

FANTASTICAL IMAGES IN THE NOVEL “MOUNTAINS” (“PLANINE”) BY PETAR ZORANIĆ

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Abstract

This article attempts to trace fantastic images the reader encounters in the novel of a Renaissance Croatian writer Petar Zoranić: fantastic beings, fantastic places, fantastic objects, magical ceremonies and dreams.

Key words: Croatian literature, Renaissance, Petar Zoranić, fantastics, «Planine»

Introduction

One of the topical and particularly interesting areas of research in contemporary literary criticism is the study of the literary fantastic. In 20th century there came about a lot of research-studies that inquire into the questions of ontology and phenomenology of fantastic literature, fantastic figurativeness, strategies and approaches to introduce fantastic element into the literary text. In the world literary criticism several schools that study fantastics in literature could be now distinguished. For example, French School (Tzvetan Todorov, Roger Caillois and others), Anglo-Saxon School (Neil Cornwell, C.N. Manlove, Kathryn Hume, Dieter Petzold, Brian MC Hale, Eric S. Rabkin, Rosemary Jackson and others), Russian

School (Yuliy Kaharlytsky, Tatiana Chernysheva, Elena Kovtun, Yurii Mann and others), Serbian School (Predrag Palavestra, Sava Damjanov, Jovica Aćin and others), Italian School (Umberto Eco, Lucio Lugniani and others), Croatian School (Branimir Donat, Jurica Pavičić, Jagna Pogačnik, Tatjana Peruško and others)

The questions of genesis and evolution of literary fantastic and fantastic in literature until 19th century remain as the most undeveloped and the least studied areas in literary criticism.

In her monograph “Discourses fantastic” (Ляхманн, 2009) Renate Lachmann, a Slavist from Germany, inquires from the standpoint of culturology into the consistency of poetics, literary fantastic and its functions.

In his research paper “Serbian Fantastic from the Middle Ages to the Postmodern” Sava Damjanov, a Serbian literary historian shows how literary fantastic under the influences of poetics and aesthetics of a certain period in the history of literature, in a peculiar way reflects classical conventional literature (and therefore, also methods to appreciate it), represents its alternative and is either being edged out by it or on the contrary, becomes its natural constitutive component.

The Renaissance is one of the periods marked by the complicated and tough relations between literary fantastic and literary convention. It is particularly interesting to trace these relations through the case study of Croatian literature, that reached high artistic levels during the Renaissance.

In the context of this subject there’s an important research work called “The Frame of Mimesis, the Frame of Fantastic: the Other Creatures in the Literature of ancient Dubrovnik” (Fališevac, 2007) by Dunja Fališevac, a researcher of ancient Croatian literature and a literary critic. In this work she analyses mostly the functions of fantastic characters in the ancient Croatian literature drawing examples mainly from Dubrovnik literature.

Croatian literature of the Renaissance period develops first of all in Dalmatia under the considerable influence of Italian philosophy of Humanism and Renaissance culture in harsh historical conditions. By the end of XV and in XVI centuries Croatia is not only divided, but is under the constant attacks from ottomans and Venetian Republic.

Only the Republic of Ragusa preserves relative independence with the help of successful diplomacy, commerce and advantageous location at the crossing of commercial routes between West and East. And though Dubrovnik manages to keep its borders, Croatian-Hungarian, Venetian and Turkish borders are constantly moving.

In such difficult conditions yet, inspired by the ideas of Humanism. there develop and successfully operate local cultural circles in Split, Zadar, Hvar and Dubrovnik. New philosophical thinking also spreads into Northern Croatia.

However in Dalmatia, as a Croatian literary historian Marin Franičević points out where it came down to survival, the cultural centres in due course turned back towards Medieval mystics, and the writers thematised threats that their native land endures. In particular, the patriotic discourse is entwined with the fantastic by P. Zoranić (Franičević, 1974).

The Novel “Mountains” by Petar Zoranić and Fantastic

On the contrary to authors from Dubrovnik, whose fantastic-grotesque/ fantastic-comical component serves to stating the truth (Климецъ, 2016), P. Zoranić, a writer from Zadar, to depict reality, turns to allegory: his imaginary travel around native places goes «*pod koprinom*»¹.

The first novel in Croatian literature, a bucolic poetical-allegorical work “Mountains” is one of the literature reflections of “Arcadia” by Jacopo Sannazaro, though, as Branimir Donat points out, although they share artistic and social affinity, their creative intentionalities have some deep-rooted differences. To the common features, the critic includes the attempt to rationally explain the irrational world. The structure of prose thinking is also identical: the intimate is shown as something objective, and the idyllic – as natural (Donat, 1991: 60-61)². “However the novel of P. Zoranić does not get lost in the forest of abstractions, because our writer lovingly cherishes the tender sprout of belonging to people. The objectivation of this intimate loyalty to the native land is connected with the mythologizing of the travel” (Donat, 1991: 61).

In “Mountains” the Dalmatian Arcadia comes up in several dimensions: in mimetic, though ornated landscape, in which one can recognize outskirts of the city of Zadar, local rivers, springs and mountains; in mythological, that comes from the stories about miraculous reincarnations, along which the origin of local toponyms, names of the plants and phenomena is explained; in patriotic – the author leaves the story about the beauty of native land in the Garden of Glory); and in literary, as traveling around Dalmatia, P. Zoranić takes his reader into the realms of world literature.

This work is polymorphous and structured as putting prose and poetic fragments on a string, while lyrical parts (the songs of shepherds with Petrarca or patriotic motives) serve as a subjective background and prose ones set mythological dimension (the stories about the miraculous transformations that correspond to Ovid’s “Metamorphoses”, legends, traditional stories, magic rituals, etc.) and allegorical dimension (poetic view of the world around and the author in it) dimensions of the work. What’s also interesting is the immersion of the author into a rich literary context of the epoch – on the book’s strands P. Zoranić mentions canonical works, translations or paraphrases of biblical aphorisms, one can trace the motives of Dante, Virgil, some poetic works are the renditions of F. Petrarca or include the motives of works by the Italian poet, some songs are tintured with folklore images and performed in popular melodies. These hybrid fragments are sewn together by the motive of travel, and the central are the literary topoi *bašćine*³ and love (in the variations of romantic longing, broken heart, and love to the native land and high genuine love).

A songster Zoran (the alter ego of P. Zoranić) on the eve of his thirtieth anniversary in May sets out on a journey to get cured of his unrequited love. On his way, the songster meets vila Zorica (Napea) that directs the poet to vila Grace (Milost). With her the songster surmounts a sea journey, descends to hell, meets noble shepherds (some of them are singing

¹ In a mask or a veil

² B. Donat points to the connection of P. Zoranić’s work not only with pastoral, but also romance and chivalric novels, emphasizing the deep connection of “Mountains” with European novel tradition (Donat, 1991)

³ native land, and also heritage, that could be broadly interpreted in the work.

about love, and others on the other side of the mountains are worried about the attacks of the «wolves»⁴, vila Conscience (Svijest) shows him the way to the sorceress Dinara, that performs a magical ceremony over Zoran and frees him from the chains of love, the songster dreams about the Garden of Glory, either in dreams or awake he sees the mill of time, speaks with Saint Jerome and bishop Juraj Divnić⁵.

In this work there are many allegories wrapped up in ‘clothes’ of fantastic, so, without turning to allegorical interpretation, let us try to sort out fantastic images. **Fantastic creatures** comprise the first group.

- *vile* Zorica (Napea), Krka, Grace, Truth (Istina), Glory (Slava) and Conscience, each having her own attributes. We can categorize Latinka, Hrvatica and Kaldejka into a separate subgroup. These characters are different by level of allegorization: there’s a fairy-tale ontology in Krka, Zorica and Grace, Truth, Glory and Conscience are completely allegorical figures, Latinka, Hrvatica and Kaldejka symbolize respective literatures. Zorica lives in the Vodica well. She’s a Zoranić’s relative, to which points not only her name, but also the story of an unrequited love of vila and Lilyanko (a lily is depicted on the Zoranić family’s coat of arms) who died because of the separation with his beloved Zorica and was turned into a lily. From Zorica’s tears there came a well, called by her name that later transformed into Vodica. Vila Grace is a beauty in a white transparent dress, who’s standing with her left foot on a golden apple. She accompanies Zoran from Zorica to the shepherds and from Krka to home. She gives Zoran a clear and transparent stone to look around hell. Vila Krka is dressed in clothes from water, she takes Zoran in a boat wreathed from water weeds. Other vilas (the embodiment of river Krka’s tributaries) gift her the pitchers with water and pay honours. Vila Truth descends on a white cloud, and her attire is snow-white, blinding as the sun. She accompanies Saint Jerome and bishop Divnić. On seeing Truth, Zoran realizes that his aim is to serve the genuine eternal love, and not the passing amorous passions. Vila Conscience knows about Zoran’s “ailment” and shows him the way to Dinara. Vila Glory lives in the Garden of Glory and flies over the tree with golden laves. She’s got a crown on her head made of precious jewels, she’s got wings at her back from peacock’s feathers and engirdled with a double belt: one is made of steel with bells, another one is embroidered with gold also embellished with bells. She’s got a trumpet in her left hand and a palm branch with gilded leaves. «Quivering the wings, blowing the trumpet and ringing the bells, she filled the whole garden with happy sounds» (Zoranić, 1999: 130). Vila Latinka, Hrvatica and Kaldejka stay at the Garden of Glory. Each of them has golden apples with names of the authors and works inscribed on them. Hrvatica is young and sad, because she has got much fewer apples than her friends. It is interesting that the apple with Petar Zoranić’s name it is also written “Amour hunt” and “Sorceress”⁶, and vila was starting to writing the word «Mountains”.

⁴ The Turks, that occupied the Eastern part of Dalmatia. One of the shepherds renders a song of the shepherd by the name of Marula. In Marula we perceive Marko Marulić, a writer from Split, the author of poetic anti-Turkish work “The prayer against the Turks” (Molitva suprotiva Turkom, the end of XV century.)

⁵ In Glagolitic tradition Saint Jerome was considered the founder of literature, and bishop and writer Juraj Divnić is Zoranić’s compatriot and the founder of a church in the city of Nin.

⁶ Based on this, literary critics concluded that P. Zoranić was the author of two works that as of today have not been found.

- **Sorceress** Dinara (Deianira). The daughter of Aeneas and the wife of Heracles. After Heracles' death, Dinara, feeling her guilt, goes roaming the world until she settles on the top of the mountain, not far from Zadar. Feeling sorry for Dinara's tears, Heracles asked Apollo to grant his wife the sorceress and fortune-teller knowledge. The mountain where the sorceress lives people called Dinara. She performs magical ceremonies over Zoran.

- **millar** at the time mill, «an old but portly man, who incessantly and quickly brought and threw on the millstone not sacks of grains, but cities, castles, villages, palaces, people, animals, trees, flowers, plants and weeds, inventiveness, pride, beauty, bravery and everything whatsoever there is in the world, and the hard millstones at once mill it into dust» (Zoranić, 1990: 137)

- **infernal creatures** Lucifer, his sons Deuce and Devil, his daughters Scum and Monster, sons of Deuce and Scum and sons of Devil and Monster. Lucifer is at the abyss, chained. In hell there also lives Bura⁷, a beauty, the daughter of the lord, who lived in the northern lands, in the country between the rise of the sun and the Plough. The gods punished Bura for her arrogance, pride and boasting of her beauty, turning her into a wind.

- **fantastic animals**. Fantastic animal lives in a lake that crosses the way to the mountain tops. He "has got seven different heads, four snake's legs, the body of a black donkey and a double twisted tail, like pincers. The first head of a scary foaming Lion, the second one from the furious Bear, the third one from a black Raven, the fourth – from the Whordome Lady, the fifth – from the poisonous and angry Viper, the sixth – from a Toad, and the seventh – from the insatiable Wolf" (Zoranić, 1999: 43). Fantastic creatures from the ancient pantheon are mentioned in the legends and traditional stories numerous times (these are centauruses (Nessus), white fallow deers, etc.).

To **fantastic objects** we could include golden apples, while the golden apple of Grace serves as a means of transport and the golden apples "torn down by different hands" (Zoranić, 1999: 129) are canonical works in the Garden of Glory. This is also Krka's boat wreathed from water and water weeds, it gets even through steep waterfalls on the river and also a clear, white stone with which Zoran examines hell.

The magical ceremony over Zoran are performed by the sorceress Dinara. The cure of romantic longing is described by the principal of realised metaphor: love threads that were tied around the heart of a lover untwine and Zoran's heart is ready to get filled with new high feelings. Preparation to the magical ceremony is described in detail: "Dinara stood up and not going far gathered the herbs, different roots casting the spell; then she went with me to the cave where there were many boxes with different powder, roots dried out in the cold, bones and fats of various animals and ichor, and fur from the animals' tails, in glasses there were magical poisons and potions. She put everything in one bowl, poured some clean clear water, started a fire from aromatic logs and cooked a potion while casting a spell, blowing into the bowl and stirring the potion with the right hand.» (Zoranić, 1999: 125). Magical ceremony takes place in the evening at moon light over the well. Dinara pronounces a spell, twice throws the salt into the water, oil and then pours in the cooked potion. Zoran on Dinara's advice looked into the water and saw himself "not only from outside, but from inside, and

⁷ Bura in Croatian and bora in Italian is a strong, dry, cold and gusty wind, that blows from the continent along the Mediterranean Coast.

who would have believe it, and beheld his heart tied up in strange stings and twisted knots. And, it seems, he recognized in these twists the golden strand of my sweet foe, because exactly with it, with a hard knot my heart was squeezed so it barely beat.» (Zoranić, 1999: 125-126). Then Dinara sprinkles Zoran with water seven times and he sees how the strings and knots that were binding his heat untie. For this magical ceremony time is particularly important: Sidmoj, a father of one of the shepherds warns Zoran, that the ceremony is best to be held on the Jupiter night, and Dinara conducts the ceremony at night in the moonlight.

On his way to the mountains (which is an allegory of spiritual growth) Zoran passes **fantastic places**. For example, a magic lake, where a seven headed monster lives. In hell, a big and spacious place live various monsters, sinful souls are tormented and in the deep abyss there's chained Lucifer. Hell is covered in smoke and fire, from there cries and screams and gnashing of monsters' teeth are coming. Seven rives are flowing through the hell. They freeze from flapping of Lucifer's wings and start boiling, when the demon spits out flames from his mouth. P. Zoranić locates hell in Mala i Velika Paklenica⁸ canyons, explaining thus the toponymy. The Garden of Glory is also a fantastical space. This is yet another variation of *bašćine*, a place where the canonical literature is gathered together. The way to the Garden of Glory isn't easy because it is situated on the top of the mountain and surrounded with water. This requires of the traveller to additionally exert oneself. Grace takes Zoran over the river and to his eye opens idyllic scenery: the garden of glory is surrounded with hedge, The entrance is through four archy gates. Then Zoran goes down seven alleys safeguarded by seven different specious of trees growing on their sides. This is the place of eternal spring, filled with wonderful scents and magical sounds. In the middle of the garden there grows a majestic tree. Its leaves are golden on one side and green from the other. The tree is covered with golden apples. Near the tree there's a fountain with crystal clear water. Seven gold casted girls hold the fountain. In the shadow of a tree there are vile. Among them are Latinka, Hrvatica and Kaldejka mentioned earlier. Pavao Pavličić writes in detail about the allegory of garden (Pavličić, 2002). The description of time mill is also fantastic: «His spindle had twelve wings and an internal ring that hit them had three hundred and sixty five white and the same amount of black fingers that alternated. The external ring had thirty wings. The wind didn't spin them, nor did the water come down on them, but Apollo and his horses walking around turned them and did the milling (Zoranić, 1999: 137). As fantastic we can categorize also a smaller locations – river banks, where usually vile show up, ponds that vile live in and the cave of sorceress Dinara.

The special place in this work is set for **mythological time and space**, in which the reader can recognize Dalmatia and the suburbs surrounding Zadar. These peculiar Dalmatia “Metamorphoses” populated by deities from the ancient mythology present a different layer of the novel. They are structured as legends that shepherds retell to Zoran: about the transformation of Sokolar, Novak and Paprat into the wells with same names, Jagoda into a berry Ružica into a rose, Mara into Marble well, Jela into a fir tree, Asel into a basil, Marcela into murtela⁹, Ljubica and Ljubidrag into a violet¹⁰, Anica into Anita plant (fennel),¹¹ Stana

⁸ National Park Paklenica is in the Northern Dalmatia. On the Southern slopes of the Velebit). Pakao – hell in Croatian.

⁹ Another name for basil

into a well of Fountain, three Paprat's sisters that came to Zadar looking for their brother into three streams that flow into Vrulje. Zorica's story about the transformation of her lover Žilbil's body into a lily. The toponymical legend in which the name of the Velebit mountain is explained is also loaded with **fantastic events**: a boy called Velevij¹², Atlas' son, boiling with a thirst for knowledge after his long journeys settled on the top of the mountain, to be closer to stars and to learn celestial mysteries/secrets. For this the gods punished him. Thunder and lightning burnt his body and so that even ashes him were gone, they covered the top with white snow; this is where the other name of the mountain Velebil¹³ comes from. The memory of vila Prislavka was preserved in the name of the Privlaka well, and sorceress Dinara's name in the name of the mountain Dinara (Sorceress Deianira). The stories about miraculous transformation thematise the unrequited love between vile and people, punishment for breaking the ban to love worldly boys, revenge for betrayal etc.

An important part in these transformations play the **phrophetic dreams** in which the reader can foresee the future tragedy: about the mortal combat of lioness and she-wolf, about the death of the hawk who crashed while trying to stop the fight between two doves (the story about Sokolar and Jagoda, who kills her friend Ružica out of jealousy): it is about small turtledove that descends from the fir tree and an eagle scoops her from the hunter's hands, a golden sword, that Dražnik falls on and gets deadly wounded, a precious ring after which Novak dives into the water (the story about Diana killing vile Mara and Jela for their love to Dražnik and Novak); about Sun burning Moon, that was embracing Star; about two white flowers that blossomed on a boat which a furious Poseidon tried to sink, but Moon saved it (the story about Marcela who for years has been looking for Ansel who went missing after he died struck with lightning).

In his phantom dream to Ljubidrag¹⁴ in love comes Venus and suggests a plan to seduce Ljubica (a story about Ljubidrag taking advantage of Ljubica who was forbidden by Clytie's mother to have any affairs with no man. After being abused she commits a suicide).

The dream reveals itself as Morpheus too. Because it was he who made Zoran dream about the Garden of Glory.

The last chapter of the novel is designed in the form of the phantom dream: Zoran meets with Juraj Divnić, a bishop in the city of Nin, Saint Jerome and vila Truth and hands the reader the keys of how he can interpret the travel historically (realistically) and allegorically (poetic perception of reality).

Conclusion

By interweaving mimetic world and the world of fantasy, bringing in allegorical figures that hint at the Turkish threats of that time, masked allusions to difficult conditions in which Croatian literature was developing.

With his Mountains P. Zoranić creates a myth about Arcadia on the shores of the Adriatic Sea and introduces it into domains of contemporaneous European literature.

¹⁰ ljubica in Croatian

¹¹ anethum in Latin

¹² omniscient

¹³ Very white

¹⁴ a Violet in Croatian

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