

Summary of PhD thesis

Aleksandra Wojtaszek

Imagined Geographies. 1990s Croatian and Serbian fantasy fiction vs. reality

PhD thesis supervised by Prof. Sylwia Nowak-Bajcar, Jagiellonian University

In the following PhD thesis I analyse and interpret Serbian and Croatian fantasy literature from the 1990s from the perspective of geopoetics. I examine the links between these works and space and, in consequence, the non-literary reality. I am interested in a particular kind of writing situated outside of mainstream literature and includes genres such as science fiction, fantasy fiction and horror, sometimes referred to as “genre fantasy” [fantastyka gatunkowa]. In the 1990s, there were significant modifications of Serbian and Croatian fantasy paradigm, manifested primarily in the emergence of previously absent themes related to locality and space. An important modification of this trend in the indicated period is also genre hybridization of literary works, which implies the need to analyse them from the perspective of genology. The contemplation of imagined literary geographies and transformations of genological templates in selected works invite questions regarding this writings’ relationship with the key issues of modernity and defining its subversive or conciliatory character in relation to the then dominant ideologies, and therefore a reflection on the meanings of this genres of fantasy.

The first chapter of the work is devoted to theoretical and genological issues. A discussion of the most important contemporary theories concerning fantasy writing allowed me to define the scope of my research and to distinguish between mainstream fantasy and genre fantasy. I also discuss the most important findings regarding the highly conventionalized genres of fantasy. The theory chapter is also devoted to the issue of space – both as a methodology used in the humanities to describe the phenomena of modernity and as an important category in the study of distinct genres of fantasy.

The following chapter is devoted to the history of fantasy in Serbia and Croatia. I discuss in detail the existing Croatian and Serbian research on fantasy in these two countries, as well as in Poland. I also reconstruct the history of genre fantasy in Serbia and Croatia – from the emergence of this kind of writing at the turn of 20th century up until 1989. The next

two historical and literary chapters are devoted to the most interesting – in my view – period, the 1990s, and the thematic and genological modifications that occurred at that time within these literary genres.

The following analytical and interpretative part is divided into an introduction and three subsections organized around the themes of globalism, national identity, and locality. The presentation of ways in which space is conceptualized and a description of spatial imagery found in the works of Serbian and Croatian writers are combined with a reflection on questions regarding genology. I interpret the presentation of space in the context of research perspectives such as imagology, postcolonialism, decentralization, connections between memory and place, new regionalisms, reinterpretation of the spatial imaginary or constructing national identity in the works of Goran Konvični, Neven Jovanović, Milena Benini, Aleksander Žiljak, Dalibor Perkovic, Marina Jadrežčić, Goran Skrobonja, Ilija Bakić, Vladimir Lazovic, Zoran Jakšic, Boban Knežević, and Dragan Filipovic. In the final chapter, I compare the selected texts based on the ideas, beliefs, or stereotypes revealed in them, which are often an expression of their authors' worldviews or ideology. Thus, I examine the attitude of the 1990s Serbian and Croatian genre fantasy to non-literary reality.