

## Jasna Šego: “The Extinguished Light of the Stipančić Family. The defeat of the yearnings and hope in the context of family decline”

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### **Abstract**

Vjenceslav Novak’s novel, *The Last of the Stipančićs* (1899), has intrigued the public and literary criticism until the present day. The Stipančić family includes the father Ante, mother Valpurga, son Juraj and daughter Lucija. Lucija is a girl confined within four walls, who has her girlish dreams, and who aspires to, and hopes for, a better life, wishing to realise her right to happiness, love and a life worthy of a human being. Lucija lives in a patriarchal society that has its strict rules, the disrespect of which is drastically punished. After the rebellion against her marginality, deprivation of her rights, confinement and neglect, and ill from tuberculosis, exhausted, weary, exploited, cheated, betrayed, left alone and disappointed, Lucija dies. The fate of Lucija, Valpurga, Ante and Juraj Stipančić embodies the fall of the patricians of Senj due to political, social and economic conditions in Senj in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Key words:** decline, patriarchy, Stipančić family, disempowerment, tragedy

### **Introductory considerations: The framework and methodology**

Literature describes the possible world. The themes and problems with which it deals are often entrenched in reality; literature reflects the individual and collective experience, but that experience is shaped in a literary form. In the novel, *The Last of the Stipančićs*, Vjenceslav Novak moulds the family in question on the basis of actual existing people and the social, political and economic problems that gripped Senj in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This article aims to show the ruin of the Stipančić family from Novak's novel, with a particular emphasis on the character of Lucija Stipančić. Methodological approach is inspired by the structuralist approach to characters, the cultural studies approach and the feminist interpretation of the concept of the patriarchy by S. Abede as well as Foucault's theory of power and the theory of A. Thomalle on the influence of the pre-Raphaelites on authors at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

According to the structuralist viewpoint, character is the central element of literary structure; it is the bearer of events, views, understandings and is part of life shaped in a literary manner. In the meeting with the literary character, structuralists do not pose the question of truth; they understand the character as probable in specific literary circumstances. In that sense, the literary character is observed as a being with emotional, ethical, rational and active characteristics and is observed independently of his or her creator (he or she is the bearer of ideas that need not be those of the author). Structuralists consider the literary character to be the result of the author's experience – of actual life material and literary imagination: he or she is an invented person created on the basis of actual existing material, i.e. really existing people so that he or she is therefore probable and convincing.<sup>2</sup> The characters formed in *The Last of the Stipančićs* are precisely like that – probable and convincing with regard to the real life in Senj in Novak's time.

The achievements of cultural studies can be of help in the analysis of characters; this is an interdisciplinary and methodologically pluralistic study of specific content that endeavours to link the ideas of several

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<sup>1</sup> Buzov (1996): 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> Šego (2008): 3.

disciplines (the studies of literature, history, sociology, philosophy and so on) in the analysis of culture as the way of life of specific human communities. Cultural studies use the ideas of deconstruction, feminist criticism, postcolonial theory and so on, but also the results of sociological research and philosophical theories, particularly those that deal with the problems of ideology and the repressive actions of power and authority in the areas of life and culture. It is easy to detect the model of patriarchy in the novel, *The Last of the Stipančićs*. In his theory of power, Foucault defines power as:

*“... the multitude of relations of forces that are immanent to the area in which they are being manifested and which form their organisation; as a game, which, through continuous struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens and rotates that multitude; a support mechanism that these relations of forces find in each other so that they create a chain or system or even discrepancies and contradictions which mutually separate them; and finally strategies in which they become active, the general form or institutional crystallization of which is embodied in state apparatuses, in the formulation of laws and in social hegemony.”<sup>3</sup>*

Foucault introduces the concept of the ‘regime of truth’ in cultural theory. The regime of truth determined the knowledge of male and female identities – who men and women are and what they should be. With the aid of Foucault’s theory of power, it can be demonstrated that pedagogical, medicinal and other discourses produced the truth concerning the nature of men and women.

Feminist criticism, which poses questions on how texts portray women and how they define sexual differences, etc., is also very useful in the interpretation of selected characters. In analysing the selected problems – the extinguished aspirations and hopes of Lucija Stipančić, Valpurga’s calm acceptance of the denial of her rights, the relations in the Stipančić family and its decline – the article have posed the following questions: are the heroines fettered or free? Are they active or passive? How do they confront problems? Do they master them or are there

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault (1994): 65.

obstacles? What is the status of women in the society of the described world of the novel? Do women see their happiness in men and/or in someone/something else? Do women have ideals? How is marriage portrayed? Is the woman in marriage satisfied and happy? Has the woman given up something? Why? What is the economic position of the female characters? Are the women victims? What sort of illnesses do they suffer from? How is the relationship between mothers and daughters portrayed? Has a woman been offered the opportunity to speak? Do the women oppose the men? Has the problem of female emancipation been touched upon?

The pluralism of methods enables a more thorough, encompassing and deeper understanding of the selected problems. As a fundamental theoretical basis, the article observes S. Abede's explanation of the concept of patriarchy.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of her considerations we have shaped a methodological framework for the interpretation of the aforementioned problems of the novel, particularly the fate of the main female character – Lucija Stipančić.

### **The oppressive patriarchal system**

During the long history of humanity, men have dominated women. Women were identified with nature and the earth. Androcentrism imposed the logic of domination and oppression of men over women. The patriarchal system held women to be lower beings, less worthy than men and throughout history many innocent women across Europe were killed because of misunderstandings, prejudice and misogyny. They were also denounced as witches and the assistants of the devil. This was all reflected in the art of words, so prejudices toward women and stereotypes about them entered literature.<sup>5</sup>

The word 'patriarchy' literally denotes the rule of a father or patriarch and was originally used for the description of a specific type of family that was dominated by a man:

*“... the large household of the patriarchy encompassed women, younger men, children and servants – all were governed by the aforementioned dominant man ... It is*

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<sup>4</sup> Abeda (2010/11): 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Šego (2008): 8.

*now used more generally and relates to male dominance in the relations of power between men and women and for the designation of a system in which women are held to be subordinate in many ways.”<sup>6</sup>*

In a patriarchal system the biological differences between men and women are stressed. In such a social system characterised by hierarchical relations, women are subordinate to men, and men dominate women and behave oppressively toward them.

The patriarchal cultural legacy of Antiquity and the patriarchal Biblical discourse has always impressed an important stamp on western European and Croatian culture. The patriarchal discourse shaped the desirable picture of men and women, where female nature is viewed from an essentialist perspective in a patriarchy. The ideal woman was supposed to be humble, meek, obedient, quiet, hardworking and God-fearing; in that way it could be possible to keep her in a subordinate position within the masculine order of power. In a patriarchal system, the woman is pressed into the space of the home, while the man has a monopoly over the woman's body in the marriage. In this article, amongst everything else, it is also touched upon the patriarchal system of a possible world within *The Last of the Stipančićs*. In contrast to the mother Valpurga – a submissive, subordinated and self-sacrificing woman who calmly and obediently accepts her role of wife, mother and housewife, her daughter Lucija rebels and fights for her dignity and yields in that fight. An androcentric culture attaches to women the characteristics of weakness, tenderness, obedience and the roles of wife, mother, sister, daughter, etc. Binary contrasts are revealed: man – woman, strength – weakness, domination – subordination (the first member of the contrast is, naturally, ‘privileged’). How are the characters in the novel shown? How do these characters understand themselves? How do they behave?

The article will focus on the characters of Valpurga and daughter Lucija and touch upon the characters of the father of the family Ante, son Juraj, M. Tintor, a young man platonically in love with Lucija, and Alfred, who seduced and then left Lucija, and who is a destabilising factor of the novelistic action. Lucija's mother Valpurga, once a member

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<sup>6</sup> Abeda (2010/11): 2.

of the privileged class, dies as a beggar. The father Ante is the embodiment of pride, arrogance and the sense of higher value because of which he will also suffer. The son Juraj is the ‘prodigal son’ and ruin of the family, an anational Croat, wilful and indifferent toward his mother and sister.

Systematically analysing the concept of the patriarchy, Abeda emphasises its characteristics: “*strength, domination, hierarchy and competition (...). The patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.*”<sup>7</sup> The patriarchal system considers male features to be strength, bravery, superior authority, while female ones are meekness, subordination, obedience, love and empathy. Female movement in a patriarchy is limited, and women do not have the same possibilities or the same rights as men who have actually taken possession of all power. Abeda explains the problem of subordination in the following way:

*“The concept of subordination relates to the inferior position of women, and to their impossibility of accessing specific sources and impossibility of decision-making, as well as the patriarchal domination to which women are exposed to in the majority of societies. As a result, female subordination means the inferior position of women in relation to men.”*<sup>8</sup>

The words and syntagms that are linked to the word ‘subordination’ are usually discrimination, exploitation, oppression, the lack of the possibility of education for girls, the lack of freedom and prohibition of movement of women in public and male control over women and girls.

In the patriarchal system men control female sexuality, reproduction, ownership, i.e. property and movement. And the society in which the story of *The Last of the Stipančićs* is occurring is explicitly patriarchal. Women do not participate in the socio-political and economic life of the town of Senj, their place is in the private sphere, in the house as in the Stipančić family. After his return to Senj from Europe, a shipowner Ante, the son of well-to-do tavern-keepers, a man of rich life experiences, married a woman almost half his age, the inexperienced

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<sup>7</sup> Abeda (2010/11): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Abeda (2010/11): 7.

Valpurga from the Domazetović family. In marriage they receive a son, Juraj, and six years later a daughter Lucija. The father favours Juraj and neglects his daughter, maintaining that a woman's place is in the home, alongside the husband and children, so that he need not invest in her education. Valpurga completely submits to her husband's will and obediently accepts her assigned role of wife, mother and housewife. Ante manages the finances and fairly unsuccessfully attempts to participate in the political life of Senj, currying favour with this and that authority, so as to secure an honourable place in society.

The narrator of that period explains the subordinate position of women as an outcome from the Croatian contact with the Ottoman Turks and the adoption of some Turkish patterns of behaviour toward women:

*“... the domestic life in the Stipančić household was ordered – with regard to rights and duties of men and women – according to the ways of the Orientals: Valpurga and Lucija felt in a more eminent position toward Veronica and the other young servant-girl, because they sat at the same table with Stipančić and Juraj. This was according to the spirit of the time, and it is easy to conclude that the contact of our people with the Turks through a long period affected that subordination of women. The subordination of women also acquired a more explicit character in the Stipančić household through other circumstances: the great difference between Ante Stipančić and Valpurga in age, his peculiar temperament, and especially his conceited education in contrast to his wife, who would be bestowed by the recognition of an extraordinary education by her time, if she knew how to read and write and if she was skilled in speaking a language other than her native one, and, what is more, if she read novels.”<sup>9</sup>*

In this patriarchal society, Lucija lives isolated, unrealised and disappointed; in such conditions she cannot discover her talents, abilities and possibilities. She reads literature that has been forbidden by her father such as German novels and short stories. Lucija creates an image of the ideal man who will free her from a stale, cocooned life and lead

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<sup>9</sup> Novak (1998): 71.

her to a better world. When Lucija became acquainted with Alfred, she began to idealise him. Alfred manipulates Lucija and toys with her. For Alfred, Lucija is only an object that helps him to more easily bear the boredom of life in Senj. Alfred is egotistical, unfeeling and cruel; Lucija becomes deeply disillusioned with love and is taken very ill. After Alfred's departure from Senj, Lucija hopes that he will return for her and lead her to a more beautiful world and that she will become his wife. That, however, does not happen. In response to the news that she is pregnant, Alfred sends Lucija an abortive remedy that she consumes and further hopes for Alfred's return. Her hopes are 'rewarmed' by her mother who persuades Martin Tintor, who is platonically in love with Lucija, to write letters in Alfred's name. Soon after discovering the sham behind the letters, Lucija dies.

Lucija lives in a conservative society in which the roles of men and women are defined in advance as the identities of men and women are comprehended in an essentialist manner. Men are held to be strong, brave, active, and enterprising, while women are weak, quiet, 'invisible', obedient and submissive. The 'regime of truth' demands that Lucija completely subordinates herself to the authority of her father, brother and Alfred, who used her as a sexual object. Lucija lives in an authoritarian society with firm moral norms, and disregard for the morals of that society resulted in drastic punishments. The moral norms of that period prohibited premarital sexual relations. Lucija, an unmarried girl, engages in sexual relations with Alfred and the punishment is heartless – an early death. Nobody came to save Lucija from the chains of patriarchal discipline, instead of happiness she experienced deep disillusionment, instead of dignity she felt shame, and in the end she was punished for her naivety. The 'regime of truth' has thus functioned, and because Lucija did not submit to it she was punished by death.

Instead of accepting things as they were, Lucija questioned the values of the patriarchal society. Instead of being humble and obedient to her father, Lucija rebelled against his authority. Instead of respecting the permissible moral boundaries, she transgressed them. Although the narrator sympathises with Lucija, and even though he does not condemn but understands her, he also shows that the patriarchal norms of society in which Lucija lives are relentless. Lucija is condemned to death



because of her behaviour.

### **The themes of decline, atmosphere and relations in the Stipančić household**

The theme of the decline of the patriciate as a consequence of socio-political and economic changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is one of the numerous and diverse themes dealt with by Vjenceslav Novak. Mate Ujević writes that Novak's novel shows the 'economic decline of the wealthier patrician families linked to the changes of economic paths'.<sup>10</sup> Vlatko Pavletić stresses the influence of the wider context on the individual fate of the characters:

*“The Last of the Stipančić is a model of a novelistic diachronic picture of the ruin of a patrician family in Senj with a parallel account of the development and rise of the bourgeois class. With regard to that the writer touched upon economic, social, political but also ethical questions, and, frequently, the immanent fates of the main individuals of the novel, who are exposed to humiliations, moral agony, de-nationalisation under foreign rule, compromises and, finally, moral collapse due to the objective situation, but also due to class prejudices. In the psychological layer we discover the idea of the futility of the struggle for the integrity of the human personality amidst inhumane conditions; this is a story, a real drama, but also an accusation at the same time.”*<sup>11</sup>

The members of the Stipančić family are strict: the complicated and unrealised father Ante, the infantile, helpless and devoted mother Valpurga and the brother Juraj who leaves for schooling in Vienna and grows distant and alienated from his family. Unlike her mother Valpurga who accepts her subordinate position and dependence on her husband, Lucija opposes her father and fights for her dignity.

Lucija and her father Ante do not achieve a harmonious relationship and, in fact, though they live under the same roof, they do not really know one another. Ante cannot penetrate Lucija's inner

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<sup>10</sup> Ujević (1941): 273.

<sup>11</sup> Pavletić (1996): 253.

personality. Father and daughter do not understand one another at all and do not succeed in getting close to one another, something which they both in fact regret. The mother attempts to intercede with her husband on Lucija's behalf, but, unfortunately, without success. All of the father's attention is directed toward the son Juraj whom he sent to schooling in Vienna. The father expects a great deal from Juraj and he sends him almost his entire fortune. Juraj will, however, become the material and moral wrecker of the family and a vagabond. On the eve of his death, the father Ante will receive news from Juraj that he has passed his final law exam, but he will fall in debt, force his mother to sell her house and give him the money from the sale, and later he will even lose his national identity and change his name.

Lucija is in a 'state of war' with her father. With his talk on the danger of the loss of a maiden's shame, Ante insults Lucija. Valpurga vindicates him, explaining to Lucija that he is irritated because he has not received good news from Juraj. The mother urges Lucija to forgive her father. As Ante becomes ill Lucija 'grows wings.' When she sees her feeble father, the 'delight of revenge' appears in Lucija, but when she realises that her father is fighting with death she repents and starts to pray for him before the figure of the Mother of God. Before death Ante recognises Lucija's worth in front of Valpurga. While Valpurga is at the mass, Ante breathes his last breath in Lucija's arms. Father and daughter therefore passed the communicative path from estrangement, misunderstanding, neglect, and emotional coldness to repentance, mourning because of their behaviour toward one another, understanding, rapprochement and conciliation.

Lucija and Valpurga are isolated from the external world. Their only mediator of town news is the servant-girl Gertruda. Lucija comments on their isolation: "*Look, the whole town could burn down, and we two wouldn't know anything.*" Lucija lives "*chained like a slave*". She yearns for a better world: "*the beautiful dark eyes looked thoughtfully somewhere in the distance; without doubt her thoughts wandered somewhere, where it was further, bigger and happier than that dark, unhappy and narrow little room*".<sup>12</sup> Observing Alfred's photograph Lucija revives her illness, her loneliness, and her compression between

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<sup>12</sup> Novak (1988) – citations from 32, 33 and 37.

four walls; it seems to her that she will suffocate and she wishes to end her pain. Nevertheless, within her appears the desire for new possibilities, for communication and hope in a better life: “(...) *maybe you will take me out there, where there is the wide world, where there is light, where real, live people move!*”<sup>13</sup> Lucija cries over herself, is appalled of her thin body and is conscious of her lost youth, abandonment, isolation and therefore appeals to death.

Making use of A. Thomalle’s interesting and convincing theory on the influence of the English pre-Raphaelites on the authors from Decadent movement in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dragan Buzov remarks that these authors were attracted to the weary aristocracy condemned to ruin, so that the fragile woman is in fact the embodiment of the dying nobility. The figure of the fragile woman, Buzov notes, is a symbol of the coming end of the ailing and refined aristocracy condemned to an early death.<sup>14</sup> Such a figure is precisely Lucija Stipančić. Novak moulded her to show the downfall of the Senj patricians in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lucija is fragile and delicate, dark-haired and pale, a girl who suffers from tuberculosis, but like the pre-Raphaelites, the illness does not distort her beauty. Lucija will appear sublime and beautiful even in agony.

Juraj Stipančić arrives in Senj after an absence of nine and a half years from his parental home. He returns home as a complete foreigner and prodigal son who drives his mother to sell her home so that he can return his debts with that money. With his squandering Juraj ruins his family, he does not care about his mother and sister and is completely indifferent towards them. Juraj brought to Senj his friend Alfred, who has an excellent knowledge of how to treat women so that he quickly conquers the heart of the inexperienced Lucija. Lucija confides to Alfred that she has a ‘secret’ admirer who sends her Petrarchan sonnets written in calligraphy. She translates them from Italian and Alfred ‘ marvels ’ at her reading, voice and translating skill. Alfred’s ‘ phrasing ’ seems attractive to Lucija. She was convinced that Alfred loved her and that he would open new worlds for her and be her ‘ saviour.’

From Juraj’s letter to his friend Muki we learn that Alfred is a good

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<sup>13</sup> Novak (1998): 39.

<sup>14</sup> Buzov (1996): 94-95.

actor and so he skilfully seduced Lucija; the brother, however, does not care about his sister's fate and does not even attempt to convey the real truth about Alfred to her and open her eyes to recognising his deceit. In the letter to his friend Juraj also writes that his sister is prone to phthisis, but that he is indifferent toward her. After Alfred's departure from Senj, Lucija withers, becomes sensitive and irritable, does not have an appetite and is easily angered. She becomes conscious that she is a victim of a scoundrel.

Valpurga has lived in Ante's house like a 'free slave.' She has unquestioningly carried out all his commands and has completely filled thoughts with the wishes and needs of her husband. She admired his erudition and 'worldly' experience. Valpurga was sorry that her husband treated Juraj and Lucija differently. She has lamented to her servant Veronika: "*My God, why are we women in the world? There you see, all the worries of the father go to the son, but it's as if this poor young woman is not our child.*"<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, Ante held that a woman should be a loyal wife and gratify her husband and therefore should not have the same rights as a man.

After Lucija's conflict with her father for reading 'illicit' literature - German novellas - Valpurga wishes to be a conciliatory mediator between father and daughter. However, Ante chides Valpurga for not raising Lucija well. Valpurga wishes to open her husband's eyes to see the beautiful, good and intelligent Lucija, who is their only daughter. Tubercular Lucija hopes that Juraj's friend Alfred will marry her, free from vegetating between four walls and take her away to a better and more beautiful world. Unfortunately, that does not happen; for some time, mother feeds Lucija's illusions, persuading Tintor to write Lucija a letter in Alfred's name. When Lucija uncovers the sham, she completely deteriorates and dies. Valpurga dies two years after Lucija as a beggar.

The attentive mother is full of love toward Lucija. When they are severely impoverished, Valpurga's only food becomes bread merely because she offers Lucija a better morsel. Mother is aware that the 'fraudulent letters' could kill Lucija and that it is a "*vulgar sham, a*

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<sup>15</sup> Novak (1998): 74.

*lie...She deceives her own child.*"<sup>16</sup>

The seminarian Martin Tintor is platonically in love with Lucija. He sends her Petrarch's sonnets, expressing his love and predilection. Valpurga implores him to write letters to Lucija in Alfred's name so as to keep her alive and refresh hopes that Alfred will return and take her away to a happier world. This correspondence lasts several months, while Lucija becomes suspicious of the identity of the sender, which is shown to be correct. Lucija considers the content of the letters to be naïve, while their words are 'saccharine' and empty. Martin visits Lucija just before her death. In her agony Lucija seems like an angel to him and Tintor considers her to be a sublime being and a divine work of art. After her death, Martin returns to the seminary.

Novak uses the verses from Dante's *Inferno* – "*there is no greater sorrow / than to be mindful of the happy time / in misery*" – to 'motivate Valpurga's memory of Senj's past, her parents' home and the days of childhood'. Kaštelan emphasises that the atmosphere of tragic fate takes a hold of not only Valpurga but also the remaining members of the Stipančić family:

*"But the presence of a Dantean tragedy does not only characterise the mother Valpurga, but also all the characters, conflicts and atmosphere of fate, agony and ruin of the last patrician family of Senj. The cited verses stand as a prologue in the work. The shadow of tragedy and the nearness of death become the emotive and cognitive starting point of the novel. This stage is ruled by fate, destiny and the law of continual changes."*

Kaštelan adds the following point to the argument of the ruin of the family: "*Splendour is transformed into squalor, wealth into poverty. Only the dignity of death remains. The catharsis of whiteness.*"<sup>17</sup>

To summarise: beside the decline of the father and son, the novel shows the unhappy and disempowered lives of the mother and daughter, their experiences and reactions to the course of life events:

*"The characters of the mother and daughter are*

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<sup>16</sup> Novak (1998): 40.

<sup>17</sup> Kaštelan (1978): 8-9.

*portrayed as two tiny flamed fires in an atmosphere of dying, two live coals on an extinguished hearth, and two symbols: the mother, as a symbol of tradition, and the daughter as a symbol of youthful enthusiasm and fettered freedom. They are juxtaposed to the dark male characters. The tragedy and absurd game of life is reflected in the fate of Lucija. Her sacrifice is the hardest because her enthusiasm is elevated as the ideal flame of love and beauty. Lucija is consumed by the flames of her youth as a wax-candle that flashes before it is extinguished. The mother Valpurga disappears silent and invisible before the white mask of ruin. They close the circle of fate.”<sup>18</sup>*

Ante, the head of the family, made all the members of it the victims of his nature and his pride and arrogance. “*Nevertheless, the biggest victims of Ante Stipančić are his children Juraj and Lucija.*”<sup>19</sup> All the members of Ante’s family (including himself) paid dearly for his arrogance and feeling of greater worth. Actually, the whole family has expiated because of Ante’s behaviour.

### **Lucija’s rebellion and Valpurga’s obedience**

The character of Lucija Stipančić is a fragile one that we are analysing in correlation with other characters – with her father Ante and brother Juraj, Alfred Ručić, Martin Tintor and her mother Valpurga.

Lucija Stipančić lives in a patriarchal family. “*From her earliest childhood Lucija was denied a free and unfettered experience of the world, completely isolated in her house.*”<sup>20</sup> She lives and develops in a family that is in decline influenced by the aforementioned wider economic and socio-political conditions, in other words, the overall changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Stipančić household includes two men – the father Ante and son Juraj – and four women – the mother Valpurga, daughter Lucija and two servant-girls. V. Jurdana explains Lucija’s comprehension of the world in that milieu through subjectivism: subjective knowledge is a:

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<sup>18</sup> Kaštelan (1978): 13.

<sup>19</sup> Jelčić (1996): 21.

<sup>20</sup> Jurdana (2002): 270.

*“... perspective in which truth and knowledge are understood as personal and private, subjectively known or intuited (...) that leads to the subjective understanding with which the subject is convinced that real answers truly exist – only the source is in another place.”*

Jurdana writes the following on subjectivist women: *“They are personalities of a rich internal world to which they have turned after negating the answers offered by the external world.”* She further portrays these women in more detail:

*“Subjectivist women do not have formal education, they frequently grow up without paternal protection because their fathers have neglected them, or they had parents who suffocated their curiosity or they punished them for asking too many questions (which was the case with Lucija). They come from unstable families in which there is no support and aspirations to success. Lucija and Valpurga remain completely alone at the moment of the family’s decline.”*

Regarding the relationship of the subjectivists toward authority, Jurdana also writes:

*“Subjectivist women most frequently spent their whole lives searching for some reliable authority with which to link themselves. According to Freud, the woman develops the psychological characteristic of dependency on the love of another (...) She cannot be alone because of the fear of loss. Women frequently experience failure and disappointment in that search. But the search continues so that, if it is not the father, then perhaps it might be this boy or that husband. The common line that is strongly emphasised in the narratives of these women is the picture of male authority which they described as the authority that deserted them.”<sup>21</sup>*

With regard to the way Lucija shapes her picture of men Jurdana writes: *“Lucija creates a subjectivist and idealised picture of a man (Alfred) who will change her life.”* Lucija was in her opinion: *“like the majority of*

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<sup>21</sup> Jurdana (2002): 272.

*subjectivist women betrayed by all the men in her life: firstly, her father, brother and then the man who should have become her husband.”* Jurdana considers Lucija’s ethics to be an ethics of responsibility: *“Her ethics are ethics of responsibility. She is emotive with a marked feeling of dependency and the need for love, gratification and sympathy.”* Lucija’s consent to an abortion is interpreted by Jurdana as a desire to gratify Alfred: *“Through the morality of relationships and responsibility for another person as well as feelings, concern and respect for others and toward others, Lucija wished to bring about universal values of life.”* The same scholar interprets Lucija’s motivation for abortion as:

*“... when the parcel arrives, she takes the remedy for abortion because she thinks that it is being sent by a man who loves her as much as she loves him. The abortion and the way in which she performed it is the hardest defeat for her ethics.”<sup>22</sup>*

Lucija lives in a logocentric and phallogocentric world of prejudices and stereotypes. She is marginalised and neglected in her family, which makes her frustrated and unhappy. Lucija also suffers from tuberculosis, and is lonely and isolated from the external world. In fact, she observes the world from the perspective of a captive.

Lucija endures injustice; her father favours Juraj, while he completely neglects her making her estranged from father and brother. Sometimes she is in conflict with her mother and does not communicate with people of her own age, so Lucija’s experience of the world remains fragmentary. Confined in the house, Lucija escapes into her interior, into the world of imagination. What is inaccessible in the real world is partly substituted by literature. Lucija cannot discover her potential in a cramped world because there is no opportunity to do so - she is a girl with broken wings. Her name means ‘light’ (Latin: *lux*). She yearns for light and warmth, health and happiness and communication. In other words, she yearns for a true life. Delicate and fragile, without life experiences, Lucija fell in love with the youth Alfred, her brother’s friend who becomes her hope for deliverance from the life she leads, and is the embodiment of her ‘future’ happiness. This unscrupulous and

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<sup>22</sup> Jurdana (2002): 272-74.



immoral youth brutally plays with Lucija's feelings, for him she is a mere thing, a means for satisfying his urges. A skilled actor, Alfred easily deceived the inexperienced Lucija.

Jurdana is convinced that:

*“Vjenceslav Novak does not even once leave a trace of suspicion or controversy about her fault and sin. One should seek those categories in other places in the novel. It is a question of the patrician stratum of citizens, which is inexorably decaying, and with it the outdated way of life and completely untenable interpersonal relations. The only fault of Lucija Stipančić is that she wanted to change those relations prematurely and craved too much to bring about some different and completely new relations.”<sup>23</sup>*

Finally, Jurdana argues that Lucija's decision to abort was the result of her understanding of the worthlessness of further living:

*“With the act of abortion she expresses her attitudes on the value of life, which for her no longer has any value. It is no longer sacred, untouchable and worthy in and of itself. It is polluted by disappointments and betrayals by those who should have been the last ones to betray her. In such circumstances death assumes a completely different significance.”<sup>24</sup>*

It is also interesting to read L. Gjurgjan's review of Lucija's conduct:

*“In spite of her sin, Lucija is not shown as a fallen girl. On the contrary, she is a strong personality, a fighter for her rights, imprisoned by the petty bourgeois mentality that surrounds her – the too strict father who gives her brother everything and nothing to her, a brother who is raised to love only himself but to hold others, particularly women, in contempt.”<sup>25</sup>*

The explanation of the relationship between the home and society and

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<sup>23</sup> Jurdana (2002): 279.

<sup>24</sup> Jurdana (2002): 277.

<sup>25</sup> Gjurgjan (1998): 10.

the entry of Alfred's character into Lucija's world is also interesting:

*"The relationship between the home and society runs parallel with the relationship between the town of Senj and the European metropolis of Vienna, and so the entry of the external actor (Alfred) in Lucija's untouched world is identical with the pernicious social influences of the economic centres of the Monarchy on smaller urban environments."*<sup>26</sup>

Lucija is a fragile, sensitive and disempowered girl:

*"Lucija is in fact the projection of the psychological-emotional stresses of a girl raised in a distinctly patriarchal sense, deprived of some basic human dimensions, who, in a conflict with reality, experiences a mental shock. Concentrating the best part of the novel around the character of Lucija, Novak describes, in a very condensed form, all the objective causes that will lead the girl to a personal tragedy: that was the starting point of the best pages in this book in which Novak's ability to enter into the complex psyche of Lucija came to full expression, and in the meticulous descriptions of the break-down of her first love, desecration and personal traumas which necessarily had to end with death."*<sup>27</sup>

Dubravko Jelčić excellently portrays the scale of Lucija's sensibility as a disempowered and degraded personality:

*"(...) the magisterial character of Lucija Stipančić, the deepest and most complex female character in the entire Croatian literature of the 19th century. Her intimate drama is accompanied by various psychological registers, spiritual metamorphoses and emotional gradations in a range from smothered feelings of fear, neglect and deceit to the turbulent and nervous reactions of an unhappy soul that yearns for life, youthful strength and love. Her soliloquy before the picture of a man that deceived and dishonoured her is full of internal drama*

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<sup>26</sup> Perica (2008): 674.

<sup>27</sup> Šicel (1982): 106-07.

*originating from the tension between illusory hope and total disillusion.”<sup>28</sup>*

Unlike her daughter Lucija in whom emotions are of a great range, from subtle and quiet to turbulent and destructive ones, in Valpurga it is as if the internal world has become completely still. She is an example of a woman completely subordinate to her husband. She has repressed her own desires and does not live for herself but for others. Jelčić holds that she voluntarily accepts her sacrifice:

*“She is the true sacrifice of Stipančić’s egoism and his vanity. But she is conscious of her sacrifice, so that she consciously accepts it, without reproach and without resistance, and I would say without great moroseness.”*

Living for others, Valpurga has completely lost herself, and she considers her position as ‘defined’ and established in advance (and to which she should completely adapt to). Jelčić portrays her convictions in more detail:

*“Valpurga is convinced that she is fulfilling the duty and destiny of women, the unwritten law that she is obliged to subject herself to, but also because she really was blinded by the authority (or ‘authority’) of her husband, in whom she never doubted. Valpurga is an example of a self-sacrificing woman who has suppressed all her inclinations, personal desires and feelings within herself; she is the figure of a woman without her own internal world, without her will, indeed without her intimacies because she has completely submitted herself to her husband and children.”<sup>29</sup>*

Valpurga is the embodiment of the type of domestic angel who quietly and obediently accepts her fate:

*“Valpurga is an example of a well-known type of woman, and not only from that period, who is infinitely devoted to her husband and has trust in him even when she feels, somewhere in her depths, that he might not deserve it:*

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<sup>28</sup> Jelčić (1997): 131.

<sup>29</sup> Jelčić (1996): 21.

*she defends her stance with the thought, which she firmly believes, that she can neither comprehend his thoughts nor penetrate his reasons. She completely endures disempowerment as her fate.*"<sup>30</sup>

Lucija is raised to be silent and to quietly accept her fate (like all women of that time). Behind that silence, however, frustrations flared up. From time to time those frustrations escalated into arguments with her mother. Marginalised and neglected, Lucija wished to live a life worthy of a girl her age, and she wished to love and be loved. She sincerely loved Alfred, while he toyed with her. Lucija wished to leave the house in which she felt like a prisoner, but she did not succeed in achieving her ideals and dreams. Intuitively, but also on the basis of having kept company with Alfred, she knew that there existed a more beautiful, better and happier world. Lucija searched for her own identity, but since she was isolated from the external world, it was difficult for her to create her own picture of herself. Lucija is influenced by her environment, family surroundings, her illness and the fact that her movements are limited.

According to the norms of the patriarchal society of the time, Lucija is a 'fallen', in other words, 'morally fallen' girl; it was held, according to the standards of the time, that a girl had to be 'innocent' before entering into marriage, i.e. she has to undergo her first sexual experience within marriage. D. Jelčić has remarked on the motif of the 'fallen girl' in novels:

*"Novak has stripped the 'motif of the "fallen girl"', which is very frequent in the literature of the 19th century, of sensationalism and retained it within a chambered framework. Lucija is simultaneously a symbol of sacrifice and rebellion, whereas her moral purity grows with the humiliations and insults to which she is exposed. She writes out her protesting 'J'accuse' in the name of all humiliated and disempowered girls who are deprived of their right to life and happiness. In fact, her fate and the fate of the remaining members of the Stipančić family reveals the reverse side of civic morality and patriarchal upbringing."*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jelčić (1996): 20.

<sup>31</sup> Jelčić (1997): 132.

Thanks to Alfred Ručić with whom she has fallen in love, Lucija expands her views. He is her 'window into the world' and in her meeting with him gains an awareness of the restrictiveness of the circumstances in which she lives. Regarding this problem, C. Čuljat writes the following:

*“Juraj’s friend Ručić is the bearer of news about the life of the metropolis and a connoisseur of literature, so that, through his stories, Lucija is immediately attracted to him. The transmitted views of the external world help to fortify Lucija’s comprehension of the restrictiveness of her own circumstances.”*<sup>32</sup>

Alfred brings with him the spirit of the metropolis and the presage of a completely different life to the one led by Lucija.

With regard to Lucija as a heart-broken and disempowered personality Dragutin Rosandić writes the following:

*“With the most dramatic power the love drama of Lucija Stipančić is expressed. That dramatic episode of the novel gradually acquires a sensational character with the involvement in the action of the theologian Tintor and the creation of the love triangle (Lucija, Alfred and Tintor). The outcome of the events is based on emotional gradation (the deaths of Valpurga and Lucija). The drama of the story is not only based on external effects, since the internal drama that gives the work a tense and anxious tone is more significant. The characters get into mutual conflicts and internal clashes. Such internal clashes are most obvious in the figure of Lucija Stipančić. In her are merged beauty and the enthusiasm of a maidenly spirit, the tragedy of a heart-broken and disempowered person who must be suppressed from the earliest childhood, the painful prance of her sensibility and the drama of illusions. Throughout the entire novel she fights for her human emancipation in vain. In that, she is hindered by her tyrant father who has become emotionally dull and her brother who has become completely dehumanised. In his psychological portrayal of the characters Novak showed extraordinary skill. He*

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<sup>32</sup> Čuljat (2012): 196.

*enters in an analysis of the darkest flickering of the human interior and discovers a corresponding expressive form.*"<sup>33</sup>

D. Rosandić notices Lucija's subtlety, sensibility, refinement, and the fine nuances of her inner self:

*"Lucija is revealed in direct reactions, intimate soliloquies and in nervous quivering that makes itself heard in dialogues. In the first chapter of the novel, which is saturated with the atmosphere of an extinguished life, the most dominant figure is precisely that of Lucija."*

While she despairs of her fate and contemplates Alfred's photograph, her monologue is:

*"... a cry for life, for truth and for love. This intimate wrestling of a person with her own wishes, illusions and impossibilities is decanted in ebullient trembling sentences, which, with their lexical and syntactic organisation, achieve a particularly dramatic lyricism shorn of pathos."*<sup>34</sup>

Lucija is restless and tense. She cries for love and happiness:

*"Lucija is all trembling. All considerations cease. She accuses and protests led by a lively conviction of her failure. Her speech ends with a scream. All the internal tension of her heart-broken personality is realised in an unusually strong dramatic intensity."*<sup>35</sup>

Dubravko Jelčić compares the internal world of the mother and daughter:

*"If we could say that Valpurga experiences drama without dramatic quality, because that dramatic quality is absent, since Valpurga alone, voluntarily and unselfishly consented to it, (...) Lucija's drama remains*

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<sup>33</sup> Rosandić (1963): 212-13.

<sup>34</sup> Rosandić (1963): 213.

<sup>35</sup> Rosandić (1963): 214.

*in her as her own intimate drama overflowing with powerful tensions and stormy crises. Precisely this fact, that it happens in a closed world, on the chambered stage of Lucija's soul, concentrates all those mental shocks, creates a new intensity and furnishes her with a rich, almost inexhaustible spectre of psychological nuances, from hope to hopelessness, from serenity to submission, from love to despair, and those moods, according to which Lucija is today ranked amongst the most graphic female characters in the Croatian novel of the 19th century, follow one another with dramatic unpredictability and abrupt, violent turning-points from moment to moment, refuting and simultaneously stimulating one another.”<sup>36</sup>*

In this section we have attempted to show the sensory world of Lucija Stipančić in correlation with her father, brother, Alfred and mother Valpurga in a phallogentric and logocentric patriarchal world, and Lucija's desire for freedom, for a departure from the cramped milieu of Senj and for sincere human communication. She experiences a rich scale of feelings: from longing, hope, expectation, the desire for love and happiness, and for a more beautiful, better and brighter world, to disappointments, rage, bitterness and despair, while Valpurga quietly accepts her fate, completely submitting and subordinating herself to her husband. Lucija's soul quivers while Valpurga's soul lies still. Lucija rebels, while Valpurga accepts the situation as it is. Lucija fights for her dignity and happiness, while Valpurga consciously sacrifices herself for those closest to her. Both, however, die.

### **Realist and modernist characteristics and value judgements on the novel**

Vjenceslav Novak received real recognition only after his death. He was not honoured during his life as he deserved. Comparing him to other story tellers of Croatian realism, Ivo Frangeš argues that Novak is: “*at any rate (...) the most productive and the most comprehensive.*”<sup>37</sup> It is a fact that in his literary work, Novak encompassed a wide range of themes

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<sup>36</sup> Jelčić (1996): 22.

<sup>37</sup> Frangeš (1996): vii.

such as Senj and its surroundings, Zagreb, patricians, citizens, the marginalised, the poor, humiliated and disempowered, the departure of people from Senj to foreign countries, the echoes of Illyrianism and the national awakening of Senj, struggles with the authorities, human backwardness, new fads, begging, comprehension of morals and honour, etc. Antun Barac observes that Novak sought to publish in all the journals of his time, and “*in the time of the struggle between the ‘old’ and ‘young’ he leant towards the “old” in order not to be ejected from Matica hrvatska – even though it was evident that according to his work he belonged to the progressive part of the youth.*”<sup>38</sup> Barac calls Novak the “*poet of Senj and Podgorje*”<sup>39</sup> and holds that *The Last of the Stipančićs* is the best Croatian novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dubravko Jelčić notes that, during Novak’s lifetime, neither the public nor critics particularly cared for him and stresses:

*“... that amongst our realist writers only Novak understood his task to enter into life more deeply, to bring out all the diversity and contrasts of its phenomena and to express the reality and tendencies that are generated in it, equally in the village and city. He does not offer his projection of life, but gives life itself. He is not a writer with a thesis because a thesis in a literary work is an expression of the author’s subjectivity. Novak is a writer objective in the observation and experiencing of the perceived.”*<sup>40</sup>

Jelčić holds that Novak is the “*most productive*” and “*stylistically most read and most homogeneous writer of Croatian realism.*”<sup>41</sup> Jure Kaštelan considers that Novak is rightly called the ‘Šenoa of Senj’ and notes the great worth of his novel: “*The Last of the Stipančić signifies not only the most expressive novel in the Senj cycle, and not only Novak’s most complete work, but also one of the key novels in Croatian literature.*” He defines its place within a stylistic formation: “*In the context of Croatian realism, The Last of the Stipančić signifies penetration into new themes and the expansion of a literary manner that combines lyrical, narrative*

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<sup>38</sup> Barac (1997): 17.

<sup>39</sup> Barac (1997): 12.

<sup>40</sup> Jelčić (1996): 91.

<sup>41</sup> Jelčić (1996): 7.



*and dramatic representation.*"<sup>42</sup>

Realism in European literature encompasses the period from 1830 to ca. 1870/80, in Croatian literature it is considered to begin in 1881 with the death of August Šenoa, and to last until 1892 when Matoš publishes his story, *Moć savjesti* ('The Power of Conscience'). Nevertheless, we should not regard the aforementioned years as a strict time frame because literary historians do not agree on this question and also due to the fact that realist tendencies were still present in Croatian literature when Croatian modernism began.<sup>43</sup> Speaking of the stylistic formation of Realism, Gjurgjan emphasises the following:

*"We recognise the stylistic formation according to the principle of typicality, as well as in the capably performed psychological motivation of the characters conditioned by their milieu and inheritance, in the interaction of the individual and the society that limits and determines the fate of that individual and the logical causal sequence of events in which every character has to fulfil his or her fate until the end."*<sup>44</sup>

Writing about Novak and the stylistic characteristics of realism, D. Rosandić observes the following:

*"In theory and creative practice, the aspiration for overcoming the romantic conceptions of literature has been revealed: the affirmation of realism in the 1880s shows itself in the penetration of social themes in literature, in the application of new creative procedures, which represses the surviving, romantic narrative technique of historical-idyllic short-story writing that indulges in the cultivation of exciting stories and external effects. The prosaic production of the 1880s is based on the deeper social motivation of the creative procedure."*<sup>45</sup>

Rosandić also argues that it is precisely in Novak's works that the

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<sup>42</sup> Kaštelan (1978): 9-10.

<sup>43</sup> Horvat (2017): 225.

<sup>44</sup> Gjurgjan (1998): 8.

<sup>45</sup> Rosandić (1963): 207.

continuation of Šenoa's tradition is most noticeable – more noticeable than amongst the remaining Croatian realist writers. In his works he penetrates into the most expressive areas of life and stops mostly at the fate of little people – the victims. Due to the orientation toward the most diverse thematic areas, Rosandić emphasises that Novak “gave the most complete picture of Croatian social, political, cultural and moral life.”<sup>46</sup>

M. Jurković considers *The Last of the Stipančićs* to be “a precious document of our critical realism.” Through the characters of Valpurga and Lucija, Novak portrays the ruin of a class, in other words, Novak, according to Jurković, condemns that class to ruin:

*“With the characters of Valpurga and Lucija Novak has accused the Stipančićs more heavily than when he portrayed them alone. More heavily because these two female characters were born from that basic sentimental fund which fed the poet’s fantasy in this book. The Stipančić’s illusions of grandeur and haughtiness, their refusal to go down – because the time has come – amongst the patricians of “bean-growers and vintners” condemned these two women, a mother and daughter to noble misery, ghastly under a brilliant quilt of disappearing wealth. In our littoral towns, in Novak’s time and later, many such Valpurgas and Lucijas and the offspring of old, “armadura” families were dying, hiding their poverty before the world, broken and trampled down by the transition from sailing ships to steam ships. (...) The figure of Lucija is one of Novak’s highest, if not the highest, poetical attainments.”<sup>47</sup>*

Besides the characteristics of realism, critics have also noted the characteristics of modernism in *The Last of the Stipančić*:

*“The novel is nevertheless not focalised through the consciousness of a one-eyed character so that it masters, through a narrative tissue, the consciousness of the omniscient narrator, whose exposition bears the considerable traits of Šenoa’s literary concept. However, perceived within the framework of Croatian*

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<sup>46</sup> Rosandić (1963): 208.

<sup>47</sup> Jurković (1951): 12.

*realism, the novel gives the first signs of prosaic modernism. The story is frequently slowed down by descriptions, forms of memoirist prose, diary entries and commentaries that function as social and psychological characterisations of the characters.*"<sup>48</sup>

D. Rosandić also recognises the closeness to modernism in Novak's work:

*"He reveals that which is the most painful and most intimate in a human being's life. This interest for the individual human problem brings him closer to the generation of modernists. The psychological material in Novak's work announces a new comprehension of life that brings him closer to contemporary literary sensibility."*<sup>49</sup>

Cintija Čuljat also detects the interweaving of the realist and modernist traits of the novel:

*"The author's realist fabulation is combined with modernist techniques that support the changes of the internal landscape of the novel's protagonists. The history of the family that is put forward by the objective narrator receives its counterpoint – a study of the state of the characters through epistolary fragments, the intermediary exchange of thoughts and communication with the help of literary models (Lucija, who reads passages from Klopstock's Der Messias and parts of the Old Testament to her father when he is at the point of death) (...) The mixed feelings of the female part of the Stipančić family, Juraj's disorientation and divided aims and Ante's search for his own identity break through the narrator's condensed fabulist sequence."*<sup>50</sup>

Milivoj Solar also mentions, along with an evaluation of Novak's work, the presence of realist and the recognition of the modernist traits of the novel:

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<sup>48</sup> Perica (2008): 673.

<sup>49</sup> Rosandić (1963): 209.

<sup>50</sup> Čuljat (2012): 184.

*“Due to the successful psychological analysis, particularly of the female characters (Lucija Stipančić), the interweaving of the author’s retrospective narration with an internal monologue and inserted letters, and convincing analyses of social processes in a spatially and temporally determined work, the novel occupies a high place in the epoch of realism in Croatian literature, and one can even discern the characteristics of modernity in it.”*<sup>51</sup>

At the centre of the novel *The Last of the Stipančićs* is the ill-fated girl Lucija Stipančić, isolated, neglected, misunderstood, and in search of herself and her own happiness. Numerous critics emphasise Novak’s skill in shaping Lucija’s character. Slobodan Prosperov Novak writes:

*“Novak described the ill-fated love story of Lucija brilliantly and with stylishness, creating the most touching female character in the literature of the period. The fall of Lucija, who was fed with hope by her mother, falsifying the love letters which she expected in vain, is at the heart of this worthy and very dramatic family novel which Novak freed from anecdotage so dear to his contemporaries disinclined toward his realism.”*<sup>52</sup>

Rounding off his review of Novak’s work, D. Jelčić writes that *The Last of the Stipančićs* is: “perhaps the best novel of Croatian realism and undoubtedly the most mature”, the “summa of his life perspectives and literary skill.”<sup>53</sup> With a refined view and sharp observation, Kaštelan emphasises that Novak is: “an authentic observer, original story-teller and portraitist of life.”<sup>54</sup> Some critics recognise Novak’s skill in shaping a novelistic composition:

*“(…) his stories are told carefully with a considerable feeling for composition so that Novak, who was otherwise a professor of musical harmony, narrated not following a chronology of events but made use of interpolations, and enlarged the space between the time*

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<sup>51</sup> Solar (2011): 334.

<sup>52</sup> Prosperov Novak (2004): 131.

<sup>53</sup> Jelčić (1997): 158.

<sup>54</sup> Kaštelan (1978): 13.

*of the narrative and the time of the narrator.*<sup>55</sup>

Frangeš also praises Novak's skill in composing a prosaic discourse:

*“The composition of characters in the family Stipančić is properly ideal. In essence the novel is a tragic quadrangle, carefully well balanced: father and mother, son and daughter, in other words, husband and wife, brother and sister or two men opposite two women and two youths (so different!) opposite two old persons (also completely different) and mutually opposed.”*

The same author emphasizes Alfred's figure as the fundamental factor of Lucija's destabilisation:

*“Then a fifth figure appears, the brother's colleague and friend, the cause of the main misfortune: he pays court to Juraj's sister Lucija, seduces her and she – a classic bird in a cage – in that fortress of coldness and lack of comprehension, for a moment wishes for life, love and the wider world. But, while every character in the novel has some way out, or at least the semblance of a way out, only Lucija, the unhappy Ophelia of this drama, has everyone against her: her father and brother and her unscrupulous chosen person – everyone, even herself. The only one who sincerely, albeit completely hopelessly, loves her is the young cleric Martin Tintor, who also wishes for love and the free life, and when, after all entanglements, Lucija dies, Martin calmly returns to his previously chosen priestly calling.”<sup>56</sup>*

In this section is panoramically demonstrated assessment of the interweaving between the realist characteristics of the novel *The Last of the Stipančić* (the principle of typicality, the psychological motivation of the characters, objectivity in the narration, the penetration of social themes in literature, the review of a wide spectre of themes) with modernist ones (the slowing down of the story with descriptions and commentaries, epistolary, diary and memoirist entries in the function of

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<sup>55</sup> Prosperov Novak (2004): 133.

<sup>56</sup> Frangeš (1996): xiii-xiv.

the social and psychological account of the characters, the interest for deeply intimate problems and so on). The section also mentioned the more important evaluating judgements of relevant Croatian scholars who have emphasised Novak's exceptional feeling for composition, his skill of penetrating the psychology of the characters, the authenticity of his observations, the quality of his narration and so on.

### **Conclusion**

In this article is shown the unhappy fate of the Stipančić family, its decline and the intimate drama of its members, particularly the drama of Lucija Stipančić. Her life was observed in correlation with the strict, patriarchal, demanding and complicated father, the humble, obedient, infantile and inexperienced mother Valpurga, the faltering and indifferent brother Juraj, the unscrupulous youth Alfred and with her 'secret admirer', the artless son of a stonemason and seminarian Martin Tintor.

In the patriarchal milieu of marginalised and cramped Senj in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lucija did not have the opportunity to discover her abilities and talents, develop her potential, and worthily shape her identity. She fought against deep-rooted prejudices, and against her captivity and disempowerment; she fought for love, happiness and a life worthy of a human being but did not succeed. Lucija was disappointed by her strict father, indifferent brother, the mother who misled her and Alfred who toyed with her, finally succumbing to tuberculosis. Although the narrator had understanding for Lucija, and though he sympathised with her unhappiness and with her suffering, he demonstrated that the patriarchal society is inexorable and that the one who oversteps the permissible boundaries of patriarchal morality must suffer.

The heroines of the novel, Lucija and Valpurga, are fettered in the very society in which they live. They economically depend on the breadwinner of the family Ante Stipančić, live in a patriarchal society in which women are placed in the private sphere of the 'home and hearth' and do not participate in public life. Valpurga calmly and obediently accepts the assigned role of wife, mother and homemaker completely devoted to her duties, and unquestioningly indulges her husband and

carries out his commands. She does not have many life experiences and has not learnt to confront problems in life. During Ante's life all important decisions have been made by him and he also attempted to solve family problems. Valpurga's duty was to raise the children, organise the household work, obey Ante, be subordinate to him and fulfil his demands. Lucija rebels against her marginalised position, isolation and disempowerment, against her father's rigidity and strictness and fights for her right to happiness. Unfortunately, she succumbs in that struggle, neglected, deceived, let down and abandoned, crushed by tuberculosis, disappointment and despair.

On the basis of the analysed problems, it is possible to attempt to provide answers to the questions posed in the introductory section of this article: Valpurga did not live for herself but for others. We do not learn anything about her ideals. Lucija dreamt of a man who would deliver her from the stuffiness of Senj. The marriage of Ante and Valpurga is shown as a community of man and woman in which the man is absolutely dominant. Valpurga did not reflect too much on her happiness in the marriage and her state because she knew that 'it must be so'. She completely renounced herself in order to completely give herself to others. Valpurga, completely devoted to Ante's will, voluntarily sacrificed herself for the good of her family. Her sacrifice, however, did not bear fruit: Juraj materially ruined the family, and Lucija died from tuberculosis, while Valpurga herself died from heart disease under the Nehaj Fortress.

Our two heroines fatally succumb to illness with Valpurga additionally humiliated because she dies under a bedsheet as a beggar. After Ante's death, Valpurga and Lucija were abandoned to the care of servants. Valpurga is an attentive mother who practically starves so that she can give Lucija a better morsel. Although she does everything from the best intentions, Lucija accuses Valpurga of having isolated her from others. The mother does everything in order to keep her daughter alive, hence why she thought of the ruse with the letters, but unfortunately Lucija leaves the world of the living. Lucija struggles with her disease and her father's conceptions and prejudices, as well as her mother's illusions, brother's irresponsibility and indifference toward her and their mother, the mentality of the milieu in which she lives, and finally she

breaks, gives up her fight and departs the stage of this world.

Interweaving the ruin of a local aristocratic family of Senj with the individual drama of its members and the social, economic, political and moral factors that contribute to that ruin, Novak has left a considerable trace in the realism of Croatian literature, and the characteristics of modernism are recognisable (i.e. can be read) in his opus.

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### Sažetak

U članku se, u kontekstu obiteljskoga propadanja, prikazuje poraz čežnja i nada Lucije Stipančić, junakinje romana "Posljednji Stipančići" (1899.). Lucija živi u senjskoj patrijarhalnoj sredini, izolirana od društva, sputana u obitelji, razočarana u ljubav, iznevjerenih nada. U konzervativnom senjskom društvu uloge su muškaraca i žena bile strogo definirane. Muškarci su dominirali u svim životnim sferama, a ženama je mjesto bilo u kući (u kojoj su bile podređene muškarcima). Muškarcima se u takvome društvu pridaju osobine hrabrosti, jakosti, moći, superiornosti u odnosu na žene, a ženama podređenost, poslušnost, krotkost, pokornost, nježnost,

krhkost, empatija, ljubav. Ograničene u kretanju, žene se posvećuju ulogama supruga, majki, kućanica, vjernica. Radnja se romana temelji na uvjerljivim životnim pojavama (propadanje patricija, tj. propadanje obitelji, u pozadini su politička i klasna previranja, prodor ilirskih ideja, propadanje senjske pomorske trgovine i sl., što se povezuje s ljudskim sudbinama).

Živeći izolirana, životno neiskusna, nerealizirana kao osoba, Lucija u svojoj mašti stvara ideal muškarca koji će ju osloboditi okova skućene sredine. Zaljubljuje se u bratova prijatelja Alfreda pl. Ručića koji zlorabi njezinu naivnost i zanos, manipulira njome, iskorištava ju kao seksualni objekt, upravlja njezinom voljom (šalje joj abortivno sredstvo nakon što ga Lucija obavijesti da je trudna) te ju napušta. Lucijine nade da će se Alfred vratiti po nju i odvesti je u bolji i sretniji svijet (i tako postati njezinim spasiteljem) održava i "hrani" Lucijina majka Valpurga, nagovorivši mladića Martina Tintora da joj, predstavljajući se kao Alfred, piše (dakle lažna!) pisma. Ubrzo nakon što otkrije varku, Lucija umire.

Iz iskrene ljubavi i želje da ugodni Alfredu, Lucija je pobacila začeto dijete. Samim upuštanjem u izvanbračne seksualne odnose, a zatim i pobačajem, prekršila je stroge moralne norme patrijarhalnog društva (prema katoličkom moralu abortus je ubojstvo). Alfred pl. Ručić ugasio je svjetlo Lucijine iskrene, predane i nesebične ljubavi, obmanuo ju je, iznevjerio, iskoristio i odbacio. Gašenju Lucijina svjetla pridonijeli su i otac Ante (koji ju zanemaruje, a njezina brata Jurja favorizira), Juraj (koji ju ignorira), majka (koja ju obmanjuje). Bolesna, nemoćna, zanemarena, prevarena, odbačena, oduzeta prava na sreću i život dostojan čovjeka, umorna od nadanja, želja i očekivanja, Lucija umire. Sveznajući pripovjedač ne optužuje Luciju, dapače, razumije ju i suosjeća s njom. Ipak, pokazuje da se Lucijini postupci ne uklapaju u moralne norme tadašnjega društva. (U skladu s tim Lucijina bi se smrt, pored ostaloga, mogla tumačiti i kao posljedica kršenja spomenutih normi).

U Novakovu se romanu prepleću realističke značajke (načelo tipičnosti, psihološka motivacija lika, objektivnost u pripovijedanju, prodor društvene tematike u književnost, odnosno prikaz širega spektra tema) s modernističkim (usporavanje fabule opisima i komentarima, epistolarnim, dnevničkim i memoarskim zapisima u funkciji socijalnog i psihološkog prikaza likova, interes za dubokointimne probleme i sl.).