

# Defiance of Motherhood as an Inherited Tradition and Motherhood as Redemption in the Works by Božena Víková-Kunětická and Jelena Dimitrijević

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

V prispevku predstavljam dvojni vidik materinstva v romanu *Vzpoura* (1901) češke avtorice Božene Víkove-Kuněticke (1862–1934) in romanu *Nove* (1912) srbske avtorice Jelene Dimitrijević (1862–1945). Čeprav sledita podobni pesniški usmeritvi, imata različne pristope pri upodabljanju istih tem. Medtem ko Jelena Dimitrijević situacije v turškem in ameriškem okolju prikazuje z ostrim očesom, osredotočeno predvsem na medosebne odnose in vedenje žensk ter njihovo vključevanje v družbo, je Božena Víková-Kunětická bolj zaskrbljena zaradi konkretnih težav, skozi katere prehajajo njene junakinje (npr. nezvestoba v zakonu, nosečnost izven zakona, odstopanje od tradicij in družbeno-kulturnih konvencij). Čeprav sta romana *Vzpoura* in *Nove* zelo različna v svoji umetniški in vsebinski strukturi, je njun skupni element motiv deklet, ki odrastejo na začetku 20. stoletja in se upirajo pričakovanju nadaljevanja tradicionalnih odnosov v družini. V obeh romanih je materinstvo doživljeno kot niz določenih in dovoljenih dejanj ter praks pričakovanega vedenja, ki jih ni dovoljeno kršiti, vendar se materinstvo lahko razume tudi v širšem smislu, saj se nanaša na funkcijo in vlogo žensk v patriarhalni družini in konzervativni družbi. V tem kontekstu sem poskušala identificirati primerjalno podobne in različne elemente, ki jih avtorici uporabljata za opis določenih težav (npr. odnos žensk do tradicije, njihova uporniška drža, njihovo izzivanje in vprašanje svobodne izbire). Obe avtorici prikazujeta junakinje, ki se upirajo materinstvu kot naloženi tradicionalni vlogi žensk v patriarhalni družbi, vendar prav tako enako prepoznata elemente odrešenja glavnih junakinj prav skozi rojstvo otrok v povezavi s predhodnim zavračanjem tradicije. Čeprav si ti dve stališči nasprotujeta, kažeta globlje arhetipske vidike funkcije ženskosti in samoizpolnitve junakinj.

This paper deals with the dual aspect of motherhood in both the novel by the Czech writer Božena Víková-Kunětická (1862–1934) *Vzpoura* (1901) and the novel by the Serbian writer Jelena Dimitrijević (1862–1945) *Nove* (1912). Although they follow a similar poetic direction, these women writers nevertheless have different approaches to depicting the same themes. While Jelena Dimitrijević portrays the situations in both the Turkish and American settings with a sharp eye, focusing mainly on interpersonal relationships and

women's behaviour and integration into society, Božena Víková-Kunětická is more concerned with the concrete problems her heroines go through (e.g. infidelity in marriage, pregnancy out of wedlock, deviation from traditions and socio-cultural conventions). Although the novels *Vzpouora* and *Nove* are very different in their artistic and content structure, their common element is the motif of girls growing up at the beginning of the 20th century and their resistance to the expectation of continuing traditional relationships within the family. In both novels, motherhood is experienced as a set of fixed and permitted acts and practises of expected behaviour that must not be violated, but motherhood can also be understood in a broader sense as it relates to the function and role of women in a patriarchal family and a conservative society. In this context, we have tried to identify comparatively similar and different elements that these authors use to describe certain problems (e.g. women's relationship to tradition, their rebellion, their defiance and the question of their free choice).

**Ključne besede:** materinstvo, prekinitev s tradicijo, sociologija družine, ženski princip, svoboda

**Key words:** motherhood, break with tradition, sociology of the family, female principle, freedom

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## 1 Introduction

The dual aspect of motherhood in the title of this article can be found both in the novel by the Czech writer Božena Víková-Kunětická (1862–1934) *Vzpouora* (*Rebellion*, 1901) and in the novel by the Serbian writer Jelena Dimitrijević (1862–1945) *Nove* (*New Women*, 1912). Both writers created in the modernist period. Libuše Heczková rightfully argues that Czech literature of the fin de siècle and also the art of this period was a 'feminine' time, precisely because it dealt with everything that had to do with femininity – namely the unconscious, the chaotic, sexuality, corporeality, and it gave women a voice, not only as aesthetic and conceptual beings, but also as real women (Heczková 2006: 38)<sup>1</sup>. Dobrava Moldanová points out that Kunětická considered her work an exploration of the female soul (Moldanová 1986: 426). In her prose, Víková-Kunětická was primarily concerned with the moral principles of the modern family, emphasising above all the position of women in marriage. Under the influence of the political orientations of the second half of the 19th century (socialist,

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<sup>1</sup> Here Heczková presents personal convictions and original observations when she claims that there is a certain breakthrough in European history in the fin de siècle period, which she personally calls "the Dionysian breakthrough in the uniqueness of the rational Apollonian Enlightenment culture". In Heczková's interpretation, this breakthrough refers both to the crisis of modern man as an exclusively male principle and to the return of the marginalised and neglected role of women as a kind of mythical revenge of the god Dionysus.

international and national), the women's issue, which was related to the idea of liberation or emancipation, became the focus of her interest, especially as she was very politically active.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the writer did not neglect the social circumstances in which her characters lived and she often emphasised the living conditions that strongly influenced the characters' behaviour in her prose.

As a speaker and the first female member of the State Assembly (1912), Kunětická through her novels fought against the 'celibacy' of female teachers and female employees, against the double standards that applied to women, while misbehaviour of men was still being tolerated. She makes this clear in one of her essays when she explains:

First and foremost, a woman must seek the meaning and strength of life within herself! She must find within herself the solution to all public and spiritual questions and rise above temporary social conflicts in order to realise always and everywhere that her awakening means a new life, a new longing, not only for herself but for all those with whom she is bound by destiny. (Viková-Kunětická 1912: 11)<sup>3</sup>

In her novels, she fought for women to have the opportunity to receive an education and be professionally successful, she spoke out against the prejudices that forbade men and women to meet freely, she criticised the outdated education of girls and insisted on an independent and self-confident woman (Štěpánková 2006: 16). Kunětická's essay "On Woman" speaks of the fact that what women fought for in her time in terms of freedom did not have a clearly defined goal, and what appeared to them to be freedom in the most concrete sense of the word may not even fall under the concept of tomorrow's freedom (Viková-Kunětická 1912: 6). At the same time, the author explains that her most painful novel *Vzpouora*, sad and bitter like life itself, was written in a situation that was hopeless for the woman of her time. "I wrote a motto in blood on the first page: 'Everything is an illusion, only physical pain is true'. That is why *Vzpouora* is my favourite novel. It was written in the pain a women endures giving life to a new person" (Viková-Kunětická 1912: 8). Libuše Heczková states that Kunětická's novels, published between 1895 and 1905, were both a

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<sup>2</sup> Božena Viková-Kunětická (1862–1934) was a Czech nationalist politician, writer and women's rights activist. She entered politics for the National Free Thinkers' Party (Národní Strana Svobodomyslná) in 1909 and was the first woman ever to be elected to the Czech Regional Assembly (Český Zemský Sněm) in 1912. She was made a member of the Czech Academy of Sciences in 1927 for her literary and drama work. Together with Eliška Krásnohorská, they were the first women to be mentioned by name. Both were also members of the American Ladies' Club founded by Josefa Náprstková. In her novels (*Medřická*, 1897; *Vzpouora*, 1901; *Minulost*, 1919; *Pán*, 1922) she campaigned for the emancipation of women. She also wrote several travelogues, dramas for the Stavovské divadlo and the National Theatre as well as politically oriented works under the pseudonym Ignota.

<sup>3</sup> All quotations in the text from Czech and Serbian into English were translated by the author of the article.

feminist and an artistic experiment. She therefore claims that, due to the overly emotional and uncontrolled hysterical mask<sup>4</sup>, these novels should be understood as a stylisation gradually developed by Kunčická, in the context of which the performativity of her texts is also discussed (Heczková 2006: 40). Kunčická herself says about her books: “My books are a struggle for my freedom, my purification and the ability to be proud and joyful – enjoying/experiencing self-confidence in all its breadth and beauty” (Víková-Kunčická 1912: 10).

If Jelena Dimitrijević’s work is defined as a work of lyrical realism, then it can be considered one of the best pre-modern or lyrical realist works (Вукотић 2020: 114). Jelena Dimitrijević’s social commitment was not to politics. She was committed primarily to social-humanist work.<sup>5</sup> Like Kunčická, she was very active in the fight for women’s rights and emancipation, which is reflected in her active participation in many associations such as the Women’s Society in Niš, the Circle of Serbian Sisters, the Society of Serbian Women Writers and the literary committee of the Belgrade newspaper *Domaćice*. The biography of this Serbian writer importantly points out that she travelled all across the world and visited different continents (North America, Europe, Asia, North Africa) and that she met many outstanding personalities such as Huda Sha’arawi and Rabindranath Tagore. The period in which she lived is also an important time for national history, as the end of the 19th century was a time of great historical significance<sup>6</sup>. It is important to note that Jelena Dimitrijević, while living in a country where the antagonism between the Orthodox Serbian people and the Muslim Turkish people was in full force, as a writer shows great interest in the lives of Muslim women and their customs and way of life. Ana Stjelja explains this by saying that Dimitrijević’s Turkophilia was partly the result of an infatuation with the East, as a form of resistance to the increasing Europeanisation and prosaic life of the new bourgeois world (Stjelja 2012: 22). Dimitrijević’s Oriental work, which spans over almost two decades of her life and speaks of the Oriental women she met in the liberated parts of Serbia, especially in

<sup>4</sup> “The hysterical mask” primarily refers to the emotional overemphasis of the heroines in Kunčická’s novels.

<sup>5</sup> Jelena Dimitrijević (1862–1945) was a Serbian short story writer, novelist, poet, traveler, social worker, feminist, and a polyglot. She is considered to be the first woman in modern Serbian history to publish a travelogue in 1894. She traveled around the world, including Europe, America, the Far East, East Asia, and India. From her youth, Jelena Dimitrijević was engaged in woman’s emancipation. At 19 she became the youngest member of *Podružine Ženskog Društva* (the Woman’s Society’s Branch) in Niš, and when she moved to Belgrade (1898), she immediately joined the work of *Kolo Srpskih Sestara* (The Circle of Serbian Sisters, 1903). Her literary achievement contributes to the gaining an understanding of the lives of Turkish women, including access to the private world of the harem. For her most important novel *Nove* (New Women) Dimitrijević won the prestigious Matica Srpska Prize for Literature in 1912.

<sup>6</sup> Historical significance relates to gaining the independence of Kneževina Srbija (Principality of Serbia) in 1878, won in the wars against the Ottoman Empire in 1876–1878. Jelena Dimitrijević depicts that in her prose *Pisma iz Niša* (The Letters from Niš, 1897).

Niš, and on numerous journeys, represents her very interesting and productive creative period (Вукотић 2020: 116).

The writer thus lives on the metaphysical border between the old and the new world, in the sense of the modernisation coming from the West and the oriental culture that flourished in the Balkans. A characteristic feature of Jelena Dimitrijević's literary narrative is the use of the genre of the travelogue and the letter, which contributes to authenticity, documentary value and the sincerity of her works. Magdalena Koch claims that Dimitrijević is the most distinctive of all Serbian modernists precisely because she uses traditional forms of expression that become the carrier of new content for Serbian literature and even subversively influence its traditional system (Kox 2012: 137). This Serbian writer's interests were, indeed, similar to those of Víková-Kunětická, although she was even more interested than the Czech writer in describing a certain way of life of women who came from a different background than herself. She devoted her literary work to analysing various cultural relationships and different customs, the degree to which women enjoyed freedom, and the possibilities of their education at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

## 2 On the Novels and their Heroines

The transformation of intimacy in both discussed novels is reflected in the rebellion of the main characters – Milča (*Vzpoura*) and Emir-Fatma (*Nove*) – against the patriarchally established rules of behaviour in late 19th century society, in their disregard for uncompromising obedience towards their parents, their disobedience to life and to the outdated, traditionally established form of interpersonal relationships. The novel *Vzpoura* (1901) is characterised as “a protest against male individualism, whose counterweight should be a woman who has gained experience over the centuries in order to recognise the significance and meaning of her own life” (Moldanová 1986: 426). The novel *Nove* is about the heroine ‘leaving her father's house’, primarily in the metaphysical sense, but also in the literal sense, because it is about a break with family tradition – triggered by an external impulse in connection with the workings of the political current that will eventually lead to the Young Turk revolution (1908, although the novel is set in 1905). As soon as the heroine (Emir-Fatma), however, finally leaves her father's house to live in an open, liberal Europe, she is confronted with the horror of loneliness and isolation. In her case, the change in intimate family relationships proved catastrophic, while in Milča's case, the narrative takes on an elliptical form in which the reader can only guess at the uncertain fate of the heroine, who, like Emir-Fatma, leaves her parental home, but then also leaves her partner and begins life on her own with her child.

The novel *Vzpoura* was written as an expression of Božena Víková Kunětická's deep conviction that women should achieve economic as well as moral independence, i.e. that they should be given the opportunity of

employment and an independent livelihood through education. Jan Voborník considers *Vzpouza* Kunětická's greatest novel as she very convincingly portrays the importance of women's rights. The relationship between the two main characters in the novel (Milča and Meliš) illustrates the author's position on the essence of the ideal of the liberated woman (Voborník 1934: 21). Božena Víková Kunětická has written a simple story about the sudden maturation of a young woman – Milča – about her liberation from the expectations and prejudices of society and her determination to find her own way in a world of many possibilities. Milča is a girl who was brought up from an early age to help her mother – a widow – support the family and her four siblings. Milča does not think about herself and her needs until she meets Meliš, a student who becomes the ideal of her love. Her acquaintance with Meliš sets in motion a series of changes in Milča that go hand in hand with a new way of thinking and perceiving everyday life. "She thought taken aback about everything she had heard and was able to draw her own conclusions. Suddenly it seemed to her that she was stepping out of the average and seeing more than her mother, sisters, brothers, acquaintances and friends"<sup>7</sup> (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 71).

Milča's rebellion thus first manifests itself in relation to her mother, whom she accuses of exploitation in order to feed the other underage children, leaving her, Milča, with nothing for herself. From the moment the rebellion is born, feelings of anger and contempt increasingly take hold of her. Kunětická carefully builds up this change in the girl's relationship first to her mother and then to the concept of family in general – "resentment and hatred poured into her soul, [...] Milča found herself outside the family impressions and outside the yoke of terrible events that subordinated her freedom and her still immature young powers" (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 31–32). She learnt to think according to the rhetoric Meliš had adopted, but was also able to formulate her own thoughts and express her personal views. The author points out the differences in character between the two characters already at the very beginning of their relationship. While Milča is full of inexhaustible life, warmth, enthusiasm and confidence, Meliš is portrayed as a follower of cynicism and irony, of attitudes and a philosophy that is bold, but also destructive, gloomy and bleak, which frightens Milča. Nevertheless, Meliš has direct influence on her changed relationship with her mother: "In her mother she saw a graveyard of buried attitudes and thoughts, which she skimmed over with Meliš before finding herself in a ravine of ruins that showed her a new, distant horizon" (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 110).

By leaving her parental home, Milča abandons the long-established rules according to which children fulfil their parents' expectations, and refuses to follow the long-established path of her foremothers. We thus witness how the most intimate relationship that can exist between a mother and a daughter changes in the face of Milča's unconditional adoption of Meliš's views. Meliš becomes her mentor and the source of all knowledge she has access to; it is he

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<sup>7</sup> The author of English translations from Czech is the author of the article.

who explains to her what motherhood and motherliness are: “Motherhood is only a symbol. Nothing that is permanent and binding. It should not even be called motherhood, but a box, a protection for the new man. This new man is completely independent” (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 119). Milča does not realise the depth of these words, but feels relieved about her own guilty conscience and the way she left her mother. She also confesses to Meliš that she is glad that there is no need for more mothers, because it would only take her own mother for her to doubt the correctness of her own attitudes.

It is only when they begin to live together that Milča gets to know Meliš better. His nihilistic attitudes do not worry her at first, although they surprise her, but the disregard for the institution of family that Meliš insists on, for example, is completely alien to her. He claims: “Family does not exist. It is like copper, old mould in which husband, wife and children are forced to drink from each other, eventually succumbing to their common weakness and perishing” (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 105). Milča is stunned and humiliated by his cruel determination to reject even the idea of having children together. Meliš’s nihilism does not stop here but gradually continues with the complete collapse of cultural heritage and the institution of family when he ignores the patriarchal concept of the past. “There are no fathers, there can be no mothers, therefore one half, the larger half, can not be subjugated under any circumstance” (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 120). According to Meliš, fathers and mothers are outdated concepts of miscreations in society. Based on these attitudes, Meliš seems to also be undergoing a transformation in the most intimate relationships and in the understanding of society and family, namely from outdated patriarchal prejudices to complete nihilism and non-recognition of the cultural and archetypal roles of mother and father. Milča’s inner transformation is thus followed by a kind of struggle between the previously accepted beliefs and attitudes to life and those she has learnt and adopted from Meliš.

Meliš had already designed a life that he called ‘the life of the future, the redemption of divinity and absolute freedom’ even before he bound Milča to him. This is also why Milča hid her pregnancy from Meliš, as she was aware of his unconventional attitude towards the entire civilised structure of the society in which they lived. Neither of them wanted a child that would become an obstacle between them: “The child came between them unwanted, uninvited, hated, and both became its victims” (Víková-Kunětická 1921: 209). The pregnancy is a new transformation in Milča, which helps her to realise that she had thoughtlessly adopted Meliš’s rhetoric, which suited her only to a certain extent and which she soon began to fear and loathe. After being forced to choose between the child and Meliš when he abandons her, Milča’s first instinct is to abandon the child. She thus seeks out Meliš in a rugged Prague flat, where instead of a warm and cordial man she finds merely a cold and disinterested being. Milča realises that she has made the wrong decision and tries to correct it by returning to the child she had left behind at an unknown doorstep. The last part of the novel *Vzpoura* is called ‘Woman’ because it is here that the ‘womanhood’

of the main character Milča awakens, as she fully comprehends the greatness and importance of motherhood and accepts her new role by abandoning her blind loyalty to Meliš and his nihilistic ideals.

In the last moments they spend together, Milča and Meliš engage in a silent battle for the supremacy in relation to different views of life. They do not express them though they can clearly be sensed. It is a battle between the life of a new man, alone and free of all responsibilities and duties, and the life of a woman who has experienced the full weight and blessing of life through motherhood. Milča at this point felt that the battle within her and the battle she was now silently waging against Meliš was a decisive battle for the relationship of thousands of women and thousands of future men who would be oppressed by the masses, laws and traditions.

In contrast to the Czech novel, in which the struggle for women's emancipation is depicted at the level of a subjective story, Jelena Dimitrijević's novel is a complex narrative that is not only about the change in intimate relationships within a family, but also about the transformation of the entire structure of Turkish society at the beginning of the 20th century. Through the content of the novel *Nove*, Dimitrijević's literary creativity does not only reflect social and cultural changes, but also political changes, as she does not talk only about harems, customs and the temperament of Oriental women in Thessaloniki, but also about the political climate of the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the Young Turk revolution (Вукотић 2020: 120). To explain the roots of the changes that led to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, Maja Vonić recalls that in the 19th century, the intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire became aware of their country's backwardness and poverty compared to the rest of Europe. They especially recognised important differences, particularly in the way of life and the state system. As a result, the Turks engaged more in learning European languages and reading books, which gave them a wealth of new ideas, such as liberalism and nationalism (Vonić 2011: 53). Ana Stjelja points out that the novel *Nove* not only focuses on the depiction of the intimate lives of Turkish women in the harem, but also emphasises the conflict between the old and the new, with the old being synonymous with traditional views of life, with adherence to strict and exclusive moral principles, while the 'new' represents the antithesis of the old, with the old being attributed to the East and the new to the West (Стјеља 2015: 110).

Young Turkish women describe themselves as 'new'. They were women who supported the demands of the men, the rebellious intellectuals, who wanted to change the existing conditions in the Ottoman Empire by reintroducing the Constitution of 1876. They hoped that their status in the Muslim-Turkish society would change with the introduction of a parliamentary system. The daughters of rich Turkish families living in Thessaloniki were receiving a European education out of the sheer arrogance and snobbery of their fathers – old Turks who usually despised everything European, but for the sake of prestige and mutual competition wanted their children to master different languages



– English, German, French (in addition to the obligatory Turkish, Arabic, in some cases even Persian, and in addition to the mother tongues – Greek, but also Sephardic). Svetlana Slapšak speaks of a linguistic border crossing, i.e. a harem nomadism characterised by polyglotism, which is largely an end in itself (Слапшак 2018: 137). This leads to the conclusion that harem identity is not double or multiple, transgressive and contradictory, but rather the predominant body in every language. A woman in a harem will speak, read or sing in different and numerous languages for the sole purpose of expressing different forms of existence (Слапшак 2018: 138).

The transition from an old way of life to a new one, however, is a very complex process for Turkish women, which they themselves often do not understand sufficiently. In several places in the novel, Jelena Dimitrijević points out that for some Turkish women, modernisation means merely changing their traditional dress, replacing it along with the hijab (because they want to wear hats) with more European ones, or with the prohibition of the harem, i.e. the separation of women and men from their life together in the family home or on the street. She sadly acknowledges that: “Many women consider themselves ‘new’ when they enter a room with shoes on, when they have combed their hair in a European fashion, or stuck a French name (*alafranga*) on a Turkish dress and spoken a few French words in company” (Димитријевић 2019: 64). Significant changes are thus denied to them primarily because they have no associations in which they can inform and educate themselves and draw up a programme for which they can fight, with rigorously presented demands that would ultimately lead to serious reforms. At one point, the narrator asks herself: “What organisation of women’s associations can be successful in a country where women are considered an object and where only those who suppress freedom are free?” (Димитријевић 2019: 60).

Finally, and above all, those who call themselves ‘new’ are in reality very naive in their understanding of the life, culture and customs they have adopted from the West. In their view, the only thing they desire is to be close to European women, while in reality, deep down, they are not ready to give up the metaphysics of collective being<sup>8</sup> that makes their identity so personal. This is reflected also in their aversion to certain elements of Western culture that they perceive as distant, alien, incomprehensible and unacceptable. The author’s only comments are thus: “They live in Turkey, but they dream of France. Every day they read something new and long for this foreign, unknown, distant world” (Димитријевић 2019: 11). By naming all the women who described themselves as ‘new’, the novel also has an ironic undertone, because it is precisely these heroines who most clearly disclose the gap between what they propagate and what they really are (Вуловић 2016: 214).

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<sup>8</sup> “Collective being” can refer to centuries of repeated experiences incorporated into the way of thinking and behavior of women that have become their *modus vivendi* which is not thought about, but sovereignly rules them invisibly from the past.

Emir-Fatma, the main character of the novel *Nove*, grew up in such an atmosphere. As a member of the ‘young Turkish women’, she manages to marry the man she loves, but is very early in the relationship disappointed when it turns out that her husband is an alcoholic. The very fact that she marries for love distinguishes Fatma significantly from all her predecessors, as she achieves the most important degree of emancipation (from her standpoint), namely the ability to follow the dictates of the heart. By marrying for love, Fatma achieves complete initiation and existence as a woman (Garonja Radovanac 2011: n. pag.). Her marital bliss is soon disrupted by the customs of the religious holiday of Ramadan, during which men and women must lead completely separate lives. (Милосављевић-Миличић 2015: 486). After breaking his promise not to drink three times, and after throwing a tantrum and abusing his wife, Jemal-bey will lose Emir-Fatma because, according to Turkish custom, she will be returned to her father. Fatma remains betrayed by the man she was most looking forward to and who she thought would be her ideal partner (Вукотић 2020: 125). This is where the heroine’s most visible rebellion against the established relationships in the family begins, because she still loves ‘her husband’, with whom she is now not allowed to meet. The main obstacle that the heroine has to face is initially her parents, whose role in the patriarchal society is only to consistently enforce traditional norms and uphold customs and traditions at all costs, with the father taking the lead and the mother supporting him in everything (Garonja Radovanac 2011: n. pag.).

Emir-Fatma’s rebellion becomes evident when she asks herself: “Am I to obey my father forever and fear him, even if I am married, already a wife, as long as he lives and I have no husband? [...] Why did he not prepare me for life, to be independent?” (Димитријевић 2019: 298). These words signify a break with the past and with any kind of connection to the traditions and customs she had followed and learnt from her mother and grandmother. The conflict in this novel is not just a conflict between father and daughter. It is also the conflict of an individual against the entire inhumane system that is directed against women, at the moment when the awareness matures that the position of women in such a society must change. Alluding to the situation in which women find themselves in the novel *Nove*, Zorica Bečanović Nikolić defines the status of women as subaltern, where subaltern refers to the lower classes, whose right to narrate, to articulate their own situation, was limited or non-existent even before colonial rule, as well as to women in traditionally patriarchal societies, in which they find themselves in a marginal, subaltern position even if they belong to the upper classes (Bečanović Nikolić 2011: n. pag.).

The confrontation with her father is the culmination of Fatma’s plan to elope with her beloved husband after she has ‘tricked’ the common law and arranged an escape scenario (Свирчев 2018: 38). When she decides to flee, it is the final exodus from her father’s house without a blessing. She and Jemal flee Thessaloniki in secret, with the essential element of their future fate being that they walk through the cemetery at night. The place and time of their escape and

departure from their hometown have a chthonic character, for the characters do not move during the day, so they have neither the paternal nor the solar blessing. When Fatma and her husband arrive in Paris together, Fatma soon learns from her own experience that the difference between her and the women with whom she now spends her days in Paris is in reality an insurmountable gulf. For Dimitrijević's heroine, Paris does not become a place of happiness, harmonisation and ultimate liberation, but one of misunderstanding, loneliness and failure. With freedom came disappointment, because it was not the freedom she expected, the freedom with no limits. One of Jemal's friends – Charles – even woos Fatma by giving her a book with provocative texts in which the lines in which he shares his vulgar thoughts with her are underlined, whereupon she writes: "I will never be like the women in the novels! I was born and brought up differently, and I love my husband, too" (Димитријевић 2019: 322).

Zorica Bečanović points out that Emir-Fatma understands that in the West, socially accepted, tacitly and hypocritically tolerated forms of promiscuity took the place of codified polygamy, which was by Ottoman women perceived as a great humiliation (Bečanović Nikolić 2011: n. pag). This was the reason why Fatma felt that she could better relate with statues and monuments than with real people. She was consumed by nostalgia, she missed her mother tongue, the warmth and security of her parental home, the familiar customs and rituals (Свирчев 2018: 41). Emir-Fatma is painfully aware of the huge gap between the lifestyle of her compatriots and that of educated European women (Милосављевић-Милић 2015: 486). What ultimately destroys her is the realisation that the goal she was striving to achieve was not worth the efforts and sacrifices she had made. Two years after leaving her father's house, Emir-Fatma dies. But before the news of her death reaches her homeland, Ibrahim Hasanbey receives a letter from his daughter, in the name of his granddaughter, an unnamed baby who is only a few months old.<sup>9</sup> In this letter, Fatma asks her father for forgiveness. She regrets her decision to leave everything behind and asks her father to fulfil her last wish, which would also redeem her from her offence. She asks her father to take her daughter in and raise her in a completely different manner

I send you my daughter in my place. You give her a name. You bring her up, but not like me. Hide the sun from her during the day, the candle at night, and she will feel happy. What you rich Muslims are doing (hardly some out of love for enlightenment, all out of vanity) is too early. It is too early for our dark land, for our totally unenlightened society. (Димитријевић 2019: 306)

We see that Fatma gives life for life, which is interpreted as her final redemption, and on completion of the cycle – enlightenment, education, dreams of a

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<sup>9</sup> Although it is not explicitly emphasised in the novel's narrative, Fatma sends her baby away not only because she knows she will die, but also as the ultimate redemption from her father because she has stepped out of the expected way of life.

free European life, falling in love, sacrifice, defiance and turning away from God and fleeing her homeland – the circle closes and the heroine is back at the beginning with her own death. She has broken with tradition and the well-trodden paths of her foremothers and yet has decided to send her daughter from enlightened Europe back to Turkey in a conservative dress, to her roots, because she knew that these were part of her immanent essence. What defines her as a person is no longer the books she has learnt from, the images she has fantasised about, but the feelings to which she has given herself as a woman and as a person and which have defined her in relation to the world. She does not act according to what she knows about someone, but according to how she feels about that person. She knows that her husband is a murderer, a drunk and a vagabond, but she loves him nonetheless. This is precisely the author's conclusion when she writes at the end of the story that "Oriental women are not rational, they only feel" (Димитријевић 2019: 309). The final chapter of the novel reveals the complexity of the path that leads from the ideal to the goal, which, even when achieved, can turn out to be completely false (Вуловић 2016: 215).

### 3 The Dual Aspect of Moderhood

With regard to the theme of motherhood, however, it is possible to recognise points of reference that guided the authors in the construction of their novels. *Vzpoura* takes the motif of defiance towards motherhood literally, as the main character Milča initially perceives pregnancy as a burden and gives up her child, but later accepts her motherhood as her only true purpose in life. For Emir-Fatma, on the other hand, pregnancy and then the baby is the ultimate redemption, a way to reconcile with her abandoned father. She does not hesitate to give up the child in order to redeem herself and be worthy of her father's forgiveness and love again. Motherhood is thus experienced as a set of established and permitted acts and practises of expected behaviour that must not be violated. It implies a model of behaviour and life in which women in traditional families follow the well-trodden paths of their mothers and grandmothers, which they then pass on to their daughters. The main characters of both novels (Milča, Emir-Fatma) come into conflict with social norms and break them in their search for their individual path of maturation and self-knowledge.

In Božena Víková Kunětická's work, the theme of 'motherhood' takes on a special form in modernity, i.e. the concept of motherhood itself becomes modern (Heczková 2006: 39). Heczková emphasises that the rebellion and courage to be an unmarried single mother at the end of the 19th century is a modern concept of motherhood because it was something that was silently forbidden. Single motherhood was a violation of the expected exemplary patriarchal behaviour; therefore, any woman who violated it had to be stigmatised and condemned. The novel *Vzpoura* particularly highlights this modernity as the

heroine rebels against her own mother for giving birth in poverty, and then decides through her own experience that motherhood is more valuable than the relationship with her chosen partner despite her economically unenviable position; indeed, Milča does not hesitate to choose motherhood on her own, i.e. to accept her child without a partner and to embark on an uncertain future. Kunětická clearly states in two of her novels – *Medřická* and *Vzpoura* – that the mother in a woman must be respected regardless of her relationship with the man who had made her a mother (Laichter 1919: 201). Kunětická's literary work as a whole also shows that the author gradually radicalised motherhood and sacralised her physicality (her opinion was that every woman should bear a child). This means that in her novels, the writer literally puts into practise the belief that women should not be left alone; she elevates motherhood above all laws and the cultural heritage of mankind when she says: "Motherhood is the only thing that purifies women morally and socially, because it elevates them humanly and culturally" (Viková-Kunětická 1912: 29). Through the birth of a child, physicality gains meaning, just as a woman's life gains full meaning through motherhood. For Kunětická, 'childlessness' is a humiliation for a woman; a woman has not fully realised herself if she has not given birth to a child, either in marriage or outside it.

To describe Božena Viková-Kunětická's way of thinking, Štěpánková reveals that the writer came to the conclusion in various ways that the bond between mother and child is stronger and more valuable than the bond between man and woman. According to Kunětická, motherhood becomes a fundamental value. As an ideal, she emphasises the union of woman, man and child, although she insists on a new definition of family that includes only woman and child (Štěpánková 2006: 34). Kunětická was often criticised for this attitude, especially by Leichter, who simplified and trivialised the writer's views by claiming that for Kunětická, emancipation meant that a woman was independent of her husband and could support herself entirely on her own. According to Laichter, Kunětická thinks that women who take care of themselves and do not have a husband are emancipated women (Laichter 1919: 203). Jan Voborník, however, interprets Kunětická's intention differently, namely to show in her novel the image of a woman who goes her own way and rejects love and motherhood at first as something forced upon her (she must decide for herself whether she wants to be a mother and not simply accept motherhood because it is expected of her). He therefore states that a woman's freedom lies neither in her equality nor in her right to vote, but in her right to choose motherhood out of wedlock (Voborník 1934: 34).

Josef Leichter's study "*Ženy Spisovatelky a Otázka Ženská a Mužská v Jejich Dílech*" acknowledges that the idea they present in their novels has been recognised by various Czech women writers, namely the fact that if a man despises marriage and wants to live freely, why could not a woman do the same (Laichter 1919: 173). The core of the women's issue is therefore not what the novel propagates, namely that Milča should leave Meliš, but that she should not

be afraid to be independent and provide for her own living. The novel *Vzpoura* is also a novel about the return to the mother, because to return to her child, whom she abandoned, Milča first had to return to her roots – to her mother, whom she once also abandoned. The encounter between Milča and her mother is a regeneration of the contact between the current rebellion and the established order. Heczková notes that Milča visits her mother in a symbolic act of reconciliation that reunites the interrupted line of female genealogy (Heczková 2006: 48). Woman and child remain an inseparable concept, despite differences in social and religious relationships. A woman and a child form the essence of life and its development (Voborník 1934: 33).

Contrary to Kunětická, Jelena Dimitrijević's novel shows something completely different. Her heroine is a rebellious woman, but she is not prepared to fully sacrifice her freedom. Moreover, with the death of her main character (Emir-Fatma), Dimitrijević reinforces the idea that the differences between cultures and civilisations cannot be overcome under any circumstances, and the main reason for this is the psychological and spiritual gap separating the two worlds which cannot be bridged (Стјеља 2015: 111). What both heroines have in common, however, is the complete transformation or metamorphosis of their being, which is accomplished through pregnancy and motherhood (although Fatma died during the process). Or to put it in Erich Neumann's words: the transformational character emphasises the dynamic element of the psyche, which, in contrast to the conservative tendency of the elemental character, leads everything that exists to movement, to change – i.e. to transformation (Nojman 2015: 46). The transformational character is already conspicuously at work in the basic function of the mother-woman, in pregnancy and birth, and one can speak of the complete transformation of both heroines precisely because of the motif of bearing a child. Neumann warns that when the personality comes into conflict with the transformative nature of the feminine (which is the case with both heroines – Milča and Fatma), it seems as if – mythologically speaking – the feminine is preoccupied with preserving itself as a partner (Fatma's can thus be seen as the predominant elemental character). For this heroic self, the anima, as in fairy tales, prepares a 'test' that must be passed (Nojman 2015: 52). The difference between Milča and Fatma is at this point clearly expressed, as Milča continues to fight for herself – i.e. 'motherhood as defiance', while Fatma capitulates to the challenge, she fails the initiatory test of fighting for herself; however, by returning her own daughter to her father, she returns to the beginning of the circle – which makes this a case of 'motherhood as redemption'. Neumann maintains that the transformative character of the feminine, even when it appears as a negative, hostile and provocative element, forces a tension, change and strengthening of the personality. However, the transformative character is not to be understood as a conscious intention of the woman, because self-realisation comes later, in the highest form of femininity (Nojman 2015: 52). The result of this is that one heroine dies and the other lives on. Both heroines act intuitively – Fatma rejected the rules because of her love

for Jemal-bey, left her home and gained freedom. She certainly did not intend to die, but the price she had to pay to achieve self-realization was very high (one would expect a happy ending after Fatma's self-realization process, but it is not necessarily always the case). Milča, too, left home, defied her mother because she listened to her heart, and went abroad with Meliš; she too could not imagine that she would love anyone more than him, but it happened. She gave birth to a son and left Meliš for this new love. Fatma starts the initiation but does not carry it through to the end. The main difference between both heroines is that Fatma, unlike Milča, does not have the strength to overcome the difficulties she is faced with.

In Fatma we observe the dominant so-called 'elementary character' of femininity, for she treats her partner (Jemal-bey) only collectively, as Neumann explains, i.e. she has no particular relationship with him, since she experiences him only as an archetypal situation into which she has brought her idealised version of what a man should be like and how a husband should treat her. If a daughter is bound by an umbilical cord to the male values (taught to her by her father or mother), she will in adulthood believe that her survival depends on her following patriarchal norms (Vudman 2012: 29). Their betrayal could then mean death for her, which is perfectly illustrated by the example of the end of Fatma's life. As long as a woman accepts the archetypal projection of a man, she is trapped in the male perception of reality (Vudman 2012: 47). In Milča, on the other hand, a transformational character dominates, representing a higher stage of development. The matriarchal character of the feminine, in which the relationship to the partner, to the self and to the individual is not yet developed (as in Emir-Fatma), is in the case of Milča overcome in her personality (Nojman 2015: 54). Neumann therefore points out that the psychology of the female transformational character prevails primarily in the West, while in purely patriarchal cultures (he cites the example of India, but Turkey can also be included here) the dominant maternal primal character of the feminine is mainly preserved (Nojman 2015: 55). Turning away from tradition is also a daring pilgrimage towards one's own identity. According to Marion Woodman, the task of the heroine who dares to take such a step is to free herself from the unconscious complex of the father and to appropriate her own intellect and spirit (Sonnenschein), to free herself from the unconscious complex of the mother and to appropriate her own body and soul (Mondschein) (Vudman 2012: 48), which Kunětická undoubtedly proves in her novel. This is something that Voborník emphasizes when he finds in Kunětická's prose that a woman with a child remains an inseparable concept (Voborník 1934: 33). Maternal physicality in that way becomes sacralized because a woman performs a divine act by giving birth to a child.

The differences between the two novels result from the different cultural circumstances of the two milieus described, whereby we follow the emancipated and open Czech society on the one hand and the conservative, actually isolated Turkish society on the other. The isolation of the harem prevents women from

psychologically developing and waking up to their individuation, which prevents them from finding or fulfilling their subjective vocations in the secular world, apart from the roles assigned to them by their gender which are being a wife, mother, and obedient sister or daughter. They may fantasise, have foreign governesses with whom they fall in love and to whom they look up, but such women have no practical experience of living a free life. Neumann believes that limited development leads to a crippling of the automorphic dispositions of those people who are naturally creative, resulting in them become ill, so to speak, because they cannot realise their true individuation. This is especially true for the human being for whom adaptation to the community can no longer constitute the full meaning of life if they do not experience true autonomy (Nojman 1990: 111). This explanation partly sheds light on the reason for Emir-Fatma's death, with Stjelja also adding that Dimitrijević's novel reminds us that the harem system was historically not prescribed by religion, but rather imposed on women by male selfishness and arbitrariness. This attitude is one of the postulates of Jelena Dimitrijević's feminist ideology, which is by no means radical, but remains within the framework of generally accepted notions of women's equality (Стјеља 2015: 114).

Milča and Meliš's personal attitude towards patriarchal marriage can be seen, also according to Neumann's interpretation, as fear of the feminine. The fear of commitment and contempt for the institution of marriage are a form of pathology and an underdeveloped attitude towards Meliš's anima. Neumann explains this problem by saying that liberation from the anima means a 'battle with the dragon', which the ego naturally fears. This significant fear of the feminine, which is linked to the fear of the mother, is the fear of the anima and appears in the form of the fear of transformation (Nojman 1990: 110). This is the reason why Meliš refuses to go through this process. He does not have the strength, courage or desire to follow the path of individuation himself, which brings his development to a standstill. He becomes a nihilist and a cynic. Neumann explains that with the elimination of the anima, its transformative aspect also comes to a standstill; it is split off and threatens not only marriage, but all the constants of the patriarchal family, which include security and place in the world (Nojman 1990: 115).

All of the above can be directly applied to the interpretation of the relationship between Fatma and Jemal-bey, the latter being separated from his mother in early childhood and raised by a father who underestimated the image and role of the mother. This statement directly connects to Neumann's analysis in that the element of the father is not only 'castrating' and forbidding for the woman, but it also demands the renunciation of one's own mother (which is the case in the novel *Nove*). This case occurs because the father demands masculinity from his son, i.e. to be a hero and to give up his mother and the slavish attachment to her, because this is also something he owes to the community (e.g. the Turkish community) (Nojman 1990: 113). Jemal-bey is an immature and spoilt man. He grows up in material prosperity, but is described as a boy



who passionately wants to possess everything, his friends, his mother's love and later his wife. In his passion and addiction to alcohol, he kills a man and is designated a criminal in the community. He is a man who cannot control his impulses, and who can not and will not control his own character. Neumann explains that the defensive attitude with which the man fights the transformative character of the feminine and resists the need for his own transformation is expressed in a collective patriarchal ideology in which the woman is primarily seen as 'negative-feminine' (Nojman 1990: 116).

When analysing what happened to Milča and Fatma, it is also important to note what Neumann points out: regardless of the extent to which the daughter has separated herself from the matriarchal world and has subordinated herself to the negative, devaluing patriarchal world, she will reach a stage of development in which she will almost always compensate for and heal this separation from the great wholeness of female nature. This reunification takes place in the crucial phase for the woman, and, importantly, this is not marriage, but pregnancy and the birth of the child (Nojman 1990: 120).

#### **4 Conclusion**

Comparative analysis of the above theme provides bases for the conclusion that both heroines, on their path of individuation through motherhood, find personal redemption through the process of rebellion against tradition, first in their own terms and then in relation to their family. As both have given birth to a child, they realise through motherhood that they both embody what Neumann calls the elemental and transformative feminine character. The elemental feminine is described as a huge vessel that contains all that emerges from it, and all that is born from it, and all that always belongs to it and remains subject to it (Emir-Fatme because she could not complete the initiation). In the case of Kunětická's character (Milča), however, we follow a developed aspect of the feminine, which Neumann identifies as transformative character. The main difference in the role of motherhood in the two novels can be seen in the fact that Fatma could not leave her husband when their love was over, but decided to give up her daughter so that the latter would not make the same mistakes that she did, which is the opposite to Milča's case who decided to leave Meliš to love and live for the son that Meliš rejected. The heroine's rebellion against the established social and cultural order is seen as the transformative character of the feminine, i.e. as a dynamic element of the psyche that sets everything in motion, changes it – i.e. transforms it. The transformative character has an offensive effect and forces the subject to develop, which as a result brings movement and unrest (all this can be seen in the case of Milča). Consciousness thus does not perceive it as exclusively positive, just as the elemental character is not experienced as exclusively negative. Both characters are carriers of the ambivalence that is typical of both the Great Feminine and the Great Mother

(which is the original characteristic of each archetype) (Nojman 2015: 48). In the context of such ending in both novels, the symbol of Ouroboros becomes visible in both cases, as the cycle ends where it begins – with the desire to free oneself from patriarchal restrictions, and with the return through vicissitudes to familiar ground – i.e. parenthood – that is now their own.

The real reason for the tragic fate of Emir-Fatma can ultimately be seen in the fact that the force of tradition is stronger than the occasional glimpses of reform, which awakened the spirit and created temporary moods, but they also calmed down as unexpectedly and suddenly as they were stirred up (Stjeđa 2015: 114). The end of Jelena Dimitrijević's novel is a vivid testimony to the fact that changing the social patterns characteristic of the Balkan climate was not an easy endeavour and that emancipation was therefore only partially achieved (Георгијев, Ђуричић 2013: n. pag.). The women's space in the Ottoman Empire was limited to the boundaries of the family household (Поповић 2011: 298); in contrast, a woman's actions in the Habsburg Monarchy were not restricted to a close family circle and her freedom of movement and action was much greater (Георгијев, Ђуричић 2013: n. pag.). What ultimately separates the heroines of Kunětická and Dimitrijević is not only geographical space, but also the cultural heritage of the environment in which they were born and grew up.

To summarise, despite their initial resistance to motherhood, both heroines understood that they were too much a part of an established order that needed to be changed – in Milča's case, in terms of the social aspect associated with improved living conditions that would allow a woman to be independent through economic independence, and in Fatma's case – in terms of greater freedom for women to choose a partner and form their own identity (i.e. to break out of the vicious circle of always meeting the same people). They also understood that their individuality could not be fully achieved. This is because their individual self, constantly reacting to psychic gravity, kept sinking back into the unconscious or orbiting like a satellite around the Great Feminine; it is this inherited cult of motherhood, love and care that still keeps them in the frame of inherited behaviour. Even when the individual becomes independent (when the heroines leave home with their partners), the Great Feminine relativises this independence and makes it a secondary variant of her eternal being. This means that, even though she goes through the whole transformation process, Milča, unlike Fatma, still belongs to what Neumann calls the Great Feminine, because it is the same as Primal Femininity. Primal femininity, which is common to both sexes, develops in the primary contact of intimacy between the mother and her baby. In this way we understand that Milča's emancipation did develop, but only as a secondary variant of the eternal essence of the Great Mother.

In the context of the Primal Feminine, we recognise that the heroines rebel against motherhood, and yet it remains in their orbit. Their transformation does not fail to materialise because each of them did much more for herself than the women from their own environment in the time they live in. They were brave enough to put their reputation at risk and enter a world of uncertainty

and insecurity, unfortunately with a different result. In the years that followed those in which these heroines lived, major changes in the process of emancipation and the transformation of intimacy were to be expected, which would have a more favourable impact on female subjects. The examples of the lifestyles and actions of these two heroines were undoubtedly repeated by many other women in numerous variations, but the more common the daring choices in women's lives were, the more society as a whole was willing to accept them.

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#### KLJUBOVANJE MATERINSTVU KOT PODEDOVANI TRADICIJI IN MATERINSTVO KOT ODREŠITEV V DELIH BOŽENE VÍKOVE-KUNĚTICKE IN JELENE DIMITRIJEVIĆ

Dvojni vidik materinstva, izpostavljen v naslovu članka, je prisoten tako v romanu *Vzpoura* (*Upornost*, 1901) češke avtorice Božene Víkove-KunĚticke (1862–1934) kot v romanu *Nove* (*Nove ženske*, 1912) srbske avtorice Jelene Dimitrijević (1862–1945). Preobrazba intimnosti v obeh romanih se odraža v uporabi glavnih junakinj – Milĉe (*Vzpoura*) in Emir-Fatme (*Nove*) – proti patriarhalno ustanovljenim pravilom obnašanja v poznem 19. stoletju, v njihovem neupoštevanju brezkompromisne poslušnosti do staršev, njihovi neposlušnosti do življenja in zastarelih, tradicionalno ustanovljenih oblik medosebnih odnosov. Roman *Vzpoura* (1901) predstavlja »protest proti moškemu individualizmu, katerega protiutež naj bi bila ženska, ki je skozi stoletja pridobila izkušnje, da bi prepoznala pomen in smisel svojega življenja« (Moldanová 1986: 426). Roman *Nove* govori o junakinji, ki »zapusti oĉetov dom«, predvsem v metafiziĉnem smislu, vendar tudi dobesedno, saj gre za prekinitev z druŹinsko tradicijo, ki je sproŹena z zunanjim impulzom v povezavi z delovanjem politiĉnega toka, ki na koncu pripelje do revolucije mladih Turkov (1908, ĉeprav je roman postavljen v leto 1905). Na podlagi primerjalne analize lahko zakljuĉim, da obe junakinji na svoji poti individualizacije skozi materinstvo najmeta osebno odrešenje v procesu upora proti tradiciji, najprej pred seboj in nato v odnosu do svoje druŹine. Ko vsaka izmed njiju rodi otroka, skozi materinstvo spoznata, da upodabljata tisto, kar Neumann imenuje elementarni in transformativni Źenski znaĉaj. Njuna preobrazba ne ostane neuresniĉena, saj sta zase naredili veliko veĉ kot Źenske iz njunega okolja v tedanjem ĉasu. Bili sta dovolj pogumni, da sta tvegali svoj ugled in vstopili v svet negotovosti. V letih, ki so sledila, so bile priĉakovane velike spremembe v procesu emancipacije in preobrazbe intimnosti, ki bi ugodno vplivale na Źenske.

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