

The Crucial Motif in the Novel “Genoveva” and Its Reincarnations in the Croatian Children’s Literature

The plots of standard stories about adventure heroes who try to survive in wilderness usually follow the same pattern: the hero, owing to his strength and abilities, manages to achieve dominance over animals – hunters, and in the end becomes their master (*Robinson Crusoe*, *The Jungle Book*, *Tarzan*). However, in Croatian children’s literature another theme, essentially different from adventure stories about heroes – masters of animals has dominated since its beginnings. This is the theme about the relationship of man and a big, wild and shy animal – the deer. In their relationship there is neither confrontation nor subordination.

The motif of a hind, which helps a woman and her child, expelled to the wood to survive has been present in Croatian literary space since 1734, when it appeared in the story of *Genoveva*. This motif, which had undergone certain modifications in line with literary changes, got its stable form in Schmid’s translation of *Genoveva*, published for the first time in 1846. In the next hundred years this was the most popular children’s book.

However, this does not mean that the motif grew petrified in Schmid’s work. Under the influence of other (translated) works, it has started a life of its own. Thus, in 1913, *The White Deer* by Vladimir Nazor appeared.

The theme, which obviously suits the mentality of Croatian readership, has continued to live to these days in provocative and interesting forms, in spite of highly unfavorable historical circumstances (for example, in 1945 *Genoveva* was removed from bookshop shelves). The constant presence and vitality of this theme is so surprising that it makes us call it a permanent feature of Croatian animalistic.

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