

ANALOGICAL THINKING AND FAIRY TALE PATTERNS. TOWARDS A POSSIBLE HISTORY OF A FORMULAIC IMAGE

Nemanja RADULOVIĆ

As stylistical traits of beauty in fairy tales, metallic and golden lustre and its comparison with the sun, the moon and the stars are already indicated by scholars. The Serbian fairy-tale matches with this European model. The beauty of the human form is mostly limited to face and hair. On the other hand, the body as a whole mentioned mostly as mutilated. This type of beauty can be seen in the past (Basile, Mm d'Aulnoy, even the Ancient Greek romance of Haritonos). According to some theories, fairy-tale beauty originates from Oriental sources and shows the supernatural origin of the heroine. In Serbian material there are mythical parallels in folk beliefs about fairies, whose appearance is described in same terms as that of fairy-tale figures (golden hair, e.g.). The connection among gold, sun and royal position comes from analogous thinking; this correspondence among planets, metals, social role and part of the body, established in the cultures of old, confirms the magical way of thinking in fairy tales.

Keywords: *fairy-tale; analogous thinking; image*

In this paper, we will first try to remind ourselves of the presentation of beauty and its function in fairy tales; then to point to its analogies with the living beliefs and to a diachronic perspective, as well as to a possible origin of such a presentation; finally, we will envisage the place of beauty in the fairy-tale genre.

We will repeat observations about the presentation of beauty in fairy tales, drawing mostly on Max Lüthi¹ (along with some of our observations regarding the Serbian material).

The presentation of beauty is defined by the style of a fairy tale, which means that it can be considered a property of the genre. Special emphasis is

laid on the shine, the metallic, golden and artificial shine. There are also comparisons with the celestial bodies, mostly with the Sun, but with stars and the Moon as well. In this way, beauty assumes a cosmic character. It is frequently pointed out that the heroine is the most beautiful in the world. Such figurative presentation of beauty also serves to express spiritual qualities, good is presented as beautiful. In this stylistic feature, Lüthi even looks for a certain philosophy of a fairy tale, pointing out that numinous, which is in essence absent from a fairy tale, appears through “translation”, i. e. through the importance of beauty. The beautiful is a reflection of the transcendent, and it is in its presentation that a certain religiosity of a fairy tale is felt. On the other hand, beauty is abstract. “Beauty itself is not presented, but its impact is”² – e. g. the prince faints on seeing beauty, everyone is amazed when she shows up.³

In such a presentation of beauty, the Serbian fairy tale coincides with the European fairy-tale canon. This testifies to the domination of the genre over regional peculiarities. For instance, with the type of kind and unkind girls (AaTh 403, 480) which is present both in local and European varieties, beauty is associated with a miraculous gift: pearls are shed from the eyes and roses from the mouth; the description is characteristic not only of the genre, but of this type of tale especially. Celestial bodies in Serbian fairy tales also occur as the marks on the body in the form of the Sun, and sometimes in the form of stars and the Moon. The star on the forehead marks a heroine as unique, leading, for instance, to her father’s incestuous intentions; the prince marries her just because of the promise of giving birth to the children with the golden star.⁴ Golden hair occurs a bit more often.⁵

In essence, gold is symbolical, not material.⁶ In one fairy tale from the littoral area⁷ a beauty sells her golden hair– transforming the symbolical meaning into the literal. But even here, the prince, seeing that the golden hair is for sale, guesses at once that it is his love–which implies that she is unique in the world.

Sometimes, when attention is paid to the intimations of the actual appearance, they are associated not with the whole body, but with the face and hair. (There is also the type of tale where the princess shows parts of her body to the swine-herd, but they are on the verge of a novella, showing the trickery of the hero; in the South-Slav material, some of these tales are

derived from the Muslim environment, and the Oriental stories are more inclined both to detail and eroticism; a possible ritualic origin of the motif should be left apart). In all these cases, the particularisation of the body is obvious, only the part which is the shine bearer is singled out.

The same procedures are used in presenting ugliness. In the same way as the ugly is associated with dark and evil, a more detailed mention of ugliness is associated with one part of the body. For instance, the male hero is typified as either hairless, beardless, or one-eyed. The experience of the complete picture of the body is spoiled, which means that ugliness needn't be represented only through darkness. Again, there is a certain semantic meaning behind the picture. In Oriental fairy tales, baldness denotes belonging to the lower strata of society⁸ or it marks someone who has been afflicted by scab.⁹ It is similar with beardlessness in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, where it is associated with eunuchs, who are traditionally negative in folklore as petty schemers.¹⁰

The corporality of characters, apart from the face, occurs from time to time. The body is mostly in focus when it is mutilated. The eyes are not mentioned when referring to a beautiful heroine but only when they are taken out. The arms may be golden but they are cut off a chased girl. Other parts of the body are also mentioned in connection with the acts of violence. In the same way as with the mention of beauty, in regard to the mention of the bodily completeness the focus is on one part only. The particularisation of a certain presentation is probably part of oral tradition in general (so a battle is presented through a series of minor clashes or duels both with Homer and with South-Slav epic poetry). But a body is mentioned as a whole when it is quartered, cut, or torn into pieces, when it is immersed into boiling water. Such a pattern is possible because of, essentially, uncorporeal perception of characters, because of the two-dimensional quality. (Lüthi). While some researches (M. Tatar) emphasise that such violence in the nineteenth century collections (popular editions of Perrault and Grimms) had a certain pedagogical purpose of intimidation,¹¹ we can see that even the collections not intended for children, i. e. authentically folkloral texts, contain the same pictures.

Beauty rises above the habitual stream of life, above the realistic world of physical jobs, above day labour. When in AaTh 408 the false heroine

thinks that the reflection of a beauty is hers, she says: “How beautiful I am, I won’t carry water to hay-makers any more.” But the exceptional situation has a negative size as well, separation leading to danger. Beauty will not only become the prince’s wife, but she will also be chased, mutilated, killed. Jealousy related to beauty is a typical fairy-tale motivation of the characters’ behaviour. The empress mother-in-law will hate her because she is more beautiful; Cinderella is not only a harassed daughter-in-law—the motivation for her mistreatment is the fact that she is more beautiful than the mother-in-law’s daughters.

There are also presentations of beauty which are regionally defined. In Serbian fairy tales it is the traditional folk canon, which also appears in other genres of Serbian and South-Slav verbal folklore. A girl is as slender and tall as a fir-tree, and her face is as flushed and white as an apple.¹² A series of such comparisons is present in oral lyric poetry as well. Though views of this kind are determined by the collective censorship, the triad of the red, white, and black (best known through the version of Snow White by the Brothers Grimm), is of Proto-Indo-European origin. It appears in incantations, possibly deriving from the fusion of the three Indo-European functions.¹³

Especially interesting is the comparison of a beauty to a fairy.¹⁴ It is expressed by an idiom, i. e. by a canonised, established form; the meanings incorporated into an idiom are petrified. In spite of that, a supernatural origin of beauty is foreshadowed through it. The pictures expressing the international canon of beauty are also petrified, but we will discuss this aspect later on. There is also a more vivid relationship between the belief in fairies and beauty. In beliefs, fairies are also credited with yellow, golden hair, they are called goldhaired¹⁵ (in some cases even a star is mentioned but it is probably a retroactive influence of fairy tales). They are also related to gold: either as its guards (like other supernatural creatures), or at their feasts gold plates, glasses, cups are used.¹⁶ Here we easily notice the aesthetics of the shiny. It is obvious that this folklore pattern is used for everything unusual and distinguished, both for fairies and for fairy-tale characters. Such petrification of the pattern can be considered formulaic. Fairies also have distinguished hair—it is not only stressed that it is golden but also scattered, which might be interpreted as their belonging to the other world,

beyond civilisation and humanity, as belonging to nature, not to culture (in traditional, patriarchal culture the hair of the woman is covered). There are also beliefs (similar to Samson's motif) that the fairies' strength rests in the hair. This animistic belief could possibly be a signpost for the importance of hair in fairy tales.

Waldemar Liungman thinks that the above mentioned features of beauty, like roses from the mouth and pearls from the eyes, are of Oriental origin and reflect the supernatural origin of a beauty.¹⁷ We can expand this to golden hair as well. For the sake of comparison, the Vedic and Homeric deities have golden hair (in the same way as Sanskrit deva-god is associated with the sky and shine).

If we trace back the records of fairy tales, we will easily find the same descriptions. During the seventeenth century, in the versions of Madame d'Aulnoy, there is a mention of a beauty with the hair shinier than gold (*La belle aux cheveux d'or*) (Leprince de Beaumont and d'Aulnoy 1979). With Basile (Basile, 1999) (1, 3) two children are like two apples of gold (an image very frequent in Serbian folk poetry). In his version, Cinderella (*La gatta Cenerentola*, 1, 6) appears at the ball as beautiful as the Sun (*bella come un sole*). Fairies have golden hair and the moonlike face (3, 10). Only the man with golden hair and teeth can become the king's son-in-law (3, 1). (Let us mention in passing that with Basile there appears—1, 7—a beauty with magic hair). Naturally enough, the question of interweaving of the authentic folklore material with the poetics and stylisations of these authors and epochs stands apart; perhaps these comparisons, not motifs, can point to certain folkloric origins.

As early as in the antique Hariton's romance about Herea and Caliroe, we encounter such a description of beauty: many times it is pointed out that Caliroe is the most beautiful in the world or unique, other characters being astonished when looking at her; she appears as bright as the Sun and men fall down to their knees before her. The heroine is compared to Aphrodite, she is more beautiful than a forest nymph or nereid (antique equivalent to fairies). Elsewhere in the novel there also appear similarities to a fairy tale: the descriptions of feelings are reminiscent of the descriptions that will appear in the later European fairy tale—a physical impact of the uncontrolled emotion, fainting. In the beginning of the European novel there can be

noticed the traces of folklore storytelling, which is an indirect proof of the antiquity of a fairy tale. Apart from the existing research about the structural similarities between the antique love novel and the fairy tale, the stylistic analysis might also be very helpful.¹⁸ It is assumed that in such presentation of characters the crucial role belonged to myth, not to fairy tale. But even so, that brings us back to the supernatural origins of beauty, which can appear in different genres in the same way. (We can add that ancient epic poetry uses the same type of similes; in *The Mahabharata*, beauty is described in the terms of brightness or comparing it to the sun and moon).

The connection between beauty and the supernatural, which is defined both internationally and in terms of genre, can appear on South-Slavic territory through a doubtless comparison in the beliefs about fairy tales. The same type of presentation, the same canon is used in both mythical and the fairy-tale production. There remains an open possibility that the living belief about fairies gave a new impetus, a new impulse to the fairy tale and to its stock images.

The relationship between the Sun and gold is not founded only on the comparison with glitter. If we add to this the royal origin through which the exceptional situation of a beauty is made concrete, we get a clear example of thinking by analogy. Here, we will quote Liungman once more: in Oriental stories, golden hair suggests royal origin¹⁹ (in the same way as baldness marks the belonging to lower classes). This opinion, of magical origin, associates ideas by some similarity, analogy. What gold is among metals, the Sun is among planets, or king among people, or heart (somewhere head) among the parts of the body. Hence, king-sun appears as the name, or gold is called sun in alchemical texts. In ancient civilisations, analogical thinking was codified. In Western culture, analogical thinking as a doctrine of correspondences appears in different astrological and esoteric systems up to the eighteenth century. They are based on the correspondences between the seven metals, seven planets, seven parts of the body and of the society organism; gold, sun, and king correspond here as well. There are parallels in other civilisations, too: in China, for instance, there existed analogies between fire, summer, South, the colour red and heart. Unlike discursive thinking, the analogical one increasingly withdrew to the margin of culture, so that today it exists in the subculture of occult

texts – but also in the poetry inclined to magical thinking (Baudelaire's Correspondences, Rimbaud's Vowels).²⁰

In fairy tales, the analogy between the Sun, gold, and king can be complemented with the analogical part of the body as well: in fairy tales it is usually the head, or, to be more precise, its parts (hair, forehead), or hands.

Analogical thinking can be seen in other examples, too: in type 510B sometimes there is a mention of dresses of gold, silver, and stars, and sometimes of the Sun and the Moon; obviously there are correspondences between metals and planets, which therefore can be exchanged. This once more confirms the inclination of fairy tale to magic thinking.

We have already mentioned that such petrification of images can be considered a pattern. These elements of the description of beauty can be also called motifs. However, because of the exceptional visuality of that canon, which has its impact on the reader even today, we think that it is right to say image as well. According to a study based on conversations with folk tale narrators,²¹ what we call motifs, from the narrator's viewpoint should be better called images. At the level of prose, we do not encounter formulisation in the opening and closing formulae only ("Once upon a time", or, "And they lived happily ever after"), but also at a larger level, like in the images we have just interpreted.

Tracing these images back, we discover stability. Their comparisons to beliefs reveal astonishing vitality, showing that a pattern is not only something conveyed through tradition, but renewed through it. On the one hand, the mythical and magical origin of a pattern is revealed, and on the other, the possibility of its actualisation.

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Notes

¹ M. Lüthi, *Das Volksmärchen als Dichtung. Ästhetik und Anthropologie*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 11-52.

² *Ibidem*, 14.

³ This type of the beauty may be derived from the Mediterranean tradition: "Die Schöne der Welt ist eine mediterrane Märchenfigur, auf der Schnittstelle zwischen Orient und Europa, antiktischen Mythos und neuzeitlichem Volksmärchen". – U. Diederichs, *Who's who im Märchen* (München: DTV, 1996), 301.

⁴ Different examples from Serbian fairy-tales: V. Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pripovijetke* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1988), no. 23; V. Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pripovijetke – dodatak* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1988), no. 8, 10, 11, 16; V. Čajkanović, *Srpske narodne pripovetke* (Beograd: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1927), no. 35, 63, 64.

⁵ Some papers even suggest that in Slavic oral traditions the star on the forehead is more frequent than the golden hair. (U. Diederichs, *Who's who im Märchen*, 25).

⁶ H. Jason, *Whom Does God Favour: The Wicked or the Righteous? The Reward and—Punishment Fairy Tale*. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1988), 41-42.

⁷ V. Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pripovijetke – dodatak*, no. 16.

⁸ W. Liungman, *Die Schwedische Volksmärchen. Herkunft und Geschichte*. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 61. Propp considers baldness as mark of initiation ritual. – V. J. Propp, *Historijski korijeni bajke* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1990), 211.

⁹ H. Jason, *Whom Does God Favour*, 125. About bald character as unpromising hero also: E. M. Meletinski, *Geroi volshebnoi skazki* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literature, 1958), 211-217.

¹⁰ E. Cosquin, *Contes populaires de Lorraine 1* (Paris: Libraire-Éditeur, 1887), 43. See also: V. Čajkanović, *Srpske narodne pripovetke* (Beograd: Knjižarnica Rajkovića I Čukovića, 1929), remark for the tale no. 89.

¹¹ M. Tatar, *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 7.

¹² V. Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pripovijetke*, 33.

¹³ J. Bolte; J. Polivka. *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm 1* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1913), 461-462; D. Miller, *The Epic Hero*. (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, 2002), 291-293.

¹⁴ V. Čajkanović, *Srpske narodne pripovetke* (1927), nr. 21, 46, 81.

¹⁵ T. Đorđević, *Veštica i vila u našem narodnom predanju* (Beograd: NBS, 1989.

Đorđević 1989), 59; S. Zečević, *Mitska bića srpskih predanja* (Beograd: Vuk Karadžić, Etnografski muzej, 1981), 43.

¹⁶ S. Dučić, *Pleme Kuči, život i običaji*. (Podgorica: CID, 2004), 271-272.

Z. Čiča, *Vilenica i vilenjak* (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2004), 97-98); T. Đorđević, *Veštica i vila u našem narodnom predanju*, 59.

¹⁷ W. Liungman, *Die Schwedische Volksmärche*, 87.

¹⁸ In the same way Lüthi, although not interested in genesis of fairy tale, concludes from stylistic traits that fairy-tale is not as ancient as usually considered.

¹⁹ W. Liungman, *Die Schwedische Volksmärchen*, 61.

²⁰ On correspondances as integral part of esotericism (esotericism understood as "thought-form") see Antoine Faivre's famous description. – A. Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 10-14.

²¹ N. Belmont, *Poétique du conte*. (Paris: NR, Gallimard, 1999), 85; 125.