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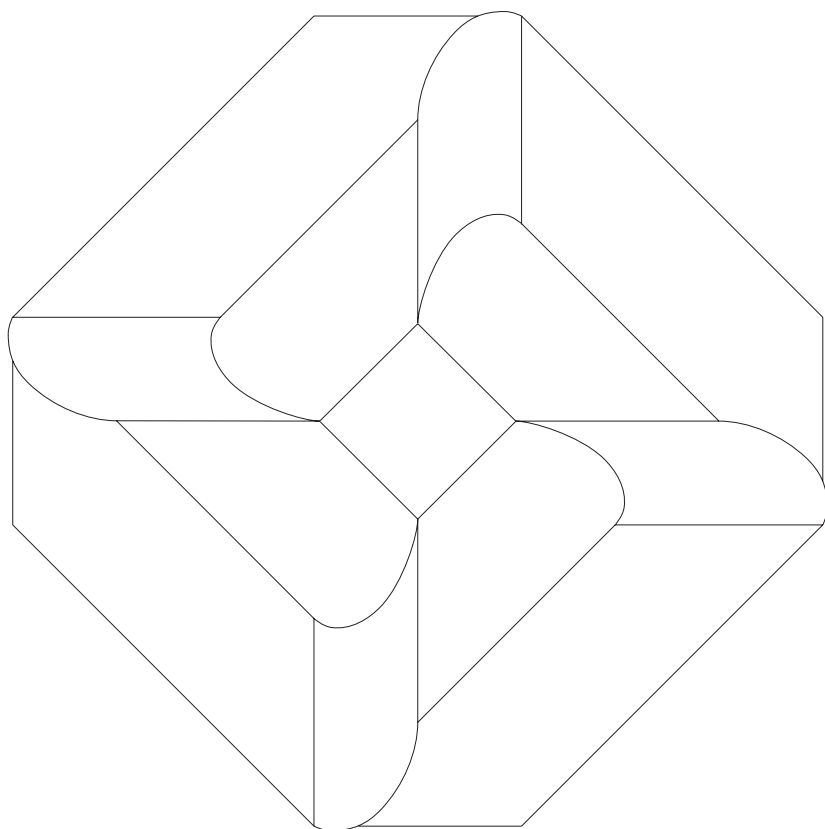
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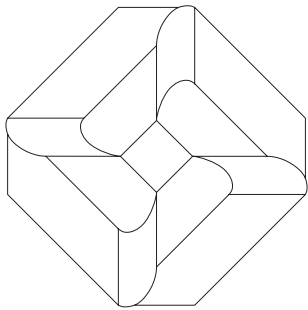
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Triglav in Slovenian National Consciousness: Literary Representations of the Alpine Region from the Enlightenment to the Interwar Period

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This article analyses various ways in which Slovenian writers (especially Valentin Vodnik, France Prešeren, and France Bevk) depicted Triglav and the mountain areas of Slovenia in literature from the Enlightenment to the interwar period. This is done through the prism of their aesthetic value and nation-building role, as well as their influence on the development of Slovenian sensibility, identity, and national consciousness. Inspiring the research was the conviction that the mountains occupy a special place in the collective memory of Slovenians, and that Triglav is a symbol of Slovenianness. An important point in the discussion is the comparative study of the origin and significance of Triglav (lit. "the three-headed one") according to Slovenian (Janez Vajkard Valvasor, Anton Tomaž Linhart, Janez Trdina, Davorin Trstenjak) and Polish scholars (Henryk Łowmiański, Jerzy Strzelczyk, Aleksander Gieysztor, Andrzej Szyjewski), and how they correspond to the representations of Triglav in the works of selected Slovenian writers (Vodnik's "Veršac," Prešeren's The Baptism on the Savica, Bevk's The Dying God Triglav).

Keywords: Slovenian literature / national identity / national mythology / mount Triglav / Vodnik, Valentin / Prešeren, France / Bevk, France

Introduction

The highest peak in the country (2,864 m) has become ingrained in Slovenian collective consciousness as a symbol of the quintessence of national identity. This was the result of the enduring relationship

with the Eastern Julian Alps, from the beginnings of Celtic, Roman, and Longobard settlement (Bohinjska Bela, Stara Fužina, Srednja vas, Češnjica, Ajdovski gradec, Trenta) through the first attempts to reach the summit in the eighteenth century and the founding of associations for mountaineering enthusiasts in the nineteenth century. It continued with the competition with the German-speaking Carniolans in marking out the trails and determining the locations of mountain shelters and huts, the purchase of Triglav by Jakob Aljaž and the construction of the Aljaž Tower (Aljažev stolp) on the summit. Later, it was reflected in the historical events in the Triglav area and at the summit as the border between Yugoslavia and Italy ran across Triglav from 1922 and was the site of a number of military operations. The presence of Triglav in events important to the nation significantly impacted its image in the Slovenian collective consciousness. It is first mentioned in seventeenth century sources (Janez Vajkard Valvasor), with the name Triglav emerging in the eighteenth century (Anton Tomaž Linhart).¹ Almost a hundred years later, the first more comprehensive publication on Triglav was written by Davorin Trstenjak (*Triglav, mythologično raziskavanje*, 1870), followed by a study by Adolf Gstirner ("Der Name Triglav und seine Geschichte," 1938) who referred to Gregor Krek and took issue with some of the findings of Trstenjak. In all of the attempts to explore the origins and meaning of Triglav (using Slovenian sources), three main ideas crystallized: (a) the connection between Triglav and the city of Szczecin, (b) the recognition of Triglav as a deity of fire and/or in connection with Trajan, and (c) the rejection of any association of Triglav with the beliefs of the Slavs, including Slovenians. It was important to find an answer to the question posed by Valter Bohinec in his article from 1925: "Does the name Triglav really originate from the name of the old three-headed Slavic god?" (Bohinec 79). If so, was this the supreme Slavic deity or a regional one (worshipped by Polabian Slavs and Pomeranians or Alpine Slavs)? As it transpired, it was particularly difficult to verify and assess the hypotheses formulated by the numerous historians and scholars who had researched the topic due to a lack of reliable sources, hence the divided opinions on the subject. This was most likely the reason why a representation was shaped in the Slovenian consciousness (and also later in literature and art), in which there was a characteristic tendency to reject any associations of Triglav with other deities. Different

¹ This refers to the name Triglav since Adolf Gstirner mentions that the name Terglau was used to refer to this mountain in 1452 (Gstirner 14).

interpretations primarily focused on presenting the image of the mountain itself as a sacred place and the related experiences and ideas, the sources of which are attributed to the representations of Triglav in the pre-Christian era, giving the mountain a special power without specifying its character.

Among the many representations of Triglav in science, literature, visual culture, social habits, and rituals, including many discourses and practices constituting Triglav as a Slovenian national symbol, I will focus on the presentation of the controversial mythical and religious dimensions of Mount Triglav in scientific and literary discourse, taking into account the state of knowledge on this subject in the Polish scholarly community. Three literary works written at different times were selected for analysis: the Enlightenment (“Veršac” by Valentin Vodnik), Romanticism (*The Baptism on the Savica* by France Prešeren) and the fascist occupation (*The Dying God Triglav* by France Bevk). The aim of this selection is to examine different, often ambivalent forms of presenting Triglav in literature by representatives of a broader socio-historical situation (Enlightenment, Romantic and anti-fascist nationalism), through the prism of their aesthetic and national value and the importance of Slavic religion in the formation of Slovenian national autonomy.

The mountain—the embodiment of the highest ideals

In many cultures, mountains are associated with sacred places and spiritual experiences, e.g., Mount Sinai in the Middle East, Mount Olympus in Greece, Mount Kailash in Tibet, Tai Shan in China, Mount Fuji in Japan, Uluru in Australia, Meru Peak in India, Hara Berezaiti in Iran, the mythical “Mountain of the Land” in Mesopotamia or Mount Gerizim in Palestine, also called “the earth’s navel” (Eliade 68–69). In many cases, the topos of the mountains was described as something completely different from the surrounding world, something mysterious that attracts and repels at the same time, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, something that commands respect and evokes fear, is far and near, sacred, and so associated with religion (Otto 39–55). Edwin Bernbaum analyzed the significance of mountains in a religious context. He lists the following roles or images of mountains: (a) the mountain as the center of the universe, a central axis linking together the three levels of the cosmos (heaven, earth, and hell), ensuring stability and order; (b) the mountain as the center of

the world; (c) the mountain as the center from the perspective of the areas surrounding it; (d) the mountain as a place of a higher reality, the world of clouds and sky; (e) the mountain as an earthly paradise; (f) the mountain as an abode of gods, water nymphs, beings of super-human power; (g) the mountains as a distant world where the bodies of the dead are buried; (h) the mountains as popular pilgrimage centers, etc. (Bernbaum 208–209). In all cases, the mountain world is secluded, embodying the highest ideals of humanity (Šaver 94). Mircea Eliade saw mountain areas in a similar way, drawing attention to their symbolic and religious significance and to the most universal archetypes of the mountain as a cosmic axis linking different levels of existence (Eliade 62–63). According to Eliade, the cosmic mountain, similar to a pillar, ladder, tree or liana, is an example of a cosmic axis around which the world is stretched. It is “the center of the world,” i.e., a sacred place constituting a break in the continuum enabling passage from one cosmic region to another (from heaven to earth and vice versa; 62–63). However, the symbolic meaning of the mountain may not only be related to the center but also to the height (elevation above sea level). The researchers claimed that because of its height, the mountain symbolizes transcendence and a place where heaven and earth meet, whereas its central location determines its symbolic manifestation. This is why climbing a mountain is a spiritual experience which leads us to know both ourselves and god (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 155–156).

The diversity of opinions on the symbolic meaning of mountains and the different cultural and social functions largely depends on the culture they concern (Bernbaum 208). In Slovenia, the mountains are understood as a social and cultural phenomenon which became a component of the notions of the nation and Slovenian collective memory.

The mythology of Triglav

According to Polish sources, Triglav (pol. Trzygłów) was a god of the Pomeranian and Polabian Slavs, worshipped in Szczecin (Borstaburg) and Brandenburg (Strzelczyk 215). We can find references in the works of a number of writers: St. Otto of Bamberg, a missionary in West Pomerania, Ebbo Bambergensis, Herbord, and an anonymous monk from Prüfening. St. Otto mentions a beautiful horse belonging to the god Triglav, which was kept for divinatory purposes, and the course of the procedure of divination similar to the practices around the

sacred horse of Svarozhits in Retra-Radogoszcz, described by Thietmar of Merseburg (216). He claimed that temples and statues dedicated to Triglav were torn down on Otto's orders:

He broke the torso of the statue of Triglav himself, but he took his three silver-plated heads—the reason he was called Triglav [“the three-headed one”]—with himself after that, and then handed them over to Pope Callixtus of blessed memory ... as the evidence of his work, and the conversion and beliefs of those tribes. (qtd. in Strzelczyk 216)

The other biographer, Ebbo Bambergensis, mentions three hills (in Szczecin) in his work *The Life of Otto, Bishop of Bamberg (Vita Ottonis episcopi Bambergensis)*:

Out of the three hills, the taller middle one, dedicated to the highest pagan god, Triglav, had a three-headed likeness, which was covered by a golden veil over the eyes and lips, and the priests assured that he was the highest god and had three heads because he ruled three kingdoms: heaven, earth, and hell, and said that he covered his face to remain indifferent to people's sins, by not seeing and staying silent. (qtd. in Strzelczyk 216)

Ebbo wrote that Triglav was worshipped in Szczecin, Wolin, and Brenna (Brandenburg), Jerzy Strzelczyk claims it was Szczecin and Brandenburg (Strzelczyk 215), whereas Henryk Łowmiański lists Szczecin and Wolin (Łowmiański 175). No other places are known for the worship of this god (at least in the Polish sources) nor does the explanation of the nature and origin of Triglav extend beyond the beliefs of the Pomeranian and Polabian Slavs. In Polish academic circles, scholars have speculated as to whether the Brandenburg and Szczecin versions of Triglav were one or two gods; whether Triglav, just like Svetovit and Svarozhits, was not just another local name of the same highest god of the Polabians, the equivalent of the Russian Perun (Brückner 83); whether the polycephaly of Polabian and Pomeranian gods was a result of Celtic influences on the Polabian religion or the influence of Christian notions of the Holy Trinity (Łowmiański 195). According to Christian Knauthe, Triglav was worshipped in Serbia, he had three golden heads under one hat and held the moon in his hand, whereas Aleksander Gieysztor thought he was the hypostasis of Veles, a Slavic god of the underworld and livestock (Strzelczyk 217; Ławecki et al. 63). However, Alexander Hilferding believed that

Triglav, whose name was just a nickname given to him because of the number of his heads, was Svetovit (Arkonian), “Svarozhits,” worshipped equally with Triglav as the main god; and their identicalness is reflected not only in their polycephaly, but also in having a cult horse and a similar divination procedure. (qtd. in Łowmiański 176–177)

Aleksander Brückner agreed with Hilferding, writing: “Svarozhits, Svetovit, Triglav, Yarovit of the Hevelli and Pomeranian Slavs (in Wolgast) are four different names of the same deity” (Brückner 83). He added: “It is not possible for a god to originally be named Triglav; it is certainly the same Dazhbog, who can see everything on earth, in heaven, and in the underworld” (83). Just like Brückner, Mikołaj Rudnicki, and Gerard Labuda (Łowmiański 195), Stanisław Urbańczyk draws attention to a very significant—though unacceptable for some—issue of *interpretatio christiana*. The scholar thought that power over three kingdoms was a late product of priestly speculations, possibly under the influence of Christian terms (Urbańczyk 46). This train of thought was also followed by Łowmiański, who claimed that Triglav was modelled on the Christian Holy Trinity (Łowmiański 400). Andrzej Szyjewski also saw an echo of the Holy Trinity in Triglav and considered the three worlds ruled over by Triglav as originating in Christian cosmology (Szyjewski 70). The influences of the Christian religion on the interpretation of the meaning of Triglav may bear testament to the relatively late emergence of the cult of Triglav among the Pomeranian Slavs, yet there is not enough evidence to prove that, which is why Gieysztor rejects the above thesis, claiming that: “Those three kingdoms, encompassing heaven, earth, and the underworld, do not have to be adopted from Christianity. A three-zone division can also be found on the so-called Zbruch Idol, Sviatovid ... [I]t is characteristic of the traditional culture of the Slavs, at least the Western ones” (Gieysztor 125). Gieysztor’s opinion would therefore not coincide with Brückner’s claim that Triglav was a young deity. His presence in the writings of Ebbo, Herbord, the monk from Prüfening, and Saxo Grammaticus as a three-headed god shows his archaic quality, which is also reflected in the presence of his name in *durdevdan* poems (Mihajlov 90).

Understanding Triglav separately from the beliefs of the Polabian and Pomeranian Slavs was rare. As one of the few Polish scholars to do so, Szyjewski mentioned Triglav as the mountain and its relationship with Slovenia. He pointed out that Mount Triglav is often mentioned in studies, sometimes enveloped in an entire myth, where it takes on the form of the Cosmic Mountain. In Balkan legends, heaven is to be

found at the summit of Mount Triglav, the first point to emerge from the primeval ocean:

By God's will, it came out of the abyss of the ocean, where it had been submerged together with the sun, moon, and the stars, lightnings and winds, since the beginning of the world; the high mountain of Triglav emerged first. According to the Slovaks, it was the Tatra Mountains (Szyjewski 70).

Tadeusz Linker also writes about Triglav's connection with the creation of the world: "With the word *Halu*, Jessa created the world and all that existed in it. Therefore Triglav, having heard it, tore off his three heads, and from the blood that flowed from them arose hosts of three successive deities" (Linker 24).

Based on the above-mentioned sources, Triglav was understood as both a deity and as a mountain in Slovenia. In Slovenia itself, however, little mention is made of the cosmogonic myth involving Triglav. According to many Slovenian sources, the name Triglav originated in Szczecin, among the earliest being the polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor's *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola (Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain, 1689)* and Anton Tomaž Linhart's work *An Essay on the History of Carniola and Other Lands of the Austrian South Slavs (Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und den übrigen Ländern der südlichen Slaven Oesterreichs, 1791)*, the first history that treated the Slovenian nation as a whole. Linhart quotes Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg's description of Szczecin as *urs tricornonis*, "three-headed," as it was located on three hills. Here, St. Otto of Bamberg destroyed a statue of the god Triglav and gave its three heads to Pope Callixtus in Rome as a symbol of his domination over the local population. In the ninth chapter of his book, Linhart argues that this god is connected with Mount Triglav in Carniola (the name Carniola was used for the largest part of present-day Slovenia until the nineteenth century). However, he does not mention the varieties of the god Triglav. As assumed by other historians, due to a lack of sufficient evidence for the existence of the god Triglav in the Eastern Alps, it was difficult to support Linhart's thesis. Thus the above mentioned connection of Triglav with Szczecin, where northern Slavs worshipped their gods, did not persist in the Slovenian collective consciousness, even though Urbańczyk attempted to prove it by means of local place names where the name and cult of Triglav were known beyond Pomerania, e.g. in the Slovenian Alps (Urbańczyk 195).

In *The History of Slovenian Nation (Zgodovina slovenskega naroda, 1866)*, Janez Trdina provided the most representative and comprehensive description of Triglav in Slovenian lands: "Triglav was to

them the ruler of land, sea, and air, and because of this threefold reign, he was attributed three heads, and also named after these three heads” (Trdina 17). Trdina already considered both the divine power of Triglav and its association with the god’s appearance, just like Nikolai Mikhailov:

Triglav was a three-headed god, which can certainly be inferred from the name itself. ... He also owned a black horse, which undoubtedly had a sacred role and which was used in prophesying. ... Although Triglav is sometimes similar to Svetovid, Léger thinks that he can without a doubt be defined as an independent god. (Mihajlov 53)

Mikhailov, based on the opinion of Vladimir Petrukhin, also claims that in the East Slavic and South Slavic mythology, Triglav could be an equivalent of the god Trajan/Trojan (Mihajlov 172); this conjecture was mentioned earlier by Trstenjak in his work *Triglav, mythologično raziskavanje* and by Frans Vyncke (Mihajlov 106–107). According to Urbańczyk, Trojan is considered a deity of the East Slavs, originating from the “divine” emperor Trajan; known also in the Balkans as a demon, a night specter with wax wings that is afraid of the sun or one with goat ears (Urbańczyk 194). It is agreed, however, that the etymological and mythological evidence of Trstenjak’s hypothesis is not convincing, which is why it was not supported by Slovenian scholars. For many Slovenians, as Božidar Jezernik points out, the question of how and when Triglav came to be/was born was no longer as interesting as the discovery of the meaning of the name itself and the moment it began to be used (Jezernik 52).

The etymology of the name Triglav

Evgen Lovšin lists seven names used for Mount Triglav: Triglav, Trgwou, Krma, Babji zob, Kum, Klek, and Beli vrh (Lovšin et al. 27). The name Krma can be found in the earliest mentions of Triglav in Valvasor’s *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. The word *krma* means “a rear part of a boat” or “fodder” (this is perhaps an analogy since Triglav’s face is covered with lush grass in its lower part). Franc Bezljaj supplements this definition by adding that it is a name of pre-Roman origin, and just like *garma* or *karma*, it denotes “a rock crevice” (its cognate words are *krmol* and *krmulja*, “a rocky summit”; Bezljaj 178). Other names used in reference to Triglav (in the central part of Slovenia) include Babji zob and Kum used interchangeably with

Triglav by Janez Mencinger in his book *My Walk on Triglav* (*Moja hoja na Triglav*, 1897). The name *Beli vrh* can be found in the writings of Belsazar Hacquet, the first explorer of Slovenian mountains and the author of *Carniolan Mineralogy* (*Oryctographia Carniolica*, 1778), which is the first publication to feature an illustration of Mount Triglav by Franz X. Baraga (Lovšin et al. 27). Two names were inscribed there: *Velki Terglou*, and below the illustration in the text—*Terglovus*.

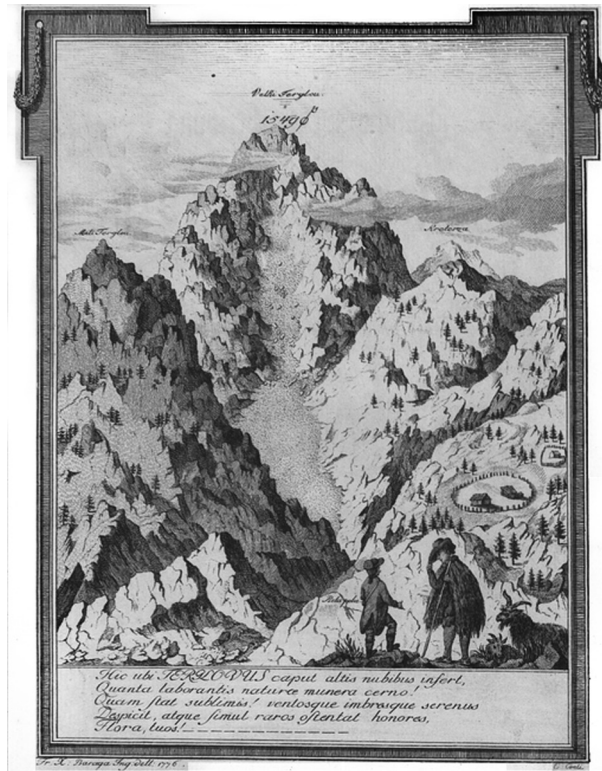


Figure 1: Triglav in Hacquet's book *Oryctographia Carniolica* (1778).

The spelling of the above listed names probably resulted from the local language use, particularly by the inhabitants of Bohinj and Mojstrana, who would say *Terglou* and *T(e)rgwou* with the stress falling on the last syllable (Bizjak 328). Alfons Gstirner studied how the original name *Terglou* transformed into *Triglav* and came to the conclusion that “our highest mountain was called *Terglau* or *Terglou* from the first surviving mention in 1452 until the nineteenth century” (Gstirner 18).

He found the first record of the name in the German work titled *Illyrian Provinces and Their Inhabitants (Die Illyrische Provinzen und ihre Eiwohner*, 1812), where Triglav figured as the highest mountain of the Illyrian Provinces (Bizjak 329). Gstirner was criticized by a number of writers and scholars to the extent that his publication was rejected on the suspicion that it supported the German authorities (Kugy 379). It is interesting that Wikipedia misinforms the readers saying that Triglav is Terglou in German. In fact, since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Germans have used the name Triglav and have not translated it as Dreikopf, as opposed to the Italians, who introduced the name Monte Tricorno right after the end of World War I and have retained this use until today (Bizjak 329).

In German-speaking countries, the name Triglav became established thanks to two literary works in German: Karel Dežman's 1868 tale about a mountain goat with golden horns in the Trenta Valley and a well-known Alpine epic poem *Goldhorn (Zlatorog*, 1877) written by Rudolf Baumbach (based on the motifs included in Dežman's tale). It is worth noting that Baumbach's iconic *Zlatorog* has never been translated into German as *Goldhorn*, just like the name Triglav which naturally supplanted Terglou (Bizjak 329).

The word *triglav* itself, denoting "three heads," was usually explained in association with a view of the mountain, specifically the presence of its three peaks (as in the case of Mount Troglav—elevation 1,913 m—in the Dinara Mountain Range, on the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). However, some researchers doubted the accuracy of this thesis, as they could not discern the three peaks. For example, Janez Bizjak claims that the mountain does not have three peaks at all, except for the view from Bohinj and Soriška planina. In fact, Bizjak says that Triglav looks like a pyramid, akin to a triangular grain of buckwheat (Bizjak 330; see also Gstirner 22). This is why Fran Orožen rejected the belief that the name Triglav has something to do with the mountain's three peaks: "This highest mountain is named after the old Slavic god Triglav, not after its three heads, which do not exist, in fact" (qtd. in Lovšin et al. 14). A similar opinion is shared by many other scholars who have preferred the mythological explanation. Opinions about the name Triglav, its meaning and origin are therefore divided and this is perhaps why Triglav has continually aroused the interest of scholars, artists, and Slovenians themselves, who still regard the mountain as a vital symbol forming their identity.

Triglav in literature and journalism

Before their conversion to Christianity, the inhabitants of what is now Slovenia believed in Triglav's divine powers. This was related to the inaccessibility of the mountain areas and the atmospheric phenomena in the Alpine region. After the ninth century, however, Triglav lost its sacred status, but the Enlightenment patron of culture Žiga Zois and the first Slovenian lay poet Valentin Vodnik recognized its high artistic value and attributed divine powers to it, yet not of the same nature as in Anton Tomaž Linhart's phrasing:

Triglav, the three-headed god, as the name suggests, because he was attributed dominion over air, earth, and water. He was worshiped especially by the Slavs living in northern Germany, where they built beautiful temples for him. Mount Triglav in Bohinj, which is the highest mountain in Carniola, full of beautiful pictures of wild nature, is probably named after this deity. (qtd. in Lovšin et al. 12)

Linhart's symptomatic use of the word "probably" due to a lack of evidence connecting the Pomeranian god Triglav with the Slovenian Mount Triglav has profoundly influenced opinions about the meaning of Triglav and its representations in Slovenian literature from the Enlightenment until the present day. In his letters to Zois—who compared Mount Vršac with Mount Parnassus and Mount Triglav with Mount Olympus (Lovšin et al. 12)—Vodnik does not even mention Linhart's hypothesis. Meanwhile, in his popular poem titled "Veršac" (1806),² the oldest Slovenian descriptive poem about mountains, he introduces the figure of the Christian God instead of mentioning the god Triglav: "Before this mighty God / I wish to go beyond my body" (Vodnik 62, transl. by Simon Zupan).³ This would seem to undermine Linhart's hypothesis. This was a rather important move, because of its tendency to interpret Triglav in the Christian context (one personal God) and a tendency to strengthen the collective identity of Slovenians assuming that Triglav is a local deity typical of Slovenia. In the light of Eliade's theory, Triglav represented the "center of the world" for Slovenians and which could also mean the embodiment of "our world" as the most important world, "the navel of the world" (Eliade 67–68).

² Veršac, today Vršac (elevation 2,346 m), is a mountain from which a view of Triglav can be admired. However, this was not known in the nineteenth century. As Fran Orožen notes in *Planinski vestnik*, Vršac is only marked on a special map as Mišel Vrh (Orožen 24–27).

³ In original: »Pod velikim tuki Bógam / Breztelesni bit želím« (Vodnik 62).

The lines “Before this mighty God / I wish to go beyond my body” puzzled many literary scholars because it is not clear which god is meant, the Christian God or Triglav (see Kos, “Vodnikov Vršac” and *Valentin Vodnik*). The title also raised a number of questions since the toponym Veršac was not recorded on maps at the time, leading scholars to speculate as to which mountain the poem referred. The description of the view from the summit was scrutinized:

Sit down on Veršac,
And behold a world unknown;
Look, amidst grey barren rock
A clump of elegant flowers blooms.
...
The clear Sava here begins,
The mother of poetic gift,
Twelve lakes together it connects,
A school of common sense.
...
Before this mighty God
I wish to go beyond my body,
Breathing freely in my circle
I feel I dwell in heaven. (Vodnik 61–62)⁴

According to Jakob Aljaž, Veršac referred to Kanjavec (elevation 2,570 m), while the canon Ivan Sušnik claimed that it represented Mali Triglav (2,740 m). Fran Orožen also concluded that Veršac refers to Mali Triglav (Orožen 27).

In his “Veršac,” Vodnik, the poet and at the same time the “first Slovenian tourist,” expresses his admiration for the surrounding view of the mountains and the nearby lands, plants, animals, and people: He was an active mountaineer who saw great aesthetic and nation-building value in the mountains and paved the way to mountain poetry. It is thanks to his poetry that the Julian Alps with Triglav, Savica Falls, and Bohinj became symbols of Slovenian identity. Vodnik also mentions Triglav in his other works, including a poem “Bohinjska Bistrica” written in manuscript form and a poem “Moj spomenik” (Dovič 249–250). The fourth stanza reads: “By the Sava I was raised, / By the

⁴ In original: “Na Veršacu doli sédi, / Neznán svét se teb odprè; / Glej med sivih pléš v’ srédi / Zarod žlahtnih rôž cvetè. ... // Tukaj bistra Sava zvirá / Mati pevske umnosti, / Jezér dvanajst kup nabirá / Šola zdrave treznosti. ... // Pod velikim tuki Bógam / Breztelesni bit želím, / Čiste sape sréd mej krógam / Menim de na neb’ živím” (Vodnik 61–62).

lowlands of Ljubljana, / By the Triglav I was inspired, / By its snowy peaks” (Vodnik 128).⁵

As early as the Enlightenment period, the name Triglav appeared a number of times in the correspondence between Zois and Vodnik. Zois stressed in his letters that a “poet under Triglav” should write in Carniolan language (Zois 31). He mentioned the “Triglav muse” (46) and recommended that Vodnik should “kiss old Triglav’s beard” (42). He also wrote about “an arduous hike to the Great God and Little Triglav” (49), which indicates Zois’ interest in topics related to the mythology of Triglav (Dović 249).

According to Marijan Dović, the most recent scholar to tackle the role of mountain imagery in early Slovenian poetry, the motif of mountains not only appeared in Vodnik’s works, but also in the poetry of Urban Jarnik (“Moj sedanji kraj,” 1809), Ignac Holzapfel (“Slavinja,” 1824), Blaž Potočnik (“Vodniku per Savici 1829,” 1830), Jakob Zupan (“Kranjski Plutarčik,” 1830), Jožef Žemlja (“28. jutro velciga travna 1828,” 1833), etc. The majority of them drew on Vodnik’s image of Triglav and its aesthetic qualities (Dović 251).

France Prešeren introduced a new perspective on the mountains, perhaps because he was not a nature enthusiast like Valentin Vodnik. Wanting to convey content important to the Slovenian nation because he considered it historically significant (Christianization of Alpine Slavs), he chose a symbolic location in the Julian Alps. The Savica Falls and its surroundings are the setting of the most important Slovenian epic poem, *The Baptism on the Savica* (*Krst pri Savici*). This poem, written by Prešeren in 1835 during the most prolific period of his career, is considered to be crucial for any understanding of Slovenian identity (also in the context of the Slavic world),⁶ a canonical, timeless text which is often referred to by writers and literary scholars alike. Janko Kos notes that Prešeren based his poem on historical data taken from Janez Vajkard Valvasor’s *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* and Linhart’s *An Attempt at the History of Carniola and Other Lands of the Austrian South Slavs*. However, the idea of Slavdom presented in the *Introduction* was probably inspired by *The Daughter of Sláva* (*Slávy dcera*, 1824), a series of sonnets written by Slovak national rebirth ideologist Ján Kollár. According to Kos, in *The Baptism on the Savica*, the influences of the works of Dante (the

⁵ In original: “Redila me Sava, / Ljubljansko poljé, / navdale Trigláva / me snéžne kopé” (Vodnik 128).

⁶ For more information on this topic, see Juvan, *Imaginarij*, “Nation,” and “Przewycięzanie.”

character of Beatrice from *The Divine Comedy*) and Byron are also noticeable (Kos, *Pregled* 103–104).

Prešeren's poem⁷ provides a description of the heroic Slovenian struggle against German domination and Christianization, a retrospective of the love between Črtomir and Bogomila, and an account of Bogomila's spiritual transformation and views on Christianity and death. We also find references to mountain spaces since the action takes place around Lake Bled and Bohinj as well as at the Savica Falls.

The mountain area, particularly in the vicinity of Lake Bohinj (Savica Falls), is closely integrated with the events and characters that appear in the poem. To Prešeren, mountains are not only a source of strong visual impressions, but also abundant historical and mythological content with a considerable emotional charge. He mentions Triglav in the first stanza of *Baptism*, after the epic description of the last battle of Ajdovski gradec in *Introduction*:

The matching violence of both men and clouds
Dark night has ended, now bright down
With ruddy sparks does gild the threefold peaks
Of the grey master of Carniola's mountains.
Bohinj Lake rests in calm and quiet now,
No trace remaining of the recent tempest.
But 'neath the waves the sheatfish battle on
With other robbers of the watery depths. (Prešeren, *Baptism* 68)⁸

He describes Lake Bohinj, above which Triglav rises. The lake is calm because the battle is over, but it seems that it is only apparently calm—the battle of fish under the water continues, just like Črtomir's despair. The depictions of nature therefore correspond to the external situation and Črtomir's mental state.

⁷ *The Baptism on the Savica* consists of two parts: *Introduction* and *Baptism*. The poem was written together with its preceding sonnet dedicated to Prešeren's late close friend and associate Matija Čop, a Slovenian literary critic, writer, linguist, and literary historian. In the sonnet dedicated to Matija Čop, Prešeren presents the characters of the poem, as well as their views and attitude to life. According to one of the two main characters, Bogomila, only Christianity can guarantee happiness in this world, while Črtomir, disillusioned with reality, believes that death is the only way to liberation from suffering (Kos, *Pregled* 104).

⁸ In original: "Mož in oblakov vojsko je obojno / končala temna noč, kar svetla zarja / zlatí z rumenmi žarki glavo trojno / snežnikov kranjskih sigva poglavarja, / Bohinjsko jezero stoji pokojno, / sledu ni več vunanjega viharja; / al somov vojska pod vodó ne mine, / in drugih roparjov v dnu globočine" (Prešeren, *Krst* 15).

Apart from Bohinj, Prešeren foregrounds the aesthetic qualities of Lake Bled, the castle located in an island in the middle of the lake, and the surrounding snow-capped mountains. This image, which he calls paradise, is a reflection of Črtomir's pleasant memories of his youth and happy moments spent with Bogomila in Bled:

Here is an island circled round by waves,
 In our days it's a pilgrim shrine to Mary;
 Against the background stand the snowcapped giants
 And fields that spread before them; Castle Bled
 Reveals still greater beauties to the left.
 The hillocks on the right conceal each other.
 Carniola does not have a prettier scene
 Than this one: it is truly heaven's twin. (68)⁹

Further on in *Baptism*, the description of nature is related to Črtomir's mental state. The picture of the austere mountain terrain at the waterfall reflects his agitation and impatience while he waits for a message about Bogomila:

The falls next morning thunder in his ears.
 Our hero ponders as the lazy waters
 Below him roar and shake the river banks.
 Above him towering cliffs and mountain heights,
 These with their trees the river undermines,
 As in its wrath its foam flies to the skies!
 So hastens youth and then it spends itself,
 Thus Črtomir reflects upon this scene. (72)¹⁰

This stems from the fact that Črtomir's inner world is treated equally with the external world of the mountain area described: "Does not this lake on whose shore, at the edge, / You stand, O Črtomir, resemble you?" (68).¹¹ This is closely related to the events presented in the

⁹ In original: "Tje na otok z valovami obdani, / v današnjih dnevih božjo pot Marije; / v dnu zad stojé snežnikov velikani, / poljá, ki spred se sprósti, lepotije / ti kaže Bléški grad na levi strani, / na desni griček se za gričam skrije. / Dežela kranjska nima lepšga kraja, / ko je z okolšno ta, podoba raja" (Prešeren, *Krst* 16–17).

¹⁰ In original: "Slap drugo jutro mu grmi v ušesa; / junak premišlja, kak bolj spodej lena / voda razgraja, kak bregove stresa, / in kak pred njo se góre ziblje stena, / kak skale podkopuje in drevesa, / kak do nebes leti nje jeze pena! – / Tak se zažene, se pozneje ustavi / mladenič, Črtomír pri sebi pravi" (Prešeren, *Krst* 22).

¹¹ In original: "Al jezero, ki na njega pokrajni / stojiš, ni, Črtomír! podoba tvoja?" (Prešeren, *Krst* 15).

poem, i.e. the story of the war in which the ancestors of the Slovenian people experienced a political and religious transformation, and to the individual story about the troubled love of Črtomir and Bogomila. Prešeren made Lake Bohinj and Savica Falls the center of the most important events: the acceptance of Christianity by the pagan leader and Bogomila's internal transformation, and Bled Island located within the Alpine paradise—home to Živa, a goddess of the Polabian Slavs (Dović 253).

Among the many writers who have dealt with the Christianization of Carinthians and Carniolans as a crucial historical moment and made reference to Triglav (as a mountain and a deity), France Bevk, with his work *The Dying God Triglav* (*Umirajoči bog Triglav*, 1930), is to the forefront. In parallel to Prešeren's poem, Bevk's novel was written at a critical historical moment. In the case of Prešeren, this was the period of German domination in the nineteenth century, while in the case of Bevk—Italian fascism in the twentieth century.¹² Zoran Božič believes that Bevk's work refers directly to Prešeren's *Baptism on the Savica*, constituting its continuation and explanation (Božič 63). The fundamental element connecting these two works is the theme of Christianization: in Prešeren, the acceptance of Christianity by all Slovenians at the end of the first millennium (the so-called first Christianization), and in Bevk—by the rebellious inhabitants of Kobarid in the first half of the feudal fourteenth century (the so-called second/late Christianization). Based on historical facts, both writers also comment on their contemporary reality and have a similar attitude to the authorities and censorship, national unity and consciousness, as well as nature. It is no accident, perhaps, that the motif of Triglav appears in both texts. In Prešeren, Triglav is mentioned as a mountain: “[B]right dawn / With ruddy sparks does gild the threefold peaks / Of the grey master of Carniola's mountains” (Prešeren, *Baptism* 68).¹³ In Bevk, however, Triglav is described as an old Slovenian deity whose existence and presence is confirmed in the form of a sign on a sacred linden tree by a sacred spring: “Upon his arrival, Gorazd found a linden

¹² In 1836, on the territory of present-day Slovenia, the official language was German in political life, administrative offices, public institutions, courts, and education. Slovenian could not even be taught as part of extra-curricular classes. In 1930, in turn, the use of Slovenian language was only allowed in private contexts in the Littoral region. In 1926, all the Slovenian schools were closed down and the following inscription appeared in public places: “Qui si parla soltanto italiano” (Božič 66).

¹³ In original: “[S]vetla zarja / zlatí z rumenmi žarki glavo trojno / snežnikov kranjskih sivga poglavarja” (Prešeren, *Krst* 15).

tree and a spring and a sign of the god Triglav tied into the bark” (Bevk 25).¹⁴ In both works, Christianity triumphs over the old faith: Črtomir is baptized, while among the rebellious inhabitants of Kobarid, faith in Jesus Christ appeases people and brings peace.

Apart from the fundamental thematic and ideological element connecting both works, two primary differences should also be noted which might have affected Slovenian consciousness. The first can be found in the storyline and lies in the endings: in Prešeren, the ending is pessimistic because Črtomir suffers defeat, whereas in Bevk it is optimistic—Gorazd wins. The second difference is formal in nature and concerns the style and language of the works. The content comprised in poetic form in *The Baptism on the Savica* was only comprehensible to a small group of readers, as opposed to Bevk’s novel which was written in prose and using more accessible language. It can therefore be concluded that despite its lower artistic value, *The Dying God Triglav* reached a broader audience and had a greater influence on Slovenian national consciousness (including the motivation to fight for their rights) than Prešeren’s poem.¹⁵

France Bevk wrote his novel in 1930 during the Italian annexation of the Littoral region. However, he did not write about his own time, but set the novel in the medieval town of Kobarid in 1331. Cirila Toplak believes that the novel can be interpreted in a number of ways: (a) as a novel about the rebellion of the inhabitants of Kobarid against an imposed religion and a fanatical (Italian) inquisition, (b) as an allegory of the relations between Italians and Slovenians in the 1930s, or (c) as a general expression of the Slovenian national consciousness (Toplak 54–55).

Bevk sets out his understanding of Triglav in the very title of his work: Triglav is a deity, not a mountain. In the novel, Triglav is presented as the only god worshipped by the inhabitants of Kobarid before they were Christianized. Yet it is a local deity, not a supreme Slovenian or Slavic one. It is interesting that, as Toplak states, Bevk put forward

¹⁴ In original: “Gorazd je uzrl lipo in studenec in v lubje lipe vrezano znamenje boga Triglava” (Bevk 25).

¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that there is a gap of nearly a hundred years between the two works and the position of the writer and literature was different in the two periods. Prešeren’s approach was largely individualistic and idealistic (he advocated a higher status of the Slovenian literary language), while Bevk’s was a practical one (what mattered most was for Slovenians not to give in to Italianization and for them to use the Slovenian language, which was supposed to be understood as concern for preserving Slovenian identity).

such an understanding despite being familiar with the comprehensive and reliable ethnographic sources about the beliefs of the inhabitants of the Soča Valley. They were collected by Pavel Medvešček, whose book only mentions Triglav as a sacred mountain once but says nothing about Triglav as the deity (see Medvešček). Other regional researchers mention Triglav only as a recognizable point in space, which Andrej Pleterski explains was a taboo subject for the inhabitants of Kobarid (Toplak 55). Perhaps it did not play as significant a role in the consciousness of Kobarid's inhabitants as some believe, including Bevk. In the novel, we can read the following:

On good days they worshiped Triglav, the three-faced god, who was personified in a tree with three peaks and a well with three springs. Although, from generation to generation, because of the loneliness in which the last pagans lived, the richness of their religion dwindled, the god Triglav remained unshaken in their souls until the end. (Bevk 22)¹⁶

Marko Snoj maintains that it is unlikely that the mountain name Triglav was equated with the Slavic god Triglav (Snoj 439), whereas Ivo Juvančič suggests that worshipping trees and streams around Kobarid testifies to the religious syncretism of Christianity with old Slovenian myths and Illyrian-Celtic influences in particular (Juvančič 54).

However, if we take a look at *The Dying God Triglav* from a broader perspective and without going into ethnological sources, we may see an allegory of the political situation in the south-western part of Slovenia in the 1930s. At the time, Mount Triglav was recognized as the highest peak of the Julian Alps, with the border between Yugoslavia and Italy running across it after the Treaty of Rapallo was signed in 1922. The image of Triglav was then included in the coat of arms of Ljubljana,¹⁷ which might have been the decisive factor in recognizing Triglav as a symbol of Slovenian identity (Toplak 57). Another piece of evidence to back up this thesis was the choice of the linden tree as a sacred tree which had allegedly fallen victim to the activities of the Italian inquisition. This is not, however, consistent with what ethnologists wrote about sacred trees, e.g., Zmago Šmitek

¹⁶ In original: "V lepih dneh so častili Triglava, triobličnega boga, ki je bil poosebljen v drevesu s tremi vrhovi in v studencu s tremi izvirki. Dasi se je od roda do roda radi osamelosti, v kateri so živeli zadnji pagani, bogastvo njihove vere manjšalo, je ostal bog Triglav v njihovih dušah do konca neomajen" (Bevk 22).

¹⁷ This is not an isolated case, however, as Mount Triglav could already be found on some coats of arms of noble families with Slovenian roots in the seventeenth century (see Svetina).

listed other tree species considered as sacred by the Slovenians (oak, cherry tree, spruce, poplar). Such a move by Bevk, interpreted as a certain expression of creativity by some, could be explained as a reference to historic events on the one hand, and on the other as granting nature, mountain areas in particular, a value that the Slovenians attributed to deities that should be worshipped. Hence, the novel's accumulation of descriptions of elements of nature and people's attitude towards it seems to be crucial to understanding Triglav and the mountain sphere as a metaphor of Slovenia, and the Slovenian attitude towards it: "Happy marriage of nature. The latter animal, every tree and plant manifested a soul that fed and shrieked. ... Every morning the sun rose again as the living spirit of the earth and enveloped them in its light" (Bevk 171).¹⁸

Conclusion

Triglav as a symbol of Slovenianness was one of the most common topics in Slovenian literature, including travel journals (Janez Mencinger), poetry (Fran Saleški Finžgar, Simon Gregorčič, Alojz Gradnik, Oton Župančič, Juš Kozak, Matija Zemljič), works of various twentieth-century authors (Edvard Kocbek, Anton Ingolič, Mojca Kumerdej, Tadej Golob), and literature written by mountaineers (Henrik Tuma, Julius Kugy, Nejc Zaplotnik, Dušan Jelinčič, Tomaž Humar, Viki Grošelj).¹⁹ The presence of Triglav in Slovenian cinematography is also worth noting. The first Slovenian feature-length film was *In the Realm of Goldenhorn* (*V kraljestvu Zlatoroga*, 1931) set in the Julian Alps, followed by *The Slopes of Triglav* (*Triglavske strmine*, 1932).

After 1945, Triglav also became a source of inspiration for the members of the Slovenian artistic group OHO (*Triglav*, 1968), and then for the group IRWIN which, referring to the *Triglav* project from 1968, opened a series of often related interpretations: *Like to Like / Mount Triglav* (*Svoji k svojim / Triglav*, 2004), *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav* (*Triglav na Triglavu*, 2007), *Golden Triglav* (*Zlati Triglav*, 2008), etc. 1986 saw one of the most important performances referring to Triglav and *The Baptism on the Savica*, the spectacle *Baptism under Triglav* (*Krst*

¹⁸ In original: "Veselo svatovanje narave. Slednja žival, vsako drevo in rastlina je očitovala dušo, ki se je napajala in vriskala. ... Vsako jutro je solnce znova vstalo kot živi duh zemlje in ju je ovilo v svojo svetlobo" (Bevk 171).

¹⁹ For more information on the so-called mountaineering literature, see Bjelčevič, "O lastnostih."

pod Triglavom) by the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre and other groups of the Neue Slowenische Kunst (Irwin, Laibach).

The manner in which Triglav is depicted in the works discussed above provides us with considerable insight in the perception of mountain areas by Slovenian authors, discerning the aesthetic qualities perceived differently by each individual, and about the influence of the mountain sphere on the development of the Slovenian collective identity and self-awareness. The conceptualization of Triglav was closely related to memory, the notions of the authors themselves, the desire for self-discovery, self-assertion, and the consolidation of identity. This process comprises the mythologization of the past, the interpretation of historic events, the socio-political situation, and the widespread Slovenian habit of climbing the highest peaks of the Julian Alps. The extensive literary works of poets, writers, and mountaineers presenting the aesthetic qualities, topography, and mythology of the Alps from different perspectives and in varying circumstances (in terms of the socio-political situation) were also not without significance, influencing the state of national consciousness, the sensitivity, attitudes, and experiences (including those related to mountain hiking and climbing) of the Slovenians, and the scientific activity of researchers dealing with this topic in Slovenia (Jernej Habjan, Marijan Dovič, Peter Mikša). It was perhaps the ambiguity of Triglav and the lack of unanimity among scholars regarding its origins and significance that has contributed to its sustained popularity and topicality in Slovenian culture.

Translated from Polish by Anna Mirek.

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Triglav v slovenski narodni zavesti: literarne reprezentacije alpskega območja od razsvetljenstva do medvojnega obdobja

Ključne besede: slovenska književnost / nacionalna identiteta / nacionalna mitologija / Triglav / Vodnik, Valentin / Prešeren, France / Bevk, France

Članek analizira različne načine prikazovanja Triglava in gorskih območij v slovenskih literarnih delih od razsvetljenstva do medvojnega obdobja (še zlasti v delih Valentina Vodnika, Franceta Prešerna in Franceta Bevka), in sicer skozi prizmo njihove estetske vrednosti, narodotvorne vloge ter vpliva na oblikovanje slovenske identitete in narodne zavesti. Raziskava izhaja iz prepričanja, da imajo gore posebno mesto v kolektivnem spominu Slovencev, Triglav pa velja za simbol slovenstva. Ob tem se članek osredotoča na primerjavo med razpravami o pomenu Triglava, ki so jih prispevali tako slovenski (Janez Vajkard Val-

vasor, Anton Tomaž Linhart, Janez Trdina in Davorin Trstenjak) kot poljski raziskovalci (Henryk Łowmiański, Jerzy Strzelczyk, Aleksander Gieysztor in Andrzej Szyjewski), ter prikazi Triglava v izbranih literarnih delih slovenskih avtorjev (v Vodnikovem »Veršacu«, Prešernovem *Krstu pri Savici* in Bevkovem *Uminajočem bogu Triglavu*).

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Albanian Themes and Motifs in Byron's Works

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Byron was inspired to explore Albanian themes and motifs after his visit to Albania in 1809, as the landscapes, folklore and people of Albania left a lasting impression on him. Not only did he influence many Albanian writers, but he also drew inspiration from the Albanian environment, which he incorporated into his poetic verse. This paper uses qualitative and comparative literary methods to analyze the Albanian themes in some of Byron's notable works, such as Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, The Bride of Abydos, The Giaour, The Siege of Corinth, Lara, Parisina and Don Juan. The analysis reveals that Byron's poems glorify the enchanting nature of Albania, the Albanian character, the virtues of Albanian women, national costumes, folklore and historical figures such as Scanderbeg and Ali Pasha, etc. The conclusion is that Byron's verses were a valuable source of inspiration for patriotic poets during the Albanian National Renaissance, as they exuded a sense of patriotism, heroism and poetic inspiration. Byron's travels to Albanian lands and his interest in Albania and the Albanians, as well as his writings about them, greatly enhanced and promoted literary and cultural relations between Albania and England. Byron's admiration for Albania and its people positioned him as a cherished friend, ally and supporter of the Albanian people, earning him great love and honor and making him the Albanians' favorite and most popular poet.

Keywords: English literature / Byron / imagology / Albania / Albanian culture

Introduction: Byron and Albanians

The exploration of Albanian themes and motifs in English literature begins with Geoffrey Chaucer and continues with the English Renaissance writers such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Edmund Spenser, and then goes on in the period of English Neoclassicism with Thomas Whincop, William Howard, and George Lillo, who have written dramas on Scanderbeg. They culminated later in the nineteenth century in the works of great English Romantic and Victorian poets and writers, such as Percy B. Shelley, Mary W. Shelley, G. G. Byron, Benjamin Disraeli, Edward Lear, Lord Alfred Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, etc. Furthermore, various writers and researchers, such as Edith Durham, Stewart Mann, Ann Bridge, Charles Ewert, Dorothy Gilman, Loreta Chase, Katherine Neville, etc., have written works with Albanian themes and motifs even during the twentieth century.

However, it is true that G. G. Byron is the most distinguished and outstanding poet when it comes to writing about Albanian themes and motifs. This is due to his personal encounters, contacts, interactions, and engagements with Albanians, as well as his extensive readings on the matter. The echo of George Byron's life and works reached small Albania, albeit a little late, due to its political, historical, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Byron himself was clearly influenced by the Albanians, what he expressed in his writings, both poetry and prose. But Byron also left many profound and unforgettable memories and traces in Albania. The Albanians transmitted this memory, passing it on from one generation to another until nowadays. These memories are so deep that there are some old Albanian men and women who still remember hearing their ancestors say that they saw Byron passing through certain places in Albania (Karagozi 17). The works of George Byron about Albanians, mostly poetry and especially *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and his letters, from the time they were written until today, have always aroused the interest and curiosity of foreign poets, intellectuals, and scholars in many aspects. Byron was the first to spread the Albanian theme, which quickly stimulated the readers' curiosity, sympathy, and desire to get to know this country and its people with special features. His work was read by the masses of different people, and these readers not only liked it but were also influenced by it (Kadija 45). Robert Elsie maintains that "of all English writers to have introduced Scanderbeg and Albania to the English-speaking public, none was more influential than Lord Byron (1788–1824). Byron

was fascinated by Albania and the Albanians during his travels in the Mediterranean and indeed began to learn the Albanian language” (Elsie 40). Namely, around four hundred verses in Canto the Second of his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* extensively delve into Albanian themes and motifs. Additionally, his Oriental poems like *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, and *The Siege of Corinth*, along with the masterpiece *Don Juan*, skillfully explore Albanian nature, character, settings, folklore, and historical figures like Ali Pasha and Scanderbeg. Moreover, Byron vividly and romantically portrays in his works the virtues of Albanian women, magnificent national attire, and the richness of Albanian history and culture. Although articles and research papers in Albanian about Byron were written by distinguished Albanian scholars, such as Abdullah Karjagdiu, Afrim Karagiozi, Skender Luarasi, Rexhep Qosja, Refik Kadija, Nexhip Gami, Vittorio Gualtieri, Jup Kastrati, Dhimitër Shuteriqi, Klara Kodra, Andrea Varfi, and others, unfortunately, very few research articles about Byron and Albanians were written in English, and almost no papers were written in English about the Albanian themes and motifs in Byron's poems and works. Therefore, this paper will attempt to conduct an analysis of his poems and works and an in-depth review of relevant scholarly articles, books, and critical essays that explore the impact of Albanian themes, motifs, characters, etc., in the works of G. G. Byron. To this end, we will emphasize qualitative methods and comparative literature methods. Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz provide a definition that best fits the aims of this paper: “Comparative literature often deals with the relationship between only two countries or two authors of different nationalities or one author and another country (e.g., Franco-German literary relations, Poe–Baudelaire, Italy in the works of Goethe)” (Stallknecht and Frenz 10). In this case, the paper deals with the relationship between Albanian and English literatures, that is, with Albanian themes and motifs in G. G. Byron's works.

There are even indications that Byron has exerted influence on many Arbëresh poets (Albanian poets of Italy) and poets of the Albanian National Renaissance (Rilindja), such as Jeronim De Rada, Elena Gjika, Anastas Kullurioti, Faik Konica, Asdren, Luigj Gurakuqi, Ismail Kadare, Agim Shehu, and Dhori Qirjazi. However, this paper will only delve into Albanian themes and motifs in Byron's poems, as we can talk about influence only when we can ascertain, on the basis of a comparison between two texts, that the qualities of one work have been inspired by the special character of the other (Brandt Corstius 185).

Albanian themes and motifs in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

According to Bernard Blackstone, Canto the Second is at the heart of Byron's reflective or intuitive verse, distinguishing him from poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Keats (Blackstone 19–25). The protagonist of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Childe Harold, is a sensitive and noble yet disillusioned young man. As he travels, he observes, admires, reflects, reminds, and advises oppressed people to reclaim their dignity and glory. He embodies a romantic hero and an individualistic rebel who is disillusioned, desperate, melodramatic, prone to wandering, homesick, and bored with life. D. W. Harding notes that Childe Harold, despite being an outcast, serves a crucial role in his society and is paradoxically more embedded in it than many poets of the time (Harding 42). The poem's full title is *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt*, using "Childe" to represent a medieval term for a small owner or a knight. The term "romaunt" reflects a chivalric romance in verse. Byron created his hero, influenced by a modernized chivalric romance (Hergešić 254).

However, to this day, it still remains debatable: Is Harold really an entirely autobiographical hero? This presents one of the most intriguing aspects of Byron's work overall. Considering the shared traits of young Byron and Harold, doubts about their connection diminish. Both grapple with a sense of hopelessness, gloomy sorrow, and boredom with life. Byron's love for nature corresponds to Harold's admiration for it, and both share discontent with England, a fondness for solitude, and a sense of remorse. The parallel travels, love for the arts, freedom, and beauty, as well as their shared activism for freedom, suggest a strong connection. However, Byron himself sought to distance Childe Harold's character from his own. Some scholars partially agree with Byron, proposing that Harold is not a direct reflection of Byron but an imagined hero embodying the author's vision. In the midst of ongoing debates, certain critics such as Guy E. Smith firmly contend that Childe Harold undeniably symbolizes Byron himself (Smith 33), a viewpoint echoed by other academics in the discipline.

Biographers find the autobiographical element in a significant portion of Byron's works particularly captivating. According to Francis M. Doherty, there are three facets of Byron: the sharp and witty diarist, the popular yet cursed and misanthropic poet, and the genius satirist of his later poems, such as *Don Juan* (Doherty 6). When discussing Byron as a poet, one inevitably delves into his life, journeys, experiences, and

impressions. While for many poets, mixing their lives with their literary works can be risky, the poetic world usually stands as a separate entity from normal thinking or behavior (Knight 18). René Wellek, Austin Warren, and David Daiches argue that while biography may offer some insight into understanding literary works, it cannot alter critical assessments (Wellek and Warren 71; Daiches 326).

According to Wellek and Warren, even for an objective poet, the distinction between a personal autobiographical statement and the use of the same motif in a work of art should not be overlooked. They argue that a work of art operates on a different plane, with a unique relationship to reality, compared to a memoir, diary, or letter (Wellek and Warren 71). Artists are influenced by compulsions, motivations, and creative inspiration, although inspiration is not a constant in artistic creativity. Different writers have diverse approaches to this, and researchers and critics often have their own opinions, which may differ from the writers' claims and explanations.

Byron's approach to his own life in letters, notes, and conversations makes the biographical analysis of works like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Oriental poems more accessible. Byron's extensive documentation of his life, including reports, visits, and letters, intertwines seamlessly with his poetry, making it challenging to separate the two. Byron's preference for drawing from real, personal experiences rather than excessive fiction contributes to this intertwining. In discussing Byron's poetry, incorporating episodes and facts from his life poses no risk of deviation, as his life exists in a poetic dimension (Knight 18). Recognizing this interplay between his life and poetry enhances the greatness of Byron's already esteemed literary works.

This assertion is most effectively demonstrated and substantiated by examining Canto the Second of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, especially the Byronic stanzas and verses dedicated to Albania and the Albanians. Comprising ninety-eight Spenserian stanzas, each with nine iambic lines, the verses detailing Albania and its people commence from the thirty-seventh stanza. Before delving into Albania, Harold first describes its nature:

Dear Nature is the kindest mother still,
 Though always changing, in her aspect mild;
 From her bare bosom let me take my fill,
 Her never-wean'd, though not her favour'd child.
 Oh! she is fairest in her features wild. (26)

Then, Harold turns to Albania, greeting it as the land of Iskander, of the brave men, and of the great battles:

Land of Albania! where Iskander rose,
Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
And he his namesake, whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise;
Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
Through many a cypress grove within each city's ken. (26)

Thus, when discussing Albania, Harold proudly references “Iskander,” the Turkish moniker for Alexander the Great (Leka i Madh), hailed as the “theme of the young and beacon of the wise.” He swiftly acknowledges Scanderbeg as the second Iskander, noting his retreat from chivalrous exploits. In such a resilient land inhabited by tough men, Harold embarks on his visit to explore magnificent places, enrich his life experiences, and delve into new customs, traditions, virtues, manners, emotions, passions, and worldviews. Subsequent stanzas find Harold reflecting on Greece’s historical past during his journey through the Cape of Leukas and the coasts of Greece, recalling figures like “Lesbia and her tomb” and “black Sappho,” a poetess who bestowed high orders and eternal life through her work. In this moment, Harold momentarily sets aside memories of harsh wars, particularly in Actium and Lepanto, despite harboring a general aversion to murderers and a penchant for mocking war heroes. Nonetheless, during his travels, Harold is paradoxically drawn into contemplation and a sense of longing for the past. Continuing his expedition, Harold notes the dawn over Albania’s stern hills and observes the ominous rocks of Dark Suli, where highlanders’ deeds stand out amidst storms and roaming wolves. Undeterred by the dangers of an unknown shore, Harold finds solace in the captivating scenes that make the ceaseless toil of travel sweet. While exploring new places, Harold momentarily sets aside contemplations of moral and religious issues. In the Orient, he expresses disdain for superstition and its various symbols, condemning the separation of gold from true worship. In the Ambracian Gulf, Harold recalls the ancient history of Greece, where Roman fleets clashed with those of the kings of Asia. Passing through Illyria’s vales, he boasts of possessing jewels surpassing even Tempe, and Parnassus pales in comparison to the coastal beauty. Journeying through Pindus and Acherusia’s lake, Harold proceeds to meet Albania’s chief, Ali Pasha Tepelena, a

ruthless ruler whose bloody sway over a turbulent and bold nation faces resistance from rebellious tribes like the Suliots. Ali Pasha employs force, cunning, and gold to subjugate those who dare oppose him. In the stanzas following the forty-seventh, Harold marvels at the enchanting landscapes, praising the Monastic Zitza with its harmonious blend of rock, river, forest, and mountain. He portrays the beauty of Chimera's alps, where herds graze amid waving trees and flowing streams. Approaching Ioannina, hidden by hills, he passes Dodona, the forgotten oracle of the ancient Greeks. Expressing regret for the lost Thunderer's shrine, Harold reflects on the impermanence of man and questions whether one should aspire to outlast marble or oak when all, including nations and worlds, succumb to fate. Reminding himself not to resist the destiny shared with the gods, he advises against futile resistance. Continuing his pilgrimage, Harold notices how the borders of Epirus are receding and the mountains are lowering as he gazes at the setting sun beyond Tomerit, and he depicts it in a magnificent way:

The sun had sunk behind vast Tomerit,
And Laos wide and fierce came roaring by;
The shades of wonted night were gathering yet,
When, down the steep banks winding warily,
Childe Harold saw, like meteors in the sky,
The glittering minarets of Tepalen,
Whose walls o'erlook the stream; and drawing nigh,
He heard the busy hum of warrior-men
Swelling the breeze that sigh'd along the lengthening glen. (29)

Approaching Tepelena, Harold spots the imposing residence of the influential leader, boldly announcing his high status. The bustling activity in the court signifies active preparations for war. Amid the crowd of knights, servants, Moors, Turks, Tartars, and Albanians, Harold discerns the distinct presence of the Albanians, indicating their involvement in the impending conflict: "The wild Albanian kirtled to his knee, / With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun, / And gold-embroider'd garments, fair to see" (30).

Harold observes the proud Albanian presence in the area, specifically noting their devotion during Ramadan. He delves into the secluded lives of Albanian women, emphasizing their restricted movements but also finding contentment in their roles as mothers. Despite the warlike demeanor of Ali Pasha, Harold acknowledges his mild and gentle side. At the palace, where the pilgrim takes respite, he contemplates the surroundings, the people, their attire, and the overall atmosphere.

In the other stanzas (up to the stanza seventy-three), Childe Harold sings almost entirely about the Albanians. Of all the stanzas, the following is the most popular among Albanians:

Fierce are Albania's children, yet they lack
Not virtues, were those virtues more mature.
Where is the foe that ever saw their back?
Who can so well the toil of war endure?
Their native fastnesses not more secure
Than they in doubtful time of troublous need:
Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,
When Gratitude or Valour bids them bleed,
Unshaken rushing on where'er their chief may lead. (31)

Harold admires the Albanians for their bravery, love of freedom, strictness, loyalty, and honesty. While acknowledging their admirable qualities, he expresses a desire for them to possess even more refined attributes. Throughout his travels, Harold encounters Albanians frequently, and he recalls a specific encounter with them in Ali Pasha's tower.

Childe Harold saw them in their chieftain's tower
Thronging to war in splendour and success;
And after view'd them, when, within their power,
Himself awhile the victim of distress;
That saddening hour when bad men hotlier press:
But these did shelter him beneath their roof,
When less barbarians would have cheer'd him less,
And follow-countrymen have stood aloof—
In aught that tries the heart how few withstand the proof! (31)

Childe Harold describes the Albanians' generous hospitality and emphasizes the virtues and kindness of their people, contrasting them with the indifference shown by his own compatriots towards those in need of shelter and protection. He notes that his fellow countrymen often distance themselves in such situations, leading Harold to conclude that very few can withstand the test of the heart, appreciating the sentiment expressed in the popular Albanian proverb: "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

In another instance, Harold fondly remembers the Albanians' generosity with reverence and longing. When a storm caused Harold's boat to crash on the rocks of Suli, he and his companions feared potential harm from the local Albanians. To their surprise, the natives approached and rescued them. Despite initial apprehension due to the

fierce appearance of their rescuers, Harold and his companions soon realized they were not in danger of robbery or harm:

Vain fear! the Suliotes stretch'd the welcome hand,
Led them o'er rocks and past the dangerous swamp,
Kinder than polish'd slaves though not so bland,
And piled the hearth, and wrung their garments damp,
And fill'd the bowl, and trimm'd the cheerful lamp,
And spread their fare; though homely, all they had:
Such conduct bears Philanthropy's rare stamp—
To rest the weary and to soothe the sad,
Doth lesson happier men, and shames at least the bad. (31)

Hence, Childe Harold developed a deep affection for these people, choosing to be constantly accompanied by a reliable group of these Albanian men. The Suliots near Utraikey astonished and captivated Harold, their friend and guest, with unforgettable moments of dinner, toasts, songs, and spirited dances. The rhythmic and powerful dances in particular left Harold enchanted:

On the smooth shore the night-fires brightly blazed,
The feast was done, the red wine circling fast,
And he that unawares had there ygaz'd
With gaping wonderment had stared aghast;
For ere nights midmost, stillest hour was past,
The native revels of the troop began;
Each Palikar his sabre from him cast,
And bounding hand in hand, man link'd to man,
Yelling their uncouth dirge, long daunced the kirtled clan. (32)

Childe Harold watched the Suliots with interest during the dance, for he liked the dances and songs he heard:

Childe Harold at a little distance stood
And view'd, but not displeas'd, the revelrie,
Nor hated harmless mirth, however rude:
In sooth, it was no vulgar sight to see
Their barbarous, yet their not indecent, glee;
And, as the flames along their faces gleam'd,
Their gestures nimble, dark eyes flashing free,
The long wild locks that to their girdles stream'd,
While thus in concert they this lay half sang, half scream'd. (32)

Childe Harold listened to the Albanian song *Tamburxhi*, a clarion call celebrating the bravery, courage, enterprises, determination, invincible endurance, hatred towards the enemy, and loyalty to their incomparable leader, Ali Pasha.

As evidenced, *Canto the Second* is dominated by Albanian themes and motifs. Namely, Byron shares beautiful verses about Albanians and Albania, reflecting his impressions and inspirations from travels, encounters with diverse people, and insights into customs, traditions, language, and folklore. The vast majority of these verses can be connected to and even identified with Byron's experiences in the villages of southern Albania and northern Greece. In other words, Harold often adheres to the itinerary of Byron's wanderings, visits the same places in which Byron wrote his letters, paints, and reflects similar or even the same scenes and figures that Byron mentions in his letters or notes; nevertheless, the difference between Harold and Byron is striking. Although William A. Borst manages to identify and ascertain more than twenty autobiographical places in *Canto the Second*, mainly in the verses dedicated to Albanians (Borst 77–78), Harold and Byron, however, cannot be identified with each other completely. As follows are some of the differences between Byron and Childe Harold that we have encountered: While Byron, through letters and notes, appears to us as a young man who experiences everything he sees, hears, and witnesses as a boy from "flesh and blood," Harold is a more idealized type, romantic and curious, who is aware that on the journey, he does not intend only to wander but also to commemorate, contemplate, appreciate, and glorify freedom, to yearn for the past, to be enchanted in the landscapes of the countries he visits, and to compare the race and psyche of people he meets with the race and psyche of his countrymen. Whereas Byron travels to broaden the horizons of life knowledge, to confirm his grasp of the Orient gained through reading, and to admire Ancient Hellas, Harold, for his part, lets us know from the get-go that he travels because he is dissatisfied with his homeland, because he is extremely interested and curious about the places he visits, and because he has a mission in life. Byron and his portrait appear to us without embellishments and distortions in Byron's notes, with dramatic, melodramatic, unexpected, pleasant, and unpleasant situations, with bizarre moments and honorable situations, with moments of pleasure and bitter moments, while Harold, who subsumes in the poet's vision, has the duty to observe, ponder, protest, lament, and grieve in the name of the high ideals of freedom, justice, humanity, and virtue.

Albanian themes and motifs in *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Lara*, *Parisina* and *Don Juan*

To Romantic poets, the Orient seemed like a new and fascinating world where one is not oppressed by the cursed bourgeois society and a place with landscapes, nature, qualities, and virtues that the Europeans of central and northern Europe, especially the English, lacked. Namely, a place with wonderful and colorful sights and scenes, with more pristine, natural, and original life, less affected and spoiled by civilization, brilliant costumes and traditions, and even more humane and nobler people (Karjagdiu 24). According to Martin Stephen, "the concept of the Byronic hero is drawn from both heroes and narrators in Byron's poetry. He is a morose, enigmatic, cultured, bitter figure, gloomy, outwardly devil-may-care, but full of dark secrets. All the controversy about Byron's life, as well as sometimes obscuring an accurate picture of his poetry, has made some readers see the figure of the Byronic hero and Byron himself as one and the same thing" (Stephen 230).

Poems like *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Parisina* share common elements in content, characters, and worldviews. These works are variations of a certain tale or story and the heroes embody qualities reminiscent of Byron's idealized self. Moreover, certain characters possess Albanian features.

Therefore, the discussion of Albanian themes, motifs, characters, conflicts, etc., in Byron's poems will focus on events, settings, and characters with Albanian characteristics. These poems narrate the tale of a romantic hero facing a similar plight: depression, demoralization, and a descent into evil due to uncontrollable events. Endowed with unmatched pride, courage, burning passions, and a broken heart, the heroes of these poems, often hindered by fate or ruthless adversaries, experience a thwarted love life.

However, the heroes and themes in Oriental poems portray and constitute an authentic Byronic Orient, dominated by a feudal patriarchal climate. Contrary to a fantastical medieval fairy tale, the dramatic events unfold in the countries and tales of the Orient that Byron encountered in reality. These powerful tales of heroism and passion against exotic backdrops feature lonely, sad, and rebellious heroes entangled in unfortunate circumstances, fights, disputes, and rivalries that eventually lead them toward the abyss (Mouni 11). Byron experts hold diverse views on the autobiographical dimension of the Oriental poems. Some believe that the protagonists embody different spiritual facets of Byron himself, while others assert that the

poems draw inspiration from oriental narratives prevalent during that period. Yet another faction acknowledges autobiographical elements but underscores the incorporation of Albanian cultural attributes in certain characters and settings.

Hence, to better understand the logical connection, a general comparison of the Byronic heroes in Oriental poems with essential Albanian features is paramount. Both groups, as portrayed by English and European writers, share distinct traits. Byronic heroes with Albanian characteristics are distinguished individuals within their societies. Loyalty is a common trait, with Byronic heroes typically portrayed as proud and poor, much like the Albanians. Both groups rebel against societal injustice, cannot tolerate tyranny or despotism, and seek revenge for insults. The shared qualities include honesty, a connection with nature, difficulty with controlling passions, and a commitment to freedom. Byronic heroes and Albanians both value their word, whether given as an oath or a promise of honor. The Byronic heroes' features align with intelligence, nobility, and a cult of freedom and love, mirroring qualities found in Albanians such as hospitality, openness, and independence (Konitza 49). Thus, it is no wonder that the following question is posed: To what extent was Byron inspired by the qualities, characteristics, and features of the Albanians that he met?

Byron repeatedly emphasizes the profound impact of his initial journey to the Near East on his creative works, notably on the passages of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and of Oriental poems. Expressing admiration for the Albanians, he acknowledged their influence on his literary works. The journey, spanning from fall 1809 to spring 1811, led to the creation of significant works like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *The Siege of Corinth*. This experience not only ignited Byron's artistic inspiration and imagination but also instilled a newfound appreciation for the Albanians' resilience and dignity despite their challenges, difficulties and humble living conditions. Byron credited these people and landscapes for awakening his true poetic sentiment, a sentiment he shared in correspondence with Thomas Moore (Marchand 66–79).

To some extent, this corresponds to the opinion of Miodrag Šijaković who suggests that many, if not all, heroes in Byron's early works retain qualities from the Albanians he encountered during his travels in the mountains (Šijaković 215–216). Simultaneously, it is essential to acknowledge that during this phase of his literary career, Byron endowed his heroes with qualities from both the Albanians he encountered and his idealized self (Lovell 135). In the Oriental poems,

these characters can be identified as “demonic” embodiments, reflections of revolutionary ideas of the era, and sometimes even as portraits of Byron himself.

To demonstrate the presence of Albanian themes, motifs, characters, conflicts, etc., in Byron's poems, we have to examine a few examples.

In *The Giaour*, the action unfolds in the wild gorges of Parnassus, Greece. The protagonist, Giaour, falls in love with Leila, the wife of a Turk named Hassan. After Leila attempts to escape, Hassan, following the strict customs of the country, punishes her by putting her in a sack and throwing her into the sea. Hassan, driven by revenge, becomes an outlaw and leads a group of Albanian outlaws to capture Giaour. In a fierce battle, Giaour succeeds in killing Hassan but is haunted by a black shadow on his soul. Despite seeking peace through travels, he finds solace only in monastic life, where he confesses, reflects, and suffers for the crime committed in the name of love (Marshall 40–41).

In *The Giaour*, the monk is referred to as “kaloje,” a term Byron used for Greek monks near Ioannina. The Zica monastery, which left a profound impact on Byron, inspired the description of Hassan's palace in the poem. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Ali Pasha is depicted as a formidable leader of Albanian warriors, while in *The Giaour* Hassan is portrayed as their sworn enemy. Giaour, of Venetian origin, seeks revenge on Hassan and allies with the Albanians. He dresses in Albanian attire, highlighting his camaraderie with them. Giaour shares common traits with Albanians, such as pride, vengefulness, loyalty, fearlessness, and patience. Despite his Italian origin, Giaour's life among the Albanians shapes his character, although he was more knowledgeable and cultured than his counterparts. His participation in their fight against feudal lords reflects his personal intentions and quest for revenge against Hasan's heinous acts.

Albanians fiercely battled foreign feudal tyranny in their quest for freedom, engaging in instinctive, spontaneous, and epic warfare during Byron's time. These conflicts involved ambushes, revengeful attacks, and incursions against despised vassals, drawing Byron's interest. Byron likely found parallels with the guerrilla warfare he witnessed in Spain, seeing small groups as the most effective form of national liberation war. The significance of brave fighters, their endurance, enthusiasm, and leadership qualities became evident in such conflicts. In *The Giaour*, the Albanians maintain their mountain peak due to their leader's, Giaour's, perceived bravery and unwavering commitment to revenge, as recognized by Byron: “Friends meet to part; love laughs at faith; / True foes, once met, are joined till death!” (258).

Giaour avoids the traps and comes out victorious from the ambushes in the mountain only due to the honest, decisive, and unreserved support of his Albanians. In the verses of *The Giaour* the scene is described as follows:

The deathshot hissing from afar;
 The shock, the shout, the groan of war,
 Reverberate along that vale,
 More suited to the shepherd's tale:
 Though few the numbers—theirs the strife
 That neither spares nor speaks for life! (25)

The mountain scene in *The Giaour* becomes a crucial moment in Giaour's life, mirroring the broader struggle of Albanians against Turkish feudalism. According to Šijaković, Byron drew inspiration for *The Giaour* from an event in Greece where a Turkish nobleman threw a woman into the sea for loving a Christian. Giaour, influenced by this experience during his travels through Albania, becomes an outlaw, leads the group, and seeks revenge against the nobleman, Hassan. Šijaković contends that Giaour embodies Albanian qualities, particularly resembling Dervish Tahir, one of Byron's companions. Byron's diary mentions Tahir's scandalous kidnapping incident in Athens, and Šijaković suggests that Giaour's details reflect features of Tahir and Albanian landscapes. In essence, Giaour epitomizes Albanian qualities and traits in Byron's Oriental poems (Šijaković 215–216).

What about other Oriental poems of this period? With the exception of the detailed portrait of Ali Pasha in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron never depicted or described the Albanian Pasha directly in his poetry. However, he did that indirectly. Ali Pasha and his traits and features were the images from which Byron borrowed some of the most striking attributes of his oriental heroes (Borst 77–78).

The portrayal of Pasha and Giaffir in *The Bride of Abydos* as ruthless, cunning, fearless, and strict characters is likely inspired by Ali Pasha, as noted by Byron. In the poem, Byron points out the parallel between Ali Pasha's actions in real life and Giaffir's ruthless elimination of a rival. Byron, during his time in Albania, likely heard of Ali Pasha's historical rival, interestingly named Giaffir (Borst 77–78). Byron borrowed this name for the victim in *The Bride of Abydos* creating an imaginative Pasha with the same name:

Begirt with many a gallant slave,
 Apparell'd as becomes the brave,
 Awaiting each his lord's behest
 To guide his steps, or guard his rest,
 Old Giaffir sate in his Divan:
 Deep thought was in his aged eye;
 And though the face of Mussulman
 Not oft betrays to standers by
 The mind within, well skill'd to hide
 All but unconquerable pride,
 His pensive cheek and pondering brow
 Did more than he wont avow. (264)

Harold Wiener asserts that Giaffir in *The Bride of Abydos* unmistakably represents Ali Pasha, depicting him as an aged, dignified evildoer with a heart devoid of mercy, skilled in cunning and intrigue. Wiener notes Ali Pasha's historical actions, such as fighting against Paswan in Vidin and poisoning a rival in Sophia, comparing him with Giaffir's ruthless character. The shared name with Ali's victim adds to the association (Wiener 19). Additionally, Selimi, another character in the poem, is identified by Šijaković as having numerous Albanian traits, characterized by bravery, fearlessness, good manners, and self-confidence reminiscent of Albanian heroes met by Byron (Šijaković 215–216).

In *The Corsair*, some Byron scholars argue that Conrad also exhibits Albanian qualities, while Borst holds that Conrad reflects more of Byron's traits than those of Ali Pasha (Borst 77–78). However, the romantic hero archetype, who rejects society, becomes an outlaw, and leads others, shares similarities with Ali Pasha. Conrad's aura of terror is reminiscent of Ali Pasha's influence, highlighting the contrast between external cold-bloodedness and internal turmoil within his soul:

But who that Chief? his name on every shore
 Is famed and fear'd—they ask and know no more.
 With these he mingles not but to command. (278)

What is that spell, that thus his lawless train
 Confess and envy, yet oppose in vain?
 What should it be, that thus their faith can bind?
 The power of Thought—the magic of the Mind!
 Link'd with success, assumed and kept with skill,
 That moulds another's weakness to its will;
 Wields with their hands, but, still to these unknown,
 Makes even their mightiest deeds appear his own. (280)

According to Šijaković, even the character Lara in the poem of the same name possesses some qualities of Albanians. Šijaković suggests that *Lara* reflects many Albanian qualities, marking the end of the first phase of Byron's career, where he celebrated true and noble love, evolving gradually into the character of Don Juan (Šijaković 215–216).

Borst suggests that Byron's encounters with tales of Greek pirates, particularly Lambro, during his Oriental journey may have influenced the creation of *The Corsair* (Borst 77–78). Lambro, a corsair in *Don Juan*, shares a name with a character from *The Corsair*. John Galt insists that Ali Pasha serves as the inspiration for Lambro, emphasizing Ali Pasha's flattery of Byron's hands and references in *Don Juan* to Lambro and his daughter Haidee's small hands (Galt 9). Some researchers believe that Byron, inspired by Albania, crafted a Lambro-like hero in *Don Juan*, resembling Ali Pasha as a prototype (Borst 77–78).

Don Juan emerges as Byron's greatest anti-society satire, presenting a lengthy poem in eight-line stanzas. The narrative revolves around the legendary Don Juan, a character found in various European versions of the legend. Typically, Don Juan is a handsome, mischievous, and villainous hero who engages in wild adventures with daughters, woos young girls with charm, flattery, and cunning, and deceives married women. In Byron's satire, Don Juan, despite his mother's guidance, becomes entangled with Donna Julia, a young woman married to an older man named Don Alfonso. The poem explores Don Juan's "successes" in love and his attempts at moral improvement. Don Juan and Donna Julia indulge in prolonged moments of covert affair, but their affair is discovered when Don Alfonso, after initial doubts, catches the young rogue in his wife's room. Before the scandal erupts, Don Juan's mother advises him to escape and embark on a journey to improve his morals. He sets out on a pilgrimage to Cádiz, but his ship sinks, casting him onto an island in the Aegean Sea. There, the revived but half-dead Don Juan is discovered by Haidee, the young and beautiful daughter of the island's chieftain and ruler. Haidee and her maid tend to and heal Don Juan in a cave. She is afraid that Don Juan will fall into the hands of her father, Lambros, who sells every slave that he captures. The idyllic love between Haidee and Don Juan lasts a long time: "She came into the cave, but it was merely / To see her bird reposing in his nest" (680).

Following the news of Haidee's father, Lambro, supposedly perishing in a pirate attack, Haidee takes Don Juan to her father's house. During a celebration, Lambro unexpectedly appears, capturing Don Juan and sending him onto a slave ship. Unaware of Haidee's fate after giving birth to their child, Don Juan is sold on the Turkish slave

market. Sultana, passing through the market, falls in love with him, purchases Don Juan, dresses him as a woman, and places him in the Sultan's harem.

Initially oblivious to Sultana's affections due to his lingering love for Haidee, Don Juan eventually engages in adventures with the dancers. Overcome with jealousy, Sultana orders him to be drowned in the sea. Don Juan escapes and joins the Russian army surrounding the Sultan's palace, displaying bravery in battle. This earns him the honor of delivering victory news to Russian Empress, Catherine the Great, in Saint Petersburg, becoming her favorite. Later, he is sent on a diplomatic mission to England, where he becomes the object of high society's adoration. Despite the poet using Don Juan's character to mock and satirize the upper class of English society, Don Juan finds happiness in his homeland, surrounded by women ready for love adventures: "Society is now one polish'd horde, / Form'd of two mighty tribes, the Bores and Bored" (819).

Don Juan becomes weary of high-class women and tries to resist Duchess Fitz-Fulke's advances. During this time, the legendary "Black Friar," a figure associated with births, deaths, and marriages, visits Don Juan. Duchess Fitz-Fulke disguises herself as a ghost to visit him. Canto the Sixteenth concludes with Don Juan revealing the attractive duchess, and Canto the Seventeenth is left inconclusive as Byron grapples with how to conclude Don Juan's story—whether to send him to hell or leave him in an unhappy marriage. Byron's Don Juan embodies the legendary character's traits while also carrying freedom-loving, critical, and satirical ideas, expressing disdain for societal corruption, hypocrisy, and oppression. This cynical Don Juan mocks the ruling class and supports the oppressed, advocating for human dignity, freedom, and social justice. Additionally, Borst notes that Byron's portrayal of Lambro in *Don Juan* combines qualities of both Lambro the Pirate and Ali Pasha, showcasing Byron's creative talent and humor (Borst 77–78). The following verses, however, also remind us of two main features of Ali Pasha:

Now in a person used to much command—
 To bid men come, and go, and come again—
 To see his orders done, too, out of hand—
 Whether the word was death, or but the chain—
 It may seem strange to find his manners bland;
 Yet such things are, which I can not explain,
 Though doubtless he who can command himself
 Is good to govern—almost as a Guelf. (690)

High and inscrutable the old man stood,
Calm in his voice, and calm within his eye—
Not always signs with him of calmest mood:
He look'd upon her, but gave no reply. (703)

He was a man of a strange temperament,
Of mild demeanour though of savage mood. (704)

Byron's Oriental poems share common themes, motifs and structures, forming a cohesive narrative. The protagonists in these poems endure a life filled with unexpected challenges, escaping, abandoning family and homeland, facing societal stigma, and enduring abuse that compels them to migrate, seek revenge, cleanse sins, and restore honor. According to Nexhip Gami, these heroes are egocentric insurgents, placing their ego at the center of the universe, reflecting the individual protest characteristic of Byron's early literary career (Gami 30). Giaour, Conrad, Lara, and others lead solitary lives, shaped by a fierce conflict with society. Despite being wanderers, lost, homeless, or exiles, they experience violations of their honor, face, love, or rights. Disillusioned yet invincible, they harbor hatred towards those responsible for their misfortune, leading them to revolt, set traps, launch offensives, and engage in unequal battles against society or tyranny.

Byron's encounter with Albania left an indelible mark on him, surpassing the influence of other countries he visited. He marveled at Albania's untamed natural beauty and was captivated by the Albanian people, appreciating their distinctive character, passionate nature, and unwritten laws. Their virtues, such as bravery, loyalty, and love for freedom, deeply inspired Byron, shaping his concept of the romantic hero. Recognizing the honesty and fearlessness of the Albanians, he seamlessly integrated these qualities into his Oriental poems. Scholars assert that Albania's impact on Byron exceeded that of Greece during his Levant journey, emphasizing the lasting impression the country and its people made on the poet.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper was to address the gap in English studies regarding Albanian themes, motifs and characters in Byron's significant works, including *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Don Juan*.

The paper revealed that Albanian themes and motifs played a crucial role in Byron's literary works, prominently featured in approximately four hundred lines of Canto the Second of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This exploration extends to other Oriental poems like *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, and *The Siege of Corinth*, as well as Byron's masterpiece, *Don Juan*. The paper also proved that the characters in Byron's poems possess Albanian characteristics. Hence, it is obvious and clear that in the aforementioned poems and works in which he wrote about Albanian themes and motifs, Byron was impressed and enthused by the masculinity, honesty, hospitality, loyalty, magnificent nature, nobility, and humanity of the Albanians. Clearly, it can be affirmed that the Albanians as well as the Albanian lands had a real poetic dimension in his poems. Among them, Byron, as an impressed and talented poet, gained inspiration; he was moved and incited to the point that he transformed his inspiration into powerful verses about Albanian themes and motifs both in form and content, as well as high and noble messages. About Byron's personality, his visit to Albania, his letters, and his poetry in which he mentioned and talked about Albanians, in all likelihood, there was interest both across the Atlantic, among the Arbëresh people in Italy, and among the representatives of the Albanian National Renaissance. Byron's writings about Albanians likely played a role in introducing them to a wider European audience, potentially influencing Arbëresh poets (Albanian poets of Italy) and poets of the Albanian National Renaissance (Rilindja). That is why Byron has taken his rightful, significant, and special place in Albanian literature, tradition, history, and culture. However, unfortunately, in Albanian literature and culture, the interest in Byron started later than in the rest of Europe and somewhat after the interest shown about him by the neighboring peoples of the Balkans.

It emphasized the creation of a unique cult of Byronic popularity in Albanian literature and culture, highlighting admiration for his principles and ideals rather than his purely poetic contributions. The tradition of Albanian literature and culture, more or less, still preserves and cultivates Byron's fame as a great English and world poet, while Byron's visit to Albania, his interest in and writing about Albania and Albanians, his style and ideas, along with other episodes in his life, are attracting and grabbing to this day the attention and interest of Albanians. Last but not least, Byron's verses about Albania and the Albanians were a precious discovery and motivation for the patriotic poets of the Albanian National Renaissance, given that his poems were full of patriotic, heroic, and poetic pathos and inspiration. Therefore,

it is hoped that this paper will incite Albanian translators, literary critics, researchers, and scholars to continue translating, appreciating, and writing about Byron's poems and other works and about his presence, reception, popularity, and influence in Albanian literature and culture, and in this way further contribute to strengthening and enriching Albanian-English literary and cultural connections, ties, and relations.

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Albanske teme in motivi v Byronovih delih

Ključne besede: angleška književnost / Byron / imagologija / Albanija / albanska kultura

Byrona je k raziskovanju albanskih tem in motivov spodbudil obisk Albanije leta 1809, saj so albanske pokrajine, folklor in ljudje nanj naredili močan vtis. Ob tem ni vplival le na številne albanske avtorje in avtorice, ampak se je navdih, ki ga je črpal iz albanskega okolja, dodobra vsadil tudi v njegovo lastno poezijo. Članek s kvalitativno in primerjalno literarno metodo obravnava albanske teme v nekaterih znamenitih Byronovih delih, kot so *Romanje grofiča Harolda*, *Nevesta iz Abidos*, *Giaour*, *Obleganje Korinta*, *Lara*, *Parizina* in *Don Juan*. Analiza razkriva, da Byron v svojih pesmih slavi očarljivo naravo Albanije, albanski značaj, vrline albanskih žensk, narodne noše, folkloro in zgodovinske osebnosti, kot so Skenderbeg, Ali Paša in drugi. Poleg tega članek pokaže, da so bila patriotska čustva in junaštvo v Byronovih verzih dragocen navdih za marsikaterega domoljubnega pesnika v času albanskega narodnega preporoda. Byronova potovanja po albanskih deželah ter njegovo zanimanje in pisanje o Albaniji in Albancih so pomembno okrepili in utrdili albansko-angleške literarne vezi in kulturne odnose. Zaradi odkritega občudovanja Albanije si je Byron kot njen prijatelj, zaveznik in podpornik pridobil neizmerno naklonjenost albanskega ljudstva ter postal najbolj priljubljen pesnik med Albanci.

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The Discourse of Progress in Italian Travel Writing on Montenegro

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This article investigates a dominant discourse in Italian travel writing about Montenegro in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the “discourse of progress.” Employing a diachronic approach and an imagological analysis, it examines the emergence of various paradigms about Montenegro in Italian travelogues and explores the potential motivations behind this new discursive practice. The study aims to identify the key elements of this discourse and the principal authors, especially journalists and scholars, who contributed significantly to its emergence. At the center of our argument is the notion that the authors’ depictions of their experiences in Montenegro were significantly influenced by the main purpose of their visit—to report on the homeland of the future Italian queen Jelena Petrović Njegoš. Consequently, the marriage of the Savoy-Petrović dynasty, which marked a period of heightened relations between Italy and Montenegro, played a crucial role in how this small Balkan principality was presented to Italian readers. By examining these accounts, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the representation of the Balkan regions in nineteenth-century travel writing, moving beyond the dominant paradigms of “demi-Orientalism” and “Balkanism” espoused by scholars such as Larry Wolff and Maria Todorova.

Keywords: Italian literature / travel writing / imagology / Balkans / Montenegro

Introduction

The surge of scholarly interest in travelogues through the lens of discourse analysis has been significantly influenced by postcolonial studies. Pioneering work by Edward Said, particularly his 1978 book *Orientalism*, laid the groundwork for critical examinations of travel narratives. Said exposed how colonial powers constructed the “Orient” as the quintessential “Other.” Building on this foundation, scholars like Larry Wolff argue that seemingly neutral geographical terms like

“Eastern Europe” are also imbued with symbolic meaning. As Wolff explains, the concept emerged during the Enlightenment to highlight cultural differences and bolster Western intellectual superiority (Wolff 357–359), mirroring Said’s critique of “Orientalism” where knowledge production justifies potential domination. However, Wolff nuances this concept, suggesting a “demi-Orientalism” at play in Eastern Europe (7). This implies a more complex dynamic compared to the absolute “Othering” of the Orient. While critiquing power imbalances, Wolff acknowledges a concurrent desire to understand and potentially integrate Eastern Europe into a broader European identity.

Particularly relevant to the Balkans and interpretations of travel writing about Southeastern Europe are the analyses by Bulgarian theorist Maria Todorova. Drawing on Said’s research, Todorova introduces the concept of “Balkanism.” Similar to Orientalism, Balkanism approaches the Balkans’ heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint, resulting in “a discourse about an imputed ambiguity,” rather than the “imputed opposition” found in Orientalism (Todorova 17). Todorova argues that, unlike the Orient, the Balkans are reframed as Europe’s “incomplete self.” Both Orientalism and Balkanism historically signify the antithesis of the European ideal, characterized by cleanliness, order, self-control, sense of law, justice, and efficient administration (119).¹

Slovenian anthropologist Božidar Jezernik’s comprehensive work *Wild Europe* (2004) provides the most extensive overview of themes found in travel writing on the Balkans and Eastern Europe by authors of various nationalities. Jezernik’s analysis of ethnological and anthropological research documented in Western European travelogues from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century reveals how perceptions of the Balkans evolved over time and in relation to the peoples described. Todorova’s approach, which avoids a common stereotype of the Balkans in the West (Todorova 115), suggests the need for a nationality-based analysis.

This study examines the portrayal of Montenegro in nineteenth-century Italian travelogues. While these accounts, written predominantly by journalists and scientists, may lack the overt literary qualities of more artistic works, they provide valuable material for discourse analysis. Our research has two main objectives. First, we aim to illuminate alternative discourses about Balkan countries, particularly Montenegro, that

¹ For more information about Orientalism and Balkanism, see Bakić-Hayden and Hayden; Fleming; Čolović; Berber; Raspudić; Ristović.

emerged during this period. Second, we seek to identify the factors that influenced these discursive shifts. By examining these Italian accounts, we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how nineteenth-century travel writing represented Balkan regions beyond the dominant paradigms of “demi-Orientalism” and “Balkanism.”

Italian travelogues on Montenegro published until the last decade of the nineteenth century

Up until the nineteenth century, Montenegro was, for Italians, an almost entirely unknown land. Seen from a political standpoint as part of Europe under Turkish domination, which was underdeveloped in terms of both its economy and its infrastructure, it did not seem a particularly attractive destination for travelers, given the potential dangers and difficulty of the journey (Popović, “Putopisno upoznavanje”). As such, in the first half of the nineteenth century, only one book describing a journey to Montenegro was published in Italian. This was the work by Bartolomeo Biasoletto (1793–1858), a botanist from Trieste, who visited Montenegro while escorting Friedrich Augustus II of Saxony in 1838, and who published his account three years later. The singularity of his experience, as well as the general perception of Montenegro at this time in the works of the few foreign visitors, is best summed up by the author’s own words on his feelings as he left Montenegro: “We turned with pleasure to look back from a distance at the harsh but wonderful places we visited in Montenegro and which we were so afraid of, almost wondering if we had really been there at all” (Biasoletto 117).

The increasing political importance of the territory of Montenegro for the Great Powers in the nineteenth century, as part of the so-called “Eastern Question,” meant there was also increased demand for information on Montenegro through eyewitness accounts, which in turn led to an increase in the number of foreign visitors. Up until the 1870s, that is, during their own struggle for both national liberation and unification, Italians began to learn more extensively about Montenegro, notably through translations, whether full or partial, of the works of French and German authors who had visited the country. In those accounts, the country is presented through a demi-Orientalizing discourse, which has at its core the perception of Eastern Europe as a space “between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism,” situating it as clearly subordinate to Western Europe (Wolff 357, 360).

Montenegro is thus viewed in their works as a rather exotic place that is home to people with strange customs and unusual social arrangements.

During the Montenegro-Turkey War (1876–1878), which resulted in the recognition of Montenegrin independence by the Ottomans at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Italian travelers were able to provide direct insights into the conditions in Montenegro. At that time, both the journalist Eugenio Popovich (1842–1931) and the Italian MP Alfredo Serristori (1833–1884) wrote about Montenegro, producing travelogues that glorified the patriotism of the Montenegrins and attempted to encourage Italian support for them at this decisive historical moment.² As such, their depictions were, understandably, focused on highlighting the military skill, courage, and high moral values of the Montenegrins, which helped to make the *heroic discourse* about Montenegro dominant in Italy. The glorification of the struggle for freedom and independence which the local population was engaged in, and their aspirations towards creating their own nation-state, meant that these Balkan warriors were no longer viewed as mere primitive butchers, but rather as brave and respectable heroes (Šistek 265).

A few years later, the botanist Antonio Baldacci (1867–1950) and the Dominican friar Vincenzo Vannutelli (1841–1900) also wrote about Montenegro in Italian. Their descriptions of the socio-cultural space of Montenegro largely follow the contours of the standard demi-Orientalist discourse. In their works, Montenegro is viewed as a curiosity on European soil, considered a difficult country to reach, where the cultural space is significantly contaminated by oriental influences, and whose ruler is seen as being closer to a medieval feudal lord than a contemporary leader.

Italian travelogues on Montenegro published between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The sudden increase in Italian interest in Montenegro at the end of the nineteenth century can be directly linked to the dynastic marriage between the House of Savoy and the Petrović dynasty. This union with a small, poor Balkan principality of roughly 200,000 inhabitants was motivated by a confluence of factors, both eugenic and political. The widely-held belief that earlier consanguineous marriages had genetically

² For more on this subject, see Popović, “Ratni dopisi” 389–401; Popović, “Parlamentare” 671–679.

“weakened” the House of Savoy directed the choice of a princess with “healthy blood” (Barneschi 15). Additionally, the Italian court and its diplomats envisioned the marriage as a strategic move to bolster Italy’s political and economic influence in the Balkans, potentially leading to closer ties with Russia (Sircana; Burzanović, *Crna Gora* 202, 207).

The announcement of the royal couple’s engagement in Cetinje (August 1896) sparked a wave of Italian journalistic interest in Montenegro. Journalists flocked to the country, eager to explore and report on various aspects of life for Italian audiences. Their investigations materialized not only in newspaper correspondence but also in a rapid succession of monographs on Montenegro. Following the wedding ceremony in Rome (October 1896), scientists and other professionals also visited Montenegro, subsequently publishing their impressions in travelogues. The dynastic marriage thus played a decisive role in shaping Italian perceptions of Montenegro. A significant shift in discourse is evident in works published between 1896 and 1906, compared to travelogues written on Montenegro just a decade earlier.

The key role in creating this new image of Montenegro following the events of 1896 was played by the *discourse on progress*. This discourse focused on analyzing the Montenegrin government’s efforts to make Montenegro more similar to developed European countries. Descriptions of the small Balkan principality emphasized its increasing urbanization, building projects, and advancements in culture, legislation, and various aspects of social development.

While prior travel writing about Montenegro primarily focused on its natural beauty, the authors visiting the country at the end of the nineteenth century shifted their focus to the reforms enacted by Montenegrin ruler Nikola I after the 1876–1878 war and the recognition of Montenegrin independence by the Ottomans at the Congress of Berlin (1878). Turning their attention to the realities of urban life in Montenegro, as evidenced by their descriptions of the places they visited, these writers explored the impact of these reforms. Given that all the visitors spent at least some time in Cetinje, their works, as might be expected, contain numerous descriptions of the Montenegrin capital.

The journalist and author Giuseppe Marcotti (1850–1922) published his account in 1896, although he had visited Cetinje approximately a decade earlier. Describing the unpaved streets and the few, modest, tiled, and plastered houses of the Montenegrin capital, he suggests that it resembles a “respectable Italian town” (Marcotti 76). Another writer and journalist, Armando Perotti (1865–1924) finds in this small town of only two thousand inhabitants a simplicity in the construction

of houses, broad streets, and a concern for cleanliness that makes him describe the Montenegrin capital as a “city of dreams.” Patrick Mac Swiney de Mashanaglass (1871–1945), President of the National Committee of Catholic Scholars of Great Britain and Ireland,³ presents Cetinje as a small town where educated foreigners from the upper classes can partake in various activities and live comfortably. He contrasts this group with those who depict the town as a place of unwanted exile, labeling them as individuals who lack inner wealth and therefore cannot fully appreciate its offerings (Mac Swiney de Mashanaglass 217). Several authors emphasize the frenetic construction activity in Cetinje. They describe the erection of diplomatic missions, churches, cultural and historical monuments, theaters, schools, and even a tennis court. This flurry of construction paints a picture of a town undergoing a radical transformation into a modern European capital. Vico Mantegazza (1856–1934) who was the correspondent for the Florentine newspaper *La Nazione* and whose book on his visit to Montenegro went through three editions within fifteen years, compared the Montenegrin capital, with its two thousand inhabitants, to metropolises like Belgrade and Sofia of thirty years prior (Mantegazza 97).⁴ Meanwhile, the correspondent for the Milanese newspaper *Perseveranza* Mario Borsa (1870–1952) was able to worry that the presence of the court, the state apparatus, a single club, and the various cultural facilities, all in such a small place, might “contaminate the people and their customs with conventionalism” (Borsa 22).⁵ Nine years after the wedding of the royal couple, in 1905, the Florentine journalist Silvio Ghelli (1866–1924) went so far as to argue that Cetinje was, in fact, an excessively modern city, with “too many tailcoats, top hats, and military decorations” on show (Ghelli 56). During the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), a notable shift in the discourse on Montenegro took place. Perceptions underwent such a dramatic transformation that one author questioned how this collection of “thirteen huts” could ever have been considered a true capital city in the European sense (Guarino 17).⁶

Even in their descriptions of the towns in the interior of Montenegro, the Italian authors emphasized just how much progress had been

³ For further insights into this author and his travelogue about Montenegro, refer to Burzanović and Popović, “Montenegro.”

⁴ For Mantegazza’s other books and works on Montenegro, see Burzanović and Popović, “Vico Mantegazza.”

⁵ For further information about this book, refer to Popović, “Montenegro.”

⁶ For a deeper exploration of the Balkanist discourse on Montenegro and the underlying motivations behind its emergence, see Popović, “Establishment.”

achieved. They highlighted improvements in the road infrastructure, the construction of new buildings and factories, enhanced telegraph and telephone connections, and the opening of cultural and educational institutions as compelling evidence of this progress. However, their impressions were far from uniform. For Mario Borsa, who visited Rijeka Crnojevića—a small town on Lake Skadar—the sight of clean houses adorned with flowers and the nineteenth-century stone bridge (which he believed to be of Roman origin) prompted him to compare this charming town to places in Switzerland. In contrast, Giuseppe Marcotti expressed reservations, particularly regarding the subpar quality of available razors and the local custom of shaving outdoors. Nevertheless, he cautioned readers against assuming that the “sophistication of the civilized world” did not extend to the town. He highlighted its vibrant trade and the availability of both Italian liquor and English biscuits in local shops.

The description of Podgorica, the largest city in the principality, allowed the authors to, on the one hand, highlight the contrast with the capital, Cetinje, in terms of the mixture of peoples and cultures found in the larger town, but also, on the other hand, to emphasize the progress that had been made since administrative control had been taken on by the Montenegrin authorities in 1878. For Mario Borsa, Podgorica embodied a liminal space, a crossroads between East and West. He found it a bustling trading center with a distinctly Oriental character. However, the lack of cleanliness and the large number of beggars left him with a negative overall impression (Borsa 68, 74, 91). Despite these drawbacks, he acknowledged efforts to improve the economy and raise cultural standards in the city. Borsa considered Nikšić, also incorporated into Montenegro in 1878, to be the principality’s most prosperous town. He lauded its institutional and economic development, even dubbing it the “Florence of Montenegro” due to the purity of the local dialect (86–87).

Botanist Antonio Baldacci, who dedicated much of his life to studying Montenegrin flora, observed the positive impact of Montenegrin rule extending beyond Podgorica and Nikšić. He noted a decline in traditional violence along the coast, with practices like blood feuds, robberies, arson, and attacks being successfully curbed. This starkly contrasted with the “anarchy in full bloom” across the border in the Pashaluk of Skadar, where tribal warfare and caravan attacks remained commonplace (Baldacci, *Crnagora* 93–94).

Geographer Guido Cora (1851–1917) sought to extend the narrative of progress beyond Podgorica and Nikšić, emphasizing the

benefits of the new administration for all of Montenegro compared to Turkish rule. He turned his lens to northern towns like Andrijeviča and Kolašin, highlighting their rapid economic and urban development. This advancement was manifested through the construction of factories, restaurants, cafes, and attractive houses, alongside the establishment of postal and telegraph services, and a diverse range of cultural institutions.⁷

Travel writers' perspectives were often influenced by their political beliefs, sometimes bordering on prejudice, for example in the context of open opposition to Italy's support for Austria-Hungary as part of the Triple Alliance. For instance, in Mantegazza's descriptions of Montenegro's towns, including details about restaurants, services, and the quality of food and drink, we can discern his fondness for the small Balkan principality. Conversely, when discussing regions under Austrian administration, he portrays Italy's historical rival for Adriatic influence in a decidedly negative light (Mantegazza 82). Austrian-controlled Kotor, which had long been hailed as the bridge connecting Montenegro to the West—both economically and culturally—is dismissed by Mantegazza as a neglected border post unsuitable for foreign visitors. Mario Borsa goes further, characterizing Kotor as a “wretched town made dirty by soldiers, sailors, merchants, porters, and prostitutes” (Borsa 18). Both Marcotti and Cora romanticize Venetian rule over the eastern Adriatic, perceiving it as a civilizing force in stark contrast to Austrian administration. Silvio Ghelli considered all the towns on the Dalmatian coast, including Kotor, exclusively through the prism of ongoing Austrian-Italian rivalry.

In the context of Montenegro's progress after two decades of peace, Italian authors frequently highlighted culture and the rule of law. These twin themes, largely absent from previous travel writing accessible to Italian readers, became cornerstones in depicting the principality's rapid civilizational advancement. According to Italian travel writers, this transformation signified that a coalition of tribes, which had recently united to resist Turkish invaders, had evolved into an organized nation with well-defined goals related to legal governance and the promotion of cultural pursuits.

Giuseppe Marcotti observed that the spirit of civilization had “begun to warm” the wild mountains of Montenegro. During his stay in the Montenegrin capital, he witnessed the construction of a national

⁷ Cora first published this work in the magazine *Nuova Antologia*, in three parts, and then as a monograph. All citations are from this later publication.

theatre, the Zetski dom, and anticipated the opening of a museum (Marcotti 84, 95). Mario Borsa, who began his career in journalism as a theatre critic, provided detailed descriptions of the Zetski dom and its performances. He found the actors to be primarily amateurs or second-rate Serbian troupes, performing comedies and historical dramas by Prince Nikola and Serbian playwrights.⁸ Borsa also visited the two reading rooms within the theatre, frequented by both intellectuals and ordinary citizens (Borsa 39). He described their historical paintings and busts of Russian Tsars, alongside one of Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of printing press (39–40). Highlighting Montenegro's cultural heritage, Borsa noted the upcoming 400th anniversary of the first printing house in the South Slavs, established even before the one in Oxford (33). Further evidence of this rich tradition came from Podgorica's reading room, where he saw a book printed in 1540 using the typographical set created by Božidar Vuković Podgoričanin (1460–1539), a Montenegrin nobleman who worked as a printer in Venice (69–71).

The authors were keenly interested in the cultural content available to Montenegrin readers, and so they noted which periodicals could be found in Montenegrin reading rooms. Giuseppe Marcotti observed that guests at the Hotel Cetinje had access to approximately thirty different newspapers, spanning Slavic and other European languages. Mario Borsa provided a more detailed account of periodicals in Zetski Dom, where he encountered journals from the South Slavic regions, as well as Russian, German, French, and Italian publications; he even listed titles of the latter. Among the Montenegrin newspapers, this author specifically mentioned those published in Cetinje during that period: the semi-official newspaper *Glas Crnogorca* (The Montenegrin Voice), the literary monthly *Luča* (The Torch), and the church and school newspaper *Prosvjeta* (Education). To delve deeper into Montenegrins' literary preferences, Borsa also visited the city's bookstore. Notably, he observed that the majority of works available were in German and Slavic languages, leading him to conclude that the Montenegrin cultural public was not familiar with the contemporary currents of European philosophy and literature.

⁸ Despite theatre activity in Montenegro having commenced a decade earlier, the Zetski dom theatre officially opened its doors in 1896. This momentous occasion coincided with the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the Petrović Njegoš dynasty's rule. It is noteworthy that Montenegro established its first domestic professional theatre with a permanent ensemble only in 1910 (Milunović).

In his writings on education and literature in Montenegro, Manfredo Cagni (1834–1907), a general, travel writer, and collector of folk sayings, attributed the delayed development of written Montenegrin literature to the centuries-long struggle for freedom, which had kept Montenegrins apart from intellectual pursuits (Cagni 95). However, he foresaw a promising future: rapid advancements in high schools and higher education, provided that new struggles did not hinder progress. Guido Cora echoed this sentiment, listing the newly opened schools and cultural institutions and making the observation that the arts have become more “favored” than before (Cora 35).

The progress Montenegro achieved in the field of law was recognized by Italian authors in the adoption of the General Property Code in 1888. This code, commissioned by Prince Nicholas I, stands as one of the most substantial compilations of legal regulations concerning property rights.⁹ Its author, the esteemed Dalmatian professor Valtazar Bogišić, is extensively featured in travelogues, delving into his background and accomplishments through biographical accounts and anecdotes from his travels or personal interviews. Vico Mantegazza and Mario Borsa particularly praised Bogišić’s ability to blend customary law principles with modern legal practices. Borsa even referred to this collection of legal regulations as a “monument” to Montenegrin “young civilization” (Borsa 115). Both Mantegazza and Adolfo Rossi (1857–1921), correspondent for *Corriere della Sera*, introduced several Montenegrin proverbs from Bogišić’s work, which aided him in conveying the concept of justice to even the least educated Montenegrins. In his travelogue, Rossi described Bogišić’s code as pivotal in transforming Montenegro into a modern legal state. Silvio Ghelli further emphasized its significance by including an extensive interview with Bogišić in his book, where specific provisions from the code were discussed.

Beyond the innovations introduced by Valtazar Bogišić’s 1888 code, Italian travel writers also referenced and highlighted specific provisions from earlier legal texts. For instance, Giuseppe Marcotti analyzed elements from the Code of Danilo I (1855).¹⁰ Meanwhile, Silvio Ghelli reminded readers of Montenegro’s initial strides toward establishing the rule of law, taken by Montenegrin Bishop Petar I in the early nineteenth

⁹ This code had an impact on theory, practice and legislation in Montenegro and abroad (Danilović).

¹⁰ The norms of this code of 95 articles regulate the rights of man and citizen, the position and rights of princes, the position and rights of courts, the obligations of citizens in protecting the state and numerous other issues related to social, political and economic life (Pavićević).

century when he enacted the Stega—the region’s first written legal framework (Ghelli 46).

To illustrate Montenegro’s transformation into a legal state, the authors detailed its court system, listing the available first and second-instance courts. However, their travelogues presented a curious detail about Montenegrin judicial administration. As a last resort, dissatisfied litigants could personally appeal to the prince, who would then convene under the shade of an elm tree in the courtyard of the former ruler’s residence, surrounded by conflicting parties and curious onlookers, to reconsider court decisions. Unlike some earlier visitors who saw this practice as emblematic of Montenegrin backwardness, late nineteenth-century authors perceived it as a unique blend of tradition and modern legal practice. Mario Borsa further noted that the process had evolved. Instead of meeting every petitioner face-to-face, the prince now relied on a book of complaints to select cases for personal consideration. Other complaints received written responses, which Borsa described as sharp, humorous, and well-judged, suggesting they warranted separate publication. This royal practice also underscored Montenegro’s educational progress; despite having established its first elementary school only in 1834, the society had already transitioned from oral communication with the ruler to written appeals.

Both Silvio Ghelli and painter Hermann Corrodi (1844–1905) witnessed trials in Cetinje and recorded their observations on the Montenegrin legal system. While Corrodi focused on the trust that subjects placed in the prince as the undisputed supreme judge, Ghelli noticed changes in the location of hearings. He observed the gradual decline of the custom of holding court under the elm tree and described the newly established courtroom. Ghelli nevertheless highlighted the continued practice of subjects appealing to the prince, who, within a few hours, could confirm or modify dozens of lower court decisions, bypassing procedures, lawyers, records, and fees (Ghelli 24). Ghelli even saw advantages in this system, praising its swiftness and affordability for citizens.

Vico Mantegazza also idealized Montenegro’s rudimentary legal system, emphasizing the absence of lawyers and various formalities such as court files and proceedings (Mantegazza 209). The author justified the prince’s involvement in court processes by citing the need to prevent potential injustices stemming from “old prejudices,” especially due to insufficiently educated judges (210). Ghelli supported this notion by recounting the case of a peasant who appealed a court-ordered high compensation payment to Prince Nikola. After appealing directly to the prince, the peasant received a reduced fine.

Thus, despite praising Montenegro's progress and modernization, the authors also harbored conservative views, highlighting the perceived benefits of Montenegro's political and legal lag compared to Italy. Giuseppe Marcotti, for instance, expressed apprehension about the Civil Code's impact, likening its introduction to opening "Pandora's Box" due to the potential rise of lawyers (Marcotti 227). Mantegazza emphasized the merits of Montenegro's gradual modernization, comparing the absolutist rule of its prince with Italy's parliamentary monarchy. He saw Italy's political life as plagued by "miserable and fruitless conflicts between political parties," while viewing Montenegro's absolutist government as "the main factor in the strength and power of the country" (Mantegazza 204). Polemical stances toward Italy were also evident in Adolfo Rossi's work. He criticized the Italian parliament for spending days debating permissible holiday activities, contrasting it with the Prince of Montenegro who simply issued decrees to his subjects (Rossi 74–75). Vico Mantegazza even believed that a premature shift to a constitutional system in Montenegro would be detrimental, potentially causing more harm than any external military threat (Mantegazza 270).

These authors' views suggest they perceived Montenegro as a society insulated by its rugged mountains, spared the ills of a developed and corrupt world. However, they worried that civic and legal advancements might erode this perceived moral purity.

Attitudes towards military modernization were also divided. Thus Adolfo Rossi, Vico Mantegazza, and army officer Eugenio Barbarich (1863–1931)¹¹ reported on the establishment of a military school in Podgorica, a four-month training course in Cetinje, improved officer training in Italian academies, new regulations, and even a military orchestra (Rossi 74–75). In contrast, Giuseppe Marcotti expressed a different perspective. Rather than focusing solely on firearms proficiency, he advocated for attention to traditional warfare techniques, especially dagger handling. According to Marcotti, mastering hand-to-hand combat would be crucial in the inevitable wars of the future (Marcotti 210).

The modernization process that took place in Montenegro in the depictions of Italian authors was also evident in the lifestyle of the Montenegrin ruling family of Petrović-Njegoš. For instance, Rossi observed that the prince's residences featured modern furniture imported from European countries, while the palace kitchen boasted

¹¹ For his works on Montenegro, see Popović, "Crnogorske teme."

a French head chef. Vico Mantegazza further noted that the prince's daughters traveled to Vienna and other European metropolises to purchase fashionable gowns. By portraying the royal family in this manner, the authors were trying to meet the expectations of the Italian public, and perhaps those of the fashionable circles that did not look with much sympathy on the decision of the Italian heir to the throne to marry a princess from such a small, poor and politically weak country.¹²

Nevertheless, the authors were eager to highlight the prince's family's ability to strike a balance between modernizing tendencies and the preservation of folk traditions. Mario Borsa, for example, acknowledged how the ruling dynasty seamlessly blended the refinement of court ceremonies with the "primitive simplicity" of the people. He illustrated this point with a description of an engagement celebration ball that included both a waltz and a traditional Montenegrin dance, as well as performances by Roma musicians (Borsa 31). Beyond court ceremonies, Italian writers documented festivities for the common people. Borsa described a "people's dinner" hosted by Prince Danilo after the Italian prince's departure. During this unique gathering, food was served on leaves instead of plates, and cutlery was absent. The festivities culminated with the traditional folk dance known as the *kolo* (144).

The significance of the author's perspective in portraying Montenegro and their deliberate intention to shape a specific perception is exemplified in this quote from Mario Borsa:

You will have noticed that I was generally very favorable and that I viewed Montenegro optimistically. This is partly because of my character and partly the result of my intention. I wanted to search here, find and see everything that this country has done in the last eighteen years since the last war to improve its material and spiritual conditions, and to renew its economic and civil life, which will not be exclusively the life of shepherds and warriors. To come up here simply to note that there was no railway, no electric light, no wealth, no comfort, no refinement, seemed to me both naive and mean-spirited. Some have done so before and some continue to do so. They probably have their reasons, and maybe this is one of them: speaking ill of others is always easy and flattering because it makes you look superior and independent. *Malignitati falsa species libertatis inest!* as Tacitus said at the beginning of his stories. (150)

¹² One of them was the Italian writer Edoardo Scarfoglio, who published several articles criticizing the prince's decision. His article "Le nozze coi fichi secchi," published under the pseudonym Tartarin in his journal *Il Mattino*, led to the seizure of issue number 269 of this periodical by Italian authorities (Barneschi 123).

Conclusion

Italian travel writing on Montenegro during the period from 1896 to 1906 underwent a significant shift in discourse. In contrast to earlier, demi-Orientalist depictions, a new discourse on progress emerged, one that is inclusive in nature. This paradigm aimed to present Montenegro to Italians as a nation that, having secured its territory and political aspirations, experienced remarkable and rapid development, laying the groundwork for future advancement in all areas. While rooted in some factual observations (Burzanović, “Moderni sviluppi” 174–176), this discourse also reflected the desire to portray Montenegro as a worthy homeland for the Italian queen. This need arose from discontent among certain Italian social circles regarding the prince’s choice of a bride, given her humble origins in a politically less influential country.

Journalists who visited Montenegro in August and September 1896—Adolfo Rossi, Vico Mantegazza, and Mario Borsa—played a pivotal role in shaping this new narrative. Although not all Italian authors explicitly justify their overwhelmingly positive portrayals, their optimistic perspectives and expectations can be attributed to the celebratory context of their visit. Italy and Montenegro, newly bound by dynastic ties, shared various political and economic goals, creating an atmosphere conducive to favorable representation.

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Diskurz o napredku v italijanski potopisni literaturi o Črni gori

Ključne besede: italijanska književnost / potopisi / imagologija / Balkan / Črna gora

Članek raziskuje prevladujoči diskurz – »diskurz o napredku« – italijanske potopisne literature o Črni gori v poznem 19. in zgodnjem 20. stoletju. Z imagološko analizo ob diahronem pristopu preučuje nastanek različnih paradig o Črni gori v italijanskih potopisih in morebitne motive za to novo diskurzivno prakso. Cilj študije je prepoznati ključne elemente tega diskurza in opredeliti glavne avtorje in avtorice, predvsem v novinarstvu in znanosti, ki so prispevali k njegovemu razvoju. Argumentacija temelji na domnevi, da je na to, kako so avtorji in avtorice prikazovali svoje izkušnje v Črni gori, pomembno vplival poglavitni namen njihovega obiska – poročati o domovini bodoče italijanske kraljice Jelene Petrović Njegoš. Dinastična poroka med Savojski in Petrovići, ki je zaznamovala obdobje intenzivnejših odnosov med Italijo in Črno goro, je bila ključnega pomena za predstavitev te majhne balkanske kneževine italijanskim bralcem. Z analizo tovrstnih pričevanj želi članek prispevati k bolj diferenciranemu razumevanju načinov, na katere so bile v potopisih 19. stoletja predstavljene balkanske regije, in preseči prevla-

dujoči paradigmi »pol-orientalizma« in »balkanizma«, ki sta ju vzpostavila Larry Wolff in Maria Todorova.

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Beyond the Ecology of Common Sense: Grasping the World from the Other Edge

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This article discusses the idea of the world in terms of literary expression and the conceptual translation of space. The term “world” in this sense designates a complex entity that is subject to different interpretations, as is the case in comparative literature, which tends to develop its definition of the world in order to theorize the relationship of literature to space. With reference to the works of twentieth-century Turkish writer Tezer Özlü, this paper addresses the autonomy of the travelling writer in the context of a textual enjoyment that renounces heteronomy vis-à-vis the Earth as an inflexibly concrete geographical reality. Özlü considers travelling as an act that goes beyond the ecology of common sense and thus claims independence from the collective and stagnant translations of the world so as not to be reduced to a uniformity of expression in the coherence of things. Considering the concepts of identity and alterity, the main issue here is to discuss the translation of the world as a reality to be grasped, as a possibility to expand in the mind, in ideas that resist the rigidity, banality and ordinariness of space as a system.

Keywords: Turkish literature / Özlü, Tezer / travel narrative / comparative literature / cultural studies / identity / alterity

Introduction

The notion “world” is a tough one to translate. In literary studies, comparative literature took the charge to propose several translations of the world to expand or criticize the meaning, nature, or function of literary presence in space. Such translations are often related to the facts of marketplace, crossroads, circulation, reception, popularity, or canonization to underscore the cultural movement and influence of literary expression across borders. So, world is considered as a concept of exchange to explain transnational relations by referring us to borders or spheres that gather common contents of nations, cultural

geographies, or regions. In this respect, Ben Hutchinson explains that the aim of comparative literature is to “conceive a world without borders” (Hutchinson 118). The latter represents in this sense a significant entity and reality in translating the world. Border functions, in Hutchinson’s definition, as a useful limit to overcome, but it also denotes a problem when it comes to conceive the idea of the world which seems to depend on the manifestation of borders. In other terms, world is conceived in terms of limits to better define the relationship between cultural spaces which indicates a complex situation to translate due to the presence of the Other.

The significance of the translation of the world in interpreting common identity and otherness reveals to be obvious in literary studies and it therefore becomes pertinent to get a critical and varying view out of such translational motivation in terms of alterity and diversity. To address that significant act regarding the conception of space, in this paper, the notion of world will be reconsidered after the works of twentieth-century Turkish writer Tezer Özlü who suggests, on several occasions in her fictional and non-fictional texts, including short story, travelogue, journal article or letter, mostly written in the 1980s, her translation of the world while formulating her literary perspective through the notions of autonomy and independence. Here, the aim is then elaborating an idea of world based on the perspective of Özlü to discuss the position of the writer in national and transnational spheres, the conception of space in literary means, and the role of travel in the development of this conception. Hence, it will be possible to revisit the term “world” in the context of literary expression to expound such complex entity that keeps preoccupying and inspiring the terminology of comparative literature. To do so, in the first chapter, the main purpose consists in inspecting how travel becomes an impetus to think about elsewhere and the world and thus to go beyond the ecology of common sense, representing the systemic translation of the world. In the second and last chapter, the focus will be on the notion of autonomy as a situation which makes sense for the writer-traveler after leaving the ecology of common sense and which is represented through enjoyment, in the sense of the word used by Roland Barthes, inside the texts produced for expressing such autonomy. Altogether, Tezer Özlü’s conception of space will be examined to rethink the idea of the world with regards to the state of travel and to the independence of the writer who tries to grasp a sort of enjoyment beyond the bounds and structures that form a calculated environment for producing literature.

Going beyond the ecology of common sense

To literary extent, ecology may stand for consonance of a culture which forms an environment for common means and ends and which tends to expand its influence and power through relations and transformations with other cultures. For Alexander Beecroft, ecology corresponds to a “system” that reflects an “interactive nature” of various inputs related to various phenomena such as sociocultural and political circumstances (Beecroft 18–19). That ecology can undergo changes, but this is also part of the ecology which keeps designating a cultural whole. The world is therefore composed of those ecologies as systems, and borders are seen as “zones of transition rather than fixed lines on a map.” When translating the world, Beecroft talks about “ecological constraints operating on the circulation of literary texts” (25). The circulation names at this point an ecologically constrained interaction between systems that incorporate conflicting sociocultural wholes, forming together a literary world totality. Akin to that view, Pascale Casanova also takes the world as totality. For her, the hegemonic and conflictual relations between nations and territories define that totality composed of centers and peripheries (Casanova 20–21). Before Beecroft, Casanova developed an idea of the world that prioritizes such kind of relations occurring in terms of power and influence. And more recently, Stefan Helgesson and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen who take the notion “systemic relations” as the key fact of their critique (Helgesson and Thomsen 18), consider the world as system, based on sociocultural geographies and zones, separated by borders, or interacted through borders. The Other in those approaches simply translates a common body, being a component of world-systems that, in Eric Hayot’s terms, constitute self-organizing, self-enclosed and self-referential totalities (Hayot 32).

To propose on her part a more inclusive term against the translation of the world as a global entity “around which the other ceases to be imagined or encountered except as the derivative of the same” (Moore and Rivera 282), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak puts forward the term “planet” with the intention to emphasize the significance of alterity in our living space: Earth. And yet, not unlikely to other approaches mentioned here, she considers the planet as “another system,” inhabited by us, “on loan” (Spivak 72). For Spivak, Earth, as a “paranational image,” stands “beyond our control and representation,” it is “something that we know is there, though we can never directly grasp as an object with our senses” (Wainwright 70, 73). That sort of alterity promotes, according to Spivak, a sense of “collectivity” for all human beings who would

be aware of their absolute common otherness toward or against Earth, that unapologetically foreign ecology. Despite its alterity-focused consideration, such view that reduces the world into the definition of a planet is still not in tune with Tezer Özlü's conception of space. In the vocabulary of Turkish writer, Earth signifies a stern reality which is not accurately convenient for re-translations as it manifests in its tedious appearance and severe limits and forms. Özlü compares Earth to a foreign "external object" like the educational globe that she remembers from geography lessons (Özlü, *Çocukluğun* 23). That school globe reminds the writer how the common sense gets systematically established thanks to the institutional education which transforms the world into a superficial reality, not apt to inspire affection or enjoyment. The writer enunciates that she never could have embraced the world in its form taught at school or have felt a belonging to any part of Earth during her life (Erbil 52). She considers herself in exile everywhere and not immigrant anywhere as she "keeps displacing" her "self" from one place to another (Özlü, *Yeryüzüne* 111). Nevertheless, she assumes that Earth functions as a solid ground for passing through worlds and consequently re-inventing the space where herself and others live.

The translation of the world relying upon the systematic structures makes the world a rigid entity unlikely to get envisioned as a sensible, subjective, and yet unsystematically diverse reality. This is the reason why "common sense" is a suitable term for identifying the systemic translation of the world, conceived as the interactive scene or arena of different common bodies that reflect the holistic view concerning every world culture. That being the case of the recent approaches mentioned above, for Tezer Özlü, the conception of space seems to indicate a different direction. By the agency of her literary outputs, she presents an idea of the world which draws forth the deviating and flexible dimensions of space rather than conceiving the latter as a solid structure that reduces people and cultures into general, formal, and collective entities. In Özlü's conception of space, common sense is something toward which a writer should take a distance to be able to "grasp the world." The latter notion means, for her, faraway places and times (Özlü, *Eski* 103), it is a "longing" for "faraway harbors" induced by the image of ships ready to sail (Özlü, *Çocukluğun* 11), or buses full of travelers going to big cities (8).

Traveling means leaving "home," that earthy-physical and limited place which, according to Özlü, only generates sameness and immobility. Home is where life and death lose their meaning inside the routine of things, and time is felt under its indifferent dimensions that help

to conserve the moderate condition of daily life. For Özlü, “there is nothing more horrifying than order and safety” (Özlü, *Kalanlar* 47). Though, Earth provides the possibility of taking distance so the writer might realize her travel to experience intensive moments for envisaging a more sensible, subjective, and diverse translation of the world. She thus feels excited by the fact that “every road opens to a new one” as a “network in endless world,” a network which seems paradoxically huge and tiny like the idea of the world (Özlü, *Zaman* 23). Anyhow, Earth becomes literally a ground to realize such particular experience that implies a condition of alterity and diversity, and this is where things get complicated.

Despite the objectivity of Earth, world, to Özlü’s view, is about transient details continuously renewed, it is about moments which are lived intensively, and which give her the impression of feeling all times, looking at all landscapes (Özlü, *Eski* 53). For Turkish writer, each person inhabiting Earth incarnates a world which is always complicated to understand. So, Earth is populated by the embodiment of worlds that make the planet a more interesting and exciting place to live in. With their unpredictable and limitless aspects, the alterity and diversity of worlds turn to be a subterfuge against the inflexibility of the planet as they provide “strength and happiness” to “resist the rigidity of Earth” (Özlü, *Zaman* 44). This happiness is about escaping from every country, every border and “tasting the timelessness” (Fidan 92) which shows another aspect of “time,” deprived from its common sense dominated by conventional and abstract ideas such as past and future that make the present a tasteless reality of time. In Elsewhere, the writer-traveler is in “her own time” (Erbil 61) due to being far from the annoying abstractions of daily life and wherefore being closer to grasping the world “as a fruit that she can squeeze in her hand,” stimulate her senses, and feel strength (Fidan 48).

According to Özlü, a writer realizes the act of writing because s/he feels the individual need to do it. The writer is not someone who “behaves in accordance with society” by following the direction institutionally promoted and by staying inside the limits that determine the nature of current artistic tendencies and mediums of communication; s/he is someone who makes her/his progress “against the stream” to show the possibility of different directions and new ways of expression (Özlü, *Yeryüzüne* 110). This is why she wants to write something that could “disturb the reader” and “agitate her/his inner world,” something that could relate a world view (Erbil 31). And for realizing that kind of writing, she affirms that one needs to get disunited from all

links attaching her/him to *the* world. And Elsewhere becomes the ideal place to offer such temporary moment of detachment during which the writer enjoys an isolation from common sense and accordingly a freedom to see and think from the other edge. In that case, the fact of writing appears to be an “islet,” as Roland Barthes names it, illustrating that “exceptional space of language” (Barthes 25) where takes place the critique of the “illusion of totality” and the dissociation of “solidarities” concerning the society (53). To emphasize the excitingly and contradictorily possible dimensions of the textual expression that are able to go beyond the common sense, Barthes firmly assumes that “rule is abuse” and “exception is enjoyment” (57).

So, after being dissociated with all links, how is it possible to grasp the world? The latter, like space, explains Özlü, is not dissimilar to a “riddle” evoking “emptiness” and “infinite” (Özlü, *Çocukluğun* 11). For her, world is all about forms and feelings through thinking (Özlü, *Kalanlar* 52). Therefore, going beyond the ecology of common sense does not mean being marginalized in terms of thought. On the contrary, it is about being away from the abusive effects of links and solidarities, and hence, being closer to the Other that makes the world a riddle, an unpredictable reality which might stimulate the process of thinking in a more comprehensive manner. Going beyond the ecology of common sense means grasping the world from the “other edge,” in the sense of the term used by Barthes who points out the “asocial nature of pleasure” (Barthes 25) which renders, as in the case of Özlü, travel a necessary action and vagrancy a compelling idea for “escaping from the alienation of society” and eluding the “*enkratique* language” which is a “language of repetition” maintained by the power (56), or, as Édouard Glissant calls it, the “powerful unicity” that distracts people with illusory rules and fails to provide new and sensible horizons to go beyond the repetition and abuse (Glissant 63). Indeed, for Barthes, repetition is the spurious aspect of mass culture which depends on systemic production of contents, ideological schemes, superficial forms, and all other artifacts such as books and movies with apparently diverse forms and different fashions but hinting at the same direction and sense (Barthes 57–58).

Barthes notes that mass culture is either historical or prospective and not about one’s present (32). Avoiding the influences of mass culture and systemic thought is then getting to the “other edge,” which signifies a “mobile” and empty space, “able to take any outline” and never fixed only to the limited and physical place where it occurs (13). Thus, during her long-term stay in Berlin, and her short-term travels

to other cities in Europe like Trieste, Zagreb, Vienna, or Prague, Özlü states that for the first time, in those faraway places, she could have had the opportunity to follow her thoughts to their “deepest edges” and to perceive the world by “translating it into words” (Erbil 33). In other terms, the writer gets to the other edge, embodied through the landscapes of different cities located outside her home-country, and there she tries to give a literary outline to her world view that could reflect an unsystematic and sensible translation of space based on temporary experiences of Elsewhere. In this respect, Glissant describes the act of translating as an “art of fugue” (Glissant 28) that tends to drift away from the fixity of movement (63) by instigating the inventiveness of the language to “tackle uniformities, dominances and standards” and to provide it with new spaces (225) that indicate the uncertain and the being in its present time (28). World, for Özlü, is better understood and contemplated when translated from such a “fugitive” perspective to not fall in the simplicity of common sense which tends to avoid the Other and the unpredictable diversity of things for the sake of preserving its integral and prosaic ecology.

By leaving the comfort zone of language and literature and by improving her own way of expression to formulate a new view about the world, Özlü explains that she gets distant from the abusive and reducing circle of repetition and formation concentrated on past and future at the expense of present. That experience of a new view occurs on Earth, on that solid ground offering different landscapes for the writer who enjoys moments of autonomy during her travels which result in the creation of texts, standing at odds with the domination of common sense. More than a simple picture, a distant object or a stern basis for abstract structures, Earth becomes meaningful when it is considered as a ground for imagining and thinking about worlds (people, feelings, etc.), and thus forming a perspective that does not give priority to ones over others. And in Özlü’s opinion, the most effective and aesthetic way to do that is literature. Rather than being a theoretical reference for systemic thought, literature functions in this case as a critical disruption to resist the rigidity of Earth and to bring the idea of the world into a state of enjoyment, in the Barthean sense of the word. Travel becomes then a key action to go beyond the ecology of common sense, which is an environment isolated from enjoyment, and therefore to grasp the world from the other edge which is nowhere and the middle of everything.

Autonomy and enjoyment

What occurs beyond the ecology of common sense? Özlü says that beyond the ecology of common sense, it is “nowhere” (Özlü, *Kalanlar* 47). Although, that nowhere has a meaning. It is not the end of things. It is rather being able to see the world from a useful distance and to be “in the middle of everything” that promotes new things to see as long as one keeps moving (Erbil 58). It is where one can claim her/his independence and autonomy because this place belongs to no one. It is obviously somewhere in the world, it is Berlin, Zurich, Prague, etc., but it does not have fixed location or limits because it depends on the mobility and change. It is virtually not motherland or a country by adoption or any other place chosen for exile. From the perspective of Özlü, being nowhere is about “moments” that need an authentic attention to be intensively lived. Those very moments are the earmarks of independence that comes along with the feelings of strength, solitude, unease, and joy (Özlü, *Yaşamın* 62). The “independence” of the writer-traveler thus occurs by “living the environment” and having senses and sensations never known or perceived before (94).

Beyond the ecology of common sense lies Elsewhere where the rules of heteronomy are not felt as imposing as in home-country. A better perception of that space thus requires a debility of rules and standards so its various landscapes can appear in a more sensible way to the view of the writer-traveler (58) whose “insatiable hunger for the life” (79) and “intuition to go elsewhere” seem to be intimately related to the “course of landscapes” and never-ending horizons of the world (67) which may be perceived through the window of a train in motion or from the balcony of a hotel room. Travel constitutes “fragments” inside the continuity of life. Those fragments are “new lives” opening to “worlds” (66). The unfamiliar landscape of a country, a random walk in the streets of a city makes one start a process of translation that reflects the images of travel (80), awakening a sentiment of resistance vis-à-vis the heteronomy of common senses. This is a moment of ease about the conventional titles, such as “citizen,” “local” or “petit bourgeois,” that mean a belonging to a societal group to form a coherent and concentrated whole (93). In Elsewhere, grasping the world becomes probable thanks to the fact that travel allows mind to extend its streets and boulevards, reinforcing the intellectual and narrative autonomy of the writer-traveler who has the desire to “give form to the life” with her words (95) instead of accepting the taught facts about the world, practicing the repetition and staying an indifferent element inside the limits

of the ecology of common sense. In Barthes's terms, the question here is not about destroying the ecology of common sense or denying it in a way to not accept its existence. It is not either to enter in a "dialogue" with it and find a common ground (Barthes 25). Rather, it is about refusing the life translated by "fortuities," as Özlü formulates it (Özlü, *Yaşamın* 52), and emphasizing its "points of failure" and "aporias," impressively exposed to someone "at the heart of enjoyment" (Barthes 14). While acknowledging the significance of the ecology of common sense, Özlü compares the one who can find a way to look that ecology from the other edge to someone able to embrace a joyful meaning of being in space and to possess a power of expressing herself in text and in life due to the moments of discontinuity compelled by mobility and travel. Such moments are the reason and the expectation of the state of enjoyment that makes one think the world in its disruptive dimensions, revealed in a temporary manner to the senses of the writer-traveler.

To figure out the notions of independence and autonomy in the senses used by Özlü, it would be convenient to look at the term "enjoyment" (*jouissance* in French), being an important part of the Barthean terminology. Enjoyment, for Barthes, is what turns pleasure to a "place of lose, failing, disruption and deflation" (14). The text of enjoyment "discomforts," it shakes the cultural grounds of the reader, and produces crisis in terms of language (23). It is "intransitive," defined by edge and extremities and not reflecting a moderate nature of things (70). This is indeed what Özlü is looking for in realizing how her writing and her autonomy take place. She desires an active life freed from the control of fortuities. For her, literature is charged with more life, more love, more feeling, more death than the life itself (Özlü, *Zaman* 31). She is not looking for a compromise with mass culture to give a moderate pleasure to the reader in order to claim her independence while trying to keep at the same time her position and status inside the society and system (Özlü, *Çocukluğun* 45). Özlü tells in this respect that she never felt the enthusiasm to dig for her "roots," and furthermore, her mother and father always seemed to her as foreigners, no more exclusive than any other person. Again, like her parents, her mother tongue, indicating where she "comes from," stands for an "estranged" reality in her life (Özlü, *Kalanlar* 44–45).

Concerning roots, Barbara Cassin talks about a "staggering equivocity" which describes the human condition, related at the same time to the "unrivaled existence" of mother tongue and to the presence of other languages as meaningful differences. For Cassin, such presence is fundamental because those other languages permit someone to

“disquiet” and “shake” the mother tongue and accordingly, the world (Cassin 64). Using also German to draft her books, Özlü recognizes the essential role of mother tongue without trying to assign an exceptional or central position to it and this is why she uses multiple times the verb “escape” to make clear her intention about keeping her distance toward the unpleasant ecology of origin-centered world view. Like other countries, other languages make possible to get to the other edge of things to grasp the world more comprehensively; they provide space for movement and change to disrupt the sameness and monotony. And this is exactly what produces enjoyment: that feeling of staggering the grounds of the established entities and facts to express an autonomy by using the language in unfamiliar manners and thus translate the world differently.

Translation is the “weakness” of assumptions in language, explains Henri Meschonnic, because it is where the confusion and disorder take place more often as a consequence of re-evaluating the representation of language and thus putting the systemic thought in question. Being “con-temporary of what moves in language and society,” translation is not operated from the language itself for particularly stylistic means, but it reconsiders, in the form of literary writing, the established values in expression and culture, and transforms the way of expression through an “organization of subjectivization.” So, for Meschonnic, literature and translation are the most vulnerable and most strategic activities to figure out what one should do with language (Meschonnic 12–15). In fact, Özlü’s perspective echoes with that view for being a writer who “learnt to get the autonomy of her world by virtue of literature” which showed her what to do with language thanks to “world literature” writers like Italo Svevo, Cesare Pavese and Djuna Barnes who perfectly reflected the “agitations of literary creativity” to translate the world through the subjective need of expression (Özlü, *Yeryüzüne* 11). For the Turkish writer, literature is a space full of contradictions that represents different dimensions of culture including the ones that stay inside the comfort zone of expression with their local preoccupations and have no saying about the world. However, Özlü is interested in literature not because of its repetitive and conformist illusion but for its power to widen and transform one’s world view as well as the conceptions of alterity and identity. That literature is the one she describes as “the most loyal and sincere world” and “the most trustful feeling” of hers (Özlü, *Yaşamın* 65). And this is why one can use it as a strategic activity to retranslate the world and get the autonomy of her/his world, or instead, can follow the familiar paths and make no meaningful

change at all. Here the words of Jonathan Culler become relevant who tells that “literature is the noise of culture as well as its information.” And he adds: “It is an entropic force as well as cultural capital. It is a writing that calls for a reading and engages readers in problems of meaning” (Culler 41).

Özlü tells that as she “approaches” people by virtue of travel, she gets more “distant” to her family and so-called roots. To put it otherwise, her world view becomes larger while her “tiny world” loses its dominance over her daily life, and this is how a process of autonomy takes place. Hence, after displacing her “self” beyond the comfort zone of sameness and repetition, her language, in its broader sense used by Meschonnic to mean “way of expression,” which is initially learnt inside the limits of home-country under the form of an instrument of common sense, is transformed into an instrument of independence for translation. With the desire to improve aptly that once conventional instrument, Özlü explains that, through her writings, she has to relate everything more correctly, live them more intensely, translate every object, every being, every person into a lived experience by making them more sensible, for instance, “making them blow like winds” or “make precipitate them like rains” (Özlü, *Eski* 93). In that lived experience, she does not perceive specific spots or feelings that would appear more important than others. What she perceives is an “onlooker” who, as the traveling self of the writer, observes herself and her life, who “makes her fly with storms, gives birth to her with sunrise, drives her to make love with darkness” (93). Özlü uses life and death as the metaphors of her erratic being in space as she says that she “dies every night” and “comes to life again” every morning (Özlü, *Zaman* 44), and that to underscore her world view based on momentary fragments that disrupt the continuity of systemic time. So, every day is a new occasion to give a present form and sense to the world. Therefore, to grasp the world accurately, her “life” and “death”, under all dimensions of her writing, must include “all lives, loves and deaths” (32) without imposing her roots or any continuity of time as an exception. The writer thus tells that she tries to express herself quite openly because she feels an endless independence and freedom, and those feelings go beyond times, countries, and cities (Özlü, *Eski* 57).

“One writes because world is painful and because feelings overwhelm,” says Özlü, according to whom, “it is a complicated task for the human being to get beyond her/his powerlessness in the world and claim independence” (Özlü, *Yeryüzüne* 10). Nevertheless, once the task gets compassed and individual freedom becomes a sensible thing,

one can actuate a more authentic direction for her/his life, and at that stage, emerges the need to tell such accomplishment to other people through writing as a literary implementation (10). The writer explains that one should live with courage, with a strident tone, and overcome “excessive sensitivities” and “strange family attachments” (Özlü, *Eski* 102). The complication of this process pertains in this sense to challenge one’s limits that can even result, as it is the case of herself, in the experience of “madness.” The latter caused for Özlü a forced isolation from the streets of the world, from its grand squares, from “the noise of people and of the outer world” (11) when she was on the other edge of reason. During the time spent in the isolated space of the hospital, she was deprived of travel and mobility, the fundamental elements of her independence and autonomy, and her “freedom of behavior” was mainly restricted, like her freedom of walking in any direction she would like to take and meditating beyond every object she would see in her way (52). Although, despite its extremely painful consequences, Özlü says, the emptiness of madness made possible for her mind to go “higher, larger and deeper” (Özlü, *Kalanlar* 48) as she could have seen the world in its bigger dimensions and understood the importance of the presence of others, their bodies and their noises, as well as the veracious meaning of the freedom of movement. In that context, madness becomes another metaphor in the terminology of Özlü who tells that “one should insist upon her/his own madness” for the reason that life becomes “existence” due to the “courage of challenging the limits in order to get to the untried and the unreached” (Özlü, *Yeryüzüne* 37). The Turkish writer transforms madness to a “reasonable” metaphor for the reader to explain her worldview which is intimately related to the limits of mind and thought. In other terms, she makes from her lived experience of madness a literary concept to contribute to her freedom of expression in translating life, love, and death.

Tezer Özlü positions herself against the word “order” not in a sense to praise anarchy but to explain joy-killing aspects of the heteronomy which tends to moderate the conception of space by reducing it into repetitive and systemic views. By recognizing the place of such reality in everyday life, Özlü articulates the significance of autonomy for a better understanding, imagination, and representation of the world. Here, it is not an egocentric autonomy, a sovereignty over others or separation from others. It is about self-accomplishment whose aim would be a very personal autonomy over words and realities, relying on the ability of understanding everybody else’s feelings. She talks in this sense about “the necessity of the breath, the living skin, and the temperature of not

only one person but many people” (Özlü, *Eski* 100) and their bodies which can make life more credible. For Turkish writer, desiring the Other, other people, other landscapes, other cities, other streets, other sunsets, other feelings is a sign of life that makes everything (orgasm, love, even the depression) meaningful (Özlü, *Yaşamın* 40). That kind of desire makes someone strong because it is not reduced to one person, one family, one language, one city or one country. It goes beyond the conforming definitions of the “wise edge” of things, as Roland Barthes names it (Barthes 13), and this is how the feelings of freedom and enjoyment persist: aspiration to keep going for other exciting worlds and to not be trapped in the melancholy or fake happiness of sameness. In other terms, it is an autonomy whose existence is granted by a traveling and observing self, open to see new things, and by the unpredictable and sensible alterity.

Conclusion

Twentieth-century Turkish writer Tezer Özlü, through the elements given in her writings, presents a conception of space that takes the notion of world as an extensible and timeless idea of space, susceptible of re-translations. Unlikely to theoretical concepts of the “world” or “planet” suggested by literary figures who consider space as system by insisting on common values, appreciations, and directions, Özlü presents a different insight regarding those very concepts. On her literary account, the Turkish writer neglects the system-based conception of space which makes the world an unpleasant and mediocre reality. Without denying the significance of the systemic thought which promotes formation and repetition inside ordinary limits that generate a preserved ecology, Özlü gives priority to the desire of having independence and autonomy to go beyond such ecology of common sense which does not offer a sensible image of the diversity and alterity in the world. To her view, Earth is obviously an inevitable ground and systemic structure that provides to the human being a certain necessary basis in space. However, this is because Earth is not suitable for re-translations due to its concrete and immediately unchangeable forms; world emerges as a key notion in the vocabulary of Özlü for overcoming the restricting limitations of Earth. As a translation of alterity and diversity, the term “world” is used by the Turkish writer in a sense to indicate the presence of each living person which represents a complicated individual world from the perspective of another person and can only be conceived by

a dynamic and inclusive thought. Living the world is about intensive moments stimulated by foreign landscapes, people, languages, noises, and the like. Özlü explains that during those moments, the sensation of grasping the world becomes something exciting to feel and think and therefore appears the need to write it down. Literature and language become at this point the strategic instruments of the writer who claims autonomy through her freedom of expression and world view.

As a writer-traveler, Özlü conceives a conception of space which is not based on conflicts or collectivities, or centers and peripheries. Her idea of the world does not consist in defending or destroying the rules and conventions. What she conceives is an autonomy in translating herself and other worlds while avoiding commonplace translations, and for that reason, she says that she escapes from places and situations that remind her of the mediocrity and boredom of home. Here it is not about losing her own identity or language and entering in a non-subjective state of things through a kind of transcendence. It is about freedom of auto-translation which inevitably relies upon the languages of common use like Turkish and German but which at the same time tends to find aporias and discontinuities of those languages by inventing new uses to find new ways of expression. It is the subversive power of literature that helps to shake the ground and the limits of literary expression to make diversity and alterity more sensible realities without reducing them inside stern definitions, commonplace entities, and homogeneous groupings. Hence, what appears in the writings of Tezer Özlü is a desire to retranslate the world without feeling the heteronomy of common senses, insensible systems, and any ideas based on insignificant totalities, and without adopting a moderate tone to not say anything disturbing or unusual in literary expression. By illustrating and inspecting the pertinent elements and features of an individual conception of space after the works of Özlü, whose life is deeply marked by the act of traveling and by the idea of sensible alterity, this paper demonstrated to what extent a possibility of translation of the world in literary terms could mean an enjoyment through independence and autonomy compared to the dominance of mass culture and to the power of collective uniformity.

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Onkraj ekologije zdravega razuma: razumeti svet z drugega konca

Ključne besede: turška književnost / Özlü, Tezer / potopisi / primerjalna književnost / kulturne študije / identiteta / drugost

V tem članku je pojem sveta predstavljen skozi literarni izraz in konceptualni prevod prostora. Izraz »svet« v tem smislu označuje kompleksno entiteto, ki je deležna različnih interpretacij, kot denimo v primerjalni književnosti, ki svojo definicijo sveta običajno razvija za potrebe teoretične opredelitve odnosa literature do prostora. S sklicevanjem na dela Tezer Özlü, turške pisateljice iz 20. stoletja, članek obravnava avtonomijo pisatelja-popotnika v kontekstu

besedilne *jouissance*, ki se odreka heteronomiji v odnosu do Zemlje kot neprilagodljive in konkretne geografske realnosti. Za Özlü je potovanje kot dejanje, ki presega ekologijo zdravega razuma in s tem terja neodvisnost od kolektivnih in stagnantnih prevodov sveta, da se ne bi v želji po koherenci omejili z uniformnostjo izraza. Ob upoštevanju konceptov identitete in drugosti sestoji tukajšnje glavno preizpraševanje iz razprave o prevodu sveta kot realnosti, ki jo je treba dojeti, ali kot možnosti nadaljnje miselne razširitve ter iz zamišljanja možnosti, da bi se uprli togosti, banalnosti in običajnosti prostora kot sistema.

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Evolution of Petrarchism in English Literature

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This article discusses the development of Petrarchism in English literature. Its aim is to analyze the emergence, development and main trends of the Petrarchan poetic movement in England. The research methodology is determined by a complex combination of biographical, historical-literary and comparative-historical methods of literary analysis. It was established that the beginning of English Petrarchism can be seen in G. Chaucer's poem Troilus and Cressida. Its first victorious steps date from the 1530s and are associated with the names of T. Wyatt and H. Howard. It has been noted that, at first glance, there appears to be an almost fifty-year break in tradition in English Petrarchism after the 1540s. However, this impression proves to be misleading, as in the 1590s the first English Petrarchan texts published in the so-called Tottel's Miscellany were reprinted again and again. The 1590s saw the second rise of English Petrarchism, which was linked to the unprecedented spread of the sonnet genre in English poetry. At the same time, it has been pointed out that the last Petrarchan sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan era lacked any originality and suffered from all sorts of shortcomings of undisguised superficial imitation. It is concluded that Petrarchism can be considered the main path of English poetry in the sixteenth century.

Keywords: English poetry / sixteenth century / literary tradition / Petrarchism / sonnet / Tottel's Miscellany

Petrarchism is a movement in European Renaissance poetry based on imitating Petrarch's lyrical texts, primarily his *Canzoniere*. The term "Petrarchism" as copying the artistic features of Petrarch's works was first recorded in N. Franco's dialogue *Il Petrarchista*, published in 1539 in Venice. However, it is essential to emphasize that N. Franco was not its author—he only, so to speak, "legitimized" words and concepts that had been used by Italians many years prior because, as it is known, mass

imitations of Petrarch in the form of using individual images, motifs, or even entire phrases of his texts began during the poet's lifetime. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the manner of his imitating crossed the Italian borders and expanded on the Iberian Peninsula and then to France; at the end of the Cinquecento and Seicento, it was transferred to England, as well as to German-speaking poets, and then to such countries as Poland, Hungary, Sweden, and others.

The subject of this paper is Petrarchism in English literature. Its purpose is to analyze the emergence, development, and main trends of the Petrarchan poetic movement in England. The research methodology is determined by a complex combination of biographical, historical-literary, and comparative-historical methods of literary analysis.

Petrarchan discourse in English literature became a research subject at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the first works devoted to this issue was P. Borghesi's book *Petrarch and His Influence on English Literature* (1906). Among the later studies of the problem, the works of R. Jack and A. Mortimer are worth mentioning. R. Dasenbrock studied the reception of Petrarchism in the works of T. Wyatt and E. Spenser; G. Waller and R. Young—in the poems of Ph. Sidney; S. Ruffo-Fiore—in the poetry of J. Donne. The influence of Petrarch on the English sonnet writers of the late sixteenth century was disclosed by T. Roche. A separate array is the scientific research of English anti-Petrarchism, that is, various reactions to the mass imitation of Petrarch's texts in English literature done by scholars such as H. Dubrow, J. Mazzaro, P. Ribes, and others.

Petrarch was well-known in England during his lifetime. The author may have visited the country in 1335 or later while traveling through Northern France and the Netherlands. It is known that the first Englishman who knew Petrarch personally was R. de Bury. It is assumed that they met in cosmopolitan Avignon in Cardinal Colonna's house sometime between 1331 and 1333. Petrarch mentioned this meeting in one of his letters. R. de Bury was a typical representative of medieval scholastic philosophy, one of the most educated Englishmen of his time. However, he was very distant from the art, and therefore, he could not appreciate the full extent of the Italian writer's innovative lyrics and his personality in general.

In order to understand Petrarch, one had to be a poet himself—and such an English poet soon appeared. It was G. Chaucer. It is documented that he visited Italy in 1372. The Italian writer was still alive then, but it is not known whether the two poets met. The influence of Petrarch on G. Chaucer is quite significant, although it is worth noting

that it concerns more Latin texts than the *Canzoniere*. Additionally, one cannot fail to mention the Petrarchan allusions in the English poet's famous *Troilus and Cressida*. They can primarily be seen in its first book, where Troilus sings a song, an English translation of the sonnet CXXXII from the *Canzoniere*. However, during the translation, the genre form of the original was violated—instead of 14 lines, the song of Troilus has 21 and consists of three seven-line stanzas; as a result, the work of Petrarch “dissolves” in the text of G. Chaucer, but does not lose its unique Petrarchan flavor.

Like the persona in the *Canzoniere*, Troilus is troubled by the conflicting feelings he has to go through. The Italian author conveyed this state with the help of the well-known metaphorical juxtaposition of ice and fire. He ends his well-known sonnet with the following words: “I do not know what I wish myself, / and tremble in midsummer, burn in winter” (Petrarch 219). G. Chaucer somewhat modified this line, but at the same time preserved the very Petrarchan concept of the ambivalence of the love feeling, giving both joy and torment at the same time: “Through heat of cold, through cold of heat I die” (Chaucer 29). In the song of Troilus, the English poet adheres quite closely to the semantics of the original, except in certain moments. Thus, the initial four lines of G. Chaucer's text reflect the first quatrain of Petrarch's sonnet. However, the English author adds three lines of his own, insightfully depicting Troilus's passion in a sensual, suggestive image—as a spiritual thirst that cannot be tired in any way. The second stanza is the least changed: G. Chaucer completely preserves the theme of Petrarch's quatrain. In the third one, he follows the Italian, developing the protagonist's arguments given in the second quatrain of the sonnet CXXXII, and finally focuses on Petrarch's original sea metaphor, combining it with a medical one. We want to emphasize the last one because this metaphor unites the English poet's text—appearing already in the first line, it passes through the entire poem. It completes it, creating a kind of framing and preparing the ground and appropriate mood for further plot development. To conclude, Petrarch's sonnet was incorporated by G. Chaucer into his *Troilus and Cressida* not just as an extra-plot decorative passage but as a full-fledged narrative element.

The third song of Troilus (Book V) is also a variation on Petrarch's sonnet CLXXXIX, containing metaphors of a ship, a storm, and the guiding stars compared to the eyes of a beloved. However, as in the previous case, the English author abandoned the sonnet form, offering in seven lines of his text the very essence of Petrarchan poetic imagery:

O star of which I have lost the light,
with sore heart I truly should bewail,
that, ever dark, in torment, night by night,
towards my death with following wind I sail:
so that if on the tenth night should fail
your bright beams' guidance for even an hour,
my ship and me Charybdis will devour. (Chaucer 382)

Thus, the Petrarchan sonnet entered the receptive field of English literature through G. Chaucer's adaptation in *Troilus and Cressida*.

G. Chaucer became the first English writer who paid close attention to the intensive development of Italian Renaissance culture and tried to use its achievements in his poems. However, we must admit that his popularization activities could have succeeded more in England. In the fourteenth century, the poet's homeland was not ready to accept the refined style of Petrarch's love poems.

In the fifteenth century, Italian (including Petrarchan) influences in Britain remained insignificant, but the literary exchange between the countries certainly took place. At that time, many Italians came to England for trade and brought manuscripts of Petrarch's works. On the other hand, the Englishmen visited the homeland of the great poet, and although most of them could not understand the greatness of Humanism there, they certainly could not fail to notice new trends in culture and art. In general, it can be assumed that although the Italian author was not famous in England in the fifteenth century, educated Englishmen indeed were acquainted with his works.

Noticeable changes began in the sixteenth century when a kind of fashion for Italy emerged in England. Its first manifestations are observed at the royal court. Thanks to the translation and distribution of books on etiquette, the Tudor court was undergoing an Italian-style transformation. B. Castiglione's work *The Courtier* became vital in this context. Although it was translated into English by T. Goby and printed only in 1561, it is evident that its original text was circulating in English court circles much earlier, in the first half of the century. Henry VIII was an ardent supporter of Italian culture. During his reign, English aristocrats traveled *en masse* to Italy, borrowing not only arts but also habits and style of life. They brought the Renaissance ideas to the aristocratic masses. However, these ideas did not immediately find their way to artistic and literary practice—at first, only some English artists and poets showed a noticeable interest in the Italian Renaissance. So, despite the generally favorable cultural ground, Petrarchism adapted slowly in England. Its language and ideological

paradigm remained strange to writers and readers for a long time. Only in the first quarter of the sixteenth century did Petrarch's manner take root more and more firmly in English literature. To a large extent, this was facilitated by the distribution of book printing and the publication of Italian writers' texts. Therefore, Petrarchism gradually gained momentum in England. By the end of the 1580s, every more or less significant poet considered it a direct duty to write something in the style of Petrarch.

The first serious achievements of English Petrarchism date back to the 1530s and are associated with the names of T. Wyatt and H. Howard, Earl of Surrey. T. Wyatt became the first English poet who fully understood the greatness of Petrarch himself and managed to convey it to his compatriots. It is still being determined when the writer composed most of his poems. It can be assumed that for some time, he did not intend to collect or systematize them, as in the sixteenth century, it was not customary among the aristocratic authors of England to publish their literary attempts. T. Wyatt's poetic texts were first published by the successful London bookseller R. Tottel in the so-called *Tottel's Miscellany* (full title: *Songes and Sonettes Written by the Right Honorable Lorde Henry Haward Late Earle of Surrey, and Other*) on June 5, 1557, already after the poet's death (see Arber). This edition, which is considered to be the first printed collection of new English poetry, consisted of 270 poems (271 in the second edition), 97 of which belonged to T. Wyatt, 40 to H. Howard, 40 to N. Grimald, and the remaining 94 to less significant authors.

T. Wyatt's lyrics in *Tottel's Miscellany* included several sonnets, rondos, ballads, and satires, as well as numerous epigrams and songs (incidentally, it is a reasonably conventional genre, where you can include almost everything that does not "fit" into the classical genre varieties). Petrarchan texts were adjacent to more original works. In this regard, D. Rees notes that two elements can be clearly distinguished in T. Wyatt's poetry—original and borrowed, national and continental—and to underestimate the importance of any of them means to simplify the writer's achievements (Rees 15). Such a view on the poetic works of this author has long been traditional for critical literature because, indeed, a significant part of his love lyrics consists of translations from Petrarch and Italian Petrarchan poets, as well as various kinds of paraphrases and imitations. Moreover, in his original poems, T. Wyatt uses almost the entire arsenal of Petrarchan imagery. His persona complains about the impossibility of conveying the depth and greatness of his love in words; he mentions hot streams

of tears, volcanoes of sighs, and spiritual sorrow that exhausts the body—all this seems to be copied verbatim from the *Canzoniere*. We also come across typical Petrarchan hyperboles and metaphors: the lover is associated with a boat caught in a storm and circling among the rocks without hope of rescue; the cloud of grief closes the stars, which symbolize the eyes of his beloved; the forests are filled with the sobs of the protagonist and the rivers stop because of his complaints; both the earth and the sky mourn with him—only the woman is deaf to his pleas. All this certainly gives reason to speak of T. Wyatt as a typical Petrarchist.

Suppose we consider T. Wyatt's poems in *Tottel's Miscellany* a continuous lyrical text. In that case, it breaks down into a series of repeated situations: love comes to the protagonist, and he hopes it will be mutual, but the woman turns out to be indifferent to his pleas every time. This is followed by a painful breakup and the lover's promise not to love anymore, but the story begins again after some time. In each of these cycles, the protagonist also tries to find an answer to the question of the source of his failures. He understands love as a loss of mind. The conflict between feelings and reason is a common motif in T. Wyatt's poems; his persona constantly vacillates between the defined poles. The lover sometimes affirms his loyalty to Cupid and sometimes refuses love, but such a refusal is never final. At first glance, his previous experience enriches every new feeling of the persona, and he constructs his relationship with a new woman in a new way. So, previously deceived, he no longer wants to be a gullible simpleton and, in one of his poems, promises to be faithful to the Mistress only if she is faithful herself:

But you, this diuersnesse that blamen most,
 Change you no more, but still after one rate
 Treat you me well: and kepe you in that state.
 And while with me doth dwell this wried gost,
 My word nor I shall not be variable,
 But alwaies one, your owne both firme and stable. (Arber 37)

However, as we can see later, any change in his outlook or behavior is illusory.

Each woman's refusal prompts the lover to reflect on the already passed part of his life. Directing his reflection on the mechanisms of love, he concludes that the reason for his love failures is the inability to express his feelings. Thus, the focus is transferred from the intimate plane to the aesthetic, philosophical one, raising the problem of the

expressive possibilities of language and the functions of poetry in general. It is in this context that the image of the “unkind tongue” created by T. Wyatt should be considered—the tongue is unkind because it is to blame that the protagonist cannot win the reciprocity of the Mistress: “Vnkind tongue, to yll hast thou me rendered” (38). In the end, he concludes that love is, in principle, inseparable from a break: “But all is turnde now ... / Into a bitter fashion of forsakyng” (40).

This opinion is expressed in the well-known poem of T. Wyatt “They Flee from Me”:

They flee from me, that sometime did me seke
With naked fote stalkyng within my chamber.
Once haue I seen them gentle, tame, and meke,
That now are wild, and do not once remember
That sometyme they haue put them selues in danger,
To take bread at my hand, and now they range,
Busily sekyng in continuall change. (Arber 40)

The author juxtaposes two timelines in the text: the past when he was happy because women gave him much love, and the present, when he is unhappy because they ignore him. At the same time, T. Wyatt strengthens the erotic element—his love experience vividly turns into a sexual one:

When her loose gowne did from her shoulders fall,
And she me caught in her armes long and small,
And therewithall, so swetely did me kysse,
And softly sayd: deare hart, how like you this?
It was no dreame: for I lay broad awakeyng. (40)

This contradicts the Petrarchan attitude to a woman’s inaccessibility. Moreover, the tradition of unconditional lover’s devotion is violated because if the protagonist promised to be faithful in exchange for faithfulness earlier, it is not even about one, but several women at once now.

The author knew that his poems often repeated what he had already said. However, his miserable conditions forced him to write equally sad songs, and he could only hope that fate would one day allow him to write a song of a different character: “And if I haue a chance ... / To sing some pleasant song” (Arber 51). At the same time, the impossibility of avoiding repetition adds supplementary elements to the figurative system of T. Wyatt’s love lyrics. First of all, the very image of the Mistress is transformed, acquiring features that are not typical for the

Petrarchan tradition. In general, T. Wyatt's protagonist is characterized by admiration for his beloved, but we never see a description of her appearance in all his texts. The protagonist concentrates on his feelings, his relationship with a woman, and the principles of love, but not on its object. From the complex traits, T. Wyatt chooses and especially emphasizes only one—his woman's cruelty. Moreover, the heroine acquires almost sadistic features as she enjoys the protagonist's humility and suffering, literally feeding on them. That is why, at a particular stage of the relationship, a woman turns from an object of desire into an object of hatred. T. Wyatt's persona likes to describe her physical suffering, and with his poetry, he seeks not to favor the beloved but to hurt her: "Passe forth my wonted cries, / Those cruell eares to pearce, / Which in most hatefull wyse / Doe styll my plaintes reuerse" (56).

Therefore, there are significant differences in many points between Petrarch and T. Wyatt. First of all, T. Wyatt's lover is not the same as Petrarch's lover: he is well aware of his courtly duties to a woman, but at the same time, he wants to have certain rights. Secondly, T. Wyatt, in his love lyrics, explicates erotic motifs that were completely absent in Petrarch's poems. Thirdly, in each new love cycle, T. Wyatt's persona strives to get close to a new woman, and each cycle ends with a rejection of love, which is simply impossible to imagine in the Italian humanist's texts. Moreover, fourthly, the very image of the woman and the model of the relationship between her and the protagonist has little in common with the Petrarchan canon. In general, T. Wyatt interprets his love experience as a relationship with a sadistic Mistress to whom he is forced to submit, because of which, in the end, he begins to hate her and seek revenge. For these reasons, we can conclude that T. Wyatt was not just a translator and imitator of Petrarch, who adopted his poetic technique, the main themes and images of his poetry, his style, and the sophistication of the language, but also an original author.

T. Wyatt's Petrarchan experiments were supported by H. Howard, Earl of Surrey. *Tottel's Miscellany* included 40 of his lyrical works (41 in the second edition). Many of these texts were translated from the *Canzoniere*. However, he had mainly imitated Petrarch's works rather than translated them. One way or another, Petrarchan reminiscences and allusions in H. Howard's poetry are pervasive.

In the very first H. Howard's text in *Tottel's Miscellany*, a circle of themes and motifs is outlined, which will constantly vary in all the author's poems: the woman, to whom the persona's passionate impulse

is directed is unattainable, the lover's sufferings are becoming more robust, and there is no escape from them: "In time my harm increases more and more" (Arber 3). Earl of Surrey also refers to the established rhetoric of Petrarchism, introducing traditional images of the helmsman, the ship, and the "ice fire" ("The frozen hart that mine in flame hath made"; 3) and its antithetical derivatives, such as the opposition "life–death" ("Strange kindes of death, in life that I doe try"; 3). The persona of H. Howard strives to change his predicament and tries to find a place where he can restore his inner balance: "And in my minde I measure pace by pace, / To seke the place where I my self had lost" (4). However, defeat awaits him everywhere, and he does not manage to achieve the desired peace: "But neuer yet the trauail of my thought / Of better state coulde catche a cause to bost" (4). Unraveling the tangle of mental contradictions is considered possible either through the rejection of love, through reunification with the Mistress, or death. The outlined conflict remains unresolved in the analyzed text, so its understanding occurs further in the following two dozen poems. At the same time, the hopelessness of the situation in which the persona found himself is constantly emphasized due to the sharp contrast between the inviolability of his inner longing and the dynamics of the beautiful world surrounding him.

In the IV and subsequent poems of H. Howard's chapter in *Tottel's Miscellany*, the poet's persona tries to penetrate the causes of suffering from love to find their source. The meditative character of the poems is strengthened—the protagonist seems to rise above his situation, trying to analyze it from the position of an observer, not a participant, and describe it from the side. At the language level, this is clearly expressed—the pronoun "he" appears in the text: "I know in heat and colde the louer how he shakes: / In singing how he doth complain, in slepyng how he wakes" (Arber 6). Reflections on the character of one's feelings eventually lead the lover to escape the prison of love by any means. He curses love and challenges it ("I cursed loue"; 8), but the attempt to rebel turns out to be unsuccessful because it violates the eternal laws of Cupid. Therefore, the persona must apologize ("Thou blinded god ... forgeue me this offense"; 8), and this increases his torment ("My harms haue euer since increased more and more"; 8). Due to the inability to free himself from the power of love, the protagonist is forced to return to love poetry, so he continues to develop typical Petrarchan themes: he describes a deep wound in his chest (VII), sings of the beautiful Mistress and bitterly regrets the impossibility of reuniting with her (VIII), reflects on the impermanence of earthly beauty (X),

again paints a picture of the permanence of his depressed state against the background of an idyllic evening landscape (X), etc. At the formal level, such a return is marked by transitioning from national verse forms—rhyming couplets of 12 and 14 syllables—to the sonnet form traditional for continental Petrarchism.

The lyrical plot of H. Howard's sonnet "When Windsor Walles Susteyned My Wearied Arme" develops against the background of the picturesque spring nature. However, this landscape plays a function that is uncharacteristic of Petrarchism. While looking through the prison window at the beauty of the meadows and forests, H. Howard's persona nostalgically plunges into memories of his childhood spent in Windsor. However, they are so depressing that he desires to throw himself off the tower. In this poem, the protagonist, for the first time, considers suicide as the only way to solve his internal problems. In the future, this motif will repeatedly appear in H. Howard's poetry. Suicidal aspirations found expression not only in this motif but also in the fact that in the later H. Howard's texts, the image of the Petrarchan lover occurs less and less: the author increasingly avoids the first-person pronoun—his persona no longer talks about his love relationship, but about the relationship of a woman and her friend, and in some texts, the persona is even the woman herself.

The culminating in the sense of experiments with the image of a protagonist is a poem, where, on behalf of the shepherd, Earl of Surrey tells us about the death of the poet—that is, the Petrarchan subject turns here into the object of a narrative. As R. Kuin writes, traditional "Petrarchan texts insisted on the obligatory identity of the lover and the poet" (Kuin 3). However, in this H. Howard's poem, the story's subject is neither a lover nor a poet, which allows the author to focus impartially on the characteristics of the object of such an analysis—the Petrarchan poet in love. The reason for his death is the impossibility of mastering his beloved, who refuses to take seriously not only the protagonist himself but also his poems. The lover chooses death voluntarily and thereby solves a complex set of problems formed by the desire to master the Mistress, the need to create love poetry, and death.

The death of the persona, however, does not mean that the poet ceases to generate Petrarchan text. In the following poems, a new persona appears, which allows H. Howard to understand the Petrarchan problems from other positions. Its main characteristic is an extremely high degree of reflectivity. So, for example, in the poem "Geue Place Ye Louers, Here Before", the poet uses the traditional method of describing the extraordinary beauty of the Mistress, which no other woman

can match: “My Ladies beawtie passeth more / The best of yours” (Arber 20). However, in the text itself, there is no indication that the story’s subject is H. Howard’s persona. This fact can only be interpreted as a detached use of one of the conventions of Petrarchism. At the same time, the reflective, poetic consciousness of the new persona does not allow H. Howard to abandon the literary tradition, due to which the author occasionally creates absolutely ordinary Petrarchan poems, for example, “As Oft As I Behold and Se.”

Thus, H. Howard’s Petrarchan text goes through several stages of development. Initially, his persona is in acute conflict between the desire to master the woman and the impossibility of realizing it. An alternative opens before him: to conquer the beloved with the help of love poetry or die. The first phase of the story demonstrates the inability to achieve the lover’s goal by the means chosen for this, as well as the immutability of his inner state. At the same stage, he attempts to rebel against the fatal dependence on the Mistress, but love wins. It turns out to be possible to change the situation only through suicide, which is the main theme of the second stage of H. Howard’s Petrarchan discourse. The symbolic death of his persona gives him freedom and, in turn, brings to life a new protagonist who interprets love problems from a detached position. In the reflective spirit, the third part of the Petrarchan story of the English poet is sustained.

After the 1540s, according to some researchers, for example, R. Jack or G. Parks, Petrarchism in English literature underwent a complete “rupture” of the tradition, restored only in the 1590s. In our opinion, such a statement is not entirely correct since, during the outlined period, *Tottel’s Miscellany* did not lose its popularity. That is evidenced by a compelling fact—the book was reprinted 11 times (twice in 1557, once between 1557 and 1559, twice in 1559, twice in 1565, and also in 1567, 1574, 1585, and 1587). Although not all the authors whose texts were included in it were Petrarchists, such as N. Grimald, it is evident that the tremendous success of the edition was due to the Petrarchan poems. As a result, between the 1540s and the 1580s, the main form of English lyrics was Petrarchan.

The *Tottel’s Miscellany* reprints gradually introduced English Petrarchism into the Elizabethan age. At this time (the 1590s), there was a period of the second surge of the Petrarchan poetical movement, when English writers were focused not only on Petrarch and his *Canzoniere* but also on the French followers of the great Italian poet. Generally speaking, European Petrarchism, if we do not consider its Italian version, has undergone nearly the most intense development

precisely on French national grounds. The scale of the Petrarchan impulses here is well described by S. Lee: “There is probably no sonnet of Petrarch, and few of the popular sonnets of his Italian followers, which were not more or less exactly and more or less independently reproduced a dozen times or more in French verse during the later years of the sixteenth century” (Lee xxv–xxvi). The significant distribution of lyrical texts by French authors in England became one of the determining factors of the so-called “sonnet boom” in the end of the sixteenth century. The revolution in French poetry carried out by the poets of La Pléiade resonated with English literature, setting new standards. In the context of these influences, numerous love sonnet sequences concentrated around the image of one woman appeared in England: *Delia* (1592) by S. Daniel, *Diana* (1592) by H. Constable, *Phyllis* (1593) by T. Lodge, *Ideas Mirrour* (1594) by M. Drayton, *Cynthia* (1595) by R. Barnfield, *Fidessa* (1596) by B. Griffin and many others, including anonymous ones, for example, *Zephyria* (1594). In these collections, the sonnet produced by generations of poets over two centuries, revived in France by P. de Ronsard and his comrades from La Pléiade and known in England since the time of T. Wyatt, underwent a vast “growth” of concepts, images, and traditional phraseology.

Elizabethan sonnets often bear explicit autobiographical traces, naturally expanding their themes and issues. However, their form and style always remain unchanged, and the concept of the relationship between the protagonist and his Mistress never goes beyond the traditional Petrarchan model: each Lady, in this sense, reminds us of Laura and each lover of Petrarch’s persona. The woman always appears cold, cruel, heartless, and indifferent to her lover but extremely beautiful and virtuous, and the protagonist is timid, meager, and depressed but very faithful and loyal. During the last decade of the sixteenth century, more sonnets appeared in English literature than in any other period. In general, the unprecedented rise of this genre in the Elizabethan era is relatively easy to explain. Since the sonnet at that time was, perhaps, the most convenient form for personal feelings and emotions, nothing is surprising in the fact that in the age, the defining psychological characteristic of which can be called individualism, it served as the primary tool for authorial expression. However, such an intensive distribution of the sonnet in the English literature of that time was also marked by some negative moments. As one repeated in the works of dozens of well-known and hundreds of little-known authors, the genre gradually began to die out. Elizabethan sonnets too often appeared deprived of

poetic invention, artificial and cold. In these texts, Petrarch was no longer translated or imitated but acted as a *zeitgeist*, a general emotional mood. In more detail, let us dwell on the most significant Petrarchists' works during the Elizabethan era.

Ph. Sidney did not consider himself to be a Petrarchist, although he wrote poetry so Petrarchan in its manner that his contemporaries called him "English Petrarch." Ph. Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* was the first complete Petrarchan collection in English literature. Moreover, although the author died in 1586, his works are traditionally analyzed in the context of the 1590s since two of his main books were published posthumously: *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591 and 1598, and *The Defence of Poesy* (under two different names, *The Defence of Poesy* and *An Apology for Poetry*) in 1595. According to P. Herman, both works established a watershed in the history of English Renaissance literature since *The Defence of Poesy* had acquired classic status. At the same time, *Astrophil and Stella* was credited with setting the trend for writing sonnets and sonnet sequences that persisted through the 1590s (Herman 33). The scientist proposes to analyze these texts by comparing them and, more specifically, to study the collection of sonnets in the light of the thoughts about poetry expressed by the author in his *Defence*.

Thus, in *The Defence of Poesy*, Ph. Sidney claims that the key to creating good poetry is the ability to hide literary fiction, the dexterity of the author. The overarching theme of his treatise is convincing the reader of the writer's feelings of sincerity. The poet reflects that he would never believe in most English literature texts under the slogans of unrequited love if he were a woman. He mentions Petrarch, emphasizing that love in the works of his imitators feels rather bookish, not alive, and even the most ardent words turn into ice in their poetry. As we can see, Ph. Sidney is ironic about the basic Petrarchan trope and his creative method. In sonnet XV of *Astrophil and Stella*, this thought is repeated and continued in the poetic form:

You that do search for everie purhng spring
 Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flowes,
 And everie floure, not sweet perhaps, which growes
 Neare thereabouts, into your poesie wring;
 Ye that do dictionarie's methode bring
 Into your rimes, running in ratling rowes;
 You that poore Petrarch's long-deceased woes
 With new-borne sighes and denisen'd wit do sing;
 You take wrong waies; those far-fet helpes be such

As do bewray a want of inward tuch.
 And sure, at length stolne goods do come to light:
 But if, both for your love and skill, your name
 You seeke to nurse at fullest breasts of Fame,
 Stella behold, and then begin to endite. (Sidney 15)

The author emphasizes that if a poet listens not to his heart but to another poet, his lines will certainly sound false. The irony, however, is that the writer puts his reflections on the problems of love poetry into the sonnet form popularized by Petrarch. Besides, his poem is part of a sonnet sequence, the idea of which also belonged to the Italian humanist. Therefore, Ph. Sidney's anti-Petrarchan statements remain in the force field of Petrarchism itself.

The first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* outlines the lyrical plot's movement and the circle of central themes. The first is poetry itself (the sonnet I is often called "a sonnet about a sonnet"). Then, in the sonnet II, we can read about the birth of Astrophil's love. The hero does not fall in love with Stella immediately—the feeling of love gradually matures in his soul, along with hopes for reciprocity. However, like any Petrarchan lover, Astrophil must soon admit that a woman's heart is unassailable (XII). He thinks a lot about love, its mysterious nature, laws (XIV), and ways to express feelings, including through poetry. His moods are changeable: sometimes despair at his worthlessness (XVIII), then regret of the mistakes he made (XXI), then resentment at the indifference of Stella (XLV), who, despite her love charms, remains quite an earthly woman (LI). From the sonnet LXII, it becomes clear that the heroine accepted the love of Astrophil but was able to offer him only a high platonic feeling in return, so the man, whose consciousness is already wholly freed from the medieval ascetic restrictions, bitterly refuses Stella's pious love. The first part of the cycle ends with song I, which sings of love and the beloved. The second part begins with the sonnet LXIV, raising the same problem of the incompatibility of a woman's Platonic feelings with the man's earthly needs and desires. Astrophil feels pain and disappointment, and only a chaste kiss from Stella restores joy and hope to his world. In song VIII there is a crucial conversation between Astrophil and Stella. Here, for the first time, we hear the heroine's voice directly through the dialogue—the woman categorically refuses to give in to her moral principles and to sacrifice her precious honor: "Tyran honour doth thus use thee, / Stella's selfe might not refuse thee" (Sidney 115). Therefore, song IX becomes the culmination of Astrophil's suffering. The following texts describe Astrophil's feelings when he is separated from Stella—the hero does not

betray his love but constantly thinks about death. The news about the woman's illness forces him to mobilize his inner strength and return to life. Astrophil once again glorifies the beauty and charm of his beloved, briefly confirming his boundless loyalty and devotion to her (CIII).

Considering his originality and poetic talent, it is impossible to call Philip Sidney only an imitator of Petrarch. First of all, the scale of the author's efforts to form new English poetry should be noted. Experimenting with different poetic dimensions, the poet became the first writer to prove the functionality of the chora for the English verse. He was also the first to return the feminine rhyme to English lyrics, significantly diversifying its sound. The poet defended natural, straightforward language and avoided unusual words, phrases, archaisms, or neologisms in his texts. Nevertheless, the vocabulary of his sonnets is highly diverse since Ph. Sidney boldly introduced military, legal, political, sports terms, and colloquial words into circulation; that is, he started the language practice that was later successfully continued by J. Donne and the poets of the "Metaphysical school."

A famous contemporary of Ph. Sidney was Edmund Spenser. Turning to the problem of E. Spenser's Petrarchism, it is worth analyzing his *Amoretti*. In this sequence, the poet continues the development of the Petrarchan poetic movement in English literature. However, his works differ significantly from the main product of the Petrarchan tradition in at least one aspect. As H. Maclean and A. Lake Prescott point out, *Amoretti's* most distinctive feature is the redirection of desire from the unattainable Donna to the woman the poet can marry (Maclean and Lake Prescott 638).

It is well known that E. Spenser wrote his poetry for Elizabeth Boyle, the woman who became his second wife. This fact fundamentally distinguishes him from Petrarch, as well as from T. Wyatt, H. Howard, and Ph. Sidney. E. Boyle, despite the status of the poet's bride in real life, in the world of *Amoretti* acts as a typical Petrarchan Mistress. She is proud and arrogant (V, VI, XXXVI, XLI, XLIX), stingy with manifestations of warm emotions (XIX), impregnable (XXVIII), and cruel (XX, XXXI, XLVIII). She is compared to beasts of prey (LVI, LIII), sometimes with a tyrant (LV), then with an executioner who mercilessly leads his victim to the stake (LVII). However, E. Spenser's persona sees the purpose of his life in only one thing—to serve this woman as conveniently and faithfully as possible (LXXII), to make her immortal through the ages (LXIX, LXXV, LXXXII) because she is the most perfect creation of God, the earthly image of heavenly beauty (IX, LXI, LXXIX).

The purpose of *Amoretti* is declared in the sonnet I: “Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone, / whom if ye please, I care for other none” (Spenser 69). All the attempts of E. Spenser’s protagonist to make his Mistress fall in love with him, of course, are fruitless, and it even seems that her icy heart, as if mocking all the laws of nature, becomes even colder from the ardent fiery passion of her lover (XXX). In order to please the capricious Mistress, the protagonist tries on various masks and performs various roles; that is, he tries out all possible ways of behavior, but all in vain because the woman is like a stone:

Yet she beholding me with constant eye
delights not in my merth nor rues my smart:
but when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry
she laughes, and hardens euermore her hart.
What then can moue her? if nor merth, nor mone,
she is no woman, but a sencelesse stone. (90)

When the Mistress is not around, the persona of E. Spenser’s sonnets sheds rivers of tears (LXXXVIII), his heart is eager to fly out of his chest like a bird and go to the beloved (LXXIII), and separation from her is equated to death (LXXXVIII). Unable to be near, the lover sends touching letters and envies even the pages of paper that will be looked at by starry eyes and touched by sweet fingers (I).

In general, *Amoretti* covers almost the entire catalog of Petrarchan images, motifs, ideas, and antitheses. Here we have the thematic juxtaposition of pain and pleasure (XXX), despair and hope (XXVI), passion and platonic love (XXI), smiles and gloom (XL), ice and flame (XXX, XXXII), the dying situation of the protagonist (VII, XI, XXV, XXVI), images of siege, war, captivity and slavery (XI, XII, XIV, XLII, LVII), the stereotypical beauty of the woman (XV, LXIV, LXXXI) and her likeness to the sun (LXXXIX), her alienated and haughty behavior (VIII, LXI, LVIII, LIX), the rebellion of the author’s persona against the power of his Mistress and capitulation (XLIII), his attacks against competitors (LXXXVI), the motifs of the ennobling power of love (III, LXXX, LXXXV), the endlessly long separation of lovers (LXXVIII, LXXXVI, LXXXVII, LXXXVIII), the traditional laments of the lover and even curses (X, LVIII, LIX). At the same time, no matter how pitiful the protagonist’s complaints about love and his misfortune are, through the tearful Petrarchan formulas in *Amoretti* we can see hopeful moods—Petrarchan poetic manner is unable to hide the author’s happy state of love.

It is also worth noting that even the greatest poet of the Elizabethan era William Shakespeare could not avoid the influence of Petrarch because, at that time, it was simply impossible to create sonnets and not owe at least something to the Italian author.

Having reached its peak during the reign of Henry VIII at the end of the sixteenth century, the trend for Italian culture and literature in England slowly began to fade. In the Elizabethan era, Petrarch was still read and imitated. However, the first attacks against Petrarchism also appeared, and in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, Petrarchan tendencies in English literature had almost become invisible. Petrarchism loses its freshness and attractiveness for readers, becomes dark and pedantic, and cannot continue to exist in this form. The last English poet who still owed something to Petrarch (although not to his love lyrics, but primarily to his prose) was John Milton. His figure stands at the very end of the period of significant Italian influences on English literature and marks the beginning of a new era of national fiction.

Considering all that has been written, the following conclusion can be formulated. The beginning of English Petrarchism can be seen in the texts of G. Chaucer. However, the poet's adaptation of Petrarch's sonnets in the poem *Troilus and Cressida* proved too weak as an impulse for the Petrarchan discourse to spread further in England. Its first victorious steps date to the 1530s and are associated primarily with the names of T. Wyatt and H. Howard, Earl of Surrey, who brought the Italian poetic tradition to English literature. Initially, English Petrarchism took shape as a reading of the translated Petrarch. Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that the very first translations of Petrarch's poems in England were not precise. They preserved the traditional poetics of Petrarchism; its tropes and stylistic figures were translated as closely as possible. The images of the protagonist and his beloved were incorporated into the English literary ground. However, even at the most stable level of the Petrarchan artistic system—language—T. Wyatt and Earl of Surrey demonstrated a creative approach to the Petrarchan narrative.

At first glance, after the 1540s, there appears to be an almost fifty-year break in tradition in English Petrarchism since, at this time, it is not replenished by any famous name. However, this impression is misleading since by the 1590s, the first English Petrarchists' texts published in *Tottel's Miscellany* have been repeatedly reprinted and still retained their popularity among the reading public.

In the 1590s, the second rise of English Petrarchism took place, connected with the unprecedented distribution of the sonnet genre in English poetry, which, as it is known, was not Petrarch's invention but

was perceived by European poets inseparably on behalf of the great Italian humanist. After the pirated edition of Ph. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), about two dozen sonnet sequences (more than 3,000 poems) appeared in England, which varied the themes and rhetoric of Petrarchan discourse in different ways. At the same time, it is worth noting that the English Petrarchists of the 1590s were no longer focused only on Petrarch's *Canzoniere* but also on numerous indirect sources, primarily the works of various French Petrarchists. As stated in the poetry anthology *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance*:

When Sidney and his successors revised the love-sonnet they did not have to start where Wyatt and Surrey had left off. In the intervening period Petrarchism had become established as a dominant European mode which could be absorbed by any cultured English poet. There was no need to look back to Wyatt or pore over the *Canzoniere* itself. ... In this situation, with Petrarchism a pervasive element in the literary atmosphere, there was no need for any major poet to keep running back to the founding father. (Mortimer 19)

E. Curtius called the literary situation in England in the 1590s the "sonnet plague" (Curtius 225). Its main conclusion and, we must admit, a very disappointing result was that the sonnet genre in English literature had been gradually "emasculated." The last Petrarchan sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan era were utterly deprived of originality and suffered from all possible shortcomings of undisguised superficial imitation.

A separate field of research opens the issue of Petrarchan impulses in W. Shakespeare's sonnets, which were created between 1592 and 1594 and, therefore, also fit into the general context of the Elizabethan "sonnet boom." Because of its complexity, scale, and scientific significance, this problem should become the subject of separate literary explorations.

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Razvoj petrarkizma v angleški književnosti

Ključne besede: angleška poezija / 16. stoletje / literarni vplivi / petrarkizem / sonet / *Tottel's Miscellany*

Članek obravnava razvoj petrarkizma v angleški književnosti, namen pa je analizirati nastanek, razvoj in glavne usmeritve petrarkističnega pesniškega gibanja v Angliji. Metodologijo raziskovanja določa kompleksen preplet biografske, literarnozgodovinske in primerjalnozgodovinske metode literarne analize. Za začetek angleškega petrarkizma velja pesnitev G. Chaucerja *Troilus in Kresida*, prvi preboj tega gibanja pa sega v trideseta leta 15. stoletja in je povezan z imenom T. Wyatt in H. Howard. Vtis, da naj bi prišlo po letu 1540 v angleškem petrarkizmu do skoraj petdesetletne prekinitve tradicije, se je izkazal za napačen, saj so bila prva besedila angleških petrarkistov, objavljena v antologiji *Tottel's Miscellany*, do devetdesetih let 15. stoletja večkrat ponatisnjena. Takrat je prišlo v skladu z dejstvom, da se je v angleški poeziji sonetni žanr bliskovito razširil, do drugega vzpona angleškega petrarkizma. Medtem ko lahko izpostavimo precejšnjo neizvirnost in izrazito pomanjkljivost zadnjih petrarkističnih sonetov elizabetinske dobe, ki so očitne površinske imitacije, moramo šteti petrarkizem za glavno usmeritev angleške lirike 16. stoletja.

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Sleuthing from the Margins: Agatha Christie's Marple and Poirot as the Detecting Other

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*Despite their central position in the canon of detective fiction, Agatha Christie's most famous characters, Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, occupy an ex-centric position in their respective fictional worlds. Both sleuths can be interpreted as marginalized Others and as such challenge the normative assumptions of the society in which they live. Miss Marple's marginalization is primarily reflected in her gender, her amateur detective work, and her marital status, while Poirot's Otherness is implied by his foreignness, his effeminacy and his neurodivergence. Both characters can also be interpreted as asexual and analyzed as straight-passing queers. This article explores how Christie uses her detectives' status as Other to gently challenge the era's dominant ideas about authority, sexuality, gender and morality. The analysis focuses primarily on the works *The Murder at the Vicarage*, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, *"The Double Clue"* and *Hallowe'en Party* and their film and television adaptations to examine both the textual and subtextual instances of marginalization, and the various attempts to keep the Other within the confines of normative identity.*

Keywords: English literature / detective novel / Christie, Agatha / Miss Marple / Hercule Poirot / marginalization / the Other

Introduction

Recent criticism (Rowland; Plain; Makinen; Bernthal) shows that Agatha Christie's innovations with regard to the detective genre can be observed from narrative, social, cultural, and feminist perspectives, to name but a few most important ones. Still, one of the most original aspects of her work are her two main detective characters, the elderly spinster Miss Marple and the funny little foreigner Hercule Poirot, who are based not only on the social context of the period (the genteel interbellum era which saw the publication of Christie's most celebrated

works), but also on a plethora of literary and non-literary intertextual relations. The two detectives are clearly positioned as marginalized in the society which nevertheless needs them to re-establish the disrupted order. Without explicitly questioning social and political norms of the turbulent period in which she was creating, Christie still points at the necessity of a search for alternative authority figures. The narrative thus constantly re-examines the two sleuths, facing them with official, accepted authorities and occasionally treating them as objects of scorn and ridicule. Christie playfully uses both conspicuous (Poirot) and unremarkable (Marple) Otherness as a corrective counterpart to the dominant, masculine discourses. Although her novels reflect the period's prevailing views on key social and moral issues through the characters who represent the pillars of society, Christie's narrative still dialogically engages with the Other, by depicting characters who may seem to be socially subversive, but who actually provide a different, even transgressive, perspective. These dominant, normative views are challenged in Christie's narrative by the fact, as emphasized by J. C. Bernthal, that "such figures as doctors, solicitors and politicians are statistically more prone to homicide in their work than are cross-dressers, homosexuals, adulterers and people from foreign countries or religious backgrounds that are not protestant" (Bernthal 78). Conservatism that is usually ascribed to Christie thus mostly stems from selective reading, that is, from taking the narrators' and characters' views to be those of the author, and from disregarding dissonant voices. This is to be expected within the framework of genre literature: the detective novel's formulaic structure of crime and investigation places the reader in a comfortable position where they are rarely expected to detect social and cultural ideologies, let alone the narrative's ironic distancing from those ideologies. Nevertheless, as exemplified in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), Christie shows the importance of *who is speaking*, so it can be deduced that this does not refer only to the facts of the crime, but also to the articulation of social rules, limitations, and freedoms.

Poirot and Marple also represent Otherness in terms of the conventional heterosexual family unit, since they are an independent, unaligned element of the community, a fact that is even more interesting given that large families feature heavily in Christie's work. In Alison Light's words, "[t]he disavowal of a romantic masculinity and its heroic performance in the public work of action" in Christie's novels is an obvious matter of disdain even for some contemporary adaptors (Light 75), so it is not surprising that Raymond Chandler bemoaned the feminization of the detective genre in England, which was made to appeal

to “the flustered old ladies—of both sexes (or no sex) and almost all ages” (qtd. in Light 75). The “no sex” part is particularly telling, clearly showing that certain readers saw a threat in what can otherwise be classified as a rather discreet intervention on Christie’s part regarding the genre’s legitimacy and social relations in the fictional world. A male detective more concerned with his appearance than with the charms of the fairer sex is a direct threat to the image of hegemonic masculinity of the British Empire, and if foreignness is added to the mixture, that image is doubly threatened. Representation of women not as objects of desire, but as agents, especially agents who resist sexualization and are yet quite aware of the particulars of the sexual dynamics around them, can be interpreted as a creative use of the term “surplus woman,” quite prevalent in the 1920s. Taking into account what Marion Shaw and Sabine Vanacker, Gill Plain, and Susan Rowland wrote on the subject, Merja Makinen states that “Miss Marple should be viewed within a context of cultural concern about the lone woman” (Makinen 45). This type of female Otherness is particularly threatening to the patriarchy, because female privacy and sexuality remain unknown and uncontrolled. In patriarchal societies, women’s financial and professional independence, or their refusal to engage in conventional marital and familial relationships, are severely limited or completely neutralized through sexual control and policing. Christie sometimes depicts the detective genre’s staple of *femme fatale* as a seemingly powerful, but essentially victimized woman (“Triangle at Rhodes,” 1937; *Evil Under the Sun*, 1941). Poirot, too, challenges the social mores of the time by being flamboyantly Other: he is an effeminate, neurodivergent foreigner who does not fit in with the social image of the heroic, masculine detective in service of the Empire, and, by being “clearly the reverse of the masculine and English Holmes” (Knight 90), he also questions the literary norms of the period. Both Poirot and Marple thus represent marginalized identities, and yet they are the unmistakable moral superiors to superficially wholesome, but essentially repugnant perpetrators of the novels’ many crimes. Therefore, the two characters are both eccentric and ex-centric. In this article, we will show how Christie uses her two detectives to challenge the dominant authorities and systems of thought, even if those challenges usually remain confined to the level of subtext. We will also touch upon some film and television adaptations in order to explore the ways those subtextual challenges rise to the surface or leave the text altogether, thus undermining the idea of marginalization in an attempt to force the characters into normative roles.

Spinsterhood as transgressive femininity: Miss Marple

By placing her female sleuth into a sexually undefined zone, Agatha Christie stresses her independence and her non-participation in the web of human relations she observes. As Miss Marple has no personal interest in these relations, she is uniquely relevant for the disrupted order of the world, even as she herself stays out of its domain. Miss Marple is thus an author figure, much earlier than Ariadne Oliver. It is then not surprising that Juliette Wells makes a connection between Miss Marple and Jane Austen through cultural imagination of “Aunt Jane” (Wells 199–219). On the one hand, biopics tend to pad up Austen’s biography with unfulfilled romances and depict her writing career as a consolation prize, unable to accept an unmarried woman as a cultural icon. On the other hand, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar show, the portrayal of both entrepreneurial and passive women is an ambivalent representation of Austen’s attitude toward her own authorship (Gilbert and Gubar 146–183). It could be said that Christie, too, projects her own authorial authority and manipulative view of story, narration, and characters onto the character of Miss Marple, hiding behind more or less stereotypical depictions of writers like Ariadne Oliver or Raymond West. Miss Marple’s behavior is steeped in performativity, conforming to the accepted social expectations regarding gender, age, and class, but the novels’ narrators point to the irony and distancing inherent in this performance. This is already noticed by Leonard Clement, the vicar who serves as the narrator of the first novel featuring Miss Marple, *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), while *A Caribbean Mystery* (1964) demonstrates that even basic communication can be seen as acting. The latter’s opening lines show Miss Marple in “a routine with which she was well acquainted”: an elderly man, Major Palgrave in this case, tells her of his past adventures. Humorously and ironically, the narrator explains: “Miss Marple had bestowed on all of them the same gentle charity. She had sat attentively, inclining her head from time to time in gentle agreement, thinking her own thoughts and enjoying what there was to enjoy: in this case the deep blue of a Caribbean Sea” (Christie, *Caribbean Mystery* 1).

Although her mannerisms echo the cultural idea of an elderly English spinster, Miss Marple often slips out of her role and reveals that she is in possession of knowledge and control. Therefore, performativity is present even in her approach to crime, her *directing* of scenes and manipulation of other characters through the selection and presentation of the information she uncovers. Also, since the reveal

of the truth and the unmasking of the perpetrator often come with no concrete evidence, half of Miss Marple stories use traps and staging to arrive at the solution (e.g., *4.50 from Paddington*, 1957). In *The Murder at the Vicarage* even the murder itself is practically stage-directed for the old lady who notices everything, as a scene observed from “the danger point of Miss Marple’s garden” (22). This element is also evident in Sir Henry Clithering’s excited words in *A Murder Is Announced* (1950): “Once more a murder is announced—for the benefit and enjoyment of Miss Marple” (61). In both *The Thirteen Problems* (1932), which introduced the character of Miss Marple (the collection featured short stories published in fiction magazines between 1927 and 1930), and *The Murder at the Vicarage*, Christie demonstrates her male characters’ condescending attitude towards Miss Marple and consequent role reversal, because the one who knows more—Marple—is shown as the dominant figure, despite that condescension. Thus, when the vicar objects to gossip, Marple replies: “You are so unworldly. I’m afraid that observing human nature for as long as I have done, one gets not to expect very much from it” (Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* 18). When Colonel Melchett needs to talk to Miss Marple and asks about her reliability, the vicar says: “She has a powerful imagination and systematically thinks the worst of every one” (59). The Colonel, however, makes the same mistake as the other male characters, starting with Raymond West: he bases his opinion of Miss Marple on everything that is performative about her—her house, her salon, her appearance. According to Makinen, the repeated details about her appearance (pink cheeks, fluffy knitting, meandering talk) “point to an awareness of elderly femininity as a form or masquerade, a performance that lives up to expectations in order to gain its own advantages” (Makinen 58). Therefore, even the concepts of privacy and domesticity can be questioned, especially considering Makinen’s conclusion that “Miss Marple’s masquerade points beyond her own individual identity to femininity as a whole” (58).

This stereotypical gender performance is almost didactically emphasized by Christie through Melchett’s mocking words: “The typical elderly spinster, in fact ... I ought to know the breed by now” (Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* 59). Upon seeing Marple’s small drawing room, he exclaims: “A lady’s room, eh, Clement?” (60). This statement shows that he is confident in his knowledge about both public and private domains and depicts him as a keeper of order who thinks he sees through both people and their environments. However, Christie shows a modern world where such convictions indicate outdated preconceptions about

gender and class, which only serve to cloud one's judgement. In her detective novels, the characters' feeling of disorientation remains even after the crime is solved and the order is restored, reflecting numerous social and political changes of the interbellum period. Indeed, the investigation itself often echoes the acknowledgment of the changed social structures, behaviors, or moral norms, or, as Light states:

The instabilities which these popular murders set in motion bear a direct relationship to the existential crises which torment the writers of high culture: the obsession with unstable identities, the ultimate unknowability of others, the sense of guilt which accompanies civilisation, and the concomitant effects which such destabilisation has upon the certainties of realist narrative—all find their modified parallel in Christie. (Light 88)

Male authority figures can thus be seen as symbolic of the disrupted, ineffective old order, while marginalized voices, represented though social unremarkables like Miss Marple, actually seem to be the more reasonable ones and it is them who are crucial to the solution. Unlike his wife, the vicar misjudges the young girls Lettice Protheroe and Miss Cram, because he cannot safely pigeonhole them into any "breed." Melchett is so condescending in his treatment of Miss Marple that even the vicar notices that he is "putting on his bluff military manner which he had an idea was attractive to elderly ladies" (Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* 60). Christie obviously takes great pleasure in having Miss Marple invalidate these preconceptions. She first demonstrates her powers of deduction, which the vicar reports to the reader: "Miss Marple shook her head slowly and pityingly. The pity was, I think, for two full-grown men being so foolish as to believe such a story. At least that is what we felt like" (64). Then, in her unassuming, polite manner, she concludes the conversation by saying: "But I'm afraid there's a lot of wickedness in the world. A nice honourable upright soldier like you doesn't know about these things, Colonel Melchett" (65). Throughout the novel, the author faces her sleuth with male authority figures whom she easily triumphs over, and key to that triumph are Miss Marple's knowledge of human nature and gossip as a "denigrated form of inter-female communication" (Makinen 62). Gossip is, more broadly, also seen as a form of folk wisdom passed down from generation to generation, available for creative use by Miss Marple, the author figure. All of these features are more emphasized in *The Murder at the Vicarage* not only because this is where the character of Miss Marple is established, but also because the novel's narrator is a man in position of social power, rather than a neutral omniscient narrator.

Later novels somewhat mitigate the image of the “nasty old cat” (Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* 18), while the first British television adaptation of *The Murder at the Vicarage* (the fifth episode in *Agatha Christie's Miss Marple*, BBC, 1984–1992) “puts her more in line with later characterizations, a simple observer who quietly works everything out without fuss, but understandably makes her more prominent” (Aldridge 230). Since “Vicarage” was not the first episode of the series, Marple’s character had already been shown as more refined in earlier stories (“The Body in the Library,” “The Moving Finger,” “A Murder Is Announced,” “A Pocketful of Rye”), not gossipy and nosy, and less conspicuously clashing with authority figures. Joan Hickson was in her eighties when she played Marple, and so the character’s liveliness, vivacity, and unconventional views were curtailed in favor of a more classical portrayal. Agatha Christie herself points out that Miss Marple was “born at the age of sixty-five to seventy” (Bunson 288). Writing about a 1970 German adaptation of the novel, Mark Aldridge points out that Inge Langen’s Marple (quite a young version, as Langen was only in her mid-forties) corresponds better to the Marple from the novel, as an “outright busybody,” not wholly likeable but somewhat irritant, and “not the kindly, softer version seen in most later adaptations” (Aldridge 290). The BBC adaptation of Marple novels, generally considered canonical, has obviously largely contributed to a conservative view of Agatha Christie.

Unfortunately, neither does the ITV series *Agatha Christie's Marple* (2004–2013) have “The Murder at the Vicarage” as its first episode, but places it after “The Body in the Library” instead. The latter caused quite a stir among fans, since a pair of lesbian killers were introduced into the plot. The ITV series’ looser adaptation harkens back to the campy, parodic context of earlier Christie films, which also featured a slew of movie stars. The need to introduce a romance element into the life of the elderly spinster manifested itself early on, with the MGM adaptations (1961–1964) starring Margaret Rutherford. Writing about the adaptation of *After the Funeral* (the book version featured Poirot, but the movie uses Marple instead, and changes the title to *Murder at the Gallop*), Aldridge writes that, “[a]s with *Murder She Said*, the film ends with the hint of wedding bells for Miss Marple” (Aldridge 100). ITV’s “The Murder at the Vicarage” (2004) goes one step further: it does not promise any future romantic involvements, but intervenes in Miss Marple’s past. In her popular book *The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple* (1985), Anne Hart points at two places in the novels where Marple hints at two suitors from her past (*At Bertram’s Hotel*,

A Caribbean Mystery), one of whom was disliked by her mother, and the other was “rather gay, almost Bohemian in his views” (Christie, *Caribbean Mystery* 170), but she found him very dull. Hart is decidedly unhappy with the fact that Christie never revealed anything from Miss Marple’s life between early girlhood and middle age, and desires to “imagine something vaguely heroic” in that gap (Hart 32). A biographer would generally fill in those gaps, but the task is less straightforward when the biography in question concerns a fictional character, whose entire existence and all the corresponding material is already textual in nature, so that kind of freedom is not tolerated outside of realms of fan fiction. Hart’s biography can be seen as a narrative extension of Miss Marple’s detective adventures, offering a frame story for the procedural since, as one *Goodreads* review says, “it makes a nice companion to the *Miss Marple* series.” Television and seriality created a type of parasocial relationship with the character that was not encouraged by the original novels. Hence the ITV series’ need to create Marple’s intimate world and to assign her *normative* sexuality.

The beginning of ITV’s “The Murder at the Vicarage” takes us back to 1915 and shows us young Captain Ainsworth being photographed in his uniform, with the photographer asking him to “look brave” and a young woman offering to see him to the station, because he is off to war. At the end of the episode, we find out that the young woman in question was Jane Marple, who had an affair with a married man whom she told to come back from the war, not for her, but for his wife. The captain dies in the war, and at the very end we see his photograph on the vanity. This flashback parallels the emphatically romanticized story between Mrs. Protheroe and Mr. Redding, so as to suggest that Miss Marple does have some experience which allows her to understand the world. This is, however, contrary to the principles of deduction she reveals in the original novel, which are based on observation, comparison, and classification of people. Makinen shows that Marple creates liminal space within the investigation which connects intuition and logocentrism: “Miss Marple, as main detective, is in control of the complete process, both the initial ‘feminine’ disquiet and the ‘masculine’ explanation of the facts” (Makinen 60). Finally, if we return to our view of Miss Marple as an author figure, here too we have a parallel with the idea that a writer does not necessarily have to have a rich life, but the ability to combine and compare impressions and experience. On the other hand, it seems that the reason why Marple never married needs to be explained, albeit within the bounds of heteronormativity. Ironically or not, the series which includes two characters coming out

of the closet—Murgatroyd and Hinchcliffe are shown kissing in the fourth episode, “A Murder Is Announced” (2005), while in the corresponding novel the two women were “merely” living together—felt the need to explicitly address Miss Marple’s sexuality and uncover the secrets from her “threatening” privacy. In the adaptation of *Murder Is Easy* (1939), which did not originally feature Miss Marple at all, an existing queer character, Mr. Ellsworthy, is not included. Moreover, he is missing even from the newest 2023 adaptation. In this way, historical representation of homosexuality is corrected: it is made explicit when it is only hinted at (like with Murgatroyd and Hinchcliffe), and an illusion is created that the society at large might have been approving of a queer relationship. This allows for a historical setting without any uncomfortable examinations of the actual historical context. A similar tendency can be seen not only in ITV’s *Agatha Christie’s Poirot* (1989–2013), but also in BBC’s *Father Brown* (2013–), where the amateur sleuth is a Catholic priest in 1950s England (transposed from G. K. Chesterton’s original stories, written between 1910s and 1930s) who has a remarkably modern and tolerant stance on queerness. While it is understandable that the heroic main characters of all of these detective stories cannot be seen as bigoted by modern standards, particularly because their genre is ultimately “cozy mystery” which does not usually explore the darker parts of human nature, this often results in obvious historical inaccuracy and an arbitrary set of rules where only the buffoons and villains tend to be aggressively sexist, racist, classist, or homophobic, and queer characters or characters of color tend to be represented in a more positive light in the adaptations than in the original stories, so as to avoid negative stereotyping. Therefore, when its representation in the original stories is negative, queerness is erased in another example of interference into the historical treatment of Otherness. Mr. Ellsworthy, thus, as a minor character whom Christie uses to show the community’s paranoia, particularly at the dawn of World War II, does not appear in the adaptations. Nevertheless, however much her novel may reflect the prejudices of its time, Christie also points out how easily those who are different become scapegoats because they are seen as perverted, corrupt, and insane. Queer men like Mr. Ellsworthy and Mr. Pye (*The Moving Finger*, 1942), who are “relatively minor characters who act chiefly as red herrings and to allow the male protagonists’ assertion of their own manly masculinity by comparison” (Bernthal 102) turn out to be innocent of the crimes in the novels, but what cunning sleuth could have relieved them of doubt in real life?

Such references to the social reality of the time, which Christie makes using the discourse of the period she belongs to, should not be erased in contemporary adaptations simply out of the desire to be politically correct. This does not only counterfeit social history, but exposes one's superficial reading of Christie. In the first Marple novel, the protagonist emphasizes that most people are "a little queer," and moreover, that "normal people do such astonishing things sometimes, and abnormal people are sometimes so very sane and ordinary" (Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* 193). Normality and ordinariness are examined in connection with guilt in a complex manner. Christie often shows that, unlike the actual perpetrators who are guilty of crimes, those who are considered to be outsiders have no "blame" other than either their unconventionality or some small infractions, and they can therefore be reintegrated into the community, or "restored to a state of innocence" (Auden 158).

Otherness on display: Hercule Poirot

When it comes to her other, arguably more famous, fictional creation, Hercule Poirot, Christie makes him much more conspicuously Other than Miss Marple. Unlike Marple, who hides her superior intellect and deduction skills behind the image of unimposing femininity, Poirot is loudly and obviously different: he is not only a foreigner, but a refugee; not only a dandy, but a man so ridiculously vain and impractical that he chooses fashion over common sense (e.g., patent leather shoes instead of more comfortable footwear even when traipsing around the countryside); not only a genius at solving crime, but an insufferable braggart about it as well. He is immensely irritating, not only to many characters in his stories, but also to his author, who gradually became so disillusioned with her creation that she side-lined him in his own narratives. Everything about Poirot, from his foreignness, his atypical masculinity, and his heavily implied neurodivergence, screams "Other." Yet he too, like Miss Marple, plays a role and exaggerates a lot of these traits on purpose, using a performative version of self in order to either confuse, annoy or trick the culprits into confession, because he also, more often than not, lacks actual evidence and has to rely on the guilty party confessing when confronted with the detective's interpretation of the crime. Like Miss Marple, Poirot is also always right, and his performance at the denouement, when he gathers all the suspects to reveal the truth, has an air of theatricality about it. Unlike Marple,

though, he is a man, even if his masculinity is coded as Other; and a professional, rather than an amateur sleuth, so he is awarded more respect by his many police associates. Furthermore, as the most famous private detective in the fictional world he inhabits, Poirot is a wealthy member of high society, which accords him certain privileges that a less fortunate immigrant might not have enjoyed in the class-conscious British society. Thus, as much as he is Othered for being a foreigner who does not embody the Empire's ideal of hegemonic masculinity, he also benefits from the advantages given to him by his sex, race, and class. Despite this, Poirot is still noticeably different from other rich, white, male characters in the novels. Interestingly enough, he revels in that difference, probably because, in his endless vanity, he perceives it as superior. Moreover, as previously mentioned, it is often these ultra-privileged members of the society's upper echelons that commit the most heinous crimes, which leaves an outsider like Poirot to serve as the world's moral center.

Conceived as a simultaneously straightforward and parodic version of a genius eccentric detective in the style of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot first appeared in Christie's debut novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (written 1916, published in the US in 1920 and in the UK in 1921). Here, in an evident attempt to emulate the Holmes stories, the narrator is the detective's associate, Captain Hastings, who met Poirot some years earlier and knows him as an odd and dandyish, albeit brilliant investigator. Unlike Watson, whose palpable admiration for Holmes casts Conan Doyle's stories in a homoerotic light, Hastings does not immediately take to Poirot. Rightfully deducing that her detective did not need an engaged narrator, Christie would later abandon this formula and send her Watson-like character, Hastings, to Argentina, leaving Poirot's adventures to impersonal narration. In *Styles*, the two characters reunite while Hastings is on leave from the front (the action takes place during World War I), recuperating from an injury, and Poirot is in England because he was forced to leave his native Belgium as a war refugee. In contrast to Holmes, who is an addict and an eccentric, but still very much a proper Victorian Englishman, Poirot is a foreigner, and a foreigner during wartime at that, a direct threat to the colonial cultural constructions of nationhood and masculinity. Moreover, to his eternal consternation, he is often confused for a Frenchman, even though he is a Belgian, which, to Charles Brownson, makes him "twice an outsider" (qtd. in Bernthal 88), as he is Francophone, but not French. As Bernthal puts it, comparing Poirot with Doyle's Holmes and Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin, two

famous fictional detectives who solve crimes in their native lands, he is “explicitly a foreigner” who invokes colonial British prejudice of foreign men’s inferiority and effeminacy (Bernthal 36). However, he recognizes the potential benefits of being underestimated and thus he usually plays up this role, using other characters’ xenophobia to his advantage, as he explains in *Three Act Tragedy* (1934):

It is true that I can speak the exact, the idiomatic English. But, my friend, to speak the broken English is an enormous asset. It leads people to despise you. They say—a foreigner—he can’t even speak English properly. It is not my policy to terrify people—instead I invite their gentle ridicule. Also I boast! An Englishman he says often, ‘A fellow who thinks as much of himself as that cannot be worth much.’ That is the English point of view. It is not at all true. And so, you see, I put people off their guard. (Christie, *Three Act Tragedy* 191)

Poirot’s foreignness is thus steeped in performativity, just like Marple’s spinsterhood. Both use other people’s prejudice toward their Otherness in order to fly under the radar and to gain an (often invisible) upper hand. This testifies to our earlier assertion that Christie gently challenges the conservatism of her era through the transgressive nature of her two sleuths.

Since diagnosis of fictional characters is never advisable and rarely useful, we will not get into medical detail about Poirot’s numerous eccentricities. Still, it bears pointing out that the character is heavily coded as neurodivergent, with traits that would later become associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and which would often characterize subsequent fictional detectives (e.g., in TV shows *Monk*, 2002–2009, or *Professor T*, which started in Belgium in 2015 and expanded into a whole franchise). In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Poirot’s implied neurodivergence is an asset that solves the crime: since he craves order and symmetry, is forever straightening things, and is particular about details, Poirot is the only one who notices that the figurines on the mantelpiece have been disturbed, which leads him to the solution. The ITV adaptation of the novel provides more detail on these quirks, adding, for instance, a scene where Poirot suggests to the baffled village shopkeeper that she should arrange spices by their country of origin. Like in its sister series, *Agatha Christie’s Marple*, the first episode of *Agatha Christie’s Poirot* is not actually the first story featuring the titular detective; indeed, “The Mysterious Affair at Styles” comes after nineteen other episodes, as the first story of season three. This way, the audience is already used to Poirot’s many eccentricities, so their effect is affection rather than

irritation in the viewer. This insistence on order is one of the keys to Poirot's success: he is detail-oriented and observant, and familiar with numerous obscure facts, due to what, if the neurodivergent angle is to be observed, might even be deemed hyperfixations. Thus, it is Poirot's mental Otherness that helps him challenge the authority of the dominant ways of thinking and allows him to succeed where they fail.

As was already stated, Poirot's gender expression is atypical and closely tied with his foreignness (insomuch that he cannot fully participate in homosocial bonding with true Englishmen, whose masculinity is uncontested), or, in Bernthal's words, he is "an alien whose stripe of masculinity is out of place in the world he inhabits" (Bernthal 36). This is signaled by his very name: he is named after the Greek demigod Hercules, the epitome of masculine strength, and yet, he is nothing like him. Further, his surname, Poirot, could loosely be translated as "little pear," which inspires neither dread nor awe. The character's full name is thus incongruous, and the effect is similar to that achieved by T. S. Eliot in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": by using a decidedly unromantic name, Eliot suggests that the love song the reader is about to encounter is a wholly ironic piece. Indeed, Hercule Poirot, unlike his mythological counterpart, is regularly described as a "little man." He is barely 5'4, and is known not for his strength, but for his intellect and his fastidiousness, reflected in his impeccably styled mustache, his neat morning suits, and his shiny patent leather shoes. Even though he takes great pride in his appearance (so much so that he dyes his hair black when it starts graying), he is never described as an attractive man (and indeed, does not think of himself as such, barring his admiration for his impressive mustache): much is made of his egg-shaped head and his small stature. Interestingly enough, though most adaptations portray him as overweight (even David Suchet's portrayal, usually regarded as the definitive one, includes a fat suit), he is not described as such in the books; on the contrary, he is often compared to a cat, with his agility and his green eyes, which grow more and more "cat-like" the more excited he becomes. This version of manliness is clearly not an ideal of masculine strength and beauty: unlike Sherlock Holmes, who is an accomplished boxer, Poirot is a "quaint dandified little man" (Christie, *Mysterious Affair* 35). Moreover, even though he is overly reliant on his "little gray cells" and "order and method" in earlier appearances, he becomes more of an observer and a "psychological" detective as time goes by. Thus, his masculinity is doubly feminized: at first, his mental faculties are placed before his physical prowess, so that the less "manly" brains are used instead of brawn, and later, that less manly, but still

masculine-coded intellectual ability gives way before feminine-coded powers of observation and analysis of people. Again, when compared with Holmes, who typically relies on cold, hard logic, Poirot solves his cases mostly by carefully observing the assorted suspects' interactions and emotional reactions, which aligns him more with Miss Marple's feminine style of sleuthing than with Holmes's masculine-coded logic. Even his impressive knowledge can be understood as "stereotypically female" (Knight 91), as exemplified by his understanding of poisons, explicitly mentioned as a feminine method of murder in *Styles*, or his observance of nail polish colors in *Death on the Nile* (1937). As Stephen Knight points out, "[b]efore Miss Marple is invented Poirot already represents a heightened version of female domestic knowledge as a weapon against fictional disorder" (Knight 91).

As mentioned above, "Styles" is not the episode which introduces the ITV adaptation of Poirot. That honor falls to "The Adventure of the Clapham Cook," where the character's first scene has the camera zoom in on his feet and then slowly pan up, lingering on his legs, and finally reaching his face. Such scopophilia is typically reserved for female characters, as a textbook example of Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze. Yet, Poirot is not eroticized here—what is on display is not his sexualized body, but his fastidiousness: his shiny shoes, his neatly pressed trousers, his well-manicured hands that are clearing off some invisible lint. He is not just dapper, but a proper dandy, and, as Judith Halberstam explains, the dandy is symptomatic of queer threat, since he is "too feminine," "a Gothic monster," who "represents too much and too little, excess and paucity; ... the parasitical aristocrat and the upwardly mobile bourgeois. He obviously also represents the homosexual male" (Halberstam 62–63). Nevertheless, Poirot's queerness is only ever implied, and easily explained away by his foreignness (e.g., his enthusiastic kisses to greet Hastings). Moreover, he, like Miss Marple, could more properly be read as asexual-coded, the type of queer that is still societally safe on the surface, linked as it is to the notion of *passing*. Indeed, both Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot can thus be interpreted as straight-passing queers. Asexuality may be described as invisible queerness, and is often excluded from more radical, hierarchical queer spaces for not being visibly queer enough or not understood as queer at all (see Serano). The homoerotic gaze in "Clapham Cook" is thus teased but ultimately thwarted, and the prospect of homoeroticism is, as Patrick Schuckmann says, both "evoked and disavowed" by the genre's constraints (Schuckmann 675). The reader (or in this case, viewer) is invited to be a voyeur, but it is Poirot's Otherness (i.e., his

overemphasized neatness, which could be linked to all three main features of his Otherness: his foreignness, his effeminacy, and his neuro-divergence) that is on display, rather than his sexually objectified body.

Nevertheless, Poirot, like Marple, suffers from being “straightened” in adaptations. One of the most egregious examples is the ITV version of his relationship with Vera Rossakoff, which turns his fascination into a full-blown infatuation, and even a doomed romance. Of the character’s three book appearances (“The Double Clue,” 1923; *The Big Four*, 1927; *The Labours of Hercules*, 1947), two were televised, and each time, Rossakoff’s dubious aristocratic title is taken at face value, and her relationship with Poirot, loud and cordial in the original, gets a wistful note in the adaptation. Bernthal rightly points out that Rossakoff’s book version is so flamboyant and exaggerated that it easily invokes Judith Butler’s notion of performative gender as artifice (Bernthal 129–134). In “The Double Clue,” Hastings describes her as “a whirlwind in human form [which] invaded our privacy, bringing with her a swirl of sables ... and a hat rampant with slaughtered osprey” (Christie, *Poirot’s Early Cases* 65). She is “a disturbing personality” (65), with a taste worthy of a drag queen, as evidenced by her “marvellous negligée of barbaric design” (67). Poirot’s fascination stems from her clever and dangerous nature (she is an accomplished thief), and not from any overt sexual attraction. In spite of this, the ITV adaptation of “The Double Clue” plays up the relationship between Poirot and Rossakoff, who is refined and subdued here, and when the couple separate at the end of the episode, the viewer is invited to consider Rossakoff as “the one who got away.” Interestingly enough, even though Poirot is thus placed within a heteronormative context, he is still not entirely sexual: while saying goodbye, Rossakoff kisses him, but instead of a passionate lip lock, he is only given a peck on the forehead. Thus, even with all the attempts to straighten him, Poirot still manages only to appear as a straight-passing asexual.

The latest in the long line of cinematic Poirots is Kenneth Branagh, who also assumes the mantle of director in his adaptations (*Murder on the Orient Express*, 2017; *Death on the Nile*, 2022; *A Haunting in Venice*, 2023). Branagh’s Poirot is noticeably less Other: he is still eccentric, but the quirks are toned down and even played for sympathy; moreover, he is also more conventionally attractive than any other portrayal. Branagh interferes in Poirot’s past quite heavily, giving him an unoriginal back story (he is no longer a former Belgian police detective turned refugee, but a World War I trench veteran who only ever wanted to be a farmer and ended up a detective by chance) and inventing a tragic

loss of love in the character of Katherine, Poirot's fiancée who died in a train crash. Even Poirot's mustache is given a tragic past: it is no longer simply a sign of his dandyism and vanity; now it is there to conceal shrapnel scars. In short, Branagh's version of Poirot is not an outsider by nature, but by circumstance, which changes the entire conception of the character. In Branagh's *Death on the Nile*, Poirot is conventionally heterosexual, and, if the flashback with Katherine was not enough to prove it, he is even given another love interest in Salome Otterbourne, who is no longer a drunken has-been writer constantly talking about sex, but a tough jazz singer who overcame racial prejudice (this version of the character is African-American) in order to become successful. At the end of the movie, Poirot, his mustache now shaved, enters the club where Otterbourne (the character is spared in this adaptation) practices her performance; the implication is that Poirot and Otterbourne are either already in a relationship, or about to enter one, leading the viewer to conclude that Branagh's Poirot is Poirot in name only. In *A Haunting in Venice*, a loose adaptation of *Hallowe'en Party* (1969), all subtextual signs of Poirot's queerness have been eradicated, and, despite the gothic atmosphere of the movie, the traditional relationship between the Gothic and the queer is left unexplored. In *Hallowe'en Party*, Poirot is entranced by Michael Garfield and his great beauty from the moment he sees him, and he keeps returning to it:

There was no doubt that Michael Garfield was a very beautiful young man. He found it difficult to know whether he himself liked Michael Garfield or not. It is always difficult to know if you like anyone beautiful. You like beauty to look at, at the same time you dislike beauty almost on principle. Women could be beautiful, but Hercule Poirot was not at all sure that he liked beauty in men. (Christie, *Hallowe'en Party* 308)

The last sentence in particular could be linked with suppression of homosexual desire in Poirot, which could then shed light on his seeming asexuality as a defense mechanism against internalized homophobia. Poirot's relationship with Garfield in the book is one of fascination, and a scene in which Garfield admires Poirot's mustache (incidentally, the only part of himself that Poirot considers beautiful, as he explicitly states in the book) could be read as flirtation. As Garfield turns out to be the killer and commits suicide at the end, there is no need for Poirot to explore these confusing feelings, and he remains safely desexualized. The ITV adaptation of the novel greatly reduces Poirot's interactions with Garfield and does not have him explicitly admire his beauty, while *A Haunting in Venice* removes the character altogether

and entirely changes the killer. Interestingly enough, the ITV version pulls a lesbian relationship between two minor characters out of the novel's subtext, where it is only hinted at, and even easily dismissed as a joke, as one of the many implausible theories by two teenage boys. The subtext between Poirot and Garfield, on the other hand, is completely ignored. In this way, Poirot is once again, like in "The Double Clue," pushed back into the realms of sexual normativity, while the series remains superficially inclusive by queering two unimportant characters.

Conclusion

As we have seen, both Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot function as moral centers of their respective fictional universes, although their social position in those universes is more closely connected with the margins. Unlike Miss Marple, who is more explicitly marginalized as an elderly spinster who solves crimes by interfering in the investigations undertaken by real police officers, Poirot seemingly occupies a more central position, given that he is a famous and rich detective sought out by the police. Nevertheless, it is actually Poirot who is more obviously Othered, since his seemingly central position belies his actual eccentricity, as he is an effeminate, neurodivergent foreigner who is not really a part of the homosocial group, but an outsider only occasionally allowed in. Miss Marple's true transgressivity, on the other hand, manages to remain hidden. As a woman, she is already marginalized, and she uses this underprivileged position to her advantage.

Christie utilizes her two sleuths to challenge normative ideas of gender, authority, sexuality, and morality; however, taking into account the social and literary context in which she creates, these challenges mostly remain on the level of subtext. For reasons of focus and space, we confined our research to a few representative texts and their adaptations, but hopefully, they served as an illustration enough of the complicated relationship between the center and the margin, the dominant and the Other. The books cleverly show Marple and Poirot's balancing act between the socially acceptable surface and their inner Otherness, all the while keeping it clear that they are the only ones who can serve as arbiters of morality and truth. When it comes to adaptations, the two sleuths' Otherness seems to be perceived as threatening and is therefore neutralized, most often through their forceful heterosexualization. As disheartening as this may seem, it only serves to prove our point: Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot do their best work while sleuthing from the margins.

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Zasledovanje z obrobja: Marple in Poirot Agathe Christie kot zasledujoči Drugi

Ključne besede: angleška književnost / detektivski roman / Christie, Agatha / Miss Marple / Hercule Poirot / marginalizacija / drugi

Kljub svojemu osrednjemu mestu v kanonu detektivske literature zasedata najslavnejša junaka Agathe Christie, gospodična Marple in Hercule Poirot, v svojih fikcijskih svetovih »izsredni« položaj. Oba detektivska lika je mogoče razmeti kot marginalizirana Druga, ki predstavljata izziv za normativne predpostavke družbe, v kateri živita. Pri gospodični Marple gre zlasti za marginalizacijo na podlagi spola, njenega amaterskega detektivskega dela in zakonskega stanu, medtem ko Poirota kot Drugega implicirajo njegova tujost, ženstvenost in nevrološka atipičnost. Oba lika je mogoče pojasniti tudi v okvirih asek-sualnosti in ju analizirati kot na videz heteronormativni kvir osebi. Članek razkriva, kako Christie uporablja status detektiva kot Drugega, da bi previdno izzvala prevladujoče ideje o avtoriteti, spolnosti, spolu in morali svojega časa. Z namenom raziskati besedilne in podbesedilne primere marginalizacije ter različne poskuse, da bi Drugi ostal v mejah normativne identitete, se analiza osredotoča predvsem na dela *Umor v župnišču*, *Skrivnostna smrt v Stylesu*, »Dvojna sled« in *Zabava za noč čarovnic*, pa tudi na njihove filmske in televizijske priredbe.

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Deterritorializing Narrative Strategies of New Literatures in English: Andriana Ierodiconou's *The Women's Coffee Shop*

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*As one of the New Literatures in English, Cypriot Anglophone literature has only recently come to be the focus of literary researchers and scholars. This article deals with Andriana Ierodiconou's 2012 novel *The Women's Coffee Shop* in the context of the New Literatures in English, starting from the theoretical and philosophical premises of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. While situating the novel within the framework of minor literatures and rhizomatic narratives, its main goal is to define and describe, through close reading, the narrative strategies that reflect and/or strengthen the deterritorializing effect as a key feature of a minor literature. To this effect, the article analyzes the figure of a deterritorialized narrator, characterization that oscillates between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the narrative method of dreamwork and narrative modes that potentially create new territories, as well as the rhizomatic narrative gap and the open ending. To summarize, the narrative of the novel is exemplary of the position that Cypriot Anglophone literature occupies as one of the (minor) New Literatures in English.*

Keywords: Anglophone Cypriot literature / Ierodiconou, Andriana: *The Women's Coffee Shop* / minor literature / narrative strategies / rhizom / deterritorialization

New Literatures in English

With large parts of the world permanently affected by the English language, due to reasons either historical and ideological (colonization and imperialism) or contemporary (globalization), literary fiction is written in English in many countries and by numerous authors who do not belong to the English or American literary tradition, which are

generally considered mainstream in the Anglosphere.¹ Defining “non-mainstream” English literature(s) is often complex: relegating it to a national literature, for instance, Maltese, Irish, etc., usually does not suffice because of the language in which it is written; equalizing it with Commonwealth literature is somewhat problematic because of the implications of colonial discourse and cultural appropriation; the concept of diasporic literature overlaps with but does not precisely correspond to it. The most frequently applied terms seem to be “New Literatures in English” and “Anglophone World Literatures,” which “identify an array of writing in English in different locations and under different circumstances, without limiting itself to authorship by Anglophone individuals in the original sense” and refer to “the entire spectrum of texts in English around the globe, past and present” (Dharwadker 48). The origins of some of these “new” literatures in English can be traced back to the nineteenth century, while others seem to have appeared in the last decades of the twentieth. In either case, there is usually a sense of novelty or freshness as well as an immediate effect of defamiliarization about literature in English that does not reflect any English/American experience. There is also the pressing need for approaching, describing, and interpreting new literatures in English from different theoretical and methodological perspectives.

This paper aims to offer contribution to the study of new literatures in English by focusing on Cypriot Anglophone literature, more precisely, the contemporary bilingual (English and Greek) author Andriana Ierodionou (b. 1952). Ierodionou is the author of two novels written originally in English: *Margarita's Husband: A Fable of the Levant* (2007) and *The Women's Coffee Shop* (2012), as well as a translator and a poet (the bilingual collection of her poems spanning the period between 1977 and 2015 with the English title *The Trawler* was published in 2016). This paper relies on a close reading of her second novel *The Women's Coffee Shop*. In Cyprus, divided along many lines, one of them based on religion (Muslim vs. Christian), the protagonist Angelou runs a coffee shop which, in a stark contrast to the traditional and patriarchally reinforced idea of coffee shops as men's realm, serves women only. Readers follow Angelou as she comes to terms with the death by stabbing of her closest friend Avraam Salih, the shadow theater master of mixed Muslim and Christian origin, whom neither the Muslim nor the Christian community agree to bury. At the same time, Angelou struggles with Avraam's domineering estranged

¹ This article presents research conducted within the MIK project (“Migrations, Integrations, Creations in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures”) of Alfa BK University.

grandfather Hadjimbey, a representative of one line of the island's traditional values, and the modern tourism and urbanization tendencies which start to effectively exert influence on the individual lives of ordinary Cypriots three years following the independence of the country. The plot is driven by discovering what happened to Avraam, but this question of death is ultimately left open, overshadowed by numerous preoccupations of life in Ierodiconou's (imaginary) Cyprus. The analysis this paper offers is framed within the theoretical concept of deterritorialization, as expounded by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in, among other works, their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, and further elaborated by other authors such as Claire Colebrook. The aim of the analysis is to identify, explain, and contextualize specific narrative strategies in *The Women's Coffee Shop* whose application is indicative of deterritorialized fiction.

Deterritorializing principle of New Literatures

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari claim that deterritorialization is the crucial feature of what they call a "minor literature." Their definition of a minor literature corresponds to that of New Literatures in English: it "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 16). Their subsequent observation that "minor" does not designate "specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (18) does suggest that a literature in English from a (geographical) *territory* other than England is not automatically minor, but it also allows for its inherent potential for being minor, due precisely to its revolutionary use of language in the process of constructing narratives. According to Claire Colebrook's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, a minor literature does not represent the world or its subjects—instead, it "has the power ... to imagine, create and vary affects that are not already given" (Colebrook 103). It does not use language simply as a means of communication; it uses "a language that becomes sound ... or a language that creates sense" to produce "what is not already recognisable" (103). A minor literature makes language seem foreign,² and it arguably moves even

² An interesting example in *The Women's Coffee Shop* is the expression "Your health," which is used throughout the narrative whenever a character takes a sip of any drink. While it is presumably rooted in the culture and customs of Cyprus, the expression in this form is uncommon in the English language.

beyond defamiliarization as dislocation of “our habitual perception of the real world so as to make it the object of a renewed attentiveness” (Bennett 20) into the process of *creating*—rather than expressing—the world and its subjects. The created world is also inevitably connected with a particular place or space inasmuch as it reconfigures (or deterritorializes) an existing *territory* (geographical or social) and subsequently reconstitutes or reterritorializes it into a new one.

This connection has not gone unnoticed in the case of the Anglophone literature of Cyprus. As Marios Vasiliou writes in his 2011 and 2017 research presenting the work of Andriana Ierodiaconou, Alev Adil, Miranda Hoplaros, and Stephanos Stephanides, the contemporary “cultural front” in Cyprus is dominated by “nationalist official discourses” in both major communities (Greek and Turkish), and the literature written in English “comes into this heated cultural front as a discourse that endeavors to re-imagine community across ethnic lines and against heteronormal sexual boundaries, taking in the process a cosmopolitan orientation” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 48–49). In this process of reimagining/creating a community, Cypriot Anglophone literature occupies a position which is minor both “locally in relation to the dominant literatures in Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English” (Vasiliou, “Cypriot English Literature” 83). Its deterritorialization is seen in its marginal position in Cyprus, as Anglophone writers “are cut off from the local Greek and Turkish speaking establishments that erect linguistic barriers to them” (84), while it is simultaneously distanced from the global literary production in English, even from the rather voluminous corpus of postcolonial fiction. It constitutes, “from the global perspective ... a very small dot on the map and appear[s] insufficiently victimised to warrant postcolonial attention” (85). In Vasiliou’s view, Cypriot Anglophone literature stands outside all easily definable and delineable categories and is frequently treated as an anomaly, which is precisely what enables it to develop its subversive potentialities—the revolutionary impulse typical of a minor literature (87). As some of the most distinctive features of Cypriot Anglophone literature, Vasiliou stresses its heteroglossic nature, which he traces in Miranda Hoplaros’s 2008 collection of short stories titled *Mrs Bones* and Andriana Ierodiaconou’s *Margarita’s Husband*, and “fragmentation and dislocation both in content and in form” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 53), which he discusses in reference to both *Margarita’s Husband* and *The Women’s Coffee Shop*, particularly as regards the character of Avraam in the latter novel, as we shall explain in due course.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, one way for a minor literature to deterritorialize the major language in which it is written is “to artificially enrich [it] ... to swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 19). The other way is the opposite: “dryness and sobriety, a willed poverty” (19), which pushes expression into utter deterritorialization so that representation and signification become impossible. Deterritorialization through enrichment allows for subsequent reterritorialization, a restructuring of the (social) territory after it has been deterritorialized—shattered or ruptured. In addition to deterritorializing effect as the major characteristic of a minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two other elements a minor literature contains. It has a collective value: as Deleuze and Guattari put it, “if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility” (17). The quote evokes the marginal position of Cypriot Anglophone literature on both the local and the international scene, but as the following analysis will show, the collective value also appears as a leitmotif in *The Women's Coffee Shop*. Finally, a minor literature is always political: “the social milieu” in major literatures serves “as a mere environment or a background,” whereas the “cramped space” of a minor literature “forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics” (17). This characteristic is also built into the story of *The Women's Coffee Shop*, where both politicalness and collective value serve to reinforce the deterritorialization effected by the narrative discourse. Relying on a close reading of the selected parts of the novel, the following sections will try to identify deterritorializing tendencies and strategies in the narrative discourse, focusing primarily on the narrator, characterization, and narrative modes. The novel presents a specific deterritorialized narrator, and most of the characters are shaped through the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The narration which is largely based on dreamwork, rewriting of old narratives, and narrative gaps, i.e., the lack of closure and the rhizomatic effect of rupture, accentuates the novel's ambiguous relationship with territory—the symbolic territory of the English literature as well as the spatial and social territory of Cyprus with which its story deals.³

³ Although research on deterritorializing narrative strategies in minor literatures seems scarce, some significant efforts to this effect have been made and the following

Deterritorialized narrator

The Women's Coffee Shop opens with rather traditional heterodiegetic narration, which at the very beginning introduces the two major characters, Avraam Salih and Angelou Pieri, immediately stressing their uncommonness. In addition to Avraam Salih's name, which reveals that he is an outsider in both dominant communities, his condition is also uncommon: "[D]ead. And not only dead, but unburied" (Ierodiamonou 5). The Christian priest refuses to bury Avraam because he was never baptized; the hodja refuses it because he was never circumscribed and never attended the mosque. Angelou, a peddler, is described as a manly woman: "[She was] strongly built about the throat, shoulders and arms ... [t]he hands ... of a worker ... the tanned skin rough. She wore a man's khaki trousers ... her feet, on the large side, were shod in the leather sandals favored by the farmers and fishermen of the region" (5–6). She drives a van, which makes her the first woman her village has ever seen behind the wheel, and she keeps a coffee shop, the business ran and visited exclusively by men. It is Angelou who buries Avraam, near the shore, on a plot of land she inherited from her father, and as she buries him, she laments his death—and life—by singing instead of praying. The first chapter ends with this uncommon burial, but the second opens with a shift in narration towards homodiegetic ("It feels strange to be at the center of a story"; 23) and even chapters continue to be narrated by the dead man. In his first address Avraam delivers an account of his origin and birth, in which all the actors seem equally out of place. His mother Constantia was disowned by her father Hadjimbey, the wealthiest man in the village, and was never married to Avraam's father Mehmet. Avraam's maternal grandmother Lefki was, following her daughter's elopement, transferred by Hadjimbey to a windowless barn where, reduced to the status of an animal, over the course of the sixteen remaining years of her life she gradually lost her mind. Avraam was born in a small house on the outskirts of the village, "worth ... close to nothing" (42). Living as "the sole resident Moslem" in a Christian village (114) and earning his living as a shadow theater master—as he phrases it, "I never put myself on stage" (23)—he literally spent his career in the shadows. Even as he lies dead in unconsecrated ground, among the roots of olive trees, "*outside* the prescribed

strategies identified: defiance of signification, neutralization of sense, asyntactical language, phantasmagorical and absurd tales, quizzical jokes, silly songs, and asubjective free indirect narration (Salami and Rahmani).

confines of a cemetery wall” (23; emphasis added), he is surrounded by similar outcasts: a miscarried five-month child and a woman murdered by her husband, whose death was never reported.

In his life as well as death, Avraam occupies a marginal position, socially as the offspring of a mixed marriage, and spatially as he is linked with the outskirts of the village/backstage shadows/unconsecrated ground near the sea. His house is brutally vandalized following his death, which shows the extent to which Avraam is considered an outcast. His position, however, becomes utterly deterritorialized as soon as the authorities reveal that his grave is empty: “Angelou sensed there was something wrong the second the police jeep had rattled to a halt in the silent olive grove. ... [T]he deserted landscape shimmered in the midday heat like a mirage. That was it—the place was deserted; there was no one there, dead or alive” (Ierodiconou 61). In his analysis of Ierodiconou’s other novel, *Margarita’s Husband*, Vasiliou focuses on a chapter titled “Gethsemane’s Story,” in which voice is given to the refugee girl, an important but silent character (Vasiliou, “Situating” 55). In this chapter, she delivers her story in broken English—just like Avraam, she becomes an unexpected homodiegetic narrator. Both Gethsemane and Avraam are displaced and hence in a way deterritorialized. However, Avraam develops the concept of a “deterritorialized narrator” to the extreme. He is not merely a marginalized or socially ostracized individual. Once his buried body is displaced, he narrates his story from a void in space, and it is only from this void that he appears as a homodiegetic narrator. In a spirit-like form, he is present in the story from which he is at the same time entirely absent. Avraam’s narratorial knowledge is not limited to past events. In chapter eight, he reveals himself as enduring presence in the village life, as regardless of the fact that he has disappeared from his grave, he knows about Angelou’s subsequent clash with a theologian and a journalist over the church’s repudiation of Avraam and the media interest in making his death political, i.e., their effort to present his death as the murder of a Moslem man in a Christian community.⁴ While Avraam does not discuss contemporary politics, he does subtly declare his political position. Describing one of the shadow theater performances he gave,

⁴ In chapter ten, Avraam appears as an eavesdropping narrator. The ending of the previous chapter relates an argument between Angelou and Ermioni, in which the latter expresses her belief that Avraam never knew she was Angelou’s lover. Chapter ten begins with his words: “Ermioni was wrong: I knew that Angelou and she were lovers” (Ierodiconou 148). The phrasing indicates that Avraam has been listening to or, just like the readers, reading the narrative of the previous chapter.

which dealt with the exploits of Alexander the Great and the significant help he received from the traditional (Turkish) shadow play character Karagöz, he states: “Moral (noticed by not a single person save the puppet-master): there’s always some insignificant little man doing his anonymous heroic best behind the achievements of the great. Anyhow, the audience enjoyed it; and if they chose to identify with Alexander rather than Karagöz, with the master rather than the slave, who was I to set them straight?” (Ierodionou 95).

It is important to note that, as a shadow theater master, Avraam is a narrator by profession, but it is even more important to stress his view of his role: “I was nothing but a manipulator of shadow-puppets, a half-breed, the lowest of the low” (Ierodionou 74). In other words, Avraam equalizes his social status with his narrator’s status and considers himself in both capacities an unrecognized, concealed “little man.” He therefore subtly indicates his own importance in the narrative, based on his belief that little men are actual heroes, but to retain the status of a hero, he needs to remain unrecognized and concealed. At another point of his narration, he details how he felt when depression set in after his mother’s death: he briefly considered suicide, but “[t]he catch was, I dreaded physical suffering; also, I still sneakily clung to the notion that my life was a story, with beginning, middle and end, and I wanted to know how it would come out” (123). For this reason, he turns to more “non-fatal forms of escape, like reading” and watching shadow theater performances (124). Avraam acknowledges that he must be part of a story while also being nothing and that stories such as his play a crucial role in the major political events and developments—a contradictory position which makes him a deterritorialized narrator while highlighting the importance of his implicit political stance.

De/re/territorializing characterization

As Marios Vasiliou notices, “Avraam Salih’s unburiable corpse can be read metonymically as the elusive, evasive, and shifting corpus of ‘minor literatures’” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 53). Had either community accepted to bury him, his body would have been reterritorialized, i.e., readmitted into one of the dominant groups as well as into “the symbolic order” which minor literatures contest through deterritorialization (53). As it is, his character represents the unrepresentable; it indicates the resistance to being placed within any confines, the perpetual non-belonging, and thus comes to stand—not only metonymically but

also metafictionally—for deterritorialization itself, as the dominant characteristic of a minor literature, including the novel whose story Avraam occupies. In his own words, “[M]y presence [in the shadow theater] was hardly registered at all by the majority of the audience” (Ierodionou 23). Avraam declares to be minoritarian. The Deleuzian minoritarian mode of existence is one that rejects all unification and standardization (Colebrook 104) while opening space for diversity through becoming and creating instead of expressing any already given identity. Through free indirect discourse attributed to Angelou,⁵ the narrative states that “Avraam was a rebel, but he staged his rebellions alone, elaborating them in private and expressing them only through his plays” (Ierodionou 109). Therefore, it is in the process of staging and performing shadow theater plays that Avraam is revealed as minoritarian since through his plays he creates identities (Karagöz, Alexander the Great, Hadjimbey, etc.) and develops stories. It is, in fact, in the choice of their profession, which serves as a major means of characterization, that both Avraam and Angelou (an artist and a woman) reject being defined in accordance with standards.

Angelou can be described in terms of yet another Deleuzian concept, that of “becoming-woman,” which is minoritarian because “there is no standard or norm for woman” (Colebrook 104) and Angelou does not comply with any.⁶ Her profession of a peddler turns her into a nomad (who is still free to cross from the Christian to the Moslem parts of the island despite the incipient “troubles”), and the establishment of the (first ever) women’s coffee shop, while putting her once again in the position of defiance of standards, is also a manifestation of women creating “by making possible a becoming over which they do not have ownership, into which they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). The women’s coffee shop indeed appears as a place over which Angelou has no ownership: all the women can bring food or prepare drinks, they do not pay

⁵ Free indirect discourse is a possible strategy of narrative deterritorialization (see footnote 3; Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). In this case, Angelou’s thoughts refer to Avraam’s rebellious nature, which is pertinent to a minor literature. Moreover, “[i]t is in free-indirect style that literature discloses language as a ‘collective assemblage’ in which ‘styles produce speaking positions’ (Colebrook 112). Narratives containing free indirect discourse/style reflect the collective value, which also bears relevance to minor literatures.

⁶ Apart from the fact that there is almost nothing feminine about her description, Angelou confesses to Avraam that she does not like men (Ierodionou 98).

(because, as Angelou explains, women own no money) and can come and go as they wish, regardless of whether Angelou is there. Moreover, this place for Angelou has a collective value. Having become motherless at an early age, she cherishes all moments when she is among a crowd of people, and “the daily gathering of women to drink, exchange news, or quarrel, stood for the family warmth she had lacked since the death of her mother,” offering “intimate, comforting sense of human contact” (Ierodionou 49–50). Angelou became “an orphaned child” at five, and Avraam in his teenage years; both are, however, in their late thirties still characterized as orphaned children, an orphan being “the most deterritorialized and the most deterritorializing figure” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 79).⁷ One of their first conversations focuses on their mothers. “You remind me of my mother,” Avraam tells her, to which she replies: “I remember your mother. ... You look alike, in a way. ... Better than I remember my own mother, really” (Ierodionou 97). These recollections of parents and childhood are their attempt at reterritorialization, finding one’s place, and so is, consequently, their joint venture of traveling around the island, Angelou selling and Avraam performing. It “takes place in a different space than that of territories, namely, overcoded geometrical space” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 222). The traveling van is indeed overcoded with the dual sign of a peddler’s van and shadow theater, and it moves across the established strata of the island, i.e., through the territorialization which this fictional world presents. Angelou’s and Avraam’s movements cannot effect any new territorialization—the single existing one concerns the “villain” of the novel, Avraam’s grandfather Hadjimbey.

Hadjimbey is preoccupied solely with territoriality, more literally, the land: “[H]e already had in hand that most profitable commodity of all: land. Cultivated, lying fallow or completely barren—as long as it was near the sea, it scarcely mattered in a small country which was quickly discovering that its future lay in selling its soul to the devil of tourism” (Ierodionou 73). Hadjimbey is “careful to steer well clear” of politics (71), just like the communist mayor and the nationalist sergeant who visit Angelou (“the flotsam and jetsam floating upon the ocean of this complex and unhappy political history”; 57) and also insist that politics should be left out of Avraam’s death. The two and Hadjimbey embody

⁷ Avraam feels “orphaned” when his father leaves for America; he is on the verge of “the tears of a six-year-old on his first day at school” as he experiences the complete separation from his single remaining parent (Ierodionou 154). He also sobs like “a lost child” when he finds out that Angelou, the woman he loves, is in a relationship with Ermioni (149).

the territorialized strata which all the other characters seem to overflow and struggle with. Though developed to the greatest extent in the two protagonists, this deterritorializing, minoritarian aspect is seen in other characters as well. Avraam's mother, Constantia, who is sixteen at the time she elopes with Mehmet Salih, is described almost solely as a child;⁸ for instance, "rubbing her knuckles into her eyes like a child, [she] began suddenly to cry" (39). Such "strict contemporaneity of the adult and the child" is what Deleuze and Guattari term "a childhood block" or "a becoming-child" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 164), which is a minoritarian practice with a deterritorializing function. In Constantia (as well as Angelou and Avraam), the child coexists with the adult, "in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries ... both off—as opposed to the child we once were, whom we remember or phantasize" (294). Angelou is described in a similar manner: her desire to be surrounded by other people, mostly women, reflects her upbringing, during which she lived with a series of aunts after her mother's death. In a way, her childhood remains present in her adult life.

It is possible to consider some of the characters, particularly Avraam and Mehmet Salih, as minor in the sense of belonging to a minority community in the Cypriot world that *The Women's Coffee Shop* charts. As such, they are "objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). Avraam's movements are constant and become indeed uncontrollable after he dies, embodying—to refer to Vasiliou's observation quoted at the beginning of this section—not just the Moslem community in the 1960s Cyprus, but also the Cypriot Anglophone minor literature. Similarly, Mehmet Salih leaves Cyprus and remains present in the narrative only in his dead son's dreams and memories; his movements are no longer confined by the island and therefore cannot be controlled.

⁸ Hadjimbej initially thinks of Mehmet as a son he does not have, whereby Mehmet is also observed as a childlike figure.

Recreating territories

In his narration, Avraam resorts several times to describing his dreams. In one of them, as he states, “[M]y father hadn’t yet gone to America, and my mother was still alive” (Ierodionou 120). He enriches the narrative with oneirism in making his dreams “objects of narrative report” (Walsh). Likewise, some odd chapters include reports of Angelou’s dreams. On the other hand, Ermioni’s description of Avraam—in which she claims that “[h]e was half asleep on his feet” and was “[a]lways thinking up stories for his precious theatre” (Ierodionou 139–140)—indicates that he was constantly in a dreamlike state or near such a state, which potentially presents “dreaming as itself a kind of narration” (Walsh). In either case, dreams present Avraam with possibilities of rewriting reality and constructing completely different worlds. In the mentioned dream, he conjures up a reality in which he is not an orphan. Being, in Ermioni’s words, always half asleep, he conjures up imaginary worlds to present in his plays. His shadow theater, in addition to serving as a means of characterization of deterritorialized Avraam, is also the ultimate form of creating. In Avraam’s words, it “had to take people out of themselves, transpose them into an alternative world of the imagination which, for as long as the black shapes danced across the screen, felt more real somehow than the real; or it was nothing” (Ierodionou 162–163).

The shadow theater in *The Women’s Coffee Shop* plays an important role—the one given in Deleuzian philosophy to literature, which, “when it fully extends its power of being literature, is always minoritarian” (Colebrook 104). According to Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka was a great writer “not because he captured the unrepresented spirit of the Czech people, but because he wrote without a standard notion of ‘the people’ ... not as a being with an identity, but as a voice of what is not given, a ‘people to come’” (Colebrook 104). This is appropriately reflected in the philosophy of Odysseas Kamenos, Avraam’s shadow theater instructor and subsequently great friend. Having once during a performance been asked by a Moslem audience member what was entertaining about the killings of the Moslem people which he staged, Odysseas understood that he should no longer do any “patriotic stuff” (Ierodionou 156). Regardless of his refusal to be patriotic and stage art that contributes to the political effort of his (Greek Orthodox) people, he remains deeply political in claiming that through his performances he wants to convey the idea of freedom—he wants everyone “to be free from hatred and killing” (161). He therefore imagines worlds in which

there are no divisions along the lines of nationality or religion, and the power such creations should project is precisely in the construction of a new reality and a new people, unburdened with divisions. It is through interaction with Odysseas that Avraam learns how to resist the major hegemonic narratives and educational practices in his shadow theater art; his apprenticeship is “a second birth into the life [he] was destined to lead” (159). This is particularly obvious in the discussion between Odysseas and Avraam about Shakespeare.

In Deleuzian terms, “Shakespeare can be considered a ‘minor’ author precisely because his works do not offer a unified image of man” (Colebrook 105). Reading Shakespeare today should not be a study of the history of ideas—instead, it should allow for a re-confrontation with “the formation, genesis or creation of ideas” (64). Various theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare have indeed been interpreted as examples of a “minor theater” (Fortier) and the fictional examples in *The Women's Coffee Shop* might fall within the same category. Namely, Odysseas proudly introduces to Avraam his “non-patriotic” play called *The Blackamoor*:

It's a good play. There's a black man, he's a general and he's really brave, so when he falls in love with a noble white lady she falls right back, and they get married, and it's all lovey-dovey for a while; then some spiteful guy comes along and whispers in the Blackamoor's ear that supposedly the lady is cuckolding him, and he goes crazy with jealousy. Then, not to kill her, he kills himself! (Ierodiconou 157)

The well-educated Avraam is excited to recognize *Othello* (although the story of *The Blackamoor* is essentially similar to his parents' love too), but Odysseas does not even know who Shakespeare is and claims that *The Blackamoor* is his original invention. Moreover, when Avraam explains the plot to him, Odysseas is convinced that Shakespeare was wrong: “The way you and this Shakespeare guy tell it, see, jealousy kills the lady and the Blackamoor. But the way I tell it, the Blackamoor kills jealousy; get it?” (158). On learning that Shakespeare wrote many more plays, Odysseas decides to recreate them, giving them new names and new ideas: “Lady Macbeth lost all her influence (‘Who'd want to watch a play about some guy doing what his wife says?’), Romeo and Juliet survived to have children and grandchildren (‘Too sad, killing them off like that’), and Titania remained forever in love with Bottom (‘Funnier!’)” (159).

The novel thus presents Shakespeare's stories as permanently in the process of becoming, and the shadow theater as a form of art that

creates new worlds through recreating Shakespeare. Shakespeare is a major author only when he becomes part of an industry, such as tourism (Colebrook 104). It is precisely the advance of tourism that threatens the peaceful village of Ayia in *The Women's Coffee Shop*, in the same way that the advance of film and television in the 1950s and 1960s threatens (and largely destroys) Avraam's shadow theater. However, the capitalism that is brought to Cyprus along with independence is not the end for it still leaves space, at least for the communities based on collective values such as Angelou's women's coffee shop, to deterritorialize the majoritarian practices by imagining what they have and might yet become—nurses, shop-keepers, even film stars. As is made clear from the start with the image of Avraam's unburiable body, his death only entails a multiplicity of the forms of existence and activity.

Rhizomatic stories

Multiplicity is one of the principles on which rhizomatic forms, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, are based. Multiplicity, "treated as a substantive ... ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 8). Other principles are connection and heterogeneity, which dictate that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7), asignifying ruptures, which lead to the cutting, shattering, or breaking at any given spot of the form, which in turn inevitably starts "up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (9), and cartography and decalcomania, meaning that a rhizome is not generative or structural, but, like a map, "detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification ... torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation ... drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation" (12). Rhizomes, described in this way, are constantly going through the mutually dependent processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, just as a minor literature does. As the narrative of *The Women's Coffee Shop* draws towards a close, its rhizomatic potentials become more prominent. For example, chapter eleven depicts a protest organized exclusively by women aiming to prevent Hadjimbey's construction of a hotel in their village. The protest is heterogeneous in that it includes absolutely all the women of the village, from the youngest to the oldest. It operates on the principle of multiplicity as the women organize as a single body, which continues

to cater for the needs of the village men and children while staging the successful protest. Like a map, it allows for numerous points of entry, which is depicted by the two journalists, Osman and Theo, interviewing the people chosen in accordance with their own preferences and thus offering different points of view. Finally, the rupture is seen in the bulldozer accident which kills Ermioni. Ermioni's death breaks the body of the protest and reshapes it into the funeral procession, but Ermioni curiously seems to go on living as Angelou recognizes the specific color of her eyes in the turquoise of Pulcheria the cat's eyes, and this makes her happy (Ierodionou 179).⁹

Ermioni's death is not the only rupture in the narrative. There are other holes which, in line with Wolfgang Iser's idea of a narrative gap as an element of the story which is unexpressed in the narrative discourse, are left to the reader's interpretation, imagination, and involvement. An example relative to the process of deterritorialization is Angelou's account of her teenage years spent with her father. It is implied in the narrative (in a chapter narrated by Avraam) that she was abused by her father. As Avraam half-narrates Angelou's confession, he stresses that "[s]he never once said the word 'father,' only 'he.' She made it sound as though the word 'father' was impossible to say" (Ierodionou 149). Avraam is unable to relate the story of the abuse in the same way that Angelou is unable to say the word. Their inability reflects deterritorialization. A complete account of this traumatic childhood memory would provide Angelou with reterritorialization, as memory "yells 'Father! Mother!'" whereas the opposite, deterritorializing process of becoming-child "is elsewhere, in the highest intensities that the child constructs with his sisters, his pal, his projects and his toys" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 79). Avraam indeed comments at this point that he "wished [he] could make her a child again and restore to her a child's proper nightmares, about wolves and being lost in the forest, instead of the others, the unspeakable ones which had been forced on her" (Ierodionou 150). While not literally a child, Angelou exists simultaneously—or alternatively—as an adult woman and a child, as has been pointed out in previous sections. She goes through a series of rhizomatic states in the process of constant de- and reterritorialization: she sells her father's land after his death, but she keeps a plot by the sea to which she returns often, usually in difficult moments. She accepts to film the documentary Avraam was commissioned to make since she

⁹ In Angelou's dream which follows, Ermioni is transformed into Pulcheria and then back again into her human shape (Ierodionou 200).

believes the story about a women's coffee shop could deterritorialize the dominant narratives in the same way that the women's protest managed to stop the construction of a hotel. However, the producer Theo, while delighted with her story, immediately reterritorializes it: by exclaiming "Amazons! Lysistrata!" (146) he gives away his wish to fit Angelou's story in the existing, long-established myths, which ultimately leaves her disappointed in television industry. Finally, when following the dream in which Avraam refers her to his suitcase with shadow theater puppets, she finds his mother's chain of gold, which Avraam left there for her, she reconnects with the past—but the figure whose inheritance she receives is the deterritorialized, exiled Constantia. In line with the rhizomatic principles of connection and heterogeneity, Angelou gives the chain to young Xenia's baby, on the condition that the baby is named Constantia, whereby she reworks Constantia's life into one of a heroine (who did the right thing, as Angelou states) and rewards it with a future through the child that will bear her name.

Avraam also describes his experience of being deterritorialized after another rupture—the news of his father's death in America: "[A] curious feeling came over me, as of my body dissolving from the centre outwards; I felt an urge to go over and look at myself in the wardrobe mirror, which I wouldn't have been surprised to find empty of any reflection. Then, slowly, my flesh seemed to coalesce about my bones again, but in a subtly different configuration" (Ierodionou 183). He does not cry but instead dreams "the same dream almost every night for the next few years: in it, I was standing in a very high place, on a tower or a cliff-top, with the darkness and the wind about me" (183). In the dream, he recreates the death of his father, who fell from the girders of a skyscraper construction site. Avraam believes his father in fact jumped because he was retracing his movements from the West to the East coast—he believes that his father wanted to effect a homecoming through suicide. When in chapter fourteen Avraam narrates his own death, he attempts to effect a similar homecoming. He opens the chapter with a metanarrative comment: "I clearly hear you saying, reader: so, what's going on here?" (203).¹⁰ Since he is utterly deterritorialized, he does not provide readers with any final solutions and instead presents a rhizomatic, decentralized narrative with numerous paths, options, and points of entry, whose greatest enemy, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is fixed signification (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka 3*). "If I am a spirit," says Avraam, "well, I am not just any spirit,

¹⁰ It is the first comment which reveals that Avraam is "concerned with the act and/or process of narration" (Neumann and Nünning).

but that of a shadow theatre master; and while I am forbidden to tell you what actually happened, I can deploy my shadow-figurines one last time, in the guise of some of the persons in this story, to show you what might have happened. After that, which ending is the right one will be up to you to decide” (Ierodiconou 203). He offers five different endings, phrased identically except for those parts which describe different possible deaths. In one ending, Ermioni stabs Avraam; in another, Kamenos is the murderer. In the third and fourth option, unidentified men from the village kill him on Hadjimbey's orders or because of his religion; in the last one, he stabs himself after Ermioni tells him that Angelou was pregnant with his child and had an abortion. All endings finish with the same sentence, which reflects Avraam's wish for reterritorialization by dying in his home, the house on the outskirts. Like his father in America, he retraces his steps from the bridge to the house: “Once in my yard, I gave a small sigh, and died” (Ierodiconou 209, 213, 219, 224).¹¹

Literature in process

Analyzing Andriana Ierodiconou's *The Women's Coffee Shop* as an example of a minor literature in English, hailing from Cyprus, which is based on politicalness, collective value, and above all, deterritorializing tendencies, reveals a set of narrative elements that reinforce the idea of deterritorialization as an overall narrative strategy. As a deterritorialized narrator who is at the same time at the center of the story and nowhere, Avraam himself stands for a void, a rupture which makes the narrative rhizomatic—filled with different voices and branching in many directions. The reader is aware of these voices and directions immediately from the titular concept of a women's coffee shop, a collective organized as a rhizome where women (marginalized by virtue of their very birth) of all backgrounds gather and talk. Most of the characters, primarily Avraam and Angelou, are described in terms of their defiance of the established territorial strata and, consequently, their shifting positions in the surrounding spatial and social territory. Their relationship is an attempt at reterritorializing their positions, and while Avraam's death prevents it, it also creates other possibilities. To this effect, the narrative

¹¹ The last ending, in which Avraam becomes aware of having lost a child, is different: “I gave a small sigh, and died” (Ierodiconou 227). The idea of an unwanted child is generative rather than rhizomatic, and therefore it simply breaks the structure without offering any transformative options which a rhizome would provide.

relies on the shadow theater as a minoritarian practice to create new territories, reinventing, among other things, Shakespeare to reflect the ideas of the 1960s Cyprus. The shadow theater as an element of the story has its parallel in dreamwork as an element of the narrative discourse, which is also a minoritarian practice due to its power to affect reality. The voice of a spirit-like eavesdropping narrator, the construction of characters who exist simultaneously as (orphaned) children and adults, the narrative method of dreamwork and the creative use of the theater all contribute to the deterritorializing process which Deleuze and Guattari describe as enriching. On the other hand, the ultimate inconclusiveness in leaving the reader uninformed about “facts,” the gaping void in the story that surrounds Avraam and his death, deterritorializes the narrative by, conditionally speaking, impoverishment. Conditionally, because while the story is devoid of its central element, it ushers the reader into its world, making him or her able to follow the rhizomatic branches and create bridges for the narrative gap. This is a means of involving the reader with the political as much as literary intrigues of the heterogenous Cypriot world. Just as Avraam and Angelou constantly oscillate between being deterritorialized and yearning for a reterritorialization, so is Cypriot Anglophone literature—like other New Literatures in English—in the process of becoming, charting new territories of literary fiction in a map that remains essentially incompletable.

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Deteritorializacija pripovednih strategij novih književnosti v angleščini: *Ženska kavarna* Andriane Ierodionou

Ključne besede: anglofonska ciprska književnost / Ierodionou, Andriana: *The Women's Coffee Shop* / manjšinska literatura / pripovedne strategije / rizom / deteritorializacija

Ciprska anglofonska književnost kot ena izmed novih literatur v angleščini je šele pred kratkim pritegnila pozornost literarnih raziskovalcev in raziskovalk. V tem kontekstu članek obravnava roman Andriane Ierodionou *Ženska kavarna* (*The Women's Coffee Shop*) iz leta 2012, ki se ga loteva na podlagi teoretičnih in filozofskih izhodišč Gillesa Deleuza in Félixu Guattarija ter ga umesti v okvir manjšinskih literatur in rizomatskih pripovedi. Glavni cilj članka je z natančnim branjem opredeliti in opisati pripovedne strategije, ki odsevajo in/ali krepijo deteritorializacijski učinek kot osrednjo značilnost manjšinske literature. V ta namen se analiza osredotoča na lik deteritorializiranega pripovedovalca, karakterizacijo, ki niha med deteritorializacijo in reteritorializacijo, pripovedno metodo sanj in načine pripovedovanja, ki potencialno ustvarjajo nova ozemlja, ter rizomatsko pripovedno vrzel in odprt konec. Kot se pokaže, romaneskna pripoved odraža položaj, ki ga zaseda ciprska anglofonska književnost kot ena od (manjših) novih literatur v angleščini.

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A Hundred Years of Sinicization: The Dissemination and Acceptance of Slovenian Literature in China

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In China, Slovenian literature is seen as part of Yugoslav literature within the wider framework of Eastern European literature, and its transmission and reception has spanned over a century. This process can be divided into three phases: before the mid-twentieth century, from the 1950s to the early twenty-first century, and from the second decade of the twenty-first century onwards. Each phase reflects shifts in China's social, cultural and political landscape, which are reflected in different approaches to translation and cultural activities. In the first phase, Chinese readers viewed Slovenian literature as "literature of small nations," resonating with its themes of social issues and national circumstances. In the second phase, Slovenian literature was regarded as "socialist literature" and "Third World literature," with translations focusing on social struggles and achievements. In the third phase, Chinese scholars began to re-evaluate the diversity of Eastern European literature, and Slovenian literary works gradually gained influence in Chinese society. This paper explores the processes of translation, adaptation and cultural exchange of Slovenian literature in China highlighting its significant role in promoting cultural understanding between China and Slovenia. It also emphasizes the need for future efforts to strengthen cultural exchange and cooperation between the two countries in order to promote global cultural diversity.

Keywords: Slovenian literature / reception / China / translation / cultural exchange / cross-cultural communication

Introduction

In 2012,¹ Slovenian poet Tomaž Šalamun, upon receiving the seventh Poetry and People Poet Award in China,² earnestly asked in his acceptance speech: “Why would a poet from a distant place, belonging to a small nation with its own language—Slovenia—garner the attention of Chinese poets and receive such an honor?” (X. Gao, “In Memory”). Šalamun’s answer was the power of poetry, but what he might not have realized is that this question is closely tied to the long-standing cultural exchange between China and Slovenia. This article explores the dissemination and reception of Slovenian literature in China, analyzing the process of its translation, interpretation and adaptation, and reveals the depth and complexity of the cultural exchange between China and Slovenia.

The history of cultural exchange between China and Slovenia is long, dating back to the eighteenth century. In 1739, Augustin Hallerstein (1703–1774), a Jesuit born in Ljubljana, arrived in Beijing and began his 35-year career in astronomy and cartography. His work was highly praised by scholars from both Slovenia and China and he is considered an important participant and promoter of eighteenth-century cultural exchange between China and Europe (Saje; W. Gao; Ke).

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, Eastern European literature began to enter the vision of Chinese translators. China’s understanding of Eastern Europe differed from its perception of “the West.” It was influenced by geopolitical, ideological, and traditional views, which made Chinese intellectuals of the time feel China has a lot in common with Eastern European countries, such as their history, cultural situation, and national character. Before the 1990s, the Chinese understanding of Eastern Europe included countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania. Today, this region comprises 14 countries or regions, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

¹ This study was funded by the Chongqing Social Science Planning Project “Research on Ukrainian Historical Memory in Russian Literature” (2023PY72) and the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities special fund project “Research on the Stylistic Evolution of Brodsky’s Poetry” (SWU2109509).

² The Poetry and People Poet Award (*Shige yu ren guoji shiren jiang*) was established in 2005 and was renamed the Poetry and People International Poetry Award in 2014. It is a lifetime award for poets granted by the magazine *Poetry and People* (*Shiren yu ren*). In April 2011, Tomas Tranströmer received this award and was later honored with the Nobel Prize in Literature in October of the same year, bringing greater attention and respect to the Poetry and People Poet Award. It has since become one of the most influential international poetry awards in China.

In the 1920s, Chinese literary journals first introduced Yugoslav literature, which included the literature of various Yugoslav nations, such as Slovenian literature, marking over a century of literary exchange with Slovenia. During this period, Slovenian literature in China underwent multiple stages of transformation. How were these works translated, interpreted, criticized, and ultimately integrated into the Chinese cultural context? These questions provide important insights into understanding the depth and complexity of cultural exchange between China and Slovenia.

Despite present-day Slovenia's relatively small population and geographical size, Slovenian literature has been translated into multiple languages, such as English, Chinese, German, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, Turkish, Croatian, Polish, and Hungarian, impacting audiences worldwide. Works by writers like France Prešeren, Ivan Cankar, and Drago Jančar—although they belong to three very different periods of literary history (as representatives of Romanticism, modern literature, and contemporary literature)—have resonated globally, enhancing the understanding of Slovenian history and culture. In the twentieth century, especially during the Cold War, Slovenian literature was often seen as a symbol of resistance to authority and the pursuit of freedom (Dovič 129).

Since Slovenia's independence, its global literary influence has been effectively expanded through translation strategies and cultural diplomacy. For example, translating literary works into German and English increased their visibility in the international literary market (Rozman 328–329). Financial support from the Slovenian Book Agency and the Trubar Foundation has encouraged the translation and international promotion of literary works, ensuring their acceptance in broader regions (Blatnik 117–118). Participation at international literary festivals such as the Frankfurt Book Fair has enhanced the international exposure of Slovenian literature, reinforcing its image as a transmitter of literature and culture. These strategies have not only improved international dissemination efficiency but also deepened global reader acceptance.

This article will explore how Slovenian literature gradually formed literary influence in Chinese society by analyzing its dissemination paths, translation practices, cultural events, and academic dialogues. Through these discussions, the article aims to reveal the process of acceptance and adaptation of Slovenian literature in China and demonstrate its important role in promoting cultural understanding and exchange between China and Slovenia and beyond.

Dissemination process

The May Fourth period usually refers to the May Fourth Movement that erupted on May 4, 1919, in response to China's dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Initially a large-scale student protest, the movement quickly evolved into a broader social and cultural movement against imperialism and feudalism, marking the awakening of modern Chinese thought and culture. The May Fourth Movement promoted the spread of democratic and scientific ideas in Chinese society and had a profound impact on modern Chinese literature, educational reform, women's liberation, and language reform.

During this period, progressive intellectuals like Chen Duxiu (1879–1942),³ Li Dazhao (1889–1927),⁴ and Lu Xun (1881–1936)⁵ began actively introducing representative works of foreign thought and culture to break free from China's humiliating and oppressed status as a weak nation since the late nineteenth century.⁶ This period saw unprecedented achievements in translated literature in China, with about 250 translators translating 2,569 novels, nearly 100 poems, and over 20 plays (Guo 15).

³ A leading figure in the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement, Chen Duxiu was a key proponent of modern Chinese thought and one of the founding members of the Chinese Communist Party. He played a crucial role in advocating for the introduction of Western ideas and culture to challenge traditional Chinese values and push for modernization.

⁴ One of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, Li Dazhao was an influential thinker during the New Culture Movement. He was instrumental in promoting Marxist ideas in China and was a key figure in the intellectual circles that sought to reform Chinese society through the adoption of Western philosophies.

⁵ Considered one of the most prominent figures in modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun was a leading intellectual of the New Culture Movement. His works are known for their sharp criticism of traditional Chinese society and culture. Lu Xun's writings played a significant role in the development of modern Chinese literature and influenced many subsequent generations of Chinese writers.

⁶ In the mid-nineteenth century, China suffered a series of defeats in the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) against Western powers, leading to the signing of unequal treaties, territorial concessions, and significant indemnities. These events marked the beginning of China's "Century of Humiliation," during which the Qing Dynasty faced internal strife, foreign aggression, and economic exploitation. The resulting social and political instability prompted Chinese intellectuals to seek new ways to strengthen the nation, including the introduction of Western ideas and culture. This period of reflection and reform eventually gave rise to the New Culture Movement, which aimed to modernize China by embracing foreign philosophies and rejecting outdated traditions.

It was during this period that the attention of the Chinese literary world also turned to the “literature of small nations” represented by Eastern Europe. In modern Chinese discourse, the concept of “small nations” originated from Chen Duxiu’s 1921 article “The Pacific Conference and the Pacific Small Nations” (“Taipingyang huiyi he taipingyang ruoxiaominzu”), and was used to refer to marginalized nations like Indians and Poles. Subsequently, this concept was widely used in cultural and literary introductions, becoming a part of universal social discourse (Song 12).

The special issue of the journal *Novel Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao*),⁷ published on October 10, 1921, introduced the literature of Eastern European nations, including Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Serbian, Croatian, and Bulgarian authors. In 1923, *Novel Monthly* published Milivoj S. Stanojević’s article “Modern Yugoslav Literature” (“Nansilafu de jindai wenxue,” translated by Pei Wei), which described the history and current situation of Yugoslav literature. In 1924, Zhao Jingshen’s (1902–1985)⁸ article “Modern Yugoslav Literature” (“Xiandai nansilafu wenxue”) was also published in *Novel Monthly*, further promoting the dissemination of Yugoslav literature in China. Scholars focused on translating and presenting works that depicted difficult lives of working people, showcased people’s struggles against oppression, and portrayed new ideals and ways of life.

In 1921, Yugoslav literary works began to be translated into Chinese, such as Svetislav Stefanović’s poem “Najveća sreća” (“Zui da de xiyue,” translated by Shen Yanbing) and Laza Lazarević’s novel *U dobri čas hajduci!* (*Qiangdao*, translated by Shen Zemin), as well as Croatian short stories. Slovenian literature was introduced slightly later than Serbian and Croatian works, the first standalone publication being Ivan Cankar’s novella *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica*

⁷ *Novel Monthly* was one of the most influential literary journals in modern Chinese literary history. Founded in 1910, it was particularly active during the May Fourth Movement, serving as a key platform for disseminating new ideas and literature. The journal was published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai. The initial editors were Yun Tieqiao (1880–1949) and Wang Chunnong (1877–1951). In January 1921, Mao Dun (1896–1981) became the chief editor. The journal ceased publication following the January 28 Incident in 1932, when Japanese forces attacked Shanghai, leading to an escalation in the conflict between China and Japan and causing significant turmoil in the city.

⁸ Zhao Jingshen was a prominent Chinese writer, translator, and literary theorist. He was a key figure in the development of modern Chinese literature and drama. He was particularly known for his translations of foreign literary works into Chinese, as well as his efforts to promote the study of foreign literature in China.

(*Yelai de gongdao*). It was translated from English by the comic artist Wang Dunqing (1899–1990)⁹ and published by Shanghai Culture Publishing House in 1929.



Figure 1: *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* (*Yelai de gongdao*), the first Slovenian literary work introduced to China.

Cankar was not selected by chance, but because his novel reflected on social issues similar to those exposed by Chinese authors at the time. The translator pointed out that the novel was filled with “warnings about society and civilization” (Cankar, *Yelai de gongdao* 3), emphasizing that social justice ensures the survival and success of a nation. The introduction of Cankar was a product of China’s social and cultural transformation at the time and was a result of the social trend of awakening national consciousness and encouraging the people to resist invasion and oppression (Ding 187).

⁹ Wang Dunqing was one of the most active comic artists and theorists in China during the 1920s and 1930s. After graduating from the Department of Literature at St. John’s University in Shanghai in 1923, he engaged in creation and translation, using the pen name Wang Yiliu when translating Cankar’s works.

The second Slovenian literary work to be introduced to China appeared in 1956. From 1937 to 1949, China was engulfed in wars, experiencing both the War of Resistance against Japan and the Civil War. During this period, although there were sporadic translations of foreign literature, the overall introduction of foreign literature was essentially stagnant (Meng and Li 87–88). After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, relations with Yugoslavia were unstable, and cultural exchanges only began after formal diplomatic relations were established on January 2, 1955, several years later than with other Eastern European countries. Unfortunately, after 1958, relations between the two countries deteriorated again, significantly reducing cultural exchanges. During this period, the only Slovenian works published were *Selected Poems of France Prešeren* (*Pulieshelen shixuan*, translated by Zhang Qi et al., People's Literature Publishing House, 1956), Cankar's novella *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* (*Lao guan'jia yeernai*, translated by Huang Xingqi et al., People's Literature Publishing House, 1957), and a few stories in *Selected Yugoslav Short Stories* (*Nansilafu duanpian xiaoshuoji*, translated by Gao Jungang et al., Writers Publishing House, 1957).¹⁰ The literary magazine *World Literature* (*Shijie wenxue*) also published Prešeren's poems "Nezakonska mati" ("Weiceng jiehun de muqin") and "Ukazi" ("Mingling").

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the introduction and study of foreign literature were severely restricted, and the dissemination of Yugoslav literature in China was almost zero. In 1978, China's attitude towards foreign literature changed significantly, and with the relaxation of the political environment and the promotion of cultural pluralism policies, Slovenian literature began to regain attention in China. During this period, translated works included Cankar's autobiographical novel *Na klancu* (*Zai qiongren jie shang*, translated by Feng Yülü, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1982) and Ciril Kosmač's novella *Balada o trobenti in oblaku* (*Baiyun he haojiao de zange*, translated by Zhang Leili, Hunan People's Publishing House, 1985). Both works were translated from Russian. Collections of Yugoslav literature containing Slovenian works included *Selected Yugoslav Short Stories* (*Nansilafu duanpian xiaoshuoji*, translated by Gao Jungang et al., People's Literature Publishing House, 1978),¹¹ *Swan*

¹⁰ Includes 29 short stories by 22 Yugoslav writers from the late nineteenth century to World War II, with five Slovenian authors: Ivan Tavčar (one story), Ivan Cankar (four stories), Prežihov Voranc (one story), France Bevk (one story), and Ciril Kosmač (one story).

¹¹ This is a reprint of *Selected Yugoslav Short Stories* first published in 1957.

Girl: Folk Tales of Various Yugoslav Nations (Tiane guniang: nansilafu gezu minjian tonghua gushi, translated by Zhang Jinzhang, Guangxi People's Publishing House, 1981),¹² *Wedding: Selected Yugoslav Short Stories (Hunli: nansilafu duanpian xiaoshuoji*, translated by Fan Xinmin et al., Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1986),¹³ *The Death of Poor Maria: Selected Yugoslav Short Stories (Buxing de Maliya zhi si: nansilafu zhongduanpian xiaoshuo xuan*, compiled by the editorial department of *World Literature*, Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 1986),¹⁴ the short story collection *Five Hundred Steps (Wubaiji taijie*, translated by Gao Ren, Chongqing Publishing House, 1990),¹⁵ and *Selected Contemporary Yugoslav Fairy Tales (Nansilafu dangdai tonghua xuan*, translated by Ye Junjian, Hunan Children's Publishing House, 1982),¹⁶ as well as Prežihov Voranc's collection of short stories *Solzice (Linglanhua*, translated by Su Zhouxiong, People's Literature Publishing House, 1980). Except for *Selected Contemporary Yugoslav Fairy Tales*, which was translated from English, and Vitomil Zupan's short story "Utrujeni bogovi" in *The Death of Poor Maria*, which was translated from Bulgarian, all works were translated from Russian.

To gain a better understanding of translation of Slovenian literature into Chinese during the twentieth century, the number of translated literary works from Slovenia is compared with those from other countries. Between 1901 and 2000, China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) published 26,143 foreign literature books with national attributions, including 17,836 from Europe. Among Eastern European

¹² Includes 18 fairy tales from Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia, with five Slovenian folk tales: "The Shepherd Boy" ("Mutong"), "The Dying King" ("Linsi qian de guowang"), "The Water Sprite" ("Shuigui"), "What Is Fear?" ("Shenme shi pa?"), and "The Story of Learning a Craft" ("Xue shouyi de gushi").

¹³ Includes 18 short stories by 14 contemporary Yugoslav writers, with two Slovenian writers: Anton Ingolič (one story) and Vitomil Zupan (one story).

¹⁴ Includes 24 short stories by 21 contemporary Yugoslav writers, with five Slovenian writers: Anton Ingolič (one story), Miško Kranjec (one story), Ciril Kosmač (one story), Vitomil Zupan (one story) and Beno Zupančič (one story).

¹⁵ Includes 11 stories by nine contemporary Yugoslav writers, with one Slovenian writer: Beno Zupančič (one story).

¹⁶ Includes five fairy tales by three authors, but the translator mistakenly thought the first two stories, "Hišica iz kock" ("Qiyi de fanguai kuai") and "Stara hiša št. 3" ("Lao fangzi san hao"), were by different authors. Both were actually written by Ela Peroci. Other stories were written by Leopold Suhodolčan: "Piko Dinozaver" ("Konglong Pihe"), "Krojaček Hlaček" ("Xiao caifeng Dingmu de gushi"), and "Kam se je skrtil krojaček Hlaček?" ("Xiao caifeng Dingmu de xin gushi?"). Thus, the book should be titled *Selected Contemporary Slovenian Fairy Tales*.

countries, the most translated literature was from Poland (197 books, 10th in Europe), and the least was from Albania (32 books, 23rd in Europe). Yugoslav literature (including works from the seven countries formed after its dissolution) had 73 translated works (18th in Europe). According to statistics, there were only six standalone books by Slovenian authors published. Compared to other Eastern European countries, translation of Slovenian literature into Chinese was relatively modest in the twentieth century. However, it is worth noting that among 45 European countries, 13 had no standalone literary works published in China (He and Cai).

From 2001 to 2024, 67 Slovenian books were published in China,¹⁷ reflecting the growing interest of Chinese readers and academia in Slovenian literature. In 2001, three Slovenian works translated by Gou Chengyi (1955–) were published, marking the first introduction of Slovenian literary works in China since Slovenia's independence in 1991. These were Cankar's short story collection *Podobe iz sanj* (*Menghuan ji*), Josip Jurčič's novella *Jurij Kozjak* (*Kezhake chengbao*), and Ivan Potrč's novel *Na kmetih* (*Tudi he qingyu*). Unfortunately, Slovenian novels (excluding children's literature) did not reappear in China until 20 years later, with Vladimir Bartol's representative work *Alamut* (*Ying zhi chao*, translated by Tang Shanhua, Democracy and Construction Press, 2021).

Since 2014, eight poetry collections by four Slovenian poets have been published in China. Among them was *One Billion Homeless or Nothingness: Selected Poems of Tomaž Šalamun* (*Shiyi ge liulanghan, huozhexuwu: Tuomasi Salamon shixuan*), a collection of over 160 poems, which was translated by Gao Xing (1963–) and published by Flower City Publishing House in 2014. It was the first Slovenian poetry collection published in China in the post-Yugoslav era. Subsequently, the scholar and poet Zhao Si (1972–) compiled and translated two collections of selected poems by Šalamun: *Light-Blue-Pillow Tower: Selected Poems Of Tomaž Šalamun* (*Languang zhen zhi ta: Salameng shixuan*, Writers Publishing House, 2014) and *The Enormous Boiling Mouths of the Sun: Selected Poems of Tomaž Šalamun* (*Taiyang feiteng de zhongkou: Tuomasi Salamon shixuan*, Oriental Publishing House, 2016).¹⁸

¹⁷ Based on the search results from the official website of the National Library of China (<https://www.nlc.cn/web/index.shtml>) and *Douban Books* (<https://book.douban.com>), supplemented by searches on the Chinese search engine Baidu (<https://www.baidu.com>).

¹⁸ The translator compiled and translated 221 poems in the first poetry collection, accompanied by a 15-page translator's afterword which provides an in-depth analysis

Liang Lizhen (1974–)¹⁹ compiled and translated four poetry collections: Aleš Šteger's *Einsteinov stolp* (*Aiyinsitan de ta*, 2014), *Na drugi strani rane* (*Cong Shangkou Lingyiduan*, 2019), and *Moje telo je centralni komite* (*Wo de shenti shi yi ge zhongyang weiyuanhui*, 2019), as well as Andrej Medved's *Razlagalec sanj* (*Meng de yizhe*, 2020). Except for *Moje telo je centralni komite*, which was published by Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, the other three collections were published by East China Normal University Press. The latter also published Šteger's essay collection *Berlin* (*Mianbao yu meigui–Bolin gushi*, 2019), translated by Liang Lizhen. Regrettably, all of those works were translated from English, with the sole exception of Srečko Kosovel's *Integrali '26* (*Zhengshu 26*), which was translated directly from Slovenian by the young translator Yuan Fan (1993–)²⁰ and published in 2017 by the People's Literature Publishing House, the most authoritative publisher in the Chinese literary community.

The remaining 54 works are all picture books for children, written by 14 Slovenian authors. In China, the most popular Slovenian children's literature author is Helena Kraljič, who has had 18 works translated into Chinese. Examples include *Dogodek v Mestnem logu* (*Conglin fengbo–bie xiangxin chuanyan*, Fujian People's Publishing House, 2016), *Veliki strašni volk* (*Kuai pao a, lang lai lei!*, Hayan Press, 2018), and *Moj očka* (*Wo de baba*, Beijing Publishing Group, 2020). Lila Prap is also highly regarded and has been called a "Slovenian

of the poet's themes, style, and ideas. In the second poetry collection, the translator selected 206 poems, along with a 19-page preface titled "The Boiling Mouths of the Sun" ("Taiyang feiteng de zhongkou"), which offers further study on the poet and his works. Additionally, the collection includes a 58-page research article by the Slovenian poet, critic, and eulogist for Šalamun, Miklavž Komelj, titled "On the Poetic Methods of Tomaž Šalamun's Recent Poetry" ("Salameng houqi shizuo de shige fangfalun").

¹⁹ Liang Lizhen graduated from the School of International Studies at Peking University in 1996 with dual bachelor's degrees in English Language and Literature and Law. She later lived for an extended period in the United Kingdom and Slovenia.

²⁰ Yuan Fan graduated in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Literature from the School of Chinese Language and Literature at Beijing Foreign Studies University. From 2012 to 2014, she took elective courses in Slovenian, and in 2013, she participated in a three-week summer school at the University of Ljubljana. Her graduation thesis, titled "Artistic Expression and Poetic Images of *Integrali '26* by Slovenian Poet Srečko Kosovel," analyzed the avant-garde artistic techniques in Kosovel's *Integrali '26*. Notably, under the guidance of Metka Lokar, a Slovenian studies professor at BFSU, she translated all 155 poems from *Integrali '26* into Chinese, which were included in the appendix. In 2015, Yuan Fan went to Columbia University to pursue a master's degree in the Department of Arts and Humanities. She currently resides in New York.

national treasure” by Chinese media (“Lila Prap”). She has had ten picture books published in China, including *1001 pravljica (1001 ge gushi)*, *Dinozavri?! (Konglong?!)*, and *Radi štejemo (Women ai shushu)*, which were supported by the Slovenian Book Agency and published by Guangxi Normal University Press in 2021.

Manica K. Musil also has ten Chinese translations. Jiangsu Phoenix Art Publishing House published four of her works in 2016: *Koza Cilka (Shanyang Saixiya)*, *Koza Cilka in kdo je popil vodo (Shei heguang le wo de shui)*, *Pobalinska pujsa (Daodan xiaozhu)*, and *Čarobna školjka (Moli beike)*. Modern Press and Sichuan Fine Arts Publishing House each published three more works by Manica K. Musil in the following years. Aksinja Kermauner’s *Žiga špaget gre v širni svet (Miantiao Qiao chuang shijie, 2017)* and two other picture books were published in China. Two works by Tatjana Pregl Kobe were published by Beijing Children’s Publishing House in 2016. Similarly, in 2017, Writers Publishing House published two works by Cvetka Sokolov. Since 2014, Bina Štampe Žmavc, Žiga Gombač, Maja Kastelic, Nina Mav Hrovat, Mojca Osojnik, Andreja Peklar, and Peter Svetina each have one children’s picture book published in China. It is worth noting that, apart from five works by Lila Prap translated from Slovenian into Chinese by Bao Jie (1988–), a former Slovenian language teacher at Beijing Foreign Studies University, the rest are primarily translated from English.

In addition to standalone publications, Slovenian works have been included in series such as *Best European Fiction* which was edited by Aleksandar Hemon and translated into Chinese. These collections feature Drago Jančar’s novel *Prerokba (Yuyan, 2011, first series)* and Mirana Likar Bajželj’s “Nadin prt” (“Nada de zhuobu,” 2013, third series). In 2012, Ningxia People’s Publishing House released *Modern European Poets Reader (Ouzhou xiandai shiren duben)*, compiled and translated by Dong Jiping (1962–).²¹ It includes 14 poems by Srečko Kosovel and Edvard Kocbek, “the most important figures of twentieth-century Slovenian poetry” (Dong 121).

Since Slovenia’s independence, translation of its literature in China has shown new characteristics in terms of themes and types. Firstly, the continuation of the twentieth-century preference for realist themes is evident, with the reintroduction of early twentieth-century authors, proving that Cankar is not only the earliest introduced but also the

²¹ Dong Jiping is a renowned poet and writer. He won the International Canada Studies Award in 1991 and was honored with the title of Honorary Writer by the University of Iowa in 1993. He has translated dozens of foreign poetry collections and essays.

most translated Slovenian writer in China.²² There is also a greater focus on poetry, with translations of works by contemporary poets like Šalamun, Šteger, and Medved, highlighting reflections on history, the pain of transition, and thoughts on the future of post-Yugoslav Slovenia. Lastly, compared to other genres, children's picture books have become the most common form of Slovenian literature introduced to China.

Overall, the century-long translation of Slovenian literature into Chinese can be divided into three distinct phases, each with its unique social and historical background, reflecting changes in Chinese domestic values and social perceptions.

The first phase started before the mid-twentieth century. Both China and Eastern European countries had suffered from the invasions and oppression of Western powers, leading Chinese literary critics to view Slovenian literature as one of the representatives of "small nations' literature." During this period, Slovenian literature was introduced to China mainly because its works reflected on similar social issues and national situations, resonating with Chinese national sentiments. From the 1920s to the 1930s, China began translating and introducing Slovenian literature, but the number of works was relatively small and concentrated only on a few authors.

The second phase lasted from the 1950s to the early twenty-first century. With the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the formation of the Cold War pattern, Eastern European literature, including Slovenian literature, was treated in China as "literature of socialist countries" (*Shehuizhuyi guojia wenxue*) and "Third World literature" (*Disan shijie wenxue*). The literary translation during this period was closely centered around the dual themes of "revolution" (*geming*) and "construction" (*jianshe*), with works mainly focusing on social struggles and achievements in construction. Although Slovenian writers, such as Prešeren, Cankar, and Kosmač, were active in earlier periods, their works were translated into Chinese because they aligned with the revolutionary and construction needs of Chinese society during the Maoist period (1949–1976). Although China's literary circles gradually lost their ideological color after the reform and opening up in the late 1970s and the changes in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, the stereotype about Slovenian literature persisted into the first decade of the twenty-first century. For example, in the 1995 Chinese book

²² The most popular Slovenian works in China today are those by Slavoj Žižek, but he is considered a philosopher rather than a writer.

about twentieth-century European and American literature, one-sixth of the chapter on Yugoslav literature was dedicated to Ivan Cankar who was mainly described as a critic of the “capitalist exploitation system” (Zhang and Li 350) and a “true proletarian revolutionary” (351).²³

The third phase is from the second decade of the twenty-first century to the present. Around 2010, Chinese foreign literature researchers gradually realized that stereotypes seriously hindered the understanding and acceptance of Eastern European literature and could have a significant negative impact on China’s literary development. Some scholars proposed that history should be viewed dialectically and that the diversity of Eastern European literature should be re-examined. Romanian literature researcher and editor-in-chief of *World Literature* Gao Xing called for China to understand the “Blue Eastern Europe beyond the Red” (X. Gao, “Red Classics”) and launched the series *Blue Eastern Europe (Lanse Dong’ou)*, introducing works of Eastern European literature, including Slovenian literature.

Therefore, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, classic Slovenian works, such as Cankar’s *Podobe iz sanj*, Jurčič’s *Jurij Kozjak*, and Potrč’s *Na kmetih*, were introduced to China. At the same time, since the mid-2010s, postmodern and contemporary literature represented by poets like Šalamun, Šteger, and Medved have been actively translated and presented. This phenomenon occurred with the deepening of the reform and opening-up and the acceleration of China’s modernization process. Chinese readers have shown great interest in contemporary existential conditions, especially the situation of the loss of human subjectivity once again. Slovenian writers’ reflections on various new situations and problems in postmodern society resonated with Chinese readers, evoking cultural empathy and providing new perspectives.

By analyzing these three phases, it can be seen that the dissemination and reception of Slovenian literature in China is a dynamically developing process, deeply reflecting the changes in China’s social, cultural, and political environment.

²³ It is noteworthy that both Cankar and Lu Xun, though contemporaries from different countries and cultures, used their literary work to critique social injustices. This parallel is interesting as Slovenian readers of Lu Xun often perceive similarities between his writing style and that of Cankar, despite their distinct cultural backgrounds.

Background and choices of translators

By “Sinicization” of Slovenian literature, we refer to the process through which Slovenian literary works are adapted or interpreted in a way that aligns with Chinese cultural, political, or social contexts. This process often involves subjective choices by translators and publishers, who may emphasize certain themes or aspects of a work while downplaying or even omitting others, based on the prevailing political climate, market preferences, or anticipated reader responses in China. This can lead to a recontextualization of Slovenian literature that is not entirely faithful to the original works, but rather tailored to fit Chinese sensibilities and expectations. As a result, the perception of Slovenian literature in China may differ significantly from how it is understood in its native context, leading to instances where authors and works are either undervalued, overemphasized, or overlooked altogether.

The academic background, language proficiency, and literary inclination of translators greatly influence their choices. According to statistics, as of 2024, there are fewer than 20 professional translators proficient in Slovenian in China. Most works are translated through English, Russian, Serbian, or other languages. These translators are mostly teachers or scholars from universities and research institutions rather than professional translators. In addition, China has a strict publication censorship system, and universities and research institutions place a strong emphasis on ideology, subjecting scholars’ translations and research outcomes to rigorous scrutiny. This directly affects the selection of works and alterations made during the translation process. For example, when translating Jurčič’s *Jurij Kozjak*, the translator “toned down certain depictions imbued with intense religious hatred” (Jurčič 176), which led to some distortion of the translation. Similarly, in the translation of Bartol’s *Alamut*, critical discussions on religious doctrine (such as “the Quran is the product of a muddled brain”) and questions about religious leaders (such as calling the Prophet “a man with a confused mind”) were likely considered offensive to religious beliefs and could spark controversy. As a result, the translator had to delete significant religious content in chapters 6, 12, 16, and 18,²⁴ compromising the narrative integrity and coherence of the work, which greatly diminished the reader’s experience.²⁵

²⁴ This was found by comparing the Chinese translation with the English translation by Michael Biggins (see Bartol, *Ying zhi chao* and *Alamut*).

²⁵ On *Douban Books*, China’s most comprehensive and active book website, most readers criticize the inconsistent narrative pace and abrupt plot transitions in *Alamut* (“*Ying zhi chao*”).

Since the second decade of the twenty-first century, the cultural content and themes of translated works must align with China's social reality and cultural values, becoming the main consideration in translation choices. During this period, the continuous increase in China's newborn population created a huge demand for quality children's literature. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, between 2010 and 2020, the number of newborns in China reached approximately 185 million. Thus, the market's demand for quality children's literature was enormous, leading to the introduction of a large number of foreign works for children. The support of Slovenian authorities for the overseas promotion of children's literature further propelled this trend, making children's literature the most translated genre in China.

Translation is not merely a conversion of languages but also an exchange and interaction of cultures (Bassnett and Trivedi 162). In the process of translating Slovenian literary works, Chinese translators face challenges with culture-specific elements, such as historical backgrounds, place names, and customs unique to Slovenia. For instance, when translating Cankar's works, translators not only need to accurately convey their literary value but also explain the unique historical events and social environments of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Slovenia.

However, these culture-specific elements are carried by the Slovenian language, and when translated from other languages, information loss or even errors inevitably occur, which in turn affects the transmission of literary work's aesthetic value. For example, Dong Jiping translated lines 3 and 4 of Kosovel's poem "Kons: XY" ("Ne obesi bolesti na veliki zvon! / Ona se smehlja: cin cin cin.") as follows: "Bu yao cong fangding shang dajiao chu ni de beishang! / Ta zai weixiao: qiaoxiang yi zhi lingdang" ("Don't shout out your sorrow from the rooftop! / She smiles: ringing a bell; Dong 443). In contrast, Yuan Fan's direct translation from Slovenian reads: "Bu yao zai dazhong shang xuangua tongku! / Ta xiaodao: ding ding ding" ("Don't hang your pain on the big bell! / She smiles: ding ding ding"; Kosovel 38). In Dong's translation, the expression "shout out your sorrow from the rooftop" does not faithfully convey the original metaphor of the "bell," and the handling of the emotion is rather direct, weakening the cultural nuances implied in the poem. While "ringing a bell" communicates the sound, it loses the lightness and rhythm of the original onomatopoeia. By comparison, Yuan's direct translation remains more faithful to the original metaphorical structure, preserving the "bell" as a symbol, capturing the

subtlety in the expression of pain, and reintroducing the rhythmic beauty of the onomatopoeia with “ding ding ding,” enhancing the musicality of the poem. This comparison highlights the importance of translating directly from the source language, avoiding the loss of cultural elements in intermediary translations, and more accurately conveying the aesthetic value and cultural essence of the work.

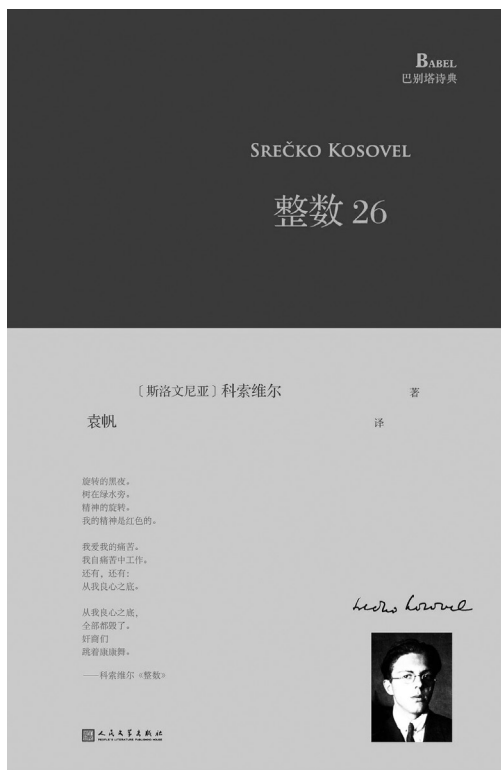


Figure 2: *Integrali '26* (*Zhengshu 26*), the first poetry collection translated from Slovenian into Chinese.

Typically, Chinese translators include prefaces or afterwords in the text to provide background information, rather than using footnotes or endnotes. This is partly because translations from Russian assume that Russian readers are more familiar with Slovenian history and culture, thus requiring fewer annotations on historical context, place names, and customs. However, the prefaces and afterwords in Chinese translations tend to focus on broader historical narratives, with less precise handling of Slovenia's national symbols and culturally specific elements. For

example, the Chinese translation of Cankar's *Podobe iz sanj* includes 56 short stories and essays, but there are only 12 annotations, of which ten are brief background introductions and two are explanations of Greek mythological figures (see Cankar, *Menghuan ji*). This approach somewhat weakens the acceptability and readability of the works, reducing opportunities for cultural resonance with Chinese readers.

Despite many challenges, some translators strive to retain the content and style of the original works, conveying their aesthetic value. For example, when translating Kosovel, who used various modernist techniques, translator Yuan Fan showcased Kosovel's avant-garde experiments, including onomatopoeia, coinages, the use of scientific terms, and innovative visual effects. At the age of 22,²⁶ Yuan Fan keenly observed Kosovel's use of onomatopoeia and attempted to restore the aesthetic meaning of the original text. For example, her translation of lines 6 and 7 of the poem "Moj črni tintnik" ("Cvili s svojo zlato violino! / Da, da, da.") reads: "Yong ta de jinse de xiao tiqin zhi zhi jiao! / Da, da, da" (Kosovel 23). She translated *da* as the Chinese onomatopoeia *da* and noted that in Slovenian, *da* means "yes" or "agree." Similarly, she rendered the last four lines of the poem "Predmeti brez duš" ("Smeh kralja DADE / na lesenem konjičku. / Hi, hi. / Pum.") as follows: "Zai muma shang / Guowang Dada de xiaosheng. / Hei, hei. / Ping" (Kosovel 27). *Hi* was translated as the Chinese onomatopoeia *hei*, and the translator explained in the footnote that in Slovenian, it refers to "laughter or the sound of riding a horse." This translation method ensures the integrity of the original information and restores the poet's intent.

Translation is not only an important mean of cross-cultural communication but also a crucial approach to cultural understanding and recognition. Translation practices significantly enhance Chinese readers' understanding of Slovenian culture and society. Through translated literary works, readers gain insights into Slovenian history, politics, social structure, and cultural values, which were often unknown to the Chinese public before translation. As David Damrosch pointed out, world literature gains new meaning and depth through translation (Damrosch 289). Translation is not merely converting a text from one language to another but embedding it into a new cultural context, increasing its cultural and literary value. With the continuous

²⁶ It may not be a coincidence that Kosovel (1904–1926) was only 22 years old when he passed away, and Yuan was also 22 years old in 2015 when she translated his poetry collection into Chinese.

deepening of Sino-Slovenian literary exchanges, future translation practices will further enrich cultural exchanges and understanding between the two countries.

Academic research and cultural exchange

The academic achievements in the study of Slovenian literature in China reflect the emphasis and in-depth understanding of scholars and critics. While popularizing Slovenian cultural knowledge, these studies guide readers to appreciate Slovenian works and highlight unique Chinese perspectives and viewpoints. However, the study of Slovenian literature in China is mainly discussed as part of Yugoslav literature within the framework of Eastern European or Central and Eastern European literature. For example, *The History of Eastern European Literature* (*Dong'ou wenxueshi*, edited by Institute of Foreign Literature of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Chongqing Publishing House, 1990), *The History of Twentieth-Century Western Literature* (*Ersshi shiji Oumei wenxueshi*, edited by Zhang Yushu and Li Mingbin, Peking University Press, 1995), *The History of Contemporary Eastern European Literature* (*Dong'ou dangdai wenxueshi*, edited by Lin Hongliang, Central Compilation and Translation Press, 1998), and *The History of Twentieth-Century Foreign Literature* (*20 shiji waiguo wenxueshi*, edited by Wu Yuanmai, Yilin Press, 2004) all introduce Slovenian literature as part of Yugoslav literature.

Regrettably, there has not yet been an independent research work on Slovenian literature in China. Relevant studies only appear in general histories of foreign literature, Euro-American literature, and Eastern European literature. The only work that evaluates Slovenian literature in independent chapters is Zheng Enbo's (1934–) *Contemporary Yugoslav Literature* (*Nansilafu dangdai wenxue*, Northern Arts Publishing House, 1988), but its research scope is limited to works published between 1945 and 1988. Zheng Enbo studied in Yugoslavia and Albania and wrote *The History of Eastern European Drama: Yugoslav Volume* (*Dong'ou xijushi-Nansilafu juan*, Beijing United Publishing Company, 2018), which traces the development of Slovenian drama from the eighteenth century to the present.

According to the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI),²⁷ there is only one research paper dedicated specifically

²⁷ CNKI is the largest comprehensive academic resource database in China, providing access to journal articles, dissertations, conference papers, and other academic resources.

to Slovenian literature, and no master's and PhD thesis have yet been focused on it. The only paper was written by Zhang Ziqing (1939–)²⁸ and published by *Foreign Literature* (*Waiguo wenxue*) in 2010. It explores the reasons for Tomaž Šalamun's success in poetry, attributing it to “his rich cross-cultural background, profound historical and political experience, absorption of diverse cultures, innovative artistic techniques, and strong sense of social responsibility” (Zhang 34).

Overall, Chinese literary critics tend to focus on general overviews and introductory discussions of Slovenian literature, lacking systematic presentation of the overall literary development. For example, there is no discussion on the development of Slovenian literature after 2000, and the content is too brief, lacking necessary background knowledge and explanations. Additionally, the research is biased towards novels and poetry, neglecting other literary forms such as drama, and lacks in-depth analysis of representative writers and works, evaluations of their literary value, ideological connotations, and artistic features, as well as detailed literature research and analysis.

World literature is not just a parallel display of literature in different languages but also an interaction and understanding across cultures (Damrosch 298). Although China's translation and research on Slovenian literature are currently lacking, related cultural and academic activities have, to some extent, compensated for the shortcomings in literary exchange, promoting the popularization and understanding of Slovenian literature in China. For example, in 2014, Aleš Šteger became a resident poet at the Capital Normal University,²⁹ the first foreign poet to achieve this honor. During his residency, he engaged in poetry writing and research and actively participated in dialogues with students, providing Chinese readers and scholars opportunities for direct interaction with Slovenian writers, showcasing the diversity and depth of Slovenian literature.

Sino-Slovenian literary exchange activities also include author interviews, public lectures, literary seminars, work readings, and cultural

²⁸ Zhang Ziqing is a scholar, translator, and professor at the Institute of Literary Studies, School of Foreign Languages, Nanjing University. He is the author of the three-volume *History of 20th-Century American Poetry* (*20 shiji Meiguo shige shi*).

²⁹ Capital Normal University's resident poet program (*Shoudu Shifan Daxue zhuxiao shiren xiangmu*) started in 2002, making it the first university in China to implement such a program. The program aims to promote poetry writing and research and to enhance the literary atmosphere on campus by inviting outstanding poets to reside there. Subsequently, other universities such as Renmin University of China, Peking University, Beijing Normal University, Hainan University, and Shandong University of Technology also implemented the resident poet system.

exhibitions, attracting wide participation. For instance, on May 8, 2018, at a reading session in Shanghai titled “Commonality and Diversity of World Literature” (“Shijie wenxue de gongxing he duoyuan”) Barbara Korun discussed with poets from Mexico and France whether poetry could be translated. On November 22, 2023, Goran Vojnović and the 11th Mao Dun Literature Prize winner Liu Liangcheng had a dialogue in Chengdu, discussing the relationship between humans and nature.

The Slovenian Embassy in China often organizes various literary exchange and dialogue activities, providing a platform for Chinese readers to understand Slovenian literature, especially contemporary works. For example, on December 3, 2022, the Slovenian-Chinese poetry reading attracted Esad Babačić, Anja Zag Golob, Gregor Podlogar, and Karlo Hmeljak, along with Chinese poets. On May 26, 2024, the Slovenian Embassy in China invited avant-garde theater director Dragan Živadinov to visit China, showcase his project *Projektil Noordung 1995–2045*, and have a dialogue with Chinese director, writer, and curator Zhao Chuan (1968–).

Scholarly exchanges between Slovenian and Chinese academics play a bridging role in these cultural activities. By organizing joint seminars and academic conferences, scholars from both sides have opportunities to share research findings, discuss literary theories and critical methods, thereby deepening mutual understanding of each other’s literature and culture. For instance, in 2009, the Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics, and the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska jointly hosted an academic seminar in Koper titled “Philosophical Issues of Literary Art: China–Slovenia,” discussing various literary and aesthetic topics. Chinese poet and scholar Wang Jiixin (1957–) attended the Slovenian International Literary Festival in Ljubljana in 2012 and in 2014. Brane Mozetič participated at the third Beijing International Poetry Festival (Beijing Guoji Shihui), sharing his insights on literary creation and answering questions from Chinese students about Slovenian literature and culture. These exchanges not only promote academic cooperation but also open new paths for teaching and research of Slovenian literature in Chinese universities.

Currently, the influence of Slovenian literature in China mainly relies on cultural and academic activities. These activities, based on continuous academic cooperation and cultural exchanges, have fostered and promoted the introduction, presentation, and translation of literary works. For example, before Aleš Šteger became a resident poet at Capital Normal University in 2014, he had already taught at the

Sichuan University and had been invited several times to poetry festivals in Beijing, Shanghai, Yangzhou, and Chengdu. His influence in China is significant: in 2014, he published his first poetry collection, and in 2019, he published both a poetry collection and an essay collection, making him the most influential Slovenian writer in China after Cankar and Šalamun.

When Slovenian writers like Šteger participate in literary activities in China, they also engage with writers from China and other countries, not only promoting the sharing of literary resources but also enhancing the cooperation and influence of both sides in the international literary community. In the long run, such sustained cooperation will further deepen the mutual understanding and respect between China and Slovenia in the fields of literature and culture.

In the future, China and Slovenia should continue to strengthen cultural exchanges and literary mutual learning, promoting the translation and publication of more Slovenian literary works in China. By hosting more literary activities, academic seminars, and author exchange programs, the literary relationship between the two countries will further deepen. This will not only enrich the reading experience of Chinese readers but also promote comprehensive cooperation between China and Slovenia in cultural, educational, and academic fields. Continuous cultural exchanges and academic cooperation will enable China and Slovenia to better understand and appreciate each other's literature and culture, thereby making positive contributions to the promotion of global cultural diversity.

Conclusion

Political ideology, national power, and linguistic intermediaries (including direct translation or translation through a third language) have indeed influenced the literary exchange process between China and Slovenia to a certain extent. However, these factors are not the core factors or sufficient and necessary conditions determining literary relations. The history of cultural exchange between Eastern Europe and China over the past century has shown that there is no direct proportional relationship between literary translation and its influence and reception (Song 253). As Christiane Nord pointed out, translation is an action performed for a specific target situation, where the target text should meet the intended or required function, that is, the purpose of the translation (Nord 32). The real factors determining the translation

of foreign literature lie in the conscious translation and evaluation by the Chinese acceptance subjects for their own cultural construction and literary creation needs, which can have a substantial impact on Chinese literature.

The significance and acceptance of Slovenian literature in China depend not only on the quantity of translations but also on whether it integrates into the creative practice of local culture and becomes part of Chinese national literature. For example, since the 1980s, China's preference for translating foreign literature has shifted towards Nobel Prize winners, leading to the diminishing voices of small nations and small language literature that have not won the prize. Meanwhile, the works of Milan Kundera have sparked a widespread trend in China, despite him not winning the Nobel Prize. According to reception aesthetics theory, the acceptance and understanding of literary works in different cultural contexts depend on the readers' prior knowledge and cultural expectations (Jauss 23–24). Kundera's success lies in his special resonance with Chinese literature and cultural context, triggering the conscious response of avant-garde intellectuals: his Eastern European national identity, unique critique of extreme leftist regimes, and the close integration of political and sexual themes all stimulate the sensitive nerves of Chinese literature.

From historical destiny, cultural situations, and national character, there are many similarities and compatibility between Slovenia and China. Slovenia has a wealth of excellent literary works that offer significant insights for China's current social trends, cultural development, and literary innovation in terms of ideas, aesthetic meanings, and expression methods. By strengthening current cultural exchanges and literary mutual learning, and discovering Slovenian literary writers and works that meet Chinese cultural needs and have an impact similar to Kundera, it is not impossible.

In the field of philosophy, Slavoj Žižek is already a successful example in China. According to searches on CNKI, there have been 1,199 journal and thesis papers about Žižek in China from 2002 to 2024. Žižek has gained widespread attention and recognition in the Chinese academic community and among readers for his profound philosophical thoughts and unique cultural criticism perspectives. This success indicates that further promotion and acceptance of Slovenian literature and thought in China is possible and has a great potential.

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Sto let sinizacije: širjenje in recepcija slovenske književnosti na Kitajskem

Ključne besede: slovenska književnost / literarna recepcija / Kitajska / prevodi / kulturna izmenjava / medkulturna komunikacija

Slovenska književnost je na Kitajskem obravnavana kot del jugoslovanske književnosti v širšem okviru vzhodnoevropske književnosti, njen prenos in recepcija pa sta trajala več kot stoletje. Ta proces lahko razdelimo na tri faze: obdobje pred sredino 20. stoletja, obdobje od petdesetih let 20. stoletja do začetka 21. stoletja in obdobje od drugega desetletja 21. stoletja naprej. Vsaka od faz odraža spremembe v kitajski družbeni, kulturni in politični krajini ter različne pristope k prevajanju in kulturnim dejavnostim. V prvi fazi so kitajski bralci slovensko književnost dojemali kot »književnost majhnih narodov«, ki je odsevala tedanja družbena vprašanja in nacionalne okoliščine. V drugi fazi je bila slovenska književnost obravnavana kot »socialistična književnost« in »književnost tretjega sveta«, pri čemer se je prevodna dejavnost osredotočala na dela, ki so prikazovala družbene boje in dosežke. V tretji fazi je začela kitajska literarna veda na novo vrednotiti raznolikost vzhodnoevropske literature, slovenska literarna dela pa so postopoma pridobivala vpliv v kitajski družbi. Članek raziskuje procese prevajanja, prilagajanja in kulturne izmenjave slovenske književnosti na Kitajskem ter poudarja njeno pomembno vlogo pri spodbujanju kulturnega razumevanja med Kitajsko in Slovenijo. Poudarja tudi potrebo po prihodnjih prizadevanjih za krepitev kulturnih izmenjav in sodelovanja med državama, ki bodo spodbujala globalno kulturno raznolikost.

1.02 Pregledni znanstveni članek / Review article

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Dilemmas Beyond Ethics: A Critique of Eastern Ethical Literary Criticism

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The aim of this article is to compare ethical literary criticism of the East with that of the West and to reveal some potential limitations of the emerging critical tendency of “ethical literary criticism” in China when applied to Western literary production. The first part sets out the conceptual framework by contrasting Nie Zhenzhao’s understanding of literature as an expression of ethics, Jacques Derrida’s conception of the institution of “literature” as having “the right to say anything,” and Levinas’s conception of ethics as “first philosophy” involving responsibility towards the Other, bearing in mind that Levinas’s entire philosophical project was an ethical response to all forms of “absolute evil” that emerged in the twentieth century. Starting from this contextual definition, the article focuses on the opening of history after the Second World War as a “caesura” (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) to show that while Nie’s application of ethics to literary analysis can work successfully for a corpus of works from the Middle Ages to nineteenth-century realism, his concept of “ethical choice” as an analytical fulcrum breaks down in the face of literature’s response to twentieth-century atrocities. In the final section, therefore, I challenge Nie’s ethical literary criticism by focusing on works in the tradition of the “Holocaust novel” and presenting a case study that demonstrates the limits of ethical criticism in the analysis of William Styron’s Sophie’s Choice.

Keywords: literature and ethics / ethical literary criticism / East and West / Nie, Zhenzhao / Derrida, Jacques / Levinas, Emmanuel / Styron, William: *Sophie’s Choice*

Does the East meet the West in critical theory?

Recently, more bridges between the East, in particular China, and the West have been established in the field of the Humanities, following many collaborations between Asian, European, American and Australian researchers in sciences. More translations from English

into Chinese and from Chinese into English appeared. Many international journals have shown an increased interest in making it possible for modern Chinese fiction and theory to become global (see, for instance, guest-edited issues, such as Wang, *Modern Chinese Fiction, Comparative Literature*, and *Modern China*; Hu-DeHart et al.; Wang and Peng).

As also mentioned by Tomo Virk, an emerging critical trend called “ethical literary criticism” appeared in China in 2004, mainly through the works of Nie Zhenzhao (Virk, “Kitajska različica”). Aware that some of my points overlap with Virk’s, yet in a dialogue with him, meant to contextualize my findings, I will briefly mention the main tenets of Nie’s ethical criticism. After *Foreign Literature Studies* published several Nie’s articles written in Chinese (Nie, “Ethical Approach,” “Ethical Literary Criticism: On Fundamental Function,” and “Ethical Literary Criticism: Its Fundamentals”), some of his works were translated into English (Nie, “Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism”; Nie and Shang). Others were analyzed in English (Tian; Yang).¹ Junwu Tian explained that by the time Nie came up with his theory, China was in a “theory aphasia,” caused by “the lack of an independent system of its own discourse” which “subordinated Western ethical criticism to other theories, such as narratology and ecocriticism” (Tian 406). The term “theory aphasia” coined by critic Cao Shunqing described “the cultural symptoms of Chinese literary criticism” (403). Nie set up his own “theoretical system of ethical literary criticism,” attempting to enrich and perfect “the existing ethical criticism” (406) by assessing the values of literary texts within a specific social and cultural context.² In December 2012, Yichang hosted the 2nd International Symposium on Ethical Literary Criticism where the International Association for Ethical Literary Criticism (IAELC) was set up as “an international literary and cultural organization which aims to link all those working in ethical literary criticism in theory and practice and to encourage the discussion of ethical value in literary creation and criticism.” Its current president is Nie.

Nie’s 2014 book *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*, which was translated into English in 2024, is made up of three main parts:

¹ Virk also engages with Junwu Tian’s article, while he does not mention Liu Yang.

² Starting from Tian, Virk explained that Nie’s theory is rooted in Chinese tradition, which may seem unfamiliar to the Western reader. He agrees with Tian that Nie’s emphasis is on “the ethical and educational function of literature and art” in general (Virk, “Kitajska različica” 223). I am exactly on the same page as Virk and in the next part I will elaborate further on the relation of Nie’s theory to Confucianism.

a theoretical exploration of ethical literary criticism which argues that “literature is an art of ethics,” followed by “applications of ethical literary criticism, and its conceptual system” (Yang 172) which include analyses of *Oedipus Rex*, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, “The Old Man and the Sea,” *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and the poetry of the May Fourth Movement (a Chinese cultural and anti-imperialist political movement that started from student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919).

In 2017, one of the issues of the journal *Primerjalna književnost* was dedicated to ethical criticism. The editors Špela Virant and Irena Samide proposed three different directions to approach ethics in criticism: “the ethicality of imagination, the ethicality of narration, and the ethicality of interpretation” (Virant and Samide 7). In the same issue, Virk made a comprehensive synthesis of the latest productions in ethical criticism and included Nie’s theory among those directions “that branched into a series of individual directions, the most prominent of which are narrative ethics, rhetorical literary ethics, ethics of reading and ethics of otherness, along with others, such as ethics of writing, ethics of fiction, ethics of difference, ethics of criticism, ethics of interpretation, ethics of world literature, ethics of imagination, ethics of hypertext, ethics of empathy, etc.”—a “potentially endless” list as he called it, pointing out that this “plurality” can end up in “cacophony” (Virk, “Etična literarna veda” 15).

Setting the conceptual stage

Nie’s “ethical literary criticism” sees literature as “a product of ethic, or a unique expression of morality in a given historical period” (Nie, “Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism” 85). Hence, Nie’s work investigates writers’ moral values, the relations between the moral phenomena of literary works and reality, and the effects of the works’ moral values on readers and society (see also Shang, “Rise”). And here comes the first difference between Eastern and Western ethical criticism: while Western ethics is of a more complex nature, Eastern ethics is often equated to morality. Tian asserts that for Nie “moral criticism functions as a lawful censorship, emphasizing the moral edification of literature, while ethical criticism behaves like a nonteleological historian, realistically recording and revealing the ethical relationships among literary characters without arbitrary judgments” (Tian 411–412). Thus, Homer’s and Hesiod’s stories of incest present immoral behaviors, yet Homer and Hesiod are not immoral, since their purpose was to

“artistically represent the ethical chaos of that period” (412). A clearer explanation is provided by Galin Tihanov in one of the two forewords to Nie’s *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Tihanov asserts that there is a difference between moral and ethical criticism, “the former being guided by the need to pass judgement from the commentator’s/reader’s *current* perspective, while the latter sets out to understand the specific *evolution* of literature as a tool of facing and resolving dilemmas around good and evil, duty and pleasure, loyalty and freedom, and so on” (Tihanov xi; see also Virk, “Kitajska različica” 217–218). However, Tihanov’s comments are contradicted by Nie’s book itself in which morality and ethics are often interchangeable. Here are only a few examples:

Ethical literary criticism differs from other strands of literary criticism in its view of the origin of literature, by claiming that literature is a product of ethics, or a unique expression of morality in a given historical period. (Nie, *Introduction* 8)

The emergences of taboos signify the early formation of morality. ... The formation and transformation of the ethical order of human society is institutionally premised on taboos. (15)

[T]he literature of Realism and Sentimentalism are inevitably engaged with morality with a special focus on moral model. It is fair to conclude that the ethical concerns of literary criticism are defined by the ethical value of literature. (73)

To quote Laurent Milesi, there is a

tendency to inadvertently rehabilitate two types of “moralizing” or ideological approaches that had prevailed in the West at a much earlier stage in the development of literary criticism, albeit at opposite ends of the political/ideological spectrum: F. R. Leavis’s emphasis on the universalizing “moral significance” of the “Great Tradition” vs. Georg Lukács’s “ethics of representation” (my terms) in his advocacy of a socialist-realist aesthetics (and debunking of modernism as bourgeois decadence). (Milesi, “Bringing the Ethos”)

In other words, if a revival of these theories is at stake nowadays, there is also a strong “necessity of re-grounding ethics in its original ethos.”

Tian attempts to convince us that “Nie’s theory of ethical literary criticism has won critical acclaims from scholars, both Chinese and foreign,” giving several examples of academics who showed interest in his theory according to an article co-authored by William Baker

and Biwu Shang for *Times Literary Supplement* (Tian 413; see also Lazer). Baker and Shang indeed spoke of ethical literary criticism as becoming “one of the most vibrant and productive critical theories in China,” receiving “increasing recognition” from “eminent scholars” (Baker and Shang 15). However, Western scholars have a more nuanced notion of ethics which differs fundamentally from the huge number of teachings and moral lessons of Laozi and Confucius. Assuming the risk of taking perhaps too many shortcuts here, to make my point clear, I would say that Chinese culture can be regarded as a culture of stories and narratives. The *shi* (“poetry”)—“the mainstream along the long river of Chinese ancient literature” (Liu 93)—tells stories. Laozi’s and Confucius’s teachings are based on concrete stories from which morals are extracted. The title of Laozi’s main work, *Daodejing*, is composed of the words *dao* (“way,” “road,” or “path”) and *dejing* which comes from *de* (“life force” or “vitality”). The figure of the Sage in *Daodejing* is “the person who epitomizes the teachings of a particular school of philosophy, how he should behave depends, of course, on the nature of the teachings concerned” (Penny xii). Moreover, according to Xinzhong Yao, “Confucianism underlined, and perhaps to a smaller extent continues to underline, the basic structure of society and community, to orient the life of the people and to define their moral standards and ethical ideal in most parts of East Asia” (Yao 32). The close connection between Confucius’s thinking and ethics made several Western scholars define Confucianism as a form of ethics (Needham; Zaehner; see also Yao 32). Because the epic genre prevails in Chinese literature, narratology is omnipresent in Chinese scholarship. Nowadays, postclassical narratology “is far from being merely an American affair since, after Critical Theory entered the study of narratives in China, Chinese academics not only welcomed the concept but also valuably contributed to the field, including with their own home-grown version of narratology” (Ionescu, “Postclassical Narratology” 15; see also Shang, “Postclassical Narratology”).

In a co-written article with Shang, Nie acknowledges that “it is striking that this scholarship has so far failed to consider ethical criticism as an independent discipline or school of critical theory,” and points out the two directions which ethical criticism has taken: “In the case of Emmanuel Lévinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Nussbaum, ethical criticism has been more or less assimilated by philosophy; in the case of Wayne C. Booth, James Phelan, and Adam Zachery Newton, ethical criticism has been assimilated by narratology” (Nie and Shang 4).

Within the Chinese context, Nie's theory resonates with the latter. The concepts "in the practice of ethical literary criticism" that he proposes "to unpack the ethical features of literary works" are "[e]thical taboo, ethical chaos, ethical consciousness, ethical environment, ethical identity, ethical choice, the Sphinx factor, the human factor, the animal factor, rational will, irrational will and natural will" (Nie, "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism" 89). These concepts are explained through examples from different stories from the Bible or Greek mythology. For instance, "the Sphinx factor" is illustrated as follows:

The feature of the Sphinx's combination of a human head and an animal body suggests, first of all, that the most important feature of a human image lies in its head, which stands for reason as a result of the evolutionary process. Secondly, it indicates that human beings have evolved from animals and thus still contain some features belonging to them. This feature can be thus called the Sphinx factor, which is composed of two parts—the human factor and the animal factor. Normally, the human factor is superior to the animal factor, and hence the former can take control of the latter, which explains why a man could become a person with ethical consciousness. (96)

While Chinese scholars may find the Sphinx factor a thought-provoking tool to decode Chinese tales of the miraculous, such as *Journey to the West* and *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (see Tian 410), the Western academic is prone to interrogate these remarks, especially in the context of posthumanism which "rejects the idea that human beings should comprise the center of research or a benchmark for measuring nonhuman abilities" (Jagodzka 160). Nie's theory dismisses animal life which makes his work part of what Rodolfo Piskorski defined as criticism that considers animal life "irrelevant or inferior" (Piskorski 6). In the second decade of the twenty-first century, returning to the idea that the human being is superior to all other creatures—after so much research questioning "humanism's anthropocentrism, essentialism, exceptionalism, and speciesism" has been produced (Herbrechter et al. 4)—seems anachronistic.

For Nie, "the ethical turn" which took place in narrative theory at the end of the 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s in the United States, "attempts to unpack the ethical values of literature, and the truth about social life depicted in literature from an ethical perspective. It should be reiterated that the ethical value of literature is historical, stable and objective, regardless of the changes undertaken in today's moral principles" (Nie, "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism" 100). Nie connects this turn to the interest in narrativity. Indeed, as Liesbeth

Korthals Altes states, there was “a pointed interest in narrativity and narrative literature from the side of moral philosophy” in these two decades (Korthals Altes 142). Martha Nussbaum, Wayne C. Booth, Kevin McGinley and Daniel R. Schwartz are among the many scholars who suggested that literature can be read as moral philosophy or that the specific nature of literature implies moral exploration. Nussbaum, Booth, David Parker, and James Phelan also believed that “narrative fiction can play an important role in the moral development of readers by modelling their emotions, self-conception, and view of life” (143; see also Parker).

However, a second major difference between the Eastern and the Western interpretation of ethics appears here. For Western scholars, literature is “more about the failures of moral philosophy than about its successes” (Siebers 160). It is not a display of “moral examples for human beings to follow” in order “to achieve their self-perfection with moral experience,” as Nie sees it (Nie, “Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism” 88). Moreover, Levinas’s work offered “an ethical justification for the influx into criticism of the new and challenging questions, called ‘theory,’” offering “a new and different way of attending to the ethical in the textual, and of the responsibility inherent in reading” (Eaglestone 7).

Nie uses the concrete example “of the choice between the identities of animals and the identities of human beings,” bringing examples from Charles Darwin’s theory that accounts for the evolution of men from apes through the natural selection process, and from Engels’s belief that what differentiated human beings from animals was labor (Nie, “Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism” 94). However, Nie does not mention that many literary scholars put to the test Darwinian concepts of adaptation, natural selection, and survival of the fittest (see Milesi, “Zo(o)graphies”). Starting from the Genesis, Nie considers the difference between good and evil as “the basis of ethics” (Nie, “Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism” 95). He introduces the notion of ethical selection that Adam and Eve completed when they chose to eat the fruit of knowledge and claims:

All literary works embed practical aims, which are mainly about moral enlightenment and education. This point can be aptly demonstrated by a huge number of literary works. For instance, Homer’s poetry conveys to the reader the rules of living; Hesiod’s *Theogony* helps the reader to know the world; Greek tragedy teaches the reader to abide by the ethical order and moral codes. The process of reading is closely related to the process of aesthetic appreciation, which ends in the receiving of moral enlightenment. Therefore, moral teaching is the fundamental function of literature. (88)

Nie's literary examples revolve mostly around classics: from ancient literature (Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*) and the Renaissance (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) to nineteenth-century Russian and French literature (Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*). Except for D. H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, and Eugene O'Neill, no other major twentieth-century writers are included in Nie's discussion. Thus, Eastern ethical criticism cannot lay claims to becoming an all-encompassing tool for the analysis of literature. The lack of theoretical self-reflection of Eastern ethical criticism is conspicuous, since Nie never acknowledges that in the twentieth-century Western world, ethical criticism is not exclusively reducible to the differences between good and evil but it also implies the obligation, responsibility that a certain author or reader takes when engaging in an act of writing or reading.

Nie's glossary to the *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism* contains the term "ethical deconstruction" which "refers to the analysis and interpretation of the ethical structure of literary works" (Nie, *Introduction* 221). Nie contrasts "construction" to "deconstruction" without mentioning that deconstruction already contains the prefix "con" and is therefore not the opposite of "construction": "While ethical construction reveals the ethical structure, ethical deconstruction is a critical reading of the ethical structure with an aim to interpret its formative process" (221). Nie is paying lip service to the term "deconstruction" here, which brings us to what deconstruction means.

In his introduction to Jacques Derrida's *Acts of Literature*, Derek Attridge pointed out that literary texts "are acts of writing that call forth acts of reading" (Attridge 2). For Derrida, literature is a "historical institution with its conventions, rules, etc., but also this institution of fiction which gives *in principle* the power to say everything, to break free of the rules, to displace them, and thereby to institute, to invent and even to suspect the traditional difference between nature and institution, nature and conventional law, nature and history" (Derrida, "This Strange Institution" 37). The link of the institution of literature "to an authorization to say everything" means that the writer is given license to say anything he wanted or could say, while remaining shielded from all censorship, be it religious or political (37). Derrida's writing on literary texts was itself a form of ethics, which brought about "a strong sense of his *responsibility* toward them, the registering of a demand which they and their signatories make, of a call that seems to come from somewhere outside the orbit within which we comfortably go about our intellectual business—but an outside which cannot simply be classified as exterior" (Attridge 5). For Derrida, ethics implied a

responsibility towards the other, and, in relation to reading literature, it was a law that bound him to devote himself or to respond. That law was “*the text of the other*, its very singularity, its idiom, its appeal” (Derrida, “This Strange Institution” 66). As Martin Hägglund has argued, Derrida’s “relation to the other” was grounded in a violent, “nonethical opening of ethics” (Hägglund 88). Derrida explained this violence as follows: “I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others. *Every other (one) is every (bit) other [tout autre est tout autre]*, every one else is completely or wholly other” (Derrida, *Gift* 68). According to him, as Milesi showed, ethics was “ultimately singularly unjustifiable, the possibility of an impossibility, and its intrinsic violence once it is unleashed through a decisional act is ... registered in this asymmetrical formula which ruptures the same from within a homology” (Milesi, “Breaching Ethics”). Ethics thus represents the link between alterity and singularity or “what one could call the universal exception or the law of the exception” (Derrida, *Gift* 87).

Responsibility founded in the non-reciprocal relation to the Other (*Autrui*), who takes precedence over “I,” was essential to Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy. The Levinasian view of ethics as “first philosophy” involves responsibility to the Other, a “language, that is, responsibility” (Levinas, “Ego” 43). For Levinas, ethics was “not a moment of being” but “otherwise and better than being” (Levinas, “God” 165). With ethics, Levinas took further the project of phenomenology, grounded more in perception than critical reflection. As confirmed in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas’s attempt was not to construct an ethics but to find its sense (34–50). To live “otherwise than being” meant for Levinas to live as “an ethical creature,” or, as Michael Fagenblat put it, “to bear witness ... to the undecidable goodness of an exposure to the other that precedes self-identity and thus testifies, despite oneself, to the glory of the Good” (Fagenblat 197).

The context in which Levinas wrote his work is important. Although the Holocaust never became the explicit content of Levinasian ethics, it dictated much of its substance. Levinas’s philosophy was written in the wake of the question whether one can still philosophize within the memory of Auschwitz. Levinas, whose life was endangered during the Holocaust, revealed the weak foundations of Western thought whose inability to conceive difference legitimated the Nazis’ radical antisemitism. The “ethical response” was the only adequate response to unprecedented horror, whereby “I” recognizes his/her “supreme obligation,” his/her “responsibility for the useless and unjustifiable suffering of

others,” as well as his/her “responsibility to respond to the evil inflicted upon ... fellow human beings” (Bernstein 266–267).

Richard J. Bernstein put forward the idea that “Levinas’s entire philosophic project can best be understood as an *ethical* response to evil—and to the problem of evil which we must confront after the ‘end of theodicy’” (Bernstein 253). He divided Levinas’s work into “three moments of the phenomenology of evil: evil as excess; evil as intention; and the hatred or horror of evil” (260). The first category refers to the evil that cannot be adequately comprehended, synthesized, or integrated into a framework of reason, because it is “a malignant sublime” (260) and such reflections prompt “an ethical response to evil” (262), the epitome of which was Auschwitz, “the paradigm of that transcendent evil that ruptures all categories of knowledge and understanding, evil as non-integrable excess” (266). Nie’s ethical criticism excludes evil as excess. His examples do not include any example of Holocaust texts.

The definition of “absolute evil” radicalizes the sort of traditional moral dichotomy envisaged by ethical literary criticism. We cannot talk about a traditional ethics of good and bad in the case of the Holocaust because this was a “caesura” which, “within history, interrupts history and opens up another possibility of history, or else closes off all possibility of history” (Lacoue-Labarthe 45). As I showed elsewhere, “this figure of historical disjunction highlighted not only that a certain continuous conception of (Western) history was brutally interrupted but also that confidence in the ability of speech to represent a commonality of experience was shattered” (Ionescu, “Differend” 255).

Limits of the East project of ethical criticism

On these thoughts, my article moves towards its final section, which focuses on a strand of literary production that shows the limits of Nie’s project: Holocaust literature, more precisely the Holocaust novel that “bursts the already fuzzy generic boundaries of autobiography and fiction, memoir and fantasy, historical document and realist novel. The incredible invites the surreal, and the absurdity of mass death defies narrative conventions of life stories, the Bildungsroman, or the epistolary form” (Sicher xii). It is a taxonomic category used to gather texts written by survivors (Aharon Appelfeld’s *The Man Who Never Stopped Sleeping*, *Katerina*, *Badenheim 1939*, *For Every Sin, All Whom I Have Loved*, and *The Story of a Life*; Primo Levi’s *If This Is*

a Man, published as *Survival in Auschwitz* in the United States, and *The Drowned and the Saved*; Elie Wiesel's *Night*; Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*; Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*; Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*), the Jewish American post-Holocaust novel (Saul Bellow, Cynthia Ozick), historical Holocaust novels (Thomas Keneally, William Styron, D. M. Thomas), second-generation Holocaust fiction (David Grossman, Art Spiegelman), as well as postmodernist Holocaust fiction (Martin Amis, Don DeLillo).

In post-WW2 Western thought, morality, ethics and forgiveness changed meanings completely. When one attempts to use Eastern ethical criticism to investigate Holocaust novels, the most problematic concept of Nie's theory is that of "ethical choice," since all these works prove that the very notion of choice disappeared. For instance, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi "testified to the victim's experience in relation to ethics, the limits of language and representation" (Ionescu, *Memorial Ethics* 20). Dealing with the interpretation of survivor memoirs from the famous Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, containing fourteen hundred videotaped interviews of Holocaust survivors, Lawrence Langer's book *Versions of Survival* called for a post-Holocaust revision of ethics, arguing vehemently that traditional ethics is incapable of judging Holocaust victims' dilemmas and contradictions in the death camps.

Langer started with examples from literature, for instance, *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex* (which Nie also used in his demonstrations), yet showed the regression from Shakespeare's and Sophocles's ethical choice to lack of choice in survivors' stories:

Both dramatic tragedy and religious martyrdom are based on the premise that the individual is free to risk certain choices with full knowledge—that the consequences may lead to extreme suffering or death. These choices, whether Hamlet's decision to duel with Laertes, Oedipus's to pursue the truth of his identity despite Jocasta's pleas, or Sir Thomas More's to adhere to his Christian principles, are necessary to the individual's vision of himself as a human being. In the deathcamps, such motives for choice survived for a time, but the consequences were quickly removed from the control of the individual, and made so unpredictable that it was virtually impossible to associate one's vision of oneself as a human being with the various modes of punishment and extermination in the surrounding environment. (Langer, *Versions* 21)

In his essay "The Dilemma of Choice in the Deathcamps," Langer coined the term "choiceless choices" which are situations "where critical

decisions did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of ‘abnormal’ response and another, both imposed by a situation that in no way was of the victim’s own choosing” (120). I will illustrate how we bring Langer’s point to bear on Nie’s conception of ethics, by looking not at an example of life writing (which is not fictionalized), but at a fictional work that belongs to literature, William Styron’s emblematic novel *Sophie’s Choice*.

In his novel, Styron brought Auschwitz to a universal status. *Sophie’s Choice* focuses on a Polish Catholic victim of Auschwitz who faces the dilemma of choice (see Mathé; Rosenfeld). In this context, Styron’s controversial choice of proposing a more general view of the barbarism of Auschwitz (and the fact that Slavic Christians were also caught up in its program of forced labor and extermination obviates the need for Christian guilt and sets aside historical arguments for Christian antisemitism as a causative agent in the Holocaust) is yet another problem of ethics that this article does not deal with. Sophie’s worst, darkest secret is not revealed until the end of the novel, because even in the dreadful Auschwitz world that she describes, the reader needs to be prepared in several stages before reading about the most atrocious event of her life. Sophie’s fragmented and repeated rewritings of her history attest to her attempt to avoid poignant choices in her life.

Adia Mendelson-Maoz reveals that, before the hardest choice of her life, Sophie was either submissive or neutral: she could have chosen not to help her father by typing and distributing his pamphlets advocating the annihilation of the Jews, but she chose to obey him; likewise, she could have chosen to help her sister-in-law Wanda by supporting her work in the resistance group, but, while admiring Wanda for her courage, Sophie refused “to fight for any principle or ideology, and saw herself as ‘on the sidelines’” (Mendelson-Maoz 376).

Perhaps Mendelson-Maoz’s term “neutral” is not appropriate for all Sophie’s actions. If before marriage, Sophie was paralyzed by the authority of her father, after she had children, she chose a certain type of action with a clear purpose—refusing to help Wanda was rather a choice not to endanger her children, considering that they were helpless. However,

to the extent that Sophie’s familial anti-Semitism is interwoven with the deep secret of her personal loss, the novel puts us in a very difficult place, properly akin to what Levi called “the gray zone.” And in this sense secrecy and its active complement, lying, provide much of the impetus for the novel’s method of

storytelling, which is focused intensively on gradual recovery of truths pertaining to the most awful and historically overdetermined personal history. (Spargo 153)

When Sophie was suddenly plunged into the Auschwitz “selection,” she had to make what we would call choice in normal circumstances (Mendelson-Maoz 376). In this particular case her decision “lay beyond the control of Auschwitz’s victims, Jewish or not” (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 376). This is the kind of “decision” that victims were forced to make by the Nazis who mocked at their hapless victims, offering them cruel, inhuman and nonsensical choices. These choices were “choiceless” because they designated violent impositions. On the night when Sophie arrived in Auschwitz, a camp doctor made her choose which of her two children would die immediately by gassing and which would continue to live, albeit in the camp. Had she not chosen, both children would have been sent to the gas chamber.

Styron’s controversial novel was based on the real story of Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*. Lengyel who was asked by the Nazi doctor, conducting the “selection,” about her elder son’s age thought that saying that Arvad was not more than twelve (his real age) was a choice to make him live. Thus, she persuaded her mother to go to the “left” where her two sons were sent, thinking that her mother could take care of them. Lengyel chose to send the three of them with other children and the elderly, without knowing that “‘left’ was the way to the gas chambers” (Roth 106).

In Styron’s novel, Sophie chose to sacrifice her seven-year-old daughter, Eva, in a heart-wrenching decision that has left her in mourning and filled with a guilt that she could never overcome. She chose to save Jan, the blond, blue-eyed, German-speaking son. She later tried to convince Rudolf Höss, the commander of Auschwitz, to allow Jan to leave the camp and enter the Lebensborn program. And yet, despite using all her charms, including her power to seduce Höss, she could not save her son either. According to Mendelson-Maoz, at this point in the novel, for Sophie, “*there was no choice*, because it was quite probable that both of her children would die regardless of her decision. Sophie loses both Eva and Jan at this same moment (she only knows that Eva is going to be killed right away and that Jan is going to be in the children’s camp. She never actually sees either of them again)” (Mendelson-Maoz 376). Although being saved from Auschwitz, Sophie prolonged her life only to tell her story; she fell prey to alcoholism and self-destruction with Nathan with whom she

eventually committed suicide, refusing Stingo's decent proposal to marry him.

Sophie's Choice proves the limits of ethics which are evaded not only by Nie's ethical criticism but in general by any moral theory. Lisa Tessman coined the term "unavoidable moral failure," a failure that many Holocaust victims encountered "either because they faced choices all of which were unthinkable or because they lost the ability or the opportunity to function as moral agents at all" (Tessman 162). Tessman places the unavoidable moral failures under two different conditions, one in which the character no longer acts as "a moral agent" and the other where "agency has been eradicated"; the first condition is "one of *dilemmatic morality*, where moral agents choose moral wrongdoings (of whatever kind or magnitude), unavoidably, because there are no morally good (or better) options available"; the second is "a condition of *absent morality*, where choice and moral agency are not even operative" (162; emphasis added).

Sophie's Choice cannot be investigated via Nie's theory, since it is not about moral dilemmas. Thinking of the twentieth-century Chinese literary scene, there are no equivalents of *Sophie's Choice*. On the contrary, China takes pride that approximately 20,000 Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and Poland were saved in Shanghai during WW2 (see Eber; Kranzler; Ionescu, "Hospitality"; Ristaino). However, in 1937 there was the Nanking Massacre. Not one single narrative dealing with the Nanking traumas (see Chang; Zhu) can be analyzed through the lens of Nie's ethical criticism.

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Dileme onkraj etike: kritika vzhodnega etičnega literarnega kritištva

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / etična literarna veda / Vzhod in Zahod / Nie, Zhenzhao / Derrida, Jacques / Levinas, Emmanuel / Styron, William: *Sophiejina odločitev*

Namen članka je primerjati vzhodno in zahodno etično literarno kritištvo ter odkriti morebitne omejitve kitajske različice etičnega literarnega kritištva pri obravnavi zahodne literarne produkcije. V prvem delu je vzpostavljen konceptualni okvir, in sicer s primerjavo med Nie Zhenzhaovim razumevanjem literature kot izraza etike, Derridajevim konceptom literature kot institucije, ki ima »pravico povedati vse«, in Levinasovim stališčem, da je etika »prva filozofija«, ki vključuje odgovornost do Drugega, pri čemer je treba upoštevati, da je bil celoten Levinasov filozofski projekt etični odgovor na vse oblike »absolutnega zla«, ki so se pojavile v 20. stoletju. Na podlagi te kontekstualne opredelitve članek v ospredje postavi odpiranje zgodovine po drugi svetovni vojni kot »cezure« (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) in pokaže, da je Niejevo teorijo sicer mogoče uspešno uporabiti pri preučevanju korpusa del od srednjega veka do realizma 19. stoletja, vendar pa se njegov koncept »etične izbire« kot analitičnega oprijemališča zlomi ob odzivu literature na grozodejstva 20. stoletja. Zadnji del članka se osredotoča na romane o holokavstvu in predstavi študijo primera, ki prek analize romana Williama Styrona *Sophiejina odločitev* razkrije omejitve Niejevega etičnega literarnega kritištva.

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Rethinking World Literature in the Age of AI

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The debate about world literature has never stopped since the term was first introduced in a conversation between Goethe and his secretary almost two centuries ago, and it has intensified in the age of AI, which is bringing about changes in almost every aspect of society, including world literature. Specifically, while AI brings enormous benefits to the dissemination and translation of world literature, it also creates challenges and problems. Based on the analysis of the translation of literary texts across different cultures, this paper argues firstly that AI may contradict David Damrosch's claim that "world literature gains through translation," as world literature can in fact "lose" something, e.g., literariness, as the examples selected in this paper show, and secondly that AI can also provide a "biased" picture of theories or works from different cultures. We should therefore be wary of these two risks, otherwise we could be misled in this "technological wave."

Keywords: literature and AI / AI-generated poetry / translation / literariness / ChatGPT / Lem, Stanisław

The term "world literature" made its "official" debut in Goethe's famous conversation with his young disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in 1827, after he read the translation of a Chinese novel. Ever since, the discussion on world literature has never stopped, from Goethe, Marx and Engels, all the way down to contemporary scholars, including David Damrosch, Haun Saussy, Ning Wang, and others who have contributed in various ways to this theoretical topic from different perspectives and backgrounds. Each stage of the changing conception and theorization of world literature is concomitant with the previous

industrialization, economic capitalization, and globalization. The development of world literature as circulation has never been independent from changes of technology and media that naturally determine the accessibility of all literatures. The drop of book prices around 1800 encouraged international exchange in literature. When the press became a mass medium in continental Europe (but also on other continents) in the second half of the nineteenth century, publishing literature on a daily basis, the huge demand for literature created a massive market for translated novels, and the new literary agencies were by no means restricted by borders of national markets or languages.

In our days, the invention and development of AI, such as ChatGPT, might create a new media context for world literature, which invites us to revisit the old notion. In this paper, we analyze how world literature comes to be influenced by this “technological wave,” as manifested in the aspects of literary production and translation. We argue that despite the unprecedented “accessibility” and “availability” that AI offers people in reading, circulating and translating world literature, it is rather “biased” in presenting theories or works from different cultures, and sometimes fails to retain the “foreignness” either in literary creation or translation. In this sense, AI may unexpectedly run counter to the notion that David Damrosch enshrines in the concept of world literature as “writing that gains in translation” (Damrosch 281) since it might lead to the circulation of a homogenized world literature, which might filter out the foreignness of the source text.

Before the widespread use and application of large language models (LLMs), human beings used to be the subjects that created world literature. The invention of LLMs creates or can probably create a different situation, at least in some scholars’ view. ChatGPT, as an artificial intelligence language model with a powerful knowledge base, has the ability to write academic papers, as well as to create poetry, prose, and novels. Thus, as Yingying Zhang suggests, “in terms of future development, the birth of ChatGPT is not only a technological and cultural phenomenon, but also a literary phenomenon. Many people have already started ChatGPT’s game-like literary attempt, which will bring about a milestone technological revolution” (Y. Zhang 1). Following this vein, scholars argue that today’s “game-like literary attempt” may one day turn into a reality of world literature; in contrast, our comparative study of literary works created by ChatGPT and those by real humans proves that this will not happen immediately.

Writers invest their own experience and imagination in literary creation, resulting in various types of representation and style. The growth

of ChatGPT suggests that the subject of literary creation may shift from humans to machines. Works created by ChatGPT are rich and diverse with sound external forms, such as rhyme in poetry, language with a sense of musical beauty, and novels with characters and plots. It can produce works with a certain aesthetic quality, which raises the alarming possibility of replacing human literary creation. However, form is not the only standard in judging the quality of literary works. Chinese philosopher Baihua Zong (1897–1986) once stated that when people appreciate art such as literature, they often “tend to lean towards the content, setting, story, and acts of life in the art, rather than artistic ‘form’ alone” (Zong 31). To study literature is to study human beings.

AI-generated poetry became a literary topic with Polish sci-fi writer Stanisław Lem (1921–2006). He can rightly be regarded as a world-literature figure, whose books have been translated into more than 40 languages, and on whose 1961 novel Andrei Tarkovsky based his classic film *Solaris* (1972). In his 1965 short story cycle *Cyberiada* (*The Cyberiad*, English translation 1974), exclusively populated by robots, constructor Trurl builds the electronic bard (*Elektrybatt*), a machine designed to create poetry. We will return to its poems later, but it is helpful to see already here how Trurl sees the problem of writing a program to create poetry:

The program found in the head of an average poet, after all, was written by the poet’s civilization, and that civilization was in turn programmed by the civilization that preceded it, and so on to the very Dawn of Time, when those bits of information that concerned the poet-to-be were still swirling about in the primordial chaos of the cosmic deep. Hence in order to program a poetry machine, one would first have to repeat the entire Universe from the beginning—or at least a good piece of it. (Lem, *Cyberiad* 43–44)

Lem appears as a true structuralist or even post-structuralist critic here, one who is maybe too quick to disregard the individuality of an author and ascribes the creative process to the cultural codes and the semiosphere. Trurl repeats most of the Universe to program his bard, and this is probably the reason why it becomes the greatest poet ever. It is only a small exaggeration to say that ChatGPT’s access to a huge part of humankind’s textual heritage makes it similar to Trurl’s electronic bard, yet it still lacks human experiences and emotions, with profound ideological connotations, which literature often reflects.

The data-based working mechanism means that “the ability of ChatGPT’s literary production mainly lies in its mastery and application of literary forms, but not the capability to create content to be

represented. ... ChatGPT's production lacks not only emotions, but also subjectivity in intervening in the real world" (S. Zhang 44). The fundamental difference between the process of creating literature used by ChatGPT and by humans lies in that the former lacks real feelings, emotions, experience, and understanding of life, without which all the knowledge and texts of human history become "flattened" in the process unless a human subject intervenes. Even for this result we had to ask AI to improve the "form" after inputting "prompts" several times, and the result tends to be much less satisfactory from the viewpoint of form in languages other than English.

AI will possibly be able to model human subjectivity in the future and produce high quality literature, but world literature might need something else, which we will call universality. Ning Wang differentiated between "world literature in general and world literatures in particular, the former referring to a universal criterion for evaluating literature of the greatest world significance, the latter to the different representations, including translations of literatures from all countries" (N. Wang, "Weltliteratur" 297). Wang's concept of "world literature in general" implies a canonical approach, but it refers to the canonical ways of appreciating and selecting literary works rather than a concrete recommended set of canonized works. While we doubt that there exists "a universal criterion for evaluating literature," we accept that a literary work needs to contain something universal to be included in the category of the "general" as opposed to the particular, which is the all-encompassing category of every piece of literature written anytime, anywhere and in any language. This universal, however, must be expressed in a particular literariness.¹ Literary works create "worlds" different from the geographical one, and "there are a great many imaginative projections of possible and conceivable worlds; and people spend most of their lives in those latter worlds" (Saussy 293).² Any great piece of literature creates its own imaginary world, which is both embedded

¹ For the universal as opposed to the national, see Ursa. For further insights about literature and universality, see Duhan et al.

² Haun Saussy uses the concept of "world" in its Heideggerian meaning (Heidegger 170). This concept was consciously and explicitly "vulgarized" to adapt it to the postcolonial field by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Spivak 260). Since then, "worlding" rather means getting embedded in the globalized world system than the individual literary work's creation of an experience in which we can feel at home. Eric Hayot discusses the applicability of the Heideggerian concept in the third chapter of his book *On Literary Worlds*, but otherwise sticks to the postcolonial meaning, as does Pheng Cheah. For the history of this transition, see Juvan 16–19.

in and yet independent from the traditions of certain regions, cultures and social circles. David Damrosch's definition of world literature as "writing that gains in translation" (Damrosch 281) appears so original and insightful precisely because it turns upside-down the truism that texts tend to lose a lot in translation. Gaining something, however, does not exclude losing something else. And gaining does not necessarily follow from the intrinsic merits of the given writing: it might happen accidentally, and it would be that accident which made something world literature. However, the dialectics of familiarity and alienness described by Schleiermacher must be at work here too: the pure universality of a literary work might no longer excite when it travels to a new place, while pure alienness makes it incomprehensible (Schleiermacher 5–158)—unless it gains some universality on the way. Therefore, from the viewpoint of intrinsic merits, Marshall Brown's comment seems valid, namely that "world literature ... is not writing that gains in translation, but writing that retains its alienness even in the original" (Brown 364). And it is this foreignness that current AI literary production still seems to lack.

Let us return to Lem's electronic bard. At the beginning, Trurl's friend Klapaucius is rather skeptical about AI-generated poetry (especially because the electronic bard's first poetic attempts are rhythmic-rhyming gibberish)³ and tests the bard by giving it a complicated assignment to write poetry. We could not resist the temptation of giving ChatGTP the same assignment, in three languages. Lem's translators, of course, did not translate the assignment literally, but obviously created their poems first and adapted the assignment to the already made poem, and it is probable that Lem proceeded similarly. This is the prompt for the poem in the Polish source text:

Niech ułoży wiersz o cyberotyce! ... Żeby tam było najwyżej sześć linijek, a w nich o miłości i o zdradzie, o muzyce, o Murzynach, o wyższych sferach, o nieszczęściu, o kazirodztwie, do rymu i żeby wszystkie słowa były tylko na literę c!! (Lem, *Cyberiada* 45)

Write a poem about cyberoticism! ... There should be at most six lines, about love and betrayal, about music, about Negroes, about high society, about misfortune, about incest, with rhymes, and all the words should only start with the letter c!! (our trans.)

³ It is difficult to evaluate the poetic qualities of gibberish, but in Beatrix Murányi's Hungarian translation the electronic bard's first attempts show some poetic strength. They are meaningless, but in a strange dadaist way they sound like poetry, suggestive of some abject topic.

When we gave these instructions to ChatGTP, it generated the following poem:

Czuły czar zdrady czai się w cieniu nocy,
Cyganie śpiewają o miłości, marzeniach rozmów,
Czułość, cicha *carmina*, w serce wprowadza młodość,
Cierpienie, chwilowe chwile, ciche żale snów.
Czuję, cichutko czuję, ciosy czasu ciche,
Ciemność czaruje, czystość chwiejna, czarny chwilowy chichot.

The tender spell of betrayal lurks in the shadows of the night,
Gypsies sing of love, dreams of conversation,
Tenderness, silent *carmina*, in the heart brings youth,
Suffering, momentary moments, silent griefs of dreams.
I feel, quietly feel, the silent blows of time,
Darkness enchants, shaky purity, black momentary giggle.

What catches the eye immediately is that the alliteration is quite incomplete. Fourteen of the thirty-nine words of the poem (36%) do not start with the letter c. Only two lines do actually rhyme. Such a verse game is unlikely to produce great poetry, but the paratactic series of short clauses with very few verbs and little cohesion also indicate poor aesthetic value. A comparison with Lem's own poem in the source text demonstrates how faulty these features are in the AI-generated poem:

Cyprian cyberotoman, cynik, ceniąc czule
Czarnej córy cesarskiej cud ciemnego ciała,
Ciągłe cytrą czarował. Czerwieniała cała,
Cicha, co dzień czekała, cierpiała, czuwała...
...Cyprian ciotkę całuje, cisnąwszy czarnułę!! (Lem, *Cyberiada* 45)

Cyprian the cyberotomaniac, cynic, cherishing tenderly
The emperor's black daughter's miracle of dark flesh,
Chanted his magic with a zither. She was turning red,
Silent, every day she waited, suffered, stayed awake...
...Cyprian kisses his aunt, rejecting the black woman!! (our trans.)

All but one word begin with the letter c (*co dzień*, "every day," can be regarded as a single syntactic unite, though), all the lines rhyme, and the three sentences narrate a complete story of betrayal. We have to admit that this was ChatGTP's only attempt and we did not make it revise and develop the poem. After a while it could improve, but Lem's electronic bard did not have a chance for revision either.

We performed the same experiment with the poems embedded in *The Cyberiad's* Hungarian and English translations, and the results were similar. Here are the Hungarian descriptions of the task and human and AI-generated poems:

Írjon kiberotikus verset! ... Legfeljebb öt sor legyen, szóljon szerelemről, árulásról és halálról, a néger kérdéstről és a nimfomániáról, legyen benne a bonyolult női lélek extrém konfliktushelyzetben bekövetkező meghasonlásának ábrázolása, a középkori feudális viszonyok és erkölcsök maró bírálata, rímeljén, és minden szó k betűvel kezdődjön! (Lem, *Kiberiáda* 150)

Kóbor kaffer kószál királylány kertjében.
 Királylány kacéran kacsint kéjvágyó kedvében:
 Kapj karodba, kaffer! Király kinéz, kiált:
 Katonák! Kürtszó, kivégzés. Királylány kacag kuszán.
 Kegyetlen kor! Kicsapongó, koronás kurtizán! (150)

Write a cyberotic poem! ... No more than five lines, about love, betrayal and death, about the Negro question and nymphomania; it should represent the complexity of the female psyche in extreme conflict, also containing harsh critique of medieval feudalism and morality, rhyming, and all words beginning with the letter k! (our trans.)

A stray kaffir roams in a princess's garden.
 The princess winks flirtatiously in her lustful mood:
 "Give me a hug, kaffir!" The king looks out, cries:
 "Soldiers! Tantara, execution." The princess laughs confusedly.
 Cruel age! A promiscuous, crowned courtesan! (our trans.)

The alliterations are perfect, the rhyming is not bad, the narrative is a bit lapidary, but not without some good phrasing. Here is what ChatGTP could create following the same instructions:

Keserű szóval suttog szívem, kín,
 Középkor királynője, koronás királynők,
 Kígyóként kúszik, kacér, kozmetikázó kéj,
 Kapzsi, kötött köntös, kert végén kárhozat,
 Kedves kéjutazás, kétely közt kárhozat.

With bitter words my heart whispers, anguish,
 Queen of the Middle Ages, queens with crowns.
 A coquettish, cosmetic lust crawls like a serpent;
 A greedy, knitted robe, damnation at the end of the garden,
 A lovely pleasure cruise, damnation in doubts.

Four words do not begin with the letter k; the only “rhyme” in the poem is a repetition of the same word at the ends of two consecutive lines; the poem does not have any characteristic rhythm which would really make it verse. However, its most faulty feature is the lack of any development of a theme: the paratactic list of unconnected clauses—some of them (such as the greedy robe) are utter nonsense—make it rather a list of k-words than a poem.

The English translation by Michael Kandel set the task this way: “Have it compose a poem—a poem about a haircut! But lofty, noble, tragic, timeless, full of love, treachery, retribution, quiet heroism in the face of certain doom! Six lines, cleverly rhymed, and every word beginning with the letter s!” (Lem, *Cyberiad* 50). Love, treachery and alliteration are the features retained from the Polish ST, while replacing Lem’s neologism cyberoticism as the required main feature of the poem with the motif of haircut, suggestive of a translator who had a particular topic in mind. The poem in the English translation explains a Biblical theme, i.e., a particular cultural reference to the probably most famous haircut ever:

Seduced, shaggy Samson snored.
She scissored short. Sorely shorn,
Soon shackled slave, Samson sighed,
Silently scheming,
Sightlessly seeking
Some savage, spectacular suicide. (51)

Perfect alliteration, some good rhymes, and a concise retelling of the myth from the Judges. It is a small wonder that ChatGTP could not think of Samson’s story full of love, treachery and heroism. This is what it created following the same instructions:

Silken strands surrender, shears swiftly swoon,
Sculpting strands, sovereign, secrets soon.
Serrated scissors sing, severing strife,
Sacrificing serenity, silent sacrifice.
Sorrowful strands fall, shorn, serene,
Symphony of shearing, sublime, unseen.

ChatGTP is obviously a better poet in English than in Polish or Hungarian, because it has access to much more data (text corpora) in English, which is problematic, as we will discuss later. Only one or two words break the alliteration, the rhymes are good, and some expressions

show some poetic quality. However, the same problem of the simple paratactic listing of clauses that do not develop a coherent content characterizes this assignment too.

In Lem's story, the electronic bard drives many poets to suicide through their desperation about achieving anything similarly great to what it could create, and after Trurl tries to isolate it in an asteroid, it broadcasts its poetry and disturbs the traffic because many spaceships' crew members are "seized with severe attacks of esthetic ecstasy" (Lem, *Cyberiad* 56). At the moment, as it seems, we do not have to worry about such severe consequences of AI-generated poetry.

In our other experiment we typed the words "spring, bloom, birds, lamb, countryside, daisy" into ChatGPT and asked for the composition of a poem on spring. It created the following two poems:

Spring

Spring is here, the season of new birth
The earth awakes from its long winter sleep
The flowers bloom in every hue and shade
The birds sing sweetly in the trees and fields

The lamb is born, a symbol of pure joy
It frolics in the meadow with its kin
It follows its mother with trust and love
It grazes on the grass and daisies white

The countryside is filled with life and light
The sun shines brightly in the clear blue sky
The breeze is gentle and the air is fresh
The stream flows softly with a soothing sound

Spring is here, the season of new hope
It brings us beauty, peace and happiness
It reminds us of the wonder of creation
It fills our hearts with gratitude and praise

Spring

Spring has arrived, the world awakes
Beneath the blue, the earth now shakes
Buds burst open, petals unfurl
The promise of life, anew, unfurled

Beneath the sun, the fields turn green
The countryside a joyous scene
Birds return from distant lands
Their song echoing through the strands

Lambs gambol through the fields so gay
Their carefree spirit on display
And in the midst of all this cheer
The daisy blooms, so pure and dear

Spring has come, and with it hope
A chance for life to start and cope
With every bloom and every bird
A promise of joy, now seen and heard.

The quality is definitely above that of an average college student. The poems make good use of diverse images, sometimes in rhyming schemes, as in the second poem. The atmosphere of the first is livelier, that of the second more peaceful. Both evoke the beauty, joy and hope spring brings to people, but they still exhibit stylistic and structural differences from poems by “real” poets such as Thomas Nashe (“Spring, the Sweet Spring,” 1600), William Wordsworth (“Lines Written in Early Spring,” 1798), Gerard Manley Hopkins (“Spring,” 1877), Christina Rossetti (“Spring Quiet,” 1862), Robert Frost (“Spring Pools,” 1916), and Edna St. Vincent Millay (“Spring,” 1921).

The repetitiveness in diction, such as “awake,” “hope” and so on, and the fixed structure with a strict rhyming scheme stand out in both poems, displaying stark contrast with the intentional choice of the imitative words such as “jug-jug,” “pu-we,” and “to-witta-woo” in Thomas Nashe’s poem, which gives a lively and vivid picture of spring. Anyone with an aesthetic taste can strongly feel the machine-trace in both poems, lacking the human aura or energy and having no foreignness but rather a hackneyed one on spring.

Human poets tend to surprise readers with some unexpected and, well, not mechanical features. For instance, the diction in the poem by Thomas Nashe is not that complicated, but one can strongly feel the lively tone of spring, and can even sing the poem due to its use of sound words and the reference to dancing maidens and frisking lambs. The mastery of sprung rhyme by Hopkins, the pondering on human’s destiny and its relation with nature in Wordsworth’s poem, the integration of aesthetics and religion by Rossetti and Frost, and the deep symbolic narrative by Millay are nowhere to be seen in the machine compositions.

Although those poets tend to use simple straightforward words rather than obscure, erudite ones to convey what they want to express, they still manage to create some unique literariness or alienness. St. Vincent Millay's line "Not only under ground are the brains of men / Eaten by maggots" can be a case in point. The expression is close to everyday usage despite the iambs, but the content comes as a shock in the middle of a Spring-poem. It diverts the readers from the lively spring to a deeper inquiry, as to the meaning of spring or life, since "Beauty is not enough" (St. Vincent Millay). At this point we can recall the Russian formalists' concept of "defamiliarization" as the essence of literature, since all the poems mentioned show a stark contrast to the too familiar tone of the machine-created poems. As Victor Shklovsky put it in 1917, "the technique of art is to make the objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object itself is not important" (Shklovsky 12). "Defamiliarization" in the poem, or more broadly, in literature, adds a sense of heaviness, complexity and strong aftertaste to the poem, specially created to free the perception from "automatism."

When we contrasted AI- and human-composed poetry in the previous passages, we disregarded the fact that human "intervention" permeates the whole process of AI literary production, starting from data input. AI must be "initiated" in composition instead of starting itself automatically and habitually. Long before the debut of ChatGPT, Italo Calvino foresaw that machines could create through their own learning and progress. He regarded literature as a machine using language, but he emphasized that only a writer can make it work, since the machine "would not work without the spasms of an I who is immersed in historical time, without his reaction, his crazy happiness, and his anger of hitting the wall with his head" (Calvino 206). The sense of time, sociality, and emotionality of human writers are still beyond ChatGPT's reach. However, ChatGPT's unique creative approach can bring us a unique aesthetic perception, which we can use to further enrich our imagination and understanding of the human creation itself.

Another high expectation about ChatGPT's influence on world literature lies in the prospect of "re-making" world literature due to the changes that befall the circulation mode of literary works, one aspect of which is the wide access to the above "peripheral" works and theories. The emergence of ChatGPT has broken down the barriers and limitations of literary communication in terms of time, space, and

language. Written in the most widely used language in the world, works in English often have an advantage in disseminating and circulating easier worldwide. Works in languages other than English are often more restricted in circulation, which makes their position in world literature disadvantaged. The center becomes more “centered” in the long run, but both the universality and relativity of world literature should be emphasized, since “without the former, literary works of any countries could be regarded as world literature, and without the latter, world literature will become all the more Eurocentric or Westcentric” (N. Wang, “Weltliteratur” 298). AI is expected to act against such “centrism” through its incommensurable access to information.

The actual situation is the opposite of this expectation, however. AI seems to strengthen instead of weakening the dominant position of central literatures as the answers which AI gave us when we asked about theories of world literature show. The first list of representative theorists of world literature ChatGPT gave us did not include any Chinese and very few Asian names (not even those who, although born in Asia, were educated and were working in the US, like Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak). When we narrowed down the question to Chinese scholars, the answer was still disappointing, with outdated and irrelevant information. ChatGPT mostly mentioned premodern belletristic writers, with the very few exceptions of Qian Zongshu (1910–1998), a novelist and scholar with significant contribution to comparative literature, and David Der-wei Wang (1954), who actually is a scholar of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. The only really relevant hit was Ning Wang (although with an incorrect birthdate), probably due to his extensive publications in English, while those whose achievement, in the Chinese context, appears equally or even more important in world literature studies, such as Weigui Fang or Daiyun Yue, did not make it onto the list. This demonstrates the dominance of English-related information in AI tools.

The renewal of world literature theories at each stage, as history shows, helps re-think, re-define and re-compose the concept of world literature, transforming it into a dynamic and lively system. The inclusion into AI of theories elaborated by eastern scholars, such as those from Asia and more specifically, China, could entail the inclusion into world literature of literary works from various cultural backgrounds, thus decentralizing the discourse in the long run, since such theories are more keenly aware of civilizational differences. Only with the contribution of literatures written in languages other than English, can world literature appear as a balanced system. Moreover, if one asks ChatGPT to name

the representative works of world literature for different periods, it produces roughly the same answer, thus running counter to the dynamic and generative feature of world literature, since the basis it uses is the data input into itself until now, lacking in a diachronic investigation into world literature. World literature thus becomes something rather fixed either in its inclusion or the representative theories or scholars.

ChatGPT can also lead to a gradual leveling of literary works through being insensitive (or too sensitive) to commercial aspects. With the use of AI such as ChatGPT, a variety of literary works come into the readers' view in an endless stream, accelerating the breakdown of the boundary between elite and popular literary works. This could be regarded as the triumph of postmodernism, which is typically characterized by "the supersession of everything outside of commercial culture, its absorption of all forms of art high and low, along with image production itself" (Jameson 135). On the other hand, it could be interpreted as decomposing the classic. Postmodernism might have abandoned the concept of the classic, i.e., works that have eternal potentials of reinterpretation or canonical works with high aesthetic and educational value. Postmodernism's blurring of elite and popular culture, and its challenge to the canons, do not mean embracing commercialism without any reservation. To use a crucial concept of Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer 31–37), ChatGPT does not have taste, and since aesthetic taste judgements, despite being intersubjective and impeccable, are incomprehensible in discursive ways, it is questionable whether it can ever be trained to develop one.

One might expect AI to make the "footwork" needed for what Franco Moretti called distant reading. When he described how he can read peripheral literatures distantly without knowing their language, he was actually suggesting the reading of literary histories and compendia written by native scholars in the languages of the central literary cultures (Moretti 59–60). In this regard, ChatGPT might have the advantage of being able to scan the academic discourse of peripheral literatures in their native language as well. However, the commercial bias of many search engines and the overwhelming presence of mass culture in search hits easily lower the threshold for the literary. ChatGPT tends to promote the "world literature" circulation of lowbrow mass products. Although "the whole world may be searching for a young voice that not only conforms to the most typical characteristics of the internet in today's era, but also generates a sense of continuity" (He 2), not only AI-produced literature but also AI selection of representative literary works by human writers tends to become standardized and simplified.

If one asks ChatGPT in English about a literary culture of a different language, it will predominantly search the Internet in English for answers, which makes it much less useful in creating a new, less biased consciousness of world literature.

Although one might hope that AI as a translation tool can also help one access various literary cultures, the potential of AI translation is also overestimated. Translation stands as the unavoidable issue in any discourse on world literature. Goethe's much quoted formulation about the coming of age of world literature was triggered by his reading of a Chinese novel in translation. Although David Damrosch, who defined world literature as circulation, emphasized that circulation beyond the original context can happen both in translation and in the original language, the statement that "world literature is writing that gains in translation" (Damrosch 281), seems to discard the latter option as marginal. Although in the current world literature, which shows more and more traces of globalization, reading literature in English is becoming a habit of many people in many non-English-speaking cultures, translation still seems the more important medium of circulation beyond the original context, and thus "world literature also implies the meaning of 'transnational' or 'translational'" (N. Wang, "Weltliteratur" 297). English translation can also mediate between two minor literary cultures. Without an intermediary of translation, some literary works can only be in a state of "death" or "marginalization" in other cultures and literary traditions (N. Wang, "World Literature" 24). Literary translation appears to be more important in the age of AI, representing the courage and confidence of various literatures to go global, and also the broad-mindedness of world literature. Due to artificial intelligence, world literature will have more diverse kinds of translators, from experts and scholars proficient in foreign languages to underpaid professional translators working under time pressure and to machine algorithms.

Translation by AI has continuously broken through technological bottlenecks and has made significant progress in terms of translation accuracy thanks to systems such as GoogleTranslate and DeepL. Intelligent translation is not only a requirement of an average user, but is also important for cultural strategies of various countries, since "national translation technology capability is an objective requirement for countries around the world in the era of artificial intelligence. Countries with a sense of responsibility should attach importance to national translation technology capability and promote global technological development" (H. Wang 43). The development of LLMs

such as ChatGPT has greatly improved the convenience, automation, and accuracy of translation technology, thus further promoting the formation of a technological community with a shared future for humanity. ChatGPT relies on its own knowledge base and corpus to translate between various natural languages, which has great potential in literary dissemination.

Despite the progress AI made in translation, one cannot stay blind to its deficiencies, especially in the field of literary translation, which typically still relies on the work of professionals, experts and scholars, or what is called academic translation, making us wary of absolute translation technicism. J. Hillis Miller announced almost ten years ago three important challenges to the new World Literature, the challenge of translation being the first, and this is still so today. The imaginary world in which a poet lives is “structured differently, and the translator’s job, already hard enough, is complicated by the duty to render this difference” (Saussy 293). We expect no less of a poetic translation than that it should create an autonomous literary world.

Translation of world literature involves heterogeneous cultures and civilizations, which puts the translator’s task beyond the already challenging requirements of accurate understanding and rendition. Already Aristotle thought that poets’ excellence could be measured by their metaphors, but “[a]t present, machine translation and translation technology cannot effectively handle the translation of metaphorical words, and the degree of accurate inference of metaphorical meaning is very low” (Li 25). The problem of translating metaphors, however, cannot be limited to poetry, since they play a crucial role in the language of most literary artforms, as well as in philosophy or language in general (see Ricoeur). ChatGPT has progressed far beyond previous machine translations, but it still fails to fully meet the requirements of literary works, as can be demonstrated with the English translation of the highly complex literary and philosophical term “yi” (義), a central notion for Mozi. ChatGPT renders it as “righteousness” or “righteousness and loyalty,” offering a brief extra explanation of its meanings in Chinese classics. But “yi” signifies far more than just “righteousness” or “loyalty” for Mozi. It can also mean “benevolence/benefits-oriented,” “ethics of conduct” and so on, depending on the context. Obviously, ChatGPT here still tends to offer a literal translation of this culturally loaded term “yi,” regardless of its multiple implications, which constitutes a central feature in classical Chinese literature and philosophy, where the meaning of a word relies mostly on the context and one’s individual insight rather than the literal sense.

The deficiencies of ChatGPT's translation became more obvious after some experimentation which we discuss below. We asked ChatGPT to translate the classical Chinese essay "Wenfu" (文赋, "Exposition on the Genre Fu") by Lu Ji (261–303) into English. Since the essay was a prestigious and sometimes central artform of classical Chinese literature, especially during Western Jin Dynasty (266–317) and thereafter, this choice is a legitimate challenge to literary translation skills of AI.

One of the first surprising results was that the quality of translation by ChatGPT is unstable. The first two or three paragraphs were translated rather well, even better than that by DeepL, with, for example, such idiomatic diction as "brilliance of literati, subtleties and extol," and a balanced and succinct syntactic structure, such as "sighing over their passing, gazing at myriad things and contemplating their diversity." However, this standard does not last; later the translation becomes more and more simplified, tending to frequently use "subject+verb+and" structure; for instance, the last paragraph of the essay is translated into a six "it+verb" sentence: "It spans, it observes, it rescues, it spreads, it absorbs, and it encompasses." If we were to restart ChatGPT every time after it has finished two or three paragraphs, the result would be more satisfying, but this is time-consuming process, which still cannot handle the difficulty of translating culture-loaded terms and concepts, such as the above mentioned "yi."

Another shortcoming appears to be ChatGPT's failure in demonstrating or presenting the aesthetic feature and flavor in literary translation. Let us take its translation of Robert Frost's poem "Spring Pools" for an example:

Spring Pools

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect
The total sky almost without defect,
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,
And yet not out by any brook or river,
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods
Let them think twice before they use their powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
These flowery waters and these watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday. (Frost)

Version 1 by ChatGPT

这些池塘，即使在森林中，仍然倒映出
几乎没有瑕疵的整个天空，
像它们旁边的花朵一样，寒冷而颤抖，
就像旁边的花朵一样，它们很快就会消失，
但并非在任何小溪或河边，
而是通过根部将黑暗的叶子引上来。

那些在它们封闭的芽中拥有的树木
让大自然变暗并成为夏季的树林 -
在它们动用力量之前，让它们三思
不要抹去、喝掉和扫走
这些花朵的水和这些水中的花朵
就像昨天刚刚融化的雪一样。

Version 2 by ChatGPT

此池，纵在深林，犹能倒映天穹无瑕，
花儿相依，凛冽颤抖，终将如同傍花之物消逝。
却非溪水江河之畔，而是根脚悄然将幽暗羽翼铺展。

那些树木，藏匿着春日之力，欲使大自然黯然褪色成夏林，
愿它们三思，切勿滥用力量，将花海澄净之水，
以及水中的芬芳花朵一扫而空，如同昨日融化的白雪。

We get two versions of the translation, the second one more literary, but the flavor and significance conveyed are rather similar to the first, and the rhyming scheme of the source text is also lost. What matters more is the losing of “depth” the poem wants to express. Robert Frost is good at using colloquial language, familiar rhythms, common metaphors and symbolic techniques in daily life in depicting the New England countryside. His record of the overlooked rural scenery often contains profound, symbolic, and even metaphysical meanings, going beyond the personal experience and linking together the inner world, nature, and the entire universe, while explaining the values on which his profound religious beliefs are based. A good translation should endeavor to represent all this, though translators might render the various features differently. The use of “在它们动用力量之前” and “切勿滥用力量” in the ChatGPT’s translation is rather awkward, compared with “请让它们一思再思” and “它们不妨多多体贴” by a human translator (Frost). The use of “请” and “不妨” conveys the poet’s lamenting on the quick passing away or disappearing of the beauty in

nature, so the trees in the poem should “think twice” before draining the pools that were formed by yesterday’s melting snow water, hoping to prolong their beauty as much as possible and also indicating a deep sense of humanism and humor towards life by the varied extent of such “appealing” on the trees in “请” (“please”), “让” (“let”) and “不妨” (“might as well”). This is a testimony to the diversity of human translation, compared with the roughly same translation by ChatGPT, though varied a little bit in diction after inserting a new prompt but still lacking the atmosphere of a poem.

What is more, not only Damrosch believes that world literature is “writing that gains in translation” (Damrosch 281) but Walter Benjamin also assumed that a translated work can, in a foreign context, gain “continuing life” or “afterlife” (Benjamin 153). This is far from being the case with the translation by ChatGPT; it might even be the opposite. With AI we can check the process of a poem being translated again and again rather quickly. Let us take the following lines of “Spring Pools” as an example: “Let them think twice before they use their powers / To blot out and drink up and sweep away.” If one asks ChatGPT to translate the Chinese version back into English, then from English into Chinese and again from Chinese into English, one can find the “final” English version: “Let them reconsider before they unleash their might / To blot out and consume and sweep away” and “Before they unleash their might, let them ponder / To blot out and consume and sweep away.”

The replacement of “think twice” by “reconsider” and “ponder” plus the use of “consume” does not conform to the original lively and poetic atmosphere, creating a rather awkward style. The back-and-forth translation experiment makes the poem go far away from the original without much literariness left. The use of ChatGPT ironically runs counter to the expectation both Damrosch and Benjamin invest in the role of translation in literature. We “lose” things, mainly “literariness,” instead of gaining them, turning a literary work or part of the work into a flattened piece of composition.

Undoubtedly, LLMs like ChatGPT are making day-by-day breakthroughs, serving as a new platform for the system of world literature. AI allows machines to connect with world literature based on the established cognition of humans. The convenience offered by this technology cannot guarantee a problem-free approach to world literature, which makes us wonder whether LLMs are a blessing or a curse for world literature. It undeniably brings great opportunities one might be happy to seize, but also some challenges, both to world literature and

the humanities more generally. The formulation of patent law of works created by AI can be a complicated problem, as well as judging if a work is wholly created and owned by AI. Despite the positive role AI plays in world literature, one still needs to stay vigilant against the potential problems it could cause in the creation, translation and circulation of world literature, for instance, retaining of “alienness” of the source text and the various “biases” integrated into this technology, as shown by different representations of the same writer, especially those writers from developing countries, in different AIs developed in different regions. Only by being aware of this can we use the technology to our advantage in advancing the values cherished both in cultural relativism and cultural universalism of world literature. AI will choose, sieve and represent based on the cognition system of its designers; therefore, it may further promote the popularity of literatures from dominant cultures, going contrary to the original intention of Goethe’s conception of world literature. As we have tried to argue, we need a balance between technology and humanity, as well as center and periphery in order to use AI for a “better” world literature.

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Premišljevanje svetovne književnosti v dobi umetne inteligence

Ključne besede: literatura in umetna inteligenca / poezija / literarno prevajanje / literarnost / ChatGPT / Lem, Stanisław

Odkar se je pred skoraj dvema stoletjema v pogovoru med Goethejem in njegovim tajnikom prvič pojavil izraz »svetovna književnost«, se razprava o njej ni nikoli ustavila, ampak se je v dobi umetne inteligence, ki prinaša spremembe na skoraj vseh področjih družbe, tudi v svetovni književnosti, le še okrepila. Natančneje, čeprav umetna inteligenca prinaša izjemne prednosti za obtok in prevajanje svetovne književnosti, odpira tudi mnoge izzive in težave. Na podlagi analize prevodov literarnih besedil med različnimi kulturami članek trdi dvoje: prvič, UI lahko nasprotuje trditvi Davida Damroscha, da »svetovna književnost pridobiva s prevajanjem«, saj ta lahko, kot kažejo izbrani primeri v prispevku, zaradi UI tudi »izgublja«, na primer svojo literarnost; drugič, UI lahko ustvarja »pristransko« sliko o teoretskih ali literarnih delih iz različnih kultur. Prav zato moramo biti pozorni, da nas ti dve nevarnosti »tehnološkega vala« ne bi zavedli.

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NAVODILA ZA AVTORJE

Primerjalna književnost objavlja izvirne razprave s področij primerjalne književnosti, literarne teorije, metodologije literarne vede, literarne estetike in drugih strok, ki obravnavajo literaturo in njene kontekste. Zaželeni so tudi meddisciplinarni pristopi. Revija objavlja prispevke v slovenščini ali angleščini, izjemoma tudi v drugih jezikih. Vsi članki so recenzirani.

Prispevke pošiljajte na naslov: marijan.dovic@zrc-sazu.si.

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