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Scientific review

Paper received: Jun 7 2022
Paper accepted: Sep 5 2022
Article Published: Oct 25 2022

The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man – Early Poetry of Jovan Dučić and Miloš Crnjanski

Extended summary

Given that Jovan Dučić and Miloš Crnjanski represent an unavoidable topic in our literary canon, and that their presence in primary and secondary school curricula is unquestionable, we would like to show how the genesis of these two poetic antipodes evolved. When they were very young men at the beginning of their interest in literature, they published poems containing an almost identical poetic image, the image of a ship heading to the open sea, carried uncontrollably by the turbulent sea, and which, in the end, is crushed by the waves. Dučić published his poem “Na moru” in 1890, while Crnjanski published “Sudba” almost two decades later in 1908. Both poets published their poems in the same literary magazine Golub. Using the identical topos of the sea, the open sea, and the ship crushed by the sea waves is interpreted as a consequence of the literary-historical and poetic turmoil at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the result of an immanent poetic development. The origin of the identical motives used by the two poets, who will later belong to different poetic orientations, can be primarily explained by a paradoxical literary and historical fact. Namely, the symbolism of Dučić and Crnjanski’s Avant-garde are essentially Neo-Romanticism oriented literary trends. However, the renewed romantic tendencies reflecting a very specific spiritual climate at the turn of the 20th century (an inclination towards exotic places, the landscapes between dreams and imagination, a pronounced subjectivism, the topos of the sea and a ship, passengers, and shipwreck survivors) are only a remote basis for a whole series of literary transformations typical of the poetics of Symbolism, i.e. the poetics of the Avant-garde that would follow. Furthermore, the presence of the identical poetic image is also interpreted as a conse-

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quence of spiritual development, as a moment of unconscious impact of archetypal patterns in the crucial moment of growing up.

Keywords: Dučić, Crnjanski, archetype, ship, sea, Romanticism, Symbolism, Avant-garde

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