

Introduction

The eleventh number of the journal *Knjiženstvo* is published at the end of the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, a year during which we have all grown tired waiting for this abnormal state of affairs, marked by many premature deaths, to come to an end. “The new normality” has become an integral part of our everyday lives.

Does the literature we present here tell us of such times? Of course it does! It shows us that there have always been not only periods but also long-lasting states of danger and fear on the one hand, and struggle for a decent life on the other. It is such works that we present in the ten texts of this number, in the section “Women’s Literature and Culture”. We begin from afar, with Chinese literature and the stories of Zhang Ailing which deal with private lives in a time of great upheavals and with female characters who, in those clashes between the old and the new, strive to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchy. Then we acquaint ourselves with the autobiographies of Dalit women who are oppressed by the caste system of India, and also by the patriarchy which determines relationships among the Dalits themselves.

The next three papers were written within the seminar *Women in Balkan Literature and Culture* which was held online over the course of 2020. The seminar is organized and run by Miglena Dikova-Milanova from the University of Ghent and Adelina Angusheva-Tihanov from the University of Manchester. They edited this small thematic subsection, and for this we are grateful to them. The first paper in this thematic subsection and the third in the section “Women’s Literature and Culture” tells of the Greek woman poet Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke and her reading of the myth of Penelope. The next text deals with the work of Romanian literary critic Monica Lovinescu and her approach to literature which was a combination of the ethical and the aesthetic. The last paper in this thematic subsection deals with subversive strategies in the works of women authors who invert the traditional relationship between artistic creation and inspiration as represented by the characters of muses. Given the fact that this paper pertains to the authors from “the region”, and thus covers the theme of women in Balkan culture, it is entirely proper for it to be followed by a paper that deals with transnationality in post-Yugoslav anti-war women’s essays, which is the sixth paper in the section “Women’s Literature and Culture”. Transnational literature is the topic of the seventh text as well: it is dedicated to a novel by Elvira Mujčić about language and an immigrant’s experience of acquiring a new identity. The text about the *Memoirs* of Teodora Kosmowska Krajewska introduces us to a Polish female physician who strove to emancipate women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms

of their attitude toward health and toward their bodies while sharing with them the status of someone who is doubly oppressed – on the grounds of national identity and on the grounds of gender. The penultimate text in this section is a result of research into Lela Davičo’s work and life, and it makes us aware of how ephemeral the society’s memory is when it comes to the achievements of women. At the very end of this section, we again go far in geographical terms – in other words, what we have is a paper on a novel by Luisa Valenzuela, an Argentinian author who shows her heroine against the backdrop of social upheavals in Argentina during the 1960s. As with the stories of the Chinese woman writer presented in the first paper, here too the intimate world is a scene of ideological changes with women always remaining the *other* or becoming even more strongly marginalized.

The other pieces that we present to you in this volume are testimonies to efforts towards describing women’s works and saving them from oblivion so that we would be able to turn them into a lasting heritage. The fifth part of the bibliography of the journal *Women’s World: The Journal of the Charity Associations of Serbian Women*, which was published from 1886 to 1914, covers four years of the journal’s publication – from 1904 to 1907 – and is part of those testimonies.

In this volume’s section “Interview”, through a conversation, we meet Sibelan Forrester, a woman translator and professor of Slavic languages and literatures from the University of Swarthmore in Pennsylvania.

In terms of both their number and topics, our reviews show a diversity of production on the topic of women’s culture and creativity. We begin with a splendid monograph devoted to the Women’s Association; and what comes next is a book about women workers and activists in Osijek between the two world wars. The next three books presented by our associates are books of proceedings. The first one is made up of texts from a conference about women scientists, held at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in February 2020, and the second one is a book of proceedings on the position of widows in Serbia. The third one is a book of texts dedicated to Marina Blagojević Hughson which tell about her work and life or deal with the fields of study that she opened up and conquered. Three of the reviewed books are dedicated to the literary works of women – a journalistic book based on the biography and letters of Milena Pavlović Barili, a book of proceedings which acquaints us with Slavic literary figures and with a project of the Forum of Slavic Cultures, and a digital textbook about women writers. At the very end of this section, we also present a brochure about women inventors.

In the section “Events”, we briefly report on two events that happened alive, which is now becoming a true rarity – a literary evening devoted to the poetry of Marija Knežević and

a ceremony on the occasion of unveiling a memorial plaque dedicated to Jelica Belović-Bernadzikowska.

So much for these hard times, for reading and learning from the past, for struggles and memory.

Biljana Dojčinović, Editor-in-Chief
(Translated by Goran Petrović)