ANNA STEPANOVA
Doctor of Science in Philology, Full Professor,
European and Oriental Languages and Translation Department,
Alfred Nobel University (Dnipro)

INNA ZHUKOVYCH
PhD in Philology, Associate Professor,
English Language Department,
Kruty Heroes Military Institute
of Telecommunications and Information Technology (Kyiv)

"THE HANDMAID'S TALE" BY MARGARET ATWOOD AS A POSTMODERN NOVEL: DYSTOPIAN GENRE TRANSGRESSION IN POSTMODERN ERA

Роман Маргарет Етвуд «Розповідь Служниці», на перший погляд, досліджений всебічно й фундаментально. Науковцями глибоко проаналізовані аспекти жанру антиутопії, його феміністська та антирелігійна спрямованість, зв'язок роману з філософськими концепціями XX ст. Поетика роману викликає інтерес дослідників до питань інтертекстуальності, специфіки композиції тощо.

Проте не зважаючи на широке коло проблем, які мають місце як у дослідженнях 1980-2000-х, так і в сучасних напрацюваннях, поза увагою науковців залишилося, на наш погляд, дуже важливе питання щодо значення роману Маргарет Етвуд для подальшого розвитку як традиції жанру антиутопії, так і жанра постмодерністського роману. У той же час «Розповідь Служниці» можна розглядати і як програмний твір, у якому чітко виокремлено й опрацьовано ключові жанрові засади постмодерністського роману-антиутопії, які ще не були обґрунтовані.

Сучасні дослідження особливостей постмодерністської антиутопії на матеріалі різних творів 1990-2000-х рр. акцентують увагу саме на ті жанрові візії, що були закладені в романі М. Етвуд. Дослідники переважно зосереджують свою увагу на трансформації змісту антиутопії в епоху постмодернізму

Водночас зрозуміло, що зміни, яких зазнала антиутопія в останній третині XX ст., пов'язані з оформленням естетики жанру постмодерного роману, про що свідчить поява роману «Розповідь Служниці». У зв'язку з цим *метою* статті вважаємо дослідження вищезазначеного твору М. Етвуд у контексті поетики жанру постмодерністського роману-антиутопії через призму тісного зв'язку змістовних ознак антиутопії та форми постмодерністського роману.

Досягнення поставленої мети передбачає звернення до історико-літературного, філософсько-естетичного, герменевтичного *методів*.

У контексті постмодерністської антиутопічної парадигми жанр антиутопії суттєво трансформується. Переорієнтація змістових аспектів жанру пов'язана зі скороченням пробілів між антиутопічним і реальним часом, появою відносно оптимістичної тональності, лабільністю антиутопічного світу (що зумовлює умовно-метафоричний характер хронотопу, аморфність просторових і дискретність часових меж), зміщенням акценту на внутрішній світ персонажа.

Вищий рівень антропоцентризму, характерний для постмодерністської антиутопії, зумовлює модифікацію характеру бунту головного героя проти тоталітарного режиму – фокус з соціального бунту зміщується на особистий екзистенційний (боротьба за збереження власної ідентичності), де важливим стає не результат, а його філософський зміст.

Водночас антиутопія вбирає в себе й риси постмодерністської романної форми і постмодерністської наративної стратегії, оперуючи прийомами інтертекстуальності та переосмислюючи традиції минулого, іронії та пародії, гри з часом і авторської гри з читачем. Зауважимо, що функція

ігрової стратегії автора полягає не лише в тому, щоб зробити читача співавтором тексту, спонукаючи його до безлічі інтерпретацій. Багатоплановість гри втягує його в дійство й змушує поміркувати про діапазон можливостей, які мають місце в сучасній цивілізації, тобто сприймати розповідь про Гілеад не просто як захопливий сторітеллінг. В ігровому модусі прослідковується ідейно-змістовна авторсь-ка стратегія оповіді – через інтертекст (як поєднання різнорівневих хронотопів і культурних текстів), з одного боку, так і через залучення в переживання Offred – з іншого, спонукати/примусити чита-ча пізнати всю історію християнської цивілізації, репрезентовану в антиутопічному наративі героїні.

Ключові слова: постмодерністський роман-антиутопія, інтертекст, іронія, гра, наратив-на стратегія, трансгресія жанру.

Introduction

Margaret Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985) has a long history of research, which began immediately after its publication. From the second half of the 1980s to the present day, the science bibliography devoted to the novel has been plentiful and is represented by in-depth studies that touch on many artistic aspects of the work. In the thematic diversity of scientific works, we can conditionally distinguish several clusters uniting studies on certain problems. The most popular and numerous studies consider *The Handmaid's Tale in the context of dystopian traditions*. Thus, Roberta Rubenstein [2001], Luci M. Freibert [1988], Diane S. Wood [1992], and N. Ovcharenko [2006] pay attention to the problem of individual freedom and the fate of women in a totalitarian society, linking the novels of J. Orwell, R. Bradbury and M. Atwood into a single dystopian tradition. Coral Ann Howells [2001] and Inna Podhurska and Myroslava Seniuk [2022] focus on the anti-religious orientation of The Handmaid's Tale as an anti-utopian novel.

Referring to the genre complexity of the novel, which incorporates features of feminist, political, and environmental novels based on an antiutopian novel [Ovcharenko, 2006, p. 46], researchers almost immediately defined the genre of "The Handmaid's Tale" as "feminist dystopia" [Malak, 1987] (today, M. Atwood's novel is called the main feminist dystopia in the history of literature [Soldatov, 2020]). This led to the emergence of the most extensive cluster of *studies of M. Atwood's novel as a feminist dystopia.* Margaret Atwood, notes Lucy Freibert, "demonstrates the absurdity of Western patriarchal teleology that views woman's biology as destiny and exposes the complicity of women in perpetuating that view" [Freibert, 1988, p. 280]. In the context of feminist dystopia, scientists focus on studying the problems of positive (based on the radical ideas of Christianity) and negative (the right to choose) freedom of women in a totalitarian society [Tolan, 2005]. The problem of the real embodiment of feminist dystopia in modern society is considered by Shirley S. Neuman, noting that there is a relationship between the society that M. Atwood creates in her novel and the real society [Neuman, 2006, p. 866]. This idea remains relevant today: almost 15 years later, Edita Bratanović notes, "Many readers feel that the society described in the novel is unrealistic and far-fetched, but the truth is that women are still being discriminated against and feminism as the movement still has a long way to go before all of its goals are achieved" [Bratanović, 2020, p. 356].

An attempt to explain "The Handmaid's Tale" as a feminist dystopia focusing on the prevailing issues of infertility, power politics, ruthlessness of the theocratic idea, suppression of women in a male chauvinistic society, exploitation of women as a toy used for absolute sexual pleasure are undertaken in the works of Astra S. Mouda [2012], V. Vinoth and M. Vijayakumar [2022], Rafea M. Alwan [2023], etc.

Aspects of the novel's poetics are no less deeply researched. In this cluster of studies, scholars have focused on the study of narrative structure, stylistic features, the author's image and authorial modality, the motif of the play, the specificity of the plot, etc. Thus, the change of discursive forms, how the first-person narrator handles the narrative material, and the composition of the narrative text become the subject of Hilde Staels' [1995] study. Inna Podhurska [2020] traces the influence of the author's choice of narrative form in a literary text as one of the best

tools for establishing contact with the reader and representing the author's position. Yulia Chernova [2019] focuses on the stylistics and peculiarities of the psychology of storylines. The ambivalence of the love theme, the motif of love as a game in the focus of Madonne Miner's [Miner, 1991] attention, etc.

Comparative studies also join the study of the poetics of M. Atwood's novel. These studies comprehend the problems of intertextuality, the comprehension of as a category of historical analysis, the peculiarities of comparing "The Handmaid's Tale" with the feminist issues of modern works, etc. Thus, Karen F. Stein [1994] traces thematic and stylistic parallels between M. Atwood's novel and J. Swift's "Modest Proposal". The problem of nation-state formation and the limited prospects for the development of middle-class women is considered by Marie Lovrod [2006] as common to M. Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" and Sidhwa's "Cracking India". Luz Angélica Kirschner [2006] brings together the images of the protagonists of M. Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and Julia Álvarez's "In the Time of the Butterflies" as marginalised women trying to survive in totalitarian oppressive regimes controlled by men. The researcher notes that both novels, "exemplify the need to consider gender 'a useful category of historical analysis' to overturn the monological and well-organised version of official history that, in the process of history writing, has tended to obliterate 'insignificant' narratives and voices" [Kirschner, 2006, p. 2].

In modern studies of M. Atwood's novel, the attention of scholars is focused on considering "The Handmaid's Tale" *in the context of various philosophical theories*. Thus, V. Vinoth and M. Vijayakumar [2023] and Sunshine C. Angcos Malit [2023] represent the protagonist of the novel through Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as the "second sex" concerning feminist concepts such as the loss of female identity, subordination in a patriarchal society, and exploitation in a consumer culture where the female body is seen only as an object. Through the prism of Michel Foucault's concept of power, H. Ismael and H. Saleh examine the discursive strategies of M. Atwood's novel [Ismael, Saleh, 2023]. Harith Ismael Turki and Dulfqar M. Abdulrazzaq examine Marxist feminism as a theoretical framework for reading the novel [Turki, Abdulrazzaq, 2023], etc.

However, despite the variety of problems covered in these studies, in our opinion, a fundamental question about the significance of Margaret Atwood's novel for the further development of the tradition of the dystopian genre has remained on the periphery of scholarly attention. Meanwhile, "The Handmaid's Tale" can be regarded as a programmatic work that clearly identifies and elaborates the key genre principles of the postmodern dystopian novel, which have not yet been substantiated. Modern studies of the features of postmodern dystopia based on the material of various works of the 1990–2000s ([Fedukh, 2015], [Hicks, 2014], [Sarrimo, 2020], [Tashchenko, 2020], [Canli, 2022], etc.) capture exactly those genre strategies that were embedded in M. Atwood's novel. As noted by Tom Moylan, Margaret Atwood has nevertheless taken the traditional dystopia to a historical limit, and in doing so, she anticipates the moment of the critical dystopias that will soon occur in the popular realm of sf in the late 1980s [Moylan, 2000, p. 166]. At the same time, researchers focus on the transformation of the mainly predominant aspects of dystopia in the era of postmodernism. Meanwhile, the changes that dystopia underwent in the last third of the 20th century are associated with the formation of the aesthetics of the genre of the postmodern novel, as evidenced by the publication of the novel "The Handmaid's Tale". In this regard, we consider it appropriate to study M. Atwood's novel as a postmodern dystopian novel in the relationship between the content features of dystopia and the form of the postmodern novel.

This work *aims* to investigate the dystopian narrative presented in "The Handmaid's Tale" in the context of the poetics of the postmodern novel genre. Achieving the stated goal involves the use of historical-literary, philosophical-aesthetic, and hermeneutical *methods of investigation*.

The dystopian novel genre in the context of the postmodern aesthetic paradigm

The study of the substantive aspects of the dystopian genre in the context of the postmodern paradigm was actualised in the early 2000s. Among the features of postmodern dystopia, researchers have identified *minimal detachment from real time* ([McHale, 1987], [Baccolini, Moylan, 2003], [Cheluwe, 2015]); *a relatively optimistic tone due to the presence of a utopian context* ([McHale, 1987], [Baccolini, Moylan, 2003], [Mohr, 2007], [Castillón, 2022], [Seyferth, 2018]

etc.); the lability of the dystopian world [Yurieva, 2005], *the eclecticism of genres* ([Baccolini, Moylan, 2003], [Ovcharenko, 2006], and *a higher degree of anthropocentrism* compared to the classical dystopia of the first half of the 20th century ([Moylan, 1986], [Rosenfeld, 2021]).

Thus, Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan note that the oppositional political culture of the late 1960s and 1970s caused a revival of truly utopian writing, which became the first major revival since the end of the 19th century [Baccolini, Moylan, 2003, p. 2]. Researchers emphasise that the dystopias of the second half of the 20th century, "are equally addressed to the future and the present", the boundaries of dystopia and reality are blurred. As A.V. Timofeeva rightly notes, "In the second half of the last century, based on previous experience, writers create a kind of artistic chronicles of the present, which, quite naturally, are devoid of any detachment from life" [Timofeeva, p. 17]. In this regard, Brian McHale draws attention to the ontological confrontation between the text and the world that is characteristic of postmodernism, "This transparently formalistic, game-like 'art in a closed field' complicates science fiction's ontological confrontation between the present and a dystopian future world by superimposing on top of it, so to speak, a characteristically postmodernist ontological confrontation between the text as formal object and the world that it projects" [McHale, 1987, p. 70].

A close connection with reality characterises the optimistic orientation of postmodern dystopia, which is stated by most researchers. R. Baccolini and T. Moylan note that the texts of postmodern dystopias support the utopian impulse. Traditionally a gloomy, depressive genre in which there is little room for hope within the plot, modern dystopias support utopian hope outside the text [Baccolini, Moylan, 2003, p. 7]. Dunja Mohr focuses on the fact that the utopian subtext of modern dystopias is located precisely in the gap between the narrated dystopian present and the expected realisation of a potential utopian future, which classical dystopia avoids [Mohr, 2007, p. 9]. Indeed, in many works of this genre of the second half of the 20th century, the situation of enslavement by civilization does not seem hopeless; the process of liberation struggle against the new totalitarian system mostly leads to the desired result (R. Bradbury, M. Atwood) with the idea of building a happy new society oriented towards the values of previous eras.

The possibility of utopian hope that Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan speak of is due to the influence on the dystopian genre of the postmodern philosophical narrative, according to which "everything is possible". The principle of endless possibilities and total variability predetermined the conventionality and lability of the dystopian world, which, unlike the world of classical dystopia, "is not static, it is constructed, it is only possible" [Yurieva, 2005].

Related to this is the genre diffusion of dystopian works, which researchers focus on, noting the increasing practice of genre-blurring, "critical dystopias resist genre purity in favour of an impure and hybrid text that updates dystopian fiction, making it formally and politically oppositional" [Baccolini, Moylan, 2003, p. 7].

Postmodern dystopia is characterised by deep anthropocentrism and psychologism noted by researchers, which implies a departure from the depersonalisation inherent in classical dystopia and a shift in emphasis to the individualisation of personality. According to Aaron Rosenfeld, in his monograph Character and Dystopia: The Last Men, in connection with the analysis of K. Ishiguro's novel "Never Let Me Go", notes that the writer is primarily concerned with the question of what a person is and, more specifically, how to talk about it, which leads to the cultivation of the inner life of the characters [Rosenfeld, 2021, pp. 23, 61]. To this, we add that the deepening of anthropocentrism and psychologism also determines the transformation of the dystopian narrative, which traditionally takes the form of a diary or manuscript, which the main character secretly creates. However, if in a classic dystopia such a manuscript, according to B. Lanin, is, in fact, a denunciation of the society surrounding the hero (since it concentrates on describing the structure of a totalitarian state) [Lanin, 1993, pp. 154–155], then in a postmodern dystopia, the diary returns to its original genre purpose – it captures the individual experience of a person, their thoughts, feelings (fears), and experiences – becoming more intimate, which is demonstrated by the novel "The Handmaid's Tale".

To the already highlighted features of postmodern dystopia, we should add that the rejection of the hopelessness inherent in classical dystopia and the focus on a relatively optimistic ending leads to a change in the artistic functions of dystopian space and time. The chronotope of the dystopia of the second half of the 20th century is notable for its *conditional metaphorical na-*

ture due to the convergence of historical and artistic realities. It is characterised by *amorphous spatial and discrete temporal boundaries*, which create an atmosphere of the precariousness of human existence in the dystopian chronotope. The isolation of the space hostile to man in the classical dystopia gives way to the possibility of overcoming its closedness, opening its borders, and overcoming the hostility of natural space. This, in turn, leads to the construction of a new type of relationship between the image of the hero and the spatio-temporal model of existence, caused by the process of displacement of the social chronotope by the personal one. Such a shift in emphasis implies another principle of the formation of the hero's world, which is dominated by personal space and personal time. Instead of the external world, the author brings to the fore the *personal space of the character*, the necessity and significance of which is explained by the fact that with the help of this space, the individual is separated from the surrounding world, gaining the opportunity to preserve his own identity. With the same intention, *the personal time of the character* is actualised in the late dystopia, presented both retrospectively (memories of childhood and mother) and prospectively (plans for the future). In the character's personal time, both *personal memory and historical memory* are activated, creating a varied view of time and history. In postmodern dystopias, "social and individual narrative voices are heard, and a polyphony of alternating voices and multiple points of view is created" [Mohr, 2007, p. 7].

At the same time, the dystopian novel of the second half of the 20th century absorbs not only the features of a postmodern philosophical narrative but also the features of the postmodern novel form, already present in the novel "The Handmaid's Tale" – *intertextuality and rethinking of the cultural traditions of the past; an open form of the character's image and open ending; irony and parody; the principle of playing with the reader and playing with time.*

The rethinking of the values of the past is reflected primarily in the dialogue with classical dystopia, which leads to the situation of intertextuality as one of the features of postmodern dystopia, which manifests itself in numerous similar images, borrowed motifs and plots, narrative techniques, and an ironic and parodic prism of view. The image of the hero inherits at the same time the aesthetic canons of *romanticism* (individualism, rebelliousness); *naturalism* (the determination of behavioural characteristics by the instinct of self-preservation, awareness of the problem of heredity through gender issues, the construction of the narrative structure on the principle of a "human document"); *modernism* (emphasis on the self-worth of the character's personality, their inner world, motives of loneliness and alienation, gender component of human images); *existentialism* (emphasis on the search for inner freedom and meaning of existence, the ability to overcome the absurdity of existence (rebellion, escape), the presence of liminal situations).

The desire to rethink the world's artistic experience in the work, the return to timeless subjects, eternal images and values through the prism of ironic quotation allows us to focus on the pathological state of these values in the modern world. Yu. Gavrikova's opinion is indisputable, "virtually every dystopia is characterised by intexts that, at first glance, resemble an allusion. However, all these intexts are paradigmatic since the source text plays the role of a frame for the context, which is characteristic of parody itself. These contexts can be different in scope, from a few lines to an entire work within dystopia" [Gavrikova, 2013, p. 300]. These characteristics mainly destroy the tragic tonality, which is characteristic of the classic dystopia.

In the process of postmodern rethinking of traditions, a new type of hero is born. The type of hero in classical dystopia undergoes a transformation based on a change in the form of rebellion/protest. In the dystopia of the second half of the 20th century, *social protest is replaced by personal*, existential protest, aimed at gaining inner freedom rather than at committing a revolutionary act. Therefore, in late dystopia, it is not the result of the revolt that is important, but its philosophical content, which determines the vector of the search for one's own identity. The schematic nature of the classical dystopian characters, which constitutes a closed structure, is replaced by an "open" form of the image that reflects *the unfinished type of the hero* (as defined by M. Bakhtin), which, in turn, determines the openness of the ending of the postmodern dystopian novel, "the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse within the work" [Baccolini, 2003, p. 130] – the hero attempts to find existence outside the totalitarian society to win their future.

The openness of the ending, expressed in its variability ("The Handmaid's Tale"), includes the principle of play with the reader. The uncertainty (or, as Raffaella Baccolini noted, ambigu-

ity) of the ending, which allows for different endings (including an optimistic one, for example, escape/rescue from a dystopian world), creates a situation of textual polyvariety, involving the reader in the process of solving the riddle and generating ambivalence of meaning. The function of the diary narrative is also transformed in the game mode, "In the postmodern dystopian space, filled with the feeling of overthrow of immutable truths, the function of the diary, as well as the first-person narrative (P. Ackroyd, J. Barnes), is different: to conclude a certain convention with the reader, to break the usual dichotomy "author – reader", to construct a microcosm of "me – not me – reader" to show the shakiness of the concepts "true – false – possible – real" and the very relative boundary between them" [Shishkina, 2009, p. 99].

Understanding the image of time is also subject to the game principle. Playing with time, which implies the inclusion of the present, past and future as a complex trinity in the structure of the work, becomes one of the distinctive features of the postmodern dystopian novel. Excursions into the past and the proposed model of the future destroy the isolation of the dystopian world, demonstrating it as one of the possible worlds, on the one hand, and as part of a unified history of the world, on the other.

The considered features of the postmodern dystopian novel were refracted in M. Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale", which became an important milestone in the development of the poetics of this genre.

Ironic and parodic intertext: "Grand Narratives" collapse echoes

As all historians know, the past is a great darkness, and filled with echoes…
Margaret Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale"

J.-F. Lyotard stated that in the postmodern era, the grand narrative has lost its right to truth, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation [Lyotard, 1984, p. 37]. In postmodern literature, the loss of plausibility of grand narratives took the form of intertextual inclusions, through which past cultural epochs were resurrected and reinterpreted in an ironic and parodic way. The further back in time a literary text was, the stronger the link established through intertext with the great narratives that had lost their verisimilitude. The more history became a possibility in a world where everything is text, the richer and more diverse intertext became. In discussing the relationship between postmodernist texts and history, Richard Lehan noted that the texts that we often see as destroying historicism are themselves deeply connected to the historical moment. In this context, "intertextuality takes on deeply historical significance when one text talks to another in contexts that are inseparable from the cultural/historical moment" [Lehan, 1990, pp. 552, 551].

In M. Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale", intertextual connections are diverse. Researchers have deeply comprehended the mythological and fairy-tale (the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood by Ch. Perrault, Alice Through the Looking Glass by L. Carroll [D'Antonio, 2021]), biblical ([Filipczak, 1993], [Christou, 2016], [Kachhwaha, 2018], [D'Antonio, 2021], etc.) literary (J. Chaucer, J. Swift, Ch. Dickens, J. Orwell ([Ingersoll, 1993], [Stein, 1994], [Thomas, 2008], [Clements, 2011], etc.), cultural-historical (onomasticon of the novel, allusions to the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century [Filipczak, 1993], [Templin, 1993], [Pawlak, 2019], etc.) intertexts. Each of the types is assigned certain functions: mythological and fairy-tale intertext deepens the characteristics of the image of the main character, literary intertext emphasises the plot and compositional originality of the novel; cultural-historical – provides the effect of proximity of the novel's dystopian world with the real world; biblical – is the basis of the image of a theocratic totalitarian state.

In addition, references to specific works and cultural realities clearly illustrate Lyotard's thesis about the collapse of grand narratives and their consequences. The image of the Republic of Gilead shows a cross-section of history, starting from early Christianity and ending with the 20th century, and the result of erroneous, sometimes perverted (imperfect) interpretation and implementation of ideas/ideologies of humankind significant for history, as well as a prognostic view of the 21st century. Among such great narratives and corresponding intertexts, we will single out *Christianity* (Puritanism as a branch of Protestantism – biblical intertext), *Enlightenment*

(J. Swift), *Victorianism* (Ch. Dickens, image of Queen Victoria), *Nazism* (allusions to concentration camps), *Communism* (K. Marx's theses), *Liberalism* (ironic understanding of tolerance). Let us look at them in more detail.

The biblical intertext is a parody of Protestant fundamentalism, based on which, in fact, the social model of the Republic of Gilead is built. We note immediately the ironic implication in the name of the state – a republic implies a democratic form of government, where power is elected by the people, while in Gilead, democracy becomes a form of dictatorship. The lack of choice among the citizens of Gilead, and especially among women, is ironically emphasised already at the beginning of the novel, "*We seemed to be able to choose, the. We were a society dying, said Aunt Lydia, of too much choice*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 37].

Already in the dedication to Perry Miller (a professor at Harvard University, a researcher of Puritanism, under whose guidance M. Atwood studied US history) and at the beginning of the narrative in the text of the novel, there are hints that the ancestors of Gilead were the Puritan founding fathers who sailed to the shores of America (New England) on the ship Mayflower, "*… you can see paintings, of women in long sombre dresses, their hair covered by white caps, and of upright men, darkly clothed and unsmiling. Our ancestors*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 44]. These hints simultaneously reveal both the place of action in the novel (the USA) and genetic connections with English culture and mentality.

As is well known, the cornerstone of the doctrine of Protestant fundamentalism, based on biblical literalism, is the question of Bible interpretation. The parodic interpretation of biblical literalism opens with one of the epigraphs to the novel, which presents a quotation from the Old Testament Book of Genesis about the birth of a child in the family of Jacob and Rachel by the maid Bilhah – a situation that, in fact, formed the basis of the existence of the Gilead state and formed the basis of its politics. The need to follow the letter of the Bible in everyday life and the laws of Gilead, ("*They can hit us, there's Scriptural precedent*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 26] – "Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid [is] in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face" [KJV[1], Genesis 16:6] (only in Gilead one cannot escape); "*Hair must be long but covered. Aunt Lydia said: Saint Paul said it's either that or a close shave*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 75] – "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered" [KJV, 1 Corinthians 11:6]; "*The penalty for rape, as you know, is death. Deuteronomy 22:23–29*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 293], etc.), was combined with the free interpretation, periphrasis or supplementation of the Bible in the interests of the ruling circles, ("*Gilead is within you*"; "*Blessed be this, blessed be that. They played it from a disc, the voice was a man's. Blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the silent. I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong, and they left things out too, but there was no way of checking*" [Atwood, 2002, pp. 35, 101]). It is impossible to verify since the residents of Gilead are prohibited from reading the Bible, they can only hear the interpretation of its text (which, in fact, is a return to what Martin Luther protested against, calling for the Bible to be translated into national languages, and thus undermining the foundations of Protestantism). This interpretation of biblical literalism leads to the desacralisation of the Bible, which is just a text, in a postmodern world where "everything is a text" (J. Derrida). This text can be added to or rewritten according to the political situation, with the result that the Bible becomes a propaganda tool. At the same time, it is not surprising that the church itself is disappearing as a social institution, becoming either a museum or a cemetery, "*The church is a small one, one of the first erected here, hundreds of years ago. It isn't used anymore, except as a museum… The old gravestones are still there, weathered, eroding, with their skulls and crossed bones, memento mori*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 44]. Let us note that with fairly harsh criticism of biblical literalism, the author does not touch upon the concept of faith – only that which is directly or indirectly connected with human deeds is subject to criticism. The faith implanted in Gilead is equivalent to ideology and becomes an element of politics; it is false. Genuine faith remains sacred. Offred's appeal to God is not ritualised, it is arbitrary and heartfelt: "*My God. Who Art in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is within. I wish you would tell me Your Name, the real one I mean. But You will do as well as anything. I wish I knew*

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[1] KJV – King James Version Bible, edited by D. Cogliano [Cogliano, 2004].

what You were up to. But whatever it is, help me to get through it, please. Though maybe it's not Your doing; I don't believe for an instant that what's going on out there is what You meant" [Atwood, 2002, p. 207]. God is explicitly excluded from the creation of the world of Gilead.

The control of the state to keep everyone *silent* is embodied in the image of The Eyes of God, ("For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth" [KJV, 2 Chronicles 16:9]). The allusion to the image of Big Brother from G. Orwell's novel ("*Big Brother is watching you*") is evident here. An interesting parallel is drawn with the image of the all-seeing and punishing Eyes, the symbolism of which is widespread in Gilead, and the image of the eye on the back of the old dollar bill, "Pieces of paper, thickish, greasy to the touch, green-coloured, with pictures on each side, some old man in a wig and on the other side a pyramid with an eye above it. It said *In God We Trust.* My mother said people used to have signs beside their cash registers, for a joke: *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash.* That would be blasphemy now" [Atwood, 2002, p. 185]. This fragment of the protagonist's memories shows that the preconditions for the atrocities taking place in Gilead are embedded in the past that Offred is so nostalgic about. The comment, "That would be blasphemy now", reveals an ironic subtext, as religion in Gilead is monetised to the maximum extent possible, and for the believer, it becomes a kind of compensation for all the trials and tribulations of earthly existence. At the same time, it becomes a means of obtaining material rewards: it is enough to order a prayer in the Soul Scrolls for the benefit of one's career, and money will be withdrawn from the card. Researchers note that the preached Puritan concept of "diligence in worldly business, and yet deadness to the world" [Cotton, 2001, p. 113] was neglected by subsequent generations and confused with simple success in this world [D'Antonio, 2021, p. 158], probably because the founding fathers, "were seeking economic opportunity rather than religious liberty in the new world" [Gaskill, 2021, p. 22]. In this regard, let us certainly agree with the opinion of Carla S. D'Antonio that Offred's narrative exposes the notion of Puritan "purity" [D'Antonio, 2021, p. 158]. In Gilead, religion and the Bible take on an entrepreneurial spirit, as indicated by the novelist's choice of names for the Aunts – women close to power in Gilead who train maids and administer important social procedures in the state (registration of marriages, birth of children, executions, etc.). According to Charlotte Templin, the names of the Aunts – Sarah, Elizabeth, Lydia, and Helena – originally go back to the names of prominent biblical women (Sarah – wife of Abraham; Elizabeth – mother of John the Baptist; Lydia – Paul's first convert in Europe. Helen – mother of Constantine and pioneer of the True Cross of the Lord) [Templin, 1993, p. 150]. At the same time, the chapter "Historical Notes" contains a hint of their commercial semantics, since the names of the aunts "*derived from commercial products available to women in the immediate pre-Gilead period, and thus familiar and reassuring to them – the names of cosmetic lines, cake mixes, frozen desserts, and even medicinal remedie*s" [Atwood, 2002, p. 322]. Charlotte Templin specifies that it is about, "Helena Rubenstein and Elizabeth Arden cosmetics, Betty Crocker foods, Sara Lee frozen desserts, and Lydia Pinkham's medicine for female complaints. The association of the 'Aunts' with advertising and consumer products suggests their function of manipulating other women in the interests of the dominant powers" [Templin, 1993, p. 150]. Taking into account the fact that the Aunts ensure life in Gilead by the essentially transformed (or inverted) letter of the Bible, and the fact that Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden were called "icons of style", a parodic analogy emerges in which the Aunts appear as "icons of the totalitarian regime". At the same time, it is not the names of Helena Rubinstein, Elizabeth Arden and others that are elevated to the images of biblical women, but the biblical names Sarah, Elizabeth, Lydia, and Helen are relegated to the level of fashion brand names.

In a parodic and ironic rethinking of the biblical intertext, the Protestant metanarrative is desacralised, losing its right to truth. Moreover, the idea, implemented in a work of fiction in the mid-1980s, was developed and approved in scientific and political science works of the 1990s. In 1991, James Moore published his article "Creationist Cosmos of Protestant Fundamentalism", in which the researcher noted that during this period, the movement of Protestant fundamentalism was experiencing a rise and consolidation with political power [Moore, 1991].

In this regard, it is significant that the biblical intertext in the novel "frames" allusions to *Nazism* and *Communism* – two metanarratives that were realised and exhausted in the 20th century, and the echoes of these metanarratives are also evident in today's global picture of the world.

The associations of the Gilead political system with Nazism and Communism have been investigated in detail by scholars. Dorota Filipczak points out the identity of the structure and ideology of Gilead and Nazi Germany [Filipczak, 1993, p. 176], which is manifested both in the affirmation of racial ideology in Gilead, and in allusions to the torchlight procession ("*the same slogans, the same phrases: the torch of the future, the cradle of the race, the task before us*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 290]), and in the presence of colonies that evoke an association with concentration camps, where dissidents and maids who were unable to bear children to the Commanders were sent, and in tattooed numbers on the legs of maids, and the racial division into full-fledged and inferior discarded women (*Unwomen*), who "burn up with the garbage" [Atwood, 2002, p. 230] and children (*Unbabies*), destroyed in "*shredders*" (which caused an association with the racist term of Nazi Germany "Untermenschen" – representatives of lower races, "subhumans", which were considered Jews, Gypsies, Slavs) [Pawlak, 2019, p. 6]. The motif of sacrifice for the common good, which is a cross-cutting theme in the novel, evokes an association with biblical sacrifice, denoted in the Latin Bible by the word "*holocaustosis*" (burnt offering). Maria Christou draws attention to this, "Though the controversial term 'Holocaust' is not used at any point in Atwood's novel, the implicit parallel between the Jewish people and the Handmaids-as-sacrificial-offerings carries the same troubling connotations" [Christou, 2016, p. 418].

Continuing the theme of "totalitarian intertext", Maria Christou points out the associations with Communism that arise from the fact that maids wear red uniforms, that their function is to work, and that they undergo indoctrination in the so-called "Red Center", where they consistently repeat a phrase, "*From each according to her ability; to each according to his needs*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 127], that they are told is taken from the Bible (they said. St. Paul again, in Acts), but is a modified version of the principle of communism borrowed from Karl Marx [Christou, 2016, p. 412]. To this, we should add the motif of "purges", which is evocative in the novel; the images of long black cars – Whirlwind, reminiscent of "*black funnels*" – NKVD official cars for transporting arrested persons, referring to the Stalinist era; and the inscription of the name of God in his economic hypostasis on a banner ("God is a national resource" [Atwood, 2002, p. 226]). In this absurd pseudo-biblical world, where Marx's atheistic communist doctrine has become the Bible, only the literal-biblical interpretation of the Republic's regime is authentic, "Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood" [KJV, Hosea 6:8].

Thus, the biblical intertext in the novel acts as a palimpsest through which the totalitarian intertext, represented by the Nazi and Communist narratives, shines through and reveals the true face of the theocratic state of Gilead.

No less important is the novel's rethinking of the Victorian metanarrative, which asserted the power of men and the powerlessness of women. The actualisation of the Victorian narrative is represented in the novel by the reference to Dickens' novel "Hard Times". As Deborah Thomas notes, the allusion to Dickens' novel is already contained in the abbreviation of the titles of both novels, "HT". The researcher notes that both novels create the image of women – Louisa in "Hard Times" and Offred in "The Handmaid's Tale" – who are victims of a totalitarian system that controls even a woman's thoughts and denies her the right to be a human being [Thomas, 2008, p. 90]. Indeed, both novels depict a world in which women are sacrificed to material profit and theory of fact (Dickens) or to an ephemeral common good (Atwood), a world in which beauty and sensuality are absent and arranged marriages are approved. In this regard, the echo of scenes from "Hard Times" (Gradgrind forcing Louisa to marry Bounderby) and The Handmaid's Tale (dialogue between the Commander and Offred), in which both women ask the question of love, is indicative. In the responses of both men, there is a similarity between the images of Gradgrind and the Commander: both reject love as "*anything fanciful, fantastic, or sentimental*" [Dickens, 1957, p. 87] and "anomaly", fruitless dreams spoken of with disgust [Atwood, 2002, p. 233]. Both resort to statistics to prove the favour of arranged marriages (compare: "*It is not unimportant to take into account the statistics of marriage, so far as they have yet been obtained, in England and Wales. I find, on reference to the figures, that a large proportion of these marriages are contracted between parties of very unequal ages, and that the elder of these contracting parties is, in rather more than three-fourths of these instances, the bridegroom*" [Dickens, 1957, p. 87] and "*But look at the stats, my dear. Was it really worth it, falling in love? Arranged marriages have always worked out just as well, if not better*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 233]). The parody of the Victorian

narrative is completed by the image of Queen Victoria present in "The Handmaid's Tale", which presents Dickens' fiction with an almost documentary projection of the objective social morality of England, legitimised at the level of the royal family: "*I remember Queen Victoria's advice to her daughter. Close your eyes and think of England*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 106]. Arranged marriages and the ceremony of impregnation as "voluntary rape" to which the Handmaids are subjected in Atwood's novel are an echo of Victorian arranged marriages and the crowning achievement of the evolution of Victorian society into the image of the Republic of Gilead, in which women, like objects, are deprived of choice and the right to vote.

It seems to us that the mention of Dickens in the novel is connected not only with the problem of the oppression of women – the analogy is obvious, but also with the "children's" problem, which is not mentioned in "Hard Times", but which occupied an important place in the work of the writer who fiercely criticised in the novels labour exploitation of children, whom society, in fact, sacrificed to the interests of those in power, just as in Gilead, children who did not meet the standards ended up in "shredders" in the name of racial purity. However, the problem of ruthless treatment of children from poor families in England in the 19th century was not new. Much earlier, Jonathan Swift spoke extremely harshly about it at the dawn of the Enlightenment in his pamphlet "A Modest Proposal", lines from which were taken as an epigraph to the novel.

The ideological and stylistic similarities between the works of J. Swift and M. Atwood were studied by Karen Stein in her work "Margaret Atwood's Modest Proposal: The Handmaid's Tale". The researcher notes that both works offer a solution to the demographic problem – the over-population of Ireland in Swift and the sparse population of Gilead in Atwood. In both cases, draconian methods of solution are proposed: in "The Handmaid's Tale" – through sexual slavery, and in "A Modest Proposal" – through cannibalism (preparing gourmet dishes from babies from poor families). In both cases, we are talking about the transformation of children into goods and the dehumanization of women, with a series of animalistic metaphors accentuated in the creation of their images [Stein, 1994, p. 64] (compare: "*mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sow when they are ready to farrow*" [Swift, 2008, p. 10] and "*fed, like a prize pig*"; "*caged rats*"; "*a trained pig*"; "*attentive pet*" [Atwood, 2002, pp. 81, 30, 188, 196]). It is noteworthy that in both works, the process of childbirth is designated by the word "breeding," emphasizing the connection with animals. The idea of cannibalism in Swift and the veiled motif of cannibalism in Atwood (which Karen Stein draws attention to [Stein, 1994, pp. 66–67]) involve going beyond the narrative space to a philosophical level, within the boundaries of which the problem of humanity devouring itself is comprehended. In "The Handmaid's Tale", the scene in which the mother explains to little Offred how Jews were exterminated in the ovens, and the girl imagines this process as cooking Jews in the oven, again refers to the Nazi narrative. Swift's "A Modest Proposal" contains, besides the perversions of cannibalism, a piece of advice, two hundred years later adopted by the fascists, "*Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass* (it is about the skin of a baby! – A.S., I.Zh.); *the skin of which artificially dressed will make admirable gloves for ladies*..." [Swift, 2008, p. 8]. Just such products as evidence of Nazi crimes against humanity, as is known, were shown at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945.

Swift's intertext in M. Atwood's novel echoes the Enlightenment metanarrative. In the postmodernist ironic rethinking of Swift's pamphlet, written at the dawn of the 18th century, the preconditions for the decline of the Enlightenment project seem to be already discernible. Developed philosophy and the achievements of European enlightenment thought did not overcome the huge gap that separated the enlightened and wealthy sections of the population from the poor. The Industrial Revolution in England at the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries, which ended the Age of Enlightenment, indeed devalued Swift's proposal for the benefit of the homeland, preferring to save the lives of children to force them to work in factories for the benefit of the same homeland for 18 hours a day.

It is significant that despite the novel's numerous affirmations of the biblical thesis, "Gilead is a city of them that works iniquity, and is polluted with blood" [KJV, Hosea 6:8], in the "Historical Notes", written during the post-Gilead society, Cambridge University professor James Darcy Pieixoto, who in 2195 speaks at a symposium on the found records of Offred and the politics of Gilead, emphatically urges his audience *to be cautious about passing moral judgment upon the Gileadeans … not to censure but to understand,* since such judgements are inevitably cultur-

ally dependent. This is the attitude the professor gives the audience before his narrative of the crimes of the totalitarian regime. At the same time, the scientific community is frankly amused by Pieixoto's report, as evidenced by the repeated repetition of the remark "*Laughter*". On the one hand, the "Historical Notes" indeed introduces a fair amount of optimism into the finale of the novel, characteristic of a postmodern dystopia, since the very event of the Twelfth Symposium on the history of Gilead indicates that Gilead really became history, and humanity experienced another political cataclysm, entering into the phase of democratic development. On the other hand, the description of Pieixoto's speech contains a fair amount of the author's irony, inherent in the genre of the postmodern novel. It indicates that in this text everything is not what it seems. In this regard, one cannot but agree with the opinion of researchers that the image of Professor Pieixoto in the "Historical Notes" correlates with the personality of Professor Perry Miller, whose name is indicated in the dedication to the novel. In this juxtaposition of the dedication and the "Historical Notes", ironic relationships-links are established between scholars and the texts they (mis)read, between historical events and the historians who (mis)interpret them and give these texts value [Stein, 1994, p. 60]. In our opinion, irony somewhat dampens the sense of restrained optimism that arises in the reader at the novel's finale, since a wrong reading of history can become dangerous. In this sense, the "Historical Notes" can be seen as the author's parody of *liberalism* gaining momentum in the West with its inherent policy of *tolerance* – another metanarrative that is not yet a thing of the past but is already losing credibility. In 1985, Peter Nicholson published an article in New York with the iconic title "Toleration as a Moral Ideal," which capped the debate about tolerance that flared up in the 1970s among English and American sociologists, political scientists and philosophers. Analysing these concepts, P. Nicholson concluded that tolerance is an inherent moral virtue of a free man and a responsible government policy, "Toleration is the virtue of refraining from exercising one's power to interfere with others' opinion or action although that deviates from one's own over something important and although one morally disapproves of it" [Nicholson, 1985, p. 162]. It seems that the position of the outside observer, which Professor Pieixoto adopts by choosing not to pass, not to censure, is that of a tolerant gentleman who has chosen to tolerate and accept what does not coincide with his moral attitudes. In such a context, "not to pass, not to censure" signifies a refusal to *comprehend* the past, and, therefore to separate the present and future from it, indicating the dangerous serenity of the distant descendant of Gilead. Consideration of the position of the post-Gilead liberal society and specifically the behaviour of Pieixoto in the aspect of tolerance reveals a semantic and compositional connection with Swift's intertext. The epigraph from Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and the "Historical Notes" that close the novel frame Offred's narrative, creating a kind of circular composition that encapsulates the idea of history repeating itself – the position of impartial, ironic observer taken by historical scholars does not allow for a lesson to be learned from past. Such a position is fraught with a return to the implementation of perverted modest proposals, such as gloves made of human skin.

It should be noted that the parodic and ironic intertext that permeates the narrative outline of the novel, in addition to the important substantive function of rethinking the great metanarratives, plays an important compositional role, presenting different points of view on the problem of the position of women in society and, more broadly, totalitarianism from the point of view of a cultural-historical perspective and retrospectives.

Playing with time: anthropologising the chronotope as a prism for reanimating the heroine's self-identity

In the novel, the artistic model of chronotope is realised in the image of the Republic of Gilead, which supposedly exists in the United States of America. In turn, the image of the Republic includes several spatio-temporal elements: physical, geographical, social, and cultural, which correlate with models of personal chronotope, embodied in the images of a house, rooms, road, and garden. The image of the Republic of Gilead is an important plot-forming factor of the novel, which simultaneously embodies two opposing archetypes: on the one hand, the Republic of Gilead is a sacred place, because it is built on the principles of religion and sacred symbols play an important role: the church, the Soul Scrolls, a place for prayer, which is evidence of the presence of a religious chronotope (this is a new element of the chronotope of the dystopian genre

of the second half of the 20th century). However, on the other hand, the author demonstrates the desacralization of the religious space, expressing an opinion about the ambiguity and duality of its purpose: a colony, a brothel. That is, the Republic of Gilead acquires at the same time the signs of heaven and hell, sinful and holy, majestic and vile, sacred and profane.

The image of the Republic embodies a model of *social chronotope* (in M. Atwood's novel, religious and totalitarian) that affects the consciousness and psychological state of the heroine. Offred's psychological state is accentuated by a sense of fear, which becomes the driving force behind her actions and behaviour. The motif of fear in the novel becomes a cross-cutting one and is realised in both the external and psychological portrait of the heroine, where the decisive role is played by the detail – a lowered head, closed face, gaze at the ground, clasped hands, small steps, etc: "*We aren't allowed to go there except in twos. This is supposed to be for our protection, though the notion is absurd: we are well protected already. The truth is that she is my spy, as I am hers. If either of us slips through the net because of something that happens on one of our daily walks, the other will be accountable*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 30]. Another means of implementing the fear motif is the motivation of the heroine's words and actions, which is not to encourage her to take a certain action, but rather to refuse to act or speak, and is expressed in the phrases, "*I can't take the risk*", and "*I should not take unnecessary risks*".

The author focuses on depicting the house as an important element of social space. Even though it was built for a rich and large family, the house reinforces and reflects the inner emptiness, loss of orientation, and aimlessness of life for its owners. Offred's room in this house is her little space, containing the past and the present, and, like no other, possesses and will possess all the secrets of the maids who have been here before and who will appear. The room, as a closed space, acts as a mute witness to the Maid's suffering, which no one but her knows about.

However, the image of the totalitarian state as a social space that evokes fear is not the main one and is rather an indispensable attribute of a traditional dystopian plot. In the novel, through the external spatial image of the Republic, *the heroine's personal space* is actualised, embodied in the images of *a room* and *a garden* with an emphasis on their detailed descriptions. The spatial images that connect Offred with the past (the garden) and the present (the room) are the personification of *the heroine's personal time*, "*I once had a garden. I can remember the smell of the turned earth, the plump shapes of the bulbs held in my hands, the fullness, the dry rustle of seeds through my fingers. Time could pass more swiftly that way*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 22]. The image of the room as a space of being alone with herself, which makes self-reflection possible, is the most important means of reproducing the heroine's inner world, her self-identity, which occurs in the process of rethinking her past life, its values and traditions. Thus, it is in the room that her personal time comes to life, reflected primarily in her memories and dreams, where the key images are those of a mother, husband, and daughter.

The image of the garden as a personal space – an integral part of the parental home, created together with his mother, and family values – is also connected with memories. In addition, through the personal time of memories, the novel recreates the mode of historical memory, which brings to life the traditions of the past.

The writer's appeal to the literary traditions of past eras is also reflected in the tendency to revive the naturalistic principles of depicting reality. The detailed descriptions of the room, the heroine's appearance, her gestures, and her behaviour acquire the features of naturalistic documentation, including details in the description of physiological processes (childbirth, the Ceremony).

The novel describes the events of the distant future. Hence the inevitable attempt to look into the future, the desire to finish the story, to see tomorrow. The combination of the past and the present is presented in one synchronous perception. Such temporal substitutions help us understand the formation of the protagonist's character. In the novel, the past interacts with the present, so the protagonist lives in two temporal dimensions: the past and the present. The fragmentation of memories directly serves to express the interpenetration of both temporal planes. This tendency of displaying time allows us to consider events from the point of view of the past and the present.

In the novel, the past tense is constantly being restored by the protagonist, brought to life in the present by her inner state. In her memory, Offred strives to revisit her past repeatedly, driven by a fear of losing it. The past, to her, is the most precious possession. Her inner time is

turned to the world of the past and memory. In the images-memories that "revive" the hero-ine's personal existence, the problem of finding her own identity, her own "I", is comprehended.

Time appears as the history of the past, which can only be re-read in the mind, making it possible to analyse an event from the perspective of the past and the present. Memories of the past evoke a sense of madness in the heroine, which is happening now. "*I'm a refugee from the past, and like other refugees I go over the customs and habits of being I've left or been forced to leave behind me, and it all seems just as quaint, from here, and I am just as obsessive about it*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 242]. The actualisation of the retrospective plan in the novel shifts the empha-sis to the individualisation of the protagonist's image. In this sense, her narrative is full of self-re-flection, where a particular place is occupied by memories of her past life, which causes reminis-cences with the flow of consciousness as the narrative style of V. Woolf's heroine Clarissa Dallo-way, which reveals a strong connection with the traditions of modernism in creating an image of inner human individuality as a value in itself.

The image of night becomes a crucial component of the chronotope. Important events in Offred's life are associated with night-time. The significance of night-time is also revealed in the composition of the novel, which is divided into "day" and "night" chapters. At night, Offred be-longs to herself, to her reflections on the present state of affairs and memories of the past. At this time, important events in the Maid's life take place: secret meetings with the Commander, with Nick, the last moments in the house and her escape. In the novel, night is the personifica-tion of the heroine's personal time.

The possibility of self-reflection, due to the presence of personal chronotope, is a prerequi-site for overcoming her fear – Offred's psychological state declared as dominant at the beginning of the story, and for carrying out a personal (existential) rebellion, based on the desire to find in-ner freedom and her own identity. The successful escape of the heroine (overcoming the bound-aries of the closed dystopian space) indicates the Canadian writer's departure from the pessimis-tic ending inherent in the tradition of classical dystopia.

Acting as a way of preserving self-identity (retrospection into the past, keeping in con-sciousness the image of the house and family), the chronotope in the novel is anthropologised, revealing the indispensable "presence of a chronotope in a person and a person in a chronotope" [Sirotkin, 2022, p. 277]. In identifying herself with space ("*I am like a room where things once happened*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 113]) and time ("[I] *step sideways out of my own time. Out of time. Though this is time, nor am I out of it*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 49]), Offred is reflected in chronotope, and the image of chronotope becomes a way of comprehending the image of Offred.

Monologue, dialogue or polylogue? Options for playing with the reader

The game mode of the narrative asserts itself in the very first pages of the novel, opening a window of opportunity for deciphering and interpreting the protagonist's name, both the real one, which is not specified in the novel, and the one assigned by the laws of Gilead by the name of the Commander (Fred), whose house she entered and was given to use to bear a child by him, and was deprived of this name when she left this house – Offred.

Researchers have noted that the real name of the protagonist is encrypted in the very first pages of the novel at the end of the first chapter. The scene when the girls, locked in a huge shared bedroom (former gymnasium), whispered their real names at night ("*We exchanged names, from bed to bed: Alma. Janine. Moira. June*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 14]). According to researchers, the hero-ine's real name is *June*, because it is the only name that is not connected to any of the characters and, except at the beginning, is never mentioned again in the narrative ([Templin, 1993], [Howells, 2005], [Thomas, 2008], etc). Charlotte Templin points out that "June" comes from the Latin "Ju-nius", the name of a noble Roman family and is the most popular of the names derived from the names of the months of the year, and is associated with youth and innocence [Templin, 1993, p. 149]. Sharing the researcher's opinion, we also note that the name "June" simultaneously suggests a mythopoetic reading, since the name of the month goes back to the name of the ancient Roman goddess "Juno" – the patroness of marriage and motherhood, the protector of women. This role, in fact, is fulfilled by the protagonist – the narrator, speaking on behalf of the women of Gilead.

In the social aspect, a name means a person rather than just a word; in the anthropological aspect, it embodies a personal substance. The heroine's real name is connected with the prob-

lem of preserving her own identity, her own "I", the marker of which in the novel is Offred's personal name, unknown to the reader, which is forbidden in the conditions of the religiously totalitarian present, but carefully preserved in her memory like a treasure, endlessly repeated in private as a spell, almost visualised in the heroine's mind, "*the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 95].

In addition, the meaning of one's own name is also connected with a religious meaning. Olivier-Maurice Clément notes that the secret of the personality imperceptibly appears in the name. A name is the knowledge that God has about each person. "I know thee by name" [KJV, Exodus 33:12, 33:17]; "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" [KJV, Jeremiah 1:5]. These are quotes from the Old Testament. The theme of the name means that the Lord names everyone, giving life to everyone. Jesus says, "...your names are written in heaven" [KJV, Luke 10:20]. The Apocalypse says that everyone's mystical, hidden name is written on a white stone [Clément, 2003, pp. 20–21]. In the novel, the heroine's name as such is absent, which means that not only is her faith absent, but for God, the heroine also seems to be non-existent; she is erased from both worlds. In other words, she both exists and does not exist (in this regard, the play with the meanings of the word "invalid" is noteworthy – Offred compares herself to a disabled person and immediately puts an equal sign between the meanings, "incapacitated" = "invalid" as not existing in reality and not having legal force, like "no valid passport" [Atwood, 2002, p. 238]). On the one hand, this ephemeral, flickering image of Offred appears as an element of the author's game with the reader – the author brings the narrative closer to reality, involving the reader in the action, creating the 'faction' effect, or creates a distance between the novel narrative and reality, implying that everything told is fictitious (the 'fiction' effect).

It is noteworthy that in an interview with Margaret Atwood, answering a question about the name "June," she did not confirm the researchers' guess, but did not refute it either, saying that this name would suit the heroine [Atwood, 2017]. Even after many years, the author continues to implement the gaming strategy, encouraging readers and researchers to search for new meanings, ciphers and interpretations of the novel's text.

This game strategy is also associated with the interpretation of the name Offred, which forms a wide field of variations in the works of researchers: Offred as *Offered* (as her sexuality encoded under a contract and "offered as property" [Rubenstein, 2001, p. 13]; sacrificed to society [Kaler, 1989, p. 47]); Offred as *Of Red* (since it is an analogue of the Whore of Babylon, the scarlet woman of mystery from Revelation 17 [Kaler, 1989, p. 47]); Offred as *Afraid* (as she is intimidated [Lacombe, 1986, p. 5]). However, the most interesting to us is Michelle Lacombe's interpretation of Offred as '*offread*', which can mean 'unread' (misread) or 'misread' (misinterpret) [Lacombe, 1986, p. 5].

On the one hand, the 'misread' may refer to the "Historical Notes" and Professor Pieixoto's 'reading' of Offred's personality. His 'reading' of Offred, like his reading of the history of Gilead, is indeed quite superficial, since, as we mentioned earlier, his position as a detached observer does not suggest the depth of study and learning from history. Let us mention that many researchers emphasise that Pieixoto's statements indicate the persistence of sexism and a "condescendingly superior" attitude towards women in the post-Gilead era [Grace, 1998, p. 481]. However, it seems to us that the point is not only that the attitude towards women has not changed. Much more important is the frivolity that a history professor shows in relation to the past, being in the illusion that their era has gotten rid of all the "excesses" of history, ("*Also, Gileadean society was under a good deal of pressure, demographic and otherwise, and was subject to factors from which we ourselves are happily more free*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 316]).

In this regard, an interesting parallel arises associated with the decoding of the name 'Pieixoto', which is consonant with the name '*Quixote*' and introduces the motif of quixotism into the professor's narrative (the consonance of these names was noted by Anne K. Kaler [1989], without giving any explanation, but her observation prompted us to develop this idea further). The playful reading of the name 'Pieixoto' as 'Quixote' indicates an ironic interpretation of the image of Pieixoto as an inverse version of the "knight of the sad image" – both concerning his penchant for sexism and in relation to his utopianism, stemming from excessive idealism (this is how quixotism is usually interpreted in a negative sense). Two points are of interest here. Firstly, in the eyes of Pieixoto, Gilead appears as a world that is "misread" (misinterpreted), like Don Quix-

ote's imaginary world, in which he believes. Thus, the postmodernist interpretation of history as a "story" or "tale" is asserted, which connects/brings together the images of Offred and Pieixoto. Secondly, the novel actualises the play with the notions of "utopia" and "utopianism", which researchers prefer to distinguish to differentiate [Popper, 1945; Claeys, 2018]. Thus, Karl Popper argued that since utopias depict an ideal society, and the ideal is unattainable, then utopianism inevitably leads to totalitarianism and violence as a means of imposing a utopia [Popper, 1945]. This, in fact, is the other side of the dystopian narrative revealed in "The Handmaid's Tale".

Playing with the names of the characters sets the variability in the reading of their images, which in turn determines the variability in the reading of the texts-narratives transmitted (formed) by them and opens up for them as narrators the possibility of playing with the reader. The monologues of Offred and Pieixoto appear as both dialogues and polylogues, each of which reveals its own gaming strategy.

The narrative of Offred as the *primary narrator*, at first glance, is a <u>*monologue*</u> – the narration is conducted in the first person, mainly in the present tense, interrupted by reminiscences in the past tense. In the retrospective narrative-memoir, we can distinguish two temporal layers – the pre-Gilead period of Offred's peaceful life with her husband and daughter and the period of her initial stay in Gilead – memories of the heroine's training time, conveying information about the almost prison regime as a condition of her existence (Chapter I). Offred's narrative is non-linear and fragmented – a retrospective plan is superimposed on a present-tense narrative, which, in turn, includes fears about the future, which gives the heroine's monologue the features of a stream of consciousness. However, it is precisely this form of the Handmaid's story – fragmentary, sometimes confusing – that best conveys both the state of her soul and the state of torn consciousness, which Offred herself hints at, "*Story is in fragments, like a body caught in cross*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 281]. Such a temporally multilayered text is complicated by a game mode, manifested in the variability of the heroine's narration of events, "*He's in his shirt sleeves, and is holding a cigarette, lit... He moves away from me, turns off the lamp. Outside, like punctuation, there's a flash of lightning; almost no pause and then the thunder. He's undoing my dress, a man made of darkness...* <u>*I made that up. It didn't happen that way. Here is what happened.*</u> *He's in his shirt sleeves, he's holding a cigarette... No preliminaries, he knows why I'm here. To get knocked up, to get in trouble, up the pole, those were all names for it once...* <u>*It didn't happen that way either. I'm not sure how it happened;*</u> *not exactly. All I can hope for is a reconstruction: the way love feels is always only approximate*" [Atwood, 2002, pp. 277–279]. This kind of narrative specificity makes the line between the actual event being narrated and the heroine's imagination/dream of the event as a suggestion of how it might have happened very shaky, giving the reader a choice of interpretation.

In the course of the narration, Offred's monologue turns into a dialogue – her story finds *an addressee* and, in the novel's finale, *a recipient*[2]. Offred addresses her story to a fictional interlocutor – *an implied fictive reader-addressee* – hoping for his understanding and sympathy, "But I keep on going with this sad and hungry and sordid, this limping and mutilated story, because after all I want you to hear it, as I will hear yours too if I ever get the chance, if I meet you... By telling you anything at all I'm at least believing in you, I believe you're there, I believe you into being. Because I'm telling you this story I will your existence. *I tell, therefore you are*" [Atwood, 2002, p. 281–282]. Here, the final phrase, "I tell, therefore you are" attracts attention, representing a paraphrase of the Cartesian statement *Cogito ergo sum* – "I think, therefore I am", which in this case indicates the materiality of thought: in the novel it is mentioned that the maid's story is being told mentally, and yet the thought is formed into a text intended for someone, and the ability to create and transmit this text is the key not only to the existence of the author but also to the existence of the reader/readers, which significantly expands and universalises Descartes' formula.

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[2] Researchers in the field of narratology suggest distinguishing between the notions of 'addressee' and 'recipient'. Thus, Wolf Schmid states, "The recipient can be divided into two entities, which differ <...> into the addressee and the recipient. The addressee is the receiver presumed or intended by the transmitter, the one to whom the transmitter sends his message, whom he had in mind as the presumed or desired receiver while writing; the recipient is the factual receiver, of whom the transmitter possibly — and, in the case of literature, as a rule — has only a general mental picture. The necessity of a distinction of this sort is clear: if, for example, a letter is not read by the person who was the intended addressee, but by someone else into whose hands it happens to fall, inconvenience may arise" [Schmid, 2010, p. 34].

However, at the level of the overall novel narrative, another level of dialogue emerges – Offred's notes get to Professor Pieixoto, who becomes not their intended, but their actual recipient – *an explicit fictive reader-receiver*. His condescending and mocking attitude towards the author of the notes and towards the customs of Gilead, which we mentioned above, does not allow us to say that this is precisely the kind of reader Offred was counting on. Based on Offred's found recordings, Pieixoto (as *a secondary narrator*) reads his <u>report-monologue</u>, which is addressed to the audience of the symposium and develops into a <u>dialogue</u> – the professor receives feedback from the audience, expressed in the text through the remarks of the audience's reactions to his report ("*Laughter*", "*Laughter, applause*", "*Laughter, some groans*", "*Applause*"). The style of the professor's report, who does not want to delve into the problems of history, and the reactions of the audience, who are primarily in the mood for entertainment, shift the focus away from the content of Offred's story – the image of the society (world) of the future, which presents only a seeming contrast to the world of Gilead, comes to the fore. We also note that Pieixoto's report employs the same game strategy as Offred's narrative: the report suggests several possibilities for the ending of the Handmaid's story – 1) she managed to escape (since the recordings, according to Pieixoto's claim, could only have been made post facto of the events depicted in the story and most likely outside Gilead [Atwood, 2002, p. 316]), 2) she failed to escape from Gilead (since the report assumes that the tapes were recorded within the confines of Gilead [Atwood, 2002, p. 319]), 3) indefinite option – "*We shall never know*..." [Atwood, 2002, p. 325][3]. At the same time, the plurality of readings in this case does not so much question the secondary narrator's point of view as it presents it as one of the possible options for creating the text.

The voice of *the author*, present in both narratives – both Offred's and Pieixoto's – and uniting them, forms a <u>*polylogue*</u> in which the image of the author (in this case, *the implied author*), being a guide to the main idea of the novel, organises the metatext as an image of the dystopian universe and, as it were, comments on the events and actions of the characters, embodying its game strategy. The author's point of view is present in Swift's (Jonathan Swift) intertext, in the playful comprehension of character names and topoi (as discussed above) and in the structural organisation of the novel's narrative. In terms of structure, the most interesting is the principle of framing that we have already mentioned – Offred's narrative is framed by dedications and epigraphs at the beginning and the "Historical Notes" in the finale. The "Historical Notes" use the "manuscript found in a bottle" device (the tapes of Offred's story are found by Pieixoto in a valise at the site of the former city of Bangor) and the academic report of a scholar-historian as a way of pseudo-documentary framing. As Patrick D. Murphy mentions, pseudo-documentary framing is more believable because it conforms to journalistic and academic writing traditions. This appeal may be due to the influence of "New Journalism" and the popularity of the "non-fiction novel". The researcher believes that the pseudo-documentary framing is intended to reduce the dystopian distance between tenor and vehicle and thus further demonstrate the strangeness of what has already become commonplace: the dystopian features of the present and the possible horrors of the future [Murphy, 1990, pp. 25, 27]. We see the importance of such framing, particularly the role of the "Historical Notes", in two other ways. First, it is Pieixoto, as a researcher of Gilead's history, not Offred, who gives the reader an insight into the structure of that state, completing her story. As Patrick D. Murphy points out, unlike many first-person science fiction stories, "The Handmaid's Tale" does not explain the created world at the outset, but reveals it in dark tones through a narrative focused on direct individual experience [Murphy, 1990, p. 34]. This shifts the emphasis from the problems of social structure inherent in the genre of dystopia to Offred's inner feelings and experiences – it is not the image of the dystopian society that becomes the main thing, but the image of a person in this society. Secondly, in the "Historical Notes", the author, in fact, presents another dystopia, already in the year 2195 – the symposium takes place at the University of Denay in the state of Nunavit. Here, the author resorts to a play on words: University of Denay, Nunavit – a pun meaning "*Deny none of it*" [Snodgrass, 2011, p. 42], which calls for no illusions that Nunavit society is free from the tyranny of Gilead. A certain similarity between Gilead and Nunavit is also indicated by the possible decoding of the word "Denay" as "Danae", which, according to Mary Ellen Snodgrass, refers to the character of ancient mythology – Danae, being imprisoned in an underground copper house, was fertilised by the sun ray of Zeus [Snodgrass, 2011, p. 42]. Thus, the author practically

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[3] Here we can discern a reference to the game strategy of J. Fowles, who at once proposed three options for the ending of the novel in the novel "The French Lieutenant's Woman".

equates the theocratic-totalitarian dystopia (Gilead) and the liberal-democratic "pseudo-utopia" (Nunavit), warning that the liberal "utopia" can slide into a totalitarian dystopia at any moment. Here, we wholeheartedly agree with Patrick D. Murphy that there is a highly ominous note in the historian's smug statement at the end when he refers to the "clearer light of our own day" [Murphy, 1990, p. 35]. In this situation, the cautiously optimistic ending presented by the author is, in fact, another form of play, since such an ending is possible for Offred, but, apparently, is not possible for all humanity. As a result, the same idea pulsates in M. Atwood's novel as in A. Huxley's dystopias – a perfect social order cannot be built until the imperfect nature of man can be changed (in "The Handmaid's Tale", this point is indirectly confirmed by the fact that Pieixoto is more concerned with how he looks on the podium than with the content of the found records and the historical problems associated with them).

The polylogue, which sets the parameters of the game with narrative levels in the text itself, continues in numerous discussions of researchers, readers, and dialogues with Margaret Atwood. The narrative of "The Handmaid's Tale" transcends both the dystopian narrative and the literary work itself, entering into transtextual relations with other texts and discourses – polemics at the level of literary studies, philosophy, sociology, and political science are maintained even today. The *transtext* of "The Handmaid's Tale", as a text that considers the specificity of content "as an intermediate step before the multilevel decoding process" [Zhu, Wang, 2022], is still being created today, acquiring the features of an ongoing narrative. The complex structure of the novel-transtext can be represented as follows:
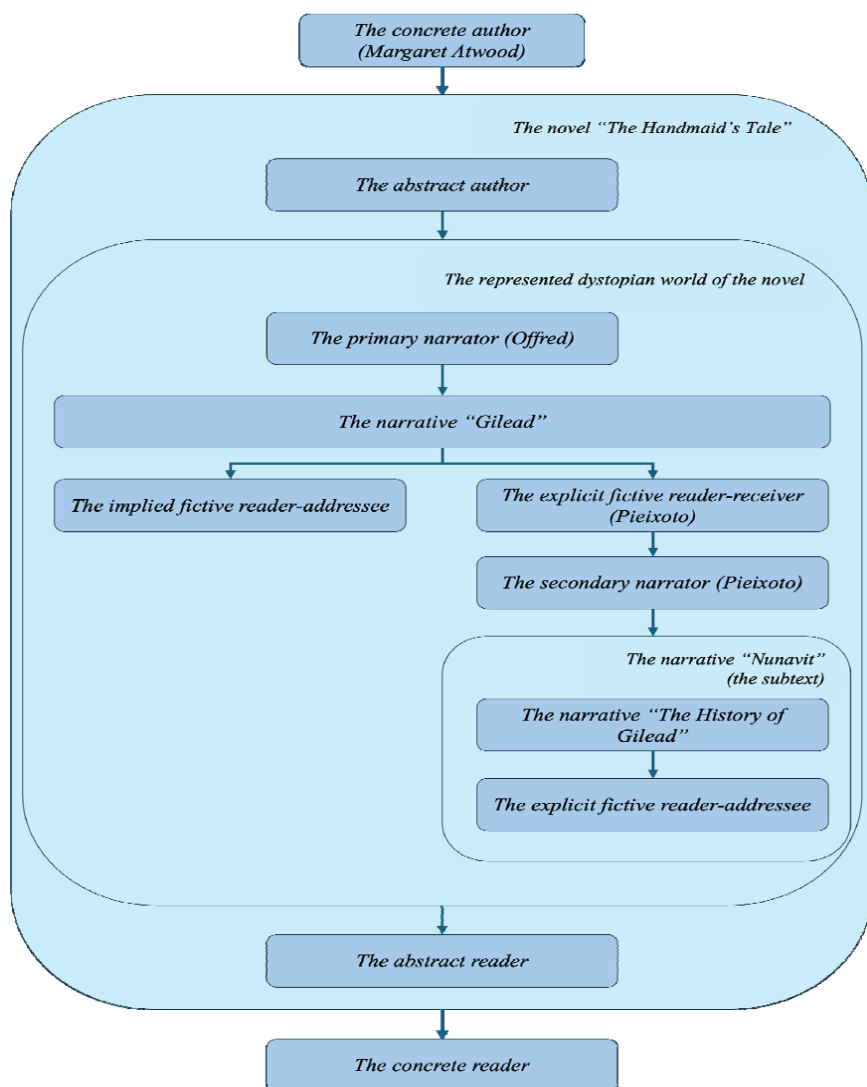
In this scheme[4], *the concrete author* is Mrs Margaret Atwood, the famous writer who created the novel "The Handmaid's Tale". In her interviews and essays, she comments on her work repeatedly, answering questions from readers and critics [see, for example, Atwood, 2017].

The abstract author is understood as the image of the author in the novel, created by the reader in the process of comprehension of the work by the latter – a concentrated embodiment of the idea of the failure of great cultural narratives that failed due to unwillingness to take into account the lessons of history.

The represented dystopian world of the novel is a single dystopian universe in the unity of the images of Gilead and Nunavit in the totality of all creative acts, including the creation of images of characters, their texts, intertextual implications, principles of game strategy, etc.

The primary narrator is the image of Offred, who acts as the narrator of the main story.

The narrative "Gilead" is Offred's diary, which tells about the internal (mental and spiritual) state of the heroine, her lifestyle and functions in Gilead and presents the image of the republic through the eyes of her subject (the view from the inside).

The implied fictive reader-addressee is the desired reader/interlocutor to whom Offred intends her story.

The explicit fictive reader-receiver is the image of Pieixoto, who is the accidental actual recipient of Offred's "message".

The secondary narrator is the image of Pieixoto, who presents his own narrative, a report on Gilead at a symposium in Nunavit, based on readings of Offred's recordings.

The narrative "The History of Gilead" is the text of Pieixoto's report on the structure of the theocratic totalitarian dystopian state of Gilead, based on Offred's accidentally found and listened recordings, representing the perception of Gilead through the eyes of an outside observer (an outsider's view).

The explicit fictive reader-addressee is the community of scholars at the symposium listening to Pieixoto's report and reacting to what they hear.

The narrative "Nunavit" is the image of the liberal-democratic pseudo-utopian society Nunavit, seen in the subtext of Pieixoto's report.

The abstract reader is a hypostasis of Margaret Atwood's idea of her reader as educated, well-read, erudite, capable of deciphering the intertext and meeting the level of the play.

The concrete reader is the set of real people, including researchers and critics, who became recipients of the novel "The Handmaid's Tale".

Conclusions

In the context of the postmodern dystopian paradigm, the genre of dystopia is significantly transformed. Changes in the substantive aspects of the genre are associated with a reduction in the gap between dystopian and real time, the affirmation of a relatively optimistic tone, the lability of the dystopian world (which predetermines the conditionally metaphorical nature of the chronotope, the amorphousness of spatial and discrete time boundaries), and a shift in emphasis to the inner world of the character. The increased degree of anthropocentrism, which is characteristic of postmodern dystopia, determines the change in the nature of the protagonist's rebellion against the totalitarian regime – the focus of social rebellion shifts to personal existential (the struggle to preserve one's own identity), where it is not the result that is important, but its philosophical content.

At the same time, dystopia also absorbs the features of the postmodern novel form and postmodern narrative strategy, mastering the techniques of intertextuality and rethinking the traditions of the past, irony and parody, playing with time and the author's game with the reader. Moreover, the function of the author's game strategy is not only to make the reader a co-author of the text but also to encourage him to make multiple interpretations. The multifaceted nature of the game draws the reader into the action and forces one to reflect on the windows of opportunity opening up in modern civilization, that is, to perceive the story of Gilead as more than just exciting storytelling. The game mode reveals the author's ideological and content-

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[4] The scheme of communicative levels in Wolf Schmid's narratology and terminology is taken as a basis [Schmid, 2010, p. 35].

based storytelling strategy – through intertext (as a combination of multi-level chronotopes and cultural texts), on the one hand, and through involvement in the experiences of Offred, on the other, to encourage/force the reader to experience the entire history of Christian civilization, presented in the dystopian heroine's narrative.

In contact with the aesthetics of postmodernism, dystopia loses its inherent "conservatism", blurring the boundaries of its own genre. It is subject to transgression, constantly going beyond itself, approaching reality and moving away from it, playing on the ironic reinterpretation of its own genre principles – the confrontation between the hero and totalitarian society ends not with the desired revolution and change of the world order, but with the escape from the "totalitarian paradise"; the image of the totalitarian state itself "blurs", multiplies, balancing between dictatorship proper and liberal democracy; the narrative strategy is subordinated to the principle of total play, when not only the author but also the hero plays with the reader, when everything is not what it seems, and everything is only one of many possibilities, including history; when comprehending both possibilities (Gilead and Nunavit), presented in the narratives of two narrators, and creating on their basis a single dystopian universe, the author concentrates not on the problems of ideal/anti-ideal social order, but on the questions of how to survive mankind, vigorously walking along the path self-destruction, and how far a person can go in their inexhaustible thirst for power, hiding under the mask of the desire to improve the world's existence. For all the worst, as the novel's cultural intertext suggests, has long since been created and tested.

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"THE HANDMAID'S TALE" BY MARGARET ATWOOD AS A POSTMODERN NOVEL: DYSTOPIAN GENRE TRANSGRESSION IN POSTMODERN ERA

Anna A. Stepanova, Alfred Nobel University (Ukraine)
e-mail: stepanova@duan.edu.ua
Inna I. Zhukovych, Kruty Heroes Military Institute of Telecommunications and Information Technology (Ukraine)
e-mail: inna_parkhomenko@ukr.net
DOI: 10.32342/2523-4463-2024-1-27-10

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Margaret Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale" seems to have been studied comprehensively and fundamentally. Aspects of the dystopian genre, its feminist and anti-religious orientation, and the novel's connection with philosophical concepts of the 20th century have been studied in depth. In the poetics of the novel, researchers' interest in the problems of intertextuality, the specifics of composition, etc., has never ceased. However, despite the variety of problems covered in these studies, in our opinion, a fundamental question about the significance of Margaret Atwood's novel for the further development of the tradition of the dystopian genre has remained on the periphery of scholarly attention. Meanwhile, "The Handmaid's Tale" can be regarded as a programmatic work that clearly identifies and elaborates the key genre principles of the postmodern dystopian novel, which have not yet been substantiated. Modern studies of the features of postmodern dystopia based on the material of various works of the 1990-2000s, as well as in modern findings, capture exactly those genre strategies that were embedded in M. Atwood's novel. At the same time, researchers focus on the transformation of the mainly predominant aspects of dystopia in the era of postmodernism. Meanwhile, the changes that dystopia underwent in the last third of the 20th century are associated with the formation of the aesthetics of the genre of the postmodern novel, as evidenced by the publication of the novel "The Handmaid's Tale". In this regard, we consider it appropriate to study M. Atwood's novel as a postmodern dystopian novel in the relationship between the content features of dystopia and the genre of the postmodern novel.

The work *aims* to investigate the dystopian narrative presented in "The Handmaid's Tale" in the context of the poetics of the postmodern novel genre. Achieving the stated goal involves the use of historical-literary, philosophical-aesthetic, and hermeneutical research *methods*.

In the context of the postmodern dystopian paradigm, the genre of dystopia is transformed significantly. Changes in the substantive aspects of the genre are associated with a reduction in the gap between dystopian and real time, the affirmation of a relatively optimistic tone, the lability of the dystopian world (which predetermines the conditionally metaphorical nature of the chronotope, the amorphousness of spatial and discrete time boundaries), and a shift in emphasis to the inner world of the character. The increased degree of anthropocentrism, which is characteristic of postmodern dystopia, determines the change in the nature of the protagonist's rebellion against the totalitarian regime – the focus of social rebellion shifts to personal existential (the struggle to preserve one's own identity), where it is not the result that is important, but its philosophical content.

At the same time, dystopia also absorbs the features of the postmodern novel form and postmodern narrative strategy, mastering the techniques of intertextuality and rethinking the traditions of the past, irony and parody, playing with time and the author's game with the reader. Moreover, the function of the author's game strategy is not only to make the reader a co-author of the text but also to encourage him to make multiple interpretations. The multifaceted nature of the game draws the reader into the action and forces one to reflect on the windows of opportunity opening up in modern civilization, that is, to perceive the story of Gilead as more than just exciting storytelling. The game mode reveals the author's ideological and content-based storytelling strategy – through intertext (as a combination of multi-level chronotopes and cultural texts), on the one hand, and through involvement in the experiences of Offred, on the other, to encourage/force the reader to experience the entire history of Christian civilization, presented in the dystopian heroine's narrative.

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