

Krystyna Pieniążek-Marković

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

krypien@amu.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-5005-6374

POZNAŃSKIE STUDIA SLAWISTYCZNE

NR 25 (2023)

DOI: 10.14746/pss.2023.25.13

Data przesłania tekstu do redakcji: 4.04.2023

Data przyjęcia tekstu do druku: 21.07.2023

## And There Were the Plitvice Lakes. The Landscapes of the Croatian Lake District in the Romantic Journey *Put na Plitvice*

**ABSTRACT:** Pieniążek-Marković Krystyna, *And There Were the Plitvice Lakes. The Landscapes of the Croatian Lake District in the Romantic Journey Put na Plitvice*, "Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne" 25. Poznań 2023. Wydawnictwo "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne," Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, pp. 277–297. ISSN 2084-3011.

*Put na Plitvice* (The Road to Plitvice, 1860) is the first of the travelogue in Croatian language describing an expedition to the Croatian Lake District. The work of art is of significant "world-creating" and "culture-creating" value, introducing the Plitvice Lakes into the Croatian national text and into the national landscape, hence the biblical allusion in the title. It will therefore be a world-creating narrative, of bringing into existence and therefore giving a symbolic dimension of the work of art. I focus on the landscape-painting aspects of the text, understanding landscape as the manner of constructing and formulating the world, as a way of perceiving and incorporating it into cultural traditions. It is therefore rough, monumental, wild like a traversed space, which should be included in the category of *picturesque* and sublimity. Veber's representation of nature illustrates how it was seen at the time within the framework of the national-revival programmes.

**KEYWORDS:** Croatian Romanticism; travel writing; Plitvice Lakes; *the picturesque*; sublimity; ecological sensitivity; *forge of nature*

*Put na Plitvice* (The Road to Plitvice, 1860) is the first of the journeys (Croatian *putopis*) of Adolf Veber Tkalčević (1825–1889), a clergyman and Slav philologist, linguist, writer, translator, politician, who is considered to be one of the most prolific Croatian travellers of the nineteenth century. This work is also the first Croatian travelogue describing an expedition to the Croatian Lake District: “premda postoje u domovini već više vjekovah, posve su na sramotu nova vlastitim sinovom” (Veber Tkalčević, 1998, 58).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the work of art is of significant “world-creating” and “culture-creating” value, introducing the Plitvice Lakes into the Croatian national text and into the national landscape, hence the biblical allusion in the title. In the article, I pay less attention to the genre specificity and research of the *travel studies*, I focus on the landscape-painting aspects of the text, understanding landscape – following representatives of cultural geography such as Denis Cosgrove, Arnold Berleant, Don Mitchell, Beata Frydryczak et al. – as the manner of constructing and formulating the world and the way of perceiving and incorporating it into cultural traditions. In line with the spirit of Romanticism, these are most often scenic landscapes, however, in the understanding of William Gilpin, they are rough, monumental, wild-like a traversed space, which should be included in the category of the *picturesque*.

[T]he category that is intended to give “pleasure to the eye” perceiving nature in fragments, or rather in images, according to the canons characteristic of painting and, through them, of the perspective gaze. It is also a category that extracts painterly effects from the view, while at the same time preferring what is covered by patina. It harbours a longing for Eden and nature luring in natural forms: old trees, ribbon winding roads, jagged hills and castle ruins – are her preferred views (Frydryczak, 2014, 19).

---

1 In subsequent citations of the text *Put on Plitvice*, I refer only the page numbers.

### *The picturesque*

Although the hikers set off from Zagreb and the first part of the journey as well as the first day of the journey include the road to Karlovac, no descriptions of this section of the route appear in the text. This area was the subject of interest in the journeys published before the piece *Put na Plitvice*, and this is probably why this part of the route with its nature and material past was omitted.<sup>2</sup>

The team set off from Karlovac at the break of dawn on 29th August, stopping first at the “oasis” of Krnjak. On those arriving from the verdant surroundings of Zagreb, this area makes a depressing impression due to the barren, red soil, wilderness and terrain: peaks and deep gorges. It is almost the embodiment of a scenic landscape, which offers a co-occurrence of vast plains with its “roughness”, irregularity, monumentality, variety, diversity, and wildness (Gilpin, 1984, 61–70; Kowalczykowska, 1982, 21–24).<sup>3</sup> The territory which he was taking a close look at arouses varied feelings; encompassing the wide panorama with his eyes, the traveller falls into raptures. Veber describes the sweeping landscape as if he were translating an unsophisticated painterly landscape composition into words. Regarding this passage, the category of *the picturesque* emerging from the experience of landscape towards which the categories used so far (beauty and sublimity) were insufficient, as they did not fully convey phenomenality and pictoriality (Frydryczak, 2014, 60). As a practical category *the picturesque* was materialised in travelling, in search of picturesque views, in attempts to “translate” painterly landscapes or to perceive the real landscape according to painterly models (Frydryczak, 2014, 60). Gilpin understood nature as an unsurpassed draughtsman and colourist who works on a scale so large that

---

2 Like the episode from Slunj: “I will not describe because I do not agree with the principle of *Repetitia placent*” (70). He only draws attention to the overgrown Orthodox cemeteries.

3 William Gilpin, fundamentally responsible for the emergence of the category of picturesqueness, wrote: “The wild and rough ingredients of nature imprint themselves most strongly on the imagination; and we may add that they are the only objects in the landscape which appeal to the picturesque eye. Anything that is tasteful, smooth and neat leaves it cool” (Woźniakowski, 1995, 185).

man does not grasp or comprehend the compositions he creates, and therefore composes on a scale of his own, applying the principles of picturesqueness (Woźniakowski, 1995, 185). The landscape thus takes on a pictorial character. At the centre of Veber's composition there is a hill with an Orthodox chapel compared to a precious stone set in a high mountain gold. The framework of this picture is formed by the ranges of the Julian Alps, the Dinaric Mountains, Medvednica and the Samoborská Highlands stretching underfoot like an army ready to attack whose discipline is watched over by two mountains: the grim-faced commander Klek<sup>4</sup> and cheerful Plešivica (64). The shape of the homeland's body provides it with security, yet it is at the same time a nature body filled with extreme emotions. Perhaps they affect the observer who cannot make up his mind whether to lament or to admire the view that despite its beauty is still deserted. He would like to arrange this nature, regulate the native earth and turn it into an English garden. However, the list of possible changes and interventions, involving measures as obvious as building bridges or as unobvious as moving peaks and river currents, is preceded by an awareness of the costliness of ventures that Croatians cannot afford: "Da se Rotschild odvaži, kupiti ovu pustaru za svoj izabrani narod, mogao bi od nje načiniti gorostas an perivoj englezki" (64). Is Veber dreaming of a landscape park or is he looking with a gardener's eye? If it were to be an English garden, nature would have to remain in its natural state but it would have to be complemented by architecture, thus by "artificiality", resulting in an aestheticised space, an embodied pictoriality, *the picturesque*. The natural landscape is seen as the potential to create an "ideal landscape" and at the same time as a space to be controlled. It would thus be a landscape created as a result of the collective human transformation of nature, a socio-economic

---

4 A different picture of the mountain would emerge on the way back: "Odsada se cilim putem zanimasmo pogledom na Klek. Kano što se čovjeku svaki put promieni lice, kad ga s druge strane motriš, tako se nam i Klek pokaza sada posve drugim, golemim, veličajnim. Kano ogroman dôm, pred kojim su druga brda na koljena pala, ukaza nam se s ove strane Klek, posve, ako me mašta ne vara, nalik na kubu i crkvu sv. Petra u Rimu, s tom jedinom razlikom, da je narav pače Božji tvor neizmjereno mnogo savršeniji od ljudske umjetnosti" (114).

product (Cosgrove 1998, 13), a link between the visual image and the material world (Cosgrove, 2003, 254).

### “In the forge of nature”

The travelling philologist’s unabashed first admiration of nature were the waterfalls on the Slunjčica River: “Ljepšega prizora nisam jošte vidio!” (65). The beauty of the landscape simultaneously evokes memories of Saxon Switzerland, Italian Civita Castellana and Horace’s estate near Tibur (Tivoli), but in order to see this all, one must look “okom pame-ti,” i.e. simultaneously with the sense of sight, but also with a mind that understands and remembers (Croatian: *pamet* – reason, mind, memory):

Kotlina je ta savršeno slična takovim okolnicama razvikane saksonske Švajce: iz vode se s obje strane uzpela strahovita stiena, nastršena amo tamo kukovi, između kojih proviruje stabarje i grmlje; a kad još dalje segneš **okom pameti**, onda ti se čini, da su te vilinske čari preniele u *Civita Castellanu* u Papinskoj Državi, (...) a i glasoviti zavičaj Horacijev, Tibur, posve je nalik ovomu predjelu (66).

The Slunjčica River is seen as an active subject, a creator of a landscape serving the nation, a caring guardian of a fertile place, almost one of the beautiful (*na*)*roditeljica*,<sup>5</sup> providing fruit, vegetables and energy: “Slunjčica se tu izvija između liticah i tvori hiljadu predivnih prizorah. Ovdje je razširila valovite ruke i zagrlila otočić, na kojem se zeleni povrće i voćnjaci; ondje je dalje zamaknula izpod brda da se na njoj namjesti vodenica ili pila; sada se probija između kukovah” (66). Veber’s representation<sup>6</sup> of nature illustrates how it was seen at the time within the

---

5 (Na)roditeljice (*narod* – nation; *roditeljica* – mother) – term reflecting the phenomenon of the politicization of the female body in the creations of literary characters embodying so called mothers for the nation (Badurina, 2009, 47).

6 I am not entering into philosophical (Martin Heidegger’s, Michel Foucault’s or Richard Rorty’s) arguments about the nature and importance of representations. According to the assumptions of imaginary geography, representations in

framework of the national-revival programmes. After all, as Maria Janion (2000, 276) who dialogues with historians of ideas, states in *In the forge of nature*, we see nature through the prism of historical ways and possibilities of perceiving it, we study the idea of nature whose meanings change according to the epochs. Equipping nature with personality and individuality, with a spiritual form, is the work of the Romantics who endowed everything that had hitherto been considered dead and soulless with spirit and life (Janion, 2000, 282). The caring-motherly-parental qualities of nature in Veber's text point to the Croatian Revival specificity of the period. The confusion of Croatian Romanticism by rational-Enlightenment thinking, on the other hand, is reflected in the recognition of the potential of the nature and making the skilful use of it. In this particular case it concerns the countless waterfalls that provide energy for the mills built on the river. Perhaps a little metaphorically, but not unreasonably, it can be said that the observer reports what is happening in the "the forge of nature", Here, I follow in the footsteps I think here both in the footsteps of Janion's reflections, Mickiewicz's poem *To Doctor S.*, which the researcher took the title from, as well as Wojciech Hamerski's (2021, 4.4.) examination of Romantic ecocriticism.

The idyllic Croatian landscape – which, according to Alina Kowalczykova (1982, 62), should be described as an ideological landscape – is also filled with animals, and their very presence is important, but what draws attention is the emphasis on the emotional state resulting from the domicile in this space of a garden combining beauty with an abundance of food. A child is also introduced into the landscape, which in turn provides an opportunity to expose the dangerous and wild nature of the area: "Sav protrneš od straha s pogibelji djevojčine" (66). This "child of nature", however, is as much at home with it as she is with the animals and moves with equal ease on the rocks between the waterfalls. The Croatian wanderer records both a settling into nature and a terror, an ambivalence of feeling. However, he does not so much combine these

---

the etymological sense are fictions, but their "repetition" gives them a performative character (Johnston, 2009, 372; v. also: Söderström, 2005, pp. 11–15). A specific form of representation is the landscape as a system of meanings (Mitchell, 2005, 48–56).

states in the experience of a single person as being separate between the man of nature (being-in-the-world child) and the man of the city (being-in-his-own-world). The traveller's admiration for the place gradually increases and in the next comparison with a foreign object he recalls Rome's Trevi Fountain. He combines his admiration for the beauty of nature with the admonition of his compatriots' firstly, he points out to the very bad road leading to the Slunjčica waterfalls, and secondly, the interest in them is of little importance.

### Traces of ecological sensitivity

The appalling state of the roads is not the only reason to complain about the situation of the Slunj regiment (with its centre in the town of Slunj),<sup>7</sup> of particular concern is the clearing of the forests that has taken place, even their complete uprooting. The traveller seeks answers to the questions of why this was done, under whose commands, under whose rule and where the wood was taken? He does not give credence to the rumours that the forests were cut down so that highwaymen would not hide in them (because why only in this regiment?) or that in 1848 the Border Guards felt liberated enough (*oslobodjeni zapta*) to cut down as many as they wanted. The seeds of ecological sensitivity can be recognised in the Croatian scholar's concern. He not only laments the current state of affairs, but also predicts catastrophic consequences: *the storm* (Croatian: *bura*) will sweep away the already poor soil, only rocks will remain, and the inhabitants will be threatened by famine and poverty ("they will become cruelly poorer!"). And here he finds a foreign analogy; the situation is already familiar to him from Italy. The authorities of the Habsburg Monarchy in control of the Borderlands sent foresters, mainly from Bohemia, to the Croatian territories. Veber also reports on their arrival in the areas he visited, but sees no tangible results from

---

7 "For familiarity meant tracing identities and similarities as well as differences. These differences, consciously brought out and recorded, were for the Romantics evidence of richness. Only poor cultures are concerned with homogeneity" (Burkot, 1988, 232).

their presence other than “enlightening”: “visoka vlada nastoji pomoći gladilicom prosvjete izgledjenoj Krajini” (68). The author’s criticism flows from the lack of evidence of specific action to be taken immediately: “Povratite zemljam šume, pa ćete učiniti, da će se moći dokopati i svega ostaloga blagostanja” (69). Veber points to the links between the colonial situation and environmental degradation (more broadly, the problem of the clearing of Croatian forests, especially in Slavonia, will be dealt with in the novel of realism), but also about the “unarchetypal relationship between man and nature” (Hamerski in his ecocritical reading of *Pan Tadeusz*, 2021, 53). The deserted, forestless land can be viewed as an illustration of postcolonial reality, a consequence of anti-nature activity or uprooting. An ecocritical reading of Veber’s text still draws attention to at least two episodes in which the traveller’s ecological sensibility is revealed, one related to horse transport, the other to the anti-urbanism activities of the period. Croatian romanticism has not yet been subjected to an ecocritical reading,<sup>8</sup> however, the proto-ecological stance is even contained in the emblematic and often described pastoral opposition city-village (reinforced nationcentrically as the village simultaneously stands for nation and the city for foreign land, the village for physical strength and the city for weakness). Veber Tkalčević in many places makes comparisons that always come out against the city. Similarly, in William Wordsworth, the English author of expeditions to the Lake District, “enthusiastic descriptions of natural beauty are often accompanied by a melancholic tone associated with memories of ‘unnatural’ life in the city” (Wiśniewski, 2012, 355). In Veber Tkalčević’s assessment, there are shadows living in the city, and he encountered real people in the towns he passed during his travels:

Niti tusti poput bačavah, niti tanki i prozirni, da jih svaki vjetrić odpuhne, mužkarci su ovuda svi veliki do hvata, jedri, lica ponajviše crnomanjasta, plemenita, a udah golemih i razmjernih. [...] Kuće nisu nimalo prama

---

8 With regard to Croatian Romanticism, one can recall Wojciech Hamerski’s statements about the Polish variant, “the turn towards the green roots of Romanticism has no strong polemical justification: our literature has from the beginning been clearly influenced by the state of the nation” (Hamerski, 2021, 42).

njihovoj visini, pače čini se, čim je tko viši, da si je tim nižu kuću sagradio, naznačujući tim, da mu je kuća cielo svodište nebesko, a u kuću da se zaklanja samo od nevremena. Prisposobljavajući golemost njihovu s malicom hrane i drugih potreboćah, uvjeravamo se o istini, da je narav s malim zadovoljna; ali čila narav, koja se kupa u sniegu i škropcu, a briše studenom plahtom sjevernjaka; koja ne zna što su grčevi, što li neprobavnost želudačna, već glad tiši mliekom, sirom i polupečenom bravetinom, a žedju gasi u nestašici dobre vode rakijom. Izkvarena narav treba neizmerno mnogo ništavilah. Ljudi, nastojte, da budete jaki i kremeniti, pa ćete i u nevolji biti zadovoljni i sretni. Biti samo zdravim, malo je bolje od bolovanja (73–74).

Veber creates frontiersmen as people living in harmony with nature (ecologically), content with little, and thus healthy and happy. This narrative is, of course, steeped in revivalist concepts, reversing the 18th century perception of rural environments. City dwellers were virtually isolated from the world, anything outside the walls was associated with primitivism, savagery, robbery, so the countryside was a space of danger, barbarism and chaos. The inhabitants of the area where Veber Tkalčević travelled were the descendants of the Morlaks, whom Voltaire counted among the savage tribes along with the Icelanders and the Sami. There were also stories among people that they were involved in slave trade. It is possible that Veber's tale of extraordinary rural giants, exuding good-naturedness and embodying the perfect symbiosis with nature, is still a response to the images of Dalmatians and Lika created by travelers from Western Europe. Alberto Fortis, who was most instrumental in spreading the image of Dalmatia and significantly revised the extremely negative judgements, wrote, for example, about the harsh morality of the Morlaks, but still called them savages, except that they were noble.

Veber's anti-urbanism, probably referring to several sources, also incorporates thinking about the past, and this is where the residents he meets on the road take the lead, taking care to perpetuate the memory and keep the fighting spirit alive. They talk about skirmishes with the Turks, about places of remembrance and prominent figures. Meanwhile, the city is a space for spinning tales of who and how much drank (75), so there is actually talk of heroes and anti-heroes/weak

ones. Veber's approach seems more anti-bourgeois than anti-urban and anti-urbanist, and certainly does not imply an aversion to technology.

### Veber Tkalčević and Wordsworth's Lake District

The Plitvice Lakes appeared to the hikers suddenly and immediately in all their beauty. The suddenness of the encounter with the unparalleled is commented on as a breathtaking experience, instilling bliss and rendering one speechless: "blažen zanos radja. Za čas se pretvorismo u Niemce (...) jedan od najljepših vidikah one bajne okolice" (78). Reading *Put on Plitvice*, it is hard to resist the temptation to refer to William Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, these works are rather incomparable on an aesthetic level, nevertheless they do have certain features in common. They both experience an immeasurable feeling in language. Wordsworth intersperses the narrative with passages of poetry that provide a place for the imagination to reveal itself (Sławek, 1993, 76), "as if he assumed that only verses are capable of giving the reader an idea of the spiritual energy that lies dormant in the Cumbrian landscape" (Wiśniewski, 2012, 348). But Veber also activates his poetic imagination:

Na čelu se je veličanstveno posadilo brdo Kik, a do koljena su mu dva glasnika: rieka Ljeskovac, koja mu dolazi s desna, i Vrhovski potok, koji s lieva utiče. Kik šalje svoje glasnike, da pozovu njegovu kičenu čeljad na široke divane. Glasnici ulaze u družbu, izprevrću jim prostrane dvo-rane, nagovaraju jih, vuku i guraju, ali vila je planinkinja udarila pro-zirnu čeljad čarobničkom šibikom, te premda se u svojih stanovih živo kreću, ne mogu ipak nikamo s mjesta, pa tako ne ostaje ni očaranomu Kiku, ni jezerom drugo, van čeznuće bez sastajališta. Ovo je u kratko pjesnička misao, koja mi se namaknula, motreć ove divne prizore (81).

The lyrical character of this passage (lyrical in the author's opinion) is probably determined by the its metaphoricality, and perhaps also by the motif of impossible longing and the reference to the tradition of oral literature and magical thinking characteristic of folk imagination and

oral works. Elsewhere, Veber alerts us to a spiritual experience deprived of words and seeks a way of recreating it (in personal memory) and of transmitting it in such a way as to allow the reader to create (recreate?) it (in his/her own imagination). Thus, in both authors, although it resounds much less in Veber's case, there is a kind of going beyond nature towards the above-sensory world. Veber gives specific instructions for dealing with the imagination leading to overcoming the state of indescribability and creating the landscape and the feelings associated with it:

**Postavi se**, štioče, 2500 stopah nad površje morsko, **popni se** još dvie sto stopah na nizinu, kojom se prolieva jezero Kozjak, **stvari** sve naokolo što bujnije šume stoljetnih bukavah i jelah, **zatoči** jezerište najizvrstnijim šestilom na više mjestah, **pretegni** obale mekanim sagom svježe zeleni, a ono, što se od vapna tik vode i obale bieli, **imenuj** umjetnom mliečnom stazicom koga englezkoga perivoja, usred vode **postavi** otočić, kano igračku nježećih se talasićah, a povrh toga **digni** na drugoj obali izpod jedne klisure lievo mlin, a izpod druge desno pilu, pa **raztvori** najedanput sve **očinja živce**, da upiješ tamnosmaragdovu boju vodnu, i **razširi uši** na sve kraje, da se razblažiš romonom i šumom slapićah i slapovah, pa ćeš si barem ponješto **stvoriti sliku** divnoga *Kozjaka*. Ali da bude **savšena slika**, **narav je do te skrajnje mekote digla tvrde hridi**, zarasle šikarom i mašinom, u koje voda pada iz Galovca, **krčeći si** prama naravi svojoj put izmedju divljega stienja. Da se pako silno navalom vodah ne ošteti nježnost Kozjaka, **izskočila** je iz dubljine strašna hridina izpad Galovca, koji se s lievoga kuta strmoglav-ljuje (78–79).

My bold markings in the quoted passage indicate the steps—intended by the author—to be taken one by one to create the landscape, reflecting the process of creative work, the role and place of the human being who creates while being on the mountain. Veber's concern for the reader seems to be an analogy to that of Wordsworth's description:

Hence, when Wordsworth, seeking a way “to render the outlines of the land described”, asks the reader “to stand with him in imagination in

a certain place” (GDL,<sup>9</sup> 55), he will do so in order to bring about the consequent “habit” of observing the local landscape (local scenery) more closely and attentively than before (GDL, 55). The act of imagination is, firstly, a creative act (the author of the guide brings to life the world that is to come into existence for the traveller), and secondly, it is intended to lead to real changes in the traveller’s perception of the world, enabling a particular “place” to come into full existence through a relationship of “care” (this is how the suggestion of “closer and more attentive observation” could be summed up) between man and the world (Sławek, 1993, 76).

Romantic writing, and later writing as well, abounded in “descriptions on the hill”, the promontory, the rock, appearing in narratives of men, “emphasising their heroism and their exposed position”, which allowed for new meanings, taking possession of the world and “world-making” as such (Pratt, 2011, 284–285). In Veber’s conception, observation from an appropriate perspective creates the elements of nature, then names them, then creates mechanisms that harness the forces of nature and finally activate the senses to soothe oneself with the way that it looks and sounds. Likewise Wordsworth invited the reader to stand together with the author on the summit (or, preferably, to sit on a cloud, thus taking the place of God), with the difference, however, that the English poet intended to create a representation of the lakes along the lines of the artificial creation that was the mock-up of the Alps that he viewed (Wiśniewski, 2012, 357). The necessity of comparison with the work of human hands also accompanies the Croatian author, who juxtaposes the Plitvice Lakes with the “gardens of water pleasures” at Hellbrunn near Salzburg and the Italian city of Terni and its famous waterfall. Both authors see the lakes through the prism of artefacts and both also feel the need to frame the landscape “in terms of a geometric pattern”, the drawing of a circle (Wiśniewski, 2012, 359). Romantic nature is thus entangled with culture in many ways in both texts, which only confirms the view of contemporary scholars (v. Hamerski, 2021). The marvellousness

---

9 The abbreviation refers to: Wordsworth, 1951.

of the view in Veber's interpretation is so unprecedented as to be almost inconceivable as the work (forge) of unregulated nature itself: "misliš, da je umjetna ruka silu vode nad Kozjakom zabušila, pak ju kroz one pukotine umjetno izpušća, da tim više ugadja gledaocu" (79). In this interpretation, nature remains at the service of man, working for his aesthetic experience.

### **Being in a dialogue with the texts**

The travellers reached the next lakes in a small boat, calling their half-hour adventure on the surface the Argonauts' expedition. The author then further goes on to talk about the appearance and his own experience with regard to seeing the Plitvice Lakes, mountains, gorges, waterfalls and the water pools, by referring to and conducting a dialogue with the text written in German by Ljudevit Vukotinović, also pointing out how his account differs from that of a geologist or botanist. Not in a very literal translation, the passage reads:

If I were a geologist, I would write (like the traveller-writer mentioned at the beginning) about the rock layers, I would mention that the water is unregulated, that the water is lime like in the lakes, about stalactites and fossils. Then I would put on my botanist's glasses to inform about the plants that only grow here... But I would never say that..., I would not dare to say..., I would only refer this judgement to... (80–81).

In *Put na Plitvice* italics are used to highlight Vukotinović's assertions which the narrator disagrees with; he indicates which perspective he looks at, because the place where you are conducting your observations may not have an influence on the difference in the insights. Veber reaches "where the eye cannot reach" (81), he stands between heaven and earth, from there he sees the world differently, but this position does not bring him even close to Kordian (Juliusz Słowacki), it does not make him a Romantic hero, he does not argue with God and the world, instead he fulfils his "Enlightenment" mission, he straightens out what is inaccurate and not precise enough in his opinion. His observations

are indeed a channel for the inflow of emotional impressions, but they are also a bit of a wise man's observations, correcting and supplementing knowledge, having in his memory (before his eyes) also the work on geology by Josip Souch, the "topographical picture on Jezerih" of 1850 by Peter Latas, a relative of the famous Omer-pasha, and the figures given by Major Bach. Based on the sources mentioned and his own experience, he creates a description of the location and characteristics of the lakes.

This passage is close to scientific prose with geographical data rarely interrupted by interjections from an expressivist subject. A factual geological-geographical narrative dominates, using abbreviations and appropriate terminology. We find information about the vegetation and tree species growing in the area of the Plitvice Lakes, about the land and water animals living there, about the birds, about the position of each lake above sea level, the depth of waterfalls and lakes, the distance of one lake from the other, rivers, hills, about the types of rocks, soil, lake beds, how they were formed, their geographical location, length, latitude. The travelling narrator gives voice to the documents he uses, almost disappearing with his emotionality. Unable to decide which data is closer to the truth, he draws up a table with the information given by both Bach and Sauch. He describes in turn Proščansko jezero, Ciganovac, Okrugljak gornji, Crno jezero and Bakinovac, Vir, Galovac, Jezerce, Kozjak, Milanovo jezero, Okrugljak dolnji, Kaludjerovo jezero, Novakovića brod. At Galovac he corrects Vukotinović's German-language publication which mentions that at most three lakes can be seen from a specific place: "Da je pošao s nami (...) vidio bi bio s neizmjernim uzhitom najedanput sedam jezerah (...), a broja vodopadah ne sjećam se više. Ova je točka drugi, možebit još krasniji vidik od prvoga" (84–85). Surely, however, it is the second of the three descriptions which delight the author to such an extent. And as he does so, he directs his words to the painters, paying particular attention to the point which he and his companions are making their observations from, and all of them – greatly impressed by the view – attempt to transfer the landscape into the language of drawing, each reaching for his pencil: "tolika je sila one krasote, da i od prišipetlje gradi umjetnika!" (85). Embracing the broad panorama from this vantage point, looking at more lakes and waterfalls,

rather than seeing each one individually, is compared to the superiority of poetry over prose.

When it comes to the beautiful view, the third highlighted by the traveller, tourists risk of falling into the abyss: "krasota nas prizora dalje potisnu, te se dogrebosmo do točke uprav prama vodopadu. Stojeći kano na jajih po kršu, i držeći se jednom rukom za grane, da se ne skoturamo u bezdno, upirasmo oči u tu treću točku koja se strašnom ljepotom svojom razlikuje od drugih dvaju nježnoljepih vidikah" (87). As they stand over the abyss to behold the beauty of the horrific view, they simultaneously stand on the threshold, or even cross the threshold of the familiar to some degree, looking into a world of otherness, a loveliness beyond the delightful prettiness and gentleness. Breaching the boundary of safety, they find themselves for a moment in the realm of horror, experiencing the uncanniness of beauty. It's almost like Arnold van Genep's rituals of passage or Vladimir Propp's fairy tale model (leaving the safe space of home). The terrible beauty consists of, among other things, abysmal abyss ("ponoran jaz") where the waterfall falls, the terrible rock ("strašna stiena"), the branches of the Plitvica River, which look like streams of pure silver when taken into perspective, and the cavern ("pećina") – in the glare of the splashing water – as if silvered, "if a ray of sunlight were added, the whole corner would light up with a magical light" ("čarobnom svjetlošću", 87). What is considered as dangerous and frightening thus has, precisely as in a magical fairy tale, a magical power. The observer, however, does not forget the scientific works he holds in his hand and, where illusion suggests incompatible with research solutions, he reverts to the superiority of documentary truth. He also mentions other works he knows about Plitvice, but which he himself has not referred to.

Weber is like a traveller-truth teller (Drohojewski, after Burkot, 1988, 49), who, according to his experience, certifies or verifies the claims of others, and, if so, still puts into practice the formula of the Enlightenment journey. However, one must remember the peculiarities of Croatian Romanticism which constitute an integral part of the Enlightenment-Revival tasks.

### Time for a summary

Zato bacivši još nekoliko pogledah, vratismo se jedan za drugim na ležište, posve zadovoljni, što smo bez većih neprilikah postigli cilj svoga domorodnoga putovanja (88).

After a day's hike and a final view of the last of the lakes, the narrator concludes that the purpose of the journey through his homeland has been achieved and, in accordance to his own understanding of the traveller's mission, proceeds to compare Plitvice with other world-famous lands of lakes or waterfalls. The juxtaposition comes off as devastating for the foreign attractions; the traveller does not find places which, although famous, would bear such a confrontation:

volja ljudska može od tmine načiniti svjetlost, a svjetlost pritisnuti mrakom. Kad se gdje u drugom svijetu prostre koja livada po obali ma kako neznatna potočića, već se ondje dižu kuće i trubi u sviet, da takovih okolica neima ni u Švajcarskoj. Ako gdje dva kuka strše nad kojom jamom, već se grade mostovi, da se s njih gleda strahota; ako se gdje mu drago odkrije ma samo jedan slapić ili vodopadić, već se grade ceste i staze, da mogu varošani grnuti u romantičke okolice: a ovaj naš gorostas, ponoseći se hiljadami divnih prizorah svake ruke, od najnježnijih do najstrahovitijih, čami u kutu i zaboravi. Petnaest što jezerah što basinah, do trideset većih i manjih vodopadah, četiri potoka, jedna rieka, sila brdah i brežuljakah s nježnimi dolinama i strašnimi ponori, prastare šume i bujna zelen, a povrh svega toga **pitka voda, kakove bi i bogovi pili**, krase ovaj perpetuum mobile vodnoga svieta, za koji malo tko znade u domovini, a jedva tko u tudjinstvu (88–89).

Plitvice is distinguished by its uniqueness, singularity, monumentality, vastness, the combination of subtleness and dreadfulness, its pristine nature, the purity of its water, which the gods would not disdain, all of which remains unknown even in its homeland. Neglect or simple unawareness, underestimation of what is one's own, would it be considered as a failure to notice? What speaks here is the strongly felt need to make one's own known (the need to advertise), to appreciate and

value one's homeliness<sup>10</sup> while depreciating what is foreign. The clergyman also has a project for the future: a sanatorium should be built here, people should come here for treatment, young people would have the joy of walking in the mountains, men could go hunting, not to mention how conducive the area is for lovers. In this paradise, one can experience multi-sensory pleasures: watching, listening and eating trout<sup>11</sup> Veber therefore takes a slightly different view from Wordsworth who was rather dismissive of tourists in his Lake District (and of the nouveaux richmen who built their palaces on islands and hills). The resort concept is even more invasive than tourism that Wordsworth warned people against, as it involves both the enjoyment of nature and considerable interference with it.

For Veber, Plitvice are not just a collection of beautiful views, but also a place of "inhabitation", as Heidegger would say, a space of future-oriented human action, of inhabitation and co-creation as a space of life, a world which one travels through along the paths that connect places of being (Ingold, 2000; 2014, 145). He thus sees it as a place of taming, of embracing care, of transforming the view into a cultural landscape and human habitat (Frydryczak, 2014, 8). Except that Veber has in mind both a concern for views, and therefore the aesthetic aspect, and a concern for the cultural landscape. He entrusts Plitvice to painters as an object

---

10 In the case of the Plitvice Lakes, this admiration is fully justified. Perhaps it is worth recalling that they were, among other things, the setting for the film adventures of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. One website offers the following commentary, humorous and yet perfectly in accordance to the age-old narratives about "noble savages": "Shot by Englishmen, Italians, Germans and so-called Ex-Yugoslavs, Winnetou and this 'Old' knew neither German nor Balkan, and the extras neither knew of it, I think of it, they barely knew the literary language, i.e. Croatian. On the other hand, the producers were enthralled by the beautiful landscapes similar to the wild west, especially the extras from the surrounding villages, i.e. they didn't need characterisation at all, there were many people similar to Indians, of course I don't mean anything bad, just that it was a lucky circumstance." (Mario Padelin, *Howgh bijela i rumena bračo!*, <https://www.zadarskilist.hr/clanci/28042022/howgh-bijela-i-rumena-braco> [28.07.2022]).

11 Enjoying a trout feast was supposed to be one of the pleasures of the trip. Unfortunately, they did not appear on the travellers' tables (see: Pieniążek-Mar-ković, 2022).

of aesthetic experience. In contrast, modifications towards cultural, infrastructural and social transformations (cultural composition of the world, Cosgrove, 1998) would require the involvement of individuals, institutions and funds. But for this to happen, a certain communicative and axiological community is needed. The first condition for its formation is fulfilled, the journey had been made and the journey published. If the book had not made it under the thatched roofs, there was another communication channel, i.e. painting (which did not require the ability to read, and one must remember that about the time of the journey): “ostaju Plitvice krasne, nu teško pristupne, zato od ljudi zanemarene, te puste, sve do boljih vremena, u koji će bar domorodni slikari čutiti ugodnu dužnost, te će svojom umjetnošću i nam i svijetu prenieti Plitvice u tišinu domaćih pragova” (89).

Veber's postulates reflect both a concern for fixation, for “stock-taking”, and a reaction to the picturesque of the landscape, to the irregularities inherent in nature affecting the effects of painting, and this is how William Gilpin, the initiator of the discourse on the *picturesque* (and also a lover of the Lake District, which he had visited many times between 1772 and 1776), understood the category, i.e. as features which in their natural state give pleasure to the eye and which can be represented by painting: “the eye sensitive to the picturesque (...) delights only in nature (...) and pictures of nature are characterised by *irregularity*, which is only another term for *coarseness*” (Gilpin, 1974, 67). Although Gilpin did not associate with the picturesque the horror and omnipotence unleashed by the sublime, *the picturesque* is, after all, about capturing nature in all its diversity and about recognising the form and composition that the “picturesque-sensitive eye” analyses.

Veber's “Land of the Lakes” really exists as does Wordsworth's, but the English poet's land is at the same time a kind of literary fiction (Wiśniewski, 2012, 356), while Veber's, also because of the citation of geological-geographical data, remains first and foremost a real territory, a perception, not an illusion, although a perception at times causing dizziness. Plitvice landscapes are filled with traditional props (mountains, rivers, lakes, villagers' huts, winding paths), the results of published research, and bodily experiences, whether related to the hardships of travelling and climbing, culinary experiences, or the experience

of immersion in nature (in the metaphorical and literal sense when it comes to bathing).

### Concluding remarks

On the 5th of September, the travellers return to Zagreb greeted with rain, which was interpreted by them as an obvious sign of God's blessing. The final paragraph of the journey begins with a phrase addressed to those who will be travelling to Plitvice. The text of the journey is recommended as a guidebook where they will find tips on what to prepare for, which way to go, where to spend the night, what to see from where. Veber advises taking large supplies of food and drink and tents in a separate cart. In his opinion, taking painters and photographers to capture the national beauty is a necessity. He recommends planning your stay at Plitvice for at least two days. In addition to travel advice, he also gives tips relating to the arrangement of the country: so that everyone does what he or she was made to do, "jer u nas se s nekom štetom svi primamo svih poslova, osim jedine hvale vriedne iznimke, što sam ja uvijek radio jedno: sjedio, pio, jeo, pušio i napokon bilježio crtice za ovaj putopis, koji mora svatko pod živu glavu kupiti i sobom ponijeti; jer ako i ima u njem mnogo slame, naći će se ipak i po koje zrnce, koje će biti svakomu tim tečnije, što je istinito, iskreno i narodno!" (118).

The ending, setting the framework of the text, is created in accordance to the understanding of the mission of travel writing: "patriotic" travelling has come to an end, the goal of the expedition has been achieved and the journey (text, *putopis*) also has the chance to fulfil its purpose, to constitute a *bedeker*. Continuing the custom of Croatian journeys he evokes the theme of the "untrained pen" that produced straw, but that the readers-participants of expeditions to Plitvice are wise ("Budući putnici plitvički! Kako ste mudri...", 118), they will be able to find valuable grains in this straw. Thus, in the end, the recipient of the message is clarified, but also other traditional formulas of the conventions of travel writing of the time are completed, such as the assertion of truthfulness that is consistent with the notes taken on the journey, sincerity and the "national" character of the work. It is, after

all, another leaf to the tree of Croatian literature, as Antun Nemčić (1845) wrote about in *Putositnice's Voyage*, but the subject of interest also closes within the national territory, its nature and inhabitants. Plitvice has been described, contextualised, brought into the space of national culture, called into existence.

## References

- Atkinson, D., Jackson, P., Sibley, D., Washbourne, N. (eds.), (2005). *Cultural Geography. A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. London–New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Badurina, N. (2009). *Nezakonite kćeri Ilirije*. Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije.
- Berleant, A. (1997). *Living in the Landscape. Toward an Aesthetics of Environment*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Burkot, S. (1988). *Polskie podróżopisarstwo romantyczne*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Cosgrove, D. (1985). *Prospect, perspective, and the evolution of the landscape idea*. "Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers," no. 10, pp. 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.2307/622249>
- Cosgrove, D. (1998). *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London: Croom Helm, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Cosgrove, D. (2003). *Landscape and the European Sense of Sight – Eying Nature*. In: *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. Eds. K. Anderson, M. Domosh, S. Pile, N. Thrift. London: Sage Publications.
- Don, M. (2005). *Landscape*. In: *Cultural Geography. A Critical Dictionary of Key Ideas*. Eds. D. Sibley, P. Jackson, D. Atkinson, N. Washbourne. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 48–56.
- Frydryczak, B. (2013). *Krajobraz. Od estetyki „the picturesque” do doświadczenia topograficznego*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN.
- Frydryczak, B. (2014). *O dwóch sensach krajobrazu*. In: *Krajobraz kulturowy*. Eds. B. Frydryczak, M. Ciesielski. Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN.
- Gennep van, A. (1981). *Les rites de passage*. Paris: Éditions A. Et J. Picard.
- Gilpin, W. (1974). *Esej I. O pięknie malowniczym*. In: *Teoretycy, artyści i krytycy o sztuce 1700–1870*. Eds. E. Grabska, M. Poprzęcka. Warszawa: PIW.
- Hamerski, W. (2021). *Romantyczne „kuźnie natury” w perspektywie ekokrytyki*. "Porównania," no. 2 (29), pp. 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.14746/por.2021.2.3>
- Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2014). *Czasowość krajobrazu*. Trans. B. Frydryczak. In: *Krajobrazy. Antologia tekstów*. Eds. B. Frydryczak, D. Angutek. Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN.
- Janion, M. (2000). *Kuźnia natury*. In: *Prace wybrane*. Vol. 1: *Gorączka romantyczna*. Kraków: Universitas, pp. 275–322.
- Johnston R.J. et al. (2009). *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Malden: Blackwell.

- Kowalczykowa, A. (1982). *Pejzaż romantyczny*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Mitchell, D. (2005). *Landscape*. In: *Cultural Geography. A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. Ed. David Atkinson et al. London–New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., pp. 48–56.
- Pieniążek-Marković, K. (2022). *Podróż wokół pstrągów: Put na Plitvice Adolfa Vebera Tkalčevića. Tekstotwórcza rola motywów kulinarnych*. „Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne,” no. 23, pp. 111–128.
- Pratt, M.L. (2011). *Imperialne spojrzenie. Pisarstwo podróżnicze a transkultuacja*. Trans. E.E. Nowakowska, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Propp, W. (2011). *Morfologia bajki magicznej*. Kraków: Nomos.
- Sławek, T. (1993). *Kraina Jezior. William Wordsworth i romantyczna hermeneutyka 'miejsca'*. In: *Znajomym gościńcem. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Ireneuszowi Opackiemu*. Eds. T. Sławek, with contributions A. Nawarecki, D. Pawelec. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Söderström, O. (2005). *Representation*. In: *Cultural Geography. A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. Ed. David Atkinson et al. London–New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., pp. 11–15.
- Veber Tkalčević, A. (1998). *Put na Plitvice*. In: *Odabrana proza*. Vinkovci: Riječ.
- Wiśniewski, M. (2012). *Kraina czystych efektów*. „Literatura na Świecie,” no. 9–10, 347–370.
- Wordsworth, W. (1951). *A Guide through the district of the lakes in the north of England. With a description of the scenery, and c. for the use of tourists and residents*. London: Hart-Davis.
- Woźniakowski, J. (1995). *Góry niewzruszone. O różnych wyobrażeniach przyrody w dziejach nowożytnej kultury europejskiej*. Kraków: Znak.

- **KRYSTYNA PIENIĄŻEK-MARKOVIĆ** – an associate professor at the Institute of Slavic Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Poland). She is a historian of literature and culture with expertise in Slavic, Croatian, and Polish studies. Her PhD dissertation and habilitation thesis explored the work of A.B. Šimić and Croatian poetry in the period 1990–2010. Her research interests include Croatian literature and culture from Romanticism to the present, Croatian memory and identity discourse in travel texts, and culinary narratives. Her latest book: *Smak drogi. Podróże chorwackiego romantyzmu (1839–1860)*.