

Dr. Agnieszka Podruczna conducts research on science fiction in English-language post-colonial literature, however, she deals with specific sci-fi literature – not only with works related to North America, but also written by non-white women; authors who come from minorities and diasporic or indigenous communities.

SCIENCE FIC

TELLS US NOTHING ABOUT THE FUTURE

The texts analyzed by Dr. Podruczna show that the traditions of postcolonial science fiction writing can be at odds with the mainstream of this genre.

"It seems to me that there is a belief that humans are destined to conquer the cosmos and subdue all that it contains. The texts that I deal with slightly question this view. The mainstream belief that humanity has to leave Earth and conquer other planets is in a sense an extension of the colonial tradition of Western countries," the philologist remarks.

In her doctoral thesis, *Reading the Body of the Other in Feminist Postcolonial Science Fiction*, Dr. Agnieszka Podruczna focuses on the ways in which the female body is represented in postcolonial science fiction written by women. The researcher discusses works by Canadian authors of various origins, such as Larissa Lai, Nalo Hopkinson, Celu Amberstone, and Suzette Mayr, as well as writers with an African background – Nisi Shawl and Carole McDonnell. In the analyzed works, the female body becomes a transgressive subject i.e. one that crosses or blurs boundaries and a subject opposing and resisting colonial practices. It is worth emphasizing that science fiction itself is very interested in issues of the body and embodiment, an aspect present in works by genre classics dealing with androids, such as Philip K. Dick.

Many of works by these authors deal with the issues of reckoning with the colonial past and slavery, resettlement,

looking for a home, and being between two worlds. It is expedient to note that writers of indigenous, Canadian, or American descent write about their lack of belonging in slightly different ways than authors whose families come from other parts of the world or who immigrated at a later point in life. The defining feature of this literature is the way it looks at the Alien, namely from the Alien's point of view. The Alien can also speak in its own voice. As one of them, Nalo Hopkinson (one of the more famous authors of postcolonial science fiction) writes in her introduction to a volume of stories: for people like her, whose communities have suffered the trauma of colonialism, a spaceship appearing somewhere on the horizon is not something fictitious. These communities have lived through it and are the Aliens in this context.

One of Nalo Hopkinson's novels entitled *Midnight Robber* is particularly noteworthy. Its action takes place in a distant future in which interplanetary travel is possible. The main character lives on one of the planets colonized by people from the Caribbeans. On the one hand, the novel meets all genre requirements, and on the other hand, it is literature dealing with reckoning, maturing, and traumatizing events.

"I share the view held by many science fiction scholars that the genre does not really tell us anything about the future. However, it tells a lot about the present and the past," Dr. Podruczna remarks.

TION

Amanda Chamon, Trap, Poland



The development of our species has significantly been influenced by various cultural trends, civilization breakthroughs, and historical events. Mary Shelley wrote in 19th century Britain, and therefore her narrative is a reflection of this era: scientific discoveries, progress in medicine, the industrial revolution. Her protagonists are people of that time trying to find their role in a new situation, asking themselves what a human being really is. Herbert George Wells, who lived at the turn of the 20th century, created stories dealing with alien invasions. These texts reflect the prevailing moods in the society of that time and the growing fear of war. In the 1950s and 1960s, an international race to the moon was underway. As a result, countless narratives about the conquest of space, such as Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* or numerous books by Isaac Asimov, appeared in science fiction novels. The 1980s followed suit; the beginning of the computer era. Consequently, cyberpunk found its way into the genre, for example in works by William Gibson, the American creator of this sub-genre of sci-fi, or by Philip K. Dick. Due to advances in technology and research on artificial intelligence in the 1990s, people have become increasingly interested in robots, androids, and AI. Nowadays, these topics are also very popular in science fiction as well as in movies and computer games. "We try to imagine what the future will look like, but the framework of our society, the political, social, or cultural climate limit us in a quite significant way. Therefore,

European sci-fi literature is different from the American, although common points could be found," the researcher remarks.

Another interesting theme in science fiction is how authors portray their – and therefore our – images of Aliens. In the great majority of cases, they are anthropomorphic characters. Aliens usually have two arms, two legs, a head, and are basically humans repainted in gray. They also exhibit human characteristics: they are peaceful or aggressive, kind or angry, greedy or selfless, and even, *nomen omen*, humanitarian.

The genre studied by Dr. Agnieszka Podruczna, postcolonial science fiction, is young, but draws heavily from the tradition of the genre. Most of the books were published at the very end of the 20th century or already in the 21st century, so we are talking about very contemporary fiction.



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