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THE FANTASTIC AND THE REALISTIC IN LITERATURE

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO DEFINE AND ANALYSE FANTASTIC FICTION

So far, attempts to define the fantastic in literature have not been satisfactory. One of the main difficulties springs from differing conceptions of reality. Differing outlooks, philosophies, and religions shape differing ideas of what is and what is not objectively, ontologically real. For an occultist like W. B. Yeats the existence of bodiless spirits with whom he can make contact by means of some psychophysical practices (like ritual magic) is a fact; for a materialist — it is a delusion. History supplies many examples of shifts in the notions about the real and of the fantastic. Traces of a belief in the real existence of fairies might have been found in Ireland sixty years ago. About the same time dead men sucking blood out of sleeping peoples were credited with existence in some Eastern European countries. Jules Verne's submarines capable of sailing 20 000 miles, flying machines heavier than the air, and spaceships foretold by H. G. Wells were considered fantastic in the nineteenth century. Today nobody can deny their reality.

Another difficulty is the presence of fantastic elements in literature side by side with realistic elements. Failure to draw a clearcut boundary between the two obscures the vision of the critic of a work called fantastic and makes his pronouncements on it vague and inexact.

At the same time, within the limits of what in literature is felt rather than understood as fantastic, the existence of differing spheres or systems is observable. Titania and Oberon obviously belong to a world of fantasy different from that of Wells's time machine. Facts of this kind prompt critics to establish types of fantastic works before they have established the concept of the fantastic. Difficulties and uncertainties spring up when the "types" merge in one work or when some highly individual works refuse to fit any class.

How to tackle the difficulties? How to build up a concept of the

fantastic which would not be philosophically controversial? How to identify fantastic elements in literature in such a way that an analysis of literary works might become precise and expressed in rational terms?

The concept of the fantastic has often been formed in opposition to the concept of objective reality [1] and then mechanically transferred to the field of literature. This practice not only involves controversial philosophical questions of the nature and limits of reality, but also leads to utter confusion. Should we accept the idea that "fantastic" means "unreal", objectively "nonexistent", we would be forced to admit that there is no specific difference between literary works of fullblooded realism and fantastic tales because all literary fiction is "unreal" and "nonexistent". Anna Karenina is no less imaginary than Frankenstein and as real in her fictional existence.

The situation improves when, instead of opposing "the fantastic" to "the real", we balance it with "the realistic". The suggestion may seem risky if we consider that the concept of realism has not been defined in a universally accepted formula. And, again, the failure at the definition has been largely due to the fact that differing philosophical languages have been used in the attempt at defining something that is more or less clear to everybody.

Why not resort to terms which are more or less clear to everybody and universally accepted? Why not turn to elementary physics?

THE WORLD OF HUMANITY AND FICTION

Let me limit my observation to the world of humanity and to fiction. Somebody has rightly observed that the world of Man is a world of medium sizes. Its place is between the microcosmos of subatomic quantities and the macrocosmos of interstellar distances. It is a world of things, a real world, visible and palpable to a large extent, not only accessible to observation but also constantly forcing itself upon the senses of every common man in normal state of consciousness. Within the limits of this world of everyday experience matter, space, time, and human consciousness form a certain pattern which is on the whole constant. They form relations familiar to a great majority of men. Industry, technique, communication, and scientific forecasts have been built on the stability and reliability of these relations. The common sense of human activities is founded on the recognition of a matter--space-time-consciousness pattern. We even make the recognition a mea-

[1] Cf. *New Oxford Dictionary* where "fantastic" is defined as "existing only in imagination; proceeding merely from imagination; fabulous, imaginary, unreal" or "perversely or irrationally imagined".

sure of human normality. We do not make an appointment today to meet yesterday. We do not go out into the street through a third floor window unless we want to be killed. We do not suspect known persons of being materialized visitors from the other world who are conspiring to abduct us as Lenore's lover does in Bürger's ballad.

Within this real, well-known section of reality accessible to direct observation through human senses and consciousness the idea of realism has been formed. It is by no means accidental that the flourishing of realism and conscious acceptance of it as of a certain attitude and artistic method occurred in the nineteenth century[2] in a period of developing sciences when man learned to reduce the matter-space-time relations to numbers, to make use of them in every field of social existence, and to show tendency to ascribe the regularity observed in their pattern to the whole Reality, then and now unknown.

Today the recognition of the world of medium sizes, the world of things as they are experienced day by day through our senses in our consciousness, need not exclude any extension of our concept of reality provided sufficient reasons are discovered. Science has revealed the reality of the atomic nucleus and the reality of the intergalactic spaces. We know that in the subatomic world and in the macrocosmic spaces the space-time relationship and even causation are modified. Some of the stars visible in the earthly sky, astronomers tell us, have ceased to exist long ago. We see what is not.

We may expect that similar scientific statements denying the testimony of the senses will multiply in the future. There is no sense in closing our eyes to that. But there is no sense, either, in confusing the microscopic or the macroscopic reality with the world of everyday things. Though it is a nebula of whirling charges of matter-energy, we can safely sit on a chair. In spite of its precopernican origin, the sentence "The sun has set" still remains the simplest possible statement of a familiar fact.

Thus it is still legitimate for us to recognize the world of everyday experience of most men as the human world. The pattern which it makes might be presented thus:

$$\left.\begin{array}{l}\textit{Man}\ (\text{matter}+\text{consciousness}) \\ \textit{world of things}\ (\text{matter}+\text{space})\end{array}\right\}\ \text{in } \textit{action}\ \text{regulated by}\ \left\{\begin{array}{c}\textit{causation} \\ \text{and/or} \\ \textit{purposefulness}\end{array}\right\}\ \text{in } \textit{time}$$

[2] It is to be noted that Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism first appeared as historical phenomena, but have been emancipated from their historical setting to form certain conventional styles of creation in art and literature.

In fiction the pattern is reflected by

characters (shown outside and inside) / *material & spatial setting* } in *action* regulated by { *causation* and/or *purposefulness* } in *time*

This is the world of fiction created by the writer from the material of his experience. The material, of course, is limited by his geographical and historical setting, by his ideas, interests, degree of intelligence, sensitiveness etc. Thus what we find in a work of fiction is a conscious or an unconscious selection from what can be experienced in life, in the human world. The way of selecting the material of experience and arranging it so as to make a significant pattern in a work of fiction shapes the style of composition. Thus in a realistic novel the world of fiction is built up from what is everyday — typical, familiar to most men in a given setting. On the contrary, the romantic fiction will concentrate on what is unusual, uncommon, individual. Strange characters, extraordinary events, unique setting, special emotions, moods, perhaps a heightened vision of reality are its characteristics. Caricature and farce in some comic stories step still farther away from realistic convention. Both the typical and the extraordinary are strongly exaggerated in them, producing a familiar but distorted vision of the human world.

Fantastic fiction is produced by a transformation of the constituents of the empirical world and/or their pattern, which makes them so different from common experience that we may look for them in this world in vain or that their existence is, at least, objectively unverifiable. They exist in their literary form as products of the imagination or fantasy and for this reason are called fantastic.

FORMATION OF FANTASTIC ELEMENTS

Now let see how they are produced. If we look again at the elements of fiction, i.e.

characters (matter[1] + consciousness[2]) / *world of things* (matter[3] + space[4]) } *in action*[5] regulated by { *causation*[6] and/or *purpose*[7] } in *time*[8],

it is easy to realize how many ways lead to wonderland.

One of them is free combination of features known from common experience. Mermaids have been made by putting together a half of a woman and a half of a fish. Homer's one-eyed giant Polyphemus, centaurs, dragons, folkloristic devils and the green men of six arms from the Martian novels by E. R. Burroughs (e.g. *A Princess of Mars*, 1912) are all examples of new combinations within the limits of familiar matter (matter [1] and matter [3]).

A reorganization of the world of things (matter [3] + space [4]) can produce strange lands, states or planets. The mysterious land of Kôr ruled by a cruel, beautiful and immortal queen in the heart of the then unknown Africa was built up by H. Rider Haggard from his impressions of the black continent, the history of ancient Egypt and various magic myths. All utopian fiction, all novels of the future, all imaginary histories, all stories of adventure in space are made by a rearrangement of the typical elements (3) and (4) and, frequently, that of time (8).

Ordinarily, the human world with its matter, space, and consciousnesses is moving in time into the future at a certain speed. The temporal existence of all organisms is limited. But in fantastic fiction, by an effort of imagination, writers present what has not yet happened (Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes,* 1911; *The Shape of Things to Come,* 1933) or what had happened in so distant a past that no records of the events are available (e.g. some stories of Atlantis or early man), or they make their heroes last for ages like the Wandering Jew. Other rearrangements of the matter-space-time relationship consist in travelling forward and backward in time (*The Time Machine,* 1895, and its many successors), in reversing causation (6) so that the future can influence the past (*Last and First Men,* 1930, by Olaf Stapledon) or producing a series of worlds synchronized but spatially independent (Wells's *Men Like Gods,* 1922).

The writer of fantastic fiction can play free with consciousness (2), its typical qualities and setting. But, again, his inventiveness is limited by the number of possible shifts within the matter-space-time-consciousness pattern. The trick consists either in heightening the normal powers of the mind or in changing typical relations between consciousness and other elements of the human world.

A character in a fantastic story may be endowed with superhuman knowledge and will-power and with an ability to read other people's thoughts or to exert mental influence on their minds and bodies or on consciousnesses able to live apart from any body (the souls of the dead, demons, angels, gods). This is the realm of myth and magic, copiously exemplified by ancient literatures, but by no means extinct in modern times. H. R. Haggard's Ayesha, the fascinating heroine of *She* (1887) has been endowed with most of the enumerated qualities besides everlasting youth and an imperishable body — features which result from changing relations between matter (1), consciousness (2) and time (8). Interesting variations on the theme of consciousness are to be found in C. S. Lewis's trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet,* 1938; *Perelandra,* 1943; *That Hideous Strength,* 1945).

An ability to leave one's body or to enter someone else's, described by Wells in *The Stolen Body,* by T. Anstey in *Vice Versa* and by

P. G. Wodehouse in *Laughing Gas* results from establishing an untypical relationship between mind (2) and human body (1).

An ability to subdue or kill other men or beasts by mere thought and will (so dreaded in Ayesha) and a "change" into an animal or an inanimate thing (so frequent in *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*) result from new combinations of mind (2) and matter (1 and 3).

Any heightening of mental powers (2) means their emancipation from matter (1 and 3) and space (4). This is evident in the cases of seeing and acting at a distance or of physical translocation by the power of will.

Knowledge of the future or of the unrecorded past, memory of previous incarnations (exemplified by Jack London in *The Star Rover*, 1914), unusual longevity or immortality are all based on a rearrangement of the typical relations between mind (2), matter (1) and time (8).

It is interesting to observe, however, that a mere remoulding of other elements of fiction in some fantastic way can result in extraordinary changes in the psychology of characters. In *The Country of the Blind* Wells deprives of their eyesight for many generations the inhabitants of a mountain village. This results in a change in their way of life and consciousness, which — in turn — results in an attempt to blind a normal man in order to "cure" him of a different outlook. Here the logic of our human world has been reversed.

A very interesting example of similar changes in social consciousness is to be found in Isaac Asimov's *Nightfall*. His imaginary characters live on a planet lit by five suns. Only once in two thousand years do the suns happen to be situated so as to allow the night to fall and the stars to appear. Thus the experience of darkness is so strange to them that when the critical nightfall comes, it causes an enormous shock in their minds. Fear makes them set whole cities on fire. In this way they periodically destroy their civilization which must start again and again from the beginning. The tradition of stars appearing in the black sky survives only in sacred books, but scientists, unable to verify the fact, dismiss it as a mere superstition.

John Wyndham in his novel *The Chrysalids* (1955) makes radioactive fallout responsible not only for biological, but also for psychological mutations. Remnants of the "normal" mankind, grouped somewhere in Labrador after an atomic disaster, try to preserve the stability of their species by means of state and church laws. Thus a child with six toes is condemned to death. So is a group of children endowed with telepathic ability to share their thoughts and emotions at a distance. This is in spite of their being higher mutants in the evolution of life on this planet. In that interesting book social consciousness is affected by the fantastic changes in its environment.

Needless to say, the action (5) of a fantastic story is to a great extent determined by the pattern of other elements of the world of fiction created by the writer. Sometimes an exciting fantastic story may develop from a single fantastic change introduced into an otherwise realistic world. Wells has achieved this in *The Invisible Man* (1897). The only fantastic factor in the novel is the invisibility of the hero's body. The rest — his troubles, other people's fears and suspicion, his social and moral estrangement, his conflict with society and his death — all beautifully follow as logical consequences of the only change.

Similarly simple are the roots of the action (5) in *Gulliver's Travels* and in R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).

Here we touch the problem of causation (6) and purpose (7) in the action (5) of a fantastic tale. Usually even most extraordinary fantastic worlds peopled with strangest possible creatures are subject to the laws causation as regards things and causation-cum-purposefulness in the behaviour of rational beings. But it is possible to write a fantastic story in which the principles (6) and (7) are modified. This kind of composition resembles the absurdity, at least the apparent absurdity of dreams, nightmares, and jokes based on the absurd.

A rich and well known source of the examples of logic turned inside out is to be found in Lewis Carroll's fantastic stories of *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872). A cat disappears, but his smile lingers in the air; time has stopped and a tea-party has no end; butter is put into a watch to make it go; one must run quickly to remain in the same place; a messenger has been imprisoned for a crime which he will commit after a sentence is passed in his trial. But he is free not to commit the offence. That would even improve things. It does not matter that he has been punished. Punishment redeems offence so the results are desirable. But how much better, according to the White Queen, if no offence is committed!

Numerous nursery rhymes, Edward Lear's limericks, some of Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and some fairy-tales either do not respect the observable behaviour of things or explain it by fantastic motivation. When cows jump over the moon and little dogs laugh to see such sport while dishes are running away with spoons we are in the realm of nonsense literature, a branch of fantastic fiction.

SOME OBJECTIONS

The review here made of the ways in which all possible fantastic worlds may be constructed from typical everyday human experience or reduced to it in an analysis carried out according to the method sug-

gested in this paper is likely to evoke some objections. One of them is: if all fantasy and imagination is a matter of using the same box of toy blocks over and over again, how is it possible to build Xanadu or the Coelestial City? How can an atmosphere of wonder, or of horror, or of fantastic beauty be created out of the elements of the grey sameness of innumerable days?

The answer is that the excitement which the reader may feel and which the writer possibly intended is a psychological state, a mental reaction to, or reception of, the several thousands of words arranged in one way in the book. We may experience the thrill of

> [...] magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,

but the sensation is — largely — an effect in us of a combination of connotations of words used by Keats in these famous lines [3].

The object of this essay is not to discuss psychology of creation or of perception of literature. Unfortunately, terms of psychology are still controversial and a great many individual case ought to be carefully analysed before any discussion becomes fruitful. At present we must proceed from what is clear to what is not quite clear by reducing what has not been defined to what can be defined exactly. Thus the object of a scientific study of fiction (the object of this essay) is to find what has been done with words by the writer [4] to produce a world of fiction related to our human world in a certain way. And a scientific study of the fantastic in fiction ought to consist in defining the relation of its fantastic elements to the realistic elements in terms of the realistic convention.

But, before we resume the discussion, another objection must be faced. As has been admitted in the beginning of this essay, submarines, aeroplanes and even spaceships which were figments of the imagination less than a hundred years ago, have become reality. Motor-cars, wireless

[3] How easy it is to spoil the psychological effect when we substitute synonyms for some of the poet's words:

> Magic windows, opening on the froth
> Of dangerous seas in pixy lands left alone.

[4] Even if we assume, for the moment, as Coleridge suggests in *Kubla Khan*, that the poet draws his inspiration from some unseen sources and that "he on honeydew hath fed And drunk the milk of Paradise" (whatever this may mean) the only inescapable facts are that "honeydew" combines some qualities of honey and dew and that "the milk of Paradise" is a kind of milk not to be found in earthly dairies and sufficiently wonderful to fit Paradise. The rest is either mental acquiescence in a mystery, proper for the reader of poetry or futile guessing unworthy of a critic. For the literary history of words in the quotation taken from *Kubla Khan* see J. L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston 1955, pp. 330—331.

and TV sets are not only in existence, but have become typical elements of our life. This proves that the realistic convention is not anything stable. It changes and it is changing quickly. Is it reasonable, then, to use as an instrument of analysis, this variable quantity? Is it not like playing croquet in *Alice in Wonderland* — with live flamingoes and hedgehogs for mallets and balls?

The answer is: all things change in space and time. This planet is both geographically and historically different from what it was, say, three hundred years ago. So are man's experience and knowledge, his ideas and evaluations. This is natural and there is no reason for intellectual despair and for giving up attempts to improve on the past. In this respect the field of literary research does not differ from other fields of human culture. Some degree of relativity is both geographically and historically unavoidable. A chair is a typical feature of European and American interiors, so it will be a part of the realistic convention in the literatures of the two continents. But in some Asiatic and African homes it may be unusual — a mat will replace it. But does this affect the essentials of everyday human life? With the passage of time novels of contemporary life will become historical novels, what is a novelty will become commonplace, but the core of everyday human life will remain. Most likely people will still eat, sleep, work, make love, have families, strive and die. In the modern realistic novel cars and TV sets have replaced horse-drawn carriages and drawing-room concerts, but they have not changed man and his life out of recognition. The world of everyday experience is still essentially anthropocentric and the convention of realism has retained its essential validity.

It will be modified, of course, and some of the fantastic books of today may lose their power to thrill, but it is easy to see why even those which have unerringly foretold some future invention or developments will not be deprived of their fantastic features altogether.

If we take a careful look at the elements of matter (3) and causation (6) in them, we shall find that neither the description nor the technical explanation of their investions exactly correspond to the equivalents of those inventions in life. The wicked queen's mirror in the tale of Snow White does not work on the principle of the modern TV set. Neither Verne's, nor Wells's, nor Żuławski's[5] spaceships are what modern astronauts have used in their flights.

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[5] Jerzy Żuławski (1874—1915), a Polish philosopher, poet, dramatist, and novelist, has written an impressive trilogy: *Na srebrnym globie* (*On the Silver Globe*, 1903), *Zwycięzca* (*The Conqueror*, 1910), *Stara ziemia* (*The Old Earth*, 1911), in which SF, yoga, and a historiosophic novel of the future combine with personal drama and tragedy.

And one point more... Most writers of fantastic fiction make their fantastic devices the centre and the wonder of their imaginary world. Everybody and everything revolves about the hub. When the unexpectedness and the novelty evaporate from a story, the presence of the fascination with something that not longer fascinates the reader will brand it as fantastic. And, *vice versa,* one of the reasons why *Tono-Bungay* has never belonged to Wells's fantastic novels is the fact that flying machines and unknown minerals do not steal the whole show in the book. Human relations, not gadgets, are the centre of its world whatever some of its characters may think.

FUNCTION OF THE FANTASTIC AND THE REALISTIC IN FICTION

I hope that by this time reader is at least half-convinced that it is possible to reduce the fantastic elements in fiction to the elements of everyday realism of the human world. There is another thing to be said too. It may sound unexpected, but there is no fantastic fiction without realistic elements. A work of completely fantastic fiction would have to present creatures that are completely different from us and modes of existence and action with their space and time settings completely alien to us. To tell a story about them the writer would have to use a new, non-human language and then the story would be unintelligible, unimaginable, and awfully uninteresting. Here is the nearest (and shortest) approach to it, taken from *The Structure of English* by C. C. Fries (London 1957, p. 71):

A diggled woggle ugged a woggled diggle.

But even this jibberish suggests to an English speaking reader the existence in a fantastic world of two units or two individuals subject between themselves to at least three different actions in a familiar flow of time (which has two or three successions of past events). The English linguistic structure of the "story" does reflect some relations of our human world, but neither its nominal nor verbal forms correspond to anything recognizable in it. We cannot understand or imagine it and, consequently, our interest in it quickly dies.

The profound truth about fiction is that, as Conrad said, it is a human story or nothing. It we allow dogs or horses to become heroes of novels, it is because their behaviour can be interpreted in the terms of human mind and because they play an important part in human life. Likewise, a clock, a ring, or a jewel can become a focus of interest in fiction only when surrounded by humanity. A novel about a social life od amoebas is unthinkable because they cannot be humanized in the way requisite for the novel.

It is human language, human interest, and the human world that determine and limit the fantastic in fiction. The fantastic world thrives best and is most impressive when its elements are most realistically presented. *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Invisible Man* will probably outlast many much more fanciful, but so much less palpable inventions.

But if it is so, if purely fantastic literature is, practically speaking, impossible, what is the amount of the fantastic which labels a work as fantastic fiction? Is *Jane Eyre,* in which a moment of telepathy determines the heroine's conduct at crossroads, to be put in one class with *The Invisible Man,* a story which is based on one fantastic element? Is *Hamlet* a fantastic tragedy because a Ghost appears in it?

The traditional answer is No and it is a sound answer though based on general impression rather than on an exact analysis. The key word in determining whether a work belongs or does not belong to fantastic fiction is "the world". A story is fantastic when fantastic elements in it constitute or condition its imaginary world as a whole. There would not be *A Midsummer Night's Dream* without elves, so the play is fantastic. *The Invisible Man* — paradoxically — would disappear as a novel, should the element of the invisibility be withdrawn from it. But telepathy in *Jane Eyre* might be replaced by a letter or a notice in newspapers without changing anything else in the story, characters and setting. Hamlet, instead of basing his suspicion on the Ghost's revelation, might have based it on his mother's too hasty remarriage. Consequently, neither *Jane Eyre,* nor the tragedy of the Prince of Denmark present fantastic worlds. Consequently, they are not fantastic compositions [6].

AUTHORS' ATTITUDES TO THE FANTASTIC

So much for the function of fantastic elements within a work of drama or of fiction. Now let us try to discover how fantastic compositions function socially, i.e. what they signify for the reader [7]. The answer is to be found in the realm of fiction in general — in the ideas and attitudes of the writer who stands between the world of his experience

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[6] Conrad's *Nostromo* presents a problem here. His Costaguana, like A. Hope's Ruritania, is an imaginary country with an imaginary geography and history (elements 3, 4, 5, and 8), but as a Central American country it is so true to type and the author's dialectic of history is so astonishingly realistic that it is hardly possible to call his imaginary world fantastic. It is rather like a biographical novel with fictitious names substituted to avoid scandal.

[7] It is assumed here, to simplify the problem that "the reader" is really the reader: careful, intelligent, critical, but benevolent.

and the world of his fiction. As a man, he belongs to the empirical world in which he was born, brought up, and has had his ideas (or philosophy) formed. As a writer, he builds from words his world of fiction so that it becomes an expression of his ideas and attitudes. This can be registered by a following diagram:

$$\text{empirical world} > \overbrace{\text{man-writer} > \text{world of fiction}}^{\text{ideas and attitudes}}$$

The ideas and the attitudes are present, explicitly or by implication, as a system or singly, adequately or inadequately, in the significant pattern in which the elements of the world of fiction arrange themselves for the reader [8]. Owing to their ambivalent character they are not only inferred from the literary work, but also judged by social (i.e. philosophical and not literary) standards. Depending on the philosophical outlook of a critic, they (and the book containing them) may be declared as socially (politically, morally, philosophically) useful, useless, or harmful. On this level different works written in the realistic convention may be sorted out into several varieties representing crude naturalism, naive realism, critical realism, or socialist realism.

These general observations ought to be borne in mind when we approach the problem of reading the ideas expressed in fantastic stories. The procedure ought to be the same. When we want to assess the social value of a book written in the realistic convention, we a) register its style of composition, b) judge its ideas according to our philosophical outlook. When we want to assess the social value of a fantastic story, we must do the same two things. It would be wrong to realize that the tale is fantastic and infer from the fact that it expresses a fantastic philosophy. A fantastic composition may be a vehicle of philosophically realistic ideas. A critic therefore, who enters a fantastic world, ought not to jump to conclusions. The strange shapes of a completely unfamiliar landscape may conceal a very human truth.

It is vital, therefore, before we declare a work of fantasy sound or unsound, to discover what is the writer's idea of the nature of the relationship between the fantastic world created by him and the world of his experience.

Here are principal attitudes of creators of fantastic worlds towards their own creation:

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[8] Thus, e. g. practical absence of a purposeful action on the part of characters and an undue stress laid upon causation may signify a fatalistic, mechanistic, or bitterly critical outlook of the author while a uniform nastiness of women in his book may be an expression of his misogyny.

1. The writer thinks that his fantastic world faithfully reflects the world of experience, though an untypical experience. This is the attitude of a medieval hagiographer describing in good faith a miracle which never happened. This is the attitude of believers in the occult (cf. *The Haunted and the Haunters* by B. Lytton and *The Necromancers*, 1909, by R. H. Benson). This attitude may be best exemplified by the fiction of past ages and civilizations in which religion and magic produced rich mythologies.

2. The writer suggests, as a serious possibility, that his fantastic world may be a faithful reflection of reality, but for some reasons he leaves room for doubt. He may think: "I know that it is so, but it is better not to insist upon that point in my book. I cannot give a proof which might convince everybody and many of my readers will be prepared rather to accept an alternative interpretation". This seems to be G. K. Chesterton's attitude in his *Magic. A Fantastic Comedy* (1913). The idea of the play is, at least, a defence of an openminded attitude to the problem of the existence of bodiless spirits with whom man can enter in contact. The idea is illustrated by a conjurer who makes an unholy bargain with the devil by virtue of which, though he has become the demon's slave, he can work preternatural wonders. Chesterton's creed certainly asserted the idea of *Magic*, but we well may doubt if he was prepared to defend the existence of literally understood Faustian pacts in Edwardian England or to insist that it is the devil's usual practice to change red lights into blue ones. He was prepared merely to admit the possibility. That is why he has called his play fantastic.

Wells's beautiful story of *The Door in the Wall*, which allows of several interpretations of its contents is an example of another attitude which results in a suggestion of possibility. The author seems to imply: "Everything is possible, so let the readers think what they will". But, of course, he may have intended merely to present a puzzle.

3. The writer knows that his fantastic world does not exist, but he believes that it may come true. This is the attitude of many authors of utopian stories who, like F. Bacon in his *New Atlantis* or E. Cabet in his *Icaria*, present a model of a happy society. Such writers usually suggest the means by which their utopias might be realized. If they make a serious effort to prove the existence of their imaginary lands, they do it only to convince the reader of the practibility of the proposed schemes. Here also belong prophets of technology writing science fiction of the Jules Verne type and some optimistic authors of imaginary anticipatory histories like Wells's *The World Set Free* (1914).

Similar but pessimistic attitude is to be observed in antiutopias or those novels of the future which either satirize the prevailing customs

and tendencies (e.g. S. Butler's *Erewhon,* 1872) or warn of possible further developments, like Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes* (1911), A. Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) or G. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

4. The writer does not suggest that his fantastic world may come true, but he wishes to show what might happen if it came to objective existence. *The Country of the Blind, The Invisible Man, The War of the Worlds* are good examples of this attitude. It often happens in books of this kind that a fantastic factor is introduced into a realistic picture of a familiar life and allowed to change it out recognition. John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), his *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957) and John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* (1956) are all composed according to this formula.

The attitude of "Let us see what might happen if..." does not necessarily produce books seriously exploring scientific, historical, or psychological possibilities. It may be combined with a wish to give merely excitement or fun. E. R. Burroughs' innumerable thrillers either about Tarzan or Martian adventures, M. R. James's *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1905), David Garnett's fantasy about *Lady into Fox* (1922) and F. Anstey's *Brass Bottle* (1900), featuring troublesome consequences of the gratitude of an Arabian jinn released by a Victorian architect from a brass jar, all express similar attitude to the fantastic though they were meant to excite in different ways.

5. The writer treats his fantastic world as a convenient illustration of his ideas. This attitude is evident in animal fables, some fairy-tales and allegorical stories, but may be traced in all other fantastic compositions which constitute a metaphor, a parable, or a similar figurative expression.

The Masque of Red Death by E. A. Poe is a good example of a metaphor changed into a story. An epidemic is personified in it and brought into contact with a proud prince and his court as if it were a man ("He had come like a thief in the night"), but the last sentence of the tale returns the reader to its metaphorical origin: "And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all".

A Christmas Carol with its wonderfully impressive and therefore deceptive realism of description had similar origins. "I have endeavoured", Dickens has written in his dedication, "to raise the Ghost of an Idea... May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it". The names of the "ghosts" educating the miser clearly point at their figurative origins: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come...

The only regular, traditional ghost in the story is Marley's apparition. But the first appearance of its face on the knocker might be, perhaps,

traced back to the saying "Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail" in the first paragraph of the tale. Of course Dickens did everything to endow his ghosts with ghastly life to suit the occassion. For Christmas, according to the English, is the time for ghost stories. The social function of the story was not to prove the existence of the ghosts, but to play on his readers' irrational fear of the other world, to make their mouths water at the thought of good food and to open their hearts to joy and generosity.

In many stories their figurative meaning is not so obvious. Wells's novel about *The Food of the Gods* (1904) begins like simple science fiction. But after a time it becomes clear that the food is a symbol. The struggle of ordinary people with a new generation of giants stands for the struggle of human littleness against greatness to which science leads — a dangerous greatness, but also sublime. It follows that Wells invented the story of the food to present his idea in an exciting way which might appeal to many readers. Similarly, in *The Wonderful Visit* (1895) he described adventures of an angel not to affirm the existence of angels, but to show how cruelly a society can persecute its own ideals when they threaten to become flesh and blood.

The fantastic trilogy written by C. S. Lewis [9] ought to be treated as philosophical parables or tales written in the spirit of Christian humanism. To draw his readers' attention to his ideas the writer used the motifs of space travel, some myths of the Mediterranean civilization, Arthurian legends, English university life, and Christian theology. The presence of ideas dominating over the fantastic machinery of the stories has even inclined some critics to treat them as allegorical [10].

Charles Williams's fantastic novels (e. g. *Many Dimensions*, 1931) form an interesting parallel to C. S. Lewis's fantasies.

The examples quoted here are very important. They show that mere choice of this or other fantastic machinery does not necessarily label its author as a follower of philosophy traditionally associated with the elements of that machinery. He who writes about angels need not be a Christian, a Jew, or a Moslem just as an eighteenth century poet need not have been a convert to ancient paganism when he was writing his

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[9] It consists of *Out of the Silent Planet, Voyage to Venus (Perelandra)* and *That Hideous Strength.*

[10] C. S. Lewis has refused this kind of interpretation any validity and in his preface to *Perelandra* he has written: "All human characters in this book are purely fictitious and none of them is allegorical". At the same time he admitted their philosophical sense writing in his preface to *That Hideous Strenght*: "This is a «tall story» about devilry, though it has behind it a serious «point» which I have tried to make in my *Abolition of Man*".

apostrophes to Mars, Venus, or the Muses. If we want to discover the writer's philosophy or some of its elements we ought to turn our attention to the ultimate significance of the whole pattern formed by the elements of his fantastic world and not to their fantastic character. Otherwise we may take a follower of materialistic philosophy for a believer in magic [11].

This list of authors' attitudes does not preclude the possibility of combinations or development of new ones.

FANTASTIC FICTION AND TRADITION

We have come to the last of the problems proposed for discussion — the problem of "system" of the fantastic and of "types" of fantastic compositions. The question arises: what to think and what to do about them?

It is abvious that the "systems" of the fantastic have historical foundation. Nymphs, fauns, and centaurs belong to Greco-Roman mythology. Apsaras, gandharvas, asuras, and nagas are connected with Hinduism. Ogres and fairies belong to the Celtic folklore. Winged angels and horned devils with cloven feet are, most likely, products of syncretic imagination combining Hebrew, Greek, Persian, Christian and magical elements. Science fiction, on the other hand, is an example of scientific imagination, just as utopias exemplify political and social imagination.

These "systems" originated from certain religious, magical, superstitious, scientific or philosophical tenets and they form certain traditional esthetic entities in our social consciousness. It may be useful to know them when we investigate sources of some fantastic invention or when we want to trace some of the author's ideas back to a system of philosophy. But these "systems" are unacceptable as a basis for any classification of fantastic fiction. It is enough to examine a few collections of tales by Andersen, Poe, Wells, Coppard or any of the annual editions of SF and fantasy so popular in USA to realize why. Syncretism and individualism in the formation of the fantastic elements have been increasing for over the last hundred years. Individual myths or mythologies of Frankenstein's monster, Peter Pan, Pinocchio, Winnie the Pooh have been imposed on the public by means of mass media. Modern fantastic

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[11] Cf. J. B. S. Haldane as the author of *My Friend Mr Leakey* (1937). But modern SF supplies interesting examples of a rapprochement between themes of magic, mysticism and science; R. A. Henlein's *Lost Legacy* (1941), A. C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1954) and A. and B. Strugatskys' *Six Matches* (edited by I. Asimov in *More Soviet Science Fiction*, New York 1962) ought to be compared.

fiction seems to tend to the same freedom of association and form as Romantic poetry in its time.

This tendency also affects typology. New types are in evidence. I have signalized the existence of a new type of fantastic composition — the imaginary history [12]. Quite recently one of the leading historical novelists in Poland has declared his book to be a fantastic historical novel [13], composed on lines analogous to the so-called SF extrapolation.

It seems, therefore, that we ought to be very careful with traditional labels when we want to classify new books. Many of the labels can be put to a good use provided we have a clear notion what distinctive features of subject and form they cover. Some of them (like "animal fable" or "fairy-tale") are used with precision, but others (like "science fiction" and "fantasy") are too large and vague or indiscriminately applied to differing types of fiction. "Utopia", for example, has been confused with antiutopia, the novel of the future, imaginary history and some technological fantasies [14].

Precision results from comparative research. It is more research that we need. We need an investigation not only of the modern fantastic fiction, but also of its antecedents. How interesting the research can be the reader may find reading *Voyages to the Moon* by Marjorie Nicolson (New York 1960). After all, what do we know about old literature which contains fantastic elements? For example, how did it happen that early epics, as widely apart as the Old English *Beowulf* and the Arabic *Sīrat Bāni Hilāl* combine historical fact with riotous fantasy? Is this the question of incrustation, or of some principle, philosophical or artistic?

Literary tradition supplies vast material for research. The store of fantastic fiction ought not to be ignored, but requires analysis and classification. The present paper is an attempt to prepare a method which might help to perform the task.

Now let me sum up what has been said. It seems to me that the right way of tackling difficulties connected with the analysis of fantastic fiction opens when we first agree on some literary conventions acceptable to everybody. The proposed conventions are: 1. the presentation of the empirical world in terms of matter, space, time, and consciousness; 2. the convention of realism, based on the idea of the typical relations

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[12] Cf. *Imaginary History* in „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich", vol. III/2, (5), Łódź 1960. Professor S. Skwarczyńska has analyzed a specimen of this genre in her *Mickiewicza „Historia przyszłości" i jej realizacje literackie* (*A. Mickiewicz's "History of the Future" and its Literary Realization*), Łódź 1964.

[13] T. Parnicki, *I u możnych dziwny*, Warszawa 1965.

[14] One of the exemplary sinners in this matter is Kingsley Amis in his interesting and otherwise well informed *New Maps of Hell*, London 1961.

between the four elements, evident in the interaction of the elements, which is regulated by causes and — to some extent — purposes; 3. the convention of the fantastic understood as the deviation from the convention of realism. The deviation creates a world of fiction largely different from the world of everyday experience.

This is the first step.

The next step is to analyse specimens of fantastic fiction by finding how the fantastic world in each of them has been built from the elements of the empirical world. This kind of analysis allows us to understand the nature of the fantastic world, its peculiarities and the place of the realistic elements in it.

The third step is to establish the total significance of the fantastic world. The significance is evident 1. in the artistic function of the constituents of the world and 2. in the social function of the world of fiction. In connexion with this function the author's attitude to his fantastic world and the use he makes of it ought to be examined. The artistic function of his imaginary world points to the social function of his work, i. e. to its philosophical sense. On this level the purely literary convention of broad structural realism may and ought to be transcended and the work evaluated according to philosophical criteria which originate and function in social life. On this level a clever and thrilling fantasy may be found wanting cognitive value; a well designed novel of the occult denounced for the superstitious outlook of its author; another author's outwardly unrealistic fantasy praised as an expression of sound philosophical (though not structural) realism.

This method may verify the usefulness of some traditional literary terms applied to varieties of fantastic fiction. It may also prove to be useful in an analysis of non-fantastic fiction. Though anchored in clearly defined conventions, it allows for considerable freedom of movement. The conventions themselves, though rooted in the past of the European novel, are capable of gradual growth and transformation conditioned by those changes in the world of human experience, which modify our ideas of the typical. The greater the dominion of mankind and the scope of its consciousness will grow, the larger and richer the conventions of the empirical world and of realism will become. As to the concept of the fantastic, it is — as Bottom put it — "past the wit of man to say what dream" will produce it in a world of the future which to our forefathers would seem a wild fantasy.

FANTASTYCZNOŚĆ I REALIZM W LITERATURZE. PROPOZYCJE W SPRAWIE DEFINICJI I ANALIZY BELETRYSTYKI FANTASTYCZNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Jak dotąd, próby zdefiniowania fantastyczności w literaturze nie były zadowalające. Główne trudności są następujące: różniące się koncepcje rzeczywistości, współistnienie elementów realistycznych wraz z fantastycznymi w jednym utworze literackim (co utrudnia przeprowadzenie linii podziału) oraz pokusa dzielenia utworów fantastycznych na typy według zaobserwowanych odrębności elementów fantastycznych (np. różnicy między światem elfów u Szekspira a wehikułem czasu u Wellsa). W tym ostatnim wypadku trudności stają się nieprzezwyciężone, kiedy „typy" mieszają się w jednym utworze, lub też gdy indywidualizm pomysłu nie pozwala na zaklasyfikowanie utworu.

Jak przezwyciężyć te trudności? Jak zbudować pojęcie fantastyczności, które nie byłoby kontrowersyjne z punktu widzenia odmiennych światopoglądów i filozofii? Jak zidentyfikować elementy fantastyczne w literaturze tak, żeby analiza dzieła stała się dokładna i mogła być wyrażona językiem racjonalnym?

Koncepcję fantastyczności buduje się często w przeciwstawieniu do pojęcia obiektywnej rzeczywistości, a potem mechanicznie przenosi do literatury. Powoduje to nie tylko spory filozoficzne na temat istoty i granic rzeczywistości, lecz także prowadzi do zamieszania. Gdybyśmy przyjęli, że „fantastyczny" znaczny „nierealny", obiektywnie „nie istniejący", bylibyśmy zmuszeni przyznać, że nie ma gatunkowej różnicy między utworami tryskającymi realizmem i utworami fantastycznymi. Anna Karenina jest postacią równie fikcyjną co Frankenstein i w równym stopniu realną w swoim bycie literackim.

Dla uniknięcia tych trudności należy zestawić to, co fantastyczne, z tym, co realistyczne. Propozycja ta może się wydać ryzykowna z uwagi na to, że — jak dotąd — nie wyrażono pojęcia realizmu w powszechnie przyjętej formule. Tu znowu przeszkodę stanowią różne poglądy i języki filozoficzne, choć sama rzecz nie jest nikomu obca.

Spróbujmy jednak wyrazić to pojęcie w terminach elementarnej fizyki. Świat ludzki jest światem średnich wielkości, znajdującym się między mikrokosmosem cząstek śródatomowych i makrokosmosem przestrzeni międzygwiezdnych. Jest to świat rzeczy, świat widzialny, dotykalny, nie tylko dostępny obserwacji, lecz także stale narzucający się zmysłom człowieka w normalnym stanie świadomości. W granicach tego świata materia, przestrzeń, czas i świadomość ludzka tworzą pewien na ogół stały układ. Na stałości stosunków między tymi elementami rzeczywistości empirycznej oparto przemysł, technikę, naukowe przewidywanie i obliczenia. Na ich układzie opiera się nasze pojęcie normalności. Nie umawiamy się np. dziś, że spotkamy się wczoraj. Nie wychodzimy na ulicę przez okno trzeciego piętra, jeśli nie chcemy się zabić. W oparciu o ten sprawdzalny, dostępny bezpośredniej obserwacji wycinek rzeczywistości w XIX wieku ukształtowało się pojęcie realizmu. I choć dziś wiemy, że w świecie śródatomowym i w świecie przestrzeni międzygalaktycznych stosunki między czasem i przestrzenią, a nawet zasada przyczynowości układają się inaczej niż w naszym ludzkim świecie, mamy prawo uznać go za świat właściwy człowiekowi.

Świat ten można przedstawić w następującym wzorze:

człowiek (materia[1]+świadomość[2])
świat rzeczy (materia[3]+przestrzeń[4])
} *w działaniu*[5] regulowanym { *przyczynowością*[6] / i/albo / *celowością*[7] } w *czasie*[8]

W powieści i utworach zbliżonych wzór ten tworzy następujące odbicie:

postacie (ukazane zewnątrz[1] i wewnątrz[2]) } w *akcji*[5] regulowanej { *przyczynowością*[6] i|albo *celowością*[7] } w *czasie*[8]
tło materialno[3]*-przestrzenne*[4]

Tak wygląda świat fikcji powieściowej wytworzony przez autora z jego doświadczenia, ograniczony tłem geograficznym i historycznym jego życia, ideami, zainteresowaniami, stopniem wrażliwości itp. Świat ten powstaje więc drogą selekcji materiału i jest kształtowany tak, żeby stanowił sensowny układ. Sposób dokonywania wyboru materiału kształtuje styl kompozycji powieściowej. Powieść r e a l i s t y c z n a powstaje, gdy autor buduje świat swojej fikcji z tego, co typowe w świecie empirycznym. Styl r o m a n t y c z n y polega na wyborze tego, co niezwykłe, indywidualne, nietypowe. K a r y k a t u r a i f a r s a jeszcze dalej odchodzą od konwencji realizmu. Zarówno to, co typowe, jak i to, co niezwykłe, jest w nich przesadnie podkreślone.

W oparciu o konwencję realizmu można zbudować konwencję fantastyczności. Kompozycja fantastyczna polega na takim przetworzeniu elementów świata empirycznego i/albo stosunków między nimi, które czyni świat fikcji artystycznej tak odmiennym od codziennego doświadczenia, że próżno szukać jego odpowiednika w świecie empirycznym. Elementów fantastycznych albo nie ma, w świecie empirycznym, albo istnienie ich jest niesprawdzalne. Istnieją one natomiast w literackiej formie jako wytwory wyobraźni lub fantazji, i dlatego nazywa się je fantastycznymi.

Elementy fantastyczne powstają przez swobodne kojarzenie elementów świata empirycznego (na wykresie od 1 do 8) lub przez zmienianie ich typowego układu. Syrena powstała przez połączenie połowy kobiety z połową ryby. Reorganizacja świata rzeczy (materia[3] + przestrzeń[4]) daje w wyniku nowe kraje, państwa lub planety. W powieściach o przyszłości manipuluje się przy tym elementem czasu (8). Przyśpieszenie tempa naszego ruchu ku przyszłości, odwracanie biegu czasu, zamykanie go w powracające koło — to inne przekształcenia tego elementu. Nietypowe przedstawienie świadomości (2) i stawienie jej w niezwykłym stosunku do materii (1) i (3), przestrzeni (4) i czasu (8) — to także metoda tworzenia elementów fantastycznego świata fikcji literackiej. W obrębie jego fantastyczną staje się także akcja (5). W literaturze nonsensu zmienia się nawet zasadę przyczynowości (6).

Prześledzenie budowy elementów fantastycznych i ich układu w utworze fantastycznym, przy zastosowaniu kryterium i konwencji realizmu strukturalnego pojmowanego jako typowość w obrębie wyżej podanego diagramu, umożliwia bardzo dokładną analizę i opis takiego utworu. Za utwór fantastyczny należy uznać dzieło, w którym obecność choćby jednego elementu fantastycznego pociąga za sobą przekształcenie się całego świata fikcji literackiej w nim przedstawionego w układ fantastyczny (np. w *Niewidzialnym człowieku* Wellsa w przeciwieństwie do *Dziwnych losów Jane Eyre* Ch. Brontë).

Niektóre utwory fantastyczne w miarę postępu cywilizacji przestają być fantastyczne. Los ten spotkał wiele powieści Verne'a i Wellsa. Mimo to pozostają w nich ślady fantastyczności. Jednym z nich jest to, że fantastyczne wynalazki prawie nigdy dokładnie nie odpowiadają wynalazkom zrealizowanym, oraz to, że większość pisarzy czyni je ośrodkiem podziwu i sensacji, które budzą zdziwienie, gdy wynalazki te stają się częścią życia codziennego.

Nie istnieją utwory fantastyczne bez elementów realistycznych. Utwór całkowicie fantastyczny musiałby przedstawiać istoty i sposoby istnienia i działania w przestrzeni i w czasie zupełnie od naszych odmienne. Wobec tego musiałby być

pisany językiem nieludzkim, niezrozumiałym, nie dawałby się wyobrazić i byłby nudny. Ludzki język, ludzkie zainteresowania i ludzki świat określają i ograniczają fantastyczność w literaturze. Świat fantastycznej fikcji sprawia najsilniejsze wrażenie, gdy utwór zawiera dużą dozę realizmu (np. *Podróże Guliwera*).

Zbadawszy strukturę utworu fantastycznego i rozgraniczywszy w niej elementy fantastyczne i realistyczne, należy przejść do ustalenia, jaka jest funkcja społeczna, a więc filozoficzna, polityczna, moralna świata fantastycznego w utworze. Aby ją ustalić, należy zbadać ideę utworu i postawę autora wobec fantastyczności w jego dziele. Można stwierdzić istnienie następujących postaw: 1. Pisarz uważa, że jego fantastyczny świat wiernie odzwierciedla świat doświadczenia, choć jest ono nietypowe (postawa średniowiecznego hagiografa opisującego w dobrej wierze cud, który nigdy się nie zdarzył); 2. pisarz podsuwa jako poważną możliwość to, że jego fantastyczny świat może być odbiciem rzeczywistości, ale z pewnych powodów zostawia furtkę dla innych możliwości (*Drzwi w murze* Wellsa); 3. pisarz wie, że jego świat fantastyczny nie istnieje, ale wierzy, że może być zrealizowany (utwory utopijne); 4. pisarz nie twierdzi, że świat fantastyczny może się zrealizować, ale chce pokazać, co by się stało, gdyby zaczął istnieć obiektywnie (*Kraina ślepców*, *Wojna światów* Wellsa, *O pani przemienionej w lisa* D. Garnetta); 5. pisarz traktuje swój świat fantastyczny jako wygodną ilustrację własnych idei (bajka zwierzęca, niektóre utwory alegoryczne, przypowieści, powieści-metafory).

Z analizy wielu utworów wynika, że kompozycje o stylu fantastycznym bywały i bywają metaforami, wyrażającymi realistyczny pogląd na świat. Poddawszy więc utwór fantastyczny analizie opartej na konwencji realizmu strukturalnego, należy przeprowadzić analizę funkcji filozoficzno-społecznej takiego utworu. Tu można osądzić ideową postawę autora, stosując tym razem kryteria filozoficzne lub na filozofii oparte. Tu wystąpć może i powinno filozoficzne sprecyzowanie danej koncepcji realizmu, a w rezultacie zastosowanie określeń takich, jak realizm naiwny, krytyczny, socjalistyczny, idealizm itp. Wynika to z ambiwalentności autora i idei, których jest nosicielem zarówno jako człowiek, jak i pisarz, co da się wyrazić we wzorze:

$$\text{świat empiryczny} > \text{człowiek-pisarz} \overset{\text{idee i postawy}}{>} \text{świat fikcji literackiej}$$

Historyczne „systemy" fantastyczności (różne mitologie oparte o religie, magię i folklor, fantazje naukowe i polityczno-społeczne) nie mogą być podstawą do ustalenia „typów" utworów fantastycznych wskutek rosnącego w literaturze fantastycznej synkretyzmu i indywidualizmu wyobraźni. Należałoby, operując zaproponowaną tutaj metodą analizy, zbadać dawną literaturę i sprawdzić przydatność tradycyjnych określeń. Metoda ta może się przydać również przy analizie literatury niefantastycznej. Konwencja realizmu, na której się ona opiera, jest dostatecznie precyzyjna, a jednocześnie łatwo może się wzbogacać przez włączenie do niej nowych typowości życia codziennego w miarę przekształcania się tego życia.

Witold Ostrowski