

Summary

The collective monograph “Aspazija and Modernity: Gender, Nation, Creativity” edited and introduced by Ausma Cimdina is dedicated to the actualisation and investigation of the creative biography of one of the most renowned Latvian cultural personalities Aspazija (1865–1943, born Johanna Emilija Lizete Rozenberga). The study was carried out with a thematic orientation / perspective towards gender identity as the national cultural identity, the main object of the research and reflection being her literary creativity and personality – a bright, inventive individuality and at the same time a writer deeply rooted in her time, her nation, its literary tradition and strongly echoed in the Latvian cultural and political history. The title of the book containing keywords – gender, nation, creativity – allows us to define the specific role of Aspazija in Latvian culture and society and demonstrates the main areas of her creative and intellectual search at a national and supranational scale.

Modern science is characterised by the priority of interdisciplinary research and due to its discursive nature, literature has become one of the most important sources for the studies of culture and national identity, regarding literary work as not only a value in itself, in its aesthetic paradigm, but also as a political substance and argument assigning the link of the science and community its specific mission of the applied research. This trend puts literary studies in an ambivalent situation: on the one hand, it calls to develop the theory and methodology of interdisciplinary research, on the other – to maintain the literary studies essential for the fundamental research, in text reading and interpretation respecting the poetic and metaphorical nature, so existentially important to the mission and essence of literature as the art of words; and, in a way, the decadent principle of “pure art”, which prevents literary characters and themes to be seen as the illustrations of social totality or the configurations of socio-political symptoms.

However, the studies of Aspazija, her versatile literary and cultural heritage can be done only in an interdisciplinary perspective, combining the semantics and poetics of the text, its social function, the aspects of reception and performance. The phenomenon of Aspazija itself requires it, because, starting already with her first steps in the literature in the 1880-years and up to the end of her life in the period of the Nazi occupation in the World War II, her life and work

have been in the limelight not only of Latvian literary and cultural life, but also its socio-political developments.¹ Rethinking the collisions in the national writing and in a broader socio-political scale related to Aspazija's name, one should be aware that the ideological contradictions confronting culture and power are characteristic not only of Aspazija and her age but is a timeless phenomenon existing also today. Modern theories of culture are questioning the existence of the society without ideology, emphasising that culture is never neutral – directly or indirectly, it expresses and represents various interests – of a nation, class, state, people, gender, religious communities, political parties, etc.

The collective monograph “Aspazija and Modernity: Gender, Nation, Creativity” continues the series of research publications on basic texts in Latvian literature established within the framework of the project “Aesthetics of Identity: Latvian Literature, Folklore and Art in Historical Signs and Contemporary Symbols” of the National Research Programme “National Identity” publishing books on outstanding contemporaries of Aspazija and their works, who alike Aspazija have played an important role in the formation of the concept of Latvian cultural identity: *Lāčplēša ceļš pasaulē. Latviešu eposu un Eiropas eposu tradīcija* (Global Journey of *Lāčplēsis* (Bear-slayer). A Latvian Epic within the European Epic Tradition) (2010), *Piebalgas teksts. Brāļu Kaudzīšu romāns “Mērnīeku laiki”* (The Piebalga Text. Novel “Times of the Land-Surveyors” by Brothers Kaudzītes) (2011), and *Rīgas teksts. Augusta Deglava romānam “Rīga” – 100* (The Rīga Text. Centennial of Augusts Deglavs Novel *Rīga*) (2013). These basic Latvian texts – *Lāčplēsis* (1888) by Andrejs Pumpurs, *Mērnīeku laiki* (1879) by Reinis and Matīss Kaudzītes and *Rīga* (1912) by Augusts Deglavs belong to the expanded epic messages about Latvia and Latvians, created within the geopolitical framework of the Russian Empire before the establishment of the independent state of Latvia. In that space and time with a bright, creative challenge Aspazija introduces herself – the first and, presumably, so far the most outstanding woman in Latvian literature.

The most significant monographic studies on Aspazija's creative work and personality by so far published should be mentioned the monograph *Aspazija* (1975) by Saulcerīte Viese in Soviet Latvia and the monograph by Astrida Stahnke *Aspazija. Her Life and Her Drama* (1984) written in the academic environment of the Latvian Diaspora in the USA and addressed mainly to foreign readers. The studies of Aspazija (alongside Rainis) have been the life's work of Saulcerīte Viese, and in the context of the given period of time *Aspazija*

¹ See Aspazija's entry in *A Hundred Great Latvians* edited by Jānis Stradiņš (Riga, 2006).

can be considered a daring and innovative accomplishment, though with a strong stamp of the stagnation years in Soviet literary science. In the introduction she characterises Aspazija's assessment in Soviet criticism, pointing out that the attitude towards her has changed if compared with the beginning of the Soviet times, and that in the recent decades, literary critics call for *a closer look at Aspazija's literary heritage and evaluating it, not to forget V. I. Lenin's instructions that the great artists of the past are complex personalities that they must be treated tenderly*.² The *Works* by Lenin and the *Selected Works* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are an integral part of the source list while Aspazija's life and creative work are significantly highlighted with unpublished at that time archival material. It is notable that Viese has avoided thematisation of Aspazija's life and creative work (most likely has been forced to do so), as her *Aspazija* is without the table of contents and chapter titles, and without the page references of the quoted texts. Her narration is just visually structured, each of the sections having an introductory motto – a characteristic poetic verse of Aspazija (except the closing section, featuring Latvian poet Mirdza Ķempe's sentence: *Un Raiņa tautā dzīvo Aspazija* (And Aspazija lives in Rainis' people).

Initially, in the history of Latvian writing Aspazija was positioned as related to the so-called “women's issue” and The New Current – the reception of Marxist social and cultural philosophy in Latvia. Closer to these days, under the influence of the feminist literature and cultural theories, she is crowned as the progenitress of feminist ideas in Latvia and at the same time a bright embodiment of feminine difference in life and literature, but at the turn of the 21st century when the gender issues unfolded in theoretical concepts, the Anglicism “gender” is complimenting the keywords in the studies of Aspazija's phenomenon. Today, when sex and sexuality have become highly interdisciplinary research objects in sociology, psychology, biology, linguistics, philosophy, and other sciences at a transnational level, a common language is being sought for to describe these issues, and it turns out that the linguistic aspect is the one causing problems in the formation of common understanding. For example, in the adaptation process of the Anglophone terminology in the cultural environment of the French language, there is a need to develop a glossary of untranslatable terms (*Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon*)³,

² See (in Latvian): Viese, S. *Aspazija*. Rīga: Liesma, 1975, p.10.

³ See: Cassin, B. *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. First, the dictionary was published in French, over time, they created entries in English, German, Spanish and Italian and showed how problematic is the literal translation of “gender” in these languages by analogy with the category of grammatical gender.

and there the Anglicism “gender” appears as one of the most typical examples of the untranslatable terms. Today the Anglophone linguistic space, including the adaptation of the terminology of the humanities and social sciences in the Latvian language, is one of the biggest challenges also in the actualisation and investigation of Aspazija’s creative biography (it appears also in the alignment of Latvian and English headings of this book in the correlation of the concept of “gender” in English and Latvian).

The presentation of the study “Aspazija and Modernity: Gender, Nation, Creativity” is structured in six chapters.

The first chapter of the book **“Aspazija’s Social Philosophy and Aesthetics of Identity”** covers a wider and many-sided thematic spectrum, and it starts with Ausma Cimdīņa’s article “Aspazija’s Challenge to Science and Fatherland”, emphasising the receptive particularities of Aspazija’s creative work, as well as the terminological adaptation problems of the gender studies in Latvian literary research that emerged within the framework of feminist theory. In Cimdīņa’s article, Aspazija is represented as an outstanding Latvian poet, playwright, public journalist, and in the public space one of the most challenging and contradictory personalities of the Latvian literature and culture. Aspazija plays a significant role in the modernisation of the Latvian literature, and in the promotion of the intellectual discussion about the key concepts of the human existence and meaning of life, women emancipation, national past and modern society, foundation of the nation and state. Cimdīņa emphasises that the reference system and context that have been used to examine and evaluate Aspazija is Rainis where she is represented as a secondary phenomenon in the tandem of Rainis and Aspazija; however, she has her own unique voice and significance in Latvian culture of her life time and today, as well as in the European history of ideas.

In the article *“The Blood Cells of Wisdom: the Metaphysical Code of Aspazija”* Ella Buceniece raises the question what are those specific blood cells of wisdom that make Aspazija both into the classical writer of today, and of the modernist for the present culture and literature of Latvia? And the answer is that the cultural code of Aspazija is to be found, first and foremost, in the structures of thought pertaining to the Renaissance-type of appreciation of humanism, universality and Platonic understanding of the micro- and macro-cosmos. She exhibits strains of certain mysticism and hiddenness; above all – her wisdom comes from corporality, from “thinking with one’s body”.

Another aspect of Aspazija's code is the metaphysical feminism, undergoing stages of evolution from her youthful social emancipationist attitudes towards the existing reality to the difference-of-sexes feminism that echoes the notions of modern feminist trends.

In the article "Aspazija's Phenomenon: Rebellious and Symbolic Power" Maija Kūle points out that Aspazija can be interpreted as a writer who belongs to the new kind of woman intellectuals. She started questioning the postulates of traditional culture, dispelling patriarchal injustices connected with the secondary role of the female gender in society and stimulated development of a new intellectual power based on the transformation of Latvia's culture with the means of literature. Aspazija's power is in introducing the spirit of modernity in Latvia: new language, new symbols, new forms for the expression of sensuality, and invitation to the individual's self-reflection. Aspazija was sure that by awakening spiritual powers and allowing women to express their feelings it is possible to transform the world. Her rebellious power was not aggressive and violent but full with a lyrical challenge.

Zita Kārkla in her article "Aspazija and Female Literary Tradition" provides insight into the history of the feminist literary theory and points out that Virginia Woolf started the specific study of women's writing as a separate category in her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) where she seeks to explain absence of women writers in literary history. By the 1960s, scholarly attention turned to finding and reclaiming "lost" women writers as early feminist literary critics – gynocritics (studying women's writing in particular) – focused on the intersection of women's lives and their writing, mapping a women's tradition in literature. In the 21st century, women's literary tradition is neither one, nor monolithic, but through women's literary tradition it is possible to see that Aspazija was neither single nor anomalous. She was more than a voice and a register of her lifetime, – she was a part of a tradition that had its origins before her age and that continues through our own.

Eva Eglāja-Kristsons's article "*Femme nouvelle*. "A New Woman" and Aspazija" aims to search for and produce links between Aspazija, her confidence and literary works and concept of a "New Woman" (*femme nouvelle*) used in academic research. Yet "New Woman" as a part of Latvian society and women representation can be noticed undoubtedly and should be analysed through women's studies perspective. It is essential that in a different time Aspazija and her heroines were ranked in a "New Woman" image gallery even before

the First World War when there is some tendency to speak about the aspect of “New Woman” in Latvian literature, comparing it to the understanding of the “Old Woman”. The “New Woman” is a grateful concept to reveal Aspazija’s personality and meaning of her early drama. Both in her personal life and femininity, and her dramas Aspazija always wavered between expression of *femme fatale* and *femme nouvelle*. Her heroines mostly die after getting in a conflict with public stereotypes, even before fulfillment of the “New Woman’s” life.

Kārlis Vērdiņš in his article “With a Long, Warm Kiss of a Sister: Female Homosociality in the Letters of Aspazija and Ivande Kaija” refers to the leading representative of queer theory Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who in her work has developed the concept of “homosociality” as a model of relationship characteristic for men collectives that enable male bonding and traditional masculine attitudes and relationship; close friendship among men is confronted to homosexuality. Phenomenon of female homosociality has been discussed much more rarely because of historical reasons that were unfavourable for it. In his paper, the author analyses the letters of Ivande Kaija and Aspazija, written during the second decade of the 20th century when Aspazija and Rainis spend their exile years in Castagnola and Ivande, a beginning prose writer and admirer of Aspazija’s poetry visited them to become friends. The letters contain significant examples of discussions concerning problems of marriage and love, friendship among women in the context of patriarchy and feminist ideas, opinions on creative work and politics. These letters invite to ask questions about friendship, love and emotional attachment in this triangle, using also the concepts of lesbian continuum and homosociality.

Sigita Kušnere in her article “Issues of Women’s Emancipation in Latvian Literature at the End of the 19th Century. Novella of Aspazija *Fight on for the Future*” notes that the central theme is women’s emancipation. Aspazija composes a schematic narrative and system of characters; she chooses to build the scene, conceptually showing how the surrounding society stand in adverse against the women. In the novella, she reveals how in literary works of this era a woman from the object becomes a subject guiding the action. At the time of publication of the novella, the issues of women’s emancipation is the theme of a number of publications, at the same time, many Latvian authors, such as writers Andrievs Niedra, Augusts Deglavs, Haralds Eldgasts, etc. are focused on the changing role of women in society.

Inese Treimane in her article “The Maximalism of Aspazija and Minimalism of the Constitution of Latvia” focuses on one of the most important episodes in the political biography of the writer. Namely, after 14 years in exile, on 10 April 1920, Aspazija returns home from Switzerland and already a week later is elected to the National Assembly of Latvia. At the National Assembly, she fervently talks about teacher remuneration, about the reform of the institution of marriage, about a woman’s place in society, about the rights of immigrants and refugees, and about the pitiful state of domestic servants. The text of the Latvian Constitution – the *Satversme* – has been created brief and concise: the formulation has to be concise but also comprehensive, while not becoming overtly detailed, in order to prevent the constitution from becoming obsolete and to ensure its long-term functionality. The proposal to supplement the preamble with thanks expressed by the Latvian people to God for the gained independence is declined. Among those who vote against the mention of God’s name is also Aspazija.

Also Vita Matiss in her article “The Divergent Thinker: Aspazija between Poetry and Politics” views Aspazija in the historical context of Latvian socio-political ideas, recalling that Latvia in a few compressed decades, experienced the diachronic unfolding – romanticism, nationalism, socialism – of a tumultuous European 19th century. This produced a curious phenomenon: being almost simultaneous apparitions in Latvia, revolutionary romanticism and socialism each contaminated the other, the former adding on a pronounced cultural (and national) tinge to early Latvian Marxism/socialism, the latter imbuing Latvian *Sturm und Drang* romanticism with a decidedly social twist. This overlap provided for an inherent tension between art and social democratic politics after the initial revolutionary period had subsided. Aspazija served as a litmus test for the role of art in politics, more specifically the role of art and literature in Latvian Social Democratic politics, and on two occasions, at a 20-year interval, intensive polemics concerning Aspazija’s perceived non-compliance with the party line led to a general public debate in Latvia on the relationship between the two. Aspazija served as a flashpoint for the debate on art and politics in Latvia, and the paper examines how her case was or was not representative of dilemmas and moral choices faced by other European authors at the beginning of the 20th century.

The second chapter of the monograph “**Dimension of Antique Culture**” emphasises Aspazija’s link with the ancient world and its cultural heritage, which

is essential not only in connection with the origin of her ancient Greek pseudonym but also the construction of images, motives and ideological themes of her creative work. It starts with Vita Papparinska's article "Ancient Greek Aspasia: Deconstruction of Personality" reminding that little is known about ancient Greek Aspasia, one of the most extraordinary women of antiquity. In the literary texts of her time, Aspasia receives but peripheral subordinate mention in connection with her husband, the Athenian politician Pericles. Information provided by ancient texts on Aspasia is varied and Aspasia's evaluation is correspondingly diverse. The unifying aspect is Aspasia's singularity – she is a woman who has left the privacy of feminine seclusion and has entered the open masculine public space. For ancient texts to serve as source material for deconstruction of Aspasia's personality, they must be critically examined for removal of the "strata" imposed by the corresponding literary genre. The deconstructed Aspasia emerges as an educated and independent woman, intellectual equivalent to the most outstanding minds of Greece, a woman who loves and is loved by Pericles.

The study of Ilze Rūmniece "Aspazija's Poetic Language: a Segment of Classical Antiquity Elements" is based on a research of drama texts by Aspazija (drama *Aspazija*), using the ideas of Aspazija about values of classical culture. Rūmniece groups and examines the signs of classical antiquity in Aspazija's language: 1) the level of vocabulary in form and content, variety of compounds and the "weaving" of separate Greek or Latin words / concepts into Latvian; 2) the level of rhetoric or stylistics / poetics – characters, symbols, allusions to ancient mythology, history and literary texts. Aspazija's language is highly creative and free – the key symbols of the ancient world are the ones that are most instrumental, but often, more concealed, there are also elements of thought and expression of ancient texts. Most of them are used to especially "mark" ideas of importance to Aspazija, among them the feminine valence in language and its stylistics.

Silvestrs Gaižūns in his article "The Myth of Prometheus in the Works of Aspazija" points out that the images and plots of the world literature and mythology constitute universal base for Aspazija's poetics. These images and plots employed in her poetry and dramas are exactly what allow her to engage in the context of the world literature. Aspazija drew most inspiration from the Greek mythology: Pan, Odysseus and Prometheus are those "eternal escorts" that commonly inspire the poet. Since the very childhood Aspazija has

considered Prometheus to be her spiritual partner, not accidentally poetic character in the poem *From the Tribe of Prometheus* taken from the poetry collection *Saulains stūrītis* (Sunny Corner) refers to Prometheus as her uncle. Two other poets, namely, Shiller and Rūdolfs Blaumanis also get included in the tribe of Prometheus. In the poem *Anniversary of Shiller* (1906), she refers to the German poet as the son of Prometheus who was appointed to clear the land from “the old altars” and to become a chieftain. Prometheus serves as the ideal not only to Aspazija, but also to her entire generation, blazing the trail to the “New Current”. In her drama *Sidraba šķidrāts* (The Silver Veil), the veil of Guna becomes the symbol of Promethean power. Drama *Aspasia* is considered the highest point of Aspazija’s Prometheism.

The aim of the third chapter “**Semantics and Poetics of Aspazija’s Texts**” is to have a closer look at the thematic lines and poetic structures from the standpoint of the genres and directions characteristic of Aspazija’s creative work and outlined in the first and the second chapter.

Linda Kusiņa in her article “Singularities of Female Characters in Aspazija’s Early Poetry, Prose and Drama” states that mostly they are shown in a dichotomy: passionate valkyrie – a sensitive northerner, active protagonist – passive antagonist, but such classification is imprecise and on a limited scale applicable just within Aspazija’s early prose and so-called social drama. Actually, there is a substantial inner dichotomy within Aspazija’s heroines themselves restricting precise classification. Characters in Aspazija’s prose are schematic and constructed; still they break the borders of realism while in drama characters are allowed to match up to stylistics of romanticism. Aspazija’s female characters are revealed at their most harmonic and natural within poetry.

Juris Andrejs Kastiņš in his article “Style Polyphony in Aspazija’s Texts” briefly describes the stylistic diversity of the literary movements (“style pluralism”), which is seen as a special feature of the Western literature at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. At this period, Aspazija’s lyrics was formed by studying classical heritage of German Romanticism (Novalis, Heine) but influenced also by Neo- or New Romanticism, Impressionism and Art Nouveau (Hauptmann, Stadler, Dauthendey). There are also other trends (Neoclassical drama, etc.), which complements the specific stylistic polyphony of her poetry. It is not an eclectic mix of styles, but stylistic diversity (e.g., Collection *Ziedu klēpis* (A Lapful of Flowers))

where the features of one style (Romanticism) complement expressions of other styles (Art Nouveau, Impressionism), marked distinctively stylistic polyphony of Aspazija's lyrics.

Aida Razumovskaja in the article "The Function of Flower Images in the Poetry of Aspazija (*A Lapful of Flowers* Collection)" focuses on the poetic manner revealed in the collection *Ziedu klēpis* (*A Lapful of Flowers*, 1911), which is a part of the lyrical heritage of Aspazija. The spiritual evolution of the poetess is revealed through the flower imagery, imbued with folklore and myth tradition. It reflects the aspirations of the modernism art. The titles of seven chapters ("Autumn Crocus", "The Blue Flower", "The Fern Flower", "Little Roses of the Wind", "Kitten's Paws", "The Deadly Flower", "Poppies") and the symbolic character of the flora help understand the state of the lyrical character (as a woman and creator, artist) and reflect the destiny of Latvian people.

Rudīte Rinkēviča in her article "Semiotics of Childhood in Childhood Stories of Aspazija *The Blue Sky in Golden Clouds*" stresses that the system of childhood semiotic of the Latvian prose of the 1920–30s is rooted in the literary tradition that since the late 19th century has foregrounded the category of memory, as well as the ascertainment of national code (home, fatherland, work, education) essential for the period of the national state in Latvia. The tradition of autobiographical childhood memory narratives initiated by Latvian writers is carried on by Aspazija in her childhood stories *Zila debess zelta mākoņos* (*The Blue Sky in Golden Clouds*) that provides a possibility for the author to express her individuality and transforms the subjective reality by poetic elements of Neo-Romanticism. The artistic world of Aspazija may be characterized either as semiotic or metaphorical, its spatial models revealing the portrayal of the human's inner world and human consciousness.

Anna Auziņa in her article "Feminine Language as a Resistance: Aspazija un Vizma Belševica" tastes the presence of feminine code in the poetic language of Aspazija, the pioneer of feminine tradition in Latvian poetry, and Vizma Belševica, a brilliant poet of the 20th century, though it does not automatically make their poetics different from those created by male authors. However, in the undivided piece of art it is impossible to separate the means of expression from the expressed experience or idea. Aspazija and Vizma Belševica not only use feminine techniques but also revolt against patriarchal structures of power. Aspazija is the first well-known Latvian female poet who gives the voice to the oppressed ones.

Vizma Belševica continues this rebellion just as sharply as Aspazija, yet revealing new historical and linguistic nuances according to her epoch.

The fourth chapter “**Drama of Aspazija and Theatre**” begins with Viktors Hausmanis’ article “Aspazija’s Debut at the Theatre and in Drama” viewing her early dramaturgy in the history of the origins of Latvian drama. He points out that in the 90s of the nineteenth century a change of great importance occurred when outstanding plays of two renowned dramatists were staged. One of these authors is Rūdolfs Blaumanis, whose drama *Pazudušais dēls* (The Prodigal Son) was first staged in 1893, but a few months later Aspazija’s drama *Vaidelote* (Vestal Virgin) has its premiere in Rīga on the Latvian theatre stage. Unlike Blaumanis, as well as some other beginning dramatists, whose works dealt with various aspects of daily life, Aspazija chose a different route. She produced a dramatically charged romantic drama examining the inner world and emotions of the central character, a young girl named Mirdza. The author also touches upon universal human problems – the awakening of love, its blossoming, followed by betrayal, which in turn elicits hate and the desire for revenge. Mirdza experiences all degrees and nuances of those emotions until the young girl sees only one solution to the conflict – suicide. A play of such dynamic scope was presented on the Latvian stage for the first time and became a desired vehicle for many actresses.

Ieva Kalniņa’s article “Natural Elements in Aspazija’s Plays *Vestal Virgin* and *Silver Veil*” explores four major elements – fire, water, earth and air – in Aspazija’s two most outstanding plays *Vaidelote* (Vestal Virgin) and *Sidraba šķidrums* (Silver Veil). The most commonly used element in Aspazija’s plays is fire. In the article, G. Bachelard’s research on the element of fire in culture is used and discovers different types of fire in the stage directions (the holy bonfire, torches, a flaming heart, a campfire, a burning castle, etc.). In *Vaidelote*, fire is related to all the most important concepts of the play (love, human growth, majesty of Lithuanian gods). In *Sidraba šķidrums*, the main heroine Guna’s spiritual world is associated with fire; she is glowing in flames of God. Guna for the first time feels the power of fire standing near the bonfire craving to reach the sun and the universe; at this point, the sexuality of fire comes apparent. The final scene with the castle burned down by Guna refers to love, sexuality and, depending on the interpretation of the play, destruction or rebirth. The ambivalent and strong nature of fire is the most integral element in Aspazija’s perception of the world.

The article by Zane Radzobe “Female Heroines in Plays by Aspazija” examines images of heroines of Aspazija in the context of the corpus of her plays and the resonance in the criticism and public opinion of her time. The paper discusses peculiarities of dramatic conflicts and narrative techniques used by Aspazija, as well as focuses on the ideas and aesthetic trends of the epoch found in her writing.

Viesturs Rudzītis in his article “Aspazija’s Women between the Matriarchal and Patriarchal” appraises Aspazija’s plays *Sidraba šķidrāts* (Silver Veil) and *Zeltīte* (Goldie) as the peak of her dramatic art, in which she works out this seemingly eternal topic – how can a woman survive in a patriarchal world? Poet shows us a wide, magnificent gamma of women’s emotional events when she lets / prohibits giving all the control to her husband, because in Aspazijas creation, a wedding is an event, which causes a lot of fear. Such characters like *Baltā sieva* (White Woman) and *Dzelzs jaunava* (Iron Maiden) display very significantly the evolution in female emotional experience from pain and sadness to anger and matriarchal eruptions of aggression about archetypical patriarchal offence against women and their projections in modern women-men relationships.

In the article by Austra Gaigala “One is not to Offend a Man’s Self-Esteem: Psychological Knots in Aspazija’s Drama *Zeltīte*” the attention is directed toward the protagonist Zeltīte and her image has been examined from both the biographical and feminist aspects. The emphasis is placed on the strive for the ideal that confronts the life’s reality, protest and struggle against the state of women being deprived of their civil rights, characteristic of female characters in Aspazija’s drama. However, the attention is also paid to the father of Zeltīte named Zeltiņš to examine the relationships of Zeltiņš with his daughter from the psychological angle, emphasising various points: the notion of honour, the offence to a man’s self-esteem and its consequences (the killing of his wife as a consequence of infidelity); power of resentment and its projection onto the life of the daughter; inability to adequately evaluate the situation and people; unrecognised grief that stimulates the emotional alienation from the daughter and leads towards further losses and death.

Silvija Radzobe’s article “Portrayal of Aspazija in Contemporary Latvian Theatre” analyses four theatre performances dedicated to the 150 anniversary of Latvian poets Rainis and Aspazija: *Aspazija. Personally* by Inga Ābele,

Paramour by Lauris Gundars, *Dreams of Rainis* by Ieva Struka, *The Blessing of Love* by Igor Konjajev. Radzobe highlights the innovations regarding the image of Aspazija in the said performances and plays, and scenarios the performances are based on. Two performances (*Dreams of Rainis*, *Paramour*) are post dramatic theatre aesthetics, the two remaining (*Aspazija. Personally*, *The Blessing of Love*) – combines elements of post dramatic theatre and psychological realism. Particular attention is dedicated to the artistry of actresses in the roles of Aspazija.

Most of the studies collected in the fifth chapter “**Aspazija and her Translations in Communication with other Cultures**” are devoted to the identification and exploration of the translations of Aspazija’s poetry into Russian – the history of these translations that extends over a century, the updating of the socio-cultural context of literary connections and the issues of poetic strategies and artistic equivalence in translations. It provides an insight into the reception of Aspazija’s creative work in Lithuania and the searches of the counterparts of the creative tandem of Rainis and Aspazija in Lithuanian literature and culture, as well as in investigations of typological parallels in Japanese culture.

Regina Kvašite in her article “Biography of Aspazija and Translations of Her Works in the Lithuanian” concludes that in the sources available in Lithuania one can find general information on Aspazija. Separate articles devoted to Aspazija have been published in Lithuanian press both in Lithuania and Latvia, and in the studies of Lithuanian and Latvian literature contacts. However, Aspazija’s creative work is known by Lithuanian literary and theatre scholars, while for the general public Aspazija is the spouse of Rainis. Renderings both in Aspazija’s lifetime and later of her works have been published mainly in the Lithuanian press and only a few are included in collections. In 1911, Aspazija’s drama *Vaidelote* (Vestal Virgin) was first staged in the Lithuanian language in Riga, and reviews of the event were published in Latvian and Lithuanian press.

Solveiga Daugirdaitė in her article “Who Could We Refer to as Lithuanian Aspazija and Rainis?” reflects on the possible kindred spirits and creative couples in Lithuanian culture, concluding that Lithuanian culture has not had such a couple or at least up to now such a couple has not been sufficiently represented in the way that was done in neighbouring Latvia where the two main

streets had been named after Rainis and Aspazija in Rīga. That such a couple of relatively equal intellectual partners emerged in Latvia but not in Lithuania was due to the different cultural circumstances (at the end of the 19th century, there were few intellectuals who spoke Lithuanian; from 1864 to 1904, Lithuanian writing in Latin characters was banned by tsarist authorities). Probably the presence of this iconic couple in Latvian cultural memory determines certain differences in the male and female situation in today's Latvia. The article discusses the problematic reception of the Lithuanian intellectual couples of the 20th century in the modern research, while paying a closer attention to the two couples of the beginning of the 20th century, namely, Ona Pleirytė-Vaidilutė and Kazys Puida, Sofija Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė and Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis.

Chiaki Sekiguchi Bems in her article "Liesma's Unlikely Sisters: Aspazija and the Writers of *Seitō*" notices typological similarities with the Japanese women's movement of the beginning of the 20th century, and concludes that Aspazija had unlikely sisters called the women of *Seitō* (Bluestockings) in Japan, and they are connected by feminism and the advocacy of the sun. *Seitō* (1911–1916) was Japan's first women-run journal devoted to women's literature and social issues. Examining the *Seitō* manifesto "In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun" by Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971) and the journal's inaugural cover design by Chieko Naganuma (1886–1938), alongside with Aspazija's play *Ragana* (Witch), the paper points out similarities as well as differences between the Latvian poet-playwright and the *Seitō* women. While the sun was employed by both Aspazija and Raichō, Aspazija's sun became a symbolic language among people, but Raichō's sun remained as a powerful metaphor that inspired many women. What contributed to this difference were Aspazija's cultivation of poetry as political efficacy and Raichō's elitist philosophical approach to the problem.

Tatjana Tsarkova's article "To the First Translations of Aspazija's Poem into Russian" offers an overview of the translations of Aspazija's poem *Dzimtene* (Homeland, 1899) that were made in the 20th century. The special attention is paid to the first translation into Russian, the translation by Isaac Mordvinov. The translation was not published, but was found in the correspondence archive of M. Stasjulevich's fund. The essence of the first translation helps to understand the destiny of this text, popular among the Russian translators, considering the biographical context of the first translator.

Ludmila Sproģe's article "Aspazija's Poem *Children of Sion*: the First Publication of Latvian Poet Work in Saint-Petersburg Journal *Sever*" examines the first publication in Saint-Petersburg journal *Sever* (North) of I. Mordvinov's translation into Russian of Aspazija's poem *Ciānas bērni* (Children of Sion, 1899). The fact of the publication of the poem attracted the attention of Rainis towards the journal, as well as towards the personality of for him an unknown translator. The article is devoted to the peculiarities of Mordvinov's translation of Aspazija's text.

Iveta Narodovska's article "And that is me...: Translations of Aspazija's Poems into Russian" provides an overview of the translations of Aspazija's poems into Russian focusing on the peculiarities of a particular historic period (chronologically from 1916 to 2015), as well as on the personalities of the translators. The following four translated poems are analysed in detail from the aspect of artistic equivalency in translation: *Bāl-mēnestiņš* (translated by a Russian symbolist Lev Ostroumov); *Viena* (translated by Viktor Tretyakov); *Circenīša Ziemas svētki* (translated by Olga Pētersone, Lubov Osipova and Larisa Romanenko) and *Tāda es esmu* (translated by Maija Borisova and Inessa Latysheva).

Tatjana Barishnikova in her article "Aspazija's Lyrics in Translations by Larisa Romanenko" examines translated texts included into the volume of collected poems titled *Bozhiy priemish* (God's Adoptee) printed by Daugava publishing house in 2003. The analysis of the poems proves that L. Romanenko tends to convey both the verbal, notional and semantic peculiarities of Aspazija's texts. Significant attention is dedicated to preserving of those phonetic and rhythmic peculiarities of the source texts. The cases of the intentional digression from the source text are mainly aesthetically justified and reasonable as they are based on the translator's goal to disclose the originality of the Russian poet's style of writing and her perception of the world to Latvian readers. Frequent derogations from the original text rather show the translator's desire to express her personal experiences and associations, launched by the original text.

Natalja Shrom in her article "Aspazija's Mistake" draws attention to the fact that at the beginning of the 1930s, Rīga, due to a simplified divorce procedure, became notoriously known as the world capital of divorce, and Aspazija, in this context, as one of the authors of the most liberal European law on

family rights, found herself in the centre of the discussion that took place on the pages of a Russian newspaper *Segodnya* (Today). As a result of public argument, many participants of women's movements, including Aspazija, re-evaluated the consequences of their actions and the prospects for further development. A significant for any European society question about the modern marriage is examined in the article from many aspects on the material of the journalistic texts from the newspaper *Segodnya* and fiction composed by Rīga's Russian writers (a long story and a book of poems by A. Katkova, a story by A. Damanskaya, a comedy by Leri, feuilletons by Civis).

The final chapter "**Cultural, Historical and Topographical Signs for Aspazija's Portrayals**" more than the previous ones of the book is dedicated to the poorly explored spots of the cultural memory associated with the life and creativity of Aspazija, in addition, highlighting the presence of Rainis (1865–1929, whom many regard as the most outstanding Latvian poet) in her life.

Gaida Jablovskā in her article "Aspazija and the Rīga Latvian Society (1893–1895)" explores the archival documents of the Rīga Latvian Society (RLS) – protocol books and accounting records – revealing hitherto lesser-known details of the events connected with Aspazija, especially in connection with the Theatre Commission of the RLS. In 1887, the RLS announced a competition and a young playwright Aspazija submitted her play *Atriebēja* (The Avenger) attracting both attention and criticism but not reaching the stage of the Rīga Latvian Theatre. Aspazija won recognition both of the RLS and the public in autumn 1893 when she wrote the Prologue for the 25th anniversary of the Rīga Latvian Society. After that, the society accepted her as its playwright with a regular monthly payment. In 1894–1895, the Rīga Latvian Theatre staged her plays *Vaidelote* (Vestal Virgin), *Zaudētas tiesības* (The Lost Rights) and *Ragana* (The Witch), but after the increasing disputes among the spokesmen of the RLS, members of the Theatre Commission and Aspazija, she ceased her activities in the RLS and discontinued her work in the theatre.

Study by Valdis Muktupāvels "*Kokle* in the World of Elza Rozenberga and Aspazija" is focused on Elza Rozenberga's (later Aspazija) experience with traditional instrumental music, especially in her childhood and youth period. In her literary activities, she, with her pseudonym Aspazija, has made use of figurativeness and of symbolic space, created by music and musical instruments. Latvian psaltery *kokle* has an outstanding role among other

instruments in this space; it is present in Aspazija's works of all creative periods. It can be concluded that Aspazija's *kokle* almost fully lacks the features of traditional instrument; the name itself serves as a common designation for different musical and musically more or less related metaphysical entities. Antique, Christian and Romantic motifs have been intertwined in the image of *kokle*; it is a metaphor of Orphic elements, creative soul and poetry. The musical experience of the poetess herself is hardly reflected in her poems and plays, whereas the autobiographic descriptions provide fragmentary, but valuable materials for the study of Latvian traditional instrumental music.

The article by Diāna Raugule "Travel Narrative: Rainis and Aspazija in Berlin" recalls that a great part of their lives Rainis and Aspazija – mostly together – have spent out of their homeland, and at the end of 1896, they had their first common trip outside Latvia; they travelled to Berlin and lived there for about three months. Experience of European cultural life and social issues of Berlin is topical in their lives hereafter. Berlin is the first place out of the homeland where both authors have to build their daily routine together, and Aspazija says that Berlin is the starter of the "small room system", which is so actual in their further life. Cultural experience of Berlin is especially revealed in texts of Rainis – *Letters from Berlin* and *Impressions and Memories from Berlin*, which at that time represent a very popular genre throughout the world, also in Latvia – travel writing, but Rainis narrative is adapted to his own taste and profile of periodical editions.

Ilma Elsberga in the article "Virtual Museum of Aspazija and Rainis in Lugano: arlugano.lv" introduces to the conceptual design of recently launched Lugano Virtual Museum of Aspazija and Rainis. A multimedia online platform provides free access for anyone who is interested in the heritage of both poets and politicians in connections with the contemporary socio-cultural processes. The broad and diverse range of audiovisual and informational materials help the visitors to become acquainted with the literary works, personal notes and letters written by the poets in the period of their exile in Switzerland (1905–1920), with an emphasis on the historical background, which affected the becoming of the particular cultural heritage.

Peter Paul in his article "Daukšas – the Chronicle of Cultural Heritage" looks at Daukšas – birthplace of Elza Rozenberga (later Aspazija) – as home of his grandfather. The chronicle of Daukšas reaches back to the time of the

feudalism of the 17th century in Kurland. After the abolishment of serfdom, the farm is taken over by the former tenant David Rosenberg. He and his family as well as the family of Paul put their stamp on the history of Daukšas from the second half of the 19th century until shortly before the end of the Second World War. The measures taken by the Tsarist regime against the growth of socialist ideas concerned also the members of those two families and Ludwig Paul have to flee and emigrate to Switzerland. Daukšas, before the Second World War a remarkable farm, disappears into meaninglessness during the Soviet time, and has finally survived only because it has been declared Latvian cultural heritage thanks to the newly awakened cultural awareness.

Raivis Vilūns and Betija Turlaja in their article “Rainis and Aspazija as Street Names in Latvian Towns” point out that the names of Rainis and Aspazija are noticeable all over the Latvia – not only in museums and schools but also many streets are named after them and by measuring the length of these streets and checking their location on map get an impression what kind of image of these two writers is made in Latvian cultural space. The research shows that Rainis is the most popular person in Latvian city texts, that there is no another Latvian author, poet, historical or fictional character that would have more streets named after him than Rainis does. Together there are 66 streets named after Rainis and 11 named after Aspazija, and presence of their names in Latvian cities and villages is a proof that shows the historical importance of both writers.

In the today's globalised economic progress and the achievement-oriented world of speed and quantity, the humanities and culture have a special mission – to absorb these processes, to seek and provide answers to the existentially important issues of human life, and in its own way to protect the human life and the cultural roots against excessive shocks. Compared to the science, which, on the one hand, forms and creates itself, its own achievements, but on the other – quickly denies and discards them, carried away by financially profitable innovations, the literary and artistic works are present and retain their intrinsic importance through the centuries and millenniums, whether they are ancient Greek myths, Goethe's *Faust*, Pumpurs' *Lāčplēsis*, Brothers Kaudzītes' *Times of the Surveyors*, Deglavs' *Rīga* or the literary heritage of Aspazija and Rainis. Knowing that it is impossible to cover fairly all aspects of Aspazija's life and creative work in one research, the study “Aspazija and Modernity: Gender, Nation, Creativity” has been carried out in conviction

that Aspazija's creative biography is not only the biography of the most famous Latvian female writer and a politically active person, but also the biography of the age that awaits and deserves further research and interpretations, as well as the translations of her poetry and a more active stage life of her dramas on Latvian and European theatre stages.

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