

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Go East!

LGBTQ+ Literature in Eastern Europe

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Venue: Filozofska fakulteta / Faculty of Arts, Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana
Modra soba / Blue Room (5th Floor)

THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2018

10.00–10.30 Registration
10.45–11.00 Opening
11.00–11.45 Keynote Speech (Prof Gregory Woods)

12.00–13.15 **PANEL 1** (4 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)

Vitaly Chernetsky

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

Tamta Melashvili

Queering Modern Georgian Literature

Gábor Csiszár

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

Izabela Morska

Modesty at Work: Zygmunt Mycielski in Warsaw

Lunch break

14.30–15.45 **PANEL 2** (4 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)

Miha Javornik

Голубая Literature and Russian Holiness

Slaven Crnić

The Whisper and the Cry: Queer Masculinities in Ivo Andrić's *The Days of the Consuls* and Omer Pasha Latas

Denis Ferhatović

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

Błażej Warkocki and Przemysław Górecki

Eastern Boys and Western Lovers: Polish Gay Literature in the Context of the East/West Distinction

16.00–17.00 **PANEL 3** (3 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)

Alenka Koron and Matteo Colombi

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

Roberto Dapit

Friulian Love Poetry and Its Reception in the Slovenian Cultural Environment

Andrej Zavrl

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

CONFERENCE XTRA

19.00 LGBTQ+ reading by Slovenian LGBTQ+ writers and conference participants (very welcome to join in)
@ Pritličje, Mestni trg 2, Ljubljana

10.00–11.15 **PANEL 4** (4 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)**Alojzija Zupan Sosič**

Contemporary Slovene LGBTQ Narrative

Nina Dragičević

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

Nataša Velikonja

Lesbian Poetry Tradition

Vesna Liponik

The Subversive Construction of Gender in the Poetry of Kristina Hočevar

11.30–12.45 **PANEL 5** (4 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)**Kevin Moss**

Camp Kharitonov and Russian Gay Identity

Tatiana Klepikova

“If a Cutie, Then Always Misha”: Evgenii Kharitonov’s Queer Masculinities

Maruša Maligoj

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

Andrea Trovesi

Bulgarian Heretics, Warm Brothers and Blue Lovers. A Historical and Etymological Overview of Words And Expressions Used in The Languages of Eastern Europe (Mainly Slavic) to Refer to Male Homosexuals

Lunch break

14.00–15.15 **PANEL 6** (4 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)**Kinga Paszko**

The Depiction of Gay Identity in Michał Witkowski’s Prose

Jelena Jović(Post)Communist Queer Identities in Uroš Filipović’s *Glasshouse* and Michał Witkowski’s *Lovetown***Eszter Timár**Queer Closeting: The Affective Politics of Gábor Thurzó’s *Days and Nights***Milena Mileva Blažić**Comparative Analysis of Children’s Literature – *Dečki* (Boys) and *Fantje iz gline* (Clay Boys)**15.30–16.30** **PANEL 7** (3 × 15 MIN. + 15 MIN. DEBATE)**Maja Šučur**

Criticism in the Closet

Suzana Tratnik

Passion for Analysis

Jasna Jasna Žmak

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

CONFERENCE XTRA

21.00Cabaret performance and party
@ LGBTQ+ Club Tiffany, Metelkova mesto

SATURDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2018

11.00

LGBTQ+ Walking Tour of Ljubljana

Meeting point: Stari trg 34 (by the Hercules fountain)

SCIENTIFIC AND ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Prof Dr Roman Kuhar, Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Prof Dr Alojzija Zupan Sosič, Department of Slovenian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Prof Dr Vojko Gorjanc, Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Suzana Tratnik, MA, writer, translator, activist

Brane Mozetič, writer, translator, editor, activist

Dr Andrej Zavrl, independent researcher, teacher, translator

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All events are free of charge for conference participants.
The language of the conference is English.



LGBTQ+ lives have always and unavoidably been shaped by the innumerable cultural and historical transformations which have also had an indelible influence on LGBTQ+ writing and reading. Today, due to the remarkable progress made in recent years, it may seem that LGBTQ+ literature has been safely mainstreamed and commodified. Moreover, the impressive work of LGBTQ+ theorists and writers has been widely recognised and institutionalised. At least in the West.

What about the East? How have LGBTQ+ literary production and scholarship developed in Eastern Europe? Has there been a pink curtain separating the supposedly liberal West from the

less than welcoming East? Why is Eastern Europe (perceived as) less accepting of sexual and gender non-normativity? Has it always been like that? And how does that show in literature?

After decades of LGBTQ+ literary studies, mostly originating in the West, what is the state of affairs in Eastern Europe?

Gregory Woods

LGBT Literature in Eastern Europe: A View from the West

Eastern European LGBT literature has tended to be seen, in the West, as either non-existent (because not known), hidden (by state- or self-censorship), or in need of catching up (with the literature of the more progressive West). Of the relatively sparse attention Western LGBT studies have paid to Eastern Europe, most has been by researchers with interests in Russian culture. Most reference books in gay studies have, if any, relevant entries only on Russia.

Before 1989, Eastern Europe was distantly regarded as an undifferentiated mass of imposed silences. Western gay readers are most familiar with Eastern gay culture that flourished by coming into exile in the West—the prime example being Diaghilev, an occidental Russian who exploited his Western reputation for being from the Orient.

In the early 1930s, when Marina Tsvetaeva read one of her poems at Natalie Barney's Paris salon, an audience of lesbian modernists thought her old-fashioned in both her fin de siècle ideas and her clothes. It is a scene that has often been repeated when East has gone West. Post-1989, the West has expected the East quickly to 'catch up' with its supposedly liberal standards, even while often reluctant to do so itself until (like the UK) forced by the European Court of Human Rights.

When we in the West consider the new LGBT scholarship in the East, should we expect similarity or difference? Eastern literature plays out the same themes as we are used to in the West: the narrative of the emergence from shame into pride; the subversive potential of camp; the occlusion of lesbians by gay men; the permeable borders between friendship and love; relationships of queer children to families, schools and religious institutions; the association of queerness with artistic sensibility;

Orientalist fantasy; allegiance to certain figures and myths in the classical world; the ubiquitous presence of homophobia and misogyny; the attractions of and resistance to normative coupledness; gender ambiguity and fluidity; the childhood development of identity; forbidden desire... But in each case, what are the variations that are specific to the Eastern experience?

In our own critical practice, too, we in the West might expect Eastern scholars to be involved in similar projects to our own. We all work to identify LGBT authors and the related themes in their works; we rediscover lost or suppressed or forgotten queer texts; we reassess, in the light of liberationist principles, queer texts which were previously undervalued or ignored; we perform queer readings of canonical texts, thereby estranging and renewing them; we identify, and read critically, homophobic texts. As far as possible within conservative intuitions, we queer the academy itself. Scholars around the world are at different stages in this process, but what are the Eastern European specifics of developing academic practice?

What do we have to learn from each other, not only by way of specific information (particular books, authors, movements), but also in the development of fresh points of view? Could the cultural centre of gravity be shifting away from the West of Europe, just as, globally, it is moving away from the Atlantic rim?

Gregory Woods is Professor Emeritus in Gay and Lesbian Studies at Nottingham Trent University, where he was the Chair in Gay and Lesbian Studies from 1998 to 2013. In addition to seven books of poetry, he is the author of such seminal studies as *Articulate Flesh: Male Homo-eroticism and Modern Poetry* (1987), *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998) and *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World* (2016), a hugely ambitious examination of LGBTQ+ history and culture which crosses continents, languages and almost a century to identify the ways in which homosexuality has helped shape the modern world.

Comparative Analysis of Children's Literature – *Dečki* (Boys) and *Fantje iz gline* (Clay Boys)

Social changes influence children's literature with problem-oriented topics, which is an umbrella term for motifs such as refugees, illness, difference, poverty, death, gender, war, etc. The search for identity is a literary universality in children's literature. In contemporary times, the theme of searching for (gender) identity in picturebooks is written mostly from an adult's and less from a child's perspective. The main criterion for this type of literature is *crosswriting* (B. Kummerling Meibauer) or *infantile text and adult contexts* (L. Seifert) but not for all of them.

The problem topic of difference is one of contemporary themes in animal stories with, for example, ferrets (*Dihurlandija [Polecatland]*), penguins (*And Tango Makes Three*), snails (*Mavrična maškarada [Rainbow Masquerade]*), pigs (*Toot & Puddle, Toot & Puddle: A present for Toot*), etc. In the picturebooks *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989), *Daddy's Roommate* (1991) and *The Two Fathers* (2012), the main characters are adults and children. Babette Cole's *Mummy Never Told Me* (2003) is one of the rare picturebooks written from a child's point of view (child-centred) (adoptions, disabilities, genders, teenage pregnancy, conception, sexuality, etc.).

The searching for (gender) identity is the central theme of the young adult novels *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* (Boys: A Novel from a Boarding School, 1938) by France Novšak and *Fantje iz gline* (Clay Boys, 2005) by Janja Vidmar. On the basis of the problem-oriented theory (I. Saksida: *Tabuji v mladinski književnosti [Taboos in Children's Literature]*, 2014), the theme in the novel *Dečki* is the search for (gender) identity or coming-of-age. The story has internal and external conflicts, the boys are not outcasts, it is character-oriented. The novel *Fantje iz gline* is a plot-oriented story.

Milena Mileva Blažić, PhD, teaches children's literature, fairy tales and picturebooks at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her fields of interest include children's literature, the pedagogy of children's literature, folk tales and fairy tales, and multicultural children's literature, picturebooks, women fairy tale writers. She has published articles in Slovenian and English in these areas of study.

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

Ivan Kozlenko's novel *Tanzher* (Tangiers) became one of Ukraine's biggest cultural events of 2017. Published by a prominent mainstream publishing house, Komora, it was also vigorously debated in the country's media and was shortlisted for multiple prizes. This was unprecedented for Ukrainian literature: a queer-themed novel whose plot centers on two bisexual love triangles, one taking place in the 1920s, the other in the early 2000s, did not provoke a torrent of homophobic abuse. Its presentations were not picketed by right-wing extremists, the way this happened on multiple occasions to other recent gay-themed publications, most notably the 2009 anthology *120 storinok Sodomu* (120 Pages of Sodom). The novel, set in the city of Odessa, constructs an alternative affirming myth, reinterpreting the episode in the city's history associated with the days when it served as Ukraine's capital of filmmaking in the 1920s and seeking to reinsert this queer-positive narrative into the national literary canon. Previous attempts to queer prominent figures of Ukraine's literary pantheon invariably resulted in scandals. What caused the reception of Kozlenko's novel to be so different? My paper analyzes the project of utopian transgression the novel seeks to enact and situates it both in the domestic sociocultural field and in the broader contexts of global LGBTQ writing, countercultural practices, and the challenges faced by post-communist societies struggling with the new conservative turn in national cultural politics.

Vitaly Chernetsky is an associate professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and director of the Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas. He is the author of *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization* (2007) and of numerous articles and literary translations.

The Whisper and the Cry: Queer Masculinities in Ivo Andrić's *The Days of the Consuls* and *Omer Pasha Latas*

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick emphatically argued, sexuality and literature in general, and male homosociality and literary representation in particular, are mutually imbricated to the point that the whole European canon can be read as a male homosocial canon (Sedgwick 1985). This is certainly true for the *oeuvre* of one of the most famous and most influential canonical authors from Yugoslavia, the 1961 Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić (1892–1975). His writings feature a rich variety of passionate relations between men, such as camaraderie and mentorship, friendship and nurture, but also jealousy and rivalry, frustrating hierarchies and destructive antagonisms. Emphasizing the importance of male bonds in his fiction, this presentation will read two of his historical novels – *The Days of the Consuls* (*Travnička hronika*, 1945) and the posthumously published, unfinished novel *Omer Pasha Latas* (1976) – as texts about different aspects of homosociality. The presentation will trace a number of notably deviant and queer male figures within these narratives and analyze the ways in which queerness serves as a specific focal point for a critical reflection on the broader themes of the novels (e.g. the relationship between East and West, and cultural hybridity, but also violence and intimacy). Finally, drawing from advances made in contemporary queer studies, the presentation will reflect upon the importance of queer male figures for the ways in which fiction narratively constructs the entire continuum of male bonds, its points of inclusion and exclusion, its regulatory ideals and disavowed transgressions.

Slaven Crnić holds an MA in Cultural Studies and is a PhD Candidate in Comparative Gender Studies at the Central European University (Budapest), researching literary representations of male homosociality and queerness in socialist Yugoslavia. He has taught at the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb, and the Department of Cultural Studies, University of Rijeka.

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

The young, bisexual Faludy (1910–2006) wrote homoerotic poems hidden behind historical masks until having come across two homosocial scenes during the Second World War: he spent one year getting to know Arabian culture in Morocco and served in the American Army for three years. As Faludy continuously rewrote his memoirs and poems, we are able to follow the development of his gay persona in his *oeuvre*. He wrote articles about his Arabian nights for the news media during and after the war; he published his autobiography in English in 1962, which was rewritten in Hungarian in 1968–1970 and 1987. The first four publications, including the canonised English version of *My Happy Days in Hell*, only hinted at man-to-man relations, contrary to the later Hungarian editions. I demonstrate the rewriting of his history with parallel citations; furthermore, I attempt to reconstruct the actual events with contemporary letters, diary entries and subsequent testimonies. On the one hand, a forgotten autobiographical sequence about his soldier years from 1947 has interesting references and gay characters, which may lead us to rethink the later literary representation of this period. On the other hand, his many poems draw a veil over the homosexual dimensions until the English translations, when the language clarifies the specific gender. Finally, his new, stable homosexual partnership, the North American environment and the gay liberation movement all helped Faludy come out of the closet in the late 1980s.

Gábor Csiszár is a teacher at a high school and at the Teacher Training Centre of the ELTE University in Budapest. His specialist fields are the history of the twentieth century Hungarian literature and LGBTQ+ representation. His PhD dissertation dealt with George Faludy and he has edited three volumes of Faludy's poetry *oeuvre*. He won the Teachers' Award of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and a state scholarship for his work in this field.

Friulian Love Poetry and Its Reception in the Slovenian Cultural Environment

During the Second World War two poets began writing in the Friulian language to express their homoerotic poetry. These are Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) and his cousin Nico Naldini (1929–) who, in a small rural centre of Friuli, in Casarsa, developed a literary activity within the framework of the *Academiuta di lenga furlana*. Their writing in Friulian testifies to the beginning of a contemporary artistic literature in this language.

The paper aims to focus on the experiences of translation, in particular the translation of poetry in Friulian, which took place in Slovenia, where Pasolini was known mainly as a film director and independent thinker. Since 2000, however, some novels and plays have been translated entirely, while Jolka Milič edited a collection of *Friulian poems* in 2012. The translation of Naldini's work, on the other hand, despite his extensive and constant production, mainly in Italian, is still extremely limited.

Through the analysis of the translated works and essays produced in Slovenia concerning the literature of the two Friulian authors (preceded by the poet Umberto Saba from Trieste, the first Italian author of homoerotic poetry – and prose – of the twentieth century), the paper proposes to develop a meditation on the prudence of the two contiguous literatures in contaminating each other. An attempt will also be made to identify the factors that have generated this detachment and lack of interest in the Slovenian social and cultural context in the second half of the 20th century.

Roberto Dapit PhD (b. 1957 in Italy), linguist and ethnologist, is associate professor of Slovenian language and literature at the University of Udine. The topics of his research are multilingual education, intercultural and translation studies, linguistic minorities and intangible cultural heritage in the area between Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, where he carried out more than 20 years of field research. His scholarly activities are recorded in several monographs in the field of linguistics, such as *Aspetti di cultura resiana nei nomi di luogo* (1995–1998–2008), and ethnology (*A Treasury of Slovenian Folklore*, 2010) and in numerous articles and visual works.

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

The name *Sappho* represents a cornerstone of lesbian cultures. It is perhaps the most general code for lesbianism – though mostly for white lesbian communities. Sappho is commonly known as “the first lesbian poet”. But, a correction is called for, as far as our need to categorise artists on the basis of their preferred medium of expression is concerned: Sappho was not a poet, she was a musician. A composer-singer-instrumentalist-songwriter, if you will. What came from the “Eastern European” area and formed all “Western” discourses” was music: poetics, which were meant to be played, and most importantly, *heard*.

The paper focuses on a great abyss, which has formed through an astonishing disregard for the unpreserved historical artefacts, and which places poetry (as a separate artistic category) at the roots of lesbian cultures, even though poetry is inseparable from its sonority, e.g. music (as a category which does not discriminate between the verbocentric and semiotically unstable audible constructs). Through sound and music theories, seminal thoughts by lesbian theoreticians and examples of poetry by writers from both the Yugoslav and global contexts, I point to the nuclear character of sound in the context of sexual difference and lesbian subjectivation, as thematized in literature. In addition, by stressing the inseparability of poetry and sonority, poetry will be shown as a primary constituent of lesbian communities as potent political bodies.

Nina Dragičević, MSoc., is a writer and a composer. She is the author of the novel *Kdo ima druge skrbi* (2014) and two volumes of scholarly essays – *Slavne neznane* (2016) and *Med njima je glasba* (2017). In 2018 she received the *Knight of Poetry* expert jury award and audience award.

DENIS FERHATOVIĆ

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

Throughout his first novel *Nowhere Man* (2002), Aleksandar Hemon strips and crushes his semi-autobiographical protagonist Jozef Pronek, literally and metaphorically. The work repeatedly expresses the degradation that results from Pronek's cultural and linguistic displacement as an immigrant in the United States in gendered and sexualized terms. Dislocation, queer desire, and masculinity in crisis converge in Pronek's interaction with his American girlfriend, her gay roommate, and the roommate's boyfriend. Still, Pronek's immigrant position does not account entirely for his humiliation. Even in the pre-war Sarajevo, Pronek embodies unconventional masculinity, as is evident in the humorous descriptions of his first clumsy sexual experiences. Despite his status as an awkward outsider in many settings, the protagonist sometimes appears as an object of erotic fantasy. In the Ukrainian section of the narrative, Pronek is desired by Victor, an American with Ukrainian roots and a closeted graduate student working on a queer topic. Victor's fantasies of Pronek have something to do with the Western gaze on Eastern Europe, but they look different in the context of the former's multiple identities and the latter's representation in the entire work. I suggest that by looking at Hemon's complex portrayal of Pronek, we can find some gay inspiration in the unlikeliest of places in Eastern European literature today.

Denis Ferhatović is an Associate Professor of English at Connecticut College. His interests include medieval literatures, immigrant writing, translation, graphic novels, queer and postcolonial theories, and food. His work has come out in *Neophilologus*, *Studies in Philology*, *Forum for Modern Language Study*, *Postmedieval*, *Medieval Science Fiction*, and *Rumba Under Fire*.

MIHA JAVORNIK

Голубая Literature and Russian Holiness

In the relationship between literature and LGBT culture in Russia, one should start from the Russians' ambivalent attitude to the Law. Since the beginnings of the Russian state, homosexuality has been strictly forbidden by the law or canon law. In reality, there was a lot of homosexuality and it was tolerated.

But if God's Word is holy, everything that is written in fiction is also sacred, since the book is the bearer of truth and beauty. There is no room for talk of homosexuality in it. Apart from minor, masked homosexual deviations in Lermontov, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky or Chekhov, even writing about homosexuality was considered a sin. The ban lasts until the end of the 19th century, until the period of decadence and symbolism. During this time, Vasily Rozanov plays an important role in the first theoretical debates on homosexuality in Russian culture. This is the time of the first coming-outs of Russian writers: Marina Cvetaeva leaves the most important trace in lesbian, Mikhail Kuzmin in gay literature. In his last collection of poems, *The Trout is Breaking Through the Ice* (1928), the symbolist poet Kuzmin, strays away from all literary conventions, and his public performances represent the first promotion of gay culture in Russia. Stalinist totalitarianism in the thirties, which continues to follow the dialogical post-October period, buries all hope: in Soviet literature (homo)sexuality is taboo again. Russian conceptualism at the end of the Soviet empire begins to break this idea again. In literature, scenes of homosexuality (Eduard Limonov) reappear, and in the 1990s literary attempts to develop homosexual themes (Yevgeny Kharitonov) are born. But this hope diminishes during the reign of Vladimir Putin. With the pressure of the Orthodox Church, homophobia is constantly growing and the recurring idea is re-enacted again: The Word is sacred, after all.

Miha Javornik, Ph.D. in literary studies, Full Professor of contemporary Russian literature at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and, as of 2005, Head of the Department of Russian literature at the University of Ljubljana. His main research interests include Russian literature of the nineteenth century (Pushkin, Gogolj, Lermontov) and the twentieth century (the avant-garde, Bulgakov, Russian postmodernist prose), and contemporary forms of communication (IT, the Internet, cyberliterature).

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

Published around the same time, both Uroš Filipović's *Glasshouse* (Belgrade, 2002) and Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown* (Warsaw, 2004) came to be recognized as the first gay novels in their countries and have since acquired a cult status there. After establishing the historical, political and cultural contexts from which the two texts produce similarities in representing and narrating queer identities, the paper will then focus on those points in which they begin to produce differences. One of the main points of intersection are the repressive communist societies of Former Yugoslavia and Polish People's Republic, yet it is the modern, post-communist societies of Poland and Serbia, with their promises of democracy and liberalism, that – paradoxically – bring those identities into a crisis and mark the crucial point of departure between these texts.

Jelena Jović (1981) – PhD candidate and higher lecturer of Polish Language, Literature and Culture at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. Translator of Joanna Bator's *Dark Almost Night*, Szczepan Twardoch's *Morphine* (2016) and Jacek Dukaj's *Ice* (due by the end of 2018); won 1st place at the Wrocław, European Capital of Culture 2016 competition in Polish literature translations of Michał Witkowski's *Lovetown* into Serbian and was awarded co-financing for its publication.

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

An iconic representative of the late Soviet gay literature, Evgenii Kharitonov (1941–1981), is well-known for his only collection of works *Pod domashnim arestom* (Under House Arrest) that he compiled shortly before his untimely death in 1981. Despite its fascinating aesthetics and open and proud homoeroticism unheard of in Russia since Mikhail Kuzmin (1872–1936), only a few researchers have so far focused on his work, with most of them emphasizing the role of binary models in the analysis of his literary legacy. Many of his short stories and poems have been interpreted through the dynamics between dominant and submissive gay masculinities, and his most famous work, *Dukhovka* (The Oven) has often been read in terms of the relationship between hegemonic heteronormativity and marginalized homosexuality, in which the latter is "afraid" to manifest itself to the hostile environment and is therefore doomed to a tragic existence. My paper will argue that Kharitonov's literary universe exists independently of the heteronormative world, in a state of what I call a "parallel reality" that is neither submissive to heteronormativity, nor overcoming it—it simply *is*, and its only purpose is to be the field where Kharitonov can explore the male corporeal beauty, the perfections of the imperfect and the imperfections of the ideal. Within this world constructed by the writer, the structures are nuanced and fluid rather than explicitly hierarchical, and with them, Kharitonov takes the reader onto a journey that provides a fresh look on queer masculinities in Russian culture.

Tatiana Klepikova is a PhD student and Teaching Fellow at the University of Passau, and co-editor of *Outside the "Comfort Zone": Private and Public Spheres in Late Socialist Europe* (to be published in 2019). Her research interests include Russian history and culture, political art, and histories and cultures of LGBT communities in the post-Soviet space.

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

Literature appears inseparable from emotions at first glance – both of the queer and of the straight kind. In the West, emotions have been recognized as a crucial part of the literary experience at least since Plato and Aristotle. Yet the cases of Enlightenment and Romanticism as well as of Modernism and Postmodernism show that different cultural periods can have different attitudes toward emotions. This very fact has been increasingly investigated in recent decades, while the so-called “affective turn” was established in the humanities. Literary studies participated in this turn, focusing (among other things) on the role of emotions as a narrative device to shape stories. In our presentation, we would like to link affective narratology and queer studies examining the ways in which queer literature structures its narratives through the representation of emotions. We will focus on the specific case of children and youngsters dealing with the issue of queer (and therefore also straight) identity in any way: their emotions constitute an important topic in LGBTQ culture, being mostly characterized as marked by disease but also (sometimes) by positive or at least defensive “counter-feelings” (on the characters’ as well as on the narrator’s and the author’s level). Our paper shall give two examples of queer emotions from Eastern Europe, analyzing a Slovak and a Slovene contemporary text, both dealing with the topic of childhood and queerness under Socialism and on the verge of Post-Socialism: Suzana Tratnik’s collection of short stories *Noben glas* (2016) and Michal Hvorecký’s novel *Eskorta* (2007). The two texts rely on different affective strategies, yet they are similar in their attempt to acknowledge and at the same time blur the distinction between queer and straight emotions.

Alenka Koron is a researcher and librarian at the ZRC SAZU, Institute of Slovenian literature and literary studies in Ljubljana. Her main fields of research are narrative theory, literary theory and methodology of literary scholarship, theory of autobiography, theory of discourse, and modern Slovenian and foreign fiction. She is in the editorial board of *Primerjalna književnost*, has co-edited a monograph *Avtobiografski*

diskurz (Autobiographical discourse [Ljubljana 2011]) and is the author of the book *Sodobne teorije pripovedi* (Contemporary narrative theories [Ljubljana 2014]).

Matteo Colombi (Seriante, Italy, 1978) is a literary scholar (comparatist and Slavacist) based in Leipzig, Germany, where he works at the Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa. His research fields are literature and ethnicity (Czech/German and Italian/Slovene relations), literature and resistance/revolution (Yugoslav Partisans and their cultural memory), subcultures (punk, women’s literary history) and literature and pop (Czech literary cultural icons).

The Subversive Construction of Gender in the Poetry of Kristina Hočevar

The article focuses on places in the poetry of Kristina Hočevar that perform gendered positions by subverting existing conventions. In her texts, the latter is carried out in such a manner that the lesbian body acts as an expression of all genders. The speaker unites both “a little boy” (*Naval I*, 34) as well as “a little / not so little girl” (*ibidem*). In *The Straight Mind* Monique Wittig asserts that a lesbian is not a woman, since the category of gender only has meaning in the heteronormative matrix. The lesbian position exits the gendered matrix and erodes the category of gender. The texts of Kristina Hočevar operate with the category of gender as a random and non-binding expression. The use of gendered labels does not only destabilize gendered roles, but allows, in an anti-ageist manner, for a different reading of age-specific expressions, for example in *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips*: “wrinkled and grey-haired, / the dolls don’t outgrow the chairs” (59). At the same time, irony is at the forefront as the dominant means of implicit social criticism in the poetry of Kristina Hočevar.

This textual strategy can already be observed in Kristina Hočevar’s third poetry collection *Tails* (2008), the poetess further develops and uses it in her fifth collection *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips* (2012), and in her last poetry collection *Rush* (2017).

Vesna Liponik (1993, Maribor) studies postgraduate comparative literature and literary theory and Slovene language at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Writes and publishes her work (*Idiot, Literatura, Dialogi, Apokalipsa, mosaik22*, etc.). She took part in the 3rd International Poetry Conference Babelsprech – Lyrik für Alle in Salzburg and in the 3rd International Student Conference STUDKON, organized by the Faculty of Arts in Niš.

Reconceptualising the Russian LGBTQ+ Community: The impact of Russia’s “Gay Propaganda” Laws on LGBTQ+ Discourse

Russia’s regional and federal “gay propaganda” laws adopted between 2006 and 2013 have had a significant impact on Russian LGBTQ+ discourse. The laws contain ideologically marked expressions whose aim is to reconceptualise the social image of LGBTQ+ community by reshaping the language used in reference to LGBTQ+ community.

The federal and regional laws utilise ideologically-laden expressions that link homosexuality with pathology and criminality, and erroneously try to present it as an ideological concept, or a political strategy. In this new opposition between “traditional/natural” and “non-traditional/unnatural”, homosexuality is reconstructed as a modern phenomenon completely alien to Russian society and in contradiction with the country’s traditional values.

This homophobic discourse has already spread into the media and everyday speech, and started to reshape the way LGBTQ+ community is perceived by the general public. As this discourse was employed by the authority, which holds the power over the production of any discourse and determines which discourse be regarded as legitimate, it is reasonable to expect that this discourse will prevail over all others and invade literary language as well. Are writers of LGBTQ+ literature aware of the discriminatory nature of this discourse, and, more importantly, are they willing to reject it in order to prevent the reconceptualization of LGBTQ+ community? Or can these language changes already be observed in LGBTQ+ literary works written after 2013?

Maruša Maligoj is a fresh graduate holding a master’s degree in English and Russian. Her main interest is the relationship between language and society, which she also researched in her master’s theses. She is fascinated by how language shapes people, and hopes to explore this phenomenon in the future.

TAMTA MELASHVILI

Queering Modern Georgian Literature

Since 2010 queer themes have appeared recurrently in contemporary Georgian literature. I argue that this process of queering is very much intertwined with the local scene of LGBTQ (and feminist) activism, which in a way discursively determined, defined and even highlighted the literary topics of modern Georgian fiction. The themes include but are not limited to the issues of coming out, homophobia/transphobia, structural gender violence, etc.

Among dozens of queer texts, the short stories *If I knew about your death* (2015) by Magda Kalandadze and *Not present* (2018) by Eka Kevanishvili; and the novels *Fallen Apart* (2017) by Davit Gabunia and *Gldani* by Guram Matskhonashvili (2018) will be discussed in a wider context of social movements and interactions.

Tamta Melashvili is a queer feminist activist, writer and a teacher at the Institute for Gender Studies, Tbilisi State University. She holds an MA degree in Gender Studies (Central European University). Her research interests mainly focus on gender and queer history.

IZABELA MORSKA

Modesty at Work: Zygmunt Mycielski in Warsaw

Zygmunt Mycielski (1907–1987) was a post-war composer and intellectual; impeccably educated (he studied composition at the Parisian École Normale de Musique) he disdained the communist rule; he also didn't hide the fact that he was gay. As fate would have it, he was the grandson of Count Szembek whose queer adventures were commemorated by Joseph Conrad in "Il Conde." His family estate parceled out, with unflinching modesty, Mycielski worked all his life as the editor of a classical music monthly. Foregoing privileges readily available to those intellectuals who were willing to create a semblance of supporting communism, he shared a small Warsaw apartment with one of his exes, a retired editor, and his young boyfriend. He also wrote a journal, eventually published in four volumes between 1998 and 2012. The "quasi-journal," as Mycielski called it, positions its author, not surprisingly, as a member of the small circle of suave anti-communist intellectuals. But, it seems, with added value: his voice is jaded, his outlook searingly anti-populist, disinclined to embrace either the stolid glory of communism or the devotional fervor of "Solidarity", and obviously queer. He neither blots out his gayness nor romanticizes it; and having been arrested in Parisian baths (which meant acquiring a criminal record preventing him from attending a UNESCO conference), he is not prone to idealizing the West, either. This paper argues that in his journals Mycielski not only carves out a piece of freedom but presents us with a blueprint for surviving an ongoing political hardship with an open mind and untarnished self-respect, steering clear of any exhilarating experiences and justifiable perks that populism delivers.

Izabela Morska, Ph.D., is an author of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and literary criticism. Her most recent book is *Glorious Outlaws: Debt as a Tool in Contemporary Postcolonial Writing* (2016). A leading voice in Polish literature following the fall of the Berlin wall, Morska has been a guest speaker or presenter at 50+ conferences and literary festivals, speaking on diverse topics including migration, women's rights, civil rights in the EU, LGBT rights in Eastern Europe. Her latest research interest is the consciousness of hunters and animals as literary characters. Working at the intersection of postcolonial, gender, and queer studies, she has been the subject of at least three books of postdoctoral criticism, including *Melancholic Migrating Bodies* by Ursula Chowanec.

KEVIN MOSS

Camp Kharitonov and Russian Gay Identity

The Russian underground writer Evgeny Kharitonov lived his entire life (1941–1981) in the Soviet Union under threat of Article 121, the anti-sodomy law, yet he managed to carve out a space to write an almost aggressively gay identity for himself. Though he never traveled abroad, Kharitonov locates himself in a worldwide gay tradition and deploys camp humor as a strategy to survive as a gay man both in the USSR and in the circle of straight dissident writers who were his peers. This paper will look at camp Kharitonov through the lens of David Halperin's *How to Be Gay* as a way of theorizing a spontaneous gay cultural style, rather than a colonization by the West. Kharitonov's prose challenges both the idea that Soviets lacked a gay identity (Laurie Essig, David Tuller) and the idea that the only image available to Russian gays was that of a sexless spiritual homosexual and martyr (Brian Baer). This is what Vitaly Chernetsky has in mind when he interprets Kharitonov's writing as *littérature mineure* and what Hal Foster calls the "postmodernism of resistance". Kharitonov writes to reclaim the subject position, to act as a spokesperson for a gay minority and against a heterosexual majority that would silence him.

Kevin Moss is the Jean Thomson Fulton Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Middlebury College, USA. He has studied Russian gay literature and culture since the early 90s and is the editor of the first anthology of gay Russian materials, *Out of the Blue: Russia's Hidden Gay Literature*.

KINGA PASZKO

The Depiction of Gay Identity in Michał Witkowski's Prose

Witkowski is the first name that comes to mind when the public in Poland is asked about a gay celebrity. The language he uses is strong, raw and doesn't seem to be politically correct – he is quoting – or flirting with – phrases used by anti-gay hate speakers. Yet he does it with such charm that the impression can only be that it is cool to be gay; it is elegant and it has a spell of communist sentiment that is so trendy nowadays. With the abundance of openly anti-LGBTQ speech in the Polish media and its influence on politics, with sexual identity education provided by non-Catholic charities such as Ponton being prohibited, making a step forward – overcoming the ridiculing of people of non-normative sexuality – is making a huge difference in breaking down the taboo. It sends a clear message "I, a gay person, can laugh at my identity – and it will be so hilarious that you won't be able to put the book down until you finish it. I'm not afraid of it. As there is nothing wrong about it and I can be proud of who I am – and a handful of jokes will not change that".

I believe a loud laughter can be a great weapon against the quiet spread of prejudice.

Kinga Paszko has completed her studies in Polish philology in 2002 at the University of Wrocław, Poland. Since then she has taken up different tasks tackling inequalities – with forming and leading a group of teenage volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2014 she moved to Ireland where she has organised fundraising events and worked directly with people stigmatised because of addiction, homelessness or minority status.

Criticism in the Closet

The paper *Criticism in the Closet* focuses on the attitudes of Slovenian literary criticism towards LGBT literature. LGBT topics are in no way underrepresented and the quality of lesbian and gay writers is well recognized by the general Slovenian readership. Nevertheless it seems that LGBT authors often feel neglected by literary criticism, but I can agree only partly.

The quantitative part of my research shows that there is no obvious discrimination at work when it comes to the critical consideration of LGBT works; the mapping of the critical coverage of selected books compared with the coverage of works by non-LGBT authors does not indicate any deviations. It also turns out that there is no important difference in the critical coverage of LGBT books within different types of media (web portals, print, radio).

But since the decision to write a critique of an LGBT work does not automatically mean “inclusive” critical practices, I also added a qualitative analysis of critical texts to my paper as sometimes the most benevolent critical decisions can also be – exclusionary. Most critics provide a thorough overview of the main topics of selected works, for example the lives of LGBT people, the love between people of the same sex through both emotional and sexual closeness. They understand the socially engaged potential of these works, they see the interplay between the private and the public, they listen actively when homophobia and social repression are in focus, etc. As I conclude, literary criticism is not ignorant and exclusionary; it is striving for greater visibility of works that history has so often overlooked. But in doing so, criticism is also overly cautious and undecided, not discriminatory but rather – as I point out with some extracts from book reviews – regrettably superficial.

Maja Šučur (1989) is a literary critic and cultural journalist at the daily newspaper Dnevnik. Her literary criticism, also published in the *Literatura* and *Dialogi* magazines as well as the *ludliteratura.si* web portal, won her last year’s Stritar award for up-and-coming literary critic. She regularly organises and moderates literary events such as critical debates at Pranger, the international gathering of poets, critics and translators of poetry. Since 2014 she is a coordinator at the Society of Slovenian Literary Critics.

Queer Closeting: The Affective Politics of Gábor Thurzó’s *Days and Nights*

In this paper, I will discuss *Days and Nights* (1944), an early novel of Hungarian novelist Gábor Thurzó, author of several queerly closeted texts. The novel tells the melodramatic tale of a Platonic triangle between a young high school teacher; the less than perfect star of the local theater, and the latter’s mentor and keeper, a wealthy and wizened widow. In the paper, I will describe the queer closeting of the text and focus on the ways that the novel can be said to expose its own closeting as a form of blatant queer revolt against heteronormative domesticity. Linking this revolt to the narrative device of staging the teacher as a narrator who addresses an audience of old university friends, thereby inversely coming out to readers positioned as at least somewhat friendly and completely fraternal, I will argue that what I call queer closeting is politically similar to Muñoz’s arguments on what he terms disidentification and tactical misrecognition and that the reparative reading of *Days and Nights* can tease out what, according to Sedgwick, we can term camp affect in its politics of closeting, having a politically significant affective or illocutionary charge that is instructive for what we refer to as the illiberal crisis of democracy as it shows that the threat to its values cannot fail to amplify a politics of dissidence.

Eszter Timár is Assistant professor in the Department of Gender Studies at CEU, Budapest. Her work focuses on biodeconstruction and on the intersections of queer theory and deconstruction. Her articles have been published in *Parallax*, the *Oxford Literary Review*, and *InterAlia: A Journal of Queer Studies*.

Passion for Analysis

The totally unknown Serbian lesbian novel *Strast (Passion)* was published in 1921 in Zagreb, that is, seven years before Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness*. The author was David Pijade, a Serbian Jewish intellectual, a writer and translator and the brother of the far better-known revolutionary Moše Pijade. He also translated Tagore and Oscar Wilde into Serbian.

His novel belongs to Serbian expressionism; in a broader sense it is also part of European expressionism and the liberal ideas which ended before WWII. It bears the subtitle *Roman iz beogradskog života - A Novel from a Life in Belgrade*, which is interesting as it is not a chronicle but a narrative about the passionate lesbian love life of two young women, Radmila and Margita, who met at a convent. It is written in the form of romantic letters sent by Radmila to Margita, who stayed in the convent. Radmila had to marry; we find a lot of thoughts and comments about the unbearable life of middle-class women and a critique of marriage. Radmila is the model of Freud's hysterical woman, an educated woman who is unsatisfied and intellectually deprived in her marriage.

The novel has been almost completely neglected and forgotten, sometimes mentioned as poor-quality literature or even pornography. It is a good case for a lesbian analysis according to the Dutch scholar Renée C. Hoogland, as it could be interpreted as a lesbian work but not as a lesbian (con)text. And it is not a narrative pattern of reversal but of damnation.

Suzana Tratnik obtained her BA in sociology, and her MA in gender anthropology in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She is author of fiction books and two studies on the lesbian movement in Slovenia, and another on lesbian literature, and memoirs. She received the national Prešeren Foundation Award for Literature in 2007.

Bulgarian Heretics, Warm Brothers and Blue Lovers. A Historical and Etymological Overview of Words and Expressions Used in the Languages of Eastern Europe (Mainly Slavic) to Refer to Male Homosexuals

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

Andrea Trovesi, lecturer for Slavic Studies and Slavic Linguistics at the University of Bergamo and Milan until 2015, at present associate professor of Slavic Linguistics and Slovene Language and Literature at "Sapienza" University of Rome. He works mainly on the field of Slavic languages and Slavic contrastive linguistics. More widely, his research interests include the linguistic and cultural history of Slavic countries and Eastern Europe.

Lesbian Poetry Tradition

In the Western context the beginnings of lesbian poetry production date back to the late 1960s as part of the emerging lesbian-feminist movement. I outlined this poetic and literary line in detail in the article “*Poetry is still not a luxury*” (the title is a paraphrase of Audre Lorde’s famous essay “*Poetry is not a luxury*”), that traced the history of lesbian poetry in the global and European context and was published in the book *Follow Her without Words: The Anthology of Contemporary European Lesbian Poetry* (Škuc Publishing House, 2015).

Lesbian poetry production can be divided into five periods: lesbian poetry from the identity politics period (emphasizing lesbian difference as a tool of political, cultural and artistic subjectivization and emancipation); the historization of lesbian poetry (searching for and analyzing lesbian topics in older or historical literary works); lesbian literary proliferation (the inclusion of ethnic, racial and class perspectives); the queer approach (a poststructuralist critique of the unified lesbian identity and emphasizing sexual non-normativity instead of sexual identity); and reconciliation between identity politics and queer politics.

Eastern European lesbian poetry follows a similar line of development, only it emerged much later, in the 1980s or even later. However, Eastern European lesbian poetry has certain specifics, firstly, because of national, social or linguistic differences the development is not so linear, and secondly, the socio-political climate in Eastern Europe is quite different from the Western one which, in turn, also affects lesbian culture and art.

Nataša Velikonja (1967), sociologist, poet, essayist, translator, lesbian activist. She has published six books of poetry and four books of essays and scientific papers. She has translated several works of lesbian theory, gender studies and radical social criticism, as well as theories of architecture and design. She received the Prešeren Award for her undergraduate thesis in 2013 and the Župančič Award for her literary work in 2016.

Eastern Boys and Western Lovers: Polish Gay Literature in the Context of the East/West Distinction

Our paper aims to describe and interpret some key motifs that appear in Polish gay/queer literature especially after 1989: the east/west distinction. The presentation will be divided into two parts. In the first one we will discuss the implications and consequences of two important books about the history of Polish emancipatory discourse: *De-centring Western Sexualities. Central and East European Perspectives*, ed. J. Mizielińska and R. Kulpa, and Łukasz Szulc’s *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland* in the context of Immanuel Wallerstein’s concept of semiperiphery (of global capitalism). In the second part of our presentation we will discuss a few important Polish queer literary texts which describe communist Poland at the beginning of the 1990s, including Michał Witkowski’s *Lubię* (2004) (translated into English by W. Martin as *Lovetown*) and its sequel *Fynf und cwancyś* (2015) and a collection of autobiographical short stories by Michał Głowiński (*Carska filiżanka*). We want to use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s conceptualization of identity and shame (*Shame and Its Sisters. A Silvan Tomkins Reader*) as our theoretical tool and present our idea of “contextual eastern queer”. Our presentation seeks to link the dynamics of the development of Polish literature with social reality.

Błażej Warkocki is an assistant professor in the Department of Polish Literary Studies at the University of Adami Mickiewicz in Poznań, Poland, and a literary critic. He co-edited two collections of essays, *Homofobia po polsku* [Polish Homophobia, Warsaw 2004] with Z. Sypniewski and *Kalendarium życia literackiego 1976–2000* [Calendar of Literary Life in Poland 1976–2000, Krakow 2003] with Przemysław Czapliński, Maciej Leciński and Eliza Szybowicz. He is the author of two books about contemporary Polish literature in the context of queer studies: *Homo niewiadomo. Polska proza wobec odmienności* [A Queer. Polish Literature and Otherness, 2007] and *Różowy język. Literatura i polityka kultury na początku wieku* [Pink Language. Literature and Cultural Politics at the Beginning of the 21st Century, 2013]. He recently published the book *Pamiętnik afektów z okresu dojrzewania. Gombrowicz – queer – Sedgwick* [2018]. He is working on the project *Cruising the 1970: Unearthing Pre-HIV/AIDS Queer Sexual Cultures* (CRUSEV).

Przemysław Górecki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland). I am a PhD candidate in literary studies. My doctoral dissertation considers the issue of masculinity in contemporary Polish prose. My scientific and didactic work focuses on issues related to studies on masculinity, new humanities, literary criticism and queer topics. I am a graduate of gender studies at The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a member of American Men's Studies Association and a participant in international conferences on the subject of men's studies. Over the years, I was actively involved in equality activities in Poland as part of many organizations, institutions and grassroots activities.

ANDREJ ZAVRL

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

France Novšak (1916–1991), published his first novel *Dečki: roman iz dijaškega internata* (Boys: A Novel from a Boarding School) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1938, then again, with some alterations, in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1970. It was reprinted in the Republic of Slovenia in 2016. In the novel two adolescent boys meet and fall for each other at a Catholic boarding school, and the novel presents us with a surprisingly frank discussion of adolescent same sex desire, in particular the boys' oscillation between their intense feelings of love and adverse social expectations.

The paper looks into how the novel has been received in different states and socio-political systems and considers what the criticism can tell us about the changing attitudes towards homosexuality. It covers all the milestones on the novel's path from the furore surrounding its first publication to the silence surrounding the second and its eventual reputation as the first homoerotic novel in Slovenian literature. It discusses, among others, the pre-WWII divide between the more traditional critics from the Catholic right and the more liberal ones from the left, brief post-war comments, Stanko Jost's film version of the novel (1976), the immensely influential inclusion in the anthology of "homoerotic love in Slovenian literature" (1990), the first scholarly analyses, articles, etc. and, finally, the latest publication of the novel in 2016.

Andrej Zavrl holds a PhD in literary studies from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is an independent teacher, translator and researcher. He has published a number of articles, introductions and reviews as well as a study of the constructions of Christopher Marlowe's dissidence in criticism, translation and performance (2016). He has also co-authored a children's picture book.

Contemporary Slovene LGBTQ Narrative

In the Slovene literature of the new millennium, gender identity is the prevalent topic in heterosexual as well as in homosexual narratives. Moreover, the most elevating fact is that from the year 2000 to 2018 the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer topics increased substantially. Although gay topics were dominant till the middle of the last millennium, lesbian topics have become the central leitmotif and theme in the last fifteen years. In my research on the latest LGBTQ narrative, I included the novels and collections of short stories of the following authors: Nina Dragičević, Jedrt Lapuh Maležič, Vesna Lemaic, Davorin Lenko, Brane Mozetič, Teja Oblak, Urška Sterle, Nataša Sukič and Suzana Tratnik. On the one hand the authors have different poetics but on the other hand they share some common characteristics such as: the connection of identity crisis with the critical aspects of society, violence, condemnation of homophobia, first-person style narration, humorous or ironic disclosure of the heterosexual matrix of oppression and linguistic or stylistic innovations at the narrative level.

Alojzija Zupan Sosič is a full professor of Slovene literature at the Department of Slovene Studies at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She has published a great deal of articles in journals and collections of important scientific papers; among her recent books is the monograph *The Theory of Narrative*. She was also a visiting professor at faculties abroad. Her fields of expertise are: contemporary Slovene novel, Slovene literature in comparative context, Slovene love poetry, the theory of the narrative text, the theory of gender and gender identity, literary interpretation in literature.

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

Although Croatian literary fiction has, in the last ten years, seen a noticeable rise in LGBTQ authors and themes, the same cannot be said about the sphere of playwriting. Seldom clearly outed and openly represented as homosexual, LGBTQ characters in Croatian drama are, in fact, always gay men and always accompanied by at least a small dose of (auto)homophobia. This means that all other “sexually variant” identities – including lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and queer – are quite literally non-existent, or rather, invisible.

The representation of gay men will be considered based on the concept of the *apparitional lesbian*, borrowed from Terry Castle, who uses it in order to describe the “haunting” presence of lesbian identities in the history of literature. In my presentation, I will argue that the same concept can be applied to the ways in which gay men are present in contemporary Croatian plays.

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

Jasna Jasna Žmak is a dramaturg and writer based in Zagreb, currently working as an assistant researcher at the Department of Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Art. Among others, she has collaborated with authors such as Matija Ferlin, Oliver Frljić, Olga Dimitrijević and Maja Pelević. She has published two performance texts and a book of (queer) prose. She regularly collaborates with feminist websites such as *MUF*, *VoxFeminae* and *Libela*.

Translation into Slovenian and/or proofreading

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