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"UNINVITED, HISTORY ENTERED OUR LIVES" THE POST-WORLD WAR I TRANSITIONS IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Allow me to start my account of Women's Life-Writing in the former Austro-Hungarian territories with a personal anecdote of former Yugoslavian territories. Born in the late 1980s, I was a child when Yugoslavia disintegrated. In the early 2000s, my friends and I, while willingly embracing the global pop-culture of MTV, began to refer to ourselves as "otroci tranzicije" which could be directly translated as "children of transition". We may have been the first generation to enjoy a popular culture identical to that of our Western peers, despite the fact that the backgrounds of our early childhoods looked different. We knew that growing up in Yugoslavia, and later in one of its successor states, was a different experience to growing up in the USA, UK or Western Germany, but we somehow believed that our futures would be similar. However, years passed and we were no longer "children". As our childhoods drew to a close it became evident that the *transition* was going to be a never-ending process, extending beyond the fall of the Berlin Wall and encompassing the political, social, cultural, national and economic changes that this brought: newly formed nation states, practicing democracy with some more or less authoritarian outbursts, economic liberalism as a dominant ideology, financial crisis, austerity measures, a collapsing job market, the real-estate bubble, covid, the war in Ukraine and Palestine, inflation, global warming. The *transition* that started in the 1990s is an ongoing process with no prospect of future "stability". We, in Central and South-Eastern Europe, may have been one of the first generations to identify ourselves with the term *transition*, but this does not imply that we were the pioneers in experiencing the everlasting economic, social and existential instability that followed the profound geo-political shifts.

In 1918 German revolutionary and journalist Maria Saran wrote in her memoir: "There was no 'last battle' on the horizon, but a long succession of battles, campaigns, activities, efforts and sacrifices"[2]. For a certain generation (but also class, nationality and race) there was no "last battle" of WW I, but the fight continued by other means: the fight for women's suffrage, the fight for women's economic independence, revolutionary upheavals, the class struggle, the

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[2] Mary Saran, *Never Give Up*, London, Oswald Wolf, 1976, p. 113.

construction(s) and de-construction(s) of the concept of Yugoslavia, the national struggles of Woodrow Wilson's Europe, the rise of fascism and the battle of economic survival to name just a few. The idea of the old world was shattered and the new world had yet to be invented.

The aim of this article is to observe the social, political and existential changes after WWI as seen by women intellectuals of different nationalities of the disintegrated Austria-Hungary. Based on autobiographies, memoirs, diaries and autobiographical fiction, the article will focus on shared and individual experiences of postwar years of women, who were predominantly writing in German, Slovene and Croatian and whose nationalities were often conflicted in postwar Europe.

Following the versatile experiences of women, as well as being aware of my own post-1989 experience of social change, the article will not aim to unify different life trajectories and narratives of post-war years into a single historical outline, but will seek to find different layers of dealing with uncertainty. The timeframe of the research extends from the last years of WWI into the transitional period that sometimes only impacts a few years, but in other cases covers the whole interwar period. The central research questions focus on the role of autobiographical writing, the different aspects of post-war transitions, the relationship between the political and the personal, autobiographical writing as a historical source and experiences of gender amidst the political, economic and cultural turmoil.

Autobiographical writings as a type of primary source are an integral part of historical research. As any other sources, they don't speak for themselves but can only be used as a genre or a methodology that opens historiography for new social, cultural and political aspects of the past[3]. Although throughout history women regularly wrote in their diaries and nurtured correspondences in which public and private spheres collided, the female autobiography as a public genre (i.e. a published book), began to gain in popularity only in the second half of the 20th century. Before that, the world of memoirs and autobiographies in Central and South-Eastern Europe belonged strictly to men of power (with a few notable exceptions). The majority of autobiographical writings that thematize the post-WWI years were first published in the second half of 20th century.

In none of these works the concept of sociopolitical transition itself is a central focus or directly discussed, but a comparative analysis of different writings offers

[3] Marta Verginella, "Zgodovinopisna raba avtobiografskih virov in značilnosti ženskega avtobiografskega pisanja" ["Historiographical Usage of Autobiographical Sources and Properties of Women's Autobiographical Writing"], in Alenka Koron et al. (eds.), *Avtobiografski diskurz: Teorija in praksa avtobiografije v literarni vedi* [*Autobiographical Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Autobiography in Literary Studies*], Ljubljana, Založba ZRC SAZU, 2011, pp. 95-108.

a set of topics that dominated the post war autobiographical narratives of women intellectuals.

For this research, the autobiographical writings of more than 20 women were taken into account, but the article will closely focus on half of them: Zofka Kveder (1878–1926)[4], Rosa Mayreder (1858–1938)[5], Marija Jurić Zagorka (1873[76, 79?]–1957)[6], Angela Vode (1892–1985)[7], Anica Lokar (1897–1976)[8], Gusti

[4] Zofka Kveder was the first Slovene professional woman writer and belonged to the first generation of Slovene feminists. She lived in Ljubljana, Trieste, Prague and Zagreb. The majority of her writings from the time after 1915 were written in Croatian. The writings, analyzed in this article, were published in Croatian: *Hanka* (a novel, published in 1917), *Unuk kraljevića Marka* [*Grandson of the Prince Marko*] (a play, 1922), *Arditi na otoku Krku* [*Ardites on the Island of Krk*] (a play, 1923), *Po putevima života* [*Along the Paths of Life*] (novellas, 1926). These are all works of fiction with clear autobiographical segments. Her Slovene writings are collected in 5 books, edited and contextualized by Katja Mihurko Poniž (Založba Litera, ZRC SAZU, 2005–2018). Unless otherwise stated, the quotations are translated into English (from Croatian, Slovenian, German) by the author of this paper.

[5] Rosa Mayreder was an Austrian author, painter, musician and feminist, who was a critic of the patriarchal structures of bourgeois society. Her most influential work was *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (published in German 1905 with the English translation *A Survey of the Woman Problem* in 1912). In 1923 she published her second book of essays with the title *Geschlecht und Kultur* [*Gender and Culture*], where her views are strongly influenced by the experience of WWI. She wrote several autobiographies which were published after her death: *Das Haus in der Landskrongasse*. *Jugenderinnerungen* [*The House on Landskrongasse. Youth Memoirs*] (published by Käthe Braun-Prager, Vienna, Mensa, 1948, re-published by Eva Geber, Vienna, Mandelbaum/AUF-Edition, 1998), *Mein Pantheon*. *Lebenserinnerungen* [*My Pantheon. Memoirs*] (published by Susanne Kerkovius, Dornach, 1988). She was also a committed diary writer. Parts of her diaries were published as *Tagebücher 1873–1937* [*Diaries 1873–1937*] by Harriet Anderson (Frankfurt am Main, Insel, 1988).

[6] Marija Jurić Zagorka was the first Croatian professional woman journalist, writer and women's rights activist. Her mostly historical novels were widely popular with readers, yet for a long time she was not taken seriously by the intellectual establishment. She is an author of more than 30 books, including an autobiographical novel *Kamen na cesti* [*A Stone on the Road*] (1934). She also wrote a few shorter non-fictional autobiographical texts, including *Što je moja krivnja* [*What's My Guilt*] (1947) and *Kako je bilo* [*How It Was*] (1953).

[7] Angela Vode was a Slovene author, feminist, political worker, dissident and human rights activist. Her most important non-fiction books are *Žena v današnji družbi* [*Woman in Contemporary Society*] (1934) and *Spol in usoda* [*Gender and Destiny*] (1938). In the 1970s she wrote her autobiography with the title *Skriti spomin* [*The Hidden Memory*] that she planned to have posthumously published. The book was published for the first time in the early 2000s, almost two decades after her death. Her autobiography is printed in two editions, one as *Skriti spomin* (ed. by Alenka Puhar, published by Nova revija) and the second one as book 3 of her collected works with the title *Spomin in pozaba* [*Memory and Oblivion*] (ed. by Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik et al., published by Krtina).

[8] Anica Lokar was a Slovene political worker and communist activist, active in Ajdovščina, Trieste, Moscow and Ljubljana. During her lifetime, she was politically and socially well-connected due to her underground political activities in the interwar period, but never publicly known. Her memoirs were published posthumously, first as a newspaper series (1993) and later as a book with the title *Od Anice do Ane Antonovne* [*From Anica to Ana Antonovna*] (2002, ed. by Alenka Puhar, published by Mladinska knjiga).

Stridsberg (1892–1978)[9], Alma Mahler Werfel (1879–1964)[10], Hilde Spiel (1911–1990)[11], Salka Viertel (1889–1978)[12], Marija Vinski (1899–1941)[13]. They belonged to at least two different generations, Kveder, Zagorka and Mayreder being the pioneer feminist activists within their national communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, while the other women were born in the late 19th century and began their crucial political, intellectual or artistic activity after WWI. The generational exception is Hilde Spiel, who experienced the war as a child and her memoirs offer a version of transition as seen from a child's perspective. These women were not only part of different national, social and political milieus, but also held different positions within their respective societies. While some of them had already been well known (and also publicly ridiculed) as intellectuals in the pre- and/or interwar period (Kveder, Zagorka, Mayreder, Vode) or socialites (Mahler Werfel), others were unknown and their primary political and/or intellectual activism first became public after the publication of their memoirs (Lokar, Stridsberg) or even posthumously (Vinski).

The core of this research are the autobiographical writings of Cisleithanian[14] women that were published and are publicly available. Even if their works were published posthumously, it can be assumed from their articulation that they were also in some way addressing the (future) public. As Lynn Z. Bloom asserts in her analysis of private dairies in the public domain, "for a professional writer there are

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[9] Gusti Jirku Stridsberg (Augustine Stridsberg) was a German-speaking author, translator, political activist and intelligence officer, born in Chernivtsi (in what is now Ukraine), who spent the first decade after WWI at a Hartenstein Castle in the Kingdom of SHS (what is now Slovenia). Later she moved via Vienna to Moscow, where she was a reporter from the Soviet Union for the Viennese newspaper *Der Wiener Tag*. In the second part of her life she lived and worked in Sweden, where she also published her autobiography *Mina fem liv* [*My Five Lives*] (1962). The translation of Gusti Stridsberg's autobiography, *Mojih pet življenj*, was published in Slovene by Obzorja Maribor publishing house in 1971.

[10] Alma Mahler Werfel was an Austrian composer, editor, socialite and integral part of Austrian and German cultural milieu. Her autobiography *And the Bridge Is Love* (1958) was first published in the USA, where she lived from 1940, and later modified and edited for the German translation. The latter with the title *Mein Leben* [*My Life*] was published in 1963.

[11] Hilde Spiel was an Austrian writer and journalist from an integrated Jewish family. Her autobiography *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten* [*The Light and the Dark Times*] was published in Munich in 1989.

[12] Salka Viertel was an Austrian Jewish actress and Hollywood screenwriter. In 1969, her autobiography, *The Kindness of Strangers*, was published in the USA.

[13] Marija Vinski was a German-writing Jewish medical doctor and intellectual, who lived in Zagreb, Kingdom of SHS (later Kingdom of Yugoslavia) from 1924. Her diary from the years 1917–1934 was discovered in the archive of her last partner, Croatian writer and political worker August Cesarec. The diaries with the title *Velik je misterij života* [*Vast Is the Secret of Life*] were edited by Lucija Bakšić and Magdalena Blažić and published by Disput in 2021.

[14] Cisleithanian refers to the western part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including present day Austria, Slovenia and Croatia that are referred to in this article.

no private writings"[15], or, if we return to Roland Barthes, the act of writing "makes the private scene public"[16]. Of the discussed works, two autobiographies (Lokar, Vode) and two diaries (Mayreder, Vinski) were published posthumously. For some of these women, the publication of their writings meant placing them in a broader context of contemporary historiography.

However, the existence and availability of women's testimonies does not necessarily mean that they are included in the prevailing historiographical narrative. As Linda Anderson points out, autobiography as a genre is inextricably linked to gender and is most often focused on middle-class men, preferably from the "West"[17]. Autobiographies of the underprivileged, the oppressed, and the overlooked have the potential to create a discourse beyond individual narratives that transcends the fate of the individual. Women or persons of non-normative sexuality and/or gender, members of non-dominant ethnic groups or the working class, can, by asserting an individual voice that has a potential to reach beyond the personal, establish their own cultural sphere. In this case, autobiography is also an emancipatory genre that helps one to fit into the culturally dominant world, to achieve social recognition, and in this way to empower oneself and one's own social group[18]. To have control over one's own narrative can also be understood as part of an emancipatory struggle, since, according to Pierre Bourdieu, deprived social classes do not speak, but are spoken for[19]. Autobiographical discourse itself can be perceived as an act of resistance: one in which a woman constructs her identity, either as a revocation of oblivion (in our case – Vode) or as "confrontation of her demonic image" (in our case – Zagorka)[20]. As Domna C. Stanton put it, the "graphing" of the "auto" could be an act of self-assertion that denied and reversed a woman's status[21]. In this article, the analysis of selected autobiographies will serve the historiographical research of women in the transitions after WWI.

Due to the focus on historiography, many aspects of autobiography as a genre and method, largely known from the fields of comparative literature, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, will be omitted. The discussed

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[15] Lynn Z. Bloom, "I Write for Myself and Strangers: Private Diaries as Public Documents", in Suzanne L. Bunkers, Cynthia Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, Amherst, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, p. 24.

[16] J. Gerald Kennedy, "Roland Barthes, Autobiography, and the End of Writing", *The Georgia Review*, 35, 1981, 2, p. 397.

[17] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography*, London, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 3.

[18] Julia Swindells, *The Uses of Autobiography*, London, Taylor & Francis, 1995, p. 7.

[19] Pierre Bourdieu, "Une classe objet", *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1977, 17/18, p. 2.

[20] Isabel González Díaz, "Autobiography as a Discourse of Identity and Resistance: Emma Goldman's Living My Life", *Revista di Filologia*, 2009, 27, pp. 89-100.

[21] Domna C. Stanton, "Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?", in Domna C. Stanton (ed.), *The Female Autograph*, Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 14.

autobiographical texts differ from each other; they follow various narrative styles, have different literary value and diverse historiographical reliability. Each of the autobiographies deserves special treatment within its context as a historiographical, literary, artistic, factual or fictional genre, but in a given case of a particular historical period it is no less important to think about what their comparison tells us about the time in question. In addition, autobiography is not only a genre or a mode, but a way of reading or understanding[22]. It is just as much a way of reading as it is a way of writing[23]. The self that is established in autobiographical writing is not only a passive representation of one's own past, but an act that produces itself linguistically and performatively. Autobiography is therefore not only a historical document or a literary work, but a trope for the fictional and performative constitution of identity[24]. As Domna C. Stanton points out, an autobiography is "a heterogenous mixture of *discours* and *histoire*", that includes diverse aspects: personal, historico-cultural, elegiac, picaresque, illustrative and reflective[25].

Most of the women discussed in this article have already received at least some research attention from historiography and/or other humanistic branches within their own national contexts. However, this article is the first attempt to try to understand them through the perspective of post-war experiences in a transnational context. After all, this was also the context to which they, as (former) citizens of Austro-Hungary, belonged. Since the period of *transition* is more of a feeling than a defined period of time, autobiographical accounts are the best way to explore its various nuances.

Modes of Autobiographical Narration

"When I reach for the journal pages again, I do so because I want to find myself once more", wrote Marija Vinski in her diary in 1926. Her confession reflects how through the dedicated act of writing in her diary she first establishes her own voice, which then, in the moments of self-doubt, contributes to the development of her character. But at the same time, establishing yourself through the act of writing can also mean replacing your memories with your writings. Such is the case of Rosa Mayreder's diary entry in 1923: "Yesterday I walked over the

[22] Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement", *MLN*, 94, 1979, 5, pp. 919-930.
[23] Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1989, p. 30.
[24] Marko Juvan, "Avtobiografija in kočljivost zvrstnih opredelitev. *Moje življenje* med tekstom in žanrom" ["Autobiography and the Difficulties in Genre Classification: *Moje življenje* between a Text and a Genre"], in Alenka Koron et al. (eds.), *Avtobiografski diskurz: Teorija in praksa avtobiografiji v literarni vedi* [*Autobiographical Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Autobiography in Literary Studies*], Ljubljana, Založba ZRC SAZU, 2011, p. 54.
[25] Domna C. Stanton, "Autogynography", p. 8.

Hetzendorfer Heide, which I haven't set foot on since I was a child. [...] Since I wrote down the memories of my youth, I can no longer really distinguish between representation and memory"[26].

We can use autobiographies to describe the elements that mark a location in the text where self-invention, self-discovery and self-representation emerge within the diary-writing[27]. Diary is more a practice than a product (unless published) and it represents many things: private documents, historical accounts, traces of a life and of a writing practice, records of self-making and a form of life writing that is closer to the letter in practice than to the published forms[28]. Both Vinski and Mayreder spent years documenting their lives through diaries through which the reader can observe both the internal struggles of the two women as well as the struggles of the world around them. Although both diaries were published posthumously, we can assume from the way they were written that they were also public documents. It is important so understand them as such, because reading women's diaries (and other autobiographical writings) solely as private documents implies an underlying assumption about who is (or who should be) removed from public life[29]. Rosa Mayreder (1858–1948) was one of the most well-known Viennese public intellectuals of her generation and spent the vast majority of her life writing. Her diaries consist of more than 4000 pages. For her, writing a diary meant to be "a historian of her own history" and diaries were like "herbarium for the pressed flowers" that would keep the past "accessible without the distortions of remembering"[30]. The editor of Mayreder's *Diaries*, Harriet Anderson, points out that her diaries served other purposes as well: her writing may not only have served to dissect the "I", but at the same time to create the "I" in daily self-reflection – as she herself later suggested, without knowing it, by reading part of the manuscript of her youthful memories titled *The Birth of Personality*[31]. At the same time, her diaries also served as a field for her literary ambitions, and had therapeutic purposes. Mayreder's diary shows a development from a training ground for her youthful sense of individuality and her literary ambitions to a place of emotional self-assurance through the means of storytelling and finally to a repository for experiences and thoughts in which they should be kept for eternity[32].

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[26] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937* [*Diaries 1873–1937*]. Edited by Harriet Anderson, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1988, p. 225.
[27] Suzanne L. Bunkers, Cynthia Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily*, p. 3.
[28] Julie Rak, "The Diary Among Other Forms of Life Writing", in Batsheva Ben-Amos, Dan Ben-Amos (eds.), *The Diary: The Epic of Everyday Life*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2020, p. 104.
[29] Kathryn Carter, "Feminist Interpretations of the Diary", in Batsheva Ben-Amos, Dan Ben-Amos (eds.), *The Diary*, p. 96.
[30] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937*, p. 27.
[31] *Ibidem*, p. 28.
[32] *Ibidem*, pp. 28-35.

Maria Vinski's (1899–1941) diary was discovered more than seven decades after her death in the archive of her last partner, the Croatian writer and political activist Avgust Cesarec. Although her fame cannot be compared to that of Rosa Mayreder, and even if she did not make a living (exclusively) by writing, as she was a doctor by profession, we can recognize the legitimacy of the public document in her private diary. This is also emphasized in the foreword to her diaries, where the editors Lucija Bakšić and Magdalena Blažić point out that the goal of their publication is to free Vinski from her anonymity and create the conditions for the theoretical separation of the diary entry from its empirical author[33]. There are also several points in the diary itself that allude to its potential public function: transcripts from the newspapers, her lectures, summaries of the books she read and detailed descriptions of political events. In 1924, after she gave birth to her son, she finished her entry with the following statement: "This notebook is coming to an end. I'll start a new one for you – maybe I can give it to you 20 years from now. Greetings to everyone I love!"[34]. From these uplifting words, we can assume two things: that she intended to hand over her diary to her son and for future generations to read, and that her diary already had readers, whom she directly greeted with this entry. Last but not least, the discovery of her diary in her partner's archive testifies to the fact that she wanted her writing to be preserved and shared with others. If she wanted to destroy her diary, she would have had several reasons to do so in the last years of her life, as its discovery could also mean danger for her: both in the Soviet Union, where she traveled with Cesarec, and later in the Nazi puppet state of the NDH (Independent State of Croatia), where she was eventually killed as a sympathizer of communism and a Jew in 1941.

Among the discussed autobiographies, there are two that were published posthumously and could therefore be considered as more private than public documents. These are *Skriti spomin* [*The Hidden Memory*] (written in 1971, first published 2000) by Angela Vode (1892–1985) and *Od Anice do Ane Antonovne* [*From Anica to Ana Antonovna*] (written in the 1970s, first published in 2002) by Anica Lokar (1897–1976). But the content of both autobiographies makes it clear that they were written with publication in mind. Vode's writing can be perceived as an act of resistance and an attempt to tell her own story and history as she has witnessed it:

> When the "heroes" achieved everything they fought for and sat firmly in their profitable positions, they began to write their memoirs [...] I am reading those, whose authors I knew personally and I am especially interested in events that I have also

[33] Marija Vinski, *Velik je misterij života. Dnevnik 1917–1934* [*Vast Is the Secret of Life. Diary 1917–1934*]. Edited by Lucija Bakšić and Magdalena Blažić, Zagreb, Disput, 2021, pp. 7-24.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 219.

witnessed myself. I am often amazed by these descriptions, as they are often completely unknown to me, even when I participated in them, and I also don't recognize the persons described, although I once knew them personally"[35].

In order to tell the "truth", Angela Vode wrote her political autobiography, focusing on her political activities as one of the first Socialists and, soon after 1919, also Communists in the interwar Yugoslavia. The detailed descriptions of the transition period mainly serve to show the early Yugoslav Socialist and Communist movement, to which she herself belonged until she was expelled from the party due to her opposition to the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. As she emphasized, she did not write her autobiography out of revenge, but out of a desire to tell the truth: "Let me just mention that these pages were not dictated to me by hatred, but by knowledge. The realization that what we have been waiting for is far from socialism, and most importantly: that our Socialism lacks a human face"[36].

Similar is the closing sentence of Anica Lokar, also an early interwar Socialist, Communist and activist, whose expectations of a Socialist utopia were not met in the Stalinist Soviet Union where she spent several years, nor in Socialist Yugoslavia: "Maybe I belong to the Communist movement of the future, but I no longer belong to the one I experienced after 1920"[37].

"When is a person the most open-hearted, where does one reveal the most, where does one best bare his soul without fear? – Maybe in letters, maybe in diaries"[38], wrote Slovene-Croatian author Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) in her letter to the women's newspaper *Ženski svet* in 1924. She was an avid letter writer and she also used the form of letters for her partly epistolary novel *Hanka* (1917) which deals directly with the question of WWI and its impact on women. *Hanka* consists of several autobiographical parts (the experience of divorce, falling in love, the death of her mother, the relationship with her daughter, antisemitism, attitude towards God, etc.) and, as Kveder's biographer Katja Mihurko Poniž points out, the novel contains almost no narrative distance[39]. Hanka was the last great female figure in Kveder's oeuvre and declares the writer's life credo through her[40]. At least some autobiographical fragments are visible in almost all of Kveder's texts and she is therefore not only one of the first professional writers of the late Austro-Hungarian empire and later interwar Yugoslavia, but also an

[35] Angela Vode, *Skriti spomin* [*The Hidden Memory*], Ljubljana, Nova revija, 2005, p. 346.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 362.
[37] Anica Lokar, *Od Anice do Ane Antonovne* [*From Anica to Ana Antonovna*], Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga, 2002, p. 169.
[38] Zofka Kveder, *Zbrano delo*, peta knjiga: *Dramatika, članki, feljtoni* [*Collected Works*, the fifth book: *Drama, Articles, Feuilletons*]. Edited by Katja Mihurko Poniž, Ljubljana, ZRC SAZU, 2018, p. 542.
[39] Katja Mihurko Poniž, *Drzno drugačna: Zofka Kveder in podobe ženskosti* [*Daringly Different: Zofka Kveder and Representations of Womanhood*], Ljubljana, Delta, 2003, p. 67.
[40] *Ibidem*, p. 74.

acclaimed contributor to women's autobiographical discourse[41]. In her literary works we can recognize a whole spectrum of autobiographical data, from political beliefs to private transformations. Her post-war literary works are largely programmatic-political dramas *Arditi na otoku Krku* [*Ardites on the Island of Krk*] and *Unuk kraljeviča Marka* [*Grandson of the Prince Marko*] (1922), that serve to spread the centralist Yugoslav ideology which was her strongest political conviction until the end of her life. In 1926 her last book, *Po putevima života* [*Along the Paths of Life*], was published and it deals exclusively with abandoned women. This too can be seen as autobiographical, since she herself was heartbroken and devastated due to her husband's infidelity and abandonment that led to a divorce from which she never recovered. In her latest collection, each story features a different female character who is abandoned by her husband. All women love their husbands unconditionally and never recover from their abandonment. The backdrop for these intimate narratives is the Yugoslav ideology. The stories take place from Triglav to Vardar, and women are victims of loveless men regardless of their nationality, religion, education or class[42]. From the novel *Hanka* onwards, Zofka Kveder increasingly turned to history for the narrative frame of her stories. Her best-known fin-de-siècle works told distinctly contemporary stories about women of her time, but after WWI the historical backdrop began to represent a key ideological component. As she wrote in *Hanka*:

> History is a tool for me. When you browse through old books and old manuscripts pay special attention to what can be used to say something to people even today. [...] Indeed, history is an extraordinary means of saying something that is actually forbidden to say[43].

The historical framework of literary works was a fundamental feature of Marija Jurić Zagorka's (1873–1957) novels. She, too, used history as a means by which to say what would be too dangerous in the present and thus experienced great popularity among Croatian readers. In 1934 she published her autobiographical novel *Kamen na cesti* [*A Stone on the Road*], which, through the story of the protagonist Mirjana Grgić, narrates a literary version of her own life with recognizable biographical features[44]. In addition to this literary autobiography, Zagorka wrote several other autobiographical texts, the most

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[41] Katja Mihurko Poniž, *Zapisano z njenim peresom. Prelomi zgodnjih slovenskih književnic s paradigmo nacionalne literature* [*Written with Her Pen: Early Slovenian Women Authors' Break with the Paradigm of National Literature*], Nova Gorica, Založba Univerze v Novi Gorici, 2014, p. 136.

[42] Zofka Kveder Demetrović, *Po putevima života* [*Along the Paths of Life*], Zagreb, Tisak štamparije S. Boranovića, 1926.

[43] Zofka Kveder, *Hanka*, Ljubljana, Ženska založba belo-modra knjižnica, IX knjiga, 1938, p. 41.

[44] Marija Jurić Zagorka, *Kamen na cesti* [*A Stone on the Road*], https://popara.mk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Kamen-na-cesti_Marija-Juri%C4%87-Zagorka.pdf. Accessed on September 2, 2022.

important of which is *Što je moja krivnja* [*What's My Guilt*], which was written in 1947 and published in 1948[45]. Both texts touch on the same life events with different literary approaches. Her autobiography is a reckoning with life and life's injustices and a testament to her achievements, which she believed had gone unrecognized. The autobiography of Marija Jurić Zagorka acts as a means of righting wrongs.

The remaining four autobiographies were published by their authors as works of literature and were written for their audience. Gusti Jirku Stridsberg (1902–1978) wrote her own life story through the key events of her life: life as a landowner in the Kingdom of SHS, political engagement, the journey through Vienna to the Soviet Union, the Spanish Civil War, the WWII and life in Sweden. It is clear from the text that it was not only important for the author to share her own life story and place herself in the history of the turbulent 20th century, but that she aspired to a literary product of a high quality. In her case, telling the "truth" or establishing herself was not more important than the craftsmanship of writing[46]. This is similar to the autobiography of actress and screenwriter Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, first published in 1969. As a politically left-leaning Jew, she had fewer and fewer opportunities in the German-speaking theater of the interwar period. A new career opportunity appeared for her in Hollywood, where she became a screenwriter and became the main breadwinner for her family. The traces of screenwriting style can be recognized in the way her autobiography is written: it is a fluent and fast read that was carefully conducted with the readership in mind. Even for her, the book as a final product is more important than placing her own person in the great historical currents of the 20th century[47]. At the same time, it is not negligible that precisely with this work she shed light on her own working-conditions and work, which until then was often in the shadow of her former husband Berthold Viertel[48].

Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten [*The Light and the Dark Times*] is only one of more than thirty books that Austrian writer Hilde Spiel (1911–1990) wrote. She was a skilled and renowned writer who also proved herself critically with various literary works. Her autobiography primarily has a writerly and literary function[49].

The autobiography *Mein Leben* [*My Life*] of socialite, composer and wife Alma Mahler Werfel (1879–1964) is literarily the weakest of the four listed. The

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[45] Marija Jurić Zagorka, "Što je moja krivnja" [*What's My Guilt*], in Vinko Brešić, *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca* [*Autobiographies of Croatian Writers*], Zagreb, AGM, 1997, pp. 451-499.
[46] Gusti Jirku Stridsberg, *Mojih pet življenj* [*My Five Lives*], Maribor, Založba Obzorja, p. 1971.
[47] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, New York, NYRB, 2019.
[48] Katharina Prager, Vanessa Hannesschläger, "Gendered Lives in Anticipation of a Biographer? Two Intellectual Relationships in Twentieth-Century Austria", *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 19, 2016, 3, pp. 337-353.
[49] Hilde Spiel, *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten. Erinnerungen 1911–1946* [*The Light and the Dark Times. Memoirs 1911–1946*], Hamburg, Rowohlt Verlag, 1991.

autobiography is based on her diaries, but serves above all as her own testament and a reminder of her own importance within the society of Viennese modernists[50].

All four autobiographies written by Gusti Jirku Stridsberg, Salka Viertel, Hilde Spiel and Alma Mahler Werfel are clearly aimed at the public. They were written with the intention of becoming a public document and will be treated as such. The autobiographical texts of the other six authors (Mayreder, Vinski, Vode, Lokar, Kveder, Zagorka) will also be treated as public documents, since it is clear from the intent and circumstances of their writing that their works were intended for an audience.

Transition: The Turbulent Present

Thanks to Stefan Zweig and his *The World of Yesterday* (1941), autobiography is the first art form that comes to mind when Habsburg nostalgia is mentioned. In the search for a sense of transition, "nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed"[51]. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time and progress[52]. But surprisingly there is only a trace of nostalgia in the autobiographical writings of the women in question, despite the fact that several of them knew and admired Zweig (Mahler Werfel, Viertel, Stridsberg) and Angela Vode even translated *The World of Yesterday* into Slovene (1958). Idealization and nostalgia (as "history without guilt"[53]) also remind us of the privilege experienced by the women in question. The privilege demonstrated the most through the writings of Alma Mahler Werfel, who described the pre-war times as "beautiful without a cloud"[54].

The disruption of "peace" took several women by surprise – Salka Viertel for instance was completely "unaware that Austria was preparing for war", because she "never read the political articles in the papers; they seemed so unimportant, compared to the theatrical news"[55]. The war came as a surprise, or as she wrote: "On June 28, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were killed in Sarajevo and everything, which appeared built for eternity, began to falter. Uninvited, history entered our lives, and our roots were plowed under by tanks and guns"[56]. But everything, even an illusion of eternity, has an expiration date. For the

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[50] Alma Mahler Werfel, *Mein Leben. Biografie* [*My Life. A Biography*], Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Verlag, 1982.
[51] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, Basic Books, 2002, p. XIII.
[52] *Ibidem*, p. XV.
[53] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, New York, Vintage, 1991, p. 688.
[54] Alma Mahler Werfel, *Mein Leben*, p. 116.
[55] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, p. 186.
[56] *Ibidem*, p. 190.

majority of women of non-German nationality, the crumbling monarchy represented an opportunity and the future seemed to be filled with expectations. Not long before the end of war Marija Jurić Zagorka demanded equal pay. Her male colleagues were in significantly better financial positions and, as her request was brutally denied, she quit her job, "firmly believing that democracy and equality were on the threshold"[57]. The same goes for Angela Vode, who lost her job at the beginning of 1917, but that didn't particularly affect her. She didn't "take things too tragically", because she was "young and gullible, and especially full of confidence in the future. Austria was already shaking a lot", she wrote, and she "firmly believed in its disintegration" after which justice will reign"[58]. In particular, Yugoslav women had no time to mourn the Empire, since they were busy with the idea of the unification of south Slavs in one common state. "Soon after the creation of the first Yugoslavia in 1918, the eyes of young fanatics, who dreamed of the state of South Slavs with such idealism, began to open"[59], wrote Vode, realizing that the post-Habsburg utopia will take a different, more authoritarian shape than expected. She was not the only one expecting the impossible. As Zofka Kveder put it in the preface to *Hanka* in December 1917: "Better days will come! Salvation! After trials, freedom – for all of us!"[60].

In 1918 Marija Jurić Zagorka printed the novel *Crveni ocean* [*The Red Ocean*] inspired by the Russian Revolution. The novel ends with the description of how "the people will be happy in the red ocean of equality", but, as she put in her autobiography, at that time she couldn't imagine "why someone would have to drown me in it"[61].

There was optimism not only in post-WWI Yugoslavia, but also in Austria. As Hilde Spiel wrote:

> It is now customary to regard the First Republic as an unfortunate entity, doomed from the start […]. At the time we felt differently for a while. We didn't mourn the monarchy because adults didn't. The fact that we had lost an empire did not bother us, because in the 1920s we thought we had exchanged it for Europe, even for the whole world[62].

But as was the case in Yugoslavia, there was a crack in the Austrian optimism as well:

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[57] Marija Jurić Zagorka, "Što je moja krivnja", p. 482.
[58] Angela Vode, *Spomin in pozaba. Zbrana dela Angele Vode*, III. knjiga [*Memory and Oblivion. Collected Works of Angela Vode*, third book]. Edited by Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik et al., Ljubljana, Krtina, 2000, p. 81.
[59] Angela Vode, *Skriti spomin*, pp. 355-356.
[60] Zofka Kveder, *Hanka*, p. 7.
[61] Marija Jurić Zagorka, "Što je moja krivnja", p. 497.
[62] Hilde Spiel, *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten*, p. 53.

> Even our fathers, who not too long ago had gone to war loyal to the Emperor, had meanwhile accepted it [the new Republic] regarded the persisting poverty, the recent inflation, the unchanged unemployment as birth pangs, hoped for the solidarity of other democratic countries […][63].

When we compare descriptions of the post-war period in autobiographies, such as that written by Hilde Spiel, with accounts of the post-war years in diaries, we notice at least one important difference. Autobiographies see the post-war period as a summary of problems, while diaries, due to their nature of daily inventory, which often does not distinguish between more and less important events, systematically list problems. Inflation and unemployment may seem manageable when viewed in autobiographical retrospect, while daily records of bread prices, cold, hunger, strikes and disease paint a much bleaker picture of the post-war reality. Diaries also don't privilege extraordinary over ordinary (historical) events in terms of scope, space or selection[64]. The reality, described in the diaries therefore often seems messier than the one summed up in autobiographies.

"The present is so turbulent. The war is not over at all"[65], wrote Marija Vinski in her diary in December 1918. Her diary entries give us the most detailed insight into the transition period, whether it is about her internal hardships, when she was prevented from traveling and therefore visiting her family in Bukovina, or about political positions, such as disagreement with Wilson's fourteen points. In October 1918 Vinski reported how it is impossible for her to imagine the truce, because everything she knows is "that there was a bright time, without unrest, mistrust, disease, hatred and misery"[66], but she can hardly remember it. For the whole months of October and November, while she was also sick with the Spanish flu, she wrote of a "general boiling": German nationalism at the University, hatred directed towards Slavic pupils and antisemitic pogroms in Krakow and Lviv[67]. "There is no way out, no light at the end of the tunnel"[68], she wrote just a few weeks before the end of the war. In November she reported how she can no longer follow the political events, because so much is happening at the same time:

> Revolution. Hungary separated from Austria. Austria no longer exists at all, only a new German-Austrian state. Retreat of the Habsburgs. […] The Americans have arrived in Trieste and are keeping it under occupation, the Italians have walked into

[63] *Ibidem*, p 54.
[64] Suzanne L. Bunkers, Cynthia A. Huff, "Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction", in Suzanne L. Bunkers, Cynthia A. Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily*, p. 5.
[65] Marija Vinski, *Velik je misterij života*, p. 58.
[66] *Ibidem*, p. 53.
[67] *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55.
[68] *Ibidem*, p. 55.

> Ljubljana. And in the meantime, the new government is discussing the state structure, which should be republican. The time of unrest got into everyone's blood[69].

Her diary entries in the first weeks, months and even years (up until 1923) are the most regular within 17 years of her diary writing. It seems like every day is a new battle of transition: the Romanian occupation of Bukovina (which also meant that in 1919 she enrolled in her studies in Vienna as a Romanian citizen), emperors renouncing the thrones, monarchies becoming republics, aggressive soldiers living in the courtyard of her parents' home long after the war "ended", socialist upheavals, demonstrations, suspended tram service, closed shops, women's suffrage and antisemitism in politics, but also on the streets of Vienna and in her own university classes. "This is not how I imagined peace"[70], she wrote, and it is true – nothing in her diaries for the first two years after the war seems peaceful.

Rosa Mayreder, who experienced the war in the same city, was less vocal in the time of vast political changes. On the day that Austria became a republic (18 October 1918), she only wrote one sentence: "Transformation of Austria into a federal state through an imperial manifesto"[71]. But she shared the view of Vinski, claiming that in the time of peace negotiations in Paris "the world does not look like peace: for a week violent street fighting took place in Berlin between the Spartacus group and the government socialists; hostilities continue between Italy and South Slavs, Hungarians and Czechs, Poles and Czechs. But most pacifists have become very quiet everywhere[72]. Almost a year later she wrote that the first year of peace "was worse than all the years of war"[73]. She described the rise of prices, food shortages, nervousness and general instability that prevent her every attempt to do intellectual work, because she found it so stressful to live in a time, when "no one knows what the next few months will bring"[74]. Rosa Mayreder regularly wrote a diary through the turbulent post-war times, but with a different temperament than Marija Vinski.

This is of course not surprising, if we take into account that there is a more than 40-year age difference between them. Vinski stood on the threshold of her adult life, while Mayreder was approaching old age, with more than three decades of public intellectual work behind her. "The events that are so big are not able to awaken any real resonance in me"[75], she wrote in the middle of November 1918. The war made her tired and she also lost "40 pounds in two years", because she lived on "black pasta, potatoes, homemade dumpling-shaped wine, all prepared

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[69] *Ibidem*.
[70] *Ibidem*.
[71] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937*, p. 183.
[72] *Ibidem*, pp. 187-188.
[73] *Ibidem*, p. 197.
[74] *Ibidem*.
[75] *Ibidem*, p. 185.

with a minimum amount of fat"[76]. However, she herself wasn't sure whether her apathy had physical or spiritual causes: the war broke her internally and she never recovered from her disappointment in humanity, which is also reflected in her post-war writings, especially in *Geschlecht und Kultur* [*Gender and Culture*] from 1923.

Many women reported that their weight loss was partly connected to the lack of food and partly to the psychological struggles of the after-war life. "My appearance adapted to my mood. I became very thin, had a narrow and boyish face and short-cropped hair"[77], described her after-war appearance Gusti Jirku Stridsberg. Her new look did not only reflect a change of fashion, but it reflected the new, unstable world. As she herself described her collision of personal and political in her autobiography:

> My world was confused. The moral notions of my educators were no longer valid. Social foundations were devalued, even grotesque. God was far away and seemed to demand incomprehensible things from me. I felt alone and had to play a role that my drive resisted. Man or woman, landowner in anachronistic feudal relations; wife without marriage, mother without faith in the future[78].

Also, here we can witness the generation gap. What for Stridsberg was a consequence of the post-war instability, for Mayreder was something she could not comprehend: "Modern women with bubikopf, a cigarette and red lipstick" were for her "beings from a foreign world"[79]. She was against the "culture of cozy enjoyment"[80] and shared her worldview with Zofka Kveder, who wrote in one of her public letters to the newspaper Jutro in 1926: "It's not true, is it, that people today only need cinemas, radio, operettas and jokes. After all, there are still some old-timers among us, and not all the youth are interested in sports"[81].

But the generational differences did not only manifest when it came to fashion or lifestyle decisions, but also in deeper, more important transitional definitions, such as politics.

Politics: The Pressure for Political Identification

In the intellectual and autobiographical work of the first generation of women's rights activists, we can begin to notice a turn to traditionalism immediately after the war. Zofka Kveder, one of the first Slovenian feminists, who in her oeuvre was prominently concerned with the empowerment of women,

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[76] *Ibidem*.
[77] Gusti Jirku Stridsberg, *Mojih pet življenj*, p. 106.
[78] *Ibidem*.
[79] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937*, p. 265.
[80] *Ibidem*, p. 247.
[81] Zofka Kveder, *Zbrano delo*, p. 578.

begins writing ideological dramas with weak female characters who exclusively serve the motherland, motherhood and men[82]. In this period, she believed that literature has to exceed fiction, or as she wrote in the afterword to one of her works: "Let this book be a document of our day – not just a theatre play"[83]. After the novel *Crveni ocean* (1918), that was directly influenced by the ideas of the Russian Revolution and the Marxist ideas about women's emancipation, Marija Jurić Zagorka, the first Croatian professional journalist, started writing *Kći Lotršćaka* [*The Daughter of the Lotrščak*], a novel with her weakest female protagonist[84]. Austrian feminist Rosa Mayreder, who wrote a seminal feminist work *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* [*A Survey of the Woman Problem*] (1913) and campaigned for women's economic and intellectual independence, was skeptical about women's suffrage in the new republic of Austria[85]. However, she was not concerned by the abolition of democracy through the Austrofascist regime of Engelbert Dollfuss[86], just as Alma Mahler Werfel, the free-spirited, artistically gifted and intellectually sharp woman "believed in the salvation of the world through Italian fascism"[87].

But at the same time as women of the older generation flirted with conservatism or even autocratic and totalitarian ideas, younger women were radicalized in another direction. Ideas of the Russian Revolution were romanticized through literature, songs and urban legends without any real understanding of what was happening in the Soviet Union. "Although I was not 'primo loco' a political person", wrote Hilde Spiel in her autobiography, "I was soon seized by the spirit of the time […]. We understood nothing of the murder of the kulaks. […] Emotional reasons […] have pushed us to the left"[88].

Angela Vode also reported about her emotional involvement, writing that she did not "join socialism for the sake of scientific study and foresight of social development in the future […], but was driven to join the ranks of the workers simply by the emotional realization that injustices must be eliminated and therefore it is necessary to fight to change the world"[89]. But what began as an

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[82] Natka Badurina, *Nezakonite kćeri Ilirije. Hrvatska književnost i ideologija u 19. in 20. Stoljeću* [*Illegal Daughters of Illyria. Croatian Literature and Ideology in the 19th and 20th Centuries*], Zagreb, Centar za ženske studije, 2009, pp. 173-195.

[83] Dimitrije Gvozdanović, *Unuk Kraljevića Marka* [*Grandson of the Prince Marko*], Zagreb, Komisarna naklada hrvatskog štamparskog zavoda, 1922, p. 319.

[84] Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Opasne iluzije. Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji [*Dangerous Illusions. Gender Stereotypes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*], Zagreb, Sredna Europa, 2014, p. 113.

[85] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937*, p. 185.

[86] Hilde Schmölzer, *Rosa Mayreder. Ein Leben zwischen Utopie und Wirklichkeit* [*Rosa Mayreder. A Life between Utopia and Reality*], Vienna, Promedia, 2002, p. 262.

[87] Alma Mahler Werfel, *Mein Leben*, p. 539.

[88] Hilde Spiel, *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten*, p. 81.

[89] Angela Vode, *Spomin in pozaba*, p. 49.

emotional attachment continued as a dangerous political path for many women. Angela Vode became a political worker for the Communist Party. Anica Lokar, Gusti Jirku Stridsberg and Marija Vinski all left for the Soviet Union to accompany their partners and to help build the new world they believed in. Lokar and Stridsberg vividly reported their disappointments as soon as they arrived in Moscow. To be a Communist in interwar Yugoslavia meant risking your life. Angela Vode, Anica Lokar and Gusti Jirku Stridsberg all report in their autobiographies that Yugoslavia was a dull autocratic police state where being a communist (or even just being a suspected communist) meant great danger for the whole family. Everyone could very quickly be suspected of communism. As Stridsberg wrote:

> Whoever wants unions is a communist. Anyone who has socialist books is a communist. Anyone who corresponds regularly with foreign countries […] is a communist. And if two or three people of this type drink wine or even brandy together, then they are an organization of state traitors[90].

Even the women who did not devote their lives to communist agitation have retained their affinity for the socialist idea. When Salka Viertel, like many other Hollywood workers during the McCarthy era, was interrogated for having alleged communist sympathies, the FBI agent, after receiving no incriminating evidence, blurted out reproachfully: "Oh, you people […] You are anti-fascist but I have never heard one of you say: I am anti-communist"[91].

As Anica Lokar remembered, the first post-war years "laid the foundation for the future outlook on the world"[92]. The same goes for many other women of her generation. As Stridsberg recalls, the post-war climate became completely politicized and younger people expected clear political definitions. "Pressure for political identification"[93], was a new societal expectation. It is interesting that in the case of the women discussed herein, we can see that the female suffrage gained after the war had no effect on radicalization. Yugoslavian women without the right to vote were no less radical than their Austrian contemporaries. As Angela Vode recalled: "[…] everything was seething with revolutionary excitement. […] The atmosphere was filled with revolutionary ideas like dynamite"[94].

For some women this atmosphere was not only exciting but also frightening. Alma Mahler Werfel wrote that she "pulled out my pistols[95]" when she saw the worker's demonstration for the first time in November 1918. She wished "for the

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[90] Gusti Jirku Stridsberg, *Mojih pet življenj*, p. 115.
[91] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, p. 667.
[92] Anica Lokar, *Od Anice do Ane Antonovne*, p. 58.
[93] Gusti Jirku Stridsberg, *Mojih pet življenj*, p. 107.
[94] Angela Vode, *Spomin in pozaba*, p. 103.
[95] Alma Mahler Werfel, *Mein Leben*, p. 228.

emperor back" and even if he were "the most idiotic of all" she would still prefer it to the "screaming of masses" that she saw as "music from hell that a pure ear can never endure"[96].

Even women with left-leaning ideological orientations did not traverse the streets of Vienna without a sense of fear. Salka Viertel described how she was curious what was going on outside and she went for a walk. She saw "thousands of people marching, among them soldiers and sailors, obviously just back from the front"[97]. They were singing the *Internationale*, while detachments of police appeared and the shooting began. She ran back home[98]. Later she didn't feel any safer in Germany, where Karl Libknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Kurt Eisner were murdered. She feared being cut from her husband by political events, and since she was expecting a child, she asked the theater director to release her from her commitment. She wrote: "In defeated Germany the bells did not ring and though relieved, people did not rejoice"[99].

For Marija Vinski, the path to political identification was a long one, but she started writing about capitalism right after the war. She regretted that "capital" had become the only goal for people and nations and pointed out that capitalism had replaced God[100]. She was also in favor of the agricultural reform that happened in Romania after the war, advocating for better lives for peasants. She believed people were too poor and taxes were too high[101]. In the interwar years, she was becoming more and more familiar with Marxist literature and her faith in God became increasingly loose. In the 1930s, her political profile was already quite clear, although she herself was not sure whether she was a revolutionary only in theory, or she could also be one in practice. In 1934 she wrote:

> Workers' revolution. I didn't go out those days. Just because I was tired and sick? Not! I wasn't so sick that I couldn't go out – it was more the fear […]. These days, the thought came to me for the first time, that I am actually a coward and that I am not made for the job of a revolutionary fighter […] [102].

She believed that a true revolutionary needs a meaningful anger about unjust conditions and must be romantic enough to believe in success[103]. She wasn't sure she had any of this.

However, the critique of capitalism was popular not only among left-leaning women, but also among conservatives. Rosa Mayreder was critical of Wilson's

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[96] *Ibidem*, p. 246.
[97] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, p. 241.
[98] *Ibidem*.
[99] *Ibidem*, p. 242.
[100] Marija Vinski, *Velik je misterij života*, p. 64.
[101] *Ibidem*, p. 68.
[102] *Ibidem*, p. 334.
[103] *Ibidem*, p. 336.

division of Europe, since she saw him as an "advocate of capitalist and imperialist interests"[104]. Indeed, criticism of Wilson and his plan for post-war Europe is the only political event mentioned in the autobiographical writings by all the women discussed in this chapter.

In conclusion: Gender in the Post-war Period

The post-war period does not only bear witness to the consequences of war, but is also a response to the new, complex reality that took place in newly formed post-Habsburg countries. Everyday life was intricately intertwined with social and political changes that none of the intellectuals could ignore. The autobiographical testimonies do not provide us with a unifying experience of this period that could be attributed to all women. However, what is evident is that the generational proximity is more unifying than the national one. The women discussed belonged to different generations, nationalities, races and classes, all of which marked the multiplicity of their experiences. However, one feature is common to all of them – gender. In conclusion, I will try to summarize the experiences of the post-war transition, which are linked exclusively to the gender of the women in question.

The first, obvious, experience that women share is the female body. With the exception of Angela Vode, Rosa Mayreder and Marija Jurić Zagorka, all women gave birth to children, at least three of them experienced a miscarriage (Kveder, Mahler Werfel, Lokar), and two of them experienced the death of their children after WWI (Kveder, Mahler Werfel). Motherhood itself is also a transition from one state into another. It is not only a personal, possibly life-defining, experience, but also a social identity that has a major impact on women's lives. Salka Viertel remembered how her first birth affected her well-being and at the same time it fit into the broader geopolitical circumstances:

> It is commonly assumed that to give birth is the happiest moment in a woman's life. Why then was I possessed by such abysmal sadness, such black depression? I was exhausted and had the feeling that something in me had died and that I would never be my old self again. […] When I finally recovered […] Sambor was now Polish. The dual monarchy had fallen apart and with it my father's entire fortune[105].

It is also needless to point out that the care of the children was left entirely to the mothers, while the fathers occupied themselves with external things, be it studies, art or revolution. Moreover, many women not only performed care work, but also took care of the family's financial well-being. Immediately after WWI, Gusti Jirku Stridsberg took care of both the estate and the daughter, while her

[104] Hilde Schmölzer, *Rosa Mayreder*, p. 216.
[105] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, pp. 256-257.

husband studied medicine in Vienna. They divorced not long after. Zofka Kveder was married for a second time and took care of her three daughters from her previous marriage. Even in her new marriage, she wanted to have a child, but she was unable to do so. To her great sadness, her husband, for whom she also did political, intellectual and activist work, left her when he impregnated a younger woman. Anica Lokar was the wife of a professional revolutionary who in the twenties spent more time in prison than at home. She took care of the family's financial well-being, and of both the household and her husband's revolutionary and intellectual activities in the interwar years. During WWII, they divorced in Moscow. For Marija Vinski, marriage meant that she moved from Vienna to Zagreb, which resulted in the discontinuation of her medical studies. She finished her studies a little less than a decade later, after she became a widow at the age of thirty-two and her child was old enough for her to devote herself to her studies. For her, motherhood meant "sentimental compulsion"[106], and she frequently discussed the challenges of having a body that undergoes changes with the menstrual cycle. She often wrote down the days of her cycle, as menstruation made it almost impossible for her to work. Or rather, as she wrote herself in 1920: "Menstruation is a major factor in a woman's life because it inhibits her mental development"[107].

With the exception of Alma Mahler Werfel, all the women discussed had a profession. For certain careers, for example acting, it was considered that if a woman wanted to keep her job, she had to return as soon as possible after giving birth. Salka Viertel, for instance, returned to the stage only six weeks after giving birth[108]. At the same time, for her being married also meant that she was convinced to follow her husband to the United States, where he had a promising career as a director. In the end, she was the one who mostly financially supported the family with writing screenplays. She and her husband divorced and after WWII he was the first to return to Europe, where a place in the Burgtheater awaited in his native Vienna.

Care-giving work did not fall to women as mothers, but also as wives. Rosa Mayreder had been caring for her mentally ill husband since the end of WWI. This was physically, mentally and intellectually exhausting for her. Several pages of the diary are devoted to documenting her paralysis due to her husband's outbursts, and she described her hurt that her work has never been truly appreciated, neither by her husband nor by the extended family[109].

Being married and/or having a child(ren) was an all-encompassing decision for the women of the post-war period, which affected not only their intimate but also

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[106] Marija Vinski, *Velik je misterij života*, p. 314.
[107] *Ibidem*, p. 91.
[108] Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, p. 262.
[109] Rosa Mayreder, *Tagebücher 1873–1937*, p. 214, 237.

their public lives. Biographical information about births, illnesses, family dynamics and biological features of the body are mostly omitted from biographical records. But it is through autobiographical testimonies that we can see that these circumstances play a key role in understanding the living conditions of women.

With the exception of Rosa Mayreder, who stayed in her (open) marriage until death, all the other women lived in non-normative relationships for those times. All of them were divorced at least once (with the exception of Marija Vinski, who was a young widow and Angela Vode, who was never married). This, too, can be seen as a consequence of post-war times.

Of course, gender was not only conditioned by biology, but also by society. This is especially evident in the reception of public intellectual work, where all three female intellectuals of the older generation, Kveder, Zagorka and Mayreder, were ridiculed, ignored or both. With their careers in decline after WWI, Zofka Kveder's words could have been attributed to either of them: "It is given to no one to spend the entire life at the highest peak of yourself. At the peak, you either die – or you have to go down to the valley again, to a normal life"[110]. But the "normal" after 1918 didn't happen for any of them.

Only one of the women made it clear in her autobiographical writing that she would like to be treated beyond gender. This is Angela Vode, a lifelong feminist and interwar gender theorist. She wrote:

> I also thought of my book *Gender and Destiny*, which brought me so much trouble. If I were to write a book about human destiny again, I would call it *Character and Destiny*. The causal relationship between gender and destiny is of sociological and biological origin. […] I was not shaped by my gender, but rather by my character[111].

Her autobiography is written in the most impersonal manner of all, and she seems to have tried more to describe the political and social conditions of her time than to describe herself. Even in this attempt of "a gender-neutral autobiography"[112], we can recognize the self-denial that can most often be attributed to women.

In conclusion, the post-WWI period marked a tumultuous and complex phase in the lives of women discussed in this study. While their experiences were diverse due to factors such as generations, nationalities and social classes, the common threads can also be detected. These include motherhood and care work, professional roles, marriage and non-normative relationships, gendered receptions of intellectual work and increased political activism that combined the private and public spheres. The autobiographical writings serve as a testament of the multifaceted experiences, highlighting the complexity of women's lives and also

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[110] Dimitrije Gvozdanović, *Unuk Kraljevića Marka*, p.317.
[111] Angela Vode, *Spomin in pozaba*, p. 49.
[112] Angela Vode, *Skriti spomin*, p. 377.

the rapidly changing world of the interwar period. The paper also demonstrates that instabilities frequently amplify, making it challenging to distinguish between inner turmoil and the sweeping transformations in the external world.

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"UNINVITED, HISTORY ENTERED OUR LIVES" THE POST-WAR TRANSITIONS IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE (*Abstract*)

The article deals with the role of autobiographical writings of women intellectuals and their depiction of the post-war transitions. In foreground are the autobiographical texts of ten women (Rosa Mayreder, Zofka Kveder, Marija Jurić Zagorka, Marija Vinski, Anica Lokar, Hilde Spiel, Alma Mahler Werfel, Angela Vode, Salka Viertel, Gusti Jirku Stridsberg) of different nationalities, social groups, generations, professions and classes who through their writing, created a legacy that thematizes the topics of nostalgia, politics, family, war and gender. The article focuses on transnational and gender perspectives of autobiographical writings as a historical source for the early post-Habsburg era.

Keywords: transitions, gender, interwar period, transnational perspective, autobiography.

„NEINVITATĂ, ISTORIA A INTRAT ÎN VIEȚILE NOASTRE". TRANZIȚII POST-PRIMUL RĂZBOI MONDIAL DIN PERSPECTIVĂ AUTOBIOGRAFICĂ (*Rezumat*)

Articolul abordează rolul textelor autobiografice scrise de intelectuale în reprezentarea tranziției de după Primul Război Mondial. Analiza se concentrează pe autobiografiile a zece autoare (Rosa Mayreder, Zofka Kveder, Marija Jurić Zagorka, Marija Vinski, Anica Lokar, Hilde Spiel, Alma Mahler Werfel, Angela Vode, Salka Viertel, Gusti Jirku Stridsberg), de naționalități diferite și aparținând unor clase sociale, generații și profesii diverse, care au creat o tradiție a tematizării unor subiecte precum nostalgia, sistemul politic, familia, războiul și identitatea de gen. Articolul dezvoltă perspective transnaționale și de gen asupra scrierilor autobiografice în calitatea lor de resurse istorice pentru înțelegerea epocii post-habsburgice.

Cuvinte-cheie: tranziție, identitate de gen, perioada interbelică, perspectivă transnațională, autobiografie.