

**SAPPHIC MODERNISM IN WOMEN'S WRITINGS IN THE AREAS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE
(POLISH, RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN LITERATURE)**

This project is an innovative initiative in the field of literary modernist studies and research on the history of sexuality. The main goal of the project is to investigate and describe the phenomenon of sapphic modernism in women's writing from the areas of the Russian Empire, especially in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian literature in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. In the context of selected literary areas, I am using the term of the Russian Empire as both geographical and chronological categories. Used in this way, it allows defining the research area more precisely. However, first and foremost, it will enable stating unique questions about the relationship between literary output and the "locational specifics" of particular writers within the same imperial structure (along with the significant consequences, such as internal tensions between the hegemonic center and the colonized periphery). The areas I have selected in the indicated period illustrate three different variants of these specific positions. The first is Russia's hegemonic imperial position. The second regards Poland under the partitions: a country with a rich literary tradition and a strong national identity, and despite being colonized, with its memory of the imperial past. The third is the case of a colonized Ukraine, a territory that is only formulating its national demands and modern identity, for which language and literature have played a key role. Jointly examined, these literature areas constitute a unique comparative territory, which will allow shedding new light on the issue of the relationship between cultural, social, and moral transformations taking place in the indicated period, not only locally but also in a broader context. The term "sapphic" chosen in the title is understood as this variant of women's writings, which refers to the creative search for a new language, which will allow literary expression of nonheteronormative experiences and identities. Although this phenomenon is well studied in the context of the work of Western European or American writers (in almost every historical period), it is a subject entirely neglected in the Slavic studies. In the Russian and Ukrainian context, the broadly understood queer studies are only carried out marginally (which comes from, among other things, the taboo of homosexuality since the Soviet period. In Poland, where the studies on queer literature in recent decades are experiencing dynamic development, this research focuses mainly on men's writing and the male experience of nonheteronormativity. These studies repeat the mechanisms of marginalization from the process of creating "classic" literary canons, in which, under categories such as "worthy" or "universal," very often was hidden: male. Although references to the sapphic themes and threads have appeared in some singular articles or the margins of works devoted to such writers as Narcyza Żmichowska, Olha Kobylańska, Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal, Lesia Ukrainka, Sofia Parnok, Marina Tsvetaeva, Maria Dąbrowska, and others, yet to date, no attempt has been made to collect these scattered cases to describe the characteristics of sapphic modernism in the indicated region from a distance. The purpose of this project is to complement these omissions, taking into account the specific circumstances of each literary area. For example, a completely different approach will require the case of Żmichowska and her unparalleled in this context work of the mid-nineteenth-century. Meanwhile, another approach will be needed in case of the flourishing sapphic literature of the women writers from the Silver Age Russia, which was unique within the chosen region and similar to Western models (e.g., the lesbian culture of belle époque Paris, or Weimar Berlin). The relationship between the imperial "affiliation" of Russian authors with the ability to express non-normative desire will be particularly important in this context. In this light, the expression of this minority position possible within the hegemonic center would be absent or much more discreet in the case of writers from peripheral, colonized cultural circles.

The aim of this project is not only to investigate the works of well-known authors but, above all, to conduct searches outside the canon (for example, in the area of popular literature mostly overlooked in traditional narrations). So the most critical task will be conducting extensive, in-depth queries both in Poland and abroad (St. Petersburg, Kyiv, Lviv, Vilnius). The work will be divided into four stages. The first will be the "mapping" of discourse on female same-sex desire in literature from the areas of the Russian Empire (both literary and specialist texts). Upon this background, it will be possible to carry out three further stages. Thus the analysis of the sapphic literature in three different periods: before 1880 (i.e., before the "birth" and the popularization of modern homosexuality discourses), in the years 1880-1917 (during the emergence of nonheteronormative identities, and at the same time the development of modern nationalism and the definitions of national identity), and after 1917 (i.e., after the collapse of the imperialist structure and the creation of the "new" national states). The main result of the project will be an English monograph, which manuscript (together with the proposal of an annex with fragments of analyzed literary works) will be submitted for publication in a renowned international publishing house (for example, in the series dedicated to queer studies at Columbia University Press). Combining queer studies with a historical-literary, feminist perspective, as well as a modern, intersectional and transnational approach to researching modernism, the monograph will join the process of creating a new paradigm of the inclusive, diverse, and intersectional history of women's writing and sexuality on a global scale.