

# Self-censorship?: The Transition between Latin and Cyrillic Script in the Personal Correspondence of Women Writers in the Era of Slovenian Modernism

PRIMOŽ MLAČNIK

*Univerza v Novi Gorici, Fakulteta za humanistiko, Vipavska cesta 13,  
SI 5000 Nova Gorica, primoz.mlacnik@ung.si*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18690/scn.17.1.162-175.2024>

————— 1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek – 1.01 Original Scientific Article —————

Prispevek temelji na avtorjevem arhivskem delu in analizi pisemske korespondence v rokopisni zbirki Narodne in univerzitetne knjižnice (NUK). Osredotoča se na korespondenco slovenskih modernističnih pisateljic Marice Nadlišek Bartol, Zofke Kveder, Marice Strnad in Vide Jeraj, ki so gojile pisemska prijateljstva. Prispevek analizira njihovo korespondenco v kontekstu nove teorije cenzure, da bi odgovoril na vprašanje, ali lahko prehajanje med latinično in cirilično pisavo dojemamo kot obliko samocenzure. Analiza kaže, da so pisateljice v pismih večinoma prehajale iz ene pisave v drugo, ko so pisale o kontroverznih temah partnerskega zakona, ljubezni, materinstva in spolnosti, vendar pri tej praksi niso bile dosledne. Avtor to prehajanje obravnava kot obliko implicitne, produktivne in nedosledne cenzure, ki je kot poseben zgodovinski način pisanja odseval širše družbeno-politične spremembe.

The paper is based on the author's archival work and analysis of correspondence in the manuscript collection of the National and University Library (NUK), focusing on the correspondence of Slovenian modernist writers Marica Nadlišek Bartol, Zofka Kveder, Marica Strnad and Vida Jeraj, who cultivated epistolary friendships. The paper analyses their correspondence in the context of the New Censorship Theory to answer the question: Can alphabetical shifting from the Latin to the Cyrillic Script be perceived as a form of self-censorship? The analysis shows that female writers mostly used this alphabetic shift in their interpersonal letters when writing about the controversial topics of marriage, love, motherhood and sexuality. However, they were not consistent in this practice. The author considers this transition as a form of implicit, productive and inconsistent censorship, which, as a particular historical mode of writing, reflects broader socio-political changes.

**Ključne besede:** samocenzura, slovenske modernistične pisateljice, pisemska korespondenca, prehajanje med latinico in cirilico

**Key words:** self-censorship, Slovenian modernist female writers, epistolary correspondence, transition between Latin and Cyrillic Script

## 1 Introduction

Drawing on the author's archive work and the analysis of the epistolary correspondences in the manuscript collection of the Slovenian National and University Library (NUK),<sup>1</sup> the article focuses on the correspondences of the Slovenian modernist female writers Marica Nadlišek Bartol, Zofka Kveder, Marica Strnad and Vida Jeraj – intellectuals, artists, editors, writers and poets that lived in different parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Ljubljana, Trieste, Vienna, Zagreb and Prague), gathered around the first Slovenian women's literary magazine *Slovenka*, and cultivated epistolary friendships.

Focusing on the alphabetical transition from the Latin Script to the Cyrillic Script, their (the female authors') letters in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century will be analysed. The correspondences of Slovenian male writers from this period have already been researched and published in countless academic works. Originating from the standpoint of the rejected tradition of Slovenian female writers, still largely excluded from the national literary canon, this article is a result of the research that covered, analysed and digitised<sup>2</sup> the correspondences of Slovenian modernist women writers in the theoretical context of the New Censorship Theory to answer a crucial question: can the mentioned alphabetic shift be considered a form of self-censorship?

## 2 Theoretical Perspectives on Censorship

In the last 50 years, the perspectives on censorship and self-censorship have under the influence of global socio-economic transformations drastically changed from traditional societies to modern ones brought about by global capitalism, the fall of the Berlin Wall with the ending of the Cold War, the rise of (il) liberal democracy, the revolution of digital technology, and the fundamental developments in (post)structuralist cultural theory. For better understanding of the various dimensions of censorship in Western social democracies reaching beyond totalitarian communist regimes, cultural theorists have proposed several models and dichotomies of transgressing traditional forms of censorship, corresponding with more systemic, subtle, invisible and pseudo-consensual methods of social repression in Western societies.

Traditional or liberal understanding of censorship considers it an array of disabling, interventional and repressive actions exercised by authoritative

---

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges financial support by the Slovenian Research agency for the research project Transformations of Intimacy in the Literary discourse of Slovenian "moderna" (J6-3134).

<sup>2</sup> The electronic collection Letters (*Pisma*) was created at the Research Centre for the Humanities of the University of Nova Gorica (<https://pisma-rch.ung.si>). It contains letters from various archives searchable by name, date and keywords.

figures, usually within the context of the state and state institutions (Bunn 2015: 27) characteristic of totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union. In societies where the state and state institutions heavily control and regulate the social life of individuals, censorship is manifested through external sources of repression. This liberal view, however, optimistically presupposes that a democratic liberal society is “a sphere of autonomous individuals interacting consensually” (Bunn 2015: 29), where censorship is non-existent.

While the traditional concept of censorship focuses on the types of communicative action identified as ‘censorship’, the New Censorship Theory focuses on the way different forms of censorship produce a variety of effects. This heterogeneous plethora of perspectives characterises censorship as a diffuse and fragmented phenomenon. Several factors, such as impersonal and structural cultural conditions, can effectively function as censors, establishing boundaries of acceptable speech. The New Censorship Theory relies profoundly on the theory of power and knowledge developed by Michel Foucault, acknowledging his account of censorship as a repressive and productive force that generates discourse (Foucault 1978: 17–18). Although this somewhat relativising conception of censorship “veers toward a notion that censorship is simply an inescapable feature of communication” (Bunn 2015: 41), the Foucauldian approach allows for censorship too be perceived in a more nuanced way, as proposed by Judith Butler (1997: 136), i. e. as part of a continuum “upon which it is possible to place the brutal extremes of incarceration or murder at one end, and the shadowy operations of constitutive exclusion at the other” (Freshwater 2003: 242).

The Foucauldian perspective views censorship as being wherever we encounter a system of knowledge, namely wherever there is a set of truthful ideas that delineate the possibilities of speech. Similarly, some authors falling under the syntagma of the New Censorship Theory adhere to poststructuralist and Marxist philosophy and thus generally reject the idea of free speech, regarding it as fictional. They argue that censorship depends on the original inequality in power relations, which provides people with more or fewer opportunities to exercise the so-called free speech and where “exploitation is disguised as consensual behaviour” (Bunn 2015: 34). According to critical perspectives of the traditional notion of censorship as an external force, the concept of censorship is largely substituted by ideology as a “form of social control beyond repression” (ibidem) or as a pre-censorial and implicit cultural form of censorship. Therefore, this type of censorship is not always exercised by external, powerful or authoritative social actors.

Furthermore, implicit censorship genuinely becomes an impossibly sensitive subject if we consider its formative or constitutive qualities. This was emphasised not only by Foucault but much earlier also by psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, who argued that censorship is an act of repression that conditions the formation of the subject and an action that is not consciously performed by the subject (Butler 1997: 138). Akin to Butler’s implicit and explicit censorship, Sue Curry Jansen establishes

a dichotomy between constitutive and regulatory censorship. Constitutive censorship encompasses taboos and mores of the community, cultural prescriptions and social norms. In contrast, regulatory censorship comprises a variety of repressive acts of intervention (Curry Jansen 1991 in Freshwater 2003: 227).

Most of Freud's psychoanalytic work views censorship as a necessary implicit and constitutive process and mechanism of socialisation, which represses socially unacceptable animalistic drives. Censorship as a liminal mechanism, both in the implicit and explicit sense, as well as a constitutive and regulatory one, as explored and elaborated in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, is perceived as a productive and constitutive force of subjectification, which occurs as a panopticon – the modern spatial principle of surveillance and punishment. The panoptic structuring of modern life and experience unavoidably entails interiorising social, institutional or cultural norms embedded in the subjecting and subjectivising the panoptic gaze (Foucault 2012: 201– 208). In this sense, Butler argues that, to some extent, all forms of censorship are not only restrictive but also formative for the subject (Butler 1997: 133).

### **3 Epistolary Correspondence and Creative (Self-)Censorship**

It is worthy of notice that the written word has historically often been a privileged site of (self)censorship. In the past, censorship as a productive force, policing the possibilities of speech, produced new literary forms, such as the Aesopian language, fostering literary creativity (Bunn 2015: 41–42). In the epistolary and literary sense, (self)censorship can produce diverse literary qualities such as irony and metaphor, allusive language and a plurality of interpretations (Patterson 1989 in Bunn 2015: 26). Furthermore, censorship of writing also depends on the material circumstances of the written word. Within the framework of implicit or explicit and constitutive or regulatory self-censorship, self-censorship and censorship can be discussed as direct and productive forms of concealment of unwanted parts of the content to avoid or perpetuate adverse effects. Historically, this role was attributed to the enveloped letter.

Culturally historical characteristics of the epistolary form of correspondence, namely of everything related to the writing of letters, are material practices linked to the contradictory and ambivalent qualities of the letter as a communicative medium. The letter is a medium imbued with contradictory attributes and functions. It is a multifaceted medium, simultaneously private and public, historically used for messages to travel over great geographical distances between lovers, kings or enemies, and to establish a communicative distance between conflicted parties, mostly to express refusal of oral communication. In human history, letters were used to share and at the same time to conceal essential messages.

Epistolary traditions historically used several material cultural practices of constitutive and productive self-censorship to conceal forbidden, private, inappropriate or criminal thoughts and intentions. The most common methods included folding letters, using indecipherable signs and, possibly most importantly, enveloping and sealing them with a waxed stamp. Other forms of veiled speech in different socio-political and ecclesiastical contexts involve careful choice of competent letter-bearers, oral transmission of letters (Allen 2015: 215), the seal ring and the omission and avoidance of damaging details that might accuse the sender of treason, sentencing him to death or exile.

In the history of epistolary correspondence, the mentioned material practices were used to ensure the secrecy and intimacy of the letters' content. Accordingly, the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th Century enabled the envelope manufacturing industry to inventing so-called gummed envelopes (Benjamin 2002: 32–33). The adhesive applied to the envelopes made sealing and opening envelopes easier. In pre-modern times, the wax stamp was broken once the envelope was opened. The envelopes could not simply be and whoever opened the envelope left a clear trace that the letter was read, since they did not have the original seal. It can thus be argued that with the modern industrialized production of gummed envelopes, which can be opened and resealed, possibly without leaving any visible traces, the content of letters was no longer safe from unwanted readers. The letter became a medium of public intimacy (Mullet 1997 in Allen 2015: 211). Because the modern, mass-produced gummed envelopes no longer ensured intimacy, secrecy and anonymity, the writers of letters had to find new ways to shield the envelope's content from the public.

Writing, as an essential field of censorship studies, reveals the intertwining of traditional and new perspectives on censorship. Butler presents two views on the censorship of writing. In the first perspective, censorship precedes the text in question, similar to subjectivity, as the writer must always select and exclude different possibilities. In the second perspective, however, no text can be censored entirely since a qualitative textual surplus always escapes censorship (Allen 1997: 128–129). One can observe the intertwining of Butler's perspectives on the (self)censorship of writing in the different forms of creative and productive self-censorship found in literature and epistolary practices, for example, in the Aesopian language under the Tsarist Soviet Union.

This article argues that, similarly to the Aesopian language, the Slovenian modernist writers self-censored their epistolary correspondence by performing an implicit, constitutive and pre-censorial linguistic or alphabetical transition from the Latin to the Cyrillic Script, which allowed the interaction between the author and the reader. At the same time, it concealed the inadmissible transgressions of cultural norms of Slovenian womanhood of that era from the unknown and unwelcomed potential reader of their private correspondence. In the following, alphabetical transitions between the Latin and the Cyrillic Script as a form of productive self-censorship used by Slovenian female modernist writers will be presented.

#### 4 Strategies of Self-Censorship: The Alphabetical Shifting Between Cyrillic and Latin Scripts

In *Writing Degree Zero* (1968), Roland Barthes presented a tripartite language, style, and writing model useful for understanding the tradition of alphabetical transition between Latin and Cyrillic Script as a means of anonymisation, concealment, or self-censorship. Language and style are fixed entities: language represents historically consensual and shared obligatory linguistic rules, and style reflects the features of the writer's personality or biography. However, orthography, or "the morality of form" (Barthes 1968: 15), is a feature that is influenced and imposed by historical and social circumstances defined as the particular historical mode of writing (Barthes 1968: 9–16). The alphabetical transition between Latin and Cyrillic is such an orthographic mode in the personal correspondence of Slovenians in the 19th and early the 20th Century, functioning as "the imposition of something beyond language, which is both History and the stand we take in it" (Barthes 1968: 1).

The alphabetical transition between Latin and Cyrillic can be considered part of the broader mode of the writing system, used to conceal the content of letters partially or as a form of preventive self-censorship. However, it is unclear how many Slovenians at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century were familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet. From the 16th Century onwards, when Slovenian language and literature experienced significant progress, Slovenians largely rejected the Cyrillic alphabet, although it was the most common writing system of the Slavic people (Rotar 1987: 51). However, we at least know that Slovenian writers of that era cultivated a great interest in Russian literature and were rather proficient in the Cyrillic Script (Zadravec 2005). Moreover, the Slovenian national movement of the time was connected with the South Slavic and Czech cultures.

One of the peculiarities in the shifting between the Latin and the Cyrillic Script as regards the personal correspondence of the female Slovenian modernist writers is the apparent inconsistency in the use of this shifting, which is twofold. First, the content in Cyrillic in some letters is by no means intimate, provocative or extraordinary, which raises the question of why the Cyrillic alphabet was used in the first place (anonymity of the sender or concealment of future meeting details).<sup>3</sup> We can make different assumptions about how the Cyrillic Script might be used to conceal the sender's identity, or as the alphabet that renders an intimate or contentious sentiment, thought and purpose of the sender – content in general – semantically entirely absent from the letter. Consequently, the Cyrillic Script can signify traces of constitutive censorship

---

<sup>3</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1213/011, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Vida Jeraj, 30 October, 1898; Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection Ms 1113/001, Zofka Kveder to Marica Nadlišek Bartol, 11 November, 1898.

preceding the writing, in which contentious content is already omitted (Butler 1997: 128).

Second, as relates to the first peculiarity, in many more letters by Slovenian female modernist writers, equally controversial, provocative and outspoken intimate statements about marriage, love, gossip, personal critique and the like are written in Latin Script. Here, the inconsistent use of the transition between the Latin and the Cyrillic Script corresponds to and interrogates the shifting gender and sexual norms, values and rights, which can be understood under the broader and common historical transformation of intimacy in Slovenian society in the late 19th and the early 20th Century.

The transformation of intimacy, articulated by Anthony Giddens, encompasses the gradual democratisation of the private and public domain concerning love, sexuality and gender in modern societies according to the logic of the 'double helix' between democracy and intimacy (Giddens 1992: 3). At the time of the discussed correspondence between Slovenian modernist writers, there was a proliferation of discourses on womanhood and women's social equality in the Slovenian public sphere (Mihurko Poniž 2009). In this sense, the letters of Slovenian female modernist writers expressed excessive sentimentality. They erotised friendships, which can be considered a form of plastic sexuality as a "decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction" (Giddens 1992: 3). This argument is supported by the fact that sentimental epistolary friendships among European women of the 18th and 19th Centuries have contributed to more democratic relationships between men and women in traditional marriage (Garrioch 2009: 203). Women often articulated their thoughts and feelings about marriage and relationships among themselves, becoming "specialists of the heart" (Giddens 1992: 44) and consequently displaying their intellectual prowess to their husbands. With their origins in the romantic tradition, epistolary friendships have greatly influenced the behavioural norms of both genders (Giddens 1992: 38–47), opposing the Victorian regime of repressive sexual morale and functioning as a private-public sphere among women who in their private correspondence dared to express everything that was publicly unacceptable and condemned.

Hence, it can be argued that the inconsistent use of the alphabetical shift in the correspondence among Slovenian female writers indicates the personal anxieties of writing about intimate matters, which reflect experiences with explicit and regulative censorship, often embodied by the male editors of Slovenian literary journals. The latter is manifested in the social, political and economic inequality of women and their dependency in the fields of education, sexuality, household, marriage and motherhood, and saturated with the conservative patriarchal Catholic morality, which worked as the ideological justification of their inequality and prevented women from openly discussing and opposing their social roles and identities (Leskovšek 2003; Mihurko Poniž 2009). In this structural and implicit perception of censorship, "cultural and social conventions impose limits on what we can say, whether in interactions

between private persons (family, friends, colleagues) or in the public sphere between individuals and the state” (Baltussen and Davis 2015: 2).

## 5 Productive Implicit Self-Censorship: Case Study

The alphabetical or linguistic shifting between Latin and Cyrillic occurs in the following collections and letters in the correspondence of Slovenian female modernist writers: between Marica Nadlišek Bartol and Fran Vidic in collections Ms 1834 (1896–1937: letters 23, 26, 43, 44, 46, 48 and 52), between Marica Nadlišek Bartol and Vida Jeraj in collection Ms 1213 (1896–1929: letters 10 and 11), between Marica Nadlišek Bartol and Marica Strnad in collection Ms 1175 (1898–1937: letter 2)<sup>4</sup> and Ms 703 (1898–1925: letters 3, 5 and 6), between Vida Jeraj and Zorana Trojanšek in collection Ms 1213 (1899–1931: letter 2 April 1900), between Zofka Kveder and Marica Nadlišek Bartol in collection Ms 1113 (1919–1926: letter 1) and between Zofka Kveder and Ivan Cankar in collection Ms 819 (1904–1914: letter 1).

Generally speaking, the alphabetical or linguistic transition between Scripts, Latin and Cyrillic, is in the discussed correspondence used when the Slovenian female authors wrote about intimate matters. Moreover, Cyrillic Script is employed when the subject matter is a negative opinion on men,<sup>5</sup> a personal statement on marriage,<sup>6</sup> an expression of love and desire for men,<sup>7</sup> a literary critique of a female colleague<sup>8</sup> and a fantasy about a dominant literary journal.<sup>9</sup> The shifting from Latin to Cyrillic also occurs when Marica Nadlišek Bartol and Marica Strnad discuss flirting with a priest<sup>10</sup> in Ms 703 (letter 6) and when the letter’s subject matter is an extensive and affectionate expression of

---

<sup>4</sup> In this collection, Marica Strnad wrote the majority of letters entirely in Cyrillic alphabet and in Russian (letters 1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

<sup>5</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/043, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 8 December, 1898.

<sup>6</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/044, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 26 December, 1898; Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/048, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 11 March, 1899.

<sup>7</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/046, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 27 February, 1899.

<sup>8</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/048, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 11 March, 1899.

<sup>9</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/052, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic.

<sup>10</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 703/006, Marica Strnad to Marica Nadlišek Bartol, December, 1898.



love and sentiment.<sup>11</sup> The content transcribed in the Cyrillic Script will in the following paragraphs be written in italics.

Letter 23 (Ms 1834) starts with: “Bravo, Mr Vidic! *We know that you danced with M*”.<sup>12</sup> The second sentence is written in Cyrillic. With this linguistic transition, Marica conceals the identity of the person with whom Fran Vidic danced and the mere fact that Fran Vidic did dance. At this point, the linguistic transition from Latin to Cyrillic announces intimate content that the reader might overlook when viewing the events from today’s perspective, even though dancing is historically linked to courtship rituals and, in this case, possible adultery. The Cyrillic content below acquires a connotation of adultery, alluding to a violation of the Christian and normative monogamous partnership in the continuation, where content is, again, written in Latin:

You said you usually do not dance when I asked you to dance - when the ladies were choosing - in Mankoč’s little house! Ewige Bache! Wasn’t Marica also at the dance? Isn’t it great for the Turkish pashas when they are allowed to love several women at the same time? The heart is so big that one almost freezes in such a large space.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear in the case of this letter that the linguistic transition from Latin to Cyrillic functioned as a partial and inconsistent form of self-censorship, since the supposedly controversial content escaped the initial censorial impetus, as proposed by Butler (1997: 129). The Cyrillic Script only concealed Fran Vidic’s secret. Still, it is assumed that the more controversial and improper ideas about polygamy were shared in Latin. Furthermore, Marica then continues in Latin about Pavlina Pajk’s shameful poetry, which in the opinion of the poet and priest Anton Medved should have been censored.

In letter 26 (Ms 1834), similarly, the content in the Cyrillic Script seems non-controversial and innocent. However, due to the occurrence of the shift from Latin to Cyrillic, the content acquires a connotation of forbidden intimacy or cultural transgression: “Dear and beloved Mr Doctor! Now to you. I wrote something to Göstl and exclaimed with Prešeren O pre-Shrovetide this darn time! Because you have all forgotten me in this mad time. How is the headship? Is it not zum davonlaufen? - Why have you forgotten me so badly, *both my sweet boys*?”<sup>14</sup> Again, the catholic ideas of a monogamous affectionate relationship and female propriety seem transgressed in the alphabetic transition.

---

<sup>11</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms1213, Vida Jeraj to Zorana Trojanšek, 2 April, 1900.

<sup>12</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/023, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 21 January, 1898.

<sup>13</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/023, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 21 January, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/026, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 1898.

In addition to Marica's expression of intimacy, her signature at the end of the letter is also written in Cyrillic.

In letter 43 (Ms 1834), Marica switches to Cyrillic when she writes about marriage and secretly slanders her sister's husband:

You will not say anything, right? I am quite looking forward to the surprise from various quarters. To a kind of dust made by my marriage, when in my little sketch 'At Sea' I have raged so terribly against men, or then, as always when I write about men, I have had before my eyes my sister's husband, whom I have told you about, and who likes to impose himself on me as the type of such men.<sup>15</sup>

In letter 44 (Ms 1834), Marica switches to Cyrillic when she writes about marriage ("Right after Easter, I jump into the marriage yoke and hang up the tedious school. My boyfriend [illegible] crush is getting old."<sup>16</sup>), while in letter 46 (Ms 1834), she switches to Cyrillic when she writes about her boyfriend's love and expresses negative feelings: "I would have given myself a fair beating to keep this horrible annoyance at bay, but my boyfriend says never; never again because he loves me. If I could (sic!) right now, I would send it all to - nothing."<sup>17</sup>

In letter 48 (Ms 1834), Marica switches to Cyrillic when she criticises Anton Aškerc's protectionism for Zofka Kveder:

She is a beautiful narrative talent; this Zofka throws us all into one basket once she starts, and she has started. You know she is in Trieste and that she has the management of Edinost and Slovenka. An eminent girl, I tell you, an outstanding talent, if only it could develop. She was also terribly praised and extolled by Aš., and the girl is also worthy [of praise]. She did not become arrogant when he told her she had come to Zvon under his patronage!<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that the linguistic transition from Latin to Cyrillic Script in the correspondence of Slovenian female modernist writers is also used inconsistently and with no apparent reason. From the socio-historical perspective of women's inequality, patriarchal Catholic morality or even a very general cause of intimate or affectionate speech, this sometimes raises the question why Slovenian women modernist writers transitioned from the Latin to the Cyrillic alphabet. It should also be noted that the inconsistent use of this linguistic shift is not a personal feature, since already Marica Nadlišek Bartol used the Cyrillic Script to 'conceal' private information by shifting from Latin to Cyrillic in the most casual of places in which the transformed word does not reveal any

---

<sup>15</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/043, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 8 December, 1898.

<sup>16</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/044, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 26 December, 1898.

<sup>17</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/046, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 27 February, 1899.

<sup>18</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/048, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic, 11 March, 1899.

‘incriminating’ content, especially not one containing ‘incriminating’ information accompanying the Cyrillic word. In a long and detailed passage to Fran Vidic in letter 52 (Ms 1834), she writes about her intimate relationships with educated and misogynistic Slovenian men and about a particular man named K. that she fancied. However, the only word that is written in Cyrillic is *love*.<sup>19</sup>

Other inconsistent uses of the linguistic transition from Latin to Cyrillic can be found in Marica Nadlišek’s letters 10 and 11 (entirely in Cyrillic) to Vida Jeraj (Ms 1213), where it seems that Marica casually slips into Cyrillic when her writing expresses affect and sentiment.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Cyrillic is used in a non-censorial way in the correspondence between Marica Nadlišek Bartol and Marica Strnad (Ms 1175 and Ms 703), who was a great admirer of Russian literature, lived in Russia for several years and used the Cyrillic Script as her primary alphabet or at least with the same frequency as the Latin alphabet. Marica Strnad, however, also shifts to the Cyrillic alphabet in two letters that she predominantly chose to write in Latin. In letter 6 (Ms 703), she turns to Cyrillic when she writes about “playing with fire” or flirting with a priest who loves her.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the analysed letters follow the argument about implicit and productive self-censorship marked by a linguistic transition from the Latin to the Cyrillic Script, exemplified by the correspondence between Vida Jeraj and Zorana Trojanšek. Although their correspondence amounts to nine letters, only one letter contains the Cyrillic Script. In that letter sent from Vida to Zorana, the affectionate and intimate content is entirely conveyed in Cyrillic.<sup>22</sup> As mentioned before, some letters are written in Cyrillic for no apparent reason. Such is the letter from Zofka Kveder to Marica Nadlišek Bartol, in which Zofka merely thanks Marica for a painting and converses about their future meeting.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Vida Jeraj uses Cyrillic in her invitation to Ivan Cankar to visit her place, naturally, without erotic connotations.<sup>24</sup> Besides intimate content written in Cyrillic, the writers also chose to write in Cyrillic when making arrangements for meeting in person.

---

<sup>19</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1834/052, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Fran Vidic.

<sup>20</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1213/010, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Vida Jeraj, 22 September, 1898; Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1213/011, Marica Nadlišek Bartol to Vida Jeraj, 30 October, 1898.

<sup>21</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 703/006, Marica Strnad to Marica Nadlišek Bartol, December, 1898.

<sup>22</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1213, Vida Jeraj to Zorana Trojanšek, 2 April, 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 1113/001, Zofka Kveder to Marica Nadlišek Bartol, 11 November, 1898.

<sup>24</sup> Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection, Ms 819/001, Vida Jeraj to Ivan Cankar, 30 March, 1905.

## 6 Discussion

The present article is based on the realization that censorship is heterogeneous (Freshwater 2003: 241), and often very subtle (Baltussen and Davis 2015: 4), and that it has to be analysed in its “[...] socio-historical specificity” (Freshwater 2003: 242). The author of the article finds that self-censoring was connected with subject matters which, politically speaking, all belonged to highly contested spheres of intimacy: marriage, love, motherhood and sexuality. The article shows that the linguistic shifting between Latin and Cyrillic Scripts can be treated as a form of implicit and partial self-censorship, preceding the act of writing as a chosen literary device and also “[exceeding] the reach of the censor” (Butler 1997: 129). The linguistic transition was used as a tool of anonymisation and omission, which partially self-censored the writing of Slovenian female modernist writers. Drawing on the inconsistency in their use of the Cyrillic alphabet, it can be argued that the mere existence and use of this elusive linguistic device enabled their writing to productively escape and surpass self-censorship. The attempt of implicit self-censoring of content through use of Script can be seen as transgressing cultural norms of womanhood in an era of prominent gender inequality.

The alphabetical transition simultaneously constitutively established the “[...] the very distinction between permissible and impermissible speech” (Butler 1997: 139), or, more precisely, the pre-existing yet changing patriarchal Catholic norms of womanhood, considering that in that time, women’s reproductive, social and political rights were gradually developing. If the norm of an uneducated, dependent and asexual woman, whose primary ‘God-given’ and ‘natural’ role was limited to household chores and upbringing children, was inoperable or dysfunctional, there would be no reason to use shifting between Latin and Cyrillic Scripts. It can therefore be argued that in the semi-private sphere of personal correspondence, the above-mentioned linguistic transition enabled Slovenian women writers to practice *parrhêsia*, that is free, truthful and public speech (Baltussen and Davis 2015: 1), which was in those times subjected to more traditional and explicit forms of censorship in literary magazines and newspapers – the primary constituents of the public sphere of that era.

### LITERATURE

Pauline ALLEN, 2015: Christian correspondences: The Secrets of letter-Writers and letter-Bearers. *The Art of Veiled Speech: Self-Censorship from Aristophanes to Hobbes*. Eds. Han Baltussen, Peter J. Davis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 209–232.

Han BALTUSSEN, Peter J. DAVIS 2015: Parrhesia, Free Speech, and Self-Censorship. *The Art of Veiled Speech: Self-Censorship from Aristophanes to Hobbes*. Eds. Han Baltussen, Peter J. Davis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1–17.

Maynard H. BENJAMIN, 2002: *The History of Envelopes: 1840–1900*. United States of America: Envelope Manufacturers Association and EMA Foundation for Paper-Based Communications.

Judith BUTLER, 1997: *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. London, New York: Routledge.

Matthew BUNN, 2015: Reimagining Repression: New Censorship Theory and After. *History and Theory* 54/1, 25–44. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24543076> (9. 10. 2023).

Michel FOUCAULT, 1978: *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Michel FOUCAULT, 2012: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Helen FRESHWATER, 2003: Towards a Redefinition of Censorship. *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*. Ed. Beate Muller. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi. 225–246.

David GARRIOCH, 2009: From Christian Friendship to Secular Sentimentality: Enlightenment Re-evaluations. *Friendship: A History*. Ed. Barbara Cain. London, Oakville: Equinox. 165–214.

Anthony GIDDENS, 1992: *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Vesna LESKOVŠEK, 2003: *Zavrnjena tradicija: ženske in ženskost v slovenski zgodovini od 1890 do 1940*. Ljubljana: Založba /\*cf.

Katja MIHURKO PONIŽ, 2009: *Evine hčere: konstruiranje ženskosti v slovenskem javnem diskurzu 1848–1902*. Nova Gorica: Univerza v Novi Gorici.

Janez ROTAR, 1987: Slovenski avtorji in cirilica. *Jezik in slovstvo* 33/3, 51–57. <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:doc:JXITM5EH/65bf5f9e-1401-43b4-a817-c3fb824-694eb/PDF> (9. 10. 2023).

Franc ZADRAVEC, 2005: Ivan Prijatelj in ruska literatura. *Slavistična revija* 53/3, 363–377. <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:doc:6KPIULOB/4d01c5ed-3783-474c-996f-b3fcec6a38ff/PDF> (9. 10. 2023).

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Slovenian National and University Library, The Manuscript Collection.

## SAMOCENZURA? PREHAJANJE MED LATINICO IN CIRILICO V OSEBNI KORESPONDENCI PISATELJIC V OBDOBJU SLOVENSKE MODERNE

Prispevek se na podlagi avtorjevega arhivskega dela in analize pisemske korespondence v rokopisni zbirki Narodne in univerzitetne knjižnice (NUK) osredotoča na samocenzuro slovenskih modernističnih pisateljic, in sicer Marice Nadlišek Bartol, Zofke Kveder, Marice Strnad ter Vide Jeraj. Gre za intelektualke, umetnice, pisateljice in pesnice, ki so živele v različnih delih Avstro-Ogrske (Ljubljana, Trst, Zagreb in Praga), se združevale

okrog prve slovenske ženske revije *Slovenka* ter gojile pisemska prijateljstva. Avtor skuša v analitičnem prispevku, ki se teoretsko naslanja na t. i. novo teorijo cenzure, odgovoriti na temeljno vprašanje: Ali lahko prehajanje med latinično ter cirilično pismo, ki se pojavlja v njihovih pismih, obravnavamo kot obliko samocenzure? Odgovor na to vprašanje je večplasten in nedokončen. Analiza pojavljanja prehajanja iz latinice v cirilico v korespondenci pisateljic namreč kaže, da lahko ta prehod obravnavamo kot zgodovinsko posebno obliko implicitne, produktivne in nedosledne samocenzure. Pisateljice so v pisemski korespondenci pogosto prehajale v cirilico, ko so pisale o partnerskem zakonu, ljubezni, materinstvu, spolnosti, govoricah ter kritikah moških urednikov ali literarnih kolegov. Vendar pri rabi cirilice niso bile dosledne, saj so o istih tematikah mestoma pisale tudi v latinici. Nedosledna raba zgodovinsko posebnega načina pisanja sovpada s spreminjajočimi se spolnimi normami, vrednotami in pravicami. Fenomen lahko razumemo kot majhen del širše zgodovinske preobrazbe demokratizacije javne sfere in družbenih ter medosebnih odnosov. V tej perspektivi nedosledna raba prehoda v osebni korespondencah slovenskih pisateljic kaže na osebne strahove in zadrege glede pisanja o intimnih, politično kontroverznih temah, ki so bile v kontekstu njihovih literarnih objav predmet tradicionalne, eksplicitne in regulativne uredniške cenzure. Če bi bile patriarhalne in konservativne norme ženskosti ob koncu devetnajstega in na začetku dvajsetega stoletja nedelujoče, slovenske pisateljice ne bi imele razloga, da bi o kontroverznih temah pisale v cirilici. Ker pa so se norme spreminjale ter izgubljale veljavo, so bili njihovi poskusi prekrivanja in izpuščanja vsebine svobodnega in resničajnega govora v osebni korespondencah nepopolni ter nedosledni.