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STUDYING THE IMAGE-SYMBOL *LABYRINTH*: A MYSTERY? A POSSIBLE ROUTE? OR A TRIAL?

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Abstract: Grounded on the integrity of the linguosemiotic, cognitive linguistic, linguocultural, and narratological methods of the literary image research, the paper focuses on the ways of construing the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian novel "*The maze runner*" by James Dashner. Considering the multileveled structure of the *labyrinth*, the paper studies it at three textual vectors (verbal, conceptual, and symbolic) applying the theory of possible worlds.

Key words: image-symbol, possible worlds, anti-utopian novel, linguocultural approach, linguosemiotic aspect.

1. Introduction

The labyrinth is something that attracts by its sacredness, its powerfulness, and mysteriousness. Everybody at some point (in their life) can find themselves in a situation, which can be conceived of as the *labyrinth* and must complete the quest to find the way out of that situation. The unconventional and diverse nature of the

labyrinth activates a broad range of interpretations and implementations in various literary genres.

A *labyrinth* can be treated as a mystery, a secret route, a trial to be overcome, a set of challenges to be tackled. In this interpretation, the labyrinth correlates with the concept of MYSTERY (Knobloch 2003). Knobloch studies the ways of implementation of the mystery in the plot of detective stories looking at the etymology and semantics of lexemes, which provide some explicit or implicit characteristics to produce the concept of MYSTERY. Nevertheless, his inquiries are not merely concerned with the image or symbol *labyrinth,* though they give the insights on the main aspects of the concept of MYSTERY, which lies at the heart of interpretation of the image-symbol *labyrinth*.

Our research **aims** at a multidimensional study of the image-symbol of *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian novel "*The maze runner*". In this paper, we study extralinguistic and reveal linguistic factors, which influence the construing of the image-symbol *labyrinth* considering its mythological, folklore background and features of the genre of the novel "*The maze runner*", which is the anti-utopian one. The **tasks** of our paper are as follows: to analyse various interpretations of such notions as "image", "verbal image", and literary image"; to reveal the mythological and folklore backgrounds of the phenomenon of labyrinth for its further construing in the novel "*The maze runner*"; to work out an algorithm for construing the model of the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text.

2. Material and methods

The present study investigates the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the 21st century American anti-utopian literary text. The factual **material** of the research is the novel "*The maze runner*" written by contemporary American writer James Dashner. The story runs about fifty teenagers, who must find their way out of the *Maze* to survive after a catastrophe.

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The beginning of the 21st century is characterised by a swift change of ideas and mainstreams in the anti-utopian genre, its reinterpretation of the new world's values and ideologies. Anti-utopia is a genre that has been in the focus of literary scholars' attention for many decades (Kumar 1987). However, recently some state-of-the-art linguistic studies of anti-utopian texts have started to evolve. Some linguists and philologists such as Volkova (2017) and Shishkina (Шишкина 2007) investigate the structure and compositional aspects of various concepts' verbal representations, the choice of the syntactic constructions and language means, which are dominant in the image formation.

Paying our linguistic attention to the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian novel we apply the **methods** of linguosemiotic, cognitive linguistics, linguocultural, and narratological analyses. The **methodology** for the study of the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian novel is grounded on the integration of basic statements of linguosemiotics (Степанов 2004; Morris 1938; Peirce 1991; Volkova 2018), cognitive linguistics and linguoconceptology (Langacker 1991; Prihodko & Prykhodchenko 2018; Talmy 2000; Vorobyova 2017), linguoculturology (Panasenko 2020; Stashko 2017; Volkova 2018), cognitive poetics (Marina 2018; Stockwell 1992; Vorobyova & Lunyova 2020;), the theory of possible worlds (Eco 1978; Doležel 1998; Lewis 1986; Ryan 2006), and the theory of mythologically oriented semiosis (Колесник 2003; Kravchenko et al. 2021; Volkova 2016).

3. Understanding the notions of "verbal image", "symbol", and a "literary image"

The image-symbol *labyrinth* in the paper is studied as a complex syncretic system. What do we mean by that? When uttering the word of the *labyrinth*, one can imagine the object of the *labyrinth* first. Certain graphical associations of this image come to the mind when the labyrinth is conceived of as some space to pass through. One may think about it as a form of some sets of circles curling like a spiral; one may associate

it with a square which consists of some "rooms", where each next room starts from the point where the previous one ends, and so on so forth.

Based on the material of our investigation, the text by James Dashner *"The maze runner"*, we study the *labyrinth* from different perspectives. We are interested not only in the meaning of *labyrinth* as such as defined in the dictionary, but we study it as an image, which has mythological and social backgrounds. The points of our linguistic interest are as follows: What is *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text? What images does it conjure up? If it is a symbol, what does it symbolize? What are the ways of conceptualizing this symbol in the text?

The theoretical studying of the notion "image" starts from the ancient world. It is originated from the Greek word "eidos", which was used by ancient philosophers to state the form of interpreting and exploring the world by humans (Філософський енциклопедичний словник 2002). Plato associates "image" with the term "idea", where the former is understood as some incorporeal entity, which exists prior to a physical thing and independently of it (Kraut 2017). Ideas or images according to philosopher's view precede all real physical objects and can be perceived by mind rather than senses (Філософський енциклопедичний словник 2002). German philosopher Humboldt (2000) proclaims that words, which are used as signs of objects, create not only the images of corresponding objects but keep their implicit relations with one another. English philosopher Russell (1993) notices that images are necessary to explain the words that do not correspond to any physical objects.

In linguistic terms, "image" is treated as the verbal image, which can be of two types – a language image and a speech image. Based on the theory of verbal image developed by Belekhova, the verbal image is classified as a way of organizing the language canvas of every poetic text, where some knowledge structures of the world acquire certain physical characteristics (Бєлєхова 2002). The verbal image is a segment of a speech act where a word or collocation bears some abstract information, and its final sense

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does not equal the individual meanings of its constituents. The verbal image is a tool to create a unique structure of a poetic text, in which some predetermined world knowledge obtains its specific physical shape (Горчак 2009).

Verbal signs always convey some specific image in the text, which in turn creates the symbolic connotation of this image, the so-called verbal symbol. The verbal symbol is a consistent associative set that exists in people's consciousness and carries a range of semes, which are culturally, stereotypically, and archetypically determined; in other words, they bear some ancient mythological origin (ibid.).

The image-symbol is an implicative, macro contextual, and dynamic verbal image, which is characterised by a duality of references and the domination of a derivative meaning over a denotational one (Нестеров 2002). The duality of references means that the name of a verbal image-symbol correlates at the same time with a certain object in the extralinguistic reality, which is qualitatively different from the construct in a person's consciousness and based on the context and personal interpretation of this name.

The symbol is an essential part of peoples' language worldview; some researchers even consider it to be a sign representation of the ethnic mindset. Based on the definition provided by Shelestiuk we understand the symbol as a sign, which transcends its original meaning and becomes more abstract and general (Шелестюк 1997). The researcher also states that symbols are nationally specified and rooted in the collective psyche, as their configuration dwells on the shared experience, which has been accumulated by successive generations (ibid.). Symbols belong to both language and speech because they transmit some abstract 'aura', which originally exists in the activation of the word and can further lead to the activation of two and more symbolic senses depending on the context where they activated. The relation between a symbol and an input word can be of different types such as comparison, opposition, and causality (Потебня 2000).

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Some scholars study the symbol from the perspective of a three-layer structure that consists of an image, a sign, and a symbol. Firstly, the image denotes the relevant object, which exists in people's knowledge system and experience. Further, the sign points to a set of images, which define its interpretation. Eventually, the symbol facilitates a particular field of abstract notions that revolve beyond a connotative meaning of the given sign in the immediate moment and context (Алефиренко 2009).

As is seen from the above explanations of the notion 'symbol', it should always be grounded in some distinctive image or correlation of images. The symbol of labyrinth incorporates a range of interrelated images and facets that evolve into a unique but worldwide renowned symbol. In turn, the range of images that lie at the heart of the labyrinth are grounded in some verbal signs, and indeed the sign can be considered as the minimal feature that triggers the development of some higher-level formations as symbols and images. These advanced formations strive to represent a synergy between a person and their environment, experience, and subjective perception of the surrounding world. From a linguosemiotic perspective, the image is a product of mapping real or abstract objects by means of verbal signs. From the standpoint of linguosemiotics, people's shared worldview is a result of accumulating some information about the world that is accompanied by signs production and an evolution of their meanings and discursive senses (Лотман 1992). The collaborative nature of the sign displays its relations between reasoning, culture, language, and speech (Лотман 1996). Volkova (2018: 449) shares quite a similar view on the notion of symbol focusing her attention on the ethnocultural symbols in Amerindian texts. She studies the syntactic imagery representation that correlates with the construction of higher symbolic meanings.

Images and symbolic meaning and function are always in the focus of linguists. For example, Stashko (2017) in her stylistic analysis of female images in American song folklore examines how symbolic language elements contribute to the construction of verbal images. Panasenko (2020) in her study of the novels by Iris Murdoch

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demonstrates how focal and subsidiary colours influence the plot development and text perception, how they weave into the texture of a work of fiction, creating rich images and characters. With such a focus of the novel analysis she concludes that "analyzing female and male characters, who may be antagonists or protagonists, considering moral aspects of the novels describing the battle between the good and the evil, we must always bear in mind symbolic meaning of colours typical of different cultures" (Panasenko 2020: 188). Through the prism of intermediality Vorobyova and Lunyova (2020) study the relation between a word and an image examining John Berger's views on writing about art.

Summarizing various approaches to understanding the terms a *verbal image*, a *symbol*, and a *literary image*, we treat the *labyrinth* as a literary image-symbol and analyse it in the anti-utopian novel as a sophisticated advanced formation that is produced at three distinctive textual levels.

4. Results and discussion

The research results prove that the image-symbol *labyrinth* is a complex construct, which has mythological, folklore intertextual components in combination with those given to it by the author of the anti-utopian text. All these influence its content and make it possible to model it as a product of multi-levelled structure. In this section the image-symbol *labyrinth* is investigated regarding its mythological, folklore, and anti-utopian features considered together.

4.1 Construing the image-symbol labyrinth in the "The maze runner"

"*The maze runner*" is a story of survival, where a group of 50 teenagers try to escape from a sophisticated and doomed construction called the *Maze*. *Thomas* is the protagonist of the story who seems to know something more than others. He is the key to passing the *Maze* and can navigate quite fast through the spirals and meanders of this formation as we can read it in the fragment from the text:

(1) "*I don't have a clue what I did before they shipped me here in that metal box, but my gut tells me that being a Runner is what I'm supposed to do. I can do it*" ("*The maze runner*", p. 99).

In fact, only the *Runners* are mature enough to go through the *Maze* and come back to the safe place, the *Glade*, and they are the only who can find the solution to the *Maze*.

Starting from the outer layer of the text, the image-symbol *labyrinth* is created by the verbal signs that carry some factual, denotative information; at this point we merge two theories – the way of construing the verbal image and the first stratum of executing an image-symbol. At the next step the image-symbol *labyrinth* is transmitted through some distinctive image; in our case, this image is the labyrinth itself. At this phase, the verbal signs are rethought and acquire a deeper meaning based on the context where they function. The last stratum of the image-symbol *labyrinth* is the symbol itself. The symbol *labyrinth* is not a physical object as it can occur at the image layer; it is an advanced formation that carries an abstract idea and reader's implications. During the symbol construction, the reader reinterprets the obtained image from a cultural perspective and personal experience. At this phase, the image-symbol *labyrinth* facilitates its universal meanings, which are intrinsic to each culture and ethnic group; it also gathers some connotations based on people's experiences and worldviews. We need to take into consideration the author's general background and the narrative genre, which influence the development of the image-symbol *labyrinth*. Figure 1 represents the schematic algorithm for construing the image-symbol *labyrinth*:

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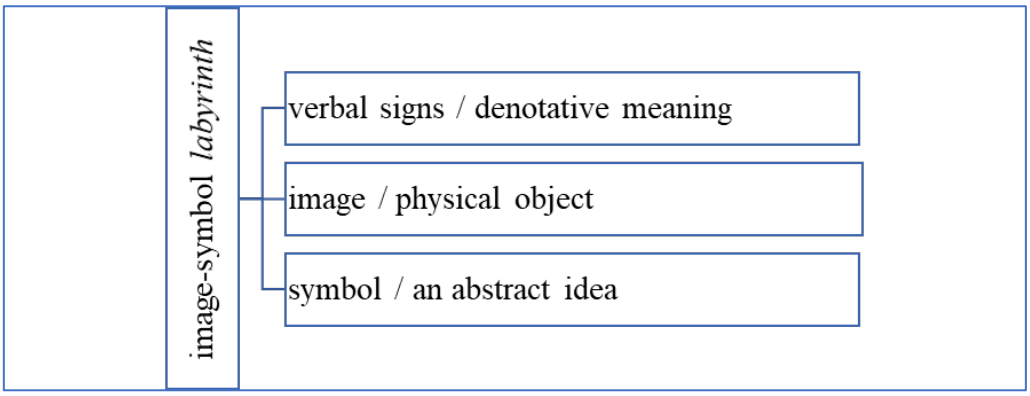

Figure 1. The schematic algorithm for construing the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text (Own processing)

The outlined levels of the image-symbol *labyrinth* are fundamental points, in which each stratum further incorporates some distinctive features borrowed from a myth or a fairytale, which construct the whole possible universe of the anti-utopian text.

4.2 Mythological and folklore features of the anti-utopian image-symbol labyrinth

The image-symbol *labyrinth* in modern anti-utopian texts appears as some mosaic, checkered construction that integrates a range of quotes, allusions, and reminiscences of mythological texts and fairy tales. To comprehend their value and relations at each step of forming the image-symbol *labyrinth,* we need to underline the difference between two main categories: a myth and a fairytale.

The study of a myth and sacred tales was initiated by anthropologists, such as Levi-Strauss, Malinowski, and others in the 20th century (Levi-Strauss 1962; Malinowski 1984). Levi-Strauss (1962) led to the new notion of myth as a model. The scholar shifted attention from the diachronic approach developed by Malinowski to the synchronic framework, attempting to relate the paradigms he discovered to cosmology and worldview (ibid). Prior to anthropologists, some philosophers tried to explore the roots and meanings of myths. Malinowski argued that even if the content of the myth does not correspond to reality, the imaginative plot of a narrative builds a cultural potential of some ethnic group (poetic, imaginative, logical, and aesthetic). Hume considered that at the heart of a myth lie people's fears and hopes (The Oxford

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handbook of Hume 2016). Taylor (2003) and Spencer (1991) supposed that a myth is a substitution of scientific facts and logic by falsified beliefs about natural phenomena; the myth is a people's endeavour to cogently explain some vague and incomprehensible phenomena. The well-known psychiatrist Freud (1919) in one of his works defined a myth as a reflection of emotions, experience, and personal feelings, which are governed by psychological and ethical social rules.

For the sake of this inquiry, we focus on the study by anthropologist Malinowski. The scientist was one of the first who gave the rigorous distinction between such notions as the myth and fairytale. Following the definition provided by Malinowski, the myth is not a symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject-matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. The myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency or ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. The myth thus is a vital ingredient of human life; it is not an idle tale but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom (1984: 199).

In the anti-utopian narrative, the myth functions as a primitive, initial, objective reality, where characters exist, and the main action takes place. For the protagonist, *Thomas*, and other 50 teenagers *the Maze* is a place to live, it has rules and rituals to follow, beliefs that are shared and common to natives residing there. At this point, the myth is incorporated at the image level into the image-symbol *labyrinth* model.

The myth as a source of perception and comprehension of the world is usually supplemented by some fantastic narratives. These stories form the bulk of fairytales, which are passed down from generation to generation. The fairytale alters its interpretation depending on the environment, historical shifts, and general

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development of humankind. The fairytales can be regarded as a kind of prism that transmits people's attitudes, desires, and values, which are produced by epoch. The tale and the narrator appear as ancient carriers of human experience and life-wisdom about social postulates and spiritual practices. They use engaging performances and a plot full of suspense and tension (decision-making, riddles, and wonders). One of the most famous and still exploited works on fairytales is "Morphology of the folktale" by Propp (2011) who looks at the discomposure of some famous fairytales into the most basic components. These constituents form a series of functions performed by the protagonist in a particular predetermined order. Even though some fairytales may lack components in their plot, typically the order of the functions usually remains the same. Propp describes the function as an event or an action (ibid., 25-66).

Tales in the anti-utopian narrative are guidelines for inhabitants to adhere to. The anthropologist Malinowski states that tales live in the memory of man, in the way, in which they are told, and even more in the complex interest, which keeps them alive, which makes the narrator recite with pride or regret, which makes the listener follow eagerly, wistfully, with hopes and ambitions roused. Thus, the essence of a fairytale is not to be found in a mere perusal of the story, but in the combined study of the narrative and its context in the social and cultural life of the natives (1984: 203).

Zinkevich-Evstigneeva elaborates on the theory that each fairytale synchronizes three realities:

1. The reality of common human values such as truth, creativity, cooperation, faith, and dignity. This reality is conceived through the aesthetic education whose main aim is to raise a versatile, artistic individual, who carries proper moral values, great intellectual abilities, and a strong will.
2. The social reality. It is grounded on relation between biological (intrinsic individual abilities) and moral (a priori social). Socialization aims at expanding moral principles

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over biological ones. The process of socializing implies moral upbringing, acquiring communicative competence, and interactive flexibility.

3. The subjective reality. This reality is also called a self-identity, where some I-concepts are formed. The subjective reality cannot function without common human values (Зинкевич-Евстигнеева 2007: 84).

These realities form one structured universe that can be transmitted into the anti-utopian narrative in the form of allusions and reminiscences. Fairytales themselves are already sophisticated structured models that differ from the image-symbol in the way that they are represented through some verbal sign system that postulates each mentioned above reality. The anti-utopian text itself is an action that strives to reveal the consequences humankind may suffer in the future following the path we are choosing at present. The function of fairytales in this context is to remind people of the timeless shared values that existed many centuries ago and continue to lead us in the present reality. That is why in our model of the image-symbol *labyrinth* fairytales reside at the level of image, where they merge with the myth, and at the level of symbol, where they trigger some abstract arcane ideas, which are universal for every culture.

Integrating the identified features of the myth and fairytale into the general model of the image-symbol *labyrinth* we obtain such a schema (Fig. 2):

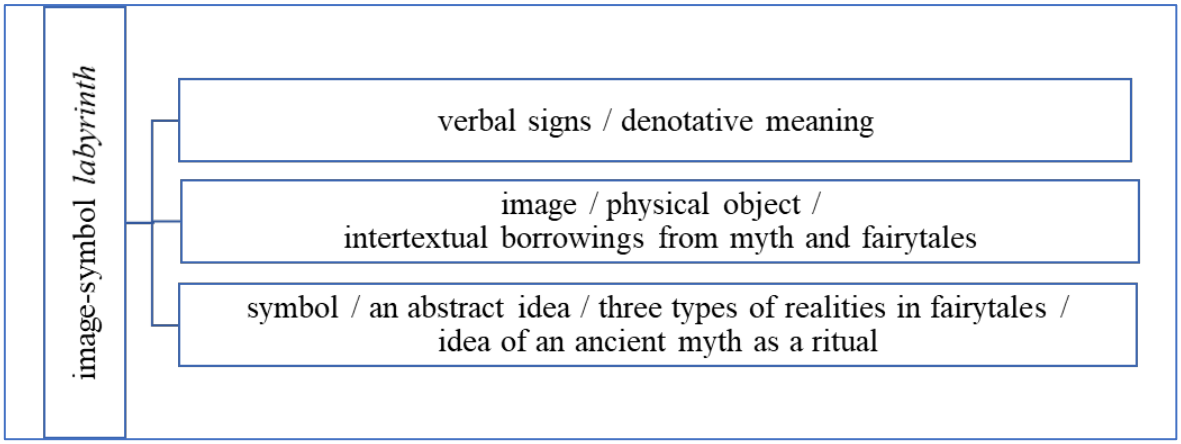

Figure 2. The schematic model of construing the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text (Own processing)

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Zinkevich-Evstigneeva names three levels of fairytales disclosure as 'realities' that can be perceived by the reader through interpretation and analysis (Зинкевич-Евстигнеева 2007). These realities can be further studied through the broader and holistic theory of possible worlds developed by Ryan (2006).

4.3 The construing of the image-symbol labyrinth in the focus of the theory of possible worlds

The anti-utopian novel "*The maze runner*" is a unique universe revolving around the image-symbol *labyrinth* that in its turn resides on three levels: the stratum of verbal signs, the image, and the symbol. The image and symbol can be presented through some epistemic possible worlds, which are facilitated by the intertextual integration of myths and fairytales. In this part of the research, we will delve into the verbal configurations of the image-symbol *labyrinth* that reveal subsidiary possible worlds of myths and tales.

One of the world's renowned mathematicians Leibniz (1985) stated that God can create infinitely many universes, but he chose to create ours and as God is always good, then our universe is the best of all possible. We will not debate in this article whether our universe is the best or not, but Leibniz postulated one of the greatest theories that is currently being investigated in mathematics, logic, physics, and linguistics – the theory of possible worlds. Firstly, logicians after many decades turned their attention back to Leibniz's idea. Hintikka (2010) and Lewis (1986) established their models based on the mathematical logic, which we can now observe in studies of artificial intelligence and formal semantics. Further possible worlds theory was adapted to the fictional worlds of narrative by Doležel (1998), Eco (2014), Ronen (1994), Ryan (2006), and others.

The fundamentals of the theory of possible worlds find their applying in modern Ukrainian philological studies. For instance, Ivanenko (Іваненко 2010) looks at the implementation of possible worlds in the intellectual novel by Iain Banks. Some

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applied aspects of possible worlds were designed by Ukrainian scholars Kahanovska (Кагановська 2002) and Savchuk (2018).

The main postulate of the theory declares that textual reality is a distinct universe that consists of various elements. This universe functions according to the established hierarchy: an arduous element, around which other constituents revolve, rests in the centre. This main element corresponds to the real world and, according to the theory, is called the actual world. Every entity that exists beyond the actual world belongs to some possible world (Ronen 1994). The boundary between the actual and possible world, according to Ryan (2006), depends on the value of accessibility that can be inferred from the interpretation. Ryan considers the possible worlds to be philosophical and narrative ones. Her reason is that if the relation between the philosophical concept of the possible world and narrative worlds turns out to be a metaphorical transfer, the narratological applications of the possible world theory will not be invalidated, for the value of the concept of the possible world for narratology depends not on a literal application, but on whether or not "specific features of fictional worlds can be identified only against the background of this model frame" (2014: 740).

One of the first linguists who adopted the theory of possible worlds into his scientific inquiry was Doležel (1988). The researcher studied a narrative world not as a means of simulating the reality, but as a holistic ontological unit that exists on its own and is in any sense possible. The access to this world is gained by the reader through the verbal signs written previously by the author. The linguist calls the narrative produced by the author as "the set of instructions" (ibid., 30) for the reader, according to which they reconstruct this possible world. The textual world for Doležel is autonomous, but ontologically incomplete, i.e. this world is characterised by certain gaps. Some of these gaps are temporary and later are filled by the author, for example, in detective stories the reader always finds out who the murder is at the end of the story. However, some of these gaps can remain blank permanently.

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Eco (1978) considers the possible world to be the world of people's dreams, imaginations, and desires, highlighting that not every text presupposes the construction of a possible world. Some stories provide direct access to the actual world. Eco regards the semantic field of the narrative as a universe that incorporates a range of possible worlds. He names the fictional narrative as "the tool for manufacturing possible worlds", which carry four distinctive characteristics: 1) possible world is the probable state of objects, which is constructed according to propositional logic and possesses such parameters as p or ~p; 2) it describes a number of individuals together with their characteristics; 3) as some of the characteristics maintained by the characters or some parameters are actions, that is why the possible world is itself the probable course of events; 4) considering that this course of events is not actual, it must be determined and governed by someone, in other words, possible worlds are the worlds in which people put their trust, that are dreamt about, imagined, and desired (ibid., 5-72). Eco assures us that the reader's observations form such effects as suspense, commitment, and curiosity, as well as cause deceptive assumptions.

Grounded on the work developed by Eco on the tools for manufacturing the possible worlds in the fictional texts, Ryan (2001) formulates her own system of narrative worlds. The level of a story where the author describes extralinguistic, objective physical is called "the possible actual world" or "the textual actual world" as an analogy to the actual world (ibid., 57). The textual actual world becomes an ontological centre that gives rise to the characters' worlds. They accumulate some knowledge acquired from the textual actual world and are called the knowledge world. The accumulated knowledge and experience may contain some gaps, restrictions, and vagueness, but from the perspective of each of the characters, this knowledge world appears to be the only true and complete one. The worlds of character's desires, obligations, and character's fantasies can also bare a distinctive meaning in the worlds' canvas (2014).

In our study, we distinguish one more relevant and salient world that can be found in the knowledge world of each character; this is the world of memories. The *Maze* in the

novel appears as a complex, extraordinary construction that possesses the textual possible world as an ontological centre, which integrates the epistemic knowledge worlds of characters and some creatures existing in the fictional space of the *labyrinth*. The knowledge worlds are themselves multidimensional; that is, they are composed of worlds of wishes, fantasies, obligations, memories, and many components. The interaction of these worlds forges the complete interpretation of the image-symbol *labyrinth.*

To build a thorough model of the image-symbol *labyrinth,* we should integrate the theory of possible worlds into three levels of the image-symbol activation defined above. The textual actual possible world lies in the centre of the narrative universe; that is why it is created at the very beginning of the story. The textual actual world exploits some plotlines and motifs intrinsic to the myth. It facilitates the objective image of the *Maze* and its constituents. The textual actual world is a dynamic system, which updates its propositions based on the actions carried through the story. It can be amended through the characters' knowledge worlds; that is why relations between the textual actual world and knowledge worlds are direct correlations where the alteration of information in one world directly updates the knowledge base of the ontological centre. As can be seen further in Figure 3, the main knowledge worlds of the protagonists of the story interrelate with the main textual actual world. The allusions to fairytales can be regarded as separate possible worlds, which are integrated into the story to serve as guidelines and ancient wisdom, which evoke some abstract ideas and associations, which are essential for symbol's formation.

So, the image-symbol *labyrinth* can be presented as a universe with the distinctive worlds and their interrelations:

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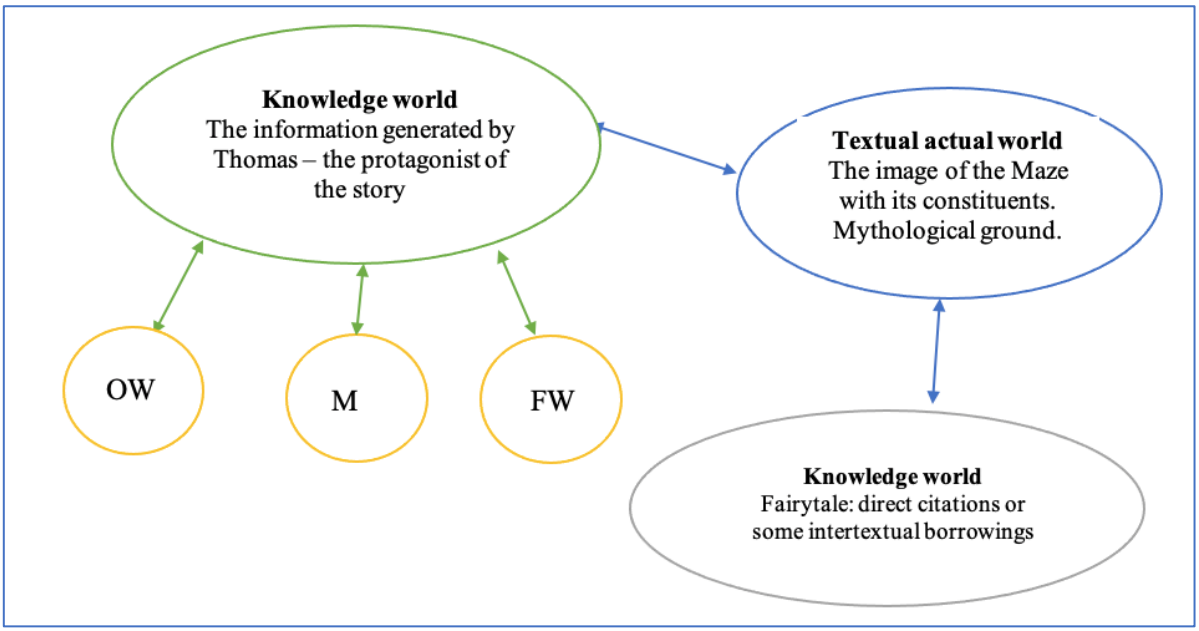

Figure 3. The integrated model of possible worlds in construing the image-symbol *labyrinth* (Own processing)

The presented worlds are just the schematic outlines of a greater structure that appears while reading the text. This research focuses mainly on the worlds and their features that are relevant to the image-symbol *labyrinth*; that is why we take into consideration such worlds as: the textual actual world, fairytales knowledge worlds, and some information from the characters' knowledge worlds.

4.4 Mythological intertextual elements as components of the image-symbol labyrinth

The textual actual world of the anti-utopian text *"The maze runner"* resets on the allusions and intertextual borrowings from the plot and ideas of some ancient myths about the labyrinth. Following Kofman's definition, every labyrinth has its centre, the ground zero where the development of the main plot line starts and is considered by ancients to be the sacred place that maintains a range of unique features (Кофман 1997). As the anthropologist Malinowski (1984) stated, myths are closely connected with the religious practices and allude to the tribal rituals and beliefs.

The *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text "*The maze runner*" dwells on two prominent myths: the myth about the Minotaur, which is a part of the world literary heritage, and

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the arcane description of a ritual that represents resurrection, transcending from one state or world into another.

Studying the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the novel "*The maze runner*" as some arcane ritual, we are highlighting such characteristics of the *labyrinth* as:
1. It should have the state of initiation.
2. It should provide some trials and challenges.
3. It should always have an exit.
4. Sometimes it may lead to death and resurrection.

The initial state of the textual *Maze* is the *Box*. In the novel "*The maze runner*" it is described as "*an old lift in a mine shaft*". Based on the following explanation, it can be inferred that the Box is a state of initiation:
(2) "*He began his new life standing up, surrounded by cold darkness and stale, dusty air*" ("*The maze runner*", p. 1).

In this fragment, *new life* stands for the ground zero, and launches the process of construing a character's knowledge world and the textual actual world based on the environment where he exists now. An extra feature that we can observe in the anti-utopian image of the *labyrinth* is that the protagonist has no prior personal memories but possesses the wisdom and knowledge obtained from the experience of his ancestors. He is the transmitter of a universal intelligence and common sense.

Considering that the myth also governs the formation of the main textual image of the *labyrinth*, we observe the general description of the *Maze*:
(3) "*In front of him, through the East Door, he could make out passages leading to the left, to the right, and straight ahead. And the walls of the corridors were similar to those that surrounded the Glade, the ground made of the same massive stone blocks as in the courtyard. The ivy seemed even thicker out there. In the distance, more breaks*

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in the walls led to other paths, and farther down, maybe a hundred meters or so away, the straight passage came to a dead end" ("*The maze runner*", p. 1).

The *Glade* mentioned in the given above fragment is the place where the protagonist and his fellows live. It surrounds the *Box* and gives access to the *Doors* leading to the *Maze*. As one can see, the textual *labyrinth* does not resemble the common picture of that in myths and fairytales. The anti-utopian *labyrinth* is not a curvy passage that leads to some dead ends or an exit; the textual *Maze* is a highly complex and sophisticated system governed by someone else and aimed at unleashing people's abilities and potentials:

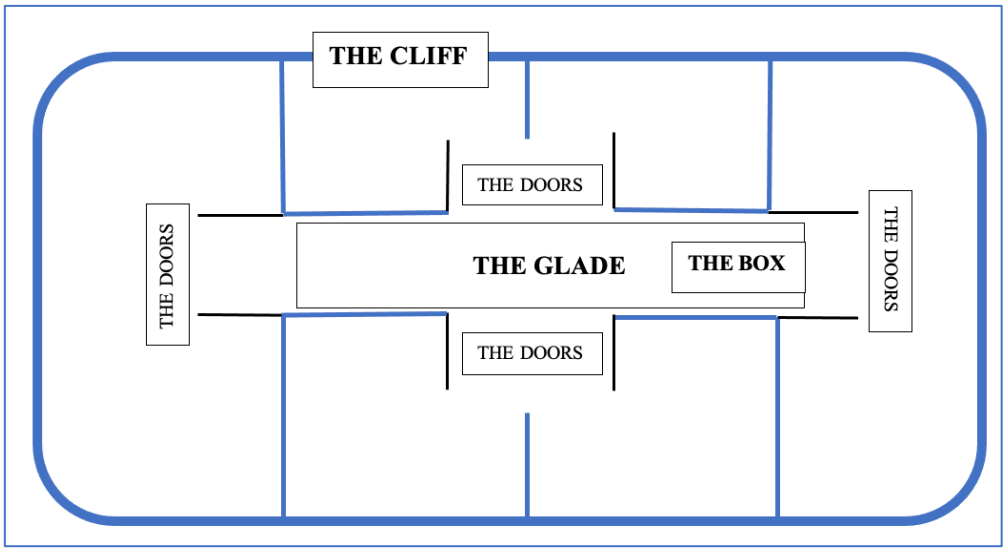

Figure 4. The scheme of the Maze (Own processing)

The anti-utopian *labyrinth* bears more resemblance to a jigsaw puzzle that must be solved rather than an ancient *labyrinth* that must be gone through without much mental effort:

(4) "*So we have the Glade, surrounded by eight Sections, each one a completely self-contained square and unsolvable in the two years since we began this freaking game. The only thing even approaching an exit is the Cliff, and that ain't a very good one unless you like falling to a horrible death. … The walls move all over the shuck place every evening – same time as our Doors close shut. At the least, we think that's when,*

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because we never really hear walls moving any other time" *("The maze runner",* p. 204*).*

The third parameter that should be considered in construing the image-symbol *labyrinth* is the presence of the exit. As the textual *Maze* can be treated as a game or a jigsaw aimed to trick and confuse its inhabitants. The exit is the hardest thing to find. Nevertheless, the only object that maintains the immanent characteristics of an exit is the *Cliff*:

(5) "*The corridor didn't end in another stone wall. It ended in blackness. He could see the stars. As they got closer, he finally realized that it was an opening – the Maze ended. <...> They had indeed reached a way out of the Maze <... >All Thomas could see in every direction, up and down, side to side, was empty air and fading stars. It was a strange and unsettling sight, like he was standing at the edge if the universe <...> It was like somebody had built the Maze and then set it afloat in the sky to hover there in the middle of nothing for the rest of eternity. Careful, you wouldn't be the first shank to fall off the Cliff*" ("*The maze runner*", p. 134).

From the example given above, we can see the description of the *Cliff* adds some more additional connotations to the image-symbol *labyrinth*. It is considered now as the point of death and rebirth, unexplored and frightening like the concept of life after death.

The last feature of the *labyrinth* that we have revealed in the anti-utopian text at the levels of textual actual world and knowledge worlds are trials and challenges, which should be overcome by the story characters. At this point, we shift our attention from the ancient arcane myth to one of the most recognizable myths – the myth about the Minotaur.

The myth runs that the Minotaur was the son of Pasiphae, the wife of King Minos of Crete. Queen Pasiphae slept with a bull sent by Zeus, and gave birth to Minotaur, a

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creature half man-half bull. King Minos was embarrassed, but did not want to kill the Minotaur, so he hid the monster in the *Labyrinth* constructed by Daedalus at the Minoan Palace of Knossos. Son of Minos, Androgeus, went to Athens to participate in the Panathenaic Games, but he was killed during the Marathon by the bull that impregnated his mother Pasiphae. Minos was infuriated, and demanded Aegeus, the king of Athens, send seven men and women every year to the Minotaur to advert the plague caused by the death of Androgeus. In the third year, Theseus, son of Aegeus decided to be one of the seven young men that would go to Crete, to kill the Minotaur and end the human sacrifices to the monster. Theseus was the one who killed the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne's thread he managed to find his way back ("*The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur*", *s.a.*).

The first similarity that may attract the reader's attention is the resemblance of the leading names *Theseus – Thomas*. The central beast of the story – the *Minotaur* – transforms into the metallic spider-like creatures with poisonous needles – the *Grievers*. In the novel "*The maze runner*" like in the myth of "Theseus and the Minotaur" every month the *Maze* welcomes one newcomer:
(6) "*They put us in the Box and sent us up here – a big group to start and then one a month over the last two years*" ("*The maze runner* ", p. 172).

The *Grievers* trigger the main action and force the characters to take moves and make decisions. These creatures carry poisonous needles and if a character gets stung by one of them, he or she goes through the process called the *Changing,* which resembles a resurrection, and those who can live through it partially restore their memories.

The Changing and *the Grievers* can be considered as the separate knowledge worlds in the narrative universe. They play an essential role for the knowledge ground of the textual actual world and have the valuable impact on the characters' knowledge worlds.

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The intertextual borrowing from the myth about the Minotaur is also present at the beginning of the story and overlaps with the primordial ritual described before:
(7) "***Once a month***, *we get a Newbie like you, never fails.* ***Once a week****, we get supplies, clothes, some food*" (*"The maze runner",* p. 42).

From the fragment above, we may realise that sometimes the boundary between the myth and the fairy-tale blurs and they merge with each other taking the idea of the newcomers from the myth and the manner of the narration from the intrinsic characteristics immanent in fairy-tales (*once a month, once a week*).

Over the centuries, The Bible has become the book of wisdom and prophecy. It prescribes the rules to follow and warns humanity about consequences that will be faced on the doomsday. The image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian texts acquires new connotations; it transforms its initial meaning of a primeval ritual and a road of epiphany into the way of transformation and a new evolution. The *Maze* serves as an intermediate point between old rules and a newborn reality.

In the Old Testament, humankind evolved from Adam and Eve, a woman who committed the greatest sin trying to grasp the forbidden knowledge. Rethinking the symbolic idea of this action, Dashner places the only girl in the *Maze* full of teenage boys, linking her to the protagonist. Teresa and Thomas, like Adam and Eve, are the only people who possess the greatest wisdom and power to cope with the *Maze*. The allusion to the biblical plot is directly highlighted in the text:
(8) "*It's a girl… She spoke one sentence – her voice hollow and haunted, but clear. Everything is going to change. Clutched in her hand was a wadded piece of paper. Scrawled across the paper in thick black letters were five words: She's the last one. Ever*" *("The maze runner"*, p. 56);
(9) "*Any signs of a crazed girl bearing the notes of doom…*" ("*The maze runner*", p. 63).

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The biblical story is integrated into the narrative worlds' structure at the level of textual actual world. It produces the knowledge world of a girl and updates the information generated by the protagonist as well as the knowledge worlds of the other characters. The motifs of the Bible reinforce the image-symbol *labyrinth* interpretation and underlines another perspective of its explanation.

Fairytales are separate, distinct worlds that occur at a higher level of the image-symbol construction. In the anti-utopian texts, they represent a person's primeval and intrinsic knowledge and wisdom. As a protagonist in a fairytale, Thomas is described by the same common categories that each hero should possess:
(10) "*To survive the buggin' Maze, you gotta be smart, quick, strong. Gotta be a decision maker, know the right amount of risk to take. Can't be reckless, can't be timid, either*" *("The maze runner",* p. 98).

As we have noticed before, some verbal structures can merge certain characteristics from the myth and the fairytale. That updates the symbolic understanding of the *Maze* as a construction that can be objectively observed in reality and can be easily faced by every human being and as an abstract idea, a primordial entity that is comprised of three realities immanent in the fairytale.

The direct allusions to the well-known fairytales underline the versatility of the image-symbol *labyrinth* rethinking through the anti-utopian canons. For example, one of the characters tells the fairytale about Hansel and Gretel:
(11) "*As he did so, he pulled one of his knives from a pocket and, without missing a beat, cut a big piece of ivy off the wall. He threw it on the ground behind him and kept running. "Bread crumbs?", Thomas asked, the old fairy tale popping into his mind. "Bread crumbs," Minho replied. "I'm Hansel, you're Gretel*" *("The maze runner*", p. 209).

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Instead of the *breadcrumbs,* boys use the *ivy leaves* to mark their way back. So, the ivy leaves serve here as symbol of returning. It is well known in medicine and science that ivy had a great deal of significance in ancient times. It was a symbol of fidelity in ancient Greece and was associated with the Roman god of revelry and good times. The ivy leaf is widely used in medicine due to its tolerability and medicinal properties (Noveille 2015).

Another narrative is retold by the character Minho:
(12) "*At dinner Minho had told him an old story – one of the bizarre and random things he remembered from before – about a woman trapped in a Maze. She escaped by never taking her right hand off the walls of the Maze, sliding it along as she walked. I am doing so, she was forced to turn right at every turn, and the simple laws of physics and geometry ensured that eventually she found the exit. It made sense*" ("*The maze runner*", p. 198).

This summary gives some clues how to navigate through the *labyrinth* (the *Maze* in the text). It highlights the common principles of physics and geometry, which should be understood by every educated person who muses upon the sense of the *labyrinth*.

Considering the examples and explanations provided for the textual actual world and some knowledge worlds of the characters, we may state that myths and fairy tales comprise a vast layer of the image-symbol *labyrinth* construction. They form the image representation at the textual actual world level of the narrative and trigger the interpretation of the hidden meanings and senses adopted from common ideas and beliefs encoded into sacred texts of myths and tales.

5. Conclusions

The given analysis of the criteria and factors influencing the process of interpreting and construing the image-symbol in anti-utopian texts makes us think of the image-symbol *labyrinth* as such a complex construct, which may be studied from multiple

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perspectives considering its mythological, folklore, philosophical, scientific, and literary features.

The fact that the *labyrinth* as a complex phenomenon incorporates a range of interrelated images and facets, which evolve into a unique, but world known symbol, predetermined our applying the set of methods, such as linguosemiotic, cognitive linguistics, linguocultural, and theories, such as the theory of possible worlds, narrative genres, and mythologically oriented semiosis. The paper considers the image-symbol *labyrinth* to be a multilevel linguotextual construct, whose mythological, psychological, sociological, folklore, and narrative elements are taken into account.

The research focuses on the possible worlds and their features, which are relevant to the image-symbol *labyrinth*. So, the paper presents the integrated model of the image-symbol *labyrinth*, which is based upon the incorporation of different worlds in the anti-utopian text "*The maze runner*", such as the textual actual world, fairytales knowledge worlds, and characters' knowledge worlds.

So, we concluded that the *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text "*The maze runner*" dwells on two prominent myths: the myth about the Minotaur that is a part of the world's literary heritage, and the arcane description of a ritual, which depicts resurrection, transcending from one state or world into another. It means that the *labyrinth* acquires new connotations; the *Maze* transforms its initial meaning of a primeval ritual and a road of epiphany into the way of transformation and a new evolution. In a way, the *Maze* (the verbal image of the *labyrinth* as image-symbol) serves as an intermediate point between old rules and a newborn reality, in which characters of the novel found themselves. Sometimes the boundary between the myth and the fairy-tale blurs, and they merge with each other taking the idea of the newcomers from the myth and the manner of the narration from the intrinsic characteristics immanent in the myths and fairy-tales.

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To sum up, the scheme of the *Maze* given in the paper illustrates that the textual *labyrinth* does not resemble the common image of that in myths and fairytales. The anti-utopian *labyrinth* is not a curvy passage that leads to some dead ends or an exit; the textual *Maze* is a highly complex and sophisticated system governed by someone else and aimed at unleashing people's abilities and potentials. Though the construing of the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text is performed by means of different lexicostylistic means, such as metaphors, allusions, intertextual elements, one cannot state exactly if the *labyrinth* is a mystery, a possible route, or a trial.

Abbreviations

FW –fairytale world

M – myth

OW – ontological world

PW – possible world

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Résumé

The *labyrinth* is an ancient complex cognitive structure that remains popular even nowadays. Its curves and meanders inspired many generations of authors to use the image of *labyrinth* as a background for their narratives. The image-symbol *labyrinth* has become especially popular among sci-fi writers and further – antiutopian authors. The structure of texts, which use the image-symbol *labyrinth* as their main narrative space, is complex and sophisticated. In this paper we study extralinguistic and reveal linguistic factors, which influence the construing of the image-symbol *labyrinth* considering its mythological, folklore background and features of the genre of the novel "*The maze runner"*, which is an anti-utopian one. The image-symbol *labyrinth* in the current study is analysed as a complex syncretic system that rests on three levels: verbal signs, which carry some denotative meanings; the image, which depicts some physical labyrinth, and the symbol, which evokes some abstract ideas. The outlined

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levels of the image-symbol *labyrinth* are fundamental points, where each stratum further incorporates some distinctive features taken from a myth or a fairytale, which construct the whole possible universe of the anti-utopian text. In order to define more precisely the possible universe of the text, we focus on the theory of possible worlds, which gives the ability to structure the textual actual possible world unfolding on the basis of the intertextual integration of some myths; we also define some other knowledge worlds, which stand for the well-known fairy-tales that are incorporated explicitly in the textual canvas. The construing of the image-symbol *labyrinth* in the anti-utopian text is performed by means of different lexico-stylistic means, such as metaphors, allusions, intertextual elements; one cannot state exactly if the *labyrinth* is a mystery, a secret route, or a trial.

Key words: image-symbol, possible worlds, anti-utopian novel, linguocultural approach, linguosemiotic aspect.

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