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FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL "PALIMPSEST"

Theoretical paper

COSMOGONIC AND APOCALYPTIC VISION OF THE WORLD IN THE PROSE OF ŽIVKO ČINGO

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Abstract: The fiction of Živko Čingo, Macedonian writer created in the spirit of magic realism, is based on the mythical and magical core generating myth about the Holy Land Paskvelia, which has been destroyed due to the frequent mistakes of its inhabitants and transformed into Pustelia (Wasteland). The structure of the fictional world in this novel is based on the connection between the traditional, patriarchal, religious, and the new socialist, communist atheistic world, on the mutual interaction of Chaos and Cosmos, of good and evil, ultimately leading to the "last times" and an apocalyptic end. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to determine, using the literary-historical, analytical, anthropological and comparative method, as well as the artistic means through which the narrative of cosmogony and apocalypse is achieved in Čingo's narrative prose.

Keywords: Živko Čingo; tradition; magical realism; cosmogonic myths; the Apocalypse.

Introduction

The subject of this paper is the exploration of the intersection and blending of the cosmogonic and apocalyptic myth in the short story collections "Paskvelia" (1963), "New Paskevila" (1965), "The Ghost in Love" (1976), "Delirum" (1989), "Grave for the Soul" (1989) by the Macedonian writer Živko Čingo. This paper is an extension of the research started in the study "Apocalypse and end-times in the fiction of Živko Čingo" (Kostadinović, 2014, pp. 7–21) and in the PHD dissertation titled "Elements of Magical Realism in the Prose of Slobodan Džunić and Živko Čingo" (Kostadinović, 2014).

Živko Čingo narrative prose, for the most part, could be classified under the category of magical realism (Đurčinov, 1990; Mojsieva, 2001). The term magical realism was first used by Franz Roh in his essay "After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting" (1925). Using Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's phenomenology as a basis, he put forward the premise that magical realism connects cerebral, cold and sober point of view with spirituality, where the ultimate goal is for the mystical, supernatural and mysterious to be perceived as part of the reality, and not something opposite to it, or something that comes into conflict with it. (Kostadinović, 2018, p. 41).

According to Scott Simpkins (1995) "magic realism seems plagued by a distinct dilemma, a problem arising primarily from its use of supplementation to "improve" upon the realistic text" (p. 145).

Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (1995) define magical realism as "a mode suited to exploring – and transgressing – boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible world, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (pp. 5–6).

By dissecting and dissolving historical, factual reality and enveloping it in a mythical, magical, and folkloric cloak, Čingo writes the saga of Macedonian society with a pronounced poetic dimension. Segments of Macedonian reality, pieces of the larger mosaic of village life in south-western Macedonia and individual lives during the challenging and transformative historical years following World War II, are embedded in the image of the mysterious, unfathomable, unexplainable, irrational to gradually evolve into an integral vision of a magical, yet deep and meaningful reality, more meaningful than what we commonly refer to as objective reality.

Živko Čingo combines the real with the surreal, the historical, factual, and documentary with a subtle reflection of the folkloric (most critics write about the strong connection of Čingo's narrative model with Macedonian folklore, see: Mitrev 1966, Redep 1966, Urošević 1971, and others, and the author himself will state in the interview "Neprestano baranje na čovekot" [Constant Search for Humanity] that he learned the craft of writing at home, from his parents, from his father who was an excellent storyteller of mythical and archetypal narratives (Čingo, 1970, p. 53). His stories are historical narratives and intimate dramas expressed through folklore and mythical categories. They are structured according to a folklore and mythical pattern. On the one hand, this corresponds to the interpretation of William Bascome (1965), who, based on data and the experiences of folklorists and anthropologists, determined that "myths are prose narratives which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past" (p. 4). It aligns with more contemporary interpretations of myth, where myth is typically defined as a traditional story and increasingly examined in the context of societal ideology and its function in society.

On the other hand, starting from the standpoint that classification is one of the first and most important stages in study, Vladimir Yakovlevich Prop (1982) examines, in folk tales, primarily the constituent parts of the fairy tale, and then the paths of substitution of motifs with newer "derived" religious, literary, and other forms (p. 192).

The cosmogonic vision of the world

Mirča Eliade (1998) states that when we talk about myth, we always think about "creation", we always think about how something was created (p. 8). At the core of the short story collections of Živko Čingo, interconnected by the imaginary chronotope of Paskvelia, which is a metaphorical and symbolic stylization of Macedonia and the region around Ohrid and Lake Ohrid, and for these reasons,

we will refer to them collectively as "Paskvelia" hereinafter, is the "creation" of an archaic and communist country and the description of events that influenced their establishment, existence, and disappearance (here it should be emphasized that, although Čingo writes about socialism, socialist vision, and revolution, in his stories he uses the term communism.) Therefore, Paskvelia can be read both as a cosmogonic myth and as the Book of Genesis (all the elements of the creation of the world are represented: heaven, earth, water, light), but also as an Apocalypse or Revelation about the "last times" and inevitable downfall.

When it comes to cosmogonic myths and myths of origin, they are difficult to separate because "every mythic narrative dealing with the origin of something presupposes and continues cosmogony. From a structural point of view, myths of origin overlap with cosmogonic myths. Since the creation of the World is creation *par excellence*, cosmogony becomes the exemplary model for every kind of 'creation'. This does not mean that the myth of origin imitates or copies the cosmogonic model because it does not involve established and systematic thought" (Eliade, 1998, p. 18).

The myth of the origin of Paskvelia, the land of communism and social justice, is preceded by the cosmogony of the sacred Paskvelian land and the history of the Macedonian community from its beginnings. Paskvelia was a land of gardeners who rose early to cultivate their fields, gardens, and vineyards by the lake. The Paskvelians celebrated the god while simultaneously honouring tradition, family, ancestors, and living in harmony with nature and its laws. This tribe, the "servants of the god Paskvel," silently endured all hardships. The valley they lived in lay beneath two mountains, with Lake Ohrid opposite the valley. This cosmogony shaped the Macedonian people and made them exist in their present form. For these reasons, the Macedonian archaic man considers the events that took place in the past as sacred and returns to them repeatedly because this return has a regenerative and rejuvenating effect on his entire people. Returning to the past has an essential value for him, especially the cult of ancestors, so that the primordial beginning is constantly revived. In Čingo's stories, the idea is conveyed that the archaic Paskvelian land is the work of the Creator, that it reflects the cosmos, and that everything resembling the cosmos contains divine substance, which is reflected in the pursuit of perfection, creation, harmony, and goodness.

On the other hand, the myth of the creation of the communist land of Paskvelia begins within a cosmogony: "It is said that all will start from the beginning, everything new... everything, both life and birth and death... Everything, we will live in a revolutionary way, in the new way! We will spit on the old ways, gone!" (Čingo 1992, p. 88). That takes us back to the primal moment of the world's creation and the emergence of the archaic, sacred land of Paskvelia – it is the clash of the folklore and the socialist mode of being that is at stake in the stories. For the archaic Macedonian man, the end of the world occurs when the communists come to power. Read in this context, Paskvelia is merely the fulfilment of prophecies about the "last times" and the downfall; it is a tale of the destruction and ruin of Macedonian society. The pages of these story collections are filled with myths of cosmic cataclysms, including the myth of the Flood, myths of fires, earthquakes,

droughts, and other disasters that the Lord sent to Macedonia to punish the misguided people.

The apocalyptic vision of the world

Writers of the magical realism often turn to apocalyptic predictions of the end of the world, primarily as a response to totalitarian regimes, typically depicted in grotesque-carnivalesque and ironic-satirical images. For instance, Gabriel García Márquez extensively combines magical realism with apocalyptic fiction, especially in novels like "One Hundred Years of Solitude" (*Cien años de soledad*, 1967) and "The Autumn of the Patriarch" (*El otoño del patriarca*, 1975), as extensively discussed by Brian Koniff (1990) and Lois Parkinson Zamora (2007).

The fiction of Živko Čingo presents the temporal reality after World War II, starting from the moment when the communists came to power and a fire engulfed the 'liberated' Paskvelian land until the point when the village of Paskvel and Paskvelia transform into Pustelia. In this relatively short span of time, encompassing the creation and dissolution of a country, the tragedy of human beings and the tragedy of the Macedonian people as a whole are described from a folklore, mythical and eschatological perspective. The author, in the structure of his collections, uses elements found in the folklore, myth and in the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse of John to depict the end of an era and a land that, due to the sins of its inhabitants, is transformed into Pustelia.

Considering that the beginning of the end of Paskvelia can be linked to the degradation of Macedonian society under the influence of the godless communist regime, it is suggested that the "last times" are a result of the political actions of the revolutionaries. Since communism itself and its representatives are associated with devils and demons, and the arrival of the communists is symbolically announced with the crowing of a red rooster in a carnivalesque-grotesque spirit, communist rule and communist ideology could be equated with the beasts from the Book of Revelation with seven heads and ten horns, which utter arrogant words of blasphemy against God, and whose distinguishing mark is the colour red.

Therefore, like other writers of magical realist origin (such as Marquez, Asturias, Llosa), Živko Čingo introduces historical, collective, and individual time. The temporal setting for the entire cycle of "Paskvelia," as emphasized, is defined by the first decade after World War II ((in some stories (e.g., "Debtors"), it touches upon the war years, while others extend to the 70s and 80s)). Considering the form of confession as the dominant narrative model in Čingo's stories, primarily structured in the frame-within-a-narrative model, the temporal perspective varies at the level of individual narratives. For example, in the story "Snowstorm" the action takes place in just under 24 hours, while in those stories where the emphasis is on the general collective experience of reality ("Fire," "On the Eve of Makavej," "Debtors," "New Paskvelia"), the amplitude of temporal duration extends over a longer period. For instance, in the story "New Paskvelia," events unfold over a span of 40 days, in "The Struggle Against the Fire," almost the entire annual cycle is covered, while in others, time is explicitly mentioned ("The Deaf Ones of the Mighty God," "The Death of the Gardener," "Father," etc.). In most stories,

time is left indefinite to underscore unlimited temporality or the disappearance of time (many characters' question what happened to time and where it went). This confirms that time in Čingo's prose does not necessarily represent the unfolding of reality but transcends into metaphysical symbols.

The crucial issue in Paskvelia is the relationship towards historical time and the consequences that historical time causes in individual destinies and for the nation, with the narrative emphasis placed on the end of that historical time. Čingo strengthens and problematizes the connection between individual destinies and historical temporality by taking a significant temporal distance in his perspective on history (Kostadinović, p. 13). The role of the chronicler in Paskvelia is left to a child who finds it difficult to grasp or even imagine that time and events have their course, their beginning, and their end, that everything comes and goes, that everything is lost and disappears, that historical time is ephemeral. Only from the perspective of an adult capable of establishing distance from historical past. Different symbols can be interpreted as a harbinger of the "last times", the "Day of Judgment", and the end of the world.

This simultaneous perspective enables Živko Čingo to establish a twist in history based on apocalyptic motifs on a mythical basis. He engages historical facts in a broadly conceived elegiac and balladic story about the land of Paskvelia, its people, and individual destinies, placing individual and collective ends on the same plane.

The narration in Paskvelia flows like a folk tale that passes from one storyteller to another, so that it continues to exist even when there is no more Paskvelia, because people and land can only live on if they are preserved in some story. For these reasons, every event in Paskvelia has its apocalyptic echo and deeper theological significance. When the communists came to power, the sky opened up, drums resounded, and trumpets blared like in the Book of Revelation ("Somewhere in the distance, drums were rumbling, trumpets, the revolution marched on, the sky opened...") (Čingo, 1992, p. 83). Then the sun turned black ("And where is the sun, God forgives you," p. 73), a fire breaks out ("Fire in the sky, fire on the earth," p. 74), drought ensues, graves open, crosses fly into the sky and turn into flames, saints leave the earth, it cannot be seen whether it is day or night, spring is delayed, winter extends to 2333 days, lightning and thunder strike ("In the sky, bluish-green flashes appeared, such a wonder occurs only once a year. For great predictions," p. 85), the land freezes, rains pour like in the time of the Flood ("and the rains came so mighty and torrential. They returned, returned... The land everywhere turned into mud and fire. Everywhere around was surrounded by water and fire," p. 90), the livestock dies ("Then a whisper came, and all the livestock died," p. 244), the cardinal points are lost, prophetic voices echoed their ominous predictions of the end of the world: "This land will be erased from the world. Not a stone, not a tree will remain. This land will be a wasteland. Its fate is determined once and for all by God's prophecy, and nothing can save this devilish people. Amen!" (73) Paskvelia transforms into fire and mud, and on a white horse, Secretary Tacko Nastejčin appears. Collectivization is accompanied by hunger, drought, diseases, mice, and locusts, whichtake over the Paskvelian land symbolizing spiritual and moral troubles ("I see hunger has come. In the fields, the seeds have dried up. A great drought has taken hold. The land cracked, turned as black as if someone had struck it with a hoe. From it, many evil creatures multiplied. Some were familiar, and some were not. Some even spoke with voices, like people. But when the locusts came, everything went silent. They devoured the crops, stripped the trees bare as if cutting them with scissors, razed the gardens, the vineyards withered, and even the mountain itself was stripped. Large rocks sprouted everywhere. Houses turned to stone, becoming like caves. People fled to the river. The locusts swarmed over them too. These black creatures brought new dreadful and tormenting diseases. On some, their hands and feet withered [...] On some, their eyes and brains even oozed out, and it was not known what kind of sickness it was – but many girls and boys suffered from it" (p. 215).

The present in Paskvelia has its negative consequences in the future. This creates intense tension in both the characters and the reader, marked by anticipation of the end and the fulfillment of prophecies and predictions about the demise of the sacred land of Paskvelia. Within this overarching duration between the time before and after, the destinies of the Paskvelian heroes are entwined, situated in the gap between the past and the present. They see their only way out as escaping from themselves and from Paskvelia ("To run away somewhere far, far away from Paskvelia. Far from everything, from everything, from everything..., p. 85), which becomes a reflection of the absence of God, something they are unable to comprehend or accept.

The memory of Paskvelia is simply an illusory attempt to break free and preserve a moment as a triumph of permanence over transience. In the era of floods, fires, frost, drought, diseases, and locusts, an undifferentiated time stretches out before the Paskvelians. Following apocalyptic convention, all that can be expected is the end of time itself. The apocalypse will befall the Paskvelians in the sense of eschatological condemnation. They have fallen into sin, and now the fulfillment of God's plan is imminent. In this regard, Paskvelia features a large number of apocalyptic narrators (Father Antim, the churchwarden Kulmo Buntašoski, a collective group of elders, the forest spirit woman), who have a prophetic role and function to establish communication between the Paskvelians and supernatural phenomena. The prophetic visions, leading towards the apocalyptic and eschatological, should ultimately lead to the establishment of a blessed community, achievable only through radical change and a radical interruption of the existing historical moment. At the same time, as suitable artistic means for representing the new historical order, the procedures of carnivalization and the grotesque have proven to be effective (see more in Kostadinović, 2005, pp. 177–185).

In the land of Paskvelia, before it was 'defiled' by the arrival of the communists, Živko Čingo finds a paradise where the inhabitants like Zurlo, Ščipek, and the Grulovi lived in a time of unified innocence. The fact that the communists and many Paskvelians do not pay attention to the mention and warning prophetic voices indicates a temporal discontinuity. Paskvelia is no longer a heavenly, sacred land but a land that transforms into hell. The disparity between the initial paradise,

the sacred, and idyllic potential of Paskvelia and the communist negation of God, saints, customs, and ancestors gives an apocalyptic tone in which one can recognize notes of nostalgia and lamentation for the lost paradise and the condemnation of those who "destroy the sacred fences of Grandpa Noah" (Ibid, p. 97).

The foreshadowing of the conflict between nature, divine substance, and the actions of the party members will result in the fulfilment of prophecies about the end of the world. However, neither the communists nor the Paskvelians, at the moment of the victory of the socialist revolution, will be aware of the fact that both their reality models are threatened and that both will disappear. The inhabitants will leave the Paskvel valley, and communism as such will cease to exist in that space.

The apocalyptic perspective in Paskvelia differentiates two sides – traditional and communist, two different worldviews, two dialectics that attempt to control each other. It simultaneously creates a completely new alternative world that is in an opposite relationship to both the first and the second world. Both the communist atheistic and the traditionally believing sides appeal to morality, justice, and the establishment of order in chaos, cosmos in chaos. Both are deeply argued, both follow strictly established canons, both are exclusive, and ultimately dogmatic (Kostadinović, 2014, p. 19). Opening up the apocalyptic perspective in Paskvelia allows for a reevaluation and revaluation of these positions. This primarily relates to the communist ideology and a reassessment of the relationship between historical necessity and human freedom, between the Paskvelians and their tradition, and the constraints imposed upon them against their will.

The initial impression left by the communist world is that it is a world of the devil (communists are referred to as devils in the text) which leaves devastation in its wake. Communism is perceived as a greater plague than fires, floods, droughts, and ice. By combining tragic, comedic, ironic, satirical, sarcastic, caricatural, and paradoxical elements, Živko Čingo connects the apocalypse with the spirit of the times, grotesquely exposing the historical background of the early post-war years. Whether Čingo's stories are read as allegorical-satirical or as magical-realist narratives, above all, they tell stories of the fears, hopes, and pains of ordinary people, about universal, ontological, and humanistic values.

Conclusion

Magical realism in the prose of Živko Čingo finds its roots in the folklore and mythical-magical milieu of Macedonia. He adheres to the realistic themes related to the Socialist Revolution and the years immediately after World War II, marked by the Informbiro Resolution and collectivization, which resulted in migrations of Macedonians to European, American, and Australian countries (he specifically addressed the theme of migration in the book "Grave for the Soul", where a part of this book titled "Bride and Ocean" consists of authentic letters from Macedonian emigrants). However, he gives a folkloric and mythical character to the realistic themes. Firstly, the setting of his stories is in an imaginary chronotope (the village of Paskvel, the land of Paskvelia), and he incorporates folk beliefs, traditions, legends, and myths from Slavic, Macedonian mythology, or the

Bible into the narrative text: about spirits ("Ghosts in the House", "The Ghost in Love"), a butterfly ("Butterfly with a Golden"), a mythical bird ("Debtors"), a rooster ("The Crazy Relatives in a Battle with the Overfed Rooster"), a tree ("The Apple", "When the Trees Were Dying", "Reborn"), the first Macedonian king Tresko ("Facing the Maccabees"), fire ("Fire", "Fight Against the Fires", "The Flame of the Desolate Land"), wind ("Sometimes When the South Wind Blows"), water ("The Loss of Water"), land, sun, drought, and so on. The folkloric and mythological foundation is just a starting point for creating an authentic artistic work where aesthetic effects are found in the artistic transformation of folkloric and mythical motifs, in the fundamental layers of the narrative structure, not outside of it.

The narrative focus is not on the folklore, mythical or religious substratum, nor on the historical time being depicted, but on the drama and tragedy of individual destinies, on the epistemic quest for the secret of revealing the totality of man and his life predestined by death.

Historical time is given the meaning of illusion and delusion, while folklore in myth is accepted as the only relevant testimony of the past. In this prose, cosmogonic and apocalyptic myths hold a dominant position, allowing Paskvelia to be read as both a cosmogonic and apocalyptic manuscript. By hyperbolizing time, the narrative about the Last Judgment and the "last times" is intensified, and time loses its semantic characteristics of periodic creation and destruction. In the end, Paskvelia transforms into Pustelia, without the possibility of reintegration and renewal.

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