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GROWING A NEW HEART: INTRUSION FANTASY AND AN ALTERNATIVE "CLUB STORY" IN *THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE*

Abstract. In *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013), Neil Gaiman constructs a fantasy world in order to dramatize a young boy's psychological crisis in the face of threatening changes in his social environment. A sense of intrusion permeates the narrative: it is both the intrusion of the adults' greed and corruption into the boy's life and the corresponding intrusion of the fantastic into consensus reality. The motif of intrusion is analysed in this paper by referring to Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), where the author defines intrusion fantasy as one of the four basic categories of the fantastic. An important term used in Mendlesohn's discussion is a "club story", which refers to any kind of discourse on consensus reality that the "club members" accept in its entirety and whose authority they never question. In an intrusion fantasy, the protagonist is usually the only one who is outside of the club story and capable of perceiving the intrusion of a dangerous otherworldly element that the others deny. The same is true for the unnamed protagonist of Gaiman's novel. However, he is not completely isolated in his recognition of danger, as he finds allies in three archetypal feminine figures. With them, the boy shares an alternative club story, one which is characterized by a more comprehensive knowledge of reality and the self.

Keywords: Neil Gaiman, Farah Mendlesohn, intrusion fantasy, archetypal criticism, the anima, alternative worldview.

1. Introduction: Harmful Intruders and Helpful Guides

In his novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013), Neil Gaiman constructs a fantasy world in order to dramatize the young protagonist's subconscious fears concerning the threatening changes in his social environment. As materialism, ruthlessness and corruption of the adult world intrude into the boy's life, a fantastic narrative develops which may be viewed as Gaiman's symbolic representation of the protagonist's crisis. Thus, the sense of intrusion that permeates the narrative refers both to the intrusion of the adults' utilitarianism and greed into the life of the boy-narrator, and the corresponding intrusion of the fantastic into consensus reality.

According to categorization proposed by Farah Mendlesohn, intrusion is one of the four basic ways in which fantastic elements enter the "real", narrated

world presented in a novel, and consequently, one of the ways in which fantastic universes are constructed (Mendlesohn 2008: 13–14). In her study *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), Mendlesohn defines the following categories within the fantastic: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive and the liminal – and summarizes their characteristics in the following way: "In the portal quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape" (ibid., 14). Each of these categories, Mendlesohn argues, inevitably makes certain ideological demands that affect the author's stylistic choices as well as the construction and narration of the story (ibid., 15).

Hailed as a major work of criticism in the field of literary fantasy, Mendlesohn's study is also significant for its analysis of a wide variety of fantasy texts, through which it elaborates further on its categories and concepts (Levy 2009: 142). The study has been used as an apt theoretical framework for discussing Gaiman's fiction by several critics. In "Neil Gaiman's Irony, Liminal Fantasies, and Fairy Tale Adaptations" (2008), Sándor Klapcsik focuses on the contrast between Mendlesohn's categories of portal-quest and liminal fantasy to interpret the narrative strategy employed in some of Gaiman's short stories in the collections *Smoke and Mirrors* (1998) and *Fragile Things* (2006). On the other hand, Daniel Baker refers to Mendlesohn's definition of portal-quest fantasy in his discussion of Gaiman's novel *Neverwhere* (1996) but points out that what Gaiman has produced in this work is in fact "a counternarrative" to the traditional portal-quest structures (Baker 2016: 471). When it comes to Gaiman's novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, the category in Mendlesohn's study which is most suitable for analysing it is the intrusion fantasy.

The premise in this type of fantasy is, as Mendlesohn explains, that "the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with, sent back whence it came, or controlled" (Mendlesohn 2008: 149). Characteristically, an entity coming from another, fantastic realm enters the narrated world, brings chaos, and "takes us out of safety without taking us from our place" (ibid., 21). The protagonist in such narratives is customarily the only one who perceives the intrusion of the dangerous otherworldly element; this person usually feels alienated from the community and faces the other characters' denial and distrust. The reason the protagonist has a unique capacity to notice the intrusion, according to Mendlesohn, is that they tend to approach phenomena by observing them personally, instead of relying on some generally established, scientific or common-sense explanations. The emphasis in the intrusion fantasy is therefore on empiricism, on "what one can see and observe, rather than what one actually knows of the world" (ibid., 152).

Closely related to this motif is the notion of the "club story". Originally explained by Mendlesohn as a form of frame narrative, a rhetorical device established in the Victorian period[1], "club story" is also used in her book to refer to any kind of

[1] The term "club story", as Mendlesohn explains, was introduced by the critic John Clute, and defined by him as a frame of narration whereby a group of men gather round in a private venue – such as the Victorian-style gentlemen club – while one of their number tells a story in which he was personally involved. In the Victorian period, such a setting was related to a particular masculine lifestyle and

discourse on consensus reality that the "club members" accept in its entirety, and whose authority and reliability they never question or deny. In Gaiman's graphic novel *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), for instance, all of the adult characters subscribe to a club story – that is, to a certain concept of reality which they consider unquestionable. As Mendlesohn explains, it is "the club story of 'adulthood' – rational, based on what is known, what 'everyone knows' or what authority asserts" (ibid. 153). This club story is questioned by the protagonist: in this case, a young girl, Lucy, who perceives the intrusion of otherworldly and fantastic (the eponymous "wolves in the walls") by not relying on such general knowledge but instead trusting her own observations. While the club story creates the sense of a protected space that cannot be ruptured, the protagonist (and, by implication, the reader as well) senses that rupture is in fact imminent (ibid., 151).

Similarly, to Lucy in *The Wolves in the Walls*, the unnamed boy-protagonist in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* feels isolated from his family, being the only one who can see beyond consensus reality and recognize the intrusion of the otherworldly monster disguised as the children's nanny Ursula Monkton. However, the boy's isolation is not absolute. He finds allies in three female figures, the Hempstock women, who live on a farm at the end of the lane. It turns out that the three of them – Lettie, an eleven-year-old girl, her mother Ginnie, and her grandmother, Old Mrs. Hempstock – possess supernatural abilities and, unlike the boy's family, recognize the danger presented by the intruder. With their magical powers, wisdom, and guidance, they help the boy deal with the frightening Ursula and put an end to the mayhem she has created. In Mendlesohn's terms, it may be argued that the three Hempstock women and the boy-narrator share an alternative "club story", one that is characterized by a more comprehensive knowledge of reality and the self than the club story imposed by the dominant culture.

In the following sections of the paper, both the threatening intruder, Ursula Monkton, and the three helpful guides, the Hempstock women, will be analysed to establish the respective roles they play in the fantasy world constructed in the novel. Archetypal analysis will be applied when discussing the Hempstock women. Robert Graves' study *The White Goddess* (1961) and C. G. Jung's *Man and His Symbols* (1964) will be referred to in order to explore the possible connection of these three female characters to the pre-patriarchal myth of the Triple Goddess, as well as the archetype of the anima. The eponymous "ocean" on the Hempstock farm, as a source of alternative, visionary knowledge, will likewise be discussed as an important constituent of this imaginary world.

2. Intrusion Fantasy and Reflections on Materialism

Materialism and reification are themes present throughout the novel and closely related to the intrusion of the fantastic in the protagonist's life. The correlation of these motifs may lead to reading Gaiman's novel as a kind of psychological case

implied that the story would be narrated authoritatively and incontestably to a group of like-minded listeners (Mendlesohn 2008: 33).

study, whereby the fantasy is conjured up by the boy himself in an attempt to cope with the destabilizing changes in his environment. Given the autobiographical elements in the novel[2], the construction of the fantastic world may also be interpreted as the author's way of imaginatively transforming his own childhood memories. However, it is also possible to view it as Gaiman's method of dramatizing the young protagonist's disturbing experience.

The boy's awareness of the social changes in his surroundings, in fact, precedes the appearance of any fantastic elements in the novel. The first significant occurrence in a sequence of such changes is his parents' decision to rent the boy's room to boarders because the family is facing financial difficulties. Thus, the boy's private sphere is taken away from him, violated and occupied by strangers. One of the boarders, an opal miner from South Africa, incidentally runs over the boy's pet kitten on arrival. He then attempts to replace it by obtaining another cat for the boy, stating that he always pays his debts (Gaiman 2014a: 14). For the miner – and, by implication, for the entire utilitarian society which he represents – the boy's pet was just a piece of property whose loss may be compensated by replacing it with another piece of property; the emotional value that the bond had for the boy is completely ignored.

Ironically, the miner will eventually get into debt he will not be able to pay: in a night of gambling, he loses the money entrusted to him by his friends, and soon afterwards, in a fit of despair over the debt, he commits suicide in the car of the protagonist's father. The shock that the boy experiences upon seeing the dead man presents a turning point in his psychological development; at the same time, however, it marks the moment when the fantastic begins to intrude into his world, its occurrences all symbolically related to the theme of materialism and acquisition.

As Mendlesohn points out, one of the recurrent rhetorical devices in the intrusion fantasy is *escalation*: intrusion tends to begin small and then gradually increases "in magnitude, in scope, or in the number of victims" (Mendlesohn 2008: 150–151). The same may be noticed in Gaiman's novel. The first appearance of the fantastic element is borderline realistic and almost imperceptible: the protagonist and Lettie discover that a fish in the pond on Lettie's farm has died because it swallowed a sixpence. Lettie gives the coin to the boy, saying it might bring him some luck. However, as the narrator comments, "she said this doubtfully, as if she were uncertain what kind of luck it would bring" (Gaiman 2014a: 31). The intrusion then "increases in magnitude": the next morning, the narrator wakes up with a silver shilling stuck in his throat. Immediately afterwards, someone starts throwing coins on his sister and her friends, and the boy must defend himself against accusations that it was his mischief. Mr. Wollery, the family gardener, finds a bottle filled with outdated pennies in the garden and the mother explains to the boy that they will only be worth something if she can find a coin collector to buy them for a few pounds.

[2] As Gaiman explains in an interview, the work is not exactly autobiographical, as the family presented in the novel has nothing to do with the author's own family; however, it conveys his "mental landscape" – i.e., the way he perceived the world when he was seven years old – and uses numerous physical places from his childhood such as farms and lanes as the setting in the novel (Gaiman 2014b: 246).

The same motif of a fortune which never truly materializes is repeated in another scene when, two days later, the boy receives a letter informing him that he has won the Premium Bonds. The boy immediately starts daydreaming about the way he will spend the money: "I was delighted to be in possession of a fortune beyond my previous imaginings... Twenty-five pounds, at 240 pennies to the pound and four sweets to the penny, was... more sweets than I could easily imagine" (ibid., 34). However, his mother informs him that she will put the money in his Post Office account. The "fortune" thus becomes an empty signifier to the boy, and the gratification he had anticipated (in the form of heaps of sweets) remains unattainable.

The otherworldly entity, at this point still invisible, continues to fulfil people's materialistic desires, but characteristically does so in unpleasant ways which end up making the recipients anxious, unhappy, or downright deranged. In a neighbourhood house, "a man dreamed of being sold and of being turned into money. Now he's started seeing things in mirrors... Himself. But with fingers poking out of his eye sockets. And things coming out of his mouth. Like crab claws" (ibid., 39). In another house, a woman has discovered money in her mattress and now refuses to get up and leave the house, afraid that someone might take it away from her. There is also a mention of a family where the husband dreams that his wife has become a prostitute, waking up the next morning to inexplicably find large amounts of money in her handbag. When the magical creature who has caused all this mayhem eventually manifests itself to the boy and Lettie, it defends its actions by saying that it simply answered people's pleas: "Something came to me[3]... It told me how I could make all the things like it happy. That they are simple creatures, and all any of them want is money, and nothing more... If it had asked, I would have given them wisdom, or peace" (ibid., 54).

As the intrusion escalates, the magical being assumes a human form and appears in the boy's household in the shape of an attractive young woman, Ursula Monkton, whom the family unwittingly employs as the children's nanny. In line with Mendlesohn's observations, the young narrator is the only one who recognizes the intrusion of the fantastic; whereas the adults, relying on the tenets of their "club story", deem such an intrusion impossible and do not even consider it. Ironically, the boy's mother is an optician, which connects her to the motif of eyesight; however, she is "blind" when it comes to discerning Ursula's true nature.

In her human form, Ursula is still closely related to the theme of inhumanity and ruthlessness of materialistic society. "Everybody wants money," she says to the boy. "It makes them happy. It will make you happy if you let it" (ibid., 76). She also makes a prophecy regarding the way financial interests will transform the boy's unkempt rural neighbourhood:

> Your parents can no longer afford this place... And they can't afford to keep it up. Soon enough they'll see that the way to solve their financial problems is to sell this house and its gardens to property developers. Then all of *this*... will become a dozen identical

[3] This part of the speech probably suggests that the spirit of the opal miner contacted the creature and conveyed to it his views on how material wealth makes people happy.

houses and gardens. And if you're lucky, you'll get to live in one. And if not, you will just envy the people who do (ibid.).

Ursula also seduces the boy's father, which suggests that she has come to the human world not only to fulfil materialistic but also sexual desires. However, the two seem to be closely connected, as Ursula clearly conforms to the standards of beauty imposed by consumer culture: "The woman was very pretty. She had shortish honey-blond hair, huge grey-blue eyes, and pale lipstick" (ibid., 70). By assuming an attractive, fashionable shape, she seems to encourage commodification, inviting the boy's father to possess her like any other piece of property.

Another characteristic of the intrusion fantasy that Mendlesohn discusses is that in such narratives, familiarity with the fantastic may lead to contamination. By recognizing the reality of the otherworldly intruder, and by becoming closely acquainted with such an entity, the protagonist also becomes exposed and vulnerable, and risks becoming contaminated by it in some way. Mendlesohn refers to such dynamics as the "pull effect" of the intrusion, arguing that the intruder has an intention to not only enter and disrupt the narrated world, but also to "drag the innocent across borders, or contaminate [them]" (Mendlesohn 2008: 163). This motif may also be observed in Gaiman's novel. When the boy and Lettie first attempt to bind the magical creature, it assumes the shape of a worm and attaches itself to the boy by drilling and entering a hole in his foot. In this way, a portal (or a "wormhole") through which the creature enters the boy's world is established. Eventually, the boy manages to pull out the majority of the worm from his foot, but a part of it remains and becomes attached to his heart. Symbolically, it suggests that the disturbing changes in his social environment are beginning to affect the young narrator as well. Towards the end of the novel, when Lettie seeks to banish Ursula once more, she uses broken toys as a part of her magic ritual, which may also symbolize a damaged or destroyed childhood. Eventually, another group of magical creatures appear in the novel: "the hunger birds", who appear to be scavengers in the fantastic realm, come to rid the world of Ursula and the disruption she has caused. However, they also seek the part of the monster that has attached itself to the boy. For everything to be resolved, it appears that the boy's heart must be destroyed.

3. An Alternative "Club Story": the Hempstock Women and Their Ocean

Gaiman's novel, however, also hints at a chance for redemption. This motif is closely related to Lettie, her mother and grandmother, the three Hempstock women who act as magical helpers and guides to the boy, and the eponymous "ocean" on their farm. Their role in the narrative is to suggest the possibility of creating an alternative "club story", one which would enable the boy to gain a more comprehensive insight into reality and his own being.

Numerous aspects of the presentation of the Hempstock women connect them to the pre-patriarchal myths of the Triple Goddess. Thus, their respective age, which

does not change (they remain the same age when the protagonist visits them again in his forties) symbolically relates them to the manifestations of the Goddess known as the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone. As Laura-Marie von Czarnowsky points out, their unchanging nature may symbolize stability that the boy sorely needs in the face of the disturbing changes in the world around him:

> They are magical beings that offer stability... They provide the narrator, both as a boy and as an adult, with a stable home to return to, a place untainted by the changing world around him... [T]heir permanent attribution to grandmother and mother roles speaks to the narrator's desire to prolong childhood and ward off destabilizing influences (ibid., 21).

The Hempstock women are further connected to the pagan Goddess through their close relation to the natural world, the farm animals and fertile land where plants thrive, and their general association with food and sustenance that they provide to the boy. They are likewise associated with the moon: Old Mrs. Hempstock is allegedly "older than the moon" and was there when it was made (Gaiman 2014a: 43). She is also capable of manipulating its phases, so that, for instance, the full moon always shines above the Hempstock farm. As Lettie explains, "Gran likes the full moon to shine on this side of the house. She says it's restful, and it reminds her of when she was a girl… And you don't trip on the stairs" (ibid., 140). In his well-known study *The White Goddess* (1961), Robert Graves explains the way that the prehistoric Triple Goddess was related to the moon and nature in general, as well as to the mysteries of life:

> As Goddess of the Underworld she was concerned with Birth, Procreation and Death. As Goddess of the Earth she was concerned with the three seasons of Spring, Summer and Winter: she animated trees and plants and ruled all living creatures. As Goddess of the Sky she was the Moon, in her three phases of New Moon, Full Moon, and Waning Moon… As the New Moon or Spring she was girl; as the Full Moon or Summer she was woman; as the Old Moon or Winter she was hag (Graves 1961: 386).

However, the way the protagonist relates to the Hempstock women also suggests their symbolical connection to the Jungian archetype of the anima. These two interpretations (the Hempstocks as manifestations of the Goddess and the anima) are not mutually exclusive, as Jung has often pointed out that the archetypes of the collective unconscious are commonly expressed through mythological themes and images. Gaiman's statement, in an interview, that the Hempstock characters have existed for a very long time in his head (Gaiman 2014b: 247), also seems to suggest their archetypal origin.

The anima, according to Jung, is "a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature, and—last but not least—his relation to the unconscious" (Jung 1964: 177). Primarily shaped by the relationship with the mother in early childhood, the anima can either exert a positive or a negative influence on an individual, which is why both aspects are represented in numerous religious and folk traditions around the world. The influence

of the three Hempstock women on the protagonist corresponds to Jung's explanation of how the anima influences one's conscious personality. Each of the three forms that the anima takes supports the boy in a specific way. Lettie is the one he spends most of his time with. Brave, determined, calm, and always certain about what to do next, she expresses all the characteristics that the boy lacks during his crisis, and guides him through the mysterious events that transpire. Ginnie, the mother figure to whom he turns for safety and comfort, makes him feel secure and enables him to overcome his feelings of anxiety and stress. The most powerful iteration of the anima is the Jungian image of the Wise Old Woman, embodied in Old Mrs. Hempstock. She possesses great supernatural powers, some of which are beyond the narrator's comprehension. Her wisdom and power make the boy feel completely safe.

When it appears in myths and folklore, the anima often has the role of a guide who enables the questing hero to get in touch with the unconscious realm and gain a deeper understanding of the world and his own psyche. In Gaiman's novel, the motif of guidance appears in an early scene where Lettie and the protagonist set out to find the intruder. For this purpose, Lettie cuts a forked hazel stick from a thicket, a tool traditionally used by water diviners in search of hidden underground currents, which may symbolize the unconscious. Seamus Heaney, who has a poem titled "The Diviner", uses the same analogy in an essay where he explains the poem's meaning: "You can't learn the craft of dowsing or divining – it is a gift for being in touch with what is there, hidden and real" (Heaney 1984: 47).

In Jungian psychology, the anima can also act as a guide to the Self, which Jung defines as a term separate from, and much more extensive than, the Freudian ego. The Self is a psychic level where one experiences one's own being as timeless and boundless; in his autobiography, Jung explains the Self as "the eternal man", as opposed to the ego, or the earthly man, whose locus is in here and now: "the psyche at times functions outside of the spatio-temporal law of causality... [W]e must face the fact that at least a part of our psychic existence is characterized by a relativity of space and time. This relativity seems to increase, in proportion to the distance from consciousness, to an absolute condition of timelessness and spacelessness". Referring to the Self as the transpersonal realm within the personal life, Jung argues that it represents our link to the infinite (Jung 1989: 322–3).

The "ocean" in Gaiman's novel corresponds to the Jungian notion of the Self. It is a magical place situated on the Hempstock farm, which to the boy, at first, appears to be no more than a pond[4]. However, it turns out to be a source of visionary knowledge and profound psychological insight. During his confrontation with the hunger birds, Lettie tells the narrator to submerge himself in it and assures him that

[4] The conversation that the boy has with his father about oceans is in fact a very good example of what Mendlesohn calls "the club story of consensus reality" (2008: 153). When asked by the boy whether an ocean can be as small as a pond, the father replies: "No... Ponds are pond-sized, lakes are lake-sized. Seas are seas and oceans are oceans" (Gaiman 2014a: 32). The tautological statement clearly shows that the father bases his worldview on commonsense knowledge which he never feels the need to broaden or re-examine; the narrator will, however, need to transcend this limited perspective in order to grasp and overcome the danger he is faced with.

he will be safe while underwater. Once inside the ocean, he has a mystical experience that connects him with the entire universe:

> I saw the world from above and below. I saw that there were patterns and gates and paths beyond the real. I saw all these things and understood them and they filled me, just as the waters of the ocean filled me.
> Everything whispered inside me. Everything spoke to everything, and I knew it all... I found myself thinking of an ocean running beneath the whole universe, like the dark sea water that laps beneath the wooden boards of an old pier: an ocean that stretches from forever to forever (Gaiman 2014a: 192–3).

Throughout the period in which the boy is submerged in the ocean, Lettie is holding his hand, which again points to the motif of guidance and connects her to the Jungian archetype of the anima. In *Man and His Symbols*, Jung stresses how important it is to accept the guidance of the anima, attend to this portion of the psyche and channel the messages it conveys into some form of artistic expression:

> But what does the role of the anima as guide to the inner world mean in practical terms? This positive function occurs when a man takes seriously the feelings, moods, expectations, and fantasies sent by his anima and when he fixes them in some form—for example, in writing, painting, sculpture, musical composition, or dancing (Jung 1964: 186)

This is congruent with the developments in Gaiman's novel, as we find out that the narrator has grown up to become an artist, and in the process has also grown "a new heart" (Gaiman 2014a: 231) to replace the one that was contaminated by Ursula and consumed by the hunger birds. With the help of the Hempstock women and their alternative "club story", the narrator reaches a more inclusive and wholesome outlook – managing, at least to some degree, to transcend the narrow-minded materialistic and rationalist views of the dominant culture.

4. Conclusion

In an interview, Neil Gaiman argues that one of the keys to children's fiction is to provide hope (Gaiman 2014b: 244). *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* – narrated, for the most part, by a seven-year-old protagonist, but still regarded by the author as a book for adults[5] (ibid.) – seems to be informed by the same sense of obligation to convey a hopeful message. This hope is compensatory to the bleak world the protagonist describes in the frame narrative, in which he returns as an adult to find the landscape of his childhood utterly changed. His description of the way it has been

[5] In the fantasy genre, another well-known example of child narration in a book for adults may be found in G. R. R. Martin's novel *A Game of Thrones* (1996), in which some of the chapters are written from the viewpoint of the seven-year old Bran Stark. The scene in which Bran inadvertently finds out about the incestuous affair between the queen and her brother is similar to the scene in Gaiman's novel where the protagonist stumbles upon the sexual encouter between his father and Ursula. In both cases, the boy narrator does not understand what he sees, but the adult reader does.

transformed and given a uniform, urbanized appearance, echoes the prophecy once made by Ursula Monkton: "the ramshackle world I lived in was demolished and replaced by trim, squat, regular houses containing smart young people who worked in the City but lived in my town, who made money by moving money from place to place but who did not build or dig or farm or weave" (Gaiman 2014a: 225).

Even though Ursula was ritually banished from the narrator's world and annihilated by the hunger birds, the money-oriented culture to which she was symbolically related is still omnipresent in the protagonist's life. This is why the existence of the Hempstock women is a crucial motif in the story, as they suggest that there is an alternative to the kind of life represented by the young City bankers "who make money by moving money from place to place". Unlike the rest of the neighbourhood, the Hempstock farm has not been changed or demolished over time. As an adult, the protagonist is still able to find it and recover the childhood memories which were essential to his psychological development. The hope in the novel is thus implicitly contained in an alternative set of values and a world view – or, in terms of Mendlesohn's theories, an alternative "club story" – embodied in the three feminine figures. The importance of their "ocean", as a source of visionary knowledge, essentially different from the contemporary rationalist outlook, is stressed by the novel's title.

As Czarnowsky points out, the story in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* "is not one of adoption, it is one of a temporary refuge" (2015: 23). The Hempstock farm is not a place where the protagonist can permanently stay; rather, it is an imaginary realm he will continue to visit throughout his life, a place where he comes to heal and reconnect with the deeper layers of his being – although, as the narrative suggests, he periodically forgets and then recalls again its mysterious existence.

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НОВО СРЦЕ: ИНТРУЗИВНА ФАНТАСТИКА И АЛТЕРНАТИВНА „КЛУПСКА ПРИЧА" У *ОКЕАНУ НА КРАЈУ ПУТЕЉКА*

Сажетак

У *Океану на крају путељка* (2013), Нил Гејмен ствара фантастичан свет како би драматизовао психолошку кризу дечака који се суочава са претећим променама у свом друштвеном окружењу. Читав наратив прожима осећај интрузије; то се односи на продор похлепе и корупције из света одраслих у дечаков живот, као и на паралелни продор фантастичног у стварност. Мотив интрузије у овом раду се доводи у везу са студијом Фаре Менделсон *Реторика фантастике* (2008), у којој ауторка дефинише интрузивну фантастику као једну од четири основне категорије фантастичног. Један од значајних термина које Менделсонова користи у дискусији јесте „оквирна клупска прича": он се односи на било коју врсту дискурса о стварности коју чланови „клуба" у потпуности прихватају и чији ауторитет никада не доводе у питање. У интрузивној фантастици, главни јунак је обично једини који је изван „клупске приче" и стога способан да препозна продор претећег оностраног елемента који други поричу. Исто важи и за неименованог протагонисту Гејменовог романа. Међутим, он није у потпуности изолован у свом поимању опасности, јер му помоћ пружају три архетипска женска лика. Гејменов протагониста са њима дели алтернативну клупску причу, која се одликује свеобухватнијим разумевањем стварности и јаства.

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