

The image of Margit Kaffka in Hungarian literature (provisional title)

When the Hungarian modern writer Margit Kaffka (1880-1918) made her debut in 1903 with the publication of a collection of poetry, Kaffka was welcomed by literary criticism “as the most talented female poet”. Of her prose – she published in total 8 collections of short stories and 4 novels- was spoken highly. Kaffka was accepted within the renowned circle of artists around the progressive literary journal *Nyugat* [West] (1908-1944), which aimed at introducing modern European literary movements in Hungary. For Kaffka this modernity was defined by literary criticism as a highly emotional, though colourful, and very subjective way of narrating the fate of Hungarian women at the beginning of the 20th century, which was based on her own personal experience. There is no doubt, Kaffka should be regarded as a highly respected and canonized author, however remained the ‘woman’ among her male colleagues, and this, according to literary criticism, defined and categorized the content and style of Kaffka’s oeuvre differently: “Kaffka writes tragedies of the soul, and it is conspicuous that she nearly always talks about herself.”¹

In this lecture I want to present the reception of Kaffka’s oeuvre from her debut as a poet via her short stories and the publication of what literary criticism called her masterpiece, the novel *Colours and years* (1912) until Kaffka’s death. Within this corpus I want to focus in particular on the use of mechanisms by which characteristics and qualities in the oeuvre are designated and ordered hierarchially as typically feminine versus masculine². I believe these pronouncements are reflected in literary histories and resulted in a rather one-sided research, which affected the image and therefore limited the position of Kaffka in the present literary canon.

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¹ Ágoston, Júlian 1934: *Kaffka Margit*. Budapest: magánkiadás; 18.

² As discussed in: Gács, Anna 2002: *Miért nem elég nekünk a könyv?* Budapest: Kijárat.

And in: Vogel, Marianne 2001: *Baard boven baard. Over het Nederlandse literaire en maatschappelijke leven 1945-1960*. Amsterdam: Van Genneep.