

THE MULTI-LAYEREDNESS OF THE ILLUSTRATED BOOK *OTOK* (*THE ISLAND*)

VLADIMIRA REZO

Fakultet hrvatskih studija
Sveučilište u Zagrebu
vrezo@hrstud.hr

UDK: 821.163.42.09-93=111
Izvorni znanstveni rad
Primljen: 11. 10. 2022.
Prihvaćen: 15. 12. 2022.

ABSTRACT

Otok (*The Island*), an illustrated book, depicts a dystopian future of an unnamed Croatian island. Grandma, the main heroine and narrator, welcomes her granddaughter Zrinka, who arrives by boat from Zagreb. The majority of the island has sunk, and the remainder is inhabited by a few elderly people. Former Mediterranean vegetation has vanished, there are no animals, the sea is poisonous and greasy, the land is poisoned and barren, and the sky is cloudy but devoid of rain. The goal of this paper is to determine which issues emerge in the illustrated book and how they are depicted, as well as to evaluate aesthetic characteristics of the story. The importance of narration in the book cannot be overstated — two stories are told from Grandma's point of view: the story of the dystopian present (told in the present tense), which is the opposite of Grandma's melancholy story of the past and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of Thumbelina. *Thumbelina* is also the main intertext of the illustrated book, which is dominated by a romantic concept of childhood (the kind that Grandma remembers). That image of childhood contrasts with Zrinka's posthumanist childhood, which is represented by a completely altered *Little Red Riding Hood* in the form of a computer game.

KEYWORDS:

dystopian world, environmental issues, technologisation, concepts of childhood, intertextuality, Thumbelina, Little Red Riding Hood

INTRODUCTION

The illustrated book *Otok (The Island)* was co-created by Ksenija Kušec¹ and Kristina Mareković². It is a science-fiction dystopia about an ecological disaster that causes the disappearance of a Croatian island over time. The goal of this paper is to determine which issues emerge in the illustrated book and how they are depicted, as well as to evaluate aesthetic characteristics of the story.

First and foremost, picturebooks must be distinguished from illustrated books. According to the authors Nikolajeva and Scott, the picturebook contains both verbal and iconic signs that are at odds and set expectations for one another (Nikolajeva, Scott, 2001: 12). An illustrated story, unlike a picturebook, can be illustrated by different illustrators, with different numbers of illustrations, and in different ways, but the story remains the same and can be read without looking at the pictures (Ibid., 2001: 8).

It is also necessary to define science fiction, as well as its subgenres and overlaps with other genres. Science fiction is defined by *Hrvatska enciklopedija (Croatian Encyclopedia)* (enciklopedija.hr) as “a genre in literature, film, television, and comics that portrays the individual and the human society in the context of a possible future, most often through interaction with possible or probable science and technology”. Darko Suvin, one of the genre’s greatest experts, gave the canonical definition: “SF is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework, alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (Suvin, 1979: 7–8). Suvin defines science fiction subgenres as: “the Islands of the Blessed, utopias, fabulous voyages, planetary novels, *Staatsromane*, anticipations, and dystopias — as well as the Verne-type *romans scientifiques*, the Wellsian scientific romance variant, and the twentieth-century

¹ Ksenija Kušec (1965) is a writer, architect, and musician who writes both for children and adults. She has produced almost an equal number of books for both age groups. Her oeuvre for adults includes two adult story collections, *Reci mi sve (Tell Me Everything)*, 2013), and *Opća opasnost (General Danger)*, 2019), as well as two novels, *Sobe (Rooms)*, 2014), and *Nije moglo bolje (It Couldn't Have Been Better)*, 2016). She is also an author of literary works for children: two collections of stories, *Priče iz Sunčeva sustava (Stories from the Solar System)*, 2010), and *I onda se dogodilo (And Then It Happened)*, 2020), a short novel *Janko i stroj za vrijeme (Janko and the Time Machine)*, 2013), a picturebook, *Prozirna Lili (Transparent Lili)*, 2015), with the co-creator Jelena Brezovec, and an illustrated book, *Otok (Island)*, 2018), with the co-creator Kristina Mareković.

² Kristina Mareković (1981) graduated from the School of Applied Arts and Design, and got her degree in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts. She is a member of the Croatian Society of Visual Artists. She is also involved in pedagogical work, children’s illustration, and graphic design.

magazine- and anthology-based SF *sensu stricto*" (Ibid., 12).

When it comes to defining dystopia, it is important to note that the term originated as the opposite of More's utopia. Utopia is a compound of two Greek words, *eu*, which means no, and *topos*, which means place, so it is translated as a place that does not exist. As a result, dystopia would be any fictional or existing social system that is distorted and full of flaws, often marked by state repression, state of war, violence, pollution, contagion, and, consequently, by dissatisfaction and suffering of the people who live in it. Dystopia refers to literary works that describe dystopian reality. Eric Rabkin has been examining the literary relationships and intersections of utopia, science fiction, and satire, and concluded that dystopian literature can be a subgenre of all three, resulting in pure dystopia (as a subgenre of utopia), SF dystopia, and satirical dystopia (1996: 122).

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TOPICS

The presentation of the island's dystopian world, where nature has been polluted to such an extent that the consequences are unavoidable for both the island and Croatia as a whole, is an important theme in the book. Academic studies on ecology in children's and YA literature by Alice Curry (2013), Zoe Jacques (2015), and Phoebe Chen (2018), as well as Victoria Flanagan's study on posthumanism and technology in YA fiction (2014), are relevant for this issue. Texts of ecocritical theorists, such as those of S. Estok (2009, 2011), R. Dini (2021), S. Grieve (2019), K. Thornber (2014), M. Thompson (1979), and others, have also served as useful starting points for this paper.

Simon Estok observes an almost universal "ecophobia" in the world around us, which he defines as "contempt and fear we feel for the agency of the natural environment" (2009: 207). In her book on the environmental crisis in YA literature, Alice Curry poses the question of the meaning of post-apocalyptic narratives, which she believes are insufficient for a shift in human action, for awareness. Nonetheless, "the strength of these novels lies in rejecting existing ideologies to make room for new, and different, world orders" (2013: 42). The YA novels she analyses in the book are not ecophobic (in the sense that Estok uses the term)³,

³ In the broadest sense, Estok defines ecophobia "as an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature" (2011: 4). Ecophobia manifests itself in all spheres of life, and is supported by capitalist economy, especially consumerism.

but they are significant because “[s]uch novels look to the post-natural landscape not as a space of threat but as a potential space of human belonging” (Ibid.). Ecocriticism, according to Zoe Jacques, is “the attempt to find alternative modes for conceptualizing the relationship between the human and the wider world” (2015: 16). According to Phoebe Chen, “these narratives project a posthumanist vision of ecologically oriented subjectivity characterized by restoration of the past and reclamation of one’s inner life” (2018: 191). When it comes to the attitude towards technology in children’s books and YA literature, Victoria Flanagan believes that it is significantly different today than it was in the 1980s, which is evident “in the way that these fictions construct the relationship between human beings and technology—primarily because they represent technology as enabling, rather than disempowering, for child and adolescent subjects” (2014: 2).

Intertextuality is also taken into account in the analysis. Intertextuality is a literary relationship that implies the existence of some meaningful connection between two or more literary texts. Viktor Žmegač analyses three types of intertextuality: self-referentiality, departure from literary tradition, and reinterpretation of a famous literary work or character (1993: 29-33), while Dubravka Oraić Tolić divides intertextual connections into those that preserve the meaning of the template and into those that intentionally change it (1990: 39). The theoretical development of intertextuality by Pavao Pavličić also applies to the book *Otok*. Pavličić emphasizes three conditions necessary for the establishment of intertextuality of two literary works: visibility of their relationship, their stylistic, compositional or other similarity, and a meaningful link between them (1988: 157-158); he distinguishes between synchronic and diachronic relations of two intertextually connected works (Ibid., 158); and categorizes intertextuality as conventional or unconventional (Ibid., 168-169).

Narration is an interesting aspect of *Otok*. We used Gerard Genette’s analysis to examine the narrating instance. Emphasizing exceptional complexity of the narrative situation, Gerard Genette analyses its three inseparable elements: “categories of time of the narrating, narrative level, and ‘person’” (1980: 215) – the last implies the relationship between the narrator and the story they tell, with the eventual appearance of the narratee (the reader, i.e. the listener, as they are imagined in the text, a character often addressed by the narrator). According to Genette, the narrator can be extradiegetic, intradiegetic, or metadiegetic, depending on the narrative level (1980: 228), and heterodiegetic (absent from the story they tell) or homodiegetic (present in the story they tell – as a character), depending

on the participation in the story (Ibid., 244-245). There is also the autodiegetic narrator, as a special instance of homodiegetic narrator, when the narrator is the hero of their narrative (Ibid., 245). When these two criteria are combined, four basic types of narrators emerge: extradiegetic-heterodiegetic, extradiegetic-homodiegetic, intradiegetic-heterodiegetic, and intradiegetic-homodiegetic (Ibid., 248). The observation of Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott' that "an ever growing number of picturebooks use an intradiegetic-homodiegetic (first-person child) verbal narrator..." (Nikolajeva, Scott, 2001: 119), is to a certain extent applicable to the analysis of illustrated book.

The final aspect of the book that we are interested in is the illustration analysis. Illustrations in an illustrated book are subordinate to words, and different illustrators may interpret the story differently, so the illustrations do not affect the story (Nikolajeva, Scott, 2001: 8). Still, they are an important part of the book. Joseph Schwarcz's analysis of the relationship between the image and the text in a picturebook is also applicable in our analysis. Schwarcz notices two basic ways in which words and pictures cooperate, two "functions of the illustration" (1982: 14). In a congruent relationship, pictures parallel, amplify, or extend the text in some way, or text and pictures alternate in telling the story. However, there is never a complete redundancy between images and words because images are more concrete than words: the illustrator "adds to, elaborates the text" (Ibid., 14). In a deviation relationship, "illustrations which are initiated by the textual framework ... veer away from it due to the illustrator's own associations and ideas" (Ibid., 16). Such a relationship occurs when the images oppose or alienate the words, that is, when the images and the words are counterpointed.

ANALYSIS

Storytelling is an important aspect of an illustrated book. The narrative is told from the perspective of an adult: the narrator is Grandma, a woman with a wealth of life experience. According to Genette's classification (1980: 248), the narrator in *Otok* is a homodiegetic-intradiegetic, that is, the one who tells an embedded story in which they are the protagonist or witness, and the story is a part of their life experience. This type of narrator is different from the extradiegetic-heterodiegetic that Nikolajeva and Scott cite as the most common type in picturebooks (2001: 119).

The narration is split into two parts. The first level of narration takes place in the present and lasts about a day: granddaughter Zrinka visits her Grandma on the island during the day, just before lunch, and returns to the coast by boat the next day—morning activities are mentioned, so we can assume she left late in the morning, before lunch: the ship probably arrives at the same time every day. Grandma recounts the events that occurred during Zrinka's visit to the island in the present. Absence of temporal distance is very unusual because it is a first-person narrator. The simultaneity of the event and the conversation about it is simulated. It should be noted that the use of the present tense is not a natural storytelling convention. When it comes to "simultaneous narration," which occurs at the same time as something is happening, i.e. in the present, what emerges is the problem of narrating the event at the time it occurs, giving a first-person narration the impression of fiction and unrealism (Grdešić, 2015: 92–93).

The second level of narration in the book are Grandma's stories from the past and a retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *Thumbelina*. They are associated with nostalgia, remembering a "better" past, referring to nature, and recalling a time before the world became dystopian.

Ecological Issues Introduced in Otok

The dystopian state of the island is revealed in the present through Grandma's narrative discourse about her granddaughter Zrinka's visit. Grandma describes the effects of mighty nature on man, which were caused by man's neglect of nature. The natural force of water changed the way of life on the island: the island has almost completely sunk, the amount of land has been significantly reduced, travelling to and from the island has become difficult, and infrastructure facilities have been closed. The sea level has risen, and the sea is highly polluted, as are the air and land on the island. As a result, demographic collapse ensues. The older people who used to live on the island ensured that children and grandchildren would at least come to visit. We are witnessing an insular demographic catastrophe: the island is demographically extinct, and it will soon cease to exist, even as a geographical fact, because the retirees have most likely moved to live on land, perhaps with their descendants or in a nursing home. All Croatian cities have been abandoned; the only populated city is Zagreb, and only a few people, most of them elderly, live on the outskirts. The situation in Zrinka's Zagreb is no better than on the island: it is equally or even more polluted, there is no sunshine, and it always rains.

Climate Changes

Otok contains elements of the cli-fi genre (climate fiction or climate change fiction or climate change science fiction). Dan Bloom coined the phrase in 2007 “to describe a set of texts, often including genre fiction elements, which present a storyworld changed by anthropogenic climate change” (as cited in Gourley, 2020: 733).

Grandma notices a significant climate change: although the island is always cloudy, it has not rained in 20 years, and the sun appears 2–3 times a year, whereas in Zagreb it always rains (acid rain). Also, the seasons have vanished on the island, with late summer or early autumn lasting forever, which is why Grandma believes it is pointless to explain in school why swallows fly south, what is spring, what is summer, what is leaf fall, what is autumn — children learn, get a grade, and forget. Climate change is the result of increased industrial production of carbon dioxide, tropospheric ozone, methane, nitrous oxide, perfluorocarbon compounds, and fine aerosols, which causes an overall warming of the atmosphere (nap.edu/10139). As significant as climate change was, Grandma’s health is unaffected by it; she does not suffer from “solastalgia”, defined as “distress that is produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment” (Albrecht et al., 2007: S95).

Mass Extinctions of Plant and Animal Species

There are no plants on the island, and there are none in Zagreb either. That is why Zrinka does not understand what grass is and what flowers are:

- Take a look at this green thing. It’s a blade of grass. There used to be a whole hill full of it.
- How many of them were there? A thousand?
- Much more.
- One million?
- Innumerable. Take a look, this is the rest of the bush. It used to have yellow flowers.
- Yeah.

I see that Zrinka says *yeah* because she doesn’t understand anything (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 7).⁴

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, translations of quotations are those of the author.

There are no animals on the island, either; Grandma's dog was the last. The sky is devoid of birds, and the sea is devoid of fish:

The frogs and the swamps have vanished, as have the other animals. It is amazing that it took only a little while, maybe thirty years. In that interval, all of the animals vanished, completely vanished. The sky is empty, the seas and oceans also, and there is no forest, and even if there were animals, they would have nowhere to be. Even in zoos, there are no animals (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 11).

Official pets are robotic dogs and cats; other animals are unnecessary because children have no experience with other animals:

I am getting sad and helpless because kids today can't have real pets, they just have robots. They appear to be real dogs and cats, but they occasionally get stuck and must be reset, or their batteries fail because, after all, they are just toys. And I don't know why they make only those two kinds of animals for pets. They could make all kinds of animals, at least to show the kids what everything used to look like. Well, they are right, that knowledge serves no purpose. What would a robotic giraffe mean to them? Nothing at all (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 20).

Zrinka has two robotic bees as pets; they were purchased at a store discount and will buzz as long as the batteries last. It is natural for her to see planes, not birds, flying through the sky. However, after reading Andersen's *Thumbelina*, she is disappointed because she would like to have a real bird, a swallow, like the one in the fairy tale.

Widespread Pollution of Sky, Sea, and Land

None of the components mentioned in the title were spared from pollution. The sea around the island is poisonous and oily. It is only used by cargo ships, and it is unknown what they are transporting or where they are going. Water cannot be consumed without a tablet; only when the tablet is recognized by the body can the water be consumed.

When it comes to air, Grandma is aware that the air on the island is still better

than elsewhere—not good enough, but better. Given that most of the islands have been flooded and that most of Croatia has been depopulated, the air on the island can only be compared to that of Zagreb, and it is to be expected that there will be less industry and commerce here.

On the island and in Zagreb, the third polluted component, land, is overcrowded with garbage. Everyone leaves piles of garbage everywhere (plastic bags, cans, cars, clothes, kites, computers, broken robots, diving suits, old dishes, and household appliances) because it is thought that protecting the environment is pointless. Kite flying is the only non-hazardous form of children's entertainment. After one game, the children release kites into the air, and for the next game, they get new ones — the production of waste that suffocates the landscape is never-ending. This is extremely concerning because, according to Rachel Dini, “the human's role in the aftermath of anthropogenic disaster is fundamentally irrelevant: that it is the stuff that they leave behind, and what happens to it even after its producers have vanished, that warrants attention” (2021: 209).

All three ecological problems of Anthropocene: “climate change; mass extinctions of plant and animal species; and widespread pollution of sky, sea, and land make clear the extent to which humans have shaped global ecologies” (Thorner, 2014: 989). The accumulation of waste deprives nature on the island (sea, air, and land) of environmental justice in the non-anthropocentric sense of the term, more in the spirit of ecocriticism, which recognizes nature's active role. Related to that is Sarah Grieve's claim that there is “the interrelatedness of human and environmental injustice” (2019: 970), because they occupy the same space, the space of the one who suffers—in *Otok* it is both the island and the islanders.

An Attempt to Clean a Polluted Island

During Zrinka's stay on the island, a watershed moment occurs when garbage begins to be collected in order to make the environment a little cleaner: on television, it was announced that anyone who brought an old computer would be rewarded. Zrinka received six pots with artificial but clean soil and seeds, each of which will sprout a flower of a different colour, in exchange for collecting six computers. When it comes to waste, the reader has no idea what will happen to it next. The fate of old computers brought by islanders in exchange for surprise gifts can be very ambiguous — it is up to organizers of the collecting action to decide which way they will go. According to Michael Thompson, the father

of waste studies, old computers gathered around the island do not belong to “rubbish,” objects “of zero and unchanging value” (1979: 9), but to “transient” objects, which “decrease in value over time” (Ibid., 7), and “durable” objects, which “increase in value over time” (Ibid.). Rachel Dini supports the idea of inscribing value in objects, even those that once served a purpose but no longer do: her temporal reading sees waste only as “a temporary blip in the potentially infinite lifespan of an object” (2021: 209).

The second course of action to improve Grandma’s island involves an attempt to reforest land where nothing grows due to pollution through afforestation with plants that can withstand the current adverse conditions (absence of rain, polluted land). All of the island’s remaining residents were given seeds of plants that can grow in contaminated soil without being watered. During Zrinka’s and Grandma’s walks around the island, the seeds germinate. When the plants on the island multiply, some of the ingredients in their leaves will cause rain-fall. Interestingly, the attempt at change is carried out by young people: six girls walk around the island in orange tracksuits with the words Recovery and Renewal written on the front and back. Zagreb’s youth are also involved in the project; Zrinka did the same with her class. *Otok*’s young characters are “agents of utopian hope, conveying the romantic notion that eventually the human condition can be recalibrated through the next generation’s active negotiation of the relationship between self and nature” (Chen, 2018: 191), and the book fulfils “its didactic value as a means of encouraging teen readers to reflect and eventually take action” (Curry, 2013: 139–40).

Apart from looking forward to small “victories” over devastated nature (she keeps battery-powered bees in a bottle and collects old computers along the beach to win jars of artificial soil and flower seeds), Zrinka has other ideas about pollution: she proposes throwing water purification tablets into the sea. Grandma mentions that a million tons of pills could have an effect. But what Grandma fails to mention is the method by which these pills are obtained: how harmful to the environment is the process of producing them, especially in such large quantities? A potential solution for cleaning up the sea could be a source of new pollution, potentially affecting all three resources: water, air, and land.

Grandma is also far from passive. She was familiar with unpolluted nature, and she is well aware of the way of life that people have lost. She adores, knows, and understands the island, and she has developed “a sense of place as a prerequisite for environmental awareness and activism” (Heise, 2008: 33), which is

associated with “spatial closeness, cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and an ethics of responsibility and ‘care’” (Ibid.). Despite having to accept new, unnatural conditions, Grandma wishes to preserve the memory of the island as it once was, and she attempts to pass on her awareness of the island’s lost beauty to Zrinka:

I want to show her the nature around the house because there are some stray blades of grass here and there. We walk up a hill that was once densely forested with fragrant Mediterranean grasses, shrubs, and pines. Everything is now grey earth. Few dry pines protrude, with garbage flapping, caught on their broken branches (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 7).

Grandma paints a picture of the ecologically devastated island and Croatia as a whole in a few emotional sentences:

The speed with which everything crashed into this void still amazes me. In just a few decades, everything has gone. I was born on a beautiful planet, raised in a dangerous environment, and am now growing old in a desert, eating recyclable waste. In only one human lifetime (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 25).

Other Dystopian Aspects of the World in Otok: Narrow Space, Control, and Posthumous Tourism

Grandma mentions a few elements of her dystopian reality that are left over from the past: umbrellas, dock gangplanks (bridges), and lemonade. She is fully aware of the dystopia that surrounds her, but in order to survive, she must think positively so that she can cope with daily life. When she contrasts the good aspects of her new life with the bad, she emphasizes more positive sides than we might expect: the bad is that the island has shrunk, but the good is that it has not vanished (as many other islands have); she used to walk for ten minutes to the dock, but now she reaches it in an instant. The island is accessed by boat. However, the ferry that brings Zrinka has an unusual route:

The ship is approaching, but its course is winding. It stays away from the roofs of sunken houses. It almost follows the former road, and a pontoon

waiting room was built on the vanished square near the church, the top of which still protrudes a little from the sea (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 3).

Interestingly, the author raises the issue of changing spatial perspective: what was popular in Grandma's past, buildings "right next to the beach", have not only lost value, but also no longer exist due to rising sea levels. The only survivor is the former periphery:

We walk past the empty houses of my former neighbours and friends as we make our way up the hill to my lodgings. There are only about twenty retirees left on the island, and when we leave or die, the island will be deserted. The sea flooded the shop, the post office, the hotel, all five waterfront cafes, and the lovely beach. What's left is what everyone used to mock.

– Are you going to the hills? Have it your way because you're stupid, and look how close everything is to me! What in the hell possessed you to build a house up there, you brought this on yourself! (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 4).

Another dystopian element in the book is the constant control of citizens through the media: television news cannot be silenced or turned off; it can also be heard when the television is turned off. The most common news items are warnings to citizens not to go outside due to polluted air, not to go outside without masks, and so on. Such messages reveal a part of the power mechanism that manifests itself in media control, and they can be read as propaganda ideologemes⁵. The entire situation resembles a Panopticon, a circular prison model centred around an observatory from which each prison cell can be seen (Bentham, 2014). Although the intimidation comes from television and is not circular, we allow for the possibility of surveillance integrated into the talking boxes. The intertextual reference to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is even more obvious — the concept of Big Brother has become a ubiquitous symbol in Western culture, and so it is recognised in this book, too.

There is also a new type of tourism in Grandma's and Zrinka's reality: post-humorous tourism. Divers come to see the sunken houses, as well as a church

⁵ More on the ideologeme in Frederick Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Fernando de Toro's *Theater Semiotics: Text and Staging in Modern Theater* (1995), and Julija Kristeva's *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980).

with beautiful gothic arches, stone statues of saints, an altar, a baptistery, and a transept. The braver ones visit the cemetery. Visitors dive in, take a look, then leave their diving suits, goggles, and everything they wore on the beach. Nothing is destroyed because there is hope that one day the water will recede. Grandma outlines Croatia of that time by using three geographical reference points: the toponym Zagreb, the choronym Slavonia, and the phrase “dirty sea.” The coastal cities have been flooded, and the plains have been abandoned; people travel from Zagreb to see abandoned houses “under the dirty sea, in the dusty Slavonia” (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 15). Vesuvius is a cultural link to Grandma’s past: back then, tourists went to see abandoned homes of other people.

Visual Component of the Book

The visual component of *Otok* that is expressed in words is impoverished, the colour palette is rather sparse, and grey colour is common in not particularly detailed descriptions. The objects are monotonous, and the colour proportion is low. The ground is grey, the sky is grey-yellow due to clouds, and the sun is only seen 2–3 times a year, and even then it is fleeting. Many people are unfamiliar with colours because of the colour minimalism around them. Colours exist on the screen, but they are not remembered for long because there is no experiential reference point. As a result, black-and-white computer games, objects, furniture, and clothing are being produced — they are less expensive, and coloured ones are unnecessary. In such an environment, Grandma’s recollection that colours once served to distinguish between poisonous and edible berries is a true anachronism — the skill of recognizing poisonous berries by colour no longer serves any purpose in Grandma’s and Zrinka’s contemporaneity.

As an addition to the verbal narrator, illustrations depict the world of the story. There are eight illustrations in all, three of which do not depict human figures. There are two panoramic images, one from afar (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: the cover) and one from above (from the air), showing several roofs and the route by which ships approach the port (Ibid., 2). Six flower pots are depicted in the third non-figurative illustration (Ibid., 24). All illustrations are created in a realistic style, which, according to Antonija Balić-Šimrak, is distinguished by a precise, orderly, and realistic portrayal of people and objects (2014: 11).

The first image of a human figure depicts Grandma next to an ice cream recycler (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 6), showing her to the waist along the right

edge of the picture (the recycler is centrally positioned). On another figurative illustration, Zrinka is shown in a close-up (Ibid., 12), with only her face visible next to a jar over which an artificial bee is flying. According to William Moebius, the size of the character in the illustration is important: the larger it is, the more impressed we will be (as cited in Sipe, 2001: 30). Zrinka's face is the largest shape in the illustrations, although it is not placed centrally, but in the right half, with the hair on the right side of the head missing.

The remaining human figures depict two divers in the sea with several houses on the hill in the background (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 14), two children, a girl and a boy, flying kites (Ibid., 18), and the most populous illustration depicts six girls in charge of island afforestation (Ibid., 8). The majority of illustrations are action illustrations since they should depict "not an object but an action because that is the most obvious purpose of pictures in the context of a text that tells a story" (Nodelman, 1988: 104).

According to Schwarcz's classification (1982: 14), we find the relationship of congruence, more precisely, parallelism, between the text and image in the illustration showing the seabed, divers, and objects on the seabed. Tourists come to dive to see "the altar, beautiful Gothic arches, stone statues of imaginary saints, baptistery, transept" (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 23), and the image depicts a Gothic arch with ornaments and a statue of a saint (Ibid., 14).

If Schwarcz's classification (1982: 14) is further applied, the illustration showing Grandma standing next to the recycler can be considered an amplification, or extension, in relation to the accompanying text. The verbal narrator says nothing about Grandma's appearance, so her depiction as a relatively young person with brown hair shaped into a loose bun is one of the "textual gaps filled by visual images" (Nikolajeva, Scott, 2001: 56), the illustrator's idea of what a grandmother looks like. Various types of waste could also be thrown into the recycler, according to the text (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 5), and the illustrator opted for a dark yellow boot resembling Timberland boots, a small black-and-white paper bundle, and several shoelaces (Ibid., 6) – in this example the illustration also amplifies and extends the words.

According to Schwarcz's classification (1982: 16), the illustration (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 24) and the text on the pots with artificial soil and plant seeds (Ibid., 23) are in a partial relationship of deviation: six pots with artificial but clean humus and seeds are mentioned, with each sprouting a flower in a different colour, but the illustrator painted three yellow and three blue flowers.

The relationship of deviation can be ascribed here only if we presume this was intentional. We think that it was, but we do not believe that the illustrator does not respect the text of the story. Instead, it is about the illustrator experiencing and interpreting the text in such a way – that is her view.

When it comes to colours, the images of interior spaces are dominated by grey (sky and sea), and beige and grey as background. Outside, the roofs of houses are orange, but it is a pale, washed-out orange. The houses are pastel, light blue, beige, and peach in colour, and we are viewing them through a layer of smog. The three scoops of ice cream have subtle colours: one is brownish, another is yellowish, and the third has a hint of pink. Zrinka's lips are pale red and her eyes are light blue. Flowers in pots are painted in more intense shades of blue and yellow; the shade of the yellow shoe that Grandma has put in the recycler is also more intense, and the girls who afforest the island wear orange tracksuits and light yellow T-shirts. Grandma's apron, like the fourth scoop of ice cream, is kerosene blue. The most colourful illustration is that of children flying kites: the three kites shown up close are red, yellow, and blue, the more distant kites are green, blue, and reddish, the boy wears a light blue T-shirt, the girl wears a green T-shirt, and their pants are grey and black.

The colour scheme in the images completely corresponds with the book's impoverished visual component expressed in words: both in the textual and in the visual layer shades of grey prevail, there are not many colours, especially not the vivid ones.

Technology: Science Fiction Elements of Otok

Several technological advancements mentioned (some of them depicted, too) in the book unquestionably define the illustrated book as science fiction. First and foremost, Grandma and Zrinka use nano-douche to wash their hands. It is required after playing in tainted seawater.

The book's second sci-fi component is about food. Grandma's food machine is called a replicator, but it should be called a recycler: it can be filled with anything, usually waste, it releases air while working, a person types in what he or she wants to eat, and the best stewed vegetables or ice cream comes out. This does not exactly imply that something comes from nothing, but the chemical composition of what goes into the machine and what comes out of it is very different.

The genetic modification of food is the book's third type of technology. Food is produced for those who do not have or do not want a replicator. Artificial meat is produced as dough, and fruits and vegetables are produced in plant factories: the bulbs "impersonate" the sun, i.e. illuminate, and artificial bees (robots) "impersonate" real, live bees, pollinating factory-grown fruits and vegetables. The lemonade that Grandma and Zrinka drink after their walk is likely to have come from a recycler: since Grandma has one, she does not have to use factory-produced lemons; she can put anything into the recycler and get lemonade.

Finally, the fourth component of the book's science fiction aspect is "the production of children": the doctor watches the computer screen carefully, and after a while, the produced child returns home.

The illustrated book clearly shows that everyday life on the island does not function without technology and machines: islanders rely on them in some aspects of their lives. The technological solutions in the book are evidence not only of the science fiction genre, but also of the children's and young adults' positive attitudes toward technology as "enabling" (Flanagan, 2014: 2), because technological solutions (mostly) improve life and make it easier. Due to its depiction of dystopian reality, *Otok* can be classified as a subgenre of science fiction, science fiction dystopia (Suvin, 1979: 12, Rabkin 1996: 122).

Intertextuality

The previously mentioned George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not the only intertext in the book. Zrinka enjoys stories, so she requests one from Grandma:

- Grandma, will you tell me that story where the rabbits are killed today?
- Where the rabbits are killed? You got something mixed up, I don't know any such story.
- You know, when a little girl goes through the woods, kills animals, collects cookies in a basket, and goes to her Grandma.
- Yeah, that's Little Red Riding Hood, but a computer game, and the real story is different (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 4).

Grandma recognizes the fundamentally altered *Little Red Riding Hood*, which is the only story Zrinka is familiar with. According to Pavao Pavličić, three

conditions should be met for the mutual relationship of literary works to be considered intertextual. Firstly, their relationship should be visible, even if it is somewhat obscured. Secondly, works should employ similar stylistic, compositional, or other procedures, or one work should comment on or paraphrase the actions of another. Thirdly, there should be a meaningful link between them, which is important for the meaning of the latter text (1988: 157–158). An intertextual relationship is established between the two versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, and all three categories mentioned by Pavličić are met: the relationship is visible, there is a meaningful connection between the texts, which is important for the meaning of Zrinka's *Little Red Riding Hood*, and the new version paraphrases (or rather explores) the original work's stylistic and compositional procedures, and it is actualized in a new medium. Pavličić distinguishes between synchronic intertextual relations, in which the text establishes relations with texts of the same poetics or striving for that poetics, and diachronic intertextual relations, in which the text establishes relations with texts from the past, different poetics; or both (1998: 158). In the case of the two variants of *Little Red Riding Hood*, it is a diachronic relationship because the works are so far apart in time: Charles Perrault wrote his version of the fairy tale in the 17th century, the brothers Grimm published their version in 1812, and *Otok* was published in 2018. It is precisely the time lag that is crucial for the experience of connection as poetically functional. Pavličić categorizes intertextuality as conventional or unconventional: in the first type, texts adhere to the existing genre, stylistic, thematic, and other models and values (Ibid., 168), whereas in the second type, there is no model, so the text innovates existing texts and engages in dialogues or polemics with them (Ibid., 169). Unconventional intertextuality that aims for originality is created between a sufficiently known and relevant template and a new work, so that the new version of *Little Red Riding Hood* challenges the original. According to Viktor Žmegač, there are three types of intertextuality: the first type (often referred to as self-referentiality) concerns the disclosure of the artificial nature of a literary text in the text itself (1993: 29), the second type is a departure from the literary tradition (Ibid., 30), and the third functions as a reinterpretation of a known literary theme or character (Ibid., 33). From that theoretical angle, we can interpret Zrinka's *Little Red Riding Hood* as a literary topic/literary person based on intertext, which is one of the most common types of intertextual addition, particularly in the twentieth century, which is prone to recycling (Ibid., 33), and the twenty-first century

is even more inventive and creative when it comes to reusing modified literary texts. Zrinka's *Little Red Riding Hood* is intermedial: the new medium implies numerous mediological peculiarities and limitations, so the game is limited to the forest section of the road, killing animals and collecting cookies, two common techniques from the beginning of the gaming era.

However, the basic intertext of the illustrated book *Otok* is Andersen's fairy tale *Thumbelina*. Among them, all three of Pavličić's conditions for establishing intertextuality were met (1988: 158): the relationship between the two works is very visible, the connection is not only functional and significant for the illustrated book - it is the interpretive key through which we should read the book, and the compositional features and genre affiliation of the original *Thumbelina* differ significantly from those of the new work. The works were published nearly two centuries apart, in 1835 and 2018, establishing the precondition for a poetically functional connection, and the template is also well-known around the world (Ibid., 158). As far as creating a completely original intertextuality (Ibid., 168), it is already visible in the genre choice: *Thumbelina* is a fairy tale, and Grandma's and Zrinka's reality is a science-fiction dystopia. *Thumbelina* discusses the temptations in life that can be overcome with hard work and effort, whereas the outlook in *Otok* is much more pessimistic (although not entirely pessimistic). Dubravka Oraić Tolić divides intertextual connections into those that aim to preserve the meaning of the older text and those that seek to change it, most often ironically (1990: 39). The intertextual connections that are made between *Otok* and *Thumbelina* are almost certainly intended to preserve the meaning. *Thumbelina* reminds Grandma of the good old days, and it is not altered in the same way as *Little Red Riding Hood* (impoverished, shortened, realized in a different medium, and imbued with aggression); these are simply two interpretations of the same fairy tale. Nonetheless, a relationship that Pavličić calls unusual intertextuality (1988: 169) is created between the illustrated book *Otok* and *Thumbelina*, and the fairy tale encourages a dialogue between two worldviews. Grandmother's telling of the fairy tale is a wistful recollection of a more beautiful, better world, and the confrontation of the idyll with the harsh reality aims to foster awareness of the obvious outcome of neglecting nature.

As a result of their disparate life experiences, Grandma and Zrinka have an intergenerational misunderstanding. They perceive the reality around them differently, and they have a different perspective on childhood. Grandma has

maintained the romantic image of childhood that pervades *Thumbelina*. It places emphasis on meeting the child's needs for protection and care, while the questions about the larger social reality remain completely outside of the child. Zrinka views her childhood through a posthumanist lens. Her perception of childhood was shaped by her experiences on the island and in Zagreb. As a result, Grandma and the little girl have very different interpretations of the fairy tale. Zrinka is unfamiliar with many historical phenomena: she has no idea what the seasons, the frog, or the swamp look like. Zrinka's only mouse is the one that "clicks" when she is playing on the computer, and when Grandma mentions flying on a swallow, she imagines it to be a flight on a superplane. Grandma has used an analogy with the kite, a favourite children's toy of Zrinka's time, when portraying a butterfly. However, in the end there are more differences than similarities between kites and butterflies: "It was just that it was alive and flying at will. It usually had beautiful colourful wings and was not tied with a string" (Kušec, Mareković, 2018: 16). Zrinka has no idea what a half-dead bird or a spider are: Grandma draws a spider web and embellishes it with dew drops, but Zrinka is uninterested, even when Grandma climbs and shows her different locations around the house where she used to find spider webs. After learning that the spiders wove a wedding gown for Thumbelina, Zrinka imagines them as little robots knitting. The cockchafer, which Zrinka imagines as a slightly larger bee, was one of the few items she recognized. Also, the tree in the story is not a problem; Zrinka has seen a flourishing tree in a computer game countless times.

Zrinka's alienation from nature is also demonstrated by her misinterpretation of Thumbelina's decision to forego marrying a mole because she could not live her life underground. Zrinka can picture herself living in a spaceship or a large tower with everything she needs. Thumbelina misses the sky, the sun, and the birds, but the sky above Zrinka is dry on the island and rainy in Zagreb, and she does not need it. She sees life through the eyes of a mole rather than those of Thumbelina, and she has no regrets about the sun, nature, or freedom. Zrinka's world is yellow, greasy, poisonous, rainy, and desolate. A little girl cannot want what she does not know. She has no prior experience: she only knows the world she is in, so her outlook is almost optimistic.

CONCLUSION

Ksenija Kušec and Kristina Mareković presented the disturbing dystopian reality of an unnamed Croatian island: all animal species disappeared over time due to air, water, and soil pollution, the climate changed, and the islanders were displaced. In addition to the ecological disaster, the co-creators brought attention to the troubling situation by mentioning the systematic control of people through non-stop television programs, the phenomenon of underwater tourism, and excessive technology. Some aspects of the illustrated book vividly illustrate phenomena mentioned in children's, youth's, and adults' literature by eco-critical and posthumanist theorists. The book's visual aspect convincingly depicts the main characters (Grandma and Zrinka), significant phenomena (diving tourism, kite flying, and so on), and the grey and colourless everyday life.

Grandma tells two stories about the life on the island against the intertextual backdrop of *Thumbelina*: an idyllic one about the past, and a dystopian one about the present. Grandma warmly recalls the former "heaven on earth", and accepts the present by striving to see the positive aspects of life. Although we would expect a child to narrate the current events in the present, the narrator had to be a grandmother who chooses the present tense for narrating the present — Zrinka's arrival and stay on the island — and the perfect tense for narrating the past — her youth and Andersen's *Thumbelina*, and at the level of expression there is a separation between the unrepentant *then* and the unwanted (but accepted as inevitable) *now*.

In *Otok*, two images of childhood are juxtaposed: a romantic image of childhood, dominant in the fairy tale, and a new posthumanist image of childhood, as seen in the actual living conditions on the island and in Zagreb. Grandma represents the first image, and Zrinka represents the second. As a result, Grandma's intertext is *Thumbelina*, untainted, romantic, and nostalgic, whereas Zrinka's is *Little Red Riding Hood*, full of intervention, altered, rough, and reality-like.

In the midst of the contemporary greyness, co-creators Kušec and Mareković see young people as change agents, following in the footsteps of authors of youth literature: young girls distribute the seeds of shrubs that will thrive despite polluted soil and air, and will encourage rainfall. Schoolchildren are also involved in the action, which has fuelled the activism of little Zrinka, who contemplates how to clean the sea. Zrinka is compelled to act and provide an

alternative to the dystopian status quo. In this way, young readers are encouraged to be active and creative.

In the past, the only active characters - the bearers of the plot - in children's literature were male. There are no male characters in the picture book *Otok*, but there are certainly activists there, and they are all female: grandmother, granddaughter, and girls who carry seeds of resistant plants. Contemporary Croatian picture books and children's books in general "suffer" less and less from the gender stereotype of cuddly and passive girls, and this is especially emphasized in this book: girls, both very young and those who are slightly older, can be whatever they want, just like the women on the island. They choose to act in an environment that is far from a fairy tale. Zrinka is especially inspiring because she does not remember a time when there was less pollution. At first, she does not seem particularly active, but encouraged by the example of the girls who are walking around the island, giving away plant seeds, she gets involved and becomes a positive character that children can look up to, with whom they can identify. Zrinka changes for the better, she "grows" in the picture book. She is not idealized, she is real, there are a lot of such little "Zrinkas" all around us, they just need to be given some motivation. Direct encouragement came from the young girls, but the grandmother also played an important role in Zrinka's involvement. Grandma lives alone on an island that is slowly disappearing. She has to do all the work herself, and can only rely on herself. She has nobody to help her with chores around the house. A grandmother is an important member of the family for every child, and Zrinka's grandmother is an excellent role model.

The illustrated book *Otok* serves several purposes: cognitive — shows the reality of the situation, the consequences of a careless attitude toward nature, the results of human recklessness and arrogance toward the Earth; aesthetic — the island's reality is depicted by realistic illustrations full of details, in colours corresponding to dystopian reality; and educational — every word in this picture book speaks to the need to raise environmental awareness and to commune with nature.

These conclusions have by no means exhausted the methodological potential of this educationally potent and morally relevant story. New researchers could conceivably conduct a new research with a different theoretical focus, committing in more detail to the developmental, motivational and methodological framework of this positive story.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALBRECHT, G., SARTORE, G.-M., CONNOR, L., HIGGINBOTHAM, N., FREEMAN, S., KELLY, B., STAIN, H., TONNA, A., and POLLARD, G. (2007). Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change. *Australian Psychiatry*, 15, S95–S98.
- BALIĆ-ŠIMRAK, A. (2014). Slikovnica – složena igra. In D. Zalar, A. Balić-Šimrak, and S. Rupčić (Ed.) *Izlet u muzej na mala vrata prema teoriji slikovnice*. Učiteljski fakultet u Zagrebu, 70–83.
- BENTHAM, Jeremy (2014). *Panoptikon ili nadzorna zgrada*. Mediterran publishing.
- CHEN, P. (2018). Posthuman Potential and Ecological Limit in Future Worlds. In A. Tarr, and D. R. White (Ed.) *Posthumanism in Young Adult Fiction. Finding Humanity in a Posthuman World*. University Press of Mississippi, 179–195.
- CURRY, A. (2013). *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction: A Poetics of Earth*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- DINI, R. (2021). “Resurrected from its Own Sewers”: Waste, Landscape, and the Environment in J. G. Ballard’s 1960s Climate Fiction. *ISLE*, 28 (1), 207–229.
- ESTOK, S. C. (2009). Theorising in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia. *ISLE*, 16 (2), 203–225.
- ESTOK, S. C. (2011). *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare. Reading Ecophobia*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- FLANAGAN, V. (2014). *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- GENETTE, G. (1980). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell University Press.
- GOURLEY, J. (2020). “Trapped by the climate”: Reading Albert Camus’s *The Plague* in Light of Anthropogenic Climate Change. *ISLE*, 27 (4), 732–752.
- GRDEŠIĆ, M. (2015). *Uvod u naratologiju*. Leykam international d.o.o.
- GRIEVE, S. (2019). Environmental Justice Witnessing in Muriel Rukeyser’s *The Book of the Dead*, *ISLE*, 26 (4), 968–985.
- HEISE, U. K. (2008). *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford University Press.
- JACQUES, Z. (2015). *Children’s Literature and the Posthuman Animal, Environment, Cyborg*. Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group.
- KUŠEC, K. and MAREKOVIĆ, K. (2018.) *Otok*. Semafora.
- NIKOLAJEVA, M. and SCOTT, C. (2001). *How Picturebooks Work*. Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group.

- NODELMAN, P. (1988). *Words about pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. University of Georgia Press.
- ORAIĆ TOLIĆ, D. (1990). *Teorija citatnosti*. Grafički zavod Hrvatske.
- PAVLIČIĆ, P. (1988). Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost. Tipološki ogledi. In D. Oraić Tolić, and V. Žmegač (Ed.) *Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost*. Zavod za znanost o književnosti, 157–189.
- RABKIN, E. S. (1996). Fantastično i žanrovska kritika. *Mogućnosti*, 43 (4–6), 105–125.
- SCHWARCZ, Joseph H. (1982). *Ways of the Illustrator: Visual Communication in Children's Literature*. American Library Association.
- SIPLE, Lawrence R. (2001). Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 6 (1), 23–42 https://www.readingrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/LTL_6.1-Siple.pdf Retrieved 14 March 2022.
- SUVIN, D. (1979). *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction. On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Yale University Press.
- THOMPSON, M. (1979). *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Oxford University Press.
- THORNER, K. (2014). Literature, Asia, and the Anthropocene: Possibilities for Asian Studies and the Environmental Humanities. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 73 (4), 989–1000.
- ŽMEGAČ, V. (1993). Tipovi intertekstualnosti i njihova funkcija. In: D. Oraić Tolić, and V. Žmegač (Ed.) *Intertekstualnost & autoreferencijalnost*. Zavod za znanost o književnosti Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 25–45.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions (2001) <http://nap.edu/10139> Retrieved 11 March 2022 = nap.edu/10139

Znanstvena fantastika <https://enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=67356> Retrieved 14 April 2022 = enciklopedija.hr

VIŠESLOJNOST ILUSTRIRANE KNJIGE *OTOK*

SAŽETAK

Ilustrirana knjiga *Otok* prikazuje distopijsku budućnost neimenovanoga hrvatskog otoka. Baka, glavna junakinja i pripovjedačica, dočekuje svoju unuku Zrinku koja stiže brodom iz Zagreba. Veći dio otoka je potonuo, a ostatak naseljava nekoliko starijih ljudi. Nekadašnja mediteranska vegetacija je nestala, životinja nema, more je otrovno i masno, zemlja zatrovana i neplodna, a nebo oblačno, ali bez kiše. Cilj je ovoga rada utvrditi koji se problemi pojavljuju u ilustriranoj knjizi i kako su prikazani, kao i ocijeniti estetske karakteristike priče. Važnost pripovijedanja u knjizi ne može se precijeniti - dvije su priče ispričane s bakinog stajališta: priča o distopijskoj sadašnjosti (ispričana u sadašnjemu vremenu), koja je suprotna bakinoj melankoličnoj priči o prošlosti i Hansa Christiana Andersena bajka o Palčici. *Palčica* je i glavni intertekst ilustrirane knjige u kojoj dominira romantični koncept djetinjstva (kakvog se baka sjeća). Ta slika djetinjstva u suprotnosti je sa Zrinkinim posthumanističkim djetinjstvom koje predstavlja potpuno izmijenjena *Crvenkapica* u obliku računalne igre.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

distopijski svijet, ekološki problemi, tehnologizacija, koncepti djetinjstva, intertekstualnost, Palčica, Crvenkapica

