



Research Workshop

The Political Novel through the Lens of Gender

Date: June 27–28, 2024

Venue: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Ivana Lučića 3, and
Booksa, Martićeva 14d, 10000 Zagreb

Organized by Nenad Ivić (University of Zagreb) and Mirela Dakić (University of Zagreb)

The research workshop “The Political Novel through the Lens of Gender” is organized as part of *The Cartography of the Political Novel in Europe* project, funded by the HORIZON Europe program. The workshop aims to explore the complex relationships between the political novel as a genre, the broad spectrum of contemporary feminist and queer politics, and the disciplinary field of feminist and queer criticism. On the one hand, the novel has played a crucial role in the critical analysis of gender, as one of the most important subjects of feminist and queer criticism. On the other hand, feminist and queer criticism has always been closely intertwined with the political issues of gender rights and gender equality. In light of all these relations, the workshop will attempt to trace the current impact of the decades-long as well as contemporary feminist and queer engagement with the novel and discuss the theoretical, methodological, political and educational novelties that could emerge from the encounter of the feminist and queer perspective with the possibilities of thinking the genre of political novel.

Contact: mdakic2@m.ffzg.hr



PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2024

Venue: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Ivana Lučića 3,
Zagreb – Classroom D4

- 9:00 Gathering of participants at FFZG
- 9:30–9:45 **Zrinka Božić** (University of Zagreb): Introductory Remarks
- 9:45–10:30 Keynote **Jasmina Lukić** (CEU, Vienna)
 Transnational Literature and Feminist Politics of Reading
- 10:30–11:00 Discussion
 Chair: Zrinka Božić (University of Zagreb)
- 11:00–11:15 Coffee break
- 11:15–11:35 **Polina Mackay** (University of Nicosia)
 Gender and the Medical-Political Novel
- 11:35–11:55 **Eric Bergman** (University of Zagreb)
 The Layered Narrative Technique of Pajtim Statovci's *My Cat Yugoslavia* and
 Resulting Queer, Feminist, and Migration Interventions
- 11:55–12:25 Discussion
 Chair: Marina Protrka Štimec (University of Zagreb)
- 12:25–14:00 Lunch break



- 14:00–14:45 Keynote **Slaven Crnić** (University of Rijeka)
Recalling Queer Antinormativity: The Inviolable Man and Anticipated Modernity in Ivo Andrić’s *Bosnian Chronicle*
- 14:45–15:15 Discussion
Chair: Mirela Dakić (University of Zagreb)
- 15:15–15:30 Coffee break
- 15:30–15:50 **Tijana Matijević** (University of Belgrade)
Happy Days: Gender and Genre Transformations in the Immediacy of Political History (online)
- 15:50–16:10 **Eugenia Seleznova** (CEU, Vienna)
Russo-Ukrainian War Temporality in *The Ladder* by Eugenia Kuznetsova: A Queer Phenomenological Reading
- 16:10–16:40 Discussion
Chair: Karlo Držaić (University of Zagreb)
- 20:00 Roundtable “Engaging Audiences, Expanding Circles”
Venue: Literary hub Booksa, Martićeva 14d, Zagreb
Participants: Ivana Dražić, Anja Tomljenović; moderated by Mirela Dakić
- 21:15 Snacks and drinks



FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2024

Venue: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Ivana Lučića 3,
Zagreb – Classroom D4

9:30–10:15 Keynote **Lada Čale Feldman** (University of Zagreb)

Love versus/and/as Politics in Miroslav Krleža's *Banquet in Blitva* and Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*

10:15–10:45 Discussion

Chair: Zvonimir Glavaš (University of Zagreb)

10:45–11:00 Coffee break

11:00–11:20 **Nenad Ivić** (University of Zagreb)

Politics of *amour fou*. Hervé Guibert's *Fou de Vincent*

11:20–11:40 **Maja Zorica** (University of Zagreb)

Renaud Camus, *mise en abyme* of the Queer Political Novel

11:40–12:10 Discussion

Chair: Ana Tomljenović (University of Zagreb)

12:10–12:25 Coffee break

12:25–12:45 **Błażej Warkocki** (A. Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

Language, Gender and Genre as Political Platform. *Snow White and Russian Red* by Dorota Masłowska in the Context of Polish Literature since 1989.



12:45–13:05 **Anna Artwich** (A. Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

Maria Modrakowska's Novel *Anetka* as a Literary Lesbian Manifesto of the Polish Interwar Period

13:05–13:35 Discussion

Chair: Nenad Ivić (University of Zagreb)

13:35–15:00 Lunch break

15:00–15:20 **Ante Andabak** (University of Zagreb)

Bodily Abounds – Hilary Mantel's *The Mirror and the Light* as Cixousian *Feminine Text*

15:20–15:40 **Andrea Anđelić** (University of Zagreb)

Friendship, Hope and Communication During Second Wave and Postfeminism: Gillian E. Hanscombe's *Between Friends* and Sally Rooney's *Conversations with Friends*

15:40–16:10 Discussion

Chair: Branimir Janković (University of Zagreb)

16:10–16:25 Coffee break

16:25–16:45 **Mark Devenney** (University of Brighton)

Posthuman Feminisms and the Politics of Narrative

16:45–17:05 **Mirela Dakić** (University of Zagreb)

The Political Novel through the Lens of Feminist and Queer Narratology

17:05–17:35 Discussion

Chair: Zrinka Božić (University of Zagreb)

20:30 Dinner



ABSTRACTS





Ante Andabak

University of Zagreb

aandabak@m.ffzg.hr

**BODILY ABOUNDS – HILARY MANTEL’S *THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT*
AS CIXOUSIAN FEMININE TEXT**

Surely one of the most critically acclaimed and overall successful examples of historical/political novels in this century, at least in the Anglophone world, has to be Hilary Mantel’s towering Thomas Cromwell trilogy, made up of *Wolf Hall* (2009), *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012) and *The Mirror and the Light* (2020). Mantel took the period and place done to death, the Court of Henry the VIII, and imbued it with new life and striking immediacy thanks to her decision to tell the story through the perspective of a blacksmith’s son from Putney who became a Chief Minister, which in turn allowed the class aspect to take a centre stage in her writings on Tudors and hold court where it usually rarely did. This talk, however, will focus on the way gender plays a role in this men-dominated world where women notoriously fared extremely badly, but it will not do so by focusing directly on the dazzling female characters Mantel gives us with, among others, Anne Boleyn and Jane Rochford, or by merely pointing out Mantel’s own gender. Rather it will be argued that it is in the indomitable style of the novels that the rich vein of feminism resides. This will be done through the help of H el ene Cixous’s seminal concept of * criture f eminine*, and especially the so-called *body words*.



Andrea Andelinic

University of Zagreb

andelinic.andrea@gmail.com

**FRIENDSHIP, HOPE AND COMMUNICATION DURING SECOND WAVE AND
POSTFEMINISM: GILLIAN E. HANSCOMBE'S *BETWEEN FRIENDS* AND SALLY
ROONEY'S *CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS***

Gillian E. Hanscombe's 1982 epistolary novel *Between Friends* offers an insight into the main ideas, conflicts and blind spots of Anglo-American second-wave (radical) feminism. Highly contested by its third-wave successors, the second wave of feminism in the Anglo-American context debated fiercely on the issues such as sex and class, female separatism and political lesbianism. These are the matters *Between Friends* addresses via a heated discussion between four women on matters such as misogyny, autohomophobia, motherhood and queer love. The answers they advocate for, such as forming a utopian lesbian enclave and abandoning all male children and aborting male feti, show the tendency of the second-wave feminists to seek grand, albeit reductive solutions to the issues posed by the patriarchal capitalist system. The protagonists of Sally Rooney's 2017 novel *Conversations with Friends* seem to be just as painfully aware of their own class and gender hindrances as their second-wave sisters, but the tone of their conversations is skeptical of 20th-century meta-narratives and refrains from offering any sorts of solutions to their social positioning. The discontinuity and inconsistency of (digital) communication between the characters in the novel reflects the uncertainty and aimlessness characterising their pursuit for love, social success and economic stability. This presentation aims to compare these two approaches to friendship and feminism by interpreting

both the ideas the characters represent, as well as their modes of communication, as a consequence of the shifts in feminist theories caused by late capitalism and its effects.



Anna Artwich

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

anna.artwich@amu.edu.pl

**MARIA MODRAKOWSKA'S NOVEL *ANETKA* AS A LITERARY
LESBIAN MANIFESTO OF THE POLISH INTERWAR PERIOD**

The proposed presentation focuses on the analysis of *Anetka* – the literary work on female non-heteronormativity by Maria Modrakowska, which was published in 1933 in Poland. It was then that Polish queer literature experienced a temporary flourishing, only to hide again in the form of literary allusions in the post-war years and during the Polish People's Republic. Therefore, it is extremely important to take a closer look at the literature about non-heteronormative women published in Poland in the interwar period. Although literary works thematizing lesbianism appear in Polish literature much earlier than commonly believed, *Anetka* did not survive in critical circle and reader consciousness over the years. Literature depicting the existence of queer women often situates itself on literary margins, hence the almost complete oblivion of *Anetka*'s existence is not surprising. Modrakowska, in the textual layer of her novel, uniquely captures both the realistic narrative and motifs associated with the modernist literature. Importantly, she does it by continuously describing the non-normative identity of the main character, whose personality development is carefully depicted in Bildungsroman-genre. The planned analysis of this selected item of queer women's depiction in modernist literature and the history of its reception may show the continuity of the tradition of women's writing. Moreover, it can demonstrate not only the specific social conditions in which the novel was created, but also – above all – how the genre itself might have influenced the transgressive theme of *Anetka*.



Eric Bergman

University of Zagreb

ebergman@m.ffzg.hr

THE LAYERED NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF PAJTIM STATOVCI'S *MY CAT YUGOSLAVIA* AND RESULTING QUEER, FEMINIST, AND MIGRIATION INTERVENTIONS

It will come as a surprise to no one that, in works of contemporary fiction, many characters' identities can be said to be in between normative categories. This paper will look at some of the formal ways in which such in-betweenness is created and represented in texts. Pajtim Statovci's *My Cat Yugoslavia* (2017 [2014]) tells the story of Bekim, whose parents moved the family from Kosovo to Finland in the 1990s due to the war. The story is narrated by Bekhim and his mother in turn, which, I will argue, destabilizes each of the narrators' perspectives. For one thing, Bekhim desires men, which, in the conservative milieu of Albanian Kosovo, is almost unimaginable, though Bekhim is now a Finn, albeit marked by in-betweenness. As such, Bekhim's initial description of the male sexual act shapes the way in which his mother's description of her marriage in Kosovo in the 1980s is read. I argue that this layered narration is a method of destabilization of gendered and sexual norms in line with, e.g., the macho ballads co-opted by the lesbian singer Chavela Vargas in 1950s Mexico. *My Cat Yugoslavia* is not only an intervention into queer politics but also the politics of feminism and migration. Using a *nepantla* narrative method I developed in my Ph.D. dissertation (Bergman 2023; see also, e.g., Anzaldúa 2015; Maffie 2014; Phelan 2005; Iser 1974, 1978), this work is part of my efforts to expand the manuscript for potential publication as a book.



Slaven Crnić

University of Rijeka

slaven.crnic@ffri.uniri.hr

**RECALLING QUEER ANTINORMATIVITY: THE INVIOULATE MAN AND
ANTICIPATED MODERNITY IN IVO ANDRIĆ'S *BOSNIAN CHRONICLE***

Antinormativity, or queer theory's signature oppositional stance against normativity, has provided queer theory with a field-consolidating momentum, a recognizable theoretical profile, and a distinct political purpose. As of late, however, some queer theorists have critically reassessed the conceptual limits that the overreliance on antinormativity imposes on the field's objects of inquiry, methods, and insights. In this presentation, I will explore the impact of antinormativity on literary studies focused on male-authored fiction. Firstly, the presentation will offer a crisscrossed reading of the ways in which normativity has been theorized, conceptualized, contested and reaffirmed in masculinity studies and queer theory. Does an author's normative gendered and sexualized image regulate our critical apparatus? How do we proceed with a literary analysis that centers on masculine queerness in novels written by male authors who have exemplified paradigmatic gendered and sexual normativity? In the second part of my presentation, I will tackle these theoretical issues through a case study of one of the main male characters from Ivo Andrić's canonical novel *Bosnian Chronicle* (*Travnička hronika*, 1945), the Austrian consul von Paulich. I will follow the ways in which this ambitious servant of the Austrian Empire, and a poster face for order and civilization, introduces not only a remarkable, detached sense for expediency and professional aptness into the Travnik political theater, but also undermines the communal sexual, gendered and political landscape. More specifically, although desired by women and admired by other men, the magnetically beautiful von Paulich willfully exempts himself from

bonds of heterosexual romance and homosocial friendship. In this process, he disrupts and reverses the novel's previously established dynamics between hegemonic masculinity, heterosexual desire and gender normativity. Finally, I will argue that the singularly puzzling – and puzzlingly single – von Paulich not only provides a fascinating and unexpected example of a literary representation of non-normative masculinity, but also thematically anticipates the arrival of Habsburg modernity to Bosnia, making this particular Austrian consul a literary herald of the new form of social organization and political power.



Lada Čale Feldman

University of Zagreb

lcfeldma@ffzg.hr

**LOVE VERSUS/AND/AS POLITICS IN MIROSLAV KRLEŽA'S *BANQUET IN
BLITVA*
AND VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *BETWEEN THE ACTS***

When asked by the literary historian Predrag Matvejević to express his views on an eventual dramatization of his novel *Banquet in Blitva* (the first two books of the novel were published in 1938–39, the third one in 1962, while the English translation of the first two books appeared in 2004), the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža – as if to spite the predominant interpretive lenses through which the novel is read in the critical mainstream (cfr. Malić 1963, Vidan 1964, Biti 1984, Flaker 1993, Žmegač 2001, and Kovacevic 2013) – insisted that the dramaturgical bone of such an endeavour should be “the love theme” joining Karin Michelson to the protagonist Niels Nielsen, and not “the officers, revolt, army” and “state parades”, which should remain sheer “decorative motives” (Matvejević, 1987: 207). My lecture shall examine the implications of this claim by placing the analysis of the novel within a double – conceptual and comparative – framework: the first one will permit us to explore Krleža's novel's “grammar of motives”, as proposed by K. Burke's dramaturgical model (cfr. Burke, 1945), while the second one will return to the already detected formal, thematic and contextual correspondences between the Croatian novel and Virginia Woolf's posthumously published *Between the Acts* (cfr. Čale Feldman, 2008), in order to now address the opposing ways in which the two novels deal with gender politics as a neglected aspect of the rationale of WWII.



Mirela Dakić

University of Zagreb

mdakic2@m.ffzg.hr

THE POLITICAL NOVEL THROUGH THE LENS OF FEMINIST AND QUEER NARRATOLOGY

The paper will offer an insight into a part of the theoretical and methodological spectrum of feminist literary criticism that has grown out of the encounter with narratology and has developed as a “sub-discipline” of both schools of thought. Feminist and/or queer narratology, which only developed its disciplinary profile since the late 1980s, had to locate its interdisciplinarity in the discussion about the ambiguous nature of reading. While traditional literary studies count feminist criticism among the highly “political” perspectives on literature – or even discredit it – narratology has often been perceived as an “apolitical”, “disinterested”, “objective” method of analyzing literary texts. In order to demonstrate the inapplicability of such an opposition, feminist/queer narratology aims at a productive disciplinary appropriation of the narratological apparatus on the one hand and a critical intervention in its disciplinary self-reflection on the other. Given the complexity of these relationships, the paper will discuss feminist/queer narratological lenses as themselves political approaches to the novel and consider the novelty they bring to the intersection between major feminist studies of the novel in general and selected studies of the political novel.



Mark Devenney

University of Brighton

m.devenney@brighton.ac.uk

POSTHUMAN FEMINISMS AND THE POLITICS OF NARRATIVE

Lieke Marsman's novel *The Opposite of a Person* thematises two 'hyper-objects' (Morton 2013) – climate change and love – as both similar and opposed. Both test the limits of language and of narrative. Both test the bounds of the proper self, and challenge any notion of the self as proprietary. They disturb and make porous the bounds of identity. Yet they are simultaneously in conflict. Global warming threatens human existence and thus the possibility of love or care as recuperative modes of being in relation. The gender-queer, 'neurologically atypical' narrator, Ida, is caught between the impulse to no longer be a person, (persons are the cause of climate destruction), or to become an other human, beyond personhood, in tune with objecthood. In love, Ida finds a form of care that might nurture selves beyond the cartesian dualism she rejects. Yet Ida is paralysed by the hyper-object climate change that will eventually engulf her life and her love. The novel asks if other relations are possible, or if we are already at the end, if language, narration, subjecthood and love must fail. I read Marsman's novel as the performative enactment of a challenge to the proper in all its instantiations. In my presentation I focus on the shift in narrative perspective from first to third person that takes place in the closing pages of the novel. Ida is a strange narrator. If people are evil she thinks the perhaps it is best not to be a person. She is born in the 1990s, lives in the suburbs, is extremely sensitive, neurologically atypical, is queer, and identifies as a woman though as a child sleeps with a clay penis between her legs until it falls off and breaks – so her gender identity is in some sense fluid. The novel narrates her life as a queer woman in the Europe in the 2000s, uncertain, looking for a future ready to fall hopelessly in love – with the looming

threat of climate crisis and a vague sense of hopelessness and uncertainty that goes with that. What seems like narcissism is rather a deep worry about the I, about the ego, and its ability to be self-contained, and about its implication in the horror of climate change. Instead what we see is the I as already other than itself, lost, post human. This narrative of loss, of letting go, asks if a posthuman queer future is possible, while performing its end.



Nenad Ivić

University of Zagreb

nivic@ffzg.hr

POLITICS OF *AMOUR FOU*. HERVÉ GUIBERT'S *FOU DE VINCENT*

In 1989, Herve Guibert published *Crazy for Vincent*. Described, among other things, as autofiction and a sort of reversed diary, it tells the story of a love affair between the narrator/author and the young boy. This paper problematizes the autofictional, narcissistic aspect of the novel (prefix *auto-*) in its relation to politics of thinking and reason of identity practices. It draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's *Sexistence* and Ovidius' *Metamorphoses* (Echo) in order to disclose a mythical/mythifying structure of identity construction operative in the text.



Jasmina Lukić

Central European University, Vienna

Lukicj@ceu.edu

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE AND FEMINIST POLITICS OF READING

The paper argues that transnational literature – and consequently novels that belong to this kind of literature – are inherently political in a way that inevitably invites some form of feminist critical interpretation. While transnational turn in literary studies has been closely related to comparative literature, postcolonial criticism, and translation studies, gender perspective has been less present in these debates. Looking at several interrelated key concepts in transnational literary studies, I intend to show the ways in which feminist and/or queer theory have profoundly shaped the way they are functioning in the context of transnational thinking. In other words, it is the transnational perspective itself with its emphasis on identity, transculturality, borderlands, migration, multilingualism, and multiculturalism – to name a few of these concepts – that sets the frame for political engagement of the narratives to be told. This engagement is necessarily gendered since any kind of experience and/or (critical) thinking that is based upon and operating with these categories cannot avoid facing their profound embeddedness in the existing gender regimes that they co-create and belong to. This research is a part of EUTERPE: European Literatures and Gender in Transnational Perspective (101073012 EUTERPE HORIZON-MSCA-2021-DN-01 Project, 2022-26).



Polina Mackay

University of Nicosia

mackay.p@unic.ac.cy

GENDER AND THE MEDICAL-POLITICAL NOVEL

My paper will first give a broad outline of what I mean by the term *medical-political novel*: a narrative that uses disease as a metaphor for societal issues with the intention to comment on the politics that drive these issues and bring about social change. Well-known examples of this kind of work include, Albert Camus' *The Plague*, José Saramago's *Blindness*, or Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*. I will then focus on novels by women that fit this category and explore the ways they make gender relevant to the aims and objectives of the medical-political narrative. My focus will be on novels that read gender through the lens of intersectionality, such as Jacqueline Roy's *The Fat Lady Sings*. These arguably offer intersectional perspectives on illness as counter narratives to discrimination and marginalization, particularly in the context of healthcare.



Tijana Matijević

University of Belgrade

tijana.matijevic@gmail.com

***HAPPY DAYS: GENDER AND GENRE TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE
IMMEDIACY OF POLITICAL HISTORY***

By discussing the very genre of political novel and the applicability of the term in the context of literary studies and interpretation, I would focus on a not less ambiguous work by a contemporary Serbian author Srđan Vučinić *Srećni dani* (*Happy Days*). The book has been awarded a prestigious literary prize *Biljana Jovanović* for 2023, awarded since 2004 for a prose, drama, or poetry work (genres the author herself practiced) that corresponds with her critical, anti-taboo and experimenting literary idiom. Though the book has been officially published and catalogized as the collection of short stories, I would offer clues to read it as a novel (the jury of the prize also questioned its genre status), thus asking a question about the correlation among genre and politicalness of literature. Besides examining the genre aspect of the issue, it would be also helpful to set Vučinić's text against other, present, and absent writings (from the apparent Samuel Becket's quotation, to Biljana Jovanović's feminist political novels from the eighties, but possibly also to the *Political Romance* by Laurence Stern) as imaginable *keys* to read this particular narrative about the last fifty years of our joint history, told from a peculiar gender-fluid perspective which at the same time assumes standard gender literary "tropes".



Eugenia Seleznova

Central European University, Vienna

Seleznova_Eugenia@phd.ceu.edu

**RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR TEMPORALITY IN *THE LADDER* BY EUGENIA
KUZNETSOVA: A QUEER PHENOMENOLOGICAL READING**

In my presentation, I plan to analyse the novel by Ukrainian author, Eugenia Kuznetsova, *The Ladder* (2023), telling the story of a Ukrainian “highly skilled migrant” permanently settled in Spain, who faces a sudden necessity to host his family fleeing the Russian full-scale invasion. The novel’s plot is centred around the conflict between the notions of gendered and national “normalcy” translated by the family, and the protagonist’s agency and image of the self, the story culminating in his eventual “re-orientation” and “straightening” (after Ahmed, 2006). By analysing the novel from queer phenomenology perspective after Sara Ahmed (2006), I plan to outline a literary example of “queer time” and “straight lines” affecting a non-heteronormative individual in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This work is part of a broader project on queer and gendered wartime temporalities experienced by LGBTQ+ Ukrainians that I am developing as my doctoral research. During my presentation, I will also introduce other queer time theorisations and the way they have been applied to the Ukrainian wartime context within the recent literary and anthropological scholarship.



Błażej Warkocki

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

blazej.warkocki@amu.edu.pl

LANGUAGE, GENDER AND GENRE AS POLITICAL PLATFORM. *SNOW WHITE AND RUSSIAN RED* BY DOROTA MASŁOWSKA IN THE CONTEXT OF POLISH LITERATURE SINCE 1989.

In my presentation, I would like to present Dorota Masłowska's novel *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą biało-czerwoną* (*Snow White and Russian Red*) (2002) as a political novel on several fundamental levels – style, gender relations and literary genre. Translated into English as *Snow White and Russian Red* (by Benjamin Paloff), the novel is one of the most famous Polish novels written after 1989. It also has many gendered aspects – it was written by a young 19-year-old girl who captured the situation of Poland on the fringes of Europe in a phantasmagorical and allegorical way, while making the main, first-person protagonist a young sexist man. In my presentation, I would like to analyze several aspects of this novel – both from a local (Polish) perspective and from a slightly more global perspective (the novel as a genre of interest to feminist criticism). Among the issues I would like to address: what the reception of this novel has been like, particularly from a gendered point of view; gender relations as an allegory for political discourse in Poland after 1989; the successful/unsuccessful attempts to re-signify the sexist and homophobic language that are made in the novel – in other words, the politicisation of language; the use of the genre of the postmodern novel, in the context of the discussion of V. Woolf's *Orlando* (Toril Moi and Elaine Showalter). And ultimately, I would like to consider to what extent this novel can be read as a critique of post-socialist neoliberalism.



Maja Zorica

University of Zagreb

mzorica@ffzg.hr

RENAUD CAMUS, *MISE EN ABYME* OF THE QUEER POLITICAL NOVEL

Renaud Camus, a French writer famous for his political ideas and projects (parties and elections), his *227 proposals*, his calls for rebellion, with his theory of the *Great* (and the *Little*) *Replacement*, the *Great Deculturation*, the *Decivisation*, is also the author of the *dictionary* and the *repertoire of the delicacies of contemporary French*, a few “dictionaries” of places and regions, the *manners of the present times*, and, among others, a book on the syntax that introduces also a eulogy of shame. He’s also an avid diarist that wrote short stories such as *The inauguration of the hall of winds*, the touching *Life of the dog Horla* and *The exhausting desire for these things*. Before his right-wing ideas spread to fame (M. Le Pen and others), he was best known as a gay icon of the 1980’s literature with his *Tricks* (and we would argue, his *Elegies*). Two of his novels, *The Furios Novel* and *The King Roman*, linked as “The Fall” and “After the Fall”, could be read as political novels in which we’ll try to identify what a far-right author conveys through these fictions. What does an author who categorically refuses the label of a queer author – proclaiming himself “Achrian” – tell when he writes a historical novel? What does it mean when the political lives mainly in the political writings and just indirectly in his novels and other books (even the ones telling the “achrian” way of life)? What does this kind of compartmentalization, the clean cut between the main questions that he addresses in his political writings as opposed to his “achrian” ones, mean? Does this type of reception, that already experienced, in a very different way, one Daniel Guérin, ensure any kind of possible questioning? What happens to politics in his fictions? What happens to politics in his “achrian” writings? What does a categorical refusal of queerness mean for his conception of “achrian

lives” or for the politics and strategies of queerness today? Contemporary sociology is judging him more than the historiography, whether they’re queer or not. The politics of the queer political novel, can they exist as a “mise en abyme” (groundlessness) and what could be their impact?