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Original research paper

FLORAL-FAUNAL MOTIFS IN SVETOZAR ĆOROVIĆ'S *LOVE STORIES*

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Abstract: The paper interprets the cycle of sketch stories by Svetozar Ćorović (1875–1919), *Love Stories*, from the narratological, structuralist and phenomenological aspects. Special attention is paid to floral and faunal motifs, which in different storytelling techniques may have the function of action setting and postponing, action starting, or hero portraying. The oriental chronotope of Ćorović's texts is seen both as a neo-romantic image of Ćorović's native Herzegovina and as a reflection of the mental states and, in general, the spiritual structure of the heroes existing in it. It is impossible to observe Bakhtinian idyllic chronotope separately from literary heroes since the floral and faunal worlds are presented in Ćorović's texts in unity with man.

Keywords: Svetozar Ćorović; floral-faunal motifs; love motif; storytelling techniques; oriental themes.

1. Introduction

In the rich literary work of Svetozar Ćorović (1875–1919), a Serbian writer from Mostar, the narrative work occupies a more important place than novel prose and dramatic texts. Ćorović is a master of short form, and literary criticism (Vučković, 2014, p. 186) relates this narrative procedure of his to the influence of Russian realist Anton Pavlovich Chekhov. Moroever, Branko Milanović (1967) also points to the influence of Serbian realists Lazarević, Veselinović, Domanović, Sremac, Stanković, as well as folk tales on artistic procedures in Ćorović's texts. Stories of love, stories of children, and stories of poor people are some of the most important thematic cycles in his narrative opus, grouped in several collections: *U časovima odmora/In the Hours of Rest* (1903, 1904, 1906, 1910), *Moji poznanici/My Acquaintances* (1909), *Komšije/ Neighbors* (1912).

The setting of the stories from the cycle *Priče o ljubavi/ Love Stories* is located in the oriental environment of Mostar, uniquely coloring the texts. Radovan Vučković (2014, p. 193) relates Ćorović's tendency to use oriental motives to his living in a religiously and nationally diverse environment and the fact that a solid stylistic current of decorativism dominated late 19th and early

20th-century European literature. On the other hand, Dragiša Vitošević (1995, pp. 466-473) sees Corovic's Orientalism as an idealization of old times, the socalled golden age, and recognizes this trait in other regional Serbian writers -Šantić (again Mostar), Sremac (Niš) and Stanković (Vranje). Gardens full of various flowers and fruits, houses filled with scents of flowers, fruits, and sweets, suggesting abundance and hedonism, are physical spaces in which the heroes of Corovic's oriental stories exist. Mental space implies the inner, spiritual life of literary heroes, whose main preoccupation is love. The heroes of these stories are not happy, because their love is impossible due to patriarchal restrictions (*Latinka*/ A Catholic, Teferič/ The Outing, Halilova kajda/ Khalil's Melody) or it is simply unrequited (Daša/ Dasha, Tata/ Tata, Puštenica/ The Widow). Even when love is two-sided, happiness is short-lived as they soon get fed up and their instinctive need to continue to search for love emerges (Osman-begova šargija/Osman-beg's shargia, Đul-begova Zejna/ Gul-beg's Zeyna). They also fear destroying ideals by consuming their love, believing that man is happy only while dreaming about happiness (*Uoči svadbe/ On the Eve of the Wedding*), while in the short story *Iza* hamama (Behind the Hammam), marital harmony is disturbed by childlessness.

In dealing with the motif of love as the central motif of this thematic cycle of Svetozar Ćorović, floral and faunal motifs occupy a special place, having different functions in the text. In purely descriptive segments, they concretize the text and slow down the action; in some narrative-descriptive segments, they are initiators of the action. However, their crucial function is undoubtedly the portrayal of heroes: on a structuralist level, it is literary heroes preoccupied with love that are in the focus of the *Love Stories*.

2. Landscape description in Ćorović's Love Stories

Duško Pevulja (2019) writes about narrative techniques in Svetozar Ćorović's prose texts as being straight forward: "His stories usually begin with a description, scene, portrait of the protagonist or a voice talking about him (which will be confirmed, modeled or completely refuted). This is followed by narration, which is mostly reduced to one plotline aboundingin artistry, concentration on the essence, and impressive, eloquent details, which often hint at the resolution and the meaning of the narration. From the way he ends his short stories, it is clear that Ćorović is a master in shaping the stories (plot twist, climax, after which adding anything would beexcessive, death of the main character, etc.)" (pp. 418-419).

In such a composition of a short story, description finds a place as a form of narration that occasionally alternates with narration in the third person, and it immediately postpones the action until the plot twist, which Gerald Prince (2011, p. 35) calls a descriptive break. The description in the introductory compositional frame, on the other hand, serves to familiarize the reader with the chronotope of Mostar, the Neretva river and Mostar gardens. Goran Maksimović (2006) points out that "numerous obvious examples of the Herzegovinian landscape, the Mostar bazaar or the Neretva shores" (p. 333) are the most obvious depiction

of Herzegovina in Ćorović's literary work, with its deeper layers in the form of social, psychological, humorous-satirical and Christian images of the world of Herzegovinian highlanders being less prominent. The end of the text is rarely characterized by a descriptive section in the form of the so-called false end since at the end of the text, the focus is on a plot twist and resolution.

Floral-faunal motifs at the beginning of Ćorović's short story *Teferić*: "Zapjevao bumbul u jorgovanu i razbudio uspavano cvijeće. Zamirisala bašča katmer-šebojima, kadifama, kaloperom i verbenama" (Ćorović, 1967, p. 38) serve to emotionally prepare the reader, bespeaking of the world shown later in the text as the world of female characters who enjoy eating sweets on the grass in a garden and cheerfully talk about love and *sevdah* (lovesickness). The chronotope of the garden, in which the heroes of Ćorović's love stories spend their everyday lives, is Bakhtinian idyllic chronotope, characterized by the blend of human life and the life of nature. The hero's entire life is connected to that space as a microworld, from birth to death (cf. Bakhtin, 1989, pp. 352-354).

Floral motifs in the description of the landscape in the short story Na vodi (On the water) belong to the current, and faunal motifs to the non-actualized world of the story – animals like eels and leeches are used to compare the Neretva and reeds growing around it: "Ispod omanjega, trbušastog brda, po kome se nižu nekolika reda rodnih vinograda i spuštaju se do gustih redova širokih, mrkih maslina i smokava, provlači se, upravo mili krivudava, široka Neretva, hujeći potmulo i zapljuskujući niske, pržinave obale, obrasle starim topolama, vodenim trskama i vrbama, koje, sa obje strane, bacaju svoje široke sjenke na nju, te se gotovo crni i izgleda kao kakva ogromna jegulja. [...] Ili ako se ozgo, preko vinograda, spusti prohladan vjetar i zaigra se duguljastim trskama, one se povijaju iznad vode i oglednu se u njoj, a tanke im sjenke počnu se vijugati po talasima i uvijati, poput kakvih neobično velikih i dugih pijavica² (Ćorović, 1967, p. 49). On the other hand, examples in which nature is compared with human traits are rare: "Sunce se spuštalo upravo iza guste, borove šume, izdignute na vrh seoskoga brdašca, slično velikoj brilijantskoj igli u crnoj kosi kakve ljepotice⁴³ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 17). For the impressionistic description of nature from the beginning of the text, Jovan Delić (2020, p. 14) rightly notes that they are extremely functional, because they announce the latter plot and the love triangle between the characters.

¹ "A bumble bee hidden in lilac started singing and woke up the dormant flowers. The garden spread the fragrance of wall flower, marigold, costmary and vervain."

² "Beneath a small, belly-like hill, on which several rows of native vineyards line and descend to dense rows of wide, brown olive and fig trees, the wide winding river Neretva is slowly running through, sifting softly and splashing the low, dusty shores, overgrown with old poplars, water reeds and willows, which, on both sides, cast their broad shadows on it, and are almost black and look like some huge eel. [...] Or, if a cool wind descends over the vineyards and plays with elongated reeds, they bend over the water and reflect in it, and their thin shadows begin to meander on the waves and twist, like some unusually large and long leeches."

³ "The sun was setting just behind a dense pine forest, perched on top of a country hill, like a large brilliant needle in the black hair of a beauty."

As the primaryrole of comparison is to virtualize the narrative world (Milosavljević Milić, 2016, p. 108), in the descriptions in Ćorović's texts we notice that the tendency to personify floral motifs results from the man's innate need to compare everything he encounters with the already known and close things, but also from understanding the man as an inseparable part of the nature that surrounds him. The description delays the action, so the floral and faunal motifs that appear in this form of narration are static motifs.

3. Floral-faunal motifs as initiators of action

Although description delays or stops the action, floral and faunal motifs can also play the role of the initiator of the action in the narrative description or narration as a form of presentation, especially when it comes to the garden as an idyllic chronotope of Corovic's love stories. A garden is a place of secret meetings of lovers, where love at first sight happens, and after that develops, until the finalization in the form of marriage or until the discovery and final prohibition by the parents. In Stara priča (The Old Story) of Khadiza-hanuma, she describes that many years ago she and Hasan-effendi fell in love with each other at the moment when she was watering the garden while singing, and he was secretly watching her. The garden becomes a place of love meetings and a secret ally to a girl in love: "Kad se spušći noć i mujezini ukujiši jaciju, ja izađi u bašču, pa se sakri kod plota. Sakri se među ruže i jorgovane, pa me ni bumbul ne vidi... I on mi dođi preko tuđih bašča, i počni da egleniše"4 (Ćorović, 1967, p. 35). Predicates expressed by an imperative contribute to iterative storytelling, pointing to repetitive garden meetings. Secret meetings of lovers in the short story Na mesečini (In the Moonlight) also take place in Emina's garden at night. To show this idyllic chronotope as suggestively as possible, the narrator uses an abundance of floral motifs as the static and the faunal motif of the Eurasian wren as the dynamic motif as the restlessness of this bird announces the young man's arrival and the beginning of the action:

"Preplašeni carić prhnu ispod plota i uzleti uz đulbehar, a nečija glava pomoli se iza ruzmarina i šapatom poče dozivati:

– Emina!

Ispod ružina bokora, sa mokre, mirisave trave, kao poplašeno, skoči mlado, rumenkasto, čupavo djevojče, osvrnu se na sve strane i prileti ruzmarinu"⁵ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 44).

Motifs of flowers and fruits occupy a special place in expressing love since

⁴ "When the night falls and the muezzin gets ready for the night prayer, I go out into the garden and hide by the fence. I hide among the roses and lilacs, so that not even the bumblebee could see me ... And he comes to me through other people's gardens, and begins to chitchat."

⁵ "The frightened wren flew under the fence and took off next to the roses, and someone's head suddenly appeared behind the rosemary and began to call whispering:

⁻ Emina!

Under the shrub roses, down from the wet, fragrant grass, as if frightened, a young, ruddy, shaggy girl jumped out, looked in all directions and ran to the rosemary."

a girl throws them at the one she is in love with, or a young man in love gives flowers to the girl he loves, which is why it can be said that floral motifs affect the motivation of the further course of action. Thus, in *Teferič*, recently married Aisha tells that before the marriage, she liked Hasa and threw roses at him over the fence while swinging, which young girls repeated, hoping that this somewhat childish game will get them love as well. In the story *Na mesečini*, Emina and an unnamed young man give each other carnations or roses as a sign of love. In the same story, Tata throws a wallflower in George's face, trying unsuccessfully to get his attention. In Halilova kajda, Gulsa throws basil at Halil, and in Đul-begova Zejna, the boys throw oranges at the windows of mischievous Zeyna to go out and flirt with them all night long. Apart from oranges, the young men also give flowers to Zeyna, and she plays games with the three of them by kissing the flower from her hair and throwing it in front of them, making the young men race to be the first to catch it and thus prove to be the most worthy of her love. Flowers, therefore, become a mediator between young characters in their attempts to express or spark love in the one they are in love with.

Giving flowers and animals in *Hafiz-efendija* means an indirect declaration of love to a married Swabian woman. In order not to arouse suspicion, peculiar Hafiz-effendi sends the most beautiful flowers, a bird in a cage and a horse to her husband. The horse motif is particularly interesting here because Hafiz-effendi obsessively imagines the Swabian woman riding a horse, and the horse itself and riding have an erotic symbolic meaning (Gerbran, Chevalier, 2013, pp. 388-389). Therefore, a faunal motif substitutes a particular activity the hero cannot realize due to social prohibitions. At the same time, through this motif, the hero tries to gain the affection of the married woman.

4. Characterization of heroes

Author Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2007, p. 77) writes in her *Narrative Prose* about a literary character as a network of character traits, which is formed on the basis of two types of textual indicators of character: direct definition and indirect presentation. Direct definition characterizes a literary character in a highly explicit way, and this artistic procedure is not so common in Ćorović's stories about love. The reading experience enriches the process of indirect presentation of a literary hero much more as in this way, the reader fills in the so-called places of indeterminacy on his/her own (cf. Ingarden, 1971, p. 11) based on their reading and life experiences. Descriptive sections in texts, which help the reader in visualization, can be of special importance in that process. In other words, they better and fully concretize a literary text and complete its schematized aspects. On the basis of the hero's behavior, speech, appearance, environment and underlining by analogy (Rimmon-Kenan, 2007, pp. 79-91), the reader builds an image of the hero in their consciousness.

4.1. Plot

Although Slavko Leovac (1978) points out that in his short stories, Svetozar Ćorović "did not delve into the labyrinths of psyche and passion too much" (p. 391), as he primarily wrote about anecdotal events and unusual, almost novelistic twists, it can be said that the characterization of his characters is most commonly expressed by indirect presentation. The plot, that is, the actions of the heroes in Ćorović's sketches are limited to a short period of time as the time of the story, so the characters are limited [to] certain models of behavior (Abbott, 2009, p. 214) as the so-called flat characters. Their main preoccupation is pain or *karasevdah* as a kind of general place in oriental prose:

"Od sevdaha goreg jada nema,

Ni bolesti od ašikovanja" (Ćorović, 1967, p. 30).

Corović's heroes express their inner unrest through behavior or actions the narrator often compares to certain animal behaviors. Thus, the narrator says that frightened Emina (Na mesečini) flopped on grass like a caught fish ("praćakala [se] po travi kao uhvaćena riba" (Ćorović, 1967, p. 46)). For Zeyna (Đul-begova Zejna), he says that her voice trembled like a swallow's song ("baš kao u lastavice"8 (Ćorović, 1967, p. 89)). Old Hatidza-hanuma (*Stara priča*) tells a young bey's wife about her former love and sevdah, comparing her youthful restlessness and confusion with the restlessness of a captured bird: "Ja nisam znala šta bi mu rekla. Samo se skupila, pa dršćem k'o tica kad je ufate..." (Ćorović, 1967, p. 36) The joy of Meha marrying his beloved (San Mehe Fenjerdžije/ The dream of Mehathe Lamplighter) is expressed through his comparison with a bird in the spring (Ćorović, 1967, p. 14), while Khalil compares his grief (*Halilova kajda*) for forbidden love with a snake: "E, eto, od onda mi se savila tuga oko srca k'o ljuta guja, pa me sisa, ispija i cidi..." (Ćorović, 1967, p. 117) However, Khalil manages to alleviate that feeling of defeat and exhaustion from snake bite by singing a song, which seems to be fainting the snake, and instead of the snake, he feels something sweet crawling on his chest. The proud gait of a happily married woman in the short story Na prozoru (On the Window) is compared by her rival Soka to a peacock walk. An important feature of such comparisons of traits, conditions, or behavior of literary heroes with those in animals is virtuality, and the main distinguishing feature of the comparison as a virtual narrative subtype of metaphor is the comparative word "like" (Milosavljević Milić, 2016, p. 91). All the mentioned heroes seem to look or act like animals, and they are focalized in that way by the narrator, some other hero, or themselves.

⁶ "There is no sorrow worse than love,/ and no worse illness than courting."

⁷ (she was wriggling on the grass like a caught fish")

⁸ ("just like swallows")

⁹ "I did not know what I would tell him. I just curled up and was trembling like a bird when someone catches it."

 $^{^{10}}$ "Well, since then, sadness curved around my heart like an angry snake, sucking, drinking and squeezing the juice out of me..."

4.2. External appearance

The physical portrayal of heroes is an artistic procedure often realized in Ćorović's texts by comparing heroes with floral and faunal motifs. While there is almost no description of male beauty, female beauty in Ćorović's texts about love is compared to flowers when it comes to platonic, idealized love, or to juicy fruits, when the portrait of a woman begins to take on the outlines of sensual.

Comparisons in *Latinka* originate from the subjectivity of the narrator in the 3rd person, who sets himself up as the transmitter of the Mostar bazaars' stories about Mara's beauty: "Svi su je zvali 1 i j e p a M a r a. [...] Oči joj kao trnjine, usta kao párom prorezana, a obraščići kao da su joj mlijekom naliveni, pa se još zarumenili čisto kao da su joj se dvije ružice rascvale na njima"¹¹ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 9). Comparison with flowers, primarily rose, in Corovic's texts of oriental provenance becomes a kind of ideal of female beauty, so even when that beauty is missing, as is the case with heroine Dasha, her portrait begins as a negation of what is expected, to go from the negation of the known to the unknown as different: "Nije kakve osobite ljepote: niti bijela kao snijeg, ni rumena poput ruže. Naprotiv, bila je sličnija Cigančetu: crnomanjasta, sa trnjinastim očima, dugom, bujnom kosom i kovrdžavim čúpima oko očiju"¹² (Ćorović, 1967, p. 21). Such a shift in the reader's expectations activates his attention, as in the further course of the action, it will turn out that this young heroine betrays expectations not only with her physical appearance, but much more with her psychological portrait – she will dare to be the first to declare love to the young man she is in love with, defying patriarchal norms.

The beauty of Habiba-hanuma, the heroine of *Puštenica* (*The Widow*), is compared three times with the floral motifs that surround her in the idyllic garden: "Oko nje, ispod sniskih plotova, mirišu sitne ljubičice, plave kao i oči njezine; pupčaju ruže, blijedorumene kao obrazi njezini; a, iza njihovih bokora, zasađena u širokoj bačvi, izviruje narandža, zlatna, kao naknivena kosa njezina"¹³ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 57). The physical features of Mejrima-hanuma are shaped by comparison with similar plant and animal physical characteristics: "Mejrima hanuma, tanka i vitka kao šibljika, vedra i vesela, uvijala se kao zmija i neprestano se smijala"¹⁴ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 58).

The 3rd person narrator in the text of Ćorović's *Hodža-Salih* (*Kawaja-Salih*) passes information through the filter of the title character in love, so the

¹¹ "Everyone called her be a utiful Mara. [...] Her eyes like blackthorn, her mouth perfectly shaped, and her cheeks as if soaked with milk, and blushing as if two roses blossomed."

^{12 &}quot;She had no special beauty: neither white as snow, nor rosy as a rose. On the contrary, she was more like a Gypsy girl: black hair, short, with eyes which resembled blackthorn and with long lush hair and curls around her eyes."

¹³ "Around her, beneath the low fences, tiny violets smell, as blue as her eyes; rosebuds blooming in pale yellow color just like her cheeks; and, behind bunches of them, planted in a wide barrel, there springs an orange tree, golden, like her hair."

¹⁴ "Mrs. Mejrima, thin and slender like a whip, cheerful and merry, twisted like a snake and laughed incessantly."

description of Lucija's eyes is subjective, expressed by comparison with what is known to the kawaja: "Oko nevelikoga, pravoga nosa modrila joj se dva krupna oka, kao dvije najzrelije šlive iz hodžine bašče, a iznad njih se povisoko uzdizale debele, garave obrve. [...]" (Ćorović, 1967, p. 69) Plums as a term to compare eyes with are taken not only for color or size, but also for sweetness and juiciness, and Lucja's description is colored with a touch of sensuality due to the kawaja's sudden falling in love and a rush of passion. Something similar can be seen in the description of Gulsah, the heroine of the story of *Halilova kajda*, whose sensual description of eyes and lips is also presented from the perspective of a hero in love: "I odmah mu se svidjele one njezine velike krupne, crne oči, pune strasti, pritajene čežnje, vatre; svidjele mu se debele, malo nagaravljene obrve, i male, tanke, sočne, slične ružinom pupoljku, usne, koje kao da su samo za poljubac i stvorene" (Ćorović, 1967, p. 114). The lips compared to a rosebud are also semantically related to the heroine's name: the gul is a Turkish for rose, as a symbol of beauty, tenderness and sensuality.

In *Hafiz-efendija*, comparisons of female beauty with floral and faunal motifs also originate from the inner focalization of the hero in love, to whom Miller's wife seems to have hands whiter than a swan's wing, and eyes bluer than the hyacinth from her window (cf. Ćorović, 1967, p. 106). The unavailability of a young married woman, a foreigner, builds an idealized image of her in the consciousness of already aged Hafiz-effendi. He does not even want to approach her, fearing that she will ruin the illusion he created about her by making a mistake, and does not dare to ask her servants about the beautiful woman so that he does not find out anything bad about her. He neither dares to speak to her, fearing that she might have a hoarse, thick voice, which would turn him away from her. Such a need of Hafiz-effendi to dream of a woman he cannot have because of biological (young age-old age opposition) and social (married to another; different national and religious affiliation) differences opens the possibility of idealizing her through physical characteristics even more pronounced than in the floral and faunal world.

The flower motif corresponds to youth because of beauty and transience, so the 3rd person narrator says that the cheeks of the old Zeyna-hanuma in *Teferič* are wilted, indirectly comparing the absence of youth and beauty in the older woman with withered flower petals. The aging and loneliness of the unnamed heroine of the story *Na mesečini* are manifested through the faunal motif of a mouse her tiny eyes are compared to ("male, sitne, mišje oči [...]"¹⁷ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 45)). She looks at the love happiness of her young niece Emina with certain jealousy, regretting her loneliness and not being fulfilled in love. That dissatisfaction with her gone life is also manifested in her physical portrait.

¹⁵ "Around her, not very large, straight nose, there were two large eyes shining blue, like the two ripest plums from the kawaja's garden, and thick, sooty eyebrows rose high above them."

¹⁶ "Immediately did he like those big black eyes of hers, full of passion and hidden longings, fire; he liked the thick, slightly tanned eyebrows, and the small, thin, juicy, rose-bud-like lips, which seemed to be made just for a kiss."

^{17 (&}quot;small, tiny mouse eyes [...]")

4.3. Environment

The indirect characterization of Hafiz-effendi in Corovic's short story of the same name was achieved through the physical environment consisting of floral and faunal motifs. The environment recognized his peculiarity in buying a beautiful Arabian horse he did not need and planting a variety of flowers: "Nije bio nikakav binjadžija, nije se znao ni držati u sedlu, a da kupi takog konja! Svi su znali da ga je uzeo samo zato da ga može svaki dan gledati i milovati; ali ko bi pametan još i zbog toga bacao novce!... Nijesu se manje bunili ni onda kad je čitavu baštu zasadio samim cvijećem, najljepšim ružama, leanderima, đurđicima, limunovima (a nije htio saditi povrće, pa bar da ima kakve koristi!) i kad je, odnekud izdaleka, dobavio kanarice, paunove i nekakve morske ptice, te njima napunio svu avliju i čitave dvije sobe... Naravno, oni nijesu nalazili za nužno da se druže sa tako čudnovatim čovjekom i pažljivo su ga izbjegavali svuda⁴¹⁸ (Ćorović, 1967, pp. 104-105). The characterization of his rival, German Miller, was done in the same way. by indirect inferences about him based on his physical environment: "Po tamnim, teškim zavjesama na prozorima i po mnogim skupim vazama, prepunim cvijeća, ispred njih, moglo se poznati da u toj kući stanuje neka veća zvijerka kako se to kaže, neki veći činovnik"¹⁹ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 105).

Just like Hafiz-effendi's, the garden of Kawaja Salih, the hero of the sketch of the same name, abounds in the most beautiful flowers. Still, the neglected house with almost no furniture and full of cobwebs is confronted with an abundance of exteriors. Such a contrast between the exterior and the interior speaks of the hero's attitude towards life and people: he is happy when he helps people with his notes and amulets, and that is what is seen from the outside, but he is actually a lonely individual who has no one in the world.

In the interior of Ćorović's story *Uoči svadbe*, the withered basil and two wilting quinces stand out, which, mixed with low light, have the function of metonymic characterization of the heroine. She is sad on the eve of her wedding as she feels that finalizing love destroys those girl's ideals she has been dreaming about for years. Withered plants metonymically indicate the destruction of girls' ideals. On the other hand, the withered basil motif in *Stara priča*, in which it appears with *đulsija* (rose water), gives the interior and the heroes a completely different tone. It seems that these herbal scents evoke memories of some ancient times, the heroine's youth, which she will tell about in the text.

¹⁸ "He was not any skilful horse-rider, he did not even know how to keep himself in a saddle, and he has bought such a stunning horse! Everyone knew that he bought it only to watch him and pat him every day; but, a smart one would never waste money for that!...No less did they complain when he had planted the whole garden with flowers, the most beautiful roses, oleanders, lilies of the valley, lemons (and he didn't want to plant vegetables, so at least to have some benefits!), and when, from somewhere far away, he got canaries, peacocks and some seabirds, and filled the whole yard and the whole two rooms with them... Of course, they did not find it necessary to associate with such a strange man and carefully avoided him everywhere."

¹⁹ "By the dark, heavy curtains on the windows and the many expensive vases, full of flowers, in front of them, anyone could say that *a big shot* was living in that house, as they say, a superior officer."

The inner state of Khalil in love (*Halilova kajda*) is presented in the form of a simulated narrative, as a false version of the world of story (Milosavljević Milić, 2016, p. 56): "I sve kao da je uzdisalo s njim zajedno, kao da je čeznulo, jecalo... Goleme voćke, slične ogromnim crnim loptama, što se uzdižu i povijaju nad zemljom, kao da su uzdisale potmulo šušteći; vlažna trava povijala mu se oko nogu i kao šaptala nešto strasno, čežnjivo; a više glave mu krckala je jedna smokvina grana, čijega široko lišće škiljilo po vratu, i kao da je iz glasa jecala"²⁰ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 115). Floral motifs, fruits, grass and fig branch, simulate human behavior. In a highly subjective way, the hero in love begins to attribute to them everything that he himself feels – longing, sighing, sobbing, passion, which is why this narrative description has the function of indirect portrayal of a literary hero.

That floral motifs from the physical environment of heroes in Ćorović's stories have the role of triggers of mental states or feelings is shown by heroine Zeyna (*Dul-begova Zejna*), in whose character the naturalistic motif of passionate, insatiable blood is especially emphasized: "Što je više vjetar milovao i okađivao je mirisom fesliđena, prsti su joj sve to grčevitije čupkali ružu, i jaka, potajna vatra obuzimala joj sve to jače čitavu snagu i sve oblo, punačko tijelo. Gotovo bi da iskida i zbaci sve haljine sa sebe, da izlomi i demire i mušebake i da se, grizući i ujedajući samu sebe, slobodno okupa u mjesečini..."²¹ (Ćorović, 1967, p. 81) As Branko Milanović (1967) observes, "the 'decor' of Ćorović's love stories is often a stimulus to unrest in the souls of lovers, but, miraculously, at the same time their absorber" (p. 66). The heroes merge with the chronotope in which they exist, in accordance with Bakhtin's (1989) claim that "the character [is] always essentially chronotopic" (p. 194).

The oriental ambience provokes the passions of the heroes, their restlessness, and similar mental states, but it seems that at the same time, it absorbs and hides them from others, becoming an ally of the heroes. This can be recognized in the plucking of flowers or leaves of some plants as a common place in Ćorović's texts about love. Mitar, the protagonist of the story *Na vodi*, disguises his longing for married Mara by nervously tearing poplar leaves. Khalil-aga (*Iza hamama*) nibbles on a rose petal soothing his burning passion for Hajkuna-hanuma. Soka (*Na prozoru*) plucks a rose restlessly while looking at the happiness of the woman whose husband she once contemptuously rejected. Zeyna (*Dul-begova Zejna*) plucks rose petals, talking about sevdah and longing for eternal youth and love.

²⁰ "And everything seemed to sigh together with him, as if longing, sobbing...Huge fruit trees, similar to huge black balls, rising and bending over the ground, as if they were sighing too in a low whisper; the damp grass curled around his legs and whispered something passionate, longing; and above his head there hanged a fig branch crackling, the broad leaves of which squinted at his neck, and seemed to sob soundly."

²¹ "The more the wind was caressing and censing her with the scent of basil, the more and more her fingers jerked the rose, and the strong, hidden fire took over all her strength and the whole of her round, plump body. She would almost tear off and take off all her clothes, break off the irons and wood window grills, and, biting and biting herself, freely moon bathing herself...."

The unnamed girl in love in Kawaja-Salih hides her shame by plucking grass while the kawaja teases her. The end of *Na prozoru* shows the merging of the entire being of the heroine – both her mental state and her physical portrait – with the ambience of nature in spring: "A Mejrima ciknu opet, opet se izvi poput zmije i jecajući zaroni glavu u Habibino krilo. Njezino jecanje čudnovato se stapalo sa zuzukanjem pčela, šaptanjem šedrvana i cvrkutanjem štiglića. I vedri, proljetnji dan smiješio se na njih i beharski snijeg još im se krunio na kosu..."²² (Ćorović, 1967, p. 62) This confirms the idea of human unity with nature, on which Ćorović's love stories are built.

5. Conclusion

Sketch stories from Ćorović's cycle of love stories show the world of heroes whose main preoccupation is love, and floral and faunal motifs occupy an important place in dealing with this topic. In purely descriptive segments, floral and faunal motifs belong to the current world of the story. They achieve decor, that is, concretization of the text and postponement of the action. In contrast, in narrative-descriptive and narrative segments, floral and faunal motifs have the function of characterizing heroes, where they belong to the non-actualized world of the story. Comparing heroes (their physical characteristics, states and behaviors) with plants and animals is a virtual narrative, namely a comparison or a simulated narrative. The heroines' beauty is compared to floral motifs and the manifestation of their love restlessnessis compared to the movements and behaviors of animals. Apart from physical descriptions and actions, Corović's heroes were also portrayed through their environment – based on the relationship with the environment and the topos of the garden. As an idyllic chronotope, the garden is an inseparable part of the heroes' everyday life. It is crucial for both the portrayal of the heroes and the development of the plot, since young heroes fall in love, meet and spend time working or resting in the garden. In addition, the garden chronotope is an indicator of the image of Mostar in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Together with the landscapes of the Neretva, the description of Mostar's gardens brings readers an atmosphere of some ancient times, full of karasevdah and pain, which was brought to Serbian literature by regional writers Svetozar Ćorović and Borisav Stanković at the crossroads of realism and modernity.

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²² "Mejrima squeaked again, and squirmed like a snake and plunged her head into Habiba's lap sobbing. Her sobs strangely merged with the buzzing of bees, the whispering of fountains, and the chirping of siskins. And a clear, spring day smiled at them and the Behar snow was still drifting on their hair..."

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