



DOI: 10.24411/2072-9316-2021-00056

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21ST CENTURY BRITISH FICTION: THE REALISTIC TELEOLOGY OF DAVID MITCHELL AND IAN MCEWAN'S NOVELS

Abstract. In the paper, I have identified and clarified the characteristics of post-postmodern realism outlined previously, manifested in British fiction: maximum details of reality by introducing non-literary and extra-life components, outlining the idea of integrity of the world (developed in the German Romanticism) in Ian McEwan and David Mitchell's fiction of the 21st century. By *extra-life components*, I mean scientific terms to denote organic foundations that are basic in human material, in its biochemical and psycho-neuro-physiological processes. Moreover, the exploitation of such concepts, the medicalized way of understanding the world enhances new realism: rational-metaphysical or positivist-metaphysical, which provides a scientific view of the nature of things around characters as molecules with consciousness. At the same time, such a vision does not deny metaphysical phenomena (God, providence). Typologically, it is similar to the Romantic worldview, which exploits the holistic capture of reality in fantastic, mystical and real (physical) phenomena. The idea of teleology is represented in McEwan's and Mitchell's fiction providing the return of grand narratives as post-postmodern discourses in which the characters seek for the senses that may help to understand the truth and find the explanation for the human and universe nature organization. "Cloud Atlas" is a representation of the metanarrative story that reinforces the German Romanticism concept of the unity between different parts of the work and the human being. In "Saturday", this unity is explained by the post-positivist mind of the protagonist who philosophically explains social and cultural phenomena using his medical knowledge.

Key words: post-postmodernism; contemporary British fiction; realisms; German Romanticism; "Cloud Atlas"; "Saturday"; I. McEwan; D. Mitchell.

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Британская проза XXI века: реалистическая телеология романов Дэвида Митчелла и Иэна Макьюэна

Аннотация. В ходе исследования идентифицируются и уточняются характеристики постпостмодернистского реализма, проявленные в британской художественной литературе (прозе, написанной после 2000 г.): максимальная детализация реальности за счет введения нелитературных компонентов, репрезентация идеи целостного и телеологически обусловленного мира (реактуализация философского дискурса немецкого романтизма) в произведениях И. Макьюэна и Д. Митчелла. Под нелитературными компонентами подразумеваются научные термины, описания явлений природы (дискурс точных наук и медицины), лежащих в основе человеческой природы, его биохимических и психо-невро-физиологических процессов. Более того, медицинское понимание мира, присущее персонажам или



нарраторам романов, усиливает экспликацию нового реализма в современной британской прозе, что предполагает определенное философское видение мира: рационально-метафизическое или позитивистско-метафизическое, обеспечивающие научный взгляд на природу вещей вокруг персонажей и на самих персонажей как на молекулы с сознанием. В то же время такое видение не отрицает метафизических явлений (Бог, судьба). Типологически данная телеология постпостмодернистского романа связана с романтическим мировоззрением, которое предполагает целостный обзор реальности в фантастических, мистических и реальных (физических) явлениях. Идея телеологии представлена в романах И. Макьюэна и Д. Митчелла, утверждая, тем самым, возвращение больших нарративов как уже постпостмодернистских дискурсов, в которых персонажи стремятся найти смыслы, способные помочь им понять и объяснить природу человека и Вселенной. «Облачный атлас» является репрезентацией метанарративной истории, в которой реактуализируется концепт единства мира и человека, представленный в немецком романтизме. В «Субботе» данное единство возможно в постпозитивистском сознании главного персонажа, который, философствуя о социальных и культурных явлениях, обращается к медицинскому знанию.

Ключевые слова: постпостмодернизм; современная британская проза; реализмы; немецкий романтизм; “Облачный атлас”; “Суббота”; И. Макьюэн; Д. Митчелл.

Introduction

British fiction provides an outline summary of some new philosophical issues in the 21st century. This literary period, which includes novels written after 2000 [The Contemporary British Novel since 2000 2017; The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction 2018], is defined by literary theorists as post-postmodern, sometimes using alternative names (neofabulism, metamodernism, altermodernism, etc.). In any case, the idea of the transformation of postmodernism into a new philosophical and aesthetic phenomenon is becoming ever more clearly established.

I maintain that the English literary tradition in the postmodern period prevails over external influences, by which I mean the theories of postmodernism and poststructuralism prevalent in, for example, France and the United States. Such theories influenced the establishment of postmodernism as a paradigm (or paradigms). As O. Dzhumaylo states, English literature of this (postmodern) period pays attention to the inner world of the characters, to the measurement of emotions, etc., which are more important for writers than experiments with narrative forms. As Dzhumaylo notes: “Interesting are the confessions of the brightest representatives of English postmodernism. Amis, author of the classic postmodern novel *Money*, which uses probably all 36 of Stovengill’s methods of self-reflexive narrative, says in an interview: “I think we all come from a playful, stunt text. It is like a building with external communications... Now it is clear that this is a dead end” ” [Джумайло / Dzhumaylo 2007]. In the first epigraph to the article of 2007, O. Dzhumaylo quotes the words of J.-F. Lyotard,



which show that, the theorists of postmodernism postulated ideas that contradicted the integrity of theories of postmodernism: “Vanity to the face of postmodernism with its words and its pseudo-reality. Yet the futility of everything cannot make us stop asking: how to live and why? <...> You will not cease to exist because, playing, you will write everything down on tricks and tricks...” [Джумайло / Dzhumaylo 2007]. After all, as previously mentioned [Дроздовський / Drozdovs’kyi 2019 b], F. Jameson, who is considered one of the leading theorists of postmodernism, is also one of the first theorists of postmodernism, to substantiate the difference between David Mitchell’s “Cloud Atlas” and postmodern works [Jameson 2015].

In this research, with specific reference to Ian McEwan’s novels “Amsterdam” and “Saturday” I shall highlight the philosophical features that give grounds to justify the idea of a transition from postmodern to post-postmodern novel. In the article “Getting Past the ‘Post-’: History and Time in the Fiction of David Mitchell” (2015), Maria Beville sharing Jameson’s views, considers that the novel “Cloud Atlas” is an example of fiction that does not fit the paradigm of postmodernism. According to the Irish researcher, the postmodern elements of the novel are these: “generic hybridity, a fragmented structure, interrupted narratives, and an emphasis on illusion and simulacrum” (these features the researcher takes from the Helene Machinal’s study “Cloud Atlas: From Postmodernity to the Posthuman”, p. 127), but it is also expedient to define the features that are no longer postmodern. First, Beville refers to the characterization of the worldview parameters of the novel, outlining the philosophical guidelines as a “quasi-positivist attitude to memory” [Beville 2015]. The second important feature analyzed in the work is the philosophy of “new sincerity” (the concept of Adam Kelly). In addition, the researcher draws attention to the general change in theoretical approaches in Western literary criticism for the analysis of novels such as “Cloud Atlas”. Her view provides grounds for talking about new trends in contemporary fiction, in particular those texts that portray “post-postmodern, critical realism, new materialism, and new-millennial fiction” [Beville 2015].

One of the markers of postmodern poetics, according to Beville (and Patricia Waugh in her monograph “Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction”, 1984) is *incompleteness*, according to Lyotard, determined by the general feeling of instability inherent in postmodern texts. Instead, “Cloud Atlas” demonstrates the idea of “metaphysical determinism” [Дроздовський / Drozdovs’kyi 2019 a], which makes it possible to project the consequences of human actions and politics in general. In addition, the novel represents the motif of the search for truth. Beville draws attention to the words in the episode “Sloosha’s Crossing and Ev’rythin”: “true true is diff’rent to the seemin ’true”, “presher’n’rarer’n diamonds” [Mitchell 2004, 287–288].

The idea of *incompleteness* as a factor in the postmodern worldview is presented in a special way in the works of late 20th century authors. However, the explication of the idea of incompleteness in “Cloud Atlas” takes new forms that go beyond postmodernism, offering a theory of symbolic perception of reality and the importance of symbols. I mean the chronotope in “Cloud Atlas”, the



symbolic representation of the sextet that unites the narrative stories and provides interconnections between the characters, their memories, letters from one time to another historical period, etc.). Knowledge of truth in “Cloud Atlas”, according to Beville, is impossible not because truth does not exist, but because of “faith”: “It (truth – *D.D.*) exists, although it can only be accessed in a mediated form. But it is also contingent upon belief. Through comments such as Adam’s, Mitchell’s writing engages what could be considered a guarded epistemological conviction, as opposed to the more radical epistemological uncertainty of post-modernism. His insistence upon the universal and a-temporal nature of meaning, however, does not suggest a monolithic version of truth or reality” [Beville 2015]. The Irish author concludes that the novel largely represents a different comparison to the postmodernism theory of the representation of truth: ““truth” is ultimately upheld as an ideal and as a direct consequence of experience in the material world” [Beville 2015].

The integration of “real” is another important feature that determines the post-postmodern nature of the novel. It is an attempt to predict future events based on the analysis of the past and present. Integrating facts with the text was an important element of the history of realism in English literature. Facts incorporated into the fictional narrative subsequently determined the development of realism in English literature [Харитонов / Kharitonov 2020, 254]. These days, as Sophie Vlacos proves to her readers in the indispensable Companion to Twenty-First Century British Literary Fiction, we have a blossoming of realisms that form an essential part of post-postmodern fiction paradigm.

Thus, the space depicted in “Cloud Atlas” as unlimited in time, is still predictable, which does not correspond to postmodern writing. According to Beville: “new sincerity seems to bring to literature offers too tight a closure on issues to do with history and fictionality than Mitchell seems to be comfortable with, as evidenced in the over-arching thematics of his fictions, which suggest circularity and causality, but never finality” [Beville 2015]. For post-postmodernism the past is one aspect of the teleological nature of this fiction (the concept of teleology is explained and discussed in Olexander Shevchenko’s dissertation “Телологическая лингвосомиотика: эвристика и онтология (на материале англоязычного публицистического дискурса)” / “Teleological linguistic semiotics: heuristics and ontology (based on the English publicistic discourse)”. Thesis for a Doctoral Degree in Philology: Speciality 10.02.04. – Germanic languages. Zaporizhzhya, 2020), which does not reject the idea of a “great narrative”. Mitchell’s novel represents ideology as an immanent factor of civilization combining these categories with the category of progress. The author resorted to the use of a positivist philosophical paradigm, which, however, for Beville, is a quasi-positivist tendency. I assume that the author uses this term in the light of what I call “metaphysical determinism”, because the rational ability to predict events and analyze the present and past is in no way opposed to the ability to believe and find symbolist forms of connection between phenomena in fiction. The symbol appears to be a form of communication in Mitchell’s “Cloud



Atlas”, and, as Beville shows, it is both a connection within one novel (“Cloud Atlas”) and the connection of the novel with other novels (“Cloud Atlas”, 2004, with the novels “Ghostwritten”, 1999 and “The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet”, 2011).

Olga Dzhumaylo in her research “Outside the Game: English postmodern novel. 1980–2000”, questions the “game for the sake of the game” thesis in English postmodern novels, since they raise philosophical issues, including those related to ethics, understanding of the world, etc.: “English postmodern novels of 1980–1990s successfully exploit a set of game strategies, but neither the philosophical nor the formal games of postmodernism have become self-sufficient for the British fiction. The game for the sake of the game, the total irony in the era of the loss of “grand narratives” only exacerbate the attention to the “small” (narratives – *D.D.*) [Dzhumaylo 2007]. Understanding the phenomenon of “game” as a factor in postmodernism, it is important to emphasize that there are different types of games (as well as different forms and types of carnival): on the horizontal and vertical levels. Games of the “vertical” type represent philosophical explorations of characters and narrators who, through interaction with others, reveal the specific character of world outlook models.

Part 1. Teleology of British fiction: from postmodernism to post-postmodernism

Olga Dzhumaylo discussed the English postmodern novel as a philosophical phenomenon. The researcher cites Christopher Nash’s arguments from *The Unraveling of the Postmodern Mind* (2001), which should convince the reader that there is another vector of postmodernism not limited to game strategies. The words Dzhumaylo quotes from the work of J.-F. Lyotard as the epigraph to her research about the necessity of the human beings to ask despite the simulacra of postmodernism [Dzhumaylo 2007] are similar to what Borys Shalahinov says. The scholar analyzes postmodernism not only through the prism of the “death of the author” theory, but considers the crisis of “grand narratives” to be one that has already occurred in different cultural and historical periods. It is not about the fact that author disappears from the work and the work itself becomes an independent phenomenon, fueled by other, already existing texts. After all, such a situation is inherent not only in recent decades, but also in the entire historical and literary process in Europe. The crisis of “great narratives” (mainly articulated in J.-F. Lyotard’s work on the postmodern condition and knowledge theory) or “the death of the author” (R. Barthes) is a commonly recurring phenomenon in history, and causes the regular devaluation of the author’s mode. Thus, “the uniqueness of postmodernism lies not in this, but in the coexistence of two mainstreams, between which a new division of roles is established. The first introduces us to the author (and hence to the human being!) in the fullness of this concept” [Шалагинов / Shalahinov 2011, 225–226].

Dzhumaylo explains a particular tradition or paradigm of English postmodernism, in which philosophical problems prevailed over experiments with form



and other formal experimental pursuits, which did not satisfy English authors. Dzhumaylo emphasizes that in the postmodern novel, the display of characters' emotions, relationships and heroic actions is actualized, and the sensual is revealed. This tendency to show the sensual together with rational elements of the character's ordinary life is displayed in British post-postmodern novels, for example, in Ian McEwan's work, which stand on the border of the transition of postmodernism into post-postmodernism as mentioned in "The Contemporary British Novel since 2000" (2017). The narrator in "Amsterdam" remarks: "His dreams were just a kaleidoscope of last week's wreckage, a fair response to his themes and emotional challenges, but they bypassed – through the involuntary bias of the unconscious – the strategy, logic that actually made him sane" [McEwan 2017, 224].

Olga Dzhumailo substantiates the existence of philosophical intentions in English postmodern novels, which re-actualize the exploration of epistemology and ethics; in particular, this applies to the novels of Peter Ackroyd, A.S. Byatt, Martin Amis, Ian McEwan, and others. The researcher examines McEwan's works, written before 2000, analyzing them in terms of postmodern poetics and aesthetics. In general, the researcher's conclusion establishes a special style of English postmodernism, in which there is a tendency to realism. Sophie Vlacos in the chapter "Realisms" in "The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction" mentioned earlier, affirms the idea of realisms in British post-postmodern fiction. As Vlacos states, "In present culture, however, the critical or ironic 'edge' associated with postmodernist anti-realist techniques has fallen flat, so much so, that the devices of postmodernist anti-realism (those devices designed to shatter the realist illusion and to foreground the fictive status of the work in question) are now submerged within a new and yet formally quite familiar mode of realism" [The Routledge Companion 2018, 103]. This new mode of realisms is multifaceted in its nature but it reveals the desire or cognitive necessity of characters like Henry Perown ("Saturday") to search for truth in understanding the nature of mind and the principles of the Universe.

In my previous research work, I have already outlined the peculiarities of post-postmodernism in British fiction, outlining the question of its teleological nature (the ability to represent a supreme intention that determines on the macro level the development of human ideas, technologies, etc). Teleology affirms that there is an intention that provides humanity with new experiences that offer the possibility of developing Hegel's notion of civilization which is also exploited in German Romanticism. There are a number of researches drawing on the revelations of German philology (e.g. Nietzsche) in David Mitchells "Cloud Atlas" [Brown 2016; Polanki 2018]. This discussion is represented in Olga Dzhumaylo's studies. The scholar paid attention to the issue of the philosophy of the "thing-in-itself" that is now presented as an important element in the realistic paradigm of the contemporary British novel. "Where Kant had side-lined aesthetic experience to its own distinct realm of appearances and disinterested pleasures, the realist asserted the interconnection of that experience with knowledge of everyday praxis, championing the artwork's participa-



tory role within everyday understanding and historical reality” [The Routledge Companion 2018, 101]. However, I would state and I have already proved this thesis in my previous researches [Дроздовський / Drozdovskyi 2019 b] that in post-postmodern fiction Kant’s philosophy is interconnected with the realist searches of the everyday praxis and the understanding of live that the characters encounter each new day is a ground for deeper understanding of the reality. This search for “true reality” problematizes the concept of realism in the contemporary British fiction and outlines the necessity of new term for realistic writing determined by both Kant and positivism.

Deeper understanding of reality in post-postmodern novels is explicated with the help of intertextuality strategies that Mitchell exploits in his texts. In his “Cloud Atlas,” there are the fragments what will be presented in writer’s future novels, e.g. “The Bone Clocks”, “The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet”. As Kathryn Simpson states, in Mitchell’s novels, “the narrative works with and through the postmodern towards something meaningful – repeatedly plural, ambiguous, contingent and uncertain, but nonetheless poignant and significant” [The Contemporary British Novel 2017, 31]. Thus, “Mitchell positions himself, in other words, as a self-consciously post-postmodern novelist” [The Contemporary British Novel 2017, 31].

This means the author has a clear vision of the reality he constructs and describes, and the novels are the parts of one meta-textual phenomenon that exploits the idea of supernatural determinism. This determinism unites different characters and their fates in one reality that has no limitations. The main function of this intertextuality bond is to provide a clear vision that the reality in Mitchell’s novels explains the mechanisms of human nature, its depth, and its good and evil sides. The author develops the idea that his texts are the fragments of the post-postmodern mosaic oriented to find the deep sense of what has happened, is happening and will happen in the future.

In addition, post-postmodernism in British fiction demonstrates the specifics of the development of English philosophy, in which an important role is played by rational-empirical philosophers like Hume, Locke, etc. Today we see the transformation of one of the most important for the English twentieth-century genre of the intellectual novel. The philosophy of rationalism largely encourages contemporary writers to analytical perception of reality and its representation in a realistic paradigm.

In the English postmodern novel of the 1980s and 1990s, the discourse of multiculturalism became important (transformed into the discourse of transculturalism in post-postmodernism). Dzhumaylo has outlined this tendency: “Perhaps the self-forgetful philosophical and aesthetic discussions about postmodernism, which reached their tension in the 1980s, may be on a par with other, no less important factors that determined the aesthetics and problems of this time. The social consequences of Margaret Thatcher’s policy, the multicultural consciousness of the British, the endless search for national identity, its connectedness within the middle class, national and personal history, <...> – all this and much more turned out to be... a little more than simulacra” [Dzhumaylo 2007].



Thus, the scholar concludes that the idea of simulacrum inspired by Lyotard's researches was not active and prolific in English postmodernism and is less interesting for the British post-postmodern fiction of McEwan, Warner, Mitchell or Robertson. Characters of post-postmodern novels comprehend the factors of transformation of reality into a simulacrum and seek to resist forms of manipulation in media (see the discourse of Mitchell's biorobots in "Cloud Atlas" and the rebel or great riot caused by one of them). This issue is discussed in "Amsterdam" when one of the characters draws a line between reality and its fake substitution in the newspapers [McEwan 2017, 136].

Part 2. Post-postmodern rationalistic realism

The British worldview is based on the traditions of empirical philosophy and in the 21st century, the traditions of German philosophy (Kant) had a more influential and creatively inspiring impact. Thus, today in British post-postmodernism, Schelling's and Hegel's concepts of the spiral development of nature ("Cloud Atlas"), of transition from one level to another with the simultaneous improvement of the forms of matter, its *potentiation*, etc., seem important for the philosophy of post-postmodernism, which determines the desire of the characters to move forward in exploring the reality of physics and the *unphysical* (dreams, memories, imagined times, etc.). These features of philosophical thought are exploited, for example, in "Cloud Atlas". In this case, the logic of unfolding events has a linear-spiral character in this novel. On the spiral, there are moments of catastrophes, crises that mark the line of apotheosis of the spirit due to the conflict between the humans and ideology (capitalism, consumerism, populism).

After each collision there is a simultaneous decline (both quantitatively) and elevation (qualitatively), which involves the transition of mind and spirit to a qualitatively higher level. The development of technology does not lead to humans harmonizing with the world of nature (Neo-Seul exploits high technologies but at the same time the new-empire of the future has a slavery system having transformed the citizens into hypertrophied consumers), but leads to disaster due to consumer politics and the production of goods, entertainment, etc.

In "Amsterdam", Vernon Halliday states: "There are things more important than symphonies. They are called people" [McEwan 2017, 151]. These words can be marked as a motto of post-postmodernism, even the novel is written at the point when the line of transformation from post into post-post merges (and one year before the British theorists proclaim the official demarcation line between these two periods of culture).

The narrator in "Amsterdam" reflects on the fact that now "there is no urgent issue that would stress the public, there is no place for the old tricks of blackmailers and complacent informants" [McEwan 2017, 158], but the entire novel is a denial of this thesis. We are talking about the emergence of new technologies and new substitutions in the information environment, which contribute to the



creation of simulacra. One example is the contemporary newspaper office in the UK, as noted by one of the characters “Amsterdam”: “It’s time for us to write more regular columns. They are cheap, and everyone likes them. You know, we hire someone with a low or medium level of intelligence, maybe a woman who would write about nothing. <...>. One thousand two hundred words” [McEwan 2017, 162].

The formalization of the media format and the use of populist or manipulative technologies lead to a situation in which the media start to work as a tool for spreading ideology, the apotheosis of which is the story of the publisher of “Knuckle Sandwich” in “Cloud Atlas”. In the novel Mitchell shows how media became a part of the general policy of a hypertrophied entertainment system, which is part of the ideology of “capitalism”. The politics of capitalist relations, according to Mitchell, manifests forms of colonialism, which contribute to the decline of analytic abilities in society. In “Amsterdam”, McEwan is ironic about the extremely rapid pace of establishing social dependence on the media: “And now he (Clive Linley – *D.D.*) saw it (civilization – *D.D.*) as it really is: square miles of poor homes, whose main purpose is to support television antennas and plates; factories that produce garbage, which is a disgrace to advertise on TV; pathetic ropes of trucks stuck in line to transport this junk” [McEwan 2017, 79]. In this early novel, McEwan also criticizes the industry of overproduction and hypertrophied consumption, and in “Cloud Atlas”, this motif is presented as the apotheosis of the tragic transformation of civilization into slaves of their own pleasures. “Postmodernism has seen a complete change in values and goals. The highest value is now proclaimed as a power-in-itself, power-as-a-kind-of-business; power-as-the-most-reliable-shelter-in-life. In addition, the means of achieving is under the influence of the “instinct of pleasure”” [Shalahinov 2015, 229]. However, from the standpoint of post-postmodernism, these motives are being criticised and rethought. Not without irony, the narrator in “Amsterdam” concludes: “Compared to the existence of any other living form on earth, the human project was not just a failure – it was wrong from the beginning” [McEwan 2017, 80].

Characters in post-postmodern novels represent a rational approach to life; they rely on rationality and seek to curb their own emotions. According to Shalahinov, the theme of “tamed” and targeted affect also “has a social and political significance. It is widely believed that postmodernism questions the possibility of rational and holistic explanation of the world. Instead of one picture of the world, there is a variety of versions and variants of reality in postmodern fiction (e.g. Julian Barnes). And one of the reasons for this is the complexity of the sensory nature of human beings, which can not be a subject to rational understanding” [Шалагин / Shalahinov 2015, 225].

The strategy for rational comprehension of reality allows post-postmodern characters to harmonize the chaos around them, bringing order to it with the help of their sceptical, positivist minds: “thanks to the implemented rules: to spend no more than five minutes on the posthumous autopsy of the number, because what was, was loud; no jokes, let alone jokes” [McEwan 2017, 46]. In



this example from “Amsterdam”, the author’s irony inherent in the narrator is still expressive. However, there would be less and less irony in McEwan’s later fiction (after 2000, like “Saturday” or “Atonement”). Instead, the discourse of politics, understanding the role of ideology in society and in governing the state is becoming more pronounced: “You see, only terror keeps the nation united, the entire system is based on fear, and no one knows how to stop it. Now the Americans will come, perhaps for the wrong reasons. But Saddam and the Ba’athists will leave” [McEwan 2006, 62]. Examples of the positivist (or, according to Beville, quasi-positivist) worldview portray the narrator’s position in “Saturday”. We have examples of the most accurate, detailed description of everyday situations and events in which the reality around the characters is recorded with scientific accuracy; from the rational, analytical standpoint (Henry’s, the protagonist, scientific mind), the narrator reveals the connection between matter and human nature: “It rises and rinses the waist. At least one molecule of it will fall on him once in the rain, according to a nonsensical article in a magazine in the coffee room. The numbers say so, but the statistical probability is not yet true” [McEwan 2006, 55].

In “Saturday,” McEwan’s narrator tells a story concentrating on the features of the described reality and expecting a deep emotional response from readers. His narration is oriented to reveal the phenomena with all the details described in colours and tunes. The narrator tries to look into the “thing-in-itself” (Kant) explaining what still has not been explained and portraying the reality in general. The main idea is to create an in-depth focus on the subject matter around the characters providing the formalists’ technique of “ostranenie” (“strangeness”) in the visualization of reality: “Prowne’s instant decision at the moment of impact is to accelerate as he swerves right. There are other sounds – the staccato rattle of red car on his left side raking a half-dozen stationary vehicles, and the thwack of concrete against rubber, like an amplified single handclap as the Mercedes mounts the cyclepath kerb. His back wheel hits the kerb too. Then he’s ahead of the intruder and braking. The slewed cars stop yards apart, engines cut, and for moment there’s silence, and no one gets out” [McEwan 2006, 81].

In “Atonement,” the narrator is accurate with descriptions that give a physical visualization of what happens and how the reality is constructed, e.g.: “when they heard behind them a rhythmic thudding, like the ticking of a gigantic clock. They turned to look back. At first sight it seemed that an enormous horizontal door was flying up the road towards them. It was a platoon of Welsh Guards in good order, rifles at the slope, led by a second-lieutenant [McEwan 2002, 240]. These examples demonstrate the realistic tendency in McEwan’s novels that with the help of realistic and post-positivist (pseudo-positivist) strategies give a possibility of feeling a “deep reality” with understanding not only of its surface but also the inner levels and nature of the medial (“Saturday”), physical (“Solar”), social (“Amsterdam”), and psychological (“Atonement”) phenomena.

In post-postmodern novels, the narrators reflect on the scientific (medial) issues, the thinking on the discoveries that have become available to the public: “The banality of fatherhood and modern genetics is that parents have no or very



little influence on the character of their children. <...>. But in reality, the personality that appears to live with you is determined by which molecule of sperm will meet the women cell, how the cards will fall in the two decks, how they will be shuffled, distributed and combined at the time of formation of a new gene structure during fertilization” [McEwan 2006, 28]. Thus, contemporary British fiction exploits the importance of facts and as in the nineteenth century, then in the now, first and foremost the fiction reinforces the necessity in realistic writing and realisms are inherent to post-postmodern narration.

Characters in British post-postmodern novels (Ian McEwan, Mark Haddon, David Mitchell, etc.) have an understanding of reality as a game in which the process of cognition of reality takes place, but I note that this game has a different nature from that in postmodernism. The difference between the post-postmodern game is the *indistinguishability* of fictional and real elements, the blurring of boundaries between *imaginary* (hallucinatory, virtual, etc.) and *real* spheres, the impossibility of epistemological verification of which of the types of reality the character is dealing with is real.

In addition, the categories of *heroic* and *tragic* are exploited in the novel “Cloud Atlas” by David Mitchell, as we have already noted in other researches [Дроздовский / Drozdovskyi 2019 a; 2019 b]. Characters like Louise Ray demonstrate features of the *heroic*, and in general the world of “Cloud Atlas” is characterized by a sense of the *tragic*, which reifies the motif of *tragic apotheosis* as a factor in the *mystery pattern*. The tragic apotheosis is inherent in the analyzed novels of Ian McEwan (Henry’s meeting with Baxter gives the character an opportunity to re-think the values of his own life, the relationship with his wife, etc.) Experiencing a tragic apotheosis is an important element in the functioning of *the mystery* as a meta-genre literary form.

In “Saturday”, Henry paves the way for a deeper understanding of life through day-to-day analysis that reflects on the nature of good and evil, aggression in human beings, what compels individuals to resort to violence, and so on. These thoughts become a factor in self-development, on the way that combines the ability to perceive reality scientifically and aesthetically, and to comprehend phenomena both in physical, biochemical (operations) and aesthetic terms (John Grammaticus, etc.).

In “Saturday”, the entire chronotope of the novel is one day, during which the game with the lives of the characters takes place. Henry, the protagonist, compares fragments of reality with his own original vision, thus exhibiting knowledge of reality and detecting diseases based on observations of the behavior of others. At the same time, Henry’s empirical surgeries do not deny his need for aesthetics.

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the ideas of German Romanticism have significant heuristic potential for the post-postmodern literary process, particularly in the UK, intensifying the epistemological resources of the novel and identifying a range of themes and problems that allows a new type of consciousness in characters and narrators. Their worldview combines the empirical (positivist, physical) and metaphysical (sublime in the forms of the



transcendent, spiritual) nature.

The general intention of the post-postmodern novel is the tendency to comprehend and depict a holistic, complete reality as a system, the factors of which are both physical components and those not given to the characters in cognition and empirical experiments.

In British post-postmodern fiction, empirical experiments, descriptions of surgical operations, the characters' reflections on evolution, aging, disease, death, etc. go beyond the laws of physics to prove that the human mind is too weak to know all the complexities of the universe, from the evolution of matter to the nature of consciousness. The "logging" mind of post-postmodern characters or narrators demystifies reality (the nature of religious fanaticism, religious differences, etc.), and at the same time mythologizes it, but on the new level: using experiments, surgical operations, and empirical data.

The detailed descriptions of medical protocols during operations in "Saturday", the analysis carried out by the protagonist (Henry) on the genetic and neuralgic diseases of the enemy (Baxter), deepens the understanding of the narrator and readers that the human being cannot be explained as a set of molecules and neurons that control the body.

The discourse of British post-postmodern fiction highlights the problem of "things-in-themselves", which is historically associated with German Romanticism and Kant. Human beings, despite the data of medical experiments, analysis of evolutionary theories, study of neurophysiological processes, etc. remains an unrecognizable phenomenon in the novels.

Thus, the narrator in Ian McEwan's "Saturday", like the Romantics, finds a *unity* in his view on the world, one of the key concepts, according to Shalahinov, that determine the romantic worldview, and its representation in literature in particular. The exposition of realistic philosophical ideas in the discourse of British post-postmodern fiction is noted by British researchers into the contemporary literary process. Thus, in "The Routledge Companion...", Sophie Vlacos in the section "*Realisms*" postulates an opinion on the post-postmodern novels, considering Kant's ideas as promising in the context of the characteristics of the postmodernist worldview [The Routledge Companion 2018, 101, 102, 104, 107].

The difference between Kant's views, their interpretation in literature and the post-postmodern British novel is striking. However, there are also connections that give grounds to witness the transformation of the worldview concepts of German Romanticism in today's British fiction.

The operating principle of the *system unity* is determined by the view of the world as one that in its commonality has the same 'matter', i.e. a common *material ground*.

Common *material ground* is a product of a medicalized view of reality, in which there are no differences between human beings and nature, because basically the same matter develops the specific sort of consciousness. However, consciousness, as Henry and the narrator point out in "Saturday", arises from evolutionary processes in the same molecular material from which inanimate



nature is created. The parameters of the narrator's worldview in "Saturday" demonstrate the ability to see the universe (macroworld), the human world, as well as the microworld (nano-processes, cellular processes, etc.) as interconnected in terms of a common material ground. By the term "material ground", I mean the existence of the same matter, consisting of a certain set of atoms. The ability to embrace the social, economic, political and natural in one perspective is inherent in the post-postmodern narrator, as well as the protagonist, who considers social phenomena (demonstrations and protesters, terrorism, religious fanaticism, etc.) from the standpoint of neurophysiological deviations or specific brain activity.

"Reductionism", inherent in the post-postmodern narrator, in particular in "Saturday", makes it possible to reduce all processes to basics in terms of neurophysiology. At the same time, I note that such reductionism is not a purely positivistic way of thinking. It also presents the metaphysical component inherent in the Romantic worldview of *common material ground*, which is now possible due to an insufficient study of consciousness and its evolutionary emergence from a special combination of molecules.

In "Saturday", the realistic tendency is presented most clearly from the perspective of the protagonist's profession (he is a neurosurgeon). At the same time, the narrator observes the world in the same way as Henry. The narrator calls his scientific worldview *reductionist*. Moreover, we have the characteristics of human beings from the standpoint of biochemistry, the perception of consciousness as an evolutionary phenomenon developed in living matter. At the same time, the process of functioning of consciousness is perceived as one that has not yet been explained completely from the scientific point of view.

Henry's and the narrator's scientific minds do not eliminate the tendencies that are generally antipathetic to the positivist worldview: I mean they still assume the role of God (invariants: chance, fate, etc.) in the evolutionary processes of the universe and the origin of human life on the planet. God appears as an organic part of the metaphysical component of the worldview of the characters, who, like the narrator, use the term without denying the existence of "metaphysical teleology".

One of the variants of post-postmodern realism demonstrates excessive attention to explication in the text of medical terminology, which details the description of the characters, their interaction, and attitude to each other.

However, I would like to note that there is no pure manifestation of the positivist platform in the worldviews of the characters, since they have metaphysical patterns that allow us to think about life as a metaphysical phenomenon. The metaphysical dimension for the narrator in "Atonement" is defined by the fact that biological death is a process of erasure and a certain history that is connected with human life. The inability to reconstruct any life in textual forms gives rise to a strategy of fictionalizing it. For Briony Tallis, the creation of texts deals with both a fiction and a reality, because, according to the protagonist, there are no clear forms of diluting the life of the character and the life of a real person, which is the basis for constructing a biography in the fiction of real forms.



Conclusions

Olga Dzhumaylo's study of English postmodern fiction testifies to the functioning of a range of themes and issues in the discourse of the philosophical novel that have resulted in the development of the intellectual novel as a leading genre. This tendency, however, occurs also in post-postmodern British fiction, for example, in McEwan's novels. His fiction represents and analytically exploits the issues of the conflict between the human being and the ideology (including entertainment policy, cultural industries, etc., as in "Cloud Atlas"). It has been discussed and proved that Dzhumaylo's work became significant in terms of systematizing the views of European and post-Soviet scholars in general, who stressed on the inhomogeneity of postmodernism as a cultural and historical period.

Nowadays, the works of leading postmodernism theorists (Fredric Jameson) inspire literary researches in post-postmodern fiction (e.g. regarding "Cloud Atlas"). However, Dzhumaylo was the first in post-Soviet times to single out a set of philosophical problems and worldviews of postmodern characters, which largely determined the development of post-postmodern British fiction, in which philosophical reflections on the future of civilization, the dangers of economic and social policy, the impact of technology on posthuman society have been discussed taking into account the facts from academic discourse (medicine, sciences).

The analysis of Ian McEwan's novels shows that contemporary British fiction demonstrates the necessity in facts derived from "physical" modes of reality and it uses realistic techniques with increasing precision to create imagined worlds that demonstrate the negative tendencies of contemporary social and economic politics. Contemporary British fiction reinforces German philosophy to problematize the issue of the "thing-in 'itself'" using knowledge from physical and medial investigations and promoting that knowledge to the readers. British scholars maintain that Kant's philosophy is essential for discussing the anthropological and epistemological paradigm of contemporary fiction.

In addition, Dzhumaylo's works prove other scholars' ideas (Shalahinov) regarding the presence of a wide range of philosophical problems relating to the existential, social, and political motives that are increasingly important for post-postmodernism in the works of the postmodern period.

The protagonists of post-postmodern British fiction combine positivist and Romantic worldviews, i.e., according to the thesis statement, we have the re-actualization of the ideas of German Romanticism in the worldview of the protagonists (narrators) of British novels written by McEwan and Mitchell after 2000. Representation of the world as a space of molecules, atoms, neurons, etc. enables the characters to connect the human being (as a biophysical phenomenon) to other natural phenomena (teleology of the development of matter in the universe and in the human being). Medicalization makes it possible to understand the basic principles of the human body. The characters make assumptions about the functioning of consciousness, brain activity, etc., imposing



the medical results of the study of human consciousness on reasoning of the “reasonableness” of the universe and realizing the explication of the principle of the integrity of the world.

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