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YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIA, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND BIBLICAL HOPE IN SANDRA NEWMAN'S *JULIA*[1]

Abstract

The article examines Sandra Newman's *Julia* (2023) with particular attention to its engagement with the conventions of Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction and its strategic use of intertextuality. While the novel is fundamentally a feminist retelling of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), this author argues that it also draws extensively on developments within YA dystopias over the past seven decades, especially in its portrayal of the intertwined coming-of-age trajectories of its two protagonists, Julia and Vicky. The analysis further highlights the novel's allusions to canonical works such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. These intertexts—each offering depictions of women shaped by male authors—complicate the novel's feminist project: by invoking and reframing them, Newman both critiques the patriarchal literary canon and positions *Julia* within a broader lineage of narratives concerned with the constraints imposed on women. Finally, the article identifies a biblical layer that offers a distinctive solution to the central dystopian problem of hope, suggesting forgiveness and

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love as potential antidotes to the forms of damnation totalitarian systems attempt to impose on their subjects.

Keywords: *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* George Orwell, *Julia*, Sandra Newman, YA dystopia, intertextuality, hope

1. Introduction

Sandra Newman's *Julia* (2023), the rewriting of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949, henceforth: *NEF*) offers a female perspective on the novel's well-known dystopian setting. While Newman's novel represents an important turning point, the reception of Orwell's classic in the last seventy-five years has already been rich: *NEF* has been translated into more than sixty languages (Johnson 123), it was adapted into different genres and media ranging from pop music and comics to video games (Waddell, *Companion* 13–16), and the library of related critical works seems to constantly expand.[2] With the approach of the titular year, interest in the novel intensified to the level of obsession, and not only in the Anglophone world, where important new editions and critical works came out, not to mention the 1985 publication of what is referred by some as the third "classic dystopia" (besides *NEF* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.[3] In the wider European context, Günter Grass famously referred to the 1980s as the "Orwell decade" (though not necessarily in a celebratory tone), while in this final phase of Socialist rule in Central Europe, reception took a slow start after decades of hardline censorship against Orwell's works.[4] More recently, the beginning of Trump's first presidential term gave a remarkable boost to the sales of the novel (and there seems to be a similar response as the second term commences); it also caused some stir in

[2] The comprehensive but admittedly incomplete 1998 bibliography of Orwell's texts (editions and translations) encompasses more than four hundred pages (Fenwick). Two new biographies were published in 2023 (Taylor, *Orwell: The New Life*) and in 2025 (Waddell, *A Bright Cold Day*), and a new handbook on Orwell is published around the time of writing the present article (Waddell, *The Oxford Handbook of George Orwell*); another was published a few years ago devoted only to *NEF* (Waddell, *Companion*). Innumerable other reference works are available, some of which will be cited in their due place.

[3] In their pioneering study of the dystopian tradition, Baccolini and Moylan link Atwood to the tradition of classic dystopias (3), while more recently McManus also stresses that Atwood "appears to be working . . . from the model of the classical dystopia that gave the genre its name and tradition" (106). Johnson assigns a similarly special place to Atwood's work among "Orwell's literary inheritors" (131–35).

[4] For a summary of Orwell's Hungarian reception, see Nóvé (2003) and Czigányik (2011).

the Arab world.[5] Commissioned by the Orwell estate and surrounded by intense press coverage even before its publication,[6] Newman's novel heralds a new era in the novel's afterlife, and may be seen as a final attempt at retaining control over the work going out of copyright in 2024 (Taylor, "Orwell out of Copyright").

The hype before the publication of Newman's novel was followed by quick responses and generally positive reviews, occasionally highlighting certain perceived weaknesses of the text. Carlo Gébler puts Newman's undertaking in the company of other, "corrective" rewritings like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, aiming to amend "Winston's (and Orwell's) misogyny," but he also voices serious concerns about Newman's treatment of Julia's torture scenes. In a similar vein, Natasha Walter calls *Julia* "a satisfying tribute act," but feels that the second half of the book, the torture scenes in particular, is less convincing. Walter also makes a remarkable reference to YA dystopias by claiming that "Newman's prison has something of the performative cruelty of *The Hunger Games* or similar recent dystopias, and her desire to win hope out of the darkness gradually leads her on to less convincing ground" (n.pag). Many of the reviews are uncritically positive, like Isy Santini's, who emphasises *Julia*'s "more human look" at life in a totalitarian state, whereas Aimee Tutchener praises how the novel reveals "the many layers of identity that have been damaged as a result of oppressive dictatorship" (n.pag). Other readers, however, find Julia's agency a bit too strong, comparing the work to a "Marvel-style Hollywood film" (Hunt). In general, torture and oppression, and their perception in *Julia* naturally surface in many opinions, and at least in one case, a connection with Young Adult dystopia is highlighted.

Other reviews come from central sites of reception, like the two polarised opinions published in the *Orwell Society Journal*. Hassan Akram allows for the merits of the book especially in rendering Julia more human, but finds that "parts of it lean too heavily on the traditions of low-grade fiction," explicitly referring to the genre of fanfiction (Akram).[7] In the same place, Réka Törzsök, is genuinely enthusiastic about the way "Julia gains a voice of her own," and she finds the parts discussing Julia's past particularly convincing (Törzsök, "Reimagining Oceania from Julia's Point of View"). Acclaimed biographer David John

[5] According to Johnson, the high sales were due to adviser Kellyanne Conway's use of the curious term "alternative facts" (136, note 4). On the Arabic translations, see Almomani (esp. 50–52.)

[6] For an example, see Flood (2021), on the background, see Miller (2023).

[7] The association with fanfiction is repeated by blogger/journalist/sci-fi author Cory Doctorow (2024).

Taylor celebrates Newman's novel for providing Julia with "an agency that Orwell pretty much denies her," but he finds some of the scenes awkward and artificial (Taylor, "Two Reworkings"). Dorian Lynskey highlights how protective Sonia Orwell was of Orwell's literary estate until her death in 1980 and provides an insight into the role which her successor Bill Hamilton played in the birth of *Julia*, driven by the potential of the "narrative holes" (Hamilton qtd. in Lynskey) of *NEF*. Furthermore, Lynskey emphasises Newman's real-life experiences in the 1980s' USSR, which are clearly felt in descriptions of everyday life of the rural Semi-Autonomous Zones in *Julia* (especially in Chapter 5). Additional reviews can be cited, but the general lines of reception already emerge: while certain aspects like the torture scenes trigger criticism, and some readers are wary of the familiar pitfalls of rewritten classics, the novel's basic conceptual framework is generally appreciated.

Evaluations clearly recognise Newman's attempt to settle what many view as the "feminist debts" of Orwell. This tendency is rooted in a critical engagement with the "Orwell mystique," a term introduced by Daphné Patai to describe the largely unchallenged myth of Orwell as "the most honest writer of our time" (Pritchett qtd. in Patai 3). As Patai argues, such a critical climate has often left "[w]omen readers … effectively excluded from the magic narrative circle" (17). In this light, Newman's novel may indeed be read as a belated response to this critique. The critique has, by now, clearly surpassed the boundaries of academia, as reflected by *New York Times* referring to the same problem: "[Orwell] did not seem to like women much as human beings. He wrote incel-ish, misogynistic rants for male protagonists of his fiction" (Bakewell).[8] Most reviews of Newman's novel are clearly informed by such feminist considerations, and the same is true of the first more detailed scholarly evaluations of the text, like Sena Önvural's essay, which promises a "gynocritical analysis" of Newman's *Julia*. The applied theoretical framework significantly determines the outcomes of the comparison, and unsurprisingly, Orwell is denounced for not "considering [Julia's] agency, personality, thoughts, or individuality" (203), while *Julia* is praised for the way it "challenges the traditional male-dominated narrative by highlighting the female perspective and experience" (210). Although Andleeb and Akram's recent essay shares a similar interest in the feminist aspects of the text, by adding a "feminist posthumanist" angle to their reading, and by focusing on the surveillance technologies represented in the novel, they offer a unique presentist reading of

[8] For a recent assessment of the issue, see Bluemel (2025).

the text, claiming that Newman uses "twenty-first-century forms of digital and emotional subjugation within an Orwellian frame" (2). The representation of Julia as an "allegory of the algorithmic woman of the digital century," however, is not entirely pessimistic, and in this reading, the protagonist's "relational awareness, her ability to read and react to emotional spaces despite being saturated by surveillance" become an essential form of resistance (11). The most detailed study of the original and Newman's rewriting, Réka Törzsök's essay, in a similar vein, focuses on intersubjectivity and the female ethics of care in *Julia*, but provides a more thorough and theoretically founded interpretation, locating many of the relevant issues already in Orwell's novel. She also calls specific attention to the relationship between Julia and Vicky, which will be discussed below, albeit from a somewhat different perspective (Törzsök, "Female Unpersons").[9]

Intriguing as such readings are, they fail to do justice to those aspects of Newman's novel which are not immediately associated with the "gynocritical" criticism of Orwell and his work. However, this article argues that the significance of Newman's novel extends beyond these obvious parallels, and that the work establishes a wider network of intertextual connections that complicate and enrich its interpretation. First, some of the connections reflect the developments of the dystopian genre since Orwell, particularly the proliferation of Young Adult dystopia in the last two decades, which Newman treats with a degree of criticism. Second, connections with female characters portrayed in famous literary classics from Chaucer to Tolstoy extend the work's scope well beyond the actual commission, placing Julia's character in an illustrious pantheon of literary figures who struggle in their respective male-dominated fictional worlds. Finally, by using a subtle biblical idiom, especially in the relationship between its two main female characters, Julia and Vicky, the novel recalibrates the subject of hope, one of the central issues of the dystopian genre. Considered in this network of intertextual references, *Julia* gains relevance beyond the obvious Orwellian perspective, and offers a wider critical perspective on questions related to the literary canon and how it treats the female characters.

[9] This author is indebted to Réka Törzsök for providing manuscript access to several of her forthcoming essays, as well as for her many insightful suggestions about an early draft of this article.

2. *Julia* and the Young Adult Dystopia

In the seventy-five years since the publication of Orwell's novel, the literary landscape has, of course, seen fundamental changes. Dystopia has become an omnipresent, intertextual, and intermedial genre, popular not only on streaming platforms with an immense reach but also acclaimed in prestigious literary circles, as witnessed by some recent winners of the Booker Prize (for example, Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* [2023] or Georgi Gospodinov's *Time Shelter* [2020]). Another development, particularly relevant for the discussion of *Julia*, is the proliferation of Young Adult (YA) dystopia, which has become a mainstream literary and media genre, with a productive relationship between the two domains.[10] The genre has also found its place in the evolving field of dystopian studies, albeit with some obvious reservations, as witnessed in Gregory Claeys's perfunctory assessment of the trend in a standard handbook, or Raffaela Baccolini's criticism of the "compensatory" nature of what she refers to as the "commercial" YA dystopia.[11] Despite the reservations, the study of YA dystopias has been on the rise, especially after two significant essay collections from 2003 and 2013 (Hintz and Ostry; Basu et al.), although it must be noted that both pioneering works originated in the field of children's literature and Young Adult Literature, while dystopian studies, even today, seem to show ambivalence about the genre.

This generic context has not yet been adequately mapped in the quoted assessments of Newman's work. The absence is even more puzzling in light of her earlier novel, *The Country of Ice Cream Star* (2014), in connection with which Newman openly admits to similarities with Collins's work, and the novel's regular comparisons with *The Hunger Games*.[12] Meanwhile, the influence of the popular genre on *Julia* is quite obvious, especially if one focuses on the retrospective coming-of-age story of the titular character, or the in-progress development and the addition of the figure of adolescent Vicky, a fully new invention of Newman. Both aspects of the storyline can be read from the perspective of YA dystopias, which "recapitulate the conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*, using political strife, environmental disaster, or other forms of turmoil as the catalyst for

[10] On the dynamic interplay between dystopian books and movies/series, see Pataki Šumiga "Young Adult Dystopia's Influence" (2026).

[11] See Claeys (2022, 61) and cf. *Utopian and Dystopian Fictions* (31:30-32:30).

[12] "There *are* a lot of features that my book shares with popular dystopias like *The Hunger Games*" ("Interview"). Also, "Sandra Newman's novel 'The Country of Ice Cream Star' makes the 'Hunger Games' seem Wimpy" (Shapiro).

achieving adulthood" (Basu et al., 'Introduction' 7). Therefore, an exploration of Julia's childhood and Vicky's subplot promises a better understanding of the impact of YA dystopia on Newman's novel.

The parts providing glimpses into Julia's childhood and adolescence have already been highlighted in reviews due to the vivid details they provide about the everyday life of rural areas, and this new perspective is crucial for several reasons. First, the description of the gruesome life in the Semi Autonomous Zones serves as a demystifying counterpoint to the idealised rural landscape of *NEF*, where the Golden Country appears as a pastoral-like enclave within the wider dystopian world of the novel (Kerr 44–45). Julia's childhood experiences, notwithstanding the veil of some childhood nostalgia in Newman's novel, reveal a more merciless side of rural life:

> They were exiled to Kent for his [Julia's father's] intransigence, but he continued to write peppery letters to the newspapers about the Party's wrong direction, for which folly he was finally hanged in the street … with his wife and child in compulsory attendance. Baby Julia screamed and fought to reach her father long after he was dead. (Newman 50)

Second, by depicting a series of similar traumas experienced by the young Julia, the episodes taking place in this unidealized rural setting provide a completely new dimension to Julia's character. She faces discrimination as the member of the stigmatised exile group (the "Boots"), and sees the burning of books "utterly different from those she later knew at Fiction" (51). She witnesses how her mother is sexually exploited by Party "uncles," and later, her first sexual encounter with the manipulative, older party cadre Gerber is described in similarly traumatic terms. The shock of the latter is mirrored on the narrative level as well, because the disturbing scenes appear rather unexpectedly in the text:

> He showed her photographs of Westminster compound, and told tales of the ingenuity and kindness of the high officials. She closed her eyes and thought of airmen while he touched her under her clothes. He would say at these times, "Let's see … let's see…" Afterwards he always gave her food, and it was he who secured her the post of secretary of the Youth League, with the extra rations that entailed. If she thought of hope or comfort, she thought of Gerber. The sexual pleasure, too, was a revelation; he might as well have taught her to levitate. It didn't matter that she had to close her eyes and pretend he was an airman. It didn't matter that she

> sometimes couldn't bear his hands on her and trembled with the need to stop him. (109)

By blending the external description of trivial everyday events of the rural life with the unexpected sexual references, and providing hints at the internal struggle the young Julia faces because of the unsolicited but clearly unstoppable advances of Gerber, Newman powerfully reflects the shock of the inexperienced protagonist, and provides a unique insight not only into Julia's youth, which Orwell completely dismissed, but also into a domain of traumatic experience of a female subject in a totalitarian state that his male hero never has to face.

As if the spectacle of the hanging of Julia's father and Gerber's uninvited sexual advances were not enough, the climatic part in the last chapter of Part One retells the apocalyptic story of a village dying from hunger. The visceral scenes culminate in total chaos and destruction, and Julia is saved only by turning in her own mother, who provides all the guidance needed to succeed in the betrayal: "She told Julia how to behave, the emotions she must feign" (169). At the same time, the mother's self-sacrificing act, which saves her daughter, counterbalances the mounting pessimism of the novel. The pragmatic yet meaningful relationship between Julia's mother and her daughter is described after the curious connection between Julia and Vicky had already been hinted at early in the novel, and thus the story of the mother, even if told later, can be regarded as a prefiguration of the relationship between Julia and Vicky. With this conclusion at the end of Part One, Julia's coming-of-age is complete, and through her betrayal, she is ready to begin her disillusioned adult life in Airstrip One. The focus on the adolescent Julia struggling to survive in a rural setting, and the all-encompassing torment of hunger strengthen the ties with the *Hunger Games*, yet the steps young Julia must take are noticeably harsher than the more romance-like behaviour of the heroic Katniss Everdeen.

Despite the indicated affinity between the young Julia and YA heroines, Newman's single most important addition from this respect is the figure of young Vicky. The idealistic, teenaged confidant of Julia is an almost archetypal representative of the typical YA dystopian heroine; she is the adolescent female, who, surrounded by an oppressive totalitarian regime, still believes in the possibility of a Revolution and plays an active role in making it happen. Important critical work has been devoted to the exploration of this type of heroine, who is characterised by the simultaneous presence of vulnerability and empowerment,

resulting in the profound liminality of her position (Day et al. 3). Therefore, examining where Vicky (or, for that matter, the young Julia) is to be placed on the scale from "New Ophelia" to "Girl Power" (Day et al. 5) promises to give a better understanding of the attitude of Newman's text to the key aspects of YA dystopia. One of these aspects is hope, which is, according to some commentators, the distinguishing feature of the YA version of dystopia (and the probable cause of the critical attitude of dystopian studies mentioned above). Acknowledging the fact that this reductionist view has been seriously challenged,[13] exploring the two protagonists of *Julia* from this aspect is crucial for the exploration of the issue of generic affiliations.

Vicky's name appears in Chapter 2, the first part of the plot that is completely independent from *NEF*, which at the same time contains one of the most disturbing scenes in the whole book.[14] Here, Julia heads home to her dorm due to "Sickness: Menstrual" (19), and undertakes the gruesome job of cleaning one of the clogged toilets. The episode is full of insight both as to the character of Julia and to the everyday life of women in Airstrip One in domestic spaces uncharted by Orwell. From both respects, the episode where Julia changes clothes, while being watched by the telescreens, is particularly revealing:

> She turned to the telescreen with a pleasant smile and said, "I'll just change from my good clothes, not to get them soiled. If there's a male comrade on duty, I'd ask you to avert your eyes." Julia often made announcements of this kind to entertain the other girls. The assumption was that it would bring every male comrade within earshot running. Julia didn't care who saw her naked arse, which was a fine arse, and nothing to blush at. Sometimes she even felt a thrill from imagining the snoops getting hot and bothered. (32)

The brief episode reveals Julia's playful, active character, while also offering a rare glimpse into the daily life in the dorm, where a fragile sense of fellowship can still emerge despite the oppressive conditions. Within this small community, Vicky holds a special position: "Vicky was their baby, the pet of the hostel, who

[13] "YA dystopias can uphold that tradition of optimism, embrace a more cynical vision, or oscillate between the two" (Basu et al., "Introduction" 2). See also (Day et al. 10).

[14] According to Törzsök ("Female Unpersons"), in Newman's novel, the relationship between Julia and Vicky, which is present throughout the novel, is much more important than that between Julia and Winston.

still cried when one of the cats caught a mouse" (27). Not only is this interesting because of the light it sheds on one side of Vicky's figure, her particular sensitivity, but also because the word "mouse" returns at the shocking final scene of the chapter, when Julia finds the reason of the clog. It is Vicky's aborted child, lying "in reeking brown water and dilute blood," "no bigger than a mouse" (34–35).

Vicky's sensitivity towards animals and the death of her unborn baby are thus linked even on a lexical level, rendering Vicky not only as a typical vulnerable adolescent figure, but also as a liminal character surrounded by irreconcilable ambiguities, the typical position of YA dystopian heroines. The intermittent plotline following Vicky soon provides an account of how a higher-level Party member, Whitehead, drove her to the horrible deed without any previous warning. Nonetheless, Vicky quickly comes to realise the weight of her actions, as revealed in a key passage from a dialogue between her and Julia: "Do you think . . . do you suppose one might be forgiven for a crime, if they saw it truly wasn't one's fault? If they saw that one was led by a powerful person, that one couldn't say no? They might see, mightn't they? If one simply made a clean breast of it, I mean?" (45). Vicky appears here as a victim of the inescapable totalitarian circumstances, yet her moral dilemmas prove her profound awareness, hinting at her later revolutionary stance. Although both Julia's and Vicky's coming-of-age stories start from similar backgrounds as those of stock YA heroines, one sees neither two Ophelias nor the idealised representatives of the "Girl Power" type in their stories. As such, they offer a counterpoint to the idealised and somewhat flattened YA dystopia heroines, and lend an additional layer of complexity to the affiliation between Newman's novel and the immensely popular genre. In the crucial issue of hope, often rendered in unrealistic, compensatory terms in YA dystopia, *Julia* is different: if there is hope in this world, it lies in the relationship between Julia and Vicky, and the unique fellowship of women.

3. The Intertextual Network and the Biblical Register in *Julia*

The explored parallels with YA dystopia showcase Newman's erudite and critical attitude to literary precedents. Other works by the author reveal an even more complex and intense engagement with literary history, not always meeting readers' tastes. Just to cite a few examples, *The Heavens* (2019) is a unique blend of a novel of 9/11 New York and a historiographical metafiction set in Elizabethan England, revolving around the figure of Emilia Bassano (1569–1645). *The Men* (2022) could be called a feminist dystopia describing a world without men,

which received mixed reviews including rather harsh assessments. Without delving deeper into Newman's nonfiction, like *The Western Lit Survival Kit: How to Read the Classics Without Fear* (2012), it must be declared at this point that *Julia* is the work of a versatile writer ready to experiment with unconventional generic combinations and relying on a deep-rooted familiarity with literary traditions. All this is important because besides its YA dystopian leanings, the novel contains a number of intertextual references to canonical literary works, which open new avenues of interpretation and recalibrate both Julia's and *Julia*'s place in the Western canon.

The profoundly intertextual nature of the novel is somewhat overshadowed by the organic connection with Orwell's original. Intertextuality in Newman's work, however, goes well beyond this obvious level and invokes classics which problematise the role of women well before Orwell. The first unexpected association connects *Julia* with Geoffrey Chaucer's (c. 1343–1400) classic, *The Canterbury Tales*. Although this medieval work features the Wife of Bath, the epitome of female agency and probably the most subversive female character in all medieval English literature, Newman invokes a different woman, the Prioress, through the initial description of Vicky. The passage quoted above ("Vicky […] still cried when one of the cats caught a mouse," 27) is interesting not only because of the intratextual repetition in the horrendous description of the dead baby at the end of Chapter 2 ("It was no bigger than a mouse," 34). It also evokes the Prioress, whose indifference towards people is highlighted through her sensitivity towards animals: "She was so charitable and so pitous / She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous / Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde" (Chaucer, "General Prologue" 143–45). Furthermore, this connection might also have an indirect bearing on Vicky's name, which works in the novel on several levels. First, it associates the character with the ubiquitous brand/place name in Airstrip One (Victory Coffee, Victory Cigarettes, Victory Gin, Victory Square, and Victory Mansions). Second, it is a rather evocative name, associating the character with the possibility of coming out victoriously from the battle between the Party and the Rebels. Third, if one considers the original context of the intertextual reference, the striking Latin conclusion to the Prioress's description might also be evoked: "And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene, / On which ther was first write a crowned A / And after Amor vincit omnia" (Chaucer, "General Prologue" 160–63). The verb "vincit" in the Vergilian phrase (meaning "Love conquers all") is etymologically related to the word "victoria," reinforcing the

association between the figure of Vicky, the hope of victory represented by her, and Love as the power defeating everything, possibly even an oppressive totalitarian regime.

Admittedly, this association might be exaggerated in this reading; however, the next reference reinforces the connection between Vicky and Love, while also reflecting on the possibility of victory. In Chapter 16, Julia and Vicky meet during a Junior Anti Sex League hike in the rural areas known as the Golden Country from *NEF*. At one point, they leave the group behind to look for mushrooms, which is only an excuse for a chance to talk privately; this scene obviously recalls one of the most emotionally charged parts of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878).[15] Even if the scene in Newman could also be read as a light-hearted parody of the climatic point in Tolstoy's novel reminding one of the often-forgotten satiric nature of *NEF*, its role is equally important here. In this scene, the two characters engage in what is probably the most passionate and intimate conversation between them. Vicky reveals insider information from the Central Committee of the Party, which suggests that rebel forces are making advances towards Airstrip One and are slowly taking over the country. Apparently, Vicky turns into one of those typical YA heroines "who resist the forces of their broken and corrupt societies to create their own identities, shape their own destinies, and transform the worlds in which they live" (Sawyer Fritz 17). At the same time, the two female characters effectively exchange roles. While in the beginning of the novel, Julia is "the one Vicky followed around like a gosling at the heels of a mother goose" (28), here young Vicky is trying to persuade her older companion to join the rebels together with her. For a short while there is a glimmer of youthful hope which seems to transform the disillusioned Julia as well. Hope is shattered, or at least seriously challenged, by the end of the novel, which makes the success of the revolution dubious at best, even if Vicky explicitly and somewhat naively declares that "I am a rebel or mean to be" (238). The conclusion of the novel is open-ended, representing another recurring element of YA dystopias by female authors (Day et al. 9), although it must be allowed that ambiguity and open-endedness are hardly exclusive to this genre.

[15] In Part 6, Chapter 5, Sergey Ivanovitch tries to confess her feelings to Varvara Andreevna during a similar hike, when they move away from the others to look for mushrooms. Unfortunately, in the crucial moment, instead of asking for Varvara's hand, the protagonist says "What is the difference between the 'birch' mushroom and the 'white' mushroom?" (Tolstoy 174).

The ending of the novel, in its very final sentences, introduces another important intertextual connection: "'Yes,' said Julia. 'Yes, I will. Yes.'" This is an almost verbatim borrowing of the famous last sentence in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920), which concludes Molly Bloom's chapter-long monologue, establishing yet another intertextual link (Patrick) between Newman's novel and a central piece of the Western literary canon. All the invoked literary connections associate the figures of Julia and Vicky with female figures from Western literary works. Remarkably, all the invoked female characters are represented by male authors, which might suggest that this intertextual web is used to highlight gynocritical problems similar to the one providing the impetus for *Julia* itself, using the occasion of the specific rewriting of Orwell to land a more general criticism of the Western literary canon.

There is one further relevant intertextual domain which works less on the level of concrete borrowings and relies more on idiom instead. As it was already highlighted, crime and forgiveness play a prominent role in the language used in the description of the complicated relationship between Julia and Vicky. This is present already in the aftermath of Vicky's abortion, where an innocent Vicky deliberates the issues of crime and forgiveness. Similar issues resurface in the cited, Tolstoyan scene, which is not only concerned with the possibility of the revolution, the main focus in the above discussion. More importantly, the heated discussion shows how the two (at this point admittedly main) characters come clean to each other through an intense scene of mutual confessions, initiated by Julia's strong words:

> "Oh, I'm a damned, rotten person, and here you are trusting me."
>
> "Do you know," Vicky said, "I always think of my baby – *my baby*, I can say those words to you . . . And I think how you came to my bed, how you forgave me when no other would.
>
> "Vicky, don't! Only think. How can you say such things to me? When I am what I am?"
>
> "I shall forgive you as you forgave me. How am I any better? Even if it's true, I'm no better. I killed my baby! I let that girl Margaret die for what I'd done." (241-2)

While Julia admits to being a member of the Thought Police, reflecting one of Newman's most important changes to the original character, Vicky acknowledges her own sin, that is, murdering not only the baby, but causing the death

of the scapegoat Margaret as well. Besides the confessional situation,[16] the language is also remarkable here: "I am what I am" is a clear Biblical reference, but words like "damned," "forgive," and even the use of the archaic "shall" in a parallel structure reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer, similarly evoke the language of the Bible. The novel, after all, seems to be infused with intertextual references to classic literary pieces, and a specific Biblical register is present at the level of idiom. While the former, featuring classic women figures (mis)represented by male authors is more important from the gynocritical perspective, the significance of the latter lies in how it is used to deliver hope in the otherwise rather hopeless world of *Julia*, where instead of the revolution, true hope seems to reside in the (biblical but also potentially romantic) love between the victims of the oppressive state.

5. Conclusion

It is clear that Newman's rendering of the life of women and young girls in Orwell's grim world shares a lot with YA dystopias. Parallels between the rebellious Vicky and famous YA dystopian heroines like Katniss Everdeen can clearly be identified and certain elements of the plot (like the road trip to the rebels) as well as the open-endedness of the novel further strengthen the link with YA dystopia. At the same time, Newman's version seems to be strongly critical of the compensatory nature of the popular genre. Episodes like Julia's traumatic history from childhood to adulthood or her exploitation of Winston and other Party members, richly detailed in the novel, provide further warning against a romance-like reading of the novel.[17] Criticism and revision are most apparent in the different treatment of hope and the denial of a happy ending in *Julia*, which concludes with a revolution suggesting the impossibility of change: Julia has to take the same oath with the rebels as with O'Brien before, suggesting that everything remains the same. That does not mean that the grim world constructed by Newman is entirely hopeless; hope resides at least in two domains. One is found in the personal relationships between women, as exemplified by Julia and Vicky, but other figures could also be mentioned. Through the frequent occurrence of terms related to sin, damnation, and forgiveness, such relationships receive an almost transcendental dimension and become a

[16] For a more detailed discussion on the topic of confession in *NEF*, see Törzsök, *The Paradoxes of Torture in Orwell's 1984*.

[17] On YA dystopia and the romance, see Day (4, 6). Also, see Hintz (194–95).

silent religion of (Biblical) love, offering an escape route from the emotional alienation forced on the subjects by the Party's ideology. The other site of hope in *Julia* appears on a more surprising, metatextual level. By establishing links with literary classics that feature ambivalent, struggling, or out-of-place female characters, the novel promises hope through the redemptive function of literature, and as such, claims its own space less in the canon of YA dystopias and more in the pantheon of literary classics ranging from Chaucer to Joyce. Further research might reveal additional connections and provide a better understanding of how Newman's unique literary undertaking challenges the male-dominated representations of liminal female figures and aligns with as well as contributes to a different tradition.

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DISTOPIJA ZA MLADE, INTERTEKSTUALNOST I BIBLIJSKA NADA U ROMANU *JULIA* SANDRE NEWMAN

Sažetak

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Rad analizira roman *Julia* (2023.) autorice Sandre Newman s posebnim naglaskom na prisutnost konvencija distopijskog romana za mlade odrasle (eng. *Young Adult*) i stratešku upotrebu intertekstualnosti. Premda *Julia* predstavlja feminističku obradu Orwellova distopijskog romana *1984.* (1949.), autorica tvrdi da se također znatno oslanja na razvoj distopije za mlade u proteklih sedamdeset godina, posebice u prikazu isprepletenih putanja odrastanja dviju protagonistica, Julije i Vicky. Nadalje, analiza ističe aluzije romana na kanonska djela poput *Canterburyjskih priča* Geoffreyja Chaucera, *Ane Karenjine* Lava Tolstoja i *Uliksa* Jamesa Joycea. Ti intertekstovi – od kojih svaki donosi prikaze žena koje su oblikovali muški autori – usložnjavaju feministički projekt romana: pozivanjem na njih i njihovim preoblikovanjem, Newman istodobno kritizira patrijarhalni književni kanon i smješta Juliju unutar šireg sloja narativa koji tematiziraju ograničenja nametnuta ženama. Naposljetku, rad utvrđuje prisutnost biblijskih elemenata time što pruža prepoznatljivo rješenje za središnji distopijski problem nade, sugerirajući oprost i ljubav kao potencijalne oblike otpora uništenju koje totalitarni sustavi nastoje nametnuti svojim podanicima.

Ključne riječi: *1984.,* George Orwell, *Julia*, Sandra Newman, distopija za mlade, intertekstualnost, nada