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Red Zora and Her Gang (*Die rote Zora und ihre Bande*) and the Croatian Canon of Children's Literature

Izvorni znanstveni rad / original research paper

Primljeno / received 1. 10. 2019. Prihvaćeno / accepted 11. 4. 2022.

DOI: 10.21066/carcl.libri.11.2.5



*Red Zora and Her Gang*¹ (orig. *Die rote Zora und ihre Bande*) is a 1941 novel by the German-Swiss author Kurt Held (Kurt Kläber), inspired by the Croatian mentality and Croatian history. While it was enormously popular in Germany, the Croatian translation was issued only in 2017. In this paper, we analyse the hypothetical position of *Red Zora* within the Croatian canon of children's literature established at the time the novel was written. *Red Zora* tends towards realism in shaping children's reality based on unusual adventures in common with the most dominant of children's novels so that it fits into the contemporary novelistic matrix, however with a distinctive detail – a girl as “gang leader” – which goes beyond the trends of Croatian children's literature of the time. The paper considers the hypothetical question of the possible influence of the novel on the development of Croatian children's literature regarding the construction of the female character.

Keywords: canon of children's literature, girl character, children's gang, children's novel, Croatian children's literature, *Red Zora and Her Gang*

The canon has become one of the imperative issues of contemporary literary research,² especially within the framework of children's literature where it not only

¹ Hereinafter we will use the abbreviated title of the novel, *Red Zora*.

² Cf. Kümmerling-Meibauer and Müller (2017). Throughout the world, especially within the framework of the Anglo-American and German community of researchers, the issue of canon was addressed some 30 years ago, but has remained outside any serious academic focus to this day among Croatian children's literature scholars (cf. Protrka Štimec 2008).

refers to the aesthetic value of the literary work but is also concerned with achieving and maintaining the reading interest of (younger) recipients.³

The canon can, potentially, be defined as a literary choice acclaimed by generations of readers based on three criteria: the aesthetically validated value of the literary work, ideological selection, and the choice of the audience. These three criteria do not have to be met simultaneously, so it is sometimes difficult to rationalise the selective choice of the audience with literary and aesthetic factors.

In Croatian children's literature scholarship, Berislav Majhut (2015)⁴ intensified contemporary discussion about the canon with his critical review of the history of children's literature by Milan Crnković (1925–1998). With an indisputably positive attitude towards the traditional heritage of children's literature history, especially towards Crnković's role in endeavours to achieve the autonomy of Croatian children's literature, primarily with respect to the attempt "to impose the model of unitary Yugoslav children's literature" (Majhut 2015: 200, 201), Majhut emphasises the need to revise some of Crnković's arguments. The attitude of contemporary observers towards the literary canon from the perspective of that time and the perspective of contemporary time and also in hindsight is in line with such revision. Marginal literary works, which have inconspicuously influenced the shaping of the canon, have thus come into the focus of interest. They can be observed as an option which could have paved a different route for the canon, considering the effects these works had in other places where they shaped a different canon of children's literature. This is confirmed by a study conducted by Berislav Majhut and Sanja Lovrić Kralj (2018) which emphasises the significant role of foreign literature, dominated by the German language, or its translated counterparts in the shaping of the reading audience and the consequential development of Croatian national children's literature.

Red Zora and Her Gang, originally *Die rote Zora und ihre Bande*, is one of the novels whose emergence raises the mentioned issue. It is a novel written by a Jewish German-Swiss author, Kurt Held, whose real name was Kurt Kläber (1897–1959), published in 1941. The novel was inspired by the Croatian territory and Croatian history. While it was considerably popular in Germany, it was first translated into Croatian only in 2017. The novel has been available in the territory of former Yugoslavia since 1952 in Serbian, in Cyrillic script (Prpić Rogić 2017: 11), and in 1979 it served as a model for a TV series in a German-Swiss-Yugoslav co-production (Prpić Rogić 2017: 13). Nevertheless, the novel remained unknown to the wider Croatian scholarly and reading audience. Internet sources list only a small number of research papers written by Croatian authors about the novel;⁵ they mostly report on the attempt of media popularisation which remained

³ According to Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, one of the definitions of children's classics defines them as relevant within a national literature or a specific language, playing a prominent role characterised by a special reflection and presentation of that era with their literary and aesthetic quality (2017: xi). The essential criteria of literary quality of children's classics include innovation, representation, the aesthetic design of language, simplicity, representation of the child's world of experience, imagination, polyvalence or ambiguity, and cross-writing (xii-xv).

⁴ See also Berislav Majhut and Dubravka Težak (2018).

⁵ The paper written by Iris Šmidt Pelajić (2019) tackles the issue of transfer of linguistic and cultural differences in translation and indicates the ideological basis of the novel.

within the limits of mere presentation in several similar newspaper articles. It is worth noting the research of intertextuality, intermediality and imagology (Narančić-Kovač 2017: 22) which focuses on the presentation of works in the media, since *Red Zora* was first introduced to the Croatian public on the stage,⁶ and its translated version⁷ was used for the tourist branding of Senj (Prpić Rogić 2017: 14; see also Turistička zajednica grada Senja 2020). However, any further elaboration on these lines would exceed the scope of this paper.

If we consider the theory of the implied reader and the response of the readership (Majhut 2005) as a significant factor in the reception and consequent canonisation of literary work, we can praise *Red Zora* for captivating the interest of the German audience,⁸ and, regardless of the cultural association with the “native [Croatian] territory” for the settings, we can only speculate on the effects the novel could have had on Croatian (children’s) literature. In addition, we can merely contemplate why *Red Zora* remained on the margins of Croatian literature or was even excluded from it.⁹

This paper aims to observe the novel *Red Zora and Her Gang* through the prism of the novelistic shaping of the canon of Croatian children’s literature of the time, including a view on the role of translated literature, especially with respect to the role of the central female character, a girl named Zora. This analysis raises a question which can only be answered hypothetically – whether *Red Zora* represents a recognisable potential that might have led to a different course of development of the Croatian children’s novel in the 1940s, given the significant deviation from the typical female character of contemporaneous Croatian children’s literature.

⁶ The author of this paper was first introduced to this novel through the media presentation made available by the association *Kliški uskoci*, which referred to its theatrical adaptation directed by Sven Medvešek, titled *Zora ridokosa* [Ginger-haired Zora] and performed at the theatre *Trešnja* in Zagreb in 2017 (cf. Kazalište Trešnja 2017).

⁷ As Iris Šmidt Pelajić points out, the translators and publishers of the Croatian translation claimed that they used the Serbian 1952 translation as a guide for the Croatian 2017 edition (2019: 412).

⁸ In Germany (and the rest of Europe), the novel was issued 30 times, and in 2008 a feature film was made based on the book (Prpić Rogić 2017: 13). There are articles about the activism of a female terrorist organisation established in Germany in 1970s named after the red-haired Zora which testify to the character’s expanding popularity (see University of Edinburgh 2017). Another interesting fact is connected with this story: a German named Horst Emmerich, who was a very private person, moved to Senj where he financed the schooling of a certain boy, so the first edition of the novel is dedicated to him (Prpić Rogić 2017: 16, 17).

⁹ The reasons for *Red Zora* to be introduced to the Croatian public with such a delay are still unknown, although socio-ideological restrictions and financial factors might have played a part. It is also possible that the policy of the former Yugoslavia believed that the Cyrillic version in Serbian of *Red Zora* was enough. The fact that the novel achieved its global acclaim after the 2nd reprint in 1950 could also be significant in this respect (see Vjetropirka 2017), because at the time, the Croatian book market, just like that in the rest of communist Yugoslavia, was mainly focused on Soviet literature (cf. Majhut and Lovrić Kralj 2018). On the other hand, it is possible that a string of coincidences denied *Red Zora* a significant impact on the Croatian literature of the time.

The issue of the literary canon

It seems that consensus about the widely accepted postulate for determining the literary canon is quite clear – works of artistic value, i.e. classics, deserve a place in the canon. This includes works applicable to everyone at any given period of time, i.e. works which surpass the discursive circumstances of different socio-political moments with the same underlying concept of basic human values. Such affirmative meaning is rooted in the very lexeme *canon* – “upright growing cane” (Protrka Štimec 2008: 11). Such a simplified approach is far from simplistic, since literature itself has not been adequately defined, let alone children's literature. In their recent book, Hameršak and Zima (2015) claim that any attempt to define literature results in aporias, and they present many efforts which have not led and, based on their claim, are unlikely ever to lead to a definitive conclusion. The difficulty of defining the canon stems from such a generally accepted viewpoint,¹⁰ specifically because certain literary works floating on the verge of literature sometimes find their way into the canon. Terry Eagleton's remark about the value-judgement of literature is also useful for considering the canon: “there is nothing at all whimsical about such kinds of value-judgement: they have their roots in deeper structures of belief which are as apparently unshakeable as the Empire State building” (1987: 25).

Eagleton, for the most part, guarantees the stability of the status of a literary work but also, by using the word “apparently”, he implies the illusive nature of the canon, and hence we deem acceptable Pavao Pavličić's (2018) argument about the canon being a trend. Pavličić presents the widely accepted dogmas as false by perceiving the literary canon as being subject to perpetual change. The belief in the possibility of “writing for eternity” has proven questionable (Pavličić 2018: 11). The phenomenon of novelty and originality has also turned out to be a false guideline in determining the canon, since excessive obsession with it resulted in an aversion to originality to the extent that imitation, i.e. the successful recycling of other people's work, at some point became the benchmark of originality. In addition, although Pavličić states that new elements must replace and remove old elements from the canon so that they can be physically absorbed, the selection criteria are vague (Pavličić 2018: 14, 15):

At that time,¹¹ it was impossible to discuss modern literature without referring to writers such as Joyce, Faulkner, Proust, Huxley, Camus or Mann. Today, these authors are barely even mentioned, even though they made their mark in eternity at some point. The only issue is whether they are still there, or if they have been expelled from eternity to make room for other, more recent authors. [...]. If we perceive eternity as a train, then we could say that the passengers are constantly changing on that train. To

¹⁰ The most recent works in the field of children's literature still tackle the issue of whether the specificity of children's literature should be emphasised or whether it should be considered an integral part of literature as a whole for the sake of authenticity (cf. Batinić 2013: 29, 34). It seems that these observations have been gradually surpassed due to the fact that children's literature is increasingly emphasised as a separate field in literary studies.

¹¹ The author refers to the period of some 50 years ago.

be more precise, some change and some stay. In the front carriages, passengers such as Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Gundulić are constantly travelling in peace towards their last stop whose destination is unknown. In other carriages, some people get off at the stations, while others get on. These new passengers, of course, share their fate with the old passengers while on the train and they are their equals – they can go to the rail car restaurant and rest in the sleeping carriage – but sometimes the guards (who are also changing) suddenly inform them that their tickets are no longer valid and request that they get off the train at the next stop. The stops become more frequent and the passengers rapidly change, pushing others out.¹²

Predrag Brebanović (2018) defines the canon as an “indicator term”, alluding thus to the issues agreed upon by most theoreticians: its fluidity and the impossibility to clearly define it.

Contemporary Italian theoreticians use several terms referring to the paradoxical nature of the canon: on the one hand, it is “polysemous, elusive (...)”, while, on the other hand, “considering the etymology of the term, it is proposed as a norm, rule, regulation”¹³ (Roncaglia and Solimine 2015: 6). It is impossible to deny ideological indication as an important characteristic of the canon,¹⁴ or the readers’ preferences, which makes the canon liable to subjective interpretations, rendering it the subject of continuous debate.¹⁵ The canon is, therefore, observed as a fluid space, moving “from the canon as an ideological residue, on the one hand, to the canon as the aesthetic climax, on the other hand”. We should not refrain from a more pungent observation of the “ideological constraint of the aesthetic evaluation of works of the canon” (Hameršak 2006: 95). Majhut’s observation regarding the history of children’s literature quoted above is an apt illustration of these viewpoints on the canon in children’s literature. By re-examining the relevance and the shortcomings of these overviews, primarily of Crnković’s review of children’s literature,¹⁶ Majhut (2015) indicates several disputable points which serve as a starting point for the majority of scholarly and professional overviews of children’s literature. One of these reduced literary production for children in the 1930s almost

¹² The translations of all the quotations from Croatian into English are by the translator of this paper.

¹³ Originally: “multiforme, sfuggente (...) si propone, fin dall’etimologia del termine, come misura, regola, prescrizione”.

¹⁴ The selection of the works of the canon has always been inseparable from the historical, sociological and cultural context; it resulted from different goals, questionable and unpredictable factors. Originally: “[...] è sempre stato (perfino nel caso dei testi sacri) risultato di scelte inevitabilmente influenzate dal contesto storico, sociale, culturale, da obiettivi diversi, da fattori discutibili e contingenti” (Roncaglia and Solimine 2015: 6).

¹⁵ “Un campo di battaglia costante” (Gabriele Pedullà, as quoted in Roncaglia and Solimine 2015: 9).

¹⁶ Majhut refers to Crnković’s paper written in 1971 on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Croatian Pedagogic-Literary Assembly (HPKZ) *Sto (i nešto) godina hrvatske dječje književnosti* [A Hundred Years (and More) of Croatian Children’s Literature] and to his book published in 1978 titled “Hrvatska dječja književnost do kraja XIX. stoljeća” [Croatian Children’s Literature by the End of the 20th Century]. He noted that disputable claims dominated even before Crnković revitalised and reaffirmed them (Majhut 2015: 192).

exclusively to Mato Lovrak's works,¹⁷ without taking into account the wider picture and its diversity, which may have shed different light on the overall perception of the canon. Instead of observing the canon from the perspective of its totality, there was a biased approach which should be considered in contemporary research (Majhut 2015: 197):

Crnković referred to the period between 1933 and 1956 as "Lovrak's age". Lovrak was supposed to serve as a transition between pre-war and post-war (WWII) children's literature. However, under the pressure of ideology in communist Yugoslavia, the entire present-day view of the literary production for children in the 1930s has been reduced exclusively to Lovrak. This entirely distorted the perception of 1930s' literature, since it accounted only for socially engaged children's literature, whereas the rest of children's literature, with its unprecedented prolific production and incredible diversity of genres and extensive and palpable interaction with neighbouring media areas was entirely erased from literary memory.

However, Stjepan Hranjec does not question the canonisation of certain authors. By explaining the periodisation of the dominant theoreticians of children's literature (Milan Crnković, Joža Skok, Ivo Zalar), he noted a connection between them in a way that "certain periods are shaped and formed with respect to their dominant representative and the work of this representative, i.e. the stylistic and thematic innovator who most prominently represented the active literary period of the time; in other words, the one who offered a new stylistic path in different societal conditions" (Hranjec 2009: 17). Hranjec did not rebut the infiltration of ideology into literature; he noted the negative repercussions that made the book "an obedient, terrified and very disciplined servant who served everyday political purposes, burdened by a black and white perception" (Hranjec 2009: 19). The fluidity of the canon is confirmed by the fact that Ivan Kušan's novels were, at the beginning, rejected by publishers in Sarajevo with the excuse that they lacked artistic and pedagogical value (Hranjec 2009: 33). In other words, the innovators of the canon were often rejected at first, and it frequently occurred that they simply disappeared from the canon after having persevered for so long within it.

The reasons for canonising a literary work are most often socio-politically conditioned, even when this is not conspicuously done. Consequently, contemporary research has increasingly indicated that the formation of the canon was influenced by the totality of the cultural events in a particular area, in addition to national, foreign and translated literature. Therefore, we can terminologically distinguish two terms: (1) the Croatian canon of children's literature (which would include books written in foreign languages that were read in Croatia and translated literature) and (2) the canon of Croatian children's literature (which would include books written originally in the Croatian language).

¹⁷ Mato Lovrak (1899–1974) is the author of the children's classics *Vlak u snijegu* [Train in the Snow] and *Družba Pere Kvržice* [Pero Knobble's Gang]. He is considered by some literary historians as the founder of the Croatian realistic novel for children, which is why he is denoted by critics as a turning point in the development of the Croatian children's novel. Like most teachers of the time, Lovrak observed the relationship between children's literature and pedagogy (cf. [Majhut] 2012). For more information on Lovrak, see Hranjec (2006: 71–79).

On the Croatian children's canon in the period of *Red Zora*

The first mention of the children's novel in terms of the terminological definiteness of genre,¹⁸ often indicated in the paratext of the literary work, dates back to the 1930s (cf. Zima 2011, Majhut 2005). We should point out that contemporary researchers of Croatian children's literature acknowledge the indisputable influence of the literary tradition on the shaping of the children's novel in Croatia (cf. Majhut 2005, 2015). As a result, such formulation concerning the beginnings of the Croatian children's novel can only be considered accurate to a certain extent.¹⁹ Referring to *Šegrt Hlapić* [The Marvellous Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice] by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Majhut indicates the author's knowledge of the literary tradition of "non-existing" novels which enabled the development of the first "official" children's novel in Croatia (Majhut 2005: 23):

Crnković claims that, at the end of the 19th century, there were still no signs of the Croatian children's novel. On the contrary, we believe that it abundantly existed, although not so much in the physical sense as in the preparedness of the audience, their expectations, conventions and narrative strategies mastered by the audience, even in their satiation with boredom.

Until the arrival of the first "official" children's novel, the children's novel had already existed as a lengthy narrative with generalised characters, children devoid of identity, as defined by Zima (cf. 2011: 11–34). We are referring here to the considerable influence of the adult world, the patterns of behaviour of adults, and on the shaping of children's reality. The child is devoid of any formative elements of a typical child-like identity, which mainly refers to the importance of children's activity and the role of the child as a key instigator of action. The examples where a child demonstrates proclivity towards independent and active behaviour show that the child is merely reduced to a function (Zima 2011), idealised and/or ideologised with the aim of idealising desirable social and/or ideological conduct. Majhut's conclusion about some three hundred novels by different international authors translated into Croatian and some eighty novels written by Croatian authors by 1945 testifies to the literary production which should have influenced the ensuing paradigmatic model of a novel, although he noted that the protagonists in these novels did not express their own opinions "without fearfully glancing at the adult character in the background" (Majhut 2005: 26), i.e. the protagonists spoke in the voices of social authorities – school and the church.

Referring to the reader, Majhut concluded that the children's author should have a clear perception of the model recipient (child), i.e. the intended reader (2005: 80).

¹⁸ On the role of paratext, see Buljubašić 2017: 20.

¹⁹ Different theoretical approaches to determining the poetics of the children's novel stem from different perceptions of its historical development – there are several approaches to the temporal and stylistic classification of the children's novel (cf. Zima 2011: 11–18, Vrcić-Matajija 2018). Even though each of them has some disputable points, the fact remains that contemporary research inevitably questions the firmly set paradigms of previous researchers (cf. Majhut 2005, 2015).

Deriving from such a viewpoint, we can conclude that the perception of the child as a model to be shaped by the social authorities of the time influenced the shaping of the first children's novels. Gradually, the perception of the child changed as a result of change in the social discourse (cf. Vrcić-Mataija 2018: 33), which led to a proliferation of individualised characters in the children's novel.

The Croatian literary canon encompasses the totality of the literary endeavour translated and originally written in the Croatian language. It may also include books in foreign languages that were read across the Croatian ethnic space, because they also significantly influenced the formation of the reading audience's consciousness and the desirable model for new works. The coexistence of such a triangle – literature in the national language, translated literature, and literature in foreign languages – is an intrinsic part of the cultural heritage of the Croatian ethnic space fragmented across different state unions. Analogously, the novel *Red Zora and Her Gang* is observed from a dual position: (1) with reference to the Croatian translated literary canon, and (2) with reference to the canon of literary works created in the Croatian language. The literary canon is always on the border of ideological determination; it not only includes aesthetically valuable works, but also works that have had a significant impact on national literature.

The aim of such an approach is to try to provide an answer to the hypothetical question about why there was no need for the translation of *Red Zora*, which was widely accepted in the German cultural space, across the Croatian territory at the time, despite the very strong influence of German literature on Croatian children's authors. It should be noted that the paper is structured on a consideration of the said hypothesis in the light of the cultural discourse of the time, even though the author is aware that there is no conclusive or precisely justifiable answer. The aim of the paper is, therefore, to raise debatable issues whose answers will (possibly) be provided in the future.

Red Zora and the Croatian translated literary canon

The author believes that it is most appropriate to consider *Red Zora* as part of the translated canon, even though children's literature written in Croatian is usually received alongside literature translated into Croatian. Moreover, as already mentioned, translated literature often influenced the formation of children's literature written in the Croatian language. The translated canon in Croatia at the time *Red Zora* was written will be considered below.

The German-speaking and cultural area has traditionally influenced the Croatian cultural space due to its long-term state and legal attachment to Croatian territories (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) (cf. Majhut and Lovrić Kralj, 2020). The appearance of *Red Zora* coincides with the formation of the new state. Nominally, the ideology of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH²⁰) emphasised the importance of books in the public discourse (cf. Glavačević 2017), which can be considered a general ideological paradigm

²⁰ NDH is an acronym for the Independent State of Croatia, which will be used hereinafter.

(because books, along with the media, are one of the strongest means of conveying ideological ideas). We have, therefore, every reason to expect that the NDH, like any other state, used all available means to disseminate its own ideology. The data confirm that many books were printed, varying in format and quality, and many cultural events were held in the Independent State of Croatia. Dubravko Jelčić (1995) also points to a kind of apparent paradox – the fact that the politically repressive regime was “enviously tolerant in the cultural domain” (Jelčić 1995: 522), further claiming that ideological imperatives that were publicly proclaimed mostly in magazines were not necessarily dominant in practice. Although Jelčić elaborates on this hypothesis by pointing to the concrete, rich and valuable production of Croatian literature during the Independent State of Croatia, we obtain new information from his review about the translated literary endeavour (cf. Jelčić 1995: 523). He states that the cultural space of the Independent State of Croatia was not closed to cultural workers of Serbian and Jewish origin (cf. Jelčić 1995: 524). In view of the above, it can be concluded that, nominally, there was no political obstacle to the translation of a (children’s) book written by a Jewish writer such as Kurt Held. However, there may not have been a place for the translation of a book that, regardless of the origin of the author, implies a critique of the existing regime (cf. Mikota 2014). Recent research on the subject confirms Jelčić’s claims, but also indicates that the NDH regime, just like any other, always proclaimed the content that supported its agenda; the difference is only at the level of implicitness or explicitness. This has been confirmed by a number of titles tackling the subject of censorship to which Glavačević (2017) refers in his work. In addition, in the said paper, the author unequivocally claims that censorship in the NDH was “very systematically elaborated and thorough” (Glavačević 2017: 11). One of the means for achieving this was by establishing library control, which, among other things (cf. Petrač 2017: 12), encompassed books written in Serbian and published in Cyrillic script and books of “unsuitable content”, which, more specifically, included books written by Serbian writers, Marxist books, pornography, books of hedonistic content, and books that Germany considered unsuitable (cf. Glavačević 2017: 14). *Red Zora*, considering its author and the critique of national socialism, could have been such a book. The novel was published in 1941 by the publishing house Sauerländer in Switzerland, where the author lived with his wife as a dissident having defected from Germany. This fact may be observed as relevant when considering why the novel was not translated into Croatian during the NDH regime.

If the propaganda of the Independent State of Croatia was a possible obstacle to the translation of *Red Zora* in the Croatian territory at the time it was written, the climate of the 1950s, when it was eventually translated into Serbian and published in Novi Sad, i.e. on the territory of the former Yugoslavia to which Croatia belonged at the time, was evidently still not quite favourable for the novel in Croatia itself. Soviet literature was the desired model for the translated canon, and Croatian translators and publishers followed it. The topics covered by Soviet literature reinforced the desirable ideological image in a similar way as in the Independent State of Croatia. *Red Zora* was not particularly interesting reading within the framework of “suitable topics”. The

tradition of the novel about an orphan had been familiar in Croatian territory from earlier times, but at the time of *Red Zora* such a novel was not a preferred model for translation. The novelty introduced by *Red Zora* is a children's gang that appeared in Croatian children's literature in the 1930s, complementing the tradition of novels about orphans: "novels about children's gangs represent a sort of deviation from the dominant adventure novels and novels about orphans" (Majhut and Lovrić Kralj 2020: 161). After 1945, the topics in novels declined both in number and scope. In addition to omitting undesirable content in translations, such as the Christian affiliation in the translation of *The Paul Street Boys* (cf. Majhut and Lovrić Kralj 2020: 165–171), publishers propagated a very specific topic – a happy childhood in socialist Yugoslavia (Majhut and Lovrić Kralj 2020: 184):

1) Children should be carefree because the Communist Party and Tito have ensured a happy childhood for them, i.e., they are protected from hunger and the financial worries of adults. 2) Children have the right to a proper childhood. Unlike pre-war childhood when child labour was often exploited, everyone was provided with equal opportunities for education, which enables children to become a future member of a socialist society.

The main character, a girl named Zora, was just the opposite – she represented the dark side of childhood, one of the unfortunate orphans left to their own devices, and to dehumanised society. As a result, *Red Zora* remained on the margins and has been revived only recently, in a period which favours the novel due to new cultural trends (the revival of national identity in pursuit of self-determination within a dominant globalist cultural paradigm).

Red Zora and the literary canon written in Croatian

If we wish to observe *Red Zora* in relation to the literary canon written in Croatian, the novel may be juxtaposed with the trends of the time in children's literature in Croatian. It inevitably relied on the foreign models mentioned above, bearing in mind the cultural specifics which, despite the foreign influences, became part of the (exclusively) national literary tradition.

Red Zora was written approximately ten years after the appearance of the first novel by Mato Lovrak in 1933. Lovrak marked the entire period, and his work is considered to belong to the canon of the time by a large majority of Croatian children's literature scholars. With respect to the previously indicated differences regarding the periodisation of the Croatian children's novel, the term "Lovrak's age"²¹ should be taken with caution due to the aforementioned contemporary findings which question this decision and the fact that Lovrak's popularity was recognised as a consequence of the literary or ideological canon. The realistic children's novel in the 1930s (and many years afterwards) introduced several novelties: the character of a child or children united in

²¹ Since Lovrak's novels were considered to mark a turning point in the development of the Croatian children's novel (cf. footnote 17), the period of the author's literary production (1933–1956) is often denoted as "Lovrak's era" (cf. Zima 2011: 81).

a gang, adventurous traits, proneness to action, child play, the comprehensibility of expression, the realistic shaping of the narrative, linear narration, clarity of expression, happy endings.²² These characteristics are not applicable to the most frequently used narrative structures of the 19th century children's novel – the orphan novel and the adventure novel (cf. Majhut 2005). Child play, which was seldom present in the tradition of the Croatian children's novel until the 1920s, and which was inspired by the image of the “Dionysian” child (Chris Jenks, as quoted in Zima 2011: 59), marked “the key element of the novelist structure” in Lovrak's work (Zima 2011: 79). Kušan had already appeared on the Croatian literary map in the 1950s, at the time of the Serbian translation of *Red Zora*, and he marked and later certainly influenced the collapse of the poetic model of Lovrak's novels.²³ Considering this course of events, from the perspective of the poetic shaping of the novel, *Red Zora* does not represent a novelty with respect to the trends in Croatian children's literature in the 1950s, as we will elaborate in the following section. A potential novelty derives from the role of the female protagonist in the plot and her viewpoint.

Gita, the companion of the protagonist in *The Marvellous Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice*, represents a significant female predecessor who had appeared more than four decades before Kušan's heroine, Melita, and Hlapić represents the first individualised child character in Croatian children's literature (Zima 2011: 38, 39). Even though Lidija Dujić believes that the female characters of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić do not have a significant or dominant role, she emphasised Gita as a rare example of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's female characters (Dujić 2018: 55), listing several reasons why her “activity” has been brought into question in the very sense of the word. Such a viewpoint leans on Zima's observation which perceives Gita as a subordinate character in terms of gender despite her carefree and playful nature, because “the boy assumes responsibility for the girl who appears co-dependent, spoiled and lazy; she represents a passive and a somewhat lagging element in the overall structure of the novel” (Zima 2011: 38). Narančić Kovač (2015) offers a somewhat different view of Gita's position. Even though Hlapić is her protector and cares about her fundamental existential needs,

²² This refers to a paradigm of shaping the children's novel which was further reaffirmed by Ivo Zalar. Due to the recent revival of the novelist tradition of the Croatian children's novel (cf. Majhut 2005, 2015) and the prolific production of contemporary children's novels, it can no longer cover the totality of production of the Croatian children's novel.

²³ *Uzbuna na Zelenom Vrhu [The Mystery of Green Hill]*, Kušan's first novel, was written in 1956 and translated into English in 1966. It indicated the author's “subversive poetics”, as previously mentioned within the framework of the theoretical contemplations of Stjepan Hranjec: “[...] it was indeed subversive, and that is why the publisher from Sarajevo obviously refused to publish the work because it allegedly lacked ‘artistic value’, but in fact it did not fit in with the socio-literary pattern of the time. What constitutes Kušan's subversion? In short, the writer deconstructed Lovrak's and the post-war canon of the children's novel with positive protagonists from socialist realism, an utterly disciplined structure and emphasised educational character” (Hranjec 2006: 101). We should also mention Kušan's novel *Lažeš Melita [You are Lying, Melita!]* which revolves around a non-typical female character, but it should also be pointed out that it was written somewhat later, in 1965.

Gita does not accept the inferior perception of her circus skills. On the contrary, she has no issue with the perception of her own occupation and she does not feel useless – she demonstrates an enviable degree of self-esteem, while her skills are presented as a platform for good deeds, as presented in the scene where Gita helps a poor basket weaver (cf. Narančić Kovač 2015: 73, 74). In result, “[t]he novel does not present the harmonisation of perspectives, since both children retained their respective views, and neither of these views is presented as universally better, more correct or more viable” (75).

In her novel *Zlatni danci* [Golden Days] published in 1918, Jagoda Truhelka introduces a girl as a central character in relation to a nostalgic narration about childhood, which implies an entirely different narrative code and a different role of the characters (cf. Zima 2011: 50–59) in comparison with contemporary novels. Zima concluded that Croatian children's literature by the 1930s does not show significant interest in female characters, especially as protagonists; and when it finally does, the female character is devoid of identity as a child – she develops it only in her adult years. In addition, the female character's main trait is passivity (cf. Zima 2011: 73).

Zima recognised the first attempts at profiling a more clearly defined female character in the novel by Zlatko Špoljar, *Tri bjegunca* [Three Fugitives] (1930) in the character of Milica who shares Gita's traits. The novel “revolves around children's independence, with a girl as the protagonist, hence her independence is marked by her mandatory passivity as the key gender designation in the children's novelist discourse” (Zima 2011: 72), while her character is reduced to “helplessness and fear of unfavourable circumstances” (73).

The same applies to the female character of Đurđica in the novel by Agata Truhelka *Đurđica i Srebrenko* [Đurđica and Srebrenko] (1945) whose activity is justified by introducing fantastic elements. Zima does not consider Lovrak's female characters particularly interesting.

At the end of the decade, the character of Darka in the novel *Iz dnevnika jedne djevojčice* [From a Girl's Diary] (1938) by Zora Ruklić finally depicted a certain surpassing of “gender-specific convention, including the passivity with which Špoljar characterised his protagonist” (Zima 2011: 73). In fact, besides the deviation from the structural shaping of the novel (Ruklić's novel is not an adventure novel but a prose diary as a recollection of an intimate experience of an adventure, which could at a later time be referred to as a typical “female genre”), Zima recognised a shift in the perception of the female character from the fact that “gender issues in the novel are pushed into the background, so that they are not raised by the female protagonist or other characters in the novel” (Zima 2015: 106). In this sense, we can refer to red-haired Zora as a female character who goes beyond the canonical conventions of the time. In conclusion, in reference to the position of the female character in the Croatian novel before 1945, we can concur that girl characters seldom assume an active role in terms of independence, whereas the boys are usually independent and, overall, more dominant.

Red Zora and Her Gang – an unused potential driver of change in the canon of Croatian children’s literature?

As revealed in the foreword of the Croatian edition, the novel *Red Zora* was inspired by the author’s journey across the territory of Croatia and related adventures, as well as real characters and events from the 1930s. Kurt Kläber spent his childhood and youth in Germany. Faced with the emerging racist ideology and the revocation of German nationality ahead of WWII, he moved to Switzerland together with his wife, Lisa Tetzner, who was a children’s author and who inspired his interest in writing children’s literature. The novel *Red Zora and Her Gang* was published there in 1941 under the pseudonym of Kurt Held. It is his first and most famous children’s novel out of six published novels.

The positive effect of his experience during a visit to Senj is discernible in many places in the novel; he managed to convince the reader that the author was very familiar with and passionate about the places and the tradition he describes. The characters are marked by their attitudes towards their homeland, especially the seaside views, while the city atmosphere is presented by the dominant Church of St. Francis and the town square, particularly the atmosphere of a littoral town depicted by a collage of typical and recognisable characters (cf. Held 2017: 37). The author managed to develop their individuality to a certain extent, occasionally failing to escape a black and white depiction of the characters, which is why there is a rather clear line between good and evil, especially among the adult characters. This line vanishes among the members of Zora’s gang: the children are described more vividly as non-idealised creatures with pronounced flaws and virtues. The novel is undoubtedly inspired by the Uskok²⁴ tradition of the City of Senj. Even though it is not at the centre of the narration, it is quite an evident driving force behind the story. In one segment, the legend from Uskok history is interpolated through the narration of the old man Gorjan. The children’s gang led by Zora enters into the spirit of child Uskoks, staying in the role to the very end of the novel when they, partly in line with the poetics of the orphan novel (as defined by Majhut 2005), accept the conventions of everyday life, while maintaining their personal freedom. The final scene of the novel contains a poem dedicated to the Uskoks.

²⁴ The Croatian Encyclopaedia defines Uskoks as “soldiers displaced from their homeland who fled from the imminent threat of the Ottoman Empire; exiles and renegades from the territories under the Ottoman government who “jumped in” to serve with the soldiers of the Croatian fortresses on the frontier to fight against the Ottomans” (Uskoci 2021). According to Rudolf Abraham (2011), “[t]he word Uskok derives from the verb *uskočiti*, which literally translates as ‘to jump in’ (alluding to their propensity to dive into a fight). As typically recounted, the Uskoks’ story is that, displaced from their homelands further south and east by the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans, they entered the service of the Austrian military as soldiers on the Croatian Military Frontier (*Vojna krajina*). They were based, among other places, at the strategic fortress of Klis, above Split, and in the port of Senj — the spot on the coast most closely associated with the Uskoks. And it was in Senj that the Uskoks, having repeatedly failed to receive any wages from their Habsburg masters, turned to piracy in order to sustain themselves”. For more information on the Uskoks, see Bracewell 1992.

From the thematic layer referring to the Uskoks, Jana Mikota derives the possibility of Held's anti-Nazi engagement, opposing the tendencies of the Croatian children's novel of the 1940s which either ignored the war or idealised the victorious side without any discernible critique. The Uskoks are an alternative to the national-socialist structure; they are militant and independent at the same time, free, altruistic, empathetic – all these traits are embodied in the character of the protagonist, a girl named Zora (Mikota 2014: 164). Mikota refers to the long tradition of children's female literature in Germany (2014: 151),²⁵ although she further explains that there is seldom any dominance of female characters; instead, they are prepared for their traditional female roles through the roles of girl characters, which are often associated with ongoing socio-political trends. According to Mikota, the shift towards a different thematic field in terms of female characters in German children's literature occurred at the end of the 19th century, after which it developed in two directions – the traditional and the modern course which turned female characters into more proactive subjects. These are works usually by authors in exile who contradicted the ideological canon on many levels; this canon depicted the values of the ideal woman as viewed by the political system and it reflected the basic guidelines of Hitler's ideology (Mikota 2014: 152). Mikota also refers to Kurt Held by claiming that he radically shifted the girl character in his work away from the earlier perception of such a character in children's literature, and that the children's gang is a democratically established group where girls are boys' equals (Mikota 2014: 163). A stronger global affirmation of female characters dates back to the 1960s and the 1970s (cf. Adams 2016).

The novel is divided into 25 chapters whose linear narration follows a dynamic story with the protagonist Zora and the boys from her gang, primarily a boy named Branko Babić whose tragic fate introduces us into the novel. The death of his mother is presented in the Dickensian manner of a social novel (Prpić Rogić 2017: 12) which depicts the face of civic society devoid of empathy towards its most vulnerable members. Despite such an introduction, as further confirmed by the explicit scenes of the death of Branko's mother, the personal and the social tragedy transforms into an adventure of the children's gang where the reader is able to forget the underlying reason for their adventures. Their play does not stem from their carefree childhood, it is not mere childish activity whose only purpose is fun, but it rather derives from the tragedy of

²⁵ "Girls' literature has a long tradition in Germany". Under the notion of "girls' literature", Mikota implies the literature intended for female readers. The appeal of female characters, who are put in unusual situations, to girls who were used to pedagogically controlled narratives is partly explained by the following paragraph: "Girls' literature in this essay is understood as literature explicitly addressed to female readers. Such an address is defined on a paratextual level by the cover, the title, publication as part of a series, or manner of advertisement. The subjects of girls' literature are those that interest young women and are taken from their milieu. While girls' literature is not exclusively written by female authors, most authors of girls' literature are women. All novels presented here have titles featuring girls' names, and the book covers display female figures and – as will be explained below – contain allusions to the female characters' personalities and virtues" (Mikota 2014: 152).

life; it resembles a game which teaches the children and adults a valuable lesson, in line with the children's perception of the world. The existential struggle is accepted as an adventure, which presents a link between this type of novel and both the adventure novel and orphan novel, especially if we take into account the individual fate of all the members of Zora's gang. The adventure is not just a string of dangerous situations, since it also reveals the children's tacit pleasure stemming from their own autonomy, thus creating an impression that the boundary between reality and fiction (the game) has been breached.

Therefore, *Red Zora* does not significantly deviate from the set of recognisable dominant characteristics of Croatian children's literature. The novel combines elements of the orphan novel, the adventure novel, and the affirmation of the Lovrak-type novel with a gang of children counterposed to the adult world. This set of traditional features of children's literature is related to the shaping of the basic model of the children's novel²⁶ which, over time, has been questioned as a firm paradigm by contemporary views, as shown above. The overview of the novel's narrative thread indicates a basic poetic structure of the children's novel: it is a novel with elements of the adventure novel whose central characters are children grouped into a gang which is counterposed to the adult world.

Referring to the Croatian children's novel before WWII, Majhut (2005) establishes clear demarcation points between the adventure novel, the orphan novel, and the children's gang novel. "The attitude towards the narrative environment" is one of the methods to recognise and categorise each of these types, as exemplified by the works of Croatian literature, namely Jagoda Truhelka's *Tugomila* (1894) and Vjekoslav Košćević's *Sretni kovač* [The Happy Blacksmith] (1895). The character of an orphan is not a decisive factor here – instead, it is the attitude of the implied reader towards the protagonist; unlike the reader who admires the character in the adventure novel, in the orphan novel the reader sympathises with the protagonist and never wants to be in their position.

According to Majhut, the second distinctive feature is the attitude towards home – in the adventure novel, there is the chance that the protagonist will eventually return, whereas in the orphan novel, there is no such possibility. In the orphan novel, walking away from home was not the protagonist's choice; it was rather decided by others, hence it constitutes a coercive journey, which affects the further development of the situation and results in a permanent state of rejection, and consequently the reader is generally drawn to sympathise with the protagonist's adventures. In the children's gang novel, home represents the voluntary need to create one's own space as a result of conflict with adults, rather than a coercive consequence (cf. Majhut 2005). Hence, if we take into

²⁶ We refer to *Red Zora* as a children's novel, using this notion in the most general sense and covering a broad spectrum of the way in which we perceive a child/childhood. Considering certain characteristics, such as the social nature of the novel, perhaps it would be more appropriate to refer to it as a young adult novel. The boundary between these two variants of children's literature is also fragile, if we take into account the shifts in the way we perceive a child or their childhood.

account the attitude towards home, it may be framed within the dichotomy of consent and coercion. Coercion characterises the orphan novel, whereas consent characterises the adventure and the children's gang novel. In line with Majhut's observations, we can conclude that *Red Zora* has some elements of the orphan novel but also some disputable points evident from the main character's dominance. Even though Zora is an orphan, the character's strong dominance raises the readers' admiration rather than sympathy, although the latter exists to some extent as well, e.g. in the description of the fate of Zora's family and the fate of other child characters.

Despite her dominance among her gang and the citizens of Senj who are desperately trying to put an end to her activities (without realising that her activity stems from the inactivity of adults), Zora is not an idealised character and things often do not go her way. Due to Branko's unrequited affection for someone else, the expression on Zora's face becomes "dark and full of hatred" (Held 2017: 275), and she is jealous and ready to fight. The ending of the novel is atypical of the paradigm of the orphan novel – Zora is in love with Branko, but Branko is covertly interested in a different girl who eventually leaves, but there is no indication that he will turn his affection towards Zora. Her practical jokes are sometimes rather insensitive, but she is a good judge of situations which require a quick response. Zora has innate authority that comes naturally; she always attempts to implement it wisely so that the other members of the gang do not feel less important, as evident from the initiation ceremony through a knife game.

The readers' first encounter with the character of Zora occurs at the moment of the existential struggle of the boy named Branko. When the city government ruthlessly attacks him for stealing some leftover fish from the city market, he is saved from custody by a girl with the most unusual appearance (Held 2017: 51):

He was now talking to a tall and slender girl [...]. Her brazen bright eyes shone from her firm and rugged face. Her freckles extended all the way to her nose, and her fire-red hair fluttered in the wind. She was barefoot and without a hat. [...]. A farmer had just given her several aubergines. She tucked them under her green sweater. That sweater and the brown skirt were all the clothes she was wearing.

It is impossible to neglect the physical and partly psychological similarity between the main character and the global heroine who made a substantial difference in the canon of children's literature, Pippi Longstocking. However, there is no ground for any kind of well-argued discussion about the mutual influence, even though it is reasonable to expect that Lindgren could have been familiar with *Red Zora* if we take its massive popularity into account.²⁷ The physical appearance of the girl with conspicuous red hair could also be explained from the perspective of the poetics of children's (and oral) literature. Such a physical and personal depiction of a character could be observed through the prism of a commonplace in children's literature, equivalent to the permanent epithets in oral literature. This is in line with the general trope that physical beauty

²⁷ In the newspaper article about the theatrical adaptation of the novel by Božena Matijević (2017), Mira Muhoberac assumed that there is a great likelihood that *Red Zora* served as an inspiration for the character of Pippi Longstocking. Also see Mlikota 2014: 165.

equals goodness of heart, i.e. the physical appearance of the character is in line with the character's personal characteristics. Majhut (2005: 235) noted that the literary shaping of the external appearance of female characters undoubtedly indicates their character. In this sense, red hair could be interpreted as a symbol of unusual and fiery strength, and as a connection between mild-tempered women as a stereotype symbolising female nature and the dark and dangerous women who freely oppose men. Even though this kind of shaping could be observed as stereotypical to a certain extent, on several occasions Zima (2011) indicates that the names of child characters and their deviation from the generalised and socially desirable traits denote shifts in the shaping of child characters. Here we must refer to two paradigmatic features of children's literature – the character (protagonist) and the often ascribed pedagogical purpose of literary works intended for children, i.e. the crafty merging of the two. Zora is atypical because she is “wild, freedom-loving, and unruly”, but she also possesses all the traditional female traits, “at the same time, she is endowed with familiar female attributes: she provides security and cares for her friends” (Mikota 2014: 164).

In an unusual character, Held combines the pedagogical and non-pedagogical elements at a micro level in the isolated instances of the narrative. We should not observe the anti-pedagogical²⁸ potential in *Red Zora* from the perspective of its contradiction with the aesthetic element, but rather in opposition to the didactic element, which coincides with the standards set by adults. Children are occasionally put into typical anti-pedagogical situations – such as, for instance, Zora's militant character which often causes her to physically confront others; once, the members of her gang were offered cigarettes, which they gladly accepted. As she was rescuing Branko from confinement, Zora stuck out her tongue at the person in charge, and the rest of the boys from her gang whispered in awe: “Zora is so strong; she is stronger than all of us!” (Held 2017: 80).

The adult world is not presented here as a model to aspire to; on the contrary, adult behaviours are a non-exemplary paradigm and are greatly surpassed by the children's philosophy which is lacking in terms of experience but is much more effective in spirit. Only a few adults approach the children's world in the novel (the fisherman Gorjan, the baker Ćurćin), and they serve merely as the correctives of social disorders, while their attitude towards the evil characters in the adult world is one of the less favourable aspects of the novel considering that the author had a tendency towards a black and white depiction of characters. The marital life of Branko's parents also represents an atypical symbiosis of two free-spirited individuals whose deviation from the social norms in the name of love is not frowned upon by the author, as he did not make any

²⁸ It should be noted that contemporary theoreticians recognise the need for a more extensive and layered consideration of the term pedagogical (Majhut 2015, Hranjec 2009). Majhut claims that Crnković is overly obsessed with the aesthetic element in children's literature and prone to a strict antipodean demarcation between notions of the pedagogical and aesthetic, as he “was so focused on artistically valuable literature that he lost sight of the dimension of children's culture” (Majhut 2015: 198). Hranjec believes that, in a broader sense of the word, children's literature is always pedagogical, hence it should be distinguished from the equivalent notion characterised by a negative perception (Hranjec 2009: 30–40).

connection between the atypical choice of the mother and her affection for the child (Held 2017: 32, 33):²⁹

For several weeks, she would join my father on his trips and share his carefree and unrestrained lifestyle. He would play in a café or a bar, and people would dance; then they would walk to a different venue, sleeping in the wild bushes and eating whatever they found or that people would give them, and bathing in the sea. Branko would never ask for his mother over a longer period of time. He would even forget that he had one [...]. Instead of his mother, Elena would give him a piece of bread, a cured fish or a bowl of soup.

The novel *Red Zora and Her Gang* marks a shift in the stylistic and ideological canon of German children's literature. We have analysed it in reference to Croatian children's literature of the time in an attempt to provide an answer to the question of whether the more significant presence of *Red Zora* in Croatian children's literature of the time would have changed its course of development. Considering the significant infiltration of foreign literature, the particular popularity of German titles (Majhut and Lovrić Kralj 2018) and the rise of the realistic children's novel in the 1940s in general, we can merely provide an optimistic hypothetical answer. From the aspect of literary scholarship, because this issue is part of literary history as well, we can perhaps only hypothetically contextualise the novel within the trends of children's literature of the time. In terms of style, the novel leans on the dominant poetics of the realistic children's novel widely recognised across the Croatian territory between the end of the 19th century and the 1940s. With respect to the position of the female character, *Red Zora* surpasses the canon of Croatian children's literature of the time which nominally includes girl characters who barely even reach the level of activism as found in *Red Zora*.

Conclusion

Considering the paradigms of the children's novel and its positioning within the canon of Croatian children's literature, there is still an unanswered question of the extent to which foreign books translated into Croatian influenced the shaping of the Croatian children's novel. Majhut (2015) notes that, even if we decide to support the claim that *The Marvellous Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice* by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić (1913) was the first Croatian novel, we cannot deny the influence of books of a similar genre that preceded it.

The novel *Red Zora* was written in German and received significant acclaim in Germany. It also received popular acclaim in Croatia at a much later time, namely in 2017. There is no definitive answer as to why the evident wonder of the vistas of Senj and a specific segment of Croatian history was not deemed sufficient to present this novel

²⁹ It would be interesting to observe the relationship between these two characters, Branko's parents Anka and Milan, in the context of gender relationships regardless of the previously stated affirmative attitude of the writer towards the concept of "open marriage". In fact, Anka is perpetually waiting for and searching for Milan who only occasionally appears, justifying his absence and irresponsible behaviour towards his family with the fact that he is a performer.

earlier to the Croatian reading audience. There is one ensuing question considering the poetic features related to the shaping of the children's novel: is it possible that an earlier release of *Red Zora* could have influenced the development of Croatian children's literature or even changed its course given the effects it had in Germany? We can only provide an answer in the form of an optimistic hypothesis based on a glimpse into research on the significant role of foreign children's books and their translations. In addition, *Red Zora* resembles Pippi Longstocking who, only several years later (1973), significantly captured Croatian child readers, and hence a similar effect could have been expected in the case of *Red Zora*.

In terms of the position of female characters, *Red Zora* surpasses the canon of Croatian children's literature of the time which only nominally included girl characters, although they barely reached her level of activism. This is discernible from her egalitarian position within the children's gang which never raises the issue of Zora's gender, and the activism deriving from Robin-Hood-like humanistic worldviews which was pursued by realistically depicted female characters.

In sum, we have attempted to explain the novel's lack of influence on Croatian children's literature by giving the various cultural and historical reasons for it not to have appeared on the literary market.

Translated by Ana Mršić Zdilar

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Crvenokosa Zora i njezina družina i hrvatski kanon dječje književnosti

Crvenokosa Zora i njezina družina (*Die rote Zora und ihre Bande*) roman je njemačko-švicarskoga pisca Kurta Helda (pravim imenom Kurt Kläber), napisan 1941. godine, inspiriran hrvatskim prostorom i hrvatskom poviješću. Dok je u Njemačkoj doživio veliku popularnost, prvi prijevod na hrvatski jezik dobili smo 2017. godine. U radu se *Crvenokosa Zora* razmatra unutar kanona dječje književnosti, bilo na hrvatskom jeziku,

bilo u prijevodu, koji je objavljen na hrvatskom etničkom prostoru u vrijeme nastanka romana. *Crvenokosa Zora* dijeli s dominantnim romanima hrvatske dječje književnosti toga vremena realistične tendencije u oblikovanju dječje stvarnosti zasnovane na neobičnim pothvatima i pustolovinama dječje družine. Razvidno je iz toga da se *Crvenokosa Zora* uklapa u romanesknu matricu dječjega romana toga vremena, ali značajnim detaljem – likom djevojčice u ulozi „vođe bande“ – nadrašta onodobna stremljenja hrvatske dječje književnosti. Problematizira se hipotetsko pitanje utjecaja izgradnje naslovnoga ženskoga lika na razvoj ženskih likova hrvatske dječje književnosti.

Ključne riječi: *Crvenokosa Zora i njezina družina*, dječji roman, hrvatska dječja književnost, kanon, roman za mladež, ženski lik u dječjem romanu