

Tomasz Bielak¹
University of Bielsko-Biała
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0151-4260
e-mail: tbielak@ath.edu.pl

Transmedia novel attempt (*The Longest Night* by M. Bukowski&M. Dancewicz)

**Próba powieści transmedialnej
(*Najdłuższa noc* M. Bukowskiego i M. Dancewicza)**

ABSTRAKT

Artykuł jest analizą (studium przypadku) serialu *Belle Époque* – superprodukcji stacji TVN, której towarzyszyło wydanie książki *Najdłuższa noc*. Jej autorami są scenarzyści serialu. Taki model wydawniczy zdecydował o umiejscowieniu serialu i powieści w katalogu działań transmedialnych, które poddano analizie zarówno tekstualnej, jak i medialnej. Drobiazgowe interpretacje wybranych epizodów serialu i fragmentów książki ukazują warsztat autorów, ich medialne i książkowe fascynacje oraz umożliwiają czytelnikowi własne refleksje na temat niewielkiego zainteresowania ze strony widzów i czytelników (a – w konsekwencji – decyzję o zakończeniu show po jednym sezonie).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: serial, gatunek transmedialny, nowe media, kultura audiowizualna

Let us start from a bit lengthy comment given by one of “gazeta.pl” web portal users:

“[...] Yesterday, when stars only reached their natural density and started to lighten this Polish vale shadowed entirely up to the horizon, the newest TVN’s film production kicked off, *Belle Époque* series. The surprise was even more unexpected as there’s been hardly any activity in our media recently, and in culture in general. For over one and a half year, people have stopped watching the political, propagandist and national TVP television. On the other hand, our cinemas have been filling up slowly with viewers and have started to become crowded again. So a conclusion may be that there’s hope that people actually need normality, some contact with the world and entertainment, and not only some information given by, e.g. a mystical politician who’s convinced of having experienced some overnight visions. Having said that, *La Belle Époque*, the name being presumably not accidental as it refers to the period when our continent developed

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greatly, including medical sciences, physics, astronomy, to the time of steam and electricity, geographical discoveries, the expansion of social sciences and, first of all, the so-called higher culture, a mere example being literature, painting, architecture or music. Obviously, this list should be complemented by the press, and even the development of sport. It was more or less what happened in France, Great Britain, etc. of that time. But what did it look like in Poland then? Well, it was very modest, truly speaking, that culture was noticed in our country but probably only through its exterior packaging, e.g. clothes, especially female hats and umbrellas. So likewise then, Poland today's still trying but only to follow Europe and peep at it. When it comes to science, the situation really varies, i.e. there are many talented ones but patents are still registered there and not here. After the latest educational reform, we are still closer to Kamchatka and Senegal. And this is mainly what the historical reference of our new series is based on. Its actors by their very behaviours, way of moving and even way of speaking absolutely do not mirror that epoch; what's more, they rudely spoil it. All the time, this culture is widely available, is precisely described, one just needs to read more of it. Reading does not hurt! The second great dissonance of this series event is its dubious music because it is some teenage-disco mix-up of accidentally combined basic notes. I don't know, maybe the director meant some Polish version of Harry Potter? The scenography is not without fault either because, e.g. how can one explain freshly scattered straw on modern concrete cobbled paving? Plastic windows and ideally polished façades of tenement houses don't make up for that failure either. I'm writing about it because I'm really fond of costume films and I like to pay attention to the tiniest details. A film is supposed to belong to the area of art so one may have expectations towards it. Next time, try more.²

Series as textual conglomerate

In this chapter the author analyses one of the biggest television productions within the last five years which has quite strongly divided the domestic audience. This polarisation was the effect of huge expectations on the one hand and, on the other, acquired and high cultural competences concerning various viewing strategies used by already "experienced" Polish viewers. Although the fashion for watching series does not fade, there is no longer a seemingly counter-cultural character among aca-fans³ (prevalence of television over cinema); neither it is a manifesto of unlimited access to globally transmitted content which revolves around several popular torrent services. Similarly, watching series stopped to be a very effective story about just a ritual use of computers or tablets (instead of a TV set) – currently, *binge watching* forces comfort – popular streaming services (HBO GO, Netflix, Showmax, Player.pl) are available in the form of applications, e.g. in gaming consoles, or they serve a function of additional content available in high quality TV sets which allow for watching content in 4K. Nowadays, downloading series complements a domestic offer, e.g. in Poland we cannot use Hulu service – the producer of the cult adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

² The comment available in: M. Korycka, „*Belle Epoque*” *widzieliśmy dwa pierwsze odcinki nowego serialu TVN. Pięknie jest, ale co poza tym?* [review], *gazeta.pl/kultura*, 15.02.2017, <https://bit.ly/2jBDWfa> [access: 07.05.2018].

³ It is worth noting the blog written by H. Jenkins, *Confessions of an aca-fan*, in which the author explains the problem of this category. See more at: <http://bit.ly/2LnYl47> [access: 17.12.2018].

or Paramount Network – the distributor of 9-episode anthology *Yellowstone* by (screenplay and direction) Taylor Sheridan with Kevin Costner in the lead role. Currently, fascination with series has stopped to be a fashion strongly connected with changes which television has undergone within the last two decades and of which synthetic description appears in the book written by Małgorzata Bogunia-Borowska:

“The space of television is formed based on various social events but also leads, motifs and ideas. It is the area where social and cultural senses are created. Television makes its order, a framework explaining and interpreting the organisation of reality in which we live. It refers to the world, comments on it, parodies it and polemicalises with it. Television allows us to look at our lives from a distance and from another angle. It provides an opportunity to observe reality reflected on television screen. Television captures events and emotions which accompany them in pictures. It also takes on the teacher’s role consisting in guiding viewers among complex and incomprehensible meanders of more and more complicated everyday life. It depicts places and worlds which most of us would never be able to see and experience impressions connected with them. Television is a guide of everyday life. In the tangle of various topics, issues and facts, it helps us to make choices. Apart from that, it directs our thinking and provides subjects and motifs, which we consider more or less consciously. It performs the function of a road sign or map⁴”.

There is a note of some even incorrect faith coming through the above piece, which the author puts in technological determinism and, at the same time, a visible turn towards representationalism which was stale even during the time when the book was written.⁵ The latest research on television is far from statements about reflecting some reality, depicting possible but not accessible worlds, selectively presenting events, for which professionals’ ethics is indispensable (i.e. editors’, journalists’, programme presenters’). At the current time, television is a multi-task flow of media events, full of internal aporia (simultaneous presentation of opinions by party leaders during the 2018 local government elections revealed that they can only be won). Television provides today a number of affordances, understood by the author as concrete and realised possibilities of acting, drawing on the so far existing experiences, desires, intentions, faith as well as conscious needs to transgress values considered as norms⁶. Regularly watching a series is therefore one of attempts to go beyond television experience which is understood by media experts in the way expressed by Bogunia-Borowska in the piece quoted above.

⁴ M. Bogunia-Borowska, *Fenomen telewizji. Interpretacje socjologiczne i kulturowe*, Kraków 2012, p. 14.

⁵ As early as in 1995, Elżbieta Kałuszyńska expressed her quite extreme view about representationalism in her article: *Co rozumiem przez reprezentacjonizm i dlaczego go odrzucam?*, “Filozofia Nauki”, 3/3 1995, pp. 65–72. The article is also available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/2TFQflw> [access: 24.11.2018].

⁶ See more about issues connected with affordance: a thematic issue of magazine “Avant”, 2/2012, <https://bit.ly/2r1XGwx> [access: 24.11.2018]; J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* New York 1979; K. S. Jones, *What Is an Affordance?*, “Ecological Psychology”, 15 (2) 2003, pp. 107–114; C. F. Michaels, *Affordances: four points of debate*, “Ecological Psychology”, 15 (2)2003, pp. 135–148; M. T. Turvey, *Affordances and prospective control: An outline of the ontology*, “Ecological Psychology”, 4 (3) 1992, pp. 173–187; R. Withagen, A. Chemero, *Affordances and classification: On the significance of a sidebar in James Gibson’s last book*, “Philosophical Psychology”, 25 (4) 2011, pp. 521–537.

What also influences this situation is a far more developed technology and the environment in which series appear and what services contribute to their more intense watching⁷ and (earlier) systemic and economic transformations which were, in the author's view, a result of a new publishing model (*publishing flow*) having become more widely spread, which is described by Derek Kompare:

“However, it is clear that the centralized, mass-disseminated cultural institution that has held sway since the middle of the twentieth century is largely ceding to a regime premised on individual choice, marked by highly diversified content, atomized reception, and malleable technologies. While this transition will likely not mark the end of television's particular role in the reproduction of culture, it still confronts us with the necessity to rethink long-held conceptions of the medium and of the media in general. The current changes around television are part of a larger conceptual shift across all media, as the boundaries between previously discrete forms (text, film, broadcasting, video, and sound recordings) are increasingly blurred – aesthetically, technologically, industrially, and culturally – challenging established theoretical paradigms. Technology, industry, and culture are not autonomous domains; each is shaped by the other in particular ways, helping construct particular media forms and practices in particular contexts. It is crucial to remember this point as we investigate the media's past and speculate on its future, for its aesthetic, industrial and regulatory practices, and uses and meanings are all tied together⁸”.

This chapter aims also at presenting how transitions discussed above have yet contributed to the negative reception of the first (for many years) costume series which TVN channel producers and authorities advertised as “a historical drama with elements of a convincing crime scenario.” The distribution structure of story prepared by the TVN group assumed the promotion of ten-episode series *Belle Epoque* as “meeting viewers' expectations aged 19-46” and, what constitutes one of elements analysed here – precisely reconstructing the realities of the beginning of the twentieth century. As the author attempts to prove in a subsequent part of this chapter, the negative reception of this story was not the consequence of only inadequately conducted promotional action (based on a false assumption that the TVN viewer is not a prosumer who freely moves around the common knowledge space and various types of cultural texts, i.e. pictures, fashion, music). Of significant importance was also (and perhaps first and foremost) a specific and entropic in a way character of the “Internet community opinion,” which rapidly allowed for establishing the negative reception of this story, based on untrue comparisons made by users or simply copied and repeated by them within their social media profiles.

⁷ NC+ platform's offer may serve as a good example here: *Nielegalni* (2018) series is a loose adaptation of two novels by V. Severski which tells a story about the lives and activities of a group of Polish spies. The series is accompanied by a number of media sub-shows complementing every episode and the whole season. There is a dedicated website which stores additional content, logical games for viewers, hidden information which, when solved, can serve to identify what intentions individual characters have and explain vague motivations which drive them. Cf. the series official website: <https://bit.ly/2r2fuaF> [access: 24.11.2018].

⁸ D. Kompare, *Publishing Flow: DVD Box Sets and the Reconceptation of Television*, „Television and New Media” vol. 7 No. 4 2006 pp. 335-336.

In the author's view, the case of *Belle Epoque* is an extremely interesting and subsequent example of users' specific involvement in creating the media reality, and in a sense (if we take account of TVN authorities' conviction about a particular mission-led character of some productions) – a certain sample of media conglomerate's broader policy.

“Literary prototype” – ennoblement model of television genre

It is not too exaggerated to state that Edward Miszczak, the TVN station's long-term programme director, is an unquestionable authority in the area of television expert knowledge. Programmes, formats or one-time events which he promoted usually turned out to be commercial successes that had been building the budget potential of TVN for many years. At a certain point of time, it was even said that TVN, despite its commercial origin, could have captured and created a mission-led character which had been so far “reserved” for public service TV programmes – TVP (with its subsidiary channels). Viewers and observers of the media market in Poland got used to the arrangement that a subsequent schedule is a widely commented in social and professional media event, while Director Miszczak's comments form a certain promise and guarantee of quality, and a prescient announcement of another success counted in numbers. When during subsequent presentation of schedule, the TVN television leader announced a new station's production, claiming that:

“nothing compares to this series for there has not been such a production in Poland. There is *Peaky Blinders*, and, surely, *Taboo*. We have Paweł Małasznicki, and Tom Hardy is there. A lonely man wearing a hat and long coat comes back to his family town. London is there, Kraków is here. Unshaven face with crevices – hundred-percent masculinity.”⁹

The comparison of *Belle Epoque* with a “classical” series (*Peaky Blinders*) and one of the most awaited productions recently (*Taboo*) inevitably led to specific feedback in the form of regular citations of, in many commentators' opinions, missed setting of domestic production – this issue will be brought again in a further part of this chapter. In the case of the series under discussion, TVN's programme policy opted for actions of a total character which would subordinate the schedule to Wednesday evenings¹⁰ and those including spot variations,¹¹ visual identification (according to the author, it was a very successful transformation of TVN's logo in the days following the premiere episode release – the mentioned logo and graphic

⁹ The part of Edward Miszczak's statement is available in “Wirtualne Media”: Rusza „*Belle Epoque*”. *Takiej produkcji jeszcze w Polsce nie było*, <https://bit.ly/2DV7Lns> 02.10.2017 [access: 24.11.2018].

¹⁰ It should be remembered that it is the time when TVP1 broadcasts very popular *Champions League* football meetings.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. <https://bit.ly/2r23S07>: TVN 2017 Spring schedule 2017 using one of series characters.

motifs related to the series scenery are presented below¹²): as well as the so-called supporting actions (social platforms, sponsored articles).

Against this background, the inter-media action consisting in publishing a book being a peculiar *prequel* to the series on the one hand, and granting the production something resembling a nobility patent on the other (adaptation of a novel is certainly strongly domesticated in the Polish movement of reception¹³), seems to be a coherent and well-thought operation for the publishing model selected by the Polish broadcaster.

Published simultaneously with the series release, *Najdłuższa noc* (*The Longest Night*) is therefore not only a noteworthy example of group's intermedia action but also an intriguing attempt to include a film prototype (characters, location) in literary publishing. As a brand, *Belle Époque* becomes in this arrangement a platform, a type of textual (cultural) *hub*, to which other media creations can be connected: websites, board games, console games or games for smartphones – in a way, everything depends on viewing rates and sales figures of advertising time slots¹⁴.

Marek Bukowski and Maciej Danczewicz are both the creators (more producers, actually speaking...) of the novel and co-authors of the series screenplay. Interestingly, both of them are actors. The first one has starred a dozen or so roles which enjoyed either really favourable or very negative reception (among other things, *Nad rzeką, której nie ma* by Andrzej Barański [1991] – a film based on Stanisław Czyż's short story, and negatively reviewed performance in *Smoleńsk* by Antoni Krauze [2016]); the latter actor is known to a more narrow audience of television soap operas in which he has minor roles (e.g. Polsat-produced *Hotel 52* series). What we deal here with is “non-professionals” in the field of crime literature who supposedly could not have dreamt about a better and more spectacular debut.

Najdłuższa noc was published by Wydawnictwo “Muza” in two distribution formats: a traditional softcover book and professionally prepared eBook available in most services offering this purchase possibility. Reading a short description provided in eBook services, we find out that:

¹² Przemysław Kilichowski is the author of graphic concept.

¹³ It is worth noting that apart from classical literature (novels by Prus, Sienkiewicz, Reymont), it was also popular novels and short stories that were adapted (e.g. by Dołęga-Mostowicz). By way of illustration, both seasons of *Oz zgłoś się*, which have enjoyed huge popularity to date, were adaptations of short stories written by, among others, Jerzy Edigey (the episode entitled *300 tysięcy w nowych banknotach*), Jerzy Iwaszkiewicz (*Dlaczego Pan zabił moją mamę?*) or Anna Kłodzińska (*Morderca działa nocą*).

¹⁴ A typical example of such franchise is the series named *Narcos* which was commissioned by *Netflix* (three seasons and the so-called *sister show* *Narcos: Mexico*. About the *Netflix* business model and phenomenon of “The fourth-era television:” M. Jenner, *Is this TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and binge-watching*, “New Media & Society”, No. 18 (2) 2016, pp. 257–273; D. Ramsay (2013), *Confessions of a binge watcher*, “CST Online”, 04.10.2013, <https://bit.ly/2L5CJK7> [access: 09.12.2018]; T. Spangler, *Netflix survey: binge-watching is not weird or unusual*, “Variety”, 13.12.2018, <https://bit.ly/2EbOSMp> [access: 09.12.2018].

“It is December 1914. A bit under 30, Jan Edigey-Korycki cruises on board of “Legion” to a Madagascar port. It is where he receives a message about his mother’s death. He returns as soon as he can to Kraków, the city which the protagonist was forced to leave after his unhappily falling in love with a beautiful aristocratic woman.

In the meantime, the city witnesses a series of macabre crimes. Women are killed – eyes gouged out, heads cut, their bodies charred. Following a murder, Jan must get deeper into the criminal world of Kraków and mysterious religious symbolism. It soon occurs that hideous crimes committed according to a sophisticated *modus operandi* conceal something which he cannot capture...

Najdłuższa noc is a book inspired by events from *Belle Epoque* series. Marek Bukowski and Maciej Dancewicz are co-authors of its screenplay. Spectacularly made, this TVN crime drama series is a unique proposal which will surely meet the taste of crime story fans. This story combines love, passion, and the beauty of epoch with brutal crimes which shook Kraków dwellers at the beginning of the twentieth century. The screen hosts, among others, Paweł Małaczyński, Magdalena Cielecka, Weronika Rosati, Eryk Lubos, and Olaf Lubaszenko.¹⁵

As clearly accentuated by the publisher, the series is the archetype of the novel, the more that its authors are screenwriters of a likely (“spectacularly made”) blockbuster of TVN station. In the interview conducted by Maciej Mikulski, authors themselves recollect that the book is “a far more gory sister of the series”:

“The book is a dreary and uncompromising version of events shown in the series. In the novel we focus more on a case from the first episode but in a much deeper and wider sense, we deepen in parts related to individual protagonists, there are also plenty of details and characters who you will never get to know as viewers. The novel is a closed whole concerning a single case, while every subsequent episode of the series will tell a story about a completely different crime.¹⁶”

What we face here is the series characterised by a very distinct degree of convergence, in which media content components complement each other, actors become writers and writers scriptwriters, and a content medium is traditional media (books, television) as well as multimedia platforms and services (eBook bookshops, streaming services).

Bukowski and Dancewicz indicate that a more demanding viewer should decide on the book for it depicts a deepened version of events which happen in the first episodes of the series and allow the reader to better understand the main hero’s motives.

Following that, let us analyse the plot of *Najdłuższa noc*. It is worth bearing in mind that this interpretation is essential for comprehending a broad context of *Belle Epoque*, levels and strategies of broadcast and reception, which resulted in particular negative reactions after the first episodes were premiered.

¹⁵ The illustration comes from the official website of Wydawnictwo “Muza” [access: 22.05.2018].

¹⁶ M. Mikulski, *Najdłuższa noc. Tego nie zobaczycie w serialu Belle Epoque!*, 15.02.2017, <https://bit.ly/2r3ZzZp> [access: 24.11.2018].

Novel as remixed set of popular culture knowledge – selected examples

The principal character is Jan Edigey-Korycki who is a son of a wealthy Lviv landowner and renowned professor of medicine. The family is well-known and respected in Kraków also because of missionary actions of Orest Korycki, who treats *pro bono* the poorest inhabitants of this former capital city of Poland. Little do we know about this central character's past apart from the fact that, as a result of unfortunate circumstances, he fatally wounds a brother of Konstancja, who is Jan's immense love, in a duel. As a consequence of that event, Konstancja takes her own life. This is the reason why he leaves the country and wanders around the world for many years. Edigey-Korycki becomes an excellent sailor, he experiences a lot of adventures on land and at sea – he knows foreign languages, has mastered martial arts, takes part in bloody uprisings at Far East, and he is also familiar with various customs and denominations. Literally, he becomes “the world citizen.” Bukowski and Dancewicz construct the protagonist so as to have his ancestry directly “rewritten” from the school hegemonic tradition of required reading list: the novel tells therefore about both romantic love and private tragedy; it illustrates a desirable and “romantically recognised” oriental and marine motifs; last but not least, there is also positivist knowledge and sacrifice which are sometimes observed in the main character. Taking account of all the above, Edigey-Korycki needs to be predictable and schematic:

“‘My father is an incorrigible romanticist and his views are not necessarily close to mine,’ Jan retorted shortly because he didn’t like this comparison with his father. ‘But it doesn’t mean I forget that he was banished by the tsarists to Siberia, they earlier hang his brother at Lukiškės Square in Vilnius, burnt our family house where we had been living for generations, and confiscated the land which our family had been bestowed upon half a thousand years ago by a Polish king and gave it to some slavish vagabond,’ he added vigorously in the same breath.¹⁷”

[p. 72]

It is one of main character's statements in which he presents the above mentioned ideological combination in the popular culture version. Authors-actors do not even hide their reading interests – literature is for them a solely entertaining material, while the amount of crypto-quotations proves the writers' undeniable eloquence. The book is accompanied with a motto – quotation from the short story *Cel* from *Tropy* which is a collection by Franciszek Mirandola. A little popular writer (an outstanding translator though) included in the novel framework is a type of literary ennoblement, and even a distinctive “informal education” practiced

¹⁷ If not stated otherwise, all the quotations come from eBook by M. Bukowski, M. Dancewicz, *Najdłuższa noc*, Warszawa 2017.

by writers of crime novels, e.g. Joe Alex¹⁸ (Maciej Słomczyński). While in the case of the author of *Cichym ścigałam go lotem* it was a completely deliberate, written in a multi-volume-novel-series endeavour, when it comes to the two authors of *Najdłuższa noc*, the choice of this novel motto seems to be gimmicky (because rather not intentional), and the fact of no information and reference address having been provided might not as much hinder tracing a source (*Tropy* is available in the service “Wolne Lektury”) as rather discourage a potential reader from possibly searching further.

Let us look again at the principal hero and set of traits he was given (literary qualities in reality):

“When he was saying that, his immensely black eyes seemed to sparkle. Burn smiled faintly. He liked that Pole. There was something typical of a Scottish highlander in him.¹⁹”

[p. 73]

Even a less discerning recipient of culture will associate this piece with William Wallace and a Hollywood novel depicting own dignity and liberation of nation [*The Bravheart*, 1995 M. Gibson]. A reader who is more sensitive about the “acquired discourse” characterising the authors of *Najdłuższa noc* will easily identify how this piece is inclined towards a solution used by Henryk Sienkiewicz, the master of popular novel:

“Having the soul of a Scottish highlander, thus full of melancholy, Ketling worshipped and adored Oleńka, while started to hate Anusia from the first moment, who retaliated as a matter of fact, compensating losses on Braun and all others, not excluding Rosieński swordbearer himself.²⁰”

The motivation which drove Sienkiewicz is well-known – an ostensible “mistake” in the national trait of Ketling (it is worth remembering he was ... Englishman) served a sole purpose of embracing the Walter Scott model of hero. Turning to the protagonist of *Najdłuższa noc*, it is similar – Jan “needs” such features as “exaggerated propensity for melancholy” for this is what should drive his motivations and later actions in Kraków to a large extent. The authors equipped Korycki with obsessive love for Konstancja, a woman from a higher class (her relationship with Korycki was a *mésalliance*), which brings him also closer to another leading protagonist, who is a distinctive repository of romantic emotions – Stanisław Wokulski. Obsessive love and desire get the authors bored themselves as the relationship of these two people was summarised in the following piece:

¹⁸ The author discussed issues concerning the meaning and pragmatics of mottos in crime novels in the book *Proza Macieja Słomczyńskiego (Joe Alexa)*, Katowice 2008, pp. 140–148.

¹⁹ If not indicated otherwise, all emphasis in bold in this chapter has been introduced by the author.

²⁰ H. Sienkiewicz, *Potop*, Kraków 2000, p. 765.

“He shot a bit in his early youth; one can say – like an amateur. In a countryside cottage of his friend, he shot from pistol to a board hang on an old pine tree that was growing against the wall surrounding the garden in the property of his friend’s uncle, Henryk Skarżyński, which was situated near Kraków. Perhaps that was the reason why he shot the dragoon in his right shoulder so as to overpower him because the conditions on which the duel was organised were drastic – they were supposed to shoot as long as one of them would not be able to stand. Such a shot happens once in a hundred times. Had he targeted precisely and wanted to target in the way in which he did, he would have not surely succeeded. The dragoon had his wound dressed on the site and was transported home. The bullet didn’t even touch a bone.

Jan was convinced the case was closed.

Unfortunately, after three days, Konstancja’s brother was taken to hospital. His wound didn’t heal and fever came. It became infected and, after the next three days had passed, the lieutenant died and a more tragic message came soon from Switzerland – Konstancja committed suicide. More out of despair than the revenge announced by the father of his fiancée-to-be, Jan leaves his family city. He wanted to be as far from all his memories as possible and such luxury was guaranteed only by his service in fleet.”

[p. 163]

Essentially, stories about Konstancja are only reminiscences of similar ones. A motivation we can assume in this case might be an exceptional structure of intermedia genre – the lead concerning the relationship these two had becomes a feature pivot of a number of episodes (including an astonishing end which is discussed in the part referring to the series).

Central composition pivot of the novel: protagonist and female quadrangle.

By including a love lead in the series framework and leaving it out in the novel, Bukowski and Danciewicz clumsily wade into further “replacements.” In a crime novel with elements of history and occultism, basically, it would not be anything negative if it were not for the lack of a defined strategy and consistence in action. We receive a type of a surprising “magazine” with the protagonist's relationships with women – they end unexpectedly every time. What we anticipate is that the hero, who does not refrain from meetings with accidentally acquainted women or prostitutes during his stopovers at ports around the world, is a discerning player. This is how the authors create him anyway:

“He had a lot of women of different races and colours of their skin but neither of them had Konstancja’s face so far and he saw her face in each of them. Sophie had Sophie’s body and face. It was something new and cleansing for him. One glance was enough. She smiled gently.”

[p. 88]

The meeting with an attractive daughter of the Gascon bartender and native inhabitant of Madagascar finishes with a telling and evocative description of intercourse, which is posed as a Bond scene of the following type:

“She took her shawl off with one movement and it looked like the birth of someone new, more beautiful, more perfect. A goddess. He took off his shirt and an oriental dragon with its head at the solar plexus, wing proudly spread on its heart and tail bent at its underbelly, of which tattoo he had on his chest, shone on his wet skin, symbolising bravery, strength and brutal power. Hot, humid air. They were so wet with sweat as if they had just come out of the ocean. In the beginning, they were making love abruptly and feverishly but Jan got tired quickly. Months of celibacy, exhausting journey and yesterday’s alcohol had their toll. It was when she took over initiative. She started moving on him in an ecstatic dance, sticking to his sweaty body so strongly and so tightly that they became one whole. She rubbed against him with her ankles, calves, thighs, she massaged his belly with her hard one, she touched his bushy beard with her small and shapely breast, whose nipples seemingly liked that. She caressed him in a way he didn’t know from port brothels, he never did this with such intensity, he could say without any exaggeration that he had not been so closely with anyone before.”

[p.88]

Faced with such an illustration, readers may switch off their imagination completely. A thing is that it is exactly when the authors decide on a feature twist, which has quite interesting consequences, and which closes in just one sentence:

“And perhaps it was the journey that took many months, continuous thinking about his home, mother, about what he would see upon his return that sharpened his senses so much.”

[p. 89]

It should be reminded that it is just “the Madagascar incident” that finishes with the message about his mother’s abrupt death; therefore, recollecting her during his intercourse with an exotic and mysterious girl evokes considerable confusion in the reader, so to speak. It seems though that in this single case Bukowski and Dancewicz maintain most unusual consistence indeed. Although it starts with having sex, the meeting with Sophie finishes actually with longing, love and pondering the future together. Edigey-Korycki acts similarly after his return to Kraków where the fate brings other two women to him. The first one, Mila, is an extraordinarily attractive prostitute from the *Ypsilon* hotel who becomes Jan’s carer soon:

“Whereupon she undressed him so scrupulously that he was naked. She put a pillow under his head and covered him with duvet.

Jan started mumbling something again about Mila having so pretty eyes...

‘They emanate strange radiance ... like stars at night at the ocean,’ he muttered and fell asleep.

Mila looked around the room – there was a horrible mess and dirt everywhere.

‘I thought they would take a better care of him here,’ she murmured to herself.

She went to the door but glanced again at Jan in his sleep. She thought that she could turn the key at that moment, get swiftly undressed and under duvet. She knew Jan would scarcely remember

anything tomorrow after becoming sober. And that is why she refused to think about that.

The sun woke him up in the morning. Strangely, he didn't feel any effects of yesterday's 'fall.' No dryness in his mouth nor any headache... He looked towards the window and realised it was late. He sat on the bed, rubbed his eyes, looked at the room... his eyes became the size of saucers. The room was clean and immaculately clean. There were two rolls, a piece of sausage and cheese on the table."

[p.308]

"'Where are my clothes?,' Jan asked, having many bad suspicions.

'They are in the wardrobe.'

He went there and opened it. There was ideal tidiness inside, even his shirts were ironed.

'Did we yesterday...did anything happen?'

'Trade secret,' Mila laughed.

Jan wasn't sure if she was joking or not.

'I didn't use you. I like you too much,' she added, and Jan sighed with relief and fell on the bed, hitting his head against something hard. He lifted slightly and took *Złota legenda* from underneath the duvet."

[p. 309]

Obviously, the situation between Mila and Jan is adequately motivated – it should be added, only in the book logic and owing to this heroine in the first place (starred by Vanessa Alexander in the series), the realities already presented in *Belle Epoque* were considered not only theatrical but even preposterous. So Mila is a daughter of the prostitute with whom Jan had some intimacy – he thus treats the girl as his daughter, which, given the context of her profession and time when the plot takes place, is impossible and unnecessary. What is more, the "fallen woman" has attributes of a "good bourgeoisie;" she cooks, cleans, can read a bit and she has defined moral principles (very strict!) – the series heroine was deprived of these qualities, leaving only her unquestionable charm, cleanliness and lack of venereal diseases. Mila is a collection of film clichés based on which the novel authors were probably brought up. While creating such a character may defend itself in the cinema by choosing an actress performing the role, it loses its whole power in the literary structure and becomes a usually treated "writing defect."

Using emotional vectors incompetently is visible in the scene of Jan and Mila parting. They hold their last conversation – patterned for certain upon great film "separations" (e.g. Rick Blaine and Ilsa Lund Laszlo) – as a result, the scene becomes only a type of "deal closing:" despite Jan's persistent endeavours and Mila's declarative love, a vision of the nineteenth-century economics is looming over their last dialogue:

"'Listen,' he said and got up from the bed. 'I have inherited a big estate. Very big. I will buy a flat for you and give you money. You can open some kind of a shop.'

'I can't really do calculations. I can barely give my signature,' she burst out laughing.

'You will learn. I will hire a teacher for you.'

'Why trouble so much about a simple whore?' That was it.

'I will give you the money and you can live as you wish...'

'But I won't take it.' I have my fees. Me earning for a flat would mean you would have to make love with me for about a hundred years, and every day, five times a day. Besides that, I wouldn't do that with you obviously for money.

Silence followed. Jan felt bewildered. On the one hand, her reaction surprised him, on the other, he should have expected that.

'I will visit you.'

'No. You won't. I can see it in your eyes that you won't.'

Jan didn't speak. He didn't know what to say to that simple girl.

'I just came to say goodbye. I also move out. To Lviv, bigger city, more clients.' Mila stated.

'Please, take this money.'

'I'm leaving now.' Mila opened the door. 'I broke the absolute rule of all whores of the world because I fell in love. And this is where it got me.'"

[p. 367]

Constructed in this way, the solution leads the writers to verify one more relationship pattern. Following Bond's favourites: woman – phantom (Konstancja), woman – sexual toy (Mila), one more appears: woman – scientist. It is Weronika – Henryk Starzyński's sister, who cooperates with him in the forensic medicine laboratory, who is a suffragette and graduate of the Sorbonne. Her bond with Jan is based on regularly confronting the established image of a little girl (remembered so by the hero during his escape from Poland) with an unusually attractive young woman, who, so to say, needs to have her attractiveness and sexuality confirmed just in her relationship with Edigey-Korycki. The authors build the relationship of these two sparingly; they also often use established patterns from novels of manners:

"The superintendent stood up and came to the autopsy table and looked at the object of the study that was just being carried out.

'I dare to doubt, Miss Weronika, that this is the right place for you. Such sights? Horrible.'

'Is it perhaps because I am a woman?' I wish the superintendent noted that I graduated from the Sorbonne in Paris. Under Prof. Skłodowska-Curie. She has a diploma in chemistry and...'

'Of course, of course,' Jelinek interrupted her. 'Paris is the capital of all fashions. Naturally that in Paris because it would be unthinkable in our decent Vienna. It is Paris from where all these deviations come from to us. I remember times when streets were safe, the police knew about every disloyal man and secret small game, and there was public order. Women stayed at home,

raised children and took care of their husbands. I do know that all young ladies who call themselves suffragettes are fascinated now by the life of Madame Curie but I can assure you that each of them actually dreams only about not becoming a spinster.”

[p. 127]

In essence, the quoted piece does not require any comment – both the writers unknowingly subdue to the pattern which Umberto Eco wrote about in his famous essay *Superman in mass culture*:

“Bourgeoise society is the kingdom of facts and the novel is its changeable and functional ideological treaty. A century later, the writer will notice that facts are unbearable. And so if ‘Coketown was the kingdom of facts,’ with its black houses and air-contaminating chimneys, as Dickens sees them, then these facts need to be completed with reasonable fantasy to remind that the society can kill and heal like a strict and rightful God but the merciful one.”²¹

Certainly, this peculiar interspersed aims at maximum simplification and update of subsequent events. Since “inhabitants of mass imagination” are to completely believe the characters and fully support their actions or entirely refuse the presented motivation. Among other things, this is the reason why Superintendent Jelinek is a misogynist and supporter of enlightenment crime theories only to emphasise and strengthen his antagonist relations with Jan, Henry and, first of all, with Weronika. The last relationship in the male world of K.K. Galicia would be redundant for the novel, was it not for Jelinek’s “antifeminist attacks.” Weronika does not prove her feature usefulness solely by her sequences which present her as a prominent specialist in the field of chemistry or physics but, first and foremost, when she becomes Weronika-the woman whom Jan must save from the hands of a demonic murderer. The paradox of this character consists in that (despite earlier declarations) about the strength and “male” attitude to the world (visible especially in her way of dressing, manners, profession and passions). Weronika is the most “attractive” to the reader when she becomes a defenceless young girl who is secretly keen on the central character.

Despite the presented stage production measures, Bukowski and Dancewicz get entangled in a way in a costume model straight from a nineteenth-century popular novel – women are reliant on men, entirely subdued to them, and at the top of hierarchy there is a (usually phantom and absent) mother. If we add the fact that the declaration to return to crocheting is made by the superintendent inheriting his name from a female Nobel Prize winner and a leading, feminist, iconoclastic for some circles Austrian author, Elfriede Jelinek, then the reader receives an ideological mix which is difficult to untangle even for the authors themselves.

Proximity to female characters of popular novels of manners results in a difficulty in identifying who Weronika was modelled on. However, if we assumed that the authors of *Najdłuższa noc* move within the framework of intermediary

²¹ Polish edition: U. Eco, *Superman w kulturze masowej*, translated by J. Ugniewska, Warszawa 1996, pp. 23–24.

genre, then this affinity might decisively go beyond literary boundaries. As mentioned earlier, it was frequently signalled after the first episodes of *Belle Epoque* were released that the series' creators drew abundantly on the aesthetics of *Taboo*, *Ripper Street* and *The Knick* – not only are these comparisons exaggerated but also unauthorised in terms of interpretation.²² Nonetheless, the use of certain scenes in the novel leads the reader-viewer to a given trail.

The above picture-commercial depicts one of the most well-known, even cult scenes²³ from the series named *The Knick*²⁴ (s01e05²⁵ *They capture the heat*) which was used in the novel in the following way:

“I have something for you,’ and she handed a big metal clip.

‘What is this?’

‘The clip for clipping your right leg of trousers so they don’t get entangled in the bike chain.’

‘I don’t have a bike.’

‘Yes, you do.’ Weronika pointed her hand at a new beautiful bicycle which was leaning against the wall next to the café entry. ‘It’s yours.’ This is the present from me.’

‘I can’t accept it.’

‘You have deserved it.’

‘Such a stunner is very expensive...’

‘What if you bought it to yourself, would you enjoy it?’

‘Well, yes.’

‘Then assume that you bought it yourself.’

‘I really, really thank you,’ he finally said. He embraced her and kissed her firmly.

‘And I hope you will enjoy the riding.’

Jan meant to reply something but he clearly didn’t know what and how...

²² The author indicated it in the comprehensive analysis of the series in the book entitled *Patchwork. Kulturowa cyrkulacja obiektów medialnych*, Bielsko-Biała 2018, pp. 61-108.

²³ The clip from the episode is available in *YouTube*: <https://bit.ly/2r3Xz3C> [access: 24.11.2018].

²⁴ *The Knick* – the series created by Steven Soderbergh, which tells about the lives of staff working in a hospital in a New York district, *Knickerbocker*. The department is managed by Dr Jon Thackery, the cocaine and heroin addicted surgeon whose methods of work and attempts to bypass binding medical procedures raise controversy among other doctors and hospital donors. Originally, three seasons were commissioned but in 2017 a decision was made to abandon the series. It was acclaimed as one of the most startling and “quality” projects within the last years; not only actors’ good performance was highlighted but also specific editing and exceptional music by Cliff Martinez. Unfortunately, expectations concerning an equivalent of commercial Cinemax were decisively higher, and the series became a “niche gem” for an insignificant group of those interested. See more: N. Andreeva, “*The Knick*” Canceled After 2 Seasons As Cinemax Focuses On Action Dramas, “Deadline”, 23.03.2017, <https://bit.ly/2B1XzFB> [access: 09.12.2018].

²⁵ The abbreviation and number of series and episode are always signalled in the book as “season” and “episode”.

'Is there anything else that bothers you?,' Weronika sked.

'I can't ride a bicycle. I didn't have an opportunity somehow.'

'Well, great, I will teach you..'

'All right but somewhere out of town so I am not a laughing stock,' Jan made a provision.

'Why out of town? Here and now!'

Weronika got on the bike.

'Look how simple it is.' And she rode several circles in front of the café.

Jan clipped his trousers and he was just to get on the bike when a rushing carriage suddenly appeared opposite them. Jan and Weronika moved away instinctively because the carriage was going far too quickly. When it was passing them, raising a cloud of dust, Jan noticed that Konstancja was one of its passengers. Weronika spotted her too.

'And that's the way it is – some need to pedal to go, while others are carried,' she commented perspicaciously, when looking at Jan. 'This kind of konstancjas bring about the class conflict.'

[pp. 355–357]

Writing self-awareness does not let the authors write this piece as a dynamic scene of learning to ride. For it is not possible to repeat a sequence of shots in which Lucy, the nurse, persuades Dr Thackery to try to ride. In Steven Soderbergh's series, a three-minute bit part takes place in a peculiar scenery of the New York hospital courtyard – the viewer accompanies these two; surgeon's singing-humming is juxtaposed with Cliff Martinez's unique climatic music.

We can observe that the protagonist gets out of the view of the woman who has fallen in love with him – her perspective is in a way ours – the audience; a distinctive anticipation of the final sequence from the season-closing episode (s02e10), in which the famous: *"That's it. This is all we are,"* is said by the central character when he independently performs large intestine resection in front of the other doctors.

Bukowski and Dancewicz decide on a more "aspirational" end of this relationship:

"She smiled and Jan smiled back, and for the second time – apart from the moment in her flat – he looked at her not as at a friend's sister but a woman whom he liked and who impressed him, and who was charming. And he thought that he travelled the whole world, looking for the four-leaf clover which he might have had within his reach straight from the beginning... he knew, however, that it was too late for everything. Jan was empty inside, burnt out, unsure about anything."

[pp. 373–374]

This effective phrase “empty inside, burnt out, unsure about anything” explicitly referring to T.S. Elliot’s *The Hollowmen* (translated in Poland by Czesław Miłosz) pictures Jan’s emotional condition and his toxic relationship with Konstancja (permanent, constant – as this is the origin of this name).

Final solution

However, it is the next feature “twist” used in the epilogue that deserves the greatest attention – the authors opt for an exceptionally complex and risky measure, for they resign from a crime novel with elements of thriller in turn for occult horror – it occurs that accidents which concern the central character and signs sent by a mysterious murderer which prove his entanglement in his mother’s death that happened in unclear circumstances, are not accidental and they form the effect of a really untypical bet between Jan and commissioner Burnt – who turns out to be one of Satan’s incarnations. Insofar as this strategy is recognised in popular culture and appears mainly in the entertaining cinema²⁶, Dancewicz’s and Bukowski’s idea is not implemented in the way which would make the reader accept. The reader feels deceived somehow (which is against the rules of crime or detective novel²⁷), and attempts to rationally explain subsequent crimes and the inclusion of laboratory apparatus in searching for the criminal become the prosthesis of the deduction process of the protagonist and readers who, faced with unidentified murder’s actions which do not have any rational basis, are unable to understand and solve a final intrigue...

The novel has not been widely reviewed – it is cited in the context of “blockbuster series” promoted by TVN and (as already mentioned by the author) it

²⁶ Two well-known and acclaimed cinema stories can serve as an example here: *Angel Heart*, directed by A. Parker [1987] and *The Devil’s Advocate*, directed by T. Hackford [1997]. Both Hollywood movies show Lucifer as a modern businessman whose demonic lures the main hero who puts his life at stake. In the beginning, these actions are unconscious but they prove to be a consistent pursue of definitive choices. Such an arrangement of the good and bad one always leads to a tragic end which is symbolically expressed (Harry Angel – going downstairs in the lift which suggests a journey to the Hell, Kevin Lomax – “resetting” suicide of the central character and return to the beginning which means another temptation).

²⁷ See more: S. Lasić, *Poetyka powieści kryminalnej. Próba analizy strukturalnej*, translated by M. Petryńska, Warszawa 1976; a definition of crime novel outline based on classical texts (Callois, Martuszewska, Eco, Barańczak) was attempted by E. Mrowczyk-Hearfield in *Badania literatury kryminalnej – propozycja*, “Teksty Drugie”: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja, No. 6 (54) 1998, pp. 87–98: “Preliminarily, it might be therefore assumed that, as I think, crime literature would be work which places the issue of crime or, more generally speaking, an offence, and a way leading to solving the mystery behind that offence, at the core of its interest. It is literature that does not use criminal motifs solely as a pretext for developing other issues, though it also frequently touches upon (due to a peculiar subject) moral issues (nevertheless, these are always placed in the background, leaving the mystery at the forefront). This literature is not mythical or sacred in character (it does resolve problems of sin and punishment for sin), though it is concerned with the fight between good and evil. It is written with the use of the realistic method, and the straightforward formalization of plot and building a linear composition with leads running forward and backward constitute its distinguishing feature.”

serves the purpose of emphasising the viewer-expected “quality.” Turning to the series, it employs intrigue which appears in the novel only at the initial stage (presentation of realities and characters as well as establishing relations connecting them) so as to become a separate plot in episodes that follow.

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An Attempt at a Transmedia Novel (*The Longest Night* by M. Bukowski&M. Dancewicz)

Summary

The article is an analysis (a case study) of the Belle Epoque series - a TVN superproduction, which was the source of the book *The Longest Night*. Its authors are the screenwriters of the series. Such a publishing model places the series and novels in the catalog of transmedia activities, which were subjected to both textual and media analysis. Meticulous interpretations of selected episodes of the series and fragments of the book show the workshop of the authors, their media and book fascinations, and allow the reader to reflect on the low level of viewers' and readers' interest, and on the consequent decision to end the show after one season.

Keywords: series, transmedia genre, new media, AV culture