

Female young adult dystopia becoming a contemporary “Bildungsroman” on the example of the “Slated” series by Teri Terry (2012–2014)¹

Feministyczna dystopia dla młodzieży jako współczesna wersja „Bildungsroman” na przykładzie powieści „Slated” autorstwa Teri Terry (2012–2014)

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Abstract

Due to significant events of the 20th century, *dystopia* (which derives from *utopia*) developed into the main form of utopian literature in the mid-twentieth century and it has been developing until today. The authors of dystopia present a society controlled by the totalitarian government to criticize current issues and to help the reader avoid a similar future. One of the subgenres of dystopian literature, young adult dystopia, follows teenage, mostly female protagonists who rebel against the strict rules. This dystopian subgenre, where a young, rebellious woman leads the narrative, may be perceived as a modern equivalent for the 19th-century novel of formation – *Bildungsroman*.

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The aim of this paper is to evidence that the key features of the German *Bildungsroman* genre can be found in female young adult dystopia, hence the female young adult dystopias can be considered as contemporary versions of *Bildungsroman* literature.

Abstrakt

W drugiej połowie XX wieku dystopia, wywodząca się z konceptu *utopii*, stała się najbardziej rozpowszechnionym podgatunkiem literatury utopijnej, który rozwija się do dziś. Autorzy fikcji dystopijnej prezentują społeczeństwa pod władzą rządów totalitarnych, inspirując się niepokojami społecznymi, aby przestrzec czytelnika przed podobną przyszłością. Jednym z podgatunków dystopii jest dystopia młodzieżowa, która skupia się na losach młodych bohaterów, buntujących się przeciwko surowej władzy. Przedstawienie perspektywy zbuntowanej, nastoletniej dziewczyny pozwala na założenie, że dystopia młodzieżowa może być również postrzegana jako współczesna wersja niemieckiej, dziewiętnastowiecznej powieści *Bildungsroman*.

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu wykazanie obecności cech gatunkowych literatury *Bildungsroman*, występujących w młodzieżowej powieści dystopijnej, aby poprzeć tezę, iż niektóre feministyczne dystopijne powieści młodzieżowe są również współczesnymi przykładami dziewiętnastowiecznego *Bildungsroman*.

Introduction

The vision of fictitious society that is subordinate to the set of rules distinct from those followed in the real world, has been appealing to the people since 1516 when the term *utopia* was first coined by Thomas More. From the word *utopia* derives *dystopia*, which, according to Claeys: "(...) evokes disturbing images"². Dystopia connotes a vision of a 'bad place' where the individual is deprived of his liberty and basic rights. In spite of the fact that dystopian fiction focuses on this ominous presentation of the future world, it still gains publicity amongst readers. It is the critique of the society done in a specific, detailed way that is so appealing to the readers. In the end, the aim of dystopia is to alert the reader to the consequences of their actions since the dystopian world is the result of human destructiveness³.

Dystopian literature has been developing as a literary genre since the 20th century responding to the traumatic events that happened in the world. Throughout the years the motif of dystopian society became adopted by different media. Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) responds to the people's fears

² G. Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, Oxford 2017, pp. 3.

³ L. T. Sargent, *Do Dystopias matter?*, [in:] *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. Fátima Vieira, Cambridge 2013, pp. 12.

of technology advancement and the postmodern era. Heather Philipson's artwork, *The End* (2020), depicting an enormous, sculptured ball of whipped cream decorated with a cherry, a fly and a drone, refers to the social anxieties caused by Brexit. What is more, it promises upcoming radical changes⁴. It is clear then that there is a link between dystopia and the fears of the society. Those dreads are usually discussed in different subgenres of dystopia. One of them is young adult dystopia. Authors of this subcategory refer to anxieties shared by the young generation. They present society governed by a totalitarian system which uses pervasive propaganda as a tool to control the citizens. The main character is mostly a young, usually female, protagonist who is experiencing her coming-of-age process. Dystopian authors focus on the issue of gender roles in the society but also they discuss the teenage character's input into the rebuilding of the collapsed social order. Since young adult dystopia discusses the issue of gender equality and debunks the traditional perception of femininity, the genre often becomes female young adult dystopia (henceforth: FYAD). What is more, the key features of this particular subgenre very often correspond to the basic characteristics of the German *Bildungsroman* literature.

In this paper I intend to present how the key features of *Bildungsroman*, such as, the protagonist's coming-of-age process, his (or her) social development and the role of the character's gender are represented in FYAD novel. Thus, female young adult dystopia very often should be treated as a modern version of *Bildungsroman*. To evidence this relationship I aim to discuss Teri Terry's *Slated* series by analysing and defining its affiliation to the aforementioned literary genres – FYAD and *Bildungsroman*. I intend to prove that the form of Terry's text fits into the categories of FYAD and *Bildungsroman* literature and that it shares a message about the social changes that influenced and shifted the values of the modern society.

Approaching the literary genres of dystopia and *Bildungsroman*

Although the concept of utopia is widely believed to stand for a perfect, imaginary place⁵, in fact it is *eutopia* which refers to a non-existent, 'good place'⁶. *Utopia* etymologically derives from the Greek prefix *ou* (the equiva-

⁴ On the fourth pedestal of Trafalgar Square, a dystopian sculpture by Heather Philipson is unveiled, [in:] <http://usaartnews.com/news/on-the-fourth-pedestal-of-traffic-square-a-dystopian-sculpture-by-heather-phillipson-is-unveiled> (access 20 II 2023).

⁵ L. T. Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2010, pp. 2.

⁶ L. T. Sargent, *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited*, "Journal of Utopian Studies" 1994, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 9.

lent for the English adverb 'no') and the word *topos* ('place')⁷. Since the prefix *eu* in the word *eutopia* stands for the adjective 'good', it is *eutopia* which should be recognized as a perfect, non-existent place, whereas *utopia* means an imaginary place in general⁸. *Dystopia*, hence, stands in the opposition to *eutopia*. The prefix *dys* defines something 'imperfect' or even 'incorrect'⁹.

The idea of the dystopian society primarily focuses on the omnipotent government ruled by a wealthy, callous elite or a dictator. The ruler passes the law, however, he (or she) is not obliged to follow it. According to Facal, the dictator's strict control over the citizens is an essential element of dystopian fiction¹⁰. Each aspect of the citizen's life is surveilled by the authorities and subordinate to propaganda, like in George Orwell's *1984* (1949). Dystopian societies are often characterized by a radical class division as well. Lower classes are ceaselessly exploited by the wealth which eventually spawns the future revolution. Raza and Awan in their article approached the concept of dystopian society pointing out the link between dystopia and the Marxist theory which addresses the constant struggle of the lower class who eventually are incited to rebel against the tyranny¹¹. Hence, it is terror and exploitation which are the factors dystopian society cannot exist without. Usually the reader is acquainted with the dystopian world following the point of view of the main character who eventually joins the resistance group or even becomes the symbol of the upcoming revolution. This element of the dystopian novel is preceded by the moment of epiphany when the character realises he (or she) is able to finally oppose the tyranny. However, not until the protagonist is threatened with the loss of his (or her) own identity in behalf of enforced conformity, does he (or she) come to a decision about a rebellion. Sanders comments on dystopia to be a description of "invisible men and women"¹². According to him, preserving one's independency and autonomy in the dystopian society may cause the precarious position of the

⁷ Online Etymology Dictionary, "utopia" [in:] <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=utopia> (access 24 II 2023).

⁸ Sargent, *The Three Faces*, pp. 9.

⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary, "dystopia" [in:] <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=dystopia> (access 24 II 2023).

¹⁰ M. Facal, *The process and modes of control in dystopian literature: an analysis of 1984 and Fahrenheit 451*, Coruña 2020, pp. 24.

¹¹ S. Raza and A. Awan, *The effects of totalitarianism and Marxism towards dystopian society in George Orwell's selected fictions*, "Global Journal of Management and Social Sciences 2016", vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 36.

¹² S. Sanders, *Invisible Men and Women: The Disappearance of Character in Science Fiction*, "Science Fiction Studies" 1997, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 14-24 quoted in M. Jaspers, *The Individual vs. The System: Repression and Rebellion in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, and Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, Nijmegen 2017, pp. 11.

totalitarian government since it would be harder to control the citizens. The final element of the dystopian fiction is a revolution. It might be successful, yet it does not have to lead to the protagonist's eventual victory. In his paper, *The Individual vs. The System*, Moniek Jaspers emphasises the importance of a resistance regardless of its impact on the main character of the dystopian novel¹³. He claims that "a passive attitude delivers no results"¹⁴, hence, though the protagonist may not experience the final results of the revolution, it is crucial for him to oppose.

The dystopian literature has been developing since the beginning of the twentieth century to confront the terrors of those times. At the same time it distinguished itself as the most eagerly-read subcategory of the utopian literature¹⁵. In spite of dystopian authors presenting their barbaric fictitious societies in the most exaggerated way, they still comment on the real problems happening in the world – those from the past (like World War II) and those likely to happen in the future (like environmental disaster). The immense popularity of dystopia was caused by its accurate reflection on the current problems of the world – political, social ones and so forth. Fears and anxieties of different communities served as an inspiration for writers and resulted in development of various dystopian subcategories. The increasing improvement of technology and artificial intelligence was contributory to the great publicity of technology-themed dystopias such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* By Philip K. Dick (1968). The fact Dick's novel was adapted into two films (*Blade Runner* of 1982 and *Blade Runner 2049* of 2017), which were awarded by the Academy during the 55th and the 90th Oscars ceremony, points its great publicity and refers to the people's interest in this particular theme caused by the fear of the future world subordinated to technology. Another characteristic dystopian theme is the motif of society subjugated to the strict law based on rules determined by the Bible. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, published by Margaret Atwood in 1985, the author depicts the future American society governed by religious fanatics who force women into bearing children for the ruling commanders and their infertile wives. The Atwood's novel and its immense popularity in current times is a result of the ongoing dispute covering the topic of abortion and women's fear of being deprived of their rights and choices. *The Handmaid's Tale* became one of the prominent examples of feminist dystopia. Atwood, beside the other representatives of this particular subcategory of dystopian literature, aims to familiarise the reader with the disturbing vision of the future world where inequality between genders and the common tendency to require of women sacrificing their independency to bear children, eventually resulted in enslavement of

¹³ M. Jaspers, *The Individual vs. The System*, pp. 26.

¹⁴ Ibidem

¹⁵ L. T. Sargent, *Utopianism*, pp. 21.

women. Thus, feminist dystopia reflects the fears of adult women threatened with the idea of being entirely subordinated to men, but it also refers to the anxieties of adolescent women and their struggles in the patriarchal society.

Feminist theme is a significant element of another dystopian subgenre, young adult dystopia (henceforth: YAD), which is the main subject of this paper. In spite of YA fiction being commonly underrated by the adult readers, the great publicity of John Green's novels or *Harry Potter* series (J. K. Rowling, 1997–2007) proved the value of the literature devoted to adolescents. The main concept of YAD is based on the teenage character (mostly a female) raised in the totalitarian system. The character's final purpose in the novel becomes overthrowing the regime. YAD novels address the fears and anxieties of young readers and at the same time reflect their need to become active members of the society. Teenagers' dreads refer to the spreading technological advancement which allowed of free access to negative information all around the world and made them more aware, yet still scared of their upcoming adulthood. The great appeal of this particular subgenre of dystopia is the result of "teenagers' political and social awakening"¹⁶. Dystopian fiction enables adolescents to put themselves in the position superior to the adults since it is them who eventually will establish new, safe and just government. They aim to rebuild the system though they still fear experiencing their coming-of-age process which is one of the most significant elements of YAD fiction. The depiction of the reality where main characters struggle with the same problems young readers do, such as first love, conflicts with parents or the fear of becoming an adult, enhances the appeal of YA dystopia amongst adolescents. Developing one's identity, this sexual one as well, is another important feature of this dystopian subgenre. The fierce debate addressing the topic of gender equality and its role in the society has been held in the public space for a long time. Consequently, it influenced and shifted all literary genres including those for young readers as well. Therefore, a vast number of YA dystopia follows the story of a young heroine who rejects the social conventions and becomes a true leader – an independent woman that a young girl of the 21st century wants to be. It resulted in creating FYAD fiction – a "heaven for female protagonists"¹⁷. Converging different genres and subgenres with each other lets YA authors to engage the readers' attention and encourage them to discuss important issues that concern them in their own coming-of-age process.

¹⁶ P. Kennon, *Belonging in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction: New Communities Created by Children*, "Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature" 2005, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 40–49 quoted in M. Rutell, *Locked Out of Dystopia: Gender and Diversity Issues in Popular Young Adult Literature*, Denver 2015, pp. 9.

¹⁷ S. K. Day et al., *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*, Farnham 2014, pp. 3.

The aim of this paper is to analyse two, seemingly different, literary genres to prove the link between them and to point out the possibility of FYAD being also a modern version of *Bildungsroman*.

The name of the *Bildungsroman* genre derives from German words *bildung*, 'formation', and *roman* which means 'novel'. Hence, the brief definition of *Bildungsroman* is the story of one's formation and development. According to Abrams, *Bildungsroman* follows the shift in the character's approach and attitude towards the social norms pending his (or her) coming-of-age process, which eventually influences the recognition of one's self¹⁸. The main character is a young person coming from the lower social class who tends to rebel against the conventions approved by the society. However, as the story proceeds the character learns how to adapt to the social norms, develops his (or her) own identity and eventually changes his (or her) social status to become a respected member of his (or her) community. Svensson uses a term of a 'guide for the Victorian society's correct manners'¹⁹ to define the role of the *Bildungsroman* genre and the impact the main character's final change was intended to make on the reader. Moreover, Svensson refers to the bond that is created between the protagonist and the society to emphasize its relevance in the genre with the words:

(...) the spirits and values of the social order eventually become manifest in the protagonist who is ultimately accommodated into society. The novel ends with the protagonist's appraisal of himself and his new place in society, usually manifested by a social contact, most commonly in the shape of marriage since this is regarded as a kind of physical and psychical bond between man and society²⁰.

Among the most prominent examples of *Bildungsroman* genre are Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-1796) or Dicken's *David Copperfield* (1850) but also Emily Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre* published in 1847.

Defining Teri Terry's *Slated* trilogy as FYAD

The *Slated* trilogy is divided into three parts, entitled *Slated* (2012), *Fractured* (2013) and *Shattered* (2014) consecutively. It might not win such acclaim as Susanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* series (2008-2010) – the prom-

¹⁸ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed., San Diego 1999 quoted in C. Bonar, *Expanding the Bildungsroman genre: variation in contemporary youth narratives*, Iowa City 1996, pp. 1.

¹⁹ K. Svensson, *Old Traits and New Fiction: The Role of the Bildungsroman in Contemporary Fiction: A Comparison Based on Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia and Charles Dicken's Great Expectations*, Lund 2009, pp. 2.

²⁰ Ibidem

inent example of FYAD fiction, yet it is still appreciated by the critics and considered to be one of the most illuminating dystopian novels for young adults. Terry shared what inspired her to write a story of Kyla, sixteen-year-old girl whose memory was erased in the process called Slating. The author mentioned three issues she had aimed to comment on in her books. The first one covered the concept of one's identity. Terry intended to discuss whether and how it is possible to answer the question 'Who am I?' and 'Where do I belong'²¹. The next issue the author wanted to discuss concerned the idea of second chances. The very name of the treatment the main character is forced to undergo is believed to be a second chance for young criminals²². Terry's aim is to pose a question whether people are born as ones capable of becoming criminals or they are rather brought up to commit a crime thus, giving them a second chance does not make any sense. The last thing Terry wanted to refer to was the problem of terrorism and the glorification of so-called 'freedom fighters'. In the book Kyla joins the resistance group which fights against the callous system of the 2054 United Kingdom. However, their methods are often not very different from those used by oppressors. Thus, Terry's books are to answer the question whether freedom fighters' ways of resisting the oppressive system should be justified²³.

Slated is characterised by the key elements of FYAD fiction. The Central Coalition of 2054 London is governed by the Lords party which exercises the severe control over the citizens. People's rights are limited and each act of disobedience is quelled with violence and terror. The entitled Slating process, which consists in erasing memory of young criminals, is the main subject of the national propaganda people are enforced to support. As the main character, Kyla, is thought to be a former terrorist she is undergone the procedure of Slating and all her memories disappear. Since, according to the system, she got a second chance and a new life she is adopted by a foster family and obliged to wear the Levo device – a bracelet that controls her emotions and not let her become violent or even upset. Kyla is warned to obey the rules of the system, otherwise, she will be so-called 'returned'. Hence, the citizens, especially the Slated ones, are deprived of their own thoughts and they are trained what they are supposed to say and feel which is stressed by Kyla herself in the following quote: "We had Group at hospital also, so I know the story. We're supposed to talk about our feelings in a 'supportive non-judgemental atmosphere', but it usually seems to me that they tell us what we are supposed to be feeling"²⁴. Due to Slating, the government aims to create

²¹ C. Gourlay, *Slated by Teri Terry* [in:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbynW-Of-tRQ&t=233s> (access 14 III 2023), 03:40-04:03.

²² T. Terry, *Slated*, London 2013, pp. 34.

²³ C. Gourlay, *Slated by Teri Terry*, 04:38-05:08.

²⁴ T. Terry, *Slated*, pp. 48.

“a useful, happy, integrated member of (...) [the] society”²⁵. The party uses the propaganda praising Slating as an innovative way to rehabilitate young criminals and offer them a second chance. Those who oppose the idea of Slating, such as Kyla’s teacher, are immediately confronted with the authorities. The extract below presents the example of the authorities’ intervention at Kyla’s school:

I climb in and twist to see out the window. Gianelli [Kyla’s teacher] is walking past us on the footpath along the car park, flanked either side by Lords. Another walks behind. They are heading towards a black van double parked by the school buses, blocking the exit. Gianelli stumbles; one yanks on his arm and pulls him to his feet, and they continue on. None of the buses have left, even though I was late getting out. Students are waiting, but the bus doors are shut. There are Lords scattered about the bus bays. In black vests. Armed. A dozen or so of them; maybe a thousand students. We all watch, as Gianelli – one old man, an artist, who stood up and protested in his own way – is shoved towards the van side door. His head bangs on the roof, he falls and the Lord plants a boot in to get him through the door. It is slammed shut²⁶.

As the fragment quoted above may suggest, the citizens’ disobedience usually ends up with their permanent disappearance. The propaganda is spread by media as well. As the story proceeds, Kyla realises that “They mostly only put happy places and people on the news.’ (...) ‘Well, that isn’t really news then, is it. People aren’t always happy”²⁷. Moreover, she points the differences between the actual state of the city and the vision of it which is shown on the news. She claims: “That building – look, there – it was a shell when we drove past, a week ago. It hasn’t been fixed up that quick”²⁸, which is quickly concluded with her friend’s, Mac, words: “Ah, but it looks prettier this way, don’t it”²⁹. The propaganda is the government’s tool of maintaining order in the country and controlling the citizens by the manipulation of their beliefs and emotions.

As the totalitarian government of the 2054 UK is omnipotent, the Lords party can enforce even the most radical law. However, their omnipotence enables the rulings to break their own rules as well. It is presented in the last instalment of the *Slated* trilogy, *Shattered* (2014) when Kyla is acquainted with a group of children who underwent the Slating process even though it is illegal to perform the treatment on those under sixteen.

The author of the books poses a question whether the technological advancement should interfere such areas as one’s identity and personality. Terry

²⁵ Ibidem, pp. 88.

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 177.

²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 130.

²⁸ Ibidem

²⁹ Ibidem

encourages the reader to discuss whether it is a humanitarian action to deprive one of his (her) personality in order that he (she) could receive a new, seemingly better life.

Another element of FYAD literature is the character's struggle whether to remain conformed to strict rules or to fight for his (her) right to individuality. Enforced conformity is one of the most prominent features of that genre since it is easier to control people that way. The concept of dystopian society comes down to depriving people of their individuality, for "(...) the individual is inferior to the system"³⁰. The Slated ones are depicted by Terry to look as unaware and naïve teenagers unable to think critically and prone to follow the government's rules thoughtlessly. Despite Kyla being suspicious towards the Lords' practice, she conforms the system. She believes there is no other way to survive. She eventually admits: "(...) I have to make them like me. Failure is not an option"³¹. When she finds out her memories were not completely erased, Kyla is terrified with the consequences she may face if it is revealed to the authorities. As she finally confesses, it is her former identity she is afraid the most³². The aforementioned Levo device is a symbol of Slateds' subjugation to the system. After realising Kyla is still aware and capable of critical judgment, she claims that even though she hates Levo, she would not feel comfortable without it³³. She subconsciously remains conformed to the ideology of Slating. Throughout the story Kyla gets the information about her real name, Lucy. She forgot it after she was undergone the treatment. Kyla also gets a chance to contact with the family who raised her but she is too terrified with the consequences of it so she refuses the offer. "Tracking down my past life would be well and truly illegal"³⁴ she claims stubbornly.

In the volume 2, *Fractured* (2013), Terry focuses on Kyla's activity as a member of the resistance group led by a man named Nico. Kyla recalls the man from her past and declares to join the rebels to overthrow the regime. However, despite her opposing the system, the girl remains conformed to a different type of manipulation and terror, since Nico's practises are not very different from those used by the Lords. Kyla stresses multiple times that she still needs to be under control for she feels terrified with the idea of being forced to work anything out for herself³⁵. Her opposition towards the Lords does not depict her as an individual, independent character for she only becomes subjugated to a different tyranny.

³⁰ S. Sanders, *Invisible Men and Women*, quoted in M. Jaspers, *The Individual vs. The System*, pp. 4.

³¹ T. Terry, *Slated*, pp. 5.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 127.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 273.

³⁴ T. Terry, *Fractured*, London 2014, pp. 32.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 19.

Kyla's process of becoming a truly independent person fighting for her individuality takes a long time. However, the fact she preserved the access to some of her memories and her conscious, dubious thoughts concerning Slating makes her unique and more prone to fight for her individuality. What is more, from the very beginning Kyla is willing to protest in her own defence which should not be possible for her as a Slated girl. Her mates perceive her as one who "(...) seem[s] to still have an actual mind of (...) [her] own"³⁶ in comparison to other Slated teenagers. At the beginning of the book, she rebels subconsciously since she is still scared and conformed to the system. The extract below that depicts Kyla's conversation with her sister, Amy, proves the Slated's inner need for individuality which she is not ready to accept yet:

But at least if you were in jail, you'd know who you are. Not for long on the chair, though, if you'd done something bad enough to warrant that. I bite my lip 'Don't you ever want to know?' 'What?' 'Why you were Slated.' 'No. If the past is unbearable, why choose to bear it?' I shrug. *Because it is mine*³⁷.

As the story proceeds Kyla's resistance becomes her own decision. She discovers that her friends created an illegal web site where Slated teenagers are reported missing to give their former parents chance to seek their children out. Though Kyla in the beginning refuses to help the rebels, she decides not to report them to the authorities. She finally shares her opinion on Slating comparing Slateds to thoughtless cattle³⁸. He fights the Lords and Nico's group to gain her right to individuality which eventually lets her make her own decisions. At the end of the series, Kyla refuses undergoing the treatment which would reverse the effects of Slating and enable her to get the utter access to her blurred memories. As she claims: "From now on nobody but me has any say in what I choose to remember, what I choose to forget"³⁹.

The character of FYAD fiction experiences a breakthrough which helps her realise she is capable of opposing the callous system and she is finally ready to fight for her rights. Eventually, Kyla agrees the government must be stopped. "They are the enemy"⁴⁰ she claims pointing out the Lords party. She has her moment of epiphany, yet it takes a while for her to become a true, devoted rebel. After releasing herself from Nico's influence, Kyla joins the group of rebels run by her friend, Aiden. She truly believes in the success of their mission which she constantly emphasizes claiming that: "(...) he [Aiden] and the others can really do it. (...) we can do it"⁴¹.

³⁶ T. Terry, *Slated*, pp. 132.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 32.

³⁸ T. Terry, *Fractured*, pp. 5.

³⁹ T. Terry, *Shattered*, London 2015, pp. 301.

⁴⁰ T. Terry, *Slated*, pp. 318.

⁴¹ T. Terry, *Shattered*, pp. 212.

At the beginning of the series Kyla is depicted as an intimidated, Slated girl who conforms to the social norms to avoid the cruel punishment for her disobedience. Even when she finally opposes the system she is still manipulated by Nico and his terrorist group. Eventually, Kyla realises she is willing to fight actively for her independence and to overthrow the regime which leads to another element of FYAD fiction – the rebellion.

At the beginning of the volume 1, the reader is informed that the current system was formed after the riots which took place in late 2020s. The fighting was provoked mostly by groups of teenage offenders which led to the invention of the Slating process. Kyla, similarly to the rest of the society, is instructed to despise anyone who opposes the system and treat those people as dangerous criminals. She is terrified with the idea of herself belonging to the group of the opponents. Her own rebellion begins with the questions she is not supposed to ask. Later on, those questions evolve into direct protest against the government. Throughout the book Kyla witnesses different rebellious activities performed by organised groups but also by the individuals such as her classmate or the art professor. All of those acts prove the growing civil disorder and promise the future revolution which finally breaks out. Terry depicts two groups of revolutionists which refer to the issue she aims to discuss: whether there is any difference between terrorists and freedom fighters. Nico's group represents both, freedom fighters but at the same time their methods do not differ from those practised by terrorists. As Kyla admits: "Free UK [Nico's organisation] rose up in response, wanting rid of Lorder oppression by whatever means. *Whatever means*"⁴². However, the group run by Kyla's friend, Aiden, performs non-violent methods and finally manages to overthrow the regime. The juxtaposition of those two different approaches to liberation of the country lets Terry pose a question if there is any difference between terrorism and freedom fighters as long as they follow the same methods.

Teri Terry's series includes the key features of FYAD fiction such as a depiction of a totalitarian system, a female, teenage character who is initially conformed to strict rules and eventually in her moment of epiphany she decides it is time for her to overthrow the regime and join the revolution. Thus, *Slated* is the example of female young adult dystopia.

Defining Teri Terry's *Slated* trilogy as *Bildungsroman*

Wilhelm Dilthey once claimed that, referring to the original *Bildungsroman* literature of 18th century, women could not become the main characters of a coming-of-age story. Since females' rights and freedom were limited, women were not able to experience various events which would significantly

⁴² T. Terry, *Fractured*, pp. 18.

shape their process of self-development⁴³. Surely, the genre has evolved which allowed women of becoming protagonists of *Bildungsroman* literature and Kyla from the *Slated* series resembles one of them.

After Slating not only is Kyla deprived of her memories, but also she forgets the basic skills such as the ability to talk or walk. She lacks experience and has to learn everything from the beginning. Hence, she resembles a newborn baby. Kyla's process of learning represents a metaphorical childhood at the same time becoming a classic beginning of a *Bildungsroman* story. Throughout the books Kyla faces various challenges and has to handle her inner conflicts exactly the same way *Bildungsroman* characters do. She struggles with the fact her memories were not completely wiped out and she is still able to remember some details from her past. Moreover, she is torn between her need for individuality and the fear of the consequences she would face if she did not conform to the system. Each of Kyla's acts of resistance towards the government, even the smallest one, shapes her identity and is a critical element of her development – her 'Bildung'. According to Maider Matas Hertero, it is often a some kind of a traumatic event that forces the character's final transition from a child to an adult⁴⁴. At the end of the volume 1, Kyla is attacked by a man and is almost raped by him. However, she quickly discovers her Levo, which was supposed to prevent her from hurting anyone, is not working anymore and she is able to defend herself so she kills her oppressor. This scene may symbolise the beginning of Kyla's adulthood.

Another element which links Terry's story with *Bildungsroman* is Kyla's need for belonging. She longs to be a part of a community, to understand the rules she is obligated to follow. Unfortunately, it is not possible for her in the beginning. She cannot affiliate with any group that surrounds her since she is not even a true Slated. That is why Kyla succumbs to Nico's manipulations so easily. As she claims: "I know where I come from, and where I belong"⁴⁵. It takes her a while to realise she has been manipulated by the man so she needs to find her place somewhere else. The last element which symbolises Kyla's coming-of-age process is the development of her own identity. As the story proceeds the character finds out that neither Kyla nor Lucy is her birth name she was given by her biological mother. Eventually the girl admits: "I have both been given and taken so many identities, but at last I am beginning to grow into my one true name"⁴⁶. The moment she finally accepts the first name she was given (Hope) by her mother is the final point of the

⁴³ W. Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers*, Berlin 1970 quoted in M. Matas, *Challenging in Coming-Of-Age: Similitudes and Divergences of Contemporary Female Bildungsroman with Traditional Instances*, Leioa 2017, pp. 15.

⁴⁴ M. Matas, *Challenging in Coming-Of-Age*, pp. 10.

⁴⁵ T. Terry, *Fractured*, pp. 36.

⁴⁶ T. Terry, *Shattered*, pp. 304.

character's development. From now on she is an independent, mature person who eventually accepts her identity.

Another important element which proves the *Slated* trilogy's affiliation to *Bildungsroman* literature is the process of changing the main character's social status. In the beginning, Kyla is believed to be a former criminal who was made forget about her past in order to start a new life. After the procedure she is bullied by one of her mates, Phoebe, who accuses Kyla of spying for the government. She is humiliated by Phoebe and called not to be a human being anymore – "Whatever you used to be, you're not a real person any more"⁴⁷. Phoebe's accusations points out Kyla's loss of her previous social status. It turns out that as a Slated person she is no longer perceived as a human. However, when the girl joins Aiden's rebels she becomes the important member of the resistance movement which at the same time influenced her social status. What is more, at the end of the *Slated* series Kyla turns out to be the missing granddaughter of the Prime Minister. From the beginning of the novel the protagonist's social status changes significantly. Starting as a confused, terrified Slated girl who is treated as an outcast she develops to become a revolutionist ready to fight for her freedom and, eventually, she discovers her kinship with the current Prime Minister.

Terry presents Kyla as a soldier becoming first a terrorist and ending up as a rebel. It emphasizes the feminist tone of the trilogy for the traditional perception of a 'fragile' femininity is disproven. What is more, it is Kyla's anger which eventually makes her Levo stop working. What Terry highlights here is the power of women's anger and the fact they may become as dangerous as men do. The protagonists of the 19th century *Bildungsroman* stories used to be portrayed as independent and slightly rebellious characters. Terry's presentation of Kyla as a terrorist and a revolutionist disturbs the traditional social view on female fragility and innocence. Thereby, Terry's FYAD story links with the key features of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

Conclusions

Over the years the vision of the dystopian society has been approached by different authors as a response to fears spread amongst people terrified with the traumatic events of the 20th century. Deriving from More's concept of *utopia*, dystopian literature has developed into numerous subcategories covering the issues such as technological advancement, the consequences of climate crisis or the fundamental human rights and their value. FYAD is one of them. A young, female protagonist descending from the lower social class has to struggle with the strict laws of the totalitarian system she lives in. As it was presented on the example of Teri's novel, Kyla initially submits to

⁴⁷ T. Terry, *Slated*, pp. 145.

the cruel rules of the London's Central Coalition. Although she longs to fight for her right for independence and individuality, she fears the consequences of her disobedience. Finally, Kyla experiences the moment of her epiphany when she realises she does not accept the fact of being the government's slave. She rebels against the callous system and joins the resistance movement to be an active member of the upcoming revolution. The character starts to believe she has her tools and methods to successfully overthrow the regime. Those features evidence that the *Slated* series fits into the category of FYAD fiction.

Terry's story focuses on Kyla's self-development through her coming-of-age process. She is forced to handle numerous obstacles to finally fight her freedom back which corresponds with the concept of the *Bildungsroman* character's struggle with different difficulties. Kyla, a former criminal, deprived of her memories and treated by the society as inferior to them finally manages to change her social status and becomes one of the most important people in the country. Thus, she once again resembles the *Bildungsroman* character whose development to a respectable, educated member of the society is one of the most crucial elements of this particular genre. The social advancement that is reached by the dystopian character differs from the same concept depicted by the *Bildungsroman* authors. Nevertheless, on account of a great number of significant social events, which influenced relevant changes such as the issue of gender equality, there is a visible similarity between the social advancement concept presented in a *Bildungsroman* novel and the one depicted in FYAD. Kyla's final craving for revolution and her willingness to rebuild the social order may link with the *Bildungsroman* character's eventual acceptance and partial subordination to the norms considering the practices of the 19th century. Kyla's gender and her rebellious disposition represent the fight for women's equality in the modern world. Women who reject the traditional approach to femininity and distinguish themselves by male features or activities, sometimes are still treated as outcasts. This particular feature of FYAD may refer to the disobedient *Bildungsroman* character whose acts and beliefs result in his exclusion from the society.

To sum it up, the aforementioned examples prove that some of FYAD novels may be considered as modern version of *Bildungsroman* since they preserve the characteristic features of this genre such as the protagonist's coming-of-age process, one's self-development and the relationship between the character and the society.

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