Women Writers in the Romantic Age

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Cover image: the Brontë sisters (Anne, Emily and Charlotte) by Patrick Branwell Brontë, oil on canvas, ca. 1834. ©National Portrait Gallery, London

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4. Writers from Habsburg Territories

The Austrian Empire came into existence in 1806, when Francis II abdicated as Holy Roman Emperor and proclaimed himself Emperor of Austria in its stead. This moment, brought about by Napoleon's redrawing of Germany's map, permanently recentered Habsburg ambitions away from Germany and toward Italy and Eastern Europe, from Poland to the Balkans. Austria briefly rejoined Germany in 1938, with the *Anschluss*, and has been its modern shape since 1945. The Habsburgs are departed. There is, then, an Austrian national tradition, independent of Germany, featuring just four women writing in German for our period, and other Habsburg territories are also listed here: not the former Austrian Netherlands, nor Italy, nor Poland, but modern Croatia, with three women writers, 1776–1848, Czechia, with one, Hungary, with two, and Slovenia, with zero. There is perhaps no better illustration of the existential risk emergent nationalism posed to the European political order than the Habsburg story, in which a heterogeneous empire speaking at least nine languages fought tooth and nail against reform for decades before its eventual collapse into nation states, many of them still splintering today.

Austria (4 writers)

Ida Laura Pfeiffer (14 October 1797–27 October 1858), born in Vienna, married Dr. Mark Anton Pfeiffer in 1820. In 1842, Pfeiffer traveled to Istanbul and Jerusalem, publishing an account in 1844. In 1845, she traveled to Scandinavia and Iceland, publishing in 1846. She traveled around the world from 1846–1848, visiting South America, Tahiti, China, India, Persia, and Greece, and publishing an account in 1850. In 1851–1855,

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she began a second round the world trip in Berlin, meeting Alexander von Humboldt, then London, South Africa, Malaysia, Borneo, Sumatra, California, Central and South America, New Orleans and the Great Lakes, meeting Washington Irving and Louis Agassiz. Her account appeared in 1856. Traveling to Madagascar and Mauritius in 1857–1858, Pfeiffer contracted malaria, dying in Vienna. Her account appeared in 1861.[1]

Caroline [or **Karoline**] **Pichler** (7 September 1769–9 July 1843), born in Vienna, met Haydn and was taught by Mozart, along with Latin, French, Italian, and English. In 1796, she married Andreas Pichler, founding a salon frequented by Beethoven, Schubert, Friedrich Schlegel, and Grillparzer. Her *Gleichnisse* appeared in 1800, *Lenore* and *Ruth* in 1804–1805. She moved to historical romance in 1808 with *Agathokles*, publishing for instance *Biblische Idyllen*, 1812, *Die Belagerung Wiens*, 1824, *Die Schweden in Prag*, 1827, and *Henriette von England* in 1832. Pichler's autobiography appeared in 1844. Her complete works fill sixty volumes.[2]

Theresa Pulszky, née **Walter** (7 January 1819–4 September 1866), born in Vienna, married Ferenc Pulszky and moved to London with him in 1845 before they could return to their manor near Pest. Pulszky chronicled the 1848 revolution and her flight to Belgium in her 1850 *Memoirs of a Hungarian Lady*. The couple met Lajos Kossuth in Southampton in 1851, after his refusal of the throne of Hungary, traveling with him to the United States, then London. Pulszky published a book of Hungarian myths and legends in 1852, then an account of her American tour in 1853. She translated Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time* from Russian in 1854.[3]

Sophie Ritter von Scherer, née **Sockl** (5 February 1817–29 May 1876), born in Vienna, married Anton Ritter von Scherer in 1841. In 1848, she published a three-volume educational work, presented as letters opposing the 1848 Revolution but in support of social reform. Two open letters followed in 1848 concerning reforms in the Catholic Church, suggesting for instance the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and the abolition of priestly celibacy.[4]

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1 Gabriele Habinger, *Eine Wiener Biedermeierdame erobert die Welt. Die Lebensgeschichte der Ida Pfeiffer (1797–1858)* (Vienna: Promedia Verlag, 1997).

2 Donald G. Daviau, ed. *Major Figures of Nineteenth-Century Austrian Literature* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998).

3 Constant Wurzbach, *Biographische Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, 60 vols (Vienna: Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1856–1891).

4 Constant Wurzbach, *Biographische Lexikon* (1856–1891).

Croatia (3 writers)

Anica Bošković (1714–1804)

"Na čast Prisvetoga Djetešca Jezusa Pjesan"

Sobom dare ponesoše
Kad Pastiri otidoše,
Poklonit se u veselju
Porođenu Spasitelju,
Nu njihovi dari njemu
Priprosti su bili u svemu.
Kralji opeta, kad dodoše,
Prid noge mu donesoše
Druge u sebi zlamenite
Izabrane, plemenite,
I s ljubavi primio je
On jednakom dare oboje.
A ja s huda moga udesa
Poklonit mu nejmam česa.
Nesvjestan sam tako bio,
Da sam sasvjem istratio
Sve što imah, sva godišta,
U ispraznos, i u ništa,
Ali ja ću, kako svoje,
Poklonit mu srce moje
I ako stečem milos taku,
Da on primi čast ovaku,
Ne zavidim ni ja veće
Tad njihove česti i sreće![5]

5 Slavica Stojan, *Anica Bošković* (Dubrovnik: Hazu, 1998), p. 251.

Song in Honor of the Holy Child Jesus

They brought gifts with them
When the Shepherds left,
To bow in great joy
To the Savior Born.
But their gifts to him
Proved plain one and all.
The kings again, when they came,
At his feet they laid
Others more renowned
The chosen, noble ones,
And with love he received
All of them equally.
But I in my foul calamity
Have nothing to offer him.
In my heedless ways
I completely wasted
All that I had, all years,
In nothing, and in vain,
But I will, as my own,
Give him my heart,
And if I gain such grace
That he receives this honor,
I will not envy them
Their greater fortune and honor![6]

A look through Bošković's published works reveals that religious poems are not atypical for her. Bošković was active by 1758, the year of her prose work *The Dialogue*, and she died in 1804. Her poems are often undated but fall within this timeframe, which may seem early for a South Slavic publication until one observes that the first Croatian printed book was published in 1483, being the first non-Latin printed missal in Europe. A manuscript in Serbian similarly is recorded as early as the twelfth century. Bošković's contemporary Lukrecija Budmani was also publishing well before 1800, by which time literary Croatian was well established.

6 Translation reviewed by Vladislav Beronja.

Like much religious poetry, this piece is not particularly characterized by the period in which it was produced; one must look hard to find in it evidence of revolutionary or Romantic sentiment. Bošković was writing in the aristocratic Republic of Ragusa, which governed the southern Dalmatian coast from 1358–1808, when it was absorbed by the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy. Bošković died shortly before the republic's pillage by the French and Russians (after 1806) and subsequent dissolution; there is no hint in this poem of the old republic's forthcoming fate. The poem is instead concerned with the relation between the narrator and the Christ Child, contrasting the shepherds and kings who were received equally when visiting Christ's manger in Bethlehem, then turning to the narrator, who is without a gift. Interest quickens here with mention of the narrator's "foul calamity;" all humans are imperfect and sinners, from a Christian perspective, but evidently the narrator has a particular trauma to remember in writing this piece. One may recall at this point Ivan Gundulić's long poem "Suze sina razmetnoga" [Tears of the Prodigal Son] (1622), which stands among the literary achievements of the Ragusan Baroque. Bošković would have been familiar with this work and seems here to be paying homage to it. This information was provided by Vladislav Beronja.

Anica Bošković (3 November or 3 December 1714–13 August 1804), born in Dubrovnik (Republic of Ragusa), was the sister of the scientist and polymath Roger Joseph Boscovich. She wrote a pastoral song and translated from the Italian. Her 1758 work, *The Dialogue*, is the first known literary work by a woman in the literature of Ragusa.[7]

Lukrecija Bogašinović Budmani (26 October 1710–8 June 1784), born in Dubrovnik (Republic of Ragusa), was the daughter of a government clerk banished from Dubrovnik for corruption. In 1752, she married Simone Budmani, who died ten years later. Budmani was a popular poet, though only four works of hers survive as manuscripts.[8]

Dragojla Jarnević [or **Jarnjević**] (4 January 1812–12 March 1875), born in Habsburg Karlovac, was a Croatian poet and teacher who joined the pan-South-Slavic Illyrian Movement in the 1830s, writing on women's rights. She was also an early mountaineer and rock-climber.[9]

7 *Književnstvo—Theory and History of Women›s Writing in Serbian until 1915.* http://knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/en

8 Katharina M. Wilson, Paul Schlueter, and June Schlueter, eds. *Women Writers of Great Britain and Europe: An Encyclopedia* (London: Garland, 1997).

9 Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds. *A Biographical*

Czechia (1 writer)

Božena Němcová

Národní báchorky a pověsti (1845)

O zlatém kolovrátku

Jedna chudá vdova měla dvě dcery, dvojčata. Byly si v tváři tak podobny, že je nebylo možná rozeznati. Tím rozdílnější byly ale jejich povahy. Dobrunka byla děvče poslušné, pracovité, přívětivé a rozumné, zkrátka děvče nad obyčej dobré. Zloboha naproti tomu byla zlá, mstivá, neposlušná, lenivá a hrdá, ba měla všecky nectnosti, které jen vedle sebe býti mohou. A matka přece jen Zlobohu ráda měla, a kde jen mohla, jí nadlehčovala. Bydlely v lese v malé chaloupce, kam člověk málokdy zabloudil, ačkoli to nedaleko města bylo. Aby se Zloboha něčemu naučila, dovedla ji matka do města do jedné služby, kde se jí dosti dobře vedlo. Dobrunka musela zatím doma malé hospodářství spravovat. Když ráno kozu nakrmila, skromné, ale chutné jídlo přistrojila, sedničku a kuchyňku čistě vymetla a uspořádala, musela ještě, neměla-li právě potřebnější práci před rukama, ke kolovrátku zasednout a pilně přísti. Tenounké její předivo matka potom v městě prodala a začasté z výdělku Zloboze na šaty koupila; ubohá Dobrunka ale z toho nikdy ani za vlas nedostala. Proto však přece matku milovala, a ač od ní za celý den ani vlídného oka neviděla, ani dobrého slova neslyšela, přece ji vždycky bez škaredění a bez odmluvy poslouchala, takže ani Pánbůh od ní reptavého slova neslyšel.[10]

National Gossip and Rumors
About the Golden Wheel

A poor widow had two daughters, twins. Their faces were so similar that it was impossible to tell them apart. But their personalities were all the more different. Dobrunka [*Good girl*] *was an obedient, hard-working, friendly, and reasonable girl, in short, a very good girl. Zloboha* [*Nasty girl*]*, on the other hand, was evil, vengeful, disobedient, lazy, and proud, indeed she had all the vices that can only exist side by side. And mother liked Zloboha after all, and whenever she could, she made it easy for her. They lived in a small cottage in the forest, where one rarely wandered, although it was not far from the city. In order for Zloboha to learn something, her mother took her to service in the city, where she did quite*

Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006).

10 Božena Němcová, *Národní báchorky a pověsti* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1950), p. 9.

> *well. For the time being, Dobrunka had to manage a small farm at home. In the morning, when she had fed the goat, prepared a modest but tasty meal, swept, and tidied up the sitting room and the kitchen, she still had to sit down at the spinning wheel and work diligently, unless she had more important work to do. Her mother then sold her thin yarn in the city and often used the earnings to buy Zloboha clothes; but poor Dobrunka never got a hair's breadth from it. But that's why she loved her mother, and even though she didn't see a kind eye or hear a good word from her during the whole day, she always listened to her without nagging and without excuses, so even the Lord God didn't hear a grumbling word from her.*[11]

Three things about this text of Němcová's catch the eye at once. First, it is in Czech, some eighty years before Czech independence; second, her collection's title opens with the word "národní" or *national*; and third, this is a folk tale, in the tradition of the elegant Charles Perrault, 1697, or the less elegant Brothers Grimm, 1812–1815. Across nineteenth-century Eastern and Northern Europe, following on eighteenth-century British figures like Bishop Percy or James MacPherson, linguists and compilers repeatedly played a key role in national Romantic movements, and Němcová is no exception. There is a self-deprecating wit about her collection's title, "National Gossip and Rumors," which depends in part for its effect on the author's gender; she here offers us old wives' tales, but these are "national" and thus public creations, they belong simultaneously to public and private spheres and are in that sense androgynous. In those terms, the whole thing has a certain revolutionary thrill.

As for this extract, it is an interesting artifact. Diligent and lazy twins have a long history in folk tales, they are not new; and the opposition Němcová establishes between the twins is somewhat simplistic. But that is not where the extract's interest lies. Instead, it lies in the author's choice of the Grimm brothers over Perrault as a model, her resolutely rustic narrative. The text is a world away from sophisticated Romantic productions like the opening to George Sand's *Indiana*, but it is not the less Romantic for that; the embrace of folk elements is indeed a quintessential Romantic gesture. Furthermore, a hermeneutic pattern emerges in this brief text, starting with the very names—Dobrunka and Zloboha, Goodie and Nasty—which trace an absolute system of meaning behind the day's local occurrences. "There is another world, and it is this

11 Translation reviewed by Naděžda Salmhoferová.

one," wrote Paul Éluard, they say, and Dobrunka and Zloboha inhabit a world in which their nature is proclaimed incontrovertibly from birth. This is a world in which cottagers encounter golden wheels; it is the world of fairy tale.[12]

Božena Němcová, née **Barbara Pankel** (4 February 1820–21 January 1862), born in Vienna, grew up in Bohemia. In 1837, aged seventeen, she married Josef Němec. It was an unhappy marriage. Němcová may later have been involved with the poet Václav Bolemir Nebeský, a fellow member of the Czech National Revival Movement. There is also some speculation about her birth. Němcová published two novels in 1855, *Babička* [The Grandmother], inspired by her own childhood with her grandmother, and *Pohorská vesnice* [The Village under the Mountains]. She also published collections of fairy tales and legends, notably *Národní báchorky a pověsti* in 1845.[13]

Hungary (2 writers)

Teréz Karacs (1808–1892)

Történetem

> Apám szegény napszámos volt, de nem azon nappalók közül, kik ezreken vásárolják napi örömeiket; hanem azok egyike, kik néhány garasért árulgatják fáradságuk verejtékétől csillogó napjaikat. Mély szegénység vala sorsa, és örök vágyódás jobb után, de mellynek elérhetésére lépéseket sem tehete a csupán taligatolásra, favágásra oktatott pór. Anyám hasonlón szegény kofa volt, de csak czimjénél fogva rokon azokkal, kik e mesterséget szabadon, helypénz-fizetés nélkül űzik; ezek embertársaik boldogságán nyerekednek, anyám csak egy-két garasáru gyümölcsön; s mig ezek pompásan világított palotáikban a városi történeteket és nem történteket szövögeték, addig anyám—fösvényen világító mécsénél gyermeke s férje rongyait foltozgatá, azon elégüléssel dölve az álom karjába, hogy vasárnapra kijavitott öltönyt adhat családjára.
>
> Mint látható, szülőim körülményei a leghomályosbak valának, s következőleg sorsom sem igen rózsaszínü.[14]

12 The Éluard quotation is apocryphal.

13 Wilma Abeles Iggers, *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995).

14 In *Karacs Teréz összes munkái* [All the Works of Teréz Karacs] ed. Ádám Takács, 2

My Story

My father was a poor day laborer, but not one of those day laborers who buy their daily pleasures by the thousands; but one of those who sell their days shining with the sweat of their labor for a few pennies. Deep poverty was his destiny, and an eternal longing for better things, but which he could not even take steps to achieve, being trained only to push a wheelbarrow and cut wood. My mother was similarly a poor costermonger, but only related by name to those who practice this craft freely, without paying local money; these gain from the happiness of their fellow men, my mother only from a fruit for a penny or two; and while these in their magnificently lit palaces were weaving the stories of the city and what had not happened, my mother was patching the rags of her child and husband at the miserly lit candle, contentedly falling into the arms of the dream that she could give her family a repaired suit for Sunday.

As you can see, my parents' circumstances were the gloomiest, and consequently my fate is not very rosy either.[15]

Teréz Karacs's short prose narrative *Történetem*, or *My Story*, opens with a description of the extreme poverty that circumscribed the narrator's childhood. It does this, not by reviewing the family's possessions, in the sort of scene-setting one might find to open a fairy tale, but by precisely indicating the parents' socioeconomic status: day laborer and costermonger, they are perched at the precarious end of proletarian existence, patching their family's rags by a "miserly lit candle." And from this opening scene, two immediate conclusions emerge. First, it matters that we have traveled on from the ringing words "We the people" which open 1787's United States Constitution, indeed from the taking of the Bastille in 1789, a time when "the people" could still mean first and foremost the Third Estate—the urban bourgeoisie. Just as France's bourgeois elected representatives found their actions to some extent determined by the more proletarian *sans-culotte* crowd they admitted to their deliberations—just as the Terror and the great *journées* saw proletarian emergence into the light of national politics—so here, we have come to a popular art in which 'the people' no longer means the bourgeoisie, let alone the minor nobility: it means the proletariat. This new focus on workers and on the economic circumstances that determine their existence becomes common after the 1830s and helps

vols (Miskolcz: Lajos Tóth, 1853), I pp. 179–180.

15 Translation reviewed by Márta Csire.

to determine the Europe-wide revolutions of 1848. Second, it matters that the grinding proletarian existence here described evidently in no way characterized the childhood of Teréz Karacs, whose father was an engraver and engineer and no day laborer, and whose mother was an advocate for women's rights. What then are we to make of her *My Story*? We might perhaps begin by stating that the author's heart is clearly with the urban poor, like, say, Flora Tristan in the same period. Does her own economic background matter? Only in that this text is presented as autobiography. But then, fairy tales can begin thus, from Bohemia to Norway. Robespierre, who certainly spoke for the poor, was a lawyer by profession. Karacs may have been invited to tutor royalty; here, in the age of Marx and Hugo, she speaks for the day laborer, and she deserves credit for that. Hers is an art shaped and conditioned by the different revolutions of the age, from 1776 to 1848; it is, in that sense, a quintessentially Romantic production.

Teréz Karacs (18 April 1808–2 October 1892), born in Budapest, was the daughter of an advocate for women's rights and an engraver and engineer. Their Protestant home was a meeting place for intellectuals. After 1822, Karacs published poems, novels, and contributions to literary journals. From 1838 to 1844, she worked as a housekeeper while continuing to write. From 1846 to 1859, Karacs managed a school for girls in Miskolc, publishing a collection of romantic stories in 1853. In 1865–1877, she worked in Budapest as a private teacher, though invited to tutor King Louis Philippe's grandchild. In 1877, Karacs moved to Kiskunhalas, living with relatives. Her memoirs appeared to critical acclaim in the 1880s.[16]

Judit Dukai Takách [or **Malvina**] (1795–1836), born in Duka, was a Hungarian poet. She was known under her pseudonym 'Malvina.'[17]

Slovenia (0 writers)

I have identified zero Slovenian women authors in this period. Further research clearly remains to be done.

16 Francisca de Haan et al., eds. *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements* (2006).
17 Vadász Norbert, *Dukai Takács Judit élete és munkái* (Budapest: Franklin-Társ, 1909).