

A Century of High Fantasy in Latin Europe (1838-1938), and Beyond: A Historical Overview¹

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Bibliographies, encyclopaedias and literary research by both fans and scholars are increasingly bringing to light the international wealth of science fiction's past and present. The other great branch of speculative fiction, (high) fantasy, has still a long way to go in this regard. In particular, a number of important works published after J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of*

the Rings (1954-1955) by high fantasists from Europe, and specifically Latin Europe, from Portugal to Romania and from French Belgium to Italy,² are virtually ignored abroad, except for a couple of exceptions, namely Vladimir Colin's Romanian *Legendele Țării lui Vam* (*Legends from Vamland*,³ 1961), which is an outstanding collection of linked myths and epics from an

¹ This essay, which I presented at Eurocon in Dudelange (Luxembourg) on April 10th 2022, has been written with a wider readership in mind. It builds on an earlier paper of mine (2020), some parts of which have been recycled here. A wider theoretical discussion on the specific features of high fantasy proper can be found in another paper of mine in Spanish (2022). I warmly thank Sara Martín and Jonathan Hay for having corrected my draft. All remaining errors are my own.

² I consider here works written by Latin European authors published in Latin Europe, not those by Latin Americans published in Latin Europe or by Latin Europeans published only in Latin America or elsewhere. If a particular work has been published earlier out of Europe, the date given here is that of its first European edition.

³ Titles in italics are of works already published translations into English (in full or in part), according to the bibliographical information that I have found on the Internet. Those in Roman types are of works still to be translated into that language as far as I know. The given date is always that of the earliest publication of the original text that I am aware of, or the (approximate) date of the manuscript if this was posthumously published. Its spelling of which (and of the author's name) is adapted to current rules of its language. I will only mention here titles of works that I have had the opportunity to read and that I broadly consider artistically satisfying. Some could think that too many titles are mentioned. I hope that readers will understand that my point is precisely to demonstrate the outstanding wealth, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, of high fantasy in Latin Europe. Further research could very well bring to light even more, especially in Italian. Moreover, quite a few more titles could be mentioned as well, especially those written in Romance *Kulturdiakete*, most of which I am unable to read, although I am aware of some fine high fantasy stories written by contemporary authors in Galician, such as "O templo" (*The Temple*, 1958) and "O dique de area" (*The Sand Dyke*, 1958) by Xosé Luis Méndez Ferrín, as well as in Provençal, such as "Archieu secret dóu Tèmple di tèmple" (*Secret Archives of the Temple of Temples*, 1970) by Louis Bayle,

imaginary ancient nation, and of Silvana De Mari's fine Italian genre novel *L'ultimo elfo* (*The Last Elf*, 2004). Lacking translations into English, other inventive high fantasy novels by mainstream writers such as Mário Braga's *O Reino Circular* (*The Circular Kingdom*, 1969), Charles Duit's *Ptah-Hotep* (*Ptah-Hotep*, 1971), Miguel Espinosa's *Escuela de mandarines* (*School for Mandarins*, 1974), Pau Faner's *Potser només la fosca* (*Maybe Just Darkness*, 1979), Jacques Abeille's *Les jardin statuaires* (*The Statuary Gardens*, 1982), Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's *El testimonio de Yarfoz* (*Yarfoz's Testimony*, 1986), João Aguiar's *O homem sem nome* (*The Man Without a Name*, 1986), Isabelle Hausser's *Célubée* (*Celubea*, 1986) and Bernardo Cicchetti's *Lo specchio di Atlante* (*Atlas' Mirror*, 1991)⁴ are not even mentioned in international, or even national surveys of high

fantasy. The same has happened with significant high fantasies published in collections of youth literature such as Jean-François Ménard's *L'île du dieu maussade* (*The Isle of the Sullen God*, 1980), Joan Manuel Gisbert's *Leyendas del planeta Thámyris* (*Legends from Planet Thamyris*, 1982)⁵, Nadèjda Garrel's *Les princes de l'exil* (*The Princes of Exile*, 1984), Vicent Pascual's *L'últim guerrer* (*The Last Warrior*, 1986) and Silvana De Mari's *La nuova dinastia* (*The New Dynasty*, 2015).⁶ It could be argued, however, that contemporary Latin European genre high fantasy has mostly been rather derivative from Anglophone models, especially the Howardian Sword and Sorcery and the Tolkienian mythopoetic kinds of fiction, although there are certainly in Latin Europe some genre novels also written by contemporary older authors⁷ that are enjoyable as original

and in Asturian, such as "Pol sendeiru la nueite" (*On the Path at Night*, 1981) and "L'anicu de los dioses ya de las cousas" (*The Beginning of Gods and Things*, 2014) by Roberto González Quevedo.

⁴ The languages of these works are, respectively, Portuguese, French, Spanish, Catalan, French, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian.

⁵ This book by Gisbert is a collection of short stories. They show that high fantasy short narratives have existed in the last decades despite the overwhelming prevalence of the long novel in that genre. Further significant Latin European examples published after 1954 are "La longueur de temps" (*The Length of Time*, 1968), "Le ghoom" (*The Ghoom*, 1968) and "La terrasse du feu roi" (*The Terrace of the Late King*, 1968) by Albert Dasnoy, "La visite au tombeau de mes ancêtres" (*The Visit to My Ancestors' Tomb*, 1995), "Les dunes grises" (*Grey Dunes*, 1995) and "Le Roi" (*The King*, 1995) by Sylvain Jouty and "Akr Simoul, le très puissant" (*Akrum Simul the Very Powerful*, 1999) by Robert Duterme in French, "A cidade" (*The City*, 1968) by José Saramago and "Do Deus memória e notícia" (*Report and Information on the God*, 1981) by Mário de Carvalho in Portuguese, "Sigúe Poeta" (*Poet Still*, 1969) by Manuel Derqui, "La mujer y el dios" (*The Woman and the God*, 1971) by José Ángel Valente, "Lem" (*Lem*, 1979), "Origen de la dinastía reinante" (*Origin of the Ruling Dynasty*, 1979) and "Nari" (*Nari*, 2006) by José Elgarresta and "El retorno de Sheherezade" (*Scheherazade's Return*, 1991) by José Ferrater Mora in Spanish, "Il poeta" (*The Poet*, 1972) by Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, "Drakar l'eterno" (*Drakar the Eternal*, 1985) by Luigi Menghini and "La torre" (*The Tower*, 1990) by Giorgio Prodi in Italian, "La sabata de l'emperador Orfran" (*Emperor Orfran's Shoe*, 1974) by Xesc Barceló in Catalan, "Felonia" (*Felonia*, 1981) by Mihail Grănescu, "Căutători de comori din Eldo" (*Treasure Hunters from Eldo*, 1982) by Mihai Măniuțiu and "Anul în care nu vor veni zangorii" (*The Year When the Zangors Will Not Come*, 2005) by Liviu Radu in Romanian, and "Ils uors tabuisai" (*Tabooed Bears*, 2009) by Lothar Deplazes in Romansh. There are also short fictions written as historic and geographic accounts of imaginary ancient cities, such as "La Ciudad Rosa y Roja" (*The Pink and Red City*, 1980) and "La ciudad incontenible" (*The Unstoppable City*, 1999) by Carlo Frabetti in Spanish, as well as several of the cities described in the collections of 'urbogonies' *Le città invisibili* (*Invisible Cities*, 1972) by Italo Calvino in Italian and *Cuadratura cercului* (*Squaring the Circle*, 1975) by Gheorghe Săsărman in Romanian.

⁶ These books are written, respectively, in French, Spanish, French, Catalan and Italian.

⁷ I understand here by 'contemporary older authors' those born in or before the landmark year 1954.

literature as well, such as Christia Sylf's *Kobor Tigan't* (Kobor Tigan't, 1969), Gianluigi Zuddas' *Amazon* (Amazon, 1978), Francis Berthelot's *Khanaor* (Khanaor, 1983), Rosanna Masoero's *Aragorn e la maga verde* (Aragorn and the Green Wizardess, 1996), Liviu Radu's *Armata moliilor* (Army of Moths, 2012) and Toti Martínez de Lezea's *Enda* (Enda, 2014),⁸ as well as a number of series.⁹ At any case, even admitting the current overwhelming influence

⁸ The languages of these books are, respectively, French, Italian, French, Italian, Romanian and Spanish. To all these Latin European high fantasy works one could add several heroic fantasies with marginal elements of Christianity and/or other historic religions, sometimes verging on chivalric romance, such as Jaume Fuster's Catalan series of Mòn Conegut (Known World, 1983-1993), Hugues Douriaux's French novel in three volumes *La biche de la forêt d'Arcande* (The Hind of the Forest of Arcande, 1988) and Ana María Matute's narrative masterpiece in Spanish *Olvidado rey Gudú* (Forgotten King Gudu, 1996). Other genres related to high fantasy can also boast of fine Latin European books written by older authors and published after 1954. For example, constructed cultures from the origins of sedentism to the Bronze Age are described in similar terms to those common in high fantasy in novels such as *În valea Marelui Fluviu* (In the Valley of the Great River, 1955) by Felix Aderca in Romanian, *Culan da Crestaulta* (Culan from Crestaulta, 1955) by Toni Halter in Romansh, *La déesse mère* (The Mother Goddess, 1997) by François Cavanna in French, *Aetara* (Aetara, 2004) by Pau Faner in Catalan and *El último cazador* (The Last Hunter, 2008) by Antonio Pérez Henares in Spanish. Among works set in lost Atlantis, the novels *Luntrea sublimă* (The Sublime Boat, 1961) by Victor Kernbach in Romanian, *Les Atlantes* (The Atlanteans, 1965), later retitled *Les survivants de l'Atlantide* (Survivors from Atlantis, 1965), by Georges Bordonove in French, *La signora di Atlantide* (The Lady of Atlantis, 1988) by Bruno Tacconi in Italian and *Atlantida* (Atlantis, 1995) by Margarida Arizeta in Catalan deserve to be mentioned, as well as the French series of Enfants de l'Atlantide (Atlantis' Children, 1994-2003) by Bernard Simonay. Most of these novels portray Atlantis as a civilisation contemporary to others having really existed in ancient history. The same can be said of further narratives where imaginary and real ancient civilisations also coexist, such as the French novels *La ville de sable* (The City of Sand, 1959) by Marcel Brion and *Le pays noyé* (The Drowned Land, 1990) by Paul Willems, and the Spanish one *Menesteos, marinero de abril* (Menesteos, April Sailor, 1965) by María Teresa León, as well as the French masterpiece of imaginary history *La gloire de l'empire* (The Glory of the Empire, 1971) by Jean d'Ormesson. Other invented civilisations also appear to be similar to those portrayed in high fantasy in several works written as lost race tales in which the secondary world cannot be accessed to by modern characters, such as the Spanish novel *Teluria, un país de tinieblas* (Teluria, a Land of Darkness, 1972) by Pedro Sánchez Paredes, or as imaginary voyages set in a past or indefinite period, such the French stories collected in *Voyages aux pays évanouis* (Travels to Vanished Countries, 2000) by Sylvain Jouty. Moreover, some books introduce the future perspective typical of science fiction into high fantasy narratives, such as the novels *Nocturne sur fond d'épées* (Nocturne on a Background of Swords, 1984) by Daniel Walther in French and *Temblor* (Tremor, 1990) by Rosa Montero in Spanish, the French series of Phénix (Phoenix, 1886-1990) by Bernard Simonay and the Italian collection of linked stories *Il libro dell'impero* (The Book of the Empire, 2000) by Adalberto Cersosimo. Conversely, a technologically advanced civilisation in the remote past of the Earth is described in René Barjavel's French novel *La nuit des temps* (The Ice People, 1968).

⁹ Some of the above-mentioned novels are, in fact, the first ones in their series. These are, respectively, De Mari's *Ultimi* (Last Ones, 2004-2020), Sylf's *Géants* (Giants, 1969-1971), Zuddas' *Amazzoni* (Amazons, 1978-1984), Radu's *Taravik* (2012-2014) and Martínez de Lezea's *Enda* (2014-2017). Further Latin European genre high fantasy series by other contemporary older authors are, to name but a few, Jean Tur's *Arkonn Tecla* (1973-1976), Alain Paris's *Antarctie* (1985-1987) and *Pangée* (Pangea, 1989), Hugues Douriaux' *Vonia* (1989-1990), and Alain Le Bussy's *Chatinika* (1995-1999) in French, as well as Domingo Santos & Luis Vigil's *Nomanor* (1971-1974) in Spanish, and Mariangela Cerrino's *Lisidrandra* (2008) and Donato Altomare's *Artiglio* (Claw, 2010-2013) in Italian. Indeed, genre high fantasy is often composed of series of novels set in the same fictional universe, but mainstream authors have occasionally adopted a similar literary approach as well. For example, in French, Duits wrote a further novel titled *Nefer* (Nefer, 1978) set in the secondary world of *Ptah-Hotep*, while Abeille set in his secondary world of *Contrées* (Lands) several novels and a fine collection of short stories and fictional non-fiction texts titled *Les carnets de l'explorateur perdu* (The Lost Explorer's Notebooks, 1993). In Spanish, Sánchez Ferlosio produced a couple of short stories titled "Los lectores del ayer" (The Readers of Yesterday, 1980) and "Los príncipes concordes" (The Princes in Agreement, 2005), which belong with *El testamento de Yarfoz* to a series named *Historia de las guerras barciales* (History of the Barcialean Wars), yet to be published in full.

of high fantasy written in English, there is no reason to believe that this peculiar situation of cultural dependence has always been the same.

Before *The Lord of the Rings* redefined the genre, there was already high fantasy of outstanding quality in Latin Europe. This fact has been overlooked, however, despite the unarguable influence of French Symbolist fantasy on the work of some of the best English and American fantasists. Many of those French¹⁰ fantasists wrote in the so-called purple prose typical of artistic literature in the Decadent and Aesthetic Movement at the turn of the 19th century. This particular style of writing was creatively emulated, among others, by Lord Dunsany, Kenneth Morris and Clark Ashton Smith, who should particularly be counted among the creators of high fantasy in the modern sense. There is likewise no need to position H. P. Lovecraft's typical purple prose as a further derivative of earlier continental models, especially his first high fantasy stories, before he moved into the weird fantastic. Therefore, it is at least historically relevant to recall the development of high fantasy not only in France, the leading literary country in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but also in other parts of Latin Europe¹¹ which also produced early high fantasy, almost always without even knowing contemporary British classics of this

literary mode such as William Morris. Hence, high fantasy was born in parallel in different parts of Europe. Better recognising this fact would allow us to fully appreciate high fantasy works rooted in European traditions rather than in the Anglophone ones, regarding both their themes and their style. This move is not meant to belittle any particular literature or language. Rather, it is about promoting a meaningful universalism, as well as a fairer literary globalisation both culturally and linguistically. My field of study is unfortunately limited to Romance languages and I am not, therefore, into a position to discuss early high fantasy works in other European languages. I hope, nevertheless, that this limited historical survey will show how helplessly parochial the usual overviews are which only focus on works written in English, as if this were the only language and literature worth studying, at least in the realms of high fantasy.

Before attempting to draft a history of high fantasy, it might be worth trying to describe first what exactly we aim to discuss. This is not an idle task even from the historical perspective here adopted. A prior specific theoretical description of high fantasy seems necessary to escape the vagueness that all too often affects both academic and fan approaches to this kind of narratives. Whereas science fiction is, despite

¹⁰ Some of them are, in fact, from Belgium. In this overview, every ethnonym solely refers to the language used by the discussed Latin European authors in their mentioned works, not to their ethnicity, nationality or citizenship.

¹¹ There are some high fantasy works worth mentioning in Latin America in the period prior to World War II, too. For example, Brazilian Nestor Vitor's tale "Hiranyo e Garbha" (Hiranyo and Garbha, 1895) is a rare example of pure dystopian high fantasy; Argentinian Leopoldo Lugones' flash fiction "El mal, el bien, la justicia y la ley" (*Evil, Good, Justice and Law*, 1909) is a masterful parable on morality and politics; Uruguayan Álvaro Armando Vasseur's piece of historical fictional non-fiction titled "La isla donde no se dormía" (The Island Where No One Slept, 1919) shows an original alternative past humanity, while his fellow countryman Pedro Figari used a similar literary procedure in *Historia kiria* (Kirian History, 1930); the prose poems with ancient imaginary settings included by Venezuelan José Antonio Ramos Sucre in his books from the 1920s have become canonical in Latin American literature, and the volume *O'Yarkandal* (O'Yarkandal, 1929) by Salvadorian Salarrué is a significant collection of allegedly translated myths and legends from an invented ancient civilization. To those works we could add a few fine high fantasy short narrative poems, such as Luís Delfino's "Origem das nuvens" (Origin of Clouds, 1855) in Brazil and Duraciné Vaval's "La légende du chasseur" (The Hunter's Legend, 1912) in Haiti.

its range of definitions, a clear literary entity, the English word ‘fantasy’ is so all-encompassing that it has virtually lost any taxonomic value. Putting Edgar Allan Poe and J. R. R. Tolkien under the same heading because both use the supernatural amounts to a complete disregard of the specific nature of fantasy, and namely of high fantasy. This is a particular literary species with distinctive fictional features that can be inferred from even a superficial reading of its classics. High fantasy is about the realistically consistent building of a fictional secondary world fully independent from the mundane one (past, present, or rationally anticipated). Whether it is specifically named or not, high fantasy hardly stands intrusions from our world without losing its ontologically autonomous status, if we are to follow the definition of ‘secondary world,’ as it appears in this genre, proposed by Waggoner: “A fantasy world is a secondary reality whose metaphysical premises are different from those of the real world” (1978: 4). Using a more precise narratological language, Trębicki contends that fantasy follows “a strategy aimed at the creation of a secondary world model with its own precisely described spatial and temporal parameters, its own social and ontological order,¹² and its own causality, unusual from the point of view of mimetic reality but perfectly coherent and logical within

the fictional universe” (2014: 488). Therefore, one should exclude from high fantasy those works in which modern characters directly and knowingly intervene in the secondary world, thus depriving it of the illusion of completeness in its own setting in a venue removed from the primary world or parallel to it, even when this venue is not explicitly named (if it is, onomastics usually indicate its imaginary status). C. S. Lewis’ Narnia is a wide and sophisticated secondary world but the children’s access into it and return from it through a wardrobe during World War II implies that their modern primary world and the secondary world of Narnia are intertwined, instead of the latter remaining independent from mundane modernity as it would be the case in true exercises of sub-creation in the Tolkienian sense. Portal fantasies such as Lewis’ or Massimo Bontempelli’s Italian short novel *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio* (*The Chessboard in Front of the Mirror*, 1922) are certainly enjoyable as great literature in their own right, but they cannot be considered, in my view, genuine high fantasy.¹³

High fantasy eschews implausible direct contacts between ontologically different kinds of fictional worlds (the mundane and the fantastic) in order to offer the complete result of a speculative process of world building akin to that of science fiction (since it is

¹² Trębicki slightly modified this contention in a later study on the same subject, where he stated that the fictional secondary worlds of both science fiction and (high) fantasy have “their own social and, sometimes, ontological orders” (2015: 66), thus tacitly recognising that fantasy can abide by the natural laws of our material universe. A specific social order would be, on the contrary, necessary.

¹³ In order to offer a wider picture of Latin European endeavours in fictional ‘sub-creation,’ I mention in passing (mostly in footnotes) some significant fictions that are not high fantasies, but that create similar secondary worlds based on the mythopoetic/pagan view within an imagined ancient civilisation underpinning high fantasy proper: fictions set in a pagan non-technological future, fictions set in nations already invented in ancient times (e.g., Atlantis), imaginary voyages into ancient fantasy lands, archaeological fictions on imagined first civilisations, heroic archaeological fantasies with marginal historical content and invented mythographic texts and ethnographic accounts, etc. I do not mention in this study any kind of portal fantasies featuring characters clearly living in the modern age who can have access to the secondary world, not even if their intrusion into it is fully ignored as it happens with the arrival of Lessingham on Zimiamvia in E. R. Eddison’s novel *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922).

rationally created on the basis of a particular set of premises). These appear to be scientific in science fiction, as its name implies. They are rather mythical in high fantasy, thus warranting the common presence¹⁴ of supernatural beings, magical powers and extraordinary occurrences in the framework of a plausible pagan society, as they all were before the advent of Christianity and Islam, as well as before the evolution of Buddhism into a clerical religion focused on its divinised founder. These religions have transformed our worldview up to the point that their presence in a fictional world implies that this is not fully removed from our current culture and cannot be independent from it. Therefore, it cannot be a pure high fantasy world according to the approach here adopted,¹⁵ especially if we also consider that both Christianity and Islam tend to exclude supernatural forces that do not fit into their received beliefs, thus preventing the free use of imagination to invent them or to show them acting in a non-traditional way. Confessional theology is hardly favourable to mythopoesis, at least to any myth-making free from dogmatic interference.

By contrast, in high fantasy societies, godlike forces can freely intervene, or are believed to intervene, in human affairs in the same way as they do in the true mythological lore that modern archaeological, philological, mythological and ethnological research have revealed to us using rational methods from the Enlightenment Age onwards. However, unlike mythological and legendary fiction mainly

based on existing matter (for instance, any kind of existing mythic beliefs in the past or the present and, therefore, any form of historical paganism), as well as fairy tales, where narratives follow traditional and stereotyped settings and motives usually borrowed from folklore, high fantasy is 'created,' or if we prefer to use a Tolkienian term, 'sub-created.' Its worlds are essentially personal artistic inventions by a particular author, although fantasy writers often find inspiration in existing mythologies as well as in ancient history for their creations, which are nevertheless invented. High fantasy writers treat features borrowed from the ancient lore yet revealed by the modern human sciences as mere elements in their free world building, the consistency of which is internal, and which need not to be externally consistent with previous mythological, ethnographical or historical knowledge. For example, while Robert H. Howard uses names and peoples from the true ancient history of our planet in his Conan stories, these do not constitute archaeological fiction, because the history of their secondary world is freely imagined, as his fictional historiographical account of the Hyborian age shows. Lord Dunsany was probably inspired by Japanese mythology, but his mythology of Pegāna was his own.

These features are common to all high fantasy worlds now considered canonical, such as William Morris' *Glittering Plain*, Lord Dunsany's *Pegāna*, Robert H. Howard's *Hyboria*, Clark Ashton Smith's *Hyperborea*,

¹⁴ Although many high fantasy fictions feature supernatural occurrences, some of them do not and they still 'sub-create' a full-fledged secondary world of the high fantasy type here described. A good example of this is William Morris' romance *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890). Its venue, the Dale, and its inhabitants are probably inspired in early Germanic tribes, but there is not a single mention to any historical nation, name or culture from the past of our primary world. The Dale is, as such, a wholly invented place, a secondary fictional world where imaginary pagan nations have imaginary religions, history and manners, and from which any supernatural agency is fully absent.

¹⁵ This is the main reason for our excluding from this survey chivalric romances, including those related to the Arthurian legend, which are deeply related to Christianity (cf. the *Holy Grail*), as well as those orientalist fantasies related to Islamic cultures (e.g. Latin European works based on the lore of the *Arabian Nights*) and to Asian civilisations shaped by Buddhism.

Tolkien's Middle-earth, Fritz Leiber's Nehwon, L. Sprague de Camp's Novaria, Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea, Samuel Delany's Nevèrÿon, and George R. R. Martin's Westeros. A similar mythopoetic imagination already appears active in the largely invented Ossianic epic narratives by James Macpherson and, especially, in William Blake's narrative poems where his personal mythology is, rather confusedly, presented to the world as an alternative to Christianity.¹⁶ Regarding prose fiction, John Sterling's short story "The Sons of Iron" (included as an independent narrative in the novel *Arthur Coningsby*, 1833) explores the customs and history of an ancient imaginary race of men made of iron. This tale could be considered the first true high fantasy narrative, but it remained obscure in Britain, and it does not seem to have influenced the later course of English-language fantasy from George Macdonald's *Phantastes* (1858) onwards, with the caveat that Macdonald's significant narrative could be better understood as a portal fantasy or even as a symbolic *Märchen* novel, and not as high fantasy proper. This ambiguity also occurs in a minor degree in the first significant work in this

mode published in Latin Europe,¹⁷ Alphonse de Lamartine's *La chute d'un ange* (The Fall of an Angel), a long epic poem first published in 1838. There is, however, a significant difference. Whereas Anodos, the protagonist and homodiegetic narrator of *Phantastes*, returns to his known and contemporary primary world, once the angel of Lamartine's poem renounces his heavenly status for the love of an earthly woman, he loses all memories of his former being, and he never recovers it, even in the face of death. Moreover, although Lamartine's story is firmly set in an existing mythological time and place, specifically in the antediluvian times described in the Hebrew *Book of Genesis*, the former angel's earthly adventures with his lover owe nothing to Hebrew myth. Their world is purely invented, and has the appeal of encompassing two fully constructed imaginary civilisations. The first one is a technologically primitive society from which the couple has to flee due to the fact that their love does not fit into the unwritten collective laws of the tribe, thus showing how social pressure from peers can act as a sort of horizontal totalitarianism tending to repress any signs of unbridled

¹⁶ Blake's poems remained largely ignored for many years and they were not directly imitated, whereas poets throughout Europe wrote epic poems on the matter of Ossian. Among those written in Romance languages, I will just mention "Óscar y Malvina" (Oscar and Malvina, 1837) by José de Espronceda in Spanish, "Óscar" (Oscar, 1845) by Almeida Garrett in Portuguese and "Orla" (Orla, 1892) by Nicolae I. Basilescu in Romanian. Moreover, Ossian's example might have given rise to further attempts at creating national epics using allegedly ancient, pre-Classical and pre-Christian materials from several areas of Europe. Among them, only the Catalan narrative poem "La deixa del geni grec" (The Legacy of Greek Genius, 1902) by Miquel Costa i Llobera and the Romanian dramatic poem *Zamolxe* (*Zalmoxis*, 1921) by Lucian Blaga seem to have acquired canonical status. However, all these works can hardly be regarded as belonging to high fantasy, whereas other modern legends also set in ancient times in barbarian Europe read now as sword and sorcery fiction, such as the Basque novella written in Spanish by Vicente de Arana titled "La leyenda de Lelo" (Lelo's Legend, 1882), or even as a sort of Tolkienian *legendarium*, such as the linked short stories set in pre-Roman Germanic Campine (now in Belgium) that Roland de Marès published in his French book *En Barbarie* (In Barbarian Lands, 1894).

¹⁷ The short description in verse of a magnificent imaginary city endowed with supernatural high fantasy features made by Philothée O'Neddy in his French "Fragment indien" (Indian Fragment) could have been written earlier, since it is included in a series of poetic fragments written between 1835 and 1842 according to the publishers of their posthumous edition in 1877. From our perspective, it might be worth clarifying that, despite its title, there is no indication in the poem that the city is located anywhere in historical or mythical India. Moreover, we cannot be sure if that title was already present in the manuscript written down by O'Neddy.

individual agency. The second civilisation is, in contrast, a vertically totalitarian one, since it is a tyrannical monarchy where prisoners are enslaved and public dissidence is also actively repressed, whereas the powerful have a lavish lifestyle in a palace as luxuriant and ornate as any aesthete from the Decadent movement could desire. How the lovers succeed in fleeing only to die is also an early example of the way Latin European high fantasy usually avoids the consolations of eucatastrophe. Unhappy endings seem to be, indeed, specific to many of Latin European masterpieces of high fantasy after Lamartine.

Not many years passed until his example was, indeed, followed. A further French canonical author, George Sand, revisited humankind's beginning in the poetic and philosophical prose narrative *Évenor et Leucippe* (Evenor and Leucippe, 1856), later retitled *Les amours de l'âge d'or: Évenor et Leucippe* (The Loves of the Golden Age: *Evenor and Leucippe*, 1861). This is arguably the very first high fantasy novel.¹⁸ Although she called it a "Légende antédiluvienne" ('antediluvian legend'), its world is fully mythopoetic in the Tolkienian sense. Sand invented her own myth about the origins of humanity, love and civilization. Both the Hebrew single god and the panoply of Greek deities are absent from the narrative, which tells the life as well as the emotional

and philosophical growth of Évenor, a human child living in a balanced primitive society. The seeds of selfishness and evil already exist among humans, however, and the young protagonist is happy to find, after getting lost in the forest, a secluded, paradisiacal valley where he decides to stay. He meets there another child, Leucippe, a girl who is being raised by Téléïa, the last of the 'dives,' a species of beings half humane and half divine, and Sand's own invention. The 'dive' teaches them morality and true love as the main inheritance from her race to this couple of children, then teenagers and married couple, so that they can deliver it to the successor sentient race, the humans. They fail, however, in their mission. Evil has already grown deep roots in human society. Évenor, Leucippe and their followers are forced to escape from their tribe. Only the dive's supernatural intervention finally saves them from their pursuers, allowing them to return to their paradise in the valley, called Éden. This parts them from their fellow humans and therefore from the course of human history. Their fate is lost in the mist of myth and legend. Despite the echoes of their names and place in later traditions, namely Biblical and Platonic, their internally consistent world is a closed one, having nothing to do either with sacred or secular history. *Évenor et Leucippe* is not a fictional reconstruction of prehistory as it could have been but rather a symbolic narrative

¹⁸ There is at least an earlier high fantasy short story, namely the Spanish one "El rey Eserdis" (King Eserdis, 1842) by Manuel Milá y Fontanals. It is a parable set in an Orient-like imaginary kingdom and conveying a moral lesson combined with tacit political criticism of despotism. A similar approach to high fantasy was also adopted by later Spanish writers of parables such as "La esclava perfecta" (*The Perfect Slave*, 1872) by Federico de Castro, "Las piedades del sultan" (The Sultan's Mercies, 1897) by José de Echegaray, "El cuerno del rey Zamur" (King Zamur's Horn, 1898) by Alejandro Larrubiera, "La sombra" (*The Shadow*, 1900) by Emilia Pardo Bazán, "La corte triste" (The Sad Court, 1902) by Mauricio López Roberts, "La duda del rey Omar" (King Omar's Doubt, 1918) by Álvaro Alcalá Galiano, "Benagissal el profeta" (*Benagissal, the Prophet*, 1924) by Alfonso Maseras, "La clave" (The Key, 1926) by Huberto López de la Ossa and "Ilustir el triunfador" (Ilustir the Victor, 1928) by Sinesio Darnell. Among these tales, Castro's "La esclava perfecta" stands out due to its combining of supernatural features and the presence of ancient technology since that 'perfect slave' is a perfect female automaton. Castro might have known a former French example of that combination of fantasy and a very early form of retro-futurism, namely a short story by Aurélien Scholl related to the Frankenstein topic titled "Prométhidès" (Promethides, 1854).

intended to convey, for a grown-up readership, an ethical and philosophical meaning through mythopoesis¹⁹. Therefore, the fictional world created there by George Sand fulfils for the first time all the requirements of high fantasy in a novel.

Despite Sand's status as a renowned and also popular writer in her time and afterwards, no other French high fantasy full-fledged novels were produced for decades, although her son Maurice published in book form in 1867 a long romance set in Plato's Atlantis titled *Le coq aux cheveux d'or* (The Golden-Haired Rooster), which reads as one of the first heroic fantasy or even sword and sorcery works ever written in modern times. The rooster of the title looks and acts in a similar way to Howard's Conan. Its fictional world is also fully Howardian both for its themes and its style. The same can be said of a 19th century Spanish novel set in two ancient kingdoms of Amazons and developing, as an

extended narrative, ancient legends on that matter summarized by Diodorus Siculus. Pedro Mata's *Las amazonas* (The Amazons, 1852) tells the many adventures and political intrigues of an Amazon queen fighting with monsters, human or not, and it does it with a lively pace which can also be considered as offering a foretaste of Howardian writing. Unfortunately, neither the youngest Sand nor Mata's footsteps were immediately followed. Latin European novels of heroic fantasy adventures entirely set in ancient Atlantis began to appear in the 20th century,²⁰ such as *Les Atlantes* (*The Last Days of Atlantis*, 1905) by Charles Lomon & Pierre-Barthélémy Gheusi and *La fin d'Atlantis* (*The End of Atlantis*, 1926) by Jean Carrère in French, to which one could add a number of more innovative short stories on the same subject written in the style of the Decadent/Aesthetic movement around 1900, such as Paul Valéry's "L'île Xiphos" (*The Island of Xiphos*, written in 1896), also in

¹⁹ George Sand had already written a further mythopoetic piece, namely a short epic poem in prose titled "Le poème de Myrza" (Myrza's Poem, 1835). Although it is mostly based in ancient Hebrew creation myths, it is to be considered, along with William Blake's mythic poems, one of the first modern examples of literary mythopoesis. Sand's footsteps were later followed by further Latin European authors who proposed their own creation myths, usually in the form of allegoric narratives often based on dualistic Theology and written as mythographic accounts in verse, such as "Fiat lux!" (Fiat Lux!, 1863) by Antero de Quental and "O firmamento" (The Firmament, 1895) by Teófilo Braga in Portuguese, "El Bien y el Mal" (Good and Evil, 1868) by José Fernández Bremón in Spanish, *Les destins* (Destinies, 1872) by Sully Prudhomme and "La légende de la Terre" (The Legend of the Earth, 1886) by Jean Rameau in French, "Creațiunea" (The Creation, 1874) by Alexandru Macedonski in Romanian and "Creació" (Creation, 1902) by Àngel Guimerà in Catalan, or in prose, such as "Vie de Morphiel, demiurge" (Life of Morphiel the Demiurge, 1895) by Marcel Schwob, "Sacrifices" (*Sacrifices*, 1902) by Han Ryner, "La genèse profane" (Secular Genesis, 1902) by Renée Vivien and *L'épopée de Lucifer* (The Epic of Lucifer, 1937) by Henri Mazel in French, "A Dor" (Sorrow, 1902) by Raul Brandão in Portuguese, "Il fuoco" (Fire, 1919) by Vincenzo Cardarelli in Italian, "Buntad" (Goodness, written before 1935) by Gian Fontana in Romansh, and "Oglinda" (The Mirror, 1922) by Ion Pillat and "Geneza și apocalipsa" (Genesis and Apocalypse, 1937) by Tudor Arghezi in Romanian. In "Le poème de Myrza" a civilisation of imaginary pre-human intelligent beings with supernatural features is described as well. Similar beings also appear in later mythographic allegories such as "Les Funèbres" (The Mournful Ones, 1898) by Gabriel de Lautrec in French and "Bătrânii Insulei de Aur" (The Old men from the Golden Island, 1925), later retitled "Bătrânii din insulă" (The Old Men from the Island, 1931), by Tudor Arghezi in Romanian.

²⁰ Earlier significant narratives on Atlantis showing features of contemporary Positivism, such as the Catalan long narrative poem *L'Atlàntida* (Atlantis, 1877) by Jacint Verdaguer and the Portuguese short one "A submersão da Atlântida" (The Sinking of Atlantis, 1894) by Teófilo Braga, are rather related to Greek myths (Heracles, Prometheus, etc.) and bear much less resemblance to high fantasy than the later narratives mentioned or than other epic poems, generally short, on the same matter of Atlantis, such as "La découverte d'Atlantide" (The Discovery of Atlantis, 1883) by Pimodan and "Les géants" (The Giants, 1890) by Auguste Génin, as well as two further short epics also in French, both titled "L'Atlantide" (Atlantis), one published in 1885 by Stanislas de Guaita and the other written in 1932 by François Brousse.

French, and Luis Valera's "La diosa velada" (*The Veiled Goddess*, 1905) in Spanish. Amazonian fiction was less popular back then, although several French works, all titled "Les Amazones" (The Amazons), warrant to be mentioned, namely a Parnassian poem from 1902 by Renée Vivien, a drama from 1905 by Henri Mazel and a cruel Lesbian tale from 1928 by Renée Dunan, as well as an Italian short narrative poem titled "Laòmache" (Laomache, 1906-1916) by modern classic Luigi Pirandello. However, both

strands of fiction are not high fantasy proper, because their worlds are not wholly invented.²¹ Therefore, stories of this kind are better seen as belonging to a corpus composed of modern and original versions of ancient legends on imaginary kingdoms,²² rather than to high fantasy proper. Nevertheless, their similarities and mutual influence cannot be denied.

High fantasy in Latin Europe only gained momentum when the Decadent/Aesthetic worldview promoted the invention of exotic

²¹ The same can be argued regarding secondary worlds created in later times. Among them, the stark Christian character of legends such as the Arthurian ones and those of the drowned city of Ys excludes them from high fantasy proper, being rather forms of chivalric romance and hagiography, respectively. There is, however, a legendary matter implying a full-fledged secondary world that has inspired fantasies in our period of study, such as the poems "La coupe du roi de Thulé" (The King of Thule's Cup, 1863) by Louise Ackermann and "Le roi de Thulé" (The King of Thule, 1877) by Arsène Houssaye in French, and "Nova balada do rei de Tule" (New Ballad of the King of Thule, 1875) by António Gomes Leal in Portuguese, as well as the tales in prose "A taça do rei de Thule" (The King of Thule's Cup, 1893) by Fialho de Almeida in Portuguese and "La copa del rei de Tule" (The King of Thule's Cup, 1899) by Eugeni D'Ors in Catalan. This secondary world is that of Thule in the German ballad by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe titled "Der König in Thule" (*The King in Thule*, 1774).

²² There are some fantasies written in this period and also set in classic mythical or historical times but in other classic imaginary regions different from Atlantis and the kingdoms of Amazons, such as those described in the poems "La ville disparue" (*The Vanished City*, 1877) by Victor Hugo in French, "La città dei titani" (The City of Titans, 1897) by Arturo Graf in Italian and "La destrucció d'Idàlia" (The Destruction of Idalia, 1912) by Jeroni Zanné in Catalan, as well as in the French drama *Avant l'âge d'or* (Before the Golden Age, 1927) by Henri Mazel. Moreover, there are some modern imaginary voyages featuring invented ancient travellers who come from a real place in history and visit imaginary regions populated by fantasy beings, human or otherwise. The masterpiece of this sort of imaginary voyages is arguably the Spanish novella "Los inmortales" (The Immortals, 1947), later retitled "El inmortal" (*The Immortal*, 1949) by Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, but we should not forget some Latin European works that preceded it, such as the short fictions "Les embaumeurs" (*The Embalming-women*, 1891) and "Origines du journal: l'Île des Diurnales" (Origins of the Newspaper: the Island of the Diurnals, 1903) by Marcel Schwob, the novella "Les aventures de Setné" (The Adventures of Setné, 1902) by J.-H. Rosny aîné and the novels *Les voyages de Psychodore, philosophe cynique* (*The Travels of Psychodorus, Cynic Philosopher*, 1903) by Han Ryner and *Le bouclier d'Alexandre* (Alexander's Shield, 1922) by Marcelle Tinayre, all of them in French, as well as the playlet "La fuente del mal" (The Source of Evil, 1907) by José Francés in Spanish and the Italian tale "Un'avventura di Alessandro Magno e dei suoi" (An Adventure of Alexander the Great and His Men, 1908) by Arturo Graf. To these we can add other fantasy voyages of a more symbolic nature, such as those where an imaginary traveller, either unnamed or with a fully invented name (a typical linguistic mark for high fantasy), visits in an unspecified past time period cities and places unlike any one having existed. The extraordinary features of those venues are usually endowed with a particular philosophical meaning, as it is the case, for example, in the French short stories "La vie sans effroi" (*Life Without Fear*, 1891) by Bernard Lazare, "Le temple d'Effroi" (The Temple of Dread, 1891) by Pierre-M. Olin, "La ville aux aveugles" (The City of the Blind, 1897) by Édouard Ducoté, "Voyage à la Cité des Morts" (Voyage to the City of the Dead, 1898) by Frédéric Boutet, "L'île de la joie" (*The Isle of Joy*, 1900) by Victor-Émile Michellet and "Le long de l'abîme" (*Along the Abyss*, 1905) by Renée Vivien, and in the Spanish one "Las peregrinaciones de Turismundo" (*The Travels of Turismundo*, 1921) by Miguel de Unamuno, as well as in some lyrical visits to fantasy and sacred places such as the ones portrayed in the French poem in prose "Offrande distraite" (Distracted Offering, 1892) by Arnold Goffin, in the Italian playlet "La statua velata" (The Veiled Statue, 1905) by Arturo Graf, in the Catalan tale "Oracle" (Oracle, 1905) by Alfons Maseras and in the Romanian poem in verse "Per aspera" (Per aspera, 1912) by Ovid Densusianu. Imaginary journeys of this kind are probably to be counted among the rare instances of portal fantasies that could be considered high fantasies as well.

worlds, often primitive or Oriental-looking. In the last decades of the 19th century, pagan myths and legends different from the Greco-Latin or Hebrew ones were already widely known among educated writers thanks to translations from works written, among others, in Old Egyptian, Akkadian, Sanskrit, Old Irish, Old Norse and Persian (especially Ferdowsi's *Book of Kings*), as well as from modern pagan lore from Europe, especially Finland (*The Kalevala*), and from other regions of the world, such as Native America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific islands, which began to be revealed by ethnologists back then.²³ Leconte de Lisle and later Parnassian poets enthusiastically embraced this exotic matter and produced poetic versions of the now revealed myths, epics and histories. Some of his followers went a step further by inventing their own fictional worlds, with their history, art and myths. This Parnassian high fantasy can be illustrated by short poems in French, such as Léon Dierx's "La ruine" (The Ruin, 1879), Éphraïm Mikhaël's "L'hierodule" (The Hierodule, 1886) and "Le mage" (The Mage, 1890), and Auguste Angellier's "La ville ruinée" (The City in Ruins, 1909); in Catalan, such as Àngel Guimerà's "L'honor real" (Royal Honour, 1887) and Gabriel Alomar's "La doma dels déus" (*The Domestication of the Gods*, 1911), and in Italian, such as Luigi Gualdo's "Atarah" (Atarah, 1883) and, especially, an early

work by modern classic Gabriele D'Annunzio. His short narrative poem "Il fuoco della pace" (The Fire of Peace) was first published in 1883 and, in its definite version titled "Il sangue delle vergini" (Virgins' Blood), in 1894. Although D'Annunzio paraphrased in part of his poem one of the episodes of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), the plot of "Il sangue delle vergini" is not exactly located in any venue of the real ancient world. Also invented, including their names, are the two tribes who fight each other until their members are all killed following the attempted rape and death of the virgins of the other tribe, despite the attempt of their national god, also invented, to appease them. D'Annunzio pessimistically shows how human, and especially male violence, transgresses even materially uttered divine injunctions. D'Annunzio's superb command of poetic language allows him to endow great rhetorical and literary beauty to such a horrible view of our species, a view unfortunately all too often underpinned by real history, both in the legendary past and in recorded history until our own times.

This anthropological pessimism endures in Latin European fantasy after 1900, as if it were a dire premonition of the horrors to be seen during the two great wars of the 20th century. Two narratives set in secondary worlds populated by sentient non-human beings coming from

²³ *Fakelore* or true folklore, such ethnologic narratives were creatively imitated in the form of original myths written as if they were taken from an imaginary oral literary tradition, namely by Henri Michaux in his avantgardistic *Fables des origines* (Fables of the Origin, 1923). These French fables by Michaux are often etiologic tales that read as poetic versions in prose of oral pagan lore from Sub-Saharan Africa, although they are fully invented and can be read as mild parodies as well. This parodic is far clearer, for example, in the fake critical translation by Pompeu Gener into Catalan of an imaginary Indian sacred book which allegedly explains the origins of all titled first "Una teogonia índia" (An Indian Theogony, 1901) and later "Antic poem del Indostan" (Ancient Poem from Hindustan, 1911). Despite its alleged origin in India, this piece of mythology is populated by fully invented gods and divine forces that own nothing to Hindu lore, being are rather the result of a process of myth-making intended to deconstruct the myths themselves from a Positivist perspective. Positivism also underpins "A dor" (The Sorrow, 1881) by Fialho de Almeida, which is a serious etiologic tale in Portuguese set in the beginnings of hominization according to contemporary scientific theories, although it is an unnamed forest god who forces intelligence and, consequently, sorrow upon the unsuspecting pre-human.

Classic mythology and European folklore are good expressions of a common negative concept of humankind extending to the whole human race, not just to some specific (imaginary) nations as it was the case in D'Annunzio's poem. In André Lichtenberger's French novel *Les centaures* (*The Centaurs*, 1904), a faraway forest is the last refuge of centaurs and other such creatures from encroaching humans. Centaurs are the guardians of a technologically primitive and peaceful community where all its members, including animals, live in harmony with nature and themselves. The arrival of humans into the forest means the destruction of that utopian order following a battle of annihilation. The story happens in a legendary time, after which the very existence of centaurs and similar beings, now killed to the last one, becomes the matter of myth. In the Catalan long poem *Liliana* (*Liliana*, 1907) by Apel·les Mestres a forest is also the place where different elemental beings, in particular gnomes and sylphs, spend their lives

in a natural way according to the lore described by Paracelsus and others. The frustrated love of several gnomes for a visiting female sylph²⁴ is depicted in delicate and melancholic terms, but this turns into expressionistic tragedy after their world is dramatically disturbed by the irruption in the forest of armed hunters. Following this, this fantasy world, which had existed independently along with our human one, is threatened. Although the elementals succeed in expelling human invaders from their forest refuge, Mestres shows that the cohabitation of both worlds is impossible. Given human ways, fantasies where men and elementals live alongside each other are tacitly shown as illusory and false.²⁵

The negative concept of mankind implied in many narratives of this kind²⁶ often acquires a metaphysical dimension in Symbolist high fantasy. Symbolism is about suggesting through intuition hidden messages coming from a universe that is spiritual as much as it is material.

²⁴ Mestres had presented a similar plot in an earlier and much shorter narrative poem, also in Catalan, titled "El gnomo" (*The Gnome*, 1906). The frustrated love of gnomes for a female of another species, this time human, is also the subject of the Spanish playlet "Tragedia de gnomos" (*Gnomes' Tragedy*, 1912) by Eugenio López Aydillo. A further example of a Spanish narrative where gnomes are the main characters is Vicente Risco's fine tale "El tesoro de Kolirán" (*Kolirán's Treasure*, 1910).

²⁵ A similar message can be easily deduced from an interesting example of the fantastic ethnographic report in French on the life and manners of elves by Camille Maclair titled "Vie des elfes" (*Life of Elves*, 1903), whose elves are shown to exist in a different plane alongside bothersome humans until today. Other communities, although allegedly human, are described as being unlike any other to such a degree that they seem the stuff of high fantasy, namely those described in Spanish by Tomás Borrás in "El agua de la ciudad seca" (*The Water of the Dry Town*, 1924) and, especially, in French by Henri Michaux in *Voyage en Grande Garabagne* (*Travels to Great Garabagne*, 1936). This kind of ethnographic fantasy had been cultivated very early, but with no literary consequences whatsoever by Pavel Vasici-Ungureanu in his short fiction in Romanian "Geografia Țintirimului" (*Geography of the Cemetery Kingdom*, 1840).

²⁶ In addition to these two significant long works, short fantasies featuring communities of elementals and similar beings in conflict with humans within secondary worlds were quite numerous in Latin Europe between 1838 and 1938. Among them, I will mention but a few in prose, such as Guerra Junqueiro's "Os gigantes da montanha e os anões da planície" (*Mountain Giants and Plain Dwarves*, 1877) in Portuguese, Renée Vivien's "La légende du saule" (*The Legend of the Willow*, 1902) in French, Alfons Maseras' "El conte d'una bruixa" (*The Tale of a Witch*, 1905) in Catalan, Arturo Graf's "Lo gnomo" (*The Gnome*, 1908) in Italian, Nicolae Davidescu's "Zâna din fundul lacului" (*The Fairy at the Bottom of the Lake*, 1912) in Romanian and "La sirena" (*The Siren*, 1918) by Álvaro Alcalá Galiano in Spanish, and in verse, such as Nicolae Iorga's "Sirenele" (*Sirens*, 1893) in Romanian, Salvador Rueda's "Las xanas" (*The Xanas*, 1893) in Spanish, Albert Samain's "Les sirènes" (*Sirens*, 1894) in French, Alberto Osório de Castro's "Fata Morgana" (*Fata Morgana*, 1906) in Portuguese, Alexandre de Riquer's "Fada Doralissa" (*Doralissa the Fairy*, 1910) in Catalan and Gian Fontana's "La diala" (*The Diala*, 1925) in Romansh.

Metaphor is the main trope used to convey meanings that cannot be accessed by reason alone. This is mostly the case in symbolist poetry, but also in symbolist narratives, especially in short ones. In this context, the tale is usually conceived as a sort of extended metaphor and, therefore, it often appears as a parable. Although this genre has very ancient roots, older even than the Christian gospels, Symbolist parable sometimes introduces new significant features. Some examples endeavour to convey their philosophical message through innovative processes of literary world-building. In order to move away from contemporary realities, as well as from documented history, several Latin European Symbolists tried to exploit the connotations of exoticism, legend and myth by presenting invented ancient and pagan kingdoms in imaginary or vague temporal and geographical venues. Thus, they could fully create mythopoetical worlds of fiction where they could express their seeking of hidden meanings both in the universe and in the human mind, without any pollution by positivistic materiality. The ensemble of these parables written in the service of a poetic investigation of the essence of things, both natural and social, constitutes one of the main strands of early modern high fantasy, from Pre-Raphaelite forerunners such as George Macdonald to writers of the Aesthetic

Movement such as Lord Dunsany and Kenneth Morris. However, French Symbolism was the cultural movement that ushered in the first golden age of high fantasy. The short stories that can be said to belong to this species are often impressive both for their number and for the consistent high quality of their style, which was often influenced by the rhetoric of the so-called *écriture artiste* (artistic writing). Despite this fact, it is to be admitted that French Symbolist high fantasy has not acquired yet the canonical status that it certainly deserves, although recent reissues and translations suggest that their rediscovery is underway. Here I will just mention but a few short stories translated into English that can be considered representative of that sort of literature in French, namely Éphraïm Mikhaël's "L'évocateur" (*The Evocator*, 1890) and "Le solitaire" (*Solitude*, 1890), Pierre Quillard's "Les frères d'armes" (*The Brothers-at-Arms*, 1890), Bernard Lazare's "Les fleurs" (*The Flowers*, 1891), Jean Lorrain's "Hylas" (*Hylas*, 1892), Marcel Schwob's "Le roi au masque d'or" (*The King in the Golden Mask*, 1893), Gabriel de Lautrec's "Le mur" (*The Wall*, 1898), Remy de Gourmont's "La ville des sphinx" (*The City of Sphinxes*, 1898), Victor-Émile Michelet's "Holwennioul" (*Holwennioul*, 1899) and, especially, Camille Mauclair's *Le poison des pierreries* (*The Poison of Precious Stones*, 1903).²⁷ This is a novella luxuriantly

²⁷ There are, of course, a number of high fantasy tales and short narrative poems in French following the Decadent/Aesthetic style which seem not to have been translated into English. Here I will mention just some beautifully written examples, such as the short stories "La recherche" (The Search, 1879) by Ernest Hello, "L'arbre sacré" (The Sacred Tree, 1885) by Catulle Mendès, "Soléal" (Soleal, 1893) by Hubert Stienet, "Le roi" (The King, 1895) and "Le Triomphateur" (The Victor, 1895) by Jehan Maillart (Jules Noël), "Hors la lumière" (Out of the Light, 1897) by Édouard Ducoté, "Fax-Agélia, prince de Belsédène" (Fax-Agelia, Prince of Belsedene, 1898) by Frédéric Boutet, "Le bouclier d'or" (The Golden Shield, 1903) and "La révolte des bijoux" (The Jewellery Revolt, 1906) by Camille Mauclair, and "Hécatombes" (Slaughters, 1906) and "Les noyées" (The Drowned Women, 1906) by Stuart Merrill, as well as the poems in verse "L'étrangère" (The Stranger, 1888) by Éphraïm Mikhaël, "L'aventurier" (The Adventurer, 1890), "Le bois sacré" (The Sacred Wood, 1890) and "La voix impérissable" (The Imperishable Voice, 1890) by Pierre Quillard, "L'idole" (The Idol, 1891) by Stuart Merrill, "La reine Margiane" (Queen Margiane, 1895) by Gustave Kahn, "La Cité de Lumière" (The City of Light, 1896) by Claude Couturier, "Les éléphants bourreaux" (Executioner Elephants, 1911) by Sébastien-Charles Leconte and "Le château des masques" (The Castle of Masks, 1918) by Maurice Magre. Among works of a similar kind written in other Latin European

portraying an imaginary and Oriental-looking ancient kingdom, where a sorceress queen unsuccessfully tries, having recourse to the black magic residing in her precious necklace, to confront her husband, a very masculine warrior king, with his beloved younger brother, an androgynously delicate and artistically-minded, but nevertheless iron-willed prince.

Mauclair's novella is a successful high fantasy narrative following Gustave Flaubert's style of writing in *Salammô* (*Salammô*, 1862), the historical novel that inaugurated the kind of prose almost universally embraced by the above-mentioned authors in France, although it was also widely practiced by high fantasy writers in other Latin European countries.²⁸ In this respect, Portuguese literature can boast of one of the masterpieces of Symbolist high fantasy in artistic (rather than purple) prose thanks to two opposite main versions of the same tale written by the same author. Raul Brandão first depicted in "A voluptuosidade e o amor" (*Voluptuousness and Love*, 1896)²⁹ an oppressive ancient society subjected to sanguinary rites focusing on the human sacrifice of young couples, as requested

once a year by an idol endowed with divine powers. The subsequent terror surrounding nascent love and relationships is, however, brought to an end by the triumph of spring, which is symbolised by bees making their honey on the former stone god. Some years after, impressed by the suffering caused by the Russian civil war on the wake of the 1917 revolution, Brandão altered that ending. The latest version of his story, now retitled "Primavera abortada" (*Aborted Spring*, 1926), describes the failure of Nature in front of the forces of darkness and death embodied by the idol. Human suffering will then continue.

This tragic story was hardly exceptional in its time. Melancholy and pessimism are prevalent in Symbolist high fantasy, but there were alternatives within that kind of fiction as well. There was, indeed, a parallel strand of optimistic high fantasy showing how heroism could prevail against difficult odds. J.-H. Rosny aîné's novella in French "Les Xipéhuz" (*The Shapes*, 1887) is a significant pioneering work of adventure high fantasy, although it has also been considered one of the first masterpieces

languages and also lacking English translations, there are several that warrant mentioning here, such as the Italian brief descriptions of symbolic secondary worlds titled "La montagna fatale" (The Fatal Mountain, 1892) by Mario Rapisardi and "La porta di bronzo" (The Bronze Door, 1901) by Arturo Graf, both in verse, and "Era il paradiso terrestre" (It Was the Terrestrial Paradise, written in 1908) by Carlo Michelstaedter, in prose. To these can be added the Romanian tale "Apocalips profan" (Secular Apocalypse, 1913) by Nicolae Davidescu and the Spanish novellas "El Jardín Encantado" (The Enchanted Garden, 1918) by Álvaro Alcalá Galiano and "La estrella cautiva" (The Captive Star, 1922) by Tomás Borrás.

²⁸ *Salammô* was influential on high fantasy not only due to its style. Although its plot was based on historical facts, Carthaginian civilisation itself was only vaguely known. This allowed Flaubert to give a free rein to his imagination when portraying it, perhaps following the steps of his friend Maxime du Camp in his French novella set in a fantasy India titled "Tagahor" (Tagahor, 1851). Other 19th Latin European writers also used exotic and little known mythic or historic legends set in largely imaginary Oriental kingdoms, or created them, in order to produce narratives that often read, like those on Atlantis and the Amazons, as if they were high fantasies, such as Juan Valera's Spanish unfinished novel "Lulú, princesa de Zabulistán" (Lulu, Princess of Zabulistan, 1870), Villiers de l'Isle Adam's French novella "Akédysseril" (Akedysseril, 1885), Marià Vayreda's Catalan "Conte àrab" (Arabian Tale, 1893) and Giovanni Pascoli's Italian poem "Gog e Magog" (Gog and Magog, 1895). "Akédysseril" was later emulated, among others, by Félicien Champsaur in his supernatural fantasy *La princesse Émeraude* (*The Emerald Princess*, 1928), which is set in an invented kingdom where Hindu gods are worshipped.

²⁹ There is an earlier, less developed version of this tale titled "Deus" (God) published in 1895.

of science fiction.³⁰ The reason for the latter classification is that a group of ancient humans are confronted with a form of intelligent life apparently alien to earthly biology. However, Rosny aîné states nowhere that the portrayed beings are anything but terrestrial. They seem to be rather a modern variant of the usual fantasy monster that kills people, with the difference that those 'shapes' are fully 'sub-created,' since they are not based on previous myths or legends. Moreover, the novella is firmly set in an entirely imagined civilisation somehow similar to Neolithic ones, albeit it is fully imaginary. Although the narrative focuses on the war between humans and the fantastic mineral-like 'shapes,' as well as on the gallant deeds of men led by the main hero, who is both brave and intelligent, there is an adequate depiction of the mores, beliefs and culture of the invented populations depicted. This stimulates a deliberate search for historical plausibility and completeness by the imagined civilization fighting for its survival, which also means the survival of humankind. Men succeed at great cost in conquering and eliminating the rival race after an epic clash as impressive and existentially meaningful as those described in Tolkien's masterpieces, despite the relative brevity of Rosny aîné's story. This work is also literarily sophisticated since the alleged memories of the main hero follow a heterodiegetic narrative in order to tell his discovery of the shapes' vulnerabilities and how he took advantage

of them to win the day. These memories are presented as a document, which makes this part of the book an interesting example of fictional non-fiction.

Luis Valera uses a similar procedure in order to create an allegedly non-fictional framework for the events narrated in his Spanish novella "Dyusandir y Ganitriya" (Dyusandir and Ganitriya, 1903). Instead of taking responsibility for the historical veracity of those events, the narrator attributes their knowledge to the testimony of a German archaeologist. This scholar, perhaps unreliable, tells him of his own discovery in Asia of ancient remains and documents, so that the text is presented as a novelisation of a historical account about an early Aryan civilisation in Asia, that of the Purunas. This is not directly linked to Persia or India, but appears as a fully invented ethnicity, including their religion, language, culture and institutions. Although these are common for the whole Puruna nation, it is divided in two rival kingdoms fighting for supremacy. This conflict is finally solved by the marriage of Dyusandir and Ganitriya, respectively the crown prince and princess of each of the kingdoms, after many adventures (some of them apparently supernatural) that they must undertake to secure their relationship against all political obstacles. The story comes to a happy ending, notably thanks to the deeds undertaken by the young woman, rather than by any male agency, let alone war. Valera shows

³⁰ High fantasy and science fiction can be said to overlap more clearly in some instances, in particular if the invented past civilization is shown as having command of advanced technology before its disappearance in the mists of (fictional) history, such as it is the case in the French novels *La fin d'Illa* (*Illa's End*, 1925) by José Moselli and *L'incroyable histoire de Tali-Thô la décolorée* (*The Incredible Story of the Discoloured Tali-Tho*, 1932) by Ferdinand Duchêne, as well as in several narratives set in ancient Atlantis, such as the French short stories "Cataclisme" (*Cataclysm*, 1893) by Jean Richepin, "La malédiction du soleil" (*The Sun's Curse*, 1913) by Grégoire Le Roy and "Le déluge" (*The Deluge*, 1936) by René Le Cœur, and the Romanian long poem *Atlantis sau epoca de aur* (*Atlantis; or, The Golden Age*, 1929) by Cleant Spirescu. Conversely, there are narratives set in a future that looks like a mythic past, such as the Catalan tale "Los immortals" (*The Immortals*, 1899) by Alexandre de Riquer, a French poem titled "Le Dieu futur" (*The Future God*, 1911) by Sébastien-Charles Leconte and, especially, the rhetorically sophisticated French novel *Les surhommes* (*The Superhumans*, 1929) by Han Ryner.

how feminine endurance and strong will can be heroic, too. Ganitriya shows that a woman can prevail without recourse to violence, unlike the tyrannical queen regnant in Camille Maclair's French cruel tale "Vie de la princesse Hérène" (*The Life of the Princess Hérène*, 1896). This violent ruling woman imposes her will upon her subjects and conquered enemies, thus becoming a fascinating example of feminine political agency threatening to subvert the patriarchal public order. Other fantasies prefer to portray feminine characters who succeed in peacefully negotiating their male-dominated societies to empower themselves and, indirectly, their mates as Ganitriya does in Valera's novella. Similarly, mildness distinguishes the idealised heroine of the French novella set in an oriental-like imaginary kingdom titled *Djéta et Maknem* (Djieta and Maknem, 1893) by Philippe Selk,

as well as the more assertive queen of Carles Riba's Catalan short story "La pietat de la reina Alina" (Queen Alina's Mercy, 1916) and the female protagonist of Eduardo Marquina's successful Spanish dramatic comedy in verse *El pavo real* (The Peacock, 1922),³¹ where she is even transformed into that bird before her resilience allows her to recover her lost children and the love of their father, the monarch of an imaginary ancient Asiatic kingdom.

In these fantasies, the depicted heroic feminine qualities are related to love. They are virtually devoid of direct socio-political meaning in their context. By contrast, this dimension is paramount in some works published in the interwar period and showing early imaginary kingdoms and organised societies in order to speculatively reflect upon the origins of civilisation³² and how culture and

³¹ This play by Marquina was, indeed, one of the very few high fantasy plays which was commercially successful on the stage back then, also due to its innovative scenery, costumes, etc. It is also one of the few which were actually written for the conventional scene. Despite the fact that they might have been eventually commercially staged, most high fantasy dramas were primarily intended to be read, even being sometimes impossible to stage due to their world's expanse, for example in the French short dramatic pantomime "Les bras levés" (*The Raised Arms*, 1896) by Remy de Gourmont, or because of their lyric lack of action, for example, in the Italian playlet in verse "I naviganti" (*The Navigators*, 1905) by Arturo Graf. In fact, playwrights were well aware that contemporary public taste and the practical conditions of the theatre usually precluded any performance showing high fantasy secondary worlds, except perhaps for single performances in the experimentalist theatres of Symbolist/Decadent circles, especially in Paris and Brussels, where some French high fantasy plays were, indeed, staged, such as the little dramas for marionettes by Maurice Maeterlinck from 1894 titled "Alladine et Palomides" (*Alladine and Palomides*) and "La mort de Tintagiles" (*The Death of Tintagiles*) and the lyrical playlet "L'errante" (*The Wondering Woman*, 1896) by Pierre Quillard. Nevertheless, other high fantasy plays written for those theatres, such as the French Wagnerian dramas in verse *Euryalthès* (Euryalthes, 1892) by François Coulon and *Les miroirs* (The Mirrors, 1908) by Paul-Napoléon Roinard, never reached them.

³² The fact that the secondary worlds in these works are not directly related to an attested civilisation in history distinguish them, for instance, from fictions set from the origins of sedentism to the Bronze Age, when communities were developing the traits of early states, such as an organised religion with a nascent clerical class and political authority exercised by a ruler or ruling minority, elected or not. Nevertheless, these fictions are sometimes very similar to those of high fantasy, especially when their authors only use archaeological knowledge in vague terms, focusing instead in secondary world-building. Widely constructed cultural traits, invented onomastics and imagined historical processes are features shared by high fantasy and this sort of 'protohistoric fiction.' In Latin Europe, this particular genre posited here was first inspired by the discovery of the Neolithic/Bronze age pike dwelling settlements in Europe. Several protohistoric narratives take actually place in them, but their communities are generally invented. This is the case in a number of narratives in French, beginning by Élie Berther's "La cité lacustre" (*The Lacustrian City*, 1876), which was followed, for example, by Marcel Schwob's "La vendeuse d'ambre" (*The Amber-trader*, 1891), J.-H. Rosny aîné's *Eyrimah* (*Eyrimah*, 1893), "Nomai" (*Nomai*, 1897) and "Amour des temps farouches" (Love in the Fierce Age, 1933), Joseph Jacquin's "Grite, une petite fille de l'âge de bronze" (Grite, a Little Girl from the Bronze Age, 1911) and Jacques Bainville's "Kab l'architecte" (Kab the Architect, 1928). Other

(geo)politics clashes with ethics, in the manner of Laurence Housman's early masterful novella "Gods and Their Makers" (1897). For example, religion is shown to be an empty but perhaps necessary superstition in the Spanish playlet "El templo sin Dios" (The Temple without God, 1918) by Ramón María Tenreiro, or an illusory rampart against the dangerous forces of nature in the French short story "L'ensevelissement d'Olasryck" (*The Burial of Olasryck*, 1922) by Gabriel de Lautrec; both religion and sexual violence upon women underpin the ideology of military expansion in the Italian tale "La conquista" (The Conquest, 1925) by Fillia, and the lust for gold and foreign goods destroys a nation following a cultural mutation brought about by the ideas of a mad prophet³³ in the Catalan novella "Els hereus d'en Xanta" (Xanta's Heirs, 1935), later rewritten and retitled "Els hereus de Xanta" (Xanta's Heirs, 1964) by Lluís Ferran de Pol. Since one of the main points of all these works is to show the foolishness of common beliefs, especially in religious matters, and their manipulation in order to advance earthly interests, their fictional worlds do not

feature supernatural phenomena. By contrast, they appear in a later masterpiece of Latin European high fantasy, a Romanian short three-act drama in prose and verse written by historian and politician Nicolae Iorga titled *Răzbunarea pământului* (The Revenge of the Land). This play was premiered outdoors on a village in 1938, not long before the author's assassination by right-wing extremists and the occupation of parts of Romania by foreign powers in 1940. Iorga was aware of growing geopolitical tensions in Europe, where imperial expansionism by the totalitarian regimes imposed upon Germany and Russia was clearly on the rise when his play was written as a response to those growing threats. In fact, its plot generates what seems a parable linked to that situation. An agricultural pre-state community in an unidentified ancient region is invaded by another nation that has arrived there with its fleet and has all the attributes of a state, from a royal court to a standing army. After having occupied the country and built up a fortified city, they exploit the work of their new subjects and even try to impose their religion upon them. However, the land itself rejects the

significant narratives are closer still to high fantasy for their having portrayed less specific or even fully imaginary protohistoric cultures, such as the narrative poems "Le soleil de minuit" (Midnight Sun, 1876) by Catulle Mendès in French, "Os séculos mudos" (The Silent Centuries, 1884) by Teófilo Braga in Portuguese and "El bosc se defensa" (The Forest Defends Itself, 1910) by Alexandre de Riquer in Catalan, as well as the French stories "L'offrande à la déesse" (*The Offering to the Goddess*, 1890) by Bernard Lazare, "L'idole phallique" (The Phallic Idol, 1931) by Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers and *Han, la néolithique* (Han, the Neolithic Woman, 1936) by Julienne-M. Moulinasse & Raoul Bouillerot, and the Spanish tale "La mayor fiera del mundo" (The Biggest Beast in the World, 1930) by Fulgencio Chapitel (Alfonso Martínez Rizo).

³³ Prophets are sometimes heroes in high fantasy. Although one of them already featured in Lamartine's *La chute d'un ange*, it was Friedrich Nietzsche who really established those sorts of literary characters within the genre that we could call prophetic high fantasy thanks to his German masterpiece *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883-1885). The fictional content in this and other works that can be classified in the same genre is often slight, but in some of them the authors tried to strike a balance between their didactic content (which can be, nevertheless, ironic) and both their narrative framework and/or their depiction of a secondary world. Among the most interesting Latin European examples of this approach to prophetic high fantasy are to be counted a few stories where the prophets' preaching does not mar the narrative, such as "Miracles" (1886) by Éphraïm Mikhaël, "L'ineffable mensonge" (The Ineffable Lie, 1889) and "La venue" (The Coming, 1891) by Bernard Lazare in French, "Clădirea minunată" (The Wonderful Building, 1908) by Theodor Corneli and "Povestea celui din urmă sfânt" (The Tale of the Last Saint, 1912) by Ion Pillat in Romanian, and "El fratricidio del santo" (The Fratricide of the Saint, 1923) by Huberto Pérez de la Ossa in Spanish. It is worth mentioning that modern classic Fernando Pessoa began a work of prophetic high fantasy in Portuguese titled "O livro do rei Igorab" (The Book of King Igorab, written around 1915), but he did not complete it.

invaders. Supernatural occurrences demonstrate the displeasure of local nature and gods, eventually expelling them from the conquered territory. Imperialism is, thus, defeated. This optimistic outcome, which was not commonly preferred following the Great War and the subsequent interwar geopolitical tensions, was eventually contradicted by historical reality, but Iorga's play still remains an interesting example of eucatastrophe, just before developments in the aftermath of World War II generally put an end to the history of native high fantasy in Latin Europe.

In that post-war period, both socialist realism imposed upon Romania as part of the Eastern Bloc and the increasing anglicised globalisation embraced in the Western part

of Latin Europe meant that the history begun by Lamartine in 1838 and concluded by Iorga a century later could not be resumed, save for a few exceptions written by authors already active before the end of War World II.³⁴ Latin European romantic exercises in mythopoesis, symbolist parables, realist (sub)creations of imaginary but historically plausible ancient civilizations, such as those above described have effectively been forgotten, although many of their authors are considered canonical today. As a result, high fantasy in that region ended by forgetting its own roots, usually preferring to follow successful Anglo-American models, which are now the only ones really well known by most younger readers and writers³⁵ of mass-market high fantasy across the continent. There

³⁴ Among the few high fantasy works written in Latin Europe between 1938 and 1954 (the date of Tolkien's first instalment of *The Lord of the Rings*) can be mentioned a number of Italian short stories such as "La morte del re Salibù" (King Salibu's Death, 1942) by Eugenio Prandi, "La bellissima fiaba di Rosa dei Venti" (The Very Beautiful Tale of Winds' Rose, 1948) by Riccardo Bacchelli and "La storia del mago Yaldiz" (The Story of Yaldiz the Wizard, written in the 1940s) by Saul Israel. In other parts of Latin Europe, a few already well-established authors also wrote high fantasy short stories in that period, such as "Histoire des hommes-creux et de la rose-amère" (*The Tale of the Hollow-men and the Bitter-Rose*, 1941) by René Daumal, "Les statues" (The Statues, 1947) by Marcel Brion and "La géante" (The Giantess, 1947) by Jules Supervielle in French, "Daim" (Daim, written in 1942) by Mihail Sadoveanu in Romanian, "A rota do bergantim" (The Route of the Brig, 1947) by João Barreira in Portuguese, and "Mitología de un hecho constante" (Mythology of a Constant Fact, 1948) by Tomás Borrás in Spanish, as well as plays such as *El Ben Cofat i l'altre* (The Well-Hatted and the Other One, 1951) by Josep Carner in Catalan and narrative poems such as "Les dieux décapités" (The Beheaded Gods, written in 1951) by François Brousse in French. To these titles can be added a number of works published between 1939 and 1954 in some genres related to high fantasy. For example, some stories are set in Atlantis or among the Amazons, such as "La fausse amazone" (The Fake Amazon, 1947) by Jules Supervielle in French and "La nau cretenca" (The Cretan Ship, 1953) by Antoni Rivera in Catalan. A couple of late novels on the pile-dwelling civilisations are *Oulgwy des Sables Verts* (Ulgwy of the Green Sands, 1940) by Jean Vergriete and *La vengeance du Rhin* (The Revenge of the Rhine, 1946) by Max Landreau (André Glory), both in French. Ethnographic fantasies following the model of Henri Michaux in *Voyage en Grande Garabagne* (1936) were relatively popular in that period. That significant collection of short accounts about the manners of numerous imaginary peoples visited by an unnamed traveller in an indefinite period was continued by further series of a similar kind by Michaux himself in his books *Au pays de la magie* (In the Land of Magic, 1941) and *Ici, Poddema* (Here, Poddema, 1946). He then collected these three volumes in *Ailleurs* (Elsewhere, 1948). Similar fictional ethnographic descriptions of ancient-looking imaginary nations and places, with their institutions, religion and manners were also published in Italian, such as "Il Regno dei Karseni" (The Kingdom of Karsenians, 1941), "I figli del sole" (The Sons of the Sun, 1942), "Armuria" (Armuria, 1942), "Una strana città" (A Strange City, 1950) and "Ascenzia" (Ascenzia, 1951) by Giovanni Papini, "L'isola dei sogni" (The Isle of Dreams, 1944), later retitled "La vita è un sogno" (Life is a Dream, 1944), and "Mamamel e Vusitel" (Mamatel and Vusitel, 1944) by Alberto Moravia, and "La fonte dei baci e delle lagrime" (The Fountain of Kisses and Tears, 1952) by Riccardo Bacchelli. Moreover, new myths of origin in the form of mythographic allegories were also published between 1939 and 1954, such as "Uriășii" (The Giants, 1943) by Tudor Arghezi in Romanian and "La création des animaux" (The Creation of Animals, 1947) by Jules Supervielle in French.

³⁵ I understand here as 'younger writers' those born after 1954.

have been some exceptions, though. Those artistically successful narratives written by older authors mentioned at the beginning of this survey can be counted among them. However, they do not seem to have been influential in shaping the current state of literary affairs.³⁶

The writing of usually very long high fantasy novels and series of novels intended for a mass-market and also widely read by a large readership is such a recent phenomenon in (Latin) Europe that the short chronological distance to our own time prevents us to assess its literary dimension. What can be safely stated is the staggering number of published works of that sort.³⁷ As a mere indication of the huge scope of genre high fantasy imitating / emulating English-language models in Latin Europe, one could mention that even a super-minority language such as Romansh has produced at least a couple of pleasant genre high fantasy novels, respectively titled *Emalio* (Emalio, 2015) by Flurina Albin & Stina Hendry, and *Oranja* (Oranja, 2021), by Stella Sennhauser. It can only be guessed how many more such novels have been written and published in our century in other more widely used Romance languages. These figures must be so huge that they defy a sound philological and historical survey. However, even a look

at a limited sample of books hints at the fact that English-influenced globalisation has increasingly erased literary and cultural diversity in the realm of high fantasy in the European continent. Topics, characters and, in particular, modes of writing seem to have now lost their link to (Latin) European traditions in the art and craft of literature. There must certainly be exceptions to this literary uniformity, but most of them seem to have remained ignored. It is perhaps for future scholars, translators and fans to reveal more original and culturally European high fantasy works that the inertia of global market forces has kept hidden from us. This is why further research on high fantasy works written in Romance and other European languages, as well as further translations from them into English, are a pressing necessity in order to show to a global readership, or at least to thorough scholars in the field, that high fantasy literature was a diverse and international literary mode in the past, as it should be in the present and in a truly universal future.

³⁶ A possible exception to the latter contention is *Un long voyage* (A Long Trip, 2020) by Claire Duvivier. The literary approach and the style of this French novel seem more akin to those of the mainstream high fantasy narratives written by Charles Duits, Jacques Abeille and Isabelle Hausser than to those prevailing nowadays in genre ones.

³⁷ Stand-alone high fantasy novels of reasonable length (in my view, less than 400 pages) seem to be the exception rather than the rule among younger authors in Latin Europe. Among those shorter novels written with some regard to their literary style, some good examples are *La guerre des cercles* (The War of Circles, 1995) by Jean-Claude Dunyach in French, *Máscaras de matar* (Masks for Killing, 2004) by León Arsenal in Spanish and *A noite do caçador* (The Night of the Hunter, 2019) by Sandra Carvalho in Portuguese. Among works belonging to related genres such as Atlantis fiction and fictional 'protohistoric' speculation, further fine examples of reasonably lengthed novels are, respectively, *Atlantis, les fils du rayon d'or* (Atlantis, Sons of the Golden Ray, 1998) by Pierre Bordage in French and *Il tempo del tamburo* (The Drum Time, 2021) by Sabina Moretti in Italian. Significant high fantasy short stories, both genre and mainstream, have occasionally been written by younger authors as well. With an eye to linguistic diversity, I will just mention "Călăreții de fier" (The Iron Riders, 1985) by Rodica Bretin in Romanian, "L'Artigliopàpine" (The Claw-Slaps, 2004) by Michele Mari in Italian, "Morflam" (Morflam, 2012) by Pierre Bordage in French, "Corpo, alma e coração" (Body, Soul and Heart, 2012) by Carina Portugal in Portuguese, "Els noms dels seus déus" (The Names of Their Gods, 2015) by Ruy D'Aleixo in Catalan and "Abismo, abismo, abismo" (Abyss, Abyss, Abyss, 2018) by José Ardillo in Spanish

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³⁸ This is a secondary bibliography only.