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Garden as Ideal Landscape of Its Time - Arcadia in the Garden of the Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka

Abstract: *The garden of the Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka will be studied as an entity in which morphological and phenomenological components are inseparable – in relation to the culture of Dubrovnik villas and the Italian Renaissance and Baroque concepts, considered in the context of the *longue durée*. The research goal is to examine the value of the garden in the social and private life of the villa, its representational value as well as the performance in the context of *locus amoenus* – one of the crucial elements of the concept of Arcadia. Accordingly, the garden will be considered as the active constructor and carrier of ideas of its time, reflected in literature, philosophy, and art.*

Keywords: *garden, landscape, Arcadia, villa, Sorkočević, Dubrovnik, Renaissance, Baroque*

Introduction – Landscape, Nature and Arcadia

Landscape painting hasn't always been highly valued in art theory and criticism. *Pastoral* in art and poetry was considered to be *stilus humilis* since the Middle Ages, which influenced the reception of landscape images in art production.¹ Yet despite this fact, landscape (artistic and natural) has always been spiritually important to humans. The relationship to nature gained its essence in aesthetic expressions of gardens – places where a

perfect harmony of art, nature and human beings can be fully achieved. Gardens became the display of private status and local (national) pride, tradition and philosophy, but also the places of dreams, myth and fantasy. In connection with the history of literature, philosophy and cultural anthropology, art history has succeeded to recognize, understand and explain the context in which the “ideology of garden” is created.

Symbolic potentials in natural scenery raised since the emergence of first urban residences. Since the classical period, life in nature has been regarded as a special “way of living” which evolved

1 About the perception of Pastoral: Freedman 1983, pp. 36–38.

into a type of ideology – with normative beliefs, conscious and unconscious convictions (individual and collective), that framed specific values of nature in public and private life. The ideology of life in nature is the reflection of symbolic meanings which humans, dissatisfied with the city-life, attributed to the natural environment. This impulse was generated by psychological rather than utilitarian needs. Ideological in that context implied a strong belief that sojourn in nature means the privilege and the opportunity to find peace in rural land.² That conviction involved the idealization of nature. Thus, nature became a paradigm of the *vita attiva* (enforced by agricultural activities), but also the place where humans can reach *vita contemplativa* – the world of contemplation, meditation, cognition and dream.

The idea of nature as a place of fantasy and contemplation had its deep-seated reflection in “the dream of Arcadia” – the utopian country of eternal felicity, comprehension and peace – which was a dream of the intellectual elite in many civilizations in the past. The conception of an “ideal place” – in which humans can escape the sorrowful reality – has always been the image of the idealized landscape. Arcadia (or nature) became the symbol of longing for a pure life, reflected in the mythical habitation of

herdsmen, poets, and deities. Literature, which is a primary depository of ideological myth, is the most immediate testament of the Arcadian vision. The concept of Arcadia has been present in literature since the Ancient Era: in the legacy of Theocritus (*Idylls*), Pausanias (*Description of Greece*), Polybius (*The Histories*), Lucretius (*De rerum Natura*), Ovid (*Fasti*), and, above all, Virgil (*Eclogues*) who described Arcadian land in the way which would have great influence on later poetry and art. Pastoral poetry began to treat nature as the *locus amoenus* (lovely, blissful land),³ often as a reflection of primordial purity which was attributed to the “long gone ancient time”. Thus, the concept of Arcadia encouraged the reminiscence of *The Golden Age*, manifested through dreamlike images which were always articulated by the norms of the contemporary society.⁴ However, Arcadia was also depicted as a gloomy land, where humans could express all the misfortunes of the real world. But, with the help of Arcadian residents, their music and poetry, humans could also reach the enlightenment at the end of their sojourn. This ambivalence of melancholic and joyful image of Arcadia

3 In Renaissance, the term has been inseparable from Pastoral, which was considered to be the emotional state – the state of spirit. Later on, it has been considered to be the resting place in which humans can reach the spiritual harmony. In: Brajović 2005, p. 601.

4 Borožan 2015, p. 205.

2 Ackerman 1990, p. 10.

(or nature), with its moralistic potentials, was fully articulated in early modern literature, particularly in *Arcadia*, written by Jacopo Sannazaro.⁵ This particular literary work, more than any other, affected the early modern concept of Arcadia, and in accordance with the idea *ut pictura poesis*,⁶ it had a strong influence on the art production of this period.⁷ Eventually, this concept of nature determined the treatments of the natural environment, landscape and architecture.

The Ideology of Life in Nature

The direct manifestation of the relationship between humans and nature can be seen in cultivation of landscape. The widespread praxis of building residences in nature was highly influenced by the humanist philosophy. Unlike the medieval scholasticism and mysticism, renaissance humanism put humans and nature *in medias res*.⁸ In

5 Sannazaro's *Arcadia* was found on Virgil's *Eclogues*. About the references to previous authors in pastoral poetry: Skoie 2006, p. 93. About other authors and their visions of Arcadia: Romano 1978, pp. 58-60.

6 "As is painting so is poetry". More about that concept in Renaissance: Rensselaer 1940, pp. 197-199.

7 About the arcadian features in painting of Giorgione, Titian, Guercino and Poussin: Freedman 1983.

8 About the uprising power of secular authorities in Italy: Viroli 2003. The same in Florence, and its affection on villa ideology: Gobbi Sica, 2007. About the identity of an early modern humans in Europe: Brajović, 2009.

this period, literary works of ancient writers were revalued and they played an important role in establishing the villa ideology: Hesiod, Cato, Varro, Columella, Cicero, Seneca, and Vitruvius.⁹

The villa had to fulfill the need which was more psychological than utilitarian: this particular need was supposed to harmonize the intimate fantasy with requirements of the reality. Villas were designed as both private and public spaces, created as *ego document* of its owner. However, they were much more intimate than palaces – a villa was a shelter from the harsh urban reality, an oasis of peace, contemplation and self-cognition, which was, according to the beliefs of early modern humans, possible to reach only in nature, fantasy, and myth. Thus, villas portrayed private, intimate lives of their owners.

The contrast between the country and the city has been an important philosophical topic since the Classical era. For example, Pliny the Younger described the pleasure of being in nature as the state of physical and mental peace.¹⁰ However, villas were still dependent on the city, its economic wealth and urban values. People wanted to make harmony between countryside and the city in villas as two different, but

9 Ackerman 1990, p. 19.

10 Ibid, pp. 13-14.

unified principles.¹¹ Accordingly, dialectics of natural and artificial became one of the most important characteristics of villas architecture – referred to the harmony of nature and people, primordial and cultivated. Thus, the villa represented the ideal place. Petrarca described his own villa in Arqua in *De vita solitaria* as the shelter, in a similar manner as Boccaccio, who perceived nature as a place to escape from harm, corruption, and urban diseases.¹² In the fresco *Good Government*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted an idealized landscape near Siena, but with realistic details in it. Art and literature converted villa and its landscape in a cultural and mental *topos*, set between myth and reality.

Alberti's theories were crucial for the humanistic „myth of villa”.¹³ His depiction of the life in the villa wasn't only the record of the ambient, but much more: with plenty of philosophical references about the harmony of an active and contemplative life. In *I Libri della Famiglia*, Alberti advocated the moral component of life in a country,

11 Especially in Baroque, a city was associated with the path of salvation through the physical effort and nature as the way of reaching the spiritual peace. Brajović 2005, p. 587.

12 Gobbi Sica 2007, p. 18.

13 Blant 2004, pp. 5–8. About Neoplatonism in: Panofski 1975, pp. 109–110. For essential information about Alberti's life and work: Marej 2005, p. 52.

because “the good people and reasonable hosts”, as he believed, have always been interested in the life in the villa which was, besides its profitability, the source of pleasure and honours.¹⁴

The garden was an essential part of the villa, which brought the clearest reflection on the ideology of life in nature. The garden was organized to be a display of certain concepts and values. In *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Francesco Colonna interpreted geometrical order in a theological context. Francesco di Giorgio Martini described gardens in reference to the ancient Roman public spaces and gymnasiums, which suggested the garden as the secret place of poets and philosophers.¹⁵ Lorenzo The Magnificent dedicated the mythological poem to the villa in Poggio a Caiano (*Ambra*), describing the nymph Ambra transforming in an island near the residence. In that way, the landscape of the villa was directly set in the mythical context.¹⁶ These few examples indicate the mythical and symbolical in terms of land and its shaping, which was fully articulated in the garden and gardening.

Medieval gardens, with their massive fence walls, were organized as *hortus conclusus* – which had been identified

14 Gobbi Sica 2007, p. 20.

15 Ibid, pp. 69–72.

16 Ibid, pp. 22–23.

with the heavenly shelter/*axis mundi*, since the Patristic Period.¹⁷ The Renaissance garden was the product of new humanistic concepts. It was also the confirmation of *longue durée* and incorporated the Babylonian and Egyptian gardening features, primarily the geometrics and intonation of axis in the space. These features reflected the belief that humans depended on nature, but also the need to incorporate nature into the human concept. It was a belief not in the equality of nature and humans, but in human domination.¹⁸ Italian renaissance gardens were developed in order to fulfill the need for leisure, but also the requirement for meditation in a natural environment. Thus, they got the potential to be *ozio intellettuale*.¹⁹ That signification of garden was manifested through the refined contact with nature, with the adaptation of garden decorations to the features of a landscape and soil and also by reaching harmony with the natural environment.

Humanistic philosophy brought the Neoplatonic ideas in Ragusa, which enforced the idea of reaching *vita contemplativa* in a natural environment.²⁰ Intellectuals from

Dubrovnik met the Italian concept of Arcadia and embraced it, which is clearly illustrated in early modern literature of Ragusa. Many authors from Dubrovnik wrote in pastoral atmosphere (Ilija Crijević, Nikola Vetranović, Nikola Nalješković...²¹ At the end of the 15th century, the pastoral drama (*la dramma pastorale*) was really popular in Dubrovnik.²² It inspired the literature of idyllic pastoral poems with mythical scenery and didactic intentions, in Arcadian surrounding that was set between idyll and melancholia (the most prominent authors were Marin Držić and Mavro Vetranović).²³ For the local authors, *Arcadia* of Jacopo Sanazaro had been the favorite title.²⁴ Based on Roman literary academy *The Accademia degli Arcadi*, which promoted pastoral and arcadian atmosphere in writing, intellectuals in Ragusa founded *Akademija ispraznijeh (Accademia degli Oziosi)* at the end of the 17th century. After peaceful Renaissance, Baroque announced different circumstances in Ragusa: wars on the land and difficult sea-trade caused fear for independence and economic crisis. That was a

blessedness and felicity in “this world” – which is comparable with the enlightenment of prophets. More about that: Panofski 1975, p. 116.

²¹ Pantić 1960, pp. 15–21.

²² More about that literary genre in Italian culture: Vodnik 1913, p. 159. About Torquato Tasso, the most prominent writer in this genre: Kolendić 1964, pp. 130–136.

²³ See: Pantić 1960, pp. 21–22.

²⁴ See: Kolendić 1964, pp. 84–87.

¹⁷ Brajović 2006, p. 54. About the differences between medieval and renaissance gardens: Gobbi Sica 2007, p. 69.

¹⁸ Šišić 1981, p. 12.

¹⁹ Grujić 1991, p. 164.

²⁰ According to Marsilio Ficino, *vita contemplativa* was the only way to reach the

favorable circumstance for the ideas of Catholic Reformation, defined on the Council of Trent (1545–63), which led to the reinforcement of Catholic devotion, concepts of salvation, sin and contempt for earthly delights.²⁵ Consequently, the Arcadian sense in Baroque pastoral poetry of Ragusa became notably melancholic, while the nature in it came to be the world of moral enlightenment, reached through meditation about history, patriotism, concern for essential nature of humans, awareness of mundane inconsistency and the cosmic eternity. The depictions of nature as such had their manifestation in the villa ideology of The Republic of Ragusa – primarily in the context of gardening.

Compared to contemporary villas in Italy, summer houses in Dubrovnik had a moderate size and balanced decoration.²⁶ Although the life in the villa depended on the life in the urban area (its development and structure), an original architectural form of rural residences was created in Dubrovnik.²⁷ That new form depended on the ideology of villas which existed in this area. Thus, many practical functions of houses in nature, public and residential,

were linked to the intimate vision of life in summer houses in Rijeka Dubrovačka.²⁸ The concept of Italian Renaissance garden was simultaneously spread in Ragusa.²⁹ Based on *bello ordine* in architectural composition, Ragusan gardens were fenced garden spaces, organized in relation to the main walkaway – cut by crossing paths, which resulted with a strict orthogonal layout.³⁰ There, villas with more residential function had more spacious gardens in order to enable the comfort for owners and their guests. One of them was created on the Sorkočevićs' property in Rijeka Dubrovačka.³¹



Fig.1. The Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka
(photo: K. Jović)

25 Pantić 1984, pp. 25–27.

26 Some researchers consider these values as the most beautiful features of Ragusan villas, because they were considered to be the manifestation of the perfect balance between humans and nature. In: Fisković 1966, pp. 9–10.

27 Grujić 1982, p. 9.

28 Grujić 2003, p. 13.

29 About the first local architectural and sculptural guilds: Prijatelj 1956, p. 43.

30 About the orthogonal system in Ragusa: Grujić 1991, p. 62.

31 Ibid, p. 72.

The garden of the Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka as Ideal Landscape of Its Time

Villa Sorkočević in Rijeka Dubrovačka belonged to one of the oldest Ragusan families,³² which gained a status of the most prominent local elite as early as the 14th century.³³ The Villa was built in the second half of the 16th century, with Renaissance architectural features.³⁴ However, the building process was continued in the Baroque period – up until the 18th century. The period in which the latest intervention on the Villa occurred is still unknown, but the wall painting of the gallery is dated in the second half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century.³⁵

The complex has multiple architectural components with different functions. Near its entrance, the first one is a cistern with a terrace and loft, which is followed by a small loggia and summer house, built in the Renaissance period. Symmetrical layout and relation between the main and side rooms indicate the tendency for “the ideal” Renaissance ground plan: „Quatro

stanze, un salon, z’è la casa d’un Schiavon“.³⁶ Warehouses were placed on the ground floor, together with other rooms which were used for different agricultural activities. Additionally, a big baroque gallery was built, with a bathroom and stairs which led to the bay on the southwest side of the complex. There was also a chapel, which was later destroyed.³⁷ These separate buildings are united and organized in the form of longitudinal scheme. This scheme was considered to be an appropriate form for undisturbed enjoyment in the view.³⁸ Behind the villa, there is a hillside, but its front façade is oriented towards the bay of Rijeka Dubrovačka – the delta of River Ombla. Between the water and the villa, there is a garden.

The garden of Villa Sorkočević is one of the biggest in Dubrovnik. The garden is fenced³⁹ and like the Italian Renaissance garden divided by walkways with pergolas (in Dubrovnik known as *odrina*).⁴⁰ One of the pergolas

32 For the genealogy of the family see: Vekarić 2017, pp. 317–371.

33 Together with families Gučetić, Gundulić, Bunić, Đurđević, Menčetić i Crijević: Harris 2006, p. 187. About the aristocracy in Dubrovnik: Harris 2006; Foretić 1980; Prelog et. al. (eds.) 1987, pp. 23–24.

34 Šišić 1981, p. 89.

35 See: Šulić 2010.

36 Ibid 78.

37 About chapels as symbols of status and spiritual life in villas in Dubrovnik: Grujić 1991, pp. 96–116.

38 Some researchers consider Villa Sorkočević in Rijeka Dubrovačka to be the most representative example of this scheme in Dubrovnik: Grujić 1991, pp. 74.

39 Details about the construction of the fence wall: Šišić 1981, p. 30.

40 Pergola was present since the Ancient Egypt. It remained during the Middle Ages, but it gained a great popularity in Renaissance. More in: Grujić 1991, p. 104.



Fig 2. The Garden of the Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka (Photo: K. Jović)

contributed to the unity of the garden and the building: it led to the entrance of the house and created the green porch in front of it, which symbolized the extension of the house in the garden space (nature).⁴¹ The pergola was richly branched in order to link the house with all the parts of the garden area. Thanks to it, the garden became an intimate place suitable for long walks. The structure had an important role in the dialogue between landscape and architecture: everything which was built above the pergola was visible from the fields and the sea, and by extension present in natural scenery.⁴² Pergolas

41 Šišić 1981, p. 28.

42 About the detailed construction of pergola: Ibid, p. 29.

were held by slender stone columns with capitals decorated with volutes and carved leaves, so they appeared as the sculpture decoration in the garden. The columns framed the walkways and created an architectural perspective and rhythm.⁴³ Vegetation was the component of living nature in the garden. Thus, it symbolized the link between nature and the “humanized” space. The authentic plans and drawings of the vegetation in the gardens are not conserved in Dubrovnik. The main source of information about vegetation can be found in written reviews of the contemporaneous travelers and beholders, who described glorious plants with fruits and flowers – oranges,

43 About the capitals in Dubrovnik: Ibid, p. 28.

lemons, pomegranates – which were present in all seasons.⁴⁴ The stone was the primary constructive element of the garden, but the vegetation was also used to form the scenery or to prevent soil dispersion.⁴⁵ Geomorphological and climate conditions of Ragusa and the parcels of the land were not suitable for cereal cultivation, but the land was adapted to olives, vegetables, fruits, and wine.⁴⁶ Wine has been symbolically interpreted since the Antiquity, in relation to the myth, Arcadia and the “garden of delights”. Its presence in Ragusa was very valuable, and it was cultivated mostly on pergolas. The old Ragusan proverb testifies about its importance for the local community: „Rđa se od gvožđa ne ozdaje, tu ti nije gospodstva gdi ga loza ne daje“.⁴⁷

Water was understood as one of the driving forces of garden and landscape. The sea was the great Baroque topic. The image of unity between the land, the sea and the sky (which is present in Rijeka Dubrovačka) was the Baroque image of ideal space. In relation to the rocky landscape (as the Ragusan), this image achieved a deep Christian

symbolism.⁴⁸ Water was important for vegetation, but it was also the creator of the sound and the dynamic element of the garden. Gardens in Ragusa didn't have spectacular water constructions which were known to the contemporaneous Italian culture (glorious fountains or water organs), but wall fountains were very popular. One of them was implied to the front facade of Sorkočević Villa in the Baroque period, decorated with the sculpture of Triton, the sea-deity, with twisted conch shells, on which, according to mythology, he blew like a trumpet to calm or raise the waves.⁴⁹ Above them, there are *putti* holding the coat of arms attributed to Sorkočević family. The coat of arms is also set above the entrance in the baroque gallery, as a “clear mark of dignity”⁵⁰ and a symbol of family presence in that space.

The gallery was also connected with an octagonal bathroom, built approximately at the same time (it was projected in 1748),⁵¹ on the southwest part of the building. Thus, symbolical potentials of water were linked to symbolical meanings of architecture,

44 According to Leon Bondier. Ibid, p. 31.

45 Ibid, p. 33.

46 About the soil features in Republic of Ragusa: Marčić 1937.

47 The proverb suggests that vine was a symbol of honor in Dubrovnik. Fisković 2005, p. 84.

48 In Christian symbolism, water was the archetype of life and death, joy and pain. About the connection between the rock and the water as the symbols of the Virgin: Brajović 2006, pp. 54–55.

49 About the sculptural decoration and fountains in Dubrovnik: Grujić 1991, p. 197.

50 Brajović 2005, p. 596.

51 Šulić 2010, p. 11.

since octagonal structure – combined of squares and a circle – was considered to be “the perfect” architectural form. An octagonal structure was seen as the balance of macro and microcosms, or the harmony between humans and nature. Thus, it suggested “the intellectual sphere” which was relevant for Neoplatonic ideas about the perfect relationship between humans and nature.⁵² Furthermore, the bathroom had a social purpose (being used by several people who took their baths together), and by its function and structure it was similar to ancient *laconicum* – indicating principles of the Roman bathing procedure, status and “noble taste” of the Sorkočević family. The bathroom in the Sorkočević Villa had a hypocaust, narrowed hall which was probably a dressing room, central sweating (octagonal) room with a vault and a rectangular room for a warm bath with a pool (*alveus*). Semi-circular niches with stone benches were placed on opposite (diagonal) sides, while the cistern was built below the octagonal structure, on the ground floor. The bathroom was projected in a completely regular shape and dimensions, with respect to Vitruvius’s instructions and “golden ratio” in its proportions.⁵³

52 Grujić 1994, pp. 73–82.

53 This structure can still be seen in Villa Sorkočević. Besides this bathroom, there was just one more bathroom with the octagonal structure in Dubrovnik – built in Bishop’s Summer residence in Ploče. More about the

Moreover, this dark and small place had an intimate and mystical atmosphere, which fit the mythological decorations painted in the gallery. Its spatial relations are also important for the symbolical reading of the structure. The bathroom wasn’t built near the bedrooms, but in the separate building on the “warmest” part of the Villa, which was surrounded with greenery and water. It was built on *piano nobile* together with the gallery, which represented the noblest part of the Villa which can be compared to Pliny’s *cryptoporticus* or Alberti’s *ambulano*. This place was very important for the social and intellectual life in Dubrovnik. Since the end of the 17th century, members of the aforementioned *Akademija ispraznijeh (degli Osiozi)* were usual guests in Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka. These guests, together with the hosts, both with tendencies towards Arcadian atmosphere and rebirth of Renaissance and ancient values, enjoyed the symbolical ritual of the bath *all antica*. The bath in Sorkočević Villa was later presented in *De Umbla, quae antiquis Arion*, written by Đuro Ferić, as a representative of “the Arcadian image” of Ragusan life in villas.⁵⁴ In many ways, water was an important motif in Ragusan literature. For example, Ivan Gučetić wrote *Vicinis laudor sed aqvis*,

proportions and structure of the bathroom in Sorkočević Villa in: *Ibid*, pp. 89–91.

54 *Ibid*, pp. 92–93.

inspired with life by the sea. The Renaissance poet Petar Hektorović used a motif of water in the decoration of his fishpond in villa Tvrđalj to memorize moralistic values, as well as in *Fishing and Fishermen's Conversation (Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje)*, his complex *ecloga piscatoria*.⁵⁵ Fishing was practically and symbolically important for the life in Dubrovnik, and thus also for the Sorkočević family. Fishponds, which „imitated the nature”, make a large part of the Sorkočević property.⁵⁶ They are connected with the garden of the Sorkočević villa with canals. For the local community, these structures had the same symbolical and aesthetic quality as the „water-mirrors”.⁵⁷



Fig 3. The wall fountain with the sculpture of Triton and the coat of arms (Photo: K. Jović)

55 Belamarić 1994, pp.76–89.

56 About fishponds in Dubrovnik: Ibid, p. 205.

57 Šišić 1981, p. 35.



Fig 4. Fishponds (Photo: K. Jović)

The connection with the natural scenery was visible in the architecture of the Sorkočević garden since the first stages of building. There were holes in the fence wall which is separating the garden and the sea, and they indicated the orientation toward the water and the intention of opening unto the landscape.⁵⁸ The moderate high wall is another indicator of the same idea – it doesn't interrupt the view and presence of natural scenery in the garden.⁵⁹ During the Baroque, wide panoramas in properties were not usual, but gardens included new architectural contents: viewpoints in architecture (*loggias* and terraces) and exterior stairs which connected the architecture with nature.⁶⁰ Throughout time, nature was more and more liberated from architectural domination, which was

58 Later, the holes were walled and closed: Ibid, pp. 7–8.

59 Grujić 1991, p. 75.

60 As *grotte* and fountains. About them in Dubrovnik: Ibid, p. 207.

encouraged by Latin debates.⁶¹ Villa came to be interpreted as the part of the landscape or its “pictorial element”. Wild nature (*natura rudis*) – as it was engraved in the villa of Đivo Gučetić at the beginning of the 16th century, was the “place for hunting”, but, in the 18th century, it became the place for a walk and discovery. Unification of organized and unorganized nature was achieved with illusionistic inclusion of water, rock and woods in the complex of a villa. In a similar manner, thanks to the external baroque stairs which led directly to the sea, Villa Sorkočević was connected with the waters of Rijeka Dubrovačka. One part of the fence wall was later removed, so the garden became more unified with the natural scenery in the background.⁶² Thus, in the Sorkočević villa, we can notice the longing for the liberation of landscape, which will enounce the change in the relationship to nature and new aesthetic based on the sensuality and the participation in nature – the idea of *pittoresque*.⁶³

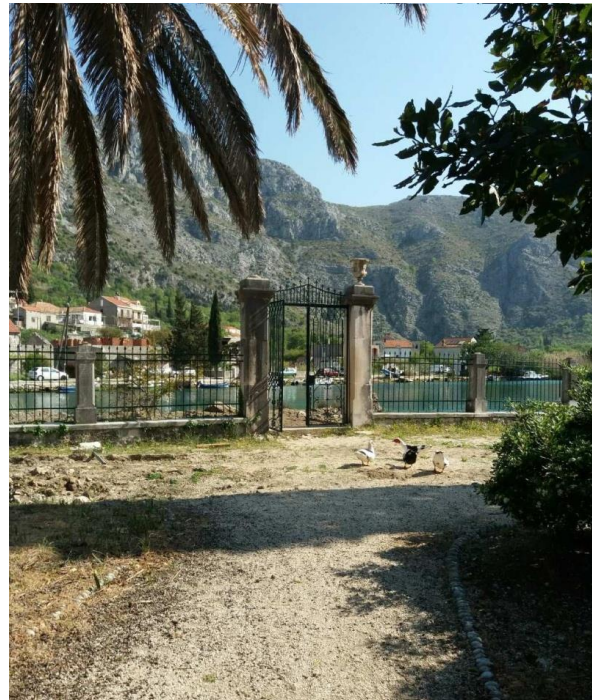


Fig 5. The walkway toward the sea (Photo: K. Jović)

Loggias, terraces and porches are places where the strongest mutual permeation of architecture and landscape could have been created. Opened towards the natural landscape and created by humans, they symbolized human presence in nature. Thus, they became an integral part of the garden.⁶⁴ The loggia in the Sorkočević Villa was built near the entrance of the complex, and it functioned as the place which could provide a delightful view, as well as a mark of the social status.⁶⁵ Terraces, which were common for buildings near the sea or river, are also present in Sorkočević Villa which is a *villa marittima*. There are two terraces in

61 See: Gobbi Sica, pp. 71-73.

62 Grujić 1991, p. 236.

63 “In the manner of a picture”, see: Brajović, Bošnjak 2012, p. 60. About the French garden in: Soergel 2005, pp. 24-25.

64 See: Šišić 1981.

65 About loggias in Ragusa: Grujić 1991, pp. 90-93.

piano nobile. First one, oriented towards the sea, was built during the Baroque period together with the stairs mentioned above, which led to the water.⁶⁶ The terrace, as well as the Baroque gallery beside, was used as a viewpoint (*belvedere*). Large windows in the gallery allowed plenty of daily light and opened the space towards the landscape.

Some baroque gardens had illusionistic fresco decoration in Dubrovnik, which complemented the world of nature with bucolic, allegorical and mythological motifs.⁶⁷ That kind of painting wasn't directly present in Sorkočević's yard with a reason – the walls in the baroque gallery have already been decorated with frescoes. Being used as *belvedere* – opened into the garden space with monumental windows – the painted gallery walls thus complemented the yard zone.



Fig. 6 The gallery (Photo: K. Jović)

Frescoes in the gallery are bucolic (pastoral motifs and deities on the wall with the monumental windows), allegorical (personifications of seasons) and mythological with moralistic character (*The Judgement of Paris, The Death of Adonis, Venus and Mars, The Contest between Minerva and Neptune, Odysseus and the Sirens, Hercules at the Crossroads and Hercules Resting*). The moralistic potential referred to the mythological scenes which indicated the Neoplatonic ideas about the good and the bad choices,⁶⁸ and by extension, the prudence of aristocratic class who governed the Ragusa.⁶⁹ Therefore, the fresco programme had a representative value suggesting the prudence of the

66 Šulić 2010, p. 1.

67 See: Marković 1978, pp. 67–76. About popularity of ancient myths and concepts in Baroque: Haynes 2006, p. 44.

68 See: Marković 1980.

69 For mythology: Srejšević, Cermanović 1987; Tresidder (ed.) 2004.

Sorkočević family, one of the noblest Ragusan families, and didactic character as frescoes were created to teach the one who stayed in the room. Because of their didactic value, mythological scenes in the gallery have been interpreted as separate fragments so far. In former art history studies, they were considered to have different meanings from the rest of the programme (bucolic and allegorical scenes). Even though the certain unity of meanings between all the frescoes in the gallery has been noticed, in former interpretations the program was divided into three separated groups: „The moralistic/didactic programme, „Arcadian programme“ and „The Seasons“.⁷⁰ In that context, „Arcadian“ referred only to the wall painted with the idealized landscape, bucolic scenes and pastoral creatures: Pan, Bacchus, putti and *The winning Love* scene (based on Neoplatonic ideas about *the divine love*, in the past considered to be an image of two lovers in the Arcadian landscape).⁷¹ But, as we saw in the examples of „Arcadian“ in Ragusan literature – Arcadia had never been just an image of idealized nature with bucolic motifs and pastoral creatures. Especially during the Baroque, the concept of Arcadia was extremely moralistic and contemplative.

As such, it was presented in Ragusan literature, and, by extension in the art of this period. Thus, the Arcadian landscape couldn't have been painted without moralistic component. Otherwise, it was considered to be mere pastoral or bucolic, but not Arcadian. Therefore, the concept of Arcadia can be recognized only in the unity of all the frescoes in the gallery, while the pastoral scenes are just one of its components. Moreover, the idyllic landscape is not depicted on the wall with the windows only. Actually, all mythological scenes have the idealized landscape in the background,⁷² which refers to the Arcadian atmosphere. Unlike the pastoral, the Arcadian painting offers the gradation from gloomy to joyful atmosphere. That gradation is similar to “the path of contemplation” which would result in “the enlightenment” in Arcadia. Only through the process which led to the awareness of bad choices (suggested, for example, in scenes *The Judgement of Paris* and *The Death of Adonis*), one could understand how to live properly (suggested, for example, in *Hercules Resting*). In combination with a didactic myth in the gallery, vivid painting had a deeper purpose – the pastoral atmosphere was surpassed and the Arcadian world was created.⁷³ The whole gallery, thus, represented the

70 See: Marković 1980, pp. 490–514.

71 Veronika Šulić gave the iconological analysis of this scene, which was based on *Omnia vincit amor* (A. Carracci). See: Šulić 2010, p. 5.

72 Ibid, p. 2.

73 About the arcadian atmosphere in painting: Freedman 1983, pp. 322–338.

imaginary Arcadia of the Sorkočević family.



Fig 7. The Death of Adonis (Photo: K. Jović)

The vision of Arcadia in the Sorkočević Villa was depicted through myth, but, like every Arcadia, it was connected with the real world. Beside the symbolical presence of the Sorkočević family in this Arcadia (through the didactic myth which suggested the prudence of the Villa's owners, or abovementioned coats of arms),⁷⁴ these paintings refer to Dubrovnik itself – the landscape, the tradition and the community. For example, the ancient Attica landscape, depicted on the background of *The Contest between Minerva and Neptune*, resembles the Ragusan coast.⁷⁵ Thus, local landscape directly became a part

74 The author has always been symbolically present in his Arcadia. There were many examples of this in literature. The similarity between the names of Jacopo Sanazzaro and the main character of his *Arcadia* – Sincero, is the one of them. See: Sanazzaro, Corniani (ed.) 1806.

75 Marković 1980, p. 496.

of the Arcadian myth. Apart from the similarity between the real and depicted area, the myth about the contest for the Attica was the allusion to The Republic of Ragusa in the local memory. Especially in the 16th and the 17th centuries, The Republic was compared to ancient *polis* in the local tradition. Antiquity was seen as the golden age of Ragusa – when Dubrovnik used to be ancient *Epidaurum*. That tradition was promoted by contemporaneous Ragusan literature. Thus, Ilija Crijević wrote that his compatriots were descendants of ancient Romans: „propago vera, verior colonia bis prolesque Quiritium“.⁷⁶ Petar Kanavelović symbolically described Dubrovnik as Athens, where the center of Slavic poetry was created.⁷⁷ Antiquity was seen as a paragon, due to freedom and independence of ancient *poleis* – the greatest values of Ragusan autonomous community.⁷⁸ Creating Arcadia from reality was a common praxis.⁷⁹ In the novel *Planine* from the 16th century, Petar Zoranić described his homeland as Arcadia.⁸⁰ In *Dubravka*, Ivan Gundulić expressed his patriotic

76 From the poem *Ode in Ragusam*, in: Vodnik 1913, p. 74.

77 Ibid, p. 276.

78 See: Kunčević 2015. About identities in Italy: Viroli 2003.

79 For example, Virgil's Arcadia in *Eclogues* was based on Mantua and Sicily. For depiction of Mantuan landscape near Mincius, see: Vergilius Maro, Bowen (ed.) 1904, p. 60.

80 See: Vodnik 1913, pp. 135–143.

sentiment in an Arcadian sense – the Ragusan residents were allegorically portrayed as herdsmen in the pastoral atmosphere and The Republic as “Dubravka”.⁸¹ The poet illustrated fictional Arcadian landscape which was, in actual fact, Ragusan.

During the 17th century, Arcadian and pastoral space and atmosphere in the painting were distinct in one more feature: the Arcadian landscape was much more opened, with more points of view and relations with the sea, while a pastoral view was usually obstructed by a mountain or trees.⁸² Large windows opened the Sorkočević’s gallery to the external natural scenery and enabled the view on the yard, sea and the “wild nature” in the background. The bucolic programme on the wall with windows, thus, had its extension in the natural scenery and was complemented with the natural landscape in the background. Consequently, the Arcadian atmosphere from the gallery expanded the real space of Rijeka Dubrovačka. Thanking to Baroque illusionistic mastery in the consolidation of architecture, painting and nature, the painting from the gallery became the component of both the interior and the exterior world – an integral part of the garden and the distant natural landscape. Thus, it became the place between the myth

and reality, which affected the special impression of the natural scenery. Moreover, with the marks of symbolical family presence in this space – through the paintings in the gallery and the coat of arms on the facade – the owners of the Villa became the characters of their own Arcadia.



Fig 8. The view from the gallery (Photo: K. Jović)

The illusionistic unification of the natural and artificial landscape in the Sorkočević Villa was “absorbed with the experience of living in that place” – the spectator’s view from the gallery to the external natural scenery embraced the myth in the painting and the landscape in the background. That view framed the real landscape – the garden and the “wild nature” behind – in a pictorial manner.⁸³

81 More in: *Ibid*, pp. 229–230.

82 Freedman 1983, pp. 322–338.

83 Pliny the Younger also admired this kind of “view”. More in: Brajović 2005, p. 605.

The painting, the architecture and nature in the Sorkočević Villa are as different structures unified with the very same principle, an entity which can be interpreted as *bel composto*, founded on the harmony of its different components and „the contemplative dialogue“ between the forms and the observer. Understanding this conception meant stimulating the intellect, will and emotions, which is why it was the perfect Baroque legacy.⁸⁴

Summary

The Arcadian atmosphere in the Sorkočević Villa was created through the *illusionistic* unity of painting, architecture and natural scenery. Their meeting point was in the garden zone: architecture opened towards the garden – the place of perfect harmony of artificial and natural – with the attached painting from the gallery to the natural landscape of Rijeka Dubrovačka. The images of Arcadia always reflected values and ideologies of their authors, but also their homeland in literature, art and philosophy. In Sorkočević’s garden, that land was embraced by the myth presented in the gallery (*belvedere*). Therefore, the myth was extended to the natural landscape of Rijeka Dubrovačka, and Dubrovnik was inserted to Sorkočević’s Arcadia. This unity of

“artificial” (fantastic) and “natural” affected the impression of “the real Arcadia” and “the ideal reality”.

Thus, the garden in front of the Sorkočević’s Villa became *Arcadia* itself and *locus amoenus*. The “humanized garden” and “wild nature” behind it – two perfect places to be – became the zone where „the mythical could be joined to the natural”.⁸⁵ They were the places for contemplation and delight, just as utopian Arcadia. The noblemen and intellectuals, resting in the garden, were characterized as Arcadian passengers. In that zone, they truly were the component of the myth: surrounded by deities and bucolic symbols – carved on fountains, capitals and walls. The special „dream“ of Ragusan aristocracy was revealed in this place: it called for the symbolic reading (in the paintings), and animated the real world (in the garden and landscape) – the real space that embraced the beholder.

Sorkočević’s Arcadia was the world between countryside and city, collective and individual, public and private, illusive and lucid. Those ambivalences, presented in the Sorkočević Villa in Rijeka Dubrovačka, were not opposed polarities, but harmonized creators of “the ideal world”.

84 Bernini defined the phrase, which was usually related to altar designs. In: Wittkower 1973.

85 Grujić 1991, p. 239.

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