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THROUGH THESES ON MEDIEVAL LITERATURE: THINKING WITH CONFESSIONAL VOICES

Abstract: This chapter aims to examine the role of identification as a foundational concept in the interpretive framework of Ksenija Atanasijević, specifically within the context of medieval (and) confessional literature. Atanasijević's theses on medieval literature are dispersed across a range of essays, fragments, reviews and portraits, necessitating a comprehensive examination. To undertake this analysis, I will adopt the typology and theoretical foundations articulated by scholars Toril Moi, Rita Felski and Amanda Anderson in their post-critical study triptych *Character. Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*, which explores the reader's perspective on literary characters. This approach marks a departure from formalistic literary analysis, wherein subjective inquiries in literature are tabooed. It is worth noting that Atanasijević's work serves as a pre-formalist precursor to this approach. By introducing the concept of confessions within literature, Atanasijević foreshadows the idea of an implicit author. Employing this strategic framework, Atanasijević elevates medieval texts to the same level as canonical European literary works, spanning antiquity to modernism and encompassing various literary forms, including poetry and novels. By presenting her theses on medieval literature through the lens of feminist criticism, Atanasijević skillfully deconstructs stereotypical narratives about the Middle Ages.

Keywords: confession, identification, character analysis, feminist essay, female portrait, medieval studies, interwar feminist criticism

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the examination of the theses on medieval literature found across the essays of the philosopher Ksenija Atanasijević. More precisely, the assertions are made through a wide range of genres and structural forms, spanning mere fragments of texts on unrelated topics to

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essays, reviews and literary portraits. These theses serve as a potential thematic unit in her body of work. Medieval figures, literary characters, and texts related to them (which are contemporaneous with the author) are often situated on the periphery of her oeuvre. Additionally, these medieval entities themselves frequently originate from the transitional period between the medieval era and previous or subsequent epochs.

In this study, I have chosen to emphasize the significance of their presence rather than the limited number of these texts. For the purposes of this work, I will establish a temporary thematic unit within Ksenija Atanasijević's body of work, specifically her writings about the Middle Ages, and assess the relevance of such a corpus. By examining her interpretations of medieval, confessional and medieval confessional literature, I aim to highlight one of her interpretive strategies: identification with confessional voices, which may provide a foundational element in her writing.

Atanasijević's selection of texts from the very early and very late medieval period is predominantly confessional in nature. Therefore, the reference to "confessional voices" in the subtitle refers, with the exception of Amanda Anderson's chapter in *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*, to voices that originate from the author, traverse the texts and resonate with the reader. When engaging with these texts, we are confronted solely with "the speaker, the voice within the text, the bearer of expression" (Zlatar, 2000, p. 157).

Academic interest in Ksenija Atanasijević's literary criticism and interpretative aspects has identified several significant thematic units within her oeuvre. Scholars have explored her "critical-essayist interpretation" of Serbian literature (Svirčev, 2020), delved into feminist interpretations of the ancient literary and philosophical canon (Šijaković Maidanik, 2021; Lončarević, 2021), conducted analyses of character representation in ancient tragedians (Milinković, 2022, p. 145), and engaged in investigative writing about women from the past (Koh, 2015). Of particular note is the special attention given to the author's writings concerning Teresa of Ávila, a 16th-century Spanish mystic and nun (Savić, 2020; Bašić, 2020).

Researchers have also drawn attention to the parallels between Ksenija Atanasijević's life and the biographical female portraits she authored, emphasizing compassion as a central theme in her work (Bašić, 2020). Additionally, parallels have been made with the life of Giordano Bruno, about whom she wrote her doctoral dissertation (Sekulić, 2020), and with the life of Teresa of Ávila (Savić, 2020). Biographic parallels are another clue for considering the role of identification as interpretive strategy. In this study, I aim to contextualize this autobiographical aspect of the author's writing within a character theory framework inspired by the works

of Toril Moi, Rita Felski and Amanda Anderson. Specifically, I will explore how Atanasijević's writing, by identifying points of connection, drawing parallels and establishing empathetic connections within texts, contributes to the development of a profound interpretative theory, as described by Svirčev (as cited in Juvan, 2020).

Middle Ages in feminist genres

The absence of a specific notion of the potential medieval thematic unit or opus in Ksenija Atanasijević's work is not entirely surprising. However, the Middle Ages stand out as a distinctive thematic entity in Atanasijević's body of work, as a literary period that exhibits a unique blend of metaphysical richness and deficiency in artistic autonomy, given that it predominantly serves a functional and non-fictional purpose (Anguševa, 2009, p. 17). In this paper, I direct the attention to several specific texts, or segments of individual texts, that pertain to this thematic realm. These include the text about Teresa of Ávila, a review of a monograph on the Spanish saint, a review of a collection of legendary texts about Joan of Arc, and finally, a text addressing confession in literature. In the latter, alongside a discussion of St. Augustine, the author provides a theoretical explanation of her understanding of confession in literature, the nature of literature itself, and the prerequisites for identification with a work of art. She delves into the relationships between the author, the work, style, form and more. Additionally, she asserts that formal properties and what she terms the depersonalization of writing are aspects that she finds less relevant, or more challenging to identify with.

All four of these texts are rooted in Ksenija Atanasijević's feminist activism, either as a way of documenting women's history, analyzing the portrayal of women in literature (particularly by male authors) or offering a unique perspective on literature itself. In this capacity, they have contributed significantly to "the formation of a local feminist essayist community with a philosophical character" (Koh, 2015, p. 224). These texts primarily fall within the realm of feminist, contextual and periodical genres, particularly the genre of female portraits (Barać, 2015), as well as feminist essays. Atanasijević's engagement with the Middle Ages, therefore, aligns with the broader aim of documenting women's history and addressing the need to "fill the void in thinking and writing about women in culture and society" (Koh, 2015, pp. 213–214).

The genre of the feminist essay, as described by Koh, has evolved into "a repository of collective memory for the achievements of women" (Koh, 2015, pp. 213–214). This particular variant of the genre has provided

female authors with a platform to reflect on their past and present realities and to interpret both (Koh, 2015, p. 212). These essays often carry a gendered perspective, given that they are typically written in the first person singular (Koh, 2015, p. 213). Moreover, they frequently adopt an “oppositional stance towards doctrinal, logocentric ‘scholarly’ opinions” (Koh, 2015, p. 213).

This methodological aspect is pivotal in Ksenija Atanasijević’s approach to interpreting the Middle Ages, one that resists conforming to stereotypical discourses, particularly in her understanding of the link between confession and literature. Her approach within the feminist essay genre is developed in opposition to conventional knowledge and could, perhaps, equally be a reaction against traditional methods of studying literature. Consequently, it aligns typologically with post-formalist and post-critical theories found in works such as *Three Inquiries in Literary Studies* and other studies by its authors (Moi, Felski, Anderson, 2019).

Atanasijević poses similar questions to those raised by Moi, Felski, and Anderson, albeit she does so in a context that predates the formalist tradition in literary studies. Her questions are anticipatory and emerge within a different framework – a tradition of studying literature that has not yet been decisively shaped by formalism, depersonalization, and scientism. It can be argued that based on this foundation – feminist genres and feminist criticism that prompt considerations of the personal significance of the texts under examination – something productive also emerges for medieval studies. In essence, a distinct interpretive practice rooted in the identification with characters and texts evolves, guiding the selection of texts and enabling interpretations that steer clear of the pitfalls associated with stereotypical discourses about the Middle Ages.

Exceptions or paradigm?

In the context of the thematic entity under examination, it is crucial to highlight that Ksenija Atanasijević’s writing on this topic diverges from the prevailing image of the Middle Ages during her time. This deviation contrasts with the prevalence of various medievalisms and narratives rooted in misconceptions about the *nature* of the Middle Ages. Atanasijević deliberately selects medieval texts that exist at the temporal fringes of the era – authored by figures such as Teresa of Ávila or St. Augustine. These texts, originating from the end and the beginning of the Middle Ages, often possess confessional and/or autobiographical qualities. Autobiographical discourse, while subject to change across epochs, consistently

embodies an “idea of humanity” (Zlatar, 2000, p. 37). This stands in stark contrast to the Middle Ages, which typically exhibit a poetics characterized by a desire for anonymity, functionality, and purposefulness – as a rare domain of subjectivity during that period.

Ksenija Atanasijević’s second thematic choice pertains to the portrayal of female characters within the classical tradition, which notably includes her writings about Joan of Arc. Throughout history, legends surrounding the French warrior have offered fertile ground for subversive interpretations. Joan of Arc has been interpreted, among other, as a “saint, heretic, zealot, witch, prophetess, adolescent lunatic, androgynous proto-feminist, class equalizer, Marxist liberator,” (Broome Saunders, 2009, p. 80). This intriguing and paradoxical figure holds much historical significance in the realm of women’s writing, serving as an inspiration for women to explore their own social and political perspectives (Broome Saunders, 2009, p. 81).

The choice of themes from medieval literature is guided by two fundamental branches of feminist criticism, as outlined by Kolarić (2021). The examination of Teresa of Ávila’s writings, at a specific juncture, constitutes an exploration of women’s writings. This endeavor serves to introduce Teresa to Atanasijević’s readership (Savić, 2020). On the other hand, the discussion of a female medieval warrior, who challenges gender stereotypes and whose portrayals allow for diverse and subversive interpretations, falls within the realm of criticism focused on the representation of female characters.

Confession and identification

In examining the theme of identification within Atanasijević’s writing, I draw upon the typology and theoretical foundations elaborated in the triptych study, *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*, by Toril Moi, Rita Felski, and Amanda Anderson. Within this triptych, Rita Felski, in her chapter “Identifying with Characters,” explores the notion of “a sense of affinity or shared response,” which describes the connections we establish or experience with literary characters. While identification is a natural and inherent aspect of our engagement with characters, it often remains unspoken and carries a certain stigma. In the realm of literary theory, identification has been both taboo and stereotypically depicted as naive, sentimental, or lacking in reflexivity (Felski, 2019, p. 83). Remarkably, “there is a rich vein in cultural studies – especially its feminist variant – that is devoted to the complexities of how audiences identify” (Felski, 2019, p. 80).

The central idea proposed by the three authors is that the foundations of identification should undergo thorough reexamination, as this term has acquired a certain taboo status within the tradition of formalist literary theory. It has come to be seen as a potential pitfall and even as the antithesis to critical thinking (Felski, 2019, p. 79). As articulated by Toril Moi (2019), formalism here is defined as the belief that professional literary scholars should implicitly justify their engagement with a text based on its formal aspects rather than their personal relationship with it, thereby giving primacy to form over content. Moi's deconstruction of the representation of identification as naive or sentimental, and the associated taboos surrounding discussions of identification, challenges this perspective. Moreover, it underscores the significance of not only the act of identification itself but also what one identifies with and how that identification unfolds. Identification can take on various dimensions, ranging from irony to sentimentality, from ethical to emotional, and this process can shape a reader's ideas and values (Felski, 2019, p. 77). Ksenija Atanasijević's (1968) questions resonate with contemporary approaches, echoing the ongoing discourse on the complexities and nuances of identification in literary studies:

In the realm of confessional literature we are faced with one question that cannot be ignored: why would it be necessary to consistently distance oneself from oneself and one's own subjectivity? Is it even necessary to always neglect oneself, to pass over oneself, as over a quantity that is neglected? Is it reprehensible to be true to oneself and sometimes to feel the impulse towards a pure confession clouded by no extraneous influences, as a way of relieving oneself of one's own joys or sorrows? Why should it represent superiority or, even, merit, to transfer oneself on every occasion to a neutral plane, in life and in literary creation? (Atanasijević, 1968, p. 41)

Various forms of identification become apparent within the conceptualization of confession, particularly in Ksenija Atanasijević's text of the same name. Confessional and intimate literature hold significant relevance within the discourse of interwar feminist creativity and the ideals associated with the 'new woman' (see Milinković, 2022). Importantly for our current discussion, "the hermeneutic context of confessional literature is shaped by metaliterary genres in which this type of literature is 'theorized'" (Milinković, 2022, p. 150).

Through her examination of the phenomenon of confession in literature, Ksenija Atanasijević positions St. Augustine alongside the canonical works

of European literature, primarily in conjunction with realist and modernist novels. But how does she establish this connection? For Atanasijević, confession is not tethered exclusively to documentary prose, intimate narratives, or first-person writing. It transcends genre and narrative situations, maintaining independence from these conventional boundaries. As articulated by Žarka Svirčev, the choice of authors she wrote about was not confined by generic frameworks (2020, p. 298), encompassing poetry, non-fiction, novels and drama as examples of confessions. Rita Felski provides insight into the relationship between confession and identification, emphasizing that personal stories resonate with others when they transform into paradigms or parables, thereby achieving transpersonal connection (2019, p. 82). This notion aligns with Atanasijević's observations regarding various deconstructive interpretations: "instead of interpreting, they pollute, and instead of enlightening, they grossly desecrate" (1968, p. 188). Atanasijević's approach seeks to ground interpretation in identification as the primary avenue for understanding.

Confession is not inherently self-referential, nor is it confined to the narrative level – it can manifest within heterodiegetic storytelling and across diverse literary genres, irrespective of the text's fictional status. As Anderson (2019, p. 132) suggests, literary narratives serve as conduits to diverse forms of existence and illuminate various modes of being through intricate formal solutions – an idea underscored by Ksenija Atanasijević as well. Moreover, some of the examples she mentions, such as Kafka and Rousseau, are considered "paradigmatic autobiographical texts within the European tradition," a category to which Augustine also belongs (Zlatar, 2000, p. 158).

Furthermore, the concept of confession, established in this manner, serves as the foundation for identification. The crucial question that arises is: identification with what precisely? Is it with the author, the work or the style (Felski, 2019, p. 93)? It appears that what Ksenija Atanasijević eloquently and anticipatorily discusses is the notion of an implicit author, abstracted from each of the aforementioned literary modalities. As an illustration, Atanasijević contends that Dostoevsky "pours out his credo in order to improve other people's lives" (1968, p. 47), essentially confessing himself in works like *The Gambler*. He also projects elements of himself onto characters like Prince Myshkin, Alyosha Karamazov and old man Zossima. For Rousseau, Atanasijević observes that his reservations disrupt the dominant discourse of confession; she asserts that Marcel Proust's work is constructed upon the foundation of confession; and adds that a more profound confession than Kafka's may never be written. In contrast, Beckett emerges and expresses himself through the actions and words of mentally

and physically impaired characters. According to Felski (2019, pp. 85–86), characters can merge with real individuals and possess a certain degree of nonfictionality, as identification with the character can blend into an association with the author. As Felski's essay implies, it is not solely the characters but also the actions, motivations, and the broader storyworld that contribute to this identification. Given the implied distinction between the author and their literary-styled confession, it is reasonable to label this as a proto-implicit author. According to Abbott (2009, p. 356), the implicit author represents "the image the reader constructs of the author while engaging with the narrative. In intentional interpretation, the implicit author embodies the sensibility and moral consciousness that readers gradually formulate to comprehend the narrative's intended effect and meaning, as envisioned by the author."

This conception does not align with a simplistic positivism; instead, it embodies an exegetical awareness that situates the concept of the implicit author within a humanist interpretation of literature, emphasizing its most optimistic potential for both authors and readers. Here, we witness the evolution of an originally formalist concept, which has taken on an anticipatory non-formalist, or humanist, character. This evolution is highlighted through an exploration of the fundamental question: why is the text significant to the author, and what exactly does she identify with? The author explicitly and articulately defines her relationship with literature as one of identification. In doing so, she delves into the essence of what makes literature meaningful to both the creator and the audience. Felski (2019) poses the question specifically regarding her reading of Thomas Bernhard:

What exactly am I identifying with? Bernhard? Bernhard's first person? The characters? The seductive-coercive pull of his incantatory sentences? It seems impossible to nail down any definite answer. Author, characters, and words blur together to form a composite site of attachment. (pp. 104–105)

It becomes, in a sense, the entire realm of the works with which the reader and interpreter identify, and it is within this expansive territory that Atanasijević locates the author.¹ Given the understanding of confession in literature as an existential element that transcends the purely literary realm – aligning with the interpretation of literature in interwar

1 The blurring of the boundaries of autobiography and fiction will be characteristic of the second wave feminism (Felski, 2019, p. 85), while Atanasijević's vision can be connected to contemporary (quasi) autofictional novels, such as those of Dubravka Ugrešić or Karl Ove Knausgård.

feminist periodicals – the concept can also encompass modernist authors like Proust. In Proust's works, characters are deconstructed, dissolved, and swept away as unity yields to a multitude of shifting and unstable identities (Felski, 2019, p. 92).

Fiction, depersonalization and medieval confession

The typological affinities within Atanasijević's theoretical discourse, which predate the enduring formalist tradition, become notably apparent when examining her analysis of the Middle Ages. This historical period is often depicted as a complex and elusive literary terrain; whether approached with affirmation or criticism, it is seldom studied in isolation but rather through the cultural and interpretive constructs collectively known as medievalism.

Medieval confessions inherently carry the intention of being presented to others. And a prevailing theme within medieval literature is the transfer of authority and legitimacy from author to text. The very act of writing is regarded as a guarantee of the truthfulness and authenticity of the content. This literary poetics notably rehabilitate autobiographical discourse through the genre of confessions (Zlatar, 2000). Hence, it comes as no surprise that Atanasijević selects confessional voices from this particular historical era as the lone bearers of authenticity, with whom the reader can identify. She aligns the non-fictional medieval confessional narratives with antiquity, where confessional voices may have manifested in poetry, and modernism, where they take on novelistic forms. Atanasijević draws comparisons between medieval literature and other periods, such as likening Sappho's expressions to an "incomparably rapturous confession" of Teresa of Ávila and equating her inspiration to Sappho's, albeit channeled differently due to the differing eras in which they lived (1968, p. 42). Furthermore, she suggests that "Teresa fundamentally touches on the question that troubles both mystics and philosophers," inviting readers to contemplate the significance of life experiences, adding that "if we carefully examine the course of our life, each of us will see from experience how little we need to take into account the pleasures or the miseries that make up that life" (Atanasijević, 2008, p. 42).

Confession, as an authentic creation imbued with the persuasive power of lived experience, stands apart from fiction, which may lack the same sense of immediacy and freshness, even if it exhibits formal craftsmanship. In Atanasijević's eyes, fiction thus assumes the character of existential fiction: anything that does not emerge from genuine, lived experi-

ences. This perspective sheds light on what she likely finds captivating in the poetics of medieval literature: the inherent connection between poetics, history and truth, namely the intention to convey something that is existentially true. As Atanasijević writes, “The fundamental wisdom of the saint regarding the world and life finds expression in succinct perspectives, unquestionably etched with the highest level of experience and truthfulness” (2008, p. 169). What readers encounter in the works of selected medieval authors is not merely historical authenticity; it is instead an existential authenticity that possesses universal resonance. In contemplation, meditation and mystical ecstasy, personal distinctions dissolve, and the self transcends into a broader, collective realm. Within the framework of the medieval confession, “one’s own self-development becomes a general concern, applicable to all and serving as an example for all” (Zlatar, 2000, p. 93). Although the theme of confession pertains to personal spiritual growth, it extends beyond the individual soul of Augustine to encompass the universal soul (Zlatar, 2000, p. 93).

Types of identification

Felski’s writings highlight the multifaceted roles of fictional beings, portraying them as alter egos, ideal types, negative exemplars, moral guides, objects of desire, and even imaginary friends (2019, p. 91). This diversity becomes especially significant in the engaged writings of Ksenija Atanasijević, where the careful selection of characters from the past transcends the mere realm of literary constructs or a series of signifiers. In her readings, the establishment of identification with these characters unfolds through several avenues: allegiance, recognition and empathy are pivotal components of the author’s interpretations. However, it’s important to note that the fourth concept introduced by Felski, alignment, which pertains to the formal means by which texts shape a reader’s or viewer’s access to character (2019, p. 95), is explicitly rejected by Atanasijević. Her concept extends beyond the confines of specific narrative situations or the presence of narrativity within the texts she interprets.

Identification, as seen through the lens of allegiance, pertains to how ethical or political values – in essence, acts of evaluation – draw audiences closer to certain literary figures (Felski, 2019, p. 95). This principle aligns with the choices made by Ksenija Atanasijević when selecting examples from the tradition she wrote about. Allegiance becomes apparent whenever readers find themselves aligning with a character and embracing their perspective. In the analysis of texts about the Spanish saint, the term ‘complicity’ is employed (Savić, 2020). In the context of Teresa of Ávila,

Ksenija Atanasijević explores the significance of the societal framework within which an individual must develop, emphasizing that during the era in which Saint Teresa lived, this framework was crucial. In that historical period, initiative by women was primarily permitted within the realms of family or the monastery (Atanasijević, 2008, p. 170). She perceives medieval literature, in part, as historically determined. This perspective establishes a clear continuity between the concept of darkness that envelops the Spanish mystic and the challenges faced by women in Atanasijević's time. As noted by Barać, Atanasijević's writings delve into the enduring issues faced by women, including distrust, rivalry and underestimation by men. In response to these challenges, she crafts a group portrait of her female predecessors (2015, p. 127).

Recognition, as a form of identification, is noticeable in moments when the narrator, character or voice of the confessional discourse gains self-awareness or a deeper understanding of the world around them (Felski, 2019, p. 101). This is a prevalent approach in writing about the confessional discourse. However, perhaps the most distinctive form of identification in Atanasijević's writing is empathy – experiencing and responding with concern to someone's feelings. As Felski says, this concept splits into two parts: feeling with someone and feeling for someone (2015, p. 95). Empathy is particularly evident in Atanasijević's interpretation of the legend of Joan of Arc. It becomes conspicuous when the tragic aspects of Joan's story weigh especially heavily on the narrative, and when Atanasijević is emotionally carried away (Atanasijević, 2008, p. 208). Likewise, in the case of Augustine, the author describes how intensely he felt the aspirations and inexorable vibrations of his soul (Atanasijević, 1968, p. 43). Atanasijević also problematizes ironic identification with aesthetically problematic texts, such as Kafka's, by writing about their simultaneous unattractiveness and authenticity (Felski, 2019, p. 96).

Feminist Essay and Rumination?

The last form of identification, or "thinking with the characters," which we will briefly discuss, is the concept of rumination, borrowed by Anderson from psychiatry and introduced as a literary concept (2019, p. 128). Anderson defines rumination as a form of obsession that can result from moral shock or disturbance. Involving an attempt to come to terms with these situations, often entailing acute ethical dilemmas, it operates within a framework of 'moral time', a slow processing of profound experiences (2019, p. 128). Atanasijević was drawn to such modes of thinking, particularly highlighting them within the confessional discourse of

figures like Teresa of Ávila or St. Augustine. For instance, Augustine was wholly immersed in the search for some form of transcendent support, experiencing the contradictory aspirations and irremovable vibrations of his soul with intense depth (Atanasijević, 1968, p. 43).

Confessional discourse is akin to the expansive prose form of the novel, which is particularly well-suited for conveying the concept of rumination (Anderson, 2019, p. 133). Atanasijević also identifies elements of rumination, akin to preoccupation, within Teresa's writings, drawing on Teresa's thoughts for her own reflections. Atanasijević thus notes, "She fundamentally touches on the question that troubles both mystics and philosophers," and asserts that "we all think with her" (Atanasijević, 2008, p. 169). The complexity of rumination as a form of moral reflection (Anderson, 2019, p. 135) becomes evident through the passage Atanasijević cited in this brief essay: it is a prolonged process that permeates her various texts. The central focus is on the attitude toward a hostile environment and the moral quandaries it entails, such as the inner life's dramatic elements (Anderson, 2019, p. 139), a facet that Atanasijević particularly underscores.

Concluding Remarks

The confluence in Atanasijević of writing women's history and exploring the Middle Ages has engendered a dual shift. First, it involves probing into the lives and experiences of women during the Middle Ages, aligning with the discourse of the 'new' or 'modern' Middle Ages. Qualification of 'new' or 'modern' depends on whether we perceive her writing as an emphasis on the continuity between those eras and Atanasijević's contemporary context or as an investigative inquiry into marginalized facets of the period, such as women's lives in the Middle Ages. By selecting texts that carry discursively or thematically subversive potential and interpreting them through the lenses of two branches of feminist criticism, the author positions medieval texts alongside European classics. These chosen texts deviate from the prevailing images of the Middle Ages, which often rely on various medievalisms and narratives rooted in misconceptions about the era. It is noteworthy that the adoption of feminist genres allowed for the exploration of questions that only gained traction in the 1970s (Melve, 2017, p. 29).

The author undertakes a deconstruction of the narrative surrounding the romantic Middle Ages when delving into the portrayal of Joan of Arc, simultaneously introducing a narrative of the 'new Middle Ages' by shed-

ding light on the story of Teresa of Ávila. In her readings related to the Middle Ages and her subsequent dismissal of conventional interpretations due to the distinct nature of its poetics, Ksenija Atanasijević's approach to confession emerges as particularly enlightening. Her concept of confession aligns closely with literary theoretical paradigms, notably anticipating Wayne Booth's notion of the implicit author (2009, p. 356).

The concept of confession in literature serves as a unifying thread for various forms of identification, ranging from empathic to ironic. All the texts Atanasijević analyzes hold personal significance for her. Joan of Arc, among other figures and characters, can be particularly situated within this category, offering opportunities for subversive and existentially meaningful interpretations.

Medieval literature, which both encompasses a broader field and differs from the modern notion of literature, becomes amenable to this mode of interpretation through the lens of reading grounded in identification with the textual world, revealing the implicit author lurking behind it. Furthermore, the author's interpretation of medieval literature owes much to interpretive potential of her feminist criticism. While her selection of texts may not always follow the canon, it aligns perfectly with the explicit questions she poses: why should the Middle Ages hold significance for us, and which texts from it bear importance for me?

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