

A LINGUIST'S ACCOUNT ON POSTHUMAN HISTORY REWRITING IN BORISLAV PEKIĆ'S *ATLANTIS*

Резиме

The possibility of having more than one history presented in the same space-time frame within a literary work calls for a consideration of depiction and interpretation of those historical realities. By focusing on existence issues of parallel histories and the juxtaposition of humans and robots in Borislav Pečić's Atlantis, this paper examines the notion of cyclicality, elaborating on the clash between the presented parallel histories and the interpretation of the depicted dual worlds of humans and androids. The aim here is to provide a fresh investigation of Pečić's understanding of the position of humankind in the current technological revolution era and its (conceivable) end.

Introduction

The appeal readers and researchers feel when challenged by the works of Serbian author Borislav Pečić predominately lies in their openness to different angles of approaches, be they literary, linguistic or cultural. Even though there are numerous pages written in connection to his literary and cultural contributions to an understanding of the position of humankind in the current technological revolution era, the appeal his works present to researchers of cultural, especially inter- and intracultural readings of linguistic layers, never cease to exist, for every new reading calls upon a new understanding of the core text. Moreover, the acknowledged density and stratification of the text itself calls for a careful uncovering and deciphering of codes using a cross-sectional approach. Namely, by turning to research of cultural-linguistic specificities of the text, one can extract additional information, which opens new possibilities for novel interpretations.

It was Pečić who drew researchers' attention to reinvestigating approaches towards an understanding of the historical reality. He (Pečić, 1984) argues that there can be no spatial limitations to its reconsideration 'until we shall spread our unhappy history throughout the universe'. The idea that the future cannot be seen unless it is viewed as the past, which repeats itself, drives one to examine one's personal understanding of historical issues in the light of present-day events. By

* zbabic@blic.net

understanding this idea as an invitation for applying it to his own work, it seemed only natural to take *Atlantis* (1988) as a corpus for a critical analysis.

In his *Foreword* to the novel, Pekić (1995a: 7) introduces the topic by saying ‘[I]t is our duty to follow our imagination in so much as to respect the obviousness of the real world in which we live. For the truth is the likeliest to exist in the place where our imagination and other realities cross...’. Pekić decidedly marks his work as an anthropological epos, and thoroughly endeavours to lead his readers into his reasons for embarking on a quest for the lost continent or the embodiment of paradise on Earth. Cautiously preparing the readers for a personal experience of his understanding of events, he appeals for understanding and reasoning by indicating that not only writers but also readers need imagination, ‘If you don’t possess it, leave the book alone!’ (Pekić, 1995a, p. 12). By casting away any responsibility for misunderstanding, the author opens a way for readers to embrace their own comprehensive model of approaching the problems raised in the text.

The novel, labelled by critics as anti-utopian, depicts a conflict between two rival paradigms, which are represented in the forms of two civilisations, human and android. Trying to immerse in the core of humanity and the course it takes in a technological, posthuman era, the novel also searches for answers about the place and future of humans within the environ they live in, which they experience as linear, and which, in fact, is cyclical.

The paper tackles a specific issue one comes across with every new reading of the novel - that of finding traces of the palimpsest of posthuman history rewriting in a literary text.

History, culture and posthumanism

When a writer decides to offer us his own interpretation of recorded history, we feel obliged to follow both paths, the original and the newly-treaded one, in order to see whether the times we live in can be interpreted as synchronicity or yet another twine in a spatio-temporal loop. Even though we feel as if time is running faster and things are changing more rapidly in the 21st century human environment, some earlier research may suggest differently. Moreover, the closeness we, as humans, feel with other human societies nowadays, due to a physical openness to other cultures and an embracing of shared symbols, languages or concepts, still does not mean that we have almost erased all lines of separation. As Zelinsky (1992: 87) states, ‘[...] cultural distances seem to be shrinking; but modern man, torn loose from conventional bounds of place or social and biological descent, may well be feeling his way into a number of newly discovered dimensions’. The

posit makes one re-evaluate the generally accepted view that societies today are so close and interwoven that we can generally welcome the notion of a universal cultural space, or, at least, a general one, close to the majority of its members.

Still, this simplistic and, on the surface, naive interpretation would not sustain any critical analysis. And the notion of posthumanism itself has been critically embraced and considered from its very beginning. Even though Donna Haraway renounces acknowledgment for branding the term 'Cyborg Manifesto', she explores potentiality which transformation into this new form may bring to the surface. The fresh wave of incessant reconsideration of the meaning of the term within various, especially humanistic, disciplines was opened by N. Katherine Hayles (1999: 2-3), and she claims that in order to characterise the term, one should consider it 'to be suggestive rather than prescriptive' and concludes that '[I]n the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals'. The tendency to pursue the critical path of consideration was retained in the 21st century. Following the works of Lacan, Derrida, Foucault or Barthes, and their specific types of readings, an important number of views has been presented as the theoretical basis for determining whether it is possible to acknowledge the discourse of the world 'before' and 'after' technologisation. Wolfe (2010) proposes the idea of 'postanthropocentrism', which ought to incite us to rethink the human in connection with its non-human others, and Herbrechter (2013) analyses it as a discourse. Braidotti (2013: 188) decides to challenge the Derrideans by ensuring that the posthumanistic arguments should encompass fighting at other levels, not only, or mainly, at the linguistic one, and, therefore, she argues that

[T]he posthuman subject is not postmodern, because it does not rely on any anti-foundationalist premises. Nor is it poststructuralist, because it does not function within the linguistic turn or other forms of deconstruction. Not being framed by the ineluctable powers of signification, it is consequently not condemned to seek adequate representation of its existence within a system that is constitutionally incapable of granting due recognition.

At the same time, Braidotti possesses a deep belief that it is possible to use the posthuman as the liberating power, which will challenge and defeat the negativity of various contemporary practices, and achieve the momentum of reinvention of the human.

What is the position of culture? Barad (2003: 801) reminds us that '[L]anguage matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter'. Being a new materialist, she puts an equation between language and matter, for biology is culturally mediated in the same amount as culture is materialistically constructed.

This view of a matter as a dynamic process, not a static product, means that various outer forces shape it. Ferrando (2013: 32), on the other hand, puts the issues under a common umbrella saying that '[P]osthumanism (here understood as critical, cultural, and philosophical posthumanism, as well as new materialisms) seems appropriate to investigate the geological time of the anthropocene. As the anthropocene marks the extent of the impact of human activities on a planetary level, the posthuman focuses on de-centering the human from the primary focus of the discourse'. We change the world around us with every new technological advancement, thus changing the milieu, which is the basis for an establishment of culture or cultures. The advancement of technology provokes emergence of the technological culture or the culture of emerging technologies. The way we shape the world around us definitely changes all the realities we confine ourselves to. The need to examine their borders, to expand their perimeters, to widen their scopes, will consequently lead to changes and adjustments, for humans' need to control and understand the reality they live in may sometimes result in having a distorted view of the world, which consists only of pieces of personal experiences. Therefore, Pepperell calls for a *defragmentation* of them, for he considers culture as *a way of de-fragmenting consciousness*.

It is evident that touching the issue of technology and the way it transforms us is just the tip of the iceberg when attempting to give even a small-scale contribution to the analysis of posthumanity. Still, what is at the core of all the various claims surrounding the examined concepts can be summarised by the usage of the word 'change'. Therefore, it is the change of boundaries, be they cultural, historical, social and personal (to name but a few), between the artificial and natural that are in focus of posthumanist research.

Parallelism in Recounting of Historical Events

In his foreword to *Atlantis*, Pekić (1995a: 9) emphasises the fact that his inspiration for writing the novel about Atlantis was influenced not only by Plato's interpretation of the war between the Athenians and Atlanteans, which promotes the black-and-white *clash of the bad and good demons*, but also by Numenius, who calls it the *battle of the souls*. Therefore, Pekić (1995a: 12) claims to accept the second idea in order to develop it into the *battle of those with a soul against those without one*, and argues that 'art is perhaps a much deeper part of memory than human remembrance and that some imagination in the quest for truth is perhaps much more useful than scientific restraints'. As aforementioned, he implores his readers not to read the book if they possess no imagination, thus involving them in the process of accepting the notions laid to them in full.

Even though it seems unfair to the readers to extract any of the novels from the trilogy (*Rabies* (1983), *Atlantis* (1988), *1999* (1984)), the author himself clearly states that all of them can be read as separate pieces of writing without the needed insight into the two other parts. Still, the argument for choosing just one novel as a corpus is simple: this paper is not going to present just another reading of the novel as the epitome of anti-utopian writing in the eve of the imminent disintegration of ex-Yugoslavia, but as the basis for the visibility of the author and his views in the surface and deep levels of the text.

Pekić instantly leads us into the story by emphasising that the novel is 'the artistic analysis of our *Indo-Mechanical civilisation*, which, in many aspects, did not seem to [him] human enough, not only in the historical, but also in the actual, aspects'. Moreover, he states that the yearning for Atlantis is real, and that even though many things are fictional and should be taken as such, this fiction is generally based on true events. And those events transfer readers to the New World.

Atlantis is set in an English-speaking country, like *Rabies* and *1999*. The need of topographical displacement is obvious, and the USA was a happy choice, for it enabled the development of the story based on the legend about Atlantis. And there is no other country more iconically predestined for a new beginning than the USA.

The first chapter (Pekić, 1995a, p. 13), which introduces the two protagonists, the Man with the Golden Eyes and the Man with the Iron Eyes, begins with William Bradford's famous quote from *The Mayflower Chronicle* (1620): 'Our Fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in the wilderness, but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard their voice and looked on their adversities...'. The author indubiously places his Atlantis at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, for this placement allows him to follow both purely historical, and his, storytelling in a linear way. The meticulousness with which all the recorded data is presented is note-worthy. The introductory note taken from Bradford is used for comparison with the recorded history, for at the beginning we seem to get immersed into polar interpretation of events, which the main characters are being drawn into. The unveiling of parallel histories is experienced simultaneously by the characters and by the readers. It is worth noting that the author is extremely precise in presenting us with the general historical background as if trying to persuade us to abandon for the moment what is known so far in order to embrace his characters' interpretation of events.

The juxtaposition of the two characters John Carver/Howland and John Alden, as previously mentioned, starts with their first appearance. The readers ought to feel more prone to liking a man with the golden (Carver/Howland) than the iron eyes (Alden). The adjectives used may be interpreted later as an introduction to the real truth behind the characters - their humanness and androidity, which

again is something they become aware of as the plot unravels and which are not their inborn characteristics that any of the two are aware of. The parallel destinies of namesakes and events, (which inevitably occur every time their roads cross), are presented in a form of a timeline, with an occasional crossing from the 7th to the 20th century.

It is John Alden who informs us that Bradford's history, however exhaustive, lacks certain events. And the readers should believe him. Here we encounter the first cultural leap. Namely, John Alden is known in American history as one of the travellers from the *Mayflower*, a hired cooper not a Separatist at first, a protagonist of a famous love triangle immortalised by Longfellow, and a signee of the Mayflower Compact, to name just a few facts as an illustration of his rich life. Pekić's Alden has another story to tell, that of his experience after coming to the shores of the New World. As a connecting thread between the story of the lost continent and nation, we are presented with the Separatists who may have ventured to build a new home for themselves but who on their arrival to the shores of Cape Code have also come to announce the approaching of the Age of Aquarius. And among them is the second John - John Carver/Howland.

Pekić definitely invites his readers to like John Carver/Howland. His physical description, his origin, his job and his social status are all in accordance with what a reader expects from the 'hero' or 'the main character'. In his case, the historical background is a mixture of two adjoined ones, which in the author's interpretation became one due to the influence of carefully planned thread-pulling. John Carver is originally the author of the Mayflower Compact and the first governor of the New Plymouth Colony. The historical records tell us more about his servant, John Howland, including the famous incident of his rescue from the turbulent ocean waters depicted in a Mike Hayward's painting 'Howland Overboard'. And it is here that the known history events are changed. We know that the genealogy of John Carver stops after his death, for he had no living descendants, but the novel offers us a parallel history. The John Carver/Howland we meet in 1988 is the descendant of the first governor, and as such, belongs to New England high society. Nevertheless, his inner being wants to escape the predestined fate of an only son born to go into politics. Here Pekić makes a literary leap into the new reality in order to connect the two stories. Barad (1995), making connection with the contribution of Niels Bohr to our understanding that words do not have inherently fixed meanings, emphasises that the uncertainty principle in quantum physics is not at all a matter of 'uncertainty' but rather of indeterminacy. She (Barad, 1995, p. 817-818) later discusses the whole ontological basis of the phenomena in general and argues that '[T]he world is an ongoing open process of matter through which "mattering" itself acquires meaning and form in the realisation of different agential possibilities. Temporality and spatiality emerge in this processual historicity. Relation of exteriority, connectivity, and exclusion are

reconfigured. The changing topologies of the world entail an ongoing reworking of the very nature of dynamics'. In the same way, by creating a parallel historical concept of human/non-human histories, Pekić opens a precipice between the two protagonists by assigning them different roles, that of a 'human' and that of a 'robot'.

The juxtaposition of assigning roles is seen too in the assignment of the characters' job, for Carver/Howland is an anthropologist and Alden is a police officer. John Carver is a professor at Harvard; John Alden works for the FBI. John Carver is an expert on Salem witches, John Alden ventures on his own witch-hunt. The binarity is ever present; still the original black-and-whiteness is constantly shaded by the greyness of the past, which keeps on hovering over the heads of both characters. For the average reader who shares the author's mother tongue, there is only one history present - the one offered by the author, for the cultural layers do not touch the core of their general knowledge. Still, this spatial and temporal detachment is needed for an introduction of ideas and considerations, which are universal and present an innuendo of the imminent end of humanism.

Both John Carver/Howland and John Alden are on quests, however different they may be. John Carver, an anthropologist, searches for the origin of humankind and his own roots. John Alden searches for a mass murderer and the murderer of his ancestors. What Pekić introduces is the idea of cyclicity and interdependence of events, which will inevitably lead to the end of humanism in the sense we know it. But in order for something to end, we must establish the very beginning of things. Pekić also provides us with his own contribution by putting the question of humanism into a created historical context.

The idea of cyclicity is inserted in the readers mind by the very acceptance of Plato as the source for the legend of Atlantis. His circular representation of an island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, so close to the average reader and generally accepted, also provides us with the explanation that due to the higher power intervention there is no possibility to navigate the ocean at present, so it is difficult to set valid proofs for the legend.¹ By accepting Plato's narrative, we also accept the author's narrative involving us in his account on the consequences the arrival of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower has at present. And the present, for Pekić, is literal. The novel was published in 1988, the very year he uses as the point in the timeline for the establishment of a connection between the past with the present and for proving that events happen in cyclical forms.

Had the historically renowned John Carver had offspring, history might not have valued John Howland's descendants with such high regard. It was, therefore, necessary to make a connection between the origins of the 20th century John Carver with the upper social layers of New England society and

¹ See Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

yet retain the plausibility of the bloodline story. Hence, in pursuing to establish the roots of his own dissatisfaction with his life and the society he lives in and to prevail the general feeling of alienation, John Carver/Howland discovers he was adopted. The discovery allows him to accept the part of himself, which was always considered strange by his surroundings. The predestined political career turns out to be the predestined career of the leader of the new Atlanteans. Pekić's insistence on binarity once again surfaces. Thus, we have encounters of present historical events, but this time readers are well aware that the singularity they have been experiencing is created, though its creation is nevertheless influenced by the previous acceptance of the rewriting of history. The insistence on adjusting historical events in order to emphasise the overpowering might of cyclicity over linearity reminds us of philosophical posits which serve as an introduction to all the chapters. Quotes from different sources, Plato, of course, but also the Bible, the Encyclopaedia Britannica or the Poet Laureate John Masefield, serve as the basis for justification of presenting this new history, which, according to Vukićević-Janković (2013: 195), 'corresponds to Pekić's tendency to explain the social history and the future of humankind by its inmost past, in which its moving truth and essence are hidden'. Once again, we must turn to the beginning and remind ourselves that it was Pekić himself who labeled this work as an 'anthropological epos', which enabled the introduction of dual reconsideration of time, linear and cyclic. This duality should be used when one considers historical events too.

Finally, it is interesting to perceive Pekić's opinion on the general notion of history. He juxtaposes two parallel interpretations, one based on solid, material proofs, and the other, an unwritten, invisible one. Their bases are antipodal and we, as readers, can choose one, both or none of these. Still, the standpoint of the author is clear and unmistakably visible. The paths the two histories take are different, one marches towards nature, and the other, towards technology and civilisation. One is linear, basically inscribed as a recorded history, thus prone to changing according to various needs, be they existential, political, or social. The disagreement with this interpretation of events echoes clearly from the very beginning of the book. So, the accounts from the *Mayflower Chronicle* are deemed as 'dishonourable lies' (Pekić, 1995a, p. 23), but the disclosure, so diligently pursued by John Alden, was never to be made. This counter-history, which would teach us that John Howland was not saved by the help of God's Providence or pure chance (however the reader interprets the event of catching the rope thrown into the water when being thrown overboard by the storm), but that he actually walked on water and climbed back on the ship. The acceptance of the counter-history would lead us astray from the linear, Christian history, the history we were brought up with. The same history that accepts Christ's ability to walk on the surface of water, but not others. This walk, of course, should not be understood literally, but as an example of a non-acceptance of ideas, which are at their core revolutionary

or, at least, bear the sparks of reformation. The linear history does not allow for surprises, it must be programmed, it must be written in order to sustain the story presented by the ruling few. The counter-history, on the other hand, is thought-provoking, order-disrupting, and revolutionary in every aspect, for its aim is not perseverance but a change of mind. Therefore, it always carries a seed of potential danger, and, as such, must be eradicated at its root, moreover there ought not to have been the chance given for writing it in the first place. This pre-emptive attack on change is what Pekić is heartily opposing, for it presumes the lack of personal choice, and, ultimately, the absence of freedom. One must be allowed to take one's own course, and the expected freedom will be at hand. At the same time, it is not possible to neglect the surroundings in which the novel was written. The term 'novel' keeps on being used here in spite of Pekić's own statement that *Atlantis* is an epos, and, furthermore, that he never wrote a novel apart from *Zlatno runo* (*The Golden Fleece*), for his own avoidance make researchers name it as one. The imminence of change is strongly felt. The late eighties were the dawn of social change in ex-Yugoslavia, so, for today's reader, this rewriting of history can be understood as an overture to the disintegration of the present society as well as a disclosure of a make-shift history which was fed to us through a meticulously post-written depiction of the emergence of an amalgam of a nation in the Balkans.

A robot's and a human's interpretation of cyclicity

The re-investigation of historical parallelism inevitably leads to the re-investigation of the dual worlds depicted in the novel, those of humans and robots.

It is worth mentioning here that in 1988 most of the everyday objects of the early 21st century reality world seemed inconceivable. There was no Internet, no mobile phones, no global village environ one is now spending one's daily life in. Nevertheless, the aroma of changes that the ongoing technological revolution had brought was strong and poignant. One would have to have been naive or ignorant not to realise that all the positive trends technologisation brought did not result in questioning the future role of humans in this new techno order. Moreover, technology is human in origin. Thus, is it possible to talk about a new type of alienation in posthumanistic society or is this new alienation just a 2.0 version of the human alienation of its own species?

At first, the predicament does not seem as dark. Pekić (1995b: 110) cautiously introduces us to his hierarchy. There are humans who are aware of their humanity but unaware that they are surrounded by robots, and a small minority of humans who are both aware of the fact that they are human and living among robots. A particular kind of robots are humanoids, who are machines ignorant of their own inhumanity, and androids, who are aware of the fact that they are

robots whose duty is to eradicate the true humans. The appropriateness of such a diversification enables yet another establishment of the ‘chosen few’, who form the secret brotherhood of Aquarius. To be precise, ‘few’ actually means ten thousand people, but in comparison with the remainder of the known population, the denomination may even seem as an overestimation. Such a diversification enables another consideration as well. Namely, it easily fits into Vinge’s (1993) premise that a posthuman reality ought to be regarded as ‘too different to fit into the classical frame of good and evil’. The near sameness of the humans and robots is introduced at the beginning of the work and we are constantly being reminded of it. Pekić’s characters only differ in the possession/non-possession of a soul. The broadened binarity brings us back to attributing the contentions of the posthuman arguments proposed by Wolfe (2010), those that the boundaries of ontological divide between human and animal are erased and that it is vital not to make the same mistake again and re-establish the primary differentiation between the two. Wolfe, of course, draws attention back to the basic postulate that language is primarily a human property and that humankind possesses the ability to use language as a means of communication. Pekić has a specific understanding of the use of language. Robots use auditory characteristic. Humans only need their minds in order to communicate with one another. They do not need instructions. They do not need means. The very belonging to the group of the enlightened ones, the ‘illuminati’, opens the possibility to communicate without any known boundaries.

Pepperell posits that ‘language divides us’² in a way that even though it is something we acquire by the age of five, it breaks the world we live in into small pieces, fragments, for ‘we tend to see the world in the way that we describe it, as a fragmented collection of “things” rather than a continuous whole’. In *Atlantis*, language is another point of separation between humans and robots. Androids use the ‘robotic’ language for communication. Still, humans use telepathy only when they are not occupying the same space. When they are together, they succumb to escaping from things that are connected with this new world they are forced to live in and use gestures for communication. They reach for sign language in order to re-create the rites of the lost Atlantis, but it is only a repeating of the known Christian tale used in many places. The Atlanteans draw the sign of Aquarius, the Christians’ fish. Vukičević-Janković (2013: 196) notes that narratives of a line of humans, presented in the form of a dialogue, are deliberately emphasised graphically, by the usage of italics, in order to determine their truthfulness and unambiguity. The writer describes his primary work tool as something artificial, created for expressing lies. For his human characters, he introduces telepathy as a type of communication, which is exempt from lying. But this exemption works only in communication with other humans. Deceit, concealment and the vow of

² Pepperell, Robert. ‘The Posthuman Conception of Consciousness’.

silence are what enable the remainder of 'humans' to preserve their existence in the world of robots. Pekić constantly reminds us that the old proverb *What goes around, comes around* can be attributed to the present-day state of things. Humans created the robots. Robots should have been used as tools, a helping hand, and a liberating force from hard work. So, humans determined their own future by the introduction of a rival. Should they have foreseen it? Could this have been prevented? Pekić never goes as far as giving us the answers. He just reminds us of the inevitability of creative forces which, by being set in motion, will continue to influence the world we live in according to the laws set by the wheel of events.

Pekić (1995a: 5) starts his story by quoting Plato's *Timaeus*: 'There was and there will be many destructions of humanity ... and it will, as a child, always have to start from the beginning not knowing what had happened before him'. The history of humans is not linear, it is cyclic in its core, for it always strives to return to its beginning. In the case of Pekić's humans, the fall of the Atlantians, known and recorded, is the beginning of new history, the robotic, linear, false. The beginning of the returning to Atlantean history is strongly dated, but it is not programmed, it is not written by the winners, for it keeps on trying to return to the state before the end of civilisation. The tendency and zest for the renewal of history tells us that we keep on going in circles. And the motif of the circle keeps on reminding us of that. It keeps on appearing as a permanent reminder that our acceptance of historical events as linear puts an equation mark between androids and us. The circular shape of Atlantis and circular shapes of spheres of the submerged civilisation reminds us that the yearning for harmony will cease only when the re-establishment of the previous state of things is finished. The image of Paradise is replaced by the image of Atlantis. The Atlantean, i.e. Pekić's (1995b: 39) definition of a human is 'a biological organisation based on a specific ration of matter, its energy and soul'. Our lives are also points in the cyclical endeavour to rectify the events from the past. For Pekić's humans, the existence of space-time is an illusion brought to life by robots in order to pacify us with the sense of inevitability. The acceptance of this illusion means the acceptance of the status quo, the acceptance of given truths and histories. This acceptance is also the acceptance of the robots' world. The non-compliance with this 'written' reality means a revolution, a struggle for personal expression, and, ultimately, a struggle with the system. When acquainted with the 'human' understanding of events, John Carver/Howland admits that '[H]e knew from earlier times that *this kind of world* was not his, even though he didn't know why. Now that he knows the reason, when he knows why he feels like an alien in it, it became impossible for him to live in it' (Pekić, 1995b, p. 120). The possession of soul means the possession of self-consciousness, the possession of struggle against robotisation, the possession of fighting against everything, which means automatisisation. Humans are in possession of *knowledge* (Pekić, 1995b, p. 181), which is the ultimate weapon

against robots and which is to be used by their leader, Pow-Hna-Tan, when he feels ready.

The parallel histories also provide the basis for constant war, which ultimately was provoked by humans' invention of humanoids as a technological aid. The corruptive side of technology is inevitably going to provide the constant need for dominance. Being posthuman, according to Pepperell (2003: 3), means not possessing naivety and benevolence: 'Humans have imagined for a long time that the ability to develop and control technology was one of the defining characteristics of our condition, something that assured us of our superiority over other animals and our unique status in the world'. This conceited idea that by creating tools which would provide conditions for less physical work and more free time was later reshaped, for it was obvious that technology is used as a mediator in the unpreventable journey towards posthumanism. Pekić (1995b: 214) warns us that '[R]obotic intelligence is based on the coded relationship of the symbols which have been taken from the human world. The processes of separation and amalgamation, differentiation and synthesis, combination and recombination, are the same in a computer and a brain'. However more advanced the human brain may have been, the technological development of both hardware and software brought the two almost to an equation. Robots, even though made by humans, have the advantage of procreation via making innumerable amount of copies, which are willing to learn, to imitate, and which do not forget. Even though their history is artificial and presents only an imitation of human history, the possibility of occurrence of a glitch in the matrix, or the linear cause of events, would change the perceived train of events, and therefore influence the time-space human reality.

Pekić fears that the conceit technology brought to our lives will pave the path to a catastrophe. The imminence of the final end is something that is predestined, but so is the cyclical form of events: 'If the end is in the beginning, one should only worry about the flow, and the end will come on its own' (Pekić, 1995b, p. 216). And the finale, however unexpected and horrid, is the general proof that cyclicity teaches us that the end of one civilisation is not the end of the universe, just the beginning of something new and that such events will happen *ad infinitum*.

The aftermath

The simple move of a lever ends in a clash between the two worlds, but it does not present the end of the cyclicity. A flight of a swallow, which occurs at the beginning and at the end of *Atlantis*, reminds us that civilisation will rise again. Even though the civilisation of robots ceased to exist, the necessity of their existence is felt. We are left with the two representatives of the species, a robot

and a human, whose task is to renew civilisation and history. Again, we feel that hope never seems to exist. In their imperfection, humans will always strive for perfection whose ultimate point is Paradise. In order to achieve it, they will try to make the path easy by creating different kinds of aids via robots. Robots are created according to a human ideal of perfection. But it is this very perfection that makes John Alden, a robot, become more human-like. So, by striving for imperfection and perfection, both humans and robots make a wheel of events proving to us that the end does not exist, for it always means a new beginning.

So, what is the future of our world? Even though Pekić keeps on reminding us about the possible hazards we are facing by our imprudent use of technology, invented to make our lives easier and more productive, the very idea of possibility of rectifying the errors from the past in some future (or parallel) history drives every new civilisation into an establishment of goals which should lead to their being the ultimate ruling models of the world. At the same time, this establishment presents the very seed for future collapse, which again bears a seed for new life. What we do is just rewrite our history on the palimpsest left to us by previous writers. Pekić, at least, offers us a possible solution to the problem - the use of imagination. We have to liberate ourselves from the technological bonds and necessities we chained ourselves into, for that is the only way for us to embrace our humanity, and, with it, embrace others.

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Жељка Бабић

ЗАПИС ЛИНГВИСТЕ О НОВОМ ПОСТХУМАНИСТИЧКОМ ИСПИСИВАЊУ ИСТОРИЈЕ У „АТЛАНТИДИ“ БОРИСЛАВА ПЕКИЋА

Могућност представљања више од једне историје унутар временско-просторног оквира омеђеног границама књижевног дјела представља подстицај лингвисти да промишља о могућности описа и интерпретације постојећих историјских реалности. Узимајући као корпус истраживања роман Борислава Пекића „Атлантида“, рад се усредсређује на двије основне истраживачке линије. Прва је усмјерена на разоткривање језичких апарата који одређују однос између припадника људског и андроидног свијета, разликовних карактеристика језика и облика комуникације који се користе, као и језичких вјештина које они користе не би ли прикрили своје јаство.

Истовремено, пишево поновно исписивање историјских догађаја посматра се у свјетлу ауторовог јаства које се огледа у коришћењу специфичних језичких структура. Повезницу ове двије истраживачке линије представља ауторово виђење развоја људског рода, технологије, цивилизације, митологије и религије у вјештачки створеном симулакруму. Сви они постоје као подсјетник да је једини начин разумијевања онај који наглашава цикличност, јер је изузетно тешко пронаћи почетак и крај у свијету чији историјски развој увијек нагриза присуство свемоћних људи који њиме управљају из сјенке. Овакво становиште је у складу са Пепереловим концептом свијести, који се у раду користи за опис присуства дијелења сопства кроз сам језик, јер је „свијест збир свих разлика које правимо кроз језик“.

Рад се осврће и на Пекићеву јукстапозицију двају историја: линеарне, хришћанске и општеприхваћене, те контраисторије, чији је циљ револуционарна промјена начина размишљања. Линеарна историја не дозвољава изненађења, јер је, као и све умјетно, испрограмирана, и једина јој је сврха очување постојећег поретка. Контраисторија, она која постоји паралелно са линеарном, јесте ненаписано појединачно искуство сваке јединке које у себи носи и сјеме погибели, те ју је, из тог разлога, потребно уништити у самом зачетку.

Јасно и злокобно упозорење о могућним опасностима које нам доноси неразборито коришћење технологије, која је превасходно створена не би ли нам олакшала живот и учинила га продуктивнијим, одзвања истовремено са поруком да је могуће исправити грешке из прошлости у некој будућој (или паралелним будућим) историјској стварности кроз коришћење имагинације и прихватање оног јединственог основа који лежи у свима нама - наше људскости, која се огледа и у специфичном коришћењу језика као једне од разликовних одредбених особина између људи и андроида.