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MIRELA ŠUŠIĆ  
University of Zadar, Department of Croatian Studies  
msusic@unizd.hr

## INTEGRATION OF THE CHARACTER OF A SELF-CONSCIOUS WOMAN IN *TRILOGY OF KURLANI* BY MIRKO BOŽIĆ

### Abstract

The paper deals with the integration of the character of a self-conscious woman in *Trilogy of Kurlani* by Mirko Božić, which is based on the semantic shift realized through the character of Gara. By her semantic components, the character of Gara deviates from the sense order inherent in the other female characters of *Trilogy*. Gara experiences a transformation of radical and universal proportions, from the oppressed position conditioned by the gender to the birth of the individual consciousness and awakening of one's own personality and is raised to the level of the concept which is presented in this paper through three phases. The first phase marks Gara's unconscious acceptance of the collective consciousness while in the second phase her disquiet comes as a motivational means. In the third phase, a self-conscious woman arises in Gara through the knowledge of the right to choice.

*Keywords:* collective consciousness; character of a self-conscious woman; personality; right to choose

## Introduction

American sociologist George Herbert Mead<sup>1</sup> developed a thesis about the fitting of an individual into the general symbolic system of roles in which the individual becomes a representative of one out of several great actantial sets. Gara, as a part of the actantial set of female characters in Božić's *Trilogy of Kurlani*, made up of the novels *Kurlani, gornji i donji* (Kurlani, Upper and Lower) (1952), *Neisplakani* (The Unwept) (1955) and *Tijela i duhovi* (Bodies and Ghosts) (1981), in which female characters constitute an essential structural element, represents all the other female characters. However, at the same time, she stands out among them because of her original Kurlani blood which is a motivational system that drives her and sets her apart from the other rural female characters.

The interpretation of the role of Gara through the events in *Trilogy*, i.e. its function, and most importantly what shows the modernity of the writer's creative process, the state of mind that this figure reflects, reveals a significant oscillation of her physical appearance which is complementary to her internal state of mind, and which, in this paper, can be best described through three phases.

In the beginning, in the first phase, Gara experiences herself from the position of the community which disparages and condemns her, and she unconsciously accepts the collective consciousness. In the second phase, after the pregnancy, there begins the process of destroying her internal and external appearance, which reflects not only resignation but also disquiet of her inner state that will be a motivating means for the integration of Gara as an action figure. In the third stage, encouraged by the Kurlani defiance and pride, Gara sees herself from the position of the "other", but now "placing her critical consciousness on the point of view of a particular group" comes to the self-awareness of herself, the family, the homeland, the world<sup>2</sup> and then the awareness of the right to choose as an essential driving force of the process of emancipation

<sup>1</sup> Cf. GEORGE HERBERT MEAD, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. VLATKO PAVLETIĆ, *Umijećem do umjetnosti*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2009, p. 38.

begins to grow. However, as Šime Vučetić points out, Gara's liberation is not "in the least similar to civic emancipation in the decorative and fashionable context of ours and the last century. It is the emancipation of the internal, curtailed freedom."<sup>3</sup>

### 1. First phase – the unconscious acceptance of collective consciousness

In the literary reality of *Trilogy*, a young sixteen-year-old girl appears, and the name itself suggests the looks of "Gara" which in the linguistic sphere of rural speech symbolizes a black-haired and dark-tanned girl. Although in this prose, it is a personal name of a female character, in the area of Dalmatian hinterland, "Gara" is a nickname which has the connotation of an attractive girl of desirable looks and strong character, almost invariably seductive. From the very beginning of *Trilogy*, the presence of fatherly love is also highlighted in the characterization of this figure. Fatherly love is interpreted in the psychoanalytic sense as the basic foundation of the healthy development of a human being and the prerequisite for the formation of self-confidence, on which, later on in life, attitude and success greatly depend. So, the emphasis put on fatherly love can be explained as the writer's logical procedure, or the motivational means of Gara's development in a stable and decisive personality.

Gara was the only daughter of a wealthy father and no matter how inhumanely female children were received and treated in that area: **Father loved Gara**<sup>4</sup>, *Ćukan saw it, and he still secretly loved her. He had already turned down her suitors three times, and they were not have-nots.*<sup>5</sup> Although Gara already got pregnant out of wedlock with an unknown man already at the age of sixteen, her father, despite his own slaps: *which he gave her with a mediocre intensity and a greater fire in his eyes than in his feelings*,<sup>6</sup> protects her from her brothers and the social isolation

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<sup>3</sup> ŠIME VUČETIĆ, „Kurlanski roman Mirka Božića“, *Ogledi o suvremenicima*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1988, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper.

<sup>5</sup> MIRKO BOŽIĆ, *Kurlani*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1980, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

that she faces as a “wayward girl”. Thus, the writer indirectly, through the character of Ćukan, clearly positions the character Gara in the social sense, but from the very beginning, he emphasizes her more favorable position in relation to other female characters, because of the fatherly love and protection she has. Namely, Perka’s difficult childhood with her father’s negative role is clearly pointed out. There is neither knowledge of Anđelija’s immediate family nor how she was brought up while Iglica had some warmth of home and father’s love but not so strong that her well-being would be paramount to the interests of her family. Moreover, the character profile of Iglica’s father, to whom anything was more comfortable than work, is connoted by the writer who, along with his name of Ante Badrov, gives him also a very suggestive and symbolic nickname “Gavran” (Raven). In this way, he attributes him the characteristics of this vulture bird that is invariably associated with deception.

In the beginning, Gara is governed by the collective consciousness that is manifested in the process of introspection, when in Gara’s mind, the image of herself as a deceitful girl is mirrored, to whom the patriarchal community does not forgive. That is the fate that has befallen and “crushed” Perka, an unprotected and sometimes “perky” and fascinating woman:

*That damn worm crawled into her head: had she not had such a good father, had she not had such strong brothers - what could have become of her, what would have become of her... for she was stricken with the same sin like that Irudica...<sup>7</sup>*

This fatherly protection that Gara enjoyed and the love she received were the foundations on which Gara’s self-confidence developed that later on, the writer would upgrade with her courage and determination to such an extent that in the last part of *Trilogy*, we could speak of elements of emancipation.

Unlike the pain-broken Perka, by the illness overwhelmed Anđelija and by the social consciousness formed Iglica, Gara is shaped like:

<sup>7</sup> MIRKO BOŽIĆ, *Neisplakani*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1989, p. 432.

... reality [...] life and at the same time a legend, the opposite of the Holy Virgin Mary, a figure who dominates power, with an incomprehensible and distant, secret desire of purity and confirmation of her own body.

Gara –

a miraculous anthroponym woven with the fibers of centuries – old mountains and bare rocky countryside, silent and steady like the underground streams of her region, persevering over the soot, the charred remnants, she, black, alone, with her slaughtered relatives but with the spark of hope, the sacred instinct of self-preservation and the saved focal point of the will. Gara – step out of hell, both inside and outside of her, the world of Evil and the evil of the human.<sup>8</sup>

Differentiation of Gara from all other female characters of *Trilogy of Kurlani* is connotated in this first phase from the very beginning of *Trilogy*, and it was realized in her “having” the Kurlani nerve, which will be affirmed in the third stage and which strengthens her life impetus:

*... The little root of the steady nerve keeps her alive with a suppressed cry and a defiant spasm, as on a stone-despite the winds and torrents-to-ugh burdock survives! The steady nerve is stronger than the surrendering body! The Kurlani nerve<sup>9</sup> time and again strengthens, subsists, stretches, as a mighty stalk a large quince.<sup>10</sup>*

This atavistic “little root of the steady nerve” as a synonym of human survival on hard stone is a genetic predisposition of the Kurlani genus, which, thanks to Božić’s sensible humanity, is the most beautiful epithet given to female gender through this very female figure and, therefore, Gara, as interpreted by Ljerka Schiffler-Premec, is:

*One of the particularly suggestive architectural constructions, which radiates all of Božić’s sensitivity, [...], is the model-figure of the woman of his great cycle. She appears to sum up all the female characters of his novel, Anđelija, Perka, Iglica, the girl (from Girls and Oaks), all his processions of women, his vision of the woman and her secrets and greatness.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> LJERKA SCHIFFLER-PREMEC, „Između sudbine i historije. Žena u romanu Mirka Božića 'Tijela i duhovi'“, *Žena*, no. 5 – 6, 1981, p. 76.

<sup>9</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper.

<sup>10</sup> MIRKO BOŽIĆ, *Tijela i duhovi*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1989, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> LJ. SCHIFFLER-PREMEC, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

## 2. Second phase – Disquiet as a Motivation

Although Gara shows no pathological remorse over the “unlawful act of love” that would destroy her spirit and mind, to which Perka was exposed, Gara’s sexual act has a versatile and a related adequate meaning. Her “illegitimate” sexual activity influences the change of her internal state and external appearance, so she, Gara, ceases to be “glittering” and “playful” and becomes “shy” and “shameful”:

*Ćukan has noticed, a good fifth, sixth time now, that Gara is sitting about the house, on the fences, when the Bosnians come, and that she secretly looks at their faces out of the sight of her family, even though only through the little holes in the drystone wall. Otherwise, on other days, she takes the cows grazing at the crack of dawn. Well, even when the Bosnians don’t trade their goods to Silvestar, on their return from the town, they again spend the night at the Kurlani, and then Gara sneaks around them to find what she is looking for. But today, however, Gara doesn’t even see them, not being interested anymore. She is sitting idly and alone high on the yellow fence and is nibbling a leaf. She does not care about the voracious goats exterminating the green shoots of the grove; a billy goat passing just next to her ear; a leaf of the ash tree falling into her lap; a little bird approaching her and squeaking like a mouse. She secluded herself in a deep sorrow and her whole world was in the “little worm in her head”.*

Pregnancy for Gara in the literal sense of the word meant “a delicate condition”, i.e. the life’s turning point and the loss of the previous, tentatively, carefree life, but forced her to think, to solve the newly created situation. It created disquiet in her, which serves to the author as a motivation by which he raises Gara to the level of a continuously active figure who acts and tries to find a solution to the problem:

*Late in the night, Gara dragged herself to the houses, all tearful and bloated sighing deeply. She **had been thinking**<sup>12</sup> all the afternoon who to confide to finally, who to pour her heart to, because it was too crazy to keep secret this anguish any longer. It has been more than five months since she started wearing a corset, becoming alienated, getting out of sight, taking care of the cattle from dawn to dusk, keeping up the fire on the hearth all*

<sup>12</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper.

*day long, and filling up the house with dry leaves so that light wouldn't betray her. She ate a little and slept poorly. How foolish it was of her to hope it would pass, shrink, disappear like a wish, that inevitable growing, which like time extends and thus heals, and with each beat, it gets closer to its purpose. And now each moment seems terrible to her; each moment shrieks and shakes her unsparingly.*<sup>13</sup>

When “remorse chipped away” at Perka, it was in the service of a motivational means that began the process of transforming the character of Perka from an enchanting woman, who with her stature and attitude exhilarates hot Kurlani’s blood, into a ruined woman – spiritually, socially and physically. However, when “sorrow started troubling” Gara, who had gone through an experience similar to that of Perka, it was a reverse process – Gara, going through the same experience as Perka, becomes stronger than ever. Moreover, the process of her physical and spiritual cleansing begins.

Gara’s newly arisen consciousness as part of the Romanesque reality brings entirely new features. The writer in the literary fact constitutes tense sensory elements, that is, they are a motive of the event in a sexual act, in which Gara will be an equal participant, and, in the process, will be knocked down by the patriarchy imposed role of a “child bearer”.

The writer, by physical characterization, announces and begins a radical change of universal proportions to this female figure. So Gara out of that “obese, full of some yellowish fat girl” first becomes: “*a corpulent, fleshy woman*”<sup>14</sup> so that the writer would, after this interesting physical gradation, begin a psychological process of plunging into the innermost nature of the character, as well as the reflections of her condition. So, disquiet forces Gara to escape, to save herself, and it atavistically emerges from her being. With this action there begins an essential, and among the characters of rural women unique point in the alteration of the structure of a woman’s role:

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<sup>13</sup> M. Božić, *Kurlani*, p. 53 – 54.

<sup>14</sup> M. Božić, *Neisplakani*, p. 381.

*Gara pulled her hands and the head through the hole in the roof - Gara!- Silvestar said agape, but his breath stopped short: Gara rose on her toes, threw herself upward, through the hole, onto the roof! (Jesus! She's gone crazy.) [...] Behind the stable, something heavy and squishy splashed, Silvestar's ears are as fragile as glass - to burst! Women got agitated. "Jesus!" "Our Lady!" "The Almighty!" And it dawned on Silvestar **Gara**<sup>15</sup> in front of his eyes - **has fallen into the liquid manure pit!**<sup>16</sup>*

We are beginning to become aware of different meaning values in this movement of Gara from her previously denoted actions. Namely, the writer, with dramatic tension displays the scene of the agony of a woman who "does something" in the sense of changing the existing unsatisfactory and unacceptable state, still "unconsciously" without the real awareness of whether to save herself or her family. Although at the first moment of the reception of this act, Gara would appear as a callous mother who leaves her child in a "hangar" and saves her own life, Božić will later, in the process of Gara's catharsis and the agony she is experiencing in the pit, humanize the act of this figure with the technique of stream of consciousness, i.e. her reflections about her act, and her attempt to understand it:

*Where's Gara's? Where are her people? They've taken them? Why did she not stay with her child? What got into her? Courage or selfishness? Why is she a wretched coward? Why is she suffering in this loathsome pit?<sup>17</sup>*

This initiating process of the awakening awareness of herself and the sense of her actions is the writer's hint of a new semantic structure of the character of Gara. This structure is known in the third part of *Trilogy, Bodies and Ghosts*, in which the process of creating a self-conscious woman will assume the fullness of its meaning.

<sup>15</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper.

<sup>16</sup> M. Božić, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 154.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

### 3. Third phase – the awakening of a self-confident woman

There is a change in the social circumstances under the influence of world changes which improve the position of women. Ahead of the approaching war turmoil, a consolidated society begins to respect every individual, woman included, whose awareness of self-confidence begins to grow. The writer describes this newly created social atmosphere in the following way and hints at the awakening of Gara:

*But you can always count on trouble, their order and directions have shaken old habits and customs. Women stopped obeying them, first shyly, and then covetously, wanting the conversation and importance they attach to them as if the world began with a woman. Gara has already started to adore a learned companion, she consumes water for her period or boils her underwear, reads the elementary level reader slowly, she is idle, and blames the elderly, **she's come to her senses**,<sup>18</sup> she says. No one has ever scolded Gara for her illegitimate son [...].<sup>19</sup>*

The writer creates conditions for the transformation of the character of Gara from the protagonist who cannot shape her destiny, into a character whose actions successfully eliminate agony and direct the development of life events in the desired direction:

*Only Gara was fidgety; she ran around the stable like a broody hen! She is looking for a nest where she will lay the egg, (When the confusion of the war settles down, she will have to find a husband and a good man!) She lifted her skirt, fastened it with a pin, her hair fell loose on her neck and down to her chest, over her eyes, like in a repentant woman. [...] There she is now swiftly clambering the crumbling beam, peeping through the hole on the thatched roof. The wind ruffles her long hair. Long hair, short wit! What is she doing? She is listening to the heavy boots of the German guards, conjuring up some buffoonery, has she gone crazy? She is looking for trouble and can find misfortune! (Šaliveštar would shout a warning, but his will betrays him, and his voice dies down at once; he would upset the household and Gara might also be better off in this disquiet.)<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper

<sup>19</sup> M. Božić, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

However, the author illuminates Gara, not only in the newly-formed process of the constellation of her discoveries, but also he renders this process through a dominant dramatic component, thus enabling it to know about the very model of this transformation - the catharsis that Gara physically and spiritually experiences after surviving the pit:

*She was stark naked underneath a long linen shirt and a black woolen corset, just as she was when Germans pulled her out of the warm bed. Down her legs, the waist and the belly, her breasts and the armpit, she felt as if icy-cold little snakes and thirsty leeches were wriggling; that horrible smell stirs the hairs in her nostrils, a stinging gurgle rumbles her stomach. Animal urine will erode her mucous membranes, like a wet baby's calves. She will be covered in itchy blotches all over and will be pinned by contagious pimples as needles do to a ball of wool. She will be full of reddish bites and dark swellings, like a bloated liver! The teacher taught her how to keep clean – and she was relieved! – And now she's all like a slimy sponge! Woe! "The worms will bite her skin and bones, eat the crack and the pubic flesh, like a fig tree," Alas! "She will end up like an incurable scab, in contempt and damnation, in the corner of the Kurlani hearth. "Wow, to heaven!"*

*She was wrapped up with cold and misery.*

*But some squeaky nerve holds the threads of her consciousness, like the pupil that flickers to the last spring.<sup>21</sup>*

The process of the awakening the awareness of one's values begins with the autosuggestion that energizes this feminine character, whose tan is no longer silken and tight, *but wrinkling and flabby, as in an old woman!*<sup>22</sup> Despite this, she remains emphatically sensual, and sexuality innate to every human being starts arousing in her and contributes to the process of new meaning values of this literary figure, who is now attributed the features of a conscious woman, as well as the elements of emancipation, which, in totality, adds a new semantic value to the character of Gara:

*She bent, took the small handles of the bucket in her hands, crouched, sat into the hot water up to her navel, and gave a quiet scream because of the*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

*warmth and relief. The heat embraced her, and she felt as if she was melting like a knob of butter. "What butter, what milk, what's entered your mind, you poor soul! You're like a poison; a snake would die from your poisonous bite!" Her hands are trembling, and she is afraid to touch the numb rings of her wretched nipples. She is forever branded with noxious sores above and under her belly. "Will you not ever live as a woman, or have a baby like a woman?" Her blood rushed to her face; she closed her eyes stricken by misery and horror. "Is she slowly beginning to kill herself with black thoughts?" No, no! „Gara! Gara! Gara! You want to live, and you will live! May the sinful burning touch you then the holy impulse shower you!”<sup>23</sup><sup>24</sup>*

After the real and metaphorical catharsis, Gara emerges from the “cesspool of life” from the life of full misery, pain, and suffering, which is followed by the integration of the character of a self-conscious woman. Gara “comes to her senses” and starts realizing that the awareness of herself is waking up. The process of identity establishment has started:

*“Think about it, Gara! Why are you swirling around the deserted house, like a headless fly? If you stink, you're not contagious! If you're alone, you're not crazy! And you will not go crazy! Pull yourself together, do not give in!”<sup>25</sup>*

The character of Gara gains a different conceptual value because she becomes a self-confident woman who does not agree to a socially-imposed Puritan convention as Krešimir Nemeč would say about the beginning of female emancipation<sup>26</sup>. By confirming herself in the sexual act, to which she willingly and deliberately yields and in which he will be “respected” and “appreciated” as a spiritual and sensual human being who reasons and feels, Gara integrates her own identity as a “human woman.”

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<sup>23</sup> Pointed out by the author of the paper.

<sup>24</sup> M. BOŽIĆ, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 168.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. KREŠIMIR NEMEČ, „Čuvarica ognjišta, svetica, vamp. Slika žene u hrvatskoj književnosti 19. stoljeća“, *Zbornik radova Zagrebačka slavistička škola*, STIPE BOTICA (ed.) FF Press, Zagreb, 2003, p. 107.

*She was intoxicated, enchanted, bewitched by him. He gently told her sweet words, seriously, without affectation. Not for a moment did she feel endangered in his embrace. He lifted and lowered her skirt carefully so that he would not make her feel ashamed, just like when she was washing in the creek, trying to avoid being seen. He did not even blame her loss of virginity. All men are looking for unskimmed milk, a virgin from heaven, raging when they are disappointed; they beat the woman, torment her and abuse her. But Milić was careful and gentle. Before and after the intercourse. Well, she would resist each kind of force, but she could not resist his gentleness. Gentleness is stronger than violence!<sup>27</sup>*

**[...] She was not a thing for him to use, but a creature that feels and returns the love.**<sup>28</sup>

*And every time he brought her to the very climax! For the first time in her life, she had experienced a woman's happiness she'd never heard of from any female*<sup>29 30</sup>

The sensory impact that Gara experiences with the lover Milić is semantically “uncoordinated” with the meaningful context of *Trilogy* and this is precisely why this female figure is unique and different concerning the other female characters:

*His arm strokes her bare knee under the skirt, goes down to her thigh, caresses her hairs and passes over, and she twitches and becomes numb, her head is bursting, and her stomach is burning.*

*She defends herself helplessly and gives herself to him, dazed with fear and craving, fearful of a shy shame and red-hot of passionate need, devoted to the shameful desire and the avid act, all in the fever of a female, all before the opening of the rose, all pressed against him as her lip to his lips, all in receiving and giving, as soil.*

*He lifts her skirt, pushes aside her legs with his knee, presses his belly against her belly, his nudity burns her, his arm hits her nerve, she feels his swollen vein, he pushes apart her thighs, he penetrates her fiercely and painfully, sparks fire, nests in to her passionately, red-hot with passion.*

*She was panting dazed in the crazy waving of their bodies, rearing the pelvis, grasping with both her hands his thick hair, in a passionate sense of being complete.*

<sup>27</sup> M. Božić, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 281.

<sup>28</sup> Pointed by the author of the paper.

<sup>29</sup> M. Božić, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 281.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

*And then she dissolves from the heat, from the coming of some unsustainable fresh pleasure, and the splutter of a passionate cry.*

*The wavy soft disappearing shudders drift her into a miraculous fluff as if she were fading into a bright strip. It seems to her that she has touched the heavenly tip, flown away into an endless flashing rest. She is like a bush of wild pomegranate that lusher in width and height after the rain blessing! To her, everything is some soothing happiness – and the tears are moisturizing her face from pleasure.*

***She passed out ... fascinated.***

***Never has she experienced such a thing, never! She was a woman, she delivered a child, but she has never been a human woman. She has never been equal to man in the way of making love and experiencing life.***<sup>31, 32</sup>

Gara, guided by sexuality, has raised the consciousness of her corporality, which she enjoys and as such can be recognized in the type of individual for which Helena Sablić Tomić, defining it, among other things, says:

“Female characters who have raised the consciousness of their own body, who enjoy it, and are trying to self-realize themselves, regardless of the conventions of socio-cultural nature, are increasingly proclaiming a modernist type of a conscious woman who is prepared to accept responsibility for the consequences of her frustrations and actions.”<sup>33</sup>

This kind of Božić's insistence on sexuality as a topic in the sixth chapter of the novel *Bodies and Ghosts*, and at the end of the third part of *Trilogy of Kurlani*, as well as the explicitness in the description of sexual intercourse, serve as a kind of illumination, on which the integration of the character of a self-conscious woman is based. Pavletić observes that insistence on sexuality is one of the typical orientations of the modern novel. However, Gara's going through an unimaginable experience of the highest point of sexual pleasure because *for the first time in her life she has experienced a woman's happiness she has never heard of by any*

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<sup>31</sup> Pointed out by the author of this paper.

<sup>32</sup> M. BOŽIĆ, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 267 – 268.

<sup>33</sup> HELENA SABLJIĆ TOMIĆ, *Gola u snu: o ženskom književnom identitetu*, Znanje, Zagreb, 2005, p. 60.

*womenfolk*<sup>34</sup> also has a socially simultaneous purpose. Characterizing Gara, Božić at the same time deals with the state of affairs regarding male and female (in)equality, as well as the issue of reinforcing taboos on sexuality. By the internal monologue as a technique of presenting the stream of consciousness Gara in some sense even touches the levelling of genders abstracting the “concept of particular ‘female psychology’”<sup>35</sup> and in some way resolves her own “internal nodes”.

*Why would an act of love be sinful? Why is a woman's sin unforgivable? Why was Perka stoned before the war, when there was no struggle for life and death.*

*A terrible moment for a woman is the glorious day if she experiences a human hug and the highest pleasure. A sin is stronger than penitence; otherwise there would be no humans. The more so if she conceives a child! Her life lasts.<sup>36</sup>*

At the end of *Trilogy*, Gara, becoming conscious of her value, experiences an entirely new spiritual state which fundamentally overturns the position of women as “other”, followed by a radical internal change, primarily in Gara’s way of reasoning, whereby Božić establishes a whole new perspective:

*And to him - fool! - pleasure is stealing; joy is empty and vain if he still does not die – poor thing! - of being sadly shattered, like a dragonfly after mating.*

*She felt a taunting delight to have squeezed him out. He pulled out from her exhausted, rotten and baggy. His craving had lost power, his vanity arrogance. His smile turned into a grin as if he had started hating himself. And he was afraid of her supreme authority, from her fiery exhilaration.<sup>37</sup>*

The re-hint of the constellation of the archetype of the mother in Gara’s character is motivated by the awareness of possible pregnancy, which Gara wants at a conscious and subconscious level. However, now

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. MILIVOJ SOLAR, „Mit o ženskoj prirodi“, *Edipova braća i sinovi*, Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2008, p. 365.

<sup>36</sup> M. BOŽIĆ, *Tijela i duhovi*, p. 282.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*.

as an aware woman, she chooses her attitude toward a new state, i.e. she does not accept collective consciousness anymore, but individually learns and makes decisions herself, and out of her, by internal monologue, the threatening defiance and pride emerge against anything that endangers her.

*“Whose is it?” Mine! “In the clear water of a stone liquid container, he looks at his threatening eyes, like in a she-wolf being in cub. It will be difficult now to treat her with ridicule. To poisonous ridicule ... a sharp tooth! „From the vine grapes, from a nit ...“ „Your mother is a nit, and you are a louse“ „He doesn't know who his father is?“ „But he knows his mother!“ „Poor you, didn't you want him?“ „Desired – undesired, it's mine!“ „No one will ever find out about his father!“ His father may be the most miserable person or worst enemy, his father may be wind or war - but mother brings him up with her heart! Father is just an unwanted creature, a seed, rubbish – mother is the sun and the earth! The power is not in the semen, but the uterus and the best seed is found in good or bad soil. The foetus is its mother's, and it will remain hers. She keeps the start of the ball of wool and end of the thread! Father is a quick-toothed dad, father's passion that passes fast, father's a memory quickly forgotten – mother's a great root, a livelihood, a lasting trace ...“*

*That's how she will defend herself! By attacking if attacked. She is not afraid either of miserable mockers or buttered hypocrites. Nor is she intimidated by evil puritans nor zealous judges. There was enough of shameful hiding, damn lamenting, or repentant suffering! The pit has been filled up, and she will not rot in it again. But she only must not be obsessed with the selfish damnation. She does not live alone any longer; she does not live just for herself! The child, they say, absorbs every mother's feeling. It is easier to endure life for the patient and restrained! However, it is not right to abandon the human order and way; you have to fight for strengthening yourself. She will go to see doctor Tomaš without shame. He will examine her and deliver her baby when it's due! There will be no tearing by the huge nails of the village midwives. She will listen to the teacher ...<sup>38</sup>*

Gara has awakened her “selfhood” by symbolizing the primordial woman whom: [...] *the burning consciousness sparks [...] with thorough power: she shudders at and is lured by the germ of life. There is a scream in her, and there is fear in her. There is a cry, and there is hope in her.*

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307 – 308.

*She's a secret, she's blood, she's next-of-kin*<sup>39</sup> and carrying a new life is the untying of the "Kurlani fierce knot"<sup>40</sup>.

## Conclusion

Transformation of the primordial existence of a female figure in *Trilogy of Kurlani* by Mirko Božić is reflected through the character of Gara. It is not an illustration of a woman, but an interpretation of the awakening of a woman's consciousness of the right to her own life, to her personality, hence awareness of the power of a woman to be a human being. The scale of the symbolism of this unique character of *Trilogy of Kurlani* is also reflected in its ambivalent function in literary fiction. On the one hand, Gara is confronted with other female characters because she is verified as a different female figure that is inconsistent with up to then established line of the acceptance of woman's subordinate position. As such, she creates tension and stands out as a peculiarity compared to other rural female characters. On the other hand, Gara is the catharsis of all female characters, purification of their suffering – the only woman who has succeeded by means of a direct understanding of her own "selfhood" both in the literal sense of the fabular events and in the figurative sense of the previous position of the woman of this harsh area of Dalmatian hinterland.

The character of Gara confirms woman's search for her own space and her place in it, which heralds a change of social consciousness and collective identity.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>40</sup> VLATKO PAVLETIĆ, *Kurlanski bijesni čvor: trajni književni domet Mirka Božića*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2006.

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MIRELA ŠUŠIĆ

Odjel za kroatistiku Sveučilišta u Zadru

## **INTEGRACIJA LIKA SAMOSVJESNE ŽENE U TRILOGIJI O KURLANIMA MIRKA BOŽIĆA**

### **Sažetak**

U radu se govori o integraciji lika samosvjesne žene u *Trilogiji o Kurlanim* Mirka Božića koja se temelji na semantičkome pomaku ostvarenom kroz lik Gare. Svojim značenjskim sastavnicama lik Gare odstupa od smisla reda koji je inherentan ostalim ženskim likovima *Trilogije*. Gara doživljava preobražaj korjenitih i univerzalnih razmjera i to od potlačena položaja uvjetovana spolom do rađanja individualne svijesti i buđenja vlastite osobnosti, te biva podignuta na razinu pojma, a što je u ovome radu prikazano kroz tri faze. Prvu fazu obilježava Garino nesvjesno prihvaćanje kolektivne svijesti, dok se u drugoj fazi javlja njezin nemir kao motivacijsko sredstvo. U trećoj fazi, kroz spoznaju o pravu na izbor, u Gari se budi samosvjesna žena.

*Ključne riječi:* kolektivna svijest; lik samosvjesne žene; osobnost; pravo na izbor