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**Game principles of the art space's organization
in D.W. Jones's novel *Hexwood***

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Abstract. The game principles of the art space's organization in D.W. Jones's novel *Hexwood* are considered. The aim of the study is to identify *Hexwood*'s game aspects in the context of fantasy's genre features in the XXth century's second half. Objectives of the study are to formulate the game principles of the fantasy genre and to trace their realization in the novel. The general thesis is that the game's phenomenon has been actualized in literature and art at the compositional and thematic levels, which corresponds to the game culture's tradition. In fantasy, game features are particularly revealed, which allows us to distinguish three aspects of their consideration: game principles of secondary world creating, problem-themed field, intertextual play with pretexts. All of this points to great gaming potential of the fantasy. It is concluded that the space and the time in D.W. Jones's novel *Hexwood* become more complex and non-linear. It's also revealed several levels of associations and allusions to the Arthurian cycle. All personages are involved in the cyborg Bannus's game, based on the Arthurian tales, but in addition to their recognizable roles (Arthur, Merlin, Amfortas, etc.), almost all of the characters play other roles, not realized by them.

Keywords: fantasy, game, D.W. Jones, *Hexwood*, chronotope, arturiana.

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Игровые принципы организации художественного пространства романа Д.У. Джонс «Зачарованный лес»

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Аннотация. Рассматриваются игровые принципы организации художественного пространства романа Д.У. Джонс «Зачарованный лес» с целью выявления игровых аспектов указанного произведения в контексте жанровых особенностей фэнтези во второй половине XX века. Ставится задача сформулировать игровые принципы жанра и проследить их реализацию в романе Д.У. Джонс «Зачарованный лес». Выдвигается общий тезис о том, что в соответствии с традицией игровой культуры феномен игры актуализировался в литературе и искусстве на структурно-композиционном и тематическом уровнях. Особенно показательно игровые особенности проявились в жанре фэнтези, что позволяет говорить о трех аспектах заявленной проблемы: игровых принципах моделирования вторичного мира; проблемно-тематическом поле; интертекстуальной игре с пре-текстами. Делается вывод, что в романе Д.У. Джонс «Зачарованный лес» пространство и время представляются нелинейными, обнаруживаются несколько уровней ассоциаций и аллюзий на артуровский цикл сказаний. Важным является и то, что все персонажи участвуют в игре киборга Баннуса по мотивам артурианы, но помимо узнаваемых ролей (Артур, Мерлин, Амфортас и др.) почти каждый из героев заявлен и в других амплуа, не осознаваемых таковыми.

Ключевые слова: фэнтези, игра, Д.У. Джонс, «Зачарованный лес», хронотоп, артуриана, жанр, миромоделирование

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Introduction

The game as a philosophical and aesthetic category has interested researchers since the era of Antiquity, and since the 18–19th centuries it has become the subject of consideration in the works of a considerable number of philosophers (I. Kant, F. Schiller, F. Nietzsche, J. Huizinga, H.-G. Gadamer, E. Fink, etc.). Various aspects of play activity were touched upon not only in aesthetic theories, but also in biological, biopsychological, sociological, cultural and synthetic concepts, and since the second half of the 20th century, fundamental changes have occurred in the human worldview, which has led to a postmodern rethinking of the phenomenon of play, which has acquired a global and comprehensive character. With all the diversity of approaches to the aesthetic category of play, its implementation in literature, as a rule, comes down to three aspects: firstly, the author creates the text as a playing field for the reader; secondly, the reader decodes the text or plays it if the work of art is constructed as a text quest; and finally, thirdly, the characters can be presented playing a variety of games (children's, psychological, social, or according to the rules set by higher powers) (Naumchik, 2020, p. 80).

Gamification of fantasy

In the context of the development of gaming culture since the second half of the 20th century, it is natural that the game has become especially relevant in literature and art, both at the structural-compositional and thematic levels, and its gaming features have been especially prominent in fantasy, since the genre itself was initially designated as gaming fiction.

The gaming features of the fantasy genre have been noted by researchers since the end of the 20th century – even W.R. Irwin in his work *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* emphasized that fantasy generates a desire for the amazing, which manifests itself in a game of the mind (Irwin, 1976, p. 3), and T.A. Chernysheva, following his thoughts, noted that the main task of fantasy is an intellectual game (Chernysheva, 1984, p. 52).

O.S. Monchakovskaya in her article *Fantasy as a Type of Game Literature*, based on the theories of J. Huizinga, J. Ortega y Gasset and H.-G. Gadamer, came to the conclusion that the agonistic principles present in fantasy, expressed in battles, duels and global conflicts, gives rise to tension, which will be one of the conditions for obtaining sensual and aesthetic pleasure, which the reader seeks in fantasy (Monchakovskaya,

2007, p. 232). It is important that the noted agonality can be considered in the context of postmodernist aesthetics and speak of the presence of an agonistic dialogue between the reader and the text (author), which should be understood not only as an expectation of victory over a partner, but also as a game on education (Monchakovskaya, 2007, p. 233). The third aspect of the game principle, which O.S. Monchakovskaya, is associated with a carefully developed secondary world, since the implementation of the game requires a certain game zone, time and space, within the boundaries of which the game action is carried out (Monchakovskaya, 2007, p. 233).

I.D. Winterle also thinks in a similar way in her dissertation *The Phenomenon of Incompleteness in the Early Works of J.R.R. Tolkien and the Problem of the Formation of the Concept of Fantasy*, emphasizing that the game principle as one of the foundations of the fantasy genre is realized on several levels: as the author's game in constructing a possible world, as the reader's game in escaping from reality, a peculiar form of escapism, and also as the exit of the game principle beyond the text – “role-playing game” with the recreation of the world of a particular work (Winterle, 2013, pp. 14–15). Following the logic of the aforementioned researchers, we, in turn, proceed from the theses that in the fantasy genre, the playful element manifests itself on three levels: firstly, the playful principles of modeling a secondary world, which is built according to a certain system of rules; secondly, the problematic-thematic field, in which the themes of playing gods and/or playing people are discerned; thirdly, the intertextual play with pretexts, which allows us to speak about the enormous playful potential of fantasy.

Game features of the novel by D.W. Jones *Hexwood*

As a clear example of fantasy, characterized by clearly expressed game principles, we take the novel by the D.W. Jones *Hexwood* (1993), the title of which is translated into Russian as *Enchanted Forest* (translated by A. Shulgat) or *Witch Forest* (translated by A. Kurlaeva).

Diana Wynne Jones (1934–2011) is a famous British writer, who worked primarily in the fantasy genre and wrote mainly for children and adolescents, in many ways determined the paths of development of fantasy literature in English literature. Her desire for a synthesis of genres corresponded to postmodern aesthetics, and the game features of her work perfectly illustrate the general trends of literary play. The language game,

the game with space and time, the intertextual game with the texts of previous literature, as well as the theme of children's games – all this corresponds to the traditions of fantasy that had developed by the end of the 20th century and confirms the playful nature of her work.

The novel *Hexwood*, to which we turn, was written at the junction of the genres of fantasy and science fiction, which corresponded to the aesthetic principles of the writer, however, due to the fact that the composition of the novel is complicated, and the events do not develop consistently, it seems that the writer deliberately misleads the reader in the first half of the novel, convincing him that this novel is nothing more than a teenage fantasy about the adventures of a girl named Anne, who finds herself in an enchanted forest.

The image of the forest, where the perception of space and the flow of time are distorted according to the plot of the novel, corresponds to the fairy-tale-mythological model, according to which the forest always represents a mysterious, wonderful and often dangerous space, opposed to the usual safe world of people. However, as events unfold, it becomes known that the magical properties of the forest are due to a certain paratypical field created by the “cyborg” Bannus, and at the very end of the work it turns out that in addition to the paratypical field of Bannus, there is also a certain theta-space of the Great Forest, uniting all the forests of the planet. By the way, in Scientology, which D.W. Jones could rely on, the Theta Universe is understood as the space of thought and the time of thought, combined into an independent universe, which is analogous to the material universe.

It can be assumed that the concept of the *Hexwood* was formed under the influence of the work of R. Holdstock *Mythago Wood* (1984), since this forest, inhabited by folklore and mythological personalities, is part of the Primordial Forest, which once covered the entire territory of England. In it, as on the enchanted islands in Celtic mythology, time flows at a different speed, and space can expand almost indefinitely, because a small forest at first glance becomes a way of transition to another world. The Mythago Forest in R. Holdstock's novel has multidimensional space and time, inhabited independently of each other by Neolithic hunters, Celts, Normans, Saxons and knights who arrived from the continent, as well as Urscumug – a hero from ancient myths, representing the archetype from which all other images originated.

Mythago Wood certainly had a huge influence on the development of fantasy in the following decades, however, if we compare the principles

of the embodiment of the chronotope in these novels, we will see that the British writer, although she plays with the reader for more than half of the novel, ultimately still gives a logical scientific explanation for the events taking place, since Bannus, on whom the organization of space, time, and the plot itself depends, is, as he himself says, what earthlings would call a cyborg (Jones, 2016, p. 385).

The purpose of Bannus, constructed four thousand years ago, is to test candidates for the rulership of the universe by placing them in the theta space and playing out scenarios based on specific people and situations. However, the scenarios that the main character takes part in are played out inconsistently, which confuses her, because Anne, periodically visiting the forest, ends up in different time streams and sees another important character – Hume, created from her blood – as a little boy, then a teenager, then a young man, and from his behavior it becomes clear that some events that have already happened to him in his time stream have not yet happened to Anne. Moreover, closer to the end of the novel, the border between the wonderful forest and the city where Anne lives becomes thinner and blurs – people dressed in medieval armor come from the forest to rob grocery stores, and later this event is explained by the fact that the castle, located in the theta space, has run out of supplies.

Complicating not only the chronotope but also the organization of the plot, D.W. Jones introduces a second plot line about the rulers who tried to overcome the crisis caused by the actions of Bannus in the Universe, consisting of an innumerable number of inhabited planets. One by one, five Sovereigns went to Earth, but they all found themselves in the paratypical field of Bannus, because of which they are forced to play by its rules and according to its script, without realizing it, and the script itself has many references to the Arthurian cycle of tales.

As a participant in the events unfolding in the enchanted forest, Anne begins to doubt the truth of what is happening more than once, but Mordion, who she met in the forest and helped create Chela, convinces her that the theta space has a true being, even if no one knows exactly what it is (Jones, 2016, p. 114). When Bannus's plan becomes clear and the principles of his game become clear, both the characters and the readers realize that even what seemed real – for example, the city in which Anne lives – is only part of the script and is included in the theta space. Moreover, Anne herself is not a teenage girl, as she seemed for a good half of the plot, but a girl named Wireran, who arrived on Earth with Lord One and Lord Two.

Thus, in the novel by D.W. Jones's *Hexwood*, despite its apparent simplicity and fairy-tale quality, can be divided into three levels of space-time.

1. The Universe, which consists of many planets and is ruled by the Lords. In this storyline, Mordion and Wireren are servants of the rulers, but at the same time, they are the carriers of their genes. This world is the true one, and Bannus starts his game for the sake of choosing new Lords.

2. The world in which the events unfold at the beginning of the novel, built on the fairy-tale-mythological opposition of the Forest – the City, where the City seems to be a real and ordinary space, and the Forest is unreal and enchanted. In this storyline, the central characters are the girl Ann, the old man Mordion and his ward Chel.

3. The world of the Forest, built in accordance with the scenario of Bannus, which is based on the Arthurian cycle of tales. In this storyline, Wireren is one of the ladies-in-waiting at the court of King Ambitas, and Mordion is presented first as a wizard and then as a dragon.

Such a complication of the secondary world, in which reality and unreality are so closely intertwined that it is almost impossible to distinguish between them, is not typical of the work of D.W. Jones, although it corresponds to the postmodern principle of uncertainty, but in such an approach to the organization of the chronotope we can see the influence of Neil Gaiman, with whom the writer was friends and to whom she dedicated the novel.

No less interesting and representative from the point of view of the embodiment of the game principles of fantasy, we see the level of the plot associated with the Bannus scenarios, played out in a random order and associated with the Arthurian cycle of tales.

The process of the game, around which the plot of the novel is built, was launched by a certain Harrisone, the caretaker of Bannus, who wanted to play a role-playing game, where there would be hobbits and the Holy Grail. As we have already said, the narrative of *The Enchanted Forest* is complex, non-linear and playful, and therefore the inclusion of images from the Arthurian cycle of tales is not always obvious and is often chaotic, although already at the beginning of the novel there is a mention of a mysterious king who is sick with an incurable wound (Jones, 2016, p. 71), Sir Bors, who prays a lot, the honest and stern Sir Bedivere, and also Sir Harrisone, whom everyone sincerely hates.

It is obvious that Bors and Bedivere refer the reader to the images of the Knights of the Round Table, as does the terminally ill king, who is implied

to be the legendary Fisher King, Amfortas, whose name and identity the writer clarifies later – he is called Ambitas and is the Second Lord, one of the five rulers against whom Bannus is playing his game. However, among the images that refer to Arthurian mythology, there is also Harrison, whose name does not undergo any changes, nor does he receive any significant role in the game – he remains himself, albeit transferred to the scenery of legendary medieval Britain.

The central characters, in turn, play quite recognizable roles: Lord of the Second – Ambitas/Amfortas; Lord of the Third – Morgan La Trey (in the Arthurian tradition, her name is Morgan La Fay); Lord of the Fourth – the Green Knight; Chel, created, like a homunculus, from the blood of Mordion and Anne – is none other than the wizard Merlin, although in one of the episodes in the forest he plays the role of King Arthur, as he extracts the sword Excalibur from the stone. Later, Artegal plays the role of Arthur, whom Anne/Wyerren, discovering in herself the ability to mentally communicate with future rulers, calls King.

It seems important that the protagonists (Anne, Mordion and Chel) simultaneously play several roles, but do not always recognize these masks as roles. For example, Anne, a teenage girl who finds herself in the Enchanted Forest, is in fact an adult girl, Wireren, who serves the Lords against her will. At the court of King Ambitas, she, in turn, becomes a lady-in-waiting, and if she perceives this role as a role, then the hypostasis of Anne is not a role for her.

Mordion, who also serves the Lords, is called Slave in the mind of Anne/Wierren, which indicates that he is a toy of the Lords, carefully raised and educated to obey and carry out their cruel orders, but it is Mordion, having gained freedom in the Bannus scenario, who plays the role of creator and mentor for Chel, and in the finale, having turned into a dragon, challenges the Lord First and defeats him.

The most complex image is that of Chel, since at first he, artificially created, resembles a foolish child, but later tries on the role of King Arthur, drawing a sword from a stone, and in the chapters devoted to the history of Vairren, he is designated as the Prisoner. At the end of the novel, he is called not only Merlin (which is quite consistent with the role of the Prisoner, because Merlin was also imprisoned in a cave), but also Uncle Wolf and Martellian, which takes us beyond the allusions to Arthurianism.

According to the plot of the novel, Martellian is none other than the ancient ruler who once introduced the principles of eugenics and the so-called education programs, the first of which, as D. W. Jones notes in the

notes, took place when he wandered through northern Europe and called himself the Wolf. Under this guise, he was later confused with the god Wotan. As the Wolf, he bred a whole race of heroes, the most famous of whom today is Siegfried (Jones, 2016, p. 454). The second program of Martellian's education led to the birth of the legendary King Arthur, whose lineage was traced back to Martellian, as was the line of Fitela from Beowulf. In the mind of Wireran, Fitela is the Boy, who in the first half of the novel plays the role of Martin, Anne's younger brother, and becomes the fourth ruler. The last of the five future rulers selected by Bannus is Arteghal, whom Wireran calls in his mind the King.

Conclusion

Thus, in the novel by D.W. Jones *Hexwood* we see not only a complex organization of space and time, but also several levels of associations and allusions, since the future rulers are designated by the conventional names King, Slave, Prisoner and Boy. They are all involved in a Bannus play based on the Arthurian cycle of tales, but in addition to their game roles, the most obvious of which are Merlin/Prisoner and Arthur/King, almost every character is also cast in other roles that are not consciously roles.

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