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NARRATIVES, THEIR GAPS AND WORLDS

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Abstract

Fictional literary narratives display missing information in varying extents and distributions, the extent of which is determined by multiple internal (essential) and external (aesthetic) factors. At the same time, fictional worlds, by definition, contain specific gaps which are inevitable parts of their structure and are also either of an essential or aesthetic nature. The present study tries to find a correlation between two concepts, one focused primarily on narratives and the other on their worlds, critically comparing the methodological equipment and potentials of both approaches. As a result, a typology of possible correlations of both concepts is delivered.

Key words

Fictional world; narrative; information; gap; rupture

Non-prototypical narratives

In recent decades a significant group of theorists have been calling for a narrative theory which would provide them with the tools necessary for a fair theoretical grasp of a specific group of (fictional) narratives. That is, narratives that differ from the prototypical ones that are conventionally based on mimetic or realist patterns and are commonly used by narrative theory to design its theoretical models (see esp. the living handbook of narratology). These non-prototypically patterned narratives are primary objects of interest of unnatural narratology, a part of modern narrative theory. Unnatural narratology has developed an impressive set of tools in order to grasp unnatural narratives theoretically – regarding means for an analysis of unnatural worlds, narrators, characters, causal settings, etc.¹ However, in order to take a closer look at non-prototypically patterned narratives, let us focus on the specific connection between narratives deviating from these patterns and the deviating worlds they constitute. That is, the ways in which narratives *rupture*, lack or lose consistency and integrity, become fragmented, disintegrate and finally (may) collapse, on the one hand, and the ways in which these narratives construe narrative world's *gaps*, a concept borrow from fictional worlds theory. I hope that the combination of these two views can help us better account for the non-prototypical narratives and pay more attention to their specificities than current theoretical models do.

The notion of narrative

Let us start our reasoning with the very notion of *narrative* – a notion which seems to be broadly used and commonly understood. Nevertheless, as soon as we employ a more detailed look at it we realize that we are actually entering a realm containing a vast number of variable theoretical strategies and suggestions. In addition, in this realm we also encounter dozens of more or less sufficient auxiliary sub-definitions and terms based on dozens of possible views of narrative, its build, and function: the underlying and surface narrative structure, plot and story, *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, *mimesis* and *diegesis*, story and discourse, *histoire*, *récit*, *narration*, temporality, causality, spaciality, event and happening, *actant* and *acteur*, narrative grammar, narrativity, narrativeness, narrativehood, tellability, and experientiality, etc. These and many others can actually be used for the definition (or description) of narratives, many of them repeatedly sworn by, many of them accepted and fossilized and many of them also repeatedly questioned and violated.

In any case, with certain relief, it is possible to claim that theorists when speaking about essential qualities of narratives mostly share certain presumptions and commonly refer to three of the dimensions of narratively ordered events: *temporal*, *causal*, and also sometimes *spatial*. At this point, I wish not to focus on the pros and cons of the three dimensions, which have been developed in the long-lasting discussions on the topic. Nevertheless, certainly many of these discussions, we are currently in possession of, have provided us with thorough and extensive analyses on which I can base a decent part of my reasoning.

At this point, temporally, let us leave aside the technical (formalist, structuralist) definition of narrative which can serve as a base for a specific narrative poetics and turn our attention to the rhetorical view of narrative, which is in full congruence with the purpose of the study. James Phelan defines narrative as follows: “Narrative is somebody telling somebody else, on some occasion and on some purposes, that something happened to someone of something” (Phelan 2005: 18). As can be seen, Phelan’s general definition of narrative clearly follows the communication model connecting it with a semantic-pragmatic view and does not seem to enrich it with any special narrative dimension. In spite of this fact, I am willing to borrow this definition and (equally generally) state that the narratives in question (non-prototypical, deviating) can actually violate any part or phase of a narrative serving as a tool for communication – not necessarily to the extent that they would destroy the process of communication completely, but they may, to a higher or lesser degree, complicate and distract it. Let me claim, thus, that deviating narratives cause specific *ruptures* in the communication process in which they function both as vehicles as well as messages. Therefore, these ruptures can appear in any phase of this process and can be based on any level of narrative communication. And finally, can be determined by any entity or context that is involved in the process.

Fictional worlds

And there is only a relatively small step to be made from ruptures in narrative communication to the announced notion of gaps of fictional worlds theory. It is hoped that this step will offer us a relatively solid base for further investigation of the phenomenon. At the same time, it should be emphasized, that the strongest connection between ruptures in narratives and gaps in fictional worlds comes from the theory of fictional worlds itself, since narratives and fictional worlds are firmly bound by definition, as we will see.

One of the most prominent theoreticians of narrative and also of fictional worlds, Marie-Laure Ryan, in her study *Toward a Definition of Narrative* (2007) states (and she is not the only one) that narrative can be only fuzzy-defined with regard to a set of qualities which do apply to particular narratives and form a system of concentric circles. In order to define narrative, Ryan initially stipulates a set of eight conditions which, according to her, prevent certain types of representation, commonly present in narratives, from actually dominating the narratives, because this dominance, according to Ryan, can substantially decrease the narrative qualities (of narratives), as she puts it: “Each of these conditions prevents a certain type of representation from forming the focus of interest, or macro-structure, of a story” (Ryan 2007: 29). In the next step, Ryan divides the conditions into four dimensions, *spatial*, *temporal*, *mental*, and *formal* and *pragmatic*, and describes the spatial dimension as follows: “Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents. *Temporal* dimension” (Ryan 2007: 29).² As we have just heard, and this is important for the direction of my reasoning. Ryan, without hesitation, connects the very first, spatial dimension of narrative with a world and inhabits this world with individuals and their motivations.

It is a matter of fact, that one of the most sophisticated models of the relationship between narratives and fictional worlds can be found in Lubomír Doležel’s detailed analysis of fictional worlds as presented in his study *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998). By definition, fictional worlds embody specific semi-otic constructs connected to narrative fictional texts: fictional worlds are based on fictional narratives, are created by fictional narratives, and also are accessible through fictional narratives. In admitting so, Doležel ultimately defines on-narrative-based fictional worlds as an alternative of narratives for the purpose of their better theoretical and methodological grasp: “Fictional semantics does not deny that the story is a defining feature of narrative but moves to the foreground the macrostructural conditions of story generation: stories happen, are enacted in certain kinds of possible worlds. The basic concept of narratology is not “story” but “narrative world” defined within a typology of possible worlds” (Doležel 1998: 31).

As we have witnessed, both Marie-Laure Ryan as well as Lubomír Doležel firmly connect narratives with fictional worlds: whereas Doležel replaces fictional narratives with fictional worlds for theoretical purposes, Ryan, when defining her narrative dimensions, explicitly stipulates that narratives are representations of worlds. If we consider the fact that fictional narratives refer to the worlds they construct, it is possible to view fictional narratives and fictional worlds as essentially

intertwined entities, viewed, however, from different points of view – more like two sides of one coin, inevitably intertwined and undetachable.

Incompleteness and gaps

Fictional worlds, according to Doležel, are incomplete due to the finitude of fictional texts that founded them: “we should recognize that the fictional text’s texture manipulates incompleteness in many different ways and degrees, determining the world’s saturation” (Doležel 1998: 169). In order to examine the incompleteness of fictional worlds Doležel introduces the notion of *gaps* – places or areas of fictional worlds with missing information: “The texture of a fictional text is the result of the choices the author makes when writing the text. When the author produces an explicit texture, he or she constructs a fictional fact (provided that the felicity conditions of authentication are satisfied). If no texture is written (zero texture), a gap arises in the fictional world structure. Gaps, let us repeat, are a necessary and universal feature of fictional worlds. Yet particular fictional texts vary the number, the extent, and the functions of the gaps by varying the distribution of zero texture” (Doležel 1998: 169–170).

In the first step, the notion of gaps must be distinguished from the concept of *places of indeterminacy* as introduced by Roman Ingarden, the founder of modern phenomenological study of literature. In *The Literary Work of Art* (1931) he uses the term in order to describe the reader’s concretization or conceptualization of a literary artwork. This term suggests that the reader’s experience plays an important role in the final meaning of a text. Ingarden’s model inspired other theoreticians and today there exist several views of the process of concretization and filling the places of indeterminacy (differing in extent and source of filling) and it seems that these concepts can be viewed as essential for our understanding of the process for aesthetic structures of gaining meaning. Coming from a classical communication model in which a literary fictional text functions as a means of specific (aesthetic) communication, various theoreticians, in spite of considering the text a base for the reader’s conceptualization of the text’s meaning, emphasize the active role of the reader in the whole process. Some of these views, in modern history of literary theoretical thought primarily connected with the receptionist positions, directly refer to the procedures used by the readers for filling the meaning in the text. Nevertheless, let us repeat that, according to Doležel, unlike gaps, places of indeterminacy can be filled. If so, it seems that author’s relatively radical view of gaps and their unfillability deprives his system from a very important tool which is present in other systems and guarantees a certain accessibility of the work’s meaning by the readers and their ability to participate in establishing of the work’s meaning. So, does Doležel’s strict refusal of any possibility of filling (in) the gaps not mean that he is depriving his fictional worlds from an important part of its meaning? The answer is negative. Simply due to the fact that gaps are not places of indeterminacy, they rather should be viewed as a specific subset of places of determinacy. Doležel’s system differentiates between gaps that can be filled by no means and between implicit meaning

which actually overlap with fillable places of indeterminacy of other theoreticians. Thus, even in Doležel's system the readers substantially contribute to the global meaning of literary artworks.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize, here, that this relatively strong ontological distinction shouldn't be mixed with the existential quantifier when applied to fictional world's entities – missing information about an entity is not directly connected with the existence of the entity, it rather refers to the possibility of the reader's conceptualisation of the entity. The very presence of gaps in fictional worlds does not logically infer that entities and their parts and qualities which are not explicitly mentioned in a fictional text do not exist: majority of them can be inferred to by implicit meanings present in fictional texts, as Doležel stipulates, or by some cognitive principles (for example by the “minimal departure principle”), as suggested by other theoreticians. It is important to understand, that the notion of gaps here refers to a very specific kind of incomplete semantic information present in fictional worlds having bigger or lesser significance for the final shape of the worlds.

For example, Stacie Friend, who introduces the notion of *Reality Assumption* to replace the challenged notion of *Reality Principle* in order to analyse the reader's conceptualization of textual information, shows the relationship between missing textual information and the reader's possible filling in the gaps created with regards to purposes or stages of interpretation: “I might imagine Gulliver with brown eyes and you might imagine him with blue, and someone else might not imagine his eye colour at all. That Gulliver's eyes blue is not fictional, because if the question arose, we would be obligated to imagine neither that his eyes are blue nor that they are not. Given that (as far as I know) Swift leaves Gulliver's eye colour indeterminate, we are authorized or permitted to fill in this aspect of the fictional world as we desire. In short, we are invited to imagine a great deal more than we should imagine for full understanding or must imagine for minimal understanding, but less than we are permitted to imagine” (Friend 2017: 4).

Let me stipulate, that Lubomír Doležel does not define the notion of gaps in order to limit the reader's permit or ability to interpret narrative literary texts, on the contrary, his aim is to draw our attention to these places of specific semantic qualities of literary narrative texts and their role in the reader's conceptualisation of fictional worlds. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that the notion of gaps invites for further elaboration in order could be used for more detailed investigation on narrative semantics.

The concept of gaps in fictional worlds has been inspirational also for some other theoreticians, especially for those who use the notion in order to describe specific qualities of fictional worlds. For example, Marie-Laure Ryan, elaborating on the ontological view of gaps, claims the connection between the ontological essence of gaps in connection to fictional worlds' ontological integrity: “The gaps in the representation of the textual universe are regarded as withdrawn information, and not as ontological deficiencies of this universe itself” (Ryan 1991: 53). Now, if it is not the ontological status of fictional worlds that is violated here, what is it then? It is possible that it is the ruptures in fictional narratives that violate the rhetorical dimension of these entities and contribute to the final effect of

fragmentation, disintegration and (sometimes) collapse of the stories and respective worlds? These and similar questions bring our attention to the relationship between ruptures in narratives, gaps in fictional worlds and integrity of fictional worlds as specific semiotic structures.

So, as defined, gaps are inevitable parts of the structure of fictional worlds and their ontology. In addition, for Doležel's type of fictional worlds semantics, unlike for example the "places of indeterminacy" of phenomenological narrative semantics, gaps cannot be filled and are also not supposed to be filled by any means. In any way, for the purpose of further analysis of the role of gaps in narrative-deviations the notion of gaps has to be elaborated on in more detail.

Let us admit that Lubomír Doležel, in various moments of his reasoning, had already taken the first step in examining gaps, their essence and their semantics and pragmatics. Inspiringly, though not consistently and systematically, Doležel repeatedly mentions the specificity of the distribution of gaps in particular fictional worlds. Accepting this challenge for the purpose of a finer analysis of gaps and their essence and functioning, we should admit that gaps, although being of an ontological essence, also play important roles in fictional world's semantic and aesthetic meaning. What is more, one should differentiate between gaps subjected either to a conventionally set genre or sub-genre form or to the individual authors and their styles. A majority of fictional narratives with their specific ruptures perfectly fit under some genre categories and sub-categories, and thus follow conventionally established patterns and are considered common and familiar; however, other narratives definitely do not follow genre patterns, are considered unexpected, unusual, authorial, innovative... and also more subversive and causing significant ruptures. And these ruptures are of a special importance for my view.

Gaps and ruptures and their types

So, if gaps exist at various levels of fictional worlds and are significant for their final shapes, what kinds of ruptures in fictional narratives causing them do we really encounter? These ruptures can definitely be viewed and classified in various ways. I believe that one possible way of classifying narratives' ruptures and worlds' gaps is according to their *position* and according to their *cause*.

Position-wise speaking, ruptures and gaps can be connected with any dimension of fictional narrative and with any level of a fictional world. Missing information can substantially violate the integrity of the *spatial and temporal* structure of a fictional world, its *relational* structure as well as its *subjects and objects*. Cause-wise speaking, apart from missing information, which is the most common and powerful source of gaps, I would like to pay attention to various techniques for distorted information, of which the most important are contradictory, alternating, or shifting information.

With regard to the position of gaps in fictional worlds, it seems that ruptures in the spatio-temporal structure of narratives represent a telling example of a source of highly subversive gaps. Simply put, if the reader is not able to fully

construct, recognize, or comprehend the spatio-temporal structure of a fictional world, they must invest a significant effort in keeping the fictional world in a relatively consistent and coherent shape; of course, this effort varies according to the integrity of the world's other dimensions. In terms of missing spatio-temporal information in fictional narratives, it seems that it is not commonly connected with any particular conventionally set genre or sub-genre and that the distortions of spatio-temporal structures of narratives are usually bound to the "ruthless" realm of modernist or post-modernist experiments. The distortion of the spatio-temporal structure in fictional narratives may substantially violate the status of their fictional worlds, fill them with essential gaps and severely attack them with a subversive destructive power: spatio-temporal ruptures in narratives have the potential to cause bottomless abysses in their worlds to the extent that they irrecoverably collapse.

As suggested, another special kind of gaps in fictional worlds is connected with missing information about its relational set up; by the word *relational* I refer here to structural relations in a specific fictional world. Simply due to the fact that the notion of causality which would be commonly used at this point can be, after all the discussions devoted to this issue, considered either too complex and vague, or even misleading. Nevertheless, regardless whether we are going to speak about relationality or causality we should acknowledge that in terms of fictional narratives this kind of connection between subject, objects and actions seems to be much more determined by the process of reception and interpretation of narratives than the previous, spatio-temporal one. If so, the reason for that can be considered as follows: apart from natural causes of events which are governed by natural laws and forces, the vast majority of actions in fictional narratives are caused by the intentionally based power of either acting subjects or some super-subjective principles. Uncovering and interpreting the intention behind the acting seems to be one of the strongest challenges for the reader and their interpretative skills depending on their experience and expectation. As, for example, Brian Richardson puts it: "In many respects, interpretation and causality are two sides of the same coin. Confronted by multiple and mutually exclusive explanatory options, characters and readers alike are impelled to weigh the evidence, take hermeneutical stands, and adjust prior expectations to meet anomalous incidents. The more ambiguous, unlikely, or contradictory the casual agency appears to be, the greater the demand for interpretive accuracy becomes" (Richardson 1997: 43).

Brian Richardson further reveals the complexity of the relational network of a fictional world and also, and probably more importantly, shows their essential connection with fictional characters at the level of particular fictional worlds: "Within a single, consistent casual world *characters* will have different powers, intentions, hidden drives, and interpretive outlooks [...] The frequent tensions between motive and action, word and deed, and intention and result are familiar to every student of fiction and drama" (Richardson 1997: 35–39).

This view of the unbreakable bond between the relational (casual) structure of fictional worlds and their characters-inhabitants actually helps us to move to the last "space" for missing information listed above: fictional characters or subjects.

Indeed, subjects represent a powerful tool for fictional semantics; being fictional counterparts of possibly real people (at least some of them) can be understood as personifications of human intentions, values, emotions, achievements, and losses, and thus generate an important interpretative matrix. Subjects of fiction and of reality may share their motivations and their intentional actions substantially contribute to the final shapes of their worlds – as Ruth Ronen repeatedly emphasizes the importance of subjects for the narrative structure: “A narrative state of affairs contains syntactic and semantic information which derives from a *general logic of narrative*, but it also demonstrates the particular laws established by a given narrative world; thus, in the psychological novel the relations among events mostly depend on mental causality and motivation (types of causation are only classifiable within a general semantics of narrative); the specific type of *mental motivation* dominating the narrative has to do with the concrete semantic rules operative in a given text. In addition to those axioms that every narrative postulates, there are ramifying variants that are world-specific” (Ronen 1994: 172).

Thus, regardless of what outer forms they have in their worlds, subjects epitomize a source of motivated behaviour, and of specific actions. In this respect, Marie-Laure Ryan actually makes an interesting methodological turn in order to visualize the relationship between fictional worlds and their inhabitants, and suggests: “I conceive the semantic domain of the narrative text as a modal universe consisting of a central planet, realm of actualized physical events, surrounded by the satellites of the private worlds of characters: wish worlds, obligation worlds, belief worlds, intention worlds (goals and plans), mock-belief worlds (fake representations used in order to deceive), and fantasy worlds (dreams or fictional stories told within the story). These worlds differ in their internal structure and in their function within the narrative universe” (Ryan 1992: 543). As can be seen in Ryan’s ultimately-on-a-world-focused view it is not only that narratives can be interchangeable with worlds in certain contexts, but also characters and their aspects embody satellite worlds and therefore can also be treated as (special kinds of) fictional worlds. This means that, first, we can actually treat characters as gap-full entities and, second, the general typology of fictional worlds is also applicable to them. Therefore, characters and their worlds, in a parallel to fictional worlds, can be viewed as contradictory, inconsistent, incoherent or collapsing entities, just like the worlds themselves. And any of the above mentioned aspects of fictional characters, which create the characters’ sub-worlds, can also serve as a basis for gaps. And these gaps can, in turn, substantially influence the characters’ qualities in the process of the reader’s interpretation of their motivation.

As stated, characters’ deeds are more or less motivated actions which not only aim at setting and fulfilling certain goals and achievements, but also represent an essential source of the dynamics of fictional worlds. Again, gaps in the subject’s (or character’s) motivations, regardless of by which narrative means these motivations are expressed, have crucial consequences for fictional worlds. Similarly to other types of gaps, motivational gaps can serve as a means of attractiveness of the text, on the one hand, but also as sources of serious fragmentation and incoherence of narratives, on the other.

A telling example of the effect of motivational gaps can be well documented by Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. The reader is given the crucial information and a code to the semantics of the novella at the very beginning: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (Kafka 1988: 67). Nevertheless, in the pace of the story, the reader, whilst observing and interpreting the actions of the novella's characters, comes to inevitable questions: Why does Gregor Samsa not show any trace of a surprise about his metamorphosis? Why does not he try to fight his fate? Why does he not think about the reversibility of the process? These and similar questions have been, are and will be asked by generations of readers, being attracted and dissatisfied at the same time. These and similar questions are the results of the presence of motivational gaps in the reader's conceptualization of Kafka's fictional world and its parts embodied in the main character's actions in this particular sense.³

As for a further classification of the cause of ruptures and gaps, another type of gap develops when the narrative provides the reader with *contradictory* or *alternating/shifting/changing information*. Contradictory information is essential for logically impossible worlds. Lubomír Doležel, when entering this issue firstly differentiates between physically and logically impossible worlds. Whereas physically impossible worlds contain non-natural or super-natural entities or laws, logically impossible fictional worlds contain logical contradictions. It is, however, necessary to emphasize that neither physical nor logical impossibility does mean that these types of worlds cannot exist. On the contrary, logically impossible worlds are common in the realm of fiction and serve particular purposes and cause particular effects. At the same time the logical impossibility of fictional worlds sentences these worlds to a specific curse: "The logical structure of the impossible worlds denies fictional existence to possible entities. Literature has the means for constructing impossible worlds, but at the price of frustrating the whole enterprise; an impossible world cannot be called into fictional existence" (Doležel 1998: 163). The gaps in the case of logically impossible worlds are caused by the impact of the contradictory information on the reader's reception. The readers cannot use this contradictory segment in the process of building a "common" fictional world and this type of information represents an essential means of narrative incoherence. It divides narratives into sub-narratives in which only one of the contradictory pieces of information is valid and therefore substantially supports the narrative's fragmentation and global collapse. Lubomír Doležel even calls this strategy a "step backward", however, at the same time connects it with the very essence of creative poetic power of literary fiction: "The writing of impossible worlds is, semantically, a step backward in fiction making; it voids the transformation of nonexistent possible into fictional entities and thus cancels the entire world-making project. However, literature turns the ruin of its own enterprise into a new achievement in designing impossible worlds, it poses a challenge to the imagination no less intriguing than squaring the circle" (Doležel 1998: 165). Nevertheless, as has been insinuated, apart from literally contradictory information, in fictional narratives we can detect various levels of deviated close-to-contradictory information which operate there with various effects. One of these *alternating, changing or shifting*

pieces of information appears when a narrative text does not provide the reader with information about a change which (more or less) obviously happened in a fictional world and has not been described in the text. Therefore the readers find themselves (repeatedly) in seemingly identical places and situations, which differ somehow from the original ones, and have to deal with interfering fact and the worlds described become shaken, blurred, and uncertain. Again, in these cases, the non-description of the change can either serve as an important source of attractiveness of the story or, on the other side of the spectrum, as a source for a strong fragmentation of narrative and a gap-full fictional world.

An excellent example of specifically distorted information can be found again in Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle*. The main character, K., makes repeated moves over the village and gains information which turns these physically circular moves to spiral ontological moves. The initial and the final point of the circle are never identical, they are spiral because the world changes in the meantime: the moves do not bring the protagonist on his way to comprehend the invisible domain to identical situations and places, but to places and situations only seemingly identical to the previous ones and differ from them. As a result, these differences effect the fictional world of the novel – this shifting identity splits the world in incongruent clusters and substantially contributes to its fragmentation and incoherence.

Finally, it is obvious that the moment we start examining specific distortions of information in fictional narratives and their effect on fictional worlds, also the (most) technological and materialistic level of the investigation has to be admitted and taken under examination – the level of (fictional) *discourse*. At this representational level, gaps are determined by particular narrative techniques and their discourse embodiments. Let us, at this point, recall one of the previously listed concepts of narrative based on the demarcation of narrative among other structures of representation. Marie-Laure Ryan, as mentioned earlier, provides us with a set of conditions, which are responsible for the decrease of *narrativity*, and among others names “static descriptions, descriptions of mental stages, recipes, and texts entirely made of advice, hypotheses, counterfactuals, and instructions” (Ryan 2007: 29–30). Seymour Chatman in his book *Coming to Terms* (1990), in a way partly similar to the discourse demarcation of narratives suggested by Marie-Laure Ryan, views narrative in contrast to *description* and *argument* (see Ryan 2007: 26), which, according to him, do not develop temporal dimension of a narrative, or develop it only in a limited way.

Conclusions

In the study I tried to offer a theoretical account for the investigation of fictional narratives substantially deviating from natural or prototypical ones. I believe that connecting these narratives with the notion of ruptures and gaps represents a possible way for further, more detailed and finer examination of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, at the same time, I am aware of the fact that this contribution represents only a symbolic first step and lots of theoretical effort has to be invested in order to obtain more systematic and convincing results.

Notes

- ¹ In the works of unnatural narratologists, unnatural narratives are considered counterparts of natural narratives. Natural narratives can be defined in various ways based on various points of view of the issue. In this study, natural narratives are, in accord with the conventional use of the term, connected with their pragmatic, conversational qualities and functions. As such, natural narratives are, according to some theoreticians, considered patterns for prototypically structured narratives. Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson directly connect these prototypical, realist narratives with the most common view of narratives as such: “Most definitions of the term “narrative” have a clear mimetic bias and take ordinary realist texts of ‘natural’ narratives as being prototypical manifestations of narrative” (Alber et al. 2010: 114). Elsewhere, Jan Alber also points out Henrik Skov Nielsen’s definition of unnatural narratives in order to provide us with another possible view of the notion of natural narrative: “Nielsen defines unnatural narratives as a subset of fictional narratives that – unlike realist and mimetic narratives – cue the reader to employ interpretational strategies that are different from those she employs in nonfictionalized conversational storytelling situations” (Alber et al. 2013: 104).
- ² In order to show the built of Ryans reasoning, let me quote here the whole set of her narrative conditions: “*Spatial* dimension (1) Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents. *Temporal* dimension (2) This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations. (3) The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events. *Mental* dimension (4) Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world. (5) Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents [...] *Formal and pragmatic* dimension (6) The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure. (7) The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the storyworld. (8) The story must communicate something meaningful to the audience” (Ryan 2007: 29).
- ³ Similar questions can be asked about motivations of other characters of the novel based on their actions. In general, these motivational gaps play crucial role in the constitution of the novella’s global meaning which refers to the idea of human depletion and alienation.

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