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LOGOCENTRISM OF PURITAN IDEA AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN POSTMODERN ERA: NEAL STEPHENSON'S NOVEL "SNOW CRASH"

Мета статті – визначення шляхів трансформації логоцентризму пуританської ідеї в романі Ніла Стівенсона «Снігопад» (1992). Завдання цієї розвідки включають: аналіз пуританських джерел, що стосуються Слова Божого, з точки зору сучасної теорії мови; вивчення в романі та пуританських проповідях перетворення тексту на логос, що змінює дійсність; дослідження опозиції «тіло-розум/ душа» та її подолання через мову в цих проповідях і у віртуальній реальності роману; осмислення гіпотези Сепіра-Ворфа та поєднання лінгвістичного детермінізму з ідеєю пуританського логоцентриз-му в «Снігопаді»; дослідження реалізації в романі мотиву Вавилонської вежі; аналіз інтертекстуальних включень у творі Стівенсона. Основними *методами* дослідження виступають культурно-історичний, філософсько-естетичний, герменевтичний, міфопоетичний та метод інтертекстуального аналізу.

З'ясовано, що зосередженість пуритан на Святому Письмі як на прямому шляху до божественної істини відповідає дослідженню в романі мови як потужного інструменту контролю та впливу. До-тримуючись Святого Письма, пуританські лідери мали на меті не лише високу духовну місію, а й суто прагматичне завдання боротьби з хаосом невідомого й небезпечного світу, контролю над па-ствою для найбільш раціонального й ефективного виживання в складних умовах. Наголошено, що як в пуританській ідеології, так і в художній ідеології роману відбувається перетворення письма на мов-лення, Стівенсон переосмислює пуританський сценарій використання теперішнього часу для ожив-лення тексту для аудиторії, щоб потім змінити цим логосом реальність.

Виявлено паралелі між пуританською риторикою та досягненням трансцендентності в Метавсесвіті Стівенсона. Порівнюючи у своїх проповідях Слово Боже з ліками, їжею, склом чи тру-бою, пуританські священики таким чином напевно активізували чуттєве сприйняття пастви, нада-ючи «плоть» абстрактному тексту. Метавсесвіт також є текстом (комп'ютерним протоколом), і програмісти щороку збільшують його віртуальну плоть (тобто розмір і різноманітність), залучаючи імітацію чуттєвого сприйняття на нейронному рівні. Отже, пуритани та програмісти спираються на текст, на взаємодію тіла й розуму/душі через мову, але якщо перші використовували текст для покра-щення реального світу відповідно до своїх поглядів, то другі створили новий віртуальний світ.

З'ясовано, що «Снігопад» як ілюстрація «сильної» версії гіпотези Сепіра-Ворфа розглядає не-безпеку використання мови як ментального чи комп'ютерного вірусу, коли свідомість людей як біороботів зазнає перепрограмування. Пуританські вірування часто характеризувались мораль-ним абсолютизмом і бажанням впорядковувати соціальну поведінку, щоб відповідати релігійним ідеалам.

Простежено мотив Вавилонської вежі з точки зору існування єдиної прамови, яка розпалася на багато інших після зруйнування вежі Богом. Фрагментована реальність Лос-Анджелеса у «Снігопаді» така ж різноманітна, як Вавилон після інфокаліпсису, де протагоніст є віртуальним фронтирним ковбоєм, культурним героєм і трикстером.

Переосмислення ідеї пуританського логоцентризму в романі відбувається в руслі естетики постмодернізму через залучення прийомів деконструкції (ідеї логоцентризму та вавилонського міфу), пародії (розвінчання міфу про «Місто на пагорбі»), іронії та інтертекстуальності. Але хоча роман спов-нений іронії, на глибинному рівні письменник відкидає постмодерністський цинізм і безпорадність. Американська нація продовжує свій розвиток, критично переглядаючи свої засадничі міфи та рефор-

муючи їх. Дотримуючись притаманної науковим фантастам віри в науку та пуританської віри в конструктивний потенціал слова для соціуму, Ніл Стівенсон створив свій метанаратив про Метавсесвіт, який став прообразом сучасного Інтернету, але у своєму повному втіленні альтернативної реальності і сьогодні залишається мрією й орієнтиром прогресивного людства.

Ключові слова: пуританська ідея, логоцентризм, наукова фантастика, біблійський міф, міф про «Місто на пагорбі», гіпотеза Сепіра-Ворфа, постмодернізм, образ Метавсесвіту.

Introduction

In its broader meaning, logocentrism (from the Greek term *logos* for word, thought, principle or speech) is a Western rationalistically orientated ideology, a philosophising strategy and a way of organizing a text based on the idea of the original rationality of the reality and language as a means of its representation. So, logocentrism is looking for an ideal rational language that can perfectly reflect the reality. The narrower approach to logocentrism considers it as phonocentrism, when logos means only a spoken word, speech, but not writing. In Ferdinand de Saussure's binary model, speech as a transcendental signifier that reflects the thought is primary, and writing that reflects the speech is secondary [Saussure, 1974, p. 67]. It means that the spoken words are the symbols of mental experience, and written words are the symbols of spoken words. The voice that produces the speech as the symbol of the first level has a relationship immediately with the mind.

Jacques Derrida was strongly against Saussure's giving the speech the privileged status [Derrida, 1976, p. 11]. The French philosopher defended the writing and deconstructed such logocentrism, dating back to Plato and Aristotle. He argued that any speech is a kind of mental writing or a mental trace itself. The philosopher concluded that the reality is first written, then existing and finally spoken. Derrida attacked the Western tradition of connecting logos with presence and truth (it means when we are speaking, we are physically present and can prove the correspondence between what is said and what we intended to say). The philosopher called it *"the illusion of logocentrism"* or *"the metaphysics of presence"* (Martin Heidegger's term). Derrida interpreted metaphysics broadly, identifying it with the culture of an entire historical period – the Christian or "onto-theological" (another Heideggerian term) era of the book. The Bible, Aristotle's "Metaphysics", Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason", and Hegel's "Science of Logic" are equally products of this great era. The discourse of the metaphysical paradigm unfolds around such classical and ineradicable mythologies as Absolute Truth, God, Being, Nature, etc. [Derrida, 1978]. To sum up, Derrida's critique of logocentrism in its narrower version meaning speech priority over writing, became a key point in postmodernist theory and influenced many contemporary studies.

Such a logocentric belief, following the biblical text where *"In the beginning was the Word"*, was also inherent in the verbal culture of the Puritan settlers in New England [Budick, 1992; Capern, 2016; Como, 2004; Davis, 1992; Fazzalari, 2019, pp. 21–23; Peterson, 2013]. Although Derrida did not write about the Puritans in particular, it is possible to deconstruct their logocentrism applying his approach as Rocco Fazzalari displayed in his thesis [Fazzalari, 2019]. The word is perceived as a tool for the rational construction of life – that is, literature is also expected to be effective, forming the national identity of the American community.

Claude Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists thought that myth provided a reconciliation in fictional form of cultural binary oppositions too painful to be considered rationally [Lévi-Strauss, 1981]. Fiction, especially science fiction as a child of the technical progress and Enlightenment, in the USA has become the modern mythology, expressing and trying to reconcile all the conflicting hopes and fears by various mythic displacements. For Roland Barthes, myth is a synonym of ideology – the notion of a socially constructed reality which is passed off as 'natural' [Barthes, 1970; Brown, 1992].

According to Robert Scholes, "Science fiction is more tendentious, more engaged, more overtly ideological than our traditional modernist fiction with its emphasis on individual psychology. The clash of values is an important dimension of the whole field and must be an important part of its critical study as well" [Scholes, 1980, p. ix]. This 'clash of values' and coexistence of contradictions (actu-

ally, Derridean poststructuralist deconstruction of binary oppositions) seem typical for the USA: for Robert Heinlein, a famous SF writer, "The culture known as "America" had a split personality throughout its history" [Heinlein, 1987, p. 169]. For example, modern Protestant fundamentalists permeate the political institutions and develop a 'creation science' as an alternative to evolutionary science [Moore, 1991; Numbers, 2006; Bielo, 2020].

In literature, this dichotomy has been quite thoroughly understood in the genre of science fiction and one of its offshoots, the post-cyberpunk novel. Post-cyberpunk emerged in the 1990s thanks to the expansion of the Internet, computerization and access to information, which made government and commercial organizations more open to civil society. Being less romantic and gloomy than cyberpunk, post-cyberpunk refutes previous ideas about the horrors of the future and parodies the social and political institutions but keeps the mixture of the high technologies and the countercultural spirit embodied by marginal heroes (hackers) borrowed from cyberpunk [Donets & Krynytska, 2022]. The classic post-cyberpunk novel "Snow Crash" (1992) by Neal Town Stephenson is important not only as a work of postmodern fiction but also as a cultural artifact that has shaped and predicted key aspects of our digital future. When Stephenson wrote "Snow Crash", software development was giving ways to the new forms of reality construction [Floyd, 1992], to understanding the role of language as a medium between the human consciousness and the reality.

It seems appropriate to trace the formation of logocentrism in the Puritan religious picture of the world and its transformation in the novel "Snow Crash".

Aims, Tasks and Methods

The purpose of the article is to explore how the logocentrism of the Puritan idea is transformed in Neal Stephenson's novel "Snow Crash" (1992). The tasks of this research include analysis of Puritan sources concerning the Word of God from the point of view of modern language theory. We study the transformation of the text into the reality-changing logos in the novel and Puritan sermons and trace the implementation of overcoming the body / mind (soul) opposition through language in these sermons and the virtual reality. We consider the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the combination of linguistic determinism with the idea of Puritan logocentrism in the novel. We study the implementation of the Tower of Babel motif and analyse intertextual elements in Stephenson's work. The main *research methods* are cultural-historical, philosophical-aesthetic, hermeneutic, mythopoetic and intertextual analysis.

The Role of the Word in Science Fiction

Undoubtedly, the model 'the world as/like a word (name)' is present, in our opinion, in the works of many authors of SF and fantasy from different countries including the USA, Great Britain, Australia, and Ukraine. These writers turn to linguistics or neurolinguistics and show worlds or conflicts in which the word plays a key role, where language is a functional and plastic tool. For example, in the dystopias, such as Ayn Rand's "Anthem" (1938), George Orwell's "1984" (1949), Anthony Burgess' "A Clockwork Orange" (1962), language is often a means of creating an unusual setting that causes cognitive estrangement for readers, becoming a tool of brainwashing, influence, control, propaganda and manipulation. Jack Vance in "The Languages of Pao" (1958), Robert Heinlein in "Stranger in a Strange Land" (1961), Robert Sheckley in "Shall We Have a Little Talk?" (1965), Samuel Delany in "Babel-17" (1966), Ian Watson in "The Embedding" (1973), Ted Chiang in "Story of Your Life" (1998), China Miéville in "Embassytown" (2011), Arkady Martin in "A Memory Called Empire" (2019) and others who experiment with linguistics in the context of extraterrestrial contact go even further in realizing the world-building role of words. We can add here famous artificial fantastic languages including *Quenya* in the world of Middle-earth by Professor John R.R. Tolkien; *Klingon*, developed by linguist Mark Okrand for one of the alien races in the "Star Trek" franchise; and *Dothraki* and *Valyrian* by linguist David Peterson for the TV series "The Game of Thrones".

The concept 'the word is magic' is popular in mythopoetic or fantasy works, e.g. Ursula Le Guin's "The Earthsea Cycle" (1964–2001), Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony" (1977), Henry Lion Oldie's "Stained Glasses of the Patriarchs" (1992), J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter series" (1997–2007), Maryna and Serhiy Dyachenko's "Vita Nostra" (2007) and "Vita Nostra: Work on Mistakes" (2021), Rebecca Kuang's "Babel, or The Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution" (2022). This concept is also realized in some SF novels, such as Neal Stephenson's "Snow Crash"

(1992) and Max Barry's "Lexicon" (2013). These works show that attention to the great role of the word in world-making is not the prerogative of American authors; therefore, the involvement of most of these works in the Puritan tradition will be artificial. So, we have to figure out what books or elements in the US science fiction can correspond with the Puritan logocenrism.

Researchers have paid great attention to the role of the word (language and speech) in SF [Barnes, 1975; Bould, 2007; Bould, 2009; Conley and Cain, 2006; Malmgren, 1993; Yaguello, 1984; Skvortsov, 2015]. Marina Yaguello suggests the term 'linguistic science fiction' for the subgenre of SF where the exploration of linguistic theories or ideas, the creation of fictional languages, or the deformation of natural languages play a central role in the narrative [Yaguello, 1984]. From this perspective, Stephenson's "Snow Crash" belongs to linguistic SF thematically, remaining at the same time a post-cyberpunk postmodern novel. Vladimir Skvortsov emphasizes that fictional languages are often present in utopias and dystopias (they are the subgenres of SF) in which they perform a genre-making function [Skvortsov, 2015, pp. 69–70, 75–76]. He summarizes that the fictional languages in SF literature perform genre-making, plot-making, worldview, artistic detail, parody and magical functions [Skvortsov, 2015, pp. 171–172].

In "Language and Linguistics" within "The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction", Mark Bould writes, "It is unsurprising that a genre concerned with imagining alternative societies and encounters with nonhuman others should frequently involve questions of language and communication" [Bould, 2009, p. 224]. He also cites Peter Stockwell, a researcher of SF poetics: the "presentation of new worlds involves new words, new syntactic structures, new semantic connections and new methods of understanding" [Stockwell, 2000, p. 113]. However, most often SF limits such experiments to occasional neologisms and neosemes – new words and new meanings for existing words [Stockwell, 2000, pp. 115–138]. Bould examines in detail two recurrent SF scenarios: 1) communication between humans and aliens and 2) linguistic relativism, i.e., the implementation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

The first scenario, according to Bould, is distinguished by anthropocentrism: in most works, the universe is depicted in the image of humanity just as it is inherent in mythology. Stanislaw Lem's "Solaris" (1961) is one of the few exceptions that mercilessly mocks this anthropocentric presumption. Any "attempt to understand the motivation" of the intelligent ocean covering the alien world of the same name "is blocked by our own anthropomorphism" [Bould, 2009, p. 228].

In the second scenario, Bould then explores how SF uses Sapir-Whorf's linguistic relativism "to imagine cultures or species determined (to varying degrees) by their language" [Bould, 2009, p. 229]. Let us remind that a 'strong' form of this hypothesis, which is now called 'linguistic determinism', claims that language determines thinking and that linguistic categories limit cognitive categories – language regulates and shapes thinking and reality. The 'weak' version of the hypothesis (linguistic relativism) assumes that language only affects thinking, which is also formed under the influence of traditions and some types of non-linguistic behaviour. The hypothesis is considered controversial and has many variations.

Linguistic Relativity

The idea of linguistic relativity was expressed in the 19th century by Wilhelm von Humboldt, who considered language to be the spirit of a nation [Humboldt, 2009]. From the beginning of the 20th century, American anthropologists, including Franz Boas, a teacher of both Edward Sapir and his colleague Alfred Kroeber (Ursula Le Guin's father), studied the languages of the indigenous American peoples and in particular the possible influence of language on thinking. The linguists themselves, Edward Sapir (1884–1939) and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941), never officially put forward such a hypothesis – this term was introduced by another student of Sapir, Harry Hoijer, as a generalization of their scientific discussions. The debates aimed at verifying the existence of a cause-and-effect relationship between language and culture.

Empirical testing of Whorf's hypothesis declined in the 1960s and 1980s, when Noam Chomsky began to develop his universal grammar; in the 1980s, the hypothesis was considered false. With the emergence of cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics in the late 1980s, was a new wave of interest in the hypothesis. George Lakoff argued that we often use language metaphorically, and that different languages apply different cultural metaphors to suggest differences in the thinking of speakers of those languages.

Therefore, Bould focuses on implementing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis by fantastic means. He quotes Benjamin Whorf who states that "all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to

the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated" [Whorf, 1957, p. 214]. Bould mentions that "paranoid versions of linguistic determinism occur in Samuel R. Delany's "Babel-17" (1966) and Neal Stephenson's "Snow Crash" (1992), in which language possesses individuals, reducing them to automata, while William S. Burroughs, who described language as a virus from outer space, implied this has already happened in reality" [Bould, 2009, p. 229].

It seems to us promising to expand Bould's research at the core of Stephenson's "Snow Crash", which he mentions only in passing. Moreover, this direction in the novel is practically not studied. We have found only a few works that slightly touch on this problem. Tracy Seneca's study of the power of the word in these novels by Delany and Stephenson is detailed but focuses on the latest IT in their works [Seneca, 1994]. Jason Michael Embry's dissertation on the role of language in the works by Philip K. Dick, Neal Stephenson, Samuel R. Delany and Chuck Palahniuk does not mention either the Puritan heritage or the Sapir-Whorf theory but studies the novels through the postmodern lens. We totally agree with Embry who writes: "The utopian goals of these texts advocate for a return to the modernist metanarrative and a revision of postmodern cynicism because the authors look to the future for hopeful solutions to the social and ideological problems of today. Using Slavoj Žižek's readings of Jacques Lacan and Theodor Adorno's readings of Karl Marx for critical insight, …these four novels imagine language as the key to personal empowerment and social change" [Embry, 2009]. In our opinion, these moments are most vividly realized in Stephenson's novel and require deep understanding.

Biblical Motifs in SF – The Tower of Babel

To establish possible connections of modern American linguistic SF with the Puritan heritage, it is worth turning to its biblical motifs, primarily to the Tower of Babel pattern of ideas. There are two accounts of ancient Babylon combined in the Bible into a single story: 1) the building of the city and the mixing of languages, and 2) the building of the tower and the scattering of the people. These myths tell about the 'beginning of history' of humanity (after the Flood) and explain the intervention of Yahweh as the root cause of the linguistic and territorial disunity of people (Gen. 11; 1–9). In later authors, the God-fighting impulse of the construction of the tower to heaven stands out and the image of God is fundamentally changed. The motif of his hostility is reinterpreted: the scattering of people is depicted not as retribution due to fear of human power but as charity and God's providence [Graves, Patai, 1986, p. 315].

The Tower of Babel story has also developed in science fiction. Tom de Bruin, who devotes a recent study to this topic, writes, "In general, the reception of the Tower of Babel can be divided into a couple of directions. The first takes up the theme of human audacity, enterprise, hubris, and arrogance – often combined with a bit of miscommunication thrown in for good measure. This is the heritage of the tower. The second direction is the curse, and it concerns the way the tower relates to language: imagery from the Genesis narrative, either explicit or implied, is used to discuss linguistics, the role of language, and translation" [De Bruin, 2023, pp. 37–38]. Studying this second direction of the curse of Babel, De Bruin focuses on Samuel Delany's "Babel-17" and mentions that another important work of the theme is Neal Stephenson's "Snow Crash". As we have traced, this book of the US author is less researched from the perspective of the role of language, the Sapir-Whorf theory and the Tower of Babel motif, let alone the Puritan heritage.

The American Background of Puritan Logocentrism

Let us consider the role of the 'Word' in the Puritan culture in detail. The first American colonists were sure that God's 'true Word' would improve the world, order all things and relationships between people, and help build a new country. This attitude to the Holy Scriptures corresponds to one of the principles of Protestantism that is *sola scriptura* (the only Scripture), according to which only the Bible should be treated as the source of Christian doctrine and divine authorship. This authority of the Bible was consistently declared by the New England clergy. In their sermons, the Bible was spoken of as the 'Word of God.' For Increase Mather, the Scriptures were "the word of Christ… because Hee is ye Author of it" [Mather, 1686, p. 76]. He emphasized, "Hence often in the Scripture, it is said, Hear the Word of the LORD, and Thus saith the LORD: Intimating that because of the Authority of the Speaker, men have infinite Reason to Hear and Fear, and to Believe and Obey" [Mather, 1682, p. 19]. Nathaniel Gookin said that biblical instructions were "the commands of the great God and his authority is

stamped upon them" [Gookin, 1690, pp. 85, 90-91]. Quoting David's words in the Old Testament, Samuel Willard pointed out that "they were not his own words, but such as the Spirit of God dictated to him, and spoke by him, whereof he was only the Instrument of their being committed to record. They therefore came out of the Mouth of God…" [Willard, 1694, p. 5]. "Emphasis on the truthfulness of the Word is found in epithets such as "word of truth", "great store-house of truth", and "Scriptures of truth", as Allen Carden observes. "In other sermon passages the Bible is called 'ye eternal word', 'the Holy Scriptures', 'the Sacred Word', 'the infallible Oracles', 'his [God's] revealed will', 'the Sword of the Spirit', 'the RULE', 'the purest spiritual milk in the world', 'a treasure', and 'infinite wisdom'" [Carden, 1980, p. 4]. We can enrich this list of poetic devices with the conceptual metaphors 'WORD IS A DRUG/MEDICINE' and 'WORD IS FOOD'. Joshua Moodey said about the Scriptures as "the Christians' Apothecaries Shop where he may go and take freely what his occasions call for. If a man needs Reproof, Correction, Doctrine, Instruction, &c. all these are there to be had" [Moodey, 1697, pp. 3–4]. John Cotton called to "FEED upon the WORD", and Cotton Mather instructed his flock to "Eat well, that we may Walk well… Let us by a Contemplative Eating chew upon the Word of God" [Mather, 1689, p. 20].

The Puritan art of preaching was perfectly organized: "The Puritan preachers were men of robust intellect and disciplined study. History shows us that they prepared their sermons carefully with painstaking and meticulous detail" [Ryken, 1986, p. 98]. For Joseph Steele, "Their appreciation for sound logic and intellectually stimulating argument is largely lacking for parallels in the history of humanity" [Steele, 2010].

Tetiana Sheburenkova states, "The founders of the colonies left behind a huge number of notes, diaries, treatises, stories, letters, messages in which they tried to capture in words what they had seen, experienced, most importantly, to give instructions to their descendants… At the same time, all genres of literature of the American colonies (biographies, descriptions, chronicles, diaries, essays, historical essays, and sermons) are based on the interpretation or illustration of biblical texts. The biographies were close in their content and form to the Lives of the Saints. The colonists wrote their history from a clean slate and tried to establish the idea of building an ideal society through words" [Sheburenkova, 2015, p. 44]. Tetiana Mykhed summarizes, "The nation was formed from words" [Mykhed, 2006, p. 190].

So, from the very beginning, America was shaped as a bookish, text-centric nation [Denysova, 2006, p. 574; Mykhed, 2006, p. 191; Pynchon, 1994, p. 207, 242, 571]. American researchers show that the New England shepherds were rational, logical and even pragmatic leaders focusing at least on the survival of their colonies and at most on the building of the Promised Land, the City upon a Hill in the New World. They considered the Bible as a tool for uniting and holding the faithful settlers, "the Rule according to which we must believe" [Mather, 1698, p. 10], "particular Instructions to us" with a message valid "to this day" [Gookin, 1690, p. 87]. When the colonists faced situations which were not covered in the Bible, the Puritan priests clarified the matters to their flock according to their aims: "doctrine is lifeless unless a person can 'build bridges' from biblical truth to everyday living" [Ryken, 1986, p. 101].

'Building bridges' between theory and practice is found, for example, in the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, one of the best-known preachers. They have a strict structure: 1) biblical text with brief overview – this stage stresses the biblical warrant and authority behind the preaching without which the congregation should not be expected to give credence to what the preacher says; 2) doctrinal assertion with various reasons enumerated that stresses the use of human reason in understanding the theological truth; and 3) application often with enumerated uses that stresses the response of the congregation in everyday life and conduct [Mitchell, 2024].

Since the linguistic turn in philosophy in the 20th century, modern language theory has been considering that language is not a neutral and passive means of reflecting reality but the tool of its shaping. Ludwig Wittgenstein explored how meaning is constructed through language and how this affects our understanding of the world [Wittgenstein, 1961]. To our mind, despite some difference, the ideas of linguistic philosophy are close to Protestant postulates. Both the Puritan belief in the biblical 'Word' and the linguistic turn in philosophy underscore the power and centrality of language in shaping human experience and understanding. While the Puritans viewed the Bible as the ultimate source of truth and guidance, linguistic philosophy examines the broader implications of language in constructing reality, meaning and knowledge.

Gnostic Influence

The utopian impulse of the people who made America was rooted not only in the Christian doctrine, but in the Gnostic worldview [Voegelin, 1952; Bloom, 1992; Davis, 1998; Burfeind, 2014]. In our opinion, this understanding is necessary for comprehending the pragmatic aims of the Puritans in shaping their society. Our knowledge of Gnosticism, a series of religious currents and heresies that developed in parallel with Christianity, is controversial. Gnosticism combined Eastern and Hellenistic motifs with a Christian interpretation of history and the destiny of humankind. Common to Gnostic views is a sharp dualism – the opposition of spirit and matter, which is also observed in Puritanism. The Gnostics believed that the world was filled with evil that could not have been created by God in any way. Therefore, the world was created either by a divine force limited in its power, or by some evil power (the Demiurge, Lucifer, etc.). The goal of Gnosticism is the reunification of 'elected' humans with the real God thanks to secret knowledge – *gnosis*.

Eric Voegelin defines Gnosticism as a false attempt to immanentize Christian eschatology, that is, a utopian attempt to create conditions on Earth reminiscent of the 'millennium' (the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ for the forming of the new nation of spiritual Israel) or already Paradise. Voegelin puts forward his version of the role of Gnosticism in Protestantism: "While none of the movements deserves preference by the content of its truth, a clear epoch in Western history is marked by the Reformation, understood as the successful invasion of Western institutions by Gnostic movements. The movements which hitherto existed in a socially marginal position – tolerated, suppressed, or underground – erupted in the formation with unexpected strength on a broad front, with the result of splitting the universal church and embarking on their gradual conquest of the political institutions in the national states" [Voegelin, 1952, p. 134]. In his further criticism of Puritanism, Voegelin, for whom a Puritan is a hidden Gnostic and a Gnostic is synonymous with a revolutionary and supporter of totalitarianism, relies on the works of the Puritans and on the opinions of their opponent, the Anglican priest Richard Hooker (1554–1600). Voegelin reveals the 'Scriptural camouflage' of the Puritans who developed two techniques to conceal their violence to Scripture: the codification of truth and the taboo on the instruments of critique. The codification of Gnostic truth was connected with the systematic formulation of new doctrine in scriptural terms, making recourse to earlier literature unnecessary. The taboo on the instruments of critique meant that the Gnostic truth could not abide criticism by the unfaithful. The instruments of critique were banned, for example, the Reformation tabooed classic philosophy and scholastic theology. [Voegelin, 1952, pp. 136–139].

So, the Puritans managed to build an effective system of uniting people into a community. The 'reading protocols' of the Scriptures developed by their leaders acted as a 'language programming' of consciousness and as a code of selection and control of the flock for their people's survival. Both Puritanism and Gnosticism are the utopian projects of building a perfect state on the Earth by the elected people based on the knowledge. At their core, both trends seem elitist, revolutionary and combining idealism with materialism.

Metaverse as a Constructed Reality. Deconstructing Body and Mind (Soul) Opposition Through the Language

Let us proceed to the echoes of the logocentrism in "Snow Crash" set in a Los Angeles of the near future. The two main characters are the pizza delivery boy and hacker Hiro Protagonist (his name hints that he lives in the text, in the narration) and the courier Y.T. [ʹwaiti:], i.e., Yours Truly (again, her name is an abbreviation that is used in the letters, in the written or printed text). Their reality is bright, dynamic, fragmented and dangerous, it is a technologically developed consumerist society ruled by the corporations, the mafia, gangs and churches. Hundreds of small states coexist with the virtual world, united in the computer Metaverse (this term as a blend of *meta* – 'beyond'– and *universe* was coined by Stephenson). The Metaverse, *"just a computer-graphics protocol written down on a piece of paper somewhere"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 25], created by Hiro and his friends about ten years ago, has become so visually rich that it functions as a full-fledged alternative reality. Here, online participants have virtual bodies (avatars), and hackers can be identified by the small details of their avatars. These are the features of postmodern aesthetics: the fictional heroes (Hiro & Co.) wrote the virtual reality and therefore changed our real world.

Since the Metaverse was initially written, it is a realm of the virtualised text. In the 1930s, Edmund Husserl stated, "The important function of written, documenting expression is that it makes

communications possible without immediate or mediate personal address; it is, so to speak, communication become virtual. Through this, the communalization of man is lifted" [Husserl, 1989, p. 164]. This idea leads to the conclusion that to comprehend any written text we create a mental virtual reality through which we can communicate with the author regardless if he or she is alive or not and how many years and miles separate us.

Stephenson's usage of the Present Tense in the novel makes an effect that everything is happening now, when we read it: *"So Hiro's not actually here at all. He's in a computer-generated universe that his computer is drawing onto his goggles and pumping into his earphones. In the lingo, this imaginary place is known as the Metaverse. Hiro spends a lot of time in the Metaverse. It beats the shit out of the U-Stor-It"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 24]. In the Puritan sermons, we see a wide use of the so-called 'Historical Present Tense' like "Jesus says/saith", not "Jesus said" [Nichols, 1989]. By employing the Present Tense, the Puritan priests created a sense of immediacy and urgency, making the spiritual and moral issues they addressed feel directly relevant and pressing to their audience. This technique was effective in engaging listeners, in making the Holy Word alive (i.e., in turning the written text into logos), in creating the effect of *"metaphysics of presence".* So, in "Snow Crash", according to Derrida's model, the world of the novel is written, then it exists for the readers here and now, then it is spoken as logos in the alternative world of the Metaverse penetrating into our reality – physically and virtually. The Puritan preachers took the written text of the Bible, made it existing (alive) and turned it into logos during their sermons.

Hence, to get to the novel's Metaverse you need a computer, a code (a written protocol, a password = a Word), special glasses and earphones. As David Porush notices, "At the simplest level, mere transcendence in cyberspace may flow from the way cyberspace will reorient the mind to the experience of sensuous information BODILESSLY… Cyberspace already transcends the physical "meat" body by creating a simulated "meta" body in the brain and communicating with it directly via electrical implants… – that is, in very literal terms, it is meta-physical. Cyborg hackers take the next evolutionary step that was begun in Daedalus's dream of flight to become electronic angels, freed from the laws of physics" [Porush, 1994, p. 538]. This technology provides real perception, even if it is produced not by sense organs, but by neural connection when the brain gets the signals directly from the computer. The role, which the body plays in the transmission and circulation of information in cyberspace, is a key point for programmers [López, 2023]. The computer screen resembles transparent one-way window (glass) through which entry into cyberspace is experienced as a remote presence.

In "Snow Crash", the language is compared to the glass that can be more or less dirty and hides the truth from the people [Stephenson, 1992, p. 181]. Interestingly enough, but in the rhetoric of the New England preachers, we find the conceptual metaphors WORD IS GLASS (logos is connected with the eyesight) and WORD IS A TRUMPET (logos is connected with the hearing). James Allen said that the sin could be revealed "by seeing your selves in the glass of the Word" [Allen, 1699, p. 27]. Cotton Mather also spoke of the Word as "the GLASS, which gives Young People, to see the Uncleanness of their Wayes" [Mather, 1694, pp. 14–15]. Josiah Flynt dwelled on a holy Word as a trumpet which was "to be sounded in the ears of sinners" in order to awaken the "secure sinner" to his plight [Flynt, 1680s, p. 11]. So, the Word of God is associated with the devices that through the senses (eyesight or hearing) help us see the reality not in ordinary way. What seems common to these Puritan sermons and virtual reality is the body / mind (soul) intersections through the language.

It can be said that the Puritan preachers tried to make the abstract Scriptures more materialistic and closer to the audience connecting them to the sensory perception (as if making language a sense of perception like hearing or taste). In the Puritan case, logos also helped to see the environment from another perspective (i.e., to switch to another reality) – it revealed the spoiled nature of the material world. This concept corresponds with the Gnostic view of the material world as a dirty place created by the evil forces.

Many Puritans of millennial Gnostic views looked forward to the return of Christ and the Divine Kingdom on earth [Campbell, 1892]. The Metaverse looks like a technological Paradise or 'millennial' utopian dream. Being a big City with one central Street, it is rather poetic (*verse* comes from Latin 'turn' but it also means 'poem' in English) and totally urbanistic: *"Your avatar can look any way you want it to, up to the limitations of your equipment. If you're ugly, you can make your avatar beautiful. If you've just gotten out of bed, your avatar can still be wearing beautiful clothes and professionally applied makeup. You can look like a gorilla or a dragon or a giant talking penis in the Metaverse. Spend five minutes walking down the Street and you will see all of these"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 36].

Of course, the ironical details of Stephenson's City like *"a giant talking penis"* would shock the true Puritans. However, on the ontological level, the Metaverse has some common elements with the Puritan worldview. Following Calvin's teachings, the Puritans believed in divine predestination – that God predetermined who would be saved (the 'elect') and who would be damned. This doctrine was more extreme than the views held by many mainline Protestants [Berg, 1999]. While the Metaverse offers vast opportunities, access to this virtual reality is limited to those with the technological means, creating a digital divide. The Metaverse as an escape from the harsh realities of the physical world is open only for the 'elect' (*"the hundred million richest, hippest, best-connected people on earth"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 26]) who know some code (it resembles the 'gnosis' idea). In the 17th century, the Puritans were the outlaws (like Stephenson's hackers) who also escaped from political, religious and economic oppression in Europe to the New World. North America became the new Canaan, the Promised Land for these Protestants who believed that they were the new chosen people living in a covenant with God to fulfil the mission of proclaiming his truth throughout the world.

Moreover, it seems that Stephenson's virtual city as a vision of an idealized society or space has much in common with John Winthrop's 'City upon a Hill'. Winthrop envisioned a Puritan society in New England that would be a beacon of righteousness and ideal governance [Winthrop, 1892].

Overcoming *Religion / Science* Antagonism

These similarities between the Metaverse and the Puritan concepts do not mean that Neal Stephenson is a religious person who shares the Puritan views. He follows the myths and revalues them at the same time. In America, the Puritan heritage coexisted with the faith in science that would solve all the problems. As far as we can judge, Stephenson is an intellectual with a rather positive attitude to Christianity (at least, while writing "Snow Crash"). Stephenson is deeply concerned about the intersections of science and religion, and for him they do not exclude each other: "There are many, many examples of legitimate scientists who espouse some form of religious faith, so I don't see any essential hostility. I grew up in a community of church-going scientists and engineers. The recent science/religion fireworks are driven by a theological movement that is as controversial within Christianity as it is in secular culture" [Newitz, 2008].

In "Snow Crash", Juanita, Hiro's ex-girl and one of the programmers who created the Metaverse, proves the coexisting of science and religion. She has been studying the non-verbal communication since her youth when her grandmother immediately understood that Juanita was pregnant although she kept it in secret. This case made the girl think that there was something beyond the understanding of science. She is a truly believer (maybe because of her Mexican Catholic background) and utters the phrases like these: *"Religion is not for simpletons"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 68]. Juanita sees the reasons why many people became atheists: *"Ninety-nine percent of everything that goes on in most Christian churches has nothing whatsoever to do with the actual religion. Intelligent people all notice this sooner or later, and they conclude that the entire one hundred percent is bullshit, which is why atheism is connected with being intelligent in people's minds"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 69]. She believes that her mission is to convert the intelligent atheists back to the faith. Juanita's idealistic views are opposed to L. Bob Rife's exploitation of the faith. We consider that in the novel, Neal Stephenson suggests a harsh critique of the church that becomes totalitarian – L. Bob Rife, the antagonist, is an oil magnate and monopolist investing in fiber optics and communications. He seeks to impose his own form of control through the Snow Crash virus.

Here we approach the implementation of the Sapir-Whorf theory and the involvement of turning the people into automata by the language and 'the curse of Babel' motifs in the novel. It seems important to us that Whorf, a native of Winthrop, Massachusetts, a descendant of the first Puritan colonists [FamilySearch, 2022; FamilySearch, 2020; Meredith, 1901, p. 89], who was absorbed in religion, theosophy, esotericism and exegetics insisted more on the linguistic determinism, so it would be more logical to call it the Whorf hypothesis. Whorf's unpublished and published papers kept at Yale University reflect his concern about the possible conflict between science and religion and prove not only his scientific studies of nature, especially botany, but also his acceptance of Genesis and the God of the Bible. Whorf thought that the key to the apparent discrepancy between biblical and scientific theories of cosmology and evolution may lie in a deep linguistic exegesis of the Old Testament [Bartucca et al., 1979].

There is a mythological subtext subtly woven into the plot of Stephenson's novel. Both in reality and in the Metaverse, the war for Snow Crash does not stop: it is a drug of happiness in real life (simi-

lar to Aldous Huxley's soma in "Brave New World") and a computer virus that causes a snow-like flickering image on the monitor. Both viruses have disastrous consequences for those who come in contact with them. People are so used to computer reality that they can be physically harmed by events that occur in cyberspace. In the novel, anyone whose computer is infected with the Snow Crash virus loses all regular neurological function and begins to speak only in gibberish. Hiro learns that Snow Crash is a digitally encoded virus that infects hackers through the optic nerve, and that the street drug is a chemically processed blood serum taken from those infected with the virus, which causes the same symptoms as the hackers after being infected. Stephenson emphasizes the commonality between drug, virus and religion – they all control people through their brains: "*This Snow Crash, what is it? A drug, virus, or religion?"..."What's the difference?*" [Stephenson, 1992, p. 200]. Let us remember that in Puritan sermons the Word of God was compared to a medicine or drug as well.

Rethinking 'The Curse of Tower' Motif

Next, the plot unfolds in cyberspace with the help of 'the Librarian', a programme like a knowbot, only with the appearance of a person in virtual space. The programme was developed by Dr. Emmanuel Lagos (this could be seen as a hint to logos), a researcher at the Library of Congress who was beginning to see a connection between the Snow Crash drug and the Snow Crash computer virus. The name of the programme that calls the Librarian is *BABEL – INFOCALYPSE*. Hiro notes early on that the symptoms of contact with Snow Crash people speak, *"Just a bunch of babble. Babble. Babel"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 74]. During their first meeting, the Librarian quotes Genesis 11:6-9 about Babel. The Librarian later makes a connection between Babel and the glossolalia ("babbling", speaking in tongues) of those infected with the Snow Crash virus. The Librarian gives examples of glossolalia from around the world and in history: *"If mystical explanations are ruled out, then it seems that glossolalia comes from structures buried deep within the brain, common to all people"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 206].

Erik Davis calls the mythology of Stephenson's novel '*memetic*', as in the transmission of information [Davis, 1998, p. 273]. According to this mythology, all humans once spoke Adam's original language, which enabled the ancient Sumerian priests to control minds by spreading biomental viruses. Snow Crash uses this language – a machine code for living things – through simple '*me*' programmes: "deep structural and unalterable rules for behavior" [Embry, 2009, p. 74]. The danger of the virus is that those infected with it are now completely vulnerable to those who know how to manipulate the spell power of this language, and become unwitting helpers in the conspiracy, which Hiro must prevent.

In Richard Dawkins's theory, meme as an information transmitter is the cultural equivalent of the gene in genetics. Similar to genes or viruses, memes are often inherited and passed down from generation to generation, at a deep, almost imperceptible level [Dawkins, 1976]. Embry writes, "*Snow Crash* fictionalizes this concept of the meme and further legitimates and mythologizes it by attributing it to the ancient and fallen cradle of civilization, Sumer" [Embry, 2009, p. 19]. In the primitive society, *me* spread like viruses of the goddess Asherah (she is, according to Stephenson, Ishtar/Inanna or Eve) and gave impetus to the emergence of civilization; Hiro suggests the cosmic origin of this virus. In order to become conscious, proactive and rational beings, people had to outgrow this universal language: *"Our speech interposes itself between apprehension and truth like a dusty pane or warped mirror. The tongue of Eden was like a flawless glass; a light of total understanding streamed through it. Thus Babel was a second Fall"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 181]. Enki in ancient Sumer (known now as the god of culture, water or earth) was a kind of hacker, because he invented new words, new programmes of human activity that blocked the influence of Asherah. It was Enki who launched into society '*nam-shub*' (translated as 'language with magical power', 'spell' [Stephenson, 1992, p. 221]), a neurolinguistic virus that expanded human functionality, influenced genes and encouraged independent action. The Babel infocalypse was the moment when the language of Sumer was destroyed, when human language became heterogeneous and diverse, and the civilization scattered: *"It was the beginning of rational religion, too, the first time that people began to think about abstract issues like God and Good and Evil... the nam-shub of Enki … broke us free from the metavirus and gave us the ability to think – moved us from a materialistic world to a dualistic world – a binary world – with both a physical and a spiritual component"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 260].

Stephenson admitted that he was influenced by Julian Jaynes's theory of bicameral mind [Mustich, 2008]. This concept is unverifiable but got a great social resonance. Jaynes argues that even

3,000 years ago the people did not have consciousness as self-awareness and introspection: their right hemisphere of the brain transmitted the information to the left hemisphere via auditory hallucinations recognised as the voices of gods. Only a chain of radical changes, caused by the Late Bronze Age collapse, led to the appearance of modern cognitive architecture and personal consciousness. Being a religious person, Jaynes suggests that the story about the 'curse of Babel' could be "a narratization of the garbling of hallucinated voices in their decline" [Jaynes, 2000, p. 235]. Bicameral consciousness eventually collapsed as human societies became more complex, and our ancestors awoke with modern self-awareness, with an inner voice that, according to Jaynes, had its roots in the language. Jaynes believes that the language had to appear before what he defines as consciousness became possible [Ibid][1].

According to Stephenson, the infocalypse was thus liberating because it brought us out of our former trance caused by early viruses and forced us to consciously learn skills and think. The religions of the Book (Bible) then countered this Sumerian trance with hygienic codes of conduct and the 'grafting' of the Torah, whose integrity was maintained by strict rules regarding its reproduction. Erik Davis writes, "However, the old metavirus continues to lurk on the fringes of human culture, where it rears up in phenomena such as Pentecostal glossolalia and, one might add, the nostalgic dreams of universal and perfect communication that drive Western mystics and techno-utopian globalists alike. But Stephenson warns that we can *only recover this Adamic state* of *collective mind* at the price of our rational independence – a telling lesson in an era of worldwide communication nets and powerful media memes" [Davis, 1998, p. 274].

Thus, Stephenson directly addresses the myth of the Tower of Babel and the hypothesis of a single true language that may reappear, as well as the magical power of language. A professional programmer, Stephenson relies on the 'strong' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and relates this topic to cyberspace and the atmosphere of extreme information overload: "Snow crash as a virus is designed specifically to subvert the self and all of its characteristics in order to render humans as malleable as non-conscious machines to benefit the elite at the expense of the masses" [Haney, 2006, p. 126].

Deconstructing Puritan Logocentric Utopia

Hiro discovers that many years ago L. Bob Rife stole Lagos' idea to use the Asherah virus for programming the people's minds. Rife financed the university studies for refining the virus, then spread it through Pentecostal churches all over the world by vaccination. In America, it is distributed as a drug. Lagos who knew much was assassinated by Rife's killer. Rife arranges a huge fleet of infected zombified immigrants (the Raft) crossing the Pacific to land in America and seize control of it. As Rajkumar Bera states, "As the flow of the action of the novel "Snow Crash" develops, the fusion of the mixture of Christianity and Capitalism is unfolded gradually as a conspiracy to attain an absolute control over the individual subjects. This conspiracy hints a direct threat to the secular protagonists who struggle hard to eradicate such maltreatments from the society to create a better society where they can find a free space for breathing, freedom and a consolidated identity" [Bera, 2023].

Actually, America was formed by this mixture of Christianity and capitalism, or, to be correct, by Protestantism and capitalism, as Max Weber displayed in his "Protestant Ethic" [Weber, 1968]. We suppose that Stephenson provides some critique of the Protestant ethic and capitalist values opposing them, in particular, pre-Reformation Christianity and feudal code of chivalry. Of course, Hiro with his katanas is rather a samurai than a knight but he is evidently anti-capitalist in his hypercapitalist world. Let us notice that, in the novel, FBI as a state structure cooperates with Rife, but the Mafia headed by Uncle Enzo, a Vietnam War veteran, tries to stop him. As one mafioso, Fisheye, explains to Hiro, they focus on personal relationships, on something concrete, not abstract, and it helps them avoid the trap of rigid ideology: *"This is how we avoid the trap of selfperpetuating ideology. Ideology is a virus"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 350]. On a deeper level, this conflict can be seen as a confrontation of the archaic conservative European (Catholic) community and the American state institutions rooted in Protestantism and Gnosticism.

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[1] An interesting detail: Jaynes's father was a priest, who died when the boy was two, having left forty-eight volumes of sermons. The boy grew up reading his father's sermons and imagining his voice – like the God's voice in his theory – again, making his father alive while turning the text into logos. Jaynes's life and magnum opus display the synthesis of faith and science and remains magnetic for many readers.

The Americans joke that Italy has exported pizza, the Mafia and the Catholic Church. In the novel, these three entities are interwoven because, at first, Hiro and later Y.T. deliver pizza for the Mafia, then the Mafia protects them, and, in general, Juanita, Dr. Emmanuel Lagos, Uncle Enzo and his mobsters as offspring of the Catholic culture contradict Rife's sect. In our opinion, pizza as a symbol combines the American style of life, consumerism, mass culture and junk food, but its ancient meaning is bread or flatbread (by the way, let us recall the abovementioned Puritan metaphors of the Scriptures as the food for soul). Uncle Enzo's character can be an allusion to Enzo, the loyal baker from "The Godfather", a former prisoner of war, who helped Michael Corleone protect his father Don Corleone in the hospital [Allen, 2018]. Uncle Enzo's feeding thousands of people with his pizzas can be compared to Jesus Christ's feeding the multitude with bread and fish, reported in the Gospels, or to the rite of the Eucharist when bread and wine are associated with Jesus's body and blood. Of course, this connection is not vivid, but, from this perspective, distributing his pizzas, Uncle Enzo spreads his values inherited from the Old World and religion. He seems almost all-mighty in the book like God.

One of the key concepts of Puritan social and religious life was the notion of the covenant meaning their consent and mutual obligations with God to establish a perfect Christian community. In 1630, John Winthrop proclaimed this covenant in his essay about the 'City upon a Hill': the rich had to show charity, the poor had to work hard, and then God would make them all an example in the world, otherwise they would feel his wrath [Winthrop, 1892]. It is interesting that the word 'covenant' is used in "Snow Crash" once concerning personal agreement between Uncle Enzo and his customers [Stephenson, 1992, p. 350]. We do not want to justify criminality, but even Uncle Enzo's Mafia looks more humane and personified than Rife's flock of zombies. Perhaps, the matter is that all the representatives of counterculture are more pleasant to Stephenson than the official America as a petrified Puritan dream.

Embry proves that Rife's character is a severe parody of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard [Embry, 2009, p. 65]. As William Burroughs states, "Hubbard bases the power he attributes to words on his theory of engrams. An engram is defined as word, sound, image recorded by the subject in a period of pain and unconsciousness" [Burroughs, 1970]. Therefore, Embry argues, "These engrams, ally or not, manipulate a person's mood and direct a person to act a certain way. It is difficult to believe that Stephenson was not influenced by all of these intersections when researching the topic of memes" [Embry, 2009, pp. 72–73].

We totally agree with him but also think that Rife can be seen as a modern-day Puritanical figure. He mirrors the Puritanical drive to shape society according to a specific set of beliefs. Rife uses audio and video bugs to control his programmers even in their homes to punish them for any *"unacceptable lifestyle choices"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 72] including some forms of sex. The tycoon is obsessed with the 'purity' of his employees in everything because he thinks that his programmers should keep and distribute the 'pure' information – so, the antivirus protection for cleaning the computer systems spreads further, to the programmers' bodies. It resembles the Puritan emphasis on the power of the 'true' word and their extremes in forbidding all non-marital and non-reproductive sexual activities. Rife's Raft, headed by his private ship *Enterprise*, a converted aircraft carrier, can be regarded as a parody of the pilgrims and Puritans who came across the Atlantic to America. The magnate's plans are ambitious: *"To renew America. Most countries are static, all they need to do is keep having babies. But America's like this big old clanking, smoking machine that just lumbers across the landscape scooping up and eating everything in sight. Leaves behind a trail of garbage a mile wide. Always needs more fuel. Ever read the story about the labyrinth and the minotaur?"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 74]. So, this American minotaur of exceptionalism, capitalism and consumerism always needs victims and sacrifices.

The name of Rife's religious franchises, the Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates, seems an allusion to John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678). This Protestant allegory about Christian's progress from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City through life in search of salvation became one of the first novels written in English. The Pearly Gates described in "The Pilgrim's Progress" [Bunyan, 1980] is the gateway to Heaven, according to the Bible: *"The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl"* [Revelation 21:9–21]. In Stephenson's novel, the Pearly Gates is a modern variant of Asherah cult where drugs are used but, on the surface, it looks like a Christian denomination combining the cults of Jesus, Elvis Presley and the Reverend Wayne Bedford. Bedford was Bunyan's native town [Johnston, 2022], and Stephenson's choice of Wayne's surname may also be a hint to "The Pilgrim's Progress".

However, Stephenson deconstructs Bunyan's pathetic spiritual journey presenting Rife's church satirically, as a simulacrum: *"The customer stomps toward the double doors, drawn in by hypnotic organ strains. The interior of the chapel is weirdly colored, illuminated partly by fluorescent fixtures wedged into the ceiling and partly by large colored light boxes that simulate tamed-glass windows. The largest of these, shaped like a fattened Gothic arch, is bolted to the back wall, above the altar, and features a blazing trinity: Jesus, Elvis, and the Reverend Wayne. Jesus gets top billing. The worshipper is not half a dozen steps into the place before she thuds down on her knees in the middle of the aisle and begins to speak in tongues: 'ar ia an ar is ye na amiriaisa, venaamiriaasaria...'"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 125]. Hiro reminds that Babel means *"Gate of God"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 260], and the motif of the gateway to Heaven in Stephenson's novel becomes more ambiguous. For Rife, a capitalist, the way to success and power is a way to God, and from this perspective building the Tower of Babel was a way to knock on Pearly Gates. On the contrary, Hiro, a countercultural hero, understands that Babel was a gateway for God to reach the people and give them a chance for self-development.

Hiro says that Rife *"wants to be Ozymandias, King of Kings"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 264]. Ozymandias was the Greek name for pharaoh Ramesses the Great. Stephenson definitely alludes to Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias" that critiques the people's hubris and conveys the futility of their ambitions:

> *And on the pedestal these words appear*
> *"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:*
> *Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"*
> *Nothing beside remains. Round the decay*
> *Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare*
> *The lone and level sands stretch far away*
> [Shelley, 1876, p. 376].

The themes of Shelley's poem resemble Shakespeare's Sonnet 123, which begins with the lines:

> *No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:*
> *Thy pyramids built up with newer might*
> *To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;*
> *They are but dressings of a former sight.*
> [Shakespeare, 2011, p. 253].

Let us recall Jorge Luis Borges' 1941 story "The Library of Babel", which depicts the universe as an infinite library, as a sphere, the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere. This library is associated with Babel because it is another colossal attempt of the humankind to get closer to God – not with the help of bricks but with the words as logos.

Kevin Vanhoozer writes, "Logocentrism is the belief that there is some stable point outside language – reason, revelation, Platonic Ideas – from which one can ensure that one's words, as well as the whole system of distinctions that order our experience, correspond to the world. It is the desire for a centre, for a point of reference, for an ultimate origin – anything on which we can non-arbitrarily hang our beliefs and values. In short, logocentrism stands for the fundamental presupposition that it is possible to speak truly" [Vanhoozer, 2006, p. 53]. So, logocentrism is connected with the totality and search for centre, truth and order. For the Puritans, God became this centre, and logos was the order and the truth. To poststructuralists, "all the epistemic frameworks are unavoidably decentred" [Tucker, 2016, p.175] because the "centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre elsewhere. The centre is not the centre" [Derrida, 1978, p. 279]. Patrick Bourgeois concludes, "Hence, the logos inevitably leads to its own downfall because it is exclusive and emerges from a prior abyss. That is, there is a further belief, even more basic, that all beliefs reveal the initial belief in logos as a bit of an illusion" [Bourgeois, 2000, p. 11].

As far as we understand, Stephenson deconstructs the Puritan logocentric utopias by making parallels between the Puritans, the arrogant people of Babel and Bob Rife – they all are doomed to fail. Rife, who says that he has bought everything and aims to reach the space (*"I just about got this*

planet all sewn up" [Stephenson, 1992, p. 73]), is a new Antichrist to Hiro [Stephenson, 1992, p. 279]. The Tower of Babel motif of human arrogance, audacity and enterprise can be traced in the control tower of Rife's aircraft carrier: *"It's getting close to twilight, the control tower of the Enterprise looms hard and black against a deep gray sky that's getting dark and gloomy so fast that it seems darker, now, than it will at midnight. But for now, none of the lights are on and that's all there is, black steel and slate sky"* [Stephenson, 1992, p. 223].

This control tower is a transmitter of commands to the millions of infected people; however, Hiro Protagonist, Y.T. and Juanita ruin Rife's plans and defend the people's free will. Hiro defends the Metaverse from the virus; together with Y.T. and the Mafia he confronts Rife in reality. Juanita infiltrates Rife's cult willingly submitting to being infected with the virus and wired by Rife's scientists to turn her into a transmitter of commands. However, she as a true Christian and researcher at the same time is strong enough to overcome the brain programming and use it against Rife, turning herself into a biological hacker. To Embry, "While neither Hiro nor Juanita actually solve social problems or change the world for the better, they do preserve free will and allow social change to be possible" [Embry, 2009, p. 155].

Coming back to L. Ron Hubbard as Rife's possible prototype, we would like to emphasize the fact that is almost ignored by the researchers: Hubbard was a prolific science fiction writer who contributed many notable works to the genre, influencing its development during the mid-20th century. In 1950, Hubbard published "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health". This book laid the groundwork for what would become Scientology (a cult and a business), introducing concepts of the mind and self-improvement. So, while initially presented as a form of self-help and therapy, Dianetics evolved into the religious movement of Scientology that covers millions of people including the celebrities and FBI agents. Actually, a SF writer decided to invent not an imaginary world but a religion in the real world and succeeded. We view Hubbard's creation of Scientology as an extension of his imaginative thinking, blurring the lines between fiction and belief. His life and career prove that in America the soil for these cult projects is fertile, and the borders between idealism and materialism, mythology and reality, science and religion, science and fiction, science fiction and reality, religion and ideology are blurred. And at the core of them are utopian projects, rational approach and logocentrism inherited from the first settlers.

Conclusions

In the novel, logos is a central theme that underscores the power of language in shaping human consciousness and society. We have found out that the Puritans' focus on the Scripture as a direct line to divine truth parallels the novel's exploration of language as a potent tool for control and impact.

In sum, using the power of the Word, the Puritans built their state and religious project rather successfully; Stephenson, who lives in the world made by them, has written the Metaverse that has changed our reality.

We have considered the parallels between the Puritan rhetoric and reaching the transcendence in Stephenson's Metaverse. Comparing the Word of God to the drug, food, glass or trumpet in their sermons, the Puritan priests activated in such a way the sensory perception of the flock giving the 'flesh' to the abstract written text. Following their rational aims the Puritans deconstructed the Christian body / soul dichotomy or binary opposition. Stephenson develops this deconstruction: the Metaverse is also a written text (the computer protocol), and the programmers increase its virtual flesh (its size and diversity) every year engaging the imitation of sensory perception on the neural level. Therefore, the Puritans and the programmers base on the text, on the body / mind (soul) interactions through the language, but if the former used the text for improving the real world according to their views, the latter made a new virtual world.

Some echoes of the Puritan utopian hopes are present in Stephenson's Metaverse as an implementation of the millennial dream or 'City upon a Hill'. On the one hand, this cyberspace was created by the hackers as the outlaws to escape from the hypercapitalist reality, to seek the freedom of self-realisation, but, on the other hand, only the richest and/or having access to high technologies can allow this 'second life' for them, and the Metaverse as a form of transcendence becomes elitist. The emphasis on this contradiction between inclusivity (meaning freedom) and exclusivity (meaning money or knowledge) allows us to say that the novel deconstructs Stephenson's Metaverse, along with Winthrop's City upon a Hill (as well as the American Dream), as potentially dangerous utopian projects.

In summary, the American nation continues to evolve by critically reviewing and reforming its founding myths. Stephenson reinterpreted the idea of Puritan logocentrism from the postmodern perspective. He deconstructed the idea of logocentrism and the 'curse of the Tower of Babel' myth, parodied Winthrop's 'City upon a Hill' myth and applied irony and intertextuality. However, the writer's irony is not total and it leaves some room for hope. Following the SF belief in science and the Puritan belief in a true Word as a password – a key to a better reality, Neal Stephenson created his metanarrative about the Metaverse. This became the prototype of the modern Internet, but in its full embodiment of an alternative reality remains the dream and reference point of progressive humanity today.

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LOGOCENTRISM OF PURITAN IDEA AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN POSTMODERN ERA: NEAL STEPHENSON'S NOVEL "SNOW CRASH"

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Key words*: Puritan idea, logocentrism, science fiction, biblical myth, 'City upon a Hill' myth, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, postmodernism, Metaverse image.*

The aim of the article is to determine the ways of transforming the logocentrism of the Puritan idea in Neal Stephenson's post-cyberpunk novel "Snow Crash" (1992). The tasks of this research include: reviewing Puritan sources relating to the Word of God from the point of view of modern language theory; studying the transformation of text into a logos that changes reality in "Snow Crash" and Puritan sermons; displaying the opposition 'body / mind (soul)' through language in these sermons and overcoming it in the virtual reality of the novel; comprehending the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and combining linguistic determinism with the idea of Puritan logocentrism in "Snow Crash"; studying the implementation of the Tower of Babel motif in the novel; and analysing intertextuality in Stephenson's work. The main methods of research are cultural-historical, philosophical-aesthetic, hermeneutic, mythopoetic and intertextual analysis.

The new findings prove that the Puritans' focus on the Holy Scriptures as a direct path to divine truth corresponds to the novel's exploration of language as a powerful tool of control and influence. Adhering to the Holy Scriptures, the Puritan leaders aimed not only at a high spiritual mission but also at a purely pragmatic task of fighting the chaos of an unknown and dangerous world and controlling their flock for the most rational and effective survival in difficult conditions. The author emphasizes that both in the Puritan ideology and in the poetic world of the novel, there is a transformation of writing into speech. This is as if Stephenson is following a puritanical script of using the Present Tense to bring the text to life for the audience and then to change reality with that logos.

Parallels have been found between Puritan rhetoric and the achievement of transcendence in Stephenson's Metaverse. Comparing the Word of God to medicine, food, glass or a trumpet in their sermons, Puritan priests thus activated the sensory perception of their flock, giving 'flesh' to an abstract text. The author assumes that they were intended to 'reprogram' the believers' perception of reality with an emphasis on the negative aspects of society. The Metaverse is also a text – a computer protocol, and every year programmers increase its virtual flesh, i.e., its size and diversity by simulation of neural sensory perception.

The Puritans and the programmers rely on the text and on the interaction of body and mind/soul through language. However, whereas the Puritans used the text to improve the real world according to their views, the programmers created a new virtual world. The Metaverse is the embodiment of the Puritan dream of a 'Millennial Paradise' or 'City upon a Hill'. On the one hand, this cyberspace is created in search of freedom by hackers to escape from hyper-capitalist reality, but on the other hand, only the richest or those with high technology have access to this form of transcendence.

The paper studies "Snow Crash" as an illustration of the 'strong' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which looks at the dangers of using language as a mental or computer virus where the minds of humans as biorobots are literally reprogrammed. Puritan beliefs were often characterized by moral absolutism and a desire to control social behaviour to conform to religious ideals.

The Tower of Babel motif is traced from the point of view of the existence of a single protolanguage, which split into many others after the destruction of the tower by God. In "Snow Crash", the Los Angeles fragmented reality is as diverse as post-infocalypse Babel, where the protagonist is a virtual frontier cowboy, culture hero and trickster. Stephenson praises the Babel infocalypse, when human language became heterogeneous, understanding it as a moment of liberation and the beginning of the countdown of independent rational thinking of humankind. He also reverently perceives the following of the Bible over the centuries as 'informational hygiene' – this is how the people of the 'Book' resisted the ancient pagan chaos.

The novel's reinterpretation of the idea of Puritan logocentrism takes place within postmodern aesthetics through the use of deconstruction (revaluing the idea of logocentrism and the Tower of Babel myth), parody (debunking the myth of the City upon a Hill), irony and intertextuality. But although "Snow Crash" is ironical, the writer at a deeper level rejects postmodern cynicism and helplessness. The American nation continues to develop, critically reviewing and reforming its founding myths. Adhering to the science fiction faith in science and the Puritan belief in the constructive potential of the word for society, Neal Stephenson created his metanarrative about the Metaverse. This became the prototype of the modern Internet, but, in its full embodiment of an alternative reality, remains a dream and a guide for progressive humanity today.