Woman and the State: Ideological Aspects of Rudolf Dilong's Novel *Song of Love* (1953)

Rudolf Dilong (1905–1986) ranks among the most controversial figures of twentieth-century Slovak literature. He was a Franciscan priest and poet who, in the 1930s, stood at the beginning of the Slovak Catholic Modernist movement. He publicly supported the wartime Slovak Republic (1939–1945), which was a satellite state of the Nazi Germany. After the Second World War he was forced into exile. He emigrated to Argentina via Italy. He was politically active: he spoke out against the legitimacy of the re-established Czechoslovakia and advocated the thesis that the Slovak Republic had never ceased to exist. In 1953, he published his novel *Song of Love* in Buenos Aires. In this autobiographical work, Dilong departs from the realist structure and gravitates toward lyrical tendencies.

The novel has six chapters. The first chapter begins with a description of R. Dilong's difficult childhood, the death of his mother and sister. He first meets the main female character of the novel, his beloved, who takes the form of a pretty girl. This happens right at the border between childhood and boyhood, when at the same time a poet is born from the lyrical subject, who is looking for his *song of love*. In the second chapter, a few years later he meets his beloved again, who takes the form of an elusive woman - a vision - a muse. This is followed by a description of her unearthly beauty. The third chapter begins in spring Bratislava (capital of Slovakia), where the spring festival is taking place. The climax of the festival (as well as the entire book) is when the adored one finally appears before the people and becomes a queen of beauty. In the fourth chapter, the subject opens the question of a woman's immortality, which is to ensure her preservation in poetry. The beloved finally confesses her love to him. The poet wants to write a poem in which he will describe her immense beauty, but he is not yet able to do so. In the fifth chapter, several savages come from the mountains and insult the beloved. The poet is overcome with immense shock and terror. He rages, curses and blasphemes. However, the beloved forgives them. War comes, the savages take over and the beloved is imprisoned. The last, sixth chapter, is dedicated to the narrator's departure abroad, his sadness and memories of the beloved.

The novel portrays a fervent romantic affection for a woman while simultaneously, in an allegorical mode, expressing his love for Slovakia. This paper examines the ways in which Dilong interweaves the ideology of the wartime Slovak Republic with the theme of love for a woman, and how this aspect of the text has been interpreted by Slovak literary critics and historians. Particular attention is devoted to the views of literary scholar and historian Július Pašteka (1924–2019), one of the principal editors of works by authors of Slovak Catholic Modernism published after 1989, who also prepared the edition of *Song of Love* in 2003. It was J. Paštek who put aside the reading of Dilong's novel through the lens of the ideology of the wartime Slovak state and moderated its reading through the lens of abstract Slovakia. In my work, I argue with the opinion of J. Paštek and present arguments why R. Dilong's novel should be read as an allegory of the wartime Slovak Republic. The arguments are based primarily on the deciphering of several autobiographical references in the text (for example, the spring festival in Bratislava, during which the beloved reveals herself in all her splendor, takes place in the spring of 1939, when the Slovak Republic was established).

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