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SF NARRATIVES AND THE ORIGINS OF (CULTURAL) REALITY

Abstract

This paper examines SF narratives, in particular works such as William Gibson`s "Neuromancer" and "Idoru", or George Orwell`s "Nineteen Eighty-Four". It aims to demonstrate the original, transcendental character of narrative related to its ability of reaching the very origins of our social and cultural reality and showing its nature - conditioned, "fleeting", and open to various possible forms. The author discusses Marshall Brown`s views according to which gothic novels are "pure speculative instruments that investigate the origins of experience" and as such, they let us raise a transcendental question concerning the conditions of the possibility of experience. She applies this thesis to SF stories. She refers to the views of ethical critics (Martha Nussbaum, Wayne C. Booth), to Marie-Laure Ryan's concept of possible worlds, as well as to Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré`s concept of narratives considered by them as "fluid patterns of action", models of the world, or apriorical categories inherent in the process of shaping our reality. The author shows that such SF stories confront us with various possible realities which are already present in our everyday practices of speaking and in routine social narratives, although not in an evident way.

Key words: narrative, possible worlds, origins of reality, William Gibson, George Orwell

This paper aims to demonstrate the transcendental character of narrative related to its ability of reaching the very origins of our social and cultural reality and showing its nature – conditioned, "fleeting", and open to various possible forms. It focuses in particular on SF narratives. They present possible worlds and as such they explore the very origins of existence showing that it is always to some extent conditioned and could be different than it actually is.

The transcendental character of narrative

In his analysis of the gothic novels, Marshall Brown considers them as "pure speculative instruments that investigate the origins of experience" (Brown, 1987: 279). According to him, the subject of gothic tales – the gothic substance – is "a thing whose materiality has been sublimated into a freedom from all conditioning factors" (Brown, 1987: 277) hence it "has nothing to do with the world of ordinary experience" (Brown, 277) and lies somewhere at its limits. Those fantastic, horrifying stories which force us to imagine "what can never be experienced" and reveal the wild, abandoned, hidden inside of what we usually call our real world confront us "with a transcendent reality" of the Kantian *Ding an sich* (thing in itself) or the Hegelian *das Innere der Dinge*. As such, they can be construed as

> thought experiments that test the limits (…) of human reason. (…) What would be left of a man,
> these novels ask, if all human society were stripped away, all customary perception, all the expected

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regularity of cause and effect? They ask, in other words, what man is in himself, when deprived of all the external supports that channel ordinary experience. What resources, if any, does the mind retain in isolation? What is the nature of pure consciousness? (Brown, 280).

Brown refers among others to Mary Shelley`s "Frankenstein", one of the most famous gothic novels, which is also considered to be the first SF novel. There are three main narrators in this typical frame tale – Captain Robert Walton, Frankenstein himself, and his hideous child, the Creature – and all of them describe their journeys. For Brown, all of those journeys are at the same time "metaphysical quests beyond the limits of experience" (Brown, 290) which engage the heroes and force them to continue their search even in the face of danger and death. As he puts it, they "lead not to the unconditioned" as such, "but rather (…) to the conditions that make experience possible" (Brown, 290). For example, in Captain Walton`s confessions, the Arctic is a place where the time passes very slowly and the sun is always visible and resembles of

the land of Creation, perpetuating the moment when the Lord called for the light (…), but before the light has been divided from the darkness, the firmament from the earth, the dry land from the waters, or man from the beasts (Brown, 288-289).

This way, he reaches the origins of life, in a very similar manner as Frankenstein who digs graves and searches graveyards and morgues looking for the best elements for his future work – to make a living entity from dead parts.

Brown underlines that in this gothic vision there are a lot of – perhaps indirect and unintended – references to Kant`s transcendental aesthetics, which in philosophical terms discusses the problem of "the ground of all experience" as well. For instance, in his "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant treats space and time as apriorical forms of sensible intuition and claims that people perceive reality just in time, space, and causality (Kant, 1982: 17). It means that these two dimensions of human cognition are to some extent fundamental for our perceptive faculty. In Mary Shelley`s text, there are passages which can be considered as a literary exemplification of this philosophical thesis – for instance, when Walton approaches the Pole, "time seems reduced to mere duration" and "space seems reduced to mere extension, not empty or unvaried, but undemarcated and unbounded" (Brown, 291) and so on.

Although Brown`s analysis focuses only on typical gothic fictions, I would like to demonstrate that his thesis concerning an original character of such stories may be applied to all narratives as well, especially – but not only – to those which present various types of so-called possible worlds, e.g. to the SF narratives. Of course, such a definition is perhaps too wide as practically all literary fictions depict some sort of alternative world. In order to make it more precise, I will refer to Peter Stockwell's proposal from the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* where he defines science fiction as "a form of genre fiction characterized by the narration of imaginative and speculative alternative worlds", which is "set in the future or in space" and "encompasses narratives of counterfactual history, virtuality, and an extreme defamiliarization of contemporary society" (Stockwell, 2010: 518) as well.

Possible worlds

Before I move on to the more detailed analysis of particular SF narratives, I would like to focus on some theoretical assumptions which will let me better explain my thesis. Narrative has an original, transcendental character because it touches the very origins of our social and cultural reality. As Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré put it, it is never just a story to be told and, what is more important, it is never only a literary fiction but it is always also a sort of social practice. As they claim, "narrative is the name for a special repertoire of instructions and norms of what is to be done and not to be done in life and how an individual case is to be integrated into a generalized and culturally established canon" (Brockmeier, 2001: 51).

In other words, experiencing life and telling a life story do not belong to entirely different orders

which are related to each other only superficially but are "inextricably interwoven in one continuous fabric of meaning and sense" (Brockmeier, 2001: 51). Narrative is more than just a literary imitation of our human reality – it is able to imitate real actions of real people living in a real world because it is a part of our lives. We tell stories in the same way in which we speak and create symbolical systems such as language and culture. Narrative includes "a variety of forms inherent in our getting knowledge, structuring action, and ordering experience" (Brockmeier, 53) and remains one of our most original activities, akin to the perceptive and the cognitive one, which was the subject of Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". It is to some extent similar to the Kantian apriorical categories and forms of sensible intuition, such as time and space. As Paul Ricoeur claims, "between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity" (Ricoeur, 1984: 52). For instance, according to his concept of the threefold mimesis there are some basic, intuitive – let me call them "apriorical" – pre-understandings "that the reader must already have (…) if she is going to comprehend what is happening in the narrative" (McNeely Farren, 2010: 88) and so forth.

Furthermore, "One of the essential functions of narrative (…) is (…) to open us up to the hypothetical, to the range of actual and possible perspectives that constitute the real life of the interpretive mind" (Brockmeier, 56). Narrative has an ability to reach the most transcendental aspects of our experience as it touches its origins, where everything or at least a few other alternative worlds, alternative states of affairs or courses of action are equally possible. This is an independent decision of the storyteller which makes one of them this actual one. Because of this peculiarity narrative belongs to the logic of possible worlds, which "starts from the simple insight that certain situations could have developed differently or (…) that the world could have been different" (Herman, 2005: 150). According to Marie-Laure Ryan, these are all the possibilities which are not impossible from the point of view of the logical law of the excluded middle, those which do not lead to a logical contradiction (Herman, 151).

She explains this within the frames of the so-called triadic model which "considers reality as a universe consisting of three different levels or worlds" (Herman, 150). The actual or real world is "in the center of the system" (Ryan, n. pag.) (first level), while the other worlds "linked to the actual by a relation of accessibility" which, as I have mentioned above, respect "the principle of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle" (Ryan, n. pag.) are alternative or non-actual, e.g. just possible ones (second level). The third and the last level refers to a world which is entirely peripheral relative to the centre, that is to say also impossible because within its boundaries the law of the excluded middle is not respected and the characters are for instance at the same time dead and alive. The main difference between the possible and impossible is accessibility – possible worlds are not real but they "have access to the existing worlds: they could at one point become real" (Herman, 151) while impossible worlds are not and will never be real as they are inwardly contradictory.

To sum up, according to this concept of so-called possible worlds, we can distinguish two main types of fictitious (not real or not actual) realities – I will call them here soft and hard fictions. "Hard" fictions refer to the third level of Ryan`s triadic model, to the worlds which are inwardly contradictory and in consequence also impossible though we are still able to describe them. Although the world presented in such a narrative cannot become real, the story which takes place in such a reality still can be told as it reveals the origins of our experience of an actual world and shows the conditions of possibility of real beings and entities. The second type – "soft" fictions – refer to the second level of Ryan`s model. The worlds presented in such narratives respect the law of the excluded middle, hence they are non-actual but possible. They show alternative states of affairs or alternative courses of events. In such a way, they widen our cognitive horizon and show us that the world could be different than it is or, as Martha Nussbaum puts it, they tell us about things that might happen (Nussbaum, 2008: 238).

Two examples – Gibson's "Neuromancer" and Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four"

I would like to consider this problem based on the example of particular SF works. Due to their

strong connection to the world in which they came into being, they depict the issue of sources of reality well. Although Gibson`s "Neuromancer" as well as Orwell`s "Nineteen Eighty-Four" present fictional worlds with no direct reference to real courses of events, at least at first glance, they do not have an entirely "utopian" character in the sense of the Greek root of the word "u-topia", i.e. something which does not exist or something which did not take place. As I will demonstrate further, because of numerous connotations to real events, political systems known from history, technological changes, and many other non-fictive details, they are actually relatively close to the reality in which their authors lived. In short, the fictional plots in those novels definitely have access to the existing worlds of their authors and in both cases are based on something which, at least partially, really took place somewhere.

For instance the main character of William Gibson`s "Neuromancer", Case, is one of the best cybercowboys who steals precious data from well-protected corporate systems. He works "for other, wealthier thieves" (Gibson, 1986: 12) and "[had] operated on an almost permanent adrenaline high (…), jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix" (Gibson, 1986: 11-12). The story begins when Case is unable to work because his former employers "damaged his nervous system with a wartime Russian mycotoxine" (Gibson, 1986: 12). He is looking for a remedy and in order to find it he goes to Japan. He is only twenty-four but he feels that his life is finished and he is in "the prison of his own flesh" (Gibson, 1986: 12) – that is to say of meat – which is totally useless for a person who lived only "for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (Gibson, 1986: 12) and is despised by other "cowboys hotshots", the elite of his profession.

Case, as well as a few other characters, such as Molly, are humans, not machines. However, they work and act as linked to the cyberspace which is

> a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators (…). A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. (Gibson, 1986: 67)

It does not mean that all the characters are humans. One of the most important and "the most vivid" (Roberts, 2003: 177), Wintermute, is in fact an Artificial Intelligence (AI). As Adam Roberts puts it, in Gibson`s novel it is very often unclear whether a given character is a human being or not as here "(…) "real" and "construct" start to blur" (Roberts, 177). For instance, the other hero, Armitage, "appears to be flesh-and-blood, as real as any human being" but "as the novel progresses, the other characters start to have their doubts (…). We slowly realize that "Armitage" is a sort of flesh construct, a ROM personality built around the recovered fragments of a "real" personality called Corto" (Roberts, 176-177). On the other hand, "real" personages are partially artificial as well. Some parts of their bodies are not entirely "real" – for instance Molly has glasses which are "surgically inset, sealing her sockets" (Gibson, 1986: 36) and a readout chipped into her optic nerve (Gibson, 1986: 44). After a surgical procedure made in order to restore his damaged skills, Case not only has a new pancreas, but also plugs in his liver as well, designed by Armitage "to bypass that shit" (Gibson, 1986: 49), that is to say drugs, such as amphetamine or cocaine.

The title hero of Gibson's "Idoru", Rei Toei, is not a human being either. She is a sort of digital being, a hologram or an entity entirely identified with an "unthinkable volume of information" (Gibson, 1997: 178). As he puts it, "She is the tip on an iceberg, no, an Antarctica, of information. (…) She induced the nodal vision in some unprecedented way; she induced it as narrative" (Gibson, 1997: 178). Laney who observes her hands during eating in order to "Watch the way she ate" (Gibson, 1997: 178) finally comes to the conclusion that she is a projection of "something". Her meal is also virtual: successive plates appear "within the field of whatever projected her" (Gibson, 1997: 178) and are placed before her, being "simultaneously veiled with a flawless copy, holo food on a holo plate" (Gibson, 1997: 178). Her chopsticks are information as well, though they are not "as dense as her features, her gaze" (Gibson, 1997: 178).

Though such a reality in which we cannot distinguish between human beings and machines still

seems to be a part of science-fiction literature, the situations described by Gibson are in fact not very far from the contemporary world in which implants and artificial parts of bodies are very popular. The Ninsei enclave where people buy and sell "proscribed biologicals" which are "genetic materials and hormones" (Gibson, 1986: 19) resembles an illegal, organized trade of human organs. Moreover, the majority of our contemporary population already have the second holo existence in the social network where people can create their profiles, cyber-identities, and so forth.

The idea of cyberspace, one of the most important themes in "Neuromancer", is a very good illustration of this thesis as well. In the first half of the 1980s, virtual reality in today's sense of the term practically did not exist as there were no social media or global computer networks, and personal computers were not as popular as now. As Roberts puts it, Gibson admitted that "this imaginary environment was based (…) upon the video games his children played" (Roberts, 172). It is interesting how fast Gibson`s cyberutopia became at least partially real and how fast we became plugged into some sort of virtual space of "unthinkable complexity" which gathers "data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system" (Gibson, 1986: 67) and which imitates and sometimes also replaces the real world and real experience.

Gibson`s cyberspace not only gathers data but can also imitate, transfer and recreate the human sensorium. Someone plugged into so-called simstim is able to receive another person's sensual experience. Case underlines that cowboys "didn't get into" it as it is "basically a meat toy" (Gibson, 1986: 71). This problem refers to the possibility of getting access to somebody`s internal life, at least to some extent. This theme comes back in other fragments when Gibson discusses the idea of the Artificial Intelligence. For instance, Wintermute has access to human memory. As he puts it, "in the paradigms print gave" (Gibson, 1986: 204), within the frames of which Case still thinks, it means that he can read somebody`s mind. When Case and Molly finally reach the core of the system which exists in the Neuromancer's mind, Case's consciousness begins taking part in a sort of omniscience:

> His vision was spherical, as though a single retina lined the inner surface of a globe that contained all things (…). And here things could be counted, each one. He knew the number of grains of sand in the construct of the beach. He knew the number of yellow food packets in the canisters in the bunker (four hundred and seven). He knew the number of brass teeth in the left half of the open zipper of the salt-crusted leather jacket that Linda Lee wore as she trudged along the sunset beach (…) (two hundred and two). (Gibson, 1986: 304-305)

All the problems mentioned above were not invented by Gibson but refer to well-known philosophical ideas. As Ryan underlines, Gibson is in fact an idealist as his cyberspace "realizes the Platonic dream of a reality fully accessible to the mind because bodies and their "meat" are recreated by the computer as intelligible patterns of information" (Ryan, 1999: 80). Though he transforms it and interprets in his own way, he is an adherent to a classical, Platonic dualism of body and spirit which for a long time determined Western philosophy. The machines embody the bodiless reality – a type of being which is deprived of meat – and at least some of them are able to be omniscient. They are rational and fully intelligible. Simstim represents the second and more basic level of cognition which can be compared for example with the Kantian sensible intuition (sensibility). In his transcendental aesthetic Kant characterizes this faculty as "The capacity (…) for obtaining presentations according as we are affected by objects" and by means of which "objects are given to us" (Kant, 16). As identified with receptivity, this paradigm has also a fully empirical, and therefore lower and worse, nature.

According to Roberts, "Neuromancer" is "an instance of the SF text that plays with secular versions of religious notions" (Roberts, 177-178) and in which Wintermute (Artificial Intelligence), because of his god-like omniscience, plays very similar roles as God or God's mind in more traditional systems. It is rather obvious that God knows our thoughts and has access to our mind, though this rather old idea takes quite new meaning when this is a machine created by people which takes his place. However, this also means that the reality depicted by Gibson has to some extent a totalitarian character. According to Mark Bould

> Gibson`s imagined future of ubiquitous digital communication and media technologies, artificial intelligences, biotechnological body-modifications, and copies without original owed more to shabby dystopias – like those in George Orwell`s "Nineteen Eighty-Four" (1949) (…) - in which marginalized characters (…) try to avoid institutions of social control. (Seed, 2008: 220)

In Orwell`s "Nineteen Eighty-Four", a book written thirty five years earlier, in 1949 it is Big Brother who is watching and who knows everything about every citizen of Oceania. In order to obtain such knowledge, he created the Thought Police. Their agents "watched everybody all the time" (Orwell, 2013: 5) and could "plug in your wire whenever they wanted to" (Orwell, 5). The telescreen which was put in every private flat picked up every sound made by a person who "remained within the field of vision" (Orwell, 5) and "received and transmitted simultaneously" (Orwell, 5). The main hero, Winston, committed thoughtcrime, which is "the essential crime that contained all others in itself" (Orwell, 22) because he began to doubt Big Brother`s infallibility.

The technology in the reality depicted in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" is of course decidedly less advanced, as the authorities of Oceania do not have such tools such as a global computer network, Artificial Intelligence, and so on. Yet this is in fact the same idea of omniscience, of the dangerous but at the same time extraordinary possibility of reading minds and of the reality as one, monolithic system in which everything is counted, absolutely predictable, and easy to control. Big Brother takes God's place similarly to Wintermute in "Neuromancer", though this is rather a god of dystopia, of a world founded not "on love or justice" but on hatred (Orwell, 306). His omniscience serves only one purpose: taking power over human beings: "Over the body – but, above all, over the mind" (Orwell, 303) and in consequence over the whole reality because, as O`Brien admits, the Party already has absolute "control over matter" (Orwell, 303).

In fact, in Orwell`s dystopia there are more similarities to the classical, philosophical notions of the highest being, God or a hierarchy of beings, even if they are sometimes applied in an entirely opaque, inversed manner. For instance, according to Kant, who remains faithful to the long philosophical tradition, the existence of God or some necessary, unconditioned, highest being is one of the regulative principles of pure reason. As he puts it, our human reason

> seeks the concept of what is independent of any condition and finds it in that which itself is the sufficient condition of everything else, that is, in what contains all reality. The unconfined All, however, is absolute unity, and carries with it the concept of a unitary, namely, the highest being. And so reason concludes that the highest being, as the primordial ground of all things, exists [*dasei*] in a downright necessary way. (Kant, 189)

Orwell`s Big Brother, with his omniscience and omnipotence, has many essential features of such an ultimate being. Therefore, he seems to perfectly fulfil this ancient ideal. Yet, there are some important differences. The Kantian absolute being is transcendent. According to O'Brien, "an Inner Party member" (Orwell, 13) who interrogates Winston and finally forces him to betray his loving Julia, to renounce all his doubts and to love Big Brother anew in this new dystopian world, god is not transcendent but is identified with power. Such people as him are the priests of collective power (Orwell, 303). In this monstrous political system, an individual, a particular human being does not matter at all as he is weak and "is always defeated" (Orwell, 303). He becomes "all-powerful and immortal" (Orwell 303) only when he "ceases to be an individual" (Orwell, 303), leaves his identity and merges himself in the Party "so that he *is* the Party" (Orwell, 303).

Of course, Big Brother is not God. Although his power is immense, it is still conditioned, immanent, and based on collective force. However, in the reality presented by Orwell, he has a very similar role, to the extent that he can be easily confused with the highest being by the characters. Although Big Brother is in fact a usurper, a variation of a fallen archangel who wanted to appropriate God`s omnipotence, in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" this power does in fact determine the life and destiny of each

citizen of Oceania. Therefore, within the frames of the novel`s reality, he is the "unconfined All", the basis of all other entities existing in this world and subordinated to his "all-powerful" political system. Orwell created a horrific vision of a closed, absolute and finite whole with no alternatives and no other possibilities. This reality is fully immanent and self-sufficient. There are no references to transcendent values, which do not belong to that world. An enormous poster with Big Brother`s face appears at the very beginning of the novel as well as at the very end, as if in this reality he were in fact the beginning and the end of all things, marking out its boundaries and being the only reference point for all the characters.

Orwell`s world is monumental, ugly, deprived of plurality, colours, and variety. The novel`s plot is based on extraordinarily sharp oppositions, so that the reader does not have much interpretative freedom and must clearly choose who is right and who is wrong. Therefore, the difference between good and evil is easily visible, as they are presented in their pure forms. There are no intermediate attitudes, as for instance in the dispute between Winston and O`Brien, that is to say between the individual and the system, represented by the black-moustachio`d face of Big Brother, who "gazed down from every commanding corner" (Orwell, 4). Doublethink, one of the key principles of the Newspeak, which culminates in three well-known Party slogans, such as "war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength" (Orwell, 6), has a strongly antithetical character. Orwell defines this term as "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one`s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (Orwell, 244).

Though, of course, this is quite an absurd practice which in the author`s intentions reveals the illogicality of the official ideology of the Party, it in fact refers to the same dilemma which tormented Kant, when he aimed at determining the conditions of our knowledge. The main character, Winston, has cognitive doubts very similar to those of Kant and transcendental thinkers: "how do we know that (…) the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind (…) – what then?" (Orwell, 92). Furthermore, according to Kant, on the profound level the nature of human reason is to some extent antithetical. In his dialectics of pure reason, he enumerates four so-called antinomies, i.e. four pairs of "seemingly dogmatic cognitions", such as for instance "it is necessary to assume a causality through freedom" (THESIS) / "there is no freedom, but everything (…) happens solely according to laws of nature" (ANTITHESIS) (Kant, 141). As he puts it, none of them "has a preferential title to our acclaim (…). Each of them by itself meets with the conditions of its necessity in the nature of reason. Unfortunately, the antithesis has equally valid and necessary reasons on its side" (Kant, 136).

In Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four", an original character of SF narratives becomes particularly well visible as he operates with ideas and models which are not entirely fictitious but which were a part of the reality in 1949 when he wrote his novel. In the text, there is a lot of evidence confirming this thesis. For example, in his presentation of the future world which the Party is creating, O'Brien makes an indirect reference to real totalitarian dictatorships of the 20th century. As he puts it,

> We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. (Orwell, 302)

This is, of course, a literary fiction. Oceania is an invented superstate which did not exist neither in 1984 nor in any other period of human history, in the same way as Eurasia or Eastasia. However, because of its quite deep anchorage in historical time in which the author lived and which was the point of departure of his political vision, this is in fact something more than pure fiction. M. Keith Booker calls this novel "one of the most important cultural texts (…) of the Cold War" and underlines that according to Orwell himself, the satirical critique of his book was aimed not only at Stalinism but "at postwar Britain and the West" as well (Seed, 172). He writes about one of the most dangerous but at the same time very real possibilities of his times, something he is afraid of, against what he perhaps wants to warn his readers and – what is most important - what was at least partially indeed already realized by the Nazis and the Communists, that is to

say O'Brien's teachers and predecessors. Big Brother did not invent his system, he simply, as O'Brien put it himself, "had the courage to recognize their motives" (Orwell, 302) and to draw the ultimate consequences out of their assumptions.

Similarly to the gothic novels in Gibson's "Neuromancer" and Orwell`s "Nineteen Eighty-Four", the problems of the origins of beings and the very beginnings of empirical reality play a substantial and significant role. The main hero of Mary Shelley`s "Frankenstein" digs up graves and looks through morgues in order to gather parts of dead bodies necessary to shape a living Creature. The themes of destruction, decay and death which let us confront our own demons and horrifying possibilities hidden deeply in our subconscious are ubiquitous in Gibson's and Orwell's narratives as well. For instance, the characters of Gibson`s "Neuromancer" as well as all "cellular, animal, human, and narrative life are (…) structured according to a (metaphorical?) death drive" (Seed, 539). Molly wants to "transcend death" by killing assassins, Armitage "works through permutations" until he can die in the proper way, as a hero (Seed, 540) and so forth. Case, who is disconnected from cyberspace, deprived of his extraordinary abilities and reduced to his body, becomes in such a way quite a vampirical entity, as he is neither dead nor alive, being metaphorically suspended between life and death (Seed, 541). The end of the narrative, which presupposes "second death", is not the true end as well (Seed, 542) as Gibson's cybercowboys, AIs and all the problems generated by a "consensual hallucination" of cyberspace return in the other parts of the Sprawl Trilogy or in the Bridge Trilogy.

In Orwell`s vision the themes of death, origins and creation are also crucial to some extent. The Party members are aware of a destructive-creative force of their ideology. They explicitly admit that their purpose is in destroying the old world and create the new one in which their power will be endless. According to O`Brien there is no such thing as "human nature which will be outraged by what we do and will turn against us. (…) we create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable" (Orwell, 308-309). As he claims, "Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing" (Orwell, 306). After the inquiry conducted by O`Brien Winston is in fact a phantom, a living dead, "a bowed, grey-coloured, skeleton-like thing" (Orwell, 310) with seamed cheeks and the mouth with "a drawn-in look" (Orwell, 310-311) or, as investigator puts it, "A bag of filth" who is "falling to pieces" (Orwell, 312). He is the last man or the last representative of this humanity which existed earlier and which according to Big Brother`s point of view must be annihilated with all its values and beliefs and created anew as entirely subordinated to the Party.

Conclusion

Narratives resemble Wittgenstein's forms of life, that is to say "fleeting constellations (…) which are best understood within a conception of structure as fluid patterns of action and of positioning" (Brockmeier, 53). In such a way, they are able to grasp "traditionally neglected by the human sciences" but characteristic for human experience changeability, openness, and flexibility as they are "amazingly open and adaptable structures that change their organization and features with their discursive context" (Brockmeier, 53). Or, as Brockmeier and Harré put it,

> the exploratory and experimental options of narrative are inextricably fused with our fleeting reality itself: with the fluid material and symbolic realities of our actions, minds, and identities. It seems that it is, not least, the narrative function that endows the human condition with its particular openness and plasticity. (Brockmeier, 56)

In short, in contradistinction to other, more systematic and scientific types of discourse, it has an ability to express the origins of our human, cultural reality and to seize it in the moment when it is shaped and comes into existence.

According to such representatives of ethical criticism as for instance Martha Nussbaum or Wayne C. Booth, literary narratives and our so-called true life constantly influence each other. Literary fictions

not only imitate real actions of real people living in a real world but provide us with patterns of acting and thinking as well. As Booth put it, "for most of us our character (…) changes, grows, and diminishes largely as a result of our imaginative diet" (Booth, 1988: 257). Narratives of our culture – fictional, historical as well as true ones – are not indifferent with regard to who we are as „the isolated individual self simply does not, cannot exist" (Booth, 238). Our self has a dialogical character and does not exist without and beyond a society in which we exist and which shaped us.

SF narratives, particularly those which belong to the second level of Ryan`s model and respect the law of the excluded middle, provide a good example of such a mutual relationship. They often use various terms, metaphors, types of description, and thought constructions which do not entirely stray from the frameworks and categories within which we usually think. Just like Orwell`s Newspeak which "was founded on the English language as we now know it" (Orwell, 344), such narratives also use the same language and the same bricks which already exist in the actual world but they change the rules of the game a little bit – they show some problems or facts from another perspective, augment or diminish them, change their order, and so forth, in short – they bring existing tendencies to their most extreme form. They simply describe possible realities which are not actual but are already to some extent present in our everyday speaking, thinking and acting though we are not aware of them as they are not evident. In such a way, they widen the boundaries of what is possible and show that what we experience as reality is always conditioned and could be different in other circumstances. In short – they present us with our own possibilities, or, as Kant put it, the conditions of the possibility of experience (Kant, 66) and show us that our world is always to some extent only a version of itself, not something that is fixed once and for all.

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