

Krzysztof M. Maj's thesis, entitled *Habitats of Fiction. Transmedial Narratology in World-building Studies*, examines the ways postclassical narratology – with particular emphasis on theories of transmediality and transfictionality – can be utilised for studying the art of fictional world-building across media. Having upheld Linda Hutcheon's and Ruth Page's critiques of, respectively, realist imperialism and verbal hegemony dominating over narrative studies heretofore, Maj proceeds with defining the so-called world-building turn in contemporary humanities as drawing attention to the world understood not as a mere setting, burdened with metaphysical mortgage (sensu Martin Heidegger) of ontological realism, but, rather, as a living, habitable space surpassing the representational boundaries of any diegetic instantiation. However, contrary to the multitude of Western approaches to the phenomenon, the subsequent analysis has resisted the temptation of falling into yet another paradigm associated with the concept of so-called "subcreation" which renders any creation of a world different than our own as secondary to the *creatio ex nihilo* and, thereby, metaphysically indebted in its very inception. Contrastingly, *Habitats of Fiction* offer an overview of narrative strategies aimed at creating an allotopian world accompanied by its own integral xenoencyclopaedia which requires narrative recipients to affirm an allocentric, rather than egocentric, cognitive perspective and re-orient their interpretative strategies developed throughout long-lasting contact with realist fiction. A world-centered narrative, central to the theory of world-building, is thus shown as displaying three distinct features: **referentiability** (that requires a certain degree of xenoencyclopaedic competence within the lore of a given fictional world), **explorability** (that encourages exploration of the storyworld – i.e. wayfaring – rather than a linear reading of a single storyline – i.e. trail-following), and **inhabitability** (that invites domestication and familiarisation of allotopian world).

In *Habitats of Fiction*, world-building theory allies with newly-developed transmedial narratology in its awareness of the so-called "media-consciousness" i.e. a claim that contemporary narrative and fiction theory should not limit its scope to monomedial analysis but, rather, transgress the boundaries of different media and seek "medium-free" aspects of the narrative. Maj claims the world-centeredness and medium-freedom of world-building techniques to be one of the latter and discusses in these terms a number of multimedia executions of fictional and fantastic world-building in literature (John Crowley, George R. R. Martin, Jacek Dukaj, Marcin Sergiusz Przybył), TV shows & movies (*Matrix*, *Avatar*, *Game of Thrones*), video games (*The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim*, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Unfinished Swan*), animes (*Sword Art Online*), or other, strictly world-building projects (*Star Citizen*). Thereinafter, Maj elaborates on the concepts of transmedia story and transmedial world as key in understanding how a fictional world may transgress the boundaries of the single diegetic instantiation that brought it to life – and, as a result, transform into what can be called a "persistent universe". This "persistence" is shown as operating on two levels: **top-down**, which contributes to a static component of world-building narrative, one designed and/or curated by world-builders, and **bottom-up**, which allows for so-called "narrativity" and "worldplay" of make-believe which contribute to the development of a dynamic component. Transmedial expansion of narrative content is not limited, however, to intermedial or intertextual relationship alone. Conversely, it operates on a transfictional level allowing for narrative cross-overs of not necessarily textual content, i.e. fictional characters and their biographies (Sherlock Holmes, Batman, Darth Vader), fictional artefacts and made-up objects (ansible, Excalibur, lightsaber), or even entire fictional worlds (Marvel Cinematic Universe). Last but not least, postclassical narratology is utilised for analysing world-building on diegetic level as well, within a framework of multi-

modality, i.e. a multi-layered integration of semiotic modes in a single medium (Jacek Dukaj's *The Old Axolotl*).

Throughout the entire thesis, narrativity, xenoencyclopaedic capacity, and spreadability of allotopian, persistent universes collineates with a continuous effort to deconstruct any paradigms that impose the discourses of power and control over world-building narratives. Therefore, *Habitats of Fiction* strive to deconstruct the widely-used binary opposition of the canon and the apocryphô which, respectively, canonises the original, authored content and legitimise any authorial creation and de-canonises any fan-made apocrypha as if they were unworthy of being appropriated within a fictional world's encyclopaedic framework. This is why Maj expands the already adopted concept of immersion in literary theory into the experience of **worldness** understood not necessarily in Lisbeth Klastrup terms as the worldliness of a given fictional world, but, rather, as a deep state of connection to a transfictional lore, one that surpasses the distinction of the self and other, the real and the fantastic, and the primary and the secondary. It is, then, the said experience that is shown as ultimately contributing to the inhabitation of fictional worldô a practice unbeknownst to the dwellers of empirical realms who have never experienced transportation to a reality other than their own. Finally, the thesis concludes with a critical commentary upon Tadeusz Siewek's concept of oikologyô a practice that combines inhabitation and domestication with a journey far beyond the horizon of reality: one that begins and ends in the "where-from" (*z-gdzie*), an entry point to a fictional reality, where one starts from and where one, ultimately, ends returning to.