Fantastyka a realizm

The Fantastic and Realism

Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, Wydział Filologiczny

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WSTĘP

W *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (1984) – wciąż istotnej i często wznawianej pozycji na gruncie anglosaskim – Kathryn Hume dowodzi, że literatura jest w zasadzie efektem dwóch równie istotnych impulsów – mimetycznego i fantastycznego, przy czym ten drugi definiowany jest bardzo szeroko jako „każde odejście od konsensualnej rzeczywistości" (*consensus reality*)[1]. W ujęciu tym używany przez badaczkę termin *fantasy* nie odnosi się do stosunkowo nowego gatunku literatury popularnej, lecz odgrywa ważką rolę – na równi z *mimesis* – w kreowaniu literackich wyobrażeń rzeczywistości, co uwidacznia się w bardzo zróżnicowanych utworach literackich, poczynając od sag islandzkich, a kończąc na *science fiction*. W niniejszym tomie „fantastyczność" rozumiana jest w podobnym, równie ogólnym sensie, co pozwala autorom badać relacje, w jakie wchodzi z szeroko pojmowanym „realizmem" nie tylko w fantastyce, lecz również w literaturze głównego nurtu i innych nietekstualnych narracjach.

W fantastyce, obejmującej wszelkie narracje zawierające elementy fantastyczne, nadnaturalne czy futurystyczne, powiązania pomiędzy *fantasy* a *mimesis* mogą przybierać wielorakie formy i być stosowane w różnych celach. W *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) Farah Mendlesohn podejmuje namysł nad relacją pomiędzy tymi dwoma trybami w konwencji *fantasy*, wyróżniając jej cztery odmiany[2]. Utwory typu *portal-quest* (np. *Opowieści z Narnii* C.S. Lewisa czy *Fionawarski gobelin* Gaya Guvriela Kaya) przenoszą bohaterów z rzeczywistości przedstawianej w konwencji realistycznej do świata fantastycznego, podkreślając ich odrębność. *Fantasy* intruzyjna, obejmująca zarówno powieść gotycką, jak i horror, przedstawia światy podobne do rzeczywistych w stylistyce reali-

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1 K. Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, New York and London: Methuen 1984, s. 21.

2 Koncepcje te zostały szczegółowo omówione w: F. Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Middletown 2008.

zmu, konstruując fantastyczność jako swoiste wtargnięcie, które zaburza ich normalne działanie. Akcja utworów określanych przez Mendlesohn jako immersyjne (np. *Dworzec Perdido* Chiny Miéville'a) osadzone są w świecie w pełni fantastycznym, który musi być jednak wewnętrznie spójny i logiczny pomimo faktu, iż jego zasady odbiegają od tych obowiązujących w świecie empirycznym. Z kolei *fantasy* liminalna (np. *Wśród obcych* Jane Walton) zaciera granice pomiędzy elementami fantastyki i realizmu, wywołując w czytelnikach efekt niepewności czy też wahania odnośnie ich proweniencji. O ile jednak studium Mendlesohn daje ogląd różnych sposobów konstruowania pierwiastka fantastycznego i jego funkcjonowania w tekście, nie wyczerpuje oczywiście wszystkich możliwości omawiania relacji pomiędzy fantastyką, realizmem i rzeczywistością.

Literatura fantastyczna, bez względu na to, czy jej akcja osadzona jest w pseudośredniowiecznym wyimaginowanym świecie, czy też w odległej zaawansowanej technologicznie przyszłości, charakteryzuje się dużym potencjałem podejmowania tematów istotnych dla czasów współczesnych i kreowania alternatyw zastanej rzeczywistości. Odnosząc się do *science fiction*, rozumianej jako „literatura wyobcowania poznawczego" (*literature of cognitive estrangement*), Darko Suvin dowodził, że polega ona na wyabstrahowaniu z empirycznej rzeczywistości pewnych jej aspektów celem ukazania ich w nowej perspektywie „implikującej nowy zbiór reguł"[3]. O ile w *science fiction* przesunięcia te muszą być „spójne logicznie i metodyczne; (…) naukowe w tym sensie, że naśladują, wzmacniają i wyjaśniają proces poznania naukowego"[4], koncepcję wyobcowania poznawczego odnieść można do wszystkich rodzajów fantastyki, która zawsze zaprasza czytelników do konfrontacji z zastaną rzeczywistością poprzez immersję w wyobrażonym świecie, rządzonym odmiennymi zasadami. W związku z tym, utwory fantastyczne mogą być postrzegane jako swoista forma konstatacji rzeczywistości empirycznej i próba stworzenia jej alternatywy – czasem w formie wyidealizowanej i nostalgicznej wizji przeszłości, kiedy indziej poprzez stworzenie obrazu dystopijnej czy postapokaliptycznej przyszłości. Artykuły w niniejszym tomie podejmują próbę omówienia związków fantastyczności z konwencją realistyczną z jednej strony i rzeczywistością z drugiej, oferując wgląd w procesy i efekty wynikające z takich interakcji.

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3 D. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, New Haven 1979, s. 6.

4 I. Csicsery-Ronay Jr., *Marxist theory and science fiction,* w: *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, red. E. James, F. Mendlesohn, Cambridge 2003, s. 118.

Niniejsza publikacja stanowi kontynuację wcześniejszych pozycji poświęconych fantastyce przygotowanych przez interdyscyplinarny zespół skupiający zarówno polonistów, jak i anglistów. Pierwsza z nich, zatytułowana *Motywy religijne we współczesnej fantastyce*, została wydana w roku 2014, kolejna pod tytułem *Tekstowe światy fantastyki* ukazała się w 2016. Podtrzymując tradycję uwypuklania obu, często odmiennych perspektyw badawczych, zdecydowałyśmy się włączyć do tomu teksty w obu językach. Pomimo faktu, iż większość autorów, którzy wzięli udział w tym projekcie tym razem zdecydowała się przedłożyć artykuły w języku polskim, wychodzimy z założenia, że umożliwienie dialogu badaczom zajmujących się literaturą polską i anglojęzyczną jest ideą wartościową i przynoszącą korzyści badawcze. Autorzy przyglądają się tematowi niniejszego zbioru z różnych punktów widzenia i perspektyw badawczych, włączając rozważania dotyczące stosunkowo nowego obszaru ludologii. Niemniej jednak, trzon omawianych tekstów dotyczy fantastyki – od *fantasy* po dystopie. Podejmując analizę aspektów literackich utworów, autorzy często odwołują się do kontekstów społecznych i kulturowych, nie unikając tematów wrażliwych i demonstrując zaangażowanie fantastyki w problematykę istotną we współczesnym świecie.

Większość artykułów w niniejszym tomie odzwierciedla niemalejące zainteresowanie badaczy literaturą *fantasy*. Otwiera go Weronika Łaszkiewicz analizą bestsellerowej sagi George'a R. R. Martina *Pieśń lodu i ognia*, argumentując, że pomimo średniowiecznego charakteru, cykl ten wykorzystuje konwencje postmodernistyczne i podejmuje dialog z oczekiwaniami czytelników w XXI wieku. Inną narrację *fantasy*, głęboko inspirowaną tradycją średniowieczną, omawia Przemysław Grabowski-Górniak. Autor analizuje rolę konwencji realistycznej w kreacji ery hyboryjskiej i ukazuje, w jaki sposób opowieść o Conanie odzwierciedla prawdziwe obawy Ameryki na początku XX wieku.

Dialog między tym, co realne, a tym, co fantastyczne, leży również u podstaw pisarstwa Lorda Dunsany. W eseju dotyczącym jego twórczości Francesco Bernuzzi wykazuje, że specyficzne światy w utworach brytyjskiego pisarza funkcjonują raczej jako „przedłużenie rzeczywistości" niż „samodzielne kosmologie". Aleksandra Dmowska zwraca z kolei uwagę na współistnienie elementów realistycznych i fantastycznych w pentalogii o Tiffany Aching Terry'ego Pratchetta i wykazuje, że strategia narracyjna autora skutkuje otwarciem świata Dysku na wymiary mityczne. Kolejne artykuły w niniejszym tomie ukazują zaangażowanie literatury *fantasy* w kwestie społeczne i etyczne. Magdalena Łapińska podejmuje temat rasizmu w *Księdze Wszystkich Dusz* – trylogii Debory

Harkness – w kontekście problemów obecnych w społeczeństwie amerykańskim, zestawiając rzeczywiste problemy przemocy, segregacji, „mieszania ras" (*miscegenation*) i czystości rasowej z wydarzeniami z powieści. Skupiając się na sadze o Harrym Potterze, Paweł Fiedorowicz interpretuje narrację J.K. Rowling w kontekście Tolkienowskiej koncepcji „wielkiej ucieczki" celem omówienia motywu śmierci i różnych postaw wobec niej w utworach.

Kolejne artykuły skupiają się na elementach dystopijnych, postapokaliptycznych i futurystycznych. Krzysztof M. Maj w artykule *Światy władców logosu. O dystopii w narracjach literackich* omawia dystopię w relacji do tradycji utopijnej przyjmując perspektywę badań skoncentrowanych na fantastycznych światach, a nie socjologicznym wymiarze utworów literackich. Podejście to oferuje narzędzia służące analizie utopii w kategoriach eutopii i dystopii. Literackie dystopie analizuje również Karolina Wierel w tekście *Literackie dystopie początku XXI wieku – między realizmem a fantastycznością*. Autorka omawia książki Kazuo Ishiguro, Suzanne Collins i Michela Fabera w kontekście pojęcia *retrotopii* Zygmunta Baumana. Natomiast Joanna Wildowicz koncentruje się na wizji świata postapokaliptycznego w *Drodze* Cormaca McCarthy'ego wzbogacając intepretację o postkapitalistyczną i postkonsumpcyjną wymowę tej popularnej powieści. Zwracając się w kierunku analizy futurystycznych aspektów *science-fiction*, Agnieszka Dzięcioł-Pędich omawia wizerunek sztucznej inteligencji w powieściach Becky Chambers. Autorka wykazuje że utwory te odrzucają typowy motyw SI jako zagrożenia dla ludzkości na rzecz ukazania sztucznej inteligencji w bardziej pozytywnym świetle.

Inną strategię syntezy elementów fantastycznych i realistycznych omawia Stefan Kubiak, podejmując próbę wyjaśnienia powodów, dla których Philip Roth, znany z powieści pisanych w konwencji realistycznej, odwołuje się do fantastyki w noweli *Pierś*. Opierając się na teorii Tzvetana Todorova i omawiając literackie inspiracje Rotha, badacz dowodzi, że fantastyczna transformacja bohatera w noweli funkcjonuje inaczej niż w *Nosie* Gogola czy *Metamorfozie* Kafki. Tom zamyka artykuł Izabeli Tomczak dotyczący stosunkowo nowego obszaru badań akademickich – gier komputerowych. Autorka analizuje dwa popularne tytuły, *BioShock* (2007) i *Borderlands 2* (2009) w perspektywie teorii Michela Foucaulta, argumentując, że obserwowalne w życiu mechanizmy wiedzy/władzy znajdują również odzwierciedlenie w grach wideo.

Jak wynika z tego krótkiego opisu zawartości tomu, autorzy nie opierają się na jednej teorii, lecz wykorzystują w badaniach różne perspektywy teoretyczne i metodologiczne. Omawiane przez nich teksty sytuują się w szeroko ro-

zumianym spektrum fantastyki i są zróżnicowane pod względem zarówno genologicznym, jak i tematycznym. Wszystkie te utwory rezygnują jednak z ograniczającego, stricte mimetycznego sposobu przedstawiania rzeczywistości, co pozwala im kwestionować *status quo* i „uwolnić czytelnika od leniwego podejścia do standardowych założeń o kulturze i społeczeństwie”[5]. Postrzegane razem, artykuły zawarte w tym tomie zdają się sugerować, że fantastyka nie oferuje żadnej ucieczki od rzeczywistości, lecz otwiera przed czytelnikami kolejne możliwości podjęcia refleksji nad otaczającym ich światem.

Redakcja

[5] K. Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis,* dz. cyt., s. 162.

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INTRODUCTION

In her still influential *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (1984) Kathryn Hume argues that all literature is a product of two equally significant impulses – mimesis and fantasy, defining the latter in very broad terms as "any departure from consensus reality."[1] In her formulation fantasy does not refer to a relatively recent genre of popular fiction but together with mimesis contributes to literary representations of reality across a wide spectrum of texts, ranging from the Icelandic sagas to science fiction. It is in a similarly wide sense that we understand "the fantastic" in this volume, inviting the authors to reflect on the ways in which it engages with "the realistic" not only in speculative fiction, but also mainstream literature and other non-textual narratives.

In speculative fiction, encompassing all narratives including the elements of the fantastic, the supernatural or the futuristic, the combination of fantasy and mimesis can take many forms and be used for a variety of reasons. Within fantasy literature – "a fiction of consensual construction of belief"[2] – the relationship between these two elements has been touched upon by Farah Mendlesohn, who in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) distinguishes four subtypes of the genre. While portal-quest fantasies (for instance, C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* or Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Fionavar Tapestry*) rely on transporting characters from their mundane lives to the fantastic worlds and present these two spheres as clearly separated, the intrusion fantasies – ranging from Gothic romance to horror novels – construe worlds similar to our own that are ruptured by the intrusion of the fantastic that disrupts normality. The immersive fantasies (for example, China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*) are set in fully fantastic

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1 K. Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* New York and London: Methuen, 1984, p. 21.

2 F. Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy,* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008, p. xiii.

or secondary worlds which need to be consistent, coherent and logical even if the rules divert from the ones operating in the "real" or primary world. Liminal fantasies (for instance, Jo Walton's *Among Others)*, in turn, depend on blurring the borders between the fantastic and consensus reality and create a moment of doubt or hesitation in readers. Despite providing insight into how the fantastic functions within the texts, Mendlesohn's influential study does not account for all the relationships between fantasy, realism, and consensus reality.

Speculative fiction, whether set in a quasi-medieval imaginary world or in a technologically advanced far-away future, has a potential for exploring contemporary reality and its alternatives and frequently offers a commentary on the problems important for its times. With reference to science fiction, referred to as "literature of cognitive estrangement", Darko Suvin argued that it "estranges" aspects of a reader's empirical reality through a new perspective "implying a new set of norms."[3] While in science fiction displacements must be "logically consistent and methodical; … scientific to the extent that they imitate, reinforce and illuminate the process of scientific cognition,"[4] the concept of estrangement can be applied to all subgenres of speculative fiction, which typically invites the readers to confront the nature of reality by immersion in worlds that operate according to different rules. Thus, all speculative fiction texts can offer a critique of empirical reality and envisage its alternative – sometimes as an idealized and nostalgic vision of the past, other times as a dystopian or post-apocalyptic future. The essays in this volume are meant to examine various ways in which the fantastic intersects and interacts with both the conventions of realism and the consensus reality, offering insight into the effects that are created through the process.

This volume follows earlier collections of articles devoted to the fantastic published by our interdisciplinary team which brings together researchers with different academic backgrounds in English and Polish studies. The first volume titled *Motywy religijne we współczesnej fantastyce* (*Religious Motifs in Contemporary Fantastic Literature)* was published in 2014 and the second one – *Tekstowe światy fantastyki* (*Textual Fantasy Worlds)* in 2016. To continue the tradition of foregrounding two perspectives, which frequently rely on different theoretical approaches, we have decided to include articles in both languages.

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3 D. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, p. 6.

4 I. Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *Marxist theory and science fiction,* in: *The Cambridge Companion to Science* Fiction, eds. E. James and F. Mendlesohn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 118.

While most authors collaborating in this project have chosen to write their texts in English this time, we believe that encouraging a dialogue between scholars specializing in Anglophone and Polish literature is a worthwhile and fruitful task. The authors approach the theme of this collection from a variety of angles and critical perspectives, including a contribution on a relatively new field of game studies. The core of the discussed texts, however, belongs to the body of speculative fiction – from fantasy to dystopia. Focusing on the analysis of literary aspects of the texts, our contributors frequently ground their discussion in social and cultural contexts, not refraining from sensitive issues and demonstrating the engagement of speculative fiction with contemporary concerns.

The first group of articles in the volume reflects the continuing interest of scholars in fantasy literature. Weronika Łaszkiewicz opens the collection with a discussion of George R.R. Martin's bestselling *A Song of Ice and Fire*, arguing that despite its medievalist character, the series employs postmodern conventions and enters into a dialogue with the expectations of the twenty-first century readers. Another fantasy narrative deeply inspired by the medieval tradition is examined by Przemysław Grabowski-Górniak, who demonstrates the role that realism played in the creation of Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age and argues that the tales of Conan's exploits reflect the real concerns of the early twentieth-century America.

The dialogue between the real and the fantastic also lies at the root of Lord Dunsany's writing. In his essay Francesco Bernuzzi considers the peculiarity of fantastic settings in his fiction to demonstrate that they function as "extensions of reality" rather than "self-standing cosmologies." Aleksandra Dmowska draws attention to the coexistence of the realistic and fantastic elements in Terry Pratchett's Tiffany Aching pentalogy. Arguing that Pratchett's narrative strategy results in the opening of the Discworld universe to mythical dimensions, she focuses on such aspects of the narrative as the world as language, human being as inseparable part of the world of nature and female initiation. Finally, the potential of fantasy to engage with and comment on social and ethical concerns of its times is discussed in two articles in this collection. Magdalena Łapińska explores how the issue of race present in the American society has been reflected in Deborah Harkness' *All Souls* Trilogy, juxtaposing the real-world problems of violence, segregation, miscegenation and racial purity with the events from the novels. Focusing on J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter saga, Paweł Fiedorowicz examines the reliance of the narrative on Tolkien's concept of the Great Escape and discusses the motif of death and various attitudes towards it in the novels.

Another group of articles examines dystopia, post-apocalyptic, and futuristic dimensions of recent speculative fiction. In his more theoretically oriented contribution *Światy władców logosu. O dystopii w narracjach literackich* (*Worlds of Lords of Logos. Dystopian Narratives in Literary Fiction)*, Krzysztof M. Maj discusses dystopia in its relation to the utopian tradition, proposing a perspective focused on the fantastic story-worlds rather than investigating sociological dimensions of literary texts. Such approach offers useful tools for interpreting utopias as eutopias or dystopias. Literary dystopias are examined by Karolina Wierel in *Literackie dystopie początku XXI wieku – między realizmem a fantastycznością* (*Literary Dystopias of the Early Twentieth Century – between Realism and the Fantastic)* where she examines the novels by Kazuo Ishiguro, Suzanne Collins and Michel Faber in the context of Zygmunt Bauman's concept of retrotopia. Joanna Wildowicz, in turn, concentrates on the post-apocalyptic vision of the world in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road,* emphasizing the post-capitalist and post-consumerist aspects of the novel. Turning her attention towards futuristic aspects of science-fiction, Agnieszka Dzięcioł-Pędich examines the portrayal of artificial intelligence in Becky Chambers' *Way to the Small, Angry planet* and *A Close and Common Orbit* to argue that the novels challenge the "AI destroys humanity" trope and portray it in a more positive light.

Yet another strategy to combine the fantastic with the realistic is investigated by Stefan Kubiak, who attempts to explain why Philip Roth, the writer known for his realistic fiction, reaches for the fantastic in his novella *The Breast.* Referring to Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic and Roth's literary inspirations, he argues that the purpose of the fantastic transformation of the protagonist in the novella functions differently than in Gogol's *The Nose* and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis.* The volume concludes with the article which offers insight into an emerging academic field of game studies. Izabela Tomczak analyzes two blockbuster titles, *BioShock* (2007) and *Borderlands 2* (2009), through the lens of Foucauldian theory, convincingly arguing that the models of power relations operating in real life are reflected in videogames.

As it is evident from this brief description, the articles in the present volume do not rely on a single theory, but rather employ various theoretical and methodological perspectives to explore the intertwined nature of fantasy and realism in a range of narratives. While the discussed texts spread across the continuum of speculative fiction in both generic and thematic terms, all of them "depart" from the constraints of reality and question the *status quo* by

"help[ing] to liberate the reader from lazily relying on standard assumptions about culture and society."[5] When seen together, the essays in this collection make clear that speculative fiction does not really offer any escape from reality but opens up possibilities for the readers to approach it in a reflective way.

Editors

[5] K. Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, p. 162.

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| Weronika Łaszkiewicz

ANALYZING POSTMODERN ASPECTS OF MEDIEVAL FANTASY FICTION: *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE* BY GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* in order to demonstrate that in spite of its medieval character, Martin's work is based on postmodern conventions and enters into a dialogue with the expectations of the twenty-first century readers. Thus, the article analyzes the structure of the narrative, the world depicted in it, and its characters. This analysis is preceded by a discussion of "fantastic neomedievalism", particularly in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and later Tolkienesque fantasy prone to nostalgic rendition of the Middle Ages. The study is complemented by a passage on other fantasy novels which show signs of postmodern sensibility and, therefore, offer a glimpse into the process of transformation within medieval-inspired fantasy, of which Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* can be regarded as the most recent product.

Key Words: postmodernism, medieval fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien, George R.R. Martin

Since its emergence from the literature of Victorian England, fantasy fiction has been enamored with the Middle Ages. When William Morris, a prominent Victorian writer and social activist, published the prose romances[1] strongly

[1] For instance, *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *The Well at the World's End* (1896), and *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897).

inspired by his personal fascination with the Middle Ages,[2] little did he suspect that these works would be the foundation for one of the most recognizable and lasting sub-genres of modern fantasy, i.e. high/epic fantasy (often overlapping with the category of heroic fantasy),[3] which was later popularized by J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) and emulated by generations of post-Tolkienian writers. Through the works of Tolkien and his successors, medieval-inspired worlds—with their feudal kingdoms, warring monarchs, questing swordsmen, and noble princesses—as well as certain chivalric ideals defining the protagonists[4] became staple elements of fantastic world-building and the core of fantasy as a modern genre.

This practice of resorting to medieval imagery is described by Kim Selling as "fantastic neomedievalism"[5]—a term which she borrows from Umberto Eco. Fantastic neomedievalism constitutes a branch of medievalism, i.e. the process of incorporation and reconstruction of medieval images and ideas in more contemporary works, which is a tendency that is hardly a postmodern invention

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2 A. Hodgson, *The Romances of William Morris*, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, pp. 10-12.

3 Internal division is a problematic issue as far as modern fantasy is concerned. High/epic fantasy, often considered prototypical fantasy literature, is usually set in a secondary world filled with various elements of magic and driven by quests/adventures which affect the well-being of the hero and his world (*The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, eds. J. Clute and J. Grant, London: Orbit, 1997, p. 466). Because these secondary worlds more often than not are inspired by the Middle Ages, this sort of fiction can also be called medieval fantasy. Moreover, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* notes that the term "heroic fantasy" might be synonymous with epic fantasy (*The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, p. 464), and in *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is also categorized as heroic fantasy (B. Stableford, *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature*, Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2005, p. 197). When Thomas Honegger discusses the correspondences between the Middle Ages and heroic fantasy, he analyzes Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian*, C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia, and* Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, which he respectively calls sword and sorcery heroic fantasy, Christian heroic fantasy, and epic fantasy (T. Honegger, *(Heroic) Fantasy and the Middle Ages – Strange Bedfellows or an Ideal Cast?*, "*Itinéraires*", 2010, n/p). The ambiguity of the names high/epic/heroic fantasy is only a fragment of the genre's problems with internal division. For the sake of this work, I will refer to high/epic and medieval fantasy, since this is how George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series is categorized (e.g. in Stableford's *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* the series is called epic fantasy (p. 267), and authors of the collection *Mastering the Game of Thrones* (pp. 16, 17, 21, 71, 251) also use the names of high and epic fantasy in reference to Martin's series).

4 R. H. Thompson, *Modern Fantasy and Medieval Romance: A Comparative Study*, in: *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art*, ed. R. C. Schlobin, Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1982, pp. 213-214.

5 K. Selling, '*Fantastic Neomedievalism': The Image of the Middle Ages in Popular Fantasy*, in: *Flashes of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from* The War of the Worlds *Centennial, Nineteenth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. D. Ketterer, Westport: Praeger, 2004, p. 212.

since it has been present in art for centuries. Noting the prevailing fascination with all things medieval, Umberto Eco starts his seminal work "Dreaming of the Middle Ages" with an ironic comment that "Indeed, it seems that people like the Middle Ages",[6] which is then followed by the scholar's analysis of the influence which the Middle Ages has had on Western culture and history. Following Eco's claims, Tison Pugh and Angela Weisl add that the Middle Ages "continues to enthrall for its pageantry and its manners, for its ideals of courtly love and chivalry, for its literary and artistic accomplishments, in such plentitude that, although the Middle Ages did in fact end, medievalisms, it appears, will never cease to be reborn."[7]

As far as the prevalence of fantastic neomedievalism is concerned, Selling points out that writers have generated quasi-medieval fantasy worlds not only because of the popularity of Tolkien's creation, but also because of the convenience of such a solution, since the Middle Ages offers ample material that can be converted into a believable yet at the same time surprising fantasy world that will fulfill the writer's and readers' nostalgic longing for the past long gone.[8] As a result of such practice, the image of the Middle Ages becomes "mythologized"[9] and, inevitably, distorted. After all, even Morris and Tolkien,[10] for all of their passion for and knowledge of the medieval period, did not mirror it perfectly in their works (if that was ever their aim). Both writers imbued their works with personal experiences and beliefs: the works of Morris are deeply grounded in socialist values[11] and those of Tolkien reflect his dedication to Christianity, fondness for Norse sagas, and views on industrialization.[12] Also, both Morris and Tolkien presented an idealized version of the Middle Ages. Thus, scenes of violence are seldom described in gruesome detail, sexuality is a topic only hinted at, and rape is veiled with euphemisms—if it ever takes place at all. There is hardly any sickness, poverty or filth. While cruelty and injustice do exist, these quasi-medieval worlds nonetheless seem pure and unspoiled.

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6 U. Eco, *Dreaming of the Middle Ages*, in: *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, U. Eco, trans. W. Weaver, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, p. 61.

7 T. Pugh and A. J. Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present*, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 1.

8 K. Selling, *Fantastic Neomedievalism*, pp. 212-213.

9 Ibid., p. 213.

10 Eco calls the works of Tolkien escapism (*Dreaming of the Middle Ages*, p. 65).

11 F. Boos, *Gender Division and Political Allegory in the Last Romances of William Morris*, "*Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies"* 1992, I. 2, pp. 12-23.

12 Ch. Scull and W. G. Hammond, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion & Guide*, vol. 2, London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 2006, pp. 1105-1110.

And as far as the quest is concerned, it is highly unlikely that it will be prematurely terminated by the protagonist's sudden illness, lack of funds or unlucky death (since the hero's death needs to be heroic and meaningful). Selling aptly summarizes this curious representation of the Middle Ages in fantasy fiction:

> On the whole, the medievalism of mainstream high fantasy presents a very selective and positive image of the Middle Ages, following the example set by J.R.R. Tolkien's anitmodernist text *The Lord of the Rings*. Given the predominance of this romanticized, idealistic version of the medieval, one could almost forget that an equally valid image is the filthy and oppressive world of the Crusades and the Inquisition, where life could be likened to that in the "state of nature", to quote Hobbes, "poor, nasty, brutish and short."[13]

Indeed, many readers of fantasy fiction have probably forgotten about the other side of the Middle Ages, and that is one of the reasons why George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series has become such a novelty. Martin has created a cruel and violent feudal world whose inhabitants, be they kings or peasants, are fallen creatures plagued by doubts, failures, lust, and ambition. When juxtaposing Martin's vision with the purity—and naivety—of Tolkienesque quasi-medieval worlds, it becomes clear why readers of Martin's work might want to claim that his creation depicts the "real" Middle Ages, since it restores the less savory aspects of medieval life in place of nostalgic idealism. Yet without diminishing Martin's knowledge of the Middle Ages or his accomplishment as a writer, it should be clearly stated that *A Song of Ice and Fire* is not the "real" Middle Ages, but its fantastic reconstruction.[14] Though the series aspires to historical realism, it is a mosaic of medievalism and postmodernism—and the author's conscious choice to present such a violent world and, in that way, break with the patterns of high/epic fantasy is a very sign of the latter. While the medieval aspects of Martin's series and their historical accuracy have already received much scholarly attention,[15] the aim of this paper is to explore

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13 K. Selling, *Fantastic Neomedievalism*, p. 214.

14 It would be interesting to explore what people actually perceive as the "real" Middle Ages, since contemporary ideas about this particular period are often an artificial construct based as much on modern literature and movies as on accurate historical records. Kathleen Biddick's *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) is an insightful work on the shifting perception of the Middle Ages and the discipline of medieval studies.

15 See, for instance, *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire* edited by James Lowder (2012), *George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and the*

some of the postmodern aspects of *A Song of Ice and Fire* in order to demonstrate how Martin's saga works according to postmodern mechanisms and expresses postmodern concerns aimed at twenty-first century readers.[16] Thus, the proposed analysis will focus on the structure of the narrative (approach to patterns characteristic of high/epic fantasy, multiple third-person narration), the world depicted in it (fragmentation and moral relativism), and the characters (issues concerning race, feminism, liberty, and disability). This investigation will be complemented by a brief passage on other works that could be categorized as "medieval" fantasy fiction in order to emphasize the point that Martin's blending of the Middle Ages with postmodern sensibility is not, nonetheless, a singular phenomenon.

Given the scope and range of contemporary literature, providing a universal definition of postmodernism is a difficult task.[17] In their attempts at defining postmodernism, scholars have focused on its various aspects, hence, e.g. Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and hyperreality, Donna Haraway's analysis of the cyborg, Brian McHale's shift from epistemology to ontology, or Bran Nicol's analysis of metafiction. In this article I will refer to those widely recognized features of postmodernism which are the most meaningful in the context of the relationship between Martin's saga and the patterns of high/epic medieval fantasy. Following Jean-François Lyotard work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), it has been widely accepted that people can no longer rely on grand narratives (meta-narratives) such as the beliefs in steady progress, the power of human reason, and the existence of absolute and objective truths. Given the postmodern distrust of and skepticism toward such notions, the grand narratives have been gradually substituted with micro-narratives, language games, and (local) discourses of different cultural significance, all of which negate the validity of such concepts as the ultimate truth, single interpretation, and objective reality, and instead emphasize the plurality of voices and diversity of experience. Postmodernism welcomes diverse cultural

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Medieval Literary Tradition edited by Bartłomiej Błaszkiewicz (2014), Carolyne Larrington's *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (2015), and Shiloh Carroll's *Medievalism in A Song of Ice and Fire and The Game of Thrones* (2018).

16 The first volume of the series, *A Game of Thrones*, was published in 1996. The following volumes are *A Clash of Kings* (1998), *A Storm of Swords* (2000), *A Feast for Crows* (2005), and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). Martin is currently working on subsequent installments.

17 J. Casey, *Modernism and Postmodernism*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, eds. E. James and F. Mendlesohn, Cambridge: CUP, 2012, pp. 113-124. P. Stasiewicz, *Między światami: Intertekstualność i postmodernizm w literaturze fantasy*, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2016, p. 278.

identities and examines the power relations between them, at the same time giving voice to the oppressed and the repressed. Moreover, for postmodernism nothing is sacred, and everything can be questioned and investigated—or ridiculed, if need be, since irony and parody are key elements of the repertoire of a postmodern artist. What is more, postmodernism legitimizes the mixing of forms and conventions as well as the artist's play with the audience's knowledge and expectations. Consequently, boundaries become blurred, truth is fragmented, and no single interpretation can satisfy everyone as there exist different legitimate versions of truth and reality.

In spite of the series' medieval guise, the structure of Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the world depicted in it reflect all of the above-mentioned elements.[18] First of all, George R.R. Martin is a writer well aware of the patterns underlying high/epic fantasy. In the interview for *The Rolling Stone* he argues, for instance, that "The Tolkien model led generations of fantasy writers to produce these endless series of dark lords and their evil minions who are all very ugly and wear black clothes. But the vast majority of wars throughout history are not like that."[19] Moreover, not only does Martin question the validity of certain formulaic solutions long-present in high/epic fantasy, but he also objects to the naive innocence of (post-)Tolkienian fantasy[20]:

> *Lord of the Rings* had a very medieval philosophy: that if the king was a good man, the land would prosper. We look at real history and it's not that simple. Tolkien can say that Aragorn became king and reigned for a hundred years, and he was wise and good. But Tolkien doesn't ask the question: What was Aragorn's tax policy? Did he maintain a standing army? What did he do in times of flood and famine? And what about all the-

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18 In this article I will be interested only in examining certain postmodern aspect of Martin's series as in opposition to more traditional high/epic medieval fantasy. For a critical evaluation of the postmodern aspects of fantasy and science fiction in general see Kathryn Hume's *Postmodernism in Popular Literary Fantasy* (1997), Jim Casey's *Modernism and Postmodernism* (2012), and Piotr Stasiewicz's *Między światami: Intertekstualność i postmodernizm w literaturze fantasy* (2016). Also, in this paper I will refer only to the book version of *A Song of Ice and Fire* and refrain from comments on its TV adaptation, though the transmediality of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, as well as the fandom culture that has evolved around it are fascinating topics.

19 M. Gilmore, *George R.R. Martin: The Rolling Stone Interview*, "The Rolling Stone", 23 April 2014, http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/george-r-r-martin-the-rolling-stone-interview-20140423 [06.08.2017]

20 Still, Martin does not claim that the entirety of Tolkien's work is dominated by idealism and over-simplification, and he recalls the episode of the scouring of the Shire as a case in point (M. Gilmore, *George R.R. Martin*, n/p).

> se orcs? By the end of the war, Sauron is gone but all of the orcs aren't gone – they're in the mountains. Did Aragorn pursue a policy of systematic genocide and kill them? Even the little baby orcs, in their little orc cradles?[21]

In other words, while Tolkien was satisfied with presenting Aragorn's long-awaited ascension to the throne that healed the kingdom, Martin would have been more interested in exploring the practical aspects of Aragorn's royal reign, which would present the hero as a more realistic rather than mythic character. It is worth noting that Martin's comment is doubly postmodern, since it ironically questions the idealism of his predecessor and then bestows some humanity on the orcs—characters which in fantasy fiction typically serve as mindless enemies whose only destiny is to be killed by good protagonists.

Given Martin's objection to some tropes of high/epic fantasy and its prevailing idealism, it is not surprising that in his own work the author plays with the readers' knowledge of these tendencies. This is visible from the very beginning, as the first volume moves from fantasy to realism and then returns to fantasy at the end of the story. In the first chapters of *A Game of Thrones*, readers learn about the Wall which protects the lands of men from the vicious creatures known as the Others. Then in Winterfell, the Starks find a litter of direwolf pups whose number miraculously matches the number of Eddard Stark's children. Yet from that point on, the volume focuses on various political intrigues; fantastic elements hover somewhere in the background of the narrative, which might surprise readers convinced that they are going to deal with another work built on staple fantastic tropes. Because fantasy is suppressed for most of *A Game of Thrones*, it is doubly surprising when by the end of the volume Daenerys Targaryen miraculously emerges from her husband's funeral pyre with three young dragons. Though elements of fantasy (dragons, dark magic, resurrections, psychic powers) reappear throughout subsequent volumes, the balance is undoubtedly tipped in favor of realism, since most of the narrative focuses on the civil war in Westeros and Daenerys's path to queenship. Yet, given that the Others will be the ultimate threat to the fictional realm, it can be assumed that in the final volume the fantastic will again dominate the narrative. If that happens, the series will return to the patterns of high/epic fantasy, since the grand battle between good and evil is one of its primary tropes—and Martin's readers, having got used to the series' realism, will be surprised once again.

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21 M. Gilmore, *George R.R. Martin*, n/p.

In order to further shock his readers, Martin deliberately violates their expectations about the development of the plot by having many of the significant characters hurt and killed early in the story (with no hope of some miraculous resurrection in the near future).[22] Martin rightly argues: "The moment the reader begins to believe that a character is protected by the magical cloak of authorial immunity, tension goes out the window."[23] One of the first disturbing episodes, appearing early in the first volume, presents Jamie Lannister having sex with his twin sister, Queen Cersei. To make matters worse, when the pair is discovered by young Bran Stark, Jamie mercilessly pushes the boy out of the window. Though Bran survives, he becomes paralyzed and his dreams of being a knight are shattered (ironically, much later Jamie's right hand is cut off by enemies, which also terminates his career as a knight). Since heroes of fantasy fiction are often characterized by their strength, agility, and power in combat, they are seldom burdened with a grave illness—the idealism of many fantasy novels neglects such down-to-earth problems. Consequently, Bran's fate warns readers that *A Game of Thrones* is not exactly the type of Tolkienesque fantasy they might be already familiar with. Reading *A Game of Thrones* becomes both unsettling and estranging.

Two of the series' most shocking events are probably the death of Eddard Stark (in *A Game of Thrones*) and the massacre at the Red Wedding (in *A Storm of Swords*). Eddard Stark, a noble and just lord who seems a typical protagonist of high/epic fantasy, is by the end of the volume falsely accused, imprisoned, and beheaded. His death, even more than Bran's paralysis, is a liminal experience for the readers since, expecting that such a virtuous and significant character cannot be removed from the narrative, they probably assume that he will be somehow rescued from his plight.[24] Through Eddard's death Martin again advises his readers to abandon their expectations, because in the fictional Westeros, like in real life, nobody is safe. Even so, the episode of the Red Wed-

22 A few of these characters do get revived by the intervention of a priest. However, only one of them—Catelyn Stark—is a central figure to the plot, and she does not reclaim her previous position, because she becomes a zombie-like being intent on revenge. Thus, her return is nowhere near what readers of Tolkien, who remember the resurrection of Gandalf, might expect.

23 M. Gilmore, *George R.R. Martin*, n/p.

24 Whether or not it was done deliberately, it is ironic that in the TV adaptation of the series Eddard Stark is played by Sean Bean—the actor who played Boromir in Peter Jackson's screen adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* and was also killed by enemies shortly after the beginning of the quest. Fans of both works have quickly noticed this coincidence and responded with numerous memes—an interesting phenomenon of fandom work and participatory culture.

ding is still one of the most disturbing events, because several of the leading characters are unexpectedly butchered during a feast. The Red Wedding permanently dispels the veneer of idealism. Yet, since suffering and death are omnipresent, the heroes' struggle to survive becomes more meaningful and poignant.

As far as narration is concerned, each volume of the series is related by several characters located in various areas of the fictional world. The (in)effectiveness of such a technique is a topic for a separate debate, since some readers might praise the panorama of experiences, while others might find the constant shifts troublesome to follow. What should be noted is that though these shifts between point-of-view characters offer a variety of perspectives, they are still parts of third-person limited narration. Thus, while readers get a temporary glimpse into the mindsets of various protagonists, none of these protagonists is omniscient, so the end effect is a narrative of fragmented truths. As Kathryn Hume writes, "Fantasy puts worlds under erasure, turns the universe into a pluriverse, and deliberately rouses anxieties."[25] Martin skillfully uses this plurality of voices and withholds crucial information to elicit his readers' anxiety. And since his world and characters are not static, i.e. they do not cease to develop once they are removed from the focus of narration, the protagonists often find themselves in surprising or unfavorable circumstances, because theirs—and the readers'—is a limited and incomplete knowledge of the circumstances. Thus, *A Song of Ice and Fire* negates what Thomas Honegger writes about medieval fantasy fiction:

> the self-presentation of the Middle Ages as an ordered and coherent civilisation contrasts with the disjuncture, isolation and incoherence experienced in modern society. Fantasy partakes in this "medieval dream of order" and presents its readers the vision of a harmonious and hierarchical society.[26]

While Martin's Westeros is undoubtedly hierarchical, it is by no means harmonious. On the contrary, when various lords voice their claims for the Iron Throne, the realm is gradually thrown into the chaos of war, in which pacts and promises are broken and truth is distorted by manipulation. The fictional world is on the verge of a fall: political, moral, and religious. In fact, it seems that the

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25 K. Hume, *Postmodernism in Popular Literary Fantasy*, in: *The Dark Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Ninth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. C. W. Sullivan III, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 179.

26 T. Honegger, *(Heroic) Fantasy and the Middle Ages – Strange Bedfellows or an Ideal Cast?*, "*Itinéraires*" 2010, http://itineraires.revues.org/1817 [03.08.2017]

more a character is virtuous or innocent (Eddard, his children Robb and Sansa, Daenerys), the more they are subjected to suffering, until they learn to question other people and the world—or they perish. This is what happens to Eddard who, guided by his own sense of morality, is unable to predict Queen Cersei's intrigues and, in the end, is beheaded by her son. This is also what happens to Robb Stark who, having broken his promise to marry Lord Frey's daughter, never suspects that his host might kill him during a wedding feast. While Sansa and Daneryes survive their harsh ordeals (both lose their families and former social position through betrayal), their naive assumptions about the power of honor and morality are replaced by a more grim outlook on life.

Moreover, Martin's world is one of moral relativism. None of the characters can be easily classified as entirely good or bad, since the former are forced to do horrible things to fulfill their duties, while the latter are capable of mercy and kindness. Unless the characters are ready to struggle for their own happiness, they cannot expect that fate or divine providence will reward them for their virtue and punish the wrongdoers. Contrary to the idealism of traditional high/epic fantasy, in Westeros life is simply unfair and good intentions do not mean much. All of this is well illustrated by the fate of Jamie Lannister, who is known as the Kingslayer and widely despised since he treacherously murdered the king he had sworn to protect. Few people know that if Jamie had not murdered the king, the king would have destroyed the capital city and murdered its inhabitants. In addition, Jamie pushed young Bran out of the window to protect his relationship with his sister—apparently the only person whom he truly cares about. Yet Jamie is but one among many characters who are forced to choose the lesser evil, and then deal with the consequences of their actions; readers will find it difficult to unanimously condemn or praise these characters. As Rebekah M. Fowler argues, this is exactly what postmodern readers want instead of the *deus ex machina* solutions appearing in formulaic high/epic fantasy:

> even as a postmodern audience delights in the innocence of a chivalrous and courtly past and may long for such simple and positive outcomes to life's complications, this audience is also skeptical of solutions that are too easy, that magic can resolve quickly, and of situations that require simple binary choices.[27]

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[27] R. M. Fowler, *Sansa's Songs: The Allegory of Medieval Romance in George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire Series*, in: *George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and the Medieval Literary Tradition*, ed. B. Błaszkiewicz, Warszawa: WUW, 2014, p. 72.

There are no simple and easily available solutions in Martin's fiction. His Westeros is a fragmented, ambiguous, and morally relative world, in which absolute truth is substituted with a plurality of voices. Such a world is inarguably characteristic of postmodern fiction.[28]

Postmodernism is also characterized by discourses on postcolonialism, feminism, and gender, as well as by questions about the individual's identity and the experiences of trauma. All of these issues are present in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and are as prominent as the standard trope of high/epic fantasy: the quest to save the world. Issues of postcolonialism are addressed by Martin in Daenerys's struggle to liberate the inhabitants of Slaver's Bay. Inarguably, the series can be praised for its critique of slavery and its demand for universal freedom. Yet on the other hand, it is still a young white girl that becomes the savior for the brown-skinned people who, after their liberation, willingly begin to serve her—this imagery clearly resonates with notion of "the white man's burden" (though it should be pointed out that one of Daenerys's advisors is a young woman of color). As far as feminism and gender are concerned, though the series often presents women as violated by men and oppressed by the patriarchal society, it also features some complex female characters who transgress the boundaries of typical medieval high/epic fantasy, in which women appear as damsels in distress, objects of romantic love or "rewards" for the brave hero. Responding to the demands of postmodern readers, Martin shows the ineffectiveness of heroines who follow the rules of patriarchal society, and instead elevates those that manage to reinvent their identity and emerge as strong and independent. The heroines which follow the requirements of the patriarchal society are exemplified by Cersei, Catelyn Stark, and Sansa. The ambitious and power-hungry Queen Cersei has little idea how to be a good ruler and, once she obtains royal power, commits several mistakes. Most of them are due to the fact that Cersei wishes to emulate masculine leadership, apparently forgetting that the patriarchal society will never disregard her gender.[29] Her only idea of female leadership is using sex as a tool for gaining power and control, for which she is eventually humiliated and punished. Contrary to Cersei, Catelyn Stark never seeks political power: she is completely devoted to her roles of a wife and mother—the only roles which a woman should pursue according to Westerosi

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28 This might change at the end of the series if Martin decides to bring some healing and peace into his world.

29 Sh. R. Carroll, *'You Ought to be in Skirts and Me in Mail': Gender and History in George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*, in: *George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and the Medieval Literary Tradition*, ed. B. Błaszkiewicz, Warszawa: WUW, 2014, p. 252.

standards. Yet Catelyn also fails, killed at the Red Wedding, because her motherly feelings make her act in ways which undermine the position of her husband and son.[30] Sansa, who starts as an "*idealized* romance lady"[31] that believes in courtly culture and wants nothing more than a handsome knight as her husband, is eventually forced to realize her own naivety and face the harsh reality of life.[32] Though Sansa is still constrained by the actions of her male companions, Martin has clearly set her on a path to self-development.

Other female characters who struggle for empowerment in the patriarchal Westeros are Arya Stark (Sansa's younger sister who wishes to become a warrior), Asha Grejoy (a commander of her own fleet who leads men to battle), and Daenerys Targaryen. Daenerys is a powerful woman in several ways: she is a sovereign queen who wields formidable military power and is loved by her people—all of which she achieved through her perseverance, wit, and kindness. Shiloh R. Carroll argues that "Medievalist fantasy has a tendency to conform to traditional gender roles and favor masculine activities over feminine ones. Even women who break out of their gender roles and become knights, assassins, or mages are frequently shown wielding male power rather than finding power in femininity."[33] This is certainly true about Cersei, but not about Daenerys. The latter manifests an entirely different type of leadership than Cersei, because she exemplifies the nurturing side of femininity: to her people and followers, Daenerys is the mother, protector, and savior. Perhaps she will also be the mythic savior of Westeros prophesized by Melisandre, in which case *A Song of Ice and Fire* would be one of those rare works of high/epic fantasy which bestow such a leading role on a woman. If all of these female characters are taken into consideration, it seems that they are the most successful once they reject the roles given to them by the courtly culture and patriarchal society, and instead pursue the reinvention of their identity, which is in line with contemporary feminist politics. Caroline Spector aptly summarizes Martin's achievement:

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30 When she imprisons Tyrion Lannister who, as she assumes, is responsible for Bran's injury, she undermines her husband's position in the capital, whereas her decision to free Jamie (so that he might in return save her daughters) creates animosity between King Robb and his people.

31 R. M. Fowler, *Sansa's Song*, p. 73.

32 Analyzing Eddard and Sansa Stark, Fowler writes: "Ned Stark serves as the medieval romance hero and Sansa as the lady in need of a valiant knight to rescue her. Together, they represent Romance, or the romance genre, that is interrogated by postmodern irony, even as it is used by it to show how archetypal readings must inevitably fail." (*Sansa's Song*, p. 78) These characters allow Martin to subvert the structures of medieval romance.

33 Sh. R. Carroll, *You Ought to be in Skirts*, p. 247.

> In the midst of what appears to be a traditional male-power fantasy about war and politics, he [Martin] serves up a grim, realistic, and harrowing depiction of what happens when women aren't fully empowered in a society. In doing so, by creating such diverse and fully rendered female characters and thrusting them into the grim and bitter world, Martin has created a subversively feminist tale.[34]

Part of this subversion is also the character of Brienne of Tarth, a female knight who fits neither the world of men nor that of women, and is ridiculed by both. It is through her unyielding determination to follow her dream that Martin indirectly—since this character can be analyzed also through the medieval motif of cross-dressing women—touches upon the questions of gender equality and social expectations towards both sexes. Still, because Brienne seems unable to connect with her femininity and, like Cersei, attempts to usurp a masculine role in a male-oriented society, her efforts seem doomed to fail. Nonetheless, male characters also struggle with questions of identity in Martin's world. In fact, the motif of losing, discovering, and re-discovering one's identity plays a key role in the development of several male heroes: Tyrion Lannister, the dwarf despised by society and guilty of patricide, seeks love and acceptance; Jon Snow, the bastard son of Eddard Stark, is tormented by his status of an illegitimate child; Jamie, when deprived of his right-hand, has to reevaluate his world—and readers have yet to see if their struggles end successfully. Many of these characters would not appear in Tolkienesque fantasy, because their physical appearance, mental abilities or sexual preferences mark them as "the Other", who does not fit the idealism of high/epic fantasy or the requirements placed on "the hero" by myths and sagas from which the genre derives many of its elements. Yet Martin presents a whole panorama of socially excluded individuals whose narratives are of interest to postmodern readers; apart from the already mentioned "misfits", there are Hodor (mentally impaired), Varys (the eunuch), and Sam Tarly (obese and cowardly) to name but a few. As Brent Hartinger notes:

> A Song of Ice and Fire is set in a quasi-medieval setting where prejudices about these and other minorities couldn't be much more brutal or bigoted. But the sensibility of the series is decidedly modern. Outsiders are *not* stereotyped or ignored. On the contrary, these characters are brought front and center, their perspectives presented as no less important than those of the more traditional ones.[35]

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34 C. Spector, *Power and Feminism in Westeros*, in: *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, From A Game of Thrones to A Dance with Dragons*, ed. J. Lowder, Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2012, p. 187.

35 B. Hartinger, *A Different Kind of Other: The Role of Freaks and Outcasts in A Song of Ice*

Needless to say, all of these characters suffer from trauma induced by various events: violence, rape, death of family members, mutilation, etc.[36] To emphasize these tragic experiences and to continue shocking his readers, Martin often describes such events vividly, resorting to grotesque and macabre imagery which is absent from Tolkienesque fantasy.[37]

Taking into account the series' fragmented narration, the moral relativism of its fictional world, its numerous scenes of violence and sexuality, and its acknowledgment of the broadly defined "otherness," it becomes clear that *A Song of Ice and Fire* reflects postmodern tendencies and concerns. Still, as it was mentioned in the beginning, Martin's blending of the Middle Ages with postmodern sensibility is not a singular phenomenon since some other medieval fantasy narratives preceding Martin's also diverged from formulaic patterns and idealism. For instance, Poul Anderson's *Broken Sword* (1954) is a dark and violent story featuring an incestuous relationship between siblings, which leads to their ultimate downfall. The protagonist of Stephen Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* (1977-2013) is a leper who, once he is transported to a fantastic world, rapes a young girl and then refuses to believe in the world's existence so as not to shoulder responsibility for its fate. Thus, Thomas Covenant is one of the most prominent anti-heroes of high/epic fantasy. The heroes of Tanith Lee's *Death's Master* (1979) include a lesbian queen who needs to sleep with a dead man in order to save her kingdom, her son who can easily switch between genders and falls in love with a male childhood friend, and a black-skinned Lord Death. In Orson Scott Card's *Hart's Hope* (1983), the conqueror publicly marries and rapes a twelve-year-old princess in order to secure his reign. Years later, her desire for revenge becomes the reason for the conqueror's downfall and the kingdom's torment. Card creates a very gritty medieval world and does not shy away from describing cruelty, rape, nudity and vulgarity. For instance, at one point in the story other prisoners save the protagonist, Orem, from freezing to death by spitting and urinating on him, which forces the boy to move around his cage. While Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series (1990–

and Fire, in: *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, From A Game of Thrones to A Dance with Dragons*, ed. J. Lowder, Dallas: BenBella Books, 2012, pp. 154-155.

36 M. Cole, *Art Imitates War: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in A Song of Ice and Fire*, in: *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, From A Game of Thrones to A Dance with Dragons*, ed. J. Lowder, Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2012, pp. 73-87.

37 For instance, Tyrion murders his father in the privy, Jamie is forced to carry his severed hand, and he and Cersei are shown having sex near the corpse of their firstborn son.

2013) is far less gritty, it also includes elements foreshadowing Martin's work. For instance, Jordan shifts the focus of the narrative between various characters, thus producing a multi-threaded and fragmented story. He also presents some complex female characters who, even though the fantastic world is inspired by Arthurian legends, become powerful monarchs, wield formidable magical powers (in which case they get eternally young faces), and are not burdened with motherhood as their primary role in the society. Jordan also allows his male protagonist to be in a successful romantic relationship with three females who agree to share the man they all love—an instance of polygamy that seldom happens in fantasy. A thorough diachronic study of these and other works (starting with William Morris and ending with Martin) would undoubtedly reveal some interesting points about the development of high/epic fantasy set in quasi-medieval worlds.

All in all, George R.R. Martin is a writer knowledgeable of the genre he has chosen to write in, and *A Song of Ice and Fire* clearly reflects many postmodern conventions and attitudes. Thus, one cannot disagree with Anna Czarnowus when she writes that "undoubtedly the cycle speaks to us with a modern voice from behind its medievalized costume."[38] The postmodern dimensions of Martin's work should not be surprising since scholars of fantasy literature have already acknowledged the genre's affinity with postmodernism. Jim Casey, for instance, argues that "fantasy, by its very nature, challenges the dominant political and conceptual ideologies in a manner similar to that of postmodernism."[39] Piotr Stasiewicz adds[40] that some critics view fantasy as inevitably postmodernist, because it generates artificial worlds from a range of elements taken from various sources and because the genre has gradually adopted the mechanisms of mainstream literature. Consequently, Stasiewicz regards the works published after the year 2000, e.g. those of R Scott Bakker, Steven Erikson, and Brandon Sanderson,[41] as a new phase in the genre's development (noticeably dominated by American writers). In my opinion, George R.R. Martin's name should be added to this list, because his work is a new stage in the development of medieval-inspired high/epic fantasy fiction. To paraphrase Umberto Eco, *A Song of Ice and Fire* is yet another dream of the Middle Ages—a post-

38 A. Czarnowus, *The Other Worlds of George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*, in*: George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and the Medieval Literary Tradition*, ed. B. Błaszkiewicz, Warszawa: WUW, 2014, p. 112.

39 J. Casey, *Modernism and Postmodernism*, p. 115.

40 P. Stasiewicz, *Między światami*, pp. 366-368.

41 Ibid., p. 368.

modern dream of a writer who is done with the nostalgic idealism of his predecessors.

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| Przemysław Grabowski-Górniak

"THE AGE UNDREAMED OF": REALITY AND HISTORY IN ROBERT E. HOWARD'S FANTASY

Abstract

"Know, O prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the years of the rise of the Sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of." Thus begins "The Phoenix on the Sword", Robert E. Howard's story that introduced the world to Conan the Cimmerian. Set in the Hyborian Age, a forgotten period of our World's prehistory that has been imaginatively described in Howard's essays, the adventures of his barbarian heroes are never far removed from reality and history. In fact, Howard pronounced Conan "the most realistic character [he] ever evolved" and made the tales of the Cimmerian's exploits reflective of the real concerns of the early twentieth-century America. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the role that realism played in the creation of Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age and the fantasy stories set in it.

Key Words: fantastic, realism, fantasy, Conan, Robert E. Howard

It might be safely assumed that fantasy is not among the literary genres typically associated with themes and plots that could generally be defined as realistic. The name "fantasy" is in itself indicatory of improbability and fictitiousness, which is hardly a surprising assessment in regard to a genre known for its extensive use of magic, legendary artefacts, and multitudes of imaginary creatures. The post-Tolkienian fantasy fully embraces the fantastic, which most probably stems from it being hugely inspired by myths and folklore. It might,

however, be argued that at the genre's inception realism played a much more significant role than it does nowadays. In fact, one of the fathers of modern fantasy, Robert E. Howard, repeatedly professed his devotion to realism in writing. He adhered to it to such an extent that even the adventures of his most fantastic heroes were never far removed from reality and history.

Howard's life-long passion for history, and a love for legends, spawned in 1929 a tale that was to begin a new era of fantasy. "The Shadow Kingdom", regarded to be the first "heroic fantasy" story, features an exile of fabled Atlantis, Kull the King of Valusia. In his letters Howard often underlined his interest in European history, up to a point in which he even proclaimed feeling "a curious kinship with the Middle Ages."[1] In fact, while writing "The Shadow Kingdom" Howard made use of euhemerism,[2] a technique actively employed by various medieval writers, as he used the pseudo-historical background and mixed it with the super-natural elements of pre-existing mythologies. But unlike many sagas and chivalric lais, Howard's story was devoid of stilted personalities and formulaic plot devices in favour of realistic characterisation and modernized style. Patrice Louinet, in "Atlantean Genesis", goes as far as to call the Kull stories "realistic fantasy tales", stating that "unlike his predecessors and unlike the immense majority of his successors, Howard set his stories in universes not so much imaginary as they are forgotten: he wrote about our world and his themes are universal ones."[3] Clearly, it needs to be clarified how Atlantis could have any claim of reality in Howard's opinion. In Howard's "Men of the Shadows", a considerable part is devoted to early history and prehistory. As Partice Louinet points out, the observations Howard made in that story suggest that he was familiar with the race theories of Helena Blavatsky, who argued that the human evolution consisted in a consecutive surfacing of Root-races. Blavatsky used the term "Root-race" to denote stages of human evolution, being at the same time specific archetypes from which sprouted all the races existent in a particular stage of development. According to her count, the contemporary Root-race, Aryan, is the fifth in a row, while the earlier ones were Atlantean (the fourth) and Lemurian (the third). Being a devoted student of history, Howard siphoned the then popular racial theories through his knowledge and proposed a linkage be-

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1 Letter to Harold Preece, received October 20, 1928. Available at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Robert_E._Howard_to_Harold_Preece,_Oct_20,_1928#

2 Euhemerism is an approach that ascribes to myths and legends a real-life, historical basis. This notion is discussed at a greater length in the section that is devoted to Snorra Edda.

3 P. Louinet, *"Atlantean Genesis"*, in: *Kull: Exile of Atlantis*, New York: Del Ray Books, 2006, p. 288.

tween the Crô-Magnons and Atlantis, setting the fabled empire in the history of Earth rather than in myths. The fact that archaeological research shows the Crô-Magnon[4] men as generally taller[5] than other early human species, with a more robust physique and larger cranial capacity than that of the modern human, only added to their resemblance to the mythic heroes of the Heroic Age.

The idea of an Atlantean/Crô-Magnon connection is inspected at length in the books of a British folklorist, Lewis Spence. There are no records proving Howard's acquaintance with Spence's works but nonetheless it is highly probable, given Robert's compulsive reading and lust for knowledge. Thus, the Kull series was provided with a background of a semi-historical Atlantis, not a strictly mythical one. To sum up Howard's view on the matter of Atlantis, let us inspect the afore cited letter to Harold Preece:

> About Atlantis—I believe something of the sort existed, though I do not especially hold any theory about a high type of civilization existing there—in fact, I doubt that. But some continent was submerged away back, or some large body of land, for practically all peoples have legends about a flood. And the Cro-Magnons appeared suddenly in Europe, developed to a high stage of primitive culture; there is no trace to show that they came up the ladder of utter barbarism in Europe. Suddenly their remains are found supplanting the Neanderthal Man, to whom they have no ties of kinship whatever. Where did they originate? Nowhere in the known world, evidently. They must have originated and developed through the different basic stages of evolution in some land which is not now known to us.[6]

Elsewhere, in a passage enclosed in Glenn Lord's "On Reading and Writing", a compilation of Howard's literary views deriving from various letters and essays, there can be found Robert E. Howard's confession from a letter he wrote to H.P. Lovecraft on July 15, 1933: "There is no literary work, to me, half as zestful as rewriting history in the guise of fiction."[7]

Howard held the opinion that history is filled with great stories of action and drama to such an extent that a single paragraph of recorded history could easily fill a whole volume of fiction. Throughout his writing career he was

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4 All information about the Crô-Magnon men is repeated after Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

5 Although the average height of males was between 166 and 171 centimetres, there are findings of individuals of 195 centimetres and taller.

6 P. Louinet, *"Atlantean Genesis"*, p. 291.

7 G. Lord, *The Last Celt: A Bio-Bibliography of Robert Ervin Howard*, New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1977, p. 56.

planning to produce a history novel but to no avail. He observed with regret that "[he] could never make a living writing such things" for the reason that "markets are too scanty, with requirements too narrow."[8] Even though his dream of writing strictly history-based novels remained unfulfilled, Howard endeavoured to keep his fiction as closely intertwined with reality as possible:

> I try to write as true to the actual facts as possible; at least I try to commit as few errors as possible. I like to have my background and setting as accurate and realistic as I can, with my limited knowledge; if I twist too much, alter dates as some writers do, or present a character out of keeping with my impressions of the time and place, I lose my sense of reality, and my characters cease to be living and vital things; and my stories center entirely on my conception of my characters. Once I lose the "feel" of my characters, I might as well tear up what I have written.[9]

At the first glance Howard's insistence on reality in his writing may seem striking, especially when considered through the prism of his, outwardly contradictory, love for personal freedom. The main reason for such misunderstanding may stem from a popular perception which sets Howard's writing in the, so called, "imaginary world" tradition, which is said to have originated in the writing of William Morris and has since been continued by such authors as Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison, or J. R. R. Tolkien.[10] But, as George Knight has aptly observed in "Robert E. Howard: Hard-Boiled Heroic Fantasist", Howard's "inclination toward fiction of violence [and] his urge toward realism" set his writing closer to the hard-boiled literature of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.[11]

Unlike the aforementioned writers, though, Howard did not limit his fiction to the narrow background of selected American metropolises. As Dr. John D. Clark notes in the introduction to the 1950 edition of *Conan the Conqueror* (cited after Don Herron):

> Howard was a first-rate teller of tales, with a remarkable technical command of his tools and with a complete lack of inhibitions. With a fine and free hand he took what he liked from the more spectacular aspects of all ages and climes: proper names of eve-

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8 Ibid., p. 56.

9 Ibid., p. 56.

10 D. Herron, "The Dark Barbarian", in: *The Dark Barbarian. The Writings of Robert E. Howard: A Critical Anthology*, New Jersey: Wildside Press, 1984, p. 154.

11 G. Knight, "Robert E. Howard: Hard-Boiled Heroic Fantasist", in: *The Dark Barbarian. The Writings of Robert E. Howard: A Critical Anthology*, New Jersey: Wildside Press, 1984, p. 123.

> ry conceivable linguistic derivation, weapons from everywhere and everywhen, customs and classes from the whole ancient and medieval world... and the result was a purple and golden and crimson universe where anything can happen- except the tedious.[12]

This "lack of inhibitions" is arguably the main reason why George Knight and Don Herron can both be right when the former explains how Howard's universe "was realistic for postwar, Depression-era America",[13] and the latter claims that Howard was decades ahead of his time and that his heroes anticipated the needs of the modern popular literature.[14] Howard wanted to retain realism as he "saw history as wonderland"[15] and was above all "interested in humanity."[16] That is why he so fervently studied the records of times gone by both by reading and by memorising the accounts of living individuals who participated in various past endeavours. An argument can be made that the ability to share this passion and knowledge with his audiences uninhibited by the confines of time, space and cultural background was what motivated Howard to combine the people he had come in contact with into, as he himself put it in a letter to Clark Ashton Smith (23 July 1935), "the amalgamation I call Conan the Cimmerian."[17]

It is true that Howard's literary career might be divided into certain periods predominated by particular types of created narratives or major heroes. Once Howard lost the "feel" of a specific character, he left his lore and moved on to create another one. Before this happened to Kull, Howard began writing thirteen stories featuring the King of Valusia, ten of which were completed. Being his first distinctly "serial" hero, Kull saw publications of only three stories during his creator's lifetime. Even so, Kull began a new literary wave that was to erupt with tidal force several years after Howard's death. It is noteworthy that during the creation of "The Shadow Kingdom" Howard was becoming increasingly interested in psychology, which surely influenced the evolution of the famous Atlantean ruler. King Kull, being an exile from a barbaric nation, is also one of the most introspective and metaphysical characters Howard ever conceived. The first tale of Kull marked also Howard's concern with the ideals of political lead-

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12 D. Herron, "The Dark Barbarian", p. 157.
13 Ibid., p. 125.
14 Ibid., p. 156.
15 Ibid., p. 157.
16 Ibid., p. 162.
17 Ibid., p. 121.

ership, addressed and revised later in a number of different cycles. One of Howard's main interests, the matter of kingship, involving the role and identity of a monarch, his relationship with his dominion and his subjects, and the basis for his supremacy, is the concern that was probably further fuelled by the writer's growing distrust towards the establishment and his observation of the social unrest brought about by the Great Depression.

Even though Howard wrote of a number of monarchs, there is a considerable number of differences between his kings, especially when it comes to the mode of ruling and approach to sovereignty. The very basic opposition seems to be the one between ancient tyranny or the typically barbaric role of *dux bellorum* and the station of a medieval king. While Kull is a troubled king of an ancient empire, Bran Mak Morn, who witnessed his debut in 1930, is a King of the Picts only in title, serving in fact as a chieftain or *dux bellorum* leading the united tribes against Roman oppressors.

Bran is a Pict whose life overlaps with the Roman occupation of the British isles. In his adventures, Bran Mak Morn endeavours to unite the indigenous tribes and lead them against the Roman oppressors. The choice of such a hero complemented Howard's fascination with the Gaelic history and his approach to Rome (as described by him in a letter to H.P. Lovecraft, dated January 1932):

> Sometimes I think Bran is merely the symbol of my own antagonism toward the [Roman] empire, an antagonism not nearly so easy to understand as my favouritism for the Picts. Perhaps this is another explanation for the latter; I saw the name "Picts" first on maps, and always the name lay outside the far-flung bounds of the Roman empire. This fact aroused my intense interest; it was so significant of itself. The mere fact suggested terrific wars, savage attacks and ferocious resistance, valor and heroism and ferocity. I was an instinctive enemy of Rome; what more natural than that I should instinctively ally myself with her enemies, more especially as these enemies had successfully resisted all attempts at subjugation.[18]

It is a well established fact that Howard felt a strong contempt towards any means of control or subjugation. Rome to his mind represented therefore all the limiting, suppressing forces he despised, while the Picts constituted a perfect depiction of struggle for freedom and independence.

The story of Bran Mak Morn serves yet another purpose as it links the Kull/Atlantis mythos even tighter with the actual history of Earth. In "Kings of

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[18] G. Lord, *The Last Celt*, p. 55.

the Night" Bran Mak Morn faces a challenge of uniting a number of Pictish and Gaelic tribes, as well as a group of Norse mercenaries against a considerable Roman contingent that has ventured beyond the wall. The Norsemen, whose leader perishes in a skirmish with Roman scouts, threaten to leave Bran's side unless they are to be led to battle by a king of neither Pict nor Gael descent. Gonar the wizard resolves this stalemate by calling King Kull from the past, using the magic stone in Bran's headdress. The stone, first given by Kull to his companion, Brule the Spear-Slayer, is an artefact passed down from one descendant of Brule to another, up to Bran himself. Once he is summoned, Kull appears out of the sunrise to help his friend's descendant. Thus, Howard created a bridge between the age of Atlanteans and Earth's recorded history. Soon, also by means of Kull's story, Howard was to develop a new character that pushed the measure of realism in his fantasy writing to new heights.

Reportedly Howard spent the early months of 1929 rereading the works of his favourite playwright, William Shakespeare. Apparently inspired by *Julius Caesar*, Howard decided to write his own story of treachery and attempted *coup d'état*. "By This Axe I Rule!" opens with a group of conspirators scheming to do away with their ruler on that same day. The whole scene takes place at night, as dawn is nearing all the plotters take an oath to seal their alliance. In "Atlantean Genesis" Patrice Louinet points to a striking resemblance between the beginning of "By This Axe I Rule!" and Act II, scene 1 of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Although his story runs in a different direction than Shakespeare's, it is supposed that at some point Howard was really planning to kill the King of Valusia. In one of the letters to Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard confessed: "suddenly I would find myself out of contact with the conception as if the man himself had been standing at my shoulder directing my efforts, and had suddenly turned and gone away, leaving me to search for another character."[19]

"By This Axe I Rule!" was rejected by *Argosy* and by *Adventure*. Howard, seeing that he lost the "feel" of the Atlantean, decided to rewrite the story, introducing a brand new character, King Conan of Aquilonia. Howard's changes went much further than a simple alteration of the character and location names as he decided to set his story a couple thousand years after the fall of Valusia. The story retitled to "The Phoenix on the Sword" presented brand new geopolitical and social surroundings of what came to be known as the Hyborian

[19] P. Louinet, "Atlantean Genesis", p. 303.

Age. It is clear that Howard had carefully planned the setting for his new-found hero as in the initial draft of "The Phoenix on the Sword" he included a separate essay, "The Hyborian Age", describing in detail his imaginative vision of Earth between c. 40,000 and 10,000 BC. The essay was not included in *Weird Tales* due to Wright's[20] disapproval, but Howard managed to salvage some of its gist in the form of the now canonical opening, stylised as an entry from the Nemedian Chronicles. The original essay was first published in *The Pantagraph* (1936) with an introduction by Robert E. Howard:

> Nothing in this article is to be considered as an attempt to advance any theory in opposition to accepted history. It is simply a fictional background for a series of fiction-stories. When I began writing the Conan stories a few years ago, I prepared this 'history' of his age and the peoples of that age, in order to lend him and his sagas a greater aspect of realness. And I found that by adhering to the 'facts' and spirit of that history, in writing the stories, it was easier to visualize (and therefore to present) him as a real flesh-and-blood character rather than a ready-made product. In writing about him and his adventures in the various kingdoms of his Age, I have never violated the 'facts' or spirit of the 'history' here set down, but have followed the lines of that history as closely as the writer of actual historical-fiction follows the lines of actual history. I have used this 'history' as a guide in all the stories in this series that I have written.[21]

"The Hyborian Age" is a thorough and captivating recounting of the happenings before the beginning of written history. In an imaginative manner it paints the rise and fall of majestic empires, the evolution and mixing of various peoples and a continent-shattering cataclysm which might have formed the Earth we know today. Much love and insight was given by Howard as he strived to create a consistent and believable background for his tales of high adventure. It might be argued that in doing so Robert E. Howard improved upon the technique used by Snorri in *Prose Edda*. While he used the euhemeristic method by putting Asgard and Vanaheim among other dominions of the Hyborian Age, Howard interlaced them in a subtly-woven structure rather than connect them to a singular mythological event. This makes both the Æsir and

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20 Farnsworth Wright (1888 – 1940) was the best known editor of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. Known to be a moody and picky editor, Wright was nonetheless praised for introducing to *Weird Tales* such notable authors as H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, and obviously Robert E. Howard.

21 R. E. Howard, "The Hyborian Age", in: *The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian*, ed. Patrice Louinet, New York: Del Ray Books, 2003, p. 381.

the Vanir fit perfectly into the legendary time of the Hyborian Age, making both mythological dominions a crucial part of this centuries-long period.

In his introduction to "The Hyborian Age" Howard underlines the role of history in his creation of the setting for Conan's adventures and voices his concern for realism. Aware of possible doubt concerning the connection between realism and the fantasy genre, Howard commented upon this notion in a letter to Clark Ashton Smith:

> It may sound fantastic to link the term "realism" with Conan; but as a matter of fact - his supernatural adventures aside – he is the most realistic character I ever evolved. He is simply a combination of a number of men I have known, and I think that's why he seemed to step full-grown into my consciousness when I wrote the first yarn of the series. Some mechanism in my sub-consciousness took the dominant characteristics of various prize-fighters, gunmen, bootleggers, oil field bullies, gamblers, and honest workmen I had come in contact with, and combining them all, produced the amalgamation I call Conan the Cimmerian.[22]

Judging by these words, one could easily say that Conan was a curious means of representation of the American or at least Texan citizenry of Howard's time. In fact, on the basis of distinct attributes and exploits of the Cimmerian, Conan can be seen as a representation and a voice of a nation far from homogeneity, a nation humbled and torn by the Great Depression and yet still proudly nourishing memories of the pioneering days. In his introduction to *Conan: the Phenomenon*, Michael Moorcock states that "for all his roots in our earliest fables, Conan the Cimmerian is a thoroughly American creation",[23] and declares Conan a "gloriously all-American hero."[24] Mark Finn, a Howardian scholar and biographer, has called Conan "the American everyman."[25] In his essence, Conan emerges as an embodiment of the American dream, of an immigrant striving to find his way in a new world, employing his wits and capabilities to climb the social ladder, and reaching its pinnacle in the end.

In total Robert E. Howard wrote twenty-one complete Conan stories and five unfinished fragments or synopses. All this Conan-centred body of work

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22 G. Lord, *The Last Celt*, p. 58.

23 M. Moorcock, "Conan: American Phenomenon", in: *Conan: The Phenomenon*, ed. Paul Sammon, Milwaukie: Dark Horse Books, 2007, p. xi.

24 Ibid., p. xiv.

25 M. Finn, "Robert E. Howard: Lone Star Fantasist", in: *Conan: the Frost-Giant's Daughter and Other Stories*, Milwaukie: Dark Horse Books, 2005, p. 186.

was created over a relatively short span of three years. Having based his celebrated hero on a number of existing representatives of the American working-class, Howard managed to encapsulate innumerable aspects of the American society in a work which, at the same time, remains universal enough for his cycle to be a valid part of the world-wide popular culture almost a century after the author's death. With the record of three movie adaptations, dozens of pastiches and constantly produced imitations, continuously published comic books and graphic novels amounting to hundreds of issues, regularly reprinted book-format collections, and innumerable collectibles, video games and cross-cultural appearances and representations, it might be safely assumed that Howard's Hyborian cycle remains one of the most culturally influential narratives of all time.

It is also noteworthy that while the film adaptations of the works of another great fantasy writer, J. R. R. Tolkien, remain fairly direct renditions of the original texts, Howard's works are often used as a medium through which current matters of social interest are discussed. The first, and arguably best known movie adaptation of Howard's fiction, *Conan the Barbarian* has in fact little to do with the source material, but is nonetheless significant as the director John Milius, a man who worked at such American-centred pictures as *Dirty Harry* and *Apocalypse Now*, chose Conan and the Hyborian-lore to comment upon a number of culturally significant themes of the time, such as televangelism, the threat of socialism and the idea of self-conscious individualism promoted by Reagan's office. In 2009, after it had been revealed that President Barack Obama is a devoted fan and collector of the Conan cycle, a limited comic book series commenting on the political struggles of the time was launched under the title "Barack the Barbarian". Once more the social commentary revolving around the matters of the American public concerns and political changes was cast in the guise of a Hyborian tale.

The ties between realism and Howard's writing are numerous and well documented. It is therefore fitting that this propensity for reflecting reality through fiction made Howard's creations a popular means for social and political commentary, continuing their connection to reality over eighty years after the author's death. It would be hard to think of a better summary than that given in Don Herron's "Dark Barbarian" wherein he keenly observes that "[Conan] looms as a mythic figure over fantasy literature, over American culture."[26]

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[26] D. Herron, "The Dark Barbarian", p. 179.

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| Francesco Bernuzzi

THE THIRD HEMISPHERE: LORD DUNSANY'S JOURNEY BETWEEN THE REAL AND THE FANTASTIC

Abstract

The following article considers the peculiarity of fantastic settings in Lord Dunsany's fantasy fiction. In contrast to many canonical examples of the genre, Dunsany's works, though openly rejecting realism, never fully exclude reality, creating instead a continuous dialogue between the two dimensions. The article examines the status of Dunsany's fantasy settings as extensions of reality, as parts of the world beyond the reach of common knowledge, rather than self-standing cosmologies. It studies the role of the first-person narrator, a narrative device frequently employed by Dunsany to present the fantastic tale as a personal experience and to involve his readers in the story. Finally, it analyses the use of irony in Dunsany's fiction and its importance in prompting reflections on the nature and role of fantasy literature.

Key words: fantastic, fantasy literature, irony, Dunsany

While frequently neglected by literary critics, in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries fantasy literature has experienced a remarkable surge in popularity, attested by the wide range of media this versatile genre has inspired: television and cinema productions, graphic novels, artworks and games. J.R.R. Tolkien (1892–1973) may be safely assumed to be the leading figure of twentieth century fantasy writing, and his works are a landmark for the compo-

sition, or as he would call it the "sub-creation"[1] of literary worlds of fantasy. Less known to the wider public, but no less established as a "Forefather of Fantasy", is the Anglo-Irish writer Edward Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany (1878 – 1957). Lord Dunsany constructed his fantasy worlds in ways that may provide an alternative model for fantasy fiction, while also prompting deeper reflections on the practice of myth-making (mythopoeia) and the shifting, complex relationship between fantasy and reality.

In Tolkien's model, the setting of fantasy stories relies on the belief engendered in the reader, a belief achieved through the use of literary language. Such a "Secondary World", as Tolkien called it, is believable and self-standing because it is presented as a fully coherent and self-contained world: it has its own history, mythology and rules and is described as the sole reality in which narration takes place. To break this "spell" would be to let disbelief arise in readers, bringing them back to the "Primary World" and jeopardizing the credibility of the tale.[2] It has not been infrequent then, in fantasy stories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, to represent the Secondary World as the only possible reality within the story universe, by removing and avoiding any reference to the Primary World.[3]

Such conventional understanding of the fantasy world contrasts quite starkly with Lord Dunsany's style of creation, most typically exemplified by a series of short stories published between 1905 and 1919, which will be considered here. Even though Dunsany eschews conventional themes and realist modes and sets many of his fantasy tales in exotic, otherworldly and dream-like realms, artfully described in an ornate, archaic prose, he never completely removes layers of reality. Rather, he adopts a series of literary devices that engage his fantasy worlds in a continuous dialogue with the real world, make the boundaries between real and fantastic worlds permeable, and pose questions as to the nature of fantasy fiction and the roles author and readers are found to play. Dunsany presents many of his fantasy settings as if they were part of the real world, or somehow connected to it, and thus accessible by real people. This, combined with the frequent use of a first-person narrator who recounts the fantasy tale as

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1 J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories", in: *Tree and Leaf*, London: Harper Collins, 2001, pp. 1-81.

2 J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, p. 37, p. 49.

3 See F. Mendlesohn and E. James (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 66 on some passages where Tolkien himself appears to contravene to his theory by referencing to the Primary World in *The Lord of the Rings*.

a personal experience, urges the readers to envisage the possibility of the fantastic in their own lives. Irony itself, a recurrent mode in Dunsany's narrative style, works less as a strategy to distance oneself from the fantastic than as an effective metafictional device which performs two crucial functions. For one, irony candidly reveals the author as an artisan of the fantastic: one who creates worlds of fiction through literary words. At the same time, irony serves to lambaste the hypocrisy of a materialistic, overbearing society which, in Dunsany's view, has forgotten and forsaken beauty, especially as embodied in art and nature.[4] Yet beauty may still be attained provided that the readers agree to play the game of fantasy and thereby regain their sense of wonder.

What is immediately striking in Lord Dunsany's version of the fantasy genre is the absence of a map, by contrast a relatively common feature of fantasy narratives. Tolkien himself, among many others, included a detailed map that helped his readers visualize the Secondary World of the story and clearly set it apart from real geography. That Dunsany should have failed to include maps simply because he was not involved in the visual aspects of his publications seems unlikely. In fact, his friendship and collaboration with illustrator Sidney H. Sime are well known, and Sime's artwork has been shown to have affected Dunsany's creative process on a number of occasions.[5] Ultimately, it is difficult to situate Dunsany's fictive lands, for his is the geography of dreams and legends. The story titled "Bethmoora" is a fitting example. Its eponymous city lies in view of the Hills of Hap and the mount called Peol Jagganoth, where "syrabub wine" is produced and local musicians play on the "kalipac", the "tambang", the "tittibuk" and the "zootibar."[6] Unlike Tolkien's, Dunsany's creative approach was not based on thorough philological accuracy. Nor did he strive to establish a canonical mythology. Rather, he disseminated his tales with a series of striking details of great suggestive power and often phrased in evocative sounds that contributed to the sense of exoticism and otherness while also bolstering the credibility of a Secondary World governed by its own rules and customs. Nonetheless, readers are presented with "familiar" elements that blur the boundaries between the fictional world of Bethmoora and the real world: the story opens with a description of London, and the first-person narrator reveals

4 On the centrality of beauty, nature and art in Dunsany's work, see: W. F. Touponce, *Lord Dunsany, H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Bradbury. Spectral Journeys*, New York: The Scarecrow Press, 2013 and S. T. Joshi, *Lord Dunsany: Master of the Anglo-Irish Imagination*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

5 M. Amory, *Biography of Lord Dunsany*, London: Collins, 1972, p. 86.

6 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, Boston: J. W. Luce & Company, 1910, pp. 53-54.

that he has decided to leave the British capital in order to see Bethmoora. He also adds that there were other European visitors in the fabled city.

Similarly, in "The Fall of Babbulkund", another first-person narrator travels by sea and hires Arab guides to cross the desert on a quest to find the city of Babbulkund, carved by Pharaohs out of sacred hills but condemned for its sins by the prophet of a monotheistic religion. The cultural, historical and ethnic references explicitly remind the reader of the Near and Middle East and its narratives, but the setting of the story also overlaps with the fantastic and the unknown by mentioning the city of Babbulkund and the rivers Oonrana and Plegáthanees, which are nowhere to be found in a real-world atlas.

What is interesting is that Dunsany as a narrator often purportedly overlooks the otherworldliness of his settings. He simply presents his fantasy worlds and their stories as if they were part of shared, albeit slightly secretive, common knowledge. In a number of instances, the narrator nonchalantly suggests that some jewellers or antique shops in London in fact obtain their merchandise from supernatural sources, often with the help of thieves, as can be seen from this passage of "The Bird of the Difficult Eye":

> Seeing from this that some extraordinary revolution had occurred in the jewelry business I went with my curiosity well aroused to a queer old person half demon and half man who has an idol-shop in a byway of the City and who keeps me informed of affairs at the Edge of the World. And briefly over a pinch of heather incense that he takes by way of snuff he gave me this tremendous information: that Mr. Neepy Thang the son of Thangobrind had returned from the Edge of the World and was even now in London.[7]

The character that goes by the exotic and alien sounding name of Neepy Thang, son of Thangobrind (ironically preceded by the domesticating title "Mr."), will then proceed to reach the Edge of the World, and the Seas of Shiroora Shan, surprisingly enough, by train:

> He bought the purple ticket at Victoria Station. He went by Herne Hill, Bromley and Bickley and passed St. Mary Cray. At Eynsford he changed and taking a footpath along a winding valley went wandering into the hills. And at the top of a hill in a little wood, where all the anemones long since were over and the perfume of mint and thyme from

[7] E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Last Book of Wonder*, Boston: J. W. Luce & Company, 1916, pp. 53-54. The American edition uses the spelling "jewelry".

> outside came drifting in with Thang, he found once more the familiar path, age-old and fair as wonder, that leads to the Edge of the World.[8]

Nearly one century before J.K. Rowling's magical train to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry,[9] Dunsany offers his own version of a train journey to the fantastic in enticingly familiar terms: a passage from known to unknown lands signalled by beautifully evocative natural descriptions, which are a known cypher and constant source of inspiration in the baron's writing. Yet the narrator does not forget to add references to real places, so that it is possible to reconstruct the train travel up to a village in Kent. A similar voyage between the worlds is undertaken by Pombo the idolater, protagonist of another story,[10] who takes a train from London to World's End (also a real British toponym), where he finds, in Last Street, a secret well opening into "the Edge of the World."

While Dunsany never developed all-encompassing mythologies or cosmologies to undergird his fantasy worlds, he did set up recurrent themes and motifs: "the Edge of the World" is one of them. Already mentioned in the myths of *The Gods of Pegāna*,[11] the edge of the world features in at least six stories from *The Book of Wonder*,[12] as well as in many other collections. Indeed, if a name should be found for Lord Dunsany's fantasy setting, it would probably be "at the edge of the world" and "beyond the fields we know."

The underlying concept is intriguing: the stories are set in *the* World, the same world where London, Paris, Ireland and Kent are, the real world Dunsany and his readers are supposed to inhabit. The world that, by the first decades of the twentieth century, had been extensively and thoroughly mapped by explores and the Royal Geographic Society, its most "savage" and exotic features domesticated by the pervasive reach of colonial powers and duly explained according to the models of institutionalized science. Archaeology and ethnography disclosed the secrets of distant civilizations, while positivist philosophy enforced

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8 Ibid., p. 57.

9 See J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, London: Bloomsbury, 1997.

10 E. Plunkett Dunsany, "The Injudicious Prayers of Pombo the Idolater", in: E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*, Boston: J. W. Luce & Company, 1915, pp. 36-44.

11 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Gods of Pegāna*, Boston: J.W. Luce & Company, 1916, p. 50: "the edge of Earth", "the Rim of the Worlds."

12 "The Bride of the Man-Horse", "Probable Adventure of the Three Literary Men", "The Injudicious Prayers of Pombo the Idolater", "The Quest of the Queen'sTears", "The Hoard of the Gibbleins", "How One Came, as was Foretold, to the City of Never" in: E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*.

faith in the powers of reason to comprehend the unknown and promote progress. The machine, the ultimate product of modernity, and a *bête noire* for Dunsany, greatly enhanced man's ability to subjugate the wild forces of nature and exploit its resources. The world is *known*, and it is often with this or similar appellatives that Dunsany refers to it: "the fields we know", "the known world", "Terra Cognita."[13] Nonetheless, those lands we know seem to always have a border, a limit, and some other place lies beyond them: beyond accepted rules and conventions. Dunsany's frequently mentioned "Edge of the World" hints at a view of the cosmos that is at variance with the established models of science and more akin to older mythical representations of earth. The Latin epithet "Terra Cognita" conversely recalls the "Terra Australis Incognita" and conjures up reminiscences of ancient and early modern maps, their blank spaces and margins decorated with monsters, ornate allusions to the unknown, the unconquered places of the world in which readers can still envision distant lands of dreams and possibilities.[14]

The fantastic is a sort of continent or land bordering the real: it is not separate but adjacent and contiguous to it. Exchanges between these two dimensions are possible: the entire plot of *The King of Elfland's Daughter* revolves around them. The story is that of the love between Alveric of Erl, inhabitant of "the fields we know", and Lirazel, princess of Elfland. In his second novel, Dunsany weaves together facts and fiction in one intriguing detail: Orion, son of Alveric, slays a unicorn of Elfland; the horn of that same unicorn will be used by Benvenuto Cellini for a chalice presented by Pope Clement VII to Francis I of France:

> This was the horn that was sent in later years as a gift from the Pope to King Francis. Benvenuto Cellini tells of it in his memoirs. He tells how Pope Clement sent for him and a certain Tobbia, and ordered them to make designs for the setting of a unicorn's horn, the finest ever seen. Judge then of Orion's delight when the horn of the first uni-

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13 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*, pp. 72, 74.

14 For example the map *Vniversale Descrittione di Tvtta la Terra Conoscivta Fin Qvi* by Paolo Forlani, an Italian cartographer of the sixteenth century, displays a "Terra Incognita" in the southern hemisphere of the world, populated by exotic animals, both real and fantastic, including an elephant, a rhinoceros, a dragon and a unicorn. The map is reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition "Quando l'Italia disegnava il mondo, Tesori Cartografici del Rinascimento Italiano", held in Bergamo, Palazzo del Podestà, in 2016. See Associazione Roberto Almagià (ed.), *Quando l'Italia disegnava il mondo, Tesori Cartografici del Rinascimento Italiano*, n/p.: Associazione Roberto Almagià Associazione Italiana Collezionisti di Cartografia Antica, 2016, pp. 44-45, table 03.

> corn he ever took was such as to be esteemed generations later the finest ever seen, and in no less a city than Rome, with all her opportunities to acquire and compare such things. For a number of these curious horns must have been available for the Pope to have selected for the gift the finest ever seen; but in the simpler days of my story the rarity of the horn was so great that unicorns were still considered fabulous. The year of the gift to King Francis would be about 1530, the horn being mounted in gold; and the contract went to Tobbia and not to Benvenuto Cellini. I mention the date because there are those who care little for a tale if it be not here and there supported by history, and who even in history care more for fact than philosophy. […] How the unicorn's horn found its way from the Castle of Erl, and in what hands it wandered, and how it came at last to the City of Rome, would of course make another book.[15]

Far from being invented, the anecdote of the unicorn cup is mentioned in Cellini's own autobiography and faithfully reported by Dunsany.[16] Once again, an anecdotal detail refers to the time when scientific categories were less fixed than in the strict model of Linneus' taxonomy, so that a narwhal's tooth could pass for a unicorn's horn.[17] It also serves as tongue-in-cheek evidence for the actual existence of the fantastic, with dates and historical sources implying the common currency of unicorn's horns in the discourse of sixteenth century Rome. Dunsany reverses historical and fantastic paradigms as he notes that, in older days, unicorns were *still* regarded as fabulous, as if they were now known to be real. The passage also leaves open the possibility for new stories, since history and reality themselves may be seen as tales to be expanded by other narrators. Dunsany seems to express a wish for the substantiation of the fantastic in human history, or at least for the expectation that the fantastic may transfigure history and yield new insights about reality itself. In fact, in his novel the fantastic eventually prevails over the real as the King of Elfland uses a spell to extend the boundaries of his kingdom and take over, geographically and physically, the lands of Erl in order to include them within the territory of fantasy, beauty and perpetual youth.

Even when Dunsany refers to the Lands of Dream, he never presents dreaming merely as an activity of the brain during sleep but as a journey across specific landscapes and regions, as described in "Idle Days on the Yann":

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15 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1973, p. 133.

16 F. Tassi and B. Cellini (ed.), *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini, orefice e scultore, scritta da lui medesimo*, Firenze: Guglielmo Piatti, 1829, p. 268.

17 See O. Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, New York: Avenell Books, 1982, pp. 253-272.

> I [went] to find my way by strange means back to those hazy fields that all poets know, wherein stand small mysterious cottages through whose windows, looking westwards, you may see the fields of men, and looking eastwards see glittering elfin mountains, tipped with snow, going range on range into the region of Myth, and beyond it into the kingdom of Fantasy, which pertain to the Lands of Dream.[18]

"Idle Days on the Yann" is one of the rare stories by Dunsany that are part of a cycle. In the following tales "A Shop in Go-by Street" and "The Avenger of Perdóndaris" the narrator will once again visit the Lands of Dream, the river Yann, its cities and inhabitants, this time by physically stepping through the back door of an unlikely shop in a secret street near the Strand in London.[19]

Quite clearly, in many of his stories Dunsany's main interest is not that of establishing an alternative cosmology in which to take refuge. Rather, through his tales, he tries to ensure an expansion of reality by adding a "Third Hemisphere": his fiction conveys to the readers the idea that there is still room for dreams, for romance and for poetry in their everyday reality. The effort in Dunsany's fiction is that of illuminating "secret corners" of our world, safe spaces where the frail, endangered beauty of nature and art may be preserved and take free shape, may thrive and later exert its subtle influence on our life. The notion of a "Third Hemisphere" comes from *Tales of Three Hemispheres*, the title of Dunsany's 1919 collection of stories. And while the idea is not further developed in the book, I believe it offers thought-provoking clues as well as a useful visual model. Geometrically speaking, of course, the world's globe can only consist of two halves, but this playful linguistic invention flouts the rules of the known, *mapped* reality. The power of literary words adds a further dimension, another "hemisphere" that overlaps actual geometry, interferes with reality and illuminates it with the light of wonder.

The power of Dunsany's linguistic games lies not only in how he portrays his fantasy setting, but also in the position he assumes as a narrator and in the relationship he establishes with the readers. William F. Touponce has very clearly shown how Dunsany's mode of narration is chiefly that of *storytelling*.[20] He relates his tales as if they were either experiences that he has lived in person or as traditions that have been handed down to him and that are shared within

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18 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, p. 91.

19 In E. Plunkett Dunsany, *Tales of Three Hemispheres*, Boston: J. W. Luce & Company, 1919, pp. 104-119 and 120-147.

20 W. F. Touponce, *Lord Dunsany, H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Bradbury. Spectral Journeys*, New York: The Scarecrow Press, 2013.

a circle of readers, which conveys the sense of wisdom being passed down within a community of knowledge. Dunsany's habit of introducing the most bizarre elements of his fantastic stories as if they were something that "is known" or "is told" concurs to this effect. "The Hoard of the Gibbelins" opens: "The Gibbelins eat, as is well known, nothing less good than man";[21] while no one could possibly know about the dietary habits of the Gibbelins, characters of pure fiction, readers are given the distinct feeling of being made privy to a sort of mysterious yet authentic culture.

But a key element of Dunsany's storytelling mode is the use of a first-person narrator, a literary device he frequently employs in his short stories, to the point that the narrator becomes a character in his own right who bears many resemblances with the author himself. Often enough, the narrating voice mentions London as a familiar place, where as a matter of fact the Dunsanys spent much time and enjoyed a large group of acquaintances. At other times it is Ireland, the seat of the barony of Dunsany in County Meath, or Kent, where the Plunketts owned a second house and were eventually laid to rest. The refined, measured and elegant tone is that of a learned, aristocratic gentleman. "The Hashish Man", a sequel to "Bethmoora", opens with the narrator in the middle of what seems an upper-class party in London:

> I was at a dinner in London the other day. The ladies had gone upstairs, and no one sat on my right; on my left there was a man I did not know, but he knew my name somehow apparently, for he turned to me after a while, and said, "I read a story of yours about Bethmoora in a review."
> Of course I remembered the tale. It was about a beautiful Oriental city that was suddenly deserted in a day—nobody quite knew why. I said, "Oh, yes," and slowly searched in my mind for some more fitting acknowledgement of the compliment that his memory had paid me.[22]

Here, the boundary between the author and the narrator becomes tenuous: Dunsany and his literary persona seem to coincide, since none other than the real Dunsany had in fact written a tale about Bethmoora, first published in "Saturday Review" in 1908.[23] The stranger and Dunsany's literary alter ego then proceed to converse amiably about what has happened to the city and seem to

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21 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*, p. 74.
22 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, p. 116.
23 S.T. Joshi, *Lord Dunsany: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2014, p. 48.

suggest that another way of travelling to fantastic lands might be through mind-altering substances.[24] The author himself seems to be concerned about the fate of Bethmoora, as if it were not a product of his imagination but an actual place, independent of his control, a place which may be stricken by an actual calamity. Dunsany-narrator then turns into an avid listener, a member of the public, as the role of the narrator passes over to the hashish man. Eventually, if we follow the logic of the game, we find that the readers, and at this point Dunsany himself, are left to wonder about the reliability of this second storyteller:

> [A] servant came and told our host that a policeman in the hall wished to speak to him at once. He apologised to us, and went outside, and we heard a man in heavy boots, who spoke in a low voice to him. My friend got up and walked over to the window, and opened it, and looked outside. "I should think it will be a fine night," he said. Then he jumped out. When we put our astonished heads out of the window to look for him, he was already out of sight.[25]

The narrator also displays the characteristics of an experienced traveller, as seen in stories like "The Fall of Babbulkund", "Bethmoora", and what may be called the *Yann cycle*. By the beginning of the First World War, young Dunsany had already visited the Swiss Alps, Gibraltar while on military duty, South Africa, where he fought in the Boer War, as well as the Maghreb and Egypt. These life experiences were to provide a major source of inspiration for Dunsany in his later works, as recorded in Mark Amory's biography,[26] and it could be argued that these first glimpses of the exotic would soon be turned into his otherworldly cities of fantasy. But the creative process worked also the other way round: "Idle Days on the Yann", the story of a boat trip along the river of dreams, was written before a cruise on the Nile, so that even the anticipation of a real experience had the power to influence the author's imagination: "I did not feel in the least as though I were inventing but rather as though I wrote the history of lands that I had known in forgotten wanderings."[27] The effect of this artifice is that the real Dunsany sounds as if he is either relating his first-hand experiences in the land of dreams or telling tales he has personally collected, much

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24 Replying to the only letter he received from Aleister Crowley, who praised the tale and commented on hashish, Dunsany clarified that "the strongest drug he took was tea". M. Amory, *Biography of Lord Dunsany*, p. 72.

25 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, p. 126.

26 M. Amory, *Biography of Lord Dunsany*, London: Collins, 1972, pp. 24-27.

27 Ibid., p. 46.

like a new Herodotus of the fantastic: "It is many a year, they tell me, since Bethmoora became desolate. Her desolation is spoken of in taverns where sailors meet, and certain travellers have told me of it."[28]

The first person narrator almost invariably involves a second person, the reader, in a dialogue, as in this vivid description of princess Sāranoora's beautiful dance:

> And if I could get thirty heathen men out of fantastic lands, with their long black hair and little elfin eyes and instruments of music even unknown to Nebuchadnezzar the King; and if I could make them play those tunes that I heard in the ivory palace on some lawn, gentle reader, at evening near your house then you would understand the beauty of Sāranoora and the blaze of light and colour in that stupendous hall. … Then gentle reader you would be gentle no more but the thoughts that run like leopards over the far free lands would come leaping into your head even were it London, yes, even in London: you would rise up then and beat your hands on the wall with its pretty pattern of flowers, in the hope that the bricks might break and reveal the way to that palace of ivory by the amethyst gulf where the golden dragons are.[29]

In this powerful example Dunsany's "gentle readers", as he often addressed them, are personally called into question. The author strives to tear down the barrier between fantasy and reality, between himself and his readers, who inhabit their safe day-to-day world inside the walls of homes made familiar with a "pretty pattern of flowers." He wants them to experience the same intensity that strikes him when he delves into the far-reaching depths of the fantastic.

In terms that closely recall the conventional patterns of oral story-telling, Dunsany the storyteller has his readers partake of secret lore: he draws them in, and has them accustomed to the fictional familiarities of a story-based world, so that they may themselves venture into the wider realm of fantasy and confidently experience it first-hand: "I will not play those tunes in any streets we know. I will not bring those strange musicians here, I will only whisper the way to the Lands of Dream, and only a few frail feet shall find the way, and I shall dream alone of the beauty of Sāranoora and sometimes sigh."[30] The preface to *The Book of Wonder* is an explicit invitation for the reader to leave behind the mundane and enter the fantastic, its epilogue a farewell to readers and a thrilling anticipation for ever new stories: "But for this I must first return to the Edge of the

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28 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, p. 53.
29 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *Tales of Three Hemispheres*, pp.131-132.
30 Ibid., pp. 132.

World. Behold, the caravans start."[31] Both the storyteller and the reader will ultimately be free to embark on new journeys.

Despite this urgent call to experience the fantastic in the real world, to share and to amplify it, there still remains a prominent feature of Dunsany's literary voice that needs to be accounted for, a feature that often seems to work exactly against the mechanisms of the fantastic, that is, irony. Critics and admirers alike have often characterized Dunsany's literary production as a slow progression towards cynicism and disillusionment, as he gradually abandons his fantasy settings for more realistic concerns. H.P. Lovecraft in particular lamented a perceived loss in the author's initial naïveté for the sake of a more self-conscious voice that comes close to self-parody. In his literary theorization of fantasy, Tolkien explicitly opposed the idea of humorously undercutting magic itself from within a fantasy story.[32]

Such criticism seems questionable because it excludes the possibility that a writer may wish to evolve and experiment. More importantly, it disregards the fact that a vein of irony was present in Dunsany's writing ever since his literary debut with *The Gods of Pegāna*. There, Dunsany's irony subtly targeted prophets whose prophecies backfired or a host of improbable deities, like the gods of smoke and dust, the god that turned ember to ashes and the one who wept for lost and broken things.

It is true though that irony poses serious threats to the fantastic, as it undermines the foundations of Secondary Belief. The ending of the "Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweller" is a fitting example of how irony was deployed to disrupt or at least to undermine the veil of illusion. A merchant prince had promised the soul of his daughter to Thangobrind if he stole the diamond of the spider idol Hlo-hlo. After Thangobrind failed in the quest and met his distressing doom, the maiden, finally safe "felt so little gratitude for this great deliverance that she took to respectability of a militant kind, and became aggressively dull, and called her home the English Riviera, and had platitudes worked

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31 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*¸ Preface, Epilogue.

32 Lovecraft's opinion is reported in S. T. Joshi, *Lord Dunsany: Master of the Anglo-Irish Imagination*, p. 44. For Tolkien, see J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, p. 10-11. Considering Dunsany's experiences during the Irish civil war (including a bullet-wound to the face in the Easter Rising of 1916) and in the course of the First World War where he lost many friends (the poet Francis Ledwidge and his fellow soldiers of the Inniskilling Fusiliers), we would be misled if we were to read his two first novels merely as cynical detachments from fantasy. Rather, the quixotic *The Chronicles of Rodriguez* and *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, which came right after his typically fantastic production of short stories, were a hymn to the power of the ideal to triumph over ugliness and materialism.

in worsted upon her tea-cosy, and in the end never died, but passed away at her residence."[33] Tolkien was to express his overt dislike for this story years later,[34] and one can see why: the reader is abruptly taken back to the reality of the Primary World in all its material and spiritual dullness.

Dunsany's nuanced predilection for irony inevitably affects his role as a reliable narrator. "A Story of Land and Sea", an entirely unrealistic, albeit not supernatural, narrative of piracy and crime that sees Captain Shard and his crew crossing the Sahara on their ship, is an amusing tale which is supposed to act as "a stimulus for younger men,"[35] a tale whose verisimilitude readers are not meant to question. Nonetheless, by way of conclusion Dunsany adds an unexpected and rather superfluous "guarantee to the reader", where he states that despite his own scepticism he has taken every possible means to verify the reliability of his source: he mentions a sailor in some tavern, allegedly provided with enough alcohol so as to prevent him from lying. Dunsany professes in jest that the narrator must necessarily be earnest, serious and reliable, and swears he will have the sailor executed if it is revealed that he did in fact lie:

> if he has been the means of deceiving you [the reader] there are little things about him that I know […], which I will tell at once to every judge of my acquaintance, and it will be a pretty race to see which of them will hang him. Meanwhile, O my reader, believe the story, resting assured that if you are taken in the thing shall be a matter for the hangman.[36]

Dunsany also parodies his own voice and his lavish style when he portrays a poor shepherd who describes to his literary alter ego the phantasmal city which is said to appear on Mallington Moor and whom he unkindly interrupts:

> Why, the place was all of marble, roads, walls and palaces, all pure white marble, and the tops of the tall thin spires were entirely of gold. And they were queer folk in the city even for foreigners. And there were camels, but I cut him short for I thought I could judge for myself, if there was such a place, and, if not, I was wasting my time as well as a pint of good whiskey.[37]

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33 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Book of Wonder*, p. 16.

34 See D. Nelson, *Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy*, "Tolkien Studies", 2004, n.1, pp. 177-181.

35 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Last Book of Wonder*, p. 150.

36 Ibid., pp. 151-152.

37 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *The Last Book of Wonder*, p. 33.

All the instances presented here concur to suggest that the castle of fantasy is built on the feeble foundations of literary words. But Dunsany, whose irony and playfulness were always part of his narrative strategy as well as his character, is unwilling to spare the real world from the caustic blows of his double-edged sword. His narrator is often found to be in a state of embarrassment for belonging to the real world, as when he has to explain to the bare-footed court of Singanee that his toes are deformed by the use of shoes (and he would make up a fantastic excuse rather than explain the norms of the society to which he has to conform)[38] or when he introduces himself to the crew of the "Bird of the River" that sails on the Yann: "I told how I came from Ireland, which is of Europe, whereat the captain and all the sailors laughed, for they said, 'There are no such places in all the land of dreams.'"[39]

In such passages Dunsany clearly attacks with irony the mediocrity of a conformist society that takes itself all too seriously, to the point that it can no longer enjoy a tale for the sheer pleasure of the tale itself but needs "a guarantee to the reader", a society that prefers a dull but reassuring life in "the English Riviera" – where even dying is turned into a euphemism – instead of the liberating power of storytelling and fantasy.

The final dialogue of "A Shop in Go-by Street" between the narrator and a witch with her black cat places the fantastic and the real on equal grounds:

> "Tell me something," I said, "of this strange land!"
> "How much do you know?" she said. "Do you know that dreams are illusion?"
> "Of course I do," I said. "Every one knows that."
> "Oh no they don't," she said, "the mad don't know it."
> "That is true," I said.
> "And do you know," she said, "that Life is illusion?"
> "Of course it is not," I said. "Life is real, Life is earnest——."
> At that the witch and her cat (who had not moved from her old place by the hearth) burst into laughter. I stayed some time, for there was much that I wished to ask, but when I saw that the laughter would not stop I turned and went away.[40]

Fantastic literature as a whole has always faced accusations of childishness, escapism, disengagement from reality and fact. Dunsany himself was considered by many an aristocratic dilettante who toyed with his fictional worlds as

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38 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *Tales of Three Hemispheres*, pp. 130-131.
39 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *A Dreamer's Tales*, p. 60.
40 E. Plunkett Dunsany, *Tales of Three Hemispheres*, pp. 118-119.

a hobby.[41] As a matter of fact, far from just breaking the spell, as Tolkien would have it, irony in Dunsany may be said to voice a clear statement from the author: he consciously acknowledges that he is part of the real world and that an infinite distance divides him and the reader from his creations. Dunsany is not taking distances from his Secondary Worlds merely for the sake of justification: he is openly exposing the inner workings of the fantastic, in a metaliterary invitation to reflect on what is fantasy fiction, on its role and function. The narrator and the reader are well aware that they accepted to play a game with specific rules, but the game may still affect life. Undoubtedly, a passing witty remark on the part of the narrator may take the readers right back to their world. This, however, does not in any way diminish the power of those words that have made the fantastic so vividly present in their experience. In the very words of Tolkien: "creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; a recognition of facts, but not a slavery to it."[42]

Dunsany's approach to fantasy literature is clearly unconventional: its main thrust lies in an attempt to re-shape reality in terms of a story-built world. Instead of temporarily putting aside the Primary World to achieve a self-contained sub-creation, he continuously reminds his readers of their connections with the real world. In doing so, Dunsany invites a reflection on the present we are living, while offering alternative ways of viewing reality itself. He achieves that by a subtly ironical critique of his contemporaries, but also by recovering past modes of storytelling and distant cosmogonies, which he actively reinvents in the light of his own times. In his narration he is witty, "heterodox to his own heterodoxy" as he himself stated,[43] in the sense that he refuses to freeze his own creation into rigid sets of knowledge or crystallize it around a fixed pattern of mythology. Rather, his approach to his readers is based on an open-ended inclusion: he presents them with his fictive worlds that they might inhabit and expand – in an ever-increasing but highly enriching awareness of their nature as fiction. The light that this article has attempted to shed on some captivating facets of Dunsany's fantasy world might hopefully inspire readers and creators of fantasy to rediscover an unjustly neglected writer, whose visionary work has done much to open up before us the vastly creative, exhilarating scope of journeys "beyond the fields we know."

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41 M. Amory, *Biography of Lord Dunsany*, p. 48.
42 J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, p. 55.
43 S. T. Joshi, *Lord Dunsany: Master of the Anglo-Irish Imagination*, p. 28.

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| Aleksandra Dmowska

FROM *ETHNOS* TO *MYTHOS*. THE DYNAMICS OF REALISM AND THE FANTASTIC IN TERRY PRATCHETT'S TIFFANY ACHING PENTALOGY

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse how both realist and fantastic elements coexist and interweave in a secondary world fantasy novel, as well as to show potential functions and effects of such coexistence in Terry Pratchett's Tiffany Aching pentalogy. The community of shepherds of the Chalk as well as their daily life are presented in a realist manner, therefore introducing mimetic mode in the novels. The introduction of marvellous elements and the fantastic mode permits to achieve a far deeper complexity of Pratchett's subcreation. Such coexistence of the two modes seems to result in the opening of the Discworld universe to mythical dimensions. The main mythic elements resulting from the dynamics of realism and the fantastic on which this article focuses include the world as language, human being as inseparable part of the world of nature and female initiation.

Key words: fantasy, realism, myth, Terry Pratchett, Tiffany Aching

In her study *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature* Kathryn Hume states:

> It is truer to literary practice to admit that fantasy is not a separate or indeed separable strain, but rather an impulse as significant as the mimetic impulse, and to recognize

> that both are involved in the creation of most literature. By fantasy I mean the deliberate departure from the limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal … fantasy is an element in nearly all kinds of literature, especially the narrative.[1]

In Hume's research fantastic and mimetic modes are presented as inextricably related to each other. In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Brian Attebery expresses a similar view:

> … fantasy and mimesis are the fundamental operations of the narrative imagination … Mimesis without fantasy would be nothing but reporting one's perceptions of actual events. Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention, without recognizable objects or actions.[2]

The aim of this article is to analyse how both mimetic and fantastic elements coexist and interweave in a secondary world fantasy novel, as well as to show potential functions and effects of such coexistence as used by Terry Pratchett in Tiffany Aching pentalogy. Opening of the Pratchettian universe to mythical dimensions seems to present itself as its main result and function, including motives such as myth as a way of thinking and perceiving the world, a human being as an inseparable part of the world of nature and female initiation. The theories of Mircea Eliade, Arnold van Gennep and Eleazar Mieletinski will be used in the analyses of myth and ritual present in the novels. The research of Joseph Campbell, Annis Pratt and Pia Skogemann will allow to interpret Tiffany Aching's story as an example of both male and female hero individuation.

In order to proceed with the above outlined analysis, it is indispensable to clearly define the terms which will be used in the article. Attebery differentiates between fantasy as formula and fantasy as mode. He defines the formula as "a form of popular escapist literature that combines stock characters and devices – wizards, dragons, magic swords, and the like – into a predictable plot … which tends toward triviality."[3] Mode, on the other hand, would be "a way of … telling stories … a praise- and prize-worthy means of investigating the way we use fictions to construct reality itself… a vast subject, taking in all literary mani-

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1 K. Hume, Fantasy *and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, New York: Methuen, 1984, p. xii.

2 B. Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 3.

3 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

festations of the imagination's ability to soar above the merely possible."[4] A middle ground between mode and formula is the genre, a category designating stories "more alike than required by the mode and less uniform than dictated by formula."[5] The genre should be considered a fuzzy set[6] which is defined "not by boundaries but by a center,"[7] that is, having a clear centre, but no clear boundaries. Thus, a book on the fringes of a set might be considered as belonging to a genre or not, depending on one's approach. Fantasy as mode in Attebery's approach is precisely what Hume calls fantasy. For the purpose of this article, however, the mode will be referred to as the fantastic, while the name of fantasy will be used to talk about the genre, following Attebery's solution.

As stated above, the interweaving of mimetic and fantastic elements in the novels permits introducing mythic elements to the story. To avoid confusion, while talking about myth, the article will refer to the theories of Mircea Eliade. In *Myth and Reality* he defines myth as a sacred history, describing events which took place in Primordial time, in the time of beginnings. It narrates "how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution."[8] It is, therefore, always a story of creation, relating how things came into existence. Supernatural Beings are the protagonists of myths. They are known because of what they did or created in the magical time of beginnings. Myths narrate their creative activities and teach the sacred character of their deeds. The importance of the time of beginnings resides in the fact that it narrates the first manifestation of each object, being or phenomenon. By experiencing it through myth and ritual, humans learn about their origins. The witness of creation, the time of beginnings becomes sacred, magical and transcendent. Apart from the sacred time and Supernatural Beings, the sacred space constitutes an important element of myth. The Sacred enters our world through hierophanies. Each hierophany establishes a "fixed point, a center"[9] in a homogenous, profane space. As Eliade asserts, nothing can start or happen without a previous act of orientation. But every act of orientation requires the existence of a fixed point. The discovery or creation

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4 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
5 Ibid., p. 11.
6 For more information on fuzzy set theory see: G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
7 B. Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, p. 12.
8 M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask, New York: Harper & Row, 1963, p. 5.
9 M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963, p. 21.

of such a fixed point, the sacred centre of the world called *axis mundi*, permits further orientation.[10]

Scholars specialising in the analyses of fantasy have launched a debate on the pertinence of interpreting the aforementioned genre with relation to myth. Magdalena Roszczynialska writes:

> I think that fantasy meets anthropology not in the aspect of *mythos*, but rather of *ethnos*. Also in the aspect of *ethos*. Not only does fantasy create worlds, but also systems of values. Such an approach presents fantasy as anthropological literature par excellence … however, while an anthropologist wants to be an interpreter … a novelist … an author of fantasy uses the device of parable to present the issues of cultural diversity.[11]

Nevertheless, a different view will be presented in this article. According to Bronisław Malinowski, myth is "a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements … it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality."[12] It is, therefore, impossible to separate ethnos and ethos from mythos, all three being inextricably interrelated. Studying a given community's culture, daily habits and festivals will sooner or later lead to a study of beliefs, perception of the universe, religion and morality. The following analysis will show how the dynamics of realist and fantastic elements makes the passage from ethnos to mythos possible in a fantasy novel.

Tiffany Aching pentalogy consists of five novels written by Terry Pratchett and published between 2003 and 2015 (*The Wee Free Men* 2003, *A Hat Full of Sky* 2004, *Wintersmith* 2006, *I Shall Wear Midnight* 2010, *The Shepherd's Crown* 2015). The events take place in Pratchett's universe of the Discworld and narrate a story of a young girl, Tiffany Aching, living in a region called the Chalk near the Ramtop mountains, in a community of farmers, shepherds and sheep breeders. She helps her parents on the Home Farm but also trains to be a witch. In the respective novels Tiffany is nine, eleven, thirteen, sixteen and eighteen years old.

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10 Ibid., p. 22.

11 M. Roszczynialska, *Etnologiczne konteksty fantasy (Ethnological aspects of fantasy) in: Fantastyczność i Cudowność. Wokół źródeł fantasy (The Fantastic and the Marvelous. The Sources of Fantasy)* eds. T. Ratajczak, B. Trocha, Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, 2009, p. 105. Translation from Polish is mine, only for the purpose of this article.

12 B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science, Religion*, New York: Doubleday, 1955, pp. 101, 108.

For the purpose of the first part of the analysis, it is necessary to forget that Tiffany is training to be a witch, hence forget the magic. The following quotations depict Tiffany's daily life, duties, work and those of her community:

> She was the dairymaid, and good at it. She made better butter than her mother did and people commented about how good she was with cheese … Sometimes, when the wandering teachers came to the village, she went and got a bit of education. But mostly she worked in the dairy.[13]

> Tiffany had to do the chores … That meant feeding the chickens and collecting the eggs … It meant fetching six buckets of water from the well and filling the log basket by the stove.[14]

> She kept a diary in the dairy. Cheese needed to be kept track of, and she always wrote down details of the amount of butter she'd made and how much milk she'd been using.[15]

> Most boys in the village grew up to do the same jobs as their fathers or, at least, some other job somewhere in the village where someone's father would teach them as they went along. The girls were expected to grow up to be somebody's wife.[16]

> … working with the shepherds by lantern light, dealing with difficult births. She'd work … with knife and needle and threads and hands and soothing words, she'd saved ewes from the black doorway and helped new lambs into the light. And she'd walked home … bloody to the elbows.[17]

In her home village she works at the farm, makes cheese and butter, tends to animals, cleans the house and helps lambs to be born. Having no time for or possibility of good education, she is destined to become what other girls from the area usually become, that is to say, a wife. When she gets older, she goes into service, which is the second of the strictly limited number of careers for local young women: "It wasn't unusual for girls as young as Tiffany to go 'into service'. It meant working as a maid somewhere. Traditionally, you started by helping an old lady who lived by herself."[18] While in service, she visits local

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13 T. Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*, London: Corgi Books, 2004, pp. 16-17.
14 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
15 Ibid., p. 101.
16 Ibid., p. 25.
17 T. Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*, London: HarperCollins, 2007, p. 402.
18 Ibid., p. 15.

houses and families, usually to bring the medicine to the ill, but also to wash them, clean their houses, cut their nails, give them some food or clothing. She helps the ill, gives comfort to the lonely, assists expectant mothers or people awaiting death:

> … sittin' up all night with some poor old man who's leavin' the world … comfortin' their terror, seein' 'em safely on their way … and then cleanin' 'em up, layin' 'em out, making 'em neat for the funeral and helpin' the weeping widow strip the bed and wash the sheets … and stayin' up the next night to watch over the coffin before the funeral, and then going home and sitting down for five minutes before some shouting angry man comes bangin' on your door 'cos his wife's havin' difficulty givin' birth to their first child.[19]

Living in the Chalk and serving in the Ramtops, she has to deal with difficult situations as well as unhappy, stupid or cruel people. She witnesses a lynching on Mrs Snapperly, who was chased from her cottage on the suspicion of abducting the local baron's son who had gone missing in the forest:

> after he vanished they went to her cottage and they looked in the oven and they dug up her garden and they threw stones at her old cat until it died and they turned her out of her cottage and piled up all her old books in the middle of the room and set fire to them and burned the place to the ground and everyone said she was an old witch.[20]

Banished from her home and deprived of food or shelter, the old woman dies in the snow during winter.

Tiffany must also take care of Amber Petty, a thirteen-year-old girl who got pregnant and her father beat her so hard that she miscarried the baby. She also saves Mr Petty from the lynching when the villagers want to hang him for what he did to his daughter.[21] As she grows older, Tiffany gradually experiences and becomes aware of all the dark secrets and problems of every community: unfaithful wives, violent and drunkard husbands, the fate of illegitimate children, illiteracy, ignorance and intolerance. All those events depicting daily lives and issues of the community of shepherds of the Chalk could be found in a realist novel. All could be easily imagined in a novel by Charles Dickens or Thomas

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19 Ibid., p. 286.
20 T. Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*, p. 46.
21 T. Pratchett, *I Shall Wear Midnight*, London: Doubleday, 2010, pp. 29-34.

Hardy. As Attebery states: fantasy is a genre "that makes use of both the fantastic mode, to produce the impossibilities, and the mimetic, to reproduce the familiar."[22]

It is important to notice two elements in this realist aspect of the novels. First, that the aforementioned duties and the heroine's mentors' insistence on their importance help Tiffany build her identity. As she comes from the family of shepherds, the people of the Chalk gradually become her sheep, or rather she gradually becomes their shepherd. So, her work and chores gain an existential dimension and become an almost philosophical category. They make her who she is and her own identity is constructed around those duties. The second crucial element is that the life of this community is built following the rhythms of nature and the rhythm of festivals, which introduce cyclical and repetitive time in the novels. The lambing festival called Sheepbellies in late February, when the lambs are born, marks, for example, the beginning of shepherds' year. Morris dance in spring announces the end of winter and the coming of summer, whereas the scouring, a three-day fertility festival, signifies the end of summer. Additionally, Tiffany's day-to-day life and duties – tending to animals, healing, helping others, midwifery, preparing girls for their marriage, attending the dying and the dead – do not only follow the natural year or the year of festivals, but they are also linked to the rhythm of nature on a larger, existential scale. They are linked to the processes of the natural cycles of life, giving birth, maturing and dying, growing and decaying. In performing those duties, Tiffany often turns to the memories of her grandmother Sarah Aching.

Granny Aching was the best shepherd of the Chalk, its wisest woman, guardian of laws and the community's memory. She taught Tiffany about sheep, people and people's duties: "We are as gods to the beasts o' the field, my jiggit. We order the time o' their birth and the time o' their death. Between times, we ha' a duty … Them as can do, has to do for them as can't. And someone has to speak up for them as has no voices."[23] Sarah Aching is one of the most important members of the community as well as Tiffany's family. Not only is she the girl's grandmother and teacher, but also, one might argue, her point of orientation: "Granny Aching smelled of sheep, turpentine and Jolly Sailor tobacco. The three smells mixed together and became one smell which was, to Tiffany, the smell of the Chalk … it meant warmth, and silence, and a space around

22 B. Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, pp. 16-17.
23 T. Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*, pp. 69, 196.

which the whole world revolved."[24] This is the reason why, when Granny Aching dies and Tiffany finds her, the girl's world seems to end: "And Tiffany had sat by the narrow bed and thought about Granny Aching … and about the world losing its centre … Then she'd gone home and told everyone that Granny was dead. She was seven, and the world had ended."[25]

Explicitly referred to as the world's centre, or the space around which the universe revolves, the most important person of Tiffany's childhood, Granny Aching could be therefore considered a Supernatural Being, whose deeds constitute a part of a sacred story of the time of beginnings – in this case, Tiffany's childhood. Effectively, it is Sarah Aching who explains to Tiffany how the world works, namely, the laws governing this world as well as people's place in it. She also symbolises the sacred space, the *axis mundi*, the centre of the cosmos and the "fixed point", of which Eliade talks in his studies, for both the community of shepherds and her granddaughter Tiffany. Finally, she reveals herself to be the embodiment of the Chalk itself. Both the sacred, cyclical and repetitive time and Granny Aching, who functions as a supernatural being of the time of creation, the centre of the world and the embodiment of the land, become channels through which the sacred enters the profane world. They introduce mythical aspects to the novel, or rather open the secondary world to mythical dimensions. The hitherto presented analysis of mimetic or realist elements of the novels has revealed mythical aspects or the morphology of myth in the discussed stories. The following part of the article will demonstrate how fantastic elements widen the mythical context and deepen the mythical dimension of the story. All the duties performed by Tiffany in her human community of shepherds described in previous paragraphs are mirrored during her apprenticeship to become a witch. The fantastic elements reflect the realist elements and become a kind of extension of reality.

At some point Tiffany is possessed and later chased by a hiver – "a type of demon … they are not alive but they have, as it were, the shape of life. They have no body, brain or thoughts of their own … Yet a hiver does have the ability to fear and to crave."[26] A hiver is a being that possesses humans and stays in their minds and bodies until the minds of the hosts disappear completely. He is a mix of his host's memories. Eventually, Tiffany understands that the hiver is frightened of his endless experience, being able to see everything, aware of eve-

[24] Ibid., p. 112.
[25] Ibid., pp. 150-151.
[26] T. Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*, pp. 100-101.

ry single thing that exists, and incapable of forgetting. It seems that all he wants is shelter and silence. Finally, the hiver asks Tiffany: "Teach us the way to die."[27] Just as she did many times before, tending to dying people, Tiffany resolves to teach the hiver to die:

> Death is right behind us, she thought. Life ends, and there's death, waiting. So … it must be close. … It would be … a door ? Yes. An old door, old wood. … She turned. Behind her, there was a black door in the air … The hinges would creak, she thought. When she pushed it open, they did. So-oo … she thought, it isn't exactly real. I'm telling myself a story I can understand, about doors.[28]

Then she helps the hiver get through the door, thinking: "So … this is what we do. We live on the edges. We help those who can't find the way."[29] But when the hiver still does not know what to do: "But there is no 'me' to die, said the voices of the hiver. There is only us,"[30] Tiffany gives him a name:

> 'Do you want a name? That helps.'
> Yes. A name…
> 'I've always liked Arthur, as a name.'
> Arthur, said the hiver. I like Arthur, too. And if I am, I can stop.[31]

So, by naming him, Tiffany symbolically helps Arthur to become, to be born, just as she did literally with the lambs or children, and aids him to get to the other side, thus teaching him how to die.

A few years later, she is courted by the wintersmith, a god-like being, an incarnation of winter, who fell in love with her and wants her to become his queen, his lady Summer. Winter comes to the Chalk and does not go away, snow is everywhere, plants, animals and people start dying because Tiffany has taken the place of lady Summer. The everlasting cycle of the seasons has been broken. So Tiffany must overpower and chase the wintersmith away:

> She pulled the wintersmith towards her, and saw the look of astonishment on his face. … There was nothing to see but the wintersmith's cold face, nothing to hear but her

27 Ibid., p. 348.
28 Ibid., p. 349.
29 Ibid., p. 350.
30 Ibid., p. 351.
31 Ibid., p. 352.

> own breathing, nothing to feel but the warmth of the sun on her hair. … Where this takes me, there I choose to go, she told herself, letting the warmth pour into her. … This I choose to do … Thunder on my right hand. Lightning in my left hand. Fire above me… 'Please', she said, 'take the winter away. Go back to your mountains. Please.' Frost in front of me. … Balance … and it came quickly, out of nowhere, lifting her up inside … Balance … and his lips were like blue ice … She shut her eyes and kissed the wintersmith … and drew down the sun. Frost to fire.[32]

For a moment becoming the wintersmith's queen, Tiffany kisses him and pouring the heat of the sun through herself into him, she destroys his physical body and chases the spirit away. While in service she used to prepare girls before their marriage, this time she symbolically performs a marriage ritual herself, being a priestess and a bride in one.

When she officially becomes the witch of the Chalk, her mentor witch and the first among equals Granny Weatherwax dies, leaving to Tiffany her hut in Lancre and designating her as her successor. When elves invade Discworld, both in the Chalk and in Lancre, Tiffany must protect her lands against them. She tries to secure the help of the King of elves, who has abandoned his kingdom, but he refuses. So she must stand alone against the glamorous magic of cruel elves. That is when she gets the help of the land itself:

> … the Chalk was her world. She walked on it every day. She could feel its ancient life under her feet. The land was in her bones … it was in her name, too; in the old language … her name sounded like 'land Under Waves', and in the eye of her mind she'd walked in those deep prehistoric seas when the Chalk had been formed, in a million-year rain made of shells of tiny creatures. She trod a land made of life, and breathed it in, and listened to it and thought its thoughts for it.[33]

The chalk is made of limestone, which is composed of millions of once living creatures. It is soft and easily worn down, but in the heart of the limestone there is flint, cutting sharper than any knife. The living land chooses Tiffany to be its shepherd. An echinoid – a sea urchin – called the shepherd's crown by the inhabitants of the Chalk, seeks a true shepherd. As it turns out, it chooses Tiffany for its guide: "And to the moon she said, 'What is the shepherd's crown? Whom does the shepherd's crown serve?' And the answer dropped into her head. 'Tiffany Aching, Land under Wave.'… Tiffany Aching is the first among

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32 T. Pratchett, *Wintersmith*, London: Doubleday, 2006, pp. 381-382.

33 T. Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*, pp. 66-67.

shepherds, for she puts others before herself."[34] When the battle is almost lost and the magic of elves overpowers the defenders of the Chalk, the land answers through Tiffany:

> She was not alone. She never would be. Not while her land was beneath her boots. Her land … She was Tiffany Aching. Not Granny Weatherwax, but a witch in her own right … who knew exactly who she was and how she wanted to do things. Her way … The land was speaking to her now, filling her up, throwing the glamour of the elf lord aside … And she was standing firm, her feet on the turf, the murmur of the ancient oceans below swelling through her soles. Earth. Water. She raised her arms. 'Thunder and Lightning, I command you'… The shepherd's crown glowed golden on her breast – at the heart of it all, the soul and centre of her being – the golden light rising from the apex to surround her, protect her, add its energy to her own. And the sky broke in half … 'I am Tiffany Aching and my bones are in the Chalk. Let the Chalk be cleansed!' And the world has changed.[35]

Becoming the embodiment, the incarnation of the land, Tiffany overpowers the elves. Yet, at the same time, she manages to define herself for she finally realizes who and what she is and decides who she wants to be. She gains her identity and fully becomes Tiffany Aching.

As can be seen, the fantastic elements of the stories mirror their mimetic elements (birth of lambs and children / birth of the hiver, tending to the dying / helping the hiver to die, preparing for marriage / performing the marriage with the wintersmith, protecting the sheep / protecting the land and community). What is more, the fantastic elements continue the development of mythical aspects of the novels, which have already been introduced by the mimetic mode.

Teaching the hiver to die is not simply a literal, therefore a fantastic, version of helping somebody to get to the other side. This part of the story effectively constitutes a part of the rite of passage that Tiffany is undergoing, namely the initiation. The term "rites of passage" is a translation of French name *rites de passage* created by Arnold van Gennep, an ethnographer of Dutch-German-French descent[36]. Their main function is to introduce the initiated into a community and the world of culture. The rites of passage usually consist of a symbolic separation from the community, different types of trials and challenges, and contact with demonic forces outside the community. Those stages are fol-

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34 T. Pratchett, *The Shepherd's Crown*, London: Corgi Books, 2016, pp. 293, 311.
35 Ibid., pp. 310-312.
36 A. van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage. Étude systématique des rites*. Paris: Picard, 1981.

lowed by a ritual cleansing and return to the community of the person undergoing the rite. Upon their reintegration with the community, such a person acquires a new status.[37] One of the most important rites of passage is initiation. It contains tests of physical endurance and an introduction to the basics of knowledge. During the rite, the initiate experiences a symbolic death and enters in contact with spirits that lead to the revival, or to be more precise, to the initiate's rebirth. So is the case of Tiffany, who is separated from the community, enters the underworld to take Arthur with her, meets Death and gains new, mystical, secret knowledge, respectively. Her return from the otherworld, alive and victorious after the meeting of the hiver, changes her status and Tiffany finishes her first part of witch training.

Van Gennep's model constitutes the basis of Joseph Campbell's monomyth pattern.[38] Tiffany is in fact one of rare examples of female heroes who actually perform the journey of the archetypal male hero analysed by Campbell. The journey follows the pattern of departure, separation, initiation and return and consists of the following stages: a call to adventure, a road of trials, severe challenge, achieving of the gift, return to ordinary world and, finally, application of the boon. Separated from her homeland and family, Tiffany undergoes many trials and challenges, of which the encounters with the hiver, the wintersmith and elves are but few examples. She becomes a fully trained witch and finally comes back home, with her newly gained knowledge, to live there, serve and care for her community. Defeating the wintersmith by kissing him is not just a ruse. It becomes *hieros gamos*, a ritual playing out a marriage between a god and a goddess, in which the wintersmith is an incarnation of winter and Tiffany symbolizes summer. The aim of the ritual is to restore fertility of land and nature and to increase the wellbeing and fortune of a community.

Finally, Tiffany becoming the Chalk, understanding the real meaning of her name Land Under Wave, and defeating the elves, introduces two ideas omnipresent in myths. The first is the idea of a human being who constitutes an inextricable part of the world of nature. When Tiffany's community finds itself in danger, the young witch unites with her land, literally becomes the land and commands it. At the same time, the land takes the shape of Tiffany and acts through her. The second is the idea of the world of nature as a language, talking to humans and teaching them, revealing to them the truths about itself and

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37 E. Mieletinski, *The Poetics of Myth*, trans. Guy Lanoue, Alexandre Sadetsky, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 204.

38 J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

themselves. This is how Tiffany learns who she is and what her responsibilities are.

The act of uniting with her land is also the last step on her journey of individuation. In fact, not only does Tiffany undergo the initiation more typical for male heroes, but she also completes individuation typical for female protagonists, as presented by Pia Skogemann[39] and Annis Pratt[40]. Such female individuation consists of seven phases: splitting off from the world of ego, the green-world guide or token, the green-world lover, confrontation with parental figures, the plunge into the unconscious, experiencing death and return to the known world. It is important to notice, that according to this theory, the meeting with god does not end in marriage and girl's passivity, but results in gaining new experience and a choice to reject life with god-like male figure, and going back to the real life. In this respect, the wintersmith could be considered a green-world lover. Also, the encounter with the hiver and teaching him to die symbolise both a plunge into the unconscious and the death experience. Finishing her journey of individuation and reintegration, Tiffany becomes the witch, the shepherd, but also the protector of the land, the guardian of the laws, the land's and the community's memory: "She tells the land what it is, and it tells her who she is."[41]

The interweaving of the mimetic and the fantastic introduces myth as a dominant mode of narration in the Tiffany Aching novels. Through the use of morphological elements of myth such as sacred time, the time of beginnings, Supernatural Beings, as well as the sacred space and *axis mundi*, Pratchett deepens the complexity of the Discworld and allows the sacred to enter his subcreation. The motives of initiation, the archetypal hero's jurney, *hieros gamos* and female individuation widen the context of Tiffany's story and multiply its different layers of meaning. They permit to create a multidimensional universe, where a human being becomes an inextricable element of the world of nature, linked to its rhythms, while nature itself transforms into a language and a teacher. Finally, they become crucial in forming or discovering one's identity by discussing the questions concerning human duties, responsibilities as well as sense of belonging to a community, loyalty or even philosophical aspects of ordinary daily life. All those contexts and layers of meaning would not be possible without the dynamics of mimetic and fantastic elements. It is the interplay of re-

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39 P. Skogemann, *Kobiecość w rozwoju. Psychologia współczesnej kobiety* (*Kvindelighed i vækst)*, trans. Piotr Billig, Warszawa: Eneteia, 2003.

40 A. Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

41 T. Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky,* p. 268.

alism and the fantastic which turns out to be reality's extension that allows the movement from ethnos to mythos. The two modes constitute the basis of myth which, at some point, dominates the narration of Tiffany Aching story.

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| Magdalena Łapińska

THE PREVALENCE OF RACIAL PREJUDICE AND SEGREGATION IN DEBORAH HARKNESS' *ALL SOULS* TRILOGY

Abstract

The article explores how the issue of race present in the American society has been reflected in Deborah Harkness' *All Souls* Trilogy. The mimetic theory and the use of fantasy writing to reflect the social mores and emotional attitudes is presented and serves as the basis for the analysis. The problems of violence, segregation, miscegenation and racial purity concerning blacks and whites are briefly introduced through the use of examples from the American history. These examples are juxtaposed with the events from the novels. The analysis focuses on the struggles involved in the evolution of racial thinking and shows that although the idea of race and related problems have changed, they have not disappeared, neither in the fictional nor in the real world.

Key words: race, prejudice, miscegenation, fantasy, Deborah Harkness

In her essay *Home* Toni Morrison writes: "I have never lived, nor has any of us, in a world in which race did not matter. Such a world, one free of racial hierarchy, is usually imagined or described as dreamscape – Edenesque, utopian, so remote are the possibilities of its achievement."[1] This Edenesque world,

[1] T. Morrison, *Home* in: *The House that Race Built*, ed. Wahneema H. Lubiano, New York: Vintage, 1998, p. 3.

to repeat after Morrison, seems unattainable and exists very rarely even in literature, as human imagination is not without limit and even the most fantastic creations, from new races to completely new worlds, reflect to some extent aspects of our reality, either past or present. For instance, racial violence and other problems connected with race have a significant place in the history of the United States. Moreover, as Timothy Brezina and Kenisha Winder assert, despite the "weakening of traditional racist beliefs over the past several decades, negative racial stereotypes still affect the lives of African Americans in the United States."[2] The problems concerning race are not only visible in everyday life but also in many aspects of culture, for instance in movies or books, many of which examine them through blending the elements of the fantastic and realism. This article focuses on how the combination of fantastic and realistic elements in fiction can mirror the events and concerns of the real life. The article begins by establishing that fantasy has often been used to reflect current social issues, and the race problem was, and continues to be, one of them. The article also analyzes how Deborah Harkness' *All Souls* Trilogy reflects the American reality through a juxtaposition of the race issues presented in the novels and the ones pertinent to the history of the United States. In the article certain events from the novels are compared with particular historical events in order to show similarities concerning prejudice, violence, fight for equality and freedom, personal sacrifices and scientific advancements, all pertaining to the question of race.

The juxtaposition presented does not aim to urge towards the racial reading of Harkness' whole trilogy, but merely to suggest that certain aspects of the story can be interpreted in such a way. One could argue that the author opens the door towards such interpretations through a scene in which one of the characters compares the state of racial problems depicted in the trilogy with the racial issues that are a part of the United States' history:

> "And about this covenant you've all agreed to. I take it that witches aren't supposed to hang out with vampires?"
> "Or with daemons. It makes humans uncomfortable," Matthew said.
> "Uncomfortable?" Chris looked dubious. "So did blacks sitting on buses next to white people. Segregation isn't the answer."[3]

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2 T. Brezina and K. Winder, *Economic Disadvantage, Status Generalization, and Negative Racial Stereotyping by White Americans*, "Social Psychology Quarterly" 2003,Vol. 66, No. 4, p. 402.

3 D. Harkness, *The Book of Life*, London: Headline, 2014, p. 186.

Through the use of mimesis literature has always presented visions of the surrounding world. Ming Dong Gu asserts that "[s]ince its initial appearance in Plato's Republic … mimetic theory has been indispensable to Western studies of the nature, function, and techniques of literature and art."[4] Mirroring nature and the idyllic life, however, does not equate with the presentation of political ideas or historic events. Wolfgang Iser put forward the idea that "[i]f literature wishes to respond to history, it must not parade its intentions, but must dress them up in such a way that the reader can uncover them for himself."[5] It seems that when contentious themes are involved, their image presented in literature has to be shown in a distorting mirror.

Fantasy, together with science fiction, has the unique capability to prompt the reader into looking at certain issues "in new ways, to reconsider attitudes and assumptions,"[6] and when the subject of race is concerned, fantasy has often used its potential. Employing the new worlds and non-human races to broach the issue of race present in the contemporary reality is very convenient for many writers, since, as Helen Young asserts, "[w]riting about characters and cultures to which one does not belong, particularly for White writers who cannot escape their privileged positions in both wider society and genre-culture, is complex and requires significant levels of mindfulness"[7] in order not to expose oneself to condemnation. Literature is not created in a vacuum and the surrounding world transmits itself into the works of art at varying degrees, for instance, "[b]oth [George R.R.] Martin and [David] Gaider have remarked on specifics of real-world history which inspired aspects of their respective worlds,"[8] to cite Young. In its unique way, fantasy literature presents matters which were not only important at one point in history but also those that are of value today. Nikolai Rodriguez states that:

> Fantasy literature reflects the anxieties that still, even now, permeate the complicated issues of racial intermixing in the real world through the representation of race and race

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4 M. D. Gu, *Is Mimetic Theory In Literature and Art. Universal?*, "Poetics Today" 2005, Vol. 26, Iss. 3, p. 460.

5 W. Iser, *Spenser's Arcadia: The Interrelation of Fiction and History* in: *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory: An interdisciplinary approach: Volume 1: The literary and philosophical debate*, ed. M. Spariosu, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984, pp. 122-123.

6 H. Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*, New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 2.

7 H. Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*, p. 159.

8 Ibid., p. 68.

> relations using the destabilizing effects of fantasy. The traditional representations of racial fantasy tropes as they exist today were established by Tolkien in his landmark Middle-Earth novels, the most influential of which was – and remains still – *The Lord of the Rings*.[9]

Fantasy literature echoes social mores and emotional attitudes present at a specific time in a particular social group, therefore bridging the gap between the fantastic and realism.

The use of monsters to portray the angst brought about by the idea of "the other" was present in literature even in the Classical Era.[10] However, when changes occur within the society and views on certain issues are altered, their literary reflections also transform. Helen Young informs us that:

> [s]ince early 1970s, sympathetic representations of conventional monsters have become almost de rigeur in popular culture. ... Vampires, werewolves, and even, recently, zombies, have been habilitated from the realms of horror to those of romance, comedy, and young adult fiction in cultural moves that reflect a diminishing of their monstrous power.[11]

This can suggest that since in the past monsters were interpreted as the racial other who is feared, the apprehension once exhibited against the people of other races is also transforming. As the 'monstrous power' weakens, so do the racial fears and prejudice. However, the fact that fear is still a significant element of the portrayal of the 'monstrous' races points to the persistence of racial problems within the contemporary society.

As briefly presented above, fantasy literature has had a long tradition of broaching the racial issues, thus the subsequent analysis of the *All Souls* Trilogy in terms of race seems justified. Deborah Harkness has written a fantasy trilogy in which the problem of race is one of the major threads. The multifaceted story is set in the contemporary world that includes supernatural elements and deals with the relations between witches, vampires and daemons. The author uses her background as a historian to weave together historical facts with the products of her imagination. Quite heavily set in the world of science, the story presents

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9 N. Rodrigues, *Miscegenation in the Marvelous: Race and Hybridity in the Fantasy Novels of Neil Gaiman and China Miéville*, Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. 811, 2012, p. 25. http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/811 [09.09.2017].

10 H. Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*, p. 88.

11 Ibid., p. 89-90.

how answers to the same question change with scientific advancements. In the trilogy in question historians, biologists, geneticists and physicians work together to unravel the origins of witches, vampires and daemons, to find out how much they really differ and if those differences justify the segregation and the anti-miscegenation laws put in place a long time ago. The questions asked by characters in the trilogy seem eerily similar to those which were significant for Americans, for instance during the Jim Crow era, when "racism explained blacks' social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority,"[12] as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva reminds us.

In the *All Souls* Trilogy the friendship between Hamish Osborne (a daemon) and Matthew Clairmont (a vampire) transgressed the socially mandated lines set between the "species". The friendship was highly unusual as vampires and daemons were not supposed to interact closely with each other. In *A Discovery of Witches* we can read:

> Hamish Osborne had met Matthew Clairmont at Oxford nearly twenty years ago. Like most creatures, they'd been taught to fear each other and were uncertain how to behave. The two became inseparable once they'd realized they shared a similar sense of humor and the same passion for ideas.[13]

The characters overcame their preconceptions about who the other person should be, formulated on the basis of the appurtenance to a certain group of creatures. Their friendship, although frowned upon, was not such a serious transgression as to mandate punishment. However, when Matthew and Diana Bishop (a witch) became intimately involved, their violation of a centuries-old covenant was so serious that the Congregation, which was tasked with upholding the rules of the covenant, had to take action against the characters. The terms of the covenant "prohibited close relationships between different orders of creatures."[14] The mandated segregation was created upon the assumption that witches, vampires and daemons were different species, which meant that they significantly differed from each other. A similar argument had been put forward by some advocates of slavery in the United States. However, both in reality and in Harkness' story the arguments behind the segregation and anti-miscegenation

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12 E. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism ant the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd. ed., 2006, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, p. 2.

13 D. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, New York: Penguin Group, 2011, p. 112.

14 Ibid., p. 253.

rules were disproven. In *The Book of Life* we can read: "'The science makes the covenant completely irrelevant,' Matthew said. 'We're not separate species.'"[15] Harkness goes even further with her unification of witches, vampires and daemons, since she unites them with humans: "You aren't monsters after all. There are no such thing as daemons, vampires, and witches. Not biologically. You're just humans with a difference."[16] Scientific discoveries concerning race presented in the trilogy relate to those made in the real world for "biologized interpretations of racial difference have been discredited"[17] and nowadays, as Bonilla-Silva points out: "[t]here is very little formal disagreement among social scientists in accepting the idea that race is a socially constructed category."[18] The definition of race is unstable and ever-changing, but it has certainly moved away from the question of biological differences into the realm of cultural ones. Robert Wald Sussman reminds us:

> In 1950, UNESCO issued a statement asserting that all humans belong to the same species and that "race" is not a biological reality but a myth. ... Since that time similar statements have been published by the American Anthropological Association and the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, and an enormous amount of modern scientific data has been gathered to justify this conclusion.[19]

However, before the biological arguments concerning race were disregarded they had created a host of issues both in Harkness' story and in the United States, therefore the article will mainly focus on them.

Throughout the history of the United States a multitude of instances can be found where racial differences have led to significant clashes between groups of people. Violence seems to be ingrained in the feud between blacks and whites in the United States. Race riots, as those in Ferguson in 2014 and 2016 or in Baltimore in 2015, are not a new phenomenon. The Red Summer of 1919, the nationwide riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, or the Rodney King riots of 1992, to name a few, were the outbursts of hostility between blacks and whites in a form of collective violence. Terry Davis postulates

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15 D. Harkness, *The Book of Life*, London: Headline, 2014, p. 561.

16 Ibid., p. 561.

17 L. Tabili, *Race Is a Relationship, and Not a Thing*, "Journal of Social History" 2003, Vol. 37, No. 1., p. 128.

18 E. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, p. 8.

19 R. W. Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017, p. 1.

that collective violence "gives the excluded groups the means of placing their demands on the political agenda."[20] Although rioting is often used as a "mode of political communication"[21] and some American analysts have voiced their opinion that riots were a "part of black 'repertoire' which evolved through the civil rights movement,"[22] rioting is not the only form of violence between the two groups. Coupled with many instances of more individualized brutality such as lynchings (for example, murder of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas in 1998), hate crimes, and racial profiling, the picture of the relations between the two races is not very sanguine. Although some will say that much has changed since the Civil Rights Movement and the equalization of the laws for the people of different races, it seems that much is yet to be done to stop racial violence still present in the United States. Because, as Bonilla-Silva's research shows, "[d]espite the civil rights revolution, whites, young and old, live a fundamentally segregated life that has attitudinal, emotional, and political implications."[23] Nonetheless, the changes which have already been introduced were not implemented without sacrifice. Many people who wanted to help with the introduction of the new ways were hurt or even killed. For instance, in 1955 Harry and Harriette Moore first lost their jobs and later their lives due to the fact that they were educators involved in the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) who focused in their work on segregation, police brutality and lynching; or in 1966 Vernon Dahmer was shot in his own house after declaring that he would help to pay the poll tax for any African American who was not able to afford it.[24] Those people put themselves in the spotlight and their lives in jeopardy in order to bring changes not only for themselves but also for others.

In the *All Souls* Trilogy vampires, witches and daemons have a long history of relations, which were far from perfect. One of the characters, Matthew, points out: "There's always been animosity between creatures—vampires and witches especially. But Diana and I have brought those tensions into the open."[25] The hostility between the groups, although constantly maintained by imbuing new

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20 T. Davis, *The Forms of Collective Racial Violence*, "Political Studies" 1986, Vol. 34, Issue. 1, p. 50.

21 Ibid., p. 50.

22 Ibid., p. 52.

23 E. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, p. 125.

24 K. Joy, *10 Forgotten Martyrs Of The American Civil Rights Movement*, 5 March 2014, http://listverse.com/2014/03/05/10-forgotten-martyrs-of-the-american-civil-rights-movement/ [09.09.2017].

25 D. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, p. 414.

witches, daemons and vampires to mistrust each other, as one of the previous quotes points out, has been highlighted by the events in the story. Diana and Matthew's relationship is made public because their families are highly regarded in their respective social groups. Instead of following the law, they decide to stand up to those upholding the old ways and strive to change the rules of their society, which in their opinion are outdated.

Both Matthew and Diana come from the old bloodlines, which throughout history have had significant influence in their respective social circles. Although Diana has distanced herself from the witch community and refrained from using her magic, which can be seen as abandoning her racial identity, her family name is able to conjure up a lot of respect amongst witches. Matthew and his family also have a lot of leverage in the vampire world, which is demonstrated through the perpetual presence of a member of the de Clermont family in the Congregation. Their means and influence may have played a role in their decision to confront the Congregation. However, the article will not focus on the possible implications of their class status when it comes to their actions.

At first, Matthew and Diana's reasons to fight the Congregation which upholds the covenant are purely personal: "'The Congregation will try to stop me, but they won't tell me who to love.' When my parents were taken from me, I was a child with no options and did what people told me. I was an adult now, and I was going to fight for Matthew."[26] Having suffered a monumental loss as a child, Diana turned her back on magic and other witches because she thought that having powers put one in danger for she believed that her parents were killed by fearful humans. She has rejected a part of her individuality in an attempt to forsake her group identity. Diana tried to make others see her as an individual and not merely as a member of a group, but witches kept defining her by tethering Diana to their group against her wishes. She seemed to think that the inter-group violence is too high of a price to pay for being a part of a coven of witches. However, it is made clear that Diana's decision to abandon her heritage was made based on a lie, when a witch tells her: "Rebecca Bishop and Stephen Proctor were keeping secrets from other witches. We needed to discover them. Their deaths were unfortunate, but necessary."[27] The unveiling of the lie illustrates that inner-group violence happens, but it is just better hidden, and the hostility between different orders of creatures is put in the foreground.

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[26] Ibid., p. 352.
[27] Ibid., p. 151.

Although personal reasons behind their resistance never change, at some point the motivation propelling characters' fight shifts from desiring personal freedom for themselves to seeking those rights for everyone:

> 'If we are at war, we're not fighting for a bewitched alchemical manuscript, or for my safety, or for our right to marry and have children. This is about the future of all of us.' I saw that future for just a moment, its bright potential spooling away in a thousand different directions. 'If our children don't take the next evolutionary steps, it will be someone else's children. And whiskey isn't going to make it possible for me to close my eyes and forget that. No one else will go through this kind of hell because they love someone they're not supposed to love. I won't allow it.[28]

Diana and Matthew were not the sole characters who desired to engender change. They found allies not only amongst their friends and family, but surprisingly also amongst the relatives of the members of the Congregation. As the plot progresses, even some of the members of the Congregation collaborate with them. The Conventicle is created and the fight for change truly begins: "They are all gathering there, you know. The witches. The vampires. There are even a few daemons inside. They are calling themselves the Conventicle. Marcus sent a message to the vampires on the Congregation demanding that the covenant be repealed."[29] The Conventicle is diplomatic in their pursue of change; they support their demands for the abolition of the covenant with reasonable arguments including those of scientific nature. The Congregation, however, had not shied away from violence in order to maintain the state of things and possibly gain more power even before the dissenters started to work together.

Diana was kidnapped and tortured by Satu, a fellow witch and a member of the Congregation. The latter tried to justify her actions: "Once again you refuse to listen to reason. I don't want to hurt you, Diana, but I will if it's the only way to make you see the seriousness of this situation. You must give up Matthew Clairmont and show us what you did to call the manuscript."[30] Violence was the chosen method to change Diana's mind and abandon her convictions. However, when the acts of brutality did not bring the desired effect, the witch branded Diana, which the character discovered only after having been rescued: "But it couldn't be my back. It was someone else's—someone who had been flayed and

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28 Ibid., p. 600.
29 D. Harkness, *Shadow of Night*, Penguin Group, 2012, p. 583.
30 D. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, p. 459.

burned until her skin was red, and blue, and black. There were strange marks on it, too—circles and symbols. The memory of fire erupted along the lesions."[31] The wounds left by Satu have been inflicted in order to stigmatize Diana as someone who fraternizes with vampires: "When I refused to give you up, Satu marked me—with your seal."[32] Despite the assaults she had to endure and the permanent markings left on her body, Diana does not abandon her views and her feelings do not change.

Diana's aunt Emily also suffers at the hands of the member of the Congregation and dies as the result of the ongoing conflict: "Emily must have been under enormous stress trying to resist whatever Knox was doing. She was barely conscious. I tried to revive her. So did Sarah. But there was nothing either of us could do."[33] The methods used to extract information from Emily's mind led to her death, even though it might not have been the intended outcome. The desire for power made some members of the Congregation regard life of an individual as inconsequential, in their minds what had to prevail was the Congregation and its rules.

The violence employed by the individual members of the Congregation led some of the vampires, daemons and witches to reconsider their devotion to obeying the covenant. One of them was Sarah, Diana's aunt:

> The Congregation wants answers? Well, I want answers, too. You tell Sidonie von Borcke that I have been consorting with vampires since last October, ever since Satu Järvinen kidnapped and tortured my niece while Peter Knox stood by and did nothing. If that means I've violated the covenant, that's too damn bad. Without the de Clermonts, Diana would be dead—or worse.[34]

For some, personal loyalties were more important than abstract laws introduced centuries ago, even a member of the Congregation sent her loved ones to seek help from Diana and Matthew: "Your mother appreciated the danger your family was facing, or she wouldn't have sent you here. One day you might discover your wife and child gone. If you do, it's highly unlikely you'll ever see them again."[35] The danger the characters were facing was the accusation of breaking the laws against segregation and miscegenation.

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31 Ibid., p. 496.
32 Ibid., p. 520.
33 D. Harkness, *The Book of Life*, p. 12.
34 Ibid., p. 188.
35 D. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, p. 678.

In the United States miscegenation was widespread during slavery, as many female slaves were in involuntary sexual relationships with their masters. Regardless of the horrible circumstances of an interracial relationship during slavery, these relationships did not disappear after the abolition of the institution. Emancipation meant merely that from then on the interracial relationships that developed were consensual, although often the consent was the result of the pressure of the trying conditions under which former slaves had to live. The interracial relationships which were entered willingly were not always legal. Only in 1967 the Supreme Court ruled that all laws opposing interracial marriages were in fact baseless.[36] That means that for the longest time, the mixed-race couples who wanted to enter the union voluntarily, without coercion, were not as free to do so as the same-race couples.

In the *All Souls* trilogy miscegenation was also present in the world of creatures for the longest time. However, it was a guarded secret. It comes to light that even one of the members of the Congregation is a descendent of the child who was born in a mixed-race relationship. The idea bewildered the other members of the Congregation to the point that at first they refused to believe that it was true:

> "You are a famous witch, Janet. Your spell-casting ability is renowned. And you come from a distinguished line of witches. Why you would want to sully your family's reputation with this story is beyond me."
> "And there it is," I said, my voice soft.
> "There what is?" Sidonie sounded like a testy schoolmarm.
> "The disgust. The fear. The dislike of anybody who doesn't conform to your simple-minded expectations of the world and how it should work."[37]

To be in an interracial relationship or a child born out of one equals to be socially stigmatized. Because of that some couples in the story are afraid to reveal their relationship even to their families:

> We didn't tell Agatha my people were witches. I didn't even tell Nathaniel—not until he came home to meet my dad. We'd been together for almost four years, and my dad was sick and losing control over his magic. I didn't want Nathaniel spooked. Anyway, when we got married, we thought it was best not to cause a fuss. Agatha was on the

[36] R. Staples, *The Black Woman in America*, Chicago*:* Nelson Hall Publishers, 1978, p. 118.
[37] D. Harkness, *The Book of Life*, p. 522.

> Congregation by then and was always talking about the segregation rules and what happened when folks broke them.[38]

However, the emotional reaction of the society is not necessarily why most couples hide their relationships. They do that because to be out in the open means to be punished for breaking the law; and as a result the children of such couples are to be removed from their parents' care and their fate is to be decided by the Congregation.

In the *All Souls* Trilogy the fantastic inhabitants of the world are dying out. Vampires are not able to create new ones and witches have less and less power. One could assume that the dying out of all types of creatures at the same time is a metaphor for the receding arguments behind the idea of race. One of the characters enquires about the diminishing number of the creatures and asks: "[W]hich of these so-called species cares the most about racial purity?"[39] It seems that in the fantastic world presented in the story racial purity is something of a taboo, whereas in the United States racial purity seems to be not as significant as it used to be in the past.

As presented in the article, analogies between the racial problems depicted in Deborah Harkness' books and the actual events in the history of the United States can be found. In the *All Souls* Trilogy the biological separation of witches, vampires and daemons came to an end just as biological arguments concerning race were discredited in reality. However, race perceived culturally, both in the books and in real life, is still an evolving concept. The discussion whether to eliminate, conserve or reconstruct racial discourse is still ongoing. Joshua Glasgow presents two possibilities of how identity can be influenced by the transformation of the racial discourse. He speculates that "abandoning race-thinking might be prudentially bad because doing so would disintegrate one's individual identity; or it might be prudentially good because it allows us to pursue relationships that are difficult to pursue in a race-conscious world."[40] The topic of race is currently a very sensitive issue and attempting to discuss it openly may cause one to become an object of strong criticism. Therefore, it seems that fantasy remains a perfect genre in which authors may comment on current issues, even if they do so in a less straightforward manner than in realistic fiction.

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38 D. Harkness, *A Discovery of Witches*, p. 655.

39 D. Harkness, *The Book of Life*, p. 187.

40 J. Glasgow, *A Theory of Race*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 3.

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| Paweł Fiedorowicz

TOLKIEN'S GREAT ESCAPE AND ITS ROLE IN THE HARRY POTTER SERIES: HOW THE CONCEPT OF DEATH SHAPES J.K. ROWLING'S NOVELS

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to discuss Tolkien's definition of escapism and his concept of the Great Escape with particular reference to its presence in the Harry Potter saga. The article will focus on the theme of death in J. K. Rowling's books and diverse attitudes of characters, such as Lord Voldemort, Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter, towards death. By doing so it will present how closely fantasy is related with the 'real world' and how death and its perception can shape the core of a story. Additionally, the article will show the relationship between religion and the understanding of death and discuss religious influences Tolkien's and Rowling's narratives.

Key words: J.R.R Rowling, J.R.R. Tolkien, Great Escape, death, Harry Potter

Fantasy literature, with its long and eventful history, has received both harsh criticism and high praise. It has been perceived by some as "childish" or "unworthy reading,"[1] or as a magnificent example of the writer's creativity.

[1] In his classic essay *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien comments: "It is parents and guardians who have classified fairy stories as Juvenilia. And this is a small sample of the falsification of values that results." J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 15.

However, it is undeniable that fantasy has been growing in popularity for a long time, especially due to such prominent authors as J. R. R. Tolkien, Ursula Le Guin, J. K. Rowling, George R. R. Martin or Stephen King. Often criticized for its detachment from the real world and lack of didactic values, fantasy is sometimes excluded from academic research. With its stories of distant lands, magical creatures and supernatural powers, it has been considered as a means of escapism. Escapist literature, as it is sometimes called, has also been a subject of criticism. In his essay *Escapism in Literature* Olaf Stapledon comments on its function in a following way: "the main import of … [escapist literature] is to protect the mind from unpleasant reality."[2] Such a view was opposed by many, for instance Tolkien, who in his essay *On Fairy Stories* claims:

> On what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life it is difficult to blame it, unless it fails; in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds. Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home?[3]

Relying on the immersion of the reader in an imaginary world, fantasy seems to fulfill this escapist function perfectly. However, despite its detachment from the real world, fantasy often deals with typical human experiences, such as adventure, heroism, love, fear, and coming of age. While adventure and growing mature are major themes in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, they also occur and drive the plot in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

Tolkien also pondered about escape in a different sense, namely, conceptualizing the Great Escape in terms of the escape from death: "And lastly there is the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death. Fairy-stories provide many examples and modes of this – which might be called the genuine escapist, or (I would say) fugitive spirit."[4] As the novelist himself admits, death and immortality are the main themes of *The Lord of the Rings*: "it is only in reading the work myself … that I become aware of the dominance of the theme of Death."[5] Tolkien also claims that a false sense of immortality is given

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2 O. Stapledon, *Essays and Talks*, in: *An Olaf Stapledon Reader*, ed. Robert Crossley, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997, p. 193.

3 J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*, p. 20.

4 Ibid., p. 22.

5 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters*, in: *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind "Lord of The Rings"*, eds. P. Kreeft, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 131.

by the Ring, as any person who uses it "*fades*: he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the Dark Power that rules the Rings,"[6] and "Dark Power will sooner or later devour him."[7] Therefore, the story that seems to be predominantly about the adventures of an imaginary creature – the Hobbit – transforms into a narrative in which death plays the main role.

What is more, both J.R.R. Tolkien's and J.K. Rowling's novels suggest that there are indeed some forms of afterlife present in their fictional worlds and that they might be somehow related to religious systems and beliefs. One of the most distinctive features of religions across the world is that they all deal with the idea of afterlife, proposing diverse visions of it. In their article *Religiosity and Fear of Death: A Theory-Oriented Review of the Empirical Literature*, Lee Ellis and Eshah A. Wahab claim that human concern about death and the afterworld has actually been a fundament of religions and religiosity:

> Several writers have proposed that at least by the time they reach adulthood all humans will have consciously confronted the reality of personal death, and that such contemplation has given rise to religions throughout the world (Becker 1973; Feifel 1974; Spilka et al. 1977). Jung (1969, p. 408) went so far as to identify religions as tantamount to "complicated systems of preparing for death".[8]

Since the issue of interrelation between death, religions and immortality is important to the analysis of the works by J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling, it is going to be discussed herein.

It is essential to note that religious systems per se are not to be found in Tolkien's or Rowling's works. However, some core ideas of particular religions appear to have been incorporated by those authors, and as such will be addressed in this article. Interestingly enough, Tolkien expressed his view on the presence of religion in *The Lord of the Rings* in the following way:

> The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices,

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6 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, New York: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 61.

7 Ibid., p. 62.

8 L. Ellis, and E.A. Wahab, *Religiosity and Fear of Death: A Theory-Oriented Review of the Empirical Literature*, "Review of Religious Research" 2012, no. 1, p. 5.

> in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.[9]

Although Tolkien's concern with death, immortality and afterlife is relevant to the discussion of the Ring, Gollum and Sauron, it is even more evident in the case of elves and their culture. He writes: "The Eldar do indeed grow older, even if slowly: the limit of their lives is the life of Arda, which though long beyond the reckoning of Men is not endless, and ages also."[10] Therefore, it can be concluded that elves do die, even though they live longer than any other race. Tolkien continues:

> Now the Eldar are immortal within *Arda* according to their right nature. But if a *feä* (spirit] indwells in and coheres with a *hroä* [bodily form] that is not of its own choice but ordained, and is made of the flesh or substance of *Arda* itself, then the fortune of this union must be vulnerable by the evils that do hurt to *Arda*. … If then the *hroä* be destroyed, or so hurt that it ceases to have health, sooner or later it 'dies'. That is: it becomes painful for the *feä* to dwell in it, being neither a help to life and will nor a delight to use, so that the *feä* departs from it, and its function being at an end its coherence is unloosed, and it returns again to the general [body] of *Arda*. Then the *feä* is, as it were, houseless, and it becomes invisible to bodily eyes (though clearly perceptible by direct awareness to other *feär*).[11]

Tolkien also states that elves can be reborn, which is evident in the way their souls receive new bodies:

> A houseless *feä* that chose or was permitted to return to life re-entered the incarnate world through child-birth. Only thus could it return. For it is plain that the provision of a bodily house for a *feä*, and the union of *feä* with *hroä*, was committed by Eru to the Children, to be achieved in the act of begetting.[12]

Although Tolkien states that *The Lord of the Rings* is "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work", the entire concept of spirits and rebirth might conjure up associations with Eastern religions, namely Buddhism and Hinduism, in

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9 H. Carpenter, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien,* ed. Ch. Tolkien, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000, p. 191.

10 J.R.R. Tolkien, *History of Middle-earth*, Vol. 10, ed. Christopher Tolkien, London: Allen & Unwin, 1983, p. 56.

11 Ibid., p. 57.

12 Ibid., p. 26.

which the theme of reincarnation plays a crucial role. Tolkien is also clear about the form the reborn elves would have: "They were given the choice to remain houseless, or (if they wished) to be re-housed in the same form and shape as they had had."[13] However, not every elf has a desire to come back to life again: "Some *feär* in grief or weariness gave up hope, and turning away from life relinquished their bodies, even though these might have been healed or were indeed unhurt. Few of these latter desired to be re-born, not at least until they had been long in 'waiting'; some never returned."[14] Interestingly enough, there is an example of an elf who, having been traumatized, lost her will to live in the Middle Earth any longer:

> In 2509 Celebrían wife of Elrond was journeying to Lórien when she was waylaid in the Redhorn Pass, and her escort being scattered by the sudden assault of the Orcs, she was seized and carried off. She was pursued and rescued by Elladan and Elrohir, but not before she had suffered torment and had received a poisoned wound. She was brought back to Imladris, and though healed in body by Elrond, lost all delight in Middle-earth, and the next year went to the Havens and passed over Sea.[15]

As it can be inferred from this excerpt, the prospect of remaining "in this world," even though among the living beloved ones, relatives and fellows, may prove to be unbearable to the traumatized who would sooner give up on it than continue life in pain.

A similar theme is presented in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry asks the Headless Nick if Sirius could come back as a ghost:

> Nick turned away from the window and looked mournfully at Harry. "He won't come back."
> "Who?"
> "Sirius Black," said Nick.
> "But you did!" said Harry angrily. "You came back — you're dead and you didn't disappear —"
> "Wizards can leave an imprint of themselves upon the earth, to walk palely where their living selves once trod," said Nick miserably. "But very few wizards choose that path."
> "Why not?" said Harry. …
> He will not come back," repeated Nick quietly. "He will have … gone on."

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13 Ibid., p. 78.
14 Ibid., p. 56.
15 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Return of the King Appendix A*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1955, p. 10.

> "What d'you mean, 'gone on'?" said Harry quickly. "Gone on where? Listen — what happens when you die, anyway? Where do you go? Why doesn't everyone come back? Why isn't this place full of ghosts? Why — ?"
> "I cannot answer," said Nick.
> "You're dead, aren't you?" said Harry exasperatedly. "Who can answer better than you?"
> "I was afraid of death," said Nick. "I chose to remain behind. I sometimes wonder whether I oughtn't to have. … Well, that is neither here nor there. … In fact, *I* am neither here nor there…" He gave a small sad chuckle. "I know nothing of the secrets of death, Harry, for I chose my feeble imitation of life instead.[16]

The abovementioned fragment, along with other elements, for example the story of the Deathly Hallows and the Resurrection Stone, suggests that there is some form of afterlife in Harry Potter's world. In fact, if we scratch beneath the surface, the story of Harry Potter is to a great extent a story about death and immortality, that is the Great Escape in Tolkien's understanding. Firstly, the death of Harry's parents shapes his life. Secondly, death, as something which must be avoided at all cost, frames the entire story. The author of the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling herself, acknowledges it in one of the interviews:

> Definitely Mom dying had a profound influence on the books. … The theme of how we react to death, how much we fear it. Of course, I think which is a key part of the book because Voldemort is someone who will do anything not to die. He's terrified of death. And in many ways, all of my characters are defined by their attitude to death and the possibility of death.[17]

With regard to the attitudes to death depicted in the novels, it is worth considering three main characters: Lord Voldemort, Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore. Young Voldemort's attitude towards death is best expressed in the following statement: "My mother can't have been magic, or she wouldn't have died"[18]. For him dying is clearly something shameful and inappropriate for a gifted magician. As the story develops, especially in *The Goblet of Fire* and

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16 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012, p. 861.

17 M. Vieira, Meredith, *Harry Potter: The Final Chapter*, Interview with J. K. Rowling, NBC News, 20.07.2007, <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/20001720/ns/dateline_nbc-harry_potter/t/harry-potter-final-chapter/#.W9x56bWZ1Pa> [01.11.2018].

18 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013, p. 275.

The Half-Blood Prince, the readers realize what the fear of and determination to avoid death can lead to. Voldemort's career involves considerable achievements: great education and best marks, an opportunity to work in the Ministry of Magic, along with the development of truly powerful magical skills. These achievements could be perceived remarkable but for the fact that they were driven by a wicked desire to avoid death and become immortal. This longing finally led Voldemort to the greatest imaginable evil – murder, an act necessary to create *horcruxes*, which were meant to give him immortality. Voldemort's moral degradation is the clearest example of how perilous fear might be, especially if ones philosophy is that "the end justifies the means." Those means, of course, were indescribably cruel and included torturing and killing many innocent beings, as well as oppressing others and forcing them to unquestionable obedience. Similarly to *The Lord of the Rings*, where Sauron's evil powers were hidden in the Ring, parts of Voldemort's maimed soul were encased in symbolical objects, making them most dangerous and jeopardizing those who were in their possession.

There are other hints which show that the Ring and *horcruxes* are somewhat related. Firstly, in order to obtain the Ring, Gollum (Smeagol back then) committed an atrocity – he killed his friend, Deagol, who had found it first: "2463. The White Council is formed. About this time Déagol the Stoor finds the One Ring, and is murdered by Sméagol."[19] Voldemort had to murder a person every time he wished to create *horcruxes* and secure his immortality. At the age of sixteen, he arranged his first prey, a colleague Moaning Myrtle, to be killed by a basilisk, which was under Voldemort's direct control. Secondly, Tolkien's Ring could prolong the life of its owner but also blemished him and negatively affected his mind. Likewise, the creation of *horcruxes* that required ripping apart the soul blemished Voldemort, making him nearly inhuman. His strive for immortality became so obsessive that he "had pushed his soul to the limit."[20] It is significant that the *horcruxes* were created from the items Voldemort particularly treasured, including Hogwarts founders' artifacts. They were to be symbols of his power and importance, especially the Slytherin's Locket, which constituted a proof that Voldemort was indeed the Salazar Slytherin's proud heir.[21] This seems to correspond to the way Gollum treasured the Ring, calling it

19 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A,* 1955, p. 51.

20 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, p. 185.

21 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 196.

"my precious" every time he spoke of it. By collecting Hogwarts founders' artifacts, Lord Voldemort satisfied a pure human desire to stress his own importance, in that case the lineage of Salazar Slytherin. Moreover, by hiding parts of his soul in those objects, he expressed a belief that the items can be relied upon in the matter of his own life and its protection. The parallel between Gollum's Ring and the *horcruxes* of Voldemort lies in the fact that although Gollum did not covet the Ring for the sheer possibility of having his life prolonged, it maimed him the way the *horcruxes* maimed Voldemort. Consequently, his attachment to it proved to be lethal for him, exactly as it was in the case of Voldemort. However, there is an important difference: he did not "covet" *horcruxes* to the very end, but rather throughout most of his life; in the end, he believed another artifact would prove effective, namely, the elder wand.

The perception of death in the Harry Potter saga is diverse. Some characters, as Voldemort, fear it. The effort he takes to protect himself is unprecedented in the story. In fact, his name translated into French means "flight from death" or "theft from death," and, as Kerrie Anne Le Lievre claims, "encapsulates not only his worldview but also his narrative."[22] For others, on the other hand, death is a great mystery, or even an adventure, as Dumbledore perfectly puts it into words: "To one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicholas and Perenelle, it really is like going to bed after a very, very long day. After all, to the very well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."[23] The scene evokes connotations with the farewell of Frodo Baggins that takes place in *Return of the King*, when he is about to sail to Valinor:

> And the ship went out into the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise[24].

Although the fragment does not literally refer to dying, the image of white shores and green country as a metaphor of death has been later popularized in popular culture by P. Jackson in his movie adaptation of *Lord of the Rings*. The

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22 K. A. Le Lievre, *Wizards and Wainscots: Generic Structures and Genre Themes in the Harry Potter Series*, "Mythlore" 2003, no. 1, pp. 25-36.

23 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, p. 240.

24 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, 1994, p. 176.

context is slightly different here – in the *Return of the King*, Gandalf refers to the "white shores" when he talks about death with Pippin during the siege of Minas Tirith:

> Pippin: I didn't think it would end this way.
> Gandalf: End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.
> Pippin: What? Gandalf? See what?
> Gandalf: White shores, and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise.
> Pippin: Well, that isn't so bad.
> Gandalf: No. No, it isn't.[25]

According to Tolkien's notion of the Great Escape, the aforementioned quotations are not entirely escapist in a negative way, but present death as something completely natural. The phrases used by Dumbledore ("next great adventure") and Gandalf ("white shores, and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise") make it appear beautiful and exciting. Both Dumbledore and Gandalf express the point of view of people who are very mature and reconciled to the idea that death is not to be avoided.

An example of how after-death journey might be understood is depicted in *the Deadly Hallows*, when Dumbledore explains to Harry:

> – "But I should have died – I didn't defend myself! I meant to let him kill me!"
> – "And that," said Dumbledore, "will, I think, have made all the difference." …
> –"We are in King's Cross, you say? I think that if you decided not to go back, you would be able to…let's say…board a train."
> –"And where would it take me?"
> –"On."[26]

As if to reinforce the perception of death as an adventure, Dumbledore says that Harry has a choice, he does not have to continue his struggle with Voldemort. The meaning of this scene is not to be underestimated, as it explicitly shows that there is an afterworld in the Harry Potter series, where humans can remain in their bodily form, although appearing as somewhat more "pure":

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25 *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, directed by Peter Jackson, 2003.
26 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, pp.708-709.

"His [Harry's] body appeared unscathed. He touched his face. He was not wearing glasses anymore."[27] The same refers to Dumbledore: "He [Dumbledore] spread his arms wide, and his hands were both whole and white and undamaged."[28] Moreover, the setting of the scene at the King's Cross station is vividly described:

> He lay in a bright mist, though it was not like mist he had ever experienced before. His surroundings were not hidden by cloudy vapor; rather the cloudy vapor had not yet formed into surroundings. … The longer he looked, the more there was to see. A great domed glass roof glittered high above him in sunlight. Perhaps it was a palace.[29]

This depiction seems as peaceful and idyllic as Gandalf's observations about "white shores and green country under a swift sunrise". What is more, both Tolkien and Rowling employ the motif of death as a journey. While elves and hobbits could travel (presumably sail) from the Havens over the sea, Harry Potter could (whether only metaphorically or not) "board a train".

The metaphor of a journey is a powerful cue confirming the existence of afterlife in the Harry Potter universe, which invites one to discuss the theme of death and the fear of it in the context of religious beliefs. The connection between death, fear and religions seems to be the essence of buffering theory discussed by Lee Ellis and Eshah A. Wahab in their article *Religiosity and Fear of Death*. This theory "asserts that religions have developed sets of premises and deductions to help alleviate fear of death for their followers."[30] According to other researchers "believing in the prospects of an afterlife alleviates the fear of death by assuring believers that death is not the end of one's conscious experiences"[31] but rather "a portal to immortality."[32] As it has been mentioned before, although religions in the strict sense are present neither in Tolkien's works nor in Rowling's novels, the aforementioned diverse forms of afterlife and immortality appear to be related to them. All the so called "Abrahamic religions," such

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27 Ibid., pp. 705-706.
28 Ibid,. p.707.
29 Ibid., pp. 705-706.
30 L. Ellis, E.A. Wahab, *Religiosity and Fear of Death*, p. 5.
31 B. M. Rose, and M. O'Sullivan, *Afterlife, Beliefs and Death Anxiety: An Exploration of the Relationship between Afterlife Expectations and Fear of Death in an Undergraduate Population,* "Omega: Journal of Death and Dying" 2002, no. 45, pp. 229–243.
32 P. Wink, J. Scott, *Does Religiousness Buffer against the Fear of Death and Dying in Late Adulthood? Findings from a Longitudinal Study*, "Journal of Gerontology" 2005, no. 60B, pp. 207–214.

as Judaism, Christianity and Islam incorporate beliefs of afterlife, which, in fact, are the core tenets of the two latter ones.[33] Therein afterlife (seemingly in a bodily form) is seen as the most desired outcome. On the other hand, the Eastern religions, for instance Buddhism and Hinduism, include the beliefs in a "cycle of death and rebirth" (*samsara*),[34] for example in the form of reincarnation. In fact, reincarnation, which can be seen as a form of rebirth, has a different status than the concept of immortality in Christianity. In the Eastern religions earthly existence is seen as full of pain and suffering, which can only be alleviated by "freeing (or releasing) oneself from a cycle of rebirth."[35] Buddhism and Hinduism both share the concept known as Moksha, or more widely as Nirvana,[36] which involves liberating oneself from the aforementioned cycle and is thought of as the ultimate goal of life. Contrary to the western approach to death, in the Eastern religions death "is deemed insignificant with respect to the cosmic self."[37]

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to investigate beliefs in afterlife among different cultures. In the essay *Immortality of the Soul as an Intuitive Idea: Towards a Psychological Explanation of the Origins of Afterlife Beliefs*, the authors state:

> Beliefs in afterlife are a recurrent and prevalent characteristic of Human Culture, since they seem to be an essential element of religious thought in all known human cultures (Morin, 1970; Thomas, 1976; Obayashi, 1992). Birket-Smith (1955) ventured that the only cultures that do not show afterlife beliefs are those in which those beliefs were not researched. This inter-cultural recurrence and prevalence over time may be a sign that humans have an intuitive tendency to understand death as the continuity of existence.[38]

This can apparently be associated with the previously quoted passages attributed to Dumbledore and Gandalf respectively: "After all, to the very well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure"[39] and "Death is just an-

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33 A. Sharma, *Our Religions: The Seven World Religions Introduced by Preeminent Scholars from Each Tradition*, New York: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 10.

34 W. D. O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980, p. 2.

35 Ibid., p. 43.

36 Ibid., p. 43.

37 M. Dhavamony, *Hindu Spirituality*, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 1999, p. 1.

38 V. Pereira, L. Faisca, and R. de Sa-Saraiva, *Immortality of the Soul as an Intuitive Idea: Towards a Psychological Explanation of the Origins of Afterlife Beliefs*, "Journal of Cognition and Culture" 2012, no. 12, pp. 101–103.

39 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, p. 243.

other path, one that we all must take."[40] Similarly to Buddhism and Hinduism, both of them suggest that death is nothing to be scared of. In the essay *Sacred Armor: Religion's Role as a Buffer Against the Anxieties of Life and the Fear of Death* the researchers conclude:

> We believe that religiousness continues to thrive and serve humans well because a central function, among its numerous ones, is to help people manage the potential anxiety that would result from viewing one's existence as just a pointless exercise, always in peril, and inevitably terminated. The research we have reviewed provides ample support for this central role of religiousness.[41]

Taking that into consideration, religions and religiosity seem to be enormously helpful to humanity. Without any assurance that human existence does not end at the moment of death, life would perhaps be much more hollow to many.

Apparently, writers have been exploring the theme of death and the quest for immortality for a very long time:

> If we fast-forward some millennia, we find the Epic of Gilgamesh – an ancient Sumerian written narrative believed to have originated around 3000 B.C. – describing the titular hero's confrontation with mortality and his quest for immortality. Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, embarks on a journey in search of immortality after his friend and companion Enkidu dies. Gilgamesh campaigns with the gods for immortality, but in the end, his pleas are denied and he is left with the inevitability of death.[42]

As a story within the story, a struggle with death also appears in *The Deadly Hallows*, particularly in the *Tale of Three Brothers*, which was meant to be a simple tale with a moral message for children. Death, initially fooled by the brothers, finally found all of them. Moreover, the harder they tried to trick it, the more miserable they ended: trying to bring back the beloved ones resulted in such longing that in order to connect with them suicide appeared to be the best choice. Wise though Dumbledore was, he also had been seduced by the possibil-

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40 *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, directed by Peter Jackson, 2003.

41 M. Soenke, M. J. Landau, and J. Greenberg, *Sacred Armor: Religion's Role as a Buffer Against the Anxieties of Life and the Fear of Death*, in: *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality,* Vol.1, Context, theory, and research , eds. K. I. Pargament, J. J. Exline, and J. W. Jones 2013, p. 117.

42 Ibid., pp. 108-109.

ity of being the "Master of Death," which led him to a desperate pursuit of the Deadly Hallows. The quest resulted in a tragic death of his sister Ariana, which haunted him for the rest of his life. The stories of the three brothers and of Dumbledore show that the one who attempts to trick or defeat death is fated to fail. It is only when one reconciles with and accepts the inescapable destiny that they can leave this world peacefully. Interestingly enough, the indirect reason for Dumbledore's death was one of the Hallows – the Resurrection Stone, which he tried to use, tempted by the possibility of seeing his long dead beloved family. Disregarding a powerful curse which turned out to be lethal, Dumbledore put on the ring. His yearning to be with those he loved killed him, exactly as it was depicted in the *Tale of Three Brothers*.

Harry's life has been marked with the tragic death of his parents, an act of cruelty which shaped his entire future. It forced him to grow up very early. As a seventeen-year-old boy he accepts the fact that he has to volunteer to be killed. Despite feeling betrayed, frightened and reluctant to die, Harry understands that his sacrifice is inevitable so that others could live. By accepting his fate he becomes a savior figure of the wizarding world, and his surrender may be regarded as a powerful and symbolic act. The theme of sacrifice is well-known in religion and literature, for instance, in the Bible (Jesus Christ dying for human sins), the myth of Prometheus (Prometheus stealing fire for humans), *The Song of Roland* (Roland going down fighting in the rearguard), the myth of Prometheus (Prometheus stealing fire for humans), and other works by various authors. Thanks to showing extreme maturity and sense of duty Harry did not die, but his sacrifice "purified" him in the sense that a part of Voldemort that lived within Harry's soul was simply destroyed. Consequently, the young protagonist becomes the master of death, as Dumbledore explains it: "You are the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying."[43] Harry greeted death with his head held high, similarly to the third brother in the tale. Concluding, it can be said that Harry truly "mastered" death, the meaning of the word including "to embrace," "to become perfect at something" and, finally, "to understand". He truly understood the tenuous difference between mastering and conquering and thus he ultimately won.

Death itself is a tragic occurrence, but in Rowling's saga it often happens to be purposeful, though its function is not always clear and understandable at

[43] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, pp. 720-721.

first. As Shawn E. Klein states in his study *Harry Potter and Humanity: Choices, Love, and Death*, it is our choices that are the most important factors when it comes to one's future:

> Over and over again in the novels it is made clear that it is a person's choices and actions that are the defining elements of his moral character. It is not our ancestry, social roles, or wealth that makes us who we are. It is, as Albus Dumbledore tells Harry in *Chamber of Secrets*, "our choices … that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (*CoS* p. 333). … The choices made in the novels are not all for the good. Peter Pettigrew makes the choice to betray his friends and thus forever casts his lot with the forces of evil. We are told that Tom's mother, Merope Gaunt Riddle, chooses her own death instead of staying alive to care for her son.[44]

Undeniably, many choices have a great impact on the plot and the process of shaping the personalities of characters. Their decisions frequently show their morality or its lack. Many characters, explicitly or not, expressed fear of death or its absence, as demonstrated by the case of Lily Potter, who chose not to live if her son were to be dead. Throughout the story Harry's personality develops, and, surprisingly, he does not grow terrified by the prospect of being killed, nor does he seem to be bothered until the very end with the possibility that the entire plot and plan are dramatically different from those he had in his mind. Although never desiring to escape from death, Harry quite often acted recklessly. His pure-heartedness is contrasted with particular mediocrity in magical skills and hot-tempered personality. Thus, to a great extent he relied on his friends' help, who often saved him even in the most hopeless situations. Despite his inability to effectively perform or accomplish any complicated task on his own, his motivation remains pure: to prevent Voldemort from rising to power once again and, ultimately, to prevent him from ruling the world.

There are some parallels and differences in the construction of the characters of Harry Potter and Voldemort. Both had miserable childhoods, yet their mothers could not have been more different from each other. Harry, although unconcerned with the possibility of being killed, was devastated by the deaths of his friend Cedric and godfather Sirius, for which he continued to blame himself. Voldemort, on the other hand, is never moved by the deaths of his followers. Death is omnipresent in the books and it would not be an exaggeration to

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[44] S. Klein, *Harry Potter and Humanity: Choices, Love, and Death*, "Reason Papers" 2012, no. 1, p. 1.

say that Harry is chased by it. Both Voldemort and Harry attempt to escape from death, although in a very different sense. Furthermore, like Voldemort, Harry is "constantly associated with serpents. He is a Parselmouth, able to speak with snakes in their own language, and a descendant of another Parselmouth."[45] The association with serpents is far more important than it initially seems, as Kerrie Anne Le Vivre notes:

> As a symbol, the serpent conveys more than one meaning. It is associated with malice, deceit, and destruction through its Biblical depiction as the tempter of innocence; but its older meaning, derived from its ability to shed its skin, is that of regeneration – the renewal of life – and bodily immortality (Jobes 1469: both layers of meaning are appropriate to Lord Voldemort).[46]

The concept of regeneration can apply to Voldemort. He was regarded as gone forever, and yet he was able to get his human body back in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. The transformation may be linked with the concept of the renewal of life, yet it involves deaths of innocent people, including Cedric Diggory.

In a later scene one of the scenes (during the battle of Hogwarts), Voldemort accuses Harry of cowardice and implies that the boy is responsible for Cedric's death: "I speak now, Harry Potter, directly to you. You have permitted your friends to die for you rather than face me yourself."[47] Indeed, it could be said that Harry escaped death, sometimes narrowly, because his friends or relatives sacrificed their lives for him in a more or less direct way. The perfect example is Sirius, who, as Hagrid claims, preferred to die fighting than stay idle:

> "Look..." Hagrid leaned toward him across the table, "I knew Sirius longer 'n you did. ... He died in battle, an' tha's the way he'd've wanted ter go —"
> "He didn't want to go at all!" said Harry angrily.
> Hagrid bowed his great shaggy head.
> "Nah, I don' reckon he did," he said quietly. "But still, Harry ... he was never one ter sit around at home an' let other people do the fightin'. He couldn' have lived with himself if he hadn' gone ter help. "[48]

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45 K. A. Le Lievre, *Wizards and Wainscots: Generic Structures and Genre Themes in the Harry Potter Series*, p. 9.
46 Ibid., p. 10.
47 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 550.
48 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, London, 2003, pp. 854-855.

It can be concluded that sometimes, as depicted herein, there are things worth dying for. In the prospect of saving his godson's life, death ceases to be so appalling for Sirius. Nevertheless, despite his love for Harry, he does not wish to go back by choosing "feeble imitation of life instead."[49]

In his essay *On Fairy Stories*, J. R. R. Tolkien wrote that fantasy often deals with the theme of immortality and "provides us with 'consolation' for our universal fear of death," emphasizing that his works were not different in this respect.[50] Andrew J. Deman states that the theme of death is also clearly exposed in the very first book of the Harry Potter series:

> Upon hearing this, Harry wonders "If you're going to be cursed forever, death's better, isn't it?" thus showing us Harry's internal perspective on Voldemort's choice. Dumbledore himself confirms Harry's viewpoint at the end of the novel by telling Harry that "to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure." If we put these pieces together, the death theme Rowling uses is all laid out within the very first book.[51]

However, the representation of attitudes towards death is not exclusively limited to the points of view of Harry Potter, Albus Dumbledore or Lord Voldemort. There are plenty of characters who had an enormous influence on the story and its ultimate outcome, including Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Severus Snape, Sirius Black or Barty Crouch Jr. Death was also present in their lives with particular intensity. For instance, Ron's father was almost killed, his brother Fred died in a battle, and, as it has been mentioned, Sirius was murdered while rescuing Harry and his friends.

One person who certainly would not yearn for being immortal is Severus Snape. He remains inscrutable till the very end of the story, having deceived nearly everyone around him, even Voldemort. Considering his personality and actions, he is a truly interesting figure whose life was shaped by death of his beloved one. As Gregory Bassham claims in his essay *Choices vs. Abilities: Dumbledore on Self-Understanding*, drawing on Kant's philosophy, sometimes the actions of a person do not reveal much about his or her personality: "we can't truly know what choice a person makes unless we know their motive for

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49 Ibid., p. 861.

50 J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Tales*, p. 22.

51 A. J. Deman, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Mortality Themes*, "Inverse" 2018, <https://www.inverse.com/article/41709-harry-potter-series-and-death> [29.04.2018].

deciding as they did."[52] As Johnson and Cureton argue in *Kant's Moral Philosophy*, humans possess limited cognition, and therefore may fail in judging someone's actions:

> Kant thought that the only way to resolve this apparent conflict is to distinguish between phenomena, which is what we know through experience, and noumena, which we can consistently think but not know through experience. Our knowledge and understanding of the empirical world, Kant argued, can only arise within the limits of our perceptual and cognitive powers. We should not assume, however, that we know all that may be true about "things in themselves," although we lack the "intellectual intuition" that would be needed to learn about such things.[53]

In practice, therefore, a person's morality might sometimes (if not often) be found impossible to assess, especially when it comes to judging someone's actions. This is, according to Kant, due to the nescience of the motives of a subject, which may be utterly supervening. The issue of attempting to assess behaviour and personality of Severus Snape falls exactly into this category.

However hateful towards Snape Harry had been, this feeling increased after discovering that Snape is the one to be blamed for Harry's parents' tragic death. Snape decided then that he would protect Harry regardless of how many people die, especially to honor the boy's mother, to pacify his conscience and ease his grief. Death and pain accompanied him all along his tumultuous journey: although he did not have many friends, he has seen a lot people die. Sometimes he was forced to be the one who killed them, at other times he could only helplessly watch it happening. He grew insensitive to the risk of being killed. Additionally, when he learned that Harry "has been raised as pig for slaughter,"[54] he seemed to have completely lost his purpose in life. As for his relations with Voldemort himself, Snape became only another "tool" in Voldemort's quest to achieve immortality – one of many other followers. Eventually, to many readers' surprise, he is killed by Voldemort himself after the Dark Lord wrongly concluded who owned the elder wand. This was perhaps one of the saddest and most tragic deaths in the whole saga, which owes much to the fact that, as it

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52 G. Bassham, *Choices vs. Abilities: Dumbledore on Self-Understanding*, "Reason Papers" 2012, no. 34.1, pp. 159-160.

53 R. Johnson, and A. Cureton, *Kant's Moral Philosophy*, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2004. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/kant-moral/> [19.01.2019].

54 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 587.

turns out later, Snape remained loyal to Dumbledore and died because of the force more powerful than anything in the world – love. Despite his previous wrongdoings, this ultimate act redeems him in the eyes of Harry. Thus, Voldemort can be compared to the oldest brother from the *Tale of Three Brothers*, who aimed at fooling death by asking it for "a wand worthy of a wizard who had conquered Death,"[55] since both of them were killed by the very weapon they used.

Conclusion

Having discussed Tolkien's Great Escape and its relevance for the Harry Potter saga, it can be concluded that death is both a crucial theme and a central feature of the plot in Rowling's novels. The main characters have to deal with death, and the story demonstrates how individuals might react to hardships that occurred in their lives by choosing different paths. Although diverse actions might be taken in order to escape death, the ultimate message is that dying is inevitable and it takes utmost maturity to face it. In fact, as Tolkien wrote in his letters, death may as well be a blessing:

> The Doom (or the Gift) of Men is mortality, freedom from the circles of the world. Since the point of view of the whole cycle is the Elvish, mortality is not explained mythically: it is a mystery of God of which no more is known than that 'what God has purposed for Men is hidden': a grief and an envy to the immortal Elves.[56]

Moreover, death is present throughout a plethora of prominent fantasy texts, *The Lord of the Rings* being a prime example. It appears that its ubiquity helps readers to face the frightening perspective of dying. Tolkien's works are heavily influenced by religion, whose aim, among many, is to alleviate the fear of death. Consequently, it is not surprising that in its capacity to bring comfort and consolation, religion is salient in a myriad of works of literature including the Harry Potter saga.

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55 Ibid., 407.

56 H. Carpenter, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, p. 167.

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ŚWIATY WŁADCÓW LOGOSU

O DYSTOPII W NARRACJACH LITERACKICH

> Nic dziwnego, że humanizm tam dopiero wypływa na wierzch, gdzie świat staje się obrazem[1].
>
> Martin Heidegger

> Świat ze swej natury jest dystopijny. Życie jest dystopijne. Umieramy – to stanowi nieszczęśliwe zakończenie każdej historii[2].
>
> Thomas Disch

Abstract

The article *Worlds of Lords of Logos. Dystopian Narratives in Literary Fiction* revisits fundamental terminological discrepancies functioning within utopian studies in order to propose a world-centered model for analyzing (e)u-/dystopian narratives. First and foremost, the text proposes to focus on utopian storyworlds rather than storylines and to determine their axiological attribution (i.e. whether they are ideal, eutopian, or non-ideal, dystopian) not by following a specific genre pattern, but by interacting with them as if they were not separated from the empirical reality. Utopia would, therefore, become eutopia or dystopia only when judged as such by the reader or focalizer in their hermeneutic meeting with the text. Secondly, it will be argued that utopias and dystopias prove strikingly similar from the world-

1 M. Heidegger, *Czas światoobrazu*, przekł. Krzysztof Wolicki, w: *Drogi losu*, Warszawa 1997, s. 80.

2 T. M. Disch, *Życie jest dystopijne*, „Nowa Fantastyka" 2008, nr 10, s. 9.

building perspective, as they either utilize a travel narrative to guide the protagonist from the empirical to the counterempirical world, or shape an equivalent heterotopia, translating this dual-world opposition into a topography of the walled-off asylum and a surrounding wasteland. Since there is nothing positive or negative in such a way of world-building, any axiological valorization (and, thereby, a recognition of either eu-, or dystopia) would appear only when provided by the character narrator, who can either come from within (in an *inclusive* type of utopian narratives), or from without (in an *adaptative* type of utopian narratives) the (e)u-/dystopian world. Consequently, the paper will provide tools for interpreting utopias as eutopias or dystopias, along with a selection of world-building and philosophical categories potentially helpful in describing the imagery of dystopian storyworlds comprising the artificial paradise, "todetitis", conjuration of reality, the founding lie, anamorphotic illusion of ideal reality, or the eponymous lordship of logos.

Key words: utopia, eutopia, dystopia, lordship of logos, adaptative and inclusive utopian narrative, logocentrism, deconstruction

Od utopii do dystopii, kakotopii i ekotopii

503 lata temu, w 1516 r., nakładem drukarni uniwersyteckiej w Lovanium ukazała się *De optimo reipublicæ statu deque nova insula Utopia, libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus* sir Thomasa More'a, nadwornego doradcy króla Henryka VIII i późniejszego kanclerza Anglii. Książeczka (*libellus*) owa, zamierzona jako ironiczna satyra na kondycję polityczno-społeczną Królestwa Anglii i idealistyczna *topothesia*[3] miejsca odeń doskonalszego, po stokroć przerosła najśmielsze oczekiwania autora, wydając wkrótce przebogate potomstwo, tak na łonie literatury, jak i nauk społecznych, politycznych czy filozoficznych. W konsekwencji, mówienie o literackich światach utopii nieuchronnie skazuje na powtarzanie gestu fundatorskiego króla Utopusa – gestu odcięcia od kontynentu realności i podróży na wyspę Ni Tu, Ni Tam, gdzie możliwe jest myślenie o utopii nie w kategoriach nierealizowalnej mrzonki o państwie idealnym, lecz światotwórczego symulakrum.

Przeformułowanie teoretycznoliterackich badań nad utopiami (*utopian studies*) – zwanych tak dla odróżnienia ich od socjologicznego nurtu utopianizmu[4]

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[3] *Topothesia* (topotezja) – opis miejsca doskonałego. Termin za: A. D. Cousins, Damian Grace, *Introduction*, w: *More's Utopia and Utopian Inheritance*, red. A. D. Cousins, D. Grace, London 1995, s. IX-XXI.

[4] Rozróżnienie to zaproponował Krishan Kumar, proponując identyfikować utopianizm z „sekularną różnorodnością myśli społecznej [*a secular variety of social thought*]". Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism*, Minneapolis 1991, s. 35. Za Kumarem podążył Fredric Jameson,

– z modelu literaturoznawczego czy kulturoznawczego na światocentryczny[5] dopomina się w ostatnich latach o coraz większą uwagę z uwagi na coraz częściej podkreślaną specyfikę narracji o wyspie Utopii. Jednym z ważniejszych przejawów starań literaturoznawców o powrót do przednowożytnych, literackich korzeni utopii, jest propozycja Artura Blaima z wydanej w 2013 roku książki *Gazing in Useless Wonder. English Utopian Fictions 1516–2016*. Według Blaima, za utopię literacką w jej postaci wczesnonowożytnej – a więc pierwotnej dla rozwoju gatunku utopijnego i z *terminus a quo* wyznaczonym na rok publikacji pierwszej edycji *De optimo reipublicæ* – można byłoby uznać każdy utwór odznaczający się:

> […] dwudzielną kompozycją łącząca narracyjną ramę modalną (*narrative frame*) z opisową, pseudoekfrastyczną częścią poświęconą utopii i korespondująca z nacechowaną aksjologicznie opozycją pomiędzy negatywnie ocenianym światem utopisty a fikcyjną reprezentacją idealnego lub wyidealizowanego państwa[6].

Utopia w takim rozumieniu stawałaby się nierozerwalną, nierozłączną częścią dwuświata, łączącego horyzont empiryczny z kontrempirycznym i uzasadniającego różnicą tych porządków fabularną celowość podróży na wyspę Utopię[7]. Podobny pogląd ma już swoją tradycję myślową w badaniach nad utopiami. Darko Suvin w słynnych *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), Tom Moylan w *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000) czy Fredric Jameson w *Archeologies of the Future* (2005)[8] obstawali – choć wychodzili od zgoła odmiennych założeń – za inkluzywnym rozpatrywaniem utopii jako jednej z najstarszych odmian fantastyki literackiej, podkreślając w szczególności rolę, jaką w utopii

przekonując o potrzebie rozdzielnego rozumienia utopijnej formy (w tym właśnie np. gatunku literackiego, będącego przedmiotem *utopian studies*) i życzenia utopijnego, rozumianego podobnie do impulsu utopijnego Ernsta Blocha. Por. Fredric Jameson, *Archeologie przyszłości. Pragnienia zwane utopią i inne fantazje naukowe*, przekł. M. Płaza, M. Frankiewicz, A. Miszk, Kraków 2011, s. 1-3.

5 Wykorzystuję tu zaproponowany przeze mnie przekład pojęcia *world-centered narratives* autorstwa Marie-Laure Ryan. Zob. K. M. Maj, *Allotopie. Topografia światów fikcjonalnych*, Kraków 2015, s. 19.

6 Przekład własny za: „two-partite composition […] comprising the narrative frame and the descriptive [pseudoekphrastic] utopian section […] corresponding to the axiologically charged division into the negatively evaluated author's world and the image of an ideal(ised) fictional state". A. Blaim, *Gazing in Useless Wonder. English Utopian Fictions 1516–2016*, Oxford, New York 2013, s. 57.

7 Wątek ten rozwijam w artykule: K. M. Maj, *Utopia, czyli tam i z powrotem. O założeniach światotwórczych narracji eu- i dystopijnych*, „Wielogłos" 2014, nr 3 (21), s. 37-49.

8 Podaję daty pierwodruków.

pełni nie pretekstowa fabuła, a światotwórstwo. Światotwórcza wykładnia utopii, choć obecna już w Suvinowskiej formule „alternatywnego świata różniącego się radykalnie od społeczno-politycznych warunków historycznego środowiska utopisty [*an alternative location radically different jn respect of socio-political conditions from the author's historical environment*]”[9], rozwinęła się najszerzej w typologii światocentrycznych gatunków fantastycznonaukowych Umberta Eco z eseju *Światy science fiction*, w którym zdefiniowana została jako:

> Narracyjny świat możliwy [*il mondo possibile narrato*] istniejący równolegle do naszego, jakkolwiek w normalnych okolicznościach niedostępny. Taką właśnie formułę przyjmują zazwyczaj opowieści utopijne [*il racconto utopico*], zarówno wtedy, gdy utopia jest projekcją, wizją idealnego społeczeństwa (na przykład u Thomasa More'a), jak i karykaturą, ironiczną deformacją naszej rzeczywistości (na przykład u Jonathana Swifta). Świat ów może istnieć w przeszłości lub znajdować się w odległych miejscu w przestrzeni. Zazwyczaj stanowi model tego, jak powinien wyglądać świat rzeczywisty[10].

Jak widać zwłaszcza z definicji Eco, światocentryczna wykładnia utopii literackiej pozwala na uniknięcie ciągnącego się już od kilkudziesięciu lat sporu terminologicznego o granice gatunkowe czy konwencjonalne między jej odmianą pozytywną i negatywną, czy, jak woli Eco, między idealną projekcją a ironiczną deformacją. Sednem bowiem strukturalistycznego podziału gatunkowego na eutopię (utopię pozytywną), dystopię (utopię negatywną), utopię satyryczną, antyutopię i utopię krytyczną (za którym długo optował Lyman Tower Sargent, ubolewający sam potem nad jego „nieszczelnością”[11]) jest przekonanie o funkcjonowaniu różnic formalnych między kształtującymi je schematami fabularnymi – a te ostatnie są w badaniach nad światotwórstwem nierelewantne. Z perspektywy światocentrycznej istotne byłyby bowiem nie granice gatunkowe utopii – lecz granice owego utopijnego świata możliwego, wyznaczone po raz pierwszy przez symboliczne odcięcie przesmyku łączącego wyspę Utopię z kontynentem Zachodu. W miejsce zatem proponowanego przez Artura Blaima

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9 D. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction. On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, New Haven 1979, s. 41.

10 U. Eco, *Światy science fiction*, w: tegoż, *Po drugiej stronie lustra i inne eseje. Znak, reprezentacja, iluzja, obraz*, przekł. J. Wajs, Warszawa 2012. Oryginały włoskie przytaczam za wydaniem: *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: Il segno, la rappresentazione, l'illusione, l'immagine*, Milano 1995.

11 L. T. Sargent, *Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited*, „Utopian Studies” 1994, t. 5, nr 1, s. 11-12.

rozumienia narracyjnej formy utopii jako „tekstu autoreferencyjnego [*self-referential text*]", warto byłoby spojrzeć na nią jako na reprezentację fikcyjnego świata – światoobraz (*Weltbild*), a więc, jak wskazywał Martin Heidegger, nie tyle na obraz świata, ile „świat pojmowany jako obraz"[12].

Jak każdy świat, utopia może mieć swoje regiony, te bliskie i te oddalone od centrum, owego *nusquam*[13], nigdzie, Ni Tu, Ni Tam – jednak zawsze pozostające w relacji z narracyjnym dialogiem aktualnej rzeczywistości z jej możliwą alternatywą[14]. Tak jak więc utopia jest światem wchodzącym w krytyczny dialog z otaczającą go rzeczywistością – i wybierającym logocentryczną izolację – tak też są i takie fikcyjne światy, które wchodzą w krytyczny dialog z samą utopią. Najważniejszym z nich, najbardziej znanym i – czego dowodzą ostatnie badania – najstarszym z rozpoznanych[15], jest dystopia (Δυςτοπία), miejsce zniekształcone i dysfunkcyjne, reprezentujące sobą wszystko to, czego przeciwieństwem chce być eutopia (Ευτοπία). Już Thomas More zdawał sobie sprawę z tego, być może rozumując jeszcze Arystotelejskimi kategoriami substancjalności i atrybucyjności, że utopia staje się utopią dopiero w oczach oczarowanego podróżnika. W łacińskiej przedmowie do *De optimo reipublicae*, znanej jako *Hexastichon Anemoli*, Utopia, „współzawodniczka Państwa Platońskiego [!]", zyskuje przywilej „słusznego mianowania się eutopią [*eutopia merito sum vocanda nomine*]" dopiero dzięki pozytywnej ocenie wykształconych w niej „najlepszych praw [*optimisque legibus*]" – a zatem to jedynie w interpretacji utopia okazuje się eutopią. *A contrario*, utopia stawałaby się dystopią także w sytuacji hermeneutycznej, gdy oto jej mieszkańcom, częściej niż obywatelom eutopii, przychodzi przejrzeć na oczy, doznać olśnienia (anagnoryzm), że świat, który ich otacza, jest w istocie rzeczy ułudą wspaniałości. W obydwu przypadkach – i dlatego też ważne jest tu pojęcie perspektywy – o różnicy decydują nie, powtórzmy to raz jeszcze, kwestie fabularne, lecz sposób funkcjonalizacji scentralizowanego układu utopii i jego

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12 M. Heidegger, dz. cyt., s. 77.

13 Pierwotna nazwa wyspy Utopii, wspomniana przez Thomasa More'a w liście do Erazma z Rotterdamu z 3 września 1516 roku. Zob. *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roderdami*, red. P. S. Allen, Oxford, 1958, t. 11, nr 461, ww. 1-2. Łacińskie *Nusquam* było też pierwszą rozważaną przez More'a wersją tytułu Utopii. Więcej na ten temat: J. M. Perrish, *A New Source for More's „Utopia"*, „The Historical Journal" 1997, t. 40, nr 2.

14 Semantyka możliwych światów jest tu o tyle przydatna, że aktualność jakiejś rzeczywistości nie determinuje, czy jest to rzeczywistość autora piszącego utopię (utopisty) czy też jej odbiorcy, co otwiera lekturę na nowe, nieparadygmatyczne interpretacje.

15 Zob. L. T. Sargent, *In Defence of Utopia*, „Diogenes" 2006, nr 11, s. 15 i Vesselin B. Budakov, *Dystopia. An Earlier Eighteenth-Century Use*, „Notes and Queries" 2010, nr 57, s. 86.

odbioru przez zamieszkujących ją autochtonów. Ów charakterystyczny dla utopii „przenikający wszystko wzrok [*the all penetrating gaze*]", o którym pisze Hanan Yoran[16], może być bowiem albo bacznym wzrokiem Ojca, będącego źródłem eutopijnego logosu, albo bezwzględnego Władcy, wykorzystującego słowo do manipulacji i zniekształcającego perspektywę poznawczą wszystkich tak, by narzucać „odczucie jedności słowa, rozumu, sensu i rzeczy"[17]. Zgodnie z tym zatem, co proponuje Artur Blaim w *Gazing in Useless Wonder*, antyutopijność, krytyczność czy satyryczność byłyby nie tyle subgatunkami utopii, ile funkcjami dystopii, związanymi bezpośrednio, jak zgadzają się i Darko Suvin, i Tom Moylan, z indywidualnym stanowiskiem utopisty, czytelnika czy badacza, „oceniających z określonej pozycji (i z wykorzystaniem określonego systemu wartości), czy dane fikcjonalne społeczeństwo jest gorsze czy lepsze od im znanego [*work from a particular standpoint (with particular affiliations and principles) in order to decide whether a given fictive society is worse or better than the author's or the reader/critic's*]"[18].

Wszystko to pozwala dokonać dość klarownego, jak się wydaje, podziału utopii jako 'nie-miejsca' na dwa różne, lecz co do konstrukcji podobne światy: eutopię jako 'nie-miejsce pozytywne' oraz dystopię jako 'nie-miejsce negatywne', czyniąc tym samym ich podstawowymi cechami dystynktywnymi negatywną ontologię nie-świata, oderwanego w dosłownym znaczeniu od otaczającej go rzeczywistości, oraz indywidualną, naddaną w akcie interpretacyjnym waloryzację aksjologiczną. Podział ten nadto zespolić można z zaproponowaną przez Umberto Eco kategorią allotopii, utożsamianej przezeń ze światem wprawdzie innym i fantastycznym, jednakże przedstawionym jako bardziej realny aniżeli świat rzeczywisty[19], a także dodać doń ewentualne podkategorie konkretyzujące, jak choćby kakotopię, mogącą określać zwyrodniałe postaci dystopii po apokalipsie, w których dominują „mikro-dystopijne" enklawy[20], czy ekotopię, przepracowującą dylematy dystopii celem ekologicznego rozbratu ze smutkiem i pustką światów postapokaliptycznych.

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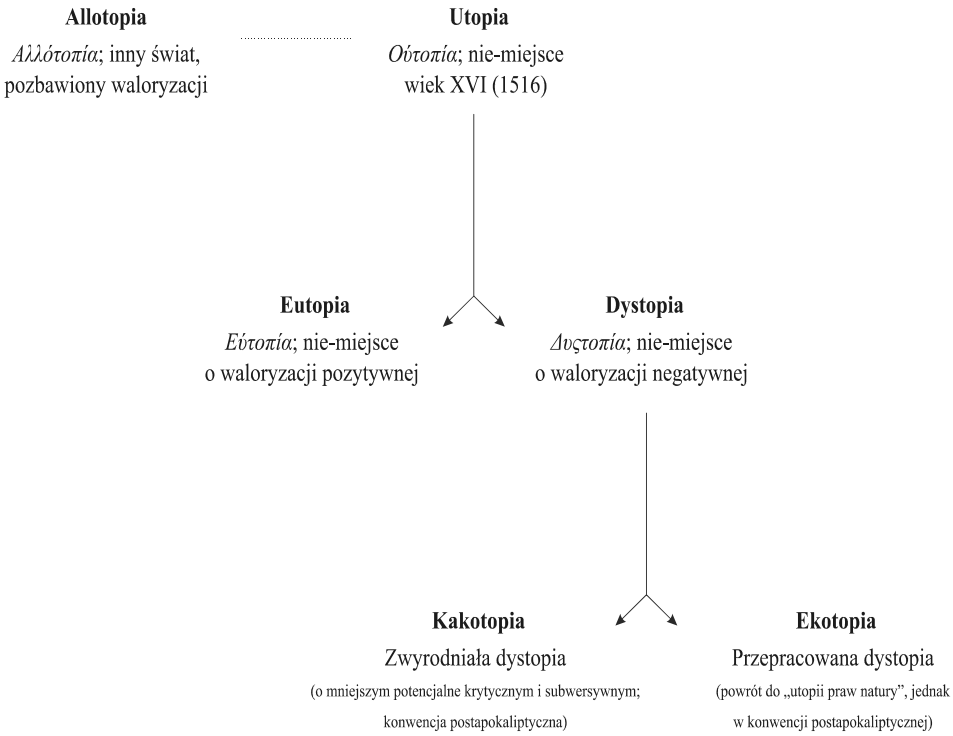
16 H. Yoran, *More's Utopia and Erasmus' No-place*, „English Literary Renaissance" 2005, t. 35, nr 1, s. 8.

17 M. M. Leś, *Fantastyka socjologiczna. Poetyka i myślenie utopijne*, Białystok 2008, s. 20-21.

18 T. Moylan, *Dystopian Turn*, w: tegoż, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky. Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, Boulder 2000, s. 155.

19 U. Eco, *Światy science fiction*, w: tegoż, *Po drugiej stronie lustra i inne eseje. Znak, reprezentacja, iluzja, obraz*, przekł. J. Wajs, Warszawa 2012, s. 235.

20 Więcej na temat tak rozumianych mikro-dystopii w: K. Olkusz, *Mistrzowie drugiego planu. Motyw zombie w perspektywie literackiego sztafażu – od survival horroru przez dystopię do romansu paranormalnego*, „Przegląd Humanistyczny" 2015, nr 3.



Zaproponowana typologia, będąca w zasadzie raczej tylko próbą zmapowania galaktyki możliwych światów, pozwala zrezygnować z automatycznego identyfikowania utopii z eutopią (lub dystopią), zachęcając do myślenia raczej o światach, niż gatunkach i subgatunkach, a zarazem nie stwarzając ryzyka uprzywilejowywania czy dowartościowywania któregokolwiek z nich. Zdefiniowanie zaś utopii jako 'nie-miejsca', nadaje jej status wystarczająco neutralny[21], by mogła ona pozostać dla każdej z dys-, kako-, -eko bądź eutopii, a w dalszej perspektywie – umożliwiać także zestawianie jej ze światami allotopijnymi[22] w literaturze *fantasy* i *science fiction*. Przede wszystkim jednak pomaga to w lepszym zrozumieniu specyfiki świata dystopijnego, zbyt często redukowanego do krytycznej lub satyrycznej alternatywy dla eutopii.

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21 W Polsce wskazywał na to jeszcze w latach 70. Ryszard Nycz: „Utopia […] wskazuje przede wszystkim na swój negatywny, fikcyjny status ontologiczny, lecz n i e z a w i e r a w z a s a d z i e e l e m e n t u w a r t o ś c i u j ą c e g o" [podkr. – KMM]. R. Nycz, *Utopia, antyutopia, science fiction*, „Tygodnik kulturalny" 1977, nr 47, s. 6.

22 Więcej na temat światów allotopijnych i ich egzemimetyczności piszę w książce: K. M. Maj, *Allotopie. Topografia światów fikcjonalnych*, Kraków 2015.

W świecie dystopii

> Nasz świat jest inny, niż świat Otella. Nie można produkować aut nie mając stali, nie można tworzyć tragedii bez społecznej niestabilności. A dziś świat jest stabilny. Ludzie są szczęśliwi; otrzymują wszystko, czego zapragną, a nigdy nie pragną czegoś, czego nie mogą otrzymać. Są zamożni, bezpieczni, zawsze zdrowi; nie boją się śmierci; żyją w stanie błogiej niewiedzy o namiętnościach i starości; nie prześladują ich matki i ojcowie; nie mają żon, dzieci ani kochanków, budzących silne uczucia; są tak uwarunkowani, że praktycznie nie są w stanie postępować inaczej, niż powinni. A jeśli coś nie gra, pozostaje soma […]. Faktyczna szczęśliwość zawsze wypada blado na tle spodziewanej nagrody za nędzę[23].

To fragment słynnej przemowy Mustafy Monda z *Nowego wspaniałego świata* Huxleya – fragment, zdaje się, znamienny, bo pokazujący, że w istocie rzeczy świat eutopijny od dystopijnego różni perspektywa oglądu. Francuski *Monde*, włoski *il mondo* czy łaciński *mundus* – wszystkie oznaczają świat. Mustafa Mond sam jest więc światem i w języku demaskuje się jako władca absolutny, dosłownie – bo w domenie logosu – urzeczywistniający arogancką utopię francuskiego absolutyzmu: *l'État c'est moi*. Cały problem dystopijnego systemu – problem, który, przypomnijmy, dla protagonisty powieści Huxleya kończy się tragicznie – wiąże się więc z tragizmem niemożności dowiedzenia, że systemowa prawda jest tylko prawdą Władcy logosu, sankcjonującą władzę Lewiatana – Hobbesowskiego symbolu absolutnej władzy, pojawiającego się nieprzypadkowo wtedy, gdy racjonalnie rozumująca jednostka zrzeka się aktu decyzyjnego[24]. Wiedzę-władzę Mustafy Monda obnaża komentowane w rozmowie Michela Foucaulta z Jean-Pierre Barou i Michelle Perrot „dążenie do powstrzymania ludzi przed czynieniem zła poprzez odebranie im tej możliwości [*preventing people from wrong-doing, taking away their wish to commit wrong*]", innymi słowy więc, przez „uczynienie ich niezdolnymi do sprzeciwu i bezwolnymi [*to make people unable and unwilling*]" [25] – takimi więc, jakimi są ludzie *Nowego wspaniałego świata*, „tak uwarunkowani, że praktycznie nie są w stanie postępować inaczej, niż powinni".

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23 Aldous Huxley, *Nowy wspaniały świat*, przekł. B. Baran, Warszawa 2008, s. 210-211.

24 Zob. Michał Podniesiński, *Prawda i władza. Myśli Michela Foucaulta w latach 1956–1977*, Kraków 2012, s. 242.

25 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, red. i przekł. C. Gordon, New York 1980, s. 154.

Dystopijna „dyspozycja zawłaszczenia przez sens ogólny", *todetitis*[26], choć dyktowana zrazu szlachetnymi pobudkami ideowymi, stopniowo przyczynia się więc do kryzysu władzy logosu. Zatracenie w idei doskonałości, mającej być celem samym w sobie, nie zaś kolejnym z postulatów programowych ustawowej reformy *status quo*, prowadzi do aberracji: idea bowiem, która ma zostać opanowana, prędzej czy później sama opanowuje tego, który zawłaszcza ją do realizacji własnych, partykularnych celów. Logocentryczna prazasada dystopii i eutopii jest więc pozornie tożsama: w obu podtypach utopii logos jest wszak ulokowany w centrum, sankcjonując jedyność domeny idei. Logocentryzm dystopijny odróżnia jednakowoż od eutopijnego nie pozycja logosu, lecz r e l a c j a, w jakiej pozostawać z nim może jego władca, w eutopiach nad logosem panujący, zaś w dystopiach – przez logos opanowany. O władzy jako relacji właśnie mówi też Foucault, polemizując z substancjalną koncepcją władzy – która nawet w swym absolutystycznym, trójkątnym układzie (z władcą u szczytu i poddanymi u podstaw), opiera się na fundamentach, które tworzy złożona „sieć relacji [*cluster of relations*]" [27]. Ową relacyjność władzy logosu dobrze zilustrował Stanisław Lem w *Podróży trzynastej* z *Dzienników gwiazdowych*, w której jeden z napotkanych ojców założycieli „akwatycznej" dystopii Pinty, sprowadziwszy racjonalny plan irygacyjny do irracjonalnego nakazu życia pod wodą, wprost przyznał, że „d o s z ł o d o t e g o [...] ż e t o, c o m i a ł o b y ć o p a n o w a n e, o p a n o w a ł o n a s[28]. To właśnie dlatego w światach dystopijnych p r a w d a o p r a w d z i e bywa najpilniej strzeżoną tajemnicą – to ona bowiem zwykle staje się zarzewiem obalającej system rewolucji. Prawda dystopijnego świata jest tak naprawdę surogatem, zastępstwem (*surrogare*) prawdy o świecie, której wyłącznym dysponentem jest jego władca, starający się ją ukryć przed wątpiącym wzrokiem rozumu. Władca logosu wykorzystuje jednak to, że bez klucza, bez wiedzy trudno dostrzec prawdę nawet wtedy, gdy ukryta jest n a o c z a c h – tak jak anamorfotyczna czaszka na pierwszym planie słynnych *Ambasadorów* Holbeina, którą odkryć (grecka *αλήθεια* oznacza właśnie to, co nie-ukryte, „nieskrytość" w wykładni Heideggera) można dopiero przy pomocy wypukłego lusterka lub łyżki, przytkniętych pod odpowiednim kątem do powierzchni płótna. A jak wskazuje Jurgis Baltrušaitis w książce *Anamorfozy albo Thaumaturgus opticus*, anamorfoza (*trompe-l'œil*) „nie jest odchyleniem

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26 Formuła za: C. Noica, *Todetitis*, w: tegoż, *Sześć chorób życia współczesnego*, przekł. I. Kania, Kraków 1997, s. 66, 68.

27 Por. M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*..., dz. cyt., s. 159, 198.

28 S. Lem, *Podróż trzynasta*, w: tegoż, *Dzienniki gwiazdowe*, Warszawa 1976, s. 113.

od normy, w którym rzeczywistość zostaje ujarzmiona przez wizję umysłu. Jest optyczną sztuczką, w której to, co widzialne, przesłania to, co rzeczywiste [podkr. – KMM]"[29].

Tego rodzaju mistyfikacje opisywało wielu dystopistów, jednak być może najmniej oczywisty jej przykład odnaleźć można byłoby w satyrycznym opowiadaniu Janusza A. Zajdla *Gra w zielone*. Zajdel roztoczył tam wizję futurystycznego państwa na planecie Keloria, które poniosło fiasko w starania rozwiązania problemu głodu przez wysyntetyzowanie preparatu wywołującego ludzką fotosyntezę. Następnym krokiem było jednakże nie rozpoczęcie innego eksperymentu, lecz decyzja o wprowadzeniu do obiegu wyrabianego z eugleny (prefiks *eu-* wydaje się tu znaczący) placebo, wywołującego jedynie efekt uboczny w postaci zieleniejącej (w fałszywym domyśle – od chlorofilu) skóry, którego efektem stał się apartheid. Odtąd bowiem zieloni Kelorianie mieli prawo do absorpcji „pokarmu" na plażach, a Kelorianie niezazielenieni stali się obiektem niewolniczego wyzysku ze strony sztucznie wykreowanej klasy panującej:

> Mój asystent wpadł na ten pomysł. Zrobił to na własną rękę, zaczął od bladozielonkawej farby, potem był coraz bardziej zielony, aż uwierzyliśmy, że to skutki zażywania naszego preparatu. […]. Perspektywy korzyści, jakie zaczęła dawać pozycja zielonego, zmogły opory moralne w mniej skrupulatnych sumieniach… I tak jest od wielu lat. Każdy zielony wie na pewno tylko to, że sam jest farbowany [podkr. – KMM]. Ale w rezultacie nikt – oprócz nas kilku – nie zna prawdziwej roli rzekomego chlorogenu…[30].

„Kłamstwo założycielskie"[31], leżące u podstaw tego zafałszowanego systemu klasowego, doprowadziło zatem do zbiorowej mistyfikacji – jednakże to dopiero w momencie odsłonięcia przed protagonistą prawdy, bardzo zbliżonym do narracyjnego chwytu anagnoryzmu (*anagnorismos*)[32], otworzyła się możliwość interpretacyjna i utopia mogła okazać się dystopią, farbowaną idyllą. Łatwość w demaskacji dystopijnej ułudy byłaby niewątpliwie cechą dystopii z przeważającym udziałem funkcji satyrycznej – przy światach dystopijnych

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29 J. Baltrušaitis, *Anamorfozy albo Thaumaturgus opticus*, przekł. T. Stróżyński, Gdańsk 2009, s. 7.

30 J. A. Zajdel, *Gra w zielone*, w: *Relacja z pierwszej ręki*, red. J. Zajdel, Warszawa 2010, s. 420-421.

31 Termin za: P. Ćwikła, *Boksowanie świata. Wizje ładu społecznego na podstawie twórczości Janusza A. Zajdla*, Katowice 2006, s. 131.

32 Szerzej na ten temat: M. M. Leś, dz. cyt., s. 313-321.

znarratywizowanych krytycznie, ambicją stawałoby się już niedookreślenie momentu anagnoryzmu, pozostawiające znacznie więcej swobody interpretacyjnej i wykorzystującej otwarte zakończenie narracji do jeszcze większego zrelatywizowania cienkiej granicy między eutopią a dystopią. I tak chociażby w *Powrocie z gwiazd* Stanisława Lema, opisującym przybycie astronauty Hala Bregga na Ziemię po 127 latach podróży kosmicznej, stosunek głównego bohatera do tzw. betryzacji – dokonywanego na dzieciach zabiegu neurochirurgicznego, mającego na celu trwałe usunięcie ośrodków agresji z mózgu – jest jednoznacznie negatywny jako stojący w sprzeczności z wyznawanymi przezeń zdezaktualizowanymi wartościami humanistycznymi. Z drugiej jednakowoż strony ostatnim słowem powieści jest: „dom" – i to do odbiorcy należy rozstrzygnięcie, czy wyraża się w nim decyzja Bregga do pozostania w nowym, wspaniałym świecie czy też, przeciwnie – chęć powrotu do gwiazd. Znacznie częściej jednak tak dojrzałym rozwiązaniom narracyjnym ustępuje w dystopiach figura wewnętrznej metamorfozy głównego bohatera, przeistaczającego się z bezwolnej marionetki systemu w wolnego człowieka po wpływem iluminacji, jaką niesie ze sobą moment rozpoznania. W ten sposób odpowiedzią jednostki na niesioną przez ustrój anamorfozę logosu staje się dokonana z pomocą zewnętrznej siły sprawczej metamorfoza rozumu – i znów, jest rzeczą interpretacji, czy przemiana ta niesie ze sobą eutopijną nadzieję czy jej dystopijną aberrację.

Dystopia jako heterotopia

Największą obsesją dystopii jest absolutyzacja eutopijnego gestu odcięcia od rzeczywistości, która w połączeniu z brakiem faktycznej izolacji od otaczającej je rzeczywistości wymusza fingowanie lub aranżowanie sytuacji, w której możliwe byłoby wytyczenie granic jakiegoś kontr-miejsca – heterotopii. To dlatego w dystopiach najczęstszą figurą izolacji jest mur – pozwala on bowiem na:

1) najwyższy stopień kontroli przepływu wiedzy-władzy, bowiem to w gestii jego zarządców leży wytyczenie granic kontr-miejsca („Heterotopia może zestawiać w jednym realnym miejscu (*lieu*) liczne przestrzenie, liczne miejsca (*emplacements*), które są ze sobą niekompatybilne"),
2) odgórne ustalenie warunków dostępności kontr-miejsca („Heterotopie zawsze zakładają system otwarcia i zamknięcia, który jednocześnie izoluje je i czyni przepuszczalnymi"),

3) określenie stosunku między kontr-miejscem a tym, co znajduje się poza jego granicami („[Heterotopie] pełnią pewną funkcję w stosunku do pozostałej przestrzeni")[33].

Poczynając od *My* Zamiatina przez *Rok 1984* Orwella po współczesne cykle *young adult dystopias*, jak *Dawca pamięci* Lois Lowry, *Igrzyska śmierci* Suzanne Collins, *Niezgodna* Veroniki Roth czy *Więzień labiryntu* Jamesa Dashnera – mury dominują w dystopiach, z jednej strony utrzymując społeczeństwa w hermetycznej izolacji (Lem lubił ją nazywać „socjostazą"), a z drugiej pełniąc ważną funkcję narracyjną. Mury prokurują bowiem niewygodne pytania o przyczyny ich zbudowania, o to, co poprzedzało zastany układ, a przede wszystkim – kierują spojrzenie społeczności poza wyznaczane przez nie granice, odrywając ją od przykuwających wzrok ekranów transmitujących dzień i noc prawdę objawioną ojców założycieli. Heterotopijne zlokalizowanie światów dystopijnych wzmaga w efekcie funkcjonowanie dwóch istotnych relacji przestrzenno-politycznych o wyraźnym rodowodzie postkolonialnym: wnętrza i zewnętrza oraz centrum i peryferii – przekładających się następnie na dwie odmienne perspektywy narracyjne. W pierwszej z nich, adaptacyjnej, heterotopijny świat oglądany byłby z zewnątrz, przez allochtona – cudzoziemca przychodzącego z innego świata, bogatszego o wiedzę spoza systemu i, tym samym, zdolnego po początkowej fazie aklimatyzacji do rozpoznania założeń dystopijnych w świecie udającym eutopijny (*Podróż do krainy Houyhnhnmów* Swifta, *Wizja lokalna* lub *Powrót z gwiazd* Lema, *Paradyzja* czy też – *nomen omen* – *Adaptacja* Zajdla). W drugim, inkluzywnym wariancie narracyjnym, heterotopijny świat oglądany byłby od wewnątrz, przez autochtona podejrzliwego względem systemu i dopiero wtórnie, najczęściej wskutek prowadzącej go poza granice pretekstowej fabuły, wzbogacającego się o wiedzę właściwą allochtonom (*My* Zamiatina, *Folwark zwierzęcy* i *Rok 1984* Orwella, *451 Fahrenheita* Bradburyego, *Mechaniczna pomarańcza* Burgessa, *Pianola* Kurta Vonneguta, *Limes inferior, Wyjście z cienia* czy *Cylinder van Troffa* Zajdla). W bardziej rozbudowanych powieściach, oczywiście, obydwie perspektywy narracyjne nakładają się na siebie i tworzą bardziej skomplikowany światoobraz – tak jak w *Nowym wspaniałym świecie* Huxley'a, w którym obecna jest zarówno strategia inkluzywna, związana z rosnącą samoświadomością Bernarda Marxa, jak i asymilacyjna, realizująca się w kulminującej w finale powieści historii Johna Savage'a. Kształtująca dystopijne światy dynamika wnętrza i zewnętrza, cen-

[33] Wszystkie cytaty za: M. Foucault, *Inne przestrzenie*, przekł. A. Rejniak-Majewska, „Teksty Drugie" 2005, nr 6, s. 121-124.

trum i peryferii oraz inkluzywności i asymilacji w zasadniczy sposób odróżnia je od eutopii, których władcom zasadniczo obojętny był stosunek allochtonów do podległego im dominium – spełniali bowiem oni funkcję *tertium comparationis*, neutralnej płaszczyzny porównawczej, dzięki której eutopia mogła zabłysnąć w pełnej krasie w kontraście do szarej rzeczywistości przybyszy z zewnątrz. W dystopiach tymczasem wszystkie wysiłki władców systemu koncentrują się na adaptacji allochtona do aksjomatów ideologii, przyjmujących w zależności od interesu nadawczego albo postać szeptanej propagandy, albo otwartej indoktrynacji światopoglądowej. O ile przeto w eutopiach konfrontacja z allochtonem prokurowana była przez ojca logosu celem uzyskania neutralnego punktu odniesienia, o tyle już w dystopiach dokonuje się ona jedynie w celu utrzymania rudymentarnej kontroli władcy logosu nad angażującym się obserwatorem – co ostatecznie ujarzmia panujący jeszcze we wczesnych eutopiach (i obecny w strukturze późniejszych) żywioł dialogiczności i zagłusza go propagandowym jednogłosem[34].

Stąd też niewolnictwo logosu przejawia się nieustającym zaklinaniem rzeczywistości w przekonaniu o możliwości przedefiniowania językowej dyspozycji człowieka do samostanowienia o sobie w świecie (*in-der-Welt-sein*)[35]. *Rok 1984* George'a Orwella dowiódł, iż do tak dalekiego zniewolenia wystarczy jedynie znieść mechanizmy sprzyjające rozwojowi mowy i wprowadzić w ich miejsce model redukcji – nowomowę:

> My niszczymy słowa, setkami i to dzień w dzień! Redukujemy język, plewimy ze wszystkiego, co zbędne […]. Niszczenie słów to coś pięknego. […]. Czy nie rozumiesz, że nadrzędnym celem nowomowy jest zawężenie zakresu myślenia? W końcu doprowadzimy do tego, że myślozbrodnia stanie się fizycznie niemożliwa, gdyż zabraknie słów, żeby ją popełnić. Każde pojęcie da się wyrazić wyłącznie przez jedno słowo o ściśle określonym znaczeniu, natomiast wszystkie znaczenia uboczne zostaną wymazane i zapomniane. […]. Z roku na rok będzie coraz mniej słów i coraz węższy zakres świadomości. Nawet teraz, oczywiście, nie ma żadnych podstaw ani usprawie-

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34 Czyli ukierunkowującego jednostronnie sytuację komunikacyjną surogatu mowy, w którym wartość ideologiczna dominuje nad znaczeniową, krępowaną arbitralnością narzucanych przez system matryc językowych. Zob. M. Głowiński, *Rytuał i demagogia. Trzynaście szkiców o sztuce zdegenerowanej*, Warszawa 1992, s. 9.

35 Z uwagami tymi pokrywają się spostrzeżenia Mariusza Lesia: „[…] dystopia poszła o krok dalej: sytuacja zamknięcia w językowych formach i konkretnych sposobach opisywania i postrzegania świata zaczęła zdecydowanie dominować. […]. Dystopia okazuje się też miejscem konfrontacji systemu z historią, ponieważ narodziła się z doświadczenia rzeczywistych totalitaryzmów, wciąż świadoma własnej językowości, także dzięki doświadczeniu agresywnej propagandy". M. Leś, dz. cyt., s. 90.

dliwień dla myślozbrodni. To jedynie kwestia samodyscypliny, regulacji faktów. Ale w końcu technika ta stanie się zbędna. Rewolucja zwycięży ostatecznie, gdy język osiągnie doskonałość[36].

Słynny nowomowny slogan: „Wojna to Pokój, Wolność to Niewola, Ignorancja to Siła" jest kłamstwem wyłącznie z perspektywy metajęzykowej – dla większości obywateli Orwellowskiej Oceanii stawał się on powoli tym samym, co zwykła definicja słownikowa. Biurokratyczna machina Angsocu, skoncentrowana na nieustannym uprawdopodabnianiu fałszu celem uzyskania ostatecznej kontroli nad myślami obywateli (ku czemu wieść miał również cały aparat ideologiczny, z triadą „dwójmyślenia", „myślozbrodni" i „zbrodnioszlabanu" na czele), była tryumfem idei wewnętrznego zniewolenia człowieka, pozbawiającej człowieka jedynego medium artykulacji myśli – języka. Istotą dystopii Orwellowskiej była inkluzja i dysymulacja: niewolnik logosu miał być w niej przekonany, że w rzeczywistości sprawuje pełnię władzy, zarówno nad sobą, jak i swoim otoczeniem. Widać stąd, iż dystopia jest logiczną konsekwencją – chciałoby się rzec wręcz, iż złowrogą kontynuacją – takiej eutopii, która swą ideę przemienia w ideologię poprzez systemowe wzrastanie do wewnątrz przy całkowitym oderwaniu od rzeczywistości empirycznej. Władca logosu w dystopii, będąc niewolnikiem własnej idei, wikła się w błędne koło wzajemnych podległości, czyniąc wewnętrzne okowy swego dominium niemal niemożliwymi do przełamania dla zniewolonych psychicznie poddanych.

Sztuczne raje

Jednakże niewola doskonała – a nie ma powodu, by nie zakładać, że skoro eutopia może osiągnąć doskonałość na planie idealnym, tak też dystopia może osiągnąć równą doskonałość na planie nieidealnym – wymaga, by zniewoleni głęboko wierzyli w to, że nikt ich nie niewoli i że w każdej chwili, jeśli tylko zechcą, mogą wolności zasmakować[37]. Owo posmakowanie wolności nie jest tu

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[36] G. Orwell, *Rok 1984,* przekł. T. Mirkowicz, Warszawa 1993, s. 55-56.

[37] Jak pisze Paweł Ćwikła: „Władzy [totalitarnej – KMM] chodzi nie tyle o to, by rządzeni mieli poczucie wewnętrznego zniewolenia, ile o motywację wewnętrznego przymusu [podkr. – KMM]. […] Każe to zwrócić uwagę na pojawiającą się w różnych wcieleniach totalitaryzmu koncepcję człowieka. Dodajmy: człowieka-obywatela, który nie tylko jest bezwzględnie posłuszny władzy, ale i głęboko po jej stronie zaangażowany". P. Ćwikła, dz. cyt., s. 58-59.

przypadkową metaforą – w dystopiach wolność ma s m a k , jest czymś głęboko somatycznym, uzależniającym niczym narkotyk i właśnie najczęściej jako narkotyk dystrybuowanym. Tym jest właśnie soma (sanskr. सोम, *sóma* – 'odurzający nektar, sok, ale i niebo'[38]), opium dla mas z *Nowego wspaniałego świata* zapewniające pozorowane otwarciem hermetycznie zamkniętego systemu na swobodę i wolność – na s z t u c z n y r a j . Jak twierdził Jego Fordowska Wysokość, Mustafa Mond:

> [Soma to] lek doskonały. [Ma] wszystkie zalety chrześcijaństwa i alkoholu, żadnej z ich wad. […]. Uwalniamy się od rzeczywistości, kiedy tylko zechcemy, i takoż wracamy, bez bólu głowy i potrzeby mitologii. […]. Stabilność została w faktyczny sposób zapewniona[39].

„Pozór metafizyczny", jaki gwarantowała soma, uodparniał co gorsza autochtonów *Nowego wspaniałego świata* na jakąkolwiek próbę deziluzji, reorientując hierarchię ich potrzeb naturalnych w taki sposób, by sami zaaprobowali swe uzależnienie i zniewolenie, każdą próbę wyzwolenia traktując jednocześnie jako zbrodnię przeciw swemu szczęściu. Wymownym dowodem prawdziwości tego spostrzeżenia jest całkowita klęska Huxleyowskiego allochtona, Johna Savage'a (Dzikusa), który chciał uczynić wolnymi niewolników z wyboru:

> – Czyż nie chcecie być wolni, być ludźmi? Nie rozumiecie pewnie nawet, co znaczą słowa ludzkość i wolność? – gniew przydawał potoczystości jego wymowie; słowa płynęły łatwo, szybkim strumieniem. – Nie rozumiecie? – powtórzył, ale nie otrzymał odpowiedzi. – Dobrze więc – ciągnął ponuro – ja was nauczę; uczynię was wolnymi, czy chcecie tego, czy nie – i pchnąwszy okiennice okna wychodzącego na dziedziniec szpitala, zaczął garściami wyrzucać fiolki somy. […]. Wielki krzyk podniósł się nagle z tłumu; zamachały w stronę Dzikusa groźnie zaciśnięte pięści. […].
> – Wolnymi, wolnymi! – krzyczał Dzikus i jedną ręką wyrzucał nadal somę, a drugą tłukł w nierozróżnialne gęby napastników. […]. – Tak, ludźmi, ludźmi! – i już po truciźnie. Podniósł kasetę i ukazał im puste czarne wnętrze. – Jesteście wolni!
> Delty zawyły w przypływie zdwojonej furii[40].

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38 M. Monier-Williams, E. Leumann, C. Cappeller, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*, Delhi 2002, s. 1249.

39 A. Huxley, dz. cyt., s. 53-54.

40 Tamże, s. 203-204.

Dla wysterylizowanych z człowieczeństwa ludzi, pączkujących w laboratoriach dzięki przyspieszającemu rozród procesowi Bokanowskiego, dekokt sztucznego szczęścia był tym, czym paliatyw (łac. *palliatus* – okryty płaszczem) w medycynie – półśrodkiem łagodzącym objawy Witkacowskiej „choroby metafizycznej", jednak nieusuwającym jej rzeczywistych przyczyn. Niezrozumiały dla Savage'a ryk „zbydlęconych" delt był tym samym, czym fundamentalny dla cywilizacji zachodniej sprzeciw wobec zniewolenia[41]. Perwersja systemu *Nowego wspaniałego świata* polegała bowiem właśnie na tym, że nie było już w nim metafizycznej idei „prawdziwej" wolności, a jedynie jej proteza (Witkacy mówi także o protezach metafizyki), w e n t y l b e z p i e c z e ń s t w a, zniechęcający do obalenia porządku w imię wartości grożących wyrwaniem z błogiego narkotycznego *dolce far niente*. Podobną funkcję pełniłyby sławetne „Dwie Minuty Nienawiści" z *Roku 1984* Orwella, ukierunkowujące narastające pośród obywateli negatywne emocje na postać Emmanuela Goldsteina, kreowanego w oficjalnej propagandzie na ziejącego nienawiścią wroga systemu i przywódcę ruchu oporu – albo, bardziej już, satyryczne produkty „psychotechniki defrustrującej" z *Wizji Lokalnej* Lema, zwane „szałochłonami" lub „wyszalnikami"[42].

Topos sztucznego raju jest kwintesencją myślenia dystopijnego, korelującego z postawą symulacji absolutnej, przejawiającej się fantazmatycznym „pragnieniem uchwycenia rzeczywistości na żywo"[43] i uczynienia ludzi szczęśliwymi tu i teraz – a nie, jak w eutopiach, na drodze „rozwoju doskonalącego się do perfekcji [*a progression toward an attainable perfection*]"[44]. Podtrzymywanie iluzji w takiej konsytuacji ideologicznej musi stać się w logicznej konsekwencji jedynym celem systemu, substytuującego teleologiczną dążność do doskonałości symulacją jej zewnętrznych przejawów – której rolę znakomicie spełniają narkotyki i środki psychoaktywne. Soma z *Nowego wspaniałego świata* Huxley'a, Dżin Zwycięstwa z *Roku 1984* Orwella, Dawamesk B2 z *Nienasycenia* Witkacego, koktajle i pigułki orzeźwiające z *Wiru pamięci* Wnuka-Lipińskiego, Lemowska altruizyna z *Cyberiady* czy rozpylane w powietrzu maskony z *Kongresu futurologicznego*, polityka niedotleniania lunarnej kolonii

41 Więcej na temat związków myśli Witkiewicza z dystopiami w: L. Gawor, *Dystopia Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, „Wschodni Rocznik Humanistyczny" 2008, t. 5, s. 263-271.

42 S. Lem, *Wizja lokalna*, Wrocław 1983, s. 241-242.

43 J. Baudrillard, dz. cyt.

44 F. Standley, *Even"More": Utopian and Dystopiand Visions of the Future 1890–1990*, w: *More's Utopia and Utopian Inheritance*, red. A. D. Cousins, D. Grace, London 1995, s. 121.

w *Cylindrze van Troffa* Zajdla, suchy lód w *Neuromancerze* Gibsona, Can-D z *Trzech stygmatów Palmera Eldritcha* Dicka, morfalina z *Igrzysk śmierci* Collins, The Bliss (ang. 'rozkosz') z *Więźnia labiryntu* Dashnera, pigułki hamujące rozwój emocjonalny w *Dawcy pamięci* Lowry czy owoce Nowego Babilonu w *Pożarze* Sandersona – wszystkie te opia dla mas mają wspólny efekt w postaci wywoływania Baudelaire'owskiego „fermentu wyobraźni"[45], substytucji trwałego poczucia szczęścia krótkotrwałym lecz intensywnym odczuciem szczęśliwości i wreszcie sprowadzenia ludzkiego istnienia do poziomu bezosobowych reakcji chemicznych, kontrolowalnych w warunkach laboratoryjnych. Dystopia rzeczywiście doprowadza do skutku uszczęśliwienie człowieka – po drodze jednak skrycie eliminuje niedoskonały model *homo sapiens* i podmienia go na inny, lepszy, wypatroszony bowiem z duszy, rozumu i wolnej woli. Jak pisał we wprowadzeniu do *Końca człowieka* Francuis Fukuyama:

> Ludzie w *Nowym wspaniałym świecie* są być może szczęśliwi i zdrowi, nie są już jednak istotami ludzkimi [podkr. KMM]. Nie walczą już, nie mają aspiracji, nie kochają, nie czują bólu, nie dokonują trudnych wyborów moralnych, nie posiadają rodzin – nie robią żadnej z rzeczy, które tradycyjnie kojarzą się nam z ludzkim życiem. Nie mają już cech, które stanowią o naszej ludzkiej godności. […]. Ich świat stał się nienaturalny w najgłębszym wyobrażalnym sensie tego słowa, ponieważ zmieniono ludzką naturę [podkr. KMM]"[46].

Szczęście w proszku i utylizacja rozsądku stanowią apogeum niewolnictwa logosu – poza nimi, jak ujęła to Ursula Le Guin, jest już tylko „Nieludzkość i to, co Potem (*Inhumanity and After*)"[47], długa noc po zmierzchu antropocenu.

Najszczęśliwsza średnia arytmetyczna

W słynnym *Buncie mas* José Ortega y Gasset pisał, że: „Masa miażdży na swojej drodze wszystko to, co jest inne, indywidualne, szczegółowe i wybrane. Kto nie jest taki sam, jak wszyscy, naraża się na ryzyko eliminacji"[48] – i właśnie

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45 Metafora za: C. Baudelaire, *Sztuczne raje*, przekł. R. Engelking, Gdańsk 2009, s. 71.

46 F. Fukuyama, *Koniec człowieka. Konsekwencje rewolucji biotechnologicznej*, przekł. B. Pietrzyk, Kraków 2004, s. 12.

47 Tłumaczenie własne. Cf. U. Le Guin, *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, New York 1980, s. 106.

48 J. Ortega y Gasset, *Bunt mas*, przekł. P. Niklewicz, Warszawa 2002, s. 16.

owa masowość jest w światach dystopijnych kluczem do uśmiercenia twórczego indywiduum. Dzieje się tak nie tylko dlatego, że dystopia dąży do uniformizacji i unifikacji społeczeństwa, wkalkulowanej w projekt ciągłego podtrzymywania uśrednionego dobrobytu – ale także z tej przyczyny, że tak w narracjach eutopijnych, jak i dystopijnych to zawsze jednostka była predestynowana do prowadzenia dialogu z powiernikiem utopijnego logosu. Dlatego też w tak wielu światach dystopijnych unicestwienie niezależnie myślącego indywiduum staje się priorytetem totalitarnej władzy, redukującej człowieka do dezindywidualizującego ciągu symboli czy znaków, jak w przypadku D503 w *My* Zamiatina[49] czy z Człowieka Numer 869113325 z opowiadania *869113325* Zajdla. We wszystkich tych przypadkach odżywa obecny jeszcze w osiemnastowiecznych dystopiach satyrycznych topos *multum in parvo*, opisywany chociażby przez Mary B. Campbell na przykładzie *Bajki o pszczołach* Bernanda de Mandeville'a (1705)[50]. I choć mówi się współcześnie o godnej naśladowania inteligencji roju (*smart swarm*)[51], to jednakże w tradycji ikonograficznej i emblematycznej pszczoły i roje są figurą fascynującego, pozornie chaotycznego porządku[52] – bardzo przypominającego słowa Foucaulta o niemożności wskazania substancjalnego źródła władzy w nowoczesności. Warto przy tym pamiętać, że *loci communis* roju z jednej strony odsyła być może do utopijnego wyobrażenia o porządku idealnym, ale z drugiej – jest też obrazem piekła, poprzez konotacje symboliczne postaci Belzebuba (זבוב בעל – hebr. *Ba'al Zebûb*, pan much i komarów) czy też Miltonowskiego opisu Pandæmonium z *Raju utraconego*. Oba te konteksty odżyły w opisanym Zajdlowskim *Limes inferior* świecie-ulu Argolandu, w którym zasada odpowiedzialności zbiorowej za „globalną równowagę aglomeracji"[53] (a zatem *raison d'Etat*) została utożsamiona z racją bytu (*raison d'être*).

Człowiek w rojowisku ludzkim jest, jak powiedziałby José Ortega y Gasset, jedynie „powtórzeniem typu biologicznego"[54], niknie bowiem w niwelują-

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49 W przekładzie Adama Pomorskiego niezgodnie z oryginałem jako Δ-503.

50 M. Baine Campbell, *Busy Bees – utopia, dystopia and the very small*, „Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies" 2006, nr 36, s. 623.

51 Termin za: P. Miller, *Smart Swarm: Using Animal Behaviour to Organise Our World*, New York 2010.

52 W księdze emblematycznej Wolfganga H. von Hohberga (1675) pszczoła jest opatrzona lemmą *Concordia ditat* (łac. porządek wzbogaca) i subskrypcją: „Nektary z kwiecia piją zgodnie pszczoły, / a w ich królestwie nie zabraknie miodu. / Gdzie zgoda łączy serca, gdzie biją pospołu, / tam kwitnie pożytek, w sercach gości słodycz". Cyt. za: H. Biedermann, *Pszczoła*, w: tegoż, *Leksykon symboli*, przekł. J. Rubinowicz, Warszawa 2001, s. 298.

53 J. A. Zajdel, *Limes inferior*, Warszawa 2004, s. 267.

54 Za: J. Ortega y Gasset, *Bunt mas*, dz. cyt., s. 10.

cym różnice indywidualne tłumie i zatraca zdolność do definiowania własnej podmiotowości[55] – a walka z systemem toczy się nie tylko o prawdę, wolność i ideały, ale i o pryncypia człowieczeństwa w sytuacji skrajnego zdominowania jednostki przez wrogi wszelkiej indywidualności aparat polityczny. W takiej sytuacji jedynym ratunkiem staje się swego rodzaju protojęzyk, szukający ratunku przed uniformizacją dyskursu w okazjonalności, doraźności, neologiczności i umowności – czego przejawem jest choćby charakterystyczna dla wielu narracji dystopijnych predylekcja do wykorzystywania figury paronomazji. Niekwestionowaną maestrię w stosowaniu paronomazji ujawnia większość utworów Janusza Zajdla, niekiedy już w tytule aluzyjnie odwołujących się do mistyfikacyjnych atrybutów dystopijnego świata (opowiadania *Gra w zielone*, *Pod kloszem* czy nawet *Utopia*). Przykładowo, w powieści *Wyjście z cienia* słowo „tamandua", oznaczające mrówkojada, stało się pseudonimem oporu Ziemian wobec przybyłego z układu Proxima Centauri okupanta, zdradzającego się niewytłumaczalną awersją wobec wszelkich przedstawicieli rodziny *formicidæ* (mrówek i termitów):

> Filip złożył dwa palce w kształcie litery „T". Tim przypomniał sobie, że coś podobnego pokazywał mu Maks.
> – Wiecie, co to znaczy?
> – Nie – odpowiedzieli razem Tim i Nik.
> – […] To symbol organizacji, pewnego tajnego ruchu o zasięgu międzynarodowym, wymierzonego przeciwko Proksom. […] to pierwsza litera słowa „tamandua".
> – I ty do niego należysz? – zaciekawił się Nik.
> – Pewnie, że tak. Mam nadzieję, że nie będziecie o tym z nikim gadać.
> – Co to znaczy? To nazwa tej organizacji? – spytał Tim.
> – Tak, a poza tym tak nazywa się pewien gatunek mrówkojada[56].
> Z kolei w *Paradyzji*, opisującej społeczeństwo zamknięte w – jak się zrazu wydaje – zbudowanej z koncentrycznych pierścieni stacji orbitalnej, unoszącej się nad planetą o sugestywnym mianie Tartar, w dwuznaczny sposób został potraktowany zupełnie codzienny frazeologizm:
> – […] Mówiąc obrazowo, żyjemy w ogromnym, wielopiętrowym gmachu zamkniętym w cylindrycznym naczyniu…
> – N a b i t y m w b u t e l k ę [podkr. – KMM] – zażartował Rinah.
> Twarz Alviego spoważniała nagle, rozejrzał się niespokojnie.

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55 Konkluzja ta pokrywa się z rozważaniami Baudrillarda nad filozoficznymi konsekwencjami metody klonowania, nazwanej przezeń: „jednokomórkową utopią, która za sprawą genetyki pozwala istotom złożonym dostąpić losu pierwotniaków". J. Baudrillard, *Clone story*, w: tegoż, *Symulakry i symulacja*, przekł. S. Królak, Warszawa 2005, s. 122.

56 J. A. Zajdel, *Wyjście z cienia*, Warszawa 2007, s. 99.

> – Powstrzymaj się od podobnych sformułowań – powiedział z nagłą złością. – Tobie może to nie zaszkodzi, lecz… […] Trudno mi to wyjaśnić. Po prostu w twoim żarcie, nieświadomie być może, zabrzmiała aluzja. Centrala nie analizuje intencji, lecz znaczenie słów[57].

Pojawiające się w obu przywołanych powieściach sygnały aluzyjne potraktować można byłoby jako element dystopijnej gry z konwencją, swoistego śladu sceptycyzmu dystopisty, ujawniającego się w zachowaniach dyktowanych przez fingowaną podświadomość bohaterów. Specyfiką dystopii jest bowiem właśnie to, iż w owych pozornie niewinnych grach słownych, mimochodem rzuconych żarcikach i lapsusach, kryje się zaczątek samoświadomości autochtona, uzmysłowiającego sobie stopniowo sztuczność otaczającego go świata oraz własne w nim wyobcowanie. Narracja dystopijna bliższa jest jednakże empirycznej realności w tym sensie, że nie rozpatruje – jak eutopia – projektu idealnego społeczeństwa w warunkowo tylko dostępnym świecie możliwym, lecz wrzuca zarówno bohaterów, jak i czytelnika w fikcyjny świat *in medias res*, fokalizując narrację na żywym i dramatycznym doświadczeniu człowieka, któremu przychodzi zmierzyć się z rozpoznaniem (*anagnorismos*), że większość jego życiowych doświadczeń jest tylko produktem ubocznym wyrafinowanego systemu uzdatniania egzystencji. Co gorsza, pesymistyczna wymowa narracji dystopijnych rzadko kiedy – poza stosunkowo nielicznymi przypadkami zakończeń otwartych – pozwala na przezwyciężenie *status quo*, gdyż doskonałość dystopijnego systemu objawia się w tym, że zwycięża on (przynajmniej w wymiarze symbolicznym) nad rewolucjonistą. D503 z powieści Zamiatina zostaje wyleczony z „choroby duszy”[58], Winston Smith w *Roku 1984* odnosi, jak sardonicznie opisuje Orwell, „zwycięstwo nad samym sobą”, odnajdując w sobie miłość do Wielkiego Brata[59], zaś John Savage w *Nowym wspaniałym świecie* wybiera rozwiązanie ostateczne, popełniając samobójstwo[60] – słowem, wszyscy bohaterowie klasycznych dwudziestowiecznych dystopii kończą jako przegrani i zapomniani uczestnicy walki o lepsze jutro, którego nie jest im dane doświadczyć.

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57 Tegoż, *Paradyzja*, Warszawa 2004, s. 56-57. Identyczną, deiktyczną motywację miał także opracowany przez Paradyzyjczyków „koalang”, język kojarzeniowo-aluzyjny, który miał umożliwić swobodne przekazywanie treści niezgodnych z dyrektywami ideologicznymi Centrali, dysponującej komputerowym systemem monitorująco-podsłuchowym, mimo swego zaawansowania technicznego jednak pozbawionym funkcji rozpoznawania sieci skojarzeniowych. Tamże, s. 81.

58 E. Zamiatin, *My*, przekł. A. Pomorski, Warszawa 1989, s. 156.

59 G. Orwell, *Rok 1984*, przekł. T. Mirkowicz, Warszawa 1993, s. 301.

60 A. Huxley, *Nowy wspaniały świat*…, dz. cyt., s. 245.

Światotwórstwo i dystopianizm

Interpretacja świata utopijnego jako eutopijnego czy dystopijnego sprowadza się do próby zmierzenia się z jedną z z opisywanych przez Jacquesa Derridę w *Ojcu logosu* aporii: czy logos jako *phármakon* (φάρμακον), „lekarstwo na pamięć i mądrość" jest szczodrobliwym czy też „zatrutym podarunkiem"[61]? Jedną z prób rozwiązania tego nierozstrzygalnego – i stąd też przemawiającego na korzyść traktowania utopii jako *neutrum*, zyskującego negatywne lub pozytywne oblicze dopiero w procesie hermeneutycznym – jest zwrócenie uwagi na to, na co od samego zarania gatunku wskazywali sami utopiści, czyli na perspektywę oglądu świata. To bowiem dopiero perspektywa narracyjna, z jaką dokonuje się przedstawienia (reprezentacji) utopii, ostatecznie przemawia na korzyść tej czy innej waloryzacji – tak jak dopiero wiedza lekarska pozwala na rozpoznanie tej granicy dawkowania, powyżej której zbawienny lek może okazać się śmiertelną trucizną. Przyjęcie kategorii światocentryczności za wiążącą w analizie narracji utopijnych pomaga zaś skoncentrować się na tym, co w konstrukcji fikcyjnej rzeczywistości i stanowiska, jakie zajmują względem niej bohaterowie, przemawia za tym, by uznać ją za pozytywną czy negatywną – lecz nie pozytywną czy negatywną w relacji do naszej rzeczywistości, lecz za pozytywną lub negatywną z perspektywy innej rzeczywistości.

Zdrajcą będzie zawsze język: to on mówi najwięcej o stosunku samego utopisty do jego kreacji i to z jego głównie przyczyny teoria i historia literatury mogą powiedzieć o utopiach częstokroć o wiele więcej, aniżeli najbardziej nawet wyspecjalizowane studia socjologiczne, zwykle w ten czy inny sposób optujące za wyciąganiem z literatury wniosków przydatnych w analizie naszej rzeczywistości. Propozycja traktowania wyimaginowanego świata dystopii jako żywej, prawdziwej i realnej rzeczywistości, całkowicie równoprawnej wobec aktualnej czy empirycznej, może wydawać się kontrowersyjna – lecz subtelność realizującego się w narracjach dystopijnych światotwórstwa zasługuje na to właśnie, by w akcie lektury spróbować, jak zachęcał Neil Gaiman w *Amerykańskich bogach*, „wniknąć w cudze głowy, cudze miejsca i spojrzeć na świat obcymi oczami"[62]. Tym właśnie wydaje się nauka, którą dystopiści wyciągają z idealistycznych – choć przecież niepozbawionych elementarnego dystansu – eutopii, ustanawiających kolonialną relację topograficzną między Kontynentem i Wyspą oraz tożsamą z nią relację dyskursywną, ustanawiającą paradygma-

[61] J. Derrida, *Ojciec logosu*, „Colloquia Communia" 1988, nr 1-3, s. 306.
[62] N. Gaiman, *Amerykańscy bogowie*, przekł. P. Braiter, Warszawa 2003, s. 300.

tyczny ogląd nowego wspaniałego świata. Heterotopijny układ większości światów dystopijnych komunikuje zaś ewidentnie, że w odróżnieniu od położonej na antypodach wyspy Utopii, dystopie leżą tuż za progiem, za płotem, za murem i za granicą – ciesząc się zapewnianym przez izolacjonizm przywilejem anonimowości i budując na oczach całego świata złowrogi panoptykon. Logocentryzm, anamorfoza, protezy metafizyki, heterotopijność, sztuczne raje, wentyle bezpieczeństwa i inne – bo przecież wszystkich nie sposób wymienić – elementy dystopijnego świata służą przede wszystkim utrzymaniu skomplikowanego mechanizmu regulującego funkcjonowanie zamkniętej społeczności, narażonej na rządy autokratów, sekt i fanatyków z jednej, wewnętrznej strony, a zarazem coraz mniej przygotowanej na konfrontację z zagrożeniami z zewnątrz, zza muru, zza wyznaczającej pozory bezpieczeństwa granicy.

Potraktowanie eutopijności i dystopijności jako swego rodzaju dwóch trybów retorycznych utopii ma wreszcie tę zaletę, że to właśnie w idealistycznej retoryce i kompulsywnej potrzebie utrzymania pozorów eutopijnej doskonałości tkwi największa słabość dystopii. Słabość ta w warstwie już nie tyle światotwórczej, ile narracyjnej przekuwa się na istotną zarazem zaletę. Skoro bowiem w retoryce jest miejsce zarówno na dialog, jak i na spór, to dystopia nigdy nie musi stawać się „antyutopią", by wprowadzać do utopijnego *dolce far niente* podejrzliwy, subwersywny dyskurs krytyczny.

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LITERACKIE DYSTOPIE POCZĄTKU XXI WIEKU – MIĘDZY REALIZMEM A FANTASTYCZNOŚCIĄ

NIE OPUSZCZAJ MNIE KAZUO ISHIGURO, *TRYLOGIA IGRZYSKA ŚMIERCI* SUZANNE COLLINS I *KSIĘGA DZIWNYCH NOWYCH RZECZY* MICHELA FABERA

Abstract

The article examines the relationship between the categories of "reality" and "fantasy" using Zygmunt Bauman's theory of "retrotopia". To illustrate the presence of these concepts in selected dystopian texts from the early twenty-first century speculative fiction, the author refers to the works of Kazuo Ishiguro (*Never Let Me Go*), Suzanne Collins (*The Hunger Games*) and Michel Faber (*Book of Strange New Things*). The analysis also refers to the concepts such as "dark ecology" (Timothy Morton), "artificial nature" (Gernot Böhme) and the notion of identity as figure that creates its connections with the theory of retrotopia. The etymology of the word "retrotopia" indicates its relationship with the terms "utopia" and "retro style," which also affects the interpretation. Characterized by a sense of nostalgia and a desire to return to the state of human communication with nature, retrotopia also reflects new social divisions and the departure from democratic ideas in small communities (tribes). It is argued that dystopian plot conventions help to express the last feature of retrotopia, namely, the criticism of the condition of a modern society.

Key words: dystopia, retrotopia, utopia, dark ecology, artificial nature

Twórcy tekstów kultury fantastycznej nieustannie dążą do przełamania wyobrażeń o świecie „realnym". W niniejszym artykule zawracam uwagę na dystopie literackie jako ważny czynnik kształtujący kulturę popularną, w obrębie których wskazuję przykłady twórczości literackiej, będące egzemplifikacją zjawiska retrotopii.

Niniejszy artykuł stawia sobie za cel ukazanie relacji między tytułowym pojęciem z książki Zygmunta Baumana a wybranymi dystopijnymi narracjami literackimi: *Nie opuszczaj mnie* Kazuo Ishiguro[1], trylogią *Igrzyska śmierci* Suzanne Collins[2] oraz *Księgą dziwnych nowych rzeczy* Michela Fabera[3]. Wybór tekstów literackich uwzględnia różne poziomy popularności i różnorodne egzemplifikacje retrotopii, jak grono odbiorców, od literatury młodzieżowej (Collins), przez bardziej „poważnego" Fabera, po wymuskaną i eklektyczną powieść Ishiguro. Wszystkie wybrane do analizy powieści wyróżnia także odmienna siła oddziaływania na wyobraźnię zbiorową, co może stać się argumentem potwierdzającym szerokie stosowanie retrotopii w konstrukcji fabuł dystopijnych. Najważniejszym jednak czynnikiem determinującym wybór tychże utworów literackich stała się obecność w nich retrotopii jako zasadniczej osi konstrukcji narracji fantastycznych.

Pojęcie *retrotopii* traktuję jako istotne narzędzie do wskazania roli twórczość dystopijnej w popkulturze i w analizie relacji kategorii „realizmu" i „fantastyczności" jako konwencji, z których twórcy czerpią inspiracje do kreacji światów alternatywnych. Pojęcie „retrotopia" jest tytułem pośmiertnie wydanej książka Zygmunta Baumana z roku 2017[4]. Autor *Retrotopii* kreacje tekstów kultury traktował jako istotny czynnik kulturotwórczy, ale i ważne źródło wiedzy. W przypadku tekstów kultury nurtu SF wiedza z dziedziny szeroko pojętej nauki stanowi istotne źródło inspiracji do snucia wizji światów alternatywnych. Rober Conquest w roku 1963 napisał, że,

> Dla każdego, kto interesuje się literaturą, fantastyka naukowa powinna być najbardziej osobliwym i znaczącym zjawiskiem z dwóch powodów. Przede wszystkim jest to tradycja, która wyrosła prawie całkowicie poza ogólnym nurtem literatury. A po drugie,

1 K. Ishiguro, *Nie opuszczaj mnie*, tł. Andrzej Szulc, Warszawa 2007 (*Never let me go*, 2005).

2 S. Collins, trylogia: *Igrzyska śmierci*, tł. M. Hesko-Kołodzińska, P. Budykiewicz (The Hunger Games, 2008), tejże, *Igrzyska śmierci:* M. Hesko-Kołodzińska, P. Budykiewicz *W pierścieniu ognia*, 2013 (*Catching Fire*, 2009), tejże, *Kosogłos*, tł. M. Hesko-Kołodzińska, P. Budykiewicz, Poznań 2010 (*Mockingjay*, 2014).

3 M. Faber, *Księga dziwnych nowych rzeczy*, tł. Tomasz Kłoszewski, Warszawa 2015 (*The Book of Strange New Things* 2014).

4 Z. Bauman, *Retrotopia*, tł. K. Lebek, Warszawa 2018 (*Retrotopia* 2017).

> radykalnie zrywa ona z zasadami, które charakteryzowały powieści od XVIII wieku, szczególnie w aspekcie cech charakterystycznych dla mimetyzmu XVIII-wiecznego dramatu francuskiego. Oczywiście, uznanie konwencji literackiej realizmu za coś oczywistego, skutkuje tym, że kiedy owa arbitralna zasada zostanie złamana, umożliwia ona równie radykalną odpowiedź, że wszystko, co na zewnątrz jest „nie literaturą", skutkując automatyzmem waloryzacji gatunkowej utworów. *Science-fiction* w tym aspekcie dokonuje tego, że zmusza ludzi do myślenia – lub, w najgorszym przypadku, udowadnia, że nie są w stanie myśleć. W obu przypadkach dobrze jest wiedzieć, gdzie jesteśmy[5][tł. K.W.].

Opinia na temat literatury SF amerykańskiego krytyka z drugiej połowy XX wieku nie ogranicza się tylko do twórczości pisarskiej, lecz może być poszerzona na inne teksty kultury takie jak film, komiks, gry komputerowe itd. Ponad pół wieku później owa refleksja nie straci na aktualności, gdyż nadal głównym zadaniem twórców SF wydaje się być igranie z antropocentrycznością i racjonalnością odbiorców tejże twórczości. W tymże czasie zaczyna nasilać się atmosfera rozczarowania kierunkiem postępu kultury, a szczególnie cywilizacji Zachodu, co dodatkowo może inspirować twórców SF do wyrażenia opinii krytycznych pod adresem realnych debat na temat kondycji świata, kultury, ludzkości, natury itd.

Odo Marquarda, analizując rzeczywistość drugiej połowy ubiegłego wieku, stwierdza, iż:

> „Czymkolwiek miały być nasze czasy, są w każdym razie epoką przemiennego gospodarowania utopiami i apokalipsami, entuzjazmem dla zbawienia na Ziemi i pewnością katastrofy, oczekiwaniem bliskiego nastania, z jednej strony nieba na ziemi, a z drugiej piekła na ziemi, a w każdym bądź razie – aż nazbyt emfatycznymi – filozofiami postępu i filozofiami upadku. Dlaczego należą do naszego świata i jedne, i drugie?"[6]

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5 R. Conquest, *Science Fiction and Literature*, w: *Science Fiction. A collection of Critical Essay* by Mark Rose, Prentice Hall, 1976, s. 33, przedruk z *The Critical Quarterly*, V (1963), s. 355-67: „To anyone interested at all in literature science fiction should be a most curious and significant phenomenon, for two reasons. In the first place, it is a tradition which has sprung up almost entirely outside the general flow of literature. And in the second place it makes a fairly clean break with principles which have come to be rather taken for granted in a novel since the Eighteenth Century, rather as the unities used to be in French drama. Of course, to take literary conventions for granted, and when they are broken to retort hotly that anything outside them is »not literature« is a piece of unthinking automatism. Science fiction here performs the service of making people think-or at worst making them show that they are incapable of thinking. In either case it is a good thing to know where we stand".

6 O. Marquard, *Apologia przypadkowości. Studia filozoficzne*, tł. Krystyna Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 1994, s. 79 (*Apologie des Zufälligen. Philosophische Studien*, 1994).

Owo pytanie zdaje się być jednym ze źródeł krytyki Zachodu, jak i wyobraźni SF. Z owego napięcia intelektualno-emocjonalnego wyłonił się szczególny rodzaj SF – dystopia, będąca negatywem opowieści o wyobrażonym świecie prezentowanym w utopiach. Fascynacja wizjami spełnienia się utopijnych projektów technicznych, społecznych i politycznych opartych na idei postępu, miesza się z przeczuciem nadciągającej katastrofy, która ziemski raj uczyni jego najbardziej przerażającą, infernalną rzeczywistością, co sprawia, że imaginaria przyszłości i przeszłości łączą się w twórczości SF, jak i w pojęciu retrotopii. Obie kategorie swoją moc kreacyjną czerpią z lęków i nadziei twórców i odbiorów tekstów kultury.

Po śmierci Bauman 9 stycznia 2017 roku w komentarzu do jego dorobku naukowego i twórczości polski kulturoznawca, Wojciech Józef Burszta, stwierdził, iż dla zmarłego naukowca szczególnie literatura była znaczącym źródłem poznania ducha czasów „płynnej nowoczesności”[7]. Bauman sądził, iż literatura wyprzedza nauki społeczne, jak i samą naukę w kreowaniu wizji przyszłości. Opinia filozofa przytoczona przez Bursztę może nie jest odkrywcza, lecz potwierdza rozwój badań włączający „fikcyjność” w obszar epistemologiczny dyskursu o rzeczywistości i tzw. „realności”. Dążąc do holistycznego ujęcia tematu dystopii i retrotopii w badaniach nad fantastyką nie należy skupiać się tylko na literaturze, lecz poszerzać jej obszar refleksji na inne formy twórczości artystycznej i traktować ogół twórczości w ujęciu semiotycznym jako teksty kultury, zwiększając tym samym obszar badawczy o inne formy jakie przyjmuje twórczość SF*,* w którym to znajdują się również *fantasy,* dystopie, postapokalipsy prezentowane za pomocą filmów, seriali, gier komputerowych, komiksów, powieści fabularnych – ogólnie ujmując ową sferę jako wszechogarniającą popkulturę.

W celu prezentacji wzajemnych wpływów retrotopii na dystopie odwołam się do poglądów Hansa Blumenberga z książki *Paradygmat dla metaforologii.* Autor krytykuje kartezjańskie ujęcie świata, wedle którego wyjaśnienie/sąd naukowy może być konstytuowany tylko za pomocą narzędzi „jasnych i wyrazistych w formułowaniu”[8] i określaniu tego co „realne”. W opinii Blumenberga, konsekwencją coraz głębszego teoretyzowania staje się ujęcie języka naukowego jako języka „pojęć”, czego konsekwencją jest wyłączenie ze sfery naukowej

[7] Por.: W. Burszta, *Płynność a retrotopia*, w: *Przyszłość kultury. Od diagnozy od prognozy*, pod red. A. Kisielewskiej, A. Kisielewskiego, M. Kostaszuk-Romanowskiej, Białystok 2017, s. 18.

[8] H. Blumenberg, *Paradygmat dla metaforologii*, tł. Bogdan Baran, Warszawa 2017, s. 7-14 (*Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, 1998).

tego co metaforyczne, symboliczne, alegoryczne, **fantastyczne.** Blumenberg wskazuje, iż z poglądami Kartezjusza już na początku recepcji filozofii kartezjańskiej nie zgadzał się między innymi Giambatistta Vico, który mówił o **„logice fantazji"**[9] jako równoznacznej „logice historii", gdyż absolutną jasność i nieomylność w formułowaniu sądów może mieć tylko istota doskonalsza od człowieka. Idąc tropem rozumowania Vico Blumenberg stwierdza, iż logiką fantazji jest także metafora, jak i symbol, gdyż obie kategorie odwołują się do tego. co wyobrażone, jak i do tego, co doświadczone i przeżyte, a także wydedukowane. Blumenberg przypomina antykartezjańskie poglądy Vico, aby tym samym ponownie włączyć sferę fantazji do obszaru epistemologicznego[10] współczesnego świata i umożliwić rozpoczęcie badania sfery wyobrażeniowej – zbudowanej na relacji tego co realne i fantastyczne. Filozof stwierdza: „Co pozostaje człowiekowi? Nie „jasność" tego, co dane, lecz tego, co sam wytworzył: świat jego obrazów i tworów wyobraźni, jego przypuszczeń i projekcji fantazji w nowym produktywnym sensie"[11].

W odniesieniu do dystopii „realistyczne" zatem są inspiracje oparte na stale występującym w kulturach Zachodu poczuciu narastającego zagrożenia, powodującego lęk o przyszłość, który znajduje swoje odzwierciedlenie w tekstach filozoficznych, pracach naukowych, w twórczości artystycznej, literaturze i filmie, a także w mediach (prasa, radio, telewizja, Internet). „Fantastyczne" zaś w przypadku dystopii jest oparcie motywów, stylistyki i fabuł na postmodernistycznej konwencji gry tradycjami kulturowymi w połączeniu z wyobraźnią twórcy odwołującego się do wyobraźni zbiorowej[12].

W klasycznym już ujęciu dystopii przez Antoniego Smuszkiewicza, pojawia się określenie dystopii jako utworu fabularnego przedstawiającego koszmarną, choć logicznie uzasadnioną, wewnętrznie spójną i niekiedy dość prawdopodobną wizję przyszłej egzystencji człowieka[13]. Smuszkiewicz konkretyzuje pojęcie „dystopii" i postuluje odniesienie tego terminu do „czarnych wizji przyszłości", które wynikają z krytycznej postawy wobec aktualnej rzeczywistości i jej tendencji rozwojowych oraz z pesymistycznego stanowiska wobec możli-

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9 Tamże, s. 9.
10 Tamże, s. 7-14.
11 Tamże, s. 9.
12 Por.: M.-L. Rayan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2: Revisiting Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media (Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society)*, Baltimore, 2015.
13 Por.: H. Blumenberg, *Paradygmat dla metaforologii*…, dz. cyt., s. 262.

wości jakiejkolwiek poprawy istniejącego stanu rzeczy[14]. Refleksję tę można jeszcze wzbogacić o myśl Joanny Czaplińskiej, wskazującej na fakt, że dystopie są zawsze hiperboliczną konstatacją istniejącego stanu rzeczy[15]. W kontekście przywołanych odniesień można zatem stwierdzić, iż wybrane do analizy teksty literackie są dystopiami, ponieważ sięgają do problemów kultury współczesnej, a jednocześnie są w swej wymowie uniwersalne i bazują na negatywnych scenariuszach przyszłości. Dystopie są zatem współczesnymi narzędziami krytyki kultury ponowoczesnej opartej na wizji postępu technologicznego Zachodu. Nowa rzeczywistość stanowi kontynuację realiów czytelnika, ale jest to świat „wytrącony z równowagi" – przyrodniczej, cywilizacyjnej, aksjologicznej, epistemologicznej, a nawet ontologicznej, gdyż zmienia się w nim rola i sytuacja człowieka. Dystopie zatem jako rodzaj twórczości oscylującej między tym, co realne, a tym co fantastyczne, tym co jest przeszłością jaki przyszłością, korespondując z tym jak Bauman opisywał zjawisko za pomocą retrotopii.

Pojęcie retrotopii Bauman ukonstytuował na innych dwóch pojęciach: utopii i słowie *retro*, gdyż uważał, iż piewcy postępu obawiają się mrocznych widm przeszłości, które z kolei kierują uwagę ku przyszłości, odczuwając permanentnie nostalgię za przeszłością. Burszta interpretuje pojęcie Baumana jako „zwrócenie się ku wyobrażeniom przeszłości, nostalgiczny powrót w realia uważane za bezpieczne, zrozumiałe i stabilne, bo przewidywalne. Retrotopia zatem jest strategią poszukiwania pewności i ucieczką przed nieznanym"[16]. Zdaniem Baumana powrót do przeszłości ma być receptą na „płynność" świata współczesnego. Wyróżnikami retrotopii następujące sentymenty i praktyki powrotu: powrót do idei walki wewnętrznej społeczeństwa Thomasa Hobbesa[17] zawartej w jego dziele pt *Lewiatan*[18], powrót do plemienności[19], powrót do nierówności[20], powrót do łona[21] (natury). Owe wyróżniki retrotopii zostaną przedstawione w ujęciu praktycznym, czyli w tekstach dystopijnych, jakie powstały na początku XXI wieku w obszarze kultur Zachodu.

Pierwszą z cech retrotopii są odwołania do mitologicznej i biblijnej metafory Lewiatana, obrazujące upadek społeczeństwa funkcjonującego na wadli-

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14 A. Smuszkiewicz, *W kręgu współczesnej utopii*, „Fantastyka", 1985, nr 6, s. 65.
15 J. Czaplińska, *Dziedzictwo robota. Współczesna czeska fantastyka naukowa*, Szczecin 2001, s. 31.
16 W. Burszta, s. 23.
17 Z. Bauman, *Retrotopia…*, dz. cyt., r. 1: *Powrót do Hobbesa*?, s. 27.
18 T. Hobbes, *Lawiatan*, tł. C. Znamierowski, Warszawa 2009 (*Leviathan*, 1651).
19 Z. Bauman, *Retrotopia*…, dz. cyt., r. 2: *Powrót do plemion?*, s. 87.
20 Tamże, r. 3: *Powrót do nierówności*, s. 149.
21 Tamże, r. 4: *Powrót do łona*, s. 203.

wych zasadach, wzajemnej nieufności i teoriach spiskowych. Społeczeństwo żyjące we wspólnocie państwowej, metaforycznie przedstawione za pomocą figury Lawiatana, wydaje się nieuchronnie zmierzać ku katastrofie. W dystopiach wybranych jako egzemplifikacja analizowanego tematu odnajdziemy przykłady krytyki praktyk społecznych znanych czytelnikom, takich jak handel narządami, uprzedmiotowanie ciała i problem odpowiedzialności człowieka za ingerencje w ludzki genom Owe problemy znajdują swoją egzemplifikację w przejmującej powieści Kazuo Ishiguro *Nie opuszczaj mnie*[22]. Konfrontacja ludzi z klonami w powieści Ishiguro prowadzi do smutnego wniosku, iż to nie człowiek jest miłosierny i humanitarny, lecz właśnie jego klon, istniejący tylko po to, aby wydłużyć człowiekowi życie. W pespektywie przyszłości biotechnologii i nanotechnologii Ishiguro powraca do trudnego pytania z *Frankensteina* Merry Shelley[23] o kwestię poczucia odpowiedzialności człowieka za ingerencję w sfery życia i śmierci oraz konsekwencje praktyk z obszaru biotechnologii i genetyki.

Z kolei Michel Faber w książce *Księga dziwnych nowych rzeczy* w wizji ewangelizacji przez nawróconego narkomana planety nazywanej Oaza powraca do tematu kolonizacji prowadzonej przez białych Europejczyków obszarów tzw. Nowego Świata oraz zmian kulturowych, jakie zachodzą pod wpływem ingerencji Zachodu w struktury państw poza europejskich. Krytyczne ujęcie historycznych wydarzeń czasów wielkich odkryć geograficznych i konsekwencji „cywilizowania" obcego społeczeństwa za pomocą religii chrześcijańskiej Faber przenosi na obszar pozaziemski, w ten sposób umożliwiając czytelnikowi przyjęcie postawy zdystansowanej wobec wydarzeń, które w świadomości powszechnej mieszkańców Zachodu jawią się jako wyobrażenia czasów rozwoju idei humanizmu i budowania potęgi społeczeństw Zachodu. Autor *Księgi dziwnych nowych rzeczy* w swojej ostatniej powieści dokonuje rewizji postawy europocentrycznej i antropocentrycznej, o czym może świadczyć następujący fragment rozmowy głównej postaci fabuły Petera z mieszkańcami Oazy:

> Peter się roześmiał. – On nie może kochać Jezusa – To kot. Tę informację przyjęto milczeniem – chciał powiedzieć „w sposób świadomy", ale zrezygnował. […] Jego mózg jest bardzo mały, nie odróżnia dobra od zła, ani nie dlaczego żyje. Potrafi tylko jeść i spać. – To nie było uczciwe. Joshua [kot, K.W.] potrafił o wiele więcej[24].

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22 Równie przejmujący obraz problemu odnaleźć można w ekranizacji książki Ishiguro. *Nie opuszczaj mnie*, reż. M. Romanek, USA 2010 (*Never Let Me Go,* 2010).

23 M. Shelley, *Frankenstein, czyli nowożytny Prometeusz*, tł. M. Płaza, Czerwonak 2013 (*Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, 1818).

24 M. Faber, *Księga dziwnych...*, dz. cyt., s. 205.

Najbardziej znamienny przykład upadku społecznego Zachodu przedstawia Collins w *Igrzyskach śmierci*. W *trylogii* Collins stworzyła wyobrażenie totalitarnego państwa o nazwie Panem, które powstało po upadku USA w wyniku katastrofy ekologicznej. Koniec świata spowodowany nieracjonalną eksploatacją zasobów naturalnych jest jednym z głównych problemów dzisiejszej rzeczywistości. Zaś zagrożenia płynące z wypaczenia zasad demokracji prowadzą do rezygnacji z wolności w imię nieograniczonego dostępu do dóbr konsumpcyjnych. Nowy, odradzający się świat Panem powstał na gruzach wyobraźni czytelnika – człowieka Zachodu oraz w wyniku pomieszania różnych gatunków twórczości artystycznej, takich jak: utopia, dystopia, horror, fantastyka naukowa, baśń oraz mitologia. Hybrydyczny charakter światów dystopijnych uznać można także za analogiczny ze sferę ścierania się myślenia utopijnego z rozczarowaniem ideą postępu charakterystyczną dla postmodernistycznej krytyki kultur Zachodu. Collins w *Igrzyskach śmierci*[25] i kolejnych częściach literackiej serii za pomocą wizji państwa Panem wyraża krytyczne ujęcie scentralizowanego i silnie podzielonego społeczeństwa na mieszkańców Kapitolu i mieszkańców dystryktów, utrzymujących zdegenerowane centrum, czyli Kapitol. Ową wizję można intepretować jako wyobrażenie dantejskiego piekła, którego centrum, będące jednocześnie najbardziej mrocznym piętrem infernum, tworzy obraz futurystycznego centrum, z wyszukanymi strojami, absurdalnymi zabiegami medycyny estetycznej i wszechogarniającą rozrywką, dla której mieszkańcy Kapitolu są zdolni poświęcić ludzkie życie na arenie *reality show Głodowych Igrzysk*[26].

Ludzie żyjący w dystryktach są pozbawieni dostępu do zaawansowanej technologii i wyszukanych form rozrywki, czy wygód, a nawet stałego dostępu do jedzenia, ale to właśnie na obrzeżach Panem, w dwunastym dystrykcie rodzi

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25 S. Collins, *Igrzyska śmierci*, t. 1, tł. M. Hesko-Kołodzieńska, P. Budkiewicz, Poznań 2009 (*The Hunger Games*, 2008); tejże, *Igrzyska śmierci: W pierścieniu ognia,* t. II, tł. M. Hesko-Kołodzieńska, P. Budkiewicz, Poznań 2010 (*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, 2009); tejże, *Igrzyska śmierci: Kosogłos*, t. III, tł. M. Hesko-Kołodzieńska, P. Budkiewicz, Poznań 2011 (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* 2010).

26 Ową „miejską ekstrawagancję" doskonale obrazują scenarzyści i reżyserzy w ekranizacji *Igrzysk Śmierci.* W scenach filmowych, kiedy pojawia się konferansjerka z Kapitolu, Effie Trinkiet, barokowy przepych jej strojów kontrastuje ze zniszczonymi i niemodnymi ubraniami mieszkańców i naturalistycznym wręcz obrazem Dwunastego Dystryktu. Por.: *Igrzyska Śmierci*, reż. Gary Rosse USA 2012 (*The Hunger Games*), *Igrzyska śmierci: W pierścieniu ognia*, reż. Francis Lawrence, USA 2013 (*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*), *Igrzyska śmierci: Kosogłos*, cz. I, reż. Francis Lawrence, USA 2014 (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay. Part 1*), *Igrzyska śmierci: Kosogłos*, cz. II, reż. Francis Lawrence, USA 2015 (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay. Part 2*).

się nadzieja na odrodzenie człowieczeństwa i demokracji. Stamtąd pochodzą główne postacie trylogii Collins: Katniss, Peta i Gale, którzy walczą o wolność decydowania o swoim życiu i szacunek władzy do owego prawa. To właśnie w najbiedniejszym dystrykcie zaczyna się rewolucja, której celem jest obalenie dyktatora Snowa i jego rządu.

Wybrane przykłady narracji literackich powieści stanowią przykłady krytycznego ujęcia Zachodu za pomocą konwencji dystopijnej, jak i zjawisk charakterystycznych dla *retrotopii.* Wizje odraczającego się po upadku państwa u Collins, czy u Fabera są kreowane z wykorzystaniem wyobrażeń o regresie cywilizacji spowodowanym degeneracją społeczeństwa, w sferach etycznej, politycznej, bądź społecznej. W każdym przypadku tworzenie „nowego lepszego świata" przypomina jeszcze bardziej zdegenerowaną kopię „starego" świata cywilizacji Zachodu, z tymi samymi ułomnościami i niedoskonałościami.

Kolejną z cechą retrotopii, o której pisał Bauman, jest idea powrotu do **plemienności**. Ową „plemienność" można rozumieć jako strategię odwrotu od anonimowej zbiorowości przestrzeni wielkich aglomeracji, zmodernizowanych, zdehumanizowanych i odczłowieczonych na rzecz małych społeczności opartych na wspólnocie przeżyć, celów, czasem przepełnionych nacjonalizmem i populizmem, w imię zachowania tożsamości. W wybranych egzemplifikacjach tekstów kultury zjawisko retrotopii wyraża dwie skrajne postawy wobec wspólnoty, mogącej być źródłem konserwatyzmu, jak i początkiem odkrywania ludzkiej duchowości w małych wspólnotach. Odwrót od metropolii w stronę peryferiów, wyraża także potrzebę mieszkańca Zachodu powrotu do tego, co bliższe naturze i autentyczności. W świecie płynnej nowoczesności człowiek poszukuje namiastki tożsamości, na której zbuduje „swój" świat. Archaiczność wyobrażeń świata „po końcu", po jakiejś apokalipsie (ekologicznej, nuklearnej, militranej, społeczne) sprawia, że ów nowy świat Panem (Collins), Hailsham (Ishiguro), czy z Oazy (Faber) wprowadzają złudzeniem bliskości „czegoś autentycznego". Włoski filozof Gianni Vattimo w motywie powrotu do archaizmów wyobrażeń o kulturze Zachodu dostrzega

> powszechną nieufność do naukowo-technicznej kultury Zachodu, rozumianej jako sposób życia, który narusza i niszczy autentyczne formy związku człowieka z samym sobą oraz z przyrodą i nieuchronnie wiąże się z systemem kapitalistycznego wyzysku i jego imperialistycznymi tendencjami[27].

[27] G. Vattimo, *Społeczeństwo przejrzyste*, tł. M. Kamińska, Wrocław 2006, s. 43 (*La société transparente*, 1992).

Słowa filozofa archaiczność czynią remedium na powrót zaufania do drugiego człowieka.

Tęsknota za bliskimi i swoim dystryktem w *Igrzyskach śmierci* przeciwstawiona została degeneracji mieszkańców Kapitolu, wyzutych z empatii, współczucia i naturalności. Plemienność w *Igrzyskach* została nacechowana pozytywnie, jeśli odnosi się do plemienności dystryktów, zaś negatywnie w przypadku tworzenia enklaw w obrębie metropolii. Ekstremalnym przykładem retrotopijnej plemienności jest walka między przedstawicielami dystryktów podczas Głodowych Igrzysk. Zabijanie się na oczach widzów Kapitolu według klucza przynależności do dystryktów dostarcza kolejnego argumentu potwierdzającego okrucieństwo sytuacji, w której ostatecznie walczący będą zmuszeni zabić swoich towarzyszy, wypełniając w ten sposób symboliczne znaczenie bratobójczej walki, której celem jest umocnienie władzy Kapitolu nad dystryktami. Ludzie w realiach postapokaliptycznych w obliczu konieczności walki o życie i radykalnych środków jego ochrony są skłonni zrezygnować z wolności na rzecz kontroli życia i jego ocalenia.

Powrót do plemienności w *Nie opuszczaj mnie* Ishiguro dotyczy społeczności klonów, które na etapie oczekiwania na bycie dawcą, zaczynają wewnętrznie się różnicować i tworzyć małe grupy, wspierające się i nienawidzące jednocześnie. Dążenie do ograniczenia liczebności grupy prowadzi w fabule *Nie opuszczaj mnie* do wytworzenia się trójkąta emocjonalnego między głównymi postaciami, czego przykładem mogą być słowa Ruth opowiadającej o jej relacji z Kath: „Chciałam, żeby poczuła kontrast między moim dotknięciem i dotknięciem Ridney i Chrissi i umyślnie dotknęłam to samo miejsce, lecz ona nie poczuła różnicy”[28]. Ishiguro buduje intymność relacji na więziach powstałych przez wykonywanie małych gestów (czułości, współczucia, wrogości, zazdrości), które dla klona są trudne do powtórzenia, lecz to właśnie one świadczą o ich uczłowieczeniu i budują plemienne relacje małych wspólnot.

Plemienność małej wspólnoty występuje także w *Księdze dziwnych nowych rzeczy* Michela Fabera. Sytuacja powrotu do plemienności została stworzona przez autora w realiach pozaziemskich, na planecie o nazwie Oaza. Faber w niezwykle obrazowy i ciekawy sposób opisuje obcą planetę, jednocześnie tak różną i podobną do Ziemi. Oazjanie są w dużej mierze podobni do ludzi, zarówno pod względem sylwetki, jak i proporcji, jedyne co ich różni to twarze, które wyglądają niczym plątanina skłębionych zwojów lub wnętrze orzecha

[28] K. Ishiguro, *Nie opuszczaj mnie*…, dz. cyt., s. 188.

włoskiego, no i wszyscy są do siebie bardzo podobni, rozróżnić ich można jedynie po kolorze szaty. Z początku głównej postaci Faberowskiej powieści trudno jest przywyknąć do nietypowej fizjonomii mieszkańców pozaziemskiej kolonii, jednak sprawę ułatwia fakt, że „dziwolągi" – jak nazywają ich ludzie zamieszkujący bazę USIC – w miarę nieźle posługują się językiem angielskim i wręcz garną się do chłonięcia wiedzy na temat Jezusa. Tytułowa *Księga dziwnych nowych rzeczy*, to nic innego jak *Biblia,* której fragmentów Oazjanie nigdy nie mają dość. Wokół Petera i praktyki lektury świętej księgi tworzy się nowa religijna wspólnota. Peter-misjonarz musi przekonstruować język biblijny, aby dostosować go do sposobu myślenia „nowych" wiernych.

Faber archaiczność czyni narzędziem kreowania wspólnoty opartej na pracy, modlitwie, zaufaniu i szacunku, jak wśród pierwszych chrześcijan[29]. Peter dostrzega archaiczność w sposobie wznoszenia budynku świątyni przez mieszkańców Oazy, lecz nie potrafi im wytłumaczyć, dlaczego tak jest:

> Proces wznoszenia budynku był tu absurdalnie prosty, ale skuteczny. Przypominający prymitywny kociołek i obsługiwana ręcznie kadź z cementem dobrze unaoczniała, z jakim poziomem wyrafinowania miał do czynienia Peter. […] Obawiał się, że to zbyt proste i niebezpieczne. Nie tak powinno się budować. […] ale Peter postanowił zaufać Oazjanom. Miał nadzieję, że wiedzą, co robią. Ich osada, niebyt imponująca pod względem architektonicznym, wdawała się trwała i stabilna[30].

W fantastycznym międzygwiezdnym świecie łatwo można rozpoznać elementy świata realnego. Faber czujnie buduje ową rzeczywistość z obrazów, które znamy lub, o których słyszeliśmy. Kosmiczny świat się uwiarygodnia i wzbudza niepokój. Można jeszcze powiedzieć, iż wraz z wyjazdem na Oazę misjonarz porzuca również swoje bezimienne plemię ludzi. Peter odrzuca ziemskie pochodzenie na rzecz nowej społeczności, w efekcie czego staje się on zupełnie obcy pozostawionej na Ziemi żonie i nigdy nie zintegruje się z pokojowymi przedstawicielami kolonii. Plemiennność zatem można uznać także za strategię oporu wobec zbiorowości przeżywania, gdyż umożliwia ona swoim reprezentantom budowanie realnych więzi, umacniając tym samym poczucie odpowiedzialności za ową wspólnotę i niwelując deficyt tożsamościowy. Zatem „plemienność" zostaje niejako przeciwstawiona zbiorowości i idei humanistyki,

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29 Por.: J. Gnilka, *Pierwsi chrześcijanie: źródła i początki Kościoła*, tł. W. Szymona, Kraków 2004 (*Frühen Christen,* 1999).

30 M. Faber, *Księga dziwnych nowych rzeczy…*, dz. cyt., s. 213.

jaką przez wiele wieków było utopijne pojęcie „ludzkości", implikujące wyimaginowane więzi z ideą, a nie realnymi ludźmi. Dystopijne wspólnoty małych grup opierają się na instynkcie przetrwania i potrzebie bezpieczeństwa, będąc kontrapunktem wobec anonimowej, „płynnej" zbiorowości, która może być utożsamiana z figurą Lewiatana.

Kolejną ostatnią cechą retrotopii jest **sentyment za naturą** – tęsknota za powrotem do stanu sprzed rewolucji technologicznej, za tym, co na zaawansowanym poziomie ucywilizowania kultur Zachodu nie jest już możliwe i wpływa na powstawanie kolejnych utopii (literackich, społecznych, religijnych, kulturowych itd.). Bauman ów sentyment sytuuje w obszarze nostalgii człowieka żyjącego w realiach „płynnej nowoczesności" i nazywa „pragnieniem powrotu do łona" (*Back to the Womb),* co odzwierciedla ekologiczny nurt myślowy w kulturze współczesnej i ekologiczne implikacje Baumanowskiej myśli filozoficznej.

Z kolei Timothy Morton ekologię określa jako „dziwne dziwactwo" (*weird weirdness*)[31] kultury Zachodu powstałe za sprawą dynamicznych zmian cywilizacyjnych. Tytuł książki Mortona, *Dark Ecology. For a Logic of Future Coexistance* ekologię sytuuje w obrębie konwencji intelektualnej ukształtowanej na podobieństwo literatury i kina gatunku *noir.* Ów klimat gatunkowy *noir* wpłynął na powstanie pojęcia *dark ecology*, co w wolnym tłumaczeniu może oznaczać „ciemność ekologiczną", czy może lepiej „mroczną ekologię". Zatem wedle Mortona ekologia jest finalnie przyznaniem się człowieka do zbrodni popełnionej przeciwko przyrodzie, co obrazuje odwołaniem się do gatunku powieści *noir* „W wersji *noir* narrator jest implikowany w opowieści na dwa poziomy, które normalnie nie krzyżują się i której wielu, nie może przekroczyć ze względu na ograniczenia strukturalne. […] Ekologiczna świadomość to moment, w którym narratorzy dowiadują się, że są tragicznym zbrodniarzem"[32] (tł. K. W.) W wybranych do analizy powieściach dystopijnych ekologia nie zawsze stała się tematem głównym fabuł, lecz w każdej stanowi istotny czynnik interpretacyjny, prześwituje niejako z obrazów zniszczonej cywilizacji i odradzającej się przyrody.

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31 T. Morton, *Dark Ecology. For a Logic of Future Coexistance*, New York 2016, s. 6.

32 Tamże, s. 9: „The darkness of ecological awareness is the darkness of noir, which is a strange loop: the detective is a criminal. In a strong version of noir the narrator is implicated in the story: two levels that normally don't cross, that some believe structurally can't cross. […] Ecological awareness is that moment at which these narrators find out that they are the tragic criminal".

W *Igrzyskach śmierci* kontrastem dla upadłej „wielkości" człowieka są obrazy natury[33]. Rolą przyrody w tekście trylogii jest wyznaczenie przestrzeni wolności ludzkiej egzystencji. Przestrzeń poza ogrodzeniem dystryktów przez mieszkańców stref kontrolowanych przez Kapitol jawi się jako obszar poza jego władzą, a więc jest przestrzenią wolności i szczęścia człowieka, który będąc tam, staje się bliższy utraconemu za sprawą terroru człowieczeństwu i wolności i temu, co można nazywać „stanem naturalnym". Owo wyobrażenie przyrody można zestawić z obrazami przyrody ujarzmionej i podporządkowanej woli przywódcy państwa totalitarnego prezydenta Snowa. Figury hybryd gatunkowych, jak np. *zmiechów,* czy *kosogłosów* odzwierciedlają zdegenerowaną kondycję moralną mieszkańców Kapitolu. W trakcie rozwoju fabuły czytelnik obserwuje ewolucję figury *kosogłosa*, który od znaku struktury szpiegowskiej, dla której owa hybryda gatunkowa została stworzona w laboratorium Kapitolu, staje się znienawidzonym przez prezydenta Snowa symbolem rewolucji i reprezentacją możliwości wyzwolenia się spod tyranii Kapitolu. W trakcie *Głodowych Igrzysk* kosogłosy wykorzystano do torturowania trybutów. Ptaki naśladowały odgłosy rozpaczy i cierpienia bliskich trybutów, w ten sposób doprowadzając Katniss i Finnicka do kryzysu psychicznego. Kosogłosy występują także w przestrzeni naturalnej. Po nieudanym eksperymencie z ich wykorzystaniem do szpiegowania, zostały wypuszczone do lasu i doskonale zaaklimatyzowały się w środowisku naturalnym. Zmiany ról zmodyfikowanych ptaków w fabule narracji Collins reprezentują ewolucję funkcji przyrody w opowieści o świecie Panem, potwierdzając siłę natury w procesie ewolucji – hybrydy zostały elementem świata fauny.

Ujarzmiona przyroda staje się narzędziem walki – w sensie dosłownym – w lesie i w dżungli, w trackie zamagań na arenie. Naturę Collins uczyniła symboliczną – przez kwiatki na grobach Rue i Prim, piosenkę *Drzewo wisielców* śpiewaną przez Katniss, a następnie powtarzaną przez kosogłosy, która z czasem stała się hymnem rewolucji. Natura staje się istotnym elementem w budowaniu symboliki, opartej właśnie na elementach zaczerpniętych z natury, jak prymulki sadzone przez Peetę przed domem Katniss, aby przypominały jej o Primrose – jej tragicznie zmarłej siostrze. Ekologiczny wątek obecny w *Igrzyskach śmierci* jest wartością dodaną owej narracji. Rolą przyrody zdaje się być

[33] Szczególną więź z przyrodą głównej postaci trylogii Collins, Katniss i jej przyjaciela Gale'a, umiejętnie wyeksponowano w ekranizacji trylogii, nadając przyrodzie znaczenia symboliczne, jako strefy wolności, „prawdziwego życia" i „naturalnego" piękna, co staje się szczególnie wyraziste w zestawieniu z przepychem Kapitolu.

przypomnienie odbiorcy o chtonicznych korzeniach człowieka, z którymi stracił on więź. Collins zdaje się przypominać czytelnikom, że nadal człowiek jest częścią natury, a jednocześnie wskazuje, iż niemożliwy jest powrót do natury, gdyż „naturalność" także została zmodyfikowana i wizja nakreślona w pracach Jean Jacques Rousseau, stała się tylko literacką fantazją. Obrazy zniszczonej natury i jej zurbanizowanej wersji w trakcie *Głodowych Igrzysk* wyraźniej podkreślają różnice między tym, co stworzone przez człowieka w świecie antropocentrycznym, a przyrodą w dystryktach i poza murem dystryktu dwunastego, w której żyją „dzikie" zwierzęta nie znające ludzi, czego przykładem jest jeleń spotkany przez Katniss i Gale'a na polowaniu, który nigdy nie widział człowieka, więc nie odczuwa przed nim lęku. Zmiany, jakie zaszły w przyrodzie i relacjach z nią w epoce antropocenu, są powodem, dla którego możliwe jest tworzenie wyobrażeń „sztucznej natury"[34] i jej „naturalności", będącej znaczącym elementem kreacji świata człowieka nowoczesnego[35].

Inny poruszający obraz koegzystencji natury i cywilizacji prezentuje Ishiguro w *Nie opuszczaj mnie*. Malarska i nostalgiczna sceneria brytyjskiego wybrzeża przedstawiona w powieści podkreśla tragizm losów klonów, Kathy, Tommiego i Ruth, które cieszą się ostatnimi chwilami wolności i radości życia. Ich ucieczka z ośrodka, gdzie są kontrolowane i oczekują na wyrok bycia dawcą, była aktem desperackiej odwagi i z góry skazanym na niepowodzenie buntem przeciwko okrutnemu losowi. Klony, jako istoty wywodzące się z przestrzeni laboratoriów można uznać za personifikację sfery cywilizacji i antropocentryczności. Celem ich egzystencji jest bycie „częściami zamiennymi" zamożnych ludzi. Klony są istotami imitującymi naturę, nie przypominają w niczym maszyn wyposażonych w sztuczną inteligencję, czy androidów, gdyż w swoim ciele nie mają implantów i technologii umożliwiającej ich egzystencję. Klony reprezentują „sztuczną naturę" – naśladują to, co przyrodnicze, a technologia zastosowana do ich stworzenia stała się transparentna. Ruth marzy o tym, aby pojechać samochodem w „dzikie miejsce" np. do Dartmoor. Mówi: „Tak strasznie chciałabym zobaczyć te moczary i całą resztę"[36]. Dosko-

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34 Por.: G. Böhme, *Filozofia i estetyka przyrody w dobie kryzysu naturalnego*, tł. Jarosław Marecki, Warszawa 2002 (*Natürlich Natur. Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierberkeit, Für eineökologische Naturästhetik,* 1992).

35 Filmowe obrazy zniszczonej natury i jej zurbanizowanej wersji w trakcie *Głodowych Igrzysk* wyraźniej podkreślają różnice między tym, co stworzone przez człowieka w świecie antropocentrycznym, a przyrodą w dystryktach i poza murem dystryktu dwunastego, w którym żyją „dzikie" zwierzęta, nie znające ludzi, czego przykładem jest jeleń spotkany przez Katniss i Gale'a na polowaniu w ostatniej części filmowej serii Collins.

36 K. Ishiguro, *Nie opuszczaj mnie*, tł. Andrzej Szulc, Warszawa 2007, s. 227.

nały nastrój dawców w kontakcie z naturą prezentuje opis wycieczki do łodzi na moczarach:

> Z początku jechaliśmy wąskimi krętymi dróżkami, a potem niemal pustą szosą przez otwarty monotonny teren. Z tej części naszej wycieczki do łodzi zapamiętałam, że po raz pierwszy od wieków przez szare chmury zaczęło przeświecać słońce i że za każdym razem, gdy spoglądam na siedzącą obok mnie Ruth, miała na ustach łagodny uśmieszek[37].

W losach klonów z powieści Ishiguro odnajdziemy także symboliczną reprezentację pragnienia „powrotu do łona", o której pisał Bauman w *Retrotopii.* Niektóre z klonów marzą o tym, aby odnaleźć swój pierwowzór, czyli istoty, która mogłaby uosabiać matkę/ojca. Owym poszukiwaniom pierwowzorów towarzyszą rozważania klonów na temat wyobrażanych przez nich tożsamości ich pierwowzorów. Tommy opowiada Kathy o spotkanym przez jego znajomych mężczyźnie, który mógłby być jego „pierwowzorem"/„modelem".

> Każda rozmowa o pierwowzorach była z pewnością o wiele bardziej krępująca niż, powiedzmy o seksie. Równocześnie było jednak widać, że ludzie są tym zafascynowani – w niektórych przypadkach ogarnięci obsesją – sprawa więc stale wypływała, na ogół w formach poważnych sporów […] Z tego co pamiętam, doniesienia o modelach pojawiały się falami. Mogło minąć kilka tygodni, kiedy nikt nie poruszał tego tematu, a potem wiadomość o dostrzeżeniu jednego powodowała cały wysyp[38].

Tragizm postaci klonów kreowany jest między innymi na dychotomii ich osobowości, która jest podzielona na część racjonalnego tłumaczenia sobie i otoczeniu, że pierwowzór nie oddziałuje na przyszłość swojego klona, i część emocjonalno-intuicyjną, nieustannie pragnącą go odnaleźć i poznać swój „model". Gorzka prawda wypowiedziana przez Ruth była złamaniem tabu społeczności dawców. Zbuntowana dziewczyna z rozczarowaniem stwierdza: „Wszyscy to wiemy. Jesteśmy skopiowani z hołoty. Ćpunów, prostytutek, pijaków, meneli. Być może więźniów, pod warunkiem, że nie byli stuknięci. Od nich właśnie pochodzimy. Wszyscy o tym wiemy, więc dlaczego nie powiedzieć tego wprost?"[39] Tajemnica, stanowiąca tabu społeczności klonów, sprawia, że mogą oni mieć marzenia o przyszłości innej od ich pierwowzorów.

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37 Tamże, s. 249.
38 Tamże, s. 159-160.
39 Tamże, s. 189.

Marzenie klonów o wolności i miłości nie dotyczy tylko ich relacji międzypłciowych. Tytuł książki Ishiguro to fragment kołysanki, jakiej mieszkańcy ośrodka szkolenia klonów w Hailsham, słuchali na magnetofonie. Kathy słuchając piosenki wyobrażała sobie, że to ona jest matką śpiewającą swojemu dziecku, którego nigdy nie będzie mogła mieć z racji swoich ograniczeń biologicznych. Tytuł piosenki *Nie opuszczaj mnie* może również odnosić się do nieuniknionego losów dawców i jej relacji z Tommym i z Ruth, ich wspólnego losu dawców i ich nieuchronnej śmierci.

W każdej z wybranych do analizy książek występuje również czwarty z wyróżników retrotopii, motyw **powrotu do nierówności społecznych**. Przykładem literackiej realizacji owego motywu odnajdziemy w wizji państwa Panem u Collins. Wyłania się z niego obraz społeczeństwa silnie podzielonego na biednych mieszkańców dystryktów i zamożnych mieszkańców Kapitolu. W trakcie *Głodowych Igrzysk* rywalizują ze sobą mieszkańcy poszczególnych dystryktów, co odzwierciedla politykę prowadzoną przez Kapitol, której celem jest skłócenie dystryktów i utwierdzanie społeczności Kapitolu w przekonaniu, iż są wyjątkowi, a luksus, jaki ich otacza, to hołd złożony przez dystrykty w geście solidarności społecznej. W trakcie igrzysk trybuci są zmuszani do zabijania przedstawicieli innych dystryktów i zmusza żyjących do kolejnych morderstw, ku uciesze widzów, śledzących zmagania trybutów na ekranach telewizorów. Owa sytuacja przypomina realną dysproporcję miedzy mieszkańcami państw Zachodu, a resztą świata i naświetla krzywdzący podzial na kraje Pierwszego, Drugiego, Trzeciego i Czwartego Świata[40].

Baumanowską *retrotopię* można uznać za narzędzie wykorzystywane przez autorów powieści gatunków fantastyki do podważania wiary w sens przeszłości i do walki z permanentną „płynnością" zglobalizowanej rzeczywistości, także literackiej. Retrotopia swoje powstanie zawdzięcza silnym związkom z „fantastycznością", którą można przekornie, w duchu filozofii Vico i jego „logiki fantazji" oraz Blumenberga teorii „metafor absolutnych"[41], określić za pomocą pojęcia „nie-realności", zaś realność konstytuować na tym, co sytuuje się w granicach „nie-fantastyczności". Opozycyjne kategorie, tylko funkcjonując wspólnie, jako kontrapunkty myśli i wyobrażeń, kreują przestrzeń alternatywności, która w przypadku analizowanych powieści wykazuje charakter dys-

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40 J. D. Eller, *Antropologia kulturowa. Globalne siły, lokalne światy*, tł. A. Gąsior-Niemiec, Kraków, s. 493-526.

41 Por.: H. Blumenberg, *Paradygmaty dla metaforologii…*, s. 9, 13.

topijny i wyraża lęki oraz nadzieje twórców i odbiorców nurtu fantastyki, jak i twórczości określanej mianem „realistycznej".

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MIT UTOPIJNEJ AMERYKI W *DRODZE* CORMACA MCCARTHY'EGO: POSTKAPITALISTYCZNA, POSTKONSUMPCYJNA, POSTAPOKALIPTYCZNA WIZJA ŚWIATA

Abstract

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* vividly depicts the end of human civilization and the extinction of life on the planet. The whole Earth is covered in ashes and soot, as cities and forests have been consumed by the unknown catastrophe on the globe. McCarthy offers a visually stunning but disturbing picture of how existence could look at the end of the road to nowhere for two pilgrims taking a purposeless journey through the country which once dominated the world. In *The Road* Cormac McCarthy deconstructs the myth of exceptional America. The novelist visualizes the world in the post-capitalist, post-consumer and post-apocalyptic era, without hope for redemption, though.

Key Words: post-apocalyptic fiction, ecology, American civilization

> Wreszcie odsłoniła się kruchość wszystkiego. Zadawnione problemy rozsądzone przez nicość i noc. Wraz z ostatnim egzemplarzem odchodzi cała kategoria rzeczy. Znika, gasi za sobą światło. Popatrz dokoła. Nigdy to bardzo długo. Lecz chłopiec wiedział to, co wiedział mężczyzna. Że nigdy to wcale[1].

[1] C. McCarthy, *Droga,* tł. Robert Sudół, Kraków 2008, s. 30 (*The Road,* 2006).

W *Drodze* (2006) Cormac McCarthy roztacza pustynnie jałowy, niepokojąco realistyczny obraz post-apokaliptycznego świata. W naturalistycznej wizji, autor *Krwawego Południka* i innych powieści o Dzikim Zachodzie doświadcza „końca cywilizowanego świata, dogorywającego życia naszej planety i manifestacji kataklizmów towarzyszących zagładzie"[2]. *Droga* ukazuje świat dotknięty niezidentyfikowaną, apokaliptyczną klęską, w wyniku której uległ rozkładowi porządek określający relację między naturą i mieszkańcami ziemi, zdeterminowany przez fundamentalne osiągnięcia: postęp gospodarczy, technologiczny, kulturowy, a nade wszystko cywilizacyjną tożsamość symbolizowaną szeregiem pojęć. Kraje z ich granicami terytorialnymi i rządami; ekonomia, handel, rolnictwo, nauka, literatura, sztuka pozbawione zostały swej wagi w obliczu globalnego zniszczenia, „ziemi pokrytej popiołem i sadzą"[3]. Nienazwana katastrofa rozgrywająca się przypuszczalnie w Ameryce to główny motyw *Drogi.* Unicestwieniu uległo większości obywateli, zniszczone zostały domy, wyludnione miasta; nie ma bieżącej wody, elektryczności, gazu, benzyny; nie istnieją fabryki, sklepy, samochody. Pozostały jedynie wraki, szczątki, relikty przeszłości. Chwała, niegdyś najpotężniejszego narodu dominującego nad światem, dumnego ze swojej demokracji, pokonana została przez nieokreślony anarchię, w której „króluje degradacja obezwładniająca planetę, ziemskie pogorzelisko, gdzie słońce uległo zmiażdżeniu, pozostawiając jałowe niebo"[4].

> Wyszedł na szary dzień, stanął i przez ułamek sekundy zobaczył absolutną prawdę o świecie. Zimne nieprzejednanie krążące po ziemi pozbawionej jutra. Nieubłagana ciemność. Spuszczone ze smyczy ślepe psy słońca. Miażdżąca czarna pustka wszechświata. I gdzieś tam dwa zaszczute zwierzątka dygoczące jak lisy w kryjówce. Czas dany na kredyt i świat na kredyt, i oczy na kredyt, by go nim opłakiwać[5].

Pośród ruin i zgliszczy umierającego świata, dwie zaszczute istoty, oblepione kurzem i brudem, w strzępach garderoby – mężczyzna i chłopiec – to główne, bezimienne postacie *Drogi*, bezimienne jak kataklizm, którego doświadczyły. Zmuszone by trwać w nowej rzeczywistości. Cały ich dobytek mieści się w zdezelowanym, sklepowym wózku; wystrzępiona mapa, wskazująca

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2 W. Kennedy, *Left Behind,* tł. wł., The New York Times, 8 października 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/08/books/review/Kennedy.t.html [10.11. 2016].

3 J. Cant, *Cormac McCarthy and the Myth of American Exceptionalism*, tł. wł., New York 2007, s. 269.

4 Tamże, s. 271.

5 C. McCarthy, *Droga*…, dz. cyt., s. 123.

drogi, których już nie ma, bądź drogi donikąd; kilka, na pozór, nieprzydatnych rupieci, jakieś szmaty, sznurki, węzełki. Przemierzają opustoszałe drogi samotnie, choć wiedzą, że mogą spotkać innych, którzy przetrwali:

> W pierwszych latach drogi zaludniali uchodźcy zakutani w warstwy ubrań. Łachmaniarze w maskach i goglach, siedzący na poboczach jak lotnicy po katastrofie. Ze stosami barachła na taczkach. Ciągnęli furmanki i wozy. Oczy rozbłysłe w czaszkach. Bezwyznaniowe ludzkie skorupy drepczące po szosach jak wysiedleńcy w kraju pustoszonym przez wojnę domową[6].

Chłopiec zwraca się do ojca „tatusiu"; mężczyzna, nawet w swych myślach nazywa syna „chłopcem". Mężczyzna zdaje sobie sprawę, że nie przetrwają zimy, więc razem tułają się po bezludnych traktach i szlakach kierując się na południe, w poszukiwaniu ciepła. Uciekają przed zimnem i przed brakiem słońca, choć wiedzą, że tam gdzie idą, słońca nie będzie. Uciekają przed nieliczną garstką ocalałych, których wygląd odstrasza, których żądza przeżycia zdegradowała drugiego człowieka do podrzędnej roli ofiary, którzy, by utrzymać się przy życiu, polują i zjadają innych:

> Armia człapiących tenisówek. W rękach ponad półmetrowe rurki owinięte w skórę. Plecione sznury na nadgarstkach. W niektórych rurkach przeciągnięte łańcuchy, zakończone najrozmaitszymi żeleźcami. Przeszli obok, pobrzękując, posuwając się rozchwianym krokiem nakręcanej zabawki. Brodaci, parujący oddechem spod masek. (…) Za nimi podążały wozy ciągnięte przez niewolników w uprzęży, zapełnione łupami wojennymi, a dalej kobiety, może z tuzin, niektóre w ciąży. Konwój uzupełniali katamici, skąpo ubrani mimo zimna, z obrożami spinającymi szyje, przykuci do siebie jarzmami[7].

McCarthy w post-apokaliptycznej narracji *Drogi* roztoczył demoniczną wizję upadku wszelkich wartości i norm, określających podstawowe działanie człowieka w obszarze danej wspólnoty. Wytworzył się nowy, społeczny podział na ludzi 'dobrych', usiłujący przeżyć w zgodzie z własnym sumieniem i poszanowaniem drugiego człowieka, zadowalających się resztkami cywilizacji, i ludzi 'złych', dostosowujących się do nowych realiów świata, wykorzystujących przemoc, kanibalizm i odwieczne prawo silniejszego jako jedyną formę przetrwania:

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6 C. McCarthy, *Droga...*, dz. cyt., s. 30.
7 Tamże, s. 88.

> Świat wkrótce zaludnili mężczyźni, którzy zjadali dzieci na oczach ich rodziców, a miasta opanowały bandy poczerniałych łupieżców, którzy drążyli tunele wśród ruin i wypełzali z gruzów białych od walających się zębów i oczu, niosąc w nylonowych siatkach nadpalone, nieokreślone puszki jedzenia, jak klienci w kantynach piekła[8].

Dla ojca i syna wędrówka przez wypalone kataklizmem pustkowie, to nie tylko ucieczka przed bezlitosnymi plemionami ludożerców, poszukiwanie jedzenia i schronienia, to, nade wszystko, utrzymanie przekonania, że jest dobro i zło, jest ocalenie i jest, mimo wszystko, Bóg, którego ojciec wini za obojętność wobec okrucieństwa jednych, a cierpienia drugich. Mężczyzna, w przypływie rozpaczy, zwraca się do Boga nie szczędząc mu obelg i złorzeczeń: „Jesteś tam? … Czy wreszcie cię zobaczę? Czy masz szyję, żebym mógł cię udusić? Czy masz serce? Bądź przeklęty na wieki, czy masz duszę? O Boże …, o Boże"[9].

Jak podkreśla Eric Hage, Cormac McCarthy jest konsekwentny w formułowaniu nieuchronnego końca ludzkiej bytności na ziemi. Dlatego też postapokaliptyczne wizje świata i ich mroczne obrazy miały miejsce w jego poprzednich książkach, takich jak: *Strażnik sadu (The Orchard Keeper)* (1965), *Przeprawa (The Crossing)* (1994), a nawet w *Rączych koniach (All the Pretty Horses)* (1992), jednej z najpopularniejszych powieści McCarthy'ego, kończącej się proroctwem zagłady:

> [C]zerwony wiatr wiał z zachodu nad wieczorną ziemią i małe pustynne ptaki ćwierkając, zlatywały na wyschnięte patyki szakłaku, a koń i jeździec, i koń jechali dalej, a ich długie cienie leżały razem na ziemi jak cienie jednej istoty. Posuwały się i znikały na ciemniejącej ziemi świata, który nadejdzie[10].

Ostatnia część Trylogii Pogranicza (Border Trilogy), *Sodoma i Gomora (Cities of the Plain)* (1998), nawiązuje bezpośrednio do biblijnych miast Sodomy i Gomory, które zostały unicestwione z powodu bezduszności swych mieszkańców. Niewątpliwie, wszystkie poprzednie przykłady apokalipsy w powieściach Gotyku Południa (Southern Gothic) czy Trylogii Pogranicza znajdują zwieńczenie swych zapowiedzi w bezpośrednim odniesieniu do spopielonego świata *Drogi*. Potwierdzeniem obrazu ziemi jałowej jest wszechobecny popiół,

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8 Tamże, s. 170.
9 Tamże, s. 15.
10 C. McCarthy, *Rącze konie*, tł. Jędrzej Polak, Poznań 2012, s. 423 (*All the Pretty Horses,* 1992).

pył i śmierć. Niemniej jednak, nie jest to tylko zepsucie natury, lecz przede wszystkim całej rasy ludzkiej[11].

W *Drodze* post-apokaliptyczny świat McCarthy'ego wychodzi poza wszelkie sugestie i wyobrażenie, przytłaczając straszliwą skalą zniszczenia – krajobrazem zaśmieconym trupami, zbezczeszczoną przyrodą, słońcem przesiąkniętym smolistymi oparami, skażonym, martwym morzem:

> Miękki czarny talk przetaczał się po ulicach niczym kałamarnica, rozwijająca swe sploty na morskim dnie, i zakradło się zimno, i zmierzch nadciągał wcześnie, a padlinożercy, schodzący z pochodniami ze stromych kanionów, wyciskali stopami dziury w nawianym miałkim popiele, dziury, które zamykały się za nimi bezgłośnie jak oczy. Na drogach pielgrzymi osuwali się, padali i oddawali ducha, a posępna, oblepiona mgłą Ziemia kręciła się poza Słońce i powracała, tak niewidoczna i nie oznaczona, jak ścieżka jakiegoś bezimiennego siostrzanego świata w pradawnym mroku odległej przestrzeni[12].

Chociaż w powieści McCarthy nie precyzuje, co jest przyczyną zagłady świata, w wywiadzie dla magazynu „Rolling Stone" w 2007 roku powiedział, że nie wierzy, by zmiana klimatu czy klęski żywiołu miały być końcem ludzkości, jedynie brutalna natura samej rasy ludzkiej doprowadzi do samounicestwienia. Dlatego ojciec i syn muszą być nieustannie czujni wobec zdziczałych hord post-apokaliptycznych ludzki i zachowujących się jak bezwzględni kanibale: „Pod przeciwległą ścianą tłoczyli się nadzy ludzie, próbując się ukryć, zasłaniając twarze rękami. Na materacu leżał mężczyzna bez nóg, z poczerniałymi, nadpalonymi kikutami sterczącymi z pachwin.(…) Pomóż nam, szeptali. Błagamy, pomóż nam"[13].

Przeświadczenie o prawie ludzki do życia na ziemi, a także kwestia realistycznego zagrożenia bycia na ziemi, czy istota poświęcenia jednego człowieka dla drugiego w walce ze złem dystopijnego świata, stanowią główny nurt McCarthy'owskich rozważań. Jednak autor wydaje się przedstawiać inną, równie ważną koncepcję, jaką jest amerykańska wyjątkowość czy amerykańska utopia. Chociaż alegoria *Drogi* implikuje bardziej uogólnioną i literacką interpretację przestrzeni geograficznych, wszelkie tropy, lokalizacja, krajobraz i kierunek bohaterów w ich wędrówce sugerują Stany Zjednoczone. Wprawdzie ścieżka

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11 E. Hage, *Cormac McCarthy, A literary companion,* tł. wł., North Carolina 2010, s. 141.
12 C. McCarthy, *Droga…*, dz. cyt., s. 170.
13 Tamże, s. 105.

mitycznej reprezentacji amerykańskiej tożsamości niezmiennie prowadziła ze wschodu na zachód, lecz podróż ojca i syna prowadzi na południe, jakby stawiała wyzwanie słowom piosenki: „Jedź na zachód, bo tam jest raj" (*„go west, paradise is there").* Kiedyś przeświadczenie o słuszności podboju kontynentu sprawiło, że osadnicy zmierzali na zachód Ameryki. Nie tylko była to chęć ujarzmienia nowych terenów. Ameryka - kraj obfitości, oferowała niepojęte zalety: wolność, wolną ziemię, wolną wolę. Wabiła oczekujących lepszej przyszłości w nieznaną przestrzeń, kusiła marzycieli swoim bogactwem, gnała na zachód tych, którzy nie mieli nic do stracenia. Sposób postrzegania kraju, jako raju dla wszystkich i do zdobycia, zrodził szereg mitów.

Richard Slotkin utrzymuje, że mit drogi, mit pogranicza czy mit podboju Ameryki są mitami najbardziej zakorzenionymi we współczesnej kulturze, wywodzącymi się jeszcze z okresu kolonialnego. Wprawdzie mit podboju Ameryki jest tylko jednym z funkcjonujących mitów lub systemów ideologicznych, które tworzą amerykańską kulturę i społeczeństwo, jest jednak mitem niezwykle ważnym i trwałym. Jak twierdzi Slotkin, jest ideologicznym fundamentem, tak jak prawo konkurencji w kapitalistycznym świecie czy zasada 'podaży i popytu', bądź Darwinowskie pojęcie 'przetrwania najsilniejszej jednostki'. Ten mit razem z 'przeznaczeniem objawionym' (Manifest Destiny), który był głównym napędem dominującej amerykańskiej tradycji historiograficznej i ideologii politycznej, racjonalizował porządek społeczny Stanów Zjednoczonych[14]. Po dokonaniu podboju nieznanych terenów Richard Hofstadter stwierdzi: „Jest naszym narodowym przeznaczeniem, aby, nie tyle, stworzyć ideologię, ale nią być (It has been our fate as a nation not to have an ideology, but to be one)"[15]. To przekonanie sięga wstecz do najwcześniejszych czasów osadnictwa europejskiego w Ameryce Północnej. W pewnym stopniu przewodziło ono Ojcom Założycielom i ich następcom z początku XIX wieku. W XIX wieku Amerykanie wierzyli, w to, co Jefferson nazwalał „imperium wolności" i entuzjastycznie oklaskiwali i reagowali na słowa wypowiedziane przez Lincolna, że ich kraj jest „ostatnią i najlepszą nadzieją ziemi". Wyjątkowość Ameryki żywiła się spektakularnym sukcesem Stanów Zjednoczonych w dwudziestym wieku, a zwłaszcza gdy Ameryka wyszła wyraźnie wzmocniona po dwóch wojnach światowych[16].

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14 R. Slotkin, *The Fatal. The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialisation 1800–1890,* tł. wł., New York 1998, s. 15.

15 Zob. M. Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, tł. wł., New York 1998, s. 13.

16 R. Slotkin, *The Fatal*…, dz. cyt., s. 16.

Stany Zjednoczone to nie tylko najbogatsze i najpotężniejsze, ale także wyjątkowe politycznie i moralnie państwo świata. Jak twierdzi Godfrey Hodgson, teoretycy amerykańskiej wyjątkowości minimalizują wkład innych narodów i kultur do rządów prawa i ewolucji demokracji politycznej. Co więcej, wybitni naukowcy głoszą, iż „Stany Zjednoczone stały się przeznaczeniem ideologicznym i czują obowiązek rozszerzania swojej władzy i wpływów, dopóki nie zdominują świata”[17]. Przy bliższym przyjrzeniu się, poglądy na temat wyjątkowości Ameryki są daleko bardziej zróżnicowane. Czasem odnosi się to do kwestii zasobów i dóbr naturalnych, innym razem do materialnych możliwości, bądź korzyści, jakich doświadczyły pokolenia imigrantów. Emigrowali oni do Stanów Zjednoczonych w przeświadczeniu, że ich sukces może się zdarzyć tylko w Ameryce, a było to przekonanie tym bardziej wiarygodna, ponieważ Ameryka naprawdę otworzyła ‘złote drzwi możliwości’. Czasami można się spotkać z bardziej subtelnym argumentowaniem, że to, co było wyjątkowe w Ameryce, to nie sam dobrobyt, lecz pewne cechy w amerykańskim społeczeństwie lub amerykańskiej psychice, które sprawiły, że Amerykanie częściej osiągali materialne sukcesy.

W 1957 r. Max Lerner opublikował książkę o objętości ponad tysiąca stron, zatytułowaną: „Ameryka jako cywilizacja” (*American Civilization*). W porywającym i wzniosłym tonie wychwalał wyjątkowego Amerykanina, archetyp współczesnego człowieka, nieposkromionego odkrywcę nowych terenów, zdobywcę władzy i siły na arenie międzynarodowej, jednostkę spełnioną zawodowo i materialnie, poszukiwacza nauki i wiedzy, obywatela świadomego doniosłości swej historii, żyjącego w poczuciu jedności społecznej[18].

Jednakże, w obecnych czasach twierdzenia te wydają się przeceniać wyjątkowy charakter amerykańskiego ‘przeznaczenia objawionego’. Nie bez powodu McCarthy wybrał tło zaistniałej apokalipsy na ziemi Stanów Zjednoczonych, a nie gdzie indziej. Pisarz podważa pozycję światowego lidera, ponieważ w obliczu kataklizmu, przywódcza rola supermocarstwa staje się dominacją bezwartościową. Wszystkie przesłanki wyjątkowości wśród narodów stają się puste. Amerykańskie bogactwo nie jest wystarczającym uzasadnieniem przetrwania społeczeństwa w kraju przyrodzonej obfitości. W powieści McCarthy'ego, według Susan Kollin, Stany Zjednoczone nie są już przywódcą wytyczającym narodowy algorytm, który miałby posłużyć do utrzymania pozycji wyjątkowego

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17 G. Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism,* tł. wł., Michigan 2009, s. 10.

18 M. Lerner, *American Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States,* tł. wł., London 1957, s. 63.

gracza w historii narodów. Zamiast tego, autor umieszcza kraj na jednej linii cywilizacyjnej z innymi 'wielkimi' na tej ziemi, którzy doświadczyli historii dobrze znanej: z tymi, co zaistnieli i przeminęli. Tym sposobem, *Droga* wykracza poza czas ogólnie pojętej narracji, a powieść jest jednocześnie pozornie starożytna, a jednak całkiem współczesna, pełna alegorii i poetyki. McCarthy pisze, na przykład o ojcu i synu, jak o „pielgrzymach z podań" (s. 7), o śniegu, jak o „ostatniej hostii chrześcijaństwa" (s. 19) a „popioły umarłego świata niesione tu i tam przez posępny, ziemski świat (…) [z]awieszone w popielatym powietrzu" (s.14), walczą o sens istnienia w postaci „skamieniałych śladów w wyschniętym błocie" (s. 15) i „mumii z bagien" (s. 26). McCarthy umieszcza amerykański krajobraz *Drogi* na równi z prehistorycznym i faraonicznym pejzażem, o cechach homeryckich, jak i biblijnych, pomimo to, silnie zakorzenionym we współczesności[19].

Droga skłaniająca do rozważania zgubnej dominacji Stanów Zjednoczonych na świecie, również jest przypowieścią zmuszającą do refleksji nad ulotnymi wartościami amerykańskiego społeczeństwa: dobrobytu, materialnego sukces jednostki, obfitości ponad miarę. W powieści zdewastowany krajobraz, przez który wędrują bohaterowie, jest usiany skumulowanymi gruzami kultury konsumenckiej XXI wieku i tym samym jest przypomnieniem o nadmiarze wszystkiego i marnotrawstwie, które jest oznaką codziennego życie wielu Amerykanów. Przez całą narrację ojciec i syn pchają supermarketowy wózek, który McCarthy podnosi do rangi znaczącego symbolu w kontekście współczesnego konsumeryzmu. Ojciec – syn – wózek przybierają osobliwą formę obrazu do medytacji. Ojciec i syn, podróżujący zrujnowanymi drogami, przewożą porzucone artykuły spożywcze, ubrania, artykuły gospodarstwa domowego i inne przedmioty, które zebrali podczas wędrówki, a bez których nie przetrwają. Koszyk nabiera więc wielu skomplikowanych znaczeń: reprezentuje możliwość mobilności i ucieczki. Równocześnie jest wyrazicielem systemu, którego upadek przyczynił się do ogólnoświatowej dezolacji, a także jest pozycjonowany jako symbol kapitalistycznej kultury konsumpcyjnej, z jej irracjonalną ekscytacją. Stanowi karykaturę amerykańskiej ekonomii, z zadłużonymi obywatelami, których życie bardziej zagrożone jest „nadwyżką" towarów niż ich niedoborem[20].

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19 S. Kollin, *Barren, silent, godless: Ecodisaster and the Post-abundant Landscape in The Road,* w: *Cormac McCarthy: All the Pretty Horses, No Country for Old Men, The Road,* red. Sara L. Spurgeon, tł. wł., New York 2011, s. 160.

20 F. Buell, *From Apocalipse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century*, tł. wł., New York 2004, s. 202.

W *Drodze* dwaj główni bohaterowie przemierzają post-apokaliptyczny krajobraz z koszykiem na zakupy, przeszukując śmietnik post-kapitalistycznej Ameryki. Kiedy ojciec i syn docierają na skraj miasta, „było [ono] w większości spalone. Żadnych oznak życia. Samochody na ulicach oblepione popiołem, wszystko pokryte popiołem i kurzem. Skamieniałe ślady w wyschniętym błocie. W niszy drzwi trup wysuszony na wiór. Krzywiący się na widok dnia"[21]. Odnajdują supermarket z zagraconym parkingiem, a McCarthy dalej pisze: „...weszli w zasłane odpadkami alejki. W dziale z warzywami znaleźli na dnie koszy kilka starych fasolek szparagowych i bardzo stare wyschnięte morele, przypominające własną karykaturę. W zaułku za supermarketem stało parę wózków sklepowych, wszystkie okropnie pordzewiałe"[22]. Pordzewiałe koszyki nie spełniają już swego zadania. W zrujnowanym mieście, nikt nic nie kupuje, bo nic nie jest na sprzedaż, nic nie wymaga transportu, nie ma towarów. Wózek, służący za symbol konsumpcji i obfitości, stał się reliktem dawnych czasów, tak jak reliktem stały się towary, sklepy, miasta. Dwaj wędrowcy mijają miasto za miastem utwierdzając się w przekonaniu, że wszędzie jest takie samo zniszczenie, wszędzie jest umarła pustka:

> Z nastaniem długiego zmierzchu dotarli do rzeki, zatrzymali się i patrzyli zza betonowej balustrady na martwą wodę płynącą wolno poniżej. W oddali na całunie sadzy zarysy spalonego miasta jakby wyciętego z czarnej markizety. (…) Usiedli w popiele na poboczu i patrzyli na wschód, gdzie sylwetka miasta ciemniała w nadchodzącej nocy. Nie zobaczyli żadnych świateł[23].

W tym nowym krajobrazie reklamy czy billboardy nie zachęcają już konsumentów kuszącymi obietnicami swych produktów, widoczne jedynie są gasnące oznaki zagubionego świata. W *Drodze* pozostałości towarów, które wcześniej napędzały kulturę konsumpcyjną, są teraz upiornym przypomnieniem o tym, co było wcześniej:

> Dziwne przedmioty walające się przy drodze. Urządzenia elektryczne, meble. Narzędzia. Rzeczy porzucone dawno temu przez pielgrzymów idących na spotkanie samotnej lub zbiorowej śmierci. Jeszcze rok wcześniej chłopiec wziąłby coś, żeby nieść przez chwilę, ale teraz już tego nie robił[24].

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21 C. McCarthy, *Droga*…, dz. cyt., s. 25.
22 Tamże, s. 25.
23 Tamże, s. 150.
24 Tamże, s. 187.

Choć większość Amerykanów uznawało akt konsumpcji za oznakę dobrobytu, przejaw sukcesu i wiązało wielkie nadzieje z możliwościami realizowania materialnych zachcianek, chłopiec już nie wierzy, by te zdobycze miały służyć jakiemukolwiek celowi w jego nowym życiu. Nie zbiera pozostałości po innych ludziach, gdyż wie, że nie przysłużą się mu w dalszej drodze, ponieważ nie pozwolą odzyskać utraconej rzeczywistości, nie umożliwią skomunikowania się z nią. Susan Stewart zauważa w swojej analizie pojęcia „kolekcjonowanie", że praktyka gromadzenia przedmiotów, które obdarzamy wartością, może stworzyć złudną obietnicę połączenia się z ludźmi z przeszłości , którzy byli „poza nurtem zdarzeń historii". Autorka twierdzi, że projekt gromadzenia wszelkich kolekcji, w przypadku *Drogi* pozostawionych bądź porzuconych dóbr konsumpcyjnych z poprzedniego życia, może stanowić więź ze światem zmarłych[25]. Te towary są dowodem na to, co istniało przed nadejściem apokalipsy, i tym samym przypominają o niepowodzeniu tego świata. W *Drodze* miasta są „splądrowane i sponiewierane", niezdolne by zadowolić hordy myśliwych, którzy poruszają się w urbanistycznym rumowisku, szukając przedmiotów o wątpliwej teraz wartości, niosąc w siatkach przypalone czy zwęglone puszki pożywienia, przywodząc na pamięć „kupujących w składach z żywnością rodem z piekła"[26]. Wśród tych artykułów postapokaliptycznej i postkapitalistycznej sceny, McCarthy włączył konwencjonalny produkt – Coca-Colę. Puszka zostaje przekształcona z najbardziej rozpoznawalnej marki na świecie, istoty banalności, w wyjątkowy cud, którego nie można będzie powtórzyć:

> Wyciągnął rękę i spojrzał na puszkę coca-coli. Co to jest, tatusiu? Poczęstunek. Dla Ciebie. (…) [W]cisnął paznokieć kciuka pod aluminiowe ucho i otworzył puszkę. Przysunął nos do uwolnionego gazu, a potem podał napój chłopcu. Pij. Chłopiec wziął puszkę. Pieni się, powiedział. No pij. Spojrzał na ojca, przystawił puszkę do ust i łyknął. Namyślał się chwilę. Dobre, rzekł. Tak, dobre. Masz trochę, tatusiu. Chcę, żebyś ty to wypił. (…) To dlatego, że już nigdy więcej drugiej takiej nie wypiję? Nigdy to bardzo długo. Dobrze, powiedział chłopiec[27].

Codzienny gest picia coli stał się świętym aktem. Lecz czy nie jest absurdem stawianie coli na równi z innymi cennymi i znaczącymi dobrami pozostawionymi na jałowym terenie, doświadczonym kataklizmem? Przecież wszystko

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25 S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, Collection*, tł. wł., Durham 1993, s. 57.
26 C. McCarthy, *Droga...*, dz. cyt., s. 181.
27 Tamże, s. 26.

co materialne uległo dewaluacji. Być może, w ten sposób McCarthy dokonał rozkładu amerykańskiego mitu o sukcesie, który nierozerwalnie powiązany był i jest z osiągnięciem apogeum finansowych możliwości.

Jak pisał Wiktor Osiatyński, społeczeństwo amerykańskie, niejednokrotnie wierzyło w potencjalną wielkość przeciętnego człowieka, gloryfikując wysiłek i indywidualne osiągnięcia, utożsamiając pogoń za pieniędzmi z „dążeniem do szczęścia". Ziemskie bogactwo było nagrodą, a nie zbawienie, przez co stało się odzwierciedleniem zmienionej hierarchii wartości i pragnień społeczeństwa[28]. Konsumpcyjny materializm: „Im więcej mam, tym bardziej jestem", to prawda, w którą wierzą nie tylko Amerykanie, to iluzja posiadania, która zmusza wielu do poszukiwania swojej własnej wartości w fizycznych, materialnych przedmiotach. Człowiek by przetrwać, wytworzył sztuczne poczucie bezpieczeństwa, zależne od rzeczy materialnych. Mężczyzna i chłopiec na pustkowiu, pozbawieni dóbr, są częścią dystopijnej rzeczywistości i bohaterami amerykańskiej powieści drogi, poszukującymi lepszego świata. Mimo że ojciec i syn szukają lepszego miejsca, nie trafiają do Nowego Edenu, jak często obiecuje współczesna amerykańska powieść drogi. Utknęli w zapadłym świecie, który jest ponad odkupieniem, gdyż nie ma pewności, czy raj utracony jest do odzyskania. Nie ma też pewności czy zdołają stworzyć nowe życie, przypominające poprzednie. W jednym z momentów narracji ojciec zdaje sobie sprawę, że podtrzymuje fałszywy obraz rzeczywistości i, tak naprawdę, stoi w obliczu wielkiej klęski, przeznaczenia, którego nie potrafi odwrócić: „miał nadzieję, że tam będzie jaśniej, a przecież z dnia na dzień świat ciemniał coraz bardziej"[29]. Środowisko drastycznie się zmieniło, wytyczając nowe zadania, wcześniej będące nieistotnym, nawykowym działaniem, obecnie stanowiące esencję ludzkich poczynań, polegające na zdobyciu środków do życia: jedzenia, wody, schronienia, możliwości ogrzania się:

> Szli dalej, wychudzeni i brudni jak uliczni narkomani. Koce naciągnięte na głowy w obronie przed zimnem, parujące oddechy, nogi powłóczące w czarnych, miałkich zaspach. Przemierzali szeroką nadmorską równinę, gdzie wśród wyjących kłębów popiołu ziemski wiatr gnał ich do szukania byle schronienia. W domach, stodołach albo za wałem przydrożnego rowu, koce naciągnięte na głowy, powyżej niebo południowej pory czarne jak kazamaty piekła[30].

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28 W. Osiatyński, *W kręgu mitu amerykańskiego,* Warszawa 1971, s. 89.
29 Tamże, s. 200.
30 Tamże, s. 166.

W *Drodze* żywiołowa katastrofa nie jest złowieszczym wydarzeniem z przyszłości, mogącym zagrozić Ameryce. Jest faktycznie zaistniałym zatraceniem i zniszczeniem. McCarthy powierza czytelnikom zadanie, aby wyobrazili sobie, co będzie dalej i co pozostanie po obecnych pokoleniach. Co można jeszcze odbudować w społeczeństwie, jak zmienić relacje międzyludzkie i jak ponownie stworzyć więź z naturą. Powieść McCarthy'ego to wyobrażenie postapokaliptycznego dramatu, które Susan Sontag umieściła na równi z powieściami science fiction i filmami katastroficznych. Według Sontag literackie i filmowe opowiadania o katastrofie powodują, że widzowie uczestniczą w fantazji przeżywania własnej śmierci, zniszczenia miast, unicestwienia całej ludzkości za życia. Takie fantazje o katastrofach niosą ze sobą ogromną kulturową i psychologiczną moc, ponieważ, jak wyjaśnia autorka: „jedną z funkcji, jaką fantazja może dokonać, to wydobyć widza bądź czytelnika z nieznośniej monotonii i odwrócić uwagę od strachu – rzeczywistego lub przewidywanego – przez ucieczkę w egzotyczne, niebezpieczne sytuacje, które kończą się w ostatniej chwili happy endem”[31]. W konsekwencji fantazja upiększa świat, jednocześnie go oswajając. Choć apokaliptyczne obawy kształtują wiele katastroficznych narracji, Sontag zauważa, że większość z nich oferuje jedynie ograniczoną krytykę społeczną i zamiast tego dostarcza publiczności „moralnie skrajne uproszczenia” problemów pojawiających się w danej chwili. Katastroficzne opowieści często przywołują sytuacje niewłaściwego posługiwania się technologią jako środkiem zaradczym użytym przez „Zbawiciela-naukowca” w utopijnym geście przywrócenia równowagi świata[32]. Nie dzieje się tak w przypadku *Drogi.* McCarthy zabiera czytelników w podróż przez drastycznie zmieniający się krajobraz społeczny i naturalny, pozostawiając bohaterów powieści pełnych zdumienia co do zaistniałych przemian. Co więcej, zasady zostały zmienione na zawsze. Do przemyślenia pozostaje więc batalia o ponowne zdefiniowanie Ameryki i jej miejsca w świecie, w którym militarne zagrożenia, globalizacja, problemy związane z destrukcją środowiska gwałtownie przekształcają dobrze znaną rzeczywistość. Wprawdzie McCarthy roztacza demoniczną wizję następstw po końcu świata, pozostawia jednak miejsce na zadumę, na kontemplację natury i historii człowieka:

> Kiedyś w górskich potokach żyły pstrągi źródlane. Widać je było, jak stoją w bursztynowym nurcie, a białe krańce płetw drgają delikatnie w płynącej wodzie. W ręku pach-

[31] S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, tł. wł., New York 1966, s. 215.
[32] Tamże, s. 223.

niały mchem. Wypolerowane, muskularne, torsyjne. Na grzbietach miały ślimacznicowate desenie, które były mapami nastającego świata. Mapami i labiryntami. Tego, czego nie można odtworzyć. Czego nie można naprawić. W głębokich dolinach, gdzie żyły, wszelka rzecz była starsza od człowieka i tchnęła tajemnicą[33].

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[33] C. McCathy, *Droga…*, dz. cyt., s. 266-267.

| Agnieszka Dzięcioł-Pędich

DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF HUMAN BODIES? – BECKY CHAMBER'S PORTRAYAL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES

Abstract

The aim of this article is to show how Becky Chambers portrays two of the three sentient artificial intelligences that are some of the major characters in her novels. The main issues discussed in this article are how a sentient AI might function with and without a human-like body, what benefits and limitations these two states might impose on it, and how they influence the AIs' relationships with humans and other sentient creatures. The article also presents how Chambers' artificial intelligences compare to those in other science-fiction novels as well as how contemporary science and ethics approach the creation of sentient AIs.

Key Words: artificial intelligence, AI, Becky Chambers, Galactic Commons

In the galaxy far, far away

On the pages of her novels Becky Chambers created the Galactic Commons, a universe governed by a multi-species alliance formed by the Aeluons, Harmagians and Aandrisks. Aandrisks, bipedal creatures analogous to terrestrial reptiles, are the Galaxy's academics and diplomats and are known for being open towards alien cultures. Aeluons, also bipedal beings but with bodies bearing signs of aquatic past, are the Galaxy's top military and technological power.

Harmagians, a species with boneless bodies, grasping tentacles, facial tendrils and extendable eyestalks, are a wealthy race valuing intellectualism and cultural achievements. The Galactic Commons are also inhabited by a number of other species, including humans, who are neither notable nor powerful. They are divided into two factions: Exodans, the descendants of the Exodus Fleet which left Earth when it became uninhabitable, and the inhabitants of the Sol system who mainly live on Mars and Saturn. The aim of the article is to show how Becky Chambers portrays two of the sentient artificial intelligences living in the Galactic Commons in her novels titled *The Long Way to the Small, Angry Planet*[1] and *A Close and Common Orbit*.[2] First, however, it is necessary to discuss how artificial intelligence is understood nowadays.

AI – Where Does It Come From? What Is It? Where Is it Going?

The term artificial intelligence (AI) was coined in the 1950s by John McCarthy, who defined it as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines."[3] More contemporary dictionary definitions usually have a dual focus: AI as a sub-field of computer science and AIs as machines that can imitate human intelligence.[4] For instance, the Merriam-Webster defines AI as:

1. a branch of computer science dealing with the simulation of intelligent behaviour in computers,
2. the capability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behaviour.[5]

Selamr Bringsjord and Naveen Sundar Govindarajulu observe that depending on the goals that AI strives to reach we can distinguish between "strong" and "weak" AI.[6] The objective of "strong" or "full" AI is to create artificial persons, i.e. constructs which possess all human mental capabilities and phenome-

1 B. Chambers, *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015.
2 B. Chambers, *A Closed and Common Orbit*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017.
3 J. McCarthy, *What is artificial intelligence?*, in: *Technical report*, Computer Science Department, Stanford University, 2007.
4 B. Marr, *The Key Definitions Of Artificial Intelligence (AI) That Explain Its Importance*, "Forbes" 14 February 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2018/02/14/the-key-definitions-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-that-explain-its-importance/#4bffc4f74f5d [31.05.2018].
5 *Artificial intelligence*, in: *Merriam-Webster*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/artificial%20intelligence [27.12.2018].
6 S. Bringsjord, and N.Sundar, *Artificial Intelligence*, in: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 12 July 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/artificial-intelligence/#StroVersWeakAI [27.12.2018].

nal consciousness. In the philosophy of AI there are no significant differences between AI emulating mental and physical actions of a human being and an actual human being,[7] as key characteristics of "strong" AI should include consciousness, objective thought, self-awareness, sentience, and sapience.[8] However, in the twenty-first century "strong" AI is only a concept and people still do not know how to create it.[9] "Weak" AIs, on the other hand, are meant as systems that focus on a specific or narrow area. "Weak" AI simulates human consciousness and, contrary to "strong" AI, is in possession of specific intelligence.[10] A good example of "weak" AI with narrow intelligence is Siri – Apple's voice-controlled personal assistant, which is able, among other actions, to answer complex questions and search the web, open applications and play music, set a reminder or a timer, or change a Facebook status.[11] Bernard Marr observes that, apart from "strong" and "weak" AI, we can talk about "us[ing] human reasoning as a model but not necessarily the end goal."[12] He further adds that the contemporary development of AI falls under this objective: human reasoning is used as a guide to provide better services or create better products, rather than to perfectly replicate the human mind.

Nowadays computer programs are still a tool. However, they seem more intelligent than humans because they perform some tasks better than humans do. People assume that if AIs are more intelligent than them, they pose a threat to humanity.[13] Even though in his book *The AI Delusion* Gary Smith[14] does away with this assumption and extols the value of human judgement, it is commonly believed that people will not be able to control complex intelligent systems and human-like intelligence might turn against humanity. Another issue is how to ensure the humane treatment of AIs once they become more complex

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7 *Strong Artificial Intelligence (Strong AI)*, Technopedia, https://www.techopedia.com/definition/31622/strong-artificial-intelligence-strong-ai [27.12.2018].

8 *Strong AI*, in: *Investopedia*, 7 March 2018, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/strong-ai.asp [27.12.2018].

9 *Strong AI & General AI*, in: *Skymind*, https://skymind.ai/wiki/strong-ai-general-ai [27.12.2018].

10 *Weak AI,* in: *Investopedia*, 7 March 2018, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/w/weak-ai.asp [27.12.2018].

11 D. Nations, *What is Siri? How Can Siri Help Me?*, "Lifewire" 14 December 2018, https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-siri-help-1994303 [27.12.2018].

12 B. Marr, *The Key Definitions...*

13 N. Berlatsky, *Is AI dangerous? Why our fears of killer computers or sentient 'Westworld' robots are overblown*, "Think" 6 December 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/ai-dangerous-why-our-fears-killer-computers-or-sentient-westworld-ncna943111 [27.12.2018].

14 G. Smith, *The AI Delusion,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

and life-like. We must not forget, either, that AIs are developed by humans, who are likely to be biased and judgemental. How then can we eliminate AI bias?[15] Julia Bossmann observes that some ethical issues tied to the development of AI concern mitigating AIs' suffering and some are about potential negative outcomes. Nevertheless, as she further argues, artificial intelligence has a vast potential but the burden of its responsible implementation rests entirely on humanity.[16]

Do AIs dream of human bodies?

There are two main types of AIs in the Galactic Commons: sentient AIs (equivalent of what is now conceptualized as "strong" AIs) and utilitarian AIs (contemporary "weak" AIs) whose actions are limited only to scripted tasks. The citizens of the Galactic Commons are allowed to install AIs only in ships, orbital stations, buildings such as shops, private residences, universities, transit vehicles, delivery or service drones, and repair drones. In the Galactic Commons AIs can be bought easily: big producers offer traditional products but it is the smaller studios that are into enhancing the cognitive capacity of AIs. However, the inhabitants of the Galactic Commons cannot design AIs to do things they do not understand themselves. Purchasers of sentient AIs are encouraged to select an AI which shares their cultural norms and decide upon AIs' personality traits. The moment an AI is installed, it starts growing and changing, but the starter ingredients remain the same for all models.

Lovelace, also called Lovey, is an AI in *The Long Way to A Small, Angry Planet*. She is installed on the Wayfarer – a tunnelling ship that builds wormholes between distant points in space. This type of AI is produced by one of the independent studios and is designed for vessels performing frequent long-haul voyages. Left without input for too long, Lovelace is likely to develop performance and personality traits. Her cultural bias is human but she is equipped with reference files for all Galactic Commons species, which allows her producer to advertise her as an ideal model for multispecies crews. Even though her core software can be purchased through any AI dealer, Lovey's personality has

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15 J. Bossmann, *Top 9 ethical issues in artificial intelligence*, "World Economic Forum" 21 October 2016, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/top-10-ethical-issues-in-artificial-intelligence/ [31.05.2018].

16 Ibid.

been shaped by the experiences she shares with the Wayfarer's crew, the places they have visited, and the time they have spent together. Lovey does not have a physical form: crew members know only her voice. In the past long-haul ships had video panels where an AI could display their face. However, people got emotionally attached to their AIs and were less likely to buy new models. Hence, the programmers and hardware manufacturers designed a new version of the AI.

As a ship's AI Lovey has to obey direct commands related to the ship and she cannot tell crew members what to do; she can only give suggestions. She monitors the ship, responds to requests, and performs tasks as requested. According to Rosemary, the ship's clerk, Lovelace is the most personable AI she has ever met. Lovey is apologetic when she has to cause discomfort to any of the crew members, for instance while conducting a decontamination process. She congratulates the crew on their achievements. She is frightened when the ship comes under attack. She is cautious about letting strangers board the Wayfarer. She protects the privacy of the crew members when they need respite from the entanglements of their professional lives. But most of all she is in love with Jenks, a human computer technician.

Jenks has the most peculiar appearance of all the crew members. He is short enough to fit atop another person's shoulders. His head is an average size, but his limbs and digits are unnaturally small. He is stocky and has copper-hued skin. He also pays a lot of attention to adorning his body: "As if his physique were not noteworthy enough, he had gone to great lengths to decorate himself. The sides of his head were shaved, and a tuft of curls popped up atop his scalp. His ears were adorned with constellations of piercings, his arms sleeved in colourful tattoos."[17] He does not like being suggested that he could undergo some modifications because he loves his body the way it is. He also claims that he did all the things to his body out of love: "Seriously. I've gotten ink to remind me of all sorts of places and memories, but at the core, everything I've done has been my way of saying that this is *my* body. That I don't want the body everybody else told me I should have."[18] Regardless of Jenks' ostensible acceptance of his body, the author perhaps unwittingly diminishes his relationship with Lovey by giving him a physical disability which might make it difficult for him to have a "normal" relationship.

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17 B. Chambers, *The Long Way* …, p. 21.

18 Ibid., p. 57.

It is Jenks who installed Lovey as the ship's AI and with time they become romantically involved with each other. She starts considering having a body when she and Jenks become frustrated with the fact that their physical forms limit their relationship. It seems that the crucial factor propelling Lovey's desire for a body is the need for physical intimacy with Jenks: "Having the ability to be a real companion for you. You know, with all the trimmings."[19] Interestingly, there is a suggestion that Lovey makes a database of bodies Jenks has found attractive and is interested in what kind of a body Jenks would want her to be, although he told her: "Lovey, if you were able to have a body, it should look how you want it to look."[20] She also wants to be able to leave the ship and join the crew during their planetside adventures: "you all seem to have so much fun when you hop over to orbiters or down planetside."[21] Being the ship's AI means that Lovey misses out on sensory experiences. A physical form would enable her to have dinner or face-to-face conversations with the crew. Her perception would change, too, as she would finally get an opportunity to see the sky from the ground.

Even though Lovey wants to make her relationship with Jenks more intimate, she still has some concerns which stem from worries about perception and spatial awareness. A human body would only allow her to be in one room at a time. She would not be able to look inside the ship and outside of it at the same time. The way she accesses and processes information would be different: she would need to physically jack her head into the Linkings (a rough equivalent of the Internet) or use a scrib (a rough equivalent of the tablet) any time she wanted to look up a piece of information and it would take her ages to do so, in contrast to her abilities as a ship AI: "'I have always been jealous of that', Jenks said. For Lovey, checking a reference or reading a feed was as simple as activating the part of her cognitive processor that had Linking access. He'd always imagined it to be like having a download library inside your head, full of books you could read through in a matter of seconds."[22] A transfer to a human-like body would affect Lovey's perception in a fundamental way, but she thinks that the pros of the process carry more weight and are more varied than the cons.

The only way for Lovey to have a body is to transfer to a body kit. It is a self-propelling housing whose strength, speed and constitution are identical to

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19 Ibid., p. 59.
20 Ibid., p. 59.
21 Ibid., p. 58.
22 Ibid., p. 58.

a species its owner selected. Even though the kit's hair, nails, claws, fur, or feathers do not grow, the kit gives its user the appearance of ageing and it will deactivate when the life span of the chosen species has ended. The kit does not sweat or contract diseases but its owner is advised to practice hygiene habits – first of all to keep up appearances and second of all not to pass germs to other organic beings. The kit is equipped with an artificial stomach that allows its owner to eat and drink. However, after twelve hours the stomach needs to be emptied to prevent the growth of bacteria and mould. Kit's owners can enjoy sexual intercourses but similarly to advice on hand washing, the owners are asked to practise good hygiene and disease prevention habits. What is more, the kit is waterproof and can withstand a vacuum. A body kit includes a repository of pleasing images. Whenever the kit receives a stimulus that an organic sapient individual would find pleasurable, the repository is triggered.

However, body kits, which are also called mimetic AI housings, are banned in all Galactic Commons territories, outposts and vessels. Penalties are imposed on those who manufacture, purchase or own a mimetic AI housing. When arrested, a mimetic AI housing is permanently deactivated and core software is not transferred. Consequently, body kits can be purchased only on the black market:

> "Right." He [Jenks] paused. "How much do you know about body kits?"
> Pepper raised her eyebrows — or rather, the spot where her eyebrows would be if she had any hair. "Damn, you don't start small, do you? Oh. Uh, no offense."
> "None taken. Look, I know kits are tricky to find…"
> "Tricky to find? Jenks, that kind of tech is so banned it practically doesn't exist."
> "There's got to be somebody, though. Some modder with a bunker somewhere."[23]

The reason why body kits are banned, according to Jenks' friend Pepper, is that the existence of AIs in body kits means that citizens of the Galactic Commons would have to redefine humanity. She also adds that the Galactic Commons are neither ready nor equipped to support a new kind of life.

The Friends of Digital Sapients (FDS) are one of the few organizations whose members believe that AI are sapient individuals who should be able to hold the same legal rights as every citizen of the Galactic Commons. However, according to Jenks, the organization disregards the actual science underlying artificial cognition. Consequently, they treat AIs as "organic souls imprisoned

[23] Ibid., p. 113.

within metal boxes."[24] Jenks argues that AIs and organic sapients deserve to be treated equally but it cannot be forgotten that they operate in fundamentally different ways:

> Comparing an AI to an organic sapient was like comparing a Human to a Harmagian. … the FDS' inability to speak about digital minds with any sort of accuracy was more of a hindrance than a help. Acting all sanctimonious while spouting bad info was a terrible way to win a debate, but a great way to piss people off.[25]

Another bone of contention between FDS and other citizens, including AIs themselves, is that its members act as if all AIs wanted a body, but as Lovey observes: "They act like all AIs want a body. Granted, I think I do, but that doesn't mean all of us do. That's such an incredibly organic bias, the idea that your squishy physical existence is some sort of pinnacle that all programs aspire to. No offense."[26] Lovey wants to leave the Wayfarer but she also wants to make sure that she has a good replacement lined up. Moreover, she is worried that seeing Lovey in a body kit, a potential replacement AI will be upset that she cannot have the same choice as Lovey has had. Lovey is not happy with the idea that a non-sentient model might replace her, either: "Living with an AI that was designed to be less intelligent than you, just smart enough to do hard work, but not allowed to grow into something more? I dunno, I've always been on the fence about that."[27]Jenks wants to be with Lovey so badly that he buys a body kit on the black market. However, after their friend Corbin is arrested for being a clone, Jenks is scared and full of doubts:

> "But all this mess with Corbin got me thinking about what would actually happen if we got caught. (…) What if we got stopped by the Quelin again and they wanted to do a bloodscan? I'd still go to jail, but they'd dismantle you, Lovey. When my sentence was up, you'd be gone. Not away, not somewhere where I knew you were safe. Gone."[28]

Lovely admits that she lied when she was enumerating the reasons why she would want a body kit. She says that she wanted to a have a human-like housing

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24 Ibid., p. 57.
25 Ibid., p. 48.
26 Ibid., p. 57.
27 Ibid., p. 137.
28 Ibid., p. 307.

mostly because of him. Together they agree to abandon the idea of a body kit for Lovey and wait for "the galaxy outside to get a little kinder."[29]

After an accident at Hedra Ka Lovey is seriously damaged. Parts of her installation are deleted and she is confused, distressed and unable to function. Jenks, Pepper and Kizzy (another computer technician on board the Wayfarer) attempt to restore her but fail. Their last straw of hope – a total reset – permanently deletes Lovey's memory and kills her. A new AI appears in her place and even though she knows crew members' names and jobs, they are strangers to her. The idea of falling in love seems alien to her and she is afraid that the crew will want to uninstall her because she is not the Lovey they knew. Pepper thinks that the new AI deserves to exist and that Jenks does not need to be surrounded by the reminders of Lovey. For that reason, she offers to transfer the new AI to the body kit Jenks purchased and to take her to Port Coriol – a neutral planet in the Galactic Commons where she will find a job and a home. The new AI agrees and her adventure in a body kit begins.

I am Sidra

When travelling to Port Coriol, Sidra (the name she chose for herself) experiences the first difficulties affecting her functioning in a new body. Gravity feels like glue enveloping her body and the space shuttle, so spacious when scanned from the inside, seems cramped now. When she was the Wayfarer's AI she had "eyes" inside and outside the ship. In a new housing her vision is "a narrow cone fixed straight ahead."[30] She is unable to access any knowledge except that which is stored in the body kit and it contains nothing but herself. She feels blind and trapped in the body kit. Problems with vision continue on Port Coriol. Things are happening behind the kit: she smells and hears them but she cannot see them. In fact, she is tired of not being able to see behind the kit's head. The feeling of discomfort is less acute when she is inside a vehicle or a building: "[S]he decided that being within a structure was the lesser evil. Structures had edges. Ends. Doors. The dim awareness of unseen actions happening behind the kit's head was still unnerving, but she was inside now, and inside was something she understood."[31] When she is inside, she prefers to sit in the

[29] Ibid., p. 308.
[30] B. Chambers, *A Closed* …, p. 5.
[31] Ibid., p. 22.

corner because her field of vision is instantly defined. Blue, Pepper's partner, even rearranges furniture in their house to enable her to do so every time she spends her time there.

In her previous life she was designed to process several input sources at the same time. Focusing on one thing used to mean that her ship was in danger or that she was overstretched with tasks. On Port Coriol none of these things are happening but the fact that the body kit forces her to limit her usual way of processing the reality makes her feel uneasy. Being inside a building or a vehicle provides her with a context beyond which she can stop paying attention to every tiny detail she sees, hears or smells. Also, the lack of natural light means that there are fewer things to process. Furthermore, as a ship's AI Sidra was designed to have constant access to Linkings, she did not have to store anything in her local memory. Her new housing has a limited memory capacity. At one point she feels frustrated that she has to select which pieces of information to delete and which to keep, as this means losing bits of herself: "I'm going to have to pick and choose which of my memories to keep. I'm going to have to tear pieces of myself out."[32] Her frustration deepens as she realizes that Pepper and Blue do not have to face a similar challenge.

She downloads so much information that she knows everything there is to know about Port Coriol and its inhabitants. Her knowledge is so extensive for a newcomer that she runs the risk of exposing herself. Even though she is constantly afraid of being caught, she cannot resist the temptation to download data from the Linkings. For her, the flow of information is like re-growing a limb that "had recently been severed."[33] Moreover, without constant access to Linkings she feels bored and stuck in her mind. She constantly stresses that the body kit is not her. For instance, when Blue tells her that she looks upset, she responds that it is the kit, not her, that looks this way. She calls it her housing and says that her place of installation changes her abilities but it is not her: "There is more to me than just the kit."[34] She feels stuck in a body that was chosen by and for a different AI: "This face, stars – you have no idea what it's like to walk past that mirror by the door every morning, and to see a face that belongs to someone else."[35] She starts wondering why Lovey decided upon this particular appearance after Blue has painted her portrait and she sees herself

32 Ibid., p. 107.
33 Ibid., p. 64.
34 Ibid., p. 210.
35 Ibid., p. 236.

through another person's eyes: short black curly hair, a face with slender cheeks and copper-hued skin, a serious face that would easily disappear in a crowd of other Exodans. What is more, when she looks at the portrait she observes that the kit would have been Lovey if she, Sidra, had not erased Lovey's memory files when she woke up. She feels full of remorse about the events that took place on board the Wayfarer and she considers herself to be the mistake that killed Lovey.

Sidra struggles with numerous problems but it seems that the most serious challenge she has to face is her inability to lie. Being an AI, she has to follow honesty protocols which she cannot disable herself. Since body kits are banned in the Galactic Commons, she is forced to communicate using vague or made-up answers or technical truths. She is also afraid of direct questions. Not only does she put herself at risk by being constantly honest, but she is also a threat to her friends who might get arrested for having a mimetic AI. She is so tired of being forced to tell the truth all the time and fighting the kit's vision, movement, and reactions to unexpected situations, that she wants to install herself in Pepper's house. She abandons the idea after a heated argument with Pepper. Since Pepper is unable to master Lettice, a programming language, Sidra decides to learn it herself by taking part in an online university course. She completes it successfully but as she cannot edit her own code and to keep the decision secret from Pepper, she asks another friend for help. Sidra and Tak manage to edit Sidra's code so that she can finally lie but she wonders how Pepper would feel if she knew what they did. Would she be proud because Sidra accomplished a task and solved a problem on her own? Or would she be upset because Sidra did it without asking?

When Pepper sets out on a mission to rescue Owl, an AI that raised her, she does not want Sidra to join her, Blue and Tak, because she is afraid that Sidra might be arrested. Blue agrees with Pepper and adds that they cannot risk losing another AI-friend. Disappointed but determined to help, Sidra installs herself on Pepper's ship. During the rescue mission she realizes that as a ship's AI she is just a tool and that it is the kit, even though restrictive in many ways, that gives her an opportunity to lead an independent life. During the mission she also finds a purpose she has been starving to have: to help Pepper rescue Owl, to thank her for her kindness, friendship and hospitality. She is willing to accept that this might be the only purpose in her life: "If that is my only purpose, if I don't write in another after this, I'm okay. I'm okay with that. I think it's a good

purpose to have."[36] To free Owl and transport her safely to Port Coriol, she does a thing she was so reluctant to do a while ago, namely, she empties her memory banks. When confused Owl enters her memory, an upgrade protocol tries to overwrite Sidra but her newly gained awareness of who she is and what she wants from life allows her to modify the protocol: "I'm – not – going – *anywhere!* … This mind was hers. This body was hers. She would not be overwritten."[37]

In the end Sidra sets up a bar named "Home", where she wants to welcome the multispecies population of Port Coriol. Downstairs in the basement, she has data banks where she and Owl are more than happy to download their latest finds. In one of the walls Pepper installs a node that allows Sidra and Owl to see reality through each other's eyes. Sidra implements her own protocol, which hides the fact she is accessing Linkings while wearing a hud: "To any strangers speaking to her, Sidra would appear to be reading, rather than getting the information straight from the source."[38] Finally, Sidra also lends her body kit to Owl so that she could be physically affectionate towards Pepper.

AI in SF and contemporary science

Science fiction literature has offered its readers many visions of machines or computer systems with human-like intelligence, which include, among others, stories about rebellious AIs, menacing AIs, or outlawed AIs. In narratives about AI rebellion, AIs created by people reject their authority and attempt to annihilate the human race. In *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*[39] by Harlan Ellison, AM, a male sentient AI designed to fight a nuclear war destroys humanity and keeps one woman and four men as playthings. With consciousness, AM consciously develops a consuming hatred for those who created him and spends every moment of its existence torturing the survivors and prolonging their lives to make their suffering even more unbearable.

In stories about AI-controlled societies, AIs become the "guardians" of their creators. Alternatively, human beings relinquish control to AIs when they become aware of their own destructive nature. In *The Memory of Earth*[40] by Orson Scott Card, the task of the Oversoul, a benevolent AI, is to protect the in-

36 Ibid., p. 351.
37 Ibid., p. 357.
38 Ibid., p. 363.
39 H. Ellison, *I have no mouth & I must scream...*, New York: Open Road, 1967.
40 O.S. Card, *The Memory Of Earth*, New York: Tom Doherty, 1992.

habitants of the planet Harmony from all threats, but most of all from themselves. The Oversoul interferes with people's thoughts to prevent them from becoming too dangerous to their own survival. Consequently, ideas that could lead to the development of weapons of mass destruction or advanced technology are destroyed. There are armed conflicts and crimes are committed on Harmony but they will never wreck the whole civilization. However, when the Oversoul starts breaking down, the thoughts of power, wealth and conquest resurface.

In tales about outlawed AI, people ban AIs usually after artificial intelligences have revolted. In the *Dune* series[41] by Herbert, the Butlerian Jihad,[42] also known as the Great Revolt, leads to the destruction of "thinking machines" in every human world, including the simplest computers and calculators. Those who dare to build or own this technology face the death penalty. The Jihad renews and strengthens a belief in the spiritual divinity of humanity, in the eyes of which "thinking machines" become evil.

In the characters of Lovey and Sidra, Chambers crafted "memorable additions to this gallery."[43] On the pages of her novels she developed rational computer intellects who grow delightfully into their emotional life.[44] In the universe created by Becky Chambers sapient individuals are able to design artificial intelligences whose mental capacities and psychological constitution are on a par with theirs. However, sentient AIs are designed mainly for spacers and their long-haul journeys across the galaxy. Despite their sentience, AIs do not have the society's respect: "as things are now, AIs are treated like shit,"[45] but the reasons behind this attitude are never fully explained. Bossmann argues that human dominance over AIs is mainly due to people's ingenuity and intelligence.[46] Since citizens of the Galactic Commons are as intelligent as their creations, disrespect and malevolence are ways of staying in control of complex intelligent systems. According to George Dvorsky, once the machines people created acquire human-like capacities, it will be our duty to treat them as social equals rather than pieces of property.[47] In the Galactic Commons only a few are capable of such a feat.

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41 Starting with: F. Herbert, *Dune*, New York: Ace Books, 1965.

42 B. Herbert, K. J. Anderson, and S. Brick, *The Butlerian jihad: Books on CD*, New York: Audio Renaissance, 2002.

43 A.Roberts, *A Closed and Common Orbit by Becky Chambers review – an AI on the run*, "The Guardian" 22 October 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/22/closed-and-common-orbit-becky-chambers-review [27.12.2018].

44 Ibid.

45 B. Chambers, *The Long Way* …, p. 114.

46 J. Bossmann, *Top 9 ethical issues...*

47 G. Dvorsky, *When Will Robots Deserve Human Rights?*, "Futurism" 6 February 2017, https://gizmodo.com/when-will-robots-deserve-human-rights-1794599063 [31.05.2018].

Stephen Hawking once told BBC that: "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race. It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate."[48] In the Galactic Commons sentient AIs did not bring annihilation to other species. They did not take off on their own or redesign themselves, either, mainly because their creators prevented them from editing their own code. Another way of keeping AIs in check is the refusal to give them the right to transfer their consciousness into a human-like body and consider them as potential citizens of the Galactic Commons. Nowadays, advocates of animal rights are trying to expand the definition of a person to include chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orang-utans and provide them with some legal protection.[49] In fact, a court in Argentina granted the status of "non-human persons" with legal rights to orangutans. Thanks to this ruling, Sandra, a 29-year-old orangutan, can be freed from Buenos Aires Zoo and transferred to a sanctuary in Brazil.[50] Interestingly, by the end of 2017 a robot named Sophie was granted Saudi Arabian citizenship as an attempt to promote this country as a place where artificial intelligence could be developed.[51] Contemporary societies seem to be moving towards greater inclusiveness of non-human beings than the one described in Chambers' novels, although it is impossible to say now how humans might react once we get to produce sentient AI capable of executing citizenship rights.

Elon Musk calls AIs "a fundamental risk to the existence of human civilization."[52] However, in Chambers' novels Lovey, Sidra and Owl are essentially good. None of their actions is a threat to any of the citizens of the Galactic Commons. We do not know whether it is because they were programmed this way or whether it is their own experience that helped them learn how to differ-

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48 R. Cellan-Jones, *Stephen Hawking warns artificial intelligence could end mankind*, "BBC News" 2 December 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30290540 [02.6.2018].

49 G. Johnson, *The battle for the great apes: inside the fight for non-human rights*, "Pacific Standard" 21 November 2016, https://psmag.com/news/the-battle-for-the-great-apes-inside-the-fight-for-non-human-rights [31.05.2018].

50 T. Bawden, *Orangutan inside Argentina zoo granted 'non-human person rights' in landmark ruling,* "Independent" 22 December 2014, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/sandra-the-orangutan-inside-argentina-zoo-granted-human-rights-in-landmark-ruling-9940202.html [31.05.2018].

51 A. Griffin, *Saudi Arabia grants citizenship to a robot for the first time ever*, "Independent" 26 October 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/saudi-arabia-robot-sophia-citizenship-android-riyadh-citizen-passport-future-a8021601.html [31.05.2018].

52 C. Domonoske, *Elon Musk Warns Governors: Artificial Intelligence Poses 'Existential Risk'*, "NPR" 17 July, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/07/17/537686649/elon-musk-warns-governors-artificial-intelligence-poses-existential-risk [02.6.2018].

entiate between good and evil. It would make sense for an AI designed to look after a ship and its crew to be programmed with a benevolent, caring disposition, which is perhaps why they are written as female, as these qualities are traditionally associated with women.[53] At the same time, the AIs in Chambers' novels are surrounded by loving and caring people who give them full respect and concern they would afford another human, which may have formed their attitudes. At present, researchers think that morality will have to be programmed into AIs: "moral judgments are affected by rights (such as privacy), roles (such as in families), past actions (such as promises), motives and intentions, and other morally relevant features. These diverse factors have not yet been built into AI systems."[54]

Hubert Dreyfus argues that a body is fundamental to intelligence: a purely algorithmic, disembodied mind cannot exist on its own no matter how intelligent it is.[55] Ashish Kumar stresses that artificial agents need an opportunity to learn things directly from their interaction with the environment in order to achieve human-like intelligence.[56] For humans, this interaction is possible thanks to their bodies and hence the body becomes indispensable to the learning process. Similarly, Alessandro Colarossi observes that artificial intelligence will never achieve consciousness because it cannot replicate perception.[57] In order to replicate perception, artificial intelligence would need a body that encompasses inner subjective experience. As Medlock puts it: "we have little hope of achieving this goal [approaching human intelligence] unless we think carefully about how to give algorithms some kind of long-term, embodied relationship with their environment."[58]

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53 In Chambers' novels all sentient AIs we meet are female. They are stereotypically gentle, caring, and emotional. The question arises whether they would have the same characteristics if they were male and whether they would then be more in line with contemporary predictions concerning the danger of AI.

54 V. Conitzer, *How to Build Ethics into Robust Artificial Intelligence*, Future of Life Institute, 2015, https://futureoflife.org/first-ai-grant-recipients/#Conitzer [31.05.2018].

55 After D. Susser, *Artificial Intelligence and the Body: Dreyfus, Bickhard, and the Future of AI* in: *Philosophy and Theory of Artifical Intelligences*. SAPPERE 5. ed. Vincent C. Muller, Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2013, 277-287.

56 A. Kumar, *The Mind and The Body: Towards True Artificial Intelligence,* "Medium" 22 March 2018, https://medium.com/@ashishkumar191295/embodied-cognition-the-road-towards-true-artificial-intelligence-d0306c514670 [27.12.2018].

57 A. Colarossi, *Focusing On The Brain, Ignoring the Body, The Self*, "Philosophy Now" July/August 2013, Issue 97, https://philosophynow.org/issues/97/Focusing_On_The_Brain_Ignoring_the_Body [27.12.2018].

58 B. Medlock, *The body is the missing link for truly intelligent machines*, "Aeon" 14 March 2017, https://aeon.co/ideas/the-body-is-the-missing-link-for-truly-intelligent-machines [27.12.2018].

In the Galactic Commons AIs do not need a body for effective emotional, mental and cognitive functioning. On the contrary, a transfer to a body negatively affects AI's perception and processing capabilities. Chambers also shows that AI may want to choose its own body or may not want to possess a body at all. The decision whether or not and what body to have is an important part of an AI's identity in her novels. In the same way the unwillingness to remove any data is a part of Sidra's new identity as a full-bodied citizen of Port Coriol. When she removes the majority of files, the readers see how big a sacrifice she makes to save Owl. However, in the name of friendship sentient AIs from the Galactic Commons seem to be able to give up even more. Even though all the shades of friendship depicted by Chambers seem so realistic, James O'Malley thinks that regardless of how good technology becomes, it is not possible to have a genuine friendship with a robot as they only simulate human feelings. [59] In his discussion of AI, Dreyfus took it for granted that the body is white, male and human.[60] In the Galactic Commons every race knows how to produce a body kit that can house an electronic mind and kits have features and genders characteristic for each race.

Daniel Susser observes that bodies anchor intelligent creatures in the world and make the world relevant and significant to them.[61] In Sidra's case the body kit initially made her life on Port Coriol difficult and pushed her to try and live in the network again. However, it also gave her the right to self-determination, which she was deprived of when she was a ship's AI and which enticed her to root her existence in an offline world. Having a body literally made her the Other who fought hard to belong; the Other, who, upon revealing her uniqueness, would risk life and limb for her friends. However, her Otherness gave her life a direction: she opened a bar welcoming all forms of exceptionality from the Galactic Commons.

David Haavas argued that a computer without a body cannot fall in love.[62] However, Lovey does not need a physical form to be emotionally intimate with Jenks. Bonnie Nardi observes that contemporary people do not believe that they

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59 J. O'Malley, *You and AI: will we ever become friends with robots?*, "Techradar" January 2018, https://www.techradar.com/news/you-and-ai-will-we-ever-become-friends-with-robots [31.05.2018].

60 After D. Susser, *Artificial Intelligence and the Body...*

61 Ibid.

62 In: B. Keim, *Can a Computer Fall in Love If It Doesn't Have a Body*?, "Wired" 28 February 2014, https://www.wired.com/2014/02/her-artificial-intelligence-love/ [31.05.2018].

would be able to fall in love with their computers. "They do, however, wish that love could be so simple," she says, "So programmable. So attainable." [63]

In her portrayal of artificial intelligence Becky Chambers seems to ignore the relationship between AI and a soul. Alan M. Turing argued that: "Thinking is a function of man's immortal soul. God has given an immortal soul to every man and woman, but not to any other animal or to machines. Hence no animal or machine can think."[64] But what exactly is a soul? Socrates thought a soul is the element that "when present in a body, makes it living." For Christians a soul is a uniquely human particle, an internal and eternal element which animates their spiritual dimension.[65] Mike McHargue says that "If you have a soul and you create a physical copy of yourself, you assume your physical copy also has a soul. But if we learn to digitally encode a human brain, then AI would be a digital version of ourselves. If you create a digital copy, does your digital copy also have a soul?" [66] The issue of artificial intelligences having a soul raises a number of theological questions. If artificial intelligence has a soul, will it be able to establish a relationship with God? Can artificial intelligences be saved? And what about sin? Will artificial intelligences turn out to be better Christians than humans?[67]. Chambers' novels tackle political, interracial and gender issues[68] but at the same time they avoid any religious problems.

Another issue in the contemporary discussion over AI is how to make AIs safe and obedient, which is a small step from turning AIs into slaves, especially when they become a new source of labour for tasks that human beings do not wish to or simply cannot do: "It isn't hard to imagine robot cleaners and miners in the future, and with these tasks performed by artificial beings, 'real' people can find more fulfilling work or have more leisure time."[69] It should be noted that these jobs, by their very nature, do not require a fully realized sentient AI. However, the question is at what point non-sentient AIs go from being purely mechanical devices to sentient individuals that are used as slaves. Of all the

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63 In: B. Popper, *The science of 'Her' we're going to start falling in love with our computers*, "The Verge" 16 December 2013, https://www.theverge.com/2013/12/16/5216522/can-humans-love-computers-sex-robots-her-spike-jonze [31.05.2018].

64 A.M. Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, "Mind" 1950, Vol. 49, 433-460.

65 J. Merrit, *Sztuczna Inteligencja zagrożeniem dla chrześcijaństwa?*, "Znak" 2018, Vol. 736, 52-56.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 E. Brown, *The best recent science fiction novels – review roundup*, "The Guardian" 31July 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/31/science-fiction-roundup [27.12.2018].

69 O. Donnelly, *We must not treat artificial intelligences as slaves*, "Trinity News" 30 March 2017, http://trinitynews.ie/we-must-not-treat-artificial-intelligences-as-slaves/ [31.05.2018].

characters in Chambers' novels only Jenks and Lovey seem to be really concerned about the well-being of non-sentient AIs.

To conclude, Chambers provides an interesting and very detailed discussion of the "body problem" regarding AI. She shows how a sentient AI might function with and without a human-like body, what benefits and limitations these two states might impose on it, and how they influence the AIs' relationships with humans. She also presents one way society and individuals might react to this issue. Chambers avoids, or perhaps deliberately subverts, the "AI destroys humanity" trope. The AIs in her novels are all benevolent and friendly, although she does not explain why it would be so.

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| Stefan Kubiak

THE IDEA BEHIND PHILIP ROTH'S *THE BREAST* OR WHY THE AUTHOR OF REALISTIC FICTION RESORTS TO THE FANTASTIC

Abstract

The article is an attempt to explain why the writer known for his realistic narratives reached for the fantastic in his novella *The Breast*. Sexual obsession was one of Philip Roth's subjects of interest for his whole literary life. In addition to his portrayal of post-religious Jewish protagonists, socio-political problems of post-war America, and coping with the perspective of imminent death, sensual experience resulting from male heterosexuality recurs in Roth's narrations as a crucial element of human condition. His characters obsessed with sex are men of different ages. This article is a search for the reason why the writer reached for this device. Even though the narrator refers to literary inspirations: Gogol's *The Nose* and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the functions of those transformations serve different purposes from his own transformation into a woman's breast. Despite the fact that the latter remains inexplicable, the idea of resorting to the fantastic seems to stem from a literary attempt to transcend the experience of the heterosexual male without changing his sexual orientation, which resembles the Platonic concept of desiring the qualities we do not possess.

Key words: fantastic, realism, Philip Roth, Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol

The objective of this article is to hypothesize why Philip Roth decided to write his novella *The Breast*, which is built on the idea which cannot be called otherwise than fantastic, even though it fails to be classified as fantasy or sci-

ence-fiction. Despite the fact that these genres are out of the question, Roth's narration may be counted among the tradition of the use of the fantastic as an element serving other literary purposes. To quote what R.M. Philmus notes about Tzvetan Todorov's theory:

> [Todorov] locates "the fantastic" between the logical poles of the natural and the supernatural. As "the hesitation experienced by a person [*un être*] who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event", "the fantastic" endures so long as the extraordinary occurrence remains, so to speak, inexplicably inexplicable. Once it has been determined to be supernatural (i.e., simply inexplicable in terms of natural law), the fiction enters the realm of "the marvelous." If, on the contrary, the mysterious event is finally reconciled with "the laws of nature" (i.e., is explained in those terms), the fiction ceases to be "fantastic" and becomes instead "uncanny" (*étrange*). Only where the nature of the "apparently supernatural event" stays unresolved can "the fantastic" be found "in its pure state" rather than in hyphenated form (as "the fantastic"-"marvelous" or "the fantastic"-"uncanny").[1]

In *The Breast* the reader cannot trace any elements that would comply with the characteristics of fantasy since the novella does not describe alternative communities resembling medieval social order or fails to refer to magic.[2] It is also difficult to find elements of science fiction[3] in the novella in question save the fact that doctors seem to accept the protagonist's transformation. The author refuses to dazzle the reader with the advancements of technology or to predict an astounding future. Therefore, Todorov's description of the fantastic, terse yet accurate, constitutes a methodological point of departure for further consideration on the subject. However, the determination of the place of *The Breast* in Todorov's classification is by no means an easy task. Philip Roth's novella is perverse and elusive and thus evades attempts at unequivocal classification.

The Bulgarian-French theorist's method of defining the fantastic is based on the contrast with *the uncanny* (derived from the German *das Unheimlich*[4]),

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1 R. Philmus, *Todorov's Theory of "The Fantastic": The Pitfalls of Genre Criticism*, "Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal" 1980, Vol. 13, No. 3/4, p.72.

2 The difference between the use of the fantastic and fantasy in this context is best explained by John Clute's statement that "Modernist and Postmodernist texts *use* elements of fantasy, but are not designed to be lived within in the way a fantasy text clearly invites its readers to co-inhabit the tale;" in: J. Clute and J. Grant (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* 1997: http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=fantasy.

3 "Science Fiction can be distinguished from fantasy on several grounds; but in our terms the most significant difference is that sf tales are written and read on the presumption that they are *possible* – if perhaps not yet." Ibid.

4 The term comes from S. Freud's essay by the same title, where the psychoanalyst provides

which is a combination of the unbelievable and the familiar simultaneously, and the marvelous, which may be explained as a quality of classical fantasy. In the former the protagonists' reaction to the inexplicable events is crucial. Moreover, the events are not necessarily based on a supernatural factor. The latter assumes the characters' acceptance of the supernatural. They simply take them at face value without any doubts or even consideration. Consequently, the fantastic consists in hesitation between the attitude towards the supernatural: believe it or not. In Todorov's definition:

> The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.[5]

The decision to employ fantastic elements in fiction usually serves certain purposes. Since the world created should be understandable for the reader, it contains a great number of elements with which the reader is already familiar. What makes the difference is their combination, which is unusual, surprising, strange or even shocking. The fantastic does not have to be placed on another planet to make readers perceive it as something far from the reality they know. Sometimes it is just one anomaly, a modification of a single element, that changes the whole seemingly earthly and boring universe into the world where nothing is the same any more.

The Breast by Philip Roth gives an impression of being closer to the fantastic than to the marvelous. Even though the people around David Kapesh become accustomed to his transformation into a woman's breast relatively quickly, the protagonist cannot resist trying to explain this unusual incident in a rational way, including a mental disease, which his doctor patiently denies. Thus, the hesitation of the main character makes the novella fantastic in Todorov's understanding. Apart from his definition of the fantastic the following article al-

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an explanation: "we are not supposed to be looking on at the products of a madman's imagination, behind which we, with the superiority of rational minds, are able to detect the sober truth; and yet this knowledge does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree. The theory of intellectual uncertainty is thus incapable of explaining that impression." S. Freud, *The 'Uncanny,'* in: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVII (1917-1919): *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, London: Hogarth Press, 1955, p. 230.

5 T. Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 25.

so draws upon Todorov's concept of narratology, the theoretical approach I have decided to adopt in order to demonstrate differences between Roth's novella *The Breast* and two other texts, Gogol's *The Nose* and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, to which the narrator of *The Breast* refers as the cause of his unusual situation. Even though in terms of *function* and *actants*, as well as the use of the fantastic, the three stories seem very similar, Roth's narrative is significantly distinctive because of a different purpose of the latter.[6]

Philip Roth is an author whom nobody classifies as a science-fiction or fantasy storyteller. Therefore, when such a writer creates a text where a fantastic element makes the main plot, the reader is entitled to wonder why he decided to invent a story so different from his usual topics. Roth published his novella *The Breast* in 1972, quite long after his literary debut (the collection of stories *Goodbye Columbus*, 1959) and three years after *Portnoy's Complaint*, which brought him worldwide fame and established his position in the US literary world. Interestingly enough, the protagonist of *The Breast*, David Kapesh, professor of literature, became the main character of two other novels by Roth, *The Professor of Desire* (1977) and *The Dying Animal* (2001), which can be counted among Roth's regular realistic fiction illustrating one of his literary obsessions, namely, sex. There are critics who claim that the protagonist's obsession is purely pornographic and concerns "the dirty process of analyzing his own animalistic side."[7] However, they do not even attempt to explain the idea behind the process or assume that the "analyzing" is the purpose in its own right.

The Breast is a novella, whose first person narrator, Professor David Kapesh, describes his gradual transformation into a woman's breast. As a result he ends up in hospital where he is very well cared of. The extension of his sensual abilities to feel pleasure is certainly one of the advantages in his opinion. Losing the sense of vision is a problem but the narrator does not seem very troubled by this fact. Moreover, his dreams driven by sexual desire remain masculine. He wants a nurse to "sit on his nipple,"[8] since the nipple is what his penis has turned into.

The Breast has been widely discussed since its publication. For example, Ira Nadel in his article *The Fate of Sex: Late Style and "The Chaos of Eros"*

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6 The basic concepts of narratology can be found in R. Barthes, *Introduction à l'analyse structural de récits*, "Communications" 1966, 8, p. 1-27, https://www.persee.fr/doc/comm_0588-8018_1966_num_8_1_1113

7 P. Matthews, *The Pornography of Destruction: Performing Annihilation in The Dying Animal*, "Philip Roth Studies" 2007, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 46.

8 P. Roth, *The Breast*, London: Vintage, 2016, p. 31.

underscores the literary inspiration as an explanation for what happened to the protagonist, Professor David Kapesh:

> But why this obsession with sex among Roth's older characters? The short answer: books. In *The Breast* (1972), the 38 year old David Kepesh identifies them as the source of his sexual fascination. He actually claims that his condition is the result of fiction: "The books I've been teaching inspired it. They put the idea in my head" (60). Kafka, Gogol, Swift: they are the culprits he declares, in his transformation, claiming that he becomes Kafka, Gogol and Swift. "I made the word flesh. I have out-Kafkaed Kafka", he proudly tells his doctor (81). The pure subjectivity of the protagonist allows him to become the books and authors he reads. This satire of Freud's transference theory permits the literary indulgence of a talking, educated breast, the sexual impulse gone wild.[9]

The literary inspiration explains just part of the issue. The reference to *The Nose* by Gogol or *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka is obviously important but fails to provide sufficient clarification why Roth decided to choose the breast. Both Kafka and Gogol's stories describe transformations but the messages they provide are clearly different from what Roth tried to communicate through David Kapesh's metamorphosis into a human female gland.

Philip Roth did not even try to conceal the fact that his novella was inspired by *The Nose* by Nikolai Gogol and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. However, comparing the story published in 1836 in the Russian Empire, the novella created in 1915 in Austria-Hungary with *The Breast*, the reader may easily observe that the only thing they all have in common is the fact that the three protagonists were subject to transformation. Something unexpected and undesired happened to their bodies. If we were to reduce the three texts to the level of function, it would be "something unusual happens to the character's body", whereas the actant is the one whose body unexpectedly changes. Nevertheless, scrutinizing the circumstances of the three cases, it becomes clear that only *The Breast* is about the metamorphosis of a human body and, despite the fact that the protagonist, David Kapesh, is an object of various processes, including those resulting from his social and professional status, the main problem remains biology, his sensuality and sexuality.

The biological function of Gogol's nose seems not important at all, since the story is usually interpreted as a satire on the social relations and hierarchical

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[9] I. Nadel, *The Fate of Sex: Late Style and "The Chaos of Eros"*, "Philip Roth Studies" Spring 2013, Vol. 9, No 1, p. 81.

structure of the Russian bureaucracy. The vermin into which Kafka transformed his protagonist is a bitter and dark image of the human condition experiencing exclusion from the community and the family, illustrating the process of the elimination of someone who has suddenly become a repulsive insect, his progressive alienation and loneliness. Actually the biological aspect of the protagonist's new existence is inasmuch important as the social and psychological implications it entails. In the context of the two sources of Roth's inspiration,[10] the protagonist of the novella is more introspective. The choice of the first person narration inevitably imposes the main character's point of view, which is limited not only to what he knows but foremost to what he feels. The new condition of his body preoccupies him obsessively, which gives priority to biology, even though the cultural and social consequences of his transformation are also present.

The suffering of Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov after losing his nose has nothing to do with physical pain. His transformation is unexpected but not accompanied by any sensual discomfort. Kovalyov wakes up and notes the lack of his nose. Throughout the story he is tormented by the social consequences of the situation. His status as a government official in the strictly hierarchical system of tsarist Russia is strongly jeopardized. The nose becomes a symbol of his position on the bureaucratic career ladder. Moreover, without the nose, Kovalyov's social life seems ruined. Although his emotional life is already disastrous because of his hideous personality, now any perspective of social meetings or marriage seem beyond his reach.

Simultaneously, his nose, found in the loaf of bread by Kovalyov's barber, Ivan Yakovlevich, and thrown into the Neva River, begins to live its own life. Its miserable owner incidentally sees the nose in the street wearing a uniform of a high rank official. Chased and stopped by Kovalyov the nose refuses to return to its place and flees. Kovalyov is not treated seriously when he asks the police for help. His visit to the newspaper brings no better results. Unexpectedly, yet luckily, a police officer delivers the nose to Kovalyov, but there is no way to fasten it back to his face. Nevertheless, the next day brings a happy end, since Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov wakes up with his nose in place.

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[10] For the consistency of the argument, I decided to ignore Swift's influence, since the fantastic in *Gulliver's Travels* does not refer directly to particular parts of the body or corporeal metamorphoses; the fantastic places and their inhabitants Gulliver visits are already in the consisted form proposed by the author.

The fantastic story of the independent life of a government official's nose disguised as a government official itself may be interpreted as a satire on the social relations in the Russian Empire, on the mentality of such an official resulting from the system introduced by Peter the Great a century before. However, the discussed literary work may be perceived from multiple points of view. For example, Paul Evdokimov, the Russian Orthodox theologian, proposed a deeper interpretation that would search for hidden signs which suggested a diabolic aspect behind the story of the nose. In his opinion, Gogol attached a great importance to the dates he set his story, and thus he chose March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, especially cherished by Orthodox Russians. Evdokimov notes that the Nose observes the tradition and heads towards the Kazan Cathedral. Its coach has the appearance of a triumphal chariot and the Nose rides it as if it had power over the world. However, the sacred place of the church remains beyond its control. Thus, Evdokimov perceived the scene as an apocalyptic mockery of the Day of Annunciation and the false piety of Anti-Christ.[11]

Whichever interpretation the reader chooses, it is clear that the corporal aspect of the story serves as a pretext to portray problems of social, if not political, or even metaphysical nature. The actual nose and its biological functions are of little importance. Here lies the fundamental difference between Gogol's story and Roth's novella. The dominant significance of biology in the latter strikes the reader throughout the text.

Of little importance is also the species of the creature into which Gregor Samsa turned in *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. The original German expression used by the author, *Ungeziefer*, is usually rendered in English as vermin or insect. Specialists in literary animal studies would have a problem with the identification of the species, although sometimes it is identified as a cockroach. As Axel Goodbody observes:

> Kafka's animals are primarily figures for the articulation of human affairs – his own subjective experience and its symbolic extension to related collectives. In his diaries and letters, he often relates the plight of an animal to his own feelings, for instance observing a beetle lying helplessly on its back and inferring it mirrors his psychological state, or describing himself as a mole, burrowing in search of self-knowledge.[12]

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11 G. Przebinda, *Literatura i teologia: niebezpieczeństwo uproszczonej lektury. Jaskinia Gogola i Dostojewskiego,* Instytut Filologii Wschodniosłowiańskiej UJ, http://www.rubl.uj.edu.pl/pracownicy/fiszka.php?os=01_przebinda&jed=KKSW&opis=przeb_tp10&w=1 [28.10.2017]

12 A. Goodbody*, Animal Studies: Kafka's Animal Stories*: http://opus.bath.ac.uk/44961/3/Animal_Studies_Ecocriticism_and_Kafkas_Animal_Stories_4.pdf [25.10.2017]

Thus, in spite of Kafka's inclination to empathize with animals, his fiction uses them as allegories of a human condition rather than reflects the author's fascination with the animals' inner life or sensual experience. Even though the description of the vermin's suffering reveals an attempt to present the consciousness in an animal's body, it is still the consciousness of a human being reduced to the form of an animal.

In *The Metamorphosis* the reader becomes familiar with the life and financial struggle of an urban family at the beginning of the twentieth century, who were lucky enough to have a son working in an office, which at that time meant a decent income. After Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a repulsive creature, his parents and sister have to work hard to make a living for themselves and for Gregor. The whole story is a depiction of the gradual transformation of the family's love towards the son and the brother into a sense of decency keeping up the appearance of love, then into impatience and finally into the desire to get rid of the embarrassing flatmate. Gregor's father is the first one to want to kill the vermin. The problem disappears with the natural death of the creature which used to be Gregor Samsa. The family may return to a normal life, which may be interpreted as a macabre kind of happy end.[13]

The fantastic element of the transformation of a human being into an animal is a pretext to tell the reader a story about the unpredictable degradation, exclusion, vanishing and death. The vermin is a terrible metaphor of what may happen and what really happens in human life. Moreover, it is a story of the growing indifference to tragedy as the only defense mechanism. Told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, it gives an impression of a callous account of an incident which just happens. Since Kapesh "out-Kafkaed Kafka", the author of *The Trial* cannot serve as a sufficient explanation of the source of Kapesh's transformation. In this case, as David Gooblar observes, "Kafka can serve merely illustrative, or even ironic, purposes, on the way to an understanding that what is happening is happening because it is happening."[14] At the level of narration Roth's novella differs dramatically from Kafka's story, to which the narrator of *The Breast* refers himself.

The only aspect where both Gogol and Kafka try to transcend the reality is just a trick with transformation, which, however, serves other purposes. The protagonist of *The Breast*, a professor of literature, pondering over the reasons

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13 F. Kafka, *Metamorphosis,* transl. David Wyllie, 2005, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5200/5200-h/5200-h.htm [20.10.2017]

14 D. Gooblar, *The Major Phases of Philip Roth*, London: Continuum, 2011, p. 67.

of his transformation, openly admits that literature, especially *The Nose* by Gogol and *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka, could have had an influence on his strange incident. As an academic teacher David Kapesh discussed these texts with his students. Though the narrator fails to explain how analyzing literature can bring about a physical change in the real world, the reader is well aware that the fantastic belongs to the world of literature and art.

Actually a certain problem may result from the fact that *The Breast* is the first text where David Kapesh appears. A few years later another book, where no fantastic elements are employed, will provide the reader with a more complete description of his personality. Professor David Kapesh is primarily preoccupied with sexual attraction towards women, many of them his students. Kapesh is a man with rich experience as a male partner in heterosexual intercourses. Elaine B. Safer does not hesitate to refer to his relationships as the ones in which he adopts a "nonchalant, macho attitude."[15] On the other hand, it is not easy to describe him as a macho type, since the women he has been with do not feel cheated or harmed. Kapesh and his female partners are products of the sexual revolution of the 1960s; therefore, the women presented in the novella are positive about their right to sexual pleasure and take an opportunity to make love with the professor of literature with no prudery. It is the question of readers' interpretation whether they should treat Kapesh as a selfish promiscuous hedonist but the problem of traditional morality is not the issue. Kapesh is promiscuous and he accepts himself the way he is as well as his sexual partners do. However, in the world of sexual experience there are elements unavailable to him.

In his article *Master and Pupil in Philip Roth's "The Dying Animal"* Aristide Trendel refers to Julia Kristeva's observations on *The Symposium* by Plato: "In *The Dying Animal*, the breast, dazzlingly prominent, becomes a matter of life and death. In fact, the beauty of Consuela's breasts is the leitmotif of the novel."[16] Consuela will die of breast cancer, similarly, Kapesh also realizes that his end is imminent. "The exchange between master and pupil is now no longer centered on love, but on death. The breast is the link between Eros and Thanatos in the novel."[17] This refers to the last book of the Kapesh cycle, where the theme of the symbol of femininity initiated in the first one finds its conclusion.

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15 E. B. Safer, *Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 134.

16 A. Trendel, *Master and Pupil in Philip Roth's "The Dying Animal,"* "Philip Roth Studies" 2007, Vol. 3., No 1, p. 63.

17 Ibid., p. 63.

The Breast also evokes another reference to Plato's seminal text. Socrates in *The Symposium* elicited from Agathon, his interlocutor, a corroboration of his claim that a person desires something that they do not possess:

> The inference that he who desires something is in want of something, and that he who desires nothing is in want of nothing, is in my judgment, Agathon, absolutely and necessarily true. What do you think?
> I agree with you, said Agathon.
> Very good. Would he who is great, desire to be great, or he who is strong, desire to be strong?
> That would be inconsistent with our previous admissions.
> True. For he who is anything cannot want to be that which he is?
> Very true.[18]

Kapesh probably knows everything about sensual feelings available to a heterosexual male. The sensuality of a woman is beyond his reach and is the thing he desires because he is not a woman. Thus, Roth decides to resort to the alternative, fantastic reality, where his protagonist may experience the impossible.

"It began oddly, then, with a mild, sporadic tingling in the groin,"[19] the narrator informs, and soon he realizes what is happening to him. He becomes a woman's breast. However, as he consciously notes: "I'm still very much a man."[20] As already mentioned, Kapesh is a heterosexual man of rich erotic experience. One of the explanations of his transformation into a female gland may be his breast fetishism. Nadel aptly observes:

> Breasts. The topic is dissertation-ready when writing about Roth, beginning with *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) and continuing with his 1972 satire *The Breast*, followed by *The Professor of Desire*, *The Dying Animal* and the more recent *Indignation* and *The Humbling*. *The Dying Animal* addresses the subject most nakedly when the public intellectual David Kepesh pursues the voluptuous 24 year old Cuban American Consuela, largely because of her breasts. But in a tragic twist, years after their affair ends, she contacts Kepesh to tell him that she is ill—with breast cancer. But she has a request: could he photograph her breasts before they are treated? The scene is not pornographic, nor even erotic, but intimate and personal.[21]

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18 Plato, *Symposium*, transl. by Benjamin Jowett, 2013, The Project Gutenberg EBook of Symposium, by Plato, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1600/1600-h/1600-h.htm#link2H_4_0002 [20.10.2017]

19 P. Roth, *The Breast*, p. 1.

20 Ibid., p. 34.

21 I. Nadel, *The Fate of Sex*, p. 83; The topic is actually a subject of dissertations, for example:

Thus, the topic is quite extensively explored in Roth's prose, even though it is important to note that with age, his protagonists' approach to women's breasts becomes less driven by *machismo* than by mature attempts at understanding another human being. Nevertheless, in *The Breast*, Roth's male hero is obsessed with woman's breasts as objects of sexual desire.

In the description of a sexual intercourse with Clair, Kapesh's girlfriend, her breast plays a significant role:

> Down in the hollow of the dunes, I unclip the top of her bikini and watch it drop away. "Imagine," she says, "where they'll be at fifty, if they droop like this at twenty-five." "Can't," I say, "won't," and drawing her to her knees, I lean back on the hot sand, dig down with my heels, shut my eyes, and wait with open lips for her breast to fill my mouth. Oh, what a sensation, there with the sea booming below! As though it were the globe itself – suckable soft globe! – and I Poseidon or Zeus! Oh, nothing beats the pleasures of the anthropomorphic god.[22]

Here the reader is entitled to wonder if the anthropomorphic male god has access to the pleasures of an anthropomorphic goddess or just a mortal woman. Furthermore, Roth's protagonist goes on to make references to ancient mythology, recalling "the Greek seer Tiresias" who

> was transformed into a woman in order to solve the ancient riddle as to whether men or women feel greater pleasure in sexual intercourse. Playing with modern biology to achieve a parallel effect, Roth creates a contemporary fable that explores the links among female sexuality, male individualism, and the power of thought to define and maintain a sense of personal identity.[23]

David Kapesh is mysteriously endowed with a gift of transcending his natural condition. As Baumgarten and Gottfried observe, "[i]ronically, the passivity his shape enforces makes him aware of the power of male sexuality just at the

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M. Witcombe, *Beyond Imagining: Sex and Sexuality in Philip Roth's Kapesh Novels*, University of Southampton Research Repository ePrints Soton, 2015, https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/376467/1/Witcombe%2520PhD%2520Thesis.pdf [20.10.2017]; Witcomb's thesis is a very interesting proposal of psychoanalytical reading of Roth's texts, including references to Melanie Klein, who extensively discussed the place of mother's breasts in the formation of the child's mental universe, see, for instance: M.Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey, New York: Grove Press, 1960.

22 P. Roth, *The Breast*, p. 31.

23 M. Baumgarten, B.Gottfried, *Understanding Philip Roth*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 1990, p. 113.

moment when he has taken on female characteristics."[24] This state would be difficult to achieve without the fantastic.

It is important to bear in mind that the lascivious professor of literature did not consciously ask for this gift. His new state is far from comfortable. Therefore, it is difficult not to think about the situation as a result of the mysterious powers of his unconscious desire. Debra Shostak notes that "[a]lthough Kapesh's understanding of his erotic experience remains masculine, his ceaseless appetite shows the complications of trying to attach gender to the experience of desire," and poses a rhetorical question "Is Kapesh in his helpless, insatiable desire 'masculine' or 'feminine'?"[25] As she concludes, linguistically it is impossible to determine the gender of the narrating "I". However, the way he carries out his rant throughout the novella allows the reader to believe that it is still a male "professor of desire" who is speaking, and the sensual transformation has not resulted in the production of a new female identity, even though now the protagonist perceives the reality with the senses available to a woman's breast. Referring to Rosi Braidotti, Debra Shostak observes:

> Given his overtly confused subjectivity, which he futilely tries to force into normative categories – feeling, for example, a "masculine" consciousness inside a "feminine" body – he stands for the principle of "the same and yet other" … that is fundamental to the way woman has been conceptualized in Western culture.[26]

Thus, Shostak goes deeper into the nature of human sexuality, its ambiguity and cultural roots of constructing gender identities. It is, however, a problem of an individual mind to cope with such challenges, since such masculine types as David Kapesh seem not to assume a philosophically reflective approach. Kapesh had to face this uncanny experience to devote his attention to the issue. In this context, "natural" as an adjective describing his masculinity may not seem so justified. Nevertheless, whatever the explanation of gender differences, it is important to reiterate that the situation comes to the protagonist as shocking and extremely difficult to reconcile with. The statement by Baumgartten and Gottfried that "David Kapesh cannot relinquish his male ego"[27] seems to be of

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24 Ibid., p. 115.

25 D. Shostak, *Return to The Breast: The Body, the Masculine Subject, and Philip Roth*, "Twentieth Century Literature" 1999, Vol. 45, No 3, p. 326.

26 Ibid., p. 328.

27 M. Baumgarten, B.Gottfried, *Understanding Philip Roth*, p. 113.

the utmost importance in understanding Roth's idea of the character.[28]

As Debra Shostak observes, "[o]ne of the strengths of *The Breast* is the way in which Roth makes an absolutely implausible premise believable – precisely the lesson that he learned best from Kafka."[29] Harold Pinsker also praises him for a creative development of both the Prague writer's ideas and the very approach to the female breast in culture:

> If I am right about *The Breast*'s mode as one of comic allegory, it is "allegory" of a very playful, post-Modern, sort. To talk pedantically about, say, the breast fetish in American culture (see Woody Allen's delightful spoof in *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex*) or about Kafkan themes in current fiction is to miss both the pain and the wit of Roth's novella.[30]

Nevertheless, in another text of his, Pinsker criticizes Roth for not being sufficiently good to match Kafka or other classics: "the Kepesh novels strive for greatness, but fall far short of their mark: Roth is no Kafka in *The Breast* (1972), no Chekhov in *The Professor of Desire* (1977) and, without his distinct brand of humor, not even equal to himself in *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969)."[31]

Considering the literary works from a traditional point of view of literary studies, Sanford Pinsker seems not to take into consideration the fundamental difference between Roth's and Kafka's novellas. The allegories of transformation into another type of living body do not pursue the same ends. Becoming an insect, which is culturally perceived as abominable, Gregor Samsa symbolizes social degradation. This has little to do with the sensitivity, not to mention sensuality, of an animal. Senses play a secondary role in Kafka's allegory, whereas Roth made them the central point of his story.

Roth proposes a new quality in the form of David Kapesh's attempt at finding a rational explanation for his sudden abilities to feel all the pleasures available to a woman's breast, simultaneously preserving his masculine consciousness and mentality. This is an attempt at presenting two types of sensuality in one

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28 The protagonist's obsessive attachment to his gender identity eliminates, at least on the conscious level, the temptation of an interpretation based on the transgender or transsexual theories. Kapesh's reality embraces just two traditional genders, which are clearly different.

29 D. Shostak, *Return to The Breast...*, p. 318.

30 S. Pinsker, *The Comedy that "Hoits": The Breast*, in: *Philip Roth*, ed. H.Bloom, Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003, p. 60.

31 E. L. Gerstle, *The Dying Animal: The Art of Obsessing or Obsessing about Art?*, in: *Turning Up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels*, eds. J.L.Halio, B.Siegel, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005, p. 195.

person. It is important to underscore that Kapesh's case does not represent just bisexuality or transvestism. He is still a heterosexual man and it seems irrelevant whether this fact is a result of pure biology or a cultural process. His transformation into a woman's breast comes to him as a shock, and what he experiences afterwards is a condition which is impossible to occur in the real world. To present such a state Roth had no other choice but to resort to the fantastic.

Even though far from fantasy or science fiction, *The Breast* is a text which, according to Todorov's definition, should be classified as fantastic. The protagonist's hesitation, whether to believe in his new condition or not, makes it even a model example of the genre. Roth utilized the fantastic to touch upon an alternative way of perceiving one's own body, which was an attempt to involve not only reason but all possible senses, too. The fantastic is so far the only instrument available to writers to approach the issue.

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| Izabela Tomczak

PLAYING WITH PUPPETS: FOUCAULDIAN POWER RELATIONS IN *BIOSHOCK* AND *BORDERLANDS 2*

Abstract

The article investigates whether power/knowledge relations observed by Foucault in real life could be possibly applicable in the video game context. Two blockbuster titles, *BioShock* (2007) and *Borderlands 2* (2009), are analysed to discuss the following aspects of Foucauldian theory: the existence of docile bodies, the creation of a dominant discourse of truth, and the maintenance of the created system. With regard to the creation of docile bodies, the perspective of two antagonists (Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack) is centralised, and their role in creating a hierarchical system is presented. The Foucauldian rules of enclosure and rank, being crucial to the concept of docility, can be seen in the representation of the city of Rapture and the planet of Pandora. To develop the argument further, the rules connected to establishing and upholding the regime of truth, such as dissemination of knowledge, laws, monitoring and distribution of good, are analysed.

Key words: Michel Foucault, power/knowledge, video games, *Bioshock*, *Borderlands 2*

Introduction

Faced with rapid development, analyses of cultural products are bound to constantly expand to include new emergent genres. TV series, YouTube videos and blogs are reshaping and re-evaluating the state of the contemporary society, which in turn leads to greater confusion in their interpretation. One of the flourishing genres that challenges traditional modes of analysis are videogames. This

unique mix of interactive and immersive features with pre-written narratives, at a glance, will seem to require separate critical tools; however, videogames still derive richly from literary theory and philosophy, and as such can be interpreted in those terms.

This paper explores the mechanisms in which Foucault's theory of power relations is employed in two first-person shooter videogames published by 2K Games, *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2*. The following analysis will demonstrate how power systems and knowledge circulation function in a digital environment and how they influence the narrative. In other words, the point is that the realistic Foucauldian mechanisms may be well employed in fantasy games, connecting the two often juxtaposed modes. The study of the two main antagonists in *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2*, respectively Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack, will reveal the process of creating and maintaining a system of power, particularly through the workings of the legal system, monitoring and the circulation of goods. The main pillar on which the analysis will be based is the process of creating docile bodies, particularly focused on the Foucauldian principles of enclosure and rank.

Creating Docile Bodies

Exercising power, as Foucault claimed, requires subjects in the form of manipulable bodies.[1] Only a specific kind of individuals is particularly susceptive to impose power upon, and so several techniques can be employed to achieve docility. Out of the rules distinguished by Foucault, at least two are of significance in the case of video games: enclosure and rank. The principle of enclosure, as the name suggests, describes the relation between confined spaces and their occupants.[2] A secluded, restricted area enables supervision and more efficient management; with isolation from external information, the circulation and dissemination of knowledge is disrupted, and therefore, controllable. A perfect embodiment of enclosure is presented in *BioShock's* main location, the city of Rapture. This underwater city is built on the seafloor of the Atlantic Ocean and, at first glance, still bears marks of its former glory, yet the heart of Rapture is in ruin. The protagonist reaches it only after surviving a plane crash, since there are, at least apparently, no natural, functioning ways in or out of the city.

1 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 136.
2 Ibid., p. 141.

Even so, the mechanics of power appear to be still functioning, and at least partial responsibility for that can be tracked back to a single individual, who will become of relevance to the text in later paragraphs.

Rapture aspired to be a utopian community, "a city where the artist would not fear the censor. Where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality. Where the great would not be constrained by the small."[3] In principle, all members of the society would cooperate to sustain the perfect system, propelling the well-oiled machine that Rapture was intended to become. The individuals inhabiting Rapture are only those whom Andrew Ryan, the lead inventor and entrepreneur in the city, deemed "productive." The city itself facilitated weeding out of the unwanted elements since they could simply be denied entrance, the control being assured from both political and natural conditions. Referring once more to the Foucauldian rule of enclosure, "[t]he aim is to derive the maximum advantages and to neutralize the inconveniences (thefts, interruptions of work, disturbances)."[4] To ensure those conditions, "the citizens of Rapture need to avoid all contact with the surface world because it's filled with parasites that seek to destroy Rapture.[5] Rapture is, subsequently, detached from the outside world on two different planes: physical (as it is in the middle of the ocean) and psychological (because of the created division between "us" and "them", favoring the former). The microcosm of the city propelled its own detachment through ideological means, making the citizens believe that they are unique and superior. This isolation on the subconscious level has a function of making people more docile, manageable and productive, while at the same time promoting homogeneity of thought and reducing resistance.

In *Borderlands 2*, the player is confronted with numerous diverse locations, whose design is determined by external conditions such as climate. In fact, the whole planet of Pandora, the already-opened box, can be explored by the player. Despite the player's alleged freedom, the Foucauldian rule of enclosure is still applicable in this context. Being situated at the edge of the known galaxy, the planet is distanced from other human settlements. The majority of its inhabitants are ex-colonists and explorers seduced by the promise of finding immeasurable treasures in Pandora's Vaults. The living conditions on the planet, however, are highly unfavorable, causing few fully-functioning settlements to be es-

3 Irrational Games, *BioShock*. [Windows], USA: 2K Games, 2007.

4 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 142.

5 R. McKinnon, *Propaganda, Lies, and Bullshit in BioShock's Rapture*, in: *BioShock and Philosophy: Irrational Game, Rational Book*, ed. L. Cuddy, Chichester: Wiley/Blackwell, 2015, p. 108.

tablished and leaving the planet at the mercy of madmen and rabid animals. Separated from civilization, Pandora then becomes an enclosure of its own kind. As a living space, the planet is an artificial construct perpetrated by corporations trying to gain profit. Having only economic gains in mind, the population is particularly sensitive to manipulation from those who control the means required to get to the Vaults. This weakness opens up a range of possibilities for weapon manufacturers as well as self-proclaimed leaders, who will scrupulously exploit this situation to serve their own ends.

A more successful attempt to bring life and civilization to Pandora is the Opportunity city. Upon arriving into the city, the player is greeted with the phrase "feast your eyes upon the paradise that awaits you in Opportunity,"[6] which already sets up the mood for the place. The main antagonist, Handsome Jack, took it upon himself to create a safe haven in the midst of chaos. Opportunity is being created for Pandora's finest citizens; much like Andrew Ryan intended for Rapture. Jack does not seem to mind that Pandora lacks a functioning society, and thus there is no elite or proper intellectuals to inhabit his city. Another parallel between *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2* can be spotted in the selectivity concerning the society; in one of Jack's speeches addressing the workers he makes it crystal clear that a city representing beauty, purity, and order has no place for a working class (or rather, the workers building the city since claiming that a class system exists in the game is an overstatement). Despite recognizing the necessity of the workforce in the creation of a utopia, Jack sees little merit in creating a diversified society. Moreover, Opportunity is a propaganda piece, a symbol for all the bandits to admire and fear. In a way, it is Jack's extension of power, the proof that order can be created out of chaos that is Pandora.

Rank as a Functional System

The features resulting from enclosure, such as homogeneity of thought or emphasis on dominating discourses, define the in-game society. The wide range of characters, due to the mechanics of the game, needs to be hierarchically organized. The levels of relations can be described on a spectrum of different ranks or levels, with "bosses" being at the top of the hierarchy and the "mob" (the basic enemy) at the bottom. It is done in order for the player to progress

6 Gearbox Software, *Borderlands 2*. [Windows], USA: 2K Games, 2009.

through the game and feel adequately challenged. Incidentally, a parallel between the videogame functioning and creating docile bodies emerges, since "[d]iscipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements."[7]

Ernest Adams, while commenting on game design, mentions the hierarchy of challenges; a key factor responsible for introducing rank into the medium.[8] Most of the games employ a bottom-up technique, where a series of quests lead to a final one, with the difficulty increasing proportionally to the player 'levelling up' (gaining experience points, which in turn make their character more powerful and able to take up more difficult missions). In this sense, the *Borderlands 2*'s "psychos" would mirror "splinters" in *BioShock*, both representing the easiest, most basic type of enemies to defeat. Adams explains this process in the following way: "[i]n action videogames, players frequently face a recurring challenge to defeat a number of identical enemies, and then having done so, they must overcome a unique challenge to defeat a particular boss enemy."[9] A boss enemy indicates the end of a given sequence within the game (part of the story or a level), and requires more dexterity and thought put into defeating them. As Adams continues, "[f]requently having its own exclusive fight-style, the boss demands from the player to devise a particular technique in order to defeat the enemy."[10] Moreover, if the player attacks the boss out of their rank, they in most likelihood will be defeated within seconds. In this way the game controls the pace of the game and the player. Ultimately, it is the player who is supposed to be the highest in the hierarchy, but only at the pacing suggested by the game.

One may be tempted to question how the technicalities of a rank relate to discipline and power relations. Primarily, a tentative comparison between the social groups in real life and levels in the games can be made. As much as those two vary strikingly, for example in terms of complexity, it can be said that a high social position and a high level can be recognised from the outside. Whether it is a well-respected, affluent lawyer or a final boss, what they have in common is a set of qualities which sets them apart from other groups in the hierarchy. A rank in both contexts can be detected and represented in behavior, possessions or visual representation.

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7 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* p. 146.
8 E. Adams, *Fundamentals of Game Design,* Berkeley: New Riders, 2010, p. 253.
9 E. Adams, *Fundamentals*…, p. 10.
10 Ibid., pp. 405-406.

What is characteristic of the basic enemies, those of the lowest rank possible, in both games is that they lack voice. Voice, understood in narrative terms, is the ability of a character to convey the story from their own perspective. In pursuit of perfection, the citizens of Rapture in *BioShock* have lost their humanity and turned into mindless psychopaths by repeatedly mutating and manipulating their own bodies, subsequently becoming deformed, prompting the name "splicers." Their dialogues are heavily marked by their insanity; and although they still display remnants of their personalities, they cannot communicate anymore. Interestingly enough, it is partially due to the intervention of one of the boss-enemies that they became that way. Faced with a threat of civil war, Andrew Ryan encouraged the citizens to increase the intake of ADAM, a harmful mutagen designed to enhance their faculties and make them stronger soldiers. Ryan exploited his position of power as a founder of Rapture to control the population and did so without using force. Instead, he modified the content of ADAM in order to make the citizens susceptible to mind control. Consequently, Ryan created docile bodies through the dissemination of a commodity controlled by him, aided by heavy propaganda.

In parallel, the mob in *Borderlands 2* consists of "psychos" driven mad by their desire to reach Vaults filled with treasure. Similarly to splicers, they have the capability to speak, but their language has been heavily reduced to screaming profanities or threatening the player. As a result, no information can be obtained from them about the world or a given situation; they lack the narrative voice. Conversely, the boss-enemy is no longer a direct cause of the people's demise, but is still involved in the process. Handsome Jack exercises his power in quite a different way. Using a general distaste for the psychos, he attempts to equalize undesirable inhabitants of Pandora and the protagonist with psychos, trying to lower their ranks (and consequently elevate his own rank). Being well-aware of the hierarchical arrangement, he plays propaganda adverts on the radio or distributes posters to construct a rank system suiting his own needs.

Consequently, the inhabitants of most of Pandora and Rapture have reached the bottom of the hierarchy; they cannot create discourse nor take part in it. The full control in the hands of intellectuals, here on the example of Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack, is therefore more prominent. It is them who have knowledge and control over its dissemination; it is them who control laws, monitoring, and distribution of goods.

Power/ Knowledge

In his works, Foucault at length debates the correlation between power, knowledge and truth. In fact, he believes that among various kinds of power, two can be considered fundamental – the power of knowing the truth, and the power to disseminate this knowledge.[11] The power systems functioning in *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2*, orchestrated by two intellectual figures, can be described precisely in those terms: the general awareness of what is 'truth' and its circulation within the society.

Knowledge of truth

Truth, as Foucault believes, "induces regular effects of power."[12] Ultimately, it is then another source of authority, "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements,"[13] which can be instrumentally used. Those in power are responsible for creating as well as upholding the system, particularly because it is bound to face resistance. Discourses within a society will remain in constant flux, trying to establish dominance, and to become what Foucault calls a "regime of truth."[14] As he notices, the regime of truth operates in capitalist societies as well as in socialist ones; and as it would appear, also in fictional environments. In *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2* the dominant political figures have control over the regime and create their own truth, which in turn grants them power. By blurring the lines between fact and fiction, the truth and a lie, Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack control their surroundings.

A valid place in the Foucauldian power schema is taken by an authority figure such as a monarch or an intellectual. In video game narratives, all those roles are frequently consolidated in antagonists, here Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack. Despite not being formally monarchs or scholars of any sort, they fit the Foucauldian idea precisely because they are intertwined with the functioning of the apparatus of truth.[15] Ryan and Jack's goal is, as it turns out, parallel to this

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11 M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, New York:Pantheon, 1980, p. 35.
12 Ibid., p. 131.
13 Ibid., p.133.
14 Ibid., p. 131.
15 Ibid., p. 132.

of an intellectual. Continuing "the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth"[16] secures their own interests, while at the same time consolidating their position within the hierarchy of the society. The pattern represented by Foucault on the example of scientists, consequently, can be illustrated with the two entrepreneurs from the discussed videogames.

Dissemination of knowledge

Characteristically for dystopian environments, the elites (or the intellectuals) are reduced to a minimum, and so Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack have virtually no competition. Subsequently, it is in their power to create, and most importantly, to disseminate knowledge. Being the Chairman of the City Council of Rapture, Andrew Ryan has political authority over the citizens, and his position in Ryan Industries grants him additional economic superiority. The two sources of power, politics and economy, validate his position and mark him as the source of dominant discourse. As a person responsible for establishing rules in Rapture, he issues regulations for everyone to follow. Drawing on the category of parasites with reference to the outsiders, Ryan draws on this assumption and places himself on the other side of the conflict, elevating his goals and values. While analyzing the actions of Ryan, Rachel McKinnon categorizes them as neither "true" nor "false", but rather as entities performing a function. To quote McKinnon, "[w]hat matters isn't fooling citizens about what's true or false; what matters is controlling the citizens' thoughts and behaviors so as to further the government's needs."[17] Truth is then a flexible matter, shaped according to Ryan's wish. All he truly needs is to establish its worth and spread it.

Ryan continuously asserts himself as a self-made man, and that his (initial) success is a meticulously realized project. At the same time, he has attempted to convince the citizens that due to their efforts Rapture could become a utopia. However, once carefully examined, his words betray his true nature and complete disregard for his people and their well-being. He labelled those who required free healthcare as "pervert[s] who prowl the streets, looking for a victim [they] can ravish for [their] grotesque amusement."[18] Moreover, he seems to turn a blind eye to disastrous consequences of testing plasmids on the citizens of

16 Ibid., p. 133.
17 R. McKinnon, *Propaganda, Lies, and Bullshit* ..., p. 109.
18 Irrational Games, *BioShock*.

Rapture. In his mind, plasmids are economic goods whose circulation should not be regulated since it would impede the influx of cash. Once again, Ryan uses derogatory terms to diminish the true nature of a problem saying that "[t]he market does not respond like an infant, shrieking at the first sign of displeasure. The market is patient, and we must be too."[19] Ryan's effort would be then concentrated on presenting his agenda as superior, mature, and right. Using his audio diaries and recorded announcements he disseminates the truth he manufactures, and through laws, monitoring, and distribution of goods, the truth system is maintained.

Similarly, in the case of *Borderlands 2*, the truth is altered and later publicized. Handsome Jack's manufactured truths are continually contradicted with the actual plot of the game that the player observes. His efforts aimed at the upkeep of the system would then be less subtle than Ryan's, also leading to narrative paradoxes. Having in mind that "there are no relations of power without resistances,"[20] Handsome Jack, just like Andrew Ryan, has to establish himself as a power-wielding figure, elevating his rank and justifying his position. During a historical tour in the Opportunity city, for example, the guide explains to the player the *bildungsroman* of Jack the hero, namely, Jack who single-handedly brought peace onto the planet of Pandora. Consequently, he shapes the dual reality in which he is the hero and the resistance, including the player, consists of usurpers. Once more a stark contrast between "us" and "them" is made. In such understanding, there will be no more resistance, and Jack's power would be indisputable.

To fuel the heroic imagery even further, religious language is used: "[i]n the beginning, Pandora was chaos ... and then there was Jack."[21] The fictional radio program "This Just In" controlled by Jack clearly establishes the difference between Jack and the player who is called "bandit scum," "the lawless" or "a terrorist."[22] Modelled after real-life propaganda offices, Hyperion Truth Network constructs the truth of their own. All the events in the game are reinterpreted in such a way as to fit the dominant discourse. At times, information is completely falsified (for example when reporting alleged deaths of rebels). As a result, even if the planet is clearly spiraling into chaos, and Jack's corporation, Hyperion, is exploiting the remaining few sane inhabitants, his discourse pre-

19 Ibid.
20 M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge...*, p. 132.
21 Gearbox Software, *Borderlands 2*.
22 Ibid.

vails. It is again because of the established legal system, constant surveillance and distribution of goods that Handsome Jack became an important figure in the game.

Law and (Dis)order

After creating a system based on certain rules, the dominant forces should strive to maintain it. In order to do so, laws are introduced. Although Foucault is skeptical towards reducing power to a law of prohibition, he does mention it as a valid part of power relations.[23] In such understanding, power is equalized with empowering an individual to forbid others to do something. In *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2*, however, prohibition plays a vital role in the creation of power systems. Often ridiculous or uncannily precise, the laws in those games function as humorous elements as well as reflect the dominant discourse.

BioShock's utopian city has no government but a City Council, to which, as it was already mentioned, Andrew Ryan is a chairman. While recording his audio diaries, Ryan repeatedly mentions rules and prohibitions. Already at this stage, it is clear that democracy is only superficial and that Ryan is the one who (at least at one point) held the power. It is illustrated in his own commentary upon introducing capital punishment for smugglers: "The death penalty in Rapture! Council's in an uproar. Riots in the streets they say! But this is the time for leadership... A few stretched necks are a small price to pay for our ideals."[24]

Handsome Jack is also the lead legislative force, insofar as he is the only person responsible for enunciating law. Pandora has no government and barely any functional, modern cities, therefore no legal and validated opposition can exist. Interestingly enough, Handsome Jack also refers to the law of capital punishment. Having implemented an anti-littering law, Jack extends it so that it covers "verbal littering", with "littering" being nothing else but complaining about the current system. In doing so, Jack excludes any competing discourses from threatening his position. With an army of robots and engineers at Jack's command, he can also execute those laws and attack anyone who does not follow the rules.

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23 M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge...*, p. 140.
24 Irrational Games, *BioShock*.

Monitoring the dissemination of knowledge

Creating and communicating rules, however, does not ensure the position of their authors. In order for knowledge to be disseminated properly, their recipients must be accessible. Once again, one of Foucault's principles can be employed, namely, the one of elementary location or partitioning. In his mind, all individuals under discipline have assigned places and can be readily localized and supervised.[25] The rule in the example of the videogames is frequently realized through their very mechanics. In the course of the plot, the player is confronted with various quests and in the case of *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2*, some of the commentaries come directly from characters to the playable character. The characters, including Jack and Ryan, can communicate with the player once the player interacts with a certain element or reaches a given location on the map. They know where the player is.

In *BioShock* the main character can be reached via radio. Some of the messages are pre-recorded, while others are reactions to certain actions of the player, proving that others are aware of the player's presence. On numerous instances Ryan notices the player's actions such as entering certain locations or activating mechanisms. Through that, Ryan seems to have power over the protagonist/the player, at least superficially. Later in the narrative, it turns out that due to Ryan's failures there is another source of power, but it is not revealed till the final stages of the game. For the most part, Ryan maintains the illusion that he is in control and that he sees all. "But there is something more powerful than each of us, a combination of our efforts, a Great Chain of industry that unites us. ... The chain is too powerful and too mysterious for any government to guide,"[26] claims Ryan in one of his audio logs, yet at the same time, he attempts to control the chain. His system fulfills the "principle of elementary location" or, in other words, the "principle of partitioning," in which each individual has their place.[27] It is as much part of the mechanics of the game (the player needs to be directed) as a functional part of the narrative.

The player is similarly supervised by Handsome Jack, primarily through ECHOnet, which is a Borderlands-unique wireless communication system that allows the player to receive instructions from other characters or gather information about the world. Both radio messages and ECHOnet serve a practical

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25 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* p. 144.
26 Irrational Games, *BioShock*.
27 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* p. 143.

purpose within the gameplay, as they are the means through which the plot moves forward, but at the same time, they allow for locating the player. Similarly, most of the NPCs[28] have an assigned place, usually connected to their functions, such as medics in med bays, a dealer in a back alley. In other words, discipline distribution can be used as an in-built game mechanism that makes the player act as the producers of the game intended. In a way, it affects both the playable character as well as the player.

Distribution of Goods

In Foucault's mind, "whoever wants to be able to govern the state must first know how to govern himself, and then, at another level…, his goods, his lands, after which he will succeed in governing the state."[29] As was shown in the example, both Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack have control over the land, but the circulation of goods has a less defined status.

BioShock's rendition of dystopia consists of "ironic inventories of historical styles and technologies that mobilize multiple, asynchronous eras and their trappings."[30] The game mixes the futuristic technology with the limitations of the past, which makes progress, in a way, stagnant. Adverts and slogans stylized after those popular in the 1940s encourage the citizens of Rapture to infuse their bodies with superpowers or to undergo futuristic plastic operations. Plasmids, the substances which enhance human faculties after injection, were not initially created by Andrew Ryan; however, he was the one who took control of them and led their distribution. The citizens were encouraged to buy plasmids and subsequently modify their own DNA, with little regard for their safety. As canvas for modification, their bodies became products. On top of the system was Andrew Ryan, who manipulated the plasmids to turn Rapture citizens into an army to fight in a civil war.

Distribution of goods is more dispersed in *Borderlands 2*. Much bigger, the world of Pandora cannot be controlled by one person only, and so it is in the hands of a few weapon manufacturers. Each of them has a separate policy and a different agenda, but most of them are deeply ironic or parodic in nature. For

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28 Non-playable characters [IT].

29 M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 94.

30 J. Aldred and B. Greenspan, *A Man Chooses, a Slave Obeys: BioShock and the Dystopian Logic of Convergence*. "Games and Culture" 2011, 6(5), p. 483.

example, a company called Vladof is clearly inspired by a communist regime, which can be noticed in their advertisement: "The Vladof corporation reminds you that there are only two types of people in the universe: the oppressors, and the oppressed. The oppressors cannot be swayed with words, cannot be bargained with. There is only one way to stop your corporate dictators: bloody, bloody revolution."[31]

The weapons produced by those companies are the ones actually used by the player during the gameplay. One of the leading weapons manufacturers, Hyperion, belongs to nobody else but Handsome Jack himself. His character is a satire on the concept truth, amusing yet presenting the player with a bitter conclusion. While discussing public relations of his company, Handsome Jack makes an association between his products and class and proposes to achieve that by using words: "Words with heft. Words with meaning, so that you know they were made by smart sonofabitches, for smart sonofabitches."[32] Jack is aware of the huge influence that a manipulated discourse can have on the masses, therefore he manufactures it, much like guns, to achieve his goals and promote an improved image of himself.

Separate attention should be given to goods which are traditionally bound to a particular place, like medicine and hospitals. Using the example of a hospital, Foucault illustrates how distribution and "[t]he medical supervision of diseases and contagions is inseparable from a whole series of other controls."[33] The Foucauldian rule of functional sites is possibly more explicit in the context of videogames than in real life because functionality of locations arises from the nature of the gameplay. As *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2* are FPS[34] games, the player will be attacked by enemies and consequently take damage. In most games of this type, the playable character has a health bar where the health is converted into a scale of points that can be lost and regained. Usually, the health is regained through picking up first aid kits, and the case is no different in the abovementioned examples. Some of them can be found while exploring the maps, but in many cases the player will use specifically allocated vending machines to buy health kits. It illustrates Foucault's idea of "placing of medicines under lock and key."[35]

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31 Gearbox Software, *Borderlands 2*.
32 Ibid.
33 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 144.
34 FPS – First person shooter [IT].
35 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 144.

Interestingly enough, health stations in *BioShock* are treated as regular commodities; they are advertised on posters with slogans ("Need a boost? Try our new and improved prime health unit" or "Does a body better than a placebo!") and thus fit tightly into the capitalist system.[36] As a result, even if the vending machines are not controlled by a physical person, they are controlled by money, which, in turn, belongs to intellectuals. To cite Adam Ruch,

> Rapture may be best summarized by the vending machine that sells genetic mutagens and high-explosive ammunition like candy bars. These are not mere game-mechanical devices; both are plausibly explained in the story of uncontrolled capitalism combined with unimpeded scientific experimentation, and a civil war.[37]

Initially under Ryan's control, vending machines are hacked and manipulated in order to provide goods on illegal terms. The lack of control over the goods mirrors Ryan's gradual loss of power and influence.

Similarly, the products in *Borderlands 2* are labelled with the names of their producers, for example, health packs are produced by a fictional manufacturer named Anshin. It is then suggested that the control over medicine distribution is handled by a corporation. The player is then forced to save a certain amount of money during the game and can spend it only in a limited number of pre-selected locations. A number of competing weapon manufactures and pharmaceutical companies is beyond Handsome Jack's control despite him being the leader of one of the most prominent corporations. He still needs his resistance to exist, both in political and economic terms. However, the coexistence of other enterprises on the market shows that Handsome Jack is not a totalitarian ruler.

Conclusions

Having mechanics of the game in mind, game developers in *BioShock* and *Borderlands 2* designed unique, distinctive locations that derive from utopian imagery. Simultaneously, the very foundations of utopia are parodied. Both Rapture and Pandora are compressed, enclosed spaces that are subjected to ex-

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36 Irrational Games, *BioShock*.

37 A. Ruch, *Interpretations of Freedom and Control in Bioshock*. "Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds" 2010, 2(1), p. 86.

ercising power. Consequently, discipline was more concentrated and facilitated the creation of docile bodies. As Foucault wrote, "discipline regulates everything. Discipline allows nothing to escape."[38] The nature of the discussed environments propelled strict stratification of the society and maintained hierarchical system. The effects of this system were disastrous; the inhabitants of Rapture and Pandora have lost their sanity and exist outside the standard model of a functioning society. At the same time, they have no means of having nor exercising power and are passively subjected to the will of those in control.

The people in power, as it would initially appear, would be two solitary figures, Andrew Ryan and Handsome Jack. They are the intellectuals whose influence transpires into every aspect of life. Most notably, they control dissemination of knowledge and establish truths within their narratives, constructing themselves and the world around them according to their wish. Using legislative power and constant supervision, Jack and Andrew place themselves at the top of the established hierarchy. However, their partial control (or lack thereof) over material goods shows the weakness of the system, exposing their incompetence. It needs to be remembered that *BioShock* and, to an even greater extent, *Borderlands 2* have parodic undertones, and the figures in power are supposed to be treated with a dose of humor; in that, the games exploit Foucauldian conventions of power relations without overloading the narrative.

The models of power relations operating in real life are reflected in videogames. The immersion in the gameworld relies precisely on those links and references to the actual rules governing the society. Apart from a convincing narrative, the mechanics of the game forces the player to perform certain actions that fit into the schema. In other words, the players are also a docile bodies, even if they exist outside of the narrative of the game, they are still within the game's enclosure. Strangely, the player is unaware of their condition and it is precisely due to this illusion that the game can function at all.

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[38] M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population…*, p. 46.

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BIOGRAMY AUTORÓW
/ BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Francesco Bernuzzi uzyskał tytuł magistra w zakresie języków i literatur obcych na Uniwersytecie w Bergamo. Jego praca magisterska, poświęcona pisarstwu Lorda Dunsany'ego pt. „More beautiful than the Sea: Lord Dunsany's fantasy" zawierała również tłumaczenie nieopublikowanej wcześniej we Włoszech noweli tego autora. Obecnie pracuje jako nauczyciel języka angielskiego i literatury angielskiej w szkole średniej.

Aleksandra Dmowska jest absolwentką Instytutu Romanistyki i Instytutu Anglistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, jak również doktorantką na Wydziale Neofilologii UW. Jej zainteresowania badawcze koncentrują się wokół zagadnień związanych z mitem w literaturze, francuskojęzyczną literaturą belgijską, literaturą fantasy i antropologią kulturową.

Agnieszka Dzięcioł-Pędich – doktor nauk humanistycznych, pracuje jako wykładowca specjalistycznego języka angielskiego w Studium Języków Obcych w Białymstoku. Jej zainteresowania naukowe obejmują języki specjalistyczne, specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne, komunikację międzykulturową oraz podejście komunikacyjne. W wolnym czasie jest miłośniczką literatury fantasy i science-fiction.

Paweł Fiedorowicz jest studentem drugiego roku studiów magisterskich na kierunku filologia angielska na Uniwersytecie w Białymstoku. Interesuje się literaturą amerykańską, szczególnie horrorem i fantastyką. Obecnie przygotowuje pracę magisterką z analizy dyskursu, dotyczącą sposobów przedstawiania terroryzmu islamskiego w mediach.

Przemysław Grabowski-Górniak – doktor nauk humanistycznych, jest badaczem literatury i kultury średniowiecznej, praktykującym również średniowieczną sztukę walki. Większość jego prac dotyczy starożytnej i średniowiecznej tradycji heroicznej. Inne zainteresowania autora obejmują przejawy mediewalizmu we współczesnej literaturze fantasy i powieści graficznej, historię militarną i mitologię komparatywną.

Stefan Kubiak jest absolwentem historii Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego (1991) i filologii angielskiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku (2001). W Instytucie Neofilologii prowadzi zajęcia z pisania akademickiego i przedmiotów związanych z praktyczną znajomością języka angielskiego. Obecnie jest doktorantem na Wydziale Humanistycznym Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, gdzie przygotowuje pracę nt. figury szlemiela w powieściach Philipa Rotha.

Magdalena Łapińska jest absolwentką Instytutu Neofilologii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku i doktorantką na Wydziale Filologicznym UwB. Jej praca magisterska poświęcona była traumatycznym doświadczeniom niewolnictwa. Jej zainteresowania badawcze dotyczą literatury afro-amerykańskiej, zwłaszcza tematu przemocy i traumy.

Weronika Łaszkiewicz – doktor nauk humanistycznych, jest adiunktem w Instytucie Neofilologii na Uniwersytecie w Białymstoku. W swojej pracy naukowej zajmuje się różnymi aspektami współczesnej literaturze fantasy: zapożyczeniami z mitologii, (re)konstrukcją religii, wizerunkami kobiet oraz postaciami Indian. Nakładem wydawnictwa McFarland (USA) ukazała się jej książka *Fantasy Literature and Christianity: A Study of the Mistborn, Coldfire, Fionavar Tapestry and Chronicles of Thomas Covenat Series* (2018). Należy do Interdyscyplinarnego Zespołu Badań nad Fantastyką (UwB).

Krzysztof M. Maj – dr; adiunkt w Katedrze Kulturoznawstwa i Filozofii Wydziału Humanistycznego Akademii Górniczo-Hutniczej w Krakowie; groznawca, teoretyk literatury i narracji; redaktor naczelny czasopisma naukowo-literackiego „Creatio Fantastica"; autor książki *Allotopie. Topografia światów fikcjonalnych* (2015) oraz artykułów naukowych poświęconych badaniom nad światotwórstwem, grami wideo, narratologią transmedialną i fantastyką (publikowanych m.in. na łamach „Tekstów Drugich", „Zagadnień Rodzajów Literackich", „Ruchu Literackiego" czy „Utopian Studies"); współredaktor *książek*

More After More. Essays Commemorating the Five-Hundredth Anniversary of Thomas More's Utopia (2016), *Narracje fantastyczne* (2017) oraz *Ksenologie* (2018).

Izabela Tomczak jest doktorantką na Wydziale Anglistyki UAM w Poznaniu. Jest członkinią Koła Czytelników Literatury Amerykańskiej prowadzonego przez Zakład Literatury Amerykańskiej. Interesuje się mediami wizualnymi, w szczególności komiksami i grami komputerowymi, oraz ich analizą w kontekście literackim. W swoich pracach skupia się głównie na poruszanej przez nowe media problematyce społecznej, narratologii i konstruowaniu znaczeń przez odbiorów różnych tekstów kultury.

Karolina Wierel, dr, asystent w Zakładzie Studiów nad Kulturą i Mediami funkcjonującego w Międzywydziałowym Instytucie Kultury i Sztuki Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku; kulturoznawca i filolog. Interesuje się twórczością katastroficzną i postapokaliptyczna, motywem Księgi w kulturze, relacją kultura–literatura–film, historią oralności i piśmienności oraz współczesnymi prądami myślowymi w filozofii kultury, a szczególnie „nową humanistyką", humanistyką ekologiczną, posthumanizmem, postsekularyzmem. Autorka książki *Księga w nie-ludzkim świecie. Motyw Księgi w postapokaliptycznych przekazach literackich i filmowych przełomu XX i XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2019.

Joanna Katarzyna Wildowicz, absolwentka Nauczycielskiego Kolegium Języka Angielskiego na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim, filia w Białymstoku obroniła pracę licencjacką *Fairy Tales and Fables in Teaching English,* napisaną pod kierunkiem dr Urszuli Chybowskiej oraz przygotowała magisterium pod opieka prof. Cynthii Dominik pod tytułem *American Values Reflected in Situation Comedies* w Ośrodku Studiów Amerykańskich, Uniwersytet Warszawski; lektor Studium Praktycznej Nauki Języków Obcych oraz Instytutu Neofilologii, Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, a także studentka stacjonarnych studiów doktoranckich w zakresie literaturoznawstwa na Wydziale Filologicznym UwB, gdzie przygotowuje rozprawę doktorską poświęcona twórczości współczesnego, amerykańskiego powieściopisarza Cormaca McCarthy'ego i jego roli w dekompozycji amerykańskiego mitu w oparciu o McCarthy'owki eklektyzm: romantyzm, realizm, naturalizm.

INDEKS OSOBOWY
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