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### **Dissertation Summary**

Title: *Works on the move. On the works of Maria Konopnicka in the years 1882-1910*

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The doctoral dissertation entitled „Works on move. On the works by Maria Konopnicka in the years 1882-1910” is a monographic account of Maria Konopnicka's works in the period encompassing the writer's travels abroad.

The research objectives revolve around identifying the specifics of her writing from the moment of her groundbreaking trip to Venice (in 1882), followed by the first printings of her sketches, which found their full shape in a volume published in 1884 entitled „Wrażenia z podróży” to Lviv (in 1910). Mediterranean culture significantly influenced and shaped Maria Konopnicka's work, and her travels abroad initiated a new stage in her writing, as well as in her existence. The dissertation reveals the relationship between lifestyle and creativity, as in the case of this author it is an almost organic relationship. The strong personality of the author emerges from the literary texts and also from other types of records (e.g. of a personal nature) that were created on the journey. Travel writing is also a record, a trace of the experience of existence, and in the case of Konopnicka's work after 1882 - it constitutes its main dimension. I single out this stage in the oeuvre because it differs from ‘domestic’ writing, and it is therefore possible to grasp the transformations taking place in the author's wider work over the years.

The subject of this dissertation is therefore Maria Konopnicka's writings from the years 1882-1910. The following works, which are directly related to the journeys made, should be included in the framework of her late works: „Wrażenia z podróży” (1884), „Listy” (1893), „Italia” (1901), „Drobiazgi z podróźnej teki” (1903), *Ludziom i chwilom* (1905), „Głosy ciszy” (1906) and „Imagina” (1912). The journey is crucial in trying to discern the meaning of these works and the changes in the poet's work. „Imagina”, which has the

characteristics of a late work, deserves to be emphasised (from the perspective of the travel situation). In addition to the literary works mentioned above, correspondence is also the subject of analysis.

The category of „works on a journey” is useful in any attempt at interpretation; it allows one to perceive and discuss the sources of inspiration, the meaning of a work and to address the issue of creative processes. The dissertation is also an attempt to answer the question: what was the journey for Konopnicka and how to read a work that interprets and perpetuates this journey. In the dissertation, I reveal the inseparable relationship between textual matter and the existential dimension. The continuity of the process of moving through space fused with the act of writing (recording reality). The map and the writing on the page formed an integral whole of meaning. I am also preoccupied with the real context of travel and travelling: the hardships of motherhood, health problems, economic problems, etc.

The category of „work on the journey” seems crucial in any attempt to identify and study this phase of Maria Konopnicka's work. The attention of the literary historian is drawn to the fact that the rhythm and character of literary works during this period is closely linked to and directly grows out of the journey. The literary texts that were created during Maria Konopnicka's numerous expeditions constitute a unique area of creativity that is still poorly developed and scientifically recognised. They demand a monographic treatment.

In 1884, the poet published „Wrażenia z podróży” which included, among other works previously published in the press. In my dissertation I argue for the recognition that the works created between 1882 and 1910<sup>1</sup> are different from the earlier volumes by „Poezji”, and require different research tools to fully demonstrate their diversity. As I mentioned earlier, Konopnicka made her first trip abroad in 1882 to Venice, and by 1910 she was planning and participating in many long-term voyages. The author by „Drobiazgi z podróźnej teki” visited several times Italy (Venice, Rome, Genoa, Florence, Gorizia, Abacia); Germany (Karlsbad, Munich, Dresden, Bad Nauheim, Reichenhall); Austria (Ischl, Graz, Admont, Vienna); France (Nice, Avignon Paris); Switzerland (Zurich, Schottwien)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The only trace of this trip is a letter sent to her uncle Ignacy Wasiłowski from Venice, dated 15 September 1882: M. Konopnicka, *Listy do Ignacego Wasiłowskiego*, ed. J. Nowak, Warsaw 2005, pp. 94-97 (letter No. 11). The editor of the volume, Jacek Nowak, noted that the poetess, during her trip to Venice in 1882, wrote a fragment entitled *Kartka z podróży*, which was published in the „Kurier Codzienny” 1882 (no. 218). The text was included in a volume entitled *Impressions from a Journey*.

<sup>2</sup> During her travels, the poet visited many more cities; in this list I only mention the most important destinations.

Research reads Konopnicka's work primarily through the prism of domestic writing. Travel-inspired writing leads to significant changes in the way of writing, choice of topics and writing styles, hence the need for separate studies.

The works of Konopnicka that I am discussing constitute a kind of extended „literary diary” in which the author writes „on the road” (this is also an important interpretative category for me). With the poet's changing interests, new spaces, the character and shape of the literary works evolved. The key issues are the influence of travel on Konopnicka's writing and the relationship between the so-called ‘real’ space and literature. For this reason, geopoetics is the most appropriate research method to fully address the issues discussed.

In my analyses of literary texts, I take into account the context of a variety of sources such as Maria Konopnicka's correspondence, family documents and postcards. It often turns out that the description of a given place in a lyric differs significantly from the way Konopnicka described the space in her letters to her loved ones. Such findings make it possible to formulate research questions: why does the image of one place described in a literary work differ so significantly from the description in letters, for example. It is not always possible to find an unambiguous answer, but the tools of geopoetics make it possible to revise many interpretative issues.

In the works created since her first journey, one can see and precisely define a kind of borderline between the author's literary works developed at the time in the Polish lands under the Partitions and travel writing. The poet's works focused on landscapes typical of the Polish lands, including the first and second series by „*Poezja*”<sup>3</sup>. I call this second part of Konopnicka's oeuvre mature, as it was written under the influence of life experiences and familiarity with the world. Compared to her earlier works, it is characterised by a new and original approach to the matter of words and, more broadly, art. The innovativeness of the works created during the journeys concerns not only the subject matter, but also the way of writing and the view of the world. Thanks to her travels, the poet opened herself up to a new dimension of creativity and became artistically independent. She continued this type of writing until her death.

In the approach proposed in the dissertation, the works created during the journey become different from the style of Konopnicka's earlier works. The period of the poet's travels intersects in the history of literature with new ideas and aesthetic currents. Studies often take up the question of the relationship of Maria Konopnicka's works with tendencies

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<sup>3</sup> M. Konopnicka, *Poezje*, first series, Warsaw 1881; M. Konopnicka, *Poezje*, second series, Warsaw 1883.

characteristic of positivism<sup>4</sup>. Barbara Bobrowska, in her monograph entitled „Konopnicka na szlakach romantyków” argued for the Romantic sources of the artist's literary imagination. It is worth noting at this point that the poet's work, as well as her way of thinking about the artistic journey, grows out of her inspiration by Romanticism, whose reinterpretation can also be found in modernism.

The dissertation is problem-analytical in nature. The different parts of the dissertation refer to the interpretation of the works in the context of the different stages of the journey. This structure makes it possible to address the question of the developmental directions of the author's works in Italy. I begin my research and interpretations with philological and editorial recognitions. These are crucial to the analytical findings. A monograph on the styles of travel at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and on the impact of travel on the work of Maria Konopnicka, may bring new threads and recognitions to scientific research. The poet's travels had an artistic character and purpose (they served to learn about the sources of culture, expand her knowledge, seek inspiration, perfect her technique). The journeys thus went beyond tourism and were creative in nature. Interestingly, at this stage Konopnicka's writing often takes on a personal, even private character - thus resembling the style of travel writing characteristic of Romanticism.

In an annex to my dissertation I included a „Calendar of foreign journeys in the years 1882-1910 by Maria Konopnicka” - compiled by me on the basis of the poet's correspondence with Eliza Orzeszkowa, her uncle Ignacy Waśkowski and the writer's children. This calendar significantly expands the knowledge of the trips made by the author to „Italia”. The appendix

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<sup>4</sup> This theme, in the context of some of Konopnicka's travel pieces, has been discussed by, among others: K. Samsel, *Trzeba iść „w niebo, w piekło, wszędzie”*, in *Konopnicka - raz jeszcze*, ed. M. J. Olszewska, Warsaw 2022, pp. 107-122; W. Ratajczak, *Sztuka bycia nieprzygotowanym. O relacji z pierwszej podróży: Konopnicka - raz jeszcze*, op. cit., pp. 251-266; M. J. Olszewska, *Refleksja nad przemijaniem. Rozważania po lekturze „Akwilei” Marii Konopnickiej: Zaciętość dumny w osamotnieniu. Konopnicka i inne*, ed. R. Stachura-Lupa, A. Sędłakowska, P. Żarnecka, Kraków 2023, pp. 69-92; B. Bobrowska, *Konopnicka na szlakach romantyków*, Warsaw 1997. B. Biliński, *Marii Konopnickiej kolumbowe reportaże z „Uroczystości imienia Kolumba” (Genua 1892): Maria Konopnicka. Nowe studia i szkice*, ed. J. Z. Białek, T. Budrewicz, Cracow 1995, pp. 19-38. J. Sztachelska, *Pejzaże tęsknoty. Wiersze Marii Konopnickiej z okresu „emigracyjnego”: Miejsca Konopnickiej: przeżycia – pejzaż – pamięć*, ed. T. Budrewicz, M. Zięba, Kraków 2002, pp. 121-132; G. Borkowska, *„Późna” poezja Konopnickiej: dopełnienie motywów: Miejsca Konopnickiej: przeżycia – pejzaż – pamięć*, op. cit., pp. 179-193. T. Budrewicz, *Konopnicka: szkice historycznoliterackie*, Kraków 2000; *Czytanie Konopnickiej*, ed. O. Płaszczewska, Kraków 2011; *Konopnicka i współczesny świat literacki. Szkice historycznoliterackie*, ed. by J. Leo, Warsaw 1969; *Konopnicka wśród jej współczesnych: szkice historycznoliterackie*, ed. by T. Achmatowicz, Warszawa 1976.

also contains a discussion of the map of foreign travels, in which I take into account the places where the poet stayed during her trips of over twenty years.

Placing the contractual caesura at 1882 makes it possible to distinguish an important stage in Maria Konopnicka's work, to renew the reading of the writer's work, and to reveal the diversity, inspiration and importance of artistic travel. The monograph is thus a realisation of the project of reading Maria Konopnicka's work in the context of the passion for travel and travel writing of a modern woman like the author of Italian and Provençal sonnets.