

TWO CONGENIAL FEMALE VOICES – A WORLD APART

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ABSTRACT

The attempt to reconstruct the personality and the literary works of Margaret Fuller and Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić shines the spotlight not only on these extraordinary female figures, two strong female voices coming from two distant parts of the world, Margaret as a writer, Transcendentalist, translator, journal editor and contributor; Ivana as the authoress of short stories, poems, a short novel and collections of fairy-tales, but also from a period of time which represents a prolegomenon in the comprehension of female abilities. Both of these distinguished female figures earned significant reputation: Margaret was the first American female foreign correspondent, and Ivana received two nominations for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Both were ahead of their time and “moved” the boundaries, both were dedicated to education and writing, and tried whole-heartedly to influence the improvement of the social position of women. The aim of this paper is to point out their vision of (women’s) writing / children’s literature as well as their contribution to education (of women) in general.

Keywords: female voice, antebellum America, South Slavic literary context, children’s literature

DUE VOCI FEMMINILI AFFINI – DUE MONDI

SINTESI

Il tentativo di ricostruire la personalità e le opere letterarie di Margaret Fuller e Ivana Brlić-Mazuranić illumina non solo queste straordinarie figure femminili, due forti voci femminili provenienti da due lontane parti del mondo, ma anche il periodo che sia nel continente americano che quello europeo rappresenta prolegomeni nella comprensione della capacità delle donne. Margaret Fuller era una scrittrice, trascendentalista, traduttrice, redattrice e collaboratrice della rivista, e Ivana Brlić-Mazuranić era autrice di racconti, poesie, romanzi brevi e raccolte di fiabe. Entrambe queste eminenti figure femminili hanno guadagnato la reputazione significativa: Fuller è stata la prima donna corrispondente americana e Brlić-Mazuranić ha ricevuto due nomination al Premio Nobel per la letteratura. Entrambe erano in anticipo sui tempi e hanno “spinto” i confini, entrambe erano dedicate all’istruzione e alla scrittura e hanno cercato con tutto il cuore di influenzare il miglioramento dello status sociale delle donne. L’obiettivo di questa opera è di sottolineare la loro visione della scrittura femminile/ letteratura per i bambini, così come il loro contributo all’istruzione (delle donne) in generale.

Parole chiave: voce femminile, antebellum America, contesto letterario slavo meridionale, letteratura per bambini

I do not write well at all ... I have written every day a little but have made but little improvement ... I hope to make greater proficiency in my Studies. (Marshall, 2013, 21)

This statement was a seven-year-old girl's apology to her father, a prominent and highly educated lawyer in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This girl would not only prove to be "the prodigy of talent and accomplishment" (Marshall, 2013, 33), but, as a young lady, she would be recognized as a writer, teacher, journalist, translator, journal editor, Transcendentalist, the first American female foreign correspondent who faced the great turmoil of the Revolution in Italy in the late 1840s, the only female writer whose literary and critical contributions were published in the *Western Messenger*, a distinguished magazine of the day, a pre-feminist who raised her voice on behalf of women, putting into the spotlight the problem of the social position and rights of the "gentler" sex and who, with her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, provoked controversial responses from her contemporaries. This girl would be known world-widely as one of the greatest minds of antebellum America¹, Margaret Fuller.

Margaret Fuller was the oldest daughter of the stern and highly demanding Timothy Fuller who had a successful career in politics, being a member of Congress. He considered his oldest daughter's education extremely significant, proclaimed himself as her only teacher and subjected her to his strenuous methods of teaching, trying to "transfer" all of his knowledge to his first born child, claiming that "[t]o excel in all things should be your constant aim; mediocrity is obscurity" (Marshall, 2013, 21). He introduced Latin lessons to her education when she was only six, "requiring that she recite her lessons only to *him* during his months at home, insisting she be kept awake until his return from work to stand before him on his study carpet late at night, her nerves 'on the stretch' until she finished repeating to him what she had learned that day" (Marshall, 2013, 21).

As Margaret Fuller's biographers state, even as an adult woman with an astonishing career, years after Mr. Fuller's death, she reflected on her father both with deep, loving emotions and a dose of resentment, probably because he had "demanded accuracy and clearness in everything" and insisted that you make yourself "perfectly intelligible to the person addressed; [you] must not express a thought, unless you can give a reason for it, if required; must not make a statement, unless sure of all particulars" (Marshall, 2013, 29).

At the age of nine she was sent to the newly opened Cambridge Port Private Grammar School though she did not stay there for long, one of the reasons being her "superiority" compared to her classmates. The next step in her education was the most academically strict and demanding girl's academy in Boston, Dr. Park's Lyceum for Young Ladies, where she could improve and broaden her knowledge as well as begin research into new disciplines. She was taught Latin and English compositions, French, Italian, history, geography, geometry and trigonometry, and natural sciences (Marshall, 2013, 32). She was enchanted with classic literature, Roman and Greek heroes, she read great German authors, even though in antebellum America German literature was not looked on favorably by many, such as Dr. Park, who claimed that it was polluted with "rhapsodical intimations [and] was not taught in his school" (Marshall, 2013, 34). Margaret excelled here as well and became a prize pupil. Years later, her interest in European literatures, history and politics tremendously increased. "No longer Byronized, Margaret read Schiller, Novalis, Jean Paul Richter, and above all Goethe" (Marshall, 2013, 57).

The "intellectual prodigy" that had mastered flawlessly the most demanding school tasks at a certain point was expected to change her role – related to the fact that her father's political career had failed and the family's economic situation was far from promising, Timothy Fuller, suggested that Margaret teach in the family school. Soon afterwards, beside her siblings, she had three village children in her classroom, thus earning her own money for the first time. And this was just the beginning of her teaching career. In the autumn of 1837 Margaret accepted a position as Bronson Alcott's teaching assistant in his Temple School in Boston. While giving classes in French, German, and Italian literature she discovered that she was, by disposition "more galvanizer than teacher" (Marshall, 2013, 77). As Megan Marshall stated, Margaret was very proud of her teaching abilities, primarily concerning the fact that "within 3 months the beginning German class was translating 20 pages per lesson, the advanced language students reading whole volumes of Goethe and Dante" (Marshall, 2013, 77).

Unlike the existing tendency in some schools in antebellum America,² the practice of rigorous methods, Margaret Fuller considered her relationships with her pupils as a special bond and friendship, nurturing collegial relations, inspiring them to converse and express their thoughts, stand their ground

1 Antebellum – "Belonging to the period before a war, esp. the American Civil War" (Jost et al., 1993, 56).

2 Richard H. Brodhead highlighted parallels between the whipping scenes in antislavery texts such as Douglas's *Narrative*, a reformist text by Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's *Record of a School* "with its astonishing account of Bronson Alcott making his pupils whip *him* for their disciplinary infractions. When at first they did it very lightly, Alcott asked of his weeping pupils if they thought that they deserved no more punishment than that. And so they were obliged to give it hard" (Brodhead, 1993, 15).

firmly in discussions, develop debating skills and satisfy their inquiring minds by a thorough search of mindscapes.

She cherished the same ideas while teaching in Providence, Rhode Island, after she had accepted Hiram Fuller's offer to work at his Greene Street School³. Since she had been given a permission to teach as she pleased, she was eager to guide and inspire the sixty girls in her class. "Margaret arranged for regular sessions with each group in the antechamber designed for recitation, insisting on conversations instead. The rule was simple: in order to remain in the class, each girl must be willing to communicate what was in her mind" (Marshall, 2013, 81). Not only did she try to focus on the girls' distinguished performance, she encouraged them to "search" for their own intellectual power, illustrating her ideas with a number of strong-willed women from ancient times, demanding "reading by women authors, from the Connecticut poet Lydia Sigourney to the British essayist Anna Jameson [...] and of course de Staël. When teaching Wordsworth, she singled out his poems about women: 'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots' received a full lesson and a written analysis as homework" (Marshall, 2013, 82).

Although Margaret Fuller was admired by the majority of her students because of her intellectual powers, the great knowledge she possessed and the efforts she put into her teaching, the tight and demanding daily schedule made her exhausted, sometimes impatient and very critical.

"I often regret that you have not a teacher who has more heart, more health, more energy, to spend upon you than I have". Although she admitted she may have been "too rough" with the girl, Margaret still hoped to "teach her more confidence and self-possession". She would rather her students learn to stand up to pressure than be indulged for shortcomings well within their power to correct: "I dare not be generous lest I should thus be unable to be just" (Marshall, 2013, 82).

After her teaching experience in Providence, Margaret came back to Boston. In 1840–42 she edited *The Dial*,⁴ a journal which presented a strong voice of Transcendentalism and circulated for four years on the literary scene, with Ralph Waldo Emerson, the father of American Transcendentalism, as the next editor. During the time she spent in New York she became inspired by the charms of the metropolis, was introduced to one of the greatest minds of the day, Evert August Duyckinck, the leader of Young America and editor of the influential journal *Arcturus*. It was Duyckinck who suggested that Margaret publish her *Papers on Literature and Art* (1846). The collection reprinted a series of her previously issued texts in *The Dial* and the part entitled "American Literature" presents, according to one of the greatest connoisseurs of American Transcendentalism, Perry Miller, "one of the boldest and most courageous" expressions in antebellum America (Miller, 1957, 188). And this is what Margaret said on the topic of American literature,⁵ its position in the present time, and prospects for the future:

3 Hiram Fuller had hired "Miss Fuller to teach for a thousand dollars a year, a salary that Alcott could never have afforded" (Allen, 1982, 296).

4 "On October 16, 1839, Emerson wrote to Margaret Fuller: 'I should heartily greet any such Journal as would fitly print these Journals of yours, & will gladly contribute of my own ink to fill it up. But unless Mr Ripley would like to undertake it himself, or unless you would, I see not that we are nearer to such an issue than we have been these two years past,' [...] Reluctantly, Margaret accepted the assignment, and George Ripley agreed to act as business manager. Weeks and Jordan in Boston contracted to publish it without subsidy. The editor was promised a salary of two hundred dollars a year, but as it turned out there were no profits and she collected no salary. [...] Alcott had suggested the name, hoping that the magazine would measure the progress of thought. [...] Throughout the winter of 1839 – 1840 he [Emerson] and Margaret furiously exchanged, discussed, and evaluated manuscripts obtained for consideration – 'Dialing', he called this correspondence – but he let her make the final decisions. This was fortunate because she was a stricter judge of literary quality; he was too eager to encourage young talent" (Allen, 1982, 357).

5 Not only did Margaret have "hot and cold" relations with "the tomahawk man", Edgar Allan Poe, there were occasional ups and downs in the long-term friendship with her Transcendental mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson. A highly educated woman, as Margaret surely was, who, according to Emerson, could stately claim, "I know all the people worth knowing in America, and I find no intellect comparable to my own" (Miller, 1957, 101), occasionally had difficulties to "adapt". However, she was ahead of her time. Sometimes her ideas, such as those expressed in her master-piece *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, were challenging and progressive, reaching far beyond the age of antebellum America. There was even a slight controversy when it comes to her friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife Sophia (Peabody) Hawthorne. This is reflected in the fact that Hawthorne's son Julian published in *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* (1884) a passage from his father's *The French and Italian Notebooks* (April 3rd 1858, Rome) which was excluded from Sophia's *Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks* (1872) (Cain, 1996, 490). Hawthorne called Margaret "a great humbug of course with much talent, and much moral reality, or else she could not have been so great a humbug. But she had stuck herself full of borrowed qualities, which she chose to provide herself with, but which had no root in her" (Cain, 1996, 491). Hawthorne even judges Margaret's choice of partner, a young Italian noble Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, claiming that he was "the handsomest man Mr. Mozier ever saw, but entirely ignorant even of his own language, scarcely able to read at all, destitute of manners; in short, half an idiot, and without any pretensions to be a gentleman" (Cain, 1996, 491). William E. Cain points out that "his words are offensive and cruel, yet in their jaded way they also bring out Fuller's intensity, intellectual resolve, and desire for experience" (1996, 490). Sophia Hawthorne was never delighted by Margaret's major ideas expressed in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, claiming that an unmarried woman has no right to comment on the institution of marriage because she had not experienced that kind of union, stating that the "'wife only' can understand the dynamics of marriage" (Marshall, 2013, 135).

Some thinkers may object to this essay, that we are about to write of that which has, as yet, no existence. For it does not follow because many books are written by persons born in America that there exists an American literature. Books which imitate or represent the thoughts and life of Europe do not constitute American literature. Before such can exist, an original idea must animate this nation and fresh currents of life must call into life fresh thoughts along its shores. We have no sympathy with national vanity. [...] We have been accused of an undue attachment to foreign continental literature, and, it is true, that in childhood, we had well-nigh 'forgotten our English', while constantly reading in other languages. Still, what we loved in the literature of continental Europe was the range and force of ideal manifestations in forms of national and individual greatness. [...] What suits Great Britain, with her insular position and consequent need to concentrate and intensify her life, her limited monarchy, and spirit of trade, does not suit a mixed race continually enriched with new blood from other stocks the most unlike that of our first descent, with ample field and verge enough to range in and leave every impulse free, and abundant opportunity to develop a genius, wide and full as our rivers, flowery, luxuriant and impassioned as our vast prairies, rooted in strength as the rocks on which the Puritan fathers landed. (Fuller in Miller, 1957, 189–191)

Margaret conducted “Conversations”, discussion classes⁶ for ladies, insisting on fruitful and vivid debates, the recognition of one’s potential, free will and self-reliance, thus promoting and shedding light on the major Transcendental ideas that she whole-heartedly supported. The Conversations enabled her to debate and focus on the reasoning of daring, “disputable” ideas in Elizabeth Peabody’s bookroom. Some of her students were very talented and outstanding women of the day, just to mention the Peabody sisters (Elizabeth, Sophia and Mary).

Fuller published her essay “The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women” (*The Dial*,⁷ July 1843). It proved to be the most daring outcry for liberation of women from the strict social rules in antebellum America. An extended version of it followed, known as her crowning work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Margaret Fuller demanded not only the autonomy of women but the interdependence of both sexes. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* the author questioned the social restrictions and “obligations” put upon women, demanding that they raise their voices and develop their own power and potential as well as decoding traditionally rooted gender roles. According to Fuller, a woman needs “not as a woman to act or rule, but as nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely” (Fuller, 1850, 31). She discusses the perspectives of marriage claiming that in marriage women had lost any right to control property and that it often implied a “union” in which the husband’s dominance over his wife is “confirmed” and “justified”.

We will not speak of the innumerable instances in which profligate and idle men live upon the earnings of industrious wives; or if the wives leave them, and take with them the children, to perform the double duty of mother and father, follow from place to place, and threaten to rob them of the children, if deprived of the rights of a husband, as they call them, planting themselves in their poor lodgings, frightening them into paying tribute by taking from them the children, running into debt at the expense of these otherwise so overtaken helots....I have known these men steal their children whom they knew they had no means to maintain...I do believe that this mode of kidnapping ..Will be by the next age viewed as it is by Heaven now (Fuller, 1850, 25–26).

Fuller pointed out that a woman does not hold property on equal terms with a man, so if it happens that she becomes a widow, instead of being the head of the family, she inherits only a part

6 Some critics, such as Perry Miller, consider these female students Transcendental luminaries, “as much laughed at as were Alcott’s ‘Orphic Sayings’, and by all accounts were as much lacking in humor” (Miller, 1957, 101).

7 The very controversial relations between Margaret Fuller and Edgar Allan Poe resulted in Poe’s intriguing statement in his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* and *Mosses from the Old Manse* (1847). According to some critics, there is a possibility that Poe was not familiar with the circumstances in the editorial board of *The Dial*, “so he probably had her in mind when he proposed that Hawthorne, in the interest of literary self-preservation, ‘hang’ the editor of *The Dial*” (Bloomfield, 2007, 103). Concerning the fact that there was a huge rift between Emerson and Transcendental “brotherhood” on one side and Edgar Allan Poe on the other, it is not surprising that Poe satirized both Transcendentalists in general and Margaret Fuller in some of his stories. Neither Emerson nor Margaret Fuller were fascinated by Poe, the man, artist, and critic. For the Father of American Transcendentalism, he was primarily “a jingle man”. However, in 1846 Poe stated that Margaret Fuller “judges woman by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozen Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth” (Bloomfield, 2007, 119).



Image 1: Margaret Fuller (Wikimedia Commons).

of her husband's fortune, "often brought him by herself, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner" (Fuller, 1850, 25). Fuller discusses "double standards" trying to "deconstruct" traditional, stereotypical issues of male and female social roles. Consequently, Fuller insists that "[t]here is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" (Fuller, 1850, 108). In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Margaret Fuller raises her voice and demands on behalf of "her sisters" the following: "Let them be sea captains, if you will!" (Fuller, 1850, 165)"

The profound texture of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) reveals Emersonian ideas of self-reliance, corresponding to the Latin saying *Ne te quesiveris extra*, thus claiming *Do not search outside yourself*, since everything you need is within you. Rely on your own self, your own potential, or, to recall Emerson again and the ideas expressed in his essay "Self-Reliance", "*trust thyself ... trust thy thought ... trust thy emotion*". According to Charles Capper, Margaret Fuller's Romanticism

deeply expressed Transcendental "versions of the values of antebellum democracy", primarily those "of universally equal individual rights and purposive self-fashioning" (Capper, 2015, 25). Margaret Fuller truly believed that there were no strict gender roles since "the world is in flux, a never ending process" (Vukčević, 2005, 159). As Vukčević points out, Margaret Fuller envisaged masterfully a partnership of equals. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* makes a distinguished "feminist" outcry in advance of the first women's rights convention.

Margaret Fuller traveled to Europe and became the first American female correspondent. While in London, she met Giuseppe Mazzini, the exiled Italian activist and patriot who had participated in creating the young Italy movement with the highest goal – the creation of an independent Republic. She was introduced to Thomas Carlyle who considered her "not nearly such a bore as [he] expected", on the contrary, he found her "heroic and courageous" (Bloomfield, 2007, 119). In Paris she was feted by George Sand, a well-

known French writer who astonished society by “breaking” social norms and being entangled with “controversy” due to her extramarital relations, as well as Adam Mickiewicz, a famous Polish patriot and poet. However, she was impressed with Italy, she fell in love with both the places she visited and the 26-year-old, poorly educated, impoverished Roman noble Giovanni Angelo Ossoli with whom she would have a son. Margaret arrived in Italy at a time of dramatic upheavals, turmoil, and intense revolutionary activity. She wrote vivid texts covering the most relevant political events thus providing readers in her homeland with the first-hand information on the turbulent course of events in the late 1840s.

[H]er *Tribune* dispatches were a source of detailed news that her American readers found not just absorbing but indispensable as a wave of revolution swept across Europe in 1848 [...] The style of reporting Margaret had developed, first in her travels in the West and then on her forays into the netherworld of the Great Metropolis, personal in tone but visionary in scope, was a perfect match for the tumultuous world events of the next eighteen months. (Marshall, 2013, 180)

After facing serious turmoil in Italy, she decided to go back to her homeland with her husband and baby. They boarded the ship *Elizabeth* which was wrecked off Fire Island on July 19, 1850. Unfortunately, all the members of the family drowned.

Not too long after her death, another significant authoress was born, another strong female voice was heard, a voice echoing from a distant country and different culture. It was one more distinctive and outstanding female voice that would make a difference and influence the generations of writers to come.

Investigating the South Slavic context of the narration from the 19th century until the present day, a very rich and diversified when talking about the male literariness, it is not hard to grasp what the reason was of the insufficiency of the female population in the creation of narrative texts, poetry, and dramatic discourse. The heroic model of the world conditioned a disproportionate prevalence of the male principle in all social issues, and also in literary creation. With the certainty of diachronic cognition we conclude that from the year 863, which is officially taken as the year when literacy and Christianity were brought to the South Slavic countries, until the 15th century, there are just rare instances of women stepping forward in literature, of which

we are familiar with the work of Jefimija who lived in the court of the Nemanjićs, and who was the author of *The Encomium of Prince Lazar*, and Jelena Balšić (the daughter of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović), the authoress of three letters from a well-known correspondence with her ordained priest and confessor Nikon of Jerusalem; their religious and pious epistolary discourse was collected in the so called Gorica's Almanac, 1441/1442 (kept in a repository of the Archive of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Belgrade). Therefore, from the beginnings of literacy until the second half of the 19th century, and almost until the end of the century, there had been no female author of greater impetus and creative continuity until Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić appeared on the scene. Before we highlight analytically the person and the works of the aforementioned authoress, it is necessary to explain why there was a centuries-long aphasia when it comes to women's writing. The first reason proves to be the already mentioned warring way of life which involved defense against the conquerors present in the region of the South Slavic communities. The colonial societies did not possess circumstances of a spiritual and material nature which would satisfy their cultural needs, therefore everything came down to maintaining the bare necessities of existence, and when the tribal society took on a different quality, literacy, and education spread through the population, but even that for a long period of time was a privilege of the aristocracy. Although it is a fact that one South Slavic community had a printing press almost concurrently with Gutenberg's printing house, when the first printing house in the South Slavic countries was established in the then state of Zeta (Montenegro), which was also the first state-owned printing house in the world, this did not contribute to the existence of an adequate affirmative atmosphere when it comes to the creation of literary ideas. This printing house served for liturgical purposes, meaning the printing of theological books, not printing of any other type of literature. Soon after its opening (six years later) it ceased its activities because it was melted down to make weapons needed for defense against the rising Ottoman Empire. The lack of freedom during the following five centuries would determine the direction of certain South Slavic communities towards the fight for national liberation and questions of identity. In such a social milieu it is clear that there was no room for women's writing.

Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić (1874–1938) was born at the time when the South Slavic people's struggle for the definition of the political, economic and cultural questions of their countries in an in-

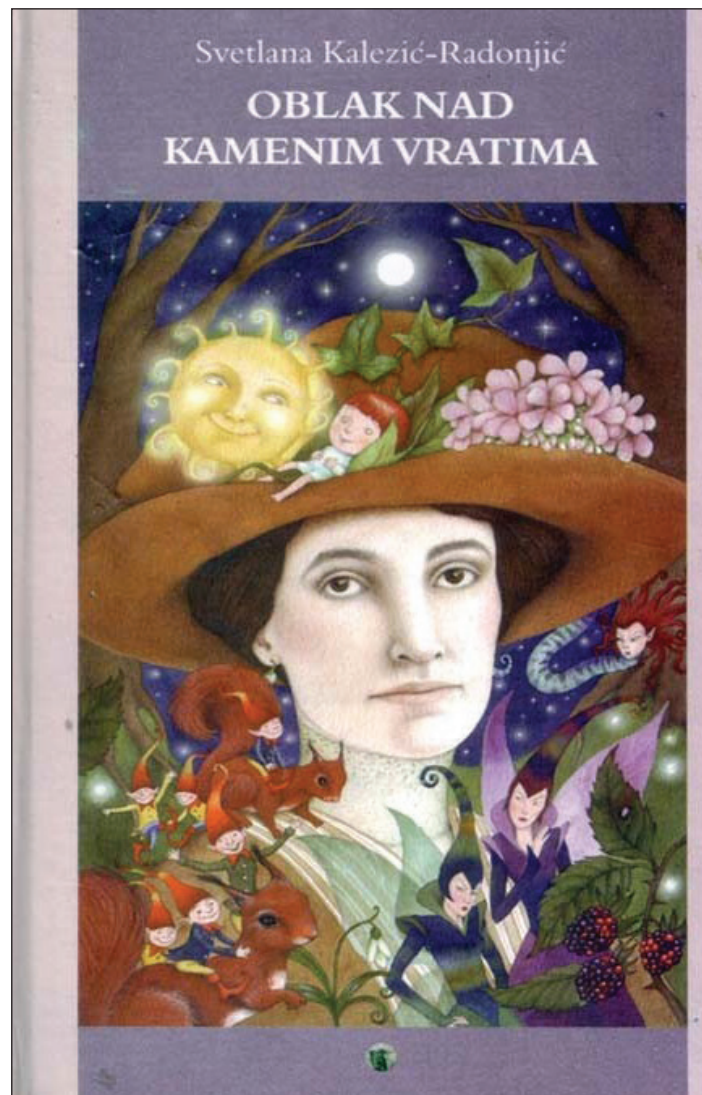


Image 2: The book cover of Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić's *The Cloud over the Stone Door: The Art of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's Writing* (by the artist Marsela Hajdinjak)

tegrated manner came to a head. Her grandfather Ivan Mažuranić, a Croatian Governor and writer, was an outstanding fighter against the brutal Hungarianization of the Croats which particularly escalated after his gubernatorial tenure of office in the time of infamous rule of Khuen-Héderváry. He was a distinguished advocate of the Illyrian Movement which emphasized a pan-Slavist conceptual basis and the introduction of the national language into literature. It is necessary to mention the fact that the Croatian language gained its official standardization from the end of the 19th century, given that, because of the exploiting aspirations of various conquerors through history, the official language of the country had only been

permitted to be Latin, German, and eventually, for a long time, Hungarian. Bearing in mind all the circumstances, Brlić-Mažuranić became the first female writer in Croatia and in South Slavic literature in general.

When considered in any of the well-known and applicable ways in the field of literary studies – Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić belongs to the already indicated context of Literary Modernism. In the terms of her biography, she was born in 1874, which means that she had just turned 20 in 1895, which is considered in literary history, more frequently than all the other dates, as the beginning

of a new literary period which, according to the same standards, would last until the First World War or 1916. In the terms of generations she stands shoulder to shoulder with the majority of key protagonists of the formation under discussion. Only a year before her, for example, Antun Gustav Matoš and Milivoj Dežman Jovanov were born, and Dinko Šimunović and Srđan Tucić, Vladimir Vidrić, and Dragutin Domjanić were born a year after her birth and two years later Milan Begović and Vladimir Nazor were born. (Kalezić-Radonjić, 2011, 7)

Although in our national societies and literatures each literary epoch, formation or movement, are half a century or sometimes even a century late (for example, 1847 was the year of the victory of Vuk's reform or the introduction of the vernacular language into literature, it was still a period of Romanticism in our literature, and at the same time, in 1835, the novel *The Père Goriot* was published in France, written by Honoré de Balzac as a programmatical novel according to the methodology of realistic procedure), the period of Modernist trends in this region and in Europe can be followed in synchronic manner. The social sobering up, acculturational European relations and interculturology, the liberation from numerous conquerors, the Berlin Congress in 1878 and different ways of affirming nations, conditioned the modern tendencies in the region. Apart from that, the historical course of events which resulted in changes in social relations – class differentiation, bourgeois conformism and resistance to it, the creation of left and then right orientations, eventually the First World War from which the avant-garde simultaneously developed, were the current actors of persuasiveness when it comes to the process of dissolving the bourgeois system in this area. The writers of this period had their personal literariness, by means of which they fought against the clearly bad living and economic conditions in the society. The way most typical of the time was anti-mimetism, since everything that was contrary to the image of reality found its place in literature as the existing projection of defense. Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić was the only woman who created her works in the time of the actual modernist and avant-garde tendencies; her anti-mimetic sensation was not, at the same time, anti-narrative; on the contrary, she decided to confront the nonsense of the world by creating fairy-tales – a narrative discourse which does not mimize the world of realia, and therefore has an unlimited defense mechanism against the laws of that world. However, it is possible that her literary interest

and the thematic, as well as motif, framework of her work did not need to have connections with the poetic atmosphere of the period – as a writer of a specific intellect and idiom she would create in the same manner and independently of the expectations of the current trends. When she gave her autopoetic comments on her life and works in her brief *Autobiography*, she pointed out that the reasons for making fairy-tales was actually her children, since she discovered that in the phase of their perception of the world, as well in the phase of finding their initial place in it, it was she who had to adapt them to the existing way of life in the sense of imitating the worlds of the non-existent. However, this artist created poetry and short stories written in a didactic vein, as well as the short novel (the genre defined by literary criticism) *The Strange Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice*, which she herself thought of as a short-story of longer scope.

The necessary question which appears here relates to the recognition of the factors which put this authoress in the ranks of the feminists, as well as marking the elements which make her oeuvre a distinctively feminine discourse. In answering this question we point to her advocacy of the enlightened state and education of women, while her personal example of shaping verbal worlds significantly points to the esthetic and ethical consciousness and a peculiar intellectual curiosity. In her *Autobiography* she points out that for a certain period of time she even set aside her literary work since she was engaged continuously as an active companion of her husband in his state affairs. Her husband Vatroslav Brlić, came from a famous family which cherished a traditional reverence for art, as well as a devotion to politics, he himself was a member of the Croatian Parliament. As someone who was by nature very modest person, she radiated her personal small revolution as a hypersensitive being through various social and cultural activities. In the words of Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić who in her MA thesis *The Cloud Over the Stone Door (The Art of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's Writing)* dealt with the analytical and synthetical range of this literary figure, Brlić-Mažuranić was interested in all the available and culturally accessible activities, and she was one of the initiators of the opening of the Croatian Reading-Room "and the first secretary of the Association of Women in the Croatian Ladies' Charitable Society (1895–1899), and afterwards twice its president (1905–1907) and (1929–1931)" (Kalezić-Radonjić, 2011, 6). In the aforementioned brief autobiographical work, Brlić-Mažuranić highlights her grandfather Ivan Mažuranić, who was her first model of identi-



Image 3: Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić (Wikimedia Commons).

fication during her childhood. The visits to her grandfather's house in Varaždin represented for her a disclosure of new worlds, each time anew and with strong intensity, since it was then that she moved away for hours from the world of the real existence, hermeneutically getting into the spirit of the cult of the story and narration. Her grandfather, a Croatian writer and governor, a fighter for South Slavic unity a full century before it actually happened, and for unity in political, economic, social, and linguistic terms, was a strong individual, although raised with evident patriarchal qualities; he was oriented towards the modernist tendencies of the new, liberal world and, therefore the concept of femininity and freedom of all sorts, the choice of free education, for Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić occurred without resistance from her family, and with the all-embracing help of her grandfather. Therefore, she grew up as an educated, widely read and multilingual person, and the fact that she was a distinguished polymath at a time when women were not edu-

cated and in a chronotope to which she did not belong because of the many centuries of colonial existence, increases the perception of this unexpected individual horizon. Apart the education of the family that she originated from, and the nobility and tendency toward art of the family she married into, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić pointed out that she needed to express her gratitude to the poet Franjo Marković for her complete literary education and intellectual ascendance. "In the close friendly communication between our families since my childhood, I had the opportunity to edge towards this really genuine poet. The public does not have any measure by which to determine the heights of a writer except by his works" (Brlić-Mažuranić, 2021).

The poet Marković as a model of creativity, and the strong figure of her grandfather Ivan, who was aware of the fact that a woman has to fulfill her creative aspirations, directed Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić in the right direction, which meant toward imagination and productivity. Although she

grew up in a patriarchal South Slavic country, she was fortunate to be born and grow up in one of the most educated Croatian houses of the nineteenth century, and the choice she made in her marriage completely directed her literary path. She declared many times that her family and literary lives at one point had become joined and out of it her multi-decade engagement was produced. She discussed this issue, as we have already mentioned, in her *Autobiography*.

When the little troop of my children began attaining full growth and when they expressed the usual desire for reading – it seemed to me at one time that I found a point where my desire for writing became reconciled with my comprehension of duties. My children wanted to read – what a joy for me to be their guide in that field as well, to open the door for them to that fabulous, uneven world into which every child steps with their first reading – to make their clear and curious little eyes look back on those sides of life that I want them to notice first and never drop from their sight. How could this job not be in accordance with my duties? (Brlić-Mažuranić, 2021)

She gave birth to seven children, one of them died in early infancy, and this large family nest demanded the continuous psychophysical activity of all the members of the family. Ivana herself at the culmination of her development as a mother, decided to incorporate for some other purposes, her talent of narrating which she had used up to that moment only into the oral discourses while entertaining and spiritually educating her children, which meant that she decided to give her stories to the others, giving the magic of the story to all generations and professions – children, their parents and family, teachers and other educators of children. In the century when she created her works, and also from long before she was born, it is important to mention once again, that she was the only woman writer, exclusively the only authoress of fairy-tales, which was a rare situation in Europe generally speaking, and since her appearance on the literary scene, the woman in the South Slavic community decided to dedicate a significant space and time to herself and her personal education. The end of the 19th century was, among other things, a period of time marked by liberation from various colonizers, and an era of freedom brought to the emergence of women and the advent of the completely different social semantics. The opening of schools for women and girls' institutes became a praiseworthy gesture in

each of the South Slavic countries. It is evident that education was still a privilege of the richest people, but in the first steps of the consciousness being raised by feminists this was a significant movement, since up to that time even the daughters of the wealthiest great lords were not being educated and not taught to do something constructive when it came to education. Brlić-Mažuranić had independence from her birth, as an unquestionable factor of her evolution, therefore not even the use of two surnames, completely unusual for the woman of that period, was not unusual for her two families; from her time, women started to add to their maiden name the family name they received by marriage, as we emphasized, shyly and gradually.

Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić in her book on Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić points out that this authoress gave the greatest of her inspirational ardor to children's literature.

In her early phase, over 10 years she published three collections – The Good and the Mischievous, School and Holidays and Images. In her mature phase the appearance of her crowning works followed, the novel The Strange Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice and the collection of fairy-tales Tales of Long Ago. Between the two wars she published a large number of various genres and themes: A Book for Youth, Joyful Mother – A Good Poetess, Children's Book of Health, Peace of Mind, From the Archives of the Brlić Family in Brod na Savi I – III, Jaša Dalmatin, Viceroy of the Gujarati, and Gingerbread Heart. (Kalezić-Radonjić, 2011, 6)

As the most significant works in her oeuvre we will highlight *Tales of Long Ago* and *The Strange Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice*. The fact that her selected works were translated into many foreign languages, because of which she became a world-renowned authoress, proves her popularity, as well as the exceptional breakthrough of female logocentrism in the achievements of the old continent and other regions as well. A connoisseur of the works of this Croatian authoress, Dragica S. Ivanović, in her text *Nove draži slovenskoga mita (New Charms of the Slavic Myth)* concludes that it is no coincidence that literary criticism has words of praise for her and calls her the Croatian Andersen, and that she was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature twice.

In Lidija Dujić's review article "Ženski red u Čudnovatim zgodama šegrta Hlapića" ("The Female Figure in *The Strange Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice*") the focus is put on the interesting constitution of the female protagonist Gita who is a rather unusual fictional construction. This is

a girl who gets lost at a fair in her early infancy and becomes the private ownership of the circus owner, an autocrat and tyrant who treats all of his employees like a slave-owner. Gita's phraseological point of view, in the same way as her ideological and psychological point of view, was not given in line with expectation; consequently it can be concluded that Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, in the manner of her betrayed motivation, included this in her literary character – the symbol of the new, forthcoming time. Gita is just a girl but she already lives by her wits, making a living by dancing and singing and performing acrobatic feats in the circus and becomes a faithful friend to little Hlapić, who finds himself in trouble. Although she suffers a lot in her short life, and although she is without her parents in a merciless world, she succeeds in finding her way in all situations through her inventiveness and experiential wisdom, which anticipates a futuristic vision of a woman who creates by herself her own spiritual comfort and triumph. Such a female character is an antipodal realization of all the earlier characters who waited passively for the decision of the old members of the family/community or obeyed the male principle.

The authoress keeps Gita's double identity right until the end of the book. As a girl from the circus she keeps on her thumb a scar in the shape of the cross which is, actually, the stamp of her earlier family's Christian life, while as the found daughter of the master Mrkonja she takes her previous name of Marica (for her parents), but retains her circus name Gita (for Hlapić and the book). Such an unstitched identity is supported additionally by the meeting of the adult Gita with a new girl who performs in the circus, with her horse and parrot, and with the new, nice owner as well. With this slightly subversive solution, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić at the same time passes on traditional gender stereotypes and vacillates between them fragiley. As the master-lady hides fresh bread for Hlapić under her apron, so Gita, hidden behind the tent cuts the rope with the bad baskets of a haughty basket-weaver – the first one disrupts the domestic, the other the market economy. (Dujić, 2013, 8)

It is not accident that in this short novel for children Brlić-Mažuranić starts playing with Gita's dual identity and life. She did not choose any of her identities, but in both of them she chose her own direction, ethics, and aesthetics of life. It is here that the newness and the artificiality of this character rest.

Critics found certain autobiographical details in this discourse, probably alluding to the creative energy of the authoress who unified the patriarchal and matriarchal code in her nature in a very adaptable and particular manner. That harmony promoted a new woman, a new idea and a new time, the woman of the twentieth century who can adapt all the demands of her nature and intellect, without these being contrasted, only if she can remain faithful to herself and does not renounce anything that could fulfill her intimately.

The female voice is a distinct category in the works of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić and it seems that it anticipates a new conception of fairy-tales and novels as well as the female characters in them. Her female characters, no matter whether they are protagonists, antagonists or minor characters, are not boiled down to a symbolic reduction, which means they do not represent just one person or symbol – maternity, sisterhood, womanhood in the sense of spousal connection, but on the contrary, each of them is a polyphonic construction composed of femininity, intellect, brightness, and practical knowledge.

By the interposition of characters which bring a realistic vision and appearance, even by putting them alongside beings from the spectrum of demonic fantasy, Brlić-Mažuranić opens up a new discourse in which ordinary people – fishermen, villagers, or peasants, can do great things and become well-known. Their mothers, girlfriends, sisters or daughters constitute a balance in the sense of semantic equivalence, which means that it is not necessary for a victory to be gained by a man or for him necessarily to be a knight or a protector; the female character gains a new, undiscriminated role, not losing any recognizable principles, or the distinction of her femininity. The female character has the expression of the twentieth century, the century of culturological freedom and emancipation.

CONCLUSION

According to the aforementioned, Margaret Fuller and Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić proved to be extraordinary female figures, two strong female voices that originated from significantly different, distant parts of the world. Margaret was a writer, Transcendentalist, translator, journal editor and contributor; Ivana was an authoress of short stories, poems, a short novel, and collections of fairy-tales. Although they were born and raised in different cultures, and although they lived in rather different societies with different (inter)national, political, and socio-economic circumstances and issues, these two female figures had much

in common. Both were the offspring of families which cherished the importance of education and personal growth. Both left an indelible stamp on literature. Both of these prominent female figures won great international acclaim; Margaret was the first American female foreign correspondent, Ivana received two nominations for the Nobel Prize for Literature. These authoresses were ahead of their time and pushed the boundaries; both of them were dedicated to education and writing, and were

eager to influence the improvement of the social position of women. They had their own vision of (women's) writing, the first one in antebellum America, the other in the region of the Balkans in the run-up to the 20th century. Both of them had bad ends to their lives – Margaret was drowned with her small family on their way to her homeland after the ship *Elizabeth* was wrecked off Fire Island, and Ivana committed suicide after a long period of suffering from depression.

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POVZETEK

Članek kot osnovno izhodišče izpostavlja seznanitev bralca z raznolikostjo in barvitostjo dveh avtoric, Margaret Fuller in Ivane Brlic-Mažuranić, ki sta neprecenljivo vplivali na kulturno zavest ameriškega in balkanskega toposa. Margaret Fuller je s svojo ustvarjalnostjo sprožila spremembe v Ameriki, s transparentnostjo poklica, ki si ga je izbrala, pa se je znebila vseh dotedanjih stigm in tabujev ter pokazala, da je ženska lahko novinarka, vojna poročevalka, pisateljica in borka za človekove pravice in svoboščine. Na drugem koncu sveta, na Hrvaškem, v še vedno absolutnem patriarhatu in vladavini kulturnih stereotipov, se sugestivno in slogovno ekspresivno pojavi Ivana Brlic-Mažuranić. Sama ustvarja žensko otroško književnost, tako pristno, da se je že na začetku njene literarne biografije razblinila izrazita nit med njeno fikcijo in epom njenega slavnega dedka Ivana Mažuranića. Če primerjamo njuno sočasnost in z vidika našega diahronega zornega kota, ju lahko označimo kot najizrazitejši femininocentrični posameznici svoje dobe, ki nakazujeta začetek nove dobe. Obe sta bili pred časom in „premikali“ meje, obe sta bili posvečeni izobraževanju in pisanju ter z vsem srcem poskušali vplivati na izboljšanje socialnega položaja žensk. Cilj tega prispevka je izpostaviti njuno vizijo (ženskega) pisanja / otroške literature in njenega prispevek k izobraževanju (žensk) na splošno.

Ključne besede: ženski glas, antebellum America, južnoslovanski literarni kontekst, otroška književnost

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