

Iva Rosanda Žigo and Ivan Krznarić: “A perspective on contemporary Croatian women’s playwriting awards for the play *Marin Držić*”

Iva Rosanda Žigo

Ivan Krznarić

Department of Media and Communication

University North, Koprivnica

irosandazigo@unin.hr

ivkrznaric@unin.hr

Abstract

The authors present one of the ways that dramatic creativity is encouraged and promoted in the Republic of Croatia, namely the competition for the Marin Držić Award, which was introduced by the Croatian Ministry of Culture in 1991. The authors are particularly interested in the manner and extent to which women, that is, authors and playwrights, are represented in the arena of contemporary trends in national theatrical and dramatic creativity.

Key words: communication, language, Marin Držić award for playwriting, psychism of the dramatic character, woman in Croatian female drama

One of the ways in which playwrighting creativity is encouraged and promoted in the Republic of Croatia is the competition for the *Marin Držić Award* for playwriting, which has been held by the Croatian Ministry of Culture in 1991. *The Marin Držić Award* ceremony is traditionally held at the opening of the *Days of Marulić* Croatian Drama Festival in Split. The winners are presented with bronze sculptures made by the academic sculptor Damir Mataušić. A public reading of the award-winning texts is also held during the festival. The *Marin Držić Award* was preceded by the Stimulation for Dramatic Creativity, which was awarded until 1991.¹ This award is especially encouraging for young authors, as it was intended to promote newer works and new trends, forms and patterns in the field. The award not only financially supports and stimulates creativity but also allows, or at least should allow, the staging of award-winning manuscripts by younger artists. This opens the door to young playwrights who bring their dreams, longings, fears, pains, sorrows and joys to life in new forms, thus exposing us to new dramatic and theatrical trends and at the same time putting Croatian drama on the map of contemporary theatrical expression.

In light of what is said above and the fact that the *Marin Držić Award* has been awarded for twenty-six years now, we were interested in the manner and the extent to which female authors and playwrights are present in this arena of contemporary trends in national theatre and drama. Admittedly, our findings on the first prize winners was disappointing, particularly the fact that over a long period of time only four authors received the first prize: Lada Kaštelan, *Giga i njezini* [*Giga and Hers*] (1995);² Ivana Sajko, *Naranča u oblacima* [*Orange in the Clouds*] (1998);³ Vlatka Vorkapić, *Judith French* (2006);⁴ Kristina

¹ See <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/izdvojeno/izdvojena-lijevo/kulturne-djelatnosti-186/dramske-umjetnosti-188/nagrada-za-dramsko-djelo-marin-drzic/297>, last access 27/01/2021.

² This text was performed as part of a collection of works: *Four dramas*: ‘And just married’ [*A tek se vjenčali*], ‘Adagio’, ‘The last link’ [*Posljednja karika*], ‘Giga and Hers’ [*Giga i njezini*], Kaštelan (1997). The play premiered in 1997 at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb and was directed by Neva Rošić.

³ The play was published in the collection *Executed Faces - Four Plays on Optimism* [*Smaknuta lica – četiri drame o optimizmu*], Sajko (2001). It premiered in 2004 at the Croatian National Theatre in Osijek and was directed by Franka Perković.

⁴ The play was published in Vorkapić (2007): 184-207. It was premiered in 2008 at the Trešnjevka Cultural Center in Zagreb, directed by Vlatka Vorkapić.

Gavran, *Spremni [Ready]* (2012).⁵ These are the four texts that were written in the period from 1995 to 2012, and so it is difficult to determine a common poetic denominator with which we could assign these texts to a unique and rounded thematic, ethical, dramatic and cultural current. Each author has her own vision of dramatic art, style and genre orientations, but they are all primarily connected by a general worldview without the burden of political themes.

This paper will take a different direction, moving beyond this fact and instead emphasising without prejudice this extremely small number of first-prize winning, so-called *female* texts. Why is this so, and is this small number indicative of the status of women in contemporary Croatian dramatic writing? Is it about the privilege and preference for male authors? Is the so-called female voice still too weak? Is our environment still insufficiently gender-aware? Or is so-called 'male writing' really better? We could, of course, continue this series of questions, but should stop here and save such questions for another occasion, when we are able to dedicate more time to them. The paper will only emphasize the fact that Croatian culture and creativity has been perceived throughout history as a space dominated by *male* authors, and gender distinction is still, as Felman well observes, the subject of astonishment, delegated to the spheres of female otherness and as such functions in fact only as a novelty.⁶

It is therefore interesting to note that our selection begins with Lada Kaštelan, who for generations belonged to the circle of playwrights who introduced the female voice into the national literary corpus. There has been a significant increase in women writers since the second half of the 1990s. The late 1990s saw a wave of female names reach the stage of the &TD Theatre in Zagreb, including Lada Kaštelan, Giga Barić, Caryl Churchill, Ivana Papesa, Asja Srnc Todorović, and the newcomers Ivana Sajko, Maja Gregl, Alma Mahler, Ivica Boban, Petra von Kant, and Dubravka Crnojević. These authors brought unusual dramaturgical and theatrical poetic modifications, sometimes successfully, sometimes less successfully.⁷ Jasen Boko, in the preface to his anthology *New*

⁵ The play was published online, <http://www.drume.hr/hr/drume/349-spremni>. It was premiered in 2014 at the Zagreb Youth Theatre, directed by Saša Božić.

⁶ Čale Feldman (2001): 47.

⁷ Čale Feldman (2001): 50.

Croatian Drama: A Selection from the Drama of the 1990s, wrote about two unavoidable phenomena that marked Croatian dramatic writing in the 1990s - male actors assume the role of playwright, whereas women take on the role of the author.⁸ And so the authors, motivated either by self-awareness, or by the need to equalize gender determinants, or by a suitable historical and political moment, influenced the formation of the contemporary domestic dramatic voice. Through their literary activism, they influenced the formation of sociological and more generally ideological image that could shake the traditionally established canons of patriarchal politics and culture.⁹

The Croatian theatre scene thus witnessed the entry of female authors and new poetic currents, with the exception of the aforementioned Jasen Boko, and many other authors who published their works in anthologies or journal formats such as L. Rafolt, B. Senker, Davor Špišić, and Jasen Boko.¹⁰ Five more anthological selections were subsequently published in Macedonian, German, Hungarian, Polish and Spanish.¹¹ It is also worth noting the *Anthology of Croatian Postwar Drama 1996–2011*¹², *The Anthology of Croatian War Comedy 1991-1997*,¹³ and numerous journal selections compiled according to genre and poetic and/or generational criteria in various national literary and theater magazines, e.g. volume 4 of *Nova Istra* journal.¹⁴

Many of Croatian historians and literary theorists, theater historians, playwrights and theatrologists have written about the stylistic peculiarities of Croatian drama since the late 1980s, such as Boris Senker, Adriana Car-Mihec, Lada Čale Feldman, Leo Rafolt, Jasen Boko, Sanja Nikčević,¹⁵ etc. Their discussions since the 1990s have concerned the attempt to establish a new direction in domestic dramatic writing, they have attempted to define this new direction thematically,

⁸ Boko (2002), cf. Rosanda Žigo (2013): 419.

⁹ Rosanda Žigo (2013): 420.

¹⁰ Rafolt (2007); Senker (2003); Špišić (2011); Boko (1996).

¹¹ Car Mihec & Rosanda Žigo (2015): 139-40.

¹² Nikčević (2014).

¹³ Nikčević (2013).

¹⁴ Ljubić (2001/02); cf. Rafolt (2007): 8-9.

¹⁵ Senker (2000); Car-Mihec (2006); Čale-Feldman (1996); Rafolt (2011); Nikčević (2008).

stylistically, genre-wise, and generationally. They have come to the conclusion that it is very difficult to find a link in any of these segments but nevertheless agree that a group of playwrights formed in the late 1990s to point out that: “... *new thematic circles, motifs, symbols, meanings and strategies in shaping dramatic characters, actions and relationships, actualizing the topos of contemporary European dramaturgy.*”¹⁶ Some of the fundamental characteristics of the drama scene in the early 1990s then evidently continued into the new millennium. These are also visible in achievements in Croatian playwriting from 2010 onwards.

It should also be noted that Lada Kaštelan and Ivana Sajko have featured in many published anthologies and discussions, while Vlatka Vorkapić and Kristina Gavran are still awaiting publication and scholarly article. Following the logic that characterizes domestic dramatic debates, we may legitimately ask whether the latter two authors, given the generational and dramatic-poetic specificities, belong to the same circle of authors who represent new or contemporary Croatian drama from the 1990s?¹⁷ Putting aside the tendency toward terminological dissection all too present in the literature from the 1990s, we can conclude that all four authors are connected by a certain ‘poetics of absence,’ which Dubravka Vrgoč defined as “*dispersing the center, removing the Subject and destabilizing meanings.*”¹⁸ They are characterized, just like the generation that marked the end of the end of the eighties and nineties of the 20th century, by the denial of linear construction, the rejection of logical procedures and the like.¹⁹ Throughout all four dramas, in Rafolt’s words, run easily relatable themes - family problems, individual or private destinies, “*which can and will become socially symptomatic, that is, which can and really will start a discussion about (the problems of)*

¹⁶ Vrgoč (1997): 126.

¹⁷ It is not uncommon for 1990 to be considered a turning point in theatrical and critical experiments in the context of Croatian drama. It is a border year by which syntheses about one period of Croatian theatre are already being made, and from which a new/different period begins. The year was declared a turning point not only because of the realities of the war that marked the entire decade and the specifics of the repertoire, but also because of the affirmation of a generation of authors and playwrights, who would remain dominant for the next two decades, i.e. until 2007, Rafolt (2007): 9.

¹⁸ Vrgoč (1997): 126.

¹⁹ Vrgoč (1997): 129.

domestic violence or the exploitation of women.”²⁰ Their structure, which is characteristic of most examples of contemporary drama, is organised around a system of opposites - life/death, present/absent, marginal/central, speech/written text, or, as Vrgoč describes, accentuated obsessive images formed precisely through constructing opposites:

*“In the rift between the signifier and the signified, in the abyss of language, everyone feels rejected, heading in vain towards the Other, and thus permanently naming the deficiency, a self devotion. Obsessive images (...) direct these sets of dramaturgical functions towards the poles, between which an action takes place, conditioned by movement in a direction determined by two opposites.”*²¹

A comparison of these four texts shows interesting overlaps, both at the linguistic-communicative level and in their understanding of dramatic space, in their preoccupation with and problematization of identity, marginal areas of personality and psychism, that is of escapism, dramatic character, more precisely, of female character, and of the female body. The plays of Lada Kaštelan, Ivana Sajko, Vlatka Vorkapić and Kristina Gavran can be characterized as ‘female writing’ in the sense used by Lada Čale Feldman, “... *as a potentially fruitful assumption of a special kind of dialogic confrontation with a text (or theatrical event)*” rather than a theoretical-critical construct.²² In other words, we are not inclined to introducing radical cuts between so-called female and male writing but rather of the opinion that these authors organize their texts within a particular literary corpus “*with its characteristic recurrent motifs, themes, symbols, styles, strategies, history, genres, intentions, ideas, etc.*”²³ They all have their own specific vision of the dramatic world, which does not arise from an attempt at rebellion or resentment against traditional patriarchal patterns but rather strives to remain consistent with their own creativity and originality down to the smallest detail.

Although Lada Kaštelan is somewhat older than Vlatka Vorkapić,

²⁰ Rafolt (2011): 24-25.

²¹ Vrgoč (1997): 136.

²² Čale Feldman (2001): 51.

²³ Čale Feldman (2001): 30.

more so than Ivana Sajko, and especially more than Kristina Gavran, we finally find in this quartet similar characteristics, thus leading us to the conclusion that all four authors belong to a circle that tends to counter the scenic worlds that emerge on the outlines of loneliness, despair, and lack of meaning and are presented through the myths of emotional autism, isolation, moral confusion, trivial conventions, and media schizophrenia. Lada Kaštelan, Ivana Sajko, Vlatka Vorkapić, and by analogy Kristina Gavran, also belong to the ‘third wave’ of Croatian drama literature, which is characterized by: “*genre hybrid texts and a marked tendency towards the reinterpretation of literary and theatrical traditions, from Greek myths, epics and tragedies, to biblical and literary themes, and the classical Croatian literature of the 20th century.*” It is precisely the dramatic text *Giga and Hers* that shows, during the 1990s, especially popularly, in Car-Mihec’s words, the intertextual relationalization of its own dramatic discourse. The work also testifies to the frequent recourse to literary texts from tradition, that is, the tendency to reinterpret dramatic themes, characters, statements and the like.²⁴

The intertextual connections between *Giga and Hers* and Begović’s novel *Barić’s Giga* [Giga Barićeva] has been written about in detail in *Lada Kaštelan’s Giga and Hers* by dramatologist Adriana Car-Mihec, and so we need not dwell on this subject in detail here. We will however point out that Lada Kaštelan certainly considers herself the originator of the current in Croatian drama that rejects the subordination of women in any sense “*and instead points to their self-conscious, almost dominant status.*” If we only consider the title of the play, we can conclude that it “*signals completely new, almost opposite perspective - it no longer defines the central character as "belonging" but rather as 'possessing'.*”²⁵ *Giga* no longer belongs to Barić. She owns, wants and more precisely can have another. And so, she in these changing relations has primarily tried to belong to herself, as she confirms in the final line:

GIGA: ‘You will do nothing! I can do everything on my own! Everything! Get out! Animals! Scoundrels... You think I need you? Do you think I can’t do it without you? You think that Giga Remetinec needs a man? Get lost! I

²⁴ Car-Mihec (2003): 12, including citation.

²⁵ Car-Mihec 2003, the citations from p.157.

*pray I never see or hear from you again! None of you!!!
Get out! Get out, now!*²⁶

She is primarily interested in women, particularly those in a state of personal transition, as Crnojević Carić points out: “*Her heroines are often inhabited - by memories personal and collective. They are inhabited by other beings on this side and that, by the living and the dead, by those who are part of our cultural and family traditions.*”²⁷

It is also important to emphasize that all four authors avoid traditional notions of space and time. They are also not interested in coherent characters in the traditional sense but have instead imagined theirs, especially the female ones, in such a way as to present a new perspective free from restrictions. We can thus conclude that the Kaštelan-Sajko-Vorkapić-Gavran corpus is linked by a particular conception of the female character as one freed from political-historical trauma, a character who is an end in itself and attempts to redefine traditional thinking about dramatic structure. The plots of contemporary drama texts unfold in spatial and temporal disproportion and discontinuity, and so the role of space is taken over by that of time, which suggests that the context of the subject is no longer the same.²⁸ The fundamental points of the traditional fabric of drama (space, time, character and plot) have then clearly shifted in an effort to create a different, modern logic concerning the structure of drama. For this reason, we will not reproduce in detail here the already much discussed thesis on the death of the subject, which considers this shift of the traditional positions of the dramatic subject an evolutionary moment that allows it to exist in altered dramatic spheres.

It is not uncommon to think of the dramatic subject as one inclined to flee and search for itself in the Other, that is, to hide itself in the perceived identity of another.²⁹ We do not agree, however, with the idea that the heroines of these four dramas function due to internal discord and contradictions but instead claim that they clearly acknowledge and accept their desires and almost paradoxically disable the aspirations of

²⁶ Kaštelan (1997): 180.

²⁷ Crnojević-Carić (2011).

²⁸ Vrgoč (1997): 156

²⁹ Vrgoč (1997): 158.

the Other. They ultimately turn to and create a foothold in themselves. These heroines are at the same time the theatre of language and its reason and purpose, but at the same time they are the drivers of tension in the plot, regardless of the framework and dynamics in which it unfolds. Causality is for the most part neglected in the plot, however, which in the context of all four observed dramas descends into a series of meditative situations and subjective attitudes, as well as the surreal fantasies of the drama heroines.

The text, as the author herself warns, is built on the principle of classical dramaturgy, today primarily dominant in the film narrative, which is based on a sequence of plot scenes separated and interrupted by sudden cuts. The latter is best illustrated in *Orange in the Clouds* by Ivana Sajko, especially considering that the plot unfolds in what could variously be:

*“a night club (...), the waiting room of a spittle-covered central train station, purgatory if they believed in it. Regardless of whether these are assembled fragments of different environments, the dramatic space shown is a place of forgetfulness, non-recognition, numb feelings and nonsense ...”*³⁰

Furthermore, the play *Ready* by Kristina Gavran takes place in an indefinite, flooded space in which a family faced with some mysterious, monstrous threat; *Giga and Hers* also take place indoors, and *Judith French* largely unfolds in Damir's apartment. With the exception of *Orange in the Clouds*, all of these dramatic spaces implicitly rise to a transcendental level that casts aside the problem of identity, violence, ideological apparatuses, problems of marginal groups, etc., thus putting the woman and her return to herself in the foreground.³¹ It is also worth pointing out the peculiar and specific way of organization, as well as the structural peculiarities of the plot of *Judith French*, which is shaped according to some fundamental film procedures. The text, as the author herself warns, is built on the principle of classical dramaturgy. This is primarily dominant today in film narratives, which consist of a sequence of plot scenes separated and interrupted by sudden cuts. This tendency is

³⁰ Senker (2011): 27.

³¹ See Ljubić (2006) on more details about space in contemporary Croatian drama.

therefore, as Vlatka Vorkapić wrote in the Program Booklet for the play *Judith French*:

“... on the level of external communication. The content is treated with a classical narrative style in counterpoint to its formal structure, whose most obvious strategy is the use and problematization of meta-theatrical elements.”

Furthermore, all four dramas also share a thematic complex related to the problems of physicality and traumatic experiences. This can also be found throughout recent Croatian drama in general.³² As we have already said the plays *Giga (Giga and Hers)*, *Schilla (Orange in the Clouds)*, *Tonka (Judith French)* and *Kći (Ready)* unfold in an indefinite, insignificant space, which manifests as a procedure that brings the character, more precisely the woman, to the fore. In this sense, it is possible to see a progression in relation to the specifics of contemporary drama in the fact that these women do not build their identity on the basis of the usual male-female opposition, but in accordance with their own beastly, wild nature.³³ A woman's body represents, in Paglia's words, the labyrinth in which the man gets lost, primarily because he is wary of her true, foreign and almost horrible biological femininity. This is because biological femininity is a sequence of circular returns that begin and end at the same point, and the woman's focus is a trap for the man, who seeks the very identity that she is blocking.³⁴ This is especially evident in *Judith French*, where the alpha-male Damir, after his initial dominance, experiences a sudden turn. In other words, Damir must transform into an innocent being that is completely free from Tonka, which he fails to do, and for that reason he experiences a strong fall, back to the centre, more precisely, into Her very Self:

*JANKO (digging through comics): Here it is. 'The creature from the mirror.' (He shows Tonka the comic.)
So what are you waiting for, Judith? Why don't you get*

³² Rafolt (2011): 24.

³³ As C. Paglia (2017) states, the identification of women with nature is not a myth. It represents one of the most problematic places in historical argumentation. For more details on women's comparisons with nature, as well as natural cycles.

³⁴ Paglia (2017): 39.

dressed? Get dressed...

*TONKA: Yes, really. Why not? (She turns to Damir).
We haven't seen each other in a long time, huh? ...
How much time has passed? How much exactly? (She
abruptly pulls the tape from him). Damir moaned.
Janko looked with approval, then returned to the comic.
He reads a few sentences aloud, most of them with
enthusiasm.*

DAMIR: Sorry...

TONKA: Three months and nine days...

*DAMIR: I shouldn't have done that... I'm really
sorry...*

*TONKA: Sorry! You'll be more sorry. (She smacks him
lightly on the cheek with her shoes.) And did you miss
Judith French?*

DAMIR: Yes.³⁵

Likewise, a comparative analysis of these texts shows that the fundamental thematic-motivic occupation of all four is death, which we consider the atmosphere, the spatial-temporal continuum in which the heroines live, fight, take pains, think, torment themselves, find themselves, love, hate, etc. Death is a place of new life in which: “*things become clearer. It is clearer in its indifferenciation. In the presence of death we become aware of the diversity, the multitude of the cosmos, the plurality of possible stories.*”³⁶ However, it should be emphasized that macabre themes and scenes, i.e. on-stage simulations of “*the final human experience,*”³⁷ are in principle ubiquitous in contemporary Croatian drama and are considered a legacy of the view that the:

“arbitrary choice of death over life - from this or that moral or ideological standpoint, an honorable death over a dishonorable life ... is deeply justified in some situations ... In such situations, the human 'I' paradoxically manages to preserve its integrity through

³⁵ Vorkapić (2007): 205.

³⁶ Crnojević-Carić (2011).

³⁷ Senker (2011): 12-13. For more details on the topic of death and the ways in which it is present in Croatian dramatic literature from Vojnović's Equinox to the present day, i.e. on the interpretation and meaning of this thematic set in the context of national dramatic currents, see Senker (2011): 12-29.

*its final annulment.*³⁸

All four authors reflect on death, talk about death and elevate death to a thematic level. Very interestingly, death is neither sexually nor gender-marked, but is equally accessible to both female and male characters. This has all been done thoughtfully and subtly, and the heroes move towards death and live in it, even while seemingly remaining alive. For this reason, death in these dramas symbolizes a transient aspect of existence, an existence that inevitably tends to decay by representing *revelation and consecration as a mystery*.³⁹ Giga thus flirts not only with her seven suitors, but above all with death, which is arguably her most masculine suitor. In all four characters in *Ready* (mother, father, daughter and son), a strange, undefined, unearthly fear dominates, and so the only way out of this claustrophobic state is another dematerialized world. The impending existential catastrophe is further marked by the symbolism of the number four, which permeates the entire drama - the family has four members, has four of each food item, as the mother says, four is a measure in all their cookbooks. Let us recall that the number four symbolizes the solid and tangible, and because of its “*connection with the cross it has become a unique symbol of completeness, comprehensiveness, and wholeness.*”⁴⁰ Among other things, the four angels from the *Book of Revelation* represent *the four angels of destruction standing at the four corners of the earth, from where the four winds blow*.⁴¹ The family in this drama precisely functions in fear of the coming end, and through their actions (the obsessive stockpiling of food and groceries) they criticize today’s consumer society that only lives at the material level and consequently sinks into hell. Furthermore, Tonka in *Judith French* can only live if she undresses and gets rid of Damir and Janko, that is, the monsters who make fun of her and from whom she eventually has to move away to prove her personality and merits, for in order to achieve the desired perfection she must overcome monsters of all kinds. More precisely, she must conquer the image of Self to develop a higher Self:

³⁸ Senker (2011): 19-20.

³⁹ Chevalier & Gheerbrant (2007): 673.

⁴⁰ Chevalier & Gheerbrant (2007): 102.

⁴¹ Chevalier & Gheerbrant (2007): 112.

Tonka starts to take off her dress.

JANKO: What are you doing, Judith ?! Don't! Judith, get him, get him! Please! Destroy that creature from the mirror! Forever!

Tonka almost takes off her dress. Janko tries to put her dress on again, but she tears herself away. She takes the clothes she came in and tries to change. Janko pushes a piece of the mirror into her hands.

JANKO: Come on, Judith, I'll help you, we'll do it together.

Tonka dodges him.

JANKO: Judith! Judith! I beg you!

(...)

Janko takes a larger piece of the mirror and starts cutting his hands. Tonka rushes to stop him, but he pushes her away. And then he cuts his throat with a sudden movement. He stands there for a moment, about as long as Tonka's scream lasts, then collapses to the floor. As he falls, he pulls the cloth with him. He discovers that under the fabric is a large mirror (which reflects the actors, but also the audience).⁴²

Ivana Sajko also thinks about death by reviving the already deceased Oscar and Schilla. This shows that life and death actually coexist at all levels of becoming, that is, there is a constant tension between these opposing forces.⁴³ Sajko turns Schilla and Oscar's conversations about death, life and life in death into a series of comical lines, thus presenting the opinion that death at one level⁴⁴ may be a prerequisite for a better life on another level, hence life after pain and suppression, after oppositions and differences:

*SCHILLA: (heading towards sleepy OSCAR)
You did it. I don't know what to do now. You know I lack discipline ... I thought peace of mind could come*

⁴² Vorkapić (2007): 206.

⁴³ In a specific way, the two guardian angels in *Orange in the Clouds*, who form: "a close relationship with the main characters, the dead Oscar and Schill, function on the one hand as their 'trustees' and on the other as their companions in the transition from this world into the next. As we have seen, this was one of the functions of the character of Death in slightly older dramas", Senker (2011): 26.

⁴⁴ Chevalier& Gheerbrant (2007): 673.

from sedation on its own. You take thirty pieces, a splash, a little water and you're done. It turns out that when I think, I always think wrong

THE SECOND ANGEL: Well, if only you could die twice.

SCHILLA: If only one could live twice. Do we have time?

FIRST ANGEL: If it's reasonable, as much as you want.

*SCHILLA: I need a few moments.*⁴⁵

Death therefore has an abundance of meanings. For instance, we can consider it a liberator from suffering and worries. It is not an end in itself but *opens the way to the kingdom of the spirit, the true life (...)*. Finally, *it symbolizes the profound change that man experiences by initiation.*⁴⁶ Death, as we have seen, permeates all four observed dramas in a way that characterises the contemporary national dramatic scene, which points to the necessity of moving away from the chaos of modern consumer society. These dramas, without pretentious pomp and radicalism, dissolve and reinterpret the life-death, present-absent, nature-culture, woman-man oppositions, moving away from political allusions and pointing instead to the necessity of creating a new world without appropriation and coercion. Finally, they suggest the need to re-create oneself with the help of another without struggle, victory and defeat and emphasize the need to create a duality that will represent joint participation. In accordance with all the above, it is not difficult to conclude that these authors belong to the new generation of playwrights (along with, for example, Tomislav Zajec, Dubravko Mihanović, Tena Štivičić and Ana Prolić), who stand considerably far: *“from the programmatic escapism and written exclusivism of the ‘young’ dramas of the early 1990s. They produce more communicative and genre-oriented writing, and approach a realistic paradigm.”*⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Sajko (2001): 28.

⁴⁶ Chevalier & Gheerbrant (2007): 674.

⁴⁷ Lederer (2004): 41.

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Sažetak

U ovom tekstu autori prezentiraju jedan od načina kojim se potiče i promovira dramsko stvaralaštvo u Republici Hrvatskoj. Jedan od tih načina je natječaj za nagradu za dramsko djelo Marin Držić kojega od 1991. godine raspisuje Ministarstvo kulture Republike Hrvatske. Autore posebno zanima na koji se način i u kojem su omjeru na ovom poprištu suvremenih trendova nacionalnoga teatarskog i dramskog stvaralaštva prisutne žene, odnosno autorice i dramatičarke.