

The interaction of canons: conflict or symbiosis? Rereading and relativity of traditions in David Gemmell's "Troy Series" and Dan Simmons's "Hyperion Cantos"

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INTRODUCTION

Questions concerning the existence and functions of literary canons as well as their cultural importance and historical mission have been widely discussed in the past few decades. It is not our intention to summarize this extraordinarily complex process (that would be an impossible task), however, at the beginning of our study it is necessary to clarify which questions we will focus on and what our main presuppositions are regarding the dynamics of canon formation.

One of the central roles of literary canons is their ability to institutionalize, which is well-proven by the observation that one cannot speak about reading without the act of canonization. The influence of canons on the formation of the aesthetic experience is inevitable. As a certain form of presupposition, the canon always instructs the reader and impacts on the process of evaluation. Moreover, the canon not only selects and informs but it also restricts, thus showing its double nature. At the same time, the role and functions of canons disperse the supposedly coherent meaning of the term "canon" so much that – even in the case of mapping identical canon constructions – we can approach this phenomenon from several aspects (see Kulcsár-Szabó 1998, 165–173).

If reading of literary texts presupposes the presence of a canon, we should not neglect the way reading (or interpretation) resists the authority of the canon. This double process is able to undo the hierarchy and the systematic organization of the canon in such a way that those components are kept in motion, which also makes it possible to build this network of relations. To put it very simply: the interpretation as the application of a canon is inseparable from the resistance to that canon. On the other hand, if we take interpretation as something concerned not with the suspension and termination of the play but instead in opening up the possible "ways" of reading and the borders of the text, then the supposed canon definitely starts to resemble a rhizome or polysemy: a tissue of divergences and coordination, missing the notion of a centre. From this perspective a relevant question emerges: how can literary texts that are canonically dispersed inscribe through interpretation into various canons.

The starting point of our study is the conflict between classical (academic) canon and alternative canon.¹ Some prominent texts of speculative fiction can notably stage this conflict (as a possible textual strategy) by confronting us with the experience that mainstream literature and popular registers are inseparable. In contemporary

literature some speculative fiction novels – works of science fiction and fantasy in particular – support the idea that: “The canonized repertoires of any system would very likely stagnate after a certain time if not for competition from non-canonized challengers, which often threaten to replace them” (Even-Zohar 1990, 16).

It may occur, however (and in the last decades there have been a growing number of examples), that a novel applying diverse techniques of hybridization can simultaneously become a part of different canons, and so modify them. Our study – by the reading of David Gemmell’s *Troy Series* (*Lord of the Silver Bow* [2005]; *Shield of Thunder* [2006]; *Fall of Kings* [2007]) and Dan Simmons’s *Hyperion Cantos* (*Hyperion* [1989]; *The Fall of Hyperion* [1990]; *Endymion* [1996]; *The Rise of Endymion* [1997]) – exemplifies the fact that the principle of innovation does not necessarily destruct the existing canon but integrates itself into the canon while restructuring it. The works of Gemmell and Simmons employ such poetical and rhetorical techniques that are able to modify the system of expectations created by the evoked genres (mythological fantasy and new space opera) and also lead us to reconsider the classical literary canon. Through the narrative processes of fantasy, Gemmell’s novels open a new perspective to the world of Homeric epics. On the other hand, the novels of Dan Simmons innovate our relation to the tradition of renaissance epic (Boccaccio, Chaucer) just as to the organic vision of romantic poetry (Keats, Hölderlin) by applying the rules of the genre called new space opera. They both indicate that an artificially created cultural hierarchy can be put in motion by rereading works of popular literature.

This last aspect should not be ignored in a study dealing with the questions of literary canon, because the problem – in light of the above – is far from peripheral. In his essential book Harold Bloom, who has focused a large part of his oeuvre on questions of the western canon, pointed out that reading a literary classic, thanks to its popular elements, can suddenly become an estranged version of its own possibilities. The process of rereading Milton confronted him with the following experience: “Although the poem [Milton’s *Paradise Lost*] is a biblical epic, in classical form, the peculiar impression it gave me was what I generally ascribe to literary fantasy or science fiction, not to heroic epic. *Weirdness* was its overwhelming effect” (Bloom 1994, 26).

Using the word weirdness to express the sudden strangeness of a heroic epic taking shape is very telling, wherefore Bloom does not describe the aesthetic effects from the perspective of the classics. But what is even more important in this expression is that the strangeness of the text appears to us as a feature that effaces something between the heroic epic and the genres of popular literature. According to this, does a kind of latent dynamics exist in the canonized (or classical) texts that open the way towards the non-identifiable, or to be more accurate, identically unrepeatable components of reception? Or conversely: does the non-canonized reading procedure projected on the canonized lead to similar results at the meeting points of the texts? In other words, can the reading of science fiction and fantasy books offer models to the reception and rereading of classical works? Owing to this interaction, can the given fantasy or science fiction novel pass the test of rereading? So we are looking for responses to these less self-evidently answerable questions with the help of the novels mentioned previously.

TROY SERIES

The reading of David Gemmell's *Troy Series* gives us a good opportunity to catch the above-mentioned mechanisms of the dynamics of canon in progress. The series not only draws elements from Homeric and ancient (Roman, Judaic and Egyptian) narrative and mythological traditions, but, more importantly, these novels relate back to the basic texts of classical canon as well. At first we take a look at how Gemmell's *Troy Series* relates to the tradition of fantasy genre. After this, we observe how the elements of classical tradition are reinterpreted in these novels. Finally, we try to point out the consequences of reading Gemmell's novels in regard to rereading the classics (particularly Homer).

The genre criticism classifies Gemmell's fantasy novels as heroic fantasies, based on well-grounded reasons (Mendlesohn – James 2009, 130). This also applies to the *Troy Series*, but at the same time one of its main features lies in exceeding the traditional heroic fantasy. By evoking historical and mythological narratives, the series allows a reading from the perspective of the historical novel and the mythological fantasy as well. From our point of view the latter is particularly important because refreshing mythological narratives can contribute to the rereading of texts of the classical literary canon.

Since we will focus on the reading of the *Troy Series*, it might be helpful to recount some features and basic forms of fantasy. Here, we recline upon Farah Mendlesohn's considerations and notions. In her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Mendlesohn points out that it is difficult to define fantasy because genres and subgenres are often mixed within the same text. Therefore, instead of the traditional genre classification, Mendlesohn proposes a rhetorical classification based on the linguistic means by which the fantastic appears in the narrated world. She differentiates four categories: the portal-quest, the intrusive, the liminal and the immersive fantasy: "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" (Mendlesohn 2008, xiv).

The *Troy Series* is an excellent example of how several subgenres are mixed within a text. Apart from the intrusive fantasy, which is nearly related to horror stories, we can find traces of all Mendlesohnian categories in the series. The most apparent of them is the immersive character. Since Tolkien, one of the most decisive features of fantasy has been the depiction of the depths of the narrated world. The *Troy Series* entirely satisfies the reader's expectation to submerge into the details of a fictional world which is elaborated with meticulous care.

Besides the immersive character we can also notice the presence of the quest. The *Troy Series* does not dispose of a protagonist; the characters have their own sovereign way of thinking and their own original and independent purposes and desires. Each one of them has their own mission, which they accomplish according to their own talent.

A decisive feature of the series is the liminality that can be grasped in the way the fantastic appears in the fictional world. It would be obvious to depict the Olympian gods in the novels; however, Gemmell does not make use of this possibility. The

world of the *Troy Series* is absolutely free from gods, yet it does not lack magic. The fate of the characters is formed by predictions. These predictions sneak the fantastic into the fictional world and in addition they play an influential role in forming the story. We can state that the fantastic does not intrude into the narrated world all the time, but rather it hides in the background, and only occasionally – but always at crucial moments – is it put into action.

The determining feature of the *Troy Series* is its relation to the myths just as to the classical literary tradition (mainly to Homeric narratives). The importance of the first lies in the profound relation between fantasy and myths. On one hand, fantasy borrows narrative patterns, even certain stories or their elements (place names, names of characters etc.) from myths. On the other hand, fantasy novels frequently create their own mythology, respectively operating the characteristic mode of mythical thinking. We can easily recognize these relations in the most important fantasies of the 20th century (Lovecraft, Tolkien, Holdstock etc.).

It is worth noting, however, that the relation between fantasy and mythology is not confined to servile imitation of mythic narratives, patterns, and archetypes. On the contrary, one of the main features of fantasy is its creative approach to any kind of tradition, thus to the mythological as well. As Brian Attebery has pointed out: “Fantasy is fundamentally playful – which does not mean that it is not serious. Its way of playing with symbols encourages the reader to see meaning as something unstable and elusive, rather than single and self-evident” (Attebery 2014, 2).

Consequently, it is not the fact that a fantasy novel borrows elements of a certain myth that is most interesting, but, rather the ways it transforms and parodies them according to its own demands. By putting elements of the ancient narratives into new context, fantasy accomplishes an important cultural mediatory work: it makes accessible – although not in identical form – the experiences of the ancient world and satisfies those human demands that desacralized societies are no longer able to satisfy. The best fantasy novels recontextualize the myths so that at the same time they direct our attention to their social, moral, and aesthetic potentials, while taking readers to a level where they can face their own godlike, heroic or monstrous character.

Gemmell’s *Troy Series* unequivocally supports this argument. The method in which these novels trace back to myths and recontextualize their elements, confirms Attebery’s remark on the playfulness of fantasy. Gemmell emphasized several times that he had never intended to imitate Homer, and he used the Homeric epic only as a source of inspiration to create an original fictional world. Therefore, while interpreting the *Troy Series*, we focus on its creative feature, instead of comparing it with the Homeric narratives.

The genre rules might provide a partial explanation of why Gemmell treats the Homeric inheritance without restraint. We can observe the playfulness of fantasy in the manner in which Gemmell represents the characters and modifies the plot. In the *Troy Series* there are numerous characters which do not exist in ancient Greek mythology. Moreover, we encounter names that are familiar to us from elsewhere (e. g. Calliope, who is the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne, and also the muse of epic poetry in Greek mythology, but in Gemmell she is a lesbian priestess). Last but not

least, some well-known characters are given new attributes that they did not possess in Homer. Hector is impotent, Priamus is frivolous, Helene is casual etc.

Furthermore, Gemmell does not draw only from Homer, but he weaves some narrative threads of Roman, Egyptian and Jewish mythology into the story and distinctly subordinates the borrowed elements to the narrative structure of the novels. This leads the reader to finding some elements familiar, in spite of which the story itself – thanks to the unexpected twists and turns – constantly captures the reader’s attention.

To sum up, we conclude: Gemmell does not preserve the traditional elements in their identical form but modifies them, and these result in a completely innovative interpretation of the Trojan War. The process, however, does not end in demythization of the tradition. Gemmell – using the possibilities offered by the genre – does not simply destruct the original; rather, he innovates and refreshes it. In the following, we try to describe this process with the help of the term narrativity.

In the *Troy Series* the act of storytelling often becomes the object of reflection. Besides the fact that the narrator – referring to different narrative genres, such as myth, tale, fable or legend – permanently reflects on the way of storytelling; sometimes the characters themselves become storytellers, and are usually aware of its relevance. Stories appear in various forms and functions on the pages of the series. For example in the *Lord of the Silver Bow* Gershom recalls a well-known Egyptian myth, the story of Osiris and Seth, to confirm his argumentation. Elsewhere we can see that the characters themselves – first of all Odysseus and Hector – are obliged to face the fact that they have become legends in their lives. All these elements allude to the fact that in the *Troy Series* Gemmell does not simply retell the ancient story but also uncovers the process of legend formation.

The complexity of storytelling intensifies the immersive feature of the series, but at the same time, we can observe different narrative strategies in the novels as well, e.g. when the characters reflect upon the constructed and fictional feature of their own stories. From this point of view, Odysseus, who can be thought of as a figure of self-reflection, deserves our utmost attention.

One of the memorable features of Homeric *Odyssey* is a narrative trick that Odysseus provisionally (in four books) takes the position of the narrator and tells the so called “Cretan stories”. In Gemmell, one of the most important features of Odysseus’s personality is his ability to tell lies in order to accommodate a specific situation. As early as in his first appearance two main attributes are assigned to him: the ability of storytelling and the ability of lying. “Grandfather says you are the greatest liar in all the world and tell the best stories”, little Xander turns to Odysseus (Gemmell 2005, 123). Later Odysseus also describes himself in the following way: “I am Odysseus, the prince of lies, the lord of storytellers” (Gemmell 2005, 118).

In Plato’s early dialogue *Lesser Hippias*, the interlocutor of Socrates also calls Odysseus a liar, but the context of this statement is entirely different (Plato 1926, 370e, 371e). In Gemmell’s novels Odysseus is not a mean figure who is despised by the others – quite the opposite. It is remarkable that Odysseus is the only one among the main characters who does not have enemies. It is interesting that he achieves this just

by telling lies and stories. The lie in his case does not mean a distortion of the truth; instead it serves as a tool for illuminating reality.

Odysseus's lies appear as truths on another level², and not only in the sense that wisdom lies behind them. Odysseus speaks about the truth of fictional stories in another way as well. According to him, stories are true as far as they are able to reshape reality. There are many examples of this in the novels: e.g. the story of Bias, the spear thrower. In a story told by Odysseus a winged demon attacks the *Penelope*, and it is Bias who kills the demon with a spear and saves the boat and his comrades from a deadly end. Bias was so uplifted by the (apparently fictitious) story that he practised throwing the javelin until he won a great prize at the king's games. Bias "had become the greatest [spear thrower] because I lied about it [said Odysseus]. And therefore it was no longer a lie" (Gemmell 2006, 142).

In Gemmell's *Troy Series*, thanks to the new context, familiar elements gain different aspects. Some episodes of Greek mythology (the Cyclops, the Gorgon, the story of Circe, the legend of the Golden Fleece etc.) are retold by the characters and unveiled as fiction. For example, Odysseus retells some events of the *Odyssey*, emphasizing its fictitious character. Due to this procedure, the tradition drawn on by the writer does not appear as an authority (like it did over centuries) but primarily as a fiction to which rewriting does not cause a problem. This diverging strain can also refer to the multiformity of Homeric texts before the process of their canonization, i.e. to a non-hierarchizable corpus from which countless variants arise, and these serve as a basis to the later canonized version of Homeric texts (see Nagy, 2011).

In addition, Gemmell's *Troy Series* goes further in this field: by comprehending mythological stories as fictions, their originality is called into question. Perhaps the most memorable episode of the series from this point of view is the story of Circe. In the *Shield of Thunder* Odysseus and his company find themselves on an island where they meet Circe, who sells pigs. As a result of their business, the pigs come aboard the *Penelope*, and so initiate some humorous and moving events. One such dramatic event takes place when Odysseus jumps into the sea to save the life of a pig about which he had told a story before. In the story the pig was none other than the "reincarnation" of Porteus, Odysseus's lost friend. Odysseus makes up the story to ease the pain caused by the loss of his friend, and the reader can hardly release the idea that he has just read the origin of the Homeric tale here.

This story can be read as an allegory of the interchangeability of origin. According to this, one cannot find the origin of Gemmell's *Troy Series* in Homeric epic; instead, the events told in the series become the origin itself of which the story retold by Homer is only a version. If we read the story of the Trojan War in the context of fantasy, some new, thus far unheard of, meanings of the story may open up. Gemmell's work makes us face the discovery that the age of heroes is not separated from us only by the abyss of time but also by an artificially established cultural hierarchy. But if fantasy is able to achieve what the heroic epic does, then we must not decide in advance which genre is valuable and which is not. David Gemmell's legacy lies here: he shows that the passage from myth to myth leads through aesthetic non-differentiation, openness and popular transfer.

HYPERION CANTOS

Dan Simmons's *Hyperion* (the first book of his four volume series) is a network of interlocking and differing narrations embedded in a frame story. Amidst the threat of an intergalactic war, seven chosen pilgrims are travelling to the Time Tombs opening on the planet Hyperion to make a request of the Shrike, an enigmatic killing machine that integrates organic and inorganic features. One of the travellers suggests that their survival may depend on mutual knowledge of their motives; therefore they decide to share their tales with each other. There are six stories told during the trip, delineating six different sorts of speaking position, style and subgenre.

The six stories and the seventh (the frame) are in a complementary relationship with each other; however, they may not be regarded as continuations or mere variations of one another. The parallel threads make up a narrative including each one of them in a way that their fragmentary character may be preserved, and they do not have to possess stable information on their truth value and credibility. Rather, they work as different media (language and culture technical intervening systems) that may be controlled from each other's aspects: one genre becomes partially controllable from the other's stance. Due to interferences and overlaps, contexts projected on one another can effectively evolve which despite the asymmetries may be prolonged in a "frameward" reading.

Accordingly, the six stories identify their narrators (narrative identity); in addition, they situate the Shrike legend (interpretative commentary) and referring to the others, they unravel the intergalactic background of space opera (subcreation or worldbuilding), respectively. At this point, one of the important principles of Simmons's novel series may already be apprehended: the Hyperion (the Time Tombs, the Shrike etc.) is "an unknown variable in a galaxy where every variable has been quantified" (Simmons 1990, 70, said by one of the narrators, Joseph Severn, who dreams about the experience of the Keats personality in *The Fall of Hyperion*.) The series deals with this anomaly, continuously re-entering itself (the signifier of which is the figure of Escher space or the labyrinth planet in the book), while offering numerous reading variants of the problem from a number of viewpoints. Henceforth, with the application of other parts of the series, we will focus only on those results and media loops that can be connected with the above-mentioned canonization questions.

Szilárd Sánta in his book *Mesterséges horizontok* refers relevantly to the canon map of the *Hyperion* assigning the inter-canonical field in which the reading (as well as the interpretation) may begin along the classical canon marked by the names of Boccaccio/Chaucer and Keats on the one hand, and Baum, respectively the inscription of science fiction genres (alternative canon) on the other (Sánta 2012, 79). Let us look at it in more detail.

In the series, indeed, a strong reference network stands out, which leans on the repertoire of the western canon. In the first part, the Chaucerian structure and the Keats paradigm (which also means the citation of Keats texts here) launch the process; however, these intersect with other traditions on the one hand, and on the other hand they also include infiltrations of alternative canons. Besides, there is another system running which primarily consists of the elements of classical science fiction,

new wave and cyberpunk. The former sequence, beside the mentioned ones, integrates for example the works of Pascal, Hölderlin, Blake, Yeats and Frost (the list could be extended); the latter assimilates first and foremost the works of Wells, Asimov, Dick and Gibson (also with a list of many more examples). Now, the relation of the two systems rather than the roll itself and the fact of intertextuality captivate our interest. If we try to follow this polysystemic pattern continuously, we face the phenomenon of symbiosis and detachment at the same time – multitudinously, since the recursive movement stretches to the point where the interpretation of the discussed works as classics has been completed all along both ranges. Its obvious sign is that beyond the denomination and word-for-word citation, the borrowings get into such a function in the series that they inform us of their upheld command of language – as if the repertoire started from connecting of this kind, and then throwing the classics off balance began their recutting.

Let us look at a concrete example. Probably the greatest enigma (interpretation-generating figure) of the book is the character of the Shrike. This organic and inorganic, red-eyed, mute killing machine is brought in line with the figure of Grendel by many of the storytellers. This parallelism is made dynamic if the reader is able to mobilize the memory of *Beowulf*, one of the significant medieval texts of the western canon. The traditional interpretation may come to a conclusion that the Shrike (similarly to its fictive progenitor) is a potential source of threat that is able to destroy entire empires by itself. Although Grendel appears in one of the classic opuses of Anglo-Saxon literature, it is a freak that makes its mark also in pop culture. On the other hand, the Shrike is a part of an antientropic field that may be identified as an anomaly, and, moreover, of such a kind that is unpredictable from the future perspective of the galactic empire. This playground, however, can be sounded from (the direction of) Asimov's Foundation trilogy, since the second volume (*Foundation and Empire*) deals exactly with a mutant, the Mule, as a certain anomaly who turns over the prediction of psychohistory and as an only unpredictable component is able to rewrite the future of the empire (the Time Tomb from the Asimov novel is such a pre-figurative image in Simmons).

At first sight, the Shrike might be a hybrid of Grendel and the Mule (which may refer to the connection of canons as well as the power of mutation); however, in the sequels that give up on the continuation of the Chaucerian narrative technique, the figure of the Shrike – similarly to other characters, for example, Father de Soya – goes through a change of poles: in the *Endymion* and in *The Rise of Endymion* it appears as the bodyguard of the Keats cybrid and Brawne Lamia's daughter (the galactic messiah). Summing up, if we make this solution an interpretative figure from the point of view of the entire opus, we can say that according to the treatment of the canonical patterns, Simmons's series does not strive to reproduce the reading experience but exploits the possibilities of the innovative game of onward- and over-writing. This also gives warning that in the kind of focal points such as the courses of meaning interlocking in the figure of the Shrike, we are unable to differentiate the original from the automatically plural, since it seems that the canons are not pure but heterogeneous systems from the outset. However, the loss of canonical purity is an

asset, as recutting of the functions which confine reading also means that a perspective opens on a field beyond the classics that could be named as the challenge of interpretation, since the subject cannot be deduced completely from any of the presuppositions. Nonetheless, from this perspective, the Shrike literally is the antientropy and a legend that cannot be referencialized, which twirls the unity of the text and diverts the directions of canonical interpretations regarded so steady (what might be said of the Shrike beyond this is that it is an allegory of admittance, altering with each rereading, a nice metaphor of which is the composite of shape-shifting and muteness, respectively the subscription by the Poet which may be connected on the one hand to the tracing of identity, on the other hand, the interpretative urge of sounding³).

Moreover, Simmons's series have a layer which can be a third track from the standpoint of canonical reading. That is, the series stages a canonical mechanism reflecting on its own operating rules. This mechanism naturally refers to the fictive "reception history" of the Hyperion Cantos by Silenus. The sequels (even in *The Fall of Hyperion*) also mention this opus very frequently: on the one hand, its readers can hardly say what is trustworthy in it and what the product of the poetic imagination is (in this sense, the two parts repeat that "solution" of the similarly titled epic poems by Keats that the second announces the failure of the first). On the other hand – as canons usually do – it is exposed to "outer" invasion, since in the Hegemony, what is written in the Cantos circulate as a version of legends. On the third hand, the fact that Silenus's version falls under ecclesiastical restriction favours the latter, so the power censorship works producing counter-discourses against the Cantos. On the fourth hand, the frame story grown into a megatext (which is essentially continued by the sequels) contains the rebooted versions of the narrated tales from the first part; these summaries behave as self-commentaries inasmuch as they are inspired to call forth the "hidden meaning" of the first versions. These alterations bring the contents of the Hyperion into a peculiar levitation, interpreting them as multiform narrations, the meaning of which depends on the canonization situation at all times. With this, Simmons quasi holds a mirror to the pragmatic reader as well, who although supposedly knows the altered variants, can only catch their courses of meaning if they count with the reading frame system of the canons. From this angle, the series behaves as a meta-canonical text corpus which returns to itself along the canon variations so that – just like an Escher space – the loop can reoriginate, always giving up its place to another canonical (or recanonical) version. This play spreads the canonical and non-canonical variants as a fan by which – beyond presenting the adventure – it also contributes to the rewriting of the genre codes of space opera.

Thus, from the viewpoint of rejuvenation of space opera it may be crucial that the inter-canonical interest of reading supplements (or relativizes) the space adventure. Simmons's series may turn out to be productive also from this angle since it does not separate phase shift, a phenomenon so important in the genre context, from the circulation of different textual instalments, which means that the differentiating play of the living traditions of different worlds (planets) enables their conflict on the level of relativism (this would be the story of the artwork, the stake of the war: a single human race vs. human variegation), while in front of the receptive sight this materia-

lizes as a hybridizing operation in which the synchrony of reading-enabling traditions manifests itself (for example, an odyssey becomes a space odyssey in *Endymion* as well as in *The Rise of Endymion*). Such double treatment of time indices enables also that the communicative variants of the stories (immaterial occurrences) and their written variants (in the forms of techno media) mutually take part in the inner perception – identifiable with the characters' viewpoint – of the events always already outrun by the given scenes. However, Simmons's work also simulates respectively and reflects these media standpoints, since usually those variants which were believed to be fixed turn out to be deceptive (for example, besides the *Cantos*, the information mediated by the digital discourse networks that leads to misdirection of the Keats cybrid). And of course at the end, the entering literally of John Keats's works into the heterogeneous language field of space opera also is relevant here, which is worth a couple of sentences as well.

In connection with the analysis of artworks that fall under the alternative canons of science fiction and fantasy, in more instances a question presented itself, namely whether the intertextual poems (and making their place of origin conscious) featuring in the works weaken or strengthen the construction (see Hegedűs 2012, 93–97). This view's starting point is that if the place of origin of the guest texts cannot be written into the created world then this may be understood as a certain inconsistency inasmuch as the artificial world could not contain the quoted poems. That is to say, this method in fact discloses the writer, thus terminating the autonomy of the set up world. Seemingly, Simmons resolves this problem in one go, so long as he enables to import the romantic poet's certain works beside Silenus's fictive poems by mediating the conscience of the Keats cybrid. Consequently, not the urge dictated by the inner logic of the created world, but rather a construction of a tradition dipped into the distance of time, the operation of another type of canon, the so-called authorial canon, will be made into a question.

From the aspect of canon reading, the kind of context where the imported poems and instalments from other works fit and the reason why those very pieces occur in the given places are probably more telling than the function of the names (see Palmer 1999, 78–79). From this angle the Keats oeuvre inevitably fragments but this makes it possible to become a starting point for a new story. Thus the *Hyperion Cantos* built on transfers utilizes elements from Keats's works, and sometimes it even causes that the reader treat the Keats work as a commentary on some of the episodes of the Simmons work. However, when this is (for example, due to language differences) absolutely not self-evident, falters or the metaphoric associations break down, there the reader must remind themselves that Keats's accomplishment fits the science fiction at stake – pars pro toto – metonymically. As a kind of inspiration, it is imprinted into one of the characters' consciousness, or digital memory. Accordingly, the oscillation among traditional interpretation variations of the Keats texts repositioned as parts of the active canon of the distant future may give up its place to popular reading in which not the authority (anything can be uploaded into the brain) but its forgetting may function as a potential focal point. Interestingly – and this is not a paradox! – this very changed media background may strengthen the “eternity” of Keats's poems.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Gemmell's *Troy Series* and Simmons's *Hyperion Cantos* in the light of the above-mentioned may take us closer to that issue which arises in connection with canonical questions and the canonical value of the read text assessed in the works. It is more and more salient – due to historical reasons – that the above-interpreted works can take a peculiar, liminal position by their seemingly inter-canonical trait between the mainstream and the popular. For instance, the category of slip-stream serves to describe those works that bring both mainstream and non-mainstream (science fiction, fantasy) elements into play simultaneously. However, the way we understand it – either as crossing borders or redoubling traditions – makes a difference. The former abolishes the stable canonical positions; the latter delivers the autonomy of the text to the discourses about it. All of this may be a warning that the issue of mutual passage or cooperation should not really be controlled by aesthetic ideology. But is a canon without an ideology that founded it thinkable? Probably the understanding why all canons strive to stabilize their boundaries stands or falls on this point.

On the other hand, if we start from the principle that a rhetorical-poetical-material etc. reading may complete the work, which might be considered as the prerequisite of canon cultivation, then probably we will confront the dilemma that these procedures at least as much vindicate as substantiate different approaches. Let us think about Paul de Man, who had struggled for decades with the issue of incompatibility of canon and rhetorical reading and hardly ever analysed anything else but canonical texts. If we add that literature is able to simulate all cultural techniques hence also the one where the functions assigning the canonical positions may be “played away” then the systems of criteria that created them also become a signifier. Apparently it is not easy to find the way out of this maze; however, it may be anticipated that inter-canonical analysis of complex fantasy and science fiction novels, the sight of which does not differentiate between canons *before* the actual reading starts may serve with surprises in the history of the divergence and convergence of canons. Without Gemmell's and Simmons's productions this issue would seem much simpler. However, the aim of reading can hardly be a simplification embodied in canon reduction.

NOTES

¹ On different types of literary canons see Varga 2014: 208–213.

² On the question of “Cretan lies” see Haft 1984. On the relation between poetry and lie see Pratt 1993, 63–71.

³ To the further interpretation of the figure of the Shrike see Beke 2014 (Beke interprets the mystical figure as an engraving of a new media environment from the future), as well as Matolcsy 2006.

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The interaction of canons: conflict or symbiosis? Rereading and relativity of traditions in David Gemmell's "Troy Series" and Dan Simmons's "Hyperion Cantos"

Classical canon. Alternative canon. Literary tradition. Fantasy. New space opera.
Innovation. Rereading of classics.

The starting point of the study is the conflict between classical (academic) and alternative canon. Some prominent texts of speculative fiction can notably stage this conflict (as a possible textual strategy) by confronting us with the experience that mainstream literature and popular registers are inseparable. The reading of these texts can prove that the aesthetical canon is not equivalent to cultural elitism. In contemporary literature, some works of speculative fiction – works of science fiction and fantasy in particular – support this idea. The study – by reading David Gemmell's "Troy Series" and Dan Simmons's "Hyperion Cantos" – exemplifies the fact that the principle of innovation does not necessarily destruct the existing canon but integrates itself into the canon while rearranging it. The works of Gemmell and Simmons employ such poetical and rhetorical techniques that are able to modify the system of expectations created by the evoked genres (mythological fantasy and new space opera) and also lead us to reconsider the classical literary canon. They both indicate that an artificially created cultural hierarchy can be set in motion by rereading works of popular literature.

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