

Family, Social Context and Drug Addiction in Young Adult Novels

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Abstract

In the 1990s the influence of literary and extraliterary changes introduced new topics to Croatian literature for young adults. Those are the topics (like drug addiction) that had been considered taboo prior to these changes. This paper presents work on a selected corpus of novels written in the period from the 1990s to the present to investigate the family and social context that appears in novels discussing drug addiction and to explore in what manner the identity formation of the individual is influenced. In the four novels analyzed: Kad pobjedi ljubav [When Love Prevails], Čarobni prosjak [The Magical Beggar], Miron u škripcu [Miron in Trouble] and Meko okidanje [The Soft Triggering] the causes of addiction are linked to family problems, while in the novel Zeleni pas [The Green Dog] there is no family pathology. A disintegrating family, neglectful parents or the lack of parental presence (physical and emotional) influence the identity formation of the teenage protagonists. In all of these novels the life of addicts is presented as a life on the margins of society. They are either ignored or pitied by their surroundings, with rare occurrences of helpers, while the institutions prove to be ineffective and powerless. The unfortunate endings in the novels that take hold of the addicts and their family members function as a warning. Only the novel Miron u škripcu [Miron in Trouble] presents a different kind of ending where the importance of family is emphasized.

Key words: drug addiction; family context; social context; young adult literature.

Introduction

The influence of literary and extraliterary changes that occurred in the last decade of the 20th century brought new topics into Croatian literature for young adults – topics that had previously been considered taboo, such as drug addiction. This paper investigates a selected corpus of Croatian novels from the 1990s to the present day to

distinguish the family and social context presented in the novels problematizing drug addiction. In the works explored here family appears as a theme or motif. The analysis will further explain the role of the family for the individual with regard to identity formation and their problems with drug addiction. Haramija (2005) emphasizes the importance of familial relationships in the depiction of the characters in young adult literature, whereupon deviation of young characters occurs in non-supporting families. The paper will seek to confirm or confute that statement by analyzing the selected titles.

Young Adult Literature and Taboo Topics

In the 1970s and especially in the 1980s the publishers became increasingly aware of the meaning of teenagers on the market. As a consequence, the world literature for young adults witnessed a boom of editions for teenagers where the topics prevailing, as opposed to children's literature full of humor and optimism, were difficult, gloomy, painful, reflecting everyday life and its difficulties, like environmental pollution, racial discrimination, women's emancipation or solidarity with the developing countries. Taboos were increasingly being broken as a result of which the motifs like sexuality, illness, divorce or death appeared more often. The 1990s literature for young readers became even more drastic with dominating motifs of fear, violence, crime, teenage prostitution, drugs, AIDS or political upheaval in Eastern Europe and its consequences on the life of young adults (Težak, 2008).

The novels for young adults were becoming drearier, more depressive and pessimistic, which Lavrenčić Vrabec (2002) considers a consequence of the social developments and events. In Croatian literature for young adults the last decade of the 20th century brought about the breaking of taboos. According to Donelson and Pace Nielsen (2005), the introduction of problematic topics in young adult literature is led by the belief that the youngsters should develop realistic expectations and be aware of the good as well as the bad sides of the society they live in. The educational trait in these works is the tendency to aid the young readers in developing a way of thinking that will help them in their behavior and decisions on their life. Books cannot completely change the life of an individual but they can open perspectives and be helpful in forming the way of thinking and reflecting on one's own actions.

The Family Image in Novels for Children and Young Adults

The family as a community is crucial for the development of an individual. According to Janković (1994, p. 42), the overall development of an individual is only possible if harmony is given in physical, psychological and social development. The parents therefore have a great responsibility for the development of their children and if they fail in their role as parents, the child will have difficulties adapting socially, manifesting asocial or disruptive behavior or even graver problems like complete separation from the environment or mental disorders.

Family as the crucial community in the children's and youth's process of growing up can, according to the research by Sanja Vrcić-Mataija (2010), be depicted as a traditional or contemporary family in the novels for youth. The latter type is more common in contemporary literature for young adults and laden with different problems from everyday difficulties to more serious problems like illness, death, poor social conditions, abuse and similar issues. The traditional family is a family with both parents often including three generations and defined by a patriarchal relationship with a male authority. The head of the family is most often the father who takes care of the material aspects of life whereas the mother is often a housewife who also provides emotional shelter for the family members. Such a family implies traditional upbringing, denoting respect for authority, a religious and patriotic awareness, caring for traditions, etc. (Vrcić-Mataija, 2010, p. 225). Contemporary families can be numerous, fragmented, struggling with the difficulties of everyday life, all of which can influence identity formation (Vrcić-Mataija, 2010).

According to Culler (2001), there are different ways for literary characters to form their identity in literary works: from an identity formed at birth, the change of identity in line with the ups and downs in life, to an identity based on the qualities that are revealed when overcoming obstacles in life. Family is an important element in the novels that discuss the topic of addiction because the causes of the problems and the influence on an individual's identity formation are to be sought there. To this end, this paper will consider Culler's starting points on identity formation of characters in which fiction traces the fates of the characters "while they are building their own self and in the way they are defined by different circumstances from their past, the choices they made and the social forces affecting them" (Culler, 2001, p. 129).

The causes and reasons of drug abuse can be various, and scientific studies, though arriving at different results, also stress the importance of family. According to Sakoman (2002, p. 41), one of the reasons can be disturbed family dynamics arising from different causes, like illness, abuse or other types of traumas that enhance the risk of developing an addiction. At the same time the use of drugs can appear as "experimenting", as happens to many young people coming from the so-called "normal" families. Drug abuse can also occur as a result of an identity crisis of teenagers while trying to form their attitudes, personality, philosophy and life style (Sakoman, 2002, p. 61). The studies of Ljubitina and Galić (2002) and Unković and Majdak (2010) show that the problem of addiction is not necessarily connected to a family pathology and the structure of the family, but to the existence of other interfamilial and/or extrafamilial factors (parenting style, communication in the family).

Familial and Social Context in the Selected Novels Discussing Addiction

In Croatian literature for young adults the topic of addiction has been present only since the second half of the 1990s and was first mentioned in the novel by Maja

Brajko-Livaković *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails] (1997). The motif of drug abuse appears in all three novels by this authoress published in the 1990s: *Sirena i oblak* [The Mermaid and the Cloud] (1995), *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails] (1997) and *Nije fer* [It's not fair] (2000) (cf. Zima, 2011). The novel *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails] describes the life of teenagers who, besides the obligations in school and the troubles of first love, need to withstand peer pressure. In the 1990s two more novels discussing the issue of drug addiction were published: *Čarobni prosjak* [The Magical Beggar] (1999) by Sunčana Škrinjarić and *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble] by Anto Gardaš. The issue of addiction remains current in the 21st century as well, hence this paper includes the analyses of relevant novels by Jadranko Bitenc and Nada Mihelčić. The novel by Bitenc *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering] was published in 2007, and the most notable and award winning novel dealing with that issue, *Zeleni pas* [The Green Dog] by Nada Mihelčić, was published in 2009. These novels will be analyzed in this paper with the aim of connecting the familial and social situation with the problem of addiction and defining the function of the literary works discussing addiction with regard to the implicit readers.

In the novel *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails] (1997) other taboo topics besides addiction arise, e.g. obesity, healthy diet, single-parent families and death. The protagonist in that novel is Dora, a chubby girl, an eighth-grade pupil. She lives in a single-parent family with her mother. The father has left the family and lives abroad. Hranjec (2005) notices the frequent occurrence of incomplete or so-called fragmented families in contemporary circumstances, where the single parent taking care of the children is more often the mother. The only people Dora can rely on are her friends; the father's abandonment left deep traces on the mother, who is increasingly withdrawing from reality, forgetting how much her daughter needs her. As a consequence of this lack of attention Dora begins to rely on a new circle of acquaintances that she has met in a club. These young people slowly introduce her to the world of drugs, while she feels needed by them, thinking in the beginning she could rescue them from this dark world.

The young characters depicted as addicts in the novel most often have problems within the family - their families are either disintegrated or the parents are focused on their own problems, which hinders them from noticing that their children feel neglected. As a result of the neglect the young characters seek comfort in their peers, desperate to adapt, even if this means consuming different kinds of opiates. The existence of family pathology, but also the lack of communication are triggers that set off the consumption of drugs. The addicts depicted in the novel live on the margins of society and the people in their surroundings look at them with loathing. Dora is the only one who wishes to help them. Zima (2011) states that her entering the world of drug addicts is motivated by friendship and compassion, as well as a sense of responsibility and adult reasoning. She neither blames her mother nor dissatisfaction of growing up in a disintegrating family for her own actions.

The novel shows the hopelessness and forlornness of the addicts' world - once the addiction sets in, it is difficult to get out, even with effort. The institutions, even though they are mentioned, have no significant function because the addicts do not trust them. The authoress' depictions of the interiors where the addicts dwell, of the scenes of drug use and the attempts to quit are vivid and convincing. She obviously intends to emphasize the horror of such conditions and life, which constitutes the pedagogical tone in the novel.

The novel ends tragically for the drug addicts, but for Dora the ending brings about the realization of the horrible consequences of drug abuse and how far it can go. She takes the strength for the return to a normal life from her affection for her peer Darko, from the return to her old friends and from the (provisionally) restored familial situation, where the mother decides to take better care of her and the father returns, though only temporarily. Such an ending can often be found in novels discussing problematic topics, as Donelsen and Pace Nilsen (2005) argue, for alongside difficult topics we can find a happy ending that the readers expect. According to Hranjec (2006), the authoress does not offer a solution for the world of drug addiction, but stays true to her motif from the title, offering only one possibility for the escape from hell: pure and honest love. She hence reinforces the belief that good can withstand evil.

The novel *Čarobni prosjak* [The Magical Beggar] (1999) by Sunčana Škrinjarčić presents a step away from the authoress' usual theme field, because in Croatian children's literature she is most of all known for her fairy tales linked together by common characteristics and motifs. Andrijana Kos-Lajtman traces certain elements of genre specific doubling in the novel *Čarobni prosjak* [The Magical Beggar], linking that novel with the fairy-tale specific patterns in other works of Sunčana Škrinjarčić (see Kos-Lajtman, 2009). The fate of a boy, a beggar, is in the centre of the narration. However, Bošković (2009) stresses that the narrator's interest is also directed to the depiction of certain parts of the social reality that threaten the contemporary child. "By skilled storytelling, maintaining several narrative threads, bringing convincing characters (like criminals from a juvenile detention centre) to the scene, the authoress intends to introduce young lost people who find themselves in deviant life circumstances due to different reasons (poverty, lack of family upbringing)" (Hranjec, 2004, p. 242). The protagonist is a boy, a beggar, who exchanges his miserable suburban existence with life in the worst social environment of Zagreb where, unaware, he joins a company of criminals and drug addicts. The motif of addiction in this novel is problematized through the character of a girl with whom the boy falls in love. The onset of her drug abuse and affiliation with the world of addicts are connected to her unhappy childhood in which she lacked love and attention. Her parents died while she was little, so growing up in a substitute family with her grandmother who did not provide her with sufficient affection and where she was left to herself influenced her identity formation. After her grandmother's death the girl joins bad company and falls in love with a handsome drug addict who introduces her to the world of

addicts. Hoping to be loved back she does whatever the young man asks her to while her life becomes increasingly hopeless and her psychic and emotional collapse are accompanied by problems in school. The young man, however, only uses her, taking her apartment as a shelter for addicts and later forcing her to earn money for the drugs. The addicts' world is presented as insensible and callous; the addicts are unaware of their environment and rid of the ability to repay others with feelings. The only thing they are interested in is drugs. After a dissipated lifestyle and many disappointments, the girl eventually dies of drug overdose while her so-called friends and the young man flee, leaving her to die in the filthy apartment. This novel also shows a hopeless world of drug addiction and it ends tragically, which is in congruence with the pedagogical function of the novel. With the family image and familial context in mind, the causes of problems with addiction in this case are the absence of a complete family during childhood and the lack of love and attention that the girl needed while growing up and which she then substituted with going out, hanging out with peers and seeking an emotional relationship.

Anto Gardaš addresses the issue of addiction in the novel *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble] in which through the plot of a crime story the familiar protagonists of the author's children's novels, Miron and his clique, begin a search for the girl Matilda, a former drug addict, and encounter the dangerous realm of drug smuggling. The novel discusses the effects of inadequate parental care for children on the children's behavior, the negative influence of bad company on young individuals and the struggle with addiction, which adds socio-psychological background to the novel. Two opposed cliques appear in the novel, depicted by the method of parallelism in characters. The group of boys from Osijek headed by Miron are the carriers of positive values and affirm the values that are essential for the poetics of Gardaš, like the family surroundings and sound relations between parents and children. The group from Zagreb, gathered around their leader Skorbut, are involved in drug smuggling and delinquent behavior. The girl Matilda acts upon their threats. The socio-psychological level of the novel is revealed through the depiction of disordered familial and financial conditions. The disturbed family dynamics is the reason of the characters' problematic behavior. The leader of the Zagreb group, Skorbut, was physically abused during childhood. The boy Ivan and his sister Matilda grew up in a family referred to as an *empty nest* so their life was never comfortable and careless. Even when the mother lived with them, which was not always, she did not take care of them but on the contrary, she abused them, hence Ivan "was used to beating" (Gardaš 2006, p. 103). Growing up in such conditions affected them severely. Matilda is a problematic student, but her greater problem is the struggle with drug addiction caused by the disordered family situation. Ivan also feels the consequences on his psyche, yet the unhappy childhood in his case does not reflect on delinquency.

Though at the beginning of the novel Matilda appears as a negative character and an addict, throughout the story her fate unfolds and her protective attitude towards

her brother emerges. The poor environment and unhappy childhood led Matilda to a situation with no apparent way out, because even though she wanted it, she could not escape crime and drugs. In the moments of crisis she reaches for drugs, endangering her own life. Vrcić-Mataija (2010) states that the author's depiction of growing up in this novel shows yet another picture of contemporary childhood and familial discourse where violence affected the formation of an insecure child's and youth's identity. Živković Zebec (2014) emphasizes the affirmation of positive family relations characteristic of the author's oeuvre and recognizable in the relationship between brother and sister, who care for each other in spite of growing up in a disturbed family. Their discovery at the end leads to a happy ending with a family reunion, even though the family is fragmented.

The plot of the novel *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering] by Jadranko Bitenc is set in a small town where the fates of the characters intertwine. A connection between the characters can be made through the boy Solo who takes photographs, portraits of the people in his town and prepares an exhibition. Addiction is problematized on multiple levels in this novel, including addicts facing serious problems and suffering abstinence crises (Pina and Tommy), young individuals only just beginning to experiment with drugs (Leo, Haš Sister and Depra) and drug dealers represented by Gerardo. Through different cases different causes of drug problems are displayed, all originating in the family and an unhappy background of growing up or insufficient care received from parents. What connects all the characters in the novel is the failure. The author himself remarks that this is a novel with no winners, the one in which everybody fails or is defeated: "the drug users themselves, their closest relatives, the dealers, the accidental criminals, the whole familial and social community..." (Bitenc, 2007, p. 161). Accordingly, every character involved in drug abuse in some respect experiences a tragic fate, whether the tragedy befalls the characters themselves or someone close to them, regardless of the manner the drug problem is portrayed in the novel.

"Tommy was gone at the age of 25.

Pina's mom at 44.

Leo at 16.

(...) all of them were gone as a consequence of drugs: the user with the predictable ending, the mother eventually losing strength to keep fighting futile struggles and Leo's curiosity for acceptance" (Bitenc, 2007, p. 154).

Most of the problems with drug addiction are attributed to Tommy and Pina, a drama student, whose fates demonstrate that drugs are an addict's only preoccupation in life, for all they think about is how to get a new *fix*. We find out that Tommy has sold all of his family assets because of drug addiction; his life deteriorates over time and in the end he dies of an overdose. Pina's situation is depicted in more detail. In her case it was above all her personality that led to experimenting with opiates. "But I know myself: I am impatient. The sensations with snorting were not intense enough, then with smoking from aluminum foil the experience was not strong enough any more...

I had begged him, oh how I had begged for days... I was ready for a step forward... He talked me out of it, avoided me, went hiding, and then that too came to an end” (Bitenc, 2007, p. 22).

The causes of her problems are to be sought in the disturbed family dynamics. She grew up in a single parent family, only with her mother. The mother had tried to make up for the absence of the father by paying attention to her daughter and ensuring she never missed a thing, but she failed. The parenting style proves important for the family relations and later on for problems with addiction. Since the mother tries to be friends with her daughter she fails to position herself as an authority and this results in Pina’s not perceiving her as such, affecting the development of Pina’s personality. The mother, while successful in the public sphere (a notable teacher and writer), becomes increasingly secluded due to failure in the private sphere. She avoids socializing and spends time at the computer (that she also uses to write her own suicide note to the daughter). Pina blames the family situation on the mother, because the father abandoned them in spite of her mother’s kindness. It is evident from the mother’s suicide note and internal focalization that she is aware of the situation. She provided everything for the daughter and tried to ignore what she had got into because she did not have any strength left for her behavior and the problems she started causing. Eventually, she simply gave up having come to a point where she made the decision to leave this world in order to try to save Pina.

“I will wait no longer, because I cannot take it anymore! I cannot, my daughter! I give up! I tried everything, really everything, and it meant nothing to you. I have reached the end of my life’s struggle! Before your father left I was everything to you. After he left I was your mother and father. A difficult role, almost impossible, ungrateful. I did not intend to harm you in any way, nor to leave you wanting for a mother’s infinite love, or God forbid anything material” (Bitenc, 2007, p. 18).

“None of it meant anything to you. You emptied my heart and left a void in it” (Bitenc, 2007, p. 19).

The mother’s death at the end of the novel has a function because it leads to Pina’s sobering up and realizing she has to change. She goes to rehabilitation, manages to break free of addiction, later graduates from drama school and becomes an actress. In her case a family member meets a tragic fate in order for the protagonist, the one with the problem of addiction, to become aware of the reality and change accordingly.

The drug dealer Gerardo comes from a so-called respectable family of entrepreneurs where only one value counts - money. Gerardo feels neglected; psychologically his feeling of being overlooked is depicted and explained from his earliest childhood, from the death of his twin brother. The disregard he experiences in youth made him like his parents - hungry for money, insensible and with the aim to destroy his parents while hiding under the mask of a polite and sleek young man. Gerardo earns money by dealing drugs but is not a drug user himself, which serves as a warning against those selling drugs and earning good money, while not using drugs themselves,

because they know it could endanger their material success. At the same time they witness the miserable life of addicts on a daily basis. The ending of the novel results in a tragedy for him as well, though it is not him who dies, but the young Leo, being killed in a car accident caused by Gerardo. The tragic fate is a punishment for him, who brought death to many local addicts, besides Leo, causing misery to their families, but simultaneously it is a punishment for Gerardo's parents for not caring enough for their only son.

The unfortunate fact that any kind of drug use can end tragically is shown in the fate of young Leo who dies in a car accident. He encounters drug problems due to his wish to be accepted in a new environment. Even though he lives in a so-called substitute family with his grandmother, he comes from a "normal" family. His parents work in Switzerland in order to ensure a better life for him. He leaves Ivanić Grad to go to school in Zagreb and wants to make friends with the new kids, trying hard to fit in, so his experimenting with drugs is caused by his identity search and the wish to be accepted. His new clique from Zagreb is problematic and the reasons of their troubles again lie in the respective family situations. Sister Haš grew up in a dysfunctional family with a promiscuous mother, while Depra comes from a strict Catholic family. However, the parents got divorced when he was 15, which left a deep mark on him as a result of which he started experimenting with alcohol and soft drugs.

In this novel the family community presents an important factor in relation to addiction and drugs, showing that addiction emerges not only in one certain type of family and parenting style. The novel uses the contrast between growing up in a harmonious family that Solo comes from (with the usual occasional quarreling between parents) and growing up in families where the problems take on manifold forms - from the single mother who raises her daughter too permissively, the "Gastarbeiter parents" (migrant workers in Leo's case), the entrepreneurs interested only in money, the authoritarian family, to promiscuous and negligent parents. The boy who grows up in a more functional family does not have problems with addiction, but he encounters problems with fitting in with the young people surrounding him because he is polite and nice, obeys his parents and has to be home at a time the parents set, which sends signals about the difficulties the young individuals encounter during the formation of their identity in youth. The social situation proves to be of little or no relevance to addiction because the young people struggling with addiction mostly come from average social background (with respect to financial aspect).

In the novel *Zeleni pas* [The Green Dog] by Nada Mihelčić addiction is presented from the perspective of the addict's younger sister. The plot focuses on the breakdown of a family caused by the addiction of one family member. The novel shows not only the life of an addict and the problems he/she encounters, but also how the addiction of one family member can influence the whole family. The novel confutes the stereotypical opinion about an addict's family as necessarily problematic because it depicts an "average", well-off family of seven members, the parents, four children

and their grandmother. Zima (2012) notes that the convention of a family pathology usually appearing in novels for young adults that problematize addiction was avoided in this novel. The most responsible person for the problem of drug addiction is Vlatka, simultaneously the most dysfunctional and most privileged member of the family. The role of the parents is relativized in the novel because they do not have time for all the children but pay all their attention to the problem child Vlatka, the one struggling with drug addiction. This, however, leads to neglecting the other children and has certain consequences for them, but here the grandmother notices the parents' mistakes and takes over the care for the other three children. The family tries to hide their problems from their surroundings. Everyone experiences emotional crises that cause quarrels and misunderstanding. As Vlatka's addiction gets discovered by the surroundings the family becomes stigmatized: the younger sister, from whose perspective the novel is written, is suddenly being avoided; Robert, the brother, ends the relationship with his girlfriend, and the family starts accumulating debts. Živković Zebec (2011) concludes that the novel also presents a criticism of the society, of the prejudice and hypocrisy prevailing.

“The addiction center, my son, has a stigma attached to it, people avoid it like the plague, though they might say they understand and that it does not mean you, too, will take a wrong turn. (...) You are the brother of a drug addict and that is a mark you will be carrying from now on. The only comfort I can offer is that it is far worse to be the parent of a drug addict. Everybody will ask what kind of a mother I am, wonder how come I did not notice anything, why I did not do anything about it. They will say behind our backs that the kid must have been unhappy and neglected and that she sought comfort in the drugs. Dad and I are the ones who will be blamed for her life that is now possibly ruined for good”. (Mihelčić, 2009, pp. 106-107).

The novel ends tragically for the addict: Vlatka dies. At the same time this brings a catharsis to the family - sadness but at the same time a kind of relief. The strong message conveyed here is a conviction of addiction and drug dealers. “The message is powerful due to the perspective it is written from because it communicates the experiences and feelings of a person who has to bear the consequences, but not the blame for the tragic events” (Živković Zebec, 2011, p. 181).

Conclusion

Family is the sphere of primary socialization and the most important factor in the life of every person, especially of the young people who are only just in the process of identity formation. A disintegrating family, neglecting parents or the lack of parental presence (physical or emotional) affect the identity formation of the teenage characters. In the novels discussed here different family types appear and even though family pathology is dominant, not in all novels is addiction induced by family problems, but

is also influenced by the parenting style and the functioning of the communication within the family and the personality of the individual.

The problems with addiction arise from discontent with one's own life, from the lack of emotional and other kinds of attention within the family, from the search for one's own identity and the need and desire to fit in. In the novels *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails], *Čarobni Prosjak* [The Magical Beggar], *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble] and *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering] the young people find themselves in drug problems in the course of their search for a substitute for something else and an escape from their family issues.

The family types in which the young adults grow up range from a troubled and disordered family situation in the novel *Kad pobijedi ljubav* [When Love Prevails], growing up in a substitute family without emotions as presented in the novels *Čarobni prosjak* [The Magical Beggar] and *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering], an empty nest in *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble] to different examples of fragmented families in *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering], which leads to the conclusion that addiction does not appear only in one family type and is not related only to specific problems. At the same time the absence of family pathology is also not the crucial factor in escaping addiction, which recent sociological research shows. The parenting style proves relevant because the permissive parenting style in *Meko okidanje* [The Soft Triggering] also leads to problems with drug use, as does a change of location, the search for new friends and the desire to fit in, as described in the same novel. In *Zeleni pas* [The Green Dog] a "normal" family appears, the one that has no greater issues at the beginning, and the causes of the addiction problem lie in the individual family member with the problem. This novel sends a message of warning that addiction can happen to anybody anywhere, notwithstanding the family pathology.

The social circumstances (the financial aspect) did not prove to be an initiator of problems with addiction, except in *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble]. The young characters mostly grow up in families that live in average social and economic circumstances. Still, with the occurrence of addiction issues, the social situation within the family changes and the life of addicts is depicted as a life on the margins of society. If the people in their surroundings do not ignore them, they look at them with pity or loathing; only in rare cases do they help them. Institutions turn out to be inefficient and that is why there is an unhappy ending. Apart from *Miron u škripcu* [Miron in Trouble], all novels end tragically with regard to the addicts or their relatives. These are unambiguous messages of warning for the readers about the perils of drug use. Only in the novel by Anto Gardaš the brother and sister reunite and the tragic ending is prevented, which has a function of emphasizing the importance of the family community, regardless of the level of its integrity.

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Obiteljski i socijalni kontekst i ovisnost o drogi u romanima za mlade

Sažetak

Devedesetih se godina 20. stoljeća pod utjecajem književnih i izvanknjiževnih promjena u hrvatsku književnost za mlade unose nove do tada tabuizirane teme, a jedna od novih tema je i problematiziranje ovisnosti o drogi. U radu je na odabranom korpusu romana od 90-ih godina do danas istražen kakav se obiteljski i socijalni kontekst pojavljuje u romanima koji problematiziraju ovisnost o drogi i kako oni utječu na izgradnju identiteta pojedinca. U četiri analizirana romana: *Kad pobijedi ljubav*, *Čarobni prosjak*, *Miron u škripcu* i *Meko okidanje*, uzroci se problema s ovisnošću povezuju s obiteljskim problemima, a u romanu *Zeleni pas* izostaje obiteljska patologija. Obitelj koja se raspada, roditelji koje ne mare za djecu ili nedostatak prisustva roditelja (fizički ili emotivno) utječu na izgradnju identiteta likova tinejdžera. U svim je romanima život ovisnika prikazan kao život na rubu društva. Okolina ih ili ignorira ili sažalijeva. Rijetki im pomažu, a institucije se pokazuju kao nemoćne. Upozoravajuća je funkcija proučavanih romana u nesretnom kraju koji zahvaća ovisnike ili članove njihovih obitelji, a izostaje samo u romanu *Miron u škripcu* u kojemu se afirmira važnost obiteljske zajednice.

Ključne riječi: književnost za mlade; ovisnost o drogi; slika obitelji; socijalni kontekst.