

COOL, PERSONAL, WONDERFUL¹

by Kristina Yordanova

Wonderful in its experimenting, brave, and conceptual way, the book of Maria Karo, is something, which is obviously missing on the Bulgarian market – it is a book-project. This is why it is published with the friendly support of Debut Project Assistance Fund, although some of the texts have already been published in various periodicals, but now they are granted a new existence, a new environment, stitched together in the canvas of the paper body. The very conception of the book is impressive. Karo's book-project breaks the usual standards we take for granted – the words, the texts, rush through the book cover, and deny being bound in a book, they reveal and denude the script and turn it into an exhibition venue, a part of the exterior. We are caught up in Karo's writing, and its first sign is the ellipsis. The title page meets us with the “**chocolate maker**“, the words just pour out after the dash, after the empty space and after the feeling that before these words there must have been others, which must have fallen off, crumbled away; or perhaps the beginning is a reference, a fragment filling out some of the texts, hidden in the cavity of the paper body. In this way, exactly as an ellipsis, élleipsis (gram. omitting) the writing merges paradoxically with everything said therein, the book is rounded up and the individual texts unite into a homogeneous whole. The design of the paper body reconfirms the ellipsis of the writing – the pages are filled with white fields, the geometry of the texts forms figures, in which the white emptiness is incorporated into the words. There is no pagination, some of the pages are folded in and their unfolding presupposes a choice of sequence, as to how the words should reach us, with no beginning and no end, without a final period to mark the end of the text. By denying the beginning and the end the experiments of Maria Karo deny the finality of the book, i.e. the script simulates infinity. The architectonics of the book draws the attention to / distracts the attention from the writing itself. And the writing, as well as the form of the paper body, is precise in its experiments; cautious towards the language, strange and unconventional. Despite Karo's affiliation with the female writing models – the fluid and in-taking way of writing – the texts highlight the gender roles. The stories are epicene when using masculine or feminine gender to designate the writer's / speaker's position, they do that through the game, trough the fiction, which involves the reader in conversations with different characters telling their own stories. Most of the texts are letters; they personalize the speaking act addressing the recipient. The words focus on sharing a profoundly personal story, which rejects any repetition and the only way for it to be preserved is to address it to a recipient, the reader / the listener. The book seems to show that what it catches will never be the same, it is elusive, it has already broken apart and the words provide the last and only sanctuary, where it can hide. The stories are personal also because they bear the traces of intimacy – portraits of a mother and a grandmother, stories about the father and the grandfather. Maria Karo is able to strike a fine balance between the cool experimental technique and the transfer of personal emotion from situations into the book. Precisely this technique makes her an outstanding representative of modern Bulgarian literature – with her word-creation, allusions and the modern European literature techniques (i.e. the expressionist verse techniques used in the portraits of the mother and the grandmother). Let us not forget Sava Primov, the designer of the book, whose work accomplishes very skilfully the fragments inside. Although the experimental book as such is not a new cultural phenomenon, when viewing and reading the project of Maria Karo, we can only wish for be more such books in Bulgaria in the years to come.

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¹ The article in the Kultura newspaper on the writer's profile is a review of the *Juliette Letters*, which is a collection of texts published under the penname of Maria Karo.