MARY JUGG MOLEK – AN AMERICAN WRITER AND POET WITH SLOVENE ROOTS

Irena Milanič

This article aims to present Mary Jugg Molek as a literary figure. There are two periods of Mary Jugg Molek's literary creativity: in the thirties she contributed poems, short stories and one-act plays to the *S.N.P.J.* publications: *Mladinski list–Juvenile* and occasionally, *Prosveta*;[1] in the seventies she wrote the book *Immigrant Woman,* compiled the bibliography of Ivan Molek's works, and translated and published his autobiography *Čez hribe in doline* and his novel *Dva svetova*.[2]

Mary Jugg Molek was born of Slovene parents in Chicopee, Kansas, in 1909. In 1932 she moved to Chicago and she was among the first contributors to write only for the English sections of – at that time – predominantly Slovene written immigrant papers.

The bulk of her original work belongs to the first period that began in 1932 and ended in 1941. In 1942 Mary Jugg published only one poem, while her last contribution to the magazine was an autobiographical short story entitled »Charlotta«, published in 1943. These two were the only contributions that she signed with her whole name. Mary Jugg Molek signed her contributions in the first period with her maiden name »Mary Jugg«, and in the seventies with »Mary

[1] *S.N.P.J.: Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota – Slovene National Benefit Society* (1904–) is one of the major Slovene assurance societies in the United States. Apart from insuring its members in case of sickness, injury and death, it also has a central cultural function of binding together its Slovene members.

[2] The title of the typescript *Čez hribe in doline – avtobiografske črtice Ivana Molka* was changed by the translator into *Slovene Immigrant History 1900–1950, Autobiographical Sketches by Ivan (John) Molek.*

Molek«. In all, she published ninety poems, thirty-seven short stories and nine one or two-scene plays.

She not only produced literary works but also an incredible amount of articles, publishing them in *Prosveta* (Enlightenment), *Proletarec* (The Proletarian), *Majski glas* (The May Herald) and *Mladinski list* (Juvenile). These articles are relevant because they indicate the writer's main interests – her deep faith in socialist reform, her concern in women's issues and second-generation identities. In some of her articles she was rather radical. She advocated that women and the *S.N.P.J.* youth should be given not only more space but also power inside the Slovene immigrant organizations. Significantly she provocatively entitled her weekly *Proletarec* column »For Women Only« (1st January 1936 – 1st July 1936), and her milder *Prosveta* column »Women's Round Table« (15th July 1936 – 22nd July 1938). Professor Christian has pointed out that the appearance of Mary Jugg's articles, particularly her column »Women's Round Table«, in July 1936, represented a »more positive sign for *Prosveta*«.[3] In 1934 she started to organize the Red Falcons, the youngest generation of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation. In 1938 she helped with the establishment of autonomous juvenile clubs: she prepared an outline of very practical advice, which aided the rise of new circles and provided the local leaders with starting ideas for activities. These suggestions were published in several issues of *Mladinski list*.

From July 1939 to April 1943 Mary Jugg's »A Column« regularly appeared in *Prosveta*. In these articles she mainly reflected upon contemporary events. In this period the general international atmosphere was becoming more and more tense because of the outbreak of the Second World War. Her contributions oscillated from advocating an isolationist position, which was shared by the general American public, to advocating a more engaged position with regards to European politics. In many of her articles she worried about the possible development of fascism in America, too. The brutal repression of a strike by the police, incidents where people had taken the law into their own hands and other expressions of dictatorship were reported and commented on in »A Column«. At the same time she also continued reporting on the cultural activities of the *S.N.P.J.*, in particular its Juvenile Clubs, and reviewing the latest published books, films and exhibitions.

Jugg's poems, short stories and plays are entirely rooted in American so-

[3] Henry Christian, The *Prosveta* English Section: Certainly Not Hard News And Never Intended to Be, *Dve domovini/Two Homelands*, 2–3 (1992), p. 37.

ciety and its social realities. In the Thirties her main concern was a realistic depiction of the Depression in its everyday scenes. In the Forties when the general economic situation started to improve she shifted her interest to contemporary international events. While in the Thirties her writings were imbued with socialism, in the Forties her fervent socialist faith waned, becoming mainly a pacifist conviction.

In the Thirties Jugg felt she had the role of making her young readers aware of the true causes of the contemporary hopeless economic situation, and she had to help them develop a new and independent vision of what they saw around. The socialist doctrine was the means to reveal the discrepancies in the American egalitarian ideology. She believed in socialist reformism. Socialism could improve American society and recharge the American ideals of democracy, freedom and equal opportunities for all with new, authentic meanings.

Her ideal socialist-democratic society was composed of responsible individuals living in a truly democratic and equal society. The reason why no progress had been achieved in society not only lay in the social system, but also in the individual and his own responsibilities. She started from herself and she frequently expressed a very combative attitude towards life:

When all around is loss and pain
And discords sweep the land
When I am met with countless things
I cannot understand;

When, midst its plenty, Need and Crime
A nation's power disgrace,
And bitter winds of cruel want
Bite sharply in my face,

I will not raise lame hands in prayer
That gods unseen will set things right –
Such Faith that is not anything
But endless space in starless night.

She then proposed how to face this harsh and inexplicable reality. There is a strong individualism, a belief in the potentialities of every single man. At the

same time she underlined the highly responsible attitude everybody has to assume before joining a brotherhood:

But I will free the powers of Me
I am the Force that guides my life
Through worthwhile channels, light and cheer,
Or dark abyss, dismay, and strife.

And when I have resigned Myself
To steady aim and purpose good
I will have found with joy intact
A lasting niche in Brotherhood.[4]

Socialism became the vehicle for a multicultural discourse. Because of the variety of the American ethnic mosaic she saw America as the right place for the creation of a brotherhood amongst people of different ethnic backgrounds. The general idea of a brotherhood could transcend national identities. The calloused hand and the bent form were enough to unite all American workers.

In her literary creations socialism took over ethnicity, which in her works emerged only in a fragmentary way: in the characters' names and surnames, by the sporadic use of Slovene words and phrases and by mentioning old world places. In her writings class-consciousness was more important than ethnicity. In this regard her poem »Nationality« should be considered. She started the first stanza:

And does it, then, make difference –
The language that you speak?
And is it nationality
Or brotherhood we seek?[5]

In the Forties Mary Jugg's attitude towards socialism changed. The play »A League of Nations« exemplifies this. The characters' names show that they are children of different national groups, but they share the same neighborhood. They suddenly learn that the site where they used to meet and play will be no

[4] Resolution, *Mladinski list–Juvenile (ML)*, 12, 1932, p. 368.
[5] Nationality, *ML*, 05, 1933, p. 145.

longer »theirs«, and another block will be built there. But the boys decide to build a memorial composed of their favorite toys, with which they played there the most. At that point of the play they are very proud of being capable of cooperation and that from their work a very original monument would result. Their teamwork on a micro-level symbolizes what the big nations should do on an international level. They mention the persecution of Jews in Germany, which they see as one of the gravest consequences of this inability to collaborate with one another. But there is a sudden change in the mood of the play. The boys unexpectedly start to quarrel over an apparent triviality and everybody takes back his own »piece« of the monument.[6] If the socialistic antidote was right, people were still not mature enough to understand its full value and significance.

In the poem »The Call of The New Year«, 1937, Mary Jugg expressed a similar dissatisfaction with socialism. The poem starts with a vision of a field covered with snow with fresh footsteps across it. In the following stanza this vision is broadened by comparison. The field is presented as a neat image in a street pool suddenly shattered by a stone. The sound of the creaking snow expresses a state of mind. The poem is enriched by associations and by new details:

Dull is the sound of the cheerless heart
Stumping across the snow –
A violin robbed of its every tone –
Missing, the strings and the bow.

Stretch of a soft, clean snow is the New Year
Furrowed to deep, slushy mud;
Blaring, metallic, falsetto notes
That fall with a deafening thud.

Jugg was aware that her plans for an improvement of society clashed with the general amorphous attitude of the masses:

Humanity Bleeding; humanity starving;
Humanity bound with a chain –
Humanity trampled – afraid of awakening –
This is the New Year's refrain.

[6] A League of Nations, *ML*, 05, 1939, pp. 5–7.

She cried out for somebody, a »traveler across the virgin plains«, capable of changing the tune (»discover the strings and pick up the bow«) so that events would really take a new course with the New Year. But there was no appeal to the positive potentialities of all people, the idea of community was not stressed. In fact, not only were people seen as a mob incapable of organizing themselves, but also as »afraid of awakening«. She was calling for someone who would be able to give these people strength, through »songs and strains«, but not for an uprising, an active en masse attempt to change the desperate human situation. These songs would only »muffle the drone of humanity's woe«.[7] In other words, their function would be only to reduce and not eliminate the severity of the human condition.

In 1938 *Mladinski List–Juvenile* underwent a general reorganization. Apart from an increasing number of drawings and pictures illustrating the stories, articles and poems, there was no longer the division between the Slovene and English sections. The number of constant columns rose and only in the year 1938 did there appear about twenty-eight constant columns. In particular, the content of the contributions changed. They became lighter, more humorous and gay. There was not only a depiction of harsh social realities; children's verses and stories dealing with fantasy worlds, also started to appear. This influenced Mary Jugg's writings too. In this year she started a series of short stories entitled »Nifty and His Friends«. It was about a dog and its animal friends. Nifty was an »intelligent« dog, whose common sense was sometimes better than humans'. From 1938 on, more and more animals were given voice in her poems and short stories. She also made objects speak, such as a clock, a radio or an old armchair, and this enabled her to present facts in a different perspective. If at the beginning of her career any fantasy dreaming had been discouraged, it was now fostered. From that year on she started to publish more children's rhymes, simple jingles and fairy tale stories. Humor replaced her sarcasm and, for instance, none of her 1938 poems and short stories dealt with any specific social problem.

Although most of Mary Jugg's literary contributions appeared in the youth paper *Mladinski list–Juvenile*, her works, in particular some of her poems, were addressed to an adult public as well. They distinguish themselves by their structure and their contents. Although Mary Jugg always remembered that she was writing for a young audience, she did not just write simple rhymes. On the one hand, some of Mary Jugg's poems have an attentively-chosen formal structure.

[7] The Call of The New Year, *ML*, 01, 1937, p. 17.

She used rhyming couplets, the sonnet and especially the ballad form. But the quatrain where the second and the fourth line rhyme underwent a series of changes, rhythmical adaptations and variations. To break the formal pattern of the lines she frequently used devices such as caesuras, internal rhyming, onomatopoeia, use of refrains and so on. On the other hand, Mary Jugg also composed in free verse and chose peculiar visual layouts for her poems. Despite this, all her poems are compact, since she provided unity through repetition and harmony of imagery. Enjambment was used repeatedly, contributing to the general impression of spontaneity and smoothness. The text achieved unity by the use of words from the same semantic area. Apart from alliteration and assonance, the repetition of the same consonant or vowel sounds, her poems often have a mirroring structure, so that the stanzas have the same number of lines, the same length and the same layout. The same mirroring effect was gained if the stanza ended or began with the same line or a slightly changed line. When she used free verse, she frequently used cross-references to bind the text together. Twenty-two poems out of ninety are in free verse, but none of them is prose. According to Professor Jerneja Petrič, Mary Jugg Molek was probably the first to introduce free verse into Slovene-American literature.[8]

Compared with the other poets' contributions in the *Juvenile*, her poems stand out for the way she dealt with her subject matter. In her anthology Professor Petrič commented how Mary Jugg's poetry had been intellectual, and as such constitutes an isolated example in Slovene-American literature.[9] This is true of her social poems, but especially of her autobiographical poems, where she developed her own original approach. She maintained a refined, psychological level, and she tended to become cryptic. She was frequently enigmatic and obscure. She admitted her fears and doubts, sometimes employing visions from nature. She saw Nature as a perfect, organized world, and in comparison, human reality appeared fallacious and illogical. She tried to explain the human condition and actions by using images of the sea and the different characteristics of the winds. On the one hand, she used nature descriptively, but on the other, it represented an escape and shelter from everyday reality. Her poetry, in these cases, hardly became firm and truly optimistic in a socialist sense and she was unable to end her poems with the purposive and convincing message required by the socialist interpretation of literature. Even though in her articles Mary Jugg advocated a poetry committed to the socialist cause, some

[8] Jerneja Petrič, *Naši na tujih tleh*, Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1982, p. 475.
[9] *Ibid.*

of her poems eventually went against the socialist interpretation of literature as something functional, clear and direct in its message.

In some of her earliest poems the idea prevailed that man could master nature through the aid of science. In the poem »Credo«, 1933, she expressed the positive idea that powerful natural elements such as the wind and the sea acquire meaning only if they are subdued by man to his service. But in many other poems she realized the smallness of humanity in front of the perfection of Nature, and how mankind was not even able to achieve control over its own complexity. She frequently spoke from her own experience. She saw how our good intentions and resolutions, usually uttered at the beginning of the New Year, were soon forgotten and never carried out. She investigated the causes of such behavior and concluded that it was because of man's fear and doubt. She frequently used images of closed doors, locked chests, insurmountable walls and clothes that cannot be discarded. All these images suggest a sense of entrapment and immobility. In her program poem, »Decision«, 1933, she looked at the future promising a commitment, but realizing the risky and the frightening part of it. Her approach is metaphorical. In this poem she compares the future to a closed book with stiff covers, and then to a chest:

I hold before me a closed book;
Not a page has been scanned nor a cover lifted;
The words, inspiration, and message
Are held within bounds of stiff, coarse buckram
That encloses.

A chest of potent ideas
Lies locked somewhere within power of my reach.
Their strength has never been tested;
They are held by strong padlocks
Of doubt.
[...][10]

At the end she decides that her New Year will be »a read book / and an opened chest.« But this ending is too plain and contrasts with the generally uncertain atmosphere of the poem.

[10] Decision, *ML*, 01, 1933, p. 17.

In »Deferment«, 1934, she represents her longings as a vision of a white house on the top of a hill, which promises a kind of paradise of oblivion (»Enter, and all will be forgotten«). But the »I« hesitates, afraid of the steep and long road uphill, whilst knowing that she had better go. When she finally decides and climbs the hill, she realizes that she has just missed the given opportunity forever:

> At last, after a great while, I summoned courage
> And climbed the hill and reached the top,
> Only to find
> That a high wind had slammed the door before my eyes
> And locked it fast-inside.[11]

Compared to the poems, the artistic accomplishment of the short stories is limited because of the predominant use of an authorial narrator. Nevertheless, the stories are interesting for their setting, themes and for their individual stylistic expedients. Small town realities with immigrants' shacks and mines nearby – this was the bleak surrounding where most of her short stories were set. The protagonists were young people torn between their expectations, fostered by the American ideology, and the gloomy reality in which they were entrapped. On the other hand, Mary Jugg's plays were practical and, in the first instance, didactic. They were mainly directed to be performed by the juvenile members, and their aim was, on the one hand, to explain socialist concepts, and on the other, to show on a micro-level how big contemporary issues could be solved through cooperation, mutual help and respect.

The reason Jugg gradually stopped contributing to *Juvenile* was not simply political (regarding hers and her husband's disagreements with other executive members of the *S.N.P.J.* about supporting the communists' struggle in the Old Country). Although this probably contributed to her estrangement from the *S.N.P.J.*, the main reason probably was that Mary Molek at that time had just finished writing her Master's thesis and was about to start writing her Ph. D. dissertation.[12] After Ivan Molek's forced resignation from *Prosveta*, she became the breadwinner of the family, working as elementary and high school teacher. In

[11] Deferment, *ML*, 08, 1934, p. 240.

[12] M. Molek, *Education in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, with Emphasis on the Period from 1918 to 1939,* unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, May 1942.

addition, she taught English in evening schools, helping the new immigrants to adjust themselves to the new environment. No information exists about the couple's life, except for the fact that they lived very modestly, and that they moved to California in the late Fifties.

Thus apparently there is a »barren period« between 1943, when her last contribution was published in *Mladinski list–Juvenile,* and 1976, when her *Immigrant Woman* and translations appeared in print. However, such a sharp division is very unlikely to be regarded as definite. This supposition is confirmed by the correspondence of Margaret E. Haughawout to Mary Jugg Molek.[13] For instance, the letter dated 04, 04, 1951 opens with

> Dear Mary,
> Ever since reading it I've meant to write and say how much I like your perfect little poem. It is all poetry. It took imagination to write it and requires one to read. [...] Anyhow it says something without saying it and one could mean a dozen or a hundred different experiences.

So further researches need to be undertaken to investigate this period. In addition, Mary Jugg Molek's documents kept at the Chicago Historical Society need to be examined. At the moment they are not available to the public because they have not yet been catalogued.

Only after her husband's death, in 1962, did Mary Molek resume publishing. She moved to Dover, Delaware, and all the works she wrote or translated were published at her own expense. When *Immigrant Woman* was published in 1976, it soon became a considerable success within the Slovene community. The book had three reprints and earned for Mary Jugg Molek the 1978 League of Slovene-American Award for contributions to Slovene-American literature.[14] Influenced by the »ethnic revival«, which began in the 1960's along with the Civil Rights Movement, Mary Molek searched for her own ethnic past. As a matter of fact, all the works she published in the Seventies could be interpreted as a redis-

[13] Margaret E. Haughawout was Mary Molek's English teacher at Kansas college. They kept up a correspondence from July 1932 to December 1961. Unfortunately, now just the Haugawout letters are available at Pittsburg State University, Special Collections.

[14] John P. Nielsen, Mary J. Molek Wins Author Award, *Ameriška domovina*, 08, 12, 1978, pp. 1 and 3.

covery of her ethnic background, a looking back in search of values that she thought should have been reconsidered, especially by the present generation. In *Immigrant Woman* she documented her mother's life at the beginning of the century, being aware of the immigrant woman's message for the present era. By translating and presenting her husband's works she proceeded to present the life of the immigrant man she married. Especially in his autobiography, her notes, appendices and references were particularly substantial, and her aim was to exalt Ivan Molek's independence of mind, perseverance and constant adherence to his ideals. On the one hand, she underlined the immigrants' contribution to the growth and greatness of the United States. On the other hand, she saw the Seventies negatively as a time when people were lost and in search of identity, a time when drugs, psychoanalysis and transcendental meditation were the rule. People were revolting against an establishment without even knowing exactly what they were contesting. She saw this period as an era marked by destruction and permissiveness, when »only '*want*' and '*take*' remained«.[15] To all this she contrasted »a chronicle of those who 'did' for that which others are now 'taking'«.[16]

Immigrant Woman is a book of recollections, an attempt to reconstruct the life of the author's mother through its most significant and vivid moments. The introduction promises all the elements necessary for a serious ethnic discourse. The author promises to descend genealogically and topologically and recover a world by the aid of the »Memory_Project dynamics«.[17] The author rather than just recovering an ethnic past, interprets it and therefore inevitably elaborates it, keying the ethnic meaning according to contemporary needs. This is how Professor Boelhower views it:

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[15] Mary Molek, Introduction to *Immigrant Woman (IW)*, Dover, Del.: M. Molek, Inc.,1976, p. 6.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] As William Boelhower in his *Through a Glass Darkly, Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature,* Venezia: Edizioni Helvetia, 1984, writes, »Ethnic discourse is a discourse of foundations.[...] The foundations of ethnicity are based on the genealogical elaboration of the story behind one's name, one's family name« (p. 81). »Ethnic semiosis can now be defined as nothing more nor less than the interpretative gaze of the subject whose strategy of seeing is determined by the very ethno-symbolic space of the possible world he inhabits [...] this model of seeing is conditioned by the following ethnosemiotic dynamics: MEMORY_PROJECT.« (p. 87).

> The principal task of the sons and daughters in ethnic fiction is to reinterpret the status of the referent as defined by the ancestors. This involves putting contemporary reality between the parentheses of Project and Memory.[...][18]

This biographical attempt represents a recovery of the mother's time and place. But rather than being a mere mnemonic exercise the author puts it in relation with contemporary time and space and points, in the ethnic morals and ethnic way of life, to an ethical answer, a solution for contemporary disorientation.

But personal reasons might also be at the root of her interest in her origins. She might be influenced by a sense of guilt concerning her previous rejection of the immigrant world, because it was so much in contrast with the American standards of living. The author describes the clashes, the scars, the psychological »deep gashes« (p. 11) and »the mental cruelty« (p. 53) that sometimes marked the mother–daughter relationship. This is how she was writing already in 1936:

> But sometime – somewhere – someone should pay honest tribute to just these unsung heroines of what America is today. Who brought forth sons and daughters to go out to build and make America »one of the richest countries«. Look at the immigrant women in small towns who slaved and worked in a country that more often than not mocked them for their ways – and because they had nowhere to learn their English.
>
> It was these same women who endured hardships with their husbands who were harnessed into mining coal, building roads, erecting buildings, working in steel mills – making America! [...]
>
> It was these women who suffered many heartaches when their own children came back from school and considered their mothers old fashioned, and even a little backward, for not having learned good English or knowing how to walk with high-heeled shoes.[19]

In the book she describes not only her mother's immigrant existence but also how she, the daughter, has grown independently from it by taking her own

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

[19] Mary Jugg, For Women Only, *Proletarec,* 13, 05, 1936, p. 6.

way. The grown-up writer returns to her past, to document it, but also with the awareness that so many things could not be remembered at all, because they went without being understood at the time when they took place.

Despite the apparent simple layout – introduction, seventeen non-numerated chapters and epilogue – the text is much more complex, since its circular narration does not respect the chapters' division. Incidents are told more than once, but every time the event becomes more detailed, because it is associated with other new and different circumstances. However, there are some central images that, like leitmotivs, reappear from time to time throughout the text and they bind the text together, providing it with an internal structure.

The core figure is certainly that of a patchwork quilt. The significance it bears in the text is transplanted on the structural level. The narrator willfully applies the quilt-making techniques to the composition of the text. As the mother started the coverlet when she was pregnant with her first-born, so the narration starts from that period. As the mother crocheted first every single medallion separately and then sewed them together, so are the patches – the singular events – remembered and described by the grown-up daughter. With such a structural choice the events narrated have no chronological order and there is no hierarchy of incidents.

The mother was always a dominant figure in her daughters' lives and she has »patterned, in her own design, three distinctly different roles for each of the [...] three« daughters.[20] In the text there is a scene where the daughter rebuffs her mother trying to teach her how to sew, deciding that she is not going to be a dressmaker as the mother was. But now, after her mother's death, the Oldest returns to her life by becoming, rather than a dressmaker, a text-maker. In the introduction Molek makes a clear reference to her text as:

> [...] A patchwork quilt. Fragments floating into the mind's eye, sometimes like discrete scraps of material, sometimes stitched together. The iridescence of a patch spills now onto one, now onto the next, obscuring the edges; and the two patches could easily be interchangeable. A spotlight illuminates now one, now another. Sometimes it rolls off the entire coverlet, leaving it only an eclipsed backdrop.[21]

[20] *IW*, p. 14.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Molek stresses that the experiences are conveyed through her own »first-hand experience as the oldest child« (p. 3). But this, rather than being presented as a filter to the objectivity of the narration, a limited perspective, is presented as an important element sustaining the reality of the things narrated. The introduction promises that the narrator will tell everything she knows, has apprehended and now remembers. The narrator, in other words, claims omniscience, but this is actually limited to her autobiographical stance, so if this is a biography, it is full of gaps. On the one hand, these gaps are partially filled when they receive a fictional reconstruction – they are transformed into dialogues, and dramatized scenes, rather than being merely narrated. Surprisingly, though, they are integrated into the general flow of the text and the narrator absorbs them in the textual ideology without mentioning them as reconstructed parts. On the other hand, her limited omniscience is exalted in other parts of the text, where the narrator refuses to give a fictionalized reconstruction. This becomes a method of ensuring reliability. By saying that some fragments cannot be reconstructed because they cannot be remembered, the narrator discloses to the reader her strategy by directly pointing the readers' attention to the missing fragment. The narrator, in other words, calls attention to her act of renunciation from writing fiction. When her omniscience becomes restricted, this restriction becomes her justification for the reliability of the things narrated. When a scene is not fully recalled, the narrator directly refers to the text as the quilt. Here are two examples:

> What is Memory's residue of that day? [...] That patch of the quilt is faded and lost.
>
> [...] What became of that evening, how it passed, is a patch of the quilt forever frazzled and lost. Only the sunset, that vivid, watercolor sunset remains.[22]

The use of animals is the other device used by the narrator to achieve unity, although on a smaller scale, since they are not given a meta-structural function. This emphasis on animals has the function of revealing the mother's estrangement in front of the new environment. In fact, when she arrives in the New world the first thing that she notices of her would-be husband is that he »looked so different, so changed«.[23] Animals seem to be the only continuity between the Old and the New World.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 112 and 121.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

There are two main antithetic movements of the narrator. One is towards complete impassivity, the other is towards an autobiographical involvement. In the first case, the narrator is an authorial narrator, coolly detached from the story. She rarely refers to the characters by name. She prefers to call them by more general and impersonal titles, such as »the Oldest«, when she speaks about the immigrant woman's oldest daughter or, »Immigrant Woman« to designate the mother. The distance between the already grown up – »the Oldest« – and Maria is established by the narrator in order to distinguish the two temporally different stages of the same person. So far, there are three projections of the author's self: on the level of the discourse, the prevalently impersonal, detached narrator, and on the story level, the Oldest who is the one who »pieced together long afterward«[24] and is engaged in reconstructing her mother's life, and Maria (the child and the adolescent). Thus there are three stadiums, three steps, of transmission of experience: Maria (who is the experiencing subject), the Oldest (who looks back at her past and gathers together the information about it) and the narrator, who presents both processes. »The Oldest« manages to see the positive aspects of her earlier education, which she was unable to see as such when she was going through them as Maria.

If the narrator strives to be detached and objective, she does not always succeed, and the female, autobiographical voice takes over from the cold biographer. The narrator is a female one because she is the bearer of a female discourse, which takes the shape of a quilt. Moreover, she voices some prejudice of the time, and when she does so, her critical attitude can be sensed. The autobiographical part of the story coexists with and occasionally takes over from the biographical one. The story starts with the birth of the daughter, the biographer, and not with that of the mother, the Immigrant Woman, »the heroine« after whom the story is titled. Moreover, part of her mother's life in the Old Country, probably about 20 years, is completely ignored. The name of the »small secluded hamlet«,[25] the mother's native place, is never mentioned. There is no mention of the mother's maiden name, nothing is said about her ocean crossing, whether she did it alone or with some relative. There is no reference to the mother's age, except when she dies (»She was eighty-five«).[26] By contrast, Maria's almost exact

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[25] *IW*, p. 37. As Mary Molek reveals in her conference The Present, Past and Future of Slovene Immigration, her mother was from Sv. Lucija, near Gorica–Gorizia. »She sprinkled her speech with both Italian and German words«, p. 5.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

hour of birth is given (»On the second Wednesday in June, 1909, about noon,«)[27] and throughout the text her age is recorded.

This temporal stratification of the same person – Maria and the Oldest – shows by itself that there has been a character development. Maria's story is much more articulated than that of the mother. Her school, her first encounter with the American environment, her college, her move to Chicago and her marriage – these are all episodes that are described in the text. All the new experiences the daughter endures are »outside« home and detached from the zone »controlled« by the mother. Her autobiography describes the steps of her estrangement from her ethnic background. Only later will she revisit her ethnic past.

The book is set in Kansas, but no precise geographical name of town or settlement is given. There is an effort to maintain a distant, scholarly standpoint. The daughter does not feel much contact with the place, or at least when the story is told from her point of view, she does not seem to see it. Awareness that this was her familiar surrounding arises only when she leaves for Chicago.

> By bus to Chicago. Ejected from all that had been familiar, from all that had budded the myriad, miniscule day-to-day worries; ejected into the horrendously frightening jaws of the unknown.[28]

But when the story is presented from the mother's point of view, a very critical picture of Kansas is given. Actually, I have found excerpts from the book among the negative quotations about Kansas on Internet.[29] The ugliness of the landscape is associated with the bitter disappointment the mother experienced upon her arriving at the »Promised Land«. The immigrant is forced to accept a radical change of landscape, and to her it seems all a »horrible nightmare«. On her arrival all she can notice is dirtiness, dilapidated frame houses and children dressed in rags, making mud pies.

Maria is born in a shanty house, dark inside, after which the family moves to another nearby town in a four-room house, where eight people lived all toget-

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

[29] »Quotable Kansas« provided as a public service by the Washburn University, Center for Kansas Studies, compiled by Prof. Tom Averill, http://www.wuaccc.edu./reference/zzcwcks/kansasqu.html/ (11, 12, 1997).

her. The second chapter is clearly set on this farm; there is a garden, chickens, a cow, and pigs. There are trees around the house the mother has planted, but they do not belong to the original landscape. They rather belong to the Old World scenery, which is recreated in the New World. The mother calls them »our property«.[30] When some workmen from town come to cut them down to widen the road, she defends her trees, saying they are the only pleasant aspect of her homestead. It is interesting that the mother is talking to these men in Slovene and that her daughter has to translate for them. But the whole narrative is conveyed in standard English and we hear directly the mother and not the child. Or more precisely, we hear the literary elaboration of what the mother has said. That the text has undergone a formal transformation is demonstrated by the use of repetition, short incisive sentences, alliteration of the »d« sound. Moreover, this continuous and circular repeating of words contributes to the general sensation that any prospect of improvement is barred.

> [...] Shame – shame on you people; come around here to cut down, to destroy – not to build up, to make nice! Not to fix that dirty road, all dust-dust-dust. Swallow dust, eat dust – every day. Every day. Horses. Horse dung. Fresh dung; dried up. Dried into dust. Ground up by the wheels. Dung; dirt; dung; dust – everything comes on and around and in the house. [...][31]

It is interesting, however, to notice that towards the end of the book the narrator expresses how the mother felt a complete identification with the Kansas environment.

She was nonessential. But this was her place. It was her land. It was her home! She must not leave it. No! If she should forsake these surroundings, she would surely die.[32]

This is an identification that recalls much more the Old World condition of dwelling as something static, topological, and recognizes a complete identification between the dwelling place and the dweller. To sum up, if the mother is the uprooted immigrant finding herself in a totally strange milieu, she constantly interacts with this new environment, and even if her response is critical, there is

[30] *IW*, p. 29.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

still an exchange, a contact and an attempt at improvement. The daughter does not feel such an emotional tie to Kansas; her view is much more superficial, more American perhaps. She is not rooted in a place, but she rather thinks of surroundings in economic terms, such as what job opportunities Kansas offers. The mother persists until the end of her life in the same farming house, where her baby boy and later on her husband have died, and she cannot feel herself at ease in a new environment, in her daughters' new homes in towns, for example.

The figures of the mother and the daughter represent not only two different concepts of space, but also of time. As a matter of fact, the mother's story is presented as part of the past and therefore has become static. The means through which she fights for a livelihood in the New World are imported from the Old World. Even though the mother could be a potential heroine who has crossed the boundaries of home to go to a new place, in the New World her fight is circumscribed to the topographical place, she remains immobile. In fact, many parts of the text stress the mother's wish to remain in one place.[33] The mother is unable to understand the new age improvements, which she calls »Krezzy Fools«. The daughter personifies the present dimension, which is not past-free, since she has constantly to face her mother's objections, comments and ideas. The mother's figure and her authority are always felt. The mother is the bearer of a profound folk wisdom that the daughter Maria continuously questions and finds lacking, because of the identification she has with American culture. The two paralleled stories present in the text are independent, but also profoundly interrelated.

According to Irene P. Winner, this collision between mother and daughter can be seen as an interplay between a static and a dynamic vision of the world which influences the structure of the book as well, since the outcome of it is not a linear biographical recount, but a collage, a patchwork. The scenes are repeated and the stories and events are narrated more than once. The montage is the result of the direct or indirect confrontation of two cultural traditions in an ethnic culture, the traditional culture and the host culture. It has to be noted that montage is not assimilation. That also explains why biography and autobiography succeed in coexisting within the same text.

The mother remains chained to the past, while the daughter emancipates herself from it. It is education that provides the Oldest with the means to leave the ethnic environment and go »into the world«. Through education she gets rid of the superstitions, bigotry and the prejudices that were inherent in the immi-

[33] *IW*, for instance on pp. 22 and 106.

grant world, especially as regards the woman's role. She leaves home, she chooses to get married at the City Hall and to have no children – three decisions that are the very opposite of what was expected from a young woman in the Slovene community. These decisions the mother cannot comprehend, although she well remembers her own oppression, her grotesque marriage and her difficult childbearings. When the daughter's wedding is presented, the narrator makes direct reference to the mother's wedding. »On her wedding day there was no wedding dress; thanks heavens! For the disappearances of the Mrs. Baskas. There was no ceremony.« The mother never forgave her oldest daughter for getting married at a registry office, and then the narrator continues: »for the Youngest, the Immigrant Woman engineered a marriage in her own fashion.«[34]

On the other hand, however, education enables the oldest daughter to return, look back and document her ethnic roots. Her vision therefore is a double vision: she documents it from the point of view of a trained scientist (detached narration) and that of a daughter who, through the reconstruction of the mother's life, is reestablishing her connection with her own ethnic culture. As Professor I. P. Winner puts it, »she escapes to an educated life, and recreates in her writings the immigrant culture.«[35] Thus the admiring tone that the narrator has for »the deeds« of the mother is the outcome of future years, and not an attribute of Maria as a teenager.

The text is a collage of styles. In stitching the text together the narrator uses citations, quotations and references to film actors, songs and famous personae. Especially in the second part of the book, when she starts to evaluate the education she has received from her mother, putting it in a more positive light, she makes references to literary heroes, to sit-coms and other typical American products, only to discard them in the name of the more genuine ethnic culture. Therefore the book is a renegotiation of Maria's previous attitude; and the positive elements of her upbringing are dug up. She comes to the conclusion that they were the only possible way that the circumstances permitted, and her Spartan upbringing was after all a success. This ultimately is the message of the work. Throughout the text constant clashes between the mother's and daughter's outlook on life are registered. The verbal blows are shown in brief, terse dialogues, but sometimes longer presentations of specific accidents are interpolated. The

[34] *Ibid.*, pp.150 and 152.

[35] Irene Portis Winner, Ethnic Culture Text As Narration, in *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs and Literature,* Fernando Poyatos (ed.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing co., 1988, p. 134.

dialogues make the narration vivid and lively. Sometimes the narrator uses sit-com techniques. For instance, she makes reference to a 1975 American sit-com (Pat Loud family), criticizing the kind of life it represents. The family members' self-centeredness and pleasure-seeking is juxtaposed to what we can see as the ethnic values of self-sacrifice, unselfishness and work. She employs sit-com proceedings – short, incisive dialogues that give insight into what can be defined as everyday life, and a strongly preachy ending. Thus it can be said that she is using a typical American product (the sit-com), charging it with new, ethnic attributes. Through the ethnic glass American society reveals its egoism and narcissism.

The narrator uses sit-com techniques to enlarge her domain. The general tone of the book is epic. Here again the narrator makes a direct mention to a film genre. In fact, the tragedies that hit the family are seen as »[...] nights of horror, colossal as a Ben Hur movie.«[36] The mother is the pioneer who manages to cope with all the adversities, who reveals herself as the engine of the family and is at the end successful. Instead of coming to a land of plenty, as her husband has written in his letters, and instead of marrying a successful pioneer, she marries an indebted and exploited miner and has to work hard as a seamstress and as a housewife to free the family of the numerous debts. The mother's story turns out to be a success story, because by relying on her own moral strength and her own work the mother succeeded in freeing herself and her family from indebtedness and giving her children college education.

On the whole, the book continuously oscillates between a fictionalizing drive and the tendency to be faithful to reality as defined by the mother's life experience. Especially at the beginning of the text the narrator continuously uses repetitions of negative or positive statements as if she could encompass the mother's life story by mere enumeration. The consequence is a rhetorical style that hinders the already weak fictional structure. Many times she becomes obscure and difficult to follow, because the references she is making become meaningful only as the story proceeds. In these parts the book loses its artistic value.

Professor Mirko Jurak points out that her use of a sententious, moralizing manner of story telling does not contribute to the fictional aspect of her narrative. There are scenes that lack artistic inspiration and expressiveness. »They are mainly straightforward descriptions, aroused in the author's mind by the acuteness of the experience, but they are not matched with an equal scope of imaginative power and comprehensiveness of meaning.«[37]

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

On the other hand, the scenes where the mother's reminiscences become overwhelming are artistically the most accomplished. The narrator proceeds through associations, and creates an element of pathos. The reader knows that the Immigrant Woman is caught, but he sees her when she struggles to get free and how she is still convinced that she will go back home as soon as she manages to earn enough money.

It has been noticed that with the exception of the Introduction the author never makes it clear that she is writing about Slovene immigrants and about a Slovene-American family.[38] The text is written in standard English with almost no Slovene words. Nevertheless the ethnic elements reveal themselves overtly, through reference to traditional food, natural home remedies and folk beliefs the mother expresses in the dialogues with her children.

The mother cooks ethnic food at home. The Slovene names of the dishes are never given, but they can be recognized. The soup with noodles, »the minestrone« and the home-made bread are particularly remembered.[39] As a true Slovene, the mother is a beekeeper too. Homemade honey is the only sweetener known.

> The dark honey produced in the rectangular frames of beeswax that had been lowered into the hives was crudely processed, strained through cheesecloth and poured into jars. For many sweetening purposes it served reasonably well. But, »Momma, I can't drink this coffee with honey in it. It makes me gag.«[40]

The mother's »diet« is constantly questioned by her children, as it conflicts with what they learn in school. To that the mother sternly remarks: »when your hygiene book or teacher has to feed you, and has to get it for you, they can dictate what you will eat. Not otherwise.«[41] The idea that everything needs to be saved, conserved, used up, and that nothing should ever be discarded is somehow typical of peasant culture. On the other hand, the American food is looked upon suspiciously by the mother:

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[37] Mirko Jurak, Immigrant Woman, *Acta Neophilologica,* 13, 1980, p. 85.
[38] Peter Elish, *Immigrant Woman* a Compelling Story, *Prosveta*, 18, 05, 1977, p. 7.
[39] *IW*, pp.57–58.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[41] All in *IW*, p. 57.

> The Oldest learned of steak – round steak, that is, for the first time in the college cafeteria. She didn't think she liked it: leathery, and poured over with a thick, brown coating in the steam table. She told her mother. »That kind of stuff is no good for you. Don't know what all they've mixed together and how long it's [sic] been standing there. Could poison you, even,« said the mother.[42]

The mother cannot enjoy the modern age improvements, and some of them she can not even understand. They represent confusion as opposed to the rigid order that reigned inside the »ethnic« family. She calls all those things »Krezzy Fool« – »this baptism of things incongruous, distasteful, ethically unacceptable, imaginary, or to be so dismissed [...].«

> »Ma, Tootsie Mantle says he has two ear plugs he puts on over his head; like this over his head; and he can hear voices and people talking from far, far away – as far away as Milwaukee. They call it a 'radio'.«
>
> »Tootsie Mantle doesn't need ear plugs to hear things like that. Krezzy fool!«

In the New World she continues to stick to old folk beliefs that might be seen as pure superstition by the Americans. One of these is her belief in the power of dreams as predictions of the future. »Contrary to others' disbelief, her clairvoyance made logic to her and could never remotely be categorized as 'Krezzy Fool' in her eyes«.[43]

When the Immigrant Woman arrives in the New Country, she is disillusioned, does not want to get married and therefore is completely passive and submissive to Mrs. Baska, the coarse landlady of her first home. The previously constructed idea of America clashes with reality. The young woman naively believed in everything that her would-be husband had written her. Her disappointment emerges in everything she says or does. But when she learns from her husband that her steamship ticket, the wedding expenses and her wedding outfit which she thought were the landlady's gift, are in fact just borrowed, she changes her meek attitude. Being in debt was a taboo in Slovene village culture and therefore she becomes determined to

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.
[43] All in *IW*, p. 61.

redeem the family from debt. She takes up sewing for her family and for others, she finds every opportunity to save. She is the homeopathic physician who knows herbal remedies, she makes soap, butter, and she cares for chickens and a cow.

She knits, does cutout embroidery, crochets, and quilts until she is eighty-five. Her sense of color in her handiwork, the text states, was her children's first lesson in art appreciation. She has a green thumb. She has hoped that she will finally arrive at a hilly place with mountains or lush valleys. A place that will resemble her native Slovenia. She attempts to recreate it by planting trees and rose bushes in front of the house.

If she does not manage to return to Europe, she succeeds in convincing her husband to break free from Mrs. Baska's claws and to get firm roots in what later will become their own house. Her family always lives honestly. Although poor she is always charitable and hospitable. Thrifty but not stingy, she will always help other people in distress. She is the focal point of the family not only morally, but economically as well. In lean times her sewing is the only source of income the family has. She is an energetic person, always working, keeping herself busy. Her primary concern is for the daughters, for their education. She always cares for her children although she brings them up rigidly. Her husband wants to move to some other state, but she can not agree with him. She wants her daughters to finish school all in one place.

The daughter has felt throughout her school career the pressure that she has to finish school as soon as possible in order to save the family from its debt at the grocery shop. She frankly admits that she was not so much driven by altruistic feelings, as constrained by her mother. In turn her school career is presented as an epic.

This text is a sincere and a critical study of the author's attitude towards ethnicity. It is, therefore, a brave exposition, since it shows that not everything was so rosy and that ethnicity, when it was »inflicted« and endured, was seen negatively. Ethnicity was not taken for granted by the children, but often fought against and ridiculed. But by being constantly questioned, it emerged somehow reinforced from this confrontation since the mother always had a ready answer to their impertinent questions. For instance, even though the mother learns English from her children, »listening to the children's homework and adding her own remarks«, she always maintains her authority inside the family. When the children mock her English, she retorts, »Don't think because you know English you're smart. For 'smart', you'll have to live awhile.«[44]

[44] *IW*, p. 37.

The daughter grasps and creates her concept of ethnicity indirectly from the mother's style of life, her morals, sayings and her way of being. It is interesting that she herself, in the Introduction, establishes a bridge of ethnical continuity that goes from the mother to the husband.

> [The mother's] beliefs in the simple virtues were completely transmitted to her Oldest (speaking only for herself). She, in turn, found their counterpart in the immigrant man she married. Together, they, because of their life's devotion to ideals, endured tribulations that (over a period of twenty-eight years, until his death) probably would have been eased had they compromised principles.[45]

It is clear that the association she establishes is not only ethnic, but ethical as well. The author considers herself an individualistic and independent American woman, but her ethnic background somehow saves her, taking her back to a heritage of values that the »pure« American society of the Seventies seems to ignore.

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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POVZETEK

MARY JUGG MOLEK – AMERIŠKA PISATELJICA IN PESNICA SLOVENSKEGA POREKLA

Irena Milanič

Mary Jugg je med leti 1932 in 1943 objavila 90 pesmi, 37 kratkih povesti in 9 dramskih enodejank. Njena literarna dela so bila predvsem namenjena mladini, to je ameriškim potomcem slovenskih priseljencev. Najizrazitejša značilnost njenih prispevkov je, da so vsi napisani v angleščini, in to v času, ko so bili izseljenski časopisi še pretežno slovenski.

V tridesetih in štiridesetih letih je Mary Jugg poleg literarnih prispevkov pisala tudi članke za tedensko angleško stran dnevnika Prosveta *in tednika* Proletarec. *S temi časopisi je pričela sodelovati leta 1933, leta 1936 pa je že vodila stalno tedensko rubriko, najprej v* Proletarcu *z izzivalnim naslovom »For Women Only« – Samo za ženske, od julija 1936 do 1938 pa je imela v* Prosveti *rubriko »Women's Round Table« – Ženska okrogla miza. Nato je imela od leta 1938 do leta 1944 v* Prosveti *tedenski časopisni stolpec »A Column«. Čeprav brez posebne literarne vrednosti, so ti članki pomembni zaradi avtoričinih naprednih stališč. S posebno odločnostjo je zagovarjala pravico tako žensk kot mladih, da bi v slovenskih izseljenskih organizacijah imeli več odločitvene moči. Mary Jugg pa se ni ustavila le pri pisanju: v* Proletarcu, *leta 1934, lahko zasledimo njene pozive, nekatere tudi v slovenščini, v katerih je vabila najmlajše, naj se pridružijo novoustanovljeni otroški skupini Rdečih Sokolov, kjer je sama vodila sobotne izvenšolske dejavnosti. Leta 1938 pa je bila med glavnimi pobudni-*

ki za ustanovitev neodvisnih mladinskih krožkov S.N.P.J., Slovenske narodne podporne jednote.

Juggova se v svojih literarnih delih predvsem osredotoča na opis ameriške realnosti, ki je skupna različnim narodnostim. Zaustavlja se pri problemih mlajših rodov ali pa delavstva nasploh. Njeni literarni prispevki iz tridesetih let so socialne slike gospodarske depresije, ki je takrat morila ameriško družbo in najhuje prizadela prav najnižje sloje, torej predvsem priseljence. Literarna dela Juggove imajo malo etničnih elementov, na kar je vplivalo tudi njeno socialistično prepričanje. V njenih prispevkih se slovenski elementi pojavljajo le v drobcih, nejasno in indirektno. Tak odnos ohranja tudi v kasnejših delih.

Leta 1976 je izšel roman Immigrant Woman (Priseljenka). *V njem se pisateljica spominja matere–priseljenke, a se istočasno zaustavlja tudi pri opisu lastnega otroštva, tako da se biografija in avtobiografija stalno prepletata. To pogojuje dejstvo, da sta tu prisotni dve antitetični pripovedniški perspektivi. Prva je nagnjena k skrajni brezosebnosti in objektivnosti, druga pa se nagiba k avtobiografski vpletenosti. Čeprav se je Mary Jugg Molek prvotno oddaljila od lastne preteklosti in se odločila za neodvisno pot v svet, se sedaj vrača kot izučena in izkušena ženska, ki želi dokumentirati zgodbo svoje matere.*

Pisateljičina genealogija se skriva v topologiji. Če hoče povleči na površje svoje etnične korenine, ne more mimo analize teritorija, torej Kansasa. Za razliko od hčerke je mati eno z okoljem, v katerem prebiva. Mati je pionirka, ker je zapustila svoj rodni kraj in se priselila v nepoznan, puščavski Kansas, področje neskončnih ravnin in prerij. A v tem novem kraju je priseljenka s trdim delom uspešno rekonstruirala svoj stari kraj tako glede zunanjosti kot glede vrednot.

Molkova se zaveda sporočila, ki ga priseljenka prinaša sodobnim generacijam. Kljub revščini in pomanjkanju so v življenju priseljencev veljale izredno trdne vrednote, ki so jim omogočale obstoj in postopno izboljšanje razmer. Njihova kmečka pokončnost je bila recept za njihov »success story«, za njihov uspeh. Molkova poudarja, da so ti priseljenci obogatitev za Ameriko. Etnično prebujanje se ne sme ustaviti pri zunanjem, formalnem vidiku, temveč mora seči globlje in ovrednotiti prav to priseljensko dediščino vrednot. Molkova zavrača slovenstvo kot abstraktno vrednoto; šele priseljenec s svojim življenjskim dostojanstvom in poštenostjo lahko etničnosti podeli pomen.

Mary Molek je kot otrok doživljala revščino negativno, vendar pa ji sedaj pogled z razdalje omogoča, da v svojem otroštvu lahko vidi tudi pozitivne strani take vzgoje. Materina strogost in trdoživost sta bili edini možni odgovor v tistih

borih razmerah. Knjiga je iskren pogled avtorice na lastno preteklost in na lastne etnične korenine. Avtorica odklanja neproblematično prikazovanje odnosov med generacijami, istočasno pa zagovarja stališče, da sta iz generacijskega trenja oba rodova izšla krepkejša.

Literarna dela Molkove so dokaj osamljen primer intelektualističnega pisanja. Mnoge njene pesmi so napisane v prostem verzu, kar je po mnenju prof. Jerneje Petrič prvi tak primer v slovenskoameriški literaturi. Njena najpogostejša metrična oblika je sicer navadna štirivrstična kitica, vendar pa ta antična baladna forma prehaja skozi vrsto sprememb in adaptacij, predvsem kar se tiče ritma oziroma iskanja posebnih zvočnih efektov in variant. Immigrant Woman *izstopa tako po svojem pristopu do obravnavanih tem in dogodkov kot po strukturi. Kombinacija kronološkega in nekronološkega reda pisateljici omogoča, da svojo zgodbo širi s pomočjo asociacij in spominov. Molkova imenuje svoje delo a »patchwork quilt«, iz različnih krp sešita odeja. Krpe so spomini ali pa dogodki, ki prihajajo na površje, a med njimi ni prave kronološke vezi. Namen hčerke–biografinje je predvsem zbrati in ponovno sešiti v neko besedilo različne prizore in dogodke. Tekst je fragmentaren tudi stilistično. Pisateljica uporablja različne tehnike: kratki in rezki dialogi med materjo in hčerko spominjajo na zabavno televizijsko nanizanko, življenjski pripetljaji in boj priseljenske družine občasno dobivajo epično-tragične tone in večkrat se pisateljica poslužuje liričnih povzetkov ali metaforičnih sintez. Proza Molkove je nemalokrat intelektualna in psihološko introspektivna.*