



Niš 2017

Univerzitet u Nišu
Filozofski fakultet

JEZIK, KNJIŽEVNOST, VREME

Književna istraživanja

ATURE, TIME

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JEZIK, KNJIŽEVNOST, VREME: KNJIŽEVNA ISTRAŽIVANJA



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KNJIŽEVNA ISTRAŽIVANJA**

Zbornik radova



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Niš, 2017.

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SADRŽAJ

JEZIK, KNJIŽEVNOST, VREME: KNJIŽEVNA ISTRAŽIVANJA

UVOD

NARATIVNO KONSTRUISANJE TEMPORALNOSTI	11
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I

TEORETSKA RAZMATRANJA

Snežana Milosavljević Milić ВРЕМЕНСКО ИСКУСТВО ПРИЧЕ – КА РЕВИЗИЈИ АТЕМПОРАЛНИХ АСПЕКТА ТЕКСТА	33
Nermin Vučelj, Milan Janjić PITANJE KNJIŽEVNE PERIODIZACIJE: PRIMER FRANCUSKOG 18. VEKA	47
Petra Mitić DRUGI POL NEKAD I SAD: VREMENSKA DISTANCA U RECEPCIJI FEMINIZMA SIMON DE BOVOAR	59
Vladislava Gordić Petković VREME I SEMANTIKA (DUGO)VEČNOSTI U SAVREMENOJ SRPSKOJ I ANGLOFONOJ PROZI	71
Borjan Mitrović ВРЕМЕНСКИ УСЛОВЉЕНО ТРАНСФОРМИСАЊЕ МОТИВА РОДОСКВРНОГ ГРИЈЕХА У СРПСКОЈ КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ	83
Ana Kocić KOLEKTIVNE PREDSTAVE O 'DRUGIMA' KROZ VREME: NEKOLIKO PRIMERA IZ AMERIČKE KNJIŽEVNOSTI I KULTURE	93
Milica Spremić Končar VREME U ISTORIJI BRITANSKIH KRALJEVA ĆEFRIJA OD MOH MUTA	105
Tatjana Vulić KRITIKA KAO NOVINARSKA VRSTA U NEDELJNIKU <i>M/N</i> KROZ VREME	119
Milan Dojčinović УЛОГА МЕДИЈА У СЛУЖБИ ОЧУВАЊА КУЛТУРНОГ ИДЕНТИТЕТА	131
Ivana Stamenković, Tatjana Đukić PROMENA PERCEPCIJE PROSTORA I VREMENA I MASOVNI MEDIJI	149
Aleksandar B. Nedeljković ФИЗИЧКА ПРИРОДА ВРЕМЕНА И ТЕОРИЈА РЕЛАТИВИТЕТА У НАУЧНОЈ ФАНТАСТИЦИ	161
Buba Stojanović VREME U BALCI - СПОНА МЕЂУ НАРОДИМА	173

II HRONOTOP

Marijan Mišić OD PROFANOG KA LIMINALNOM: POETIČKA TRANSFORMACIJA HRONOTOPA U AMERIČKOM I SRPSKOM MEĐURATNOM ROMANU O PRVOM SVETSKOM RATU	189
Sergej Macura HRONOSHIZME MEJSON I DIKSON	203
Mirjana Stošić HRONOTOP RASKRŠĆA – FRANKENŠTAJN I VAMPIR KAO FIGURE MODERNOSTI	215
Mirjana Bojanić Ćirković АСПЕКТИ ВРЕМЕНА И ТРЕТИРАЊЕ СТВАРНОСТИ У РОМАНУ <i>P. Ц. НЕМИНОВНО</i> ВЛАДАНА МАТИЈЕВИЋА	225
Jasmina Ahmetagić ВРЕМЕ И МОДЕРНА ПАРАБОЛА: <i>ПАД</i> АЛБЕРА КАМИЈА	239
Jelena Aleksov ПРОТИЦАЊЕ ВРЕМЕНА У УРБАНОМ СВЕТУ <i>РОМАНА О ЛОНДОНУ</i> МИЛОША ЦРЊАНСКОГ	251
Emilija Lipovšek TIME AND AGAIN IN BABYLONLONDON	263
Petra Pešić ВРЕМЕ У РОМАНУ <i>ПОСЛЕДЊА РУЖА КОЛУБАРЕ</i> РАДОВАНА БЕЛОГ МАРКОВИЋА	271
Sonja Urošević HRONOTORI U ROMANU <i>ZAVIČAJNI MUZEJ</i> ZIGFRIDA LENCA	281
Ivan Cvetanović, Vladeta Radović ВРЕМЕНСКО-ПРОСТОРНИ ОДНОС НАРАТОРА, НАРАТЕРА И ЧИТАОЦА У РОМАНУ <i>ТУНЕЛ</i> ЕРНЕСТА САБАТА	293

III KLASIČNE STUDIJE I STUDIJE KULTURE

Jelena Pilipović ULTIMA AETAS. ВРЕМЕ У ВЕРГИЛИЈЕВОЈ ЧЕТВРТОЈ ЕКЛОГИ	305
Elia Marinova TRAPPED IN THE 'MIDDLE TIME'	317
Ana Ž. Stanković ЗАБОРАВЉЕНО ПАМЋЕЊЕ И УПАМЋЕНИ ЗАБОРАВ У ПРЕДАЊИМА БЕЛИЦЕ	327

Monika Bala	
SEĆANJE I NARACIJA: VREMENSKA DIMENZIJA U ŽIVOTNIM PRIČAMA BUKOVINSKIH MAĐARA	339
Nataša Trnavac Đaldović	
ВРЕМЕ КАО ВЕЧИТО ВРАЋАЊЕ ИСТОГ: ПРИПОВЕДАЊЕ НАЦИОНАЛНЕ ИСТОРИЈЕ У <i>БЕЗДНУ</i> СВЕТЛАНЕ ВЕЛМАР-ЈАНКОВИЋ	351

IV

VREME, ISTORIJA, KNJIŽEVNOST

Münderlein, Kerstin-Anja	
CERTAINTY, DEATH AND TIME IN THE POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR	367
Igor Žunković	
THE TEMPORALITY OF LITERARY RECEPTION: THE CASE OF SREČKO KOSOVEL'S "SPHERICAL MIRROR"	375
Sonja Veselinović	
ДАТУМ У ПОЕЗИЈИ: ТЕКСТ И ПАРАТЕКСТ	387
Biljana Vlašković Ilić	
THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME IN AMBROSE BIERCE'S SHORT STORY "AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE"	401
Jelena Veljković Mekić	
ВРЕМЕ, ИСТОРИЈА И ФИКЦИЈА У НОВЕЛИ „ГРОБНИЦА ЗА БОРИСА ДАВИДОВИЧА"	413
Jelena Ristović	
ONIRIČKO VREME U ROMANIMA <i>HAZARSKI REČNIK</i> M. PAVIĆA I <i>OPSADA CRKVE SV.SPASA</i> G. PETROVIĆA	425
Sanja Macura	
СТАТИЧНОСТ ДИНАМИЧНОСТИ ИЛИ ДИНАМИЧНОСТ СТАТИЧНОСТИ У КЊИЖЕВНОТЕОРИЈСКОМ КОНТЕКСТУ	435
Nataša Tučev	
АНАХРОНИЈА У ROMANIMA <i>DŽOZEFA KONRADA</i>	447
Milan Živković	
<i>СРЦЕ ТАМЕ</i> КРОЗ ПРИЗМУ ВРЕМЕНА: ДИЈАЛОГ ПРОШЛОГ И САДАШЊЕГ ДОБА	457
Tijana Matović	
THE TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF REMEMBERING PAST TRAUMA IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S <i>A PALE VIEW OF HILLS</i>	469
Sara Arva	
ВРЕМЕ КАО УЗРОК СУКОВА ИЗМЕЂУ ЕТИКЕ И ЕСТЕТИКЕ: ПРОЛАЗНОСТ У <i>SLICI DORIЈANA GREЈA</i>	479

Yildiray Cevik THE TREATMENT OF TIME IN <i>TIME'S ARROW</i>	489
Sanja Ignjatovic, Milan Jačević INTERPRETING THE PRESENT – THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF TIME IN MICELHOUELLEBECQ'S "SUBMISSION"	499
Ljiljana Petrović ТРАУМА И ВРЕМЕНСКА ДИСЛОКАЦИЈА У РОМАНУ <i>ОБА ПРИЧА</i> АЛЕКСАНДРА БАРИКА	511
Ana Došen RUŠEVINA LEPOTE I MULTITEMPORALNOST U ROMANU <i>ZLATNI</i> <i>PAVILJON</i>	523
Slađana Stamenković THE CONCEPT OF TIME IN HYPERREALITY OF DON DELILLO'S <i>COSMOPOLIS</i>	533
Ljubiša Zlatanović AUTOPORTRET UMETNIKA U MLADOSTI: VREME LIČNOG I UMETNIČKOG SAZREVANJA U KNJIZI <i>SAMO DECA PETI SMIT</i>	541

UDK 821.133.1.09-31 Houellebecq M.

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INTERPRETING THE PRESENT – THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF TIME IN MICHELHOUELLEBECQ’S *SUBMISSION*

Abstract: The paper examines Michel Houellebecq’s novel *Submission* in terms of, primarily, temporality as not only a structural element of narratives, but in the service of the rhetoric of the text. The authors analyze two aspects of the narrative structure based on the theoretical framework proposed by Richard Walsh in his study *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*. The narrative is analyzed in terms of (inter)contextuality and rhetorical representation. Context and time-wise, referential properties of the narrative are analyzed with the aim of casting light on the effects produced in the process of immersion, as well as on the implication and potential ideological outcomes emerging from the interplay between the fictional world of the narrative and the present-day socio-cultural context. By uncovering the narrative’s ideologically-charged moments and their dependence on the present-day real-world referents, the authors aim to show how Houellebecq’s projection of contemporary French society results in a credible, but ultimately epistemologically ambiguous vision of the near future whose satirical potentials are undermined by the virtue of their indeterminacy and a subjective historical perspective.

Key Words: temporality, inter-textuality, narrative ethics, fictionality, rhetorics

1. Introduction

The aim of this analysis is to approach the issue of temporality in Michel Houellebecq’s novel *Submission* from the theoretical perspective of rhetorical representation. Quite controversial upon its publication in 2015, Houellebecq’s novel features a hypothetical vision of France under Islamic rule in the near future (the year 2022), which, despite its temporal distance, is still underpinned by references to contemporary factual actors and socio-political discourses. In addition to its futuristic setting, *Submission* also features time as one of its central narrative themes in the form of the protagonist’s protracted musings on the past and future, both personal and national. Time, therefore, seems to be given clear and particular thematic and structural significance in the novel. However, having in mind Houellebecq’s satirical approach to a contentious subject matter that is at the center of *Submission*, the handling of time and temporality in the novel becomes not only an issue of semantics or narrative structure, but also (and perhaps crucially) of rhetoric.

The authors of this paper argue that Houellebecq relies on temporal manipulations and an interplay between the fictional and the factual in constructing the ideologically-charged satirical discourse of the novel. By analyzing these two properties of Houellebecq's narrative from the perspective of rhetoric, we aim to show that the novel's controversial reception could be attributed not only to Houellebecq's satirical approach to a sensitive subject matter, but also the way that subject matter is temporally rendered and contextually positioned. For the purpose of highlighting the possible rhetorical function of the temporal aspects of narrative structure, this paper will draw on the work of Gerard Genette and his study of anachrony – the temporal distortions between the sequencing of the events in the story-world, and the intentionality in the deviations present in narrative representation. Genette's concepts of analepsis and prolepsis will be used to point out the anachronous sequencing in narrative representation, as well as to precisely determine the narrating situation and its implications. Also, Richard Walsh's critical study of narrative fictionality, and narrative rhetorical ethics and aesthetics, will be taken as the starting point for the analysis of Michel Houellebecq's novel *Submission*.

In the first section of the paper, we outline and define the key terms from narrative theory to be used in the analysis, paying particular attention to the concepts of time, anachrony, fabula, sujet, and fictionality. Following that, in the second section of the paper, we present our analysis of temporality in *Submission*, with the aim of showing how it underpins the novel's rhetorical and satirical potentials.

2. Theoretical Framework

Scheffel, Weixler, and Werner, in their essay *Time*, define time as “a constitutive element of worlds and a fundamental category of human experience”¹. This definition not only positions time as an indispensable category for understanding human consciousness and experience, but also for understanding the inner workings of narratives and narrative representation. Moreover, time as the fourth category enables us to “measure” our experiences and proves to be central to the cataloging of information and its interpretation. Philosophy, literary, and narrative theory, have approached the problem of time and temporality in numerous ways, from Aristotle's attempt at defining it as “a number of changes in respect of the before and after” (Aristotle 2006), to time as represented or utilized in a specific medium of transmission, but all of the definitions seem to revolve around the progression that is perceived in the process of both storytelling and reception of narrative discourses. To be more precise, the fourth dimension, intangible and invisible, is a mental construct that enables the structuring of information into meaningful wholes, into cognitive structures.

Narrative is traditionally, or in the spirit of structuralism, defined against the criterion of eventfulness – the existence of minimal action or change of state

¹ URL: <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/time>[view date:16 Apr 2016]

(Genette, Schmid, Fludernik). Furthermore, narrative also encompasses the very process of storytelling which is by default a progression structured in such a way so as to shape a particular discourse, fictional or factual, into a complete unit – a cognitive structure. This two-fold general definition accepted and built upon by the majority of contemporary narratologists, albeit founded on structuralist ideas, implies the crucial role of the spatio-temporal aspects both in terms of the minimal requirements the text must meet in order for it to be regarded as a narrative, and in terms of textual coherence achieved in the process of storytelling. Scheffel, Weixler, and Werner approach narrative time as three-fold and determining, on the most general level, the “world-constitutive dimension” – story-time. In the above-mentioned essay, *Time*, these authors propose the idea of story-time as reliant “on verbal evocation and interplay with other elements of the narrated world” which in the process of narrative transmission, narration, and narrative reception serves to better define the relationship with the vantage point from which the narrative is related – the narrator’s spatio-temporal position; the chronological order of the events or changes of state narrated, and, finally, the temporal determinants of the discourse itself. Namely, it is inconceivable for any event to take place or change of state to occur without temporality as the central defining category enabling the perception and interpretation of the phenomenon.

Drawing on the work of structuralists, but moving beyond the traditional idea of two levels of temporality embodied in the *fabula-sujet*² and similar dichotomies, David Herman points to another, dichotomy “the *what* and the *how*, or what is being told versus the manner in which it is told” (Herman 2009: 94) which, in fact, foregrounds the problem Stanzel and Genette, among many other, have tackled. The related narrative indeed has two temporal layers that or sequences that can be aligned in degrees (or dis-aligned), and the discrepancy is in the sequence of events in the story-world represented in the narrative, and their sequence in the representation itself. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette labels the occurrence as anachrony (Genette 1980). The sequence of narrative representation need not necessarily follow the chronological order of events as they occur in the story-world, and instances of analepses (flashback) and prolepses (flash-forward), intra or extra-diegetic, homo or hetero-diegetic, may re-arrange the sequence of the story-world events in the narrative representation. This, in turn, has implications on the reception of the narrative as anachronies in narrative representation pertain to narrative design and therefore shape the process of narrative reception. On the other hand, Herman rejects the idea that double temporality or anachrony can be viewed as a pre-requisite for narrativity. Temporality, rather, may too be the feature of texts which are descriptive alone. However, the aim of this paper is to exemplify the manner in which temporality or, more precisely, anachrony present in narratives may serve a rhetorical function within the text. Namely, Herman defines narrative as “a cognitive strategy for navigating the gap, in everyday experience, between what was expected and what

² “Sujet is what we come to understand as a given (fictional) narrative, and fabula is how we come to understand it. Our understanding, in other words, is not of ‘what happened’; it is of the weight and import of the narrative actually told.” (Walsh 2007: 68)

actually takes place” (Herman 2009: 97). This understanding of narratives implies that expectations, suspense and the overall genre-specific effects stem not from the narrative design itself, but rather solely from “people’s everyday understanding of how thinking works” (*Ibid.*). Drawing upon the work of Bruner and his “folk psychology”, Herman defines narratives as a discourse framework for “formulating reasons about why people engage in the actions they do” (*Ibid.*), which basically means that narratives in general serve as explanations to other narratives. Prototypical exemplars of text-type categories give basis for genre conventions and reception, and the gap-filling in the process of reception, according to Herman, accounts for the effects produced by the overall design. However, this paper deals with the question of whether temporality and its workings on multiple levels in narrative structure can indeed be rejected as one of the criteria for narrative design impact, or do they in fact play a vital role in the rhetorical ethics of the text.

Richard Walsh’s *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* has three-fold importance for the thesis of this paper, and applying the three premises proposed by Walsh concerning fictionality and narrativity, discourse, and frame of fiction (narrator) will illustrate the instances in which the interference with the temporal aspects of narrative design influence both emotively and ideologically the reception of the text. The aim is to show how the temporal aspects of narrative can be manipulated in such a way so as to serve a particular rhetorical function of the text in the course of narrative progression – the process of storytelling.

Fictionality is particularly and primarily problematic in the case of Houellebecq’s *Submission* because the story-world of the novel heavily relies on the referents in the real-world pertaining to history, historical figures, events and overall spatio-temporal aspects of today’s France. Delineating between the referent world and the fictional story-world of *Submission* is in itself not challenging, nor does it particularly relevant genre-wise. However, the issue at hand is in what ways such strong reliance of the spatio-temporal and factual information influences the reception of the text, and how temporal (dis)alignment, particularly, modifies and builds upon the cognitive environment of the reader, and the formation of cognitive structures – the fabula that we come to understand from the sujet-discourse given, in Richard Walsh’s terms. It is the sujet that the reader encounters in reading the text, whereas fabula, or the story that is the cognitive structure formed upon reading, forms during and after the act of reading. The same discourse may be read as a different story by readers of with different cognitive environments because the contextual information already present and received interacts differently with the discourse in the course of the reader’s interpretation of the story. Literary conventions and those of the genre imply that a novel possesses the attribute of fictionality regardless of its strong connection to the referent world. However, the question that poses itself in the case of *Submission* is to what extent contextual effects affect fictionality, and narrative interpretation. Also, what effect the methods or techniques modifying the sequencing in narrative representation and overall design produce in relation to the global effect – the effect that extends beyond the narrative itself, but rather to the referent world.

Following this line of thought, it is essential to define fictionality in itself, as well as against narrativity and factuality. In his essay *The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality*, Hayden White's claim is that narratives are by default characterized by fictionality, which by extension denies the possibility of factual narratives. White does not deal with the problem of narrativity that distinguishes between descriptive and action-based narratives, but it is apparent that the definition of narrative assumed in his rejection of purely factual narratives implies action – event sequencing, or state change as a general condition. White's position is that the process of narrative representation inevitably involves a point of view that is subjective and therefore only that one particular instance of the story. Walsh defines fictionality as the “cultural rationale” for “the exercise of our narrative understanding” (Walsh 2007: 8), which means that fictionality is assumed whenever narratives are produced. Tackling the problem of fictionality not as a dichotomy between the fictional and factual, Walsh suggests that it cannot be presented as the problem of “truthfulness” (Walsh 2007: 30) as fiction does not entail literal truthfulness, but rather truthfulness to the story-world, thus relevance that it may have for it. Moreover, he draws upon relevance theory as Sperber and Wilson interpret it, and extends it to fiction in the sense of equalizing the communication act in fiction with that of the real world. Namely, the speech act present in fiction is perceived as serious with Walsh, therefore allowing for inferences and the generation of implicatures. Fictive discourse thus functions in the same manner, with the presumption of the criterion of relevance, as the ordinary or “serious” speech act, but only bears indirect or little relevance to the real world. The relevance that fictive speech act possesses belongs to the story-world, but it also incrementally achieves global relevance (Walsh 2007: 30). Furthermore, narratives achieve their global relevance by building thematic relevance and transferring it in the process of reception to the cognitive environment of the reader. Walsh notices that “the narrative force of fiction depends upon the assumptions carried forward, enriched, modified, reappraised, overturned in the process of reading” (2007: 31). This is coextensive with what Sperber and Wilson term as the “poetic effect” (Walsh 2007: 28) – an accumulation of relevance in the cognitive environment of the reader that enables for “an improvement in knowledge” (*Ibid.*) that may pertain to the story-world but extends to the global world as well. The pragmatic theory of fictionality that Walsh proposes sees narrative discourse as a communicative situation the context of which need not be viewed as separate from the real-world context. Moreover, he rejects the minimal departure concept as required for immersion into the story world – the communicative situation itself, provided by the narrative discourse situated in the fictional, story-world, is enough to provide the reader with the assumptions needed for understanding the narrative. Walsh's position is that fictionality is basically only “a contextual assumption by the reader, prompted by the manifest information that the authorial discourse is offered as fiction” (2007: 36), and he notices that the rhetorical approach to fictionality does not exclude the possibility of gaining factual information from fiction, but that it is not the function of fiction. From the point of view of pragmatic theory then, fiction is the narrative representation of the way matters in real-world work as opposed to mirroring what they are like by relating facts, and the cognitive

benefit is achieved by the successful decoding of these matters related in the discourse – our making sense of them evaluatively, emotionally and logically. Fictionality, as a contextual assumption by reader, is then a rhetorical recourse – referential properties of fictionality are only secondary. On the other hand, “exercising fictionality” necessitates a certain purpose. Walsh notices that the “particulars” of narratives are fictional, but not the “mimetic process which does not reside in these particulars themselves, but in their narrative articulation” (2007: 51). It is in the narrative articulation or the *sujet*, the manner in which plot is told, that the rhetorical intention of the narrative discourse can be found for *fabula*, or the story, is “a construction of events from discourse, not their reconstruction” (Walsh 2007: 57). Furthermore, narration cannot be temporally neutral, just as absolute chronological order is impossible. In fact, the story itself is not defined by the temporal aspects of the narrative, but the structural arrangement of temporal elements produces different effects. The story as obtained from the narrative discourse is already rhetorically conditioned by the *sujet* – by the discourse, and temporal aspects of the *fabula*, such as chronological or anachronous sequencing, are not as relevant as they are relevant in the narrative representation. Actually, it is the *sujet* that allows the *fabula* to gain logical, evaluative or other relevance in relation to the interpretation.

3. The rhetorical function of time in Michel Houellebecq’s *Submission*

With all this in mind, Houellebecq’s *Submission* makes a particularly suitable object of investigation, owing to the author’s strong reliance on anachrony in the construction and presentation of the narrative. The diegetic setting is France in the year 2022, and the first-person narrative follows the life of François, a middle-aged professor of literature at the New Sorbonne University, over the course of a few months during which France is undergoing a political and socio-cultural transformation – namely, the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood and the election of their leader, Mohammed Ben-Abess, as President of France. With regards to temporality, Houellebecq’s narrative approach is unusual in two mutually related respects: firstly, in terms of the positioning of the narrative in the not-so-distant future, and secondly, due to the prevalence of extradiegetic discourse in the form of the narrator’s own ruminations on history and (at times, protracted) discussions of historical events between the characters. While the main temporal setting of the narrative is not at all uncommon per se, it is still relevant in rhetorical terms due to the strong interplay between the story world and the referent world. On a strictly formal level, Houellebecq’s presentation of French society and politics in 2022 is predicated on the inclusion of present-day real-world referents (notably, still-living politicians such as François Hollande and Marine Le Pen, and currently active political parties such as The Socialist Party, The Union for a Popular Movement³, and The National Front, to name but a few). This act of grounding the story world

³ Shortly after the publication of *Submission*, in May 2015, the Union for a Popular Movement changed its name to The Republicans (De Clercq 2015).

of the future in contemporary France eases the cognitive burden on behalf of the reader and increases narrative plausibility; much of the socio-cultural and political background of the story world is already part of the reader's contextual knowledge (presuming, of course, their suitable knowledge of XXI-century France), making it easier for them to immerse themselves in the narrative. The problem, however, arises when we take into account the thematic resonances between Houellebecq's vision of 2022 France and the referent world, and the implications of the former; in order to showcase these appropriately, we first need to examine the narrative's anachronic, often ideologically-charged moments and see how they contribute to the reader's understanding of the diegetic world.

Throughout the novel, François frequently mentions the subject of his doctoral dissertation, the nineteenth-century French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, and draws parallels between Huysmans's life and ideology and his own. Indeed, Huysmans is prominently featured as early as the very beginning of the novel, during the course of which the reader first learns about François's life and career and his close link with the author in question:

During the seven years it took me to write my dissertation, I lived with Huysmans, in his more or less permanent presence. Born in the rue Suger, having lived in the rue de Sèvres and the rue Monsieur, Huysmans died in the rue Saint-Placide and was buried in Montparnasse. He spent almost his entire life within the boundaries of the Sixth Arrondissement of Paris, just as he spent his professional life, thirty years and more of it, in the Ministry of the Interior and Ecclesiastical Affairs. I, too, lived in the Sixth Arrondissement, in a damp, cold, utterly cheerless room – the windows overlooked a tiny courtyard, practically a well. [...] And yet the morning after I defended my dissertation (or maybe that same night), my first reaction was that I had lost something priceless, something I'd never get back: my freedom. (Houellebecq 2016: 7-8)

The extent to which Huysmans and his writings influenced François's life cannot be overemphasized; in fact, most of the prominent anachronic moments in the novel concern François's contemplations on the life, works, and thought of Huysmans, which often take place following François's conversations with other characters about the current political situation in France. Furthermore, François's conversion from self-proclaimed atheist to Muslim at the end of the novel (a *presumed* conversion, since it is presented in the form of modalized proleptic speech), closely resembles that of Huysmans, who converted to Catholicism – though, it must be said, the two instances were motivated by different reasons. On a personal level, François's transformation is presented as the titular submission of the novel, a feat which would, he presumes, ensure personal relevance under the new political order and imbue the remainder of his life with a long-sought sense of significance. It is particularly important to demarcate François's "submission" to Islam; he does not present it, in any way, as an act of true religious conversion (or, rather, religious *acceptance*). Unlike Huysmans, who, as François claims, "did return to the Church, and clearly meant it," (Houellebecq 2016: 220), François's conversion at the end of the novel (spurred by explicit, crafty proselytizing on the part of the secretary

of universities, Robert Rediger, himself a convert) is presented as a thoroughly utilitarian, commercial act. Becoming a Muslim would open doors to a comfortable teaching position at the Sorbonne and, perhaps even more importantly for François, the prospect of a polygamous marriage.

Houellebecq presents this decision on the part of François as a thinly-veiled breaking away from the past – it is immediately preceded by François's completion of a preface to the Éditions de Pléiade collection of Huysmans, the work which marks the self-proclaimed end of François's intellectual life. However, taking into account the narrative as a whole, this supposed start of a new chapter in François's life, this severing of ties with history and intellect, is, from an ideological standpoint, misleading and hypocritical. The past is the cornerstone of Houellebecq's narrative; it not only emerges in the form of relatively simple analeptic references to historical and political events and the narrator's own ruminations on the life of Huysmans, but also suffuses the diegetic present. By foregrounding François's struggles with personal relevance, which culminate in his conversion to Islam, against the backdrop of political and socio-cultural transformations in 2022 France, Houellebecq invites the reader to consider the parallels between the two. François's midlife crisis is the individual equivalent of the crisis of the secular humanist tradition in France and Europe, strained under the influx of "[a] wave of new immigrants, with their traditional culture – of natural hierarchies, the submission of women and respect for elders – [who offer] a historic opportunity for the moral and familial rearmament of Europe" (Houellebecq 2016: 231). In the end, both crises are resolved in the act of ideological submission, though, owing to Houellebecq's very myopic presentation of Islam (predominantly voiced by sweet-talking converts compromised by their own political and personal goals, like Rediger), the ideology in question is, at best, secondary to the true object of submission – the repackaged and repurposed past, constantly evoked throughout the novel and indeed a major feature of its narrative presentation. The movement from the analeptic presentation of the lives of François and Huysmans at the beginning of the novel to the imagined future conversion of François presented in the form of proleptic speech at the very end of the novel structure the narrative as temporally progressive, whereas its constant evocations of the past and ultimate submission to it reveal that it is ideologically *regressive*. Faced with the untenability of their present conditions, both France and the suitably-named François choose to revert to the past – not to the spiritual or moral teachings of Islam, but, rather, to its conservative, patriarchal, family-centered sociopolitical tenets which are, in the case of François, important material perks.

Viewed in isolation, these two instances of ideological reversion in the novel do bear a certain thematic interest; however, having in mind the diegetic space-time and Houellebecq's reliance on referentiality in depicting it, they gain far more serious rhetorical relevance. The temporal distance between the story world and the referent world – just seven years at the time of the novel's publication – positions the narrative as a dire warning of things to come, while its abundance of present-day real-world signifiers seems to hint that the transition has already begun. Houellebecq envisions France in 2022 as a nation in which progressive, humanist values are poised for

complete defeat – or, rather, unconditional surrender – at the hands of conservative and extremist ideologies, a transformation presented as a regressive paradigm shift historically characteristic of grand nations and empires of Europe past their prime, which somehow still manages to fall on deaf ears in the XXI century:

Two years before, when the riots started, the media had had a field day, but now people discussed them less and less. They'd become old news. For years now, probably decades, *Le Monde* and all the other centre-left newspapers, which is to say every newspaper, had been denouncing the 'Cassandras' who predicted civil war between Muslim immigrants and the indigenous populations of Western Europe. [...] In hindsight, the journalists of the centre-left seemed only to have repeated the blindness of the Trojans. History is full of such blindness: we see it among the intellectuals, politicians and journalists of the 1930s, all of whom were convinced that Hitler would 'come to see reason'. It may well be impossible for people who have lived and prospered under a given social system to imagine the point of view of those who feel it offers them nothing, and who can contemplate its destruction without any particular dismay. But in fact, the media's attitude had changed over the last few months. No one talked about violence in the banlieues or race riots any more. That was all passed over in silence. They'd even stopped denouncing the 'Cassandras'. In the end the Cassandras had gone silent, too. People were sick of the subject, and the kind of people I knew had got sick of it before everyone else. (Houellebecq 2016: 43)

It is the normalization of this multileveled resurgence of the past which is, perhaps, the novel's most striking and troubling rhetorical characteristic. On an individual level, François follows in the footsteps of Huysmans, substituting spiritual/religious awakening for professional advancement and the possibility of living out his patriarchal fantasies of dominance; on a national level, under the leadership of Ben Abbes, France follows in the footsteps of the Third Reich, eschewing fascistic, violent totalitarianism in favor of shrewd political maneuvering and equally totalitarian collectivism, whose two main pillars are family and traditionalist education. In other words, the past is doomed to repeat itself, in a form which is just different enough for it to be presented as a novel solution, ready to take advantage of our ennui and seduce us with its promise of fulfillment. In François's words, "[t]he past is always beautiful. So, for that matter, is the future. Only the present hurts, and we carry it around like an abscess of suffering, our companion between two infinities of happiness and peace" (Houellebecq 2016: 222). Houellebecq, therefore, implies that the present is an intermediary, ultimately negative state, a prison in which we wait for the inevitable future return to the past – an implication all the more strengthened by the author's handling of temporality in the novel. There are no other solutions, no other methods of escape, but to sit, and grow bored, and eventually submit.

4. Conclusion

In a remarkable real-world illustration of the notion of eternal recurrence which Houellebecq flaunts so eagerly in his novel, *The Economist's* review

of *Submission* quotes the French novelist Emmanuel Carrère, who “compared [Houellebecq’s novel] to George Orwell’s “1984” (“Irrepressible” 2015). However, despite broad thematic similarities, the two works differ in two important aspects. In Orwell’s work, the submission of the protagonist, Winston Smith, is forced through both physical and psychological means; months of torture are needed to break his defiance and rebellion. *Submission*, on the other hand, is a narrative of ideological seduction; resistance of any kind, be it personal, social, or political, is not only futile, it is practically nonexistent, lending the novel a substantially more passive, defeatist tone compared to *1984*. Finally, and perhaps ironically, the larger temporal distance between the referent world and story world and relative referential obscurity of Orwell’s novel compared to that of *Submission* lead to a greater, more general and symbolical effectiveness of *1984*’s satirical potentials.

According to Richard Walsh in the *Rhetoric of Fictionality* (2007), the act of storytelling itself is bound to be rhetorically charged in order for the transformation of the (pseudo)factual into fictional to be successful, and for the discourse placed before the readers to be re-assembled in the form of the story by the readers themselves. Therefore, any discourse, regardless of the factual or veridical nature of elements contributing to the creation of communicative situations or the context presented in it, must be rhetorically, if not ideologically, directed by the narrating entity, or the implied author. By creating a direct and suggestive parallel between the past and present, the socio-political circumstance of then and ‘now’ of the novel and incidentally the reality it relies on; by equating Huysmans’ and François’ conversions and ideological positions, Houellebecq selectively foregrounds and targets the Islamist ideology, and does so from a very limited perspective, by indiscriminately reducing this multifaceted system to its (undoubtedly problematic) conservative socio-cultural tenets vehemently defended not by native Muslims, but by proselytizing converts motivated by personal material gain. Remaining rhetorically indeterminate, Houellebecq achieves a position where the presented ideology as a whole ultimately becomes nothing more than a scapegoat for the satirical nature of the narrative, which, under recent circumstances (the ongoing refugee crisis, the Île-de-France and November 2015 Paris attacks), has the potential to lead to particularly dangerous and unsettling implications.

By choosing to close the temporal gap between the referent world and the story world, and by additionally cumulatively basing narrative progression on the reader’s knowledge of history and socio-political circumstance of 21st century France and Europe, Houellebecq leads the reader, much in the spirit of postmodern flippant tendency to resist conclusion, to an undefined and rhetorically ambiguous ending.

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TUMAČENJE SADAŠNJOSTI - RETORIČKA UPOTREBA VREMENA U “POKORAVANJU” MIŠELA UELBEKA

Rezime

U ovom radu analizira se roman *Potčinjavanje* Mišela Uelbeka i to sa ciljem da se svojstvo temporalnosti objasni ne samo kroz ulogu strukturalnog elementa teksta, već i kroz retoričku ulogu. Autori rada analiziraju dva aspekta narativne strukture na osnovu teorijskog okvira koji se bazira na studiji „Retorika fikcionalnosti” Ričarda Volša. Dakle, narativ romana analizira se iz perspektive (inter)kontekstualnosti, i retoričkog predstavljanja u tekstu. Kada su u pitanju kontekst i vreme, istražuju se referencijalna svojstva teksta, a sa ciljem da se izoluju i na primerima pokažu efekti koje tekst stvara u procesu uranjanja, kao i implikacije odnosno potencijalno ideološki ishod interakcije fikcionalnog sveta i sociopolitičkog konteksta današnjice. Ukazujući na ideološki obojene elemente narativa, kao i na jako oslanjanje narativa na referente iz stvarnog sveta i kontekst današnjice, autori prikazuju na koji način Uelbekova projekcija savremenog francuskog društva rezultira narativom uverljive, ali na kraju epistemološki dvosmislene vizije bliske budućnosti čije su posledice tek naizgled satirične zbog svoje neodređenosti i subjektivne istorijske perspektive u čiji su kontekst stavljene.

Ključne reči: temporalnosti, intertekstualnost, etika, fikcionalnost, retorika

JEZIK, KNJIŽEVNOST, VREME
Književna istraživanja
april 2016

Izdavač

Filozofski fakultet u Nišu
Ćirila i Metodija 2

Za izdavača

Prof. dr Natalija Jovanović, dekan

Lektura

Maja Stojković (srpski)
Kelsey Montzka (engleski)

Dizajn korica

Darko Jovanović

Prelom

Milan D. Randelović

Format

17x24

Štampa

UNIGRAF X-COPY

Tiraž

100 primeraka

ISBN 978-86-7379-445-7

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

82.0:81'42(082)

82.09(082)

82.09:115(082)

JEZIK, književnost, vreme : zbornik radova.
Književna istraživanja / urednice Vesna
Lopičić, Biljana Mišić Ilić. - Niš : Filozofski
fakultet, 2017 (Niš : Unigraf x-copy). - 560 str.
: ilustr. ; 24 cm. - (Biblioteka Naučni skupovi /
[Filozofski fakultet, Niš])

“Zbornik Jezik, književnost, vreme:
književna istraživanja predstavlja jedan od
dva toma radova sa desete interdisciplinarne
međunarodne konferencije Jezik, književnost,
vreme, održane na Filozofskom fakultetu u
Nišu 22. i 23. aprila 2016. godine.”--> kolofon.
- Radovi na srp. i engl. jeziku. - Tekst lat. i ćir.
- Tiraž 100. - Str. 9-29: Narativno konstruisanje
temporalnosti / Vesna Lopičić i Biljana Mišić
Ilić. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz
tekst. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad.
- Summaries; Rezimeji.

ISBN 978-86-7379-445-7

1. Лопичић, Весна, 1959- [уредник] [аутор
додатног текста] 2. Мишић Илић,
Биљана, 1962- [уредник] [аутор додатног
текста] а) Књижевност - Дискурс анализа -
Зборници б) Компаративна књижевност
- Зборници с) Књижевност - Време -
Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 233195532