

Dorta Jagić

Small Glossary of Biblical Women

Mala zvona, Zagreb, 2013, p. 160

Throughout its centuries of history, Croatian literature has had many connections with faith, and with Christian faith in particular. Religious feelings persisted even in the times of modernity when rationalism, atheism, and all the ideologies that were based on them sought to smother this most intimate aspect of the human desire to glorify God through the written word. So far, the best theological and literary analysis of the relationship between literature and faith throughout Croatian history was written by Drago Šimundža in his two-tome work, *God in the Works of Croatian Writers: Faith and Disbelief in the Croatian Literature of the 20th Century*, in which he deals with numerous renowned and not so well-known Croatian writers, outlining their relationship with God, faith, and the transcendent.

Even though Protestantism in Croatia can boast an exquisite contribution to Croatian literature, which was made by Antun Dalmatin and Stipan Konzul Istranin at the beginning of the Reformation, the Croatian Reformation was very quickly forbidden from developing its literature. Speaking from today's perspective, Evangelical Christianity in Croatia never gave too much significance to literature, since the emphasis was placed on theological writings. In spite of this, there are notable literary breakthroughs, such as Miroslav Volf's work, *And I Know the Sun Fears Not the Darkness*, which talks about literature and piety in the works of Aleksa Šantić (issued on the occasion of his house of birth in Mostar being purchased by the Evangelical church). Poetic expression has been especially nurtured by the Church of Christ in Zagreb, which has organized nights of Christian poetry for years, and continues with this tradition in Vukovar under the name "The Valley of Blessings." We should also mention the religious poetry of Slavonian poet Mate Godanj, Heda Domitrović from Zagreb, and Darko Petrov from Zadar. The last notable work, *He Who Is Here, Hails from Here*, was written a few years ago by Evangelical theologian and guest speaker at the Bible Institute, Boris Gunjević, as co-author with the internationally renowned Croatian writer Predrag Matvejević.

Dorta Jagić is an author about whom we can say, that instead of introducing literature into Evangelical Christianity, she introduced the Evangelical element into contemporary literature. The reason for this is the previously mentioned marginalization of artistic and literary expression in Protestant-Evangelical Christianity in Croatia. The author from Zagreb, who was born in Sinj, the home-

town of poet Dinko Šimunović, has been involved in writing and translation for a number of years. Her work was noticed as early as high school and further developed during her time studying at the Jesuit Philosophical Faculty in Zagreb. In 1999 she received a prestigious Croatian award, “Goranov vijenac,” for her work as a young author. International successes ensued, leading to the award “Balkan Grand Prize for Poetry” at the festival of poetry in Romania, and last year she won the award “Poet of Freedom Literary Prize” in Gdansk, Poland, for her poem “Couch in the Square”.

The uniqueness which the author introduced into contemporary literature is her open emphasis on God in her works. In her own words: “I have only come to know God and have experienced Him as a living love in a sort of ‘punk’ environment of Protestantism, where the emphasis is placed on God’s grace, salvation by faith and the Gospel as the only foundation of the truth, without emphasizing the subsequently invented theological layers and institutional ossification. Even the word ‘Protestantism’ is quite revealing... Still, true Christianity can happen even in the most hardened religious environments, if only one would critically meditate on what is suggested to (and sometimes imposed upon) them, and would truly wish to know the Messiah.”

As one of the rare Christian women’s rights activists, she put together and edited the *Small Glossary of Biblical Women*. Even though Christian theology in Croatia has been bountifully enriched with good and relevant literature, manuals, and lexicons in the past ten years or so, this glossary is not just a report with an abundance of footnotes and a concordance. It also brings into the main text the seemingly secondary and marginalized characters: women, who have been actively involved in the three thousand years of biblical history.

The glossary lists, in alphabetical order, all the famous and less famous biblical women— from Jewish heroines such as Queen Esther to corrupt women such as Jezebel or fatal women such as Delilah or Salome, daughter of the notorious Herodias. Those without names have also been given names in the glossary, such as the Wise Woman from Tekoa, or the Wise Woman from Abel, as well as the Virtuous Woman from the Book of Proverbs. Included with those who do have names are also the meanings of their names in the Hebrew and Greek originals. This is important because the rule *Nomen est Omen* applies in the Bible, which is why the proper understanding of scriptural events and their contexts requires knowing the symbolism behind the names. For example, Jaela, who was a renown warrior, originally means “a skillful ibex”; or Elisheba, wife of Aaron the high priest, means “God is my vow”; while Ruth is simply a “lady friend.”

A brief linguistic introduction is followed by Jagić’s interpretation in the form of poetic lyricism. For example, this is what the author says concerning Lot’s wife: “I imagine she had thin hair the color of baked coffee beans, and adorned with

jewel-studded little hair-combs.” We find such descriptions for almost every character, drawing the reader into this illustrious world from the perspective of the women from the Ancient Near-East and Antiquity.

This lyrical and hermeneutical imaginary voyage is a short-lived one (this is a “small” glossary, after all). Jagić goes on to provide further information about biblical women: who they were, what position they had, and where we can find them in the Bible. She also describes the actions and exploits of each woman. The author goes on to examine these events—what were their personal internal struggles, or what became of them after the biblical narrative was finished? Through these questions she also touches on contemporary problems, which are similar to the problems at that time—fighting for faith, love, fears, jealousy, the question of evil and sin, faithfulness to God, and providing for family.

In order to complement the glossary stylistically, Jagić uses footnotes to add further information about the works of great masters of art, novelists, and musicians who strived to describe the lives of individual biblical female characters.

The *Small Glossary of Biblical Women* may indeed be small when it comes to the number of its pages, but in terms of literary value it is a great and precious work. Among other things, the book opens new horizons and provides pointers and exhortations to all who wish to express the Evangelical faith through art and poetry.

Vatroslav Župančić

Translated from Croatian by Davor Edelinski

Smith Wigglesworth

Ever Increasing Faith

Figulus d.o.o, Koprivnica, 2014, 224 p

“*Vjera koja raste*” is the translation of the book, *Ever Increasing Faith*, which was published in 1924 by Gospel Publishing House, the official publisher of the Assemblies of God. In 1938 the same publisher published another booklet containing Smith Wigglesworth’s sermons, *Faith That Prevails*.

After his baptism in the Holy Spirit in Sunderland in 1907 (as described in chapters 12 and 18), Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947), a plumber from Yorkshire, becomes a renowned evangelist, following the death of his wife Mary Jane “Polly” Featherstone. Mary was an officer in the Salvation Army and the pastor of their local congregation, Bowland Street Mission in Bradford, where they spent most of their lives, as well as most of Wigglesworth’s first visit to the United States in 1914. According to his own confession, and a fact which he was very proud of, Wigglesworth had in his entire life never read any book other than the