

CEEPUS SUMMER SCHOOL WOMEN WRITERS IN HISTORY

The Crossing Media Boundaries Summer School, organised by the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Nova Gorica and the Research Centre for the Humanities, took place from 27 August to 1 September in Nova Gorica and Trieste.

This international and interdisciplinary summer school was the result of a collaboration led by the CEEPUS network Women Writers in History, the DARIAH working group Women Writers in History and the Women Writers Route Association and the Foundation of the University of Nova Gorica. The event took place within the framework of the master's programme Women Writers in World Literature (MA) and the doctoral programme Gender and Literature (PhD) at the University of Nova Gorica as well as within the programme group Historical Interpretations of the 20th Century, which is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.

Participants had the opportunity to take part in a series of lectures, workshops and a thematic excursion led by renowned researchers and lecturers from universities in the CEEPUS network and beyond. The thematic focus of these meetings covered various areas, including gender studies, literature and digital humanities. A special feature of the programme was a practical workshop on working with the digital database SHE WROTE, which opened up new perspectives for the study and promotion of literature.

The summer school programme successfully created a collaborative and supportive environment in which participants could present and discuss their research, fostering intellectual growth and community building.

In addition to the academic content, participants also undertook a thematic excursion to Trieste, where they heard a lecture by Prof Dr Marta Verginella on the Trieste-based journal Slovenka. This interweaving of experiential activities with academic research emphasised the transgression of boundaries and limitations in women's authorship, which was the central thematic starting point of the entire programme.

27. 8. 2025

Our participants arrived in Nova Gorica and we kicked off the third interdisciplinary summer school Crossing Media Boundaries: Gender and Writing across Artistic Media.

The day began with a warm welcome from Katja Mihurko, CEEPUS Women Writers in History network coordinator, who officially opened the program. Afterwards, Darko Ilin, the summer school coordinator, led an interactive introductory workshop. Participants introduced themselves through a creative exercise: each had sent a media piece that reflected their idea of “crossing media boundaries.” The result was a fascinating collage of works and ideas — from film clips to artworks and texts — that not only showcased diverse perspectives but also set the tone for an open, collaborative atmosphere for the days ahead.

The program continued with Katja Kobolt, who shared her research on children’s literature and illustrations in socialist Yugoslavia. She highlighted the importance of creating a database of women illustrators, while at the same time encouraging critical reflection on women’s roles in literary production systems.

To close the day, Alicia Montoya presented SHEWROTE, an impressive Digital Humanities project that traces the reception of historical women authors from the early modern period up to the 20th century. With data on over 7,000 women writers and 30,000 instances of reception, the project demonstrates how women’s texts (and their images, adaptations, and reputations) have circulated across time and media. The presentation sparked a lively discussion on the role of databases in understanding cultural memory and the evolving formats of reception, from books to photos, film, and sound.

A rich and inspiring start that already set the stage for meaningful exchanges across disciplines, media, and generations.

28. 8. 2025

Day two took us out of Nova Gorica and into the vibrant city of Trieste! We explored the city’s rich literary heritage — not just the familiar names like James Joyce and Italo Svevo, but also the contributions of Slovene women writers.

We visited Gregorčič Hall, where we were warmly welcomed by Marta Verginella, who gave an engaging lecture on the Slovenian newspaper *Slovenka*. Born on the “borders of the nation” in a rapidly changing Trieste, the newspaper featured the best female writers of its time, the cream of the young Slovenian intelligentsia, alongside established literary figures.

Slovenka was ambitious: it sought to keep up with the most radical social and cultural currents in Europe, to challenge provincialism, and to give women a public voice in education, employment, and literary production. Though it had a short life (1897–1902), it represented a unique intellectual alliance between

women and men, making a lasting statement against conservative circles that denied women their right to speak publicly.

This field trip offered participants a chance not only to experience the city's literary atmosphere but also to reflect on the ways women's voices shaped cultural and intellectual life at the turn of the 20th century.

29. 8. 2025

After a stormy but restful night, we dove into an exciting third day! The morning kicked off with Maša Grdešić's workshop, where we explored contemporary television as a lens for feminist and cultural analysis. Using excerpts from HBO's *Girls*, participants reflected on how the series portrays young women striving to become artists in a neoliberal context, and how Hannah Horvath's writing raises questions about gendered perceptions of literary merit, authenticity, and triviality. The discussion sparked lively debate about the ways in which popular media can participate in broader conversations on feminism, intimacy, and artistic expression.

Later, participants enjoyed a conversation with local multimedia and performance artist Ana Čigon, whose activist and feminist works demonstrate how contemporary artists cross media boundaries. The interview, skillfully led by Sara Vukotić from the organizing team, gave students insight into the creative process and the intersections between art, activism, and media. In the afternoon, we returned to the SHEWROTE database, crossing media boundaries from screen to digital archive. In a hands-on workshop, participants created their own datasets within the database, each credited as a data "creator" and "editor," making this work a formal research contribution. We focused on women writers from Central and Eastern Europe, entering biographical and bibliographical data to help their voices resonate in the digital space. This workshop not only promoted scholarly exchange but also gave participants firsthand experience with digital humanities methodologies, a crucial skill in contemporary literary research. A day full of critical reflection, collaborative work, and the thrill of creating something that contributes to ongoing scholarship on women's writing across media.

30. 8. 2025

The morning began with Biljana Dojčinović's workshop, *The Resisting Author and Artist: Gender, Creativity and Media in Protests*. Inspired by recent student protests in Serbia following the tragic collapse of the Novi Sad railway station canopy in November 2024, the workshop explored how creative expression, slogans, actions, writings, and student publications intersect with gender and activism. Students who had participated in these protests shared photos,

publications, and firsthand experiences, prompting critical discussions about the role of social media and artistic production in contemporary activism. Historical context was also provided, tracing student protests from 1968 through the 1990s to the present.

In the afternoon, Matěj Hřib led *From Palimpsests to Memes: Creative Reading Then and Now*. Participants examined how literature and media build on previous texts, from parodies and pastiches to modern fanfiction and internet memes. We explored how women writers and readers have historically used these strategies to challenge dominant narratives and how participatory culture in fandom and online media transforms reading into acts of creation and resistance. The session was lively, with participants analyzing everything from erotic fanfiction to meme pages, proving that academic engagement with digital culture can be both rigorous and fun!

The day concluded with a mentoring session, where participants discussed their own research ideas and began laying out the framework for tomorrow's poster presentations. It was an excellent opportunity for guidance, feedback, and collaborative planning.

31. 8. 2025

The morning began with Darko Ilin's and Natalia Toporowska's workshop (and Tery Žeželj was with us in spirit), titled *Traces of Queerness: (Maga)Zines, Literature, and Community-Building in Central Europe*. Participants explored queer zines and magazines from Poland and Slovenia during the late socialist and early postsocialist period, a moment of political upheaval and cultural experimentation. These zines carved out spaces where sexuality, politics, and aesthetics intersected, and we examined how they crossed media boundaries through literary texts and community-building practices. Framing the discussion through Sara Ahmed's notion of queer use, we explored how objects and spaces can be repurposed to release new potentials and leave queer traces.

The workshop ended with a hands-on activity: participants creatively repurposed the zines we studied, producing the very first *Nova Kvirica 2025* zine, a unique, one-of-a-kind piece of queer print!

In the afternoon, participants prepared and shared their poster presentations, showcasing a wide array of projects: from creative interventions into the materiality of the book, to immersive soundscapes to small-scale research proposals. The presentations were a perfect culmination of the summer school, highlighting the richness of interdisciplinary approaches and the energy of collaboration.

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1. 9. 2025

After five days of events and evaluations, the participants used the last day to explore Nova Gorica and Gorica on their own. The evaluation showed that the summer school was a complete success.

Phots by: Mladen Franko, Darko Ilin, Katja Mihurko, Jovana Rašković, Ivana Zajc.