speak (Wardhaugh 223-25). If a language lacks certain words to describe things, the speakers of that language will find it harder to talk about those things and vice versa (223). Consequently, if one language makes distinctions between particular things or concepts, the users of such a language will find it easier to perceive these differences.

Russia's anti-gay propaganda laws adopted between 2006 and 2013 have not only had a significant impact on the lives of Russian LGBTQ+ people, but have managed to completely reconceptualise the LGBTQ+ community by changing the way it is perceived by Russian society. In this paper, we analyse the discursive practices employed by the authorities in order to identify the linguistic devices that have helped redefine homosexuality and construct a new, negative image of the Russian LGBTQ+ community.

Homophobia and Discourse

Homophobia is a "culturally produced fear of or prejudice against homosexuals that sometimes manifests itself in legal restrictions or, in extreme cases, bullying or even violence against homosexuals" (Anderson). Although the suffix *phobia* generally designates an irrational fear, in the case of homophobia the word instead refers to an attitudinal disposition of people towards homosexuals, which can range from mild dislike to loathing (ibid). However, homophobia is not just the fear of homosexuals, but also the fear of being recognised as one of the homosexuals, meaning "not manly enough". (Kuhar, *Homofobija* 546). This concept of 'manliness' is closely related to sexuality and the perception of homosexuals as primarily sexual beings.

In this context of sexuality, a homosexual started to establish himself as a subject (549) that does not have a meaning on its own, but is rather constructed within a discourse (Kuhar, *Medijske* 17). Therefore, a person does not have an inherent meaning – they become that which is said and written about them (ibid). According to Foucault, discourse is a practice defining the subject and its position in the society by "the situation that it is possible for him to occupy in relation to the various domains or groups of objects" (Foucault, *The Archaeology* 52). This occurs due to the fact that language does not only describe, but also shapes the world we live in (Grobelšek 7).

The discursive position of a subject is thus the result of the relations of power which cannot themselves be "established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault, *Power* 93). Needless to say, discourse production is always controlled by power and as individuals we know the limits of what we can say depending on the matter and circumstances. It is the authority that holds the power over the production of any discourse and determines

which words and linguistic units be regarded as legitimate (Fairclough in Grobelšek 7). The ultimate goal of the dominant discourse is hence to suppress any other discourses to such an extent that we do not perceive it as arbitrary anymore, but rather as the only legitimate norm (Kuhar, *Homofobija* 548). Following the absolute prevalence of the dominant discourse, "particular linguistic devices become the only logical choice" (Grobelšek 7) – the truth of power which individuals are subjected to and forced to reproduce (Foucault, *Power* 94).

Homosexuality in Russia

The first mentions of homosexuality in Russia date back to the Kievan Rus' era with many writings confirming that it has been a part of Russian society throughout history.[1] Over the course of centuries, public views on homosexuality have changed many times, but before the era of Peter the Great, ancient Russia had had a much more open attitude toward homosexuality compared to old Europe. Although the first governmental ban on homosexual relations was introduced in the 18th century, it was not until the late 1920s that societal attitudes toward homosexuality became explicitly hostile. This public sentiment followed the re-criminalisation of homosexual relations due to which hundreds of homosexual individuals were persecuted and sent to gulags. After decades of oppression, homosexuality was finally decriminalised and declassified as a mental disorder in the 1990s, resulting in a more tolerant public attitude toward homosexuals. According to a gay rights activist Yuri Gavrikov, the 90s "ushered in a new era of relative tolerance [and it was] common to see openly gay singers and celebrities on television" (Lang). It was also during that time that the first LGBTQ+ organisations fighting for gay and lesbian rights were founded in Sankt Petersburg and Moscow.

Following the period that some compared to France's Belle Époque (Lang), the social status of the LGBTQ+ community again started to worsen after the re-election of President Vladimir Putin in 2012. Putin's new political ideology (also dubbed 'homophobic nationalism' (Eisenstein 184)) advocating tradition, family, and Orthodoxy as its main values conveniently scapegoats the LGBTQ+ community, blaming them for the demographic crisis and other social issues troubling the Russian Federation. This new hateful rhetoric demonising the LGBTQ+ people helped create favourable conditions that enabled the government to successfully reconceptualise the LGBTQ+ community and legitimise homophobia.

Before the federal 'anti-gay propaganda' law legalised homophobia, similar regional bills had been passed in various federal subject of the Russian Federation, starting with

1 See: Dynes, R. Wayne, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality, volume II.* Routledge, 2016 or Haggerty, George, ed. *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia (Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures, Vol 2)*. Garland Pub., 2000.

Ryazan Oblast in 2006. However, the first attempts to ban 'gay propaganda' date even further back to the early 2000s, when two members of the state Duma proposed almost identical bills on three separate occasions but were always unanimously rejected. Even when two other federal subjects followed suit and passed regional 'anti-gay propaganda' bills into law, the whole concept did not gain any significant momentum. It was only when Sankt Petersburg banned the propaganda of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transsexuality and paedophilia that these anti-LGBTQ+ laws got extensive media coverage. In addition, this event sparked a nation-wide debate initially resulting in similar regional bills being passed in seven other federal subjects, finally culminating in the federal law banning the propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors that was introduced in June 2013.

Reshaping LGBTQ+ Discourse

All 'anti-gay propaganda' laws contain ideologically marked expressions that link homosexuality with pathology and criminality, and erroneously try to present it as an ideological concept or a political strategy. Just by analysing the name of the federal act itself (to be more precise the 2013 amendment), we can isolate three problematic expressions – '*propaganda* of *non-traditional sexual* relations'.

Firstly, the newly-coined term *non-traditional* creates the notion that there is such a thing as traditional – natural and non-traditional – unnatural sexual orientation, with the former being heterosexuality and the latter all other non-heterosexual orientations. The distinction between the two creates a new opposition in which all non-heterosexual orientations are reconstructed as a modern, unnatural phenomenon completely alien to 'inherently heterosexual' Russian society, whereas heterosexuality becomes the only accepted norm (Gorbachov 90). In relation to this new 'norm', homosexual relationships are perceived as inferior due to their 'fruitless' nature. With the family taking the central position in the Russian value system, it is then clear why homosexuals are treated as enemies – by not producing children they are the cause of the demographic crisis (Kondakov xiv). With regard to the concept of 'fruitlessness', we must also mention the word *sexual*. Non-traditional relationships are not referred to as 'romantic relationships' but rather 'sexual relations'. This wording implies that homosexual relationships are based mostly on sex and not emotions, thus reinforcing the stereotype of promiscuous, sexual nature of homosexual relationships.

Before the law was renamed as not to include any 'controversial terms', it initially banned propaganda of *homosexualism*. The decision to include this expression instead of the unmarked word *homosexuality* is not incidental considering that *homosexualism* is a medical term dating back to the Soviet period when homosexuality was criminalised and classified as a mental disorder. The suffix –ism hence links homosexuality with

criminality and pathology, and stresses the notion of homosexual orientation as deviant and immoral. The tendency to use ideologically-laden words is also reflected in a newly-coined, hitherto non-existing term *bisexualism* which was used in place of *bisexuality* (Gorbachov 90).

In certain regional laws, homosexualism is further explained or even replaced by the term *sodomy* (Russian: мужеложство) which is synonymous with the word *pederasty*. Despite the fact that *pederasty* is not a marked word in the Russian language but is used to define male homosexuality, it originally denoted "sexual activity involving a man and a boy" (Oxford). The inclusion of these words insinuates that there is a link between homosexuality and paedophilia, a concept further reinforced primarily by the regional laws which concurrently banned propaganda of homosexuality *and* paedophilia, as if the two were equal. According to modern sexology and medicine, homosexuality as well as bisexuality are regarded as two normal sexual orientations and are not classified as mental illnesses, whereas paedophilia is still classified as a psychiatric disorder and in many countries treated as a legal offence.

Finally, the last item I would like to highlight is *propaganda*. In the most neutral sense, it means to "disseminate or promote particular ideas" (Jowett and O'Donell 2), but the usage has rendered the term pejorative. Nowadays, we see propaganda as something negative or dishonest and usually relate it to the promotion of a political cause or point of view. Regardless of the definition, propaganda is always about promoting *ideas* or *causes* that we *choose* because they speak to us, so talking about propaganda in the context of homo- and bisexuality presupposes that sexual orientation is not determined, but is rather a thing of personal preference (Gorbachov 89). By suggesting that postulate, the Russian government claims that sexual orientation can be influenced by the media, fashion trends, ideology and, most importantly, propaganda. Consequently, the negative notion of propaganda coupled together with the concept of a ban positions non-heterosexuals as inner enemies who are trying to *'infect'* innocent Russian children with 'the virus of homosexuality' by means of propaganda.

Conclusion

The language we speak has the power to change society and alter our impressions, which is why words play a significant role in shaping ideas and the world around us. Since a person does not have an inherent meaning but is always constructed within a specific discourse, the words we use to describe them can alter their status and role in our society. As a consequence of holding the power over the production of any discourse, the Russian authorities have managed to reconceptualise the LGBTQ+ community by portraying them as deviant, promiscuous, and paedophilic individuals responsible for Russia's demographic crisis. They achieved this by utilising ideologically-laden expressions

alluding to outdated concepts that play on Russian collective memory. In doing so, they have rendered homosexuality unnatural and inferior, whereas heterosexuality has taken the place of the only legitimate sexual norm. As a result of this newly-established distinction between natural and unnatural, Russians have become more susceptible to these 'differences', and have hence started to perceive the LGBTQ+ community differently – seeing them not as people, but enemies.

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Zygmunt Mycielski's Blues, or How Some Testimonies Related to Queer History Simply Vanish into Thin Air

Izabela Morska

Abstract: In 1908, a new collection of short stories by Joseph Conrad, *A Set of Six*, is sent to the printer's. One of them, titled "Il Conde," appears to be the portrait of a factual Polish nobleman, Count Zygmunt Szembek. In 1981, Szembek's grandson, Zygmunt Mycielski, a composer and a suave oppositionist in the communist Poland, sends a letter to Conrad's biographer, Zdzisław Najder, revealing that "Il Conde" is clearly based on his grandfather's homosexual adventures in Naples at the beginning of the 20th century. By today's standards this revelation is an act of sheer courage and defiance (Mycielski, too, was gay), but the letter never sees the light of day until it appears, in English translation, in Keith Carabine's essay, "'A Very Charming Old Gentleman': Conrad, Count Szembek, and 'Il Conde'" in 2005. Mycielski's diaries, published after his death, can be deciphered today as a blueprint for survival. Mycielski preserves his dignity and clarity of vision, while his talent for maintaining non-heteronormative family structures in adverse circumstances defined by a repressive regime deserves further exploration.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, "Il Conde," Zygmunt Szembek, Zygmunt Mycielski, Chinua Achebe, Zdzisław Najder, Keith Carabine.

We might as well begin with a few facts:

Count Zygmunt Szembek died on August 13, 1907.

His grandson Zygmunt Mycielski was born on August 17, 1907.

To commemorate a recent loss, Mycielski's parents decided to pass on to him his grandfather's first name.

Perhaps later this choice was considered an ill-fated decision by some.

It seemed to be no secret that the model for the first-plan character in Joseph Conrad's story "Il Conde" was Count Zygmunt Szembek.[1]

Conrad met Szembek during his stay on Capri from January to May 1905. He travelled there, for all intends and purposes, for his wife's health. Following an unpleasant accident, she was in need of a mild climate and relaxation. Szembek lived not far from Villa di Maria where the Conrads stayed. Jessie Conrad later remembered Szembek as "one of the most charming gentlemen I met" (*Joseph Conrad and His Circle* qtd. in Carabine 58). Six letters from Conrad to Count Szembek survived, later published in G. Jean Aubrey, *Lettres francaises* (1929). These letters were reprinted in Zdzisław Najder's collection *Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends* (1964) (but not all of them) and in *Collected Letters 3* (1988). They were also, as Keith Carabine notes, completely ignored by biographers and critics.[2]

"Il Conde," subtitled "A Pathetic Tale", had its debut in the *Cassell's Magazine* in London in 1908. The publication in *A Set of Six,* a collection of short stories, followed in the same year.

"Il Conde" features a charming and cultured older man, endowed with comfortable income, without apparent family obligations, who takes residence in one of Naples' hotels. One evening he attends a music concert in a public garden. There he notices a certain type of man, "the South Italian type of young man, with a colourless, clear complexion, red lips, jet-black little moustache and liquid black eyes so wonderfully effective in leering or scowling." The Count shares a small table with such a young man, "sitting moodily before an empty glass," while the Count is sipping his lemonade. Later in the crowd their eyes meet. Following that, the Count leaves the crowded garden party and, to take some air, goes for a stroll in a dark alley. There he notices the same man sitting on a bench. As the Count proceeds further towards the end of the alley, an unpleasant occurrence takes place: he is robbed at knifepoint. His dignity injured, his other losses are minor, since he left his expensive watch at the hotel and is wearing only a cheap one and, conveniently, has only a few lira in his wallet. He is left unhurt and his attacker mysteriously disappears.

Then, in an instant, the Count makes an odd decision. Instead of taking a horse-drawn cab back to his hotel, he goes by tram to a restaurant in the vicinity, just one mile from the concert where, by an odd chance, he sees his attacker again. He also learns that

1 Zygmunt Szembek is mentioned by name in association with "Il Conde" in the Index to G. Jean-Aubry, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (1927).

2 On the theme of same-sex attraction in Conrad's works, several books have already appeared: Andrew Michael Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity* (2000); Philip Holden and Richard J. Ruppel, *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature* (2003); Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *One of Us: The Mastery of Joseph Conrad* (1997); Jeremy Hawthorn, *Sexuality and the Erotic in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (2007), and Richard J. Ruppel, *Homosexuality in the Life and Work of Joseph Conrad: Love Between the Lines* (2008). The subject is not, by any means, exhausted.

the young man comes from a good Neapolitan family and, if this was not enough, he is also in the Camorra, a local mafia. The Count's hopes for a restoring bowl of risotto are ruined when his former attacker approaches and insults him. He must have been observing the Count taking out a golden coin from his pocket, a coin he had forgotten entirely, sawn there many years earlier, as if in preparation for an unspecified and unpleasant occurrence. The uncanny and finally violent encounter with the attacker sours the Count's mood to the point that he decides to leave not only Naples but Italy, even though he finds the climate unparalleled in its effect upon his health. The seemingly naive narrator sees him off to the railroad station where the count takes a train bound for Vienna.

1975 is the year when, on February 19, Chinua Achebe, still in the aftershock following the collapse of Biafra, despite the two years of his ardent advocacy in the West and the US,[3] delivers a Chancellor's lecture at Amherst: "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." In there he proceeds to demolish the wishy-washy white men's darling, the sensitive and nonchalant Conrad, in a manner that appears to insinuate that Conrad shares a set of uncanny character traits with his lead character, Marlow, including an uncanny attraction to one's own sex, lurking underneath internalized racism. Achebe's charge that Conrad's fascination with whiteness is tinged with homosexuality is based on the memory of then fourteen-year-old Korzeniowski ogling an Englishman and feeling "dazzled" by his splendid calves, their ivory-like quality a signal of the teenager's desire documented in *A Personal Record.* This sole event serves as an exhibit as to how "irrational love" commingles with "irrational hate" in adult Conrad's "tormented" psyche [10]).[4] White male readers, if unhinged by the passage when Conrad is compared to Hitler, are eventually soothed: "irrational love" is an abstract term to be applied to someone else, a foreigner in their midst, a writer who was always a bit detached and alien.[5]

1975 is also the year when two essays appear in the same issue of *Conradiana* 7.1 (1975): Douglas A. Hughes, "Conrad's 'Il Conde': A Deucedly Queer Story" and Theo Steinmann, "Il Conde's Uncensored Story: Conrad's 'Il Conde.'" We can safely assume that these two articles must have been submitted at least one year earlier, both interpreters aiming at the same conclusion. Steinmann observes that the Count "had taken certain precautions

3 The Biafra war ended on January 15, 1970. During the siege, two million Biafran civilians died from starvation.

4 See also Morska, *Glorious Outlaws: Debt as a Tool in Contemporary Postcolonial Fiction,* 197-222.

5 In the state of Massachusetts, the 1805 Act Against Sodomy reduced the penalty for „crime against nature" from capital punishment to 1-10 years in prison. The 1947 Massachussets Acts advised indefinite civil commitment for persons whose „habitual misconduct" proves "inability to control 'sexual impulses'; in 1974, the same law was amended to exclude consensual activities (Escridge 394-5). We can assume that the general public in the state of Massachusetts remained well informed of all the unsavory details of homosexual behavior all throughout the 1974.

as though he envisaged that kind of adventure, preferably without the intervention of a knife," which is why he "had deposited his money at the hotel" and "had only the cheap watch" with him (85). These precautions, however, did not protect him against the robber's "contempt" and thus a possibility that "the robber had discovered his basic inclination and could blackmail him" (86). It appears that underneath all the comings and goings Conrad is writing another story, a grand joke, perhaps, for those in the know.

In the end, Hughes proposes, "the Count is telling an elaborate, even artful, lie" (18) via a narrator who "accepts everything about the Count at face value, [while] the author subtly encourages the reader to question the narrator's credulity" (19). The reader's task is thus to test the credibility of the narrator and to uncover the makings of this lie. Hughes then proceeds to call a spade a spade while concluding that the chatty narrator in "Il Conde" only pretends to be unaware that a visit to "the Villa Nazionale alone to hear a concert" is apparently no more than a cover for "what homosexuals call 'cruising,' searching for a pick up" (20). The narrator and the Count meet for the first time, after all, in the National Museum of Naples, ogling ("looking at side by side") the figure of a melancholy naked boy, his shapely penis at ease, discretely exposed, the sculpture appropriately called Resting Hermes.

Contrary to the previous interpreters of this story who safely if routinely weaved their interpretations around the themes of undefined guilt and self-discovery, false delicacy, the *fin de siècle* fantasy of ivory tower, and the foreshadowing of WWI, Hughes and Steinmann aim at interpreting the Count's story in accordance with what Sedgwick calls "vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail" (89). This vulnerability comes forth the first time when the Count is robbed at knifepoint and the second time when he is mistreated and slapped in a café; in both cases he resigns himself to not calling for help.

On March 12, 1981, evidently carried away by the spirit of revolutionary exuberance and for once in his adult life enthusiastic, Zygmunt Mycielski, the grandson of Count Zygmunt Szembek, sends a letter concerning some personal details of his grandfather's pastimes in Naples. This is the spring when the stakes are raising high, as the Solidarity movement solidifies in its aim to overturn the communist rule. These hopes will end with the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981.

In his letter, Mycielski reveals that Conrad's "Il Conde" is modelled on his grandfather's habit of accosting young men in Capri. He might even be willing to tell more stories because his letter ends with an exclamation: "So here you have the first ever description of my family secrets–after so many years I have no scruples!" (59). The letter is in all likelihood addressed to Andrzej Biernacki, a Warsaw historian, to be passed on to Zdzisław Najder, a visiting scholar at Oxford University, completing his main oeuvre. *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, will be first published by Smithmark in 1983 and taken on

by Cambridge University Press in 1984, to be praised by Edward Said and to launch Najder's career as a renown Conrad scholar.[6]

Years pass. In the early aughts, Najder responds to a direct inquiry from Keith Carabine, a British scholar. Carabine admits that his "fondness for the story stimulated [his] curiosity about the model for *il Conde*, the original 'very charming old gentleman'" (58). He contacts Najder, having just discovered that the last letter of Conrad to Szembek, dated December 8, 1906, was written only four days following the completion of "Il Conde." He is surprised that Conrad's letter foregoes mentioning the existence of a fictionalized account of Szembek's adventure. He reflects on the strangeness of this omission, considering that "it is the only fiction [written by Conrad] based upon a single source and written while the source was still alive" (58). Carabine thus addresses Najder as a fellow researcher, inquiring about "any more information about Count Szembek other than the few details in his fine chronicle of Conrad's life" (58). In response, Najder promptly finds the letter in his archive and engages his wife, Halina Najder, to translate it.

In this letter, Mycielski, the Count's grandson, not only admits that Szembek, who died in his parents' house at Przeworsk on August 14, 1907, was "indeed an active homosexual" (58) (Carabine quotes Mycielski directly, saying: "Quite clearly il conte accosted the boy in one of the dark alleys of the Chiaja gardens" [58]), but also suggests that Conrad found himself somewhat besotted with the count:

> He is fascinated by the illustrious nobleman whom he has met, by his upbringing and manners, by his fear of scandal, by his perfunctory and yet quite authentic culture – inborn – instilled through upbringing, by his social "polish," by the discreet elegance of his clothes, and ABOVE all this is a homosexual "adventure"!

Moreover, Mycielski implies that Szembek was not the first homosexual Conrad had met, although his grandfather must have been unique.

> In his travels Conrad must have come across many homosexuals and their world but obviously he has not met such a specimen before … My grandfather played

6 Keith Carabine in his 2005 essay on "Il Conde" states that the letter was addressed to Zdzisław Najder and was never published (58). We have to reason to doubt that Najder, an Oxford scholar and the former director of the Polish section in Radio Free Europe, was clear in regard to the letter's port of call in his communication with Carabine. But Najder was not living in Warsaw in 1981. The letter most likely was meant to reach him via Andrzej Biernacki, an editor and a nineteenth-century historian whom the authorities would not suspect of passing contraband. Following Carabine's publication, Najder's *Życie Josepha Conrada Korzeniowskiego*, a two-volume narrative on Conrad's life, third edition, appears in Polish in 2006, mentioning Mycielski's letter as addressed to Biernacki, but not to Najder, in footnote 144 (vol. 2, 424). There is no reason, however, why Mycielski would want to be so breezy and ebullient, or why he would want to announce to Biernacki, who was not a Conrad scholar, that his grandfather was gay. In the forth edition of 2014, footnote 144 disappears, although the publisher, Jagiellonian University Press, advertises this edition as "much expanded." Najder's statement that Szembek was "homosexual without a doubt" on page 626 of the 2014 edition is presented without a footnote or parenthetical citation, although it begs for one of Mycielski's jaunty comments. Incidentally, Tomasik's *Homobiografie*, presenting, among other Polish notable nonheteronormative writers and composers, Mycielski's profile, was also published in 2014.

> the piano beautifully … his father, Joseph Szembek … used to take piano lessons from Chopin (whose signature is in my great-grandfather's album). When my grandfather played by the open window on Capri he would reap applause and calls of "bravo conte" (59).

The scene above testifies to the ongoing interest in music in the Szembek family. One is bound to find it ironic that Mycielski's letter might have not appeared in print at all, and when it did, it needed to be corralled in *Conradiana*, away from the prying eyes of Polish gender studies scholars, demurely translated into English.

Zygmunt Mycielski grew up not be an ascetic, but he ended his life as a recluse. He was a trained musician and composer, but he is best remembered for his multi-volume diary, titled *Quasi-journal* and written in the years 1950–1987 (ending in the year he died).

Born in 1907, taking after his grandfather perhaps, Mycielski had shown a predilection for music at an early age. First he studied with Karol Szymanowski, a composer and an openly gay man, an oddity in the interwar era. In this milieu, the myths of antiquity reverberated. Mycielski as a young man, as we see him in old photographs, must have embodied the ideal of the ephebe. He then went on to study at École Normale de Musique in Paris. As an army officer, he took part in the hapless September 1939 campaign against the fascist army. Escaping to France, he was detained. He spent the rest of WWII first as a prisoner of war and then as a slave worker for a German farmer. Having returned to Poland, once the communists seized power, he lost all legal claims to his family estate.

In the years following the war he, too, became a composer and a music critic, as well as the editor of several magazines devoted to classical music in post-war Poland. His friendship with Nadia Boulanger, his former teacher from École Normale, proved lasting. Thanks to her recommendation, he was invited to serve on the jury of the Prince Pierre de Monaco Music Prize, an important music competition. The invitation would allow him to claim his passport and to spend two months a year travelling to Vienna, Monaco, Paris, and other prime locations, only to return to his excruciating poverty, which he wore with extreme dignity. His career could never take flight due to his uncompromisingly adverse response to the communists in power, but his insistence on remaining in the shadow might be linked to his awareness that his intimate relationships with men were bound to make him vulnerable to blackmail, if not violence, the fear of the latter apparent in his diaries (Tomasik 130).

Several other topics in his diaries prove current.

He writes about how a lie repeated by the state television becomes exceedingly more convincing than an individual testimony (today we call this phenomenon "fake news").

He takes note of the discomfort arising whenever he observes that anyone featured on the pages of his diary can be traced, scapegoated, and fired from his or her job by sheer virtue of association with him.

On the eve of his travel to Monaco he fantasizes of the world-famous composer, Penderecki, buying his old chair, the purchase of which would have assured his survival for a month. (His music was neither performed nor promoted.)

While watching the country officials on TV, he is taken aback by their blank faces, their primitive (in his words) eyes and features, their ultimate lack of polish and their utmost ignorance of any kind of governance.

He suspects that people submit to abusive power the way they submit to an impulse to run always in the same direction. He notes that he would always run in an opposite direction: he did it even under bombardment during the siege of Warsaw, which was just as well, since no one knew where the bomb was going to fall.

When the Solidarity movement takes shape, he does not gush over it. In his view, Wałęsa's task in 1981 was to contain and curb the revolutionary spirit. He writes:

> The church, KOR with Kuroń, Wałęsa with top "solidarity" leaders attempt to put out the fires ignited by the workers' and farmers' movement; we are sitting on a powder keg (2012, 41).

Mycielski tests the patience of the system and the limits of his own courage when incessantly signing virtually every letter of protest against the subjugation of Poland to the Soviet Union that has ever been drafted. In 1968, he protests against the armies of the Warsaw Pact entering Czechoslovakia. In 1975, together with other Polish intellectuals, he signs a group letter protesting the changes to the Polish constitution to be made by the Communist party. He uses defiance to mount a protective shield around himself. His "disappearance" would not have passed unnoticed.

Mycielski's diaries position his narrator as an outsider, a sharp and distanced "queer eye," never wavering or altering his gaze, his pronouncements even more relevant at present when conservative pundits in the former communist countries insist on associating the LGBT movement with the "communism plague." Judiciously and prudently, Mycielski was an ardent critic of both communism and the populistic roots of the anti-communist opposition. At times he would remember his grandfather and his family home nostalgically. Because he chose not to live in the closet, the authorities apparently did not dare to present him with an offer to sign a "declaration of collaboration." Highly respected in the Warsaw anti-communist opposition circles, if he chose not to take up a leading position, it was not for the lack of courage. The grandson of a philanderer, he refused to share the fate of his grandfather, while he appeared to be learning from his experience. Or else he just preferred to remain in the shadow.

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Camp Kharitonov and Russian Gay Identity

Kevin Moss

> Camp is a superficial aesthetic; it is not to be found in Russian literature (McMahon 8)

Abstract: The Russian underground writer Evgeny Kharitonov lived his entire life (1941-1981) in the Soviet Union under threat of Article 121, the anti-sodomy law, yet he managed to carve out a space to write an almost aggressively gay identity for himself. Though he never traveled abroad, Kharitonov locates himself in a worldwide gay tradition and deploys camp humor as a strategy to survive as a gay man both in the USSR and in the circle of straight dissident writers who were his peers. This paper looks at camp Kharitonov through the lens of David Halperin's *How to be Gay* as a way of theorizing a spontaneous gay cultural style, rather than a colonization by the West. Kharitonov's prose challenges the idea that Soviets lacked a gay identity (Laurie Essig, David Tuller). Kharitonov's use of camp led his straight peers, especially Vasilii Aksenov, to fail to appreciate him fully. Kharitonov deploys camp to reclaim the subject position, to act as a spokesperson for a gay minority and against a heterosexual majority that would silence him.

Keywords: Kharitonov, camp, Soviet gay identity, gay culture, gay literature

The Russian underground writer Evgeny Kharitonov lived his entire life (1941-1981) in the Soviet Union under threat of Article 121, the anti-sodomy law, yet he managed to carve out a space to write an almost aggressively gay identity for himself. Though he never traveled abroad, Kharitonov locates himself in a worldwide gay tradition and deploys camp humor as a strategy to survive as a gay man both in the USSR and in the circle of straight dissident writers who were his peers. This essay will look at camp Kharitonov through the lens of David Halperin's *How to be Gay* as a way of theorizing a spontaneous gay cultural style, rather than a colonization by the West.

In *How to be Gay* – both his class and the book – David Halperin examines initiation into gay male culture, primarily in the US. This essay will be a foray into how to be – or to have been – gay in the Soviet Union, through the writings of Evgenii Kharitonov. Halperin's early work on ancient homosexuality was all about arguing against thinking about homosexuals in Greece and Rome as a category of people – against, in other words, projecting our construction of "the homosexual" onto the Classical world (*One Hundred Years*; "Is There a History of Sexuality?"). Yet he was later prepared to make allowances for continuities, identifications, and queer correspondences between past and present (Halperin, "Introduction" 17). *How to be Gay* explores how proto-gay boys – even without exposure to gay culture – gravitate towards certain cultural forms like musical theater or opera or camp. In other words, there is a subjectivity that connects them, even if they have not (yet) identified as gay and learned the ropes of gay culture from other gay men.

Just as Halperin's work contributes to the question of the universality of gay culture (and questions of social construction, essentialism, historical change), so I hope this essay will contribute to the discussion of Russian gay culture and continuities, identifications, and queer correspondences between gay culture in the US and in Russia. Such comparisons are always fraught with charges of hegemony, colonization, Orientalist projection, or assumptions about temporal differences (Russia as backward or catching up to the West), critiques of elevating American history to the status of a universal pattern (Kulpa and Mizielinska 102). But the case of Kharitonov will, like Lukasz Szulc's examination of gay journals and activism in Poland, challenge the myth of total isolation of Communist Eastern Europe and the myth of teleology (the Western progress narrative) or a temporal schism between Russia and the West (Szulc; Kulpa and Mizielinska; Navickaitė). As Navickaite writes, this myth condemns Central & Eastern Europe to perpetual belatedness, "everything that will ever happen in postsocialist societies is going to be just an imitation of what has already happened in the West" (128).

When US scholars began exploring the question of homosexuality in Soviet Russia, we were scrupulous about not imposing our own stereotypes of gay identity onto Russia. I remember Susan Larsen at the first US roundtable on gay and lesbian life in Russia in 1993 warning us against projecting our own gay identity onto Russia. Yet what always struck me both in Russia and in other parts of the post-Socialist world was how familiar at least the gay male milieu felt. That is also my reaction to Kharitonov's writing to this day. I agree with Brian Baer's critique of the first Western works on gay identity or the lack thereof in Russia, namely David Tuller's *Cracks in the Iron Closet* and Laurie Essig's *Queer in Russia* ("Russian Gays"; *Other Russias*). In their effort to avoid mapping Western gay identity onto Russian queers in the early 90s, Tuller and Essig both seem to celebrate a sexual fluidity that Essig connects with post-identity politics. Both seem to seek an escape from the identitarian rigidity and gay/straight binary they find in San

Francisco and New York gay communities and greet Russia as a kind of queer utopia. I agree with Baer that this is also a kind of Western Orientalizing projection. Like most Orientalist projections, I think the "fluidity" others found tells us more about the West than it does about the Russians. Of course, many gay people married heterosexually, but there may have been other reasons for that than a fluid sexuality or identity.

Evgeny Kharitonov's entire life fell within the period when homosexuality was a criminal offense and a taboo topic in the Soviet Union. In view of this, his healthy, open approach to homosexuality in his writing is quite remarkable. Kharitonov's writing often deals with his gay identity, which made it difficult even for the other writers who shared his outcast dissident status. He was a doubly underground writer, as a radio show on his work put it (Volchek). Other underground writers were influenced by his form, though not by his content. The failure of Kharitonov's straight dissident colleagues to fully understand his work, I will argue, can also be explained with the help of Halperin's *How to be Gay*.

Unfortunately most of the memoirs about Kharitonov come from his straight writer friends, who exhibit a classic homophobic worldview, one that seeks to marginalize homosexuality or even erase it from discourse altogether. Kharitonov's own reaction to his straight peers was clearly a kind of queer, in your face, camp bravado. Many of these writers seem to have a hypersensitivity to Kharitonov's homosexual descriptions. Evgeny Popov expresses his disgust several times at the "physiological description of homosexual pleasures" and criticizes Kharitonov's "in your face homosexuality" [кичение гомосексуализмом] (104). Aksenov puts it this way, "You suddenly discover in the narrative some burning and shameful 'naturalistic' details of same sex love … The hero hides them, the author turns everything inside out, demonstratively shows everything, all the stitches and scars" (94). He describes the author's "overcoming his fears, immense pride, disguised sometimes even as arrogance, showing off – I'm 'like that'!" (94) Perhaps this is what is described by Aleksandr Timofeevskii as his "constant rapid transitions from homosexual pariah to homosexual elect, just one step from messiah" (181)

Kharitonov claimed and celebrated his homosexuality as a gift, as something that set him apart from others and gave him special insight:

> The most unusual, the most heartfelt, the man with the clearest mind on earth was undoubtedly the Evangelist John. And the second was Oscar Wilde. Joyce might compete with him here. But Joyce wasn't a homosexual, which didn't let him be as heartfelt as Oscar Wilde, for all his artistic gifts impossible for the mind to grasp. The second place might be contested by Miss Sei-Shonagon as well. But Japan is a country not of our world and Sei-Shonagon is a woman. And writing has to be not directly-masculine, but that doesn't mean it should be only-feminine either. Though, I repeat that she's his rival, Oscar Wilde's,

> whatever you like. And the third – what can I do – well, it's me, I say without being sly. And glory be to those who can sometimes feel it." ("V xolodnom vysshem smysle,") (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 327)

Yet Kharitonov must have been as good at concealing this side of himself from his writer friends as he was at concealing his writing from the KGB: most of them claim that as a devout Russian Orthodox believer he felt his gayness to be a sin. According to Nikolai Klimontovich, "he wasn't a Hellene, but a person of asceticism and spirituality … His homosexuality was a form of abstinence" (*Slezy* 114). Nina Sadur claims he felt the "misery of a deeply Russian person (and therefore a believer beyond reprieve) who was a homosexualist" (149). There is little evidence of such an interpretation in his writing. Kharitonov's gayness did get him into trouble. He was completely open about his homosexuality and completely frank in his language, which led to some problems with the *samizdat* typists, since those who were not working for the KGB were for the most part puritans in this regard. And he had trouble with the authorities as well: "Tears for One Murdered and Strangled" is a response to a real incident in Kharitonov's life. When a gay acquaintance was murdered in 1978, Kharitonov was dragged in by the police and forced to testify. Common wisdom has it that the trauma of this event laid the groundwork for the heart attack that killed Kharitonov three years later. Part of his response to the interrogation is an imagined dialog with the examiners, who threatened him with Article 121. It expresses his rage, but at the same time ends with a kind of punch-line:

> So tell me, and when you understand that I have nothing to do with this, will you then ask my forgiveness?
>
> What right does he have to threaten me with the examination, without it even popping into the charlatan's head that the so-called examination is itself a sadistic invention. That it can't prove anything; that only if you catch someone right after coitus there might be evidence; that if even a day has passed everything has long been washed away. Some chafing or chronic scars in the rectum one might say are from constipation, from enemas, and you can't prove anything; or even from masturbation with a drill handle. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 228)

Kharitonov makes the case for a kind of Soviet gay identity, or at least a Soviet gay subjectivity. The Soviet Union was known for a complete absence of public discourse about homosexuality. "We have no sex!" as a Soviet woman famously declared on a televised bridge program.[1] Dan Healey's tripartite geography of perversion maps the Soviet Union as a place of heteronormativity, where Russians project homosexuality onto "civilized" Europe and the primitive "East," while imagining "their nation as universally,

1 For the original clip from a TV bridge with Phil Donahue and Vladimir Pozner on July 17, 1986, see Telemost 1986, "Fragment telemosta 'Leningrad-Boston,'" *YouTube*, https://youtu.be/y0FTbeKGPjM.

naturally, and purely heterosexual" (253). Kharitonov's writing, which interlaces camp sensibility, overt descriptions of homosexual sex, and Soviet kitsch, does not fit in this world-view at all.

Kharitonov writes about gay geography, uses gay language, and describes gay rituals, gay genealogy and gay history. He uses gay argot and gay shibboleths: *natural* for straight (a word few Russians knew even in the mid-90s). Several times he uses *priamoi* in a way that sounds like he means "straight" as well (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 253, 314). He mentions the *pleshka* – the gay cruising area, and gives a defense of glory holes. He also notes gay ancestors and gay culture, both Russian and international: Kuzmin, Rozanov, and Richter, but also Pasolini, Wilde, Proust, and Mann's *Death in Venice*. He mentions Antinous, the emperor Hadrian's beautiful lover, whose name became synonymous with homosexuality in Russia at the turn of the 20th century. In a letter to Aksenov, Kharitonov explained that his authorial "I" does not mete out his homosexual description in doses: he is not Albee, not Baldwin, not Tennessee Williams (*Slezy* 98). "*Svoi*," "*nashi*," "*takoi*" "our kind," "ours," "like that" – these are the words Kharitonov most often uses to describe his gay friends, but if the word is unstable, the identity seems not to be. At one point he even goes so far as to talk about a "gay (*goluboi*) sect" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 257).

Straight writers had a hard time reading this, and they certainly missed the camp elements. Aksenov's reaction to Kharitonov's prose provides the starkest example of this heterosexist failure to appreciate camp, and it does not reflect well on the established writer. As Evgenii Kozlovskii puts it, "Aksenov's only serious conversation with Zhenia [Kharitonov] was not one that would contribute positively to the legacy of Vasia [Aksenov]" (*Slezy* 131). After reading Kharitonov's writing, Aksenov tried to convince him that "sexuality or homosexuality can't be the main content for a writer" (94). According to his own account, Aksenov advised Kharitonov to avoid open portrayal of the "'naturalistic' details of same sex love," the "secretions of this strange love and its dead-end underground meaning," and instead to interject some "humor, some mockery, tricks, playfulness …" (94). Unlike Aksenov, I read Kharitonov's works as full of mockery and play, it's just camp play that might be directed at a non-straight, non-Aksenov audience.

In "Tears for one Murdered and Strangled" a passage begins with a play on the slang word for "cruising area," *pleshka*:

> No Sir, in the summer one doesn't go anywhere, it's the beginning of the season
> for plye,
> plya,
> plyu
> a new generation of old ladies.
> Again to the plye? (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 241)

Or various transitions in "Роман" (The Novel) from graphic descriptions of sexuality to humor:

> Cock: Want to suck me? (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 178)
>
> Blowjob: I want them to give me give me give me. Why won't he let him give me to himself? (210)
>
> – and you feel it inside you feel how it's in you
>
> …
>
> now you will always want c.o.c.k. always think about c.o.c.k. now at last you're no longer a man say I'm no longer a man
>
> – I'm no longer a man Oy careful, you'll crush all the tapeworms! (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 210-11)

Aksenov is not the audience for this camp play, but some of us are. He doesn't get Kharitonov, but we do. Eve Sedgwick says the typifying gesture of camp may be "the moment at which a consumer of culture makes the wild surmise, 'What if whoever made this was gay too?' Unlike kitsch-attribution, then, camp-recognition doesn't ask, 'What kind of debased creature could possibly be the right audience for this spectacle?' Instead, it says what if: What if the right audience for this were exactly me?" (Sedgwick 156)

In one passage Kharitonov refers to a gay friend, Sergei Stebliuk, as "Stebliuchishka" (*Pod domashnim arestom* 242). Playing with the gender of the name (Stebliuchishka for Stebliuk) is a characteristic of the kind of camp play Kharitonov deploys elsewhere. A passage in "Tears on Flowers" describes a kind of S&M initiation in which the narrator is beaten, fucked silly, and trained to "answer only to a woman's name" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 310). In "Tears for One Murdered" he writes, "you were forced like a slave like a fool to live with a soul open and unbuttoned like a straight and simple uncouth guy forging ahead but you're not straight and not a guy you're not a he but a she" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 253). On one hand, adoption of the feminine gender corresponds to what some see as a strict top/bottom binary among Russian gay men. But in deploying it, Kharitonov also plays up the camp abjection that Halperin describes in *How to be Gay.* "Gay male culture sees itself, its own plight, in the distorted mirror of a devalued femininity" (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 182). The stigma of homosexuality is "overcome not by resisting it, but by embracing it" (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 192). In *The Novel* Kharitonov uses the feminine gender in a catty camp attack on another gay man. This entire section begins "Gadina" [reptile/vermin (f)] and uses the feminine throughout, including for another man (also feminized), and it was the latter's friend "on whose really big and thick cock she discovered her talent as a cocksuckeress" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 204).

Camp style is about putting roles in quotation marks, an awareness that all identities are roles (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 193). Kharitonov's straight writer friends seem to agree that his presentation to them had these kinds of quotation marks. Oleg Dark says

his most important creation was himself (*Slezy* 168). Efim Shifrin says he "created his own image" and "created himself" (162). Shifrin also says Kharitonov was a homosexual, "or wanted to seem like he was one" (167). Petrushevskaya even suggested to me that his homosexuality was only a pose, since he was married and had a child. His explicit texts seem to belie that idea.

In his gay manifesto "Listovka" (Leaflet), Kharitonov links homosexuality with specific cultural spheres:

> Our genius has flourished, for example, in the emptiest and most pretentious of the arts – ballet. It is obvious that it was created by us. Whether it is literally a dance or any pop song, or any other art with sensual pleasure as its basis. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 312)

> We secretly control the tastes of the world. What you find beautiful is in part established by us, but you don't always guess this … To say nothing of the fact that we often dictate fashion in clothes. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 313)

These are the very fields Halperin describes. He quotes Richard Dyer on camp reversal of style and content: "gay men have made certain 'style professions' very much theirs: hairdressing, interior decoration, dress design, ballet, musicals, revue. These occupations … are clearly marked with the camp sensibility: they are style for style's sake, they don't have 'serious' content" (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 194). (Dyer could almost be quoting Kharitonov here.) At the same time "We secretly control the tastes of the world" adopts the paranoid charge of homophobes and turns it against them, in a typical camp read. The manifesto asserts that since "all of you are repressed homosexuals," the spread of homosexuality must be controlled through silencing in the culture and sanctions in the law, because "the more visible we are, the closer the End of the World" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 314). This is in fact the logic that underlies Russia's adoption much later of a law against the "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" to children. The text expresses puzzlement at Western laws that allow clubs, gatherings, portrayal of us in art, and declaration of rights:

> Western law allows our flowers open meetings, a direct showing of us in art, clubs, gatherings, and declarations of rights – but what rights? and rights to what?
>
> The stagnant morality of our Russian Soviet Fatherland has its purpose! It pretends we don't exist, but its Criminal code sees in our floral existence a violation of the Law; because the more visible we are, the closer the End of the World. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 314)

This is the same kind of paradoxical approval of repression of himself that Kharitonov articulates in another work, "Unprintable Writers," though there it is in relation to underground writers, for whom the whole point of their art lies in the fact that they are forbidden:

> Why don't they print us? They're right not to print us. Because there is a Law and Order of our life, there is a Law what one can appropriately show people and what one should be silent about. Whatever the Law and Order of the Motherland is, that's what it should be. The order for people of an artistic view is always fatally right. We are attached to it! We need it: the nerve of our art is in its transgression. Change it and the nerve will be removed and the earth will be pulled out from under our feet. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 335)

In a Foucauldian vein, Kharitonov suggests that not only are we repressed, but we ask to be repressed, we demand our own repression. Both of these gestures work as a kind of camp strategy that, as Halperin points out, does not mean the repression is not real. "To derealize dominant heterosexual or heteronormative social roles and meanings … is not to do away with them or to make their power disappear. It is to achieve a certain degree of leverage in relation to them, while also acknowledging their continuing ability to dictate the terms of our social existence" (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 218). I have explored the structural parallels between underground writing, which conceals political dissidence, and writing in the closet, which conceals sexual dissidence, in "The Underground Closet" (Moss 229-251). Both kinds of writing are intended for an audience that is in the know, while evading a reading by non-cognoscenti. Kharitonov does both.

As Halperin puts it, "Camp works to drain suffering of the pain that it also does not deny" (*How to be Gay* 186). One passage in *Listovka* echoes Halperin on straight readings of camp classics as literal and serious vs. camp readings that are humorous and playful: "If it weren't for us, you would tend more strongly in your tastes to the direct [or straight], the carnal, the bloody. With a backwards glance at us, though not always realizing it, you have placed a high significance on the playful and the impractical" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 314).

Though he speaks primarily about US gay camp, Halperin does briefly touch on other cultures. He acknowledges that "there are many variations in the ways gay male culture is constituted, … but there are also common themes that cross social and geographic divisions" (Halperin, *How to be Gay* 17). As an example, he asks if there is a French equivalent of Madonna, or Kylie Minogue, and suggests, among other possibilities Dalida. As Kharitonov puts it, "homos love famous women as an example to be imitated" (*Pod domashnim arestom* 236). In the Soviet context, the obvious diva equivalent to Cher-Barbra-Madonna would be Alla Pugacheva, who appears at least once in Kharitonov, in his "Tears on Flowers": "Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now – if ever, now! No subtleties can compare with this brutality. As soon as Pugacheva stopped singing at my place, she started up again 10 windows away" (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 299). The song, though based on Marshak's translation of a Shakespeare sonnet, is classic camp in its overt and histrionic embrace of abjection, especially in Pugacheva's performance (Pugacheva).

Maya Turovskaya wrote an article in 1992 about the theater of Roman Viktiuk with the title "Нужен ли нищим кэмп" (Do the Poor Need Camp) – to which the presumed answer was "No." I guess she doesn't know much about, for example, the long history of Harlem Drag Balls portrayed in *Paris is Burning* and more recently in *Pose*. Camp has nothing to do with economic prosperity, or if anything, it belongs to those who are excluded from power along many axes: gender identity, sexuality, race. It was clear from the audiences who came to Viktiuk's plays that many people in the Soviet Union did need camp. The plays were always mobbed by gay Russians. The same kind of gathering happened when Kharitonov's collected works were first presented in 1993.

Straight people don't get camp. In his dismissive review of Piriutko / Rotikov's gay geography of Petersburg, *Другой Петербург* (*The Other Petersburg*), critic Mikhail Zolotonosov claims that gay geography, gay culture, and gay literature cannot exist:

> Rotikov's goal was the creation of a 'homosexual geographical text.' Let me state at once … something that should long ago have been proclaimed most definitively: there is no homosexual literature, neither fictional, nor geographical, nor any other; it does not and it cannot exist … There is a specific set of themes, but there is no special literature or culture as a whole." (Zolotonosov)

Zolotonosov provides a classic example of the kind of dismissal of gay culture Eve Sedgwick lays out in *Epistemology of the Closet:* "Don't ask; you shouldn't know. It didn't happen; it doesn't make any difference; it didn't mean anything; it doesn't have interpretive consequences. Stop asking just here; stop asking just now… it makes no difference; it doesn't mean" (53).

Kharitonov addresses the issue head-on. In a passage that refers to the homosexuality of Eduard Limonov and Sviatoslav Richter, and which echoes today's law against homosexual "propaganda," Kharitonov voices the official taboo on mentioning homosexuality. Aestheticization is allowed, he says, but not open depiction. The text is framed as a response from the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda*, justifying the official Soviet position on homosexuality:

> We agree to close our eyes and we do close them to such acts, when they are done quietly, if they are hidden by all kinds of distracting words. If it's hidden by art, for example … you can admire the naked male dancers, for example, and the whole spectacle is arranged for this, but for the people it is Ancient Greece and the struggle for freedom … But to openly give it free rein, to everyone, and call it like it is, then what will happen with ideology and how will all this fit into it. After all what you have developed into is nipped in the bud … The law must remain the law. To set an example and uphold ideology. And we will allow no one to mention that kind of life in our country from the pages of the press. It does not exist here. We have, perhaps, everything, but on paper, remember, it

> does not exist, otherwise we will be forced to bring criminal charges against you. (Kharitonov, *Pod domashnim arestom* 228-29)

Zolotonosov and the official Soviet position require denial that gay culture even exists. Halperin disagrees, and I think Kharitonov would have too. Gay culture and gay literature not only can exist, but they do exist and did exist, even in Soviet Russia. Though Kharitonov never traveled outside the Soviet Union, he presents gay culture in Russia and around the world, and he deploys camp strategies such as those Halperin describes in the US. What he has developed into doesn't fit. We should read him on his own terms, and not pretend – as some have – that those things don't exist or that they don't signify.

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Criticism in the Closet

Maja Šučur

Abstract: The paper focuses on the attitudes of Slovenian literary reviewing towards LGBT literature. The quantitative part of my research shows that there is no obvious discrimination at work when it comes to the critical consideration of LGBT works; the mapping of the critical coverage of selected books compared with the coverage of works by non-LGBT authors does not indicate any deviations. Also there is no important difference in the critical coverage of LGBT books within different types of media (web portals, print, radio). But since writing a review of an LGBT work does not automatically mean "inclusive" critical practices, I also did a qualitative analysis of texts. Most reviewers provide a thorough overview of the main topics of the selected works, they understand their socially engaged potential, they listen actively when homophobia is in focus, etc. It turns out literary reviewing is not ignorant and exclusionary, it is striving for a greater visibility of LGBT works. But in doing so, it is also regrettably superficial.

Keywords: LGBT literature, literary reviews, discrimination, inclusiveness

In order to investigate the relationship between the current critical production and LGBT literature I have taken into consideration some of the latest Slovenian LGBT works: the novel *Piknik* (2015) by Nataša Sukič, the poetry book *Ostani* (2014) by Nataša Velikonja, the novel *Objemi norosti* (2015) by Brane Mozetič, the book of poetry *Tišima* (2015) by Uroš Prah, the book of poems *Poletni volkovi* (2015) by Petra Hrovatin, Milan Šelj's poetry book *Gradim gradove* (2015), Vesna Lemaić's novel *Kokoška in ptiči* (2014), poems by Ciril Bergles, collected in *Cuerpo plural* (2014), and the anthology of European lesbian poetry *Brez besed ji sledim* (2015). With the exception of the poetry book by Prah all these books were published by the Škuc publishing house, which specialises in LGBT literature.

Through a quantitative analysis of the reviews of the selected works I searched for an answer to how actively the reviewers dealt with these books and in what types of

publications their reviews were published, so that the results could be compared with the coverage of other comparable Slovenian books. My analysis covered some of the more popular publications – the newspapers *Delo* and *Dnevnik*, the weekly *Mladina*, the literary journals *Literatura, Dialogi, Sodobnost,* the radio stations *Radio Slovenija, Radio Študent*, and the web portals *literatura.si, Airbeletrina* and *Koridor*.

Table 1

	Delo	Dnev-nik	Mla-dina	Litera-tura	Sodob-nost	Dia-logi	R SLO	RŠ	litera-tura.si	Airbele-trina	Kori-dor	SUM
Piknik	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**2**
Ostani	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	**5**
Objemi norosti	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	**6**
Tišima	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	**4**
Poletni volkovi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	**2**
Gradim gradove	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Kokoška in ptiči	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	**8**
Cuerpo plural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Brez besed ji sledim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
SUM	4	1	2	3	1	1	5	4	3	1	3	**28**

In the sample of 28 reviews, Table 1 shows above all that there is no crucial difference between the critical coverage of LGBT literary production among various media types. The possible assumption that lesbian and gay books, in contrast to more traditional printed media, would be more often covered in newer electronic portals, where reviews would be published by a younger and more liberal generation of reviewers, is wrong.

In the case of printed media, specialized literary journals could have done better. *Delo* is undoubtedly more active in covering selected books than *Dnevnik* or *Mladina*, but this is also due to the fact that the latter two rarely or never publish poetry reviews. In addition, these journals tend to cover LGBT topics in different ways – e.g. through interviews.

Radio has proven to be the most prominent. The slightly more traditional *Radio Slovenia* as well as the more alternative *Radio Študent* have aired more reviews in this period (9) than any other media: daily newspapers and weekly magazines (7), literary journals (5), electronic portals (7).

The Comparison

The second part of the quantitative analysis encompasses a mapping of the selected books with comparable books that do not belong to the category of LGBT. The purpose of such

a strategy is motivated by the question of whether books written by lesbians and gays are truly overlooked in comparison with the majority production. This kind of comparison is of course a risky one with such a small sample, as my choices are also marked by a subjective assessment, however, I attempted to achieve as much representability as possible. Due to lack of space, I will only present some of the examined cases below.

Table 2

	C. Lipuš: *Kaj smo, ko smo*	N. Velikonja: *Ostani*	B. Korun: *Čečíca, motnjena od ljubezni*
Nr. of reviews	3	5	0

Velikonja received the highest recognition of the City of Ljubljana for her *Ostani* poetry book; furthermore, her book was one of the focal points of the Pranger festival. With the bilingual poetry book *Čečíca, motnjena od ljubezni* (KUD Ivan Trinko, 2014) Korun was selected the same year for the Pranger festival. She – despite being a recipient of the Veronika prize (*Pridem takoj*, 2011) – did not receive any reviews for *Čečica*. I compare them with Lipuš, who received the Prešeren Fund award in 2016 for her book of poems *Kaj smo, ko smo* (Beletrina, 2015), but Velikonja ranks higher for the number of reviews as well, even though both books were nominated for the Veronika prize at the same time.

Table 3

	M. Dekleva: *Telo iz črk*	B. Mozetič: *Objemi norosti*	P. Čučnik: *Otročjost*
Nr. of reviews	7	6	2

In Table 3 I compare three established poets from different generations who have recently published a novel alongside their rich and award-winning poetry oeuvre (all three winners of the Jenko prize, Dekleva and Čučnik also recipients of the Veronika prize). The fewest responses were received by Čučnik's *Otročjost* (LUD Literatura, 2013), regardless of the fact that he is the most social media savvy of the three, while Mozetič received a comparable number of reviews to Dekleva for the novel *Telo iz črk* (Beletrina, 2015), and despite the fact that Dekleva was nominated for the Kresnik prize in the same year.

Table 4

	Ciril Bergles: *Cuerpo plural*	Ciril Bergles: *Lazar se odpravlja domov*
Nr. of reviews	0	1

It only made sense to compare recently (2013) deceased Bergles to himself; in the year after his death two of his poetry books were published – *Cuerpo plural* and the much less gay-marked *Lazar se odpravlja domov* (Mladinska knjiga, 2014). Even though the latter was also chosen for the Pranger festival assessment it only received one critical response, while *Cuerpo plural* received none.

I can conclude that we cannot talk about LGBT works being overlooked or discriminated regarding their critical treatment, at least not during the observed period. However, a critic's decision to write reviews of a lesbian or gay book does not automatically imply "inclusive" critical practices.

Reviews under Scrutiny

In the continuation of the paper I carefully examine all the 28 reviews in order to analyse the critical discourse. My question was whether the critical apparatus of an individual reviewer is influenced by the very subject of the literary work and the reviewer's own intimate and our common cultural context. I examined closely the critic's argumentation.

Impeccable, Superfluous, Outdated?

"The latest poetry book by Šelj, *Gradim gradove*, was given to me with a label that this is one of the most intimate books of gay poetry. I felt somewhat like someone presented me with a book written by a female poet and saying that it represents beautiful female poetry. Would somebody offer me a book of a Slovene poet and say – this is one of the most extraordinary works of male poetry? No, they would not. And after reading all the sensual (homo)erotic poems, the aforementioned label finally got a positive connotation," is what is written in the introduction to Pregl Kobe's review of the aforementioned poetry book, which I find – despite the good intention of the reviewer – alarming. It reveals either the homophobia of whoever presented the reviewer with the book, or an unusual social sensitivity of the reviewer. After years of experience in the Slovenian literary scene I would nevertheless hope to claim that the term *gay poetry* is not marked in value. Pregl Kobe continues that "the remark that Šelj is a gay poet is nevertheless partly important, as it is important that he has lived in London for many years and occasionally in Karst ...", which shows a certain embarrassment, to say the least. This note is more than just partially relevant to Šelj's book; when the review reports on "bridges to understand otherness" and "brave confessions of difference", it probably does not speak of those who are brave because they live in London rather than Maribor.

While one reviewer writes almost in fear of naming what could allegedly cause harm, another suffers from a similar kind of concern for the LGBT community – it seems obvious to her to be explicitly supportive. A critic who assessed *Poletni volkovi,*

for example, sympathizes with the anger of the lesbian subject, which is "quite justified, especially after the disappointment that was caused in December by the intolerance of Slovenian society [probably thinking of the unsuccessful referendum on LGBT rights]" (Šoster a). However, this kind of criticism can often result in righteousness rather than criticism.

On the other hand, some of the reviewers do not concern themselves with naming names at all. Two of the four critics reviewing Prah's *Tišima* do not state that this is gay poetics (no mention of homosexuality), although it is obvious from the added quotations that this fact was not overlooked. A similar issue emerges in one of the reviews of Mozetič's novel, which is interesting also because of its diametric interpretations, as one reviewer reads it as a "story about a writer's everyday life" (Bogataj a), while another one as a "story of gay sex" (Vrščaj).

Does it therefore mean that some reviewers believe that the label LGBT literature is irrelevant, superfluous, outdated? Such 'normalization' would probably have been well accepted in different social circumstances, but for the establishment and continuity of lesbian and gay literary tradition that have been in the shadows for too long, "naming names" is one of the priorities, as Bonnie Zimmerman emphasised almost thirty years ago (461).

The Meaning of Difference, the Difference in Meaning

That criticism should still be taking care of the practices of inclusion I also gather from Velikonja's writing, which, among others, relies heavily on Martha Nell Smith. She divides the history of lesbian poetry into what the "invisible" lesbian poets wrote before the 1960s and the highly politicized lesbian poetry of the past decades, which "changes the history of poetry and thus the culture itself, since it introduces the necessary cognitive correction into it: it introduces a *difference* in the so far (hetero)sexually monolithic literary canon, namely the (homo)sexual *difference*" (216).

I cite the quote as it is relevant to a kind of universalization of love or de-centralization of homosexuality in certain reviews. Such an example is already the title of one of *Piknik's* reviews: "It's not about lesbianism, it's about love" (Babnik a). And in the words of Babnik in connection with the same novel: "Most attention is paid to describing the ups and downs in a homoerotic relationship, but this is not a matter of exposure to lesbianism, but to show how fragile and breakable love can be ...". The review of the *Ostani* also insists that it is a poetry book "which calls for identification, to hell with lesbianism (after all, everything is in class and race, is it not?)" (Babnik b) and continues to be read as a manifest of love (and not lesbianism). Similarly, one of the reviewers of *Poletni volkovi* emphasizes that the poetry book "serves as a recorded monument of love, no matter which kind" (Šoster a).

Not Friends, but Lovers

Among the problematic points in some of the reviews are also inaccuracies in marking relations between literary persons, who are more than once labelled as "friends" or "spiritual comrades" instead of "lovers".

Because of the ignorance of the cultural history of the LGBT movement some of the reviews miss important references, which can be classified as poor reading. If one reviewer finds that Prah obviously likes to play with words, which even "announces the title of the poetry book, this strange *tišima*, which cannot be explained through the poems, but rather made even more complicated. Other poems are also strangely titled, so that one wonders, if the words are not in fact typing mistakes ..." (Šoster b), another reviewer has no issues with decoding. She finds the verb 'to silence' in the sense of reconciling, filling, sealing, as well as the Styrian dual form in the unusual suffix of the verb. But at the same time noting that "the title easily alludes to the controversial Japanese writer and director Mishima, who ultimately professed his homosexuality in literature ..." (Pungeršič a).

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the still insufficient critical insight into the linguistic and stylistic procedures of LGBT authors. If I come back to the case of Prah's poetry – many reviewers correctly detect the breakdown of verses and linguistic neologisms, but they cannot find an explanation for such literary manoeuvres. Perhaps they are the kind offered by a very precise reviewer of *Tišima*, that the poet's language "is dissolved so that a new, more precise, more appropriate, yet unladen markers could be created from its remains. The desire to define an altered social reality and the individual in it with a new vocabulary is, of course, an old, but obviously, always provocative intention" (Pungeršič a).

Good-Natured or Exclusionary?

Before anyone gets the wrong impression of Slovenian literary reviewers, let me make it clear that I have mentioned only individual, but sufficiently elaborate critical practices. However, the purpose of this text is not to point fingers, but above all to point out that sometimes the most self-evident and benevolent critical decisions can be – exclusionary.

Most of the reviewers thoroughly analyse the basic themes of the selected LGBT works, for example the love between people of the same sex, both through emotional proximity and sexual relations, and do not disregard the importance of desire, fear, pain. They describe the social position of the characters, devote themselves to the meaning of the body, which is "on the edge of discomfort" (Bešter) and wants to be set free, which also gives meaning to illustrative descriptions of sexuality, etc.

They understand that these are politically critical, sometimes autobiographical works for the "underground" (Sinanović), as they use intimacy to allow the readers "an

insight into something wider and larger – at least the state of margin, if not the relationship of Slovene society to homosexuality" (Putrle Srdić). Accordingly, reviewers pay attention to the "interplay between the private and the public" (Babnik b), they also take an active stance in cases of authorial censorship of homophobia and social repression, they notice "the fragile and endangered but fundamental identity which has been built by the subjects in decades of their lesbianism" (Putrle Srdić). They also notice the significance of the spatial placement, "physical or spiritual space" (Pungeršič b) is encountered, since the works are placed in the setting of the pride parade, the lesbian scene, the lesbian club Monokel, etc.

They notice "how practice and theory should and are able to mix" (Babnik b) in these books, for example, they find connections with Foucault. They are attentive to a wider cultural and artistic context, including for example Patti Smith, Virginia Woolf, Suzana Tratnik, the *Lesbo* Magazine, the film *Clouds over Sils Maria*. In several places they point out that the strategy of the persistence of literary characters and perhaps also the authors is artistic creation, also as a rebellion against established social norms. "Discourse on second-class citizenship and otherness" (Babnik c) is not perceived by reviewers only in the relationship between the capitalist present and members of the LGBT community, but ultimately, among others: refugees, mental patients and other representatives of overlooked communities or groups.

A Dangerous Critical Adventure

So when I ask myself what is the relationship between literary reviewing and existing social problems in Slovenia, I can conclude we do not have a problem with criticism, but at the same time we do have one. Criticism is not ignorant and exclusionary as a rule, LGBT literature is no longer perceived as merely intended for lesbian and gay readers. Slovenian reviewers actively strive for a greater visibility of the oppressed, but are overly cautious and undecided, rarely discriminatory, often 'only' superficial. I doubt that more or less so than when dealing with other literature. The only fact is that the negative consequences in LGBT area are due to, as Velikonja calls it, historical amnesia, which still limits gays and lesbians in the (re)construction of their artistic tradition, and due to the social climate shaped by the new rise of fascism, more socially and politically binding. To change the love relationship between the characters in Velikonja's poem into a friendly one is just so much more problematic than if a reviewer does the same with a love relationship in the poems of a straight author. And it seems that criticism is aware of that.

Zimmerman noted that the work of a lesbian critic often involves "twisting into darkened corners, reading between the lines, understanding what has not been said or what is difficult to imagine. It is a dangerous critical adventure that may yield results

that violate the norms of traditional criticism, but may at the same time transform our understanding of the possibilities offered by literature" (458). And although Zimmerman speaks of lesbian criticism, I wonder – is not this the task of any criticism? If criticism engages in promoting social change, then its only option is to violate, to go beyond its own norms. It has to come out of the closet in order to avoid ending up in the closet of history.

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Warm, Blue and Bulgarian: The Development and Diffusion of Three Expressions to Denote a "Male Homosexual" in Central and Eastern European Languages

Andrea Trovesi

Jer koliko si mi puta na klupi u parku znao reči:
"Ja sam za slobodnu mušku ljubav"
Prljavo Kazalište, *Neki dječaci* (*Some boys*), 1979[1]

Abstract: Words denoting male homosexuals in the languages of Europe often have fascinating and unexpected origins. They are reflections of different cultural patterns in the perception and understanding of homosexuality over time. The attempt to reconstruct the development of these words and expressions gives a revealing insight into the cultural history of the Old Continent. It shows the path, both geographical and semantic, along which they have spread through the centuries and reveals traces of compact cultural areas. In the paper, particular attention is devoted to three of the most interesting and widespread expressions denoting male homosexuals in Central and Eastern Europe: "warm brother", "light-blue" and "Bulgarian".
Keywords: languages of Central and Eastern Europe, words denoting male homosexuals, "warm brother", "light-blue", "Bulgarian"

Peccatum Mutum

It sounds like a paradox, but for a sin that should not even be mentioned, it is enough to leaf through any old or etymological dictionary to be literally inundated with dozens of words and expressions formerly used to refer to same-sex practices, denoting a not particularly limited or marginal diffusion of the phenomenon. Similar considerations

1 How many times on the bench in the park you told me: / "I am for free love among men"

do not apply solely to Western European languages, such as English, French and German, but even to generally less widespread ones from East Central, South-Eastern and Eastern European areas (eg. Czech, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Rumanian, Slovenian, Serbian and Croatian, Bulgarian). In this paper I will be focusing on the lexical items referring to male homosexuals from the latter group of languages, which are particularly interesting from the point of view of their origins and paths of diffusion. The most intriguing aspect that these expressions have in common is that all of them hint at the existence of consistent cultural areas in a remote or recent past, which triggered their diffusion either in the form of calque – for example, the expression *warm* occurs in the Central European cultural area and "light blue" is shared by many languages from the former Soviet Union – or borrowing, e.g. the word *Bulgarian* displays two paths of development in Western Europe (France, Britain) and in Central Europe (Central and South-Eastern).

Hot and Spicy

One of the most commonly recurring terms to express the concept of "homosexual" in the languages of Central Europe is the adjective "hot, warm". Used both as an adjective and noun in Czech and Slovak, *teplý* belongs to the group of frequent expressions, while in Polish and Hungarian, respectively *ciepły* and *meleg*, are known but less widespread. In reality, the term "hot" in the sense of "homosexual act" is extracted from the locus of the "hot brother" which occurs identically in all the languages of the area: Czech *teplý brat*, Slovak *teplý brat*, Polish *ciepły braciszek*, Slovenian *topli bratec*, Serbian and Croatian *topli brat*. The language in which this expression originated and from where it then radiated into the surrounding ones is German, where *warmer Bruder* is attested as early as the eighteenth century.

It is no coincidence that this phrase has spread precisely among those peoples who historically have been in contact with the German language, particularly within the Hapsburg Empire. The widespread diffusion of such an expression in Central Eastern Europe is not surprising as, for almost a thousand years, the region was an area of intense German-Slavic and German-Hungarian contacts, where diglossia and bilingualism were very common.

Regarding the origin of the expression *warmer Bruder*, following popular etymology, the concept of "hot, warm" to indicate "homosexual" would be associated with the various meanings that the word possesses in the lexicon of each language.

A somewhat simplistic explanation refers to body temperature (Magnus Hirschfeld argued that, for example, the skin of homosexuals was perceived as warmer than that of heterosexual men). A second interpretation relies on the sense of "agreeable temperature, warm and friendly" character, which is typologically interesting, as it would

postulate an original of the "homosexual" warm approach close to that of the English "gay" and which seems moreover supported by the paraphrase for *warmer Bruder*, see Röhrich *lustiger Bruder* "joyful / happy / funny brother".

Moreover, as in modern European languages, *warm* carries a further meaning related to physical, emotional and even sexual relations, as in "hot".

Regarding the meaning of "heat" referring to body temperature, currently in none of the aforementioned languages does the corresponding adjective indicate "temperature above normal" and therefore it is not understood even in a translational sense as "passionate, sexually hot". For this connotation, the adjective "boiling hot", in German *heiß* and in Czech *horký,* is fairly widespread . However, the word *warm* in the Grimms' German Dictionary means *warm* "wärmer als gewöhnlich, erhitzt […] leidenschaftlich" ("warmer than usual, hot […] passionate") and in Paul's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* "im 19. Jahrhundert mundartlich warm als wollüstig" ("in 19th century vernacular warm as voluptuous") or "treuer, eifriger, begeisterter Freund" ("faithful, devoted, enthusiastic friend").

These definitions would suggest a possible reference to sexual excitement or even to the coitus itself, as suggested by the Czech expression *teplej vobklad* "coitus", literally "hot pack", recorded in Prague's urban slang in the 1930s, or the Slovak *teplá riť* "homosexual", literally "warm bum". The Grimms also reported the meaning of *warm* as "treuer, eifriger, begeisterter Freund" "loyal, caring, passionate friend", on which it might be worth reflecting at greater length in the future.

In a far more pessimistic perspective, the expression might derive from the (late) medieval and the early modern age practice of condemning sodomites to death at the stake, along with anyone else deviating from the new rules of behaviour being established by the Church.

Finally, it must also be remembered that Paul in his *Wörterbuch* provides a further definition of the expression *warmer Bruder*, namely *Stubenhocker*, literally "he who sits on the stove", in the sense of "comfy slipper", or "stay-at-home". This reference to a man who was by nature too domestic and unmanly could have given rise to the word "homosexual". The etymology therefore remains uncertain.

The frequency and distribution of these expressions varies a lot between the different languages. As already mentioned, *teplý* is one of the usual terms to indicate "homosexual" in Czech and Slovak. However, the basic neutral semantics of the term is lost in the various and numerous derivatives, among which the best known are Czech *teplouš* and Slovak *teploš*, or semantically close synonyms, Czech *přihřátý* and Slovak *prihriaty* "heated". The Serbian and Croatian *vrućko* falls into the same semantic field, diminutive from the stem *vruće*, "(steaming) hot, boiling".

In German the term *warm* was gradually replaced by *schwul*, a specialized and monosemantic term meaning "male homosexual", which almost completely lost its

derogatory connotation and is now the most widespread term. The word *schwul* is a 17th-century loan from Low German (see the Dutch *zwoel* "oppressive, sultry heat"), which in new High German has given rise to two words: *schwül* "sultry, suffocating" and *schwul* "homosexual, gay". The problems of defining the origin of meaning are the same as for *warm*. However, an important clue to the etymology of the term could be provided by the meaning of the verb *schwelen* "slowly burn", from the same root of *schwul*, always derived from Low German.

Finally, *schwul* (*schwelen*) also seems to have given rise to certain terms linked with the concept of "homosexual": Polish *cwel* and its derived forms are typical prison jargon.[2]

Blue Pigeons

Before the colours of the rainbow became the symbol of the LGBT(Q) community, other colours were, and still are, used to indicate "homosexual" in various languages of Eastern Europe. One for all, the Russian *goluboj* "light blue".

In the languages of the far eastern part of the Old continent, this adjective which indicates the colour "blue, celestial" is widely calqued. Etymologists point to the fact that Russian *goluboj* has become popular since the 1970s and 1980s, but at the same time they underline that it must have been around for some time before that. Despite its recent diffusion, as it is supported by the presence of loanwords or calques in many languages of the former Soviet Union (such as Ukrainian *holubyj* or Lithuanian *žydras*, etc.), the origin of the meaning "male homosexual" for *goluboj* remains uncertain and even mysterious.

The most frequently cited hypothesis, reported in etymological dictionaries and other similar official sources, considers it a calque from English *blue ribbon* "passive homosexual", as it is recorded in the slang of American prisoners between the 19th and 20th centuries (see Mokienko and Nikitina). The problem lies in the fact that such a meaning is not actually very frequent, and, apart from that, the English word *blue* is more consistently used in the meaning of "indecent, obscene". Against the idea of an American-English borrowing are Nikitina and Roberts, who, through a thorough investigation of the term, have come to the conclusion that it is very hard to support such a hypothesis and suggest following the etymological argumentation of Šaxidžanjan, where he maintains that the semantic contents of the term developed in Soviet labour camps during the 1940s and 1950s and later passed over into the colloquial language.

2 A further interpretation considers it derived from *Schwelle*, which in the past had the meaning "axis, beam" and later took on the meaning "threshold". In its metaphorical usage it indicates a piece of wood that it is trodden upon and, by extension, a prisoner at the lowest level in the prison's hierarchy.

Another hypothesis links the colour blue to the concept of *blue blood*: same-sex sexual relations were supposed to be significantly widespread among European aristocratic circles. Yet another suggests that its origin can be traced back to the phrase *amour bleu*. This was a common expression for same-sex relationships in the past. It has originated from the name of the Greek divinity *Aphrodite Urania* "celestial", e.g. "heavenly" or "spiritual", the daughter of the Greek god Uranus. According to Greek mythology, Aphrodite Urania was conceived and born without a mother, and therefore lacked a truly feminine nature. As Plato puts it in his Symposium: "Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male" (http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html).

Criticizing the aforementioned hypothesis and pointing out various kinds of inconsistencies, first of all temporal ones, as the expression *goluboj* was recorded only recently around the 1960s, Paškov rejects them all and advances the assumption that it is a slang word invented by regulars of the historic cruising place for homosexuals near the Bol'šoj theatre in Moscow during the Soviet era (Paškov). The adjective would be a secondary formation from the noun. The author maintains that the expression comes from *golub'* "pigeon" and supports his opinion with a series of different arguments: linguistically, ***go****lub'* sounds like a euphemism built on a common pattern of word formation ***go****moseksualist*; pragmatically, starting from the pleasurable *golub'* "pigeon" to its diminutive forms used as "playful ways of addressing someone" *golubok* or *golubčik*, meaning "my dear (fellow), my friend"; and finally, culturally: a semantic reinterpretation of a popular song from the early 1960s: *Letite golubi, letite!* "Fly away, pigeons, fly away!", intended as a veiled warning for any homosexuals in the cruising area that the police are on patrol.

Whatever the origin, the term *goluboj* is less vulgar than other expressions and could have been perceived as a neutral, inoffensive word, much like the English *gay* or the German *schwul*. However, the over-riding anti-gay atmosphere in Putin's Russia has inverted such a development.

Bulgarian Heretics

Buzerant is one of the most common and widespread derogatory expressions in Czech and Slovak to say "homosexual". Various genetically related forms with different degrees of diffusion are also found in almost any Central European language: the truncated form *buzi* form *buzeráns* in modern Hungarian; Romanian *buzărean* is a Transylvanian regionalism; in Slovenian *buzarant* and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian *buzerant*; Polish *buzer* is archaic, as well as the regional Austrian-German word *Buserant*. This lexical root meaning was very popular in Europe, spreading to different Central European languages, amongst which many Slavic as well. Nevertheless, its origin has to be sought in the south-eastern part of the continent, in the Balkans, and moving westwards it had a crucial evolutionary stage in central-northern Italy.

The etymology of the word certainly dates back to the late Latin *Bulgarus* / **bu*(*l*)*gerus*, which was borrowed and transformed in the dialects of Ancient Italy into *bug*(*g*)*erone* and *buz*(*z*)*eron*. The original expression has given birth to two forms which differ in the treatment of the sound /g/ and subsequently to two divergent paths of diffusion: the one moving from north-eastern Italy towards Central Europe has /g/ > /z/, see Czech *buzerant*, the second through Western Europe remains /g/ see Old French *bougre* and then English *bugger*[3] (*Buggery act*, 1533). But it was precisely the north-eastern Italian dialectal variant of the expression (with /g/ > /z/) that was borrowed in Austrian German and spread everywhere amongst the languages of Central Europe.

As to the etymology of the word and its semantic development, originally *Bulgarus* indicated the geographic origin of a group of people from Bulgaria or, by extension, from the Balkans. Being members of the Bogomilism, a well-known heretic sect amongst the Balkan population, those *Bulgarians* fled the Ottoman invasions in Bosnia (12th-14th centuries) and moved to northern Italy and southern France, founding various groups of religious sects (some suggests their learning would provide the philosophical basis for various Reformations in Central Europe, including the Lutheran reformation). Following the spread of and, by descent, of that Patarene in northern Italy and Albigensian in southern France, the term goes by metonymy to indicate *heretic* in general and, then, in the consequence of a further semantic shift motivated ideologically by the will to discredit heretics by accusing them of acts against nature, becomes synonymous with sodomy. However, it is sometimes argued that despising sexual intercourse with women, the members of the Bogomil sect might have given grounds for suspicions of homosexual practices.

Unlike the noun, the derived verb *buggerare* survives in contemporary Italian dialects. However, it has lost the meaning "to have sodomitic relations with someone" and shifted semantically to indicate "to swindle, to cheat". A semantic evolution of this kind, in which the meaning moves away from the sexual sphere, is also found in Czech and Slovak, where the Czech and Slovak *buzerovat* verbs respectively developed secondary meanings of "to annoy, to get on someone's nerves". Similarly in Slovenian.

Along the western path, starting from Italy and developing through the Old French *bougre* "heretical, sodomite" and Modern French "idiot", the word is appropriated in English, in which the verb *to bugger* has still the meaning "practicing sodomy", whereas the adjective *bugger* means "difficult, annoying".

Disrupting the linearity of the geographical development, Russian has imported the term *bougre* from French: *bugor*, *bugry* < French *bougre* "slicker, shuffler" (see Epiškin).

3 In modern English the noun *bugger* is more commonly used as a derogatory term for cruel or contemptible men in general or affectionately for old men as in *silly old bugger*.

Conclusion

There are understandably many other words, some deeply offensive, others simply euphemistic, for referring to "male homosexual" in the languages of the "other" Europe. We have internationalisms such as *homosexual* or *gay*, loanwords from foreign languages such as Bulgarian *manaf* and *götveren* (from the Turkish "greengrocer" and "ass-giver") and so on, but amongst those the three discussed above ("warm brother", "light blue" and "Bulgarian") are the most interesting in terms of cultural history and their etymology.

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Lesbian Poetry Tradition

Nataša Velikonja

Abstract: In the Western context lesbian poetry production outbursts in the late 1960s as part of the emerging lesbian-feminist movement. This literary line, the history of lesbian poetry, can be divided into five periods: the lesbian poetry from the identity politics period (emphasizing the lesbian difference as a tool of political and cultural subjectivization and emancipation); the historization of lesbian poetry (searching and analyzing lesbian contents in older literary works); lesbian literary proliferation (inclusion of ethnic, racial and class perspectives); queer approach (poststructuralist critique of a unified lesbian identity); and reconciliation between identity politics and queer politics. Eastern European lesbian poetry follows a similar developmental line, only it emerged much later, in the 1980s or even later. However, Eastern European lesbian poetry has certain specifics, firstly, because of the national, social or linguistic differences the development is not so linear, and secondly, the socio-political climate in Eastern Europe is quite different from the Western one and this also affects lesbian culture and art.

Keywords: lesbian literary tradition, lesbian poetry, historization of lesbian literature, identity politics, queer critique

In the anthology *Brez besed ji sledim: Sodobna evropska lezbična poezija* (I Follow Her Without Words: Contemporary European Lesbian Poetry), which was published in the Slovene gay and lesbian edition Škuc Lambda in 2015 and edited by the gay poet and activist Brane Mozetič, I wrote an introduction entitled "Poetry is still not a luxury".

Let me first briefly say something about the anthology itself: it is the first European anthology of contemporary lesbian poetry, an overview of fifty-five poets, covering the period from 1933, which is the year of birth of the English poet Maureen Duffy, to 1994, the year of birth of the Estonian poet Koidula Aidla alias Koits. Therefore, it covers lesbian poetry written after the Second World War.

It covers Western European countries: for example, from Great Britain we have Maureen Duffy, Janet Sutherland and Char March, from Ireland Cherry Smyth, from Belgium Nathalie Gassel, from the Netherlands Elly de Waard, from Germany Jenny Schon and Odile Kennel, from Austria Barbara Hundegger, from Italy Maria Grazia Calandrone and Eleonora Pinzuti, from France Anne Michel, from Spain Maria Xose Queizan, Ana Tapia and Alicia Garcia Nunez and many more.

It extends to Russia, to poets Faina Grimberg, Gila Loran and Jekaterina Simonova, and to Turkey, to poet Birhan Keski.

But its notable value is the inclusion of lesbian poetry from Eastern Europe, this unjustly culturally undervalued area, as its artistic expression contains exceptional vitality, also that critical social expressiveness which is often lacking in the still dreamy European West. Therefore we have Kinga Fabo and Agata Gordon from Hungary, Maria Jastrzebska, Izabela Morska and Ewa Sonnenberg from Poland, Svatava Antošova and Andrea Vatulikova from the Czech Republic, Aida Bagić and Nora Verde from Croatia, Jelena Kerkez and Dragoslava Barzut from Serbia, Kristina Hočevar and Nataša Velikonja from Slovenia, Gabri M. from Romania, Hristja Vengrinjuk from Ukraine and so on.

Europe is a colourful continent, and lesbian poetic expression is rich and developed in some countries, for example in Spain, both in terms of the publication density and themes, but in others it is completely absent. In Italy we find only fragmented lesbian poetic expressions, without publication in specialized anthologies. And many European countries are at an absolute zero point: we cannot find lesbian poetry in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia, we cannot find it in Kosovo, and it is not present in Albania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Cyprus or Malta.

For the anthology of European lesbian poetry I wrote, as I mentioned, an introduction called "Poetry is still not a luxury". It is a paraphrase of Audre Lorde's famous essay from 1977 "Poetry is not a luxury".

In her essay Lorde declared that poetry is a *questioning and discovering of experiences*, it is the creation of thoughts, it is "the skeleton architecture of our lives", it is "as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are – until the poem – nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt" (Lorde 36). "Poetry is not a luxury", Lorde wrote, it is "not the sterile word play", but "it is a vital necessity of our existence", "it forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought" (Lorde 37).

In short, lesbian poetry has a special meaning for lesbian liberation, for lesbian identities, for emancipating lesbian subjectivity.

In the Western context the beginnings of lesbian poetry date back to the late 1960s as part of the emerging lesbian-feminist movement.

In this short article I would like to sketch a developmental line of lesbian poetry which is proved to be also a developmental line of lesbian epistemology itself. I divide this developmental line in five parts, five timeframes.[1]

The first is *the lesbian poetry from the identity politics period*, starting in the late 1960s mostly within lesbian-feminist collectives. The intonation of this early lesbian poetry was in accordance with the revolutionary period in which it emerged. It expressed a political stance and was an inseparable part of the emerging lesbian movement. The lesbian poets transferred their rebellious anger into poetry which was therefore explicitly political, even anti-poetic, it had an anti-assimilation sharpness: it strictly established and explicitly emphasized the lesbian difference. Due to the outstanding density of lesbian poetry at that time, we can even say that poetry meant the preferred political expression, with which lesbians within the lesbian movement and lesbian collectives began to declare a public lesbian presence. Regarding the literature or poetry itself, there was a strong definitional consensus: lesbian literature is written by lesbians; lesbian literature speaks about women who are sexually attracted to other women; lesbian literature describes lesbian characters and lesbian existence, in short, it contains explicitly lesbian topics. If I mention just a few classics of this lesbian poetry: Judy Grahn, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde and Pat Parker.

The second period is *the historization of lesbian poetry*. Parallel with lesbian poetry production lesbian researchers, for example Jane Rule or Lillian Faderman, began to develop lesbian literary criticism, they started to analyze lesbian elements in older or historical literary works, interpret them from a lesbian perspective, classify literary works according to lesbian themes and lesbian images, revise literary history and include into it the presence and influences of neglected lesbian authors, identify certain literary works as lesbian, discover earlier and overlooked women poets, starting with Sappho, Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Anna Seward, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, H.D., Willa Cather, Colette, Elizabeth Bishop and many others. This literary history researching actually led to more complex questions – mainly about what exactly is lesbian. All these extensions of the scope of literary works which were regarded as lesbian extended the definition of lesbian, too. But as the historical determinism of lesbian was entering more and more in the forefront of research work, and the action-oriented, political or identity concept of lesbian was drawn more and more into the background.

The third period is *lesbian literary proliferation*. Despite the diversity of lesbian poetry, the very definition is always conditioned by how a particular culture constructs lesbian identity. In the West, lesbian identity was almost always defined through the Western construction, namely, through sexology, feminism and the lesbian movement. That

1 I discuss this topic more widely in my text "Poetry is still not a luxury" (Mozetič 211-227).

is why, in the emerging canon of lesbian poetry the majority of lesbian poets were white, English-speaking middle-class women. Precisely because of the recognition of the definitional bias in the 1980s the postmodern approaches to lesbian poetry appear which correct this white picture also within the very Western construction of lesbian identity. The so-called sexual wars in feminist and lesbian communities revealed the problematic unified definition of lesbian, unified lesbian identity, they cut into it with the inclusion of ethnic, racial and class perspectives and with the extension of sexual, and thus showed how lesbian experience works differently in different cultural contexts and therefore also in various literary traditions. In 1981, the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour*, edited by Latino-Americans Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, was published. In 1983, Cherrie Moraga published *Loving in the War Years*, which is considered as the first poetry collection of an out Latino-American lesbian. In 1982, the anthology of Jewish-American lesbians *Nice Jewish Girls* was published, etc.

The fourth is the *queer approach*. Another decline of identity politics poetry was caused by the queer approach at the end of the 1980s. Queer studies forcefully challenge the basic assumptions of identity politics: lesbianism is part of overlapping identities, not just the one and only; the category of a lesbian as a stable, unified, essential concept is rejected, and lesbian identity is completely disassembled; categories of gender or sexuality are not a sufficient basis for the construction of identity, especially because they are, as Judith Butler argued in *Gender trouble*, published in 1990, performative, they are cultural fictions and therefore neither expressive nor stable nor unified. Any attempt to determine the lesbian difference and thus the lesbian identity is rejected as a reductionist and sexually repressive. Queer studies, rather than about identity, prefer to talk about sexual non-normativity or subjectivity or subject position that is formed by many factors, not just sexual orientation. This lesbian poststructuralist, queer critique, which rejected the expressive realism as an effective type of lesbian literature, promoted different types of texts, it focused on literary structure rather than on content, pointed to nonlinear, fragmented works of art, for example, to the writings of Gertrude Stein or Djuna Barnes, or to the novel *Written on the Body* by the English writer Jeanette Winterson, or to the poetry of the Canadian poet Nicole Brossard. The notion of lesbian is a metaphor, a signifier of absence, not presence, and this very radical position of absence should, in fact, unbind the existing dominant discourses. This approach was completely opposite to the classical, pioneering, some even say the heroic phase of the lesbian art and theory of the seventies that positioned the lesbian in society. Poststructuralist, queer lesbian theory refuses this concept of lesbian and it also refuses the imperative of forming the lesbian difference and identification of a lesbian.

The fifth period is the *reconciliation between identity and queer politics*. Queer studies were hit by the accusation that with the theoretical undermining of the politics of difference, they depoliticised lesbian sexuality, and that, in fact, they contributed to

maintaining hetero-normativity. British theoretician Sally Munt writes that we do need a dream of a lesbian nation, even though we are aware of its fictionality, and draws attention to the lack of political energy in queer postmodernism, because, as she says, fragmentation led to alienation. Despite the conflicting relationship, the identity-oriented lesbian politics and the post-identity queer approach coincide, writes Judith Roof, as both rejected meta-narratives and opposed centralized identity. Literary theorist Lee Edelman suggests that we should no longer participate in affirming the cognitive stability of gay identity, but endorse the deployment of gay identity as a signifier of resistance, an identity of resistance.

If I at the end return to European lesbian poetry: its course is in accordance with the developmental line, drawn in this text. The European lesbian poets, too, emphasize the constitutive link between the poetical and the activist: for example, the British poet Maureen Duffy acts also as a lesbian activist. María Xosé Queizán is one of the leading figures in the Spanish feminist movement. The Dutch poet Elly De Waard, another pioneer of European lesbian poetry, is also active in the feminist movement. Poet Izabela Morska is the first out Polish lesbian. European lesbian poets, like their American colleagues, care for the lesbian poetry production also as editors: the Serbian poet and lesbian activist Dragoslava Barzut edited an anthology of lesbian short stories. Since 2000, Jelena Kerkez has been the editor of the Serbian lesbian-feminist publishing-house Deve.

The forming of distinctive identity is present also in European lesbian poetry: here too we find lesbian poems, acting as anti-assimilation manifests: for example "The Chronicle of Revenge" or "The Amazons of Love" by the Spanish poet Ana Tapia, or the poem "Woman, the New Hymn" by the Belgian poet Nathalie Gassel. We find lyrical hymns to lesbian love, so very typical of the first introductions of lesbian into public space: lesbian love and lesbian sex are almost the most common topics, so very inspiring, so self-sufficient, they are so complete that they are located outside of the social context. We find lovers in a Sapphic, idyllic environment, in the nature, in the city, in the gardens, near the water, near the sea, surrounded by waves, by tides, in the sanctuaries and, of course, on Lesbos; poets are wondering about the mysteries of love, the miracle of love, they are questioning the language, they are describing love's approaching and departing, they are addressing love pleas to their lovers, they are Amazonas, Sapphos, Aphrodites, Venuses, Calliopes, Narcissuses, sultans, knights, guerrillas, titans, princesses, conquistadores, Barabbases, Apaches. Love is "Nirvana, Utopia, Dreamland", as Maureen Duffy writes. And lesbian love is also a source of anxiety and conflict, as in the poem "Entre nous" by the Polish poet Izabela Morska: "Do not meet her, do not allow her to talk to you, do not approach her, don't be naive, You do not know how and when she will abuse you, intentionally, rob you your dowry, shoes, salary, coldly, prune you, suck your bone after a bone, swallow your brain still fresh, and throw the remains away".

And, at last, especially in Eastern European lesbian poetry we find that special critical sharpness, the political contextualization of love, recognition that lesbian love is surrounded with hostile and violent environment, for example in the poetry by the Hungarian poet and activist Agáta Gordon or in the poem "Natural methods" by the Croatian poet Aida Bagić. Maria Jastrzebska, born in Poland, writes in a poem "Granddad's wall clock": "What does, asks Mom, a Polish girl do among all those faggots?" We rarely find a lyrical immersion into a harmonious nature, but most often claustrophobia in a society, in a nation, in a state, and a community – and also on the lesbian scene, as the Czech poet Andrea Vatulikova writes.

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The Language of Mystery in One of Witold Gombrowicz's Stories

Błażej Warkocki

> A race accursed, persecuted like Israel, and finally, like Israel, under a mass opprobrium of undeserved abhorrence, taking on mass characteristics, the physiognomy of a nation; all with certain characteristic features, physical features that are often repulsive, that sometimes are beautiful, all with a woman's loving, breakable heart. (Proust 219)

Abstract: The article presents the analysis and interpretation (in the form of a close reading) of Witold Gombrowicz's short story: "Diary of Jakub Czarniecki" from the volume *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity* from 1933 (included after the Second World War in the volume *Bakakaj* [translated into English as *Bacacay*]). The author interprets the story as narrative about life with the stigma that results from the social effects of anti-Semitism. At the same time however, he shows that the conceptualizations of "race" are often very clearly combined with the considerations about masculinity and effeminacy of the main hero. The author shows - referring to the historical works (George L. Mosse) and theoretical and literary criticism (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Alan Sinfeld) that "effiminacy" combines narratives about Jewishness and male homosexuality in a complex way, which at the same time constitutes the aporia of Gombrowicz's text. Author suggests not obvious, but deeply autobiographical dimension of the story by referring to the biographical books.

Keywords: Witold Gombrowicz, queer, anti-semitism, masculinity, Proust,

Witold Gombrowicz (1904–1969) is regarded as one of the most important Polish writers of the twentieth century and is thus firmly imbedded in the national canon. He is also one of the few Polish writers to have achieved considerable recognition and esteem

abroad. When in 1939, a month before the outbreak of World War II, he sailed off to Argentina on the ship "Chrobry", he was unaware that he would never return to Poland, becoming in effect a refugee. He would most likely spend his whole life wondering how he managed to predict this event. The last stories of his debut volume of avant-garde stories, *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity* (1933),[1] mention in first-person narrative his escape from Poland (and Europe) by ship to South America. These escapist tendencies that Gombrowicz exhibited, of course, did not come from nowhere. As Klementyna Suchanow demonstrates in her recent biography, *Ja, geniusz* (*I, Genius*) (2017), Gombrowicz was not heterosexual. This, however, was not a revelation, as rumors concerning his sexual orientation had been circulating for years, though they were never officially verified. Even without this biographical knowledge, it should be accepted today that Witold Gombrowicz is one of the most important Polish queer writers. In this article I would like to analyze how the author of *Pornography* coded his queer experience in one of the stories from his 1933 debut volume.

What should a stereotypically understood memoir contain? Secrets, of course. The second story from Witold Gombrowicz's debut volume, which he himself associated with the first and called "clear and understandable", is a kind of a "memoir in a memoir." We are dealing with a *mise en abyme* composition, as in the *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity* we find the "The Memoirs of Jakub Czarniecki" (this is the pre-war title). Is it possible to find a secret in this composition? From the strictly linguistic perspective, the answer is "yes". The word "mystery" (or its derivatives) will appear in this short text nineteen times, mainly in the form of phrases: "wall of mystery", "language of mystery", "my secret" and "Mystery" (with a capital M).

What, then, is the returning and semantically radiant "secret"? In classic interpretations of this short story, the issue has been analyzed many times over. The text is about anti-Semitism. The first-person protagonist of the *Memoirs* was brought up in a "good" family, but with a "racial" flaw: a Polish father and a Jewish mother, that is, an impoverished Polish count and a mother from the house of Goldwasser originating from the rich Jewish bourgeoisie (Gombrowicz does not spare us the details). He, a Catholic, she, also a Catholic, though a "neophyte". The father "abhors" his mother, and the mother hates his father. From this relationship a child is born, the main protagonist, burdened with the mystery of existence, which he struggles to unravel. In the yard he hears a rhyme, which he considers to be the key to the mystery: "One, two, three, every Jew's a flea, all the Poles are orioles, you are it, not me" (MSC, 22). He uses the metaphor "rat" for himself, a "mottled" one at that.

This story has often been analyzed as an outstanding literary study of anti-Semitism or, more broadly, otherness. Michał Głowiński interpreted "The Memoirs of Stefan

1 After the war, an expanded edition was published under the title *Bacacay*.

Czarniecki" (this is the post-war title) through "the dialectics of what in the situation of the individual, but also in social life, is perceived as familiar, and what creates the domain of otherness" (45). Bożena Umińska even admits that the story brings "perhaps the most interesting parable in the literature of the interwar period concerning the distribution of values in Polish-Jewish relations" (275). It can be noticed that many interpretations of the second story from Gombrowicz's debut volume will follow this path – from the literal anti-Semitism of the interwar period to the universalization of otherness that emerges from this text. Let us quote Bożena Umińska once again: "Here are two people who are really strangers to each other (but they tried to assume the role of absent figures), a real Other was born. Other internally and universally" (279). "The Memoirs of Jakub vel Stefan Czarniecki" is a phenomenal record of this otherness.

However, when we look at the text in accordance with the rule of the "purloined letter" – i.e., literally and suspiciously – we quickly notice that Jakub's vel Stefan's main problem concerns the norms related to masculinity. While the text devotes a disproportionate amount of attention to this issue, analyses, on the other hand, tend to ignore it, even though norms related to masculinity are revealed at almost every stage of the protagonist's life: during backyard school plays with friends, during unsuccessful engagements and marriages to fiancées or during war "adventures". Indeed, in the anti-Semitic discourse, effeminacy was attributed to Jews (Mosse, *The Image of Man*), as in Otto Weinger's well-known work, *Sex and Character*, which is why it is not surprising that this issue may also apply to Jakub vel Stefan (who has grotesquely interiorized this stereotype). However, it may just as well be said that the parodied language of anti-Semitism became the starting point and catalyst for the story of norms and non-masculinity. In fact, all these issues may structurally be connected, because, as George L. Mosse wrote in his classic work, "the dynamics of modern nationalism was built on the ideal of manliness" (*Nationalism and Sexuality* 64).

Without completely resolving this issue, one can agree that, in the most general sense, it is a story of life with a stigma, and therefore with a "wounded identity", to use Erving Goffman's formula. In other words, the second story from this particular diary of the period of queer maturation concerns the life of a "marked" person, cast in satirical form, which somehow denaturizes (and sometimes renaturalizes) the categories recognized as natural. However, the stigma does not apply to sexuality and gender (at least not primarily), but to "races".[2] The first-person protagonist is brought up in a "good" family, but burdened with a "flaw". An unspoken stigma looms over the protagonist, and at the same time, life teaches him the "language of mystery". With great sensitivity, the story analyzes all the oppressive mechanisms resulting from assigning meaning to racial and nationalistic discourses. He uses biological metaphors that grotesquely denaturalize.

2 I put "race" in quotation marks as is customary in racial discourse analysis.

"And in general – what ought to be the coloration of a rat born of a black male and a white female? Ought it to be mottled?" (MSC, 21), the protagonist wonders. Yes, mottled, like a stain, like the dirt at Mary Douglas', is in the eye of the beholder: "There is something about you […] I do not know what it is – some unpleasant taste" (MSC, 27). This distaste is the product of racist and nationalistic discourses, which is literally imprinted on the protagonist's body.

In this ironic narrative about stigmatized life, two of Gombrowicz's motifs are especially worth noting, as they are to be found in his early work, particularly, though not exclusively, in his *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity*. The first is that the stigmatized subject recognizes Polish literature and Polish culture as institutions whose agendas are aimed against him. The second concerns the battle between men, which eventually never materialized.

In the theater of unofficial gender roles, Jakub/Stefan does badly. The "racial" stigma is connected here explicitly and systemically with gender issues. And this is the problem that moves to the foreground of the text. Our protagonist tests the limits of masculinity norms in three institutions of modern life: in school, in marriage and in the army. And everywhere he fails these tests of manhood.

He does not only fall short in this area; he also fails to affirm his masculinity through the heterosexual ritual of love. Although, there was some success at the beginning, "The next day […] I consulted with my pals, got a grip on myself, and pinched her, upon which she narrowed her eyes and started giggling …" (MSC, 24). In these descriptions, it is extremely interesting that Gombrowicz in his *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity* does not represent love and affection as natural affections connecting two entities, as a romantic thread or aura, but consistently as a task to be performed. And even more, as a (heterosexual) ritual, thanks to which one can achieve a coherent (hegemonic) ideal of masculinity. Or he can fail this test: "a daddy's little pet, a mama's boy!" (MSC, 25), hears Jakub from his beloved. Thus, he fails miserably in this game of heteronormative masculinity.

Love, however, has much in common with war, according to our protagonist. Why?

> Love! What bewitching, incomprehensible absurdity – pinching, squeezing, even snatching in an embrace – how much it contains! Bah! Today I know what to hold onto; I see here the **secret affinity** with war, because in war too the purpose is in fact to pinch, to squeeze, or to seize in an embrace; but at that time I was not yet one of life's bankrupts – quite the opposite, I was full of goodwill. To love? I can say boldly that I was drawn to love because I hoped in this way to break through the **wall of the mystery**; and with enthusiasm and faith I bore all the eccentricities of this most bizarre of emotions in the hope that I would nevertheless eventually understand what it was all about. (MSC, 25)

There is an affinity between love and war, but it does not consist in the fact that, as the old English proverb says, all is fair in love and war. Then it would be based on the

similarity of authentic affect. In the diary of Jakub/Stefan, it is different. There is a "secret affinity" between love and war. According to the definition of metaphor as an abbreviated comparison, the *tertium comparationis* should be found. What would it be? "Masculinity", of course. And masculinity understood as a spectacle, one that has been perfected within the ritual of love and war, a hegemonic masculinity (to use Cornell's concept), which a ritual imposes. Here and there, in war and in love, one must "pinch",[3] or play the role of a real man. Is this what the "secret" is? Certainly, Jakub's/Stefan's distance towards these heteronormative rituals is mysterious and, in any case, unusual. As if he assumed a strategic distance towards them in order to analyze the entire system thoroughly.

In the linguistic sense, this distance is built on vitriolic irony. This is particularly discernible during the time spent in the army, one of the most important modern rituals of masculinity. The distance he feels towards the role of a soldier (or rather a Polish soldier, as Jakub combines national and gender issues) is definitely too large for the protagonist to be able to perform this role naturally. This theme of problems with masculinity pervades the entire *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity*, especially in the last three novels (with the most extreme instance in the last).

At this point, however, it should be noted that Witold Gombrowicz was not particularly interested in Jewish subjects neither in his pre-war nor his post-war output. Exceptions are the short "The Memoirs of Jakub Czarniecki" and a few fragments in his *Memoirs*. Anti-Semitism was not a subject that the author of *Ferdydurke* was particularly interested in, especially in the existential or "somatic" sense (i.e., the impact of racism on the psychosomatic construction of the subject).

In contrast, the topic of masculinity and effeminacy was one that the young Gombrowicz certainly had considered and perhaps even worked through (in the sense of durcharbeiten). It is a topic that often returns in his work (even in *Ferydurke* and *Trans-Atlantic*, not to look too far). It is also recalled by those who knew Witold Gombrowicz from his youth in both books by Tadeusz Kępiński (a childhood friend) and in Joanna Siedlecka's *Jaśnie Panicz*. The latter has more journalistic ambitions and makes use of opinions of people outside Gombrowicz's immediate social circle, i.e. not only of fellow intellectuals, but also domestic servants. This is how Michał Romanow, Gombrowicz's coachman, described him: "Witold, yes, not a bad looking boy, only that he is of medium height, slim, gentle on his face like a young girl. Very calm, quiet, as if unable to count to three" (Siedlecka 47) In turn, Marietta Borowiczowa, who is a member of the family, notes: "For sure, it was because of his mother's over-bearing nature that he was silent for a long time and kept to himself. He was very shy, especially towards women; however, in relation to men, it always seemed to him that he had a gentle, girlish beauty.

3 "To pinch" in Polish has a double meaning. It means to court a woman as well as to provoke a man to a duel.

His brothers played, danced, flirted with the maids, shone in company. He does not" (Siedlecka 60).

"Effeminacy" is a historical, anthropological, and sociological concept. In the context of modern discourses about homosexuality, it is associated with Oscar Wilde (secretly recalled in the last story under the code name "Banbury"). Masculinity/effeminacy of boys is also a battlefield. Analyzing the contemporary state of psychological and psychoanalytic discourses (rooted in Freud), Sedgwick wrote about the "war on effeminate boys" (*How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay*), mainly because many (if not most) discourses of power strengthen violence against such entities. It is hard to deny, however, that Witold Gombrowicz was probably more aware of the stigma of effeminacy than of Jewishness, which does not mean, of course, that the story must be read using an autobiographical key (which was suggested by Agnieszka Stawiarska in her book *Gombrowicz in Pre-War Poland*). The biographical context only supports the deconstructive "deviation" of the reading.

Let us return, however, to the story and the main metaphor. During the conversation with his father, the protagonist experiences a realization concerning his identity: "And in general – what ought to be the coloration of a rat born of a black male and a white female? Ought it to be mottled? Or was it also possible, when the opposing hues were of exact equal strength, that such a union would produce a rat without hue, without color …" (MSC, 21). Why is it a rat? Why does the protagonist use this metaphor to describe his identity? On the one hand, this is obvious and is suggested by the text itself: the rat is greatly associated with experimental crossbreeding and eugenics. At the same time, however, "a rat […] is a dirty animal, feeding on excrement, living in sewers" (Freud 60). It is not without reason that I am quoting Sigmund Freud's "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" or the famous case of the Rat Man, in a somewhat over-stigmatized language (or less stigmatized: a man whose neurosis was to be associated with a certain fantasy regarding rats).

As Jan Błoński rightly noted, "The early stories especially […] are to this day the most difficult to interpret as proof of Gombrowicz's peculiarities" (6) and, as Sedgwick wrote, paranoia is anticipatory (*Paranoid Reading* 130). Let us leave the psychoanalytic approach and remain with the uncontroversial thesis that "The Memoirs of Stefan Czarniecki" concerns a life with a racial stigma, with which the protagonist combines issues of (non-)masculinity, or perhaps hides one under the other. Or in other words, uses the language of anti-Semitism to express subjective oppression in a more intersectional manner. And in this sense, it is worth considering this story as an important chapter in the diary of queer maturation, all the more so as it resembles not only the relationship between anti-Semitic conceptualizations of "race" and "masculinity", not only the structural importance of homophobia in the conceptualization of male identity, but the problematic (at the turn of the century) status of homosexuality.

Tadeusz Kępiński, in a monograph about Witold Gombrowicz, his childhood friend, states like a positivist scientist studying insects: "He was not a purebred homosexual" (60). What does he mean by "purebred"? Of course, Kępiński is making an analogy to race, which is a kind of essentially impassable boundary, while implying that he was not a "real" homosexual, because he did not belong to this distinct race. This is more than a metaphor because it unambiguously refers to Michel Foucault's thesis from the *History of Sexuality*, where he claims that in the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to medical and juristic discourses, sexual "speciation" took place, that is, the construction of human sexual species, especially homosexual (or in other nomenclature: pederasty). The paradox of this conceptualization, as Sedgwick pointed out, is that one can be recognized as homosexual before engaging in any sexual activity based on anatomical and psychological premises. This new human species, when mature, does not look very attractive.

In this context (which probably can be considered, in the language of deconstructionists, as light decontextualisation), we shall read a passage about the meeting of the father and son from the beginning of the story:

> In the meantime I was growing up. Sometimes my father would take me on his knee and, at length, anxiously inspect my countenance. "The nose so far is mine," I would hear him whisper. "Thank the Lord! But here in the eyes and the ears …. the poor child!" – and his noble features would fill with pain. "He's going to suffer terribly when he grows to awareness; I wouldn't be surprised if at that point something happens within him along the lines of an inner massacre." – What awareness was he speaking of, and what massacre? (PC, 21)

The anti-Semitic dimension of this scene is very clear. On the basis of external features (the shape of the nose), the father looks for internal "racial" flaws in his son. The stigma is supposed to be visible on the body. Jakub/Stefan will become aware of its existence only when he is a bit more mature, and then it will become an "internal pogrom". An internal pogrom, or – when we unravel the meaning of this "powerful" metaphor – the self-hatred.

Although the anti-Semitic language is clear here, it should be remembered that in later confrontations with life, especially with the three institutions of modern life (school, marriage, army), the external sign of this internal defect is not so much (or not always) the "shape of the nose" as effeminacy. Let us quote a description of Jakub's meeting with a potential fiancée:

> "I desire you!" – I would say to my beloved. She would fob me off with generalizations. "You're nothing but a nothing, Mr. Czarniecki!" she would say enigmatically, staring into my countenance. – A daddy's little pet, a mama's boy! I shuddered: a mama's boy? What did she mean by that? Could she have guessed … because I myself had already guessed to some extent. I had understood that if

> my father was well-bred to the marrow of his bones – my mother also well-bred, but in a difference sense, in the Semitic sense. (MSC, 25)

The protagonist has already become aware of his otherness. The external signs are quite easily read by his beloved as a mark of an internal defect, and yet she is not bothered by the nose (whose shape probably has the most extreme anti-Semitic connotations), and not his ears and eyes, but by his effeminacy. The scene is all the more expressive that it is analogous to the one in which the protagonist talks to his father. He also looked for defects on Jacob's body. However, the interior/exterior dialectic can be deceptive: by looking at someone "in the face", you can, in accordance with cultural connotations, see someone's mind. Only then, the fiancée would have noticed Jacob's inner "effeminacy".

However, effeminacy and the clear dialectic of the interior and exterior have their additional connotations at the turn of the century. First, the concept of "the third sex", one of the early conceptualization of homosexuals, which Magnus Hirschfeld believed in, was based on the dialectics of the interior and exterior. The first sex is male, the "second sex" is female, and the "third sex", which Hirschfeld believed should have the same rights as the first two, is a "sexually transitory" emancipatory homosexual model from the beginning of the twentieth century (though it went through many homophobic versions). It is based on an inversion: *anima muliebris in corpore viril inclusa*, a female soul enclosed in a male body (and vice versa) (Sedgwick, "Epistemology" 87). On the other hand, Oscar Wilde should be mentioned here, as he focused on the cultural meanings of "effeminacy". According to Alan Sinfield, the infamous Wilde trials combined sign and meaning (effeminacy with homosexuality). Earlier, effeminacy was not regarded as a clear sign of homosexuality; it could have connoted aristocracy or generalized eccentricity or even asexuality. It was the Wilde trials that brought these two issues together for good. Effeminacy, a term "as misogynist as it is full of power" (Sinfield vii), has become an external sign of an internal "disorder". Sinfield reminds us that Wilde was somehow *post factum* prosecuted under this suspicion and the key piece of evidence was a photograph of someone in wig and jewelry thought to be Oscar Wilde, though upon closer scrutiny it is clearly a photo of an actress performing in Wilde's *Salome* (Sinfield 6). Effeminacy became one of the most important attributes of homosexuality in the twentieth century. In this sense, the title "Wilde's century" would mean the twentieth century, not the nineteenth century. It is worth adding that Sinfield strongly emphasizes the constructivist model of his theories and uses the word *queer* both in how it was used at the end of the nineteenth century and at the end of the twentieth.

In the narrative, effeminacy, according to anti-Semitic discourse, refers to the Jewish "essence", but it does not (always in its entirety) have to. Is there any intended ambiguity here? Some "mystery" that keeps reappearing in the text? Deviation towards the unspeakable?

Undoubtedly, effeminacy is a kind of common denominator when conceptualizing Jewishness and homosexuality at the start of the twentieth century. Perhaps, however, we should slightly modify this issue and ask whether an analogy between a Jew and a homosexual was present in the European culture of that time? Such a question should elicit the answer that it not only existed but was a central analogy and sometimes a secret metaphor. It should be remembered that Hans Mayer in his classic work *Outsiders* recognizes these two identities (next to a woman) as the basic figures of otherness constructed in (Western) European culture and it is not difficult to find analogies between them. However, the most obvious and influential writer to combine the figure of a Jew and a homosexual in the early twentieth century literary modernism is, of course, Marcel Proust.

The *locus classicus* is to be found in the first part of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, the fourth volume of *In Search of Lost Time*. It must be remembered, however, that large portions had already been written much earlier as part of the monumental and unfinished literary essay *Against Sainte-Beuve* (1909) entitled *Accursed Race*, which went against reading literature through a biographical lens. No longer young and still in mourning after his mother's death, Proust will abandon his essay and take up writing his opus magnum. But it is there, in *Against Sainte-Beuve*, which serves as a testament of defeat, that, according to the author of the introduction to the Polish translation, we find:

> A cursory, homophobic and anti-Semitic phrase that extends uninterrupted for four and a half pages in *Accursed Race*, which builds an analogy between homosexuals and Jews that is at the same time full of painful truth, which in both cases was felt directly. George D. Painter in his biography of Proust writes that this is "the longest sentence he ever wrote, as if he did not dare to interrupt it for fear that once having disappeared, it would fall silent for good." (Dwulit 15-16)

Sedgwick, who has repeatedly returned to Proust, and whose last, unfinished book is entitled *Weather in Proust*, warned that reading these fragments (which will come back in *Sodom and Gomorrah*) as "internalized homophobia" completely misreads Proust.

At the same time, Sedgwick also juxtaposed Jewish and homosexual identities, as a most obvious, though very different in detail, analogy in European culture, following the intertextual lead suggested by Proust. In her groundbreaking essay "Epistemology of the Closet" (in the book of the same title), she makes a series of useful statements about the epistemological effects of coming out as a Jew and a homosexual. The starting point for the analysis is Racine's play, *Queen Esther*, which was repeatedly and on various levels alluded to by Proust in *The Prisoner*. Art, of course, is not invoked without a reason. It is tied to the "mystery" and disclosure that affects the lives of more than one person. Racine reimagined the biblical story of Queen Esther, a Jewess who had to reveal her identity to her unwitting husband, King Ahasuerus, to save her people from his desire – prompted by the cunning Mordecai – "to destroy, to kill, and to cause

to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women" (Est, 3, 13). Esther "disclosing" this personal information had the power to save her and her people. It is, thus, no wonder that this narrative would have held such great significance for Marcel Proust in *The Fugitive*.

In the context of "The Memoirs of Jakub Czarniecki" it is worth noting the clear similarities between the biography of Gombrowicz and Proust's ideas in the *Accursed Race*, especially in reference to the fatalism of destiny, heading towards a catastrophe, but also the idea of a "female soul locked in the male body", that is, the fatal and catastrophic in its effects "effeminacy".

According to Jerzy Domagalski, the author of *Proust in Polish Literature until 1945*, in Poland, "the twenties are the period of reading the *Search* in its original version, and the other half of the thirties is when the novels are seen through Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński's[4] achievements" (13). Domagalski points out that the nationalist press was reluctant to write about Proust and only did so in an anti-Semitic manner, referring to him as a "Jewish artist" with everything that this racist conceptualization entails. Of particular interest is Adolf Nowaczyński's essay from 1929 (who in 1933 praised Gombrowicz's short story about Jakub Czarniecki) entitled "To Prus, not to Proust":

> Marcel Proust was a hybrid, carrying the hereditary burden of straddling two races. Proust's father, a well-known Parisian physician, hygienist, was a deep, charming, elegant, pure-blooded Gallic, who during his later years married a very rich Miss Weil from a well-known Semitic plutocratic family. […] The father's family did not count, did not exist, as the mother's family was rich, influential […]. The sickly Marcel, of course, had to opt for the stronger race, his mother's race. Since childhood, Proust had been more Weil than Proust … (84).

This fragment is astounding insofar as it constitutes an exact starting point for the second story in Gombrowicz's *Memoirs*. Jakub Czarniecki, like Marcel Proust, is a "hybrid" ("a mottled rat"), because of the "unfortunate" combination of two "races": noble, Aryan, though with a relatively poor father, and a mother who was a rich Jewish woman. Everything that follows develops from this fictional starting point. Is it just an accident? And does it strengthen "The Memoirs of Jakub Czarniecki" as an anti-Semitic work (which is what happened during the interwar period), that is, through a direct reading, without taking into account the convention of the grotesque? Or perhaps contradistinctively: this ghostly reference to Proust's biography, which was surrounded by rumors, understatements and euphemisms concerning his "degeneration" (i.e., his Jewishness and homosexuality and "effeminacy") and his "transgressive art" strengthens the ambivalence surrounding the apparent effeminacy in Gombrowicz's story, something which Proust himself was all too painfully aware of.

4 Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński was the Polish translator of Proust's works.

It seems that the whole charm of "The Memoirs of Stefan Czarniecki" is based on an aporia. It is impossible to entirely resolve whether, when considering Jewish effeminacy, Gombrowicz concealed – as did Proust – something extra. But this cannot be completely ruled out; hence, the necessity of basing the reading on a relentless, dynamic aporia (which Sedgwick also sees in the construction of female characters in *In Search of Lost Time*).

However, this story clearly strives to recognize its internal otherness. At the end of the story, the protagonist makes a characteristic ressentimental confession, which can be summarized in the following way: "I hate you normals"[5] or in the original version: "This is my mystery, which for my part I impose upon the great enigma of being. I simply cannot calmly pass by a pair of happy lovers, or a mother and child, or a respectable old man" (MSC, 34). However, he is also a stranger when internalizing the stigma and asks himself: "I shuddered: a mama's boy? What did she meant by that? Could she have guessed?" That effeminacy is a sign of an internal "racial" defect? Or maybe the opposite? Or maybe in a different configuration? Whatever the case may be, the secret lies in the fact that, as we read in the last sentence of the *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity*, in the story of men escaping on a ship full of men "the exterior is a mirror in which the inside can be observed" (Gombrowicz 193).

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5 "Normals" is of course Goffman's term.

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Translated by Marcin Tereszewski

Boys and Critics: The Reception of the First Slovenian Homoerotic Novel as a Reflection of Sociocultural Changes

Andrej Zavrl

Abstract: France Novšak published his novel *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* (Boys: A Novel from a Boarding School) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1938 and, with some alterations, in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1970. It was reprinted in the Republic of Slovenia in 2016. The paper looks into how the novel has been received in the three different states and socio-political systems and considers what the criticism can tell us about the changing attitudes towards homosexuality. It covers all the milestones on the novel's path from the furore surrounding its first publication to the silence surrounding the second and its eventual reputation as the first homoerotic novel in Slovenian literature.

Keywords: France Novšak (1916–1991), *Dečki*, reception, homoerotic literature, Slovenia

Introduction

The Slovenian writer France Novšak (1916–1991) was born in Ljubljana and educated in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. He is the author of a couple of stories for children and some poetry as well as, more notably, four novels, all of which were published before the end of World War II. After the war, Novšak worked as a cultural and literary journalist, translator and lexicographer.

Today, Novšak is primarily known for his novel *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* (Boys: A Novel from a Boarding School), which he wrote in 1936. In 1937, excerpts from the novel were published in three consecutive issues of the literary journal *Ljubljanski zvon*, and the first book edition came out in late 1938. The novel was published again in 1970 and 2016.

This paper considers the three editions chronologically, together with other milestones and defining circumstances in the novel's reception history. In other words, it shows how homosexuality can save your life. Or at least your book's life.

The Novel and Its First Critics

France Novšak's novel was not the first in Slovenian literature to include homoerotic elements, motifs or episodes (see Mozetič *Modra svetloba*; Zupan Sosič 321-322; Mihurko Poniž 143-151). Besides, Slovenian readers before World War II must have been familiar with at least some foreign authors' texts thematising same-sex love, or the scandals the authors and the books were embroiled in, as well as the attempts at decriminalising homosexual acts, especially by Magnus Hirschfeld, who is referenced comprehensively in an anonymous Slovenian booklet *Homoseksualnost* (Homosexuality, 1926). Nevertheless, in terms of original Slovenian literature young Novšak created something quite unique and remarkable.

In the novel's plot, Zdenko Castelli (13 going on 14) from Serbia and Nani Papali (turning 17 in the school year delimiting the novel's plot) from Slovenia meet at St. Mary's Institute, a Catholic boarding school in Zagreb, Croatia. Zdenko is the subject of great admiration, with students as well as educators generally regarding him as the most beautiful boy. He immediately catches Nani's eye, and the boys' relationship becomes very intimate very quickly. After the very intense and life-changing school year Nani and Zdenko eventually surrender to external pressures and decide to go separate ways. But not before spending the last summer together, in which Nani writes down his memories of the previous year – the novel that we have just read.

The novel describes in some detail the awakening adolescent body, which culminates in the boys' kisses and the iconic bathroom scene, where Nani and Zdenko admire each other's naked bodies. However, Nani and Zdenko are acutely aware that "these things"[1] are prohibited and they find themselves at the inevitable crossroads: should they accept external morality or clutch to their personal one, risking conflicts with the environment? We are presented with a surprisingly frank discussion of adolescent same-sex desire, in particular the boys' oscillation between their intense feelings of love and adverse social expectations. Accordingly, coping with the heteronormative matrix turns out to be an essential part of the relationship between the protagonists as well as the novel itself.

The novel develops in accordance with Gregory Woods's observation that "boarding-school is the citadel of the passing phase" (326). But not entirely and not without glitches. Nani dies very young, and what is left to him of heterosexual bliss is marred by memories of his boarding-school past. As for Zdenko, the last we read of him is that he is lonely and finds some solace with the widows he is staying with. But earlier on, the narrator gives a much darker account of the boys' likely future: at the end of the school

1 Being decades too early for any really proud, emancipatory affirmation of their identities, the boys rely on the discourse of demonstrative pronouns: "these things" ("te stvari" (Novšak 66)) indicate – what we now perceive as – the deeply ingrained shame of pre-emancipatory tradition, where homosexuality was a sin best kept in silence.

year the boys will be separated and destiny "will (perhaps) send one of them into girls' arms and leave the other one to take his own life because of unfulfilled and even unfulfillable desire" (Novšak 178).[2]

The journal that first published excerpts from the novel, the *Ljubljanski zvon* (The Ljubljana Bell, 1881–1941), was one of the most prominent literary journals before World War II. It was politically liberal and it supported the Liberation Front (partisans) and communists. When *Dečki* was published the journal was edited by Juš Kozak, Ferdo Kozak's brother, who was Novšak's teacher. Novšak refers to them both as "benevolent teachers and counsellors" (Novšak 249).

After the novel came out, the *Ljubljanski zvon* published a favourable review by Vladimir Pavšič (1913–1993, better known as Matej Bor, a renowned poet, translator, playwright, journalist and partisan). Pavšič notes on the controversial, moralistic reception of the novel, but commends Novšak on his treatment of the topics of boarding-school education, adolescents' physical and mental development and oscillation between "normal" and "abnormal" eroticism (311). With reference to homoeroticism, Pavšič distinguishes between the topic itself and how Novšak treats it – it could have been "disgusting and off-putting" if the writer had not handled it with "tact and taste"; as it is, there is evidence for a strong will for the "normal", for the boys to find girls (311-312).

The other side of the storm of controversy alluded to by Pavšič was represented by the other major literary and cultural journal – the Catholic *Dom in svet* (Home and the World, 1888–1944). Its editor Tine Debeljak and some contributors supported the Home Guard (collaborators with the occupying forces) and the journal continued to be published after foreign occupation – unlike the *Ljubljanski zvon*, which complied with the "cultural silence" introduced in the country by the Liberation Front.

Writing for the *Dom in svet*, the reviewer Mirko Javornik termed Novšak's novel a complete failure, immature and overly sentimental, formally and stylistically worthless, "nothing but the first longer homosexual piece in Slovenian literature", written "at the level of adolescent diaries"; it is best seen as "pornography intended for various private circles" (230).

The editor of the journal, Tine Debeljak (whose destiny was similar to Javornik's; they both emigrated immediately after World War II and lived abroad for the rest of their lives), left behind, in his desk drawer, an unpublished, lengthy and detailed analysis of what he perceived to be Novšak's novelistic communist conspiracy. Written in 1945, Debeljak's "Cultural Bolshevism in France Novšak's Novels" starts with Novšak's last novel, *Globoko jezero* (The Deep Lake, 1944), but it discusses his other novels, too, including *Dečki*. This book, argues Debeljak,

2 The adverb "perhaps" was only added in the second edition of the novel (1970).

> denies God, Christ's divinity, Mary's divine motherhood, belief in the afterlife, it mocks Christian morality, sacraments, saints, monastic and missionary calling, Church authorities, Christian education.
>
> It advocates uninhibited pleasure, self-pollution, the sin of Sodom, adolescent affairs, free love.
>
> It incites class hatred, revolution, underground action.
>
> It takes Bolshevism to be the only correct solution to the question of the meaning of life. (Debeljak 41)

The clash between the two titan journals reflects well the great cultural and political divide so defining of the Slovenian world before and during World War II and still so familiar today. However, the polemics were representative not only of literary and cultural politics, but also, more generally, of how gender and sexual non-normativity was perceived: although there seemed to be fundamental political and cultural differences, same-sex desire was seen by both sides as an abnormal deviation.

Boys in Yugoslavia

The first decades of Novšak's reception after the Second World War were limited to occasional, brief observations focusing on his criticism of Catholic education and false morals, but the dominant feature was silence. This is probably understandable – socialism was officially atheist, but despite the new world that was supposed to have been created, socialist sexual morals and ethics were traditionalist and heteronormative.

In spite of everything and despite the silence, the novel was published in its second edition in 1970 by a major Slovenian publisher. Unfortunately, I have been unable to uncover what motivated this remarkable publishing accomplishment, particularly at a time when "unnatural intercourse" between men was still criminalised by the Penal Code (these acts were not decriminalised until 1977).

Novšak revised his text mainly stylistically although certain changes have significant interpretative consequences, and some of these textual variants are highlighted in the 2016 edition of the novel.

The second edition came with an Afterword by Jože Kastelic, who argues for the recognition of the literary qualities of the novel (259-260) but finds himself in quite a fix when trying to explain away or gloss over the boys' relationship. I find his spiralling logic a little difficult to follow, but he struggles very hard to persuade the reader that what they might see is not what is really there. He maintains that the boys' relationship results from the school's suffocating atmosphere and religious strictness, and although it is unnatural (nenaraven) it is not against nature (protinaraven) (258). Furthermore, Kastelic distinguishes between eroticism and sexuality so as to suggest that only in sexuality would it be possible to speak of homoerotic abnormality and, hence, Nani and Zdenko

remain pure (258-259). Such interpretative attempts may indicate some sort of loyalty to Novšak, who Kastelic had known since before World War II, and perhaps he did not want to taint his friend's reputation with inappropriate associations, given the social and political circumstances in which the novel was re-issued. Seen from today, however, Kastelic's arguments are clearly based on a homophobic premise: homosexuality is something negative, and a homo-affirmative interpretation would mean betrayal. This leads to denial – whether on purpose or because of a lack of insight is another question.

In this context, and as a sort of contrast to Kastelic, I would like to call attention to another review (there were more, but they limit themselves to seeing the boys' relationship as an unproblematic passing phase or a consequence of an inappropriate milieu). Jože Šifrer, although praising certain aspects of the novel, perceives it as dated and argues that it has little to say to "us" (922). On the other hand, Šifrer recognises that a more thorough examination of same-sex "delusion" would be required, thus indirectly confirming the need for the representation "a certain kind of people" (921) in literature.

Potentially significant, but only appreciated decades after it was made in 1976, was the amateur film adaptation of the novel by Stanko Jost (b. 1944), who reports having had problems with authorities as well as some of the actors when making the film (Ozmec). The adaptation is set in Slovenia at a modern-day, lay boarding school and the boys are contemporary socialist long-haired adolescents. In contrast to the novel, religion plays no role and the boys' eroticism is quite explicit. The film did little to generate interest in Novšak and his novel(s), as it only had two screenings in 1977, until it was resurrected by the Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival in 2004. Novšak did not attend either of the initial screenings nor did the filmmaker attend the screening at the festival in 2004.

A New Life

The silence surrounding the novel was not broken to any significant degree until it was included in the anthology *Modra svetloba: homoerotična ljubezen v slovenski literaturi* (Blue Light: Homoerotic Love in Slovenian Literature), edited by Brane Mozetič in 1990. This anthology was the most important single event in the resurgence of interest in Novšak's work. It gave the novel new visibility and it was the first openly activist intervention in the author's canonisation process. *Modra svetloba* was also the first book in the LGBTQ+ book series Lambda, one of the lasting achievements of the LGBTQ+ activism emphasising culture and the arts initiated in 1984 by the Magnus Festival (the book series is still in existence, having published over 140 titles of LGBTQ+ fiction, history and theory).

In the anthology the novel is described as "the first and so far only gay novel in Slovenia" (Mozetič 20), giving it the label that has stuck with it and saved it from oblivion

but also largely delimited analyses of the novel to its depiction of same-sex desire.

Following the anthology, *Boys* gradually made it into reference books, literary studies, histories, overviews and students' papers, theses and dissertations, where practically all the debates focus – relatively narrowly – on what I have been focusing on – relatively narrowly – in this paper: the novel's representation of sexuality. References to "the passing phase" of homoerotic attachments have not disappeared, of course, but the novel has been interpreted affirmatively, and overwhelmingly so. The first article in a scholarly journal to deal exclusively with the novel was published in 2009 (Zavrl, "Dečki").

The novel has also been interpreted as a young adult novel (e.g. Pirnar 239-240; Picco 8-9; Blažić), positioning it at the intersection of literature and pedagogy. This is in sync with the wider social and political developments that have seen LGBTQ+ issues become more mainstream – as well as more openly opposed.

A new milestone in the reception of France Novšak's novel was its third edition in 2016, when it was published in the Lambda book series, this time with some textual variants juxtaposing its three editions, and the first comprehensive overview of Novšak's life and work (Zavrl, "France Novšak"). The aim of the publisher was to situate the novel firmly in Slovenian literary history and make it available to modern LGBTQ+ readers, something that has been noticed by (some of) the reviewers, too (Bratož).

The reception of France Novšak's novel *Dečki* seems to have proved that Vladimir Pavšič was right when writing in 1939 that "time is fickle, and it may turn out that Novšak's novel, despite its funeral according to all the rites, has not been buried quite so irretrievably" (311). Perhaps the most ironic aspect if it all is that the novel has survived almost exclusively because of what it was originally rejected for: homosexuality has saved its life.

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Slovenian LGBTQ Narrative in the New Millennium

Alojzija Zupan Sosič

Abstract: Since 2000, literary and political activities of sexual minorities in Slovenia have remained interconnected and interdependent. Despite an increase in hostility towards those who are perceived as different, literary accomplishments have significantly improved, which is obvious from the large production of narratives. Gay and lesbian studies in these works are gradually incorporating queer theory, and narratives by sexual minorities are contributing significantly and in novel ways to Slovenian literature. These are: the predominance of lesbian themes, motives, and main characters; the emergence of a transgender literary character; absence of victimisation; and difference as a reflection of subversiveness on the narrative level. For my analytical-interpretative approach I chose narratives written by authors who have published texts in which they have obviously and clearly introduced the theme of sexual minorities; moreover, the selected authors are "out" and representatives of the LGBTQ+ scene: Brane Mozetič, Nataša Sukič, Suzana Tratnik, Gojmir Polajnar, Urška Sterle, Jedrt Lapuh Maležič, Vesna Lemaić, Teja Oblak, and Nina Dragičević.

Keywords: gay and lesbian studies, queer theory, Slovene LGBTQ narratives

The article[1] asks whether the political activities and literary production by sexual minorities have received a more democratic treatment in the new millennium, and explores the situation in the field of Slovenian narrative art after 2000. I will first briefly present the LGBTQ+ activity on the Slovenian scene, and then analyse and interpret nine narratives by the following authors:[2] Brane Mozetič, Nataša Sukič, Suzana Tratnik,

1 The author acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

2 For reasons of space, I analyse only one work by each author. I selected authors who have published quality literary works in which they have clearly used the theme of sexual minorities; who are "out", and who have already achieved recognition in Slovenia.

Gojmir Polajnar, Urška Sterle, Jedrt Lapuh Maležič, Vesna Lemaić, Teja Oblak, and Nina Dragičević. In my analyses, I will refer to the findings of gay and lesbian studies, while also considering some of the fundamental premises of queer studies, which are still largely unrecognized in Slovenia.

Like in many other countries, gay and lesbian literature in Slovenia is linked to the development of the gay and lesbian movement. Its origins date back to the mid-1980s, and coincide with the publication of the anthology of translated and original (i.e., Slovenian) homoerotic literature, and the foundation of the specialized ŠKUC[3] book series Lambda and Vizibilija (Tratnik, *Samo* 94-96). In the subsequent years, these collections have encouraged the representatives of the LGBTQ scene to write and publish their work. Crucial for the development of gay and lesbian movement and literature was the first Magnus festival of homosexual culture, which took place in Ljubljana in 1984, followed by a few alternative publications that emerged within the gay community. In October 1987 *Mladina* magazine published the supplement "We Love Women" with translated and original texts, which is considered the official beginning of the lesbian movement in Slovenia. Although the movement later developed in a variety of directions, comprising other sexual and gender minorities in the process, the two central spaces of the movement are still the gay club Tiffany and lesbian club Monokel at Metelkova in Ljubljana (Velikonja 69). The reason for that is primarily the fact that the two clubs have been operating without interruption for twenty years.

The term *gay studies/criticism* encompasses a broad field of research (Childers and Hentzi 120), including feminist research into the historical construction of gender as well as anti-homophobic theories of the historical production and reproduction of sexuality. Both lesbian and gay studies are political in the sense that they acknowledge the marginalized and minority discourses, reflect on the formation of the canon, and question the types and effects of repression. Lesbian studies were less developed even during the period of the rise of gay studies. Nevertheless, in a very short time, lesbian studies have managed to create their own (and not merely common) history. It is a history they sometimes have to fight for even in the context of "straight" feminism or the gay movement in order to be regarded as an equal within an already established movement, or as a variant in the context of other movements (Childers and Hentzi 167-168). While traditional gay/lesbian literary scholarship attempts to establish "the truth" about the sexual orientation of an author/literary character/text, queer theory is more interested in establishing why certain views seem self-evident and in identifying the mechanisms behind heteronormativity (Zavrl 105). The queer approach maintains the criticism of a unified identity, accentuating sexual non-normativity instead of sexual identity. The queer movement and queer theory are located precisely where the analysis

3 ŠKUC is one of the most prominent non-profit organizations for cultural production in Slovenia.

of the production of the modern body merges with the arrival of the postmodern bodies to the scene (Andrieu and Boetsch 239-242).

Queer theory – despite the criticism directed at its indeterminacy, excessiveness and transgressiveness – is a modern discipline that has provided scholarship and everyday life with many benefits;[4] for instance, the terminological amelioration of existing discourse, the raising of biopolitical issues, and the establishing of connections between queer theory and narratology. Especially the latter represents an important updating of literary scholarship. Since a number of queer theory pioneers have made significant contributions to narrative theory (e.g., de Lauretis, Miller, Sedgwick) as well as analysed narrative texts, queer theory has aligned with narratology from the very beginning. It is precisely through the development of strategies for narrative analysis (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 478) that queer theory strives to find innovative ways of questioning. Its goal is not to simply identify certain authors or works as *queer*, but also to subject canonical or heterosexual texts to queer reading (to so-called *queering*). Apart from that, an important contribution of queer theory to the theory of narrative is also the questioning of the relationship between narrative structure and sexuality.

The analytical-interpretative method I will employ in my treatment of the texts is an attempt to contribute to the reflection on and the formation of a Slovenian/European literary canon, examining the types and effects of suppression of marginalized or minority discourses in the process. These concerns belong to the domain of gay and lesbian studies. However, in my readings of the texts I will combine this traditional method with the study of characterisation and narrative – that is, the approach contributed by queer theory. Queer analysis of characterisation not only places homosexual characters into a certain context or defines their behaviour; it also reveals how frustrating the expectations regarding sexual identity are for these characters. In my exploration of the narrative structure, I will observe how it deviates from the traditional principles of story coherence and narrative ending. It is logical that less predictable non-normative sexual practices not only depict "different" kinds of sexuality on the thematic level – i.e., the story (e.g., narcissism, fetishism, anal eroticism) – but also introduce various innovations and diversions on the narrative level.

Brane Mozetič (1958) is a poet, writer, editor, translator, promotor of Slovenian literature, and the most established Slovenian gay activist. The main protagonist of his third novel, *Objemi norosti* (Embraces of madness, 2015), is a gay man who is spending a summer month translating in a translators' colony in an unnamed country. In this novel, madness – a recurrent theme in Mozetič's work – refers even to the paranoid

4 No particular attention will be paid to the acknowledged advantages cited in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 477), i.e. the expression of "newfound discontinuities within the sex-gender-sexuality system" (Sedgwick), "resignif[ication of] apparently stable terms of identity" (Butler), and prediction of an incomplete and undeveloped perverse future (Berlant and Warner).

fear of refugees. It is, in fact, through the lens of this particular aspect of madness that the author criticises social anomalies. How does sexuality relate to the novel's narrative structure? Combining the realistic-naturalistic style with the asceticism of a reporter's gaze and uncompromising sincerity, the writer bypassed the Slovenian literary tradition of treating homosexuality as a morally perverted or merely ethereal relationship (Zupan Sosič, *Robovi* 328).

The existential anxiety caused by sexual identity is considerably more pronounced in the lesbian novel *Bazen* (The pool, 2017) by Nataša Sukič (1962). In her fourth novel, the writer, DJ, lesbian activist and politician places her literary character, an unnamed young woman, in a situation of making a decision about her lesbianism. Since she is growing up in a conservative environment and in a dysfunctional family, the revelation of her lesbian identity is extremely difficult. Like in Sukič's other narratives, the main structural principle is the fragment. Although in this novel the fragmentarity on the level of the story is less obvious due to the characteristics of the Bildungsroman, it is considerably more prominent on the narrative and structural line. According to queer theory, such deviations from the traditional narrative line reveal non-classical sexual practice, and tend to loosen the heteronormative (narrative) formulas.

Suzana Tratnik (1963) is a writer, translator, publicist, sociologist and lesbian activist; in her 2001 novel *My Name is Damjan* she ascribed existential anxiety to the transgender[5] Damjan. The titular hero is a transgender person, a woman who feels like a man and who, revealingly, repeats time and again that he has no traumas and that there is nothing wrong with him; that he is completely "normal". It was due to Damjan's identity confusion that the novel was initially inaccurately described as the first Slovenian lesbian novel, while today we can identify it as the first Slovenian transgender novel. The first Slovenian lesbian novel is *Third World* (2007) by the same author. Queer narrative analysis often reveals that less predictable sexual practices not only depict "queer" types of sexuality but also narrative innovations. This is also the case in this novel as the transgender person is extraordinary already on the structural level: Damjan's identity puzzle is also a narrative enigma. A transgender character also appears in the short story collection *Družinske parabole* (Family parables, 2005) by Gojmir Polajnar[6] (1964), although

5 Transgender is an umbrella term for various phenomena, such as transgender positions, transsexuality, transvestism, intersexuality, etc. Based on their gender identity, a transgender person does not conform to the established division of the biological sexes and social genders, or fluctuates between them, thus transcending the binary divide. The term transvestite refers to drag kings and drag queens, and to male and female cross-dressers. A transsexual is a person who identifies with a gender that does not correspond to the one they were assigned at birth, and they often seek medical help to transition to the desired sex and gender (Bibič et al.).

6 Gojmir Polajnar is a pseudonym used by philosopher, sociologist and writer Boris Pintar, who has been living abroad for a long time. In Slovenia the gay literary scene has been diluted in the recent years, since almost all gay authors live beyond the country's borders. For instance, Milan Šelj lives in London, Uroš Prah in Vienna, Aljaž Koprivnikar between Prague and Lisbon, and Gašper Malej in various places around the globe.

the main protagonists are gay men. The basic structure of the realistic stories in this collection is parabolic and grotesque; the stories juxtapose various events or states with a truth that is generally revealed as a paradox. This truth is similar to the message that most of the novels and short stories addressed in this study convey: the conservative, ordinary patriarchal clerical environment that rejects those who are sexually different is also hostile towards those who are nationally and socially different. The patriarchal matrix not only discards the gay and the transsexual, it also violently attacks the foreign and the poor.

The functioning of the fairy tale structure in writer, translator, performer and activist Urška Sterle's (1979) short story collection *Večno vojno stanje* (Eternal martial law, 2010) is similarly subversive as that of the parable model in Polajnar's book. The first person narrator moves through the city and analyses and evaluates in Marxist terms the capitalist sludge that various literary characters wade through. The selection of the people from the margin as the main protagonists reflects the author's view of the margin as rebellious, critical and creative. The central perspective is lesbian, and a central figure is that of a female dragon, a monster that the lesbian body received from the heteronormative society. This perspective may also be interpreted as activism and the author's personal eternal martial law, since the lesbian body is a site where the effects of betrayals, everyday fascisms and conformisms are even more blatantly manifested than elsewhere.

The short stories in writer and translator Jedrt Lapuh Maležič's (1979) collection *Bojne barve* (War paint, 2016) are also set at the intersection of the lesbian and straight worlds. Based on their positioning, the literary protagonists, all members of the LGBTQ community, are roughly divided into two groups: one consists of lesbians, gays, transgender people or transsexuals, and the other of their opponents, usually homophobes who strive to harm or even to destroy them. Little wonder, then, that the lesbians embark on a battle with the world only when they cover themselves with layers of cosmetics – the (titular) war paint. The traditional narrative feels contemporary only due to the structure of the speech. According to queer theory, the criticism of the heteronormative formulas in this collection is therefore reflected on the level of the story, much less on the level of narrative.

This sort of reflection is also the case in activist and writer Vesna Lemaić's (1981) novel *Kokoška in ptiči* (Hen and the birds, 2014): the level of the story is subversive, while the narrative level is significantly less so. The main character in this straightforward and realistic text is a lesbian who narrates the story about the 15o (15 October) movement and the events during the six-month occupation of the area in front of the Ljubljana Stock Exchange in 2011 and 2012; the style is testimonial, corroborated by documentarism. The narrative abounds in factual data, links to websites, media reports, a police record, articles about the responses to the protests, etc. Compared to other LGBTQ narratives, this is the only Slovenian novel in which the main protagonist is

not frustrated about revealing her lesbian identity. It seems that these frustrations are completely obscured by the protest engagement.

Lesbian protagonists experience a significantly larger amount of identity confusion in activist and writer Teja Oblak's (1983) short story collection *Kadetke, tovornjakarice in tete* (Twinkets, dieseldykes and queens, 2012). In these stories, the identity confusion is implicit also on the narrative level, specifically in the comic distance. The book diverges from classical realist poetics through its consistent humour and erotization of the story line. For Oblak, eroticism is the essential ingredient of lesbian identity, which is signalled by the motto at the beginning of the book, by the quotation by Audre Lorde. The consistent humorous vitalism charts a new dimension in Slovenian lesbian literature, as it evades victimisation. In this collection, victim positions – which are the *sine qua non* of literature written by sexual minorities in Slovenia – are completely ignored.

Due to their obvious linearity, the narratives by Lapuh Maležič, Lemaić and Oblak function rather traditionally. *Kdo ima druge skrbi* (Who has other worries, 2014), a novel by poet, writer, composer, producer and activist Nina Dragičević (1984), is notably different. Observed from the perspective of queer theory combined with narrative theory, the inquiries into the relationships between the narrative structure and sexuality are decidedly innovative. The organization of this modernist narrative is utterly untraditional both linguistically and structurally. The narrative line is not only interrupted by un/connected references, but also by lyricisation[7] and scenarisation, i.e., by the addition of lyrical and dramatic elements, which are structurally the most obvious on the level of form. Dragičević's novel is also a convenient cue for some final remarks, as it contains three of the four important changes the Slovenian LGBTQ narrative has undergone since 2000: the predominance of lesbian themes, motives and characters; absence of victimisation; and difference as a reflection of subversiveness on the narrative level. Due to the agrammaticality, associative logic and modernist verbosity of Dragičević's novel, the remaining novelty – the presence of a transgender literary character – cannot be established. The text does, however, thematise the fluidity of gender and other identity manifestations.

The predominance of lesbian themes and motives, as well as lesbian characters, is tightly connected to the Slovenian lesbian community, which is currently stronger and more active than the gay community. It is also more notable in terms of literary accolades. Victimisation is avoided in a variety of ways but most often by enhancing humour (cf. Lapuh Maležič, Lemaić, Oblak, Sterle and Tratnik) or irony (Polajnar, Sterle,

7 Lyricisation is an instance of digression that transforms the narrative by the insertion of lyrical elements, which brings the narrative in the vicinity of lyrical poetry and lyricism. In contrast, scenarisation transforms the narrative through the insertion of dramatic elements in the manner of a screenplay – concretely, through the insertion of (internal) monologues and dialogues, through the creation of scenes in the narrative, as well as through adaptation to the structure of speech (Zupan Sosič, *Teorija* 336-337, and 371).

Dragičević), and by placing literary characters outside the hospital (the most frequent setting in the previous century). On the narrative level, victimisation is avoided by employing essayisation to reflect on the sexual difference, and consequently abolish the passivity of the victim of heteronormativity. The subversiveness on the narrative level, combined with characterisation analysis, is actually the perspective that queer theory considers the most important. Narrative innovations of this kind can be found in *My name is Damjan*, *Bazen, Družinske parabole*, *Večno vojno stanje* and *Kdo ima druge skrbi*. Literary characters are generally frustrated by the expectations regarding their sexual identity, and their identity crises are connected to the criticism of society. A transgender character is present in one novel (Tratnik's *My Name is Damjan*)[8] and in three collections of short stories (Lapuh Maležič, Oblak and Polajnar). Due to its extra-literary character, I have not yet mentioned the fifth novelty that is just as exciting: since 2000, 29[9] prose narrative books have been written by the representatives of sexual minorities who explicitly thematise LGBTQ issues.

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8 Transgender issues also appear in Nataša Sukić's novel *Molji živijo v prahu*.

9 The sum of all narrative books by the analysed nine authors is 29 (not counting works for children and young adults): Mozetič 2, Sukič 6, Tratnik 9, Polajnar and Pintar 2, Sterle 3, Lapuh Maležič 2, Lemaič 3, Oblak 1, Dragičevič 1. Due to its blatant triviality, I did not analyse Mojca Vakselj's novel *MiaXara*.

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The Apparitional Gay and the Invisible Everyone Else – LGBTQ+ Identities in Contemporary Croatian Playwriting

Jasna Jasna Žmak

Abstract: Although Croatian literary fiction has lately seen a noticeable rise in LGBTQ+ authors and themes, the same cannot be said about the sphere of playwriting. Seldom clearly outed and openly represented as homosexual, LGBTQ+ characters in Croatian drama are actually always – gay men, always accompanied by at least a little dose of (auto)homophobia. This means that the entirety of other "sexually variant" identities – including lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer – are quite literally invisible.

As far as the representation of gay men is concerned, I will approach it through the concept of the *apparitional lesbian*, borrowed from Terry Castle, who uses it in order to describe the "haunting" presence of lesbian identities in the history of literature. In my presentation, I will argue that the same concept can be applied to the ways gay men are present in contemporary Croatian plays.

More often hidden than exposed, silent than loud, confused than lucid, the *apparitional gay* in Croatian playwriting thus becomes the prototypical figure that reveals the mainstream social attitude towards LGBTQ+ identities in the wider social sphere. Examining works by authors such as Vladimir Stojsavljević, Tomislav Zajec, Dino Pešut and Goran Ferčec, whose works are the (only) ones that have featured gay characters in Croatian plays, I will draw out the contours of this *apparitional gay* figure. I will analyze the way he has thus far "lived" in Croatian theatres, exploring the paradoxes of his existence, while simultaneously pointing out that a research of this kind has never taken place before.

Keywords: Terry Castle, Croatian playwriting, Croatian theatre, LGBTQ plays, Tomislav Zajec, Dino Pešut

In 2018 I was invited to take part in the round table *Homosexual Identities in Contemporary Croatian Plays* in Zagreb Youth Theatre, in connection with one of the theatre's premieres, quite symbolically titled *What is Missing* [*Ono što nedostaje*]. The moderator, a

queer writer himself, Srđan Sandić[1] invited Darko Lukić, also a queer writer, dramaturg and researcher, and me as speakers. When I first received the call, I asked Sandić what exactly we are going to talk about, since, from what I knew, there really were not many openly homosexual identities in contemporary Croatian plays.

This scarcity, as it turned out, was one of the main topics of our round table, echoing Terry Castle's claim asserted in her groundbreaking exploration of lesbian characters in the literary canon. In *The Apparitional Lesbian* Castle writes how "for too long our thinking has been dominated by a kind of scarcity model: either there aren't any lesbians at all, or too few to matter" (18, 19), whereas she used the rest of her book to prove this kind of oblivious thinking wrong, with one of the central questions of her book being: "why is it so difficult to see the lesbian – even when she is there, quite plainly, in front of us?" (4). In this paper, I will ask the same question in relation to the existence of all LGBTQ+ identities in the Croatian dramatic canon.

Although an important aspect of Castle's research refers to the problematic relations inscribed in the, too rarely problematised, acronym LGBTQ+, namely the fact that too often "we 'forget' about the lesbian by focusing instead on gay men" (12), my research will reiterate exactly that same position she holds problematic. Not because of my own convictions but thanks to the reality of the material at hand.

While one can find some, albeit rather scarce and often hardly visible, traces of homosexual identities in contemporary Croatian playwriting, all other identities are almost completely lacking. To be more precise, if one were to express oneself in numbers, one could say there are around 12 openly gay characters in the history of Croatian drama, 2 lesbians and 1 transvestite. And more often than not, they have not been the main characters in their plays. And even when that was the case, their non-normative sexuality was never the central issue of the pieces at stake.

The first historical appearance of a homosexual act in the works of Croatian dramatists appears in *Marlowe* by Vladimir Stojsavljević. The first part of his *Elizabethan Trilogy* (for a detailed interpretation see Govedić "Volja") features a gay sex scene, obviously relying on frequent scholarly claims about Christopher Marlowe's homosexuality (Dickson). Although the stage instructions do not venture further from stating that the time and place of the scene are *Night* and *Somewhere*, the dialogue between the two characters, Marlowe and Ingram, clearly suggests some anal sex is happening.

Interestingly enough, after *Marlowe* it took another ten years for gays to appear again in a Croatian play, and once again, thanks to Stojsavljević. His *Love Gossip* [*Trač*

1 Since his work was never staged in a professional setting I did not include him in this analysis, focusing instead exclusively on the authors whose texts have been put on stage as professional performances.

o ljubavi] from 1994, premiered a year later in Zagreb's Theatre &TD, directed by the author himself, was the first play to feature explicit mention of the word *fag* (*peder*). A story about three characters, two brothers and two gays, was much more explicit in putting a homosexual relationship directly on stage, although not so explicit as to show its carnal, physical aspect or to repeat the word *fag* once more (Ružić "Iluzija"). For that to happen, we will have to wait another 20 years. *Love Gossip* features another *first* when Croatian playwriting is concerned – it was the first one to deal with the theme of the HIV epidemic, although the name of the disease is never spoken out loud.

During the ten years after Stojsavljević there was one more play dealing with non-normative sexualities – *John Smith, Princess of Wales* [*John Smith, princeza od Walesa*] by Tomislav Zajec, subtitled *An Event from British Life, in one scene* [*Zgoda iz britanskog života, u jednom prizoru*]. It was the first text published by an author that would, in the following years, rise to be one of the most prominent and proliferate playwrights in the region.

Zajec's first play tells the story of John Smith, a British car mechanic, obsessed with Lady Di to such a degree that he often takes on her identity, by means of her clothes and make-up. The trouble starts when his surroundings, meaning his ex-wife, one of his customers and his boss, find out about it. Although some critics insist on differentiating John Smith's transvestitism from transgender and transsexual practices, limiting his transgression only to cross-dressing (Baković 196), I opt for a more courageous reading in which John Smith is one of those rare LGBTQ+ characters in Croatian plays that are not (only) gay. The text, I believe offers more than one indication for such a reading, from Diana as the ultimate gay icon (for a detailed analysis of the ways in which Lady Di is queer, see Spurlin) to its fatalistic ending in which John Smith kills all the other characters in a sudden burst of violence. In this sense, I believe that *John Smith* is an obvious manifestation of transphobic feelings, pathologising this identity and reducing its complexities.

Zajec is also the author of another gay-themed play, *What Is Missing* from 2015, staged in 2017, that Ružić describes as "at times funny, and precisely structured, but at the same time full of common places which add a tone of banality to everyday tragedies" ("Uvjerljiva dominacija"). Interestingly enough, another critic, Nina Ožegović, calls Zajec's text a "multilayered, lively, intelligent, strong, touching and poetic text that is also very brave and, in relation to the dominant conservative-catholic discourse in Croatia, even subversive and provocative", pointing out later on that the performance based on it contains probably "the most explicit depiction of a homosexual act in Croatian theatre" ("Ono što nedostaje"). Although there is no sex on stage, there is kissing that could probably be also characterised as foreplay, so Ožegović's claim possibly holds true.

But, at the same time, it feels like the author did not get rid of the homophobia prevalent in his earlier piece as both of his two gay characters are pretty bad at

handling their sexuality, a feeling that is best expressed in the following sentence one of them says to his *girlfriend*: "As if there is some tragic mistake … somewhere … inside of me". That is also the most explicit they will get when it comes to words, showing once again how coming out is sometimes much more difficult to get by in language than in the physical world.

Of course, it is not the only play that suffers from this syndrome. Firstly written as a film script and produced as a feature film in 2002, *Fine Dead Girls* [*Fine mrtve djevojke*] was later, in 2013, adapted for stage too, with the same team behind it. Writer Mate Matišić and director Dalibor Matanić, two of the most prolific and popular contemporary authors, created a movie that has, as Mima Simić writes in her review ("Fine mrtve"), entered the canon as the first lesbian movie in Croatian history. But, unfortunately, the aim of Simić's text is to prove that "not only it is not a lesbian movie, but a sexist and patriarchal product which operates in the same cruel film tradition that represents lesbians (and women) as victims, and posits lesbian relationships as an impossibility". The problem is that one cannot resist the feeling that the lesbian identity was only chosen by the authors as the best possible contrasting factor used for criticising Croatian society, not because of their genuine interest in the topic. And it seems that the film's theatrical adaptation suffers from the same problem. Writing about the staging which "becomes darker and more bitter than the movie" (Govedić "Fine"), Ružić effectively summarizes the authorial position stating how "the director and the dramatist seemingly have a heart for everyone, but in reality they don't have it for anyone, not even for the two leading heroines" ("Duhovit i provokativan").

The most problematic layer of the representation of lesbian identities in this movie, which is then also transported to the play, is, as Simić writes, the fact that the two main characters "treat their homosexuality as, what Weiss calls the 'happen to be gay' syndrome that shouldn't and couldn't have any wider implications on the society" ("Fine mrtve"). That is also why the film ends with one of them dying, while the other is reintegrated into the heterosexual matrix where she erases her previous sexual identity. As Dolan writes, "death or exile as plot devices appear often in lesbian plays of the 1980s, as if the playwrights, while describing lesbian life, could only write their characters' strengths [...] by later punishing them with tragedies" (491) and this text proves that some cultural contexts are still stuck in the same paradigm that does not allow for different scenarios when LGBTQ+ identities are in question.

Clearly, both *Fine Dead Girls* and *John Smith, Princess of Wales* are examples of texts that work on affirming what Clum would call the outside or heterosexual point of view towards the gay subject matter (171) with *What is Missing* being stuck somewhere in the middle. During and after the 2000s, there were two more authors whose plays included

non-heterosexual characters which could be considered as more *inside* examples of gay representation on stage – Goran Ferčec and Dino Pešut.

Two Ferčec's texts featured gay men as main characters, although one of them, *A Letter to Heiner M.* [*Pismo Heineru M.*] from 2008, which can also be read as an open love letter to the German writer and director Heiner Müller, only very marginally hints at the characters' homosexuality, focusing instead on elements of political identity of an unnamed Eastern European author.

His other text *Cruising* [*Kruženje*] from 2007, subtitled *Fragments of the Discourse of Desire* [*Fragmenti diskursa žudnje*] deals with the activity of cruising, typical for the gay community, openly discussing different parts of this "mating ritual", but in a very poetic way which paradoxically often obscures its homosexual subtext. The piece offers seven different possible locations as it setting, unsurprisingly, all of them unguarded public spaces, mostly parks, which are known as cruising spaces *par excellance*. Abundant with metaphors, the basic one being the one that identifies cruising with hunting, it often invokes themes of fear and secrecy, thus wrapping the whole narrative in an air of danger, transgression and even guilt, with shame never being more than a few steps away. And although this text is supposed to be all about sexuality, sexuality is seldom spoken of explicitly.

It is thus not surprising that, reading Ferčec's work, Terry Castle's words are easily invoked, especially when she writes how "the lesbian is never with us, it seems, but always somewhere else: in the shadows, in the margins, hidden from history, out of sight, out of mind, a wanderer in the dusk, a lost soul, a tragic mistake, a pale denizen of the night" (2). Although part of the reason can definitely be found in the subtleness and elusiveness which are a trademark of Ferčec's writing in general, using such language results in compliance with the apparitional mode of thinking about LGBTQ+ identities.

The youngest of all the authors involved in this research, Dino Pešut has started working in the 2010s and has been the only Croatian playwright continuously "using" homosexual identities in almost all of his plays. Pešut's four award-winning texts: *L.O.S.E.R.S.* [*L.U.Z.E.R.I.*] written in 2012, *(Pen)ultimate Panda or Static* [*(Pret)posljednja panda ili statika*] written in 2014, *Grand Hotel Abyss* [*Veliki hotel bezdan*] and *Stela, flood* [*Stela, poplava*], both from 2016, all feature at least one gay character. And although, with the exception of *L.O.S.E.R.S.* to some extent, none of his works deal directly with their sexuality, and although their sexuality is often presented as something more burdensome than pleasant, and although it always stays at the margins of the main plot lines, what is common to all of them is the fact they speak about it in an open way. Whereas one could easily be confused about the sexuality of characters from previously mentioned plays, Pešut leaves no doubt in this sense. When speaking about the love that dares not speak its name, he dares do it.

The word *fag* is spoken out aloud often and without shame, as is the word *gay*, often accompanied with a healthy dose of irony. Stereotypes are frequently invoked,

but never to be reinforced, always to be deconstructed. Although sometimes quite far away one from another, the universes of his plays all share the same combination of social and political concerns intertwined with the personal sphere so it is only natural the stigma his characters carry because of their sexuality is never exclusively posed as a personal one, but always demonstrated as "inherited" from the society. Having said that, when one takes in consideration the totality of his work, Pešut has definitely done a lot to bring visibility to the gay identities in Croatian theatre, making a huge leap forward from previous shy and hidden representations, a leap that has to do, no doubt, not only with his personal voice, but also more importantly with the changes that have happened in the social fabric of the Croatian society in the past 20 years.

Ending this short overview, I want to point out that, in pursuing this kind of analysis, my aim was definitely not to put responsibility on individual authors or blame them for "wrong" representations. As we all know, the line between *problematic representations* and *representations of problematic issues* is often a fine one, and as long as LGBTQ+ remains a problematic issue, its representations will be prone to that kind of readings.

Another *caveat* concerns the fact that I have focused exclusively on characters that have offered direct "proof" of their LGBTQ+ identity. I am aware of all the dangers this kind of reductive reading implies but my interest here lied primarily in exploring the dynamic of the dramatic field and its relations towards LGBTQ+ identities in its totality, during the last thirty plus years, since the first non-hetero character appeared on the Croatian (then Yugoslav) stage. Since this kind of research was previously never pursued, and in this sense I consider it as only the first step, a kind of prerequisite for future, more transgressive, in-depth and complex, analyses which will hopefully broaden the narrow scope I was compelled to abide to.

After all is said and done, I can only conclude that, while Jill Dolan asserts that some "theorists and artists believe 'lesbian and gay drama' is already an archaic category, no longer necessary because such work has gradually assimilated into mainstream theatre and performance" (486), Croatian playwriting is still very far from that kind of assimilation. In other words, if we use the central thesis that Simić offers in her analysis of *Fine Dead Girls* ("Fine mrtve"), namely that the film touches upon the sexuality issue just superficially and that it is thus not a real lesbian movie, we could, in the same manner conclude that the Croatian stage has yet to wait its first real LGBTQ+ play.

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Izvlečki (Abstracts in Slovenian)

Gregory Woods

LGBT književnost v vzhodni Evropi: pogled z zahoda

Na zahodu na vzhodnoevropsko LGBT književnost večinoma gledamo kot na nekaj neobstoječega (neznanega), skritega (zaradi osebne ali državne cenzure) ali pa zaostalega (za literaturo naprednejšega zahoda). Še tista sorazmerno majhna pozornost, ki jo zahodni LGBT študiji posvečajo vzhodni Evropi, je omejena na raziskovanje ruske kulture. Večina priročnikov, namenjenih LGBT študijem, vsebuje, če sploh, članke zgolj o Rusiji.

Pred letom 1989 smo na vzhodno Evropo gledali kot na nekakšno nediferencirano gmoto vsiljenih tišin. Zahodnim LGBT bralcem je najbolje poznana vzhodna LGBT kultura, ki se je razcvetela v izgnanstvu na zahodu – najboljši primer je Diaghilev, »zahodnjaški« Rus, ki je na zahodu igral na sloves umetnika orientalskega izvora.

Ko je na začetku tridesetih let 20. stoletja Marina Cvetajeva v pariškem salonu Natalie Barney brala svoje pesmi, se je publiki lezbičnih modernistk zdela staromodna tako v findesièclovskih idejah kakor tudi oblačilih. Podobni prizori so se ponovili še večkrat, ko je vzhod prišel na zahod. Po letu 1989 je zahod pričakoval, da bo vzhod hitro »dohitel« njegove domnevno liberalne standarde, čeprav se jih je tudi sam večkrat otepal, dokler (kot denimo Združeno kraljestvo) ga ni v to prisililo Evropsko sodišče za človekove pravice.

Ali naj – kadar na zahodu razmišljamo o novih LGBT študijah na vzhodu – pričakujemo podobnosti ali razlike? Literatura z vzhoda preigrava iste teme, kot smo jih navajeni na zahodu: pripoved o prehodu od srama k ponosu, subverzivni potencial kempa, gejevsko zasenčevanje lezbijk, prepustne meje med prijateljstvom in ljubeznijo, odnosi med kvirovskimi otroki ter družinami, šolami in verskimi ustanovami, povezovanje kvirovstva z umetniško občutljivostjo, orientalistične fantazije, zvestoba določenim osebam in mitom iz antičnega sveta, vsenavzočnost homofobije in mizoginije, privlačnost normativne zveze dveh in odpor do nje, spolna dvoumnost in fluidnost, razvoj identitete v otroštvu, prepovedana želja itn. Toda kakšne so variacije za vsakega od teh primerov, ki so značilne za izkušnje z vzhoda?

Tudi kar zadeva literarnovedno prakso na zahodu najbrž pričakujemo, da se strokovnjaki z vzhoda ukvarjajo s podobnimi projekti kot mi. Vsi poskušamo prepoznavati LGBT avtorje in določene teme v njihovih besedilih, ponovno odkrivamo izgubljena ali zamolčana ali pozabljena kvirovska besedila, na novo, v luči liberalističnih načel, vrednotimo kvirovska besedila, ki so bila prej podcenjena ali pa spregledana, kvirovsko

beremo kanonska besedila, s čimer jih potujujemo in prenavljamo, prepoznavamo in kritično beremo homofobna besedila. Kolikor je to v konservativnih institucijah mogoče, pokvirjamo tudi znanost samo. Strokovnjaki na različnih koncih sveta so na različnih stopnjah tega razvoja, toda kakšne so vzhodnoevropske posebnosti razvoja znanstvenega delovanja?

Kaj se lahko naučimo drug od drugega, ne le v smislu specifičnih informacij (knjige, avtorji, gibanja), ampak tudi razvoja svežih pogledov? Ali bi lahko rekli, da se kulturno težišče odmika od zahoda Evrope, ravno tako kot se v svetovnem merilu premika stran od obal Atlantika?

Milena Mileva Blažić

Primerjalna analiza mladinskih besedil – *Dečki* in *Fantje iz gline*

Družbene spremembe vplivajo na mladinsko književnost s problemskimi temami, med katere sodijo npr. begunci, bolezen, drugačnost, revščina, smrt, spolnost, vojna idr. Iskanje identitete je stalnica v mladinski književnosti. V sodobnem času je zaslediti tematiko iskanja (spolne) identitete v slikanicah, ki so napisane s perspektive odraslega in so večnaslovniško odprte. Bistveni kriterij je večnaslovniško pisanje ali tekst za otroke in kontekst za odrasle. Iskanje (spolne) identitete je osrednja tema mladinskih romanov Franceta Novšaka *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* (1938) in *Fantje iz gline* Janje Vidmar (2005). Na osnovi teorije tabujev v mladinski književnosti Igorja Saksida avtorica prispevka v romanu *Dečki* razbira temo iskanja (spolne) identitete. Zgodba vsebuje notranje in zunanje konflikte, dečka nista izobčenca, jezik ni slogovno zaznamovan, pomembno je razpoloženje. Pri *Dečkih iz gline* pa so notranji konflikti pozunanjeni, liki so prikazani kot izobčenci, dominirajo kletvice, vulgarizmi, poudarjeno je negativno razpoloženje in subjektivne predstave, zato se ta roman bolj osredotoča na dogajanje in manj na literarni lik.

Vitaly Chernetsky

V iskanju ozemelj svobode: Kozlenkov *Tanger* in kvirovski izziv ukrajinskemu kanonu

Roman *Tanzher* avtorja Ivana Kozlenka je postal eden največjih kulturnih dogodkov v Ukrajini leta 2017. Objavila ga je ugledna mainstreamovska založba Komora, bil pa je deležen tudi obširnih razprav v medijih in nominiran za več nagrad. To je bilo nekaj nezaslišanega v ukrajinski literaturi: roman s kvirovsko tematiko in zgodbo, ki se osredotoča na dva biseksualna ljubezenska trikotnika – prvi je postavljen v dvajseta leta prejšnjega stoletja, drugi pa v začetek tega tisočletja – ni sprožil vala homofobnih

odzivov. Njegovih reprezentacij niso napadli desni skrajneži, kot se je to večkrat zgodilo drugim publikacijam z gejevsko tematiko; najbolj odmeven primer tega je leta 2009 objavljena antologija *120 storinok Sodomu* (120 strani Sodome). Roman, ki se dogaja v Odesi, konstruira alternativni, afirmativni mit in na novo interpretira poglavje v zgodovini mesta, ki se povezuje z dnevi v dvajsetih letih 20. stoletja, ko je to služilo kot filmska prestolnica Ukrajine, ter poskusi vpeljati to pozitivno kvirovsko pripoved v nacionalni literarni kanon. Prejšnji poskusi pokvirjenja pomembnih figur v ukrajinskem literarnem panteonu so vsi po vrsti sprožali škandale. Zakaj je bil sprejem Kozlenkovega romana tako drugačen? Avtor v prispevku analizira projekt utopične transgresije, ki jo roman skuša prikazati, in ga umesti tako v domače sociokulturno področje kot v širši kontekst svetovne pisave LGBTQ, kontrakulturnih praks in izzivov, s katerimi se soočajo postkomunistične družbe v boju z novim konservativnim zasukom nacionalne kulturne politike.

Matteo Colombi in Alenka Koron

Kvirovska čustva? Pripovedna oblika čustev v *Nobenem glasu* Suzane Tratnik in romanu *Eskorta* Michala Hvoreckýja

Literatura se zdi že na prvi pogled neločljiva od čustev – bodisi kvirovske ali strejtovske vrste. Na zahodu so bila čustva priznana kot ključni del literarne izkušnje že vsaj od Platona in Aristotela dalje. Toda primeri razsvetljenstva in romantike, pa tudi modernizma in postmodernizma kažejo, da imajo lahko posamezna kulturna obdobja različne poglede na čustva. To dejstvo je bilo v zadnjih desetletjih vse pogosteje predmet proučevanja in v humanistiki je prišlo celo do tako imenovanega »afektivnega obrata«. Literarni študiji so se v tem obratu (med drugim) osredotočili na vlogo čustev kot pripovednega sredstva za oblikovanje zgodbe. Avtorica in avtor v prispevku pa bi rada povežeta afektivno naratologijo in kvirovske študije, ki proučujejo načine, na katere kvirovska literatura strukturira svoje pripovedi s prikazovanjem čustev. Osredotočita se na primer otrok in mladostnikov, ki se na kakršenkoli način ubadajo z vprašanjem kvirovske (in s tem tudi strejtovske) identitete: njihova čustva predstavljajo pomembno temo v kulturi LGBTQ, saj so večinoma predstavljena, kot da bi jih zaznamovalo nelagodje ali (včasih) tudi pozitivna oziroma obrambna »protičustva« (na ravni lika pa tudi pripovedovalca in avtorja). Prispevek analizira sodobni slovaško in slovensko literarno delo, ki se obe ukvarjata s temo otroštva in kvirovstva v času socializma in na prehodu v postsocializem, in predstavi dva vzhodnoevropska primera kvirovskih čustev: zbirko kratkih zgodb Suzane Tratnik *Noben glas* (2016) in roman *Eskorta* Michala Hvoreckýja (2007). Deli se opirata na različne afektivne strategije, vendar sta si podobni v poskusu priznati in hkrati zamegliti razločevanje med kvirovskimi in strejtovskimi čustvi.

Gábor Csiszár

Vojni spomini z vzhoda in zahoda: konstrukcija gejevske identitete Georga Faludyja

Mladi, biseksualni Faludy (1910–2006) je pisal homoerotične pesmi pod krinko zgodovinskih mask, dokler ni med drugo svetovno vojno prišel v stik z dvema homosocialnima prizoroma: eno leto je spoznaval arabsko kulturo v Maroku, tri leta pa je služil v ameriški vojski. Faludy je nenehno predeloval svoje spomine in pesmi, zato lahko sledimo razvoju gejevske persone v njegovem opusu. Med vojno in po njej je pisal članke o svojih arabskih nočeh za medije; leta 1962 je objavil avtobiografijo v angleškem jeziku, ki je bila v letih 1968–1970 in 1987 predelana v madžarščino. Prva štiri dela, vključno s kanonizirano angleško različico avtobiografije *My Happy Days in Hell*, so le namigovala na odnose med moškimi, v nasprotju s poznejšimi madžarskimi izdajami. Avtor skozi citate prikaže, kako je avtor na novo pisal svojo zgodovino, in rekonstruira dejanske dogodke s sodobnimi pismi, dnevniškimi zapisi in poznejšimi pričevanji. Pozabljena avtobiografska epizoda o njegovih letih v vojski iz leta 1947 vsebuje zanimive reference in gejevske karakterje, na podlagi katerih bi si lahko ustvarili drugačno podobo o poznejših literarnih reprezentacijah tega obdobja. Po drugi strani pa so v številnih avtorjevih pesmih homoseksualne dimenzije prikrite do pojava angleških prevodov, ki so jasneje ospoljeni. Naposled je Faludy ob pomoči novega stabilnega homoseksualnega razmerja, severnoameriškega okolja in gejevskega osvobodilnega gibanja ob koncu osemdesetih vendarle prišel iz klozeta.

Nina Dragičević

Sapfo ni bila pesnica: zvočni značaj poezije in njegov emancipatorni potencial

Ime *Sapfo* predstavlja temelje lezbičnih kultur. Je morda najsplošnejša koda za lezbištvo – četudi predvsem za belske lezbične skupnosti. Sapfo je znana kot »prva lezbična pesnica«. A ob težnjah po kategorizaciji umetnic glede na njihov izrazni medij je na mestu popravek: Sapfo ni bila pesnica, bila je glasbenica, zvočna umetnica. Skladateljica-vokalistka-instrumentalistka-kantavtorica. Kar je torej prišlo iz t. i. vzhodne Evrope in formiralo celotne t. i. zahodne diskurze, je bila glasba: poetika, ki je bila namenjena izvajanju, predvsem pa *poslušanju.* Avtorica se v razpravi osredotoča na brezno, ki se je razvilo preko osupljivega zanemarjanja *neohranjenih* zgodovinskih artefaktov in ki (zato) na mesto korenine lezbičnih kultur postavlja poezijo (kot samostojno umetniško kategorijo), četudi je ta nerazdružljiva od zvočnih umetnosti (denimo glasbe kot kategorije, ki ne diskriminira med verbocentričnimi in semiotično nestabilnimi zvočnimi konstrukti). Prispevek preko teorij glasbe in zvoka, temeljnih misli lezbičnih teoretičark ter primerov poezije avtoric s področja Jugoslavije in širšega prostora pokaže na jedrni značaj zvoka v kontekstih seksualne razlike in lezbične subjektivacije, kot se kažeta v

poeziji. S poudarjanjem neločljivosti poezije od zvočnosti pokaže, da je poezija šele tako in natanko zato primarni konstituent lezbičnih skupnosti kot potentnih političnih teles.

Denis Ferhatović

Spodnje perilo Jozefa Proneka: razseljenost, kvirovska želja in vzhodnoevropska maskulinost v Hemonovem romanu *Nowhere Man*

Aleksandar Hemon skozi celoten roman, prvenec, *Nowhere Man: Pronekove fantazije* (2002) slači in tepta avtofikcijskega protagonista Jozefa Proneka, tako dobesedno kot metaforično. Delo znova in znova ponazarja propad, ki je posledica Pronekove kulturne in jezikovne razseljenosti kot priseljenca v Združenih državah Amerike v spolnem in seksualnem smislu. Izkoreninjenost, kvirovska želja in maskulinost v krizi se srečajo v Pronekovi interakciji z ameriškim dekletom, njenim sostanovalcem gejem in njegovim fantom. Vseeno pa Pronekov položaj priseljenca ne pojasni v celoti njegovega ponižanja. Tudi v predvojnem Sarajevu Pronek uteleša nekonvencionalno maskulinost, kot je razvidno iz humorističnih opisov njegovih prvih nerodnih izkušenj s spolnostjo. Kljub statusu nerodnega obstranca v številnih okoljih se protagonist včasih pojavlja kot objekt erotične fantazije. V ukrajinskem delu pripovedi je Pronek objekt poželenja Victorja, Američana z ukrajinskimi koreninami in zaklozetiranega podiplomskega študenta, ki se ukvarja s kvirovsko tematiko. Victorjeve fantazije o Proneku so povezane z zahodnim pogledom na vzhodno Evropo, vendar v kontekstu Victorjevih številnih identitet in načina, kako je Pronek prikazan skozi celotno delo. Avtor prispevka meni, da če si ogledamo Hemonovo kompleksno sliko Proneka, lahko najdemo gejevski navdih na najbolj nepričakovanih mestih današnje vzhodnoevropske literature.

Jelena Jović

(Post)komunistične kvirovske identitete v delih *Rastlinjak* Uroša Filipovića in *Lubiewo* Michała Witkowskega

Deli *Rastlinjak* (Beograd, 2002) Uroša Filipovića in *Lubiewo* (Varšava, 2004) Michała Witkowskega sta izšli približno v istem času in obe dobili naziv prvega gejevskega romana v svoji državi, kjer sta sčasoma pridobili kultni status. Prispevek najprej opredeli zgodovinski, politični in kulturni kontekst, znotraj katerega se ustvarjajo podobnosti besedil pri reprezentaciji in naraciji kvirovskih identitet, nato pa se osredotoči na točke, kjer se pojavljajo razlike. Ena od glavnih stičnih točk je represivna komunistična družba nekdanje Jugoslavije in Ljudske republike Poljske, vendar pa je moderna, postkomunistična družba Poljske in Srbije z obljubljanjem demokracije in liberalizma tista, ki – paradoksalno – te identitete spravi v krizo in zaznamuje ključno točko razhajanja med obema besediloma.

Tatiana Klepikova

»Če je cukrček, bo vedno Miša«: kvirovske maskulinosti Jevgenija Haritonova

Jevgenij Haritonov (1941–1981), ikonski predstavnik pozne sovjetske gejevske literature, je poznan po svoji edini zbirki del *Pod domashnim arestom* (V hišnem zaporu), ki jo je zbral tik pred svojo prezgodnjo smrtjo leta 1981. Kljub fascinantni estetiki ter odprti in ponosni homoerotičnosti, ki je bila v Rusiji nekaj nezaslišanega od časov Mihaila Kuzmina (1872–1936), se je z njegovim delom ukvarjalo le nekaj raziskovalcev, večina pa se jih je osredotočala na vlogo binarnih modelov pri analiziranju njegove literarne zapuščine. Številne kratke zgodbe in pesmi so bile interpretirane skozi dinamiko med dominantno in podrejeno gejevsko maskulinostjo, njegovo najbolj znano delo *Dukhovka* (Pečica) pa se je pogosto bralo v luči razmerja med hegemonsko heteronormativnostjo in marginalizirano homoseksualnostjo, pri čemer se slednja »boji« pokazati sovražnemu okolju in je zato obsojena na tragičen obstoj. Avtorica v prispevku skuša prikazati, da Haritonovo literarno vesolje obstaja neodvisno od heteronormativnega sveta v stanju, ki mu pravi »vzporedna realnost«, ki ni niti podrejena heteronormativnosti niti je ne presega – preprosto *je*, njen edini namen pa je biti polje, kjer lahko Haritonov raziskuje moško telesno lepoto, popolnosti nepopolnega in nepopolnosti idealnega. V tem svetu, ki ga je avtor zgradil, strukture niso eksplicitno hierarhične, temveč prelivne in fluidne, znotraj njih pa Haritonov odpelje bralca na potovanje, ki ponudi nov pogled na kvirovske maskulinosti v ruski kulturi.

Vesna Liponik

Subverzivna konstrukcija spola v poeziji Kristine Hočevar

Prispevek se osredotoči na mesta v poeziji Kristine Hočevar, ki ospoljene površine izvajajo tako, da subvertirajo obstoječe konvencije. V njenih tekstih slednje poteka tako, da lezbično telo deluje kot nosilec vseh spolov. Pesniška persona v sebi združuje tako »majhnega fanta« (Naval, 34, I) kot tudi »malo / manj majhno dekle«. S tem se je mogoče navezati na Monique Wittig in njeno trditev v eseju *The Straight Mind*, da lezbijka ni ženska, saj ima kategorija spola svoje sidrišče zgolj v heteronormativni matrici. Lezbična pozicija predstavlja izstop iz ospoljene matrice in spodnašanje kategorije spola. Teksti Kristine Hočevar s kategorijo spola operirajo kot z naključnim in nezavezujočim označevalcem. Tovrstna raba ospoljenih oznak pa ne sprevrača le z njimi povezanih spolnih vlog, temveč nasprotuje starizmu in omogoča drugačno branje starostno zaznamovanih oznak; na primer v zbirki *Na zobeh aluminij, na ustnicah kreda* »gubaste in sivih las / punčke stolov ne prerastejo« (59). Pri tem v ospredje stopa ironija kot prevladujoče sredstvo implicitne družbene kritike v poeziji Kristine Hočevar. Tovrstno tekstno strategijo je mogoče zapaziti že v tretji pesniški zbirki Kristine Hočevar *Repki* (2008), pesnica pa

jo nadalje razvije in uporablja v svoji predzadnji zbirki *Na zobeh aluminij, na ustnicah kreda* (2012) ter v svoji zadnji pesniški zbirki *Naval* (2017).

Maruša Maligoj

Rekonceptualizacija ruske LGBTQ+ skupnosti: vpliv ruskih »anti-propagandnih« zakonov na diskurz o LGBTQ+

Ruski federalni in regionalni »anti-propagandni« zakoni, sprejeti med letoma 2006 in 2013, so imeli pomemben vpliv na ruski diskurz o LGBTQ+ skupnosti. V zakonih so prisotni zaznamovani izrazi, namen katerih je rekonceptualizirati socialno podobo LGBTQ+ skupnosti preko preoblikovanja jezika, ki se uporablja za govorjenje o LGBTQ+ skupnosti.

Tako federalni kot regionalni zakoni vsebujejo ideološko zaznamovane izraze, ki povezujejo homoseksualnost s patologijo in kriminalom ter jo zmotno poskušajo predstaviti kot ideološki koncept in/ali politično strategijo. Znotraj te nove opozicije med »tradicionalnim/naravnim« in »netradicionalnim/nenaravnim« je homoseksualnost skonstruirana kot moderni fenomen, ki je popolnoma tuj ruski družbi in v diametralnem nasprotju s tradicionalnimi vrednotami države. Ta homofobni diskurz se je že razširil v medije in vsakdanji govor in pričel preoblikovati percepcijo LGBTQ+ skupnosti v javnosti. Glede na to, da je ta diskurz uvedla oblast, ki ima moč nad produkcijo vsakršnega diskurza, kot tudi moč določiti, kateri diskurz je legitimen, je logično pričakovati, da bo ta prevladal nad vsemi ostalimi in pronical tudi v literarni jezik.

Izabela Morska

Obup Zygmunta Mycielskega ali kako nekatera pričevanja, povezana s kvirovsko zgodovino, meni nič tebi nič izpuhtijo v zrak

Leta 1908 je založnik dobil v tisk zbirko novel Josepha Conrada z naslovom *A Set of Six*. Ena od novel, »Il Conde«, je portret dejanskega poljskega plemiča, grofa Zygmunta Szembeka. Leta 1981 je Szembekov pravnuk, Zygmunt Mycielski, skladatelj in uglajen nasprotnik komunistične Poljske, poslal pismo Conradovemu biografu Zdzisławu Najderju, v katerem razkriva, da »Il Conde« temelji na homoseksualnih avanturah njegovega starega očeta v Neaplju na začetku 20. stoletja. Danes se zdi takšno razkritje dejanje čistega poguma in kljubovanja (tudi Mycielski je bil gej), toda pismo ni ugledalo luči sveta, dokler ni leta 2005 izšlo, in to v angleškem prevodu, v eseju Keitha Carabina »'A Very Charming Old Gentleman': Conrad, Count Szembek, and 'Il Conde'«. Dnevniki, ki jih je pisal Mycielski in so izšli po njegovi smrti, se danes berejo kot načrt za preživetje. Mycielski je ohranil dostojanstvo in jasen pogled, njegova nadarjenost za ohranjanje

neheteronormativnih družinskih struktur v neugodnih okoliščinah represivnega režima pa kliče k nadaljnjemu proučevanju.

Kevin Moss

Kemp Haritonova in ruska gejevska identiteta

Ruski *underground* pisatelj Jevgenij Haritonov je vse svoje življenje (1941–1981) preživel v Sovjetski zvezi pod grožnjo 121. člena kazenskega zakonika, ki je prepovedoval sodomijo, a si je uspel zagotoviti prostor za pisanje skoraj agresivno gejevske identitete. Čeprav nikoli ni potoval v tujino, se Haritonov pozicionira znotraj svetovne gejevske tradicije in uporablja kempovski humor za strategijo preživetja kot gejevski moški v ZSSR in v krogu heteroseksualnih disidentskih pisateljev, ki so bili njegovi kolegi. Prispevek obravnava kemp Haritonova skozi prizmo dela *How to be Gay* avtorja Davida Halperina kot načina teoretiziranja o spontanem gejevskem kulturnem slogu namesto zahodne kolonizacije. Pripoved Haritonova preizprašuje tako predstavo, da Sovjeti niso imeli gejevske identitete (Laurie Essig, David Tuller), kot tudi predstavo, da je bila ruskim gejem na voljo le podoba brezspolnega duhovnega homoseksualca in mučenika (Brian Baer). O tem govori Vitalij Černeckij pri interpretiranju pisanja Haritonova kot *littérature mineure* in čemur Hal Foster pravi »postmodernizem upora«. Haritonov piše, da si ponovno pridobi položaj subjekta, da spregovori v imenu gejevske manjšine in proti heteroseksualni večini, ki bi ga rada utišala.

Maja Šučur

Kritika v klozetu

V prispevku *Kritika v klozetu* se avtorica osredotoča na odnos slovenskih literarnih kritikov do literature LGBT. Lezbična in gejevska tematika je v sodobni slovenski literarni produkciji dobro zastopana, avtorji, ki se ji posvečajo, so med slovenskimi bralci dobro sprejeti. A ko pride do kritiškega branja, se kljub temu zdi, da se avtorji LGBT literature večkrat počutijo spregledane, s čimer se lahko strinjam le deloma. Kvantitativna analiza, ki jo obsega raziskava, kaže, da pri izbiri LGBT del v kritiško obravnavo ne prihaja do diskriminacije; primerjava kritiškega pokrivanja LGBT del s pokrivanjem primerljivih del preostalih (ne-LGBT) avtorjev ne kaže odstopanj. Izkaže pa se tudi, da pri kritiškem pokrivanju knjižne produkcije LGBT v različnih vrstah medijev (spletni portali, tisk, radio) ni večjih razlik. A odločitev o pisanju kritike dela z gejevsko ali lezbično tematiko ne pomeni avtomatično tudi vključujoče kritiške prakse, zato je avtorica v prispevek vključila še kvalitativno analizo kritiških besedil, včasih so namreč tudi najbolj samoumevne kritiške odločitve pravzaprav – izključujoče. Večina kritičark natančno zabeleži

vse ključne tematike obravnavanih del, pišejo denimo o življenju lezbičnih, gejevskih, biseksualnih ali transspolnih likov, ljubezenske odnose med njimi razumevajo tako prek čustvene kot prek seksualne bližine. Razumejo družbeno angažiranost tovrstnih del ter soočanje intimnega in javnega v njih, pozorne so na očrt homofobije in preostalih praks družbene represije. Kot avtorica prispevka ugotavlja v zaključku, slovenska literarna kritika torej ni ignorantska ali izključujoča, prizadeva si za vidnost del, ki so bila v zgodovini tolikokrat po krivici spregledana. A je kritika pri tem pogosto pretirano previdna in neodločna, ne diskriminatorna, temveč – kot avtorica pokaže s primeri iz kritiških tekstov – žal »zgolj« površna.

Andrea Trovesi

Topli, modri in bolgarski: razvoj in širjenje treh izrazov za označevanje »homoseksualca« v srednje- in vzhodnoevropskih jezikih

Besede za označevanje homoseksualno usmerjenega moškega imajo v evropskih jezikih pogosto presenetljivo poreklo, ki izhaja iz kulturnih predstav o homoseksualnosti v različnih zgodovinskih obdobjih starega kontinenta. Historični pregled teh izrazov nam nazorno odslikava poti, po katerih so se širili, in obenem razkriva kulturna območja, na katerih so se ustalili. V prispevku se pozornost tako namenja najpogosteje rabljenim in najbolj zanimivim besedam za označevanje homoseksualca v srednji in vzhodni Evropi: »topli brat«, »modri« in »Bolgar«.

Nataša Velikonja

Lezbična pesniška tradicija

Lezbična pesniška tradicija se v zahodnem kontekstu oblikuje v poznih šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja kot del nastajajočega lezbično-feminističnega gibanja. To tradicijo lahko razdelimo na pet obdobij: lezbična poezija iz obdobja identitetnih politik (poudarjanje lezbične razlike kot orodja politične, kulturne in umetniške subjektivizacije in emancipacije); zgodovinjenje lezbične poezije (iskanje in analiziranje lezbičnih vsebin iz starejših ali zgodovinskih literarnih del); lezbična literarna proliferacija (vključitev etnične, rasne in razredne perspektive); kvirovski pristop (poststrukturalistična kritika enotne lezbične identitete in poudarjanje seksualne nenormativnosti namesto seksualne identitete); in oblikovanje konceptualnega soglasja med identitetnimi ter kvirovskimi politikami. Oblikovanje vzhodnoevropske lezbične pesniške tradicije sledi podobni razvojni liniji, le da se je začelo mnogo kasneje, od osemdesetih let 20. stoletja dalje. Toda vzhodnoevropska lezbična poezija ima tudi svoje lastne značilnosti: njen razvoj zaradi nacionalnih, družbenih ali lingvističnih razlik ni tako linearen, poleg tega pa je družbenopolitična

atmosfera v vzhodni Evropi precej drugačna od zahodnega sveta, kar vpliva tudi na lezbično kulturo in umetnost.

Błażej Warkocki

Jezik skrivnosti v noveli Witolda Gombrowicza

Prispevek je analiza in interpretacija (z metodo natančnega branja) novele Witolda Gombrowicza »Kratki spomini Jakoba Čarneckega« iz zbirke *Spomini iz obdobja dozorevanja* (1933), ki je po vojni izšla v zbirki *Bakakaj*. Avtor prispevka novelo interpretira kot pripoved o življenju s stigmo, ki je posledica družbenih učinkov antisemitizma. Obenem tudi pokaže, da je pojmovanje »rase« pogosto zelo tesno povezano s premisleki o maskulinosti in poženščenosti glavnega junaka novele. Avtor se sklicuje na zgodovinska dela (George L. Mosse) ter literarno vedo (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Alan Sinfeld) in pokaže, da »poženščenost« na kompleksen način povezuje pripovedi o judovstvu in moški homoseksualnosti, kar je obenem bistvo aporije Gombrowiczevega besedila. Prispevek razbira globoko, toda ne zelo očitno, biografsko dimenzijo besedila, sklicujoč se na Gombrowiczeve biografije.

Andrej Zavrl

***Dečki* in literarna veda: recepcija prvega slovenskega homoerotičnega romana kot odsev družbenih in kulturnih sprememb**

France Novšak (1916–1991) je svoj prvi roman *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* prvič objavil leta 1938 v Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, drugič, z nekaj spremembami, pa leta 1970 v Jugoslaviji. Roman je bil ponatisnjen še leta 2016, tokrat v Republiki Sloveniji. Najstniška protagonista romana Zdenko in Nani se spoznata in zaljubita v katoliškem internatu, roman pa nam predstavi presenetljivo odkrite opise želje po istem spolu, še posebej pa nihanje dečkov med močnimi občutki zaljubljenosti in družbenimi pričakovanji. Prispevek predstavi recepcijo romana v različnih obdobjih, državah in družbeno-političnih sistemih z mislijo na vprašanje, kaj nam literarna veda in kritika lahko povesta o spreminjajočem se odnosu družbe do homoseksualnosti. Pregled se ustavi pri vseh ključnih dogodkih od spotike ob prvi izdaji, preko tišine ob drugi ter vse do privilegiranega statusa prvega homoerotičnega romana v slovenski književnosti. Prispevek med drugim obravnava razkol med kritiki bolj tradicionalistične desnice in liberalnejše levice pred drugo svetovno vojno, kratke omembe romana po vojni, Jostovo filmsko adaptacijo (1976), izjemno vplivno vključitev romana v antologijo »homoerotične ljubezni v slovenski literaturi« (1990), prve znanstvene analize, članke idr. ter ponovno izdajo romana leta 2016.

Alojzija Zupan Sosič

Sodobna slovenska LGBTQ+ pripoved

V slovenski književnosti novega tisočletja je spolna identiteta prevladujoča tako v heteroseksualnih kot tudi neheteroseksualnih pripovedih. V okviru te teme je najbolj razveseljivo dejstvo, da se je od leta 2000 do 2018 povečal delež lezbičnih, gejevskih, biseksualnih, transspolnih in kvirovskih tem oziroma motivov. Če sta do sredine prejšnjega desetletja prevladovali gejevska motivika in tematika, sta že skoraj petnajst let v sodobni slovenski LGBTQ+ pripovedi osrednja lezbična motivika in tematika. V raziskavo najnovejše LGBTQ+ pripovedi avtorica prispevka vključi romane in zbirke kratke pripovedi naslednjih avtoric_jev: Nine Dragičević, Jedrt Lapuh Maležič, Vesne Lemaić, Braneta Mozetiča, Teje Oblak, Urške Sterle, Nataše Sukič in Suzane Tratnik. Čeprav se pripovedi naštetih avtoric_jev med seboj razlikujejo, jih druži kar nekaj skupnih lastnosti: povezovanje identitetne krize s kritiko družbe, nasilja in obsojanja homofobije, prevlada prvoosebne_ga pripovedovalke_ca, humorno ali ironično razkrinkavanje represivnosti heteroseksualne matrice, izogibanje viktimizaciji, uvedba transspolne literarne osebe ter jezikovne in oblikovne inovacije na pripovedni ravni.

Jasna Jasna Žmak

Gej kot prikazen in nevidni drugi – LGBTQ identitete v sodobni hrvaški dramatiki

Čeprav smo v hrvaškem leposlovju v zadnjih desetih letih priča opaznemu povečanju števila LGBTQ avtoric_jev in tematik, tega ne moremo reči za področje dramatike. LGBTQ karakterji v hrvaški dramatiki so redko popolnoma razkriti in jasno predstavljeni kot homoseksualci in vedno gre pravzaprav za geje, ki jih vedno spremlja vsaj manjša doza (avto)homofobije. To pomeni, da so vse druge »seksualno drugačne« identitete – vključno z lezbično, biseksualno, transspolno in kvirovsko – čisto dobesedno neobstoječe oziroma nevidne. Avtorica prispevka se reprezentacije gejev loti skozi koncept *lezbijke kot prikazni*, ki si ga izposodi od Terry Castle; slednja izraz uporablja za opis »strašljive« prisotnosti lezbičnih identitet v zgodovini književnosti. V predstavitvi skuša pokazati, da se lahko isti koncept uporabi za načine, na katere so geji prisotni v sodobnih hrvaških dramah. *Gej kot prikazen,* ki je pogosteje skrit kot razkrit, tih kot glasen, zmeden kot razumljiv, tako v hrvaški dramatiki postane prototipna podoba, ki razkriva širši družbeni odnos do LGBTQ identitet v širši družbeni sferi. S proučevanjem avtorjev, kot so Vladimir Stojsavljević, Tomislav Zajec, Dino Pešut in Goran Ferčec, čigar dela (edina) vsebujejo gejevske karakterje v hrvaški dramatiki, avtorica zariše podobe *geja kot prikazni*. Analizira, kako je ta do sedaj »živel« v hrvaških gledališčih in razkrije paradokse njegovega obstoja, istočasno pa pokaže, da gre za prvo raziskavo te vrste.

Angleške povzetke v slovenščino prevedla Špela Bibič in Andrej Zavrl

Name Index