

EWELINA BATOR
(UNIWERSYTET WARSZAWSKI)
ORCID 0000-0001-9808-5564

ACADEMIC TEXT AS A PART OF THE *FICTIONAL WORLD* IN JOHANNA SINISALO'S *THE CORE OF THE SUN*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to discuss the composition of Johanna Sinisalo's novel *The Core of the Sun* by demonstrating how the author used excerpts of academic text to create the literary world of the novel. As the theoretical foundation, I will use Lubomír Doležel's research introducing the theory of possible worlds in literary creation. The *realia*, *possibilia*, and the *transworld* identity of the fictional world of Sinisalo's novel is analyzed on the basis of excerpts from dictionary entries and scientific articles used as world-building elements.

KEYWORDS: possible worlds, Finnish weird, dystopia, academic language, Johanna Sinisalo

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest omówienie kompozycji powieści Johanna Sinisalo *The Core of the Sun* poprzez pokazanie, w jaki sposób autorka wykorzystuje fragmenty tekstu naukowego do stworzenia świata przedstawionego w powieści. Jako podstawy teoretycznej użyję badań Lubomíra Doležela wprowadzających teorię *światów możliwych* w twórczości literackiej. *Realia*, *possibilia* i *transświatowa* tożsamość fikcyjnego świata powieści Sinisalo będą analizowane w oparciu o fragmenty haseł słownikowych i artykułów naukowych wykorzystywanych w powieści jako elementy światotwórcze.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: możliwe światy, Finnish weird, dystopia, styl naukowy, Johanna Sinisalo

INTRODUCTION – FICTIONAL WORLDS

In a chart depicting Lubomír Doležel's study in the article *Jak dotrzeć do fikcyjnych światów? (How to reach fictional worlds?)*, the author first points out that his research concerns the broader philosophy of language, which in turn consists of pragmatism and semantics. The researcher in this study focuses primarily on semantics. The next step in the scope of the classification of material under examination is the division of semantic issues into smaller ranges. One of the paths of semantics is realism, and realism is divided into next two components: *one world* and *possible worlds* (Doležel 2015: 21). Here begins deliberation on *possible worlds* and *fictional worlds*. On this basis, one wonders how much the realism of fictional worlds corresponds to the assumptions of realism in the traditional sense (Bahtin 1974; Lukács 1969), and how much depends on the model reader, his feelings,

interpretations, but also the level of knowledge in various fields (Eco 1979: 67–89). Doležel stresses that today a researcher must be interdisciplinary in their observations, but literary scholars, although they claim to be interdisciplinary, treat everything as literary means of expression (Doležel 1998: 785). This is only an instruction and a prelude to pondering *possible worlds* and the *fictional world*.

Doležel first refers to the research of Saul A. Kripke and, continuing the thought of his predecessor, stresses that the universe of discourse is not limited to the existing world. It can be assumed that there are infinitely many *possible worlds* that differ from each other in small details (e.g., the Earth can have two moons) or significantly (the Earth does not exist at all). Doležel includes fictional worlds which cease to be merely a high-flying philosophical concept and become present in works of art and literature through human cultural activity. He notes that fictional possible worlds are man-made constructs (*ibidem*: 786–787):

Fictional worlds of literature are a specific kind of possible worlds. They are artifacts produced by textual *poiesis* and preserved and circulating in the medium of fictional texts. They constitute a subset in a broader class of fictional worlds constructed by various kinds of creative activities – mythology and storytelling, painting and sculpting, dance and opera, theater, cinema and television (Doležel 1998: 787).

Fictional worlds fall into the category of *possible worlds* because they consist of parts that are not proven or well-established – such as people, events, and states. Hamlet, for example, is not a character we can find in the real world, but rather he is a possible character, living in an alternative world created by Shakespeare's drama (*ibidem*: 787). This also raises the question of how fictional historical figures appear in literary works and whether we can be sure that the characters bearing the name given by the author are no more fictional than historical ones. Doležel argues that Dickens's London is no more real than Carroll's Wonderland, putting in opposition the theory of possible worlds to – as he describes it – the “stubborn doctrine” of *mimesis*, which creates a universe based on existing prototypes. However, the semantics of possible worlds implies that fictional worlds are not an imitation or representation of the real world (*realia*), but rather sovereign realms (*possibilia*), and the space connecting fictional elements with their prototypes is a *transworld* identity (*ibidem*: 788):

The world-constructing power of the fictional text implies that the text is prior to the world, that it calls the world into existence and determines its structure. [...] Because knowledge acquisition is an activity that requires us to make a distinction between true and false statements, it operates with constatives, with sentences and texts subject to truth-valuation. Fictional texts as performatives are outside truth-valuation; their sentences are neither true nor false (Doležel 1998: 788).

According to this passage, the text itself is a determining element whether we consider the component part of the fictional world to be true. A similar function can

be reached by a using an academic style, the characteristics of which the reader can recognize intuitively. If we decide to use the characteristics of scientific style in the literary text, what result will we get? This study aims to present excerpts from Johanna Sinisalo's novel *The Core of the Sun*, written in academic style, as elements that build the construction of the presented literary world. The scientific language used in the literary work can be viewed as a space connecting fictional elements with their prototypes, which Doležel calls the *transworld* identity.

ACADEMIC TEXT AS LITERARY FICTION

Scientific text is not a homogeneous concept and trying to define it is an extremely difficult task. This is influenced by linguistic considerations, cultural influences, or even the field of science to which the text relates. The academic style, on the other hand, although it is still evolving (through new technologies, evolving vocabulary, changes in the form of writing such as charts, tables, etc.), is already recognizable by the reader at the level of intuition (cf. Świetlikowska 2011).

An interesting experiment, that can be considered as an attempt to define a scientific style, is *Wstęp do imagineskopii (Introduction to imaginescopy)* by Śledź Otrembus Podgrobelski (real name: Stanisław Moskal). The study of this text in the article *Fikcyjna nauka, naukowa fikcja i widmowa biblioteka (Fictive science, scientific fiction and phantom library)* was undertaken by Przemysław Kaliszuk. Based on this article, I will introduce the specifics of Podgrobelski's text, which will allow me to distinguish the influence of the stylistic layer of scientific text on its reception by the reader.

Introduction to imaginescopy (Podgrobelski 2009) is a classic example of stylization, or playing with the text. It is a scientific-style text, but it refers to an imaginary field of imaginescopy science. The author likens the fictitious text to scientific text "through critical literary tools: description, review, overview, summary, analysis and interpretation, and paratextual lining, that is distinctive for academic literature: introduction, afterword, tables, charts, engravings and illustrative drawings" (Kaliszuk 2017: 157) We are dealing here with pure formal mimeticism, which conflicts with the content-based layer of the text. Kaliszuk presents the "Introduction..." as a fairy tale, or apocrypha of academic research. He also assumes that this text reproduces the myth of objectivity of science and presupposes its relativity. According to the researcher, adult readers "with child's confidence" believe in the words of experts "because they have no other choice in the late modern world" (*ibidem*: 172)¹.

¹ Original: „poprzez narzędzia krytycznoliterackie: opis, recenzję, omówienie, streszczenie, analizę i interpretację oraz obudowę paratekstową, charakterystyczną dla piśmiennictwa naukowego: wstęp, posłowie, tabele, wykresy, ryciny i rysunki poglądowe” (author's translation from Polish).

The mechanism used by the reader, having received information from a seemingly reliable source, is discussed by one of the precursors of the theory of *fictional worlds*, Thomas G. Pavel (1986: 67–89):

A reader, for instance, finds in his trustworthy newspaper that a team of researchers has landed on Mars. He diligently accepts the information, which means that he integrates it into the set (...) of sentences true in our actual world. Suppose, however, that the newspaper does not speak about the fact of the landing on Mars, but only reports of rumors circulating in well-informed circles and predicting the imminent beginning of a secret mission to that planet. In this case, the reader must use his decision procedure in order to see if he can integrate the new information in at least one world (...) compatible with the actual world (...). Remembering that space research can be used for military purposes, and that for security reasons some missions are kept secret, our reader may succeed in imagining a likely state of affairs that results in a secret landing on Mars; therefore, he integrates the news in the set [of sentences true in our actual world] (Pavel 1986: 47–48).

The example of a trusted newspaper can be treated, as in Kaliszuk's observation, as a text that readers believe "because they have no other choice in the late modern world." This example may also suggest that the use of formal mimesis in the text (not necessarily literary), a scientific text stylization affects the reader's reasoning and, above all, the decision to place the information given in the fictional or real world. Such a mechanism – the application of formal mimesis can be seen in the work of Johanna Sinisalo, where fragments of novels, stylized for scientific developments, strengthen the credibility of the presented world. The scientific style here becomes the *transworld* identity mentioned by Doležel.

SCIENTIFIC TEXT IN SINISALO'S NOVEL – STYLIZATION

Johanna Sinisalo is a Finnish writer and scriptwriter born in 1958. She is considered a master and at the same time a forerunner of the Finnish Weird literary movement. It was Sinisalo herself who gave the name to the branch of Finnish literature, in which elements of scientific and fantastic literature combine with traditional realistic narrative. This type of literature is also called *real fantasy* or *speculative fiction*. Sinisalo's debut novel *Not Before Sundown* received Finland's most important literary prize (*Finlandia-palkinto*) in 2000.

Published originally in 2013 and translated in 2016 by Lola Rogers, *The Core of the Sun* is a novel set in Tampere, Finland in the 2010s. However, the picture of Finland's history, although realistic, is not real. Social changes that began as early as the 19th century made Finland the North Korea of Europe. In the *Eusistocratic Republic of Finland*, the peace and health of citizens are paramount. All stimulants are categorically prohibited, sex life is under state control, and citizens are divided

into new races. The main character of the novel is Vanna, raised as *eloi*, who, to help her sister, engages in the illegal distribution of stimulants, which in *eusistocratic* reality is chili pepper.

The first form of academic text stylization we encounter in the novel is a quote from a dictionary. This way of presenting fictional world vocabulary makes the terminology used in the narrative more credible. The definientia are words that do not exist in the real world, but the dictionary definition is intended to give them meaning, which is crucial for building a dystopian world. There are definitions of terms such as *eloi*, *morlock* and *masco*, referring to the division of society into genders, but also *eusistocracy* pointing to the new social order, the socio-economic system of power in Finland presented as a background of the fictional world of the universe of Sinisalo's novel. It should be noted from the outset that there is an intertextuality phenomenon here. *Eloi* and *morlock* refer to the characters created by Herbert G. Wells in the sci-fi classic *The Time Machine*:

MODERN DICTIONARY ENTRY

eloi – A popular unofficial vernacular word, first entering the language in the 1940s, for what is now properly called a *femiwoman*. Refers to the sub-race of females who are active on the reproductive market and are distinguished by their dedication to the overall advancement of the male sex. The word has its roots in the works of H. G. Wells, an author who predicted that humanity would be evolutionarily divided into distinct sub-races, some dedicated to serving the social structure and others meant to enjoy those services. *Plural*: *elois*. *Examples*: “A typical *eloi* has light hair and a round head.” “*Elois* can legally reproduce.” (Sinisalo 2016: 24).

This definition comes from a dictionary that is bibliographic data the reader is not aware of. However, the very title *Modern Dictionary* may suggest the universality of this publication in the fictional world. The “1940s” date appears in the definition, which may suggest that the use of a given word has been well established for several decades, and the term itself is common and generally understood by characters found in the fictional world. Another stylistic device in the entry is to refer to a well-deserved researcher named H.G. Wells. The definition treats the author as an academic and a visionary. This may, again, support the credibility of the narrative. However, an attentive reader will notice that we are talking about the already mentioned Herbert G. Wells, author of such classics of the genre of science fiction as *The War of the Worlds* or *The Time Machine*, from which the creatures' names are taken. The rhetorical device that adds depth of interpretation but is also a clue to unraveling the intentions of the author of *The Core*, may be a well-known anecdote, about the fact that a radio broadcast by Orson Welles made in 1938 on the basis of *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells caused widespread panic, as it was interpreted by listeners as a true account of the invasion of extraterrestrial beings (Schwartz 2015). Perhaps Sinisalo hoped that readers' thoughts would be similar to that doubt in the rules of the real world, which in turn would allow the reader to “sink” into the fictional world.

The last element of the definition are examples of the use of the words in the context, which also adds credibility to the entry. The reader may get the impression that the word in use has been around for a very long time. In addition, we learn stereotypes about the definiendum:

MODERN DICTIONARY ENTRY

eusistocracy – The social order of Finland, the “reign of health.” Derived from the Latin *eu* (good) and *sistere* (remain), literally “to remain in good condition.” See *eusistentialist*, *eusistence*. Example: “In a eusistocratic society the government’s most important task is to promote the overall health and well-being of the citizens.” (Sinisalo 2016: 61).

The definition of Finland’s socio-economic system of the fictional world includes an etymology of the term, which is supported by translations of constituent words. It also suggests that related entries created from the same linguistic core appear in the same dictionary. The example of the use of the word, as well as the definition of *eloi*, contains populist elements, which complements the image of dystopian vision of Finland’s social system of the fictional world. Both of these examples of the dictionary slogan demonstrate how, by referring to *realia*, they form Doležal’s *possibilia* in the literary text.

Scientific articles are evident examples of the use of academic-style text in Sinisalo’s novel, such as, among others, *The Enduring Legacy of Dimitri Belyayev*. This is an excerpt from a publication that exists only in the fictional world. Next to the title of the quoted article, there’s also the name of the volume and the year of its publication, which makes us believe the actual book exists. The article is distinguished from the text written from the perspective of the protagonist, where emotions, exclamation, colloquial language dominate².

“THE ENDURING LEGACY OF DIMITRI BELYAYEV” From A Short History of the Domestication of Women National Publishing (1997)

The modern social system we all enjoy might not exist in the form it does today if not for a brilliant Russian geneticist, Dimitri Belyayev. (...) Belyayev began his well-known series of experiments in domestication in 1959. He chose the silver fox as his test subject. The animals had long been domesticated, but were bred merely for the color and thickness of their fur. Belyayev decided to find out what would happen if humans took the place of natural selection and strove to make the foxes gentler and more docile, able to coexist with humans in the same way that their canine cousins do (Sinisalo 2016: 102).

Although the title may be disturbing, in terms of form and language, the introduction to the article does not differ significantly from traditional academic

² Dr. Dmitry Belyayev indeed was a zoologist, a researcher at the Siberian branch of the Russian Institute of Cytology and Genetics. In the 1950s, he conducted experiments to domestication of foxes. Learn more about the experiment: Kowalska and Gugołek (2013: 35).

texts. We can imagine that an article mentioning of Dr. Belyayev's previous research published in some zoological journal could begin with exactly the same paragraph. Even now, a reader who does not know the context of the novel might assume that there was a tragic mistake in the title of the study – or – it could be a research paper of some scientist employed for a totalitarian state, which would not be an isolated case in the 20th-century world of science. The academic style of the article adds realism to the novel, which can cause dissonance for the reader when, in the following paragraphs, after summarizing the achievements in the field of fox domestication, there is a mention that it concerns the realization of women and their adaptation to state-imposed roles:

From our present point of view, it may seem a self-evident assumption that the steady development of neotenic features in femiwomen from generation to generation is living proof that societal efforts to restore women to ways of behaving that are more traditional and characteristic have been in every respect a correct and well-justified decision. Throughout history, a young woman has been a pleasing mate for a man; in some cases, the younger the mate, the more pleasing she has been (Sinisalo 2016: 103).

It turns out that in the fictional world, procedures similar to the real Dr. Belyayev's studies were performed on humans, outraging those concerned with human rights, decency, and common sense. One can see a dystopian vision of a state operating on the basis of discriminatory laws and social mores. The scientific style of the article, however, adds disturbing realism.

It is crucial that the article refers to the terminology previously presented in the dictionary definitions. The term *femiwomen* appears in the entry of which we learn a dozen pages earlier – *eloi*. It creates a realistic grid of links between the scientific article, the subject of the research, and the semantic layer of the text. The aforementioned definition emphasizes that *eloi* is a colloquial word “for what is now properly called a *femiwoman*.”

However, the text of the article is not based solely on vocabulary related to science from the fictional world. In the article on Dr. Belyayev's activities, we also see references to the actual fields of science. The author thus still styles the text to fit an academic style:

Promoting submissiveness and a desire to please through the use of rewards for desirable behaviors and punishment for undesirable ones, for example, has facilitated a constant development in the right direction. Such a method is recommended by humans' history as social animals, inherently sensitive and responsive to social cues. Certain hormonal and neurochemical methods have also helped to accelerate domestication considerably. The thyroid hormone thyroxine, given in precise doses at certain developmental stages, has proved to produce an earlier age of reproduction and to increase the occurrence of the optimal physical and behavioral traits associated with domestication. Fortifying foods with melatonin has also helped to lower the age of puberty. But the most important reason for the success of domestication has been the fact that even before Belyayev's theories and experiments came

into common use among Finnish geneticists, our government had already taken many successful preliminary social steps toward femiwomen's domestication (Sinisalo 2016: 105).

In the text of the article, there are phrases referring to zoological or biological studies, such as *behaviors*, *reproduction* or *developmental stages*. The names of chemical substances are also written according to their molecular structure (*thyroid hormone thyroxine*). The text is written in impersonal form, which gives it officiality and the impression of reliability and objectivity.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize the topic, we need to return to the terminology proposed by Lubomír Doležel: *realia*, *possibilia*, and *transworld* identity occurring between the first two terms. *Realia* are an attempt at imitation or even representation of the real world. *Possibilia*, on the other hand, are elements realistic only in the fictional world; they are sovereign realms based on their counterparts in the real world. The space between *realia* and *possibilia* is the *transworld*.

Johanna Sinisalo's novel *The Core of the Sun* depicts a dystopian fictional world where Finland becomes a totalitarian state and its inhabitants are divided into separate races according to their genders, which is reflected in the country's scientific research. The real world's fields of scientific research, such as linguistics or zoology, can be called the *realia* that one sees in the novel. The very form of reporting the results of research (dictionary entry, scientific article) can undoubtedly be considered valid in the real world. Specific *realia* are created by reference to the classics of science-fiction literature – this intertextuality adds credibility to the text of the novel, and at the same time allows an attentive reader to understand it as fiction from the first glimpse of the text. The author refers here to other fictional *possible worlds*.

Elements of the presented world based on elements of the real world, but realistic only in the context of the universe of the fictional world, are referred to as *possibilia*. In Sinisalo's novel, examples of such elements may be new fields of research, based on real ones, but only possible on the pages of the book. Additionally, the terminology of the fictional world, elements of language considered as commonly used in the fictional world, can constitute Doležel's *possibilia*.

The space between the *realia* and the *possibilia* of *The Core of the Sun* is filled with an academic style of writing that is neither realistic nor fictional, but is merely a carrier of both types of information. As with *Wstęp do imagineskopii* (*Introduction to imaginescopy*) by Śledź Otrembus Podgrobelski, the style is only an external layer of text and the text itself is not a part of scientific literature. The academic articles and dictionary definitions in Sinisalo's novel are intended to create an

impression of reliability, which has an enormous impact on the realism of the fictional world. The network of connections in the novel between terminology and different types of scientific text confirming each other is one of the main building blocks of the fictional world. Through this process, the academic style becomes the *transworld* identity of *The Core of the Sun*.

REFERENCES

- BACHTIN/BAHTIN M. (1974): *Czas i przestrzeń w powieści*, „Pamiętnik Literacki”, 65/4: 273–311.
- DOLEŻEL L. (1998): *Possible worlds of fiction and history*, „New Literary History”, 29/4: 785–809, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057512>> [last access: 13.06.2021].
- ID. (2015): *Jak dotrzeć do fikcyjnych światów*, tr. Izabela Mroczek, „Er(r)go”, 30/1: 9–21.
- ECO U. (1979): *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- KALISZUK P. (2017): *Fikcyjna nauka, naukowa fikcja i widmowa biblioteka*. Wstęp do Imagineskopii *Śledzia Otrembusa Podgrobelskiego*, „Artes Humane”, 2: 155–174.
- KOWALSKA D., GUGOLEK A. (2013): *Zmiany domestykacyjne i behawioralne wskaźniki adaptacyjne zwierząt futerkowych*, „Wiadomości Zootechniczne”, 1: 31–40.
- LUKÁCS G. (1969): *The Historical Novel*, Penguin Books Ltd., London.
- PAVEL T.G. (1986): *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- PODGROBELSKI Ś.O. (2009): *Wstęp do imagineskopii*, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Rewasz”, Pruszków.
- SINISALO J. (2016): *The Core of the Sun*, tr. Lola Rogers, Grove Press UK, London.
- ŚWIETLIKOWSKA J. (2011): *Dobry tekst naukowy*, „Studia z Teorii Wychowania: Półrocznik Zespołu Teorii Wychowania Komitetu Nauk Pedagogicznych PAN”, 2/1 (2): 172–193.

INTERNET SOURCES

- AITONURMI TUOMAS, *Suomikumma*, <<https://www.kirjasampo.fi/fi/node/2876>> [last access: 13 June 2021].
- Auringon ydin*, <<http://www.teos.fi/kirjat/kaikki/2013-syksy/auringon-ydin.html>> [last access: 13 June 2021].
- Johanna Sinisalo*, <<http://www.teos.fi/kirjailijat/sinisalo.html>> [last access: 13 June 2021].
- SCHWARTZ A.B. (2015): *The Infamous “War of the Worlds” Radio Broadcast Was a Magnificent Fluke*, <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/infamous-war-worlds-radio-broadcast-was-magnificent-fluke-180955180/>> [last access: 13 June 2021].