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PAUL AUSTER'S 4 3 2 1 IN THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF HIS PREVIOUS NOVELS

Abstract: Paul Auster's novel *4 3 2 1*, published in 2017, is a unique literary creation, both in terms of its "size" (866 pages) and specificities regarding its contents, organisation, and narrative. Namely, the novel consists of four storylines (narrative timelines), which start from the same basis and then, from chapter to chapter, parallelly develop in four directions, presenting four different versions of the life of the novel's main protagonist, Archie Ferguson. However, if the novel is observed within the entire preceding opus of Auster's novels, numerous connections and relations with various aspects and elements of these novels can be found, especially in terms of the ideological context arising from their contents and visible primarily through the ideological facet of focalisation. The aim of this paper is to identify such aspects and elements and explain how they contribute to the contents, organisation, and narrative of *4 3 2 1*. In discussing the theoretical issues regarding the concepts of ideology and ideological context in literature, the studies *A Poetics of Composition* by B. A. Uspensky and *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* by S. Rimmon-Kenan will be used.

Keywords: Paul Auster, 4321, novels, ideological context, ideology, narration

1. Ideological Context and Ideology

Ideological context is the representation of views, ideas, beliefs, and values through narrative voice, characters, and settings. (Beardwood 2010: 67). Within the scope of that definition, ideology is seen as the system of beliefs, values, and categories by reference to which a person or society comprehends the world. (Fowler 1996: 130). It can be said that every piece of literature, from its beginnings to the present time, inevitably carries some ideology and ideological context as its inseparable, embedded parts. On the other hand, it can be said that the ideology and ideological context of a literary work are primarily expressed through its narration, denoted as point of view or focalisation. Thus Uspensky, in his study *A Poetics of Composition* (1973), identifies four planes from which point of view in narrative fiction can be understood, discussed, or viewed: the 'phraseological plane', the 'spatiotemporal plane', the 'psychological plane', and the 'ideological plane'. According to Uspensky, the term *ideology* has a broad scope of reference, referring to the matrix of beliefs used to understand the world and the value systems human interaction relies on within a society. Consequently, the concept of point of view, observed on the ideological

plane, is in direct connection with the way in which a text mediates a set of particular ideological beliefs through an author, narrator, or character. Discussing authorial ideology, Uspensky notices how specific ideological standpoints of some authors respectively shape the ideologies presented in their work. On the other hand, he also notices that narratives manifest ideology, working at the level of a character, and the ideas expressed by fictional characters serve as the representations of ideologies which may or may not be similar or identical to those of the real author. His conclusion is that the more the different value and ideological systems presented in a work compete with one another the richer and more interesting the work itself becomes.

Uspensky also realises that the domain of ideology is so wide that almost any aspect of narrative can be placed within it, whether it is a narrative voice embodied in an author, narrator, character, or persona, or an element of narrative interest like theme, motif, or characterisation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the concept of ideological point of view must be treated with care and caution because it is often too wide to have true explanatory power.

On the other hand, in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, Rimmon-Kenan identifies three facets of focalisation: perceptual, psychological and ideological (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 79-87). Observed in this way, the ideological facet presents the norms of the text, which are, in the simplest case, presented through a single dominant perspective of the narrator focaliser. If additional ideologies occur in such texts, they stand subordinate in relation to the dominant focaliser and transform the other evaluating subjects into objects of evaluation. In other words, the ideology of the narrator-focaliser is usually taken as leading and authoritative, while all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this position, which is seen as “higher” in relation to them. In more complex cases, an individual authoritative external focaliser enables the existence of a plurality of different ideological positions whose validity is generally doubtful and problematic. Some of them may be in a complete or partial agreement, while others may occur as mutually opposed, so that the interplay among them might cause a non-unitary, “polyphonic” reading of the text.

Also, according to Rimmon-Kenan,

a character may represent an ideological position through his way of seeing the world or his behaviour in it, but also through explicit discussion of his ideology. Similarly, the norms of a narrator-focalizer may be implicit in the orientation he gives to the story, but they can also be formulated explicitly. Thus, in addition to its contribution to focalization, ideology also plays a part in the story (characters), on the one hand, and in narration, on the other. (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 84)

It is clear that, in both cases, the ideological plane/facet implies essentially the same, consisting of a general system of viewing the world conceptually in accordance with which the events and characters of the story are evaluated (Uspensky 1973: 8).

The ideological plane/facet can be understood and observed in two possible senses. In a wider sense, it is associated with the ideological beliefs of a character, society, community, state or nation directly or indirectly (re)presented in a literary work. On the other hand, in a narrower sense, if associated only with the character(s)-

focaliser(s) of a literary work, the ideological plane/facet is associated with the person whose world, standards, principles, way of life, and ethics are described. In both senses, if observed outside the fictional reality of a literary work, the ideology is communicated by the words of the author-writer, with language as the only means to communicate it, and, as such, it may or may not resemble that of real author of the fiction, depending on the amount of personal traits which the author embedded into the character-focalisers. However, it is inevitable that an author, from one literary work to another, creates over time an ideological context of his (previous) works, within which each new work comes to life. This may be particularly the case with novels, due to the nature of the genre.

2. Paul Auster's Novels

In more than thirty years of his presence on the stage of American and world literature, Paul Auster has created an abundant fictional literary opus, consisting of seventeen novels published between 1987 and 2017. Although each of the novels are distinctive and unique fictional creations, some general elements, themes, topics, and settings can be identified in each of the novels, such as the constant quest for identity, investigation and examination of urban space, the role of chance in everyday life, dealing with betrayal, dealing with the death of a loved person, inspirational or existential crisis, the blurring of the distinction between reality and fiction within novels, etc. Writing about Auster, Varvogli states:

His work combines metafictional elements with a clearly articulated interest in, and engagement with, the contemporary world. Overt references to the act and the nature of writing and self-conscious subversions of traditional notions of story-telling are never divorced from questions pertaining to urban living, Western history, capitalism, the tyranny of money, and the role of the author in society. (Varvogli 2001: 2)

On the other hand, Brown notices that “Auster’s literature is centrally concerned with how we, as individuals, live collectively” with “the questions of living in the metropolis, of anonymity and alienation” coming to the fore. (Brown 2007. 1). As Paul Auster is a writer with clearly defined opinions, views, beliefs, and attitudes, it has been almost unavoidable for a specific ideological context to become gradually introduced and established within such a large opus. In other words, the ideological planes of individual novels create together the entire (upgradeable) body of the ideological context of the entire opus, where each new novel somehow relies in some way on the (ideological) patterns set and presented in the previous ones. Also, in creating such a context, Auster practically has not made any inconsistencies, which makes it easier for key elements to be identified and described. However, before doing that, it is necessary to give a concise description of Auster’s literary opus.

If observed chronologically, on the basis of the years of their publication, and also on the basis of the narrative characteristics which correspond with the chronology, there are three phases (stages) which can be identified in the corpus

of Auster's novels, and their classification can be made pursuant to that, keeping in mind that the ideological thread of the novels remains firm and constant from the first novel to the last one.

Regarding the novels from the first phase, we propose that their main narrative feature is the existence of one dominant frame narrative which presents the main storyline, while the other, subsidiary narratives have a limited scope and their function is, almost exclusively, to provide additional details and information regarding some aspects of the main narrative. The following novels belong to that phase: *The New York Trilogy* (1987), *In the Country of Last Things* (1987), *Moon Palace* (1989), *The Music of Chance* (1990), *Leviathan* (1992), *Mr. Vertigo* (1994) and *Timbuktu* (1999).

On the other hand, the novels from the second phase are characterised by the presence of one or more embedded narratives within the main, frame narratives, where the stories presented by the embedded narratives are mostly relatively or completely independent from the stories represented by the frame narratives. Such embedded narratives mostly occur in the form of fictional texts created by the novels' (usually main) characters, which are included in the novels as integral parts of their texts. The titles which belong to this phase are: *The Book of Illusions* (2002), *Oracle Night* (2003), *The Brooklyn Follies* (2003), *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006) and *Man in the Dark* (2008).

Finally, there are currently only three novels that fall in the category of the third phase: *Invisible* (2009), *Sunset Park* (2010) and *4 3 2 1* (2017). In spite of the technical differences in the narrative macro-organisation of the novels, there are significant similarities in terms of their (main and subsidiary) characters, recurring motifs and the overall way in which the stories of each of the novels are presented, including both the narrative techniques used in storytelling and the key events, situations, or states within the stories. Another significant component that connects these novels is Auster's use of different social taboos within the narrative in order to initiate the actions and changes in the lives of their main protagonists (incest in *Invisible*, love and sexual relationship with an underage person in *Sunset Park* and homosexuality in *4 3 2 1*).

2.1. Focalisation and Ideological Aspect in Auster's Novels

As it has already been stated in the previous section, the ideological aspect of Paul Auster's novels is based on the ideological plane seen and understood in the narrower sense, primarily associated with the main character(s)-focaliser(s) of a novel and the description of their everyday existence, view of the world, standards, principles, way of life, and ethics. In other words, the ideological aspect of the novels, observed as a system of norms, rules, and views of the world, primarily occurs as an ideological position of the character-focalisers, and also, in some cases, constitutes the role model, i.e. the authoritative position in relation to which all other ideologies found in the text are evaluated. As such it is closely associated with focalisation in the narrative of the novels. Focalisation occurs internally in Auster's novels, and in some, it occurs as fixed or alternating (Kovačević 2015: 528-529), thus enabling the

ideological plane to be identified and the ideological context arising from it to be noticed.

At the level of the entire opus of novels, there are some recurring and constant elements which characterise and determine the ideological positions of focalisers, and, as such, determine the entire ideological context of the novels.

Such elements are:

- propensity towards living in the city;
- importance of education acquired both formally and informally;
- need for reading;
- need for writing and storytelling;
- significance of film as art;
- significance of baseball;
- criticism of American policy and society.

Considered in the light of Auster's non-fictional (autobiographical) opus, all of these elements are, in a way, more or less his own ideological positions, which are, in varying manners and degrees, embedded into the fictional characters of his novels and are integral parts of their ideological contextual puzzle.

2.2. 4 3 2 1

Paul Auster wrote and published his most recent novel *4 3 2 1* after a ten-year break (2010-2017). In many aspects, it presents a sort of a crown to his work, both because of its length (with 866 pages, *4 3 2 1* is the longest of all Auster's novels) and the specificities in terms of its structure and contents. Upon first contact with *4 3 2 1*, the story and organisation of the novel can be identified or, at least, assumed before the actual reading of the book, from the author's note written on the book inside the cover:

On March 3, 1947, in the maternity ward of Beth Israel Hospital in Newark, New Jersey, Archibald Isaac Ferguson, the one and only child of Stanley and Rose Ferguson, is born. From that single beginning, Ferguson's life will take four simultaneous and independent fictional paths. Four Fergusons made of the same genetic material, four boys who are the same boy, will go on to lead four parallel and entirely different lives.

More precisely, the novel contains four parallel storylines dealing with the same character, Archie Ferguson, as four different possible life paths developed to certain points in the life of the character. Within the book, these storylines are organised in seven chapters, and each chapter contains four subchapters (one for each of the storylines), and start from the same basis (beginning), subchapter 1.0, which serves as a common background denominator for the developments which will occur in the chapters that follow.

The story of the entire novel is narrated by an omniscient narrator in the third person, and focalisation is performed mostly through Archie Ferguson as the main character and central figure in the storylines and the entire novel. Also, in spite of the fact that it contains four different (possible) storylines which run parallelly, depicting

four possible directions into which the life of the same character, Archie Ferguson, developed after the initial events and settings depicted in the subchapter 1.0, in all of the storylines his personality is, essentially, the same in terms of thoughts, opinions, and personal traits, so it can be said that all four presented Archies share the same ideological position, seen through his beliefs, attitudes, and actions. However, most of these beliefs, opinions and actions have been previously seen in some of Auster's previous novels, as parts of the ideological context in which Auster's entire fictional opus has been created (and which has been created by the opus as well) so the novel *4 3 2 1*, in terms of ideology, presents and introduces a sort of literary synthesis of the ideological aspects of all Auster's preceding novels, and its length, scope, story and overall ambitiousness contribute to that fact.

3. 4 3 2 1 in the ideological context of previous Auster's novels

The essential elements which characterise and determine the ideological positions of character-focalisers in Paul Auster's novels, thus determining the ideological context of the novels, have already been enumerated above. In the text that follows, each of the elements will be discussed in more detail, with emphasis on how it appears and manifests in the novel *4 3 2 1*.

3.1. Propensity Towards Living in the City

The propensity towards living in the city is visible in basically all the novels Paul Auster has written. Most of the novels' main characters live and exist in an urban environment (primarily New York), and, through their thoughts, actions, and overall everyday existence they promote and advocate an urban way of living and its advantages. They wander city streets, visit libraries, bookshops, cinemas, theatres, coffee shops, and numerous other locations, and the urban setting is the only possible option for their lives to be fully functional and make sense.

In the novel *4 3 2 1*, all four instances of Archie Ferguson live or tend to live in urban environments and fully enjoy and use all the benefits of city life, considering it almost as the only possible variant of living. It can be said that Archie's development and gradual adulteration, as well as his education, both formal and informal, are inseparable from the city life and everything it provides and offers. Living initially in different smaller towns in New Jersey (Newark, West Orange, Montclair, Maplewood), all the instances of Archie Ferguson from different storylines, except Archie 2 (who loses his life at the end of subchapter 2.2), strive towards and, eventually, somehow get in touch with living in big city centres such as New York ("the capital of human faces, the horizontal Babel of human tongues" Auster 2017: 19) and Paris ("the city where he eventually wanted to live" (Auster 2017: 418). This striving can be seen from an excerpt from subchapter 4.4 describing Archie Ferguson as someone "who was strongly opposed to living in a small town, who would have given almost anything to move to New York or any other large city anywhere in the world" (Auster 2017:

458). Archie is fully aware of both the good and the bad sides and aspects of living in big cities, but that is the main and only possible option for him. That becomes especially significant and emphasised at the beginning of his formal education, and, at the same time, his informal one, acquired in a partially different manner in each of the storylines through reading, music and film, and also on significant points in his youth related to his identity, self-awareness and future career choice (Archie 1 as a journalist and translator, Archie 3 as a writer gradually accepting the fact that he is bisexual, Archie 4 as a writer). It can be said that the life in a big city in many ways also presents a direct or indirect source of different traumatic experiences for Archie, but it is more important that it also provides him with solutions and reliefs for his experienced traumas. Thus, in terms of his ideological standpoint, Archie Ferguson is a true advocate for an urban lifestyle, seeing the city life as the only possible and complete solution for his existence, and that is the position and demonstrated opinion of most main protagonists in Auster's novels.

3.2. Importance of Education

Concerning the importance of education acquired both formally and informally, the characters of Auster's novels are well educated, either with a university degree (or studying for one) or by means of self-educating themselves through reading, watching films and listening to music, so that education arises from his novels as a sort of social and ideological imperative for a functional and quality life in today's world. According to the overall standpoint of the characters in Auster's novels, it is simply not permissible or acceptable to remain uneducated in a world so full of opportunities for constant and permanent educational self-improvement. Whether stated directly in the novels or through a hidden or subconscious influence on the reader, it is always there, as a fixed thread which ideologically connects all the novels, regardless of their contents, organisation, and main characters.

In the case of the novel *4 3 2 1*, ideologically resulting from the (ideological) context of the novels which precede it, it can be said that, through the presentation of the educational process in which of all four instances of Archie Ferguson have developed within their storylines, the significance of both formal and informal education has been emphasised to such a degree that it constitutes nothing less than a matter of existential nature. Even from a very young age, Archie Ferguson considers constant education and improvement to be something of crucial significance, a specific tool necessary for comprehending the world and, at the same time, for surviving in it and staying unique.

Depending on the circumstances of Archie's four lives, different details and insights are given regarding his formal education. If observed together, they represent a unique set of descriptions and comments on the systems of elementary, secondary, and university education in the USA in the second half of the 20th century which are generally affirmative and encouraging.

One of the examples is the following excerpt, relating to the impressions Archie Ferguson 1 had at the beginning of his studies at Columbia University:

It didn't take long for him to decide that the best things about Columbia were the courses, the professors, and his fellow students. The reading lists were superb, the classes were small and led by tenured faculty members who took a special interest and pleasure in teaching undergraduates, and the other students were sharp, well prepared, and not afraid to speak up in class. (Auster 2017: 515)

However, there is much greater emphasis on different types of informal education available to Archie in his real-life environment and which he consumes either at the suggestion or under the influence of different adult authorities from his surroundings or through his own discovery.

Depending on the primary interest of each Archie, in each of the four storylines there are (sometimes very detailed) descriptions and lists of films and books Archie watched/read or is about to watch/read. Although they exist in all storylines, the case of Archie 3 is especially significant. Namely, after a series of unfortunate events in his early childhood, he spends a period watching films with his mother in cinemas (the period to which Archie refers to as a *curious interregnum*) which has made him permanently fascinated with films and interested in them, and that can be seen in numerous places in the text of his narrative. Also, later, when he decides to live in Paris instead of attending a university, his stepfather Gil gives him a list of one hundred books which he must read to compensate, at least partially, for his lack of formal education at a university level. The list of books constitutes a sort of essential guide for understanding human literature, philosophy, and poetry from its beginnings to the early 20th century, and, in a broader sense, gives an ideologically oriented path for a possible reader through the most important and significant works of written art:

THE ODYSSEY WAS the second book on Gil's reading list. *The Iliad* had come first, and after plowing his way through the two epic poems by the anonymous bard or bards who had been given the name Hómēros, Ferguson had promised to read ninety-eight more books over the next two years, including Greek tragedies and comedies, Virgil and Ovid, portions of the Old Testament (King James version), Augustine's *Confessions*, Dante's *Inferno*, roughly half the contents of Montaigne's *Essays*, no fewer than four tragedies and three comedies by Shakespeare, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, selections from Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and Kant, *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, *The Norton Anthology of American Poetry*, as well as British, American, French, and Russian novels by such writers as Fielding-Sterne-Austen, Hawthorne-Melville-Twain, Balzac-Stendhal-Flaubert, and Gogol-Tolstoy-Dostoyevsky. (Auster 2017: 535)

The following two ideological elements ("Need for writing" and "Significance of film as art" and closely related to the "Importance of education".

3.3. Need for Writing and Storytelling

In one of his interviews, collected in the book *Conversations with Paul Auster*, Auster states: *Writing is no longer an act of free will for me, it's a matter of survival*. That statement can be applied to most characters in his novels, following the remark that "storytelling in Auster's work functions as a means by which the alienated individual can share with others and reconnect to the social realm" (Brown 2007: 4). Namely,

the need for writing and storytelling can be identified by the fact that all the main characters of Auster's novels, except Miles Heller from *Sunset Park*, are, or somehow become or turn into, writers. In different novels, they write reports, letters, memoirs, fiction, articles, reviews, analytical studies, or translations. For all of them, writing is truly "a matter of survival", due to different reasons and circumstances, to such a degree that the need to leave a written trace in the world is shown as a true imperative in the novels, representing the ideological standpoint according to which writing is almost equated with existence.

In a similar manner, and within the same ideological context, all four instances of Archie Ferguson are involved in writing and storytelling. In four different storylines, they do that in different ways. Archie 1 is first a journalist, then he translates 20th-century French poetry. Archie 2, as an elementary school student, creates a newspaper, while Archie 3 initially writes reviews on movies, and later also a book on his childhood years. Finally, Archie 4 writes a few fiction books. In all four cases, writing is (or becomes) an inseparable part of his life, personality, and existence. At the same time, relating to (but not limited to) particularly the writing of fiction, Auster expresses an opinion about the emptiness felt at the end of a writing process: "Books lived inside you only as long as you were writing them, but once they came out of you, they were all used up and dead" (Auster 2017: 665) which inevitably leads to the start of a new writing project, which becomes a matter of life and existential nature.

3.4. Significance of Film as Art

The significance of film as art is emphasised in numerous Auster novels. However, in three of them (*The Book of Illusions*, *Man in the Dark* and *Sunset Park*) an important place is given to both film as art and the detailed depiction and presentation of some films, either real (*Man in the Dark*, *Sunset Park*) or fictional (*The Book of Illusions*), both in terms of their contents and their production details and features.

In the case of, *4 3 2 1*, for each Archie, and especially the one from the third storyline, who, in his youth, spent a great deal of time watching films at the cinema with his mother, films are an extraordinarily important part of life, adulteration and, as already stated, informal education. *4 3 2 1* consists of plenty of overviews and presentations of different films, together with comments and the way Archie perceives them, as well as how they ideologically shape his personality. There seems to be a clear distinction between art films and commercial films (especially the ones made in Hollywood for the purpose of mass consumption and financial success), as seen in "the differences between art films and commercial films, mostly the differences between Hollywood and the rest of the world" (Auster 2017: 547), and in numerous locations in the novel when Archie expresses his opinion and aesthetic judgement regarding both categories. One such example is the excerpt in which Archie 3 plans to write a book, the third part of which "would explore the differences between Hollywood garbage films and masterpieces from other countries and argue strongly for the value of garbage even as it defended those masterpieces" (Auster 2017: 538),

which makes it clear that he is fully capable of noticing the artistic quality of films or its absence, but still finds a sort of value and quality even in the ones he calls “Hollywood garbage films”. The overall opinion and attitude are that the art of film is very significant, both as an entertainment or escape from real-life reality and as a unique visual representation of manifold stories existing and occurring in the world, and, in that sense, the novel *4 3 2 1* continues to expand the ideological standpoints from Auster’s previous novels.

3.5. Significance of Baseball

Brown notices that “baseball has performed a number of significant roles in the lives of Auster’s characters, and has functioned on a number of symbolic levels”, as “a pastime, part of social strategy, a form of community and a trope for both metropolitan living and the metropolis itself” (Brown 2007: 169). In such a context, it is easy to notice that the references to baseball exist in almost all of Auster’s novels, but are especially present and significant in *Sunset Park*. Most protagonists in Auster’s novels see baseball as an unavoidable part of their lives, regardless of their course of life, education, and overall status.

The entire novel *4 3 2 1* follows the same ideological pattern in that sense. It is full of detailed descriptions of various baseball games, situations, players and even statistical data, together with an emphasis on the general importance of baseball in the context of American life. For both Archie Ferguson and the people in his environment, baseball is a very important issue, and, in their vision of the world and life, it is almost necessary to follow it, participate in it either actively or passively, and have a critical and emotional attitude towards clubs, players, and matches. The following passage shows how the young Archie 1 started to love it more than any other sport after he watched a baseball game:

Drunk or not, Rhodes’s eyesight was in excellent form that day, and a split second after the arm-weary Bob Lemon delivered a not-so-fast fastball over the middle of the plate, Rhodes turned on it and pulled it over the right-field wall. Game over. Giants 5, Indians 2. Cassie whooped. Ferguson whooped. They hugged, they jumped up and down, they danced around the room together, and from that day forth, baseball was Ferguson’s game. (Auster 2017: 44-45)

For a person not familiar with or not particularly interested in baseball, the reflections on the sport, often resembling TV commentary of the game, are sometimes difficult to follow and fully understand. The following excerpt is an example of such a reflection:

Four consecutive innings with no one crossing the plate for either team, and then, suddenly, in the top of the eighth, the Indians put two runners on base, and up stepped Vic Wertz, a power-hitting left-handed batter, who tore into a fastball from Giants’ reliever Don Liddle and sent it flying deep to center field, so deep that Ferguson thought it was a sure home run, but he was still a novice at that point and didn’t know that the Polo Grounds was an oddly configured ballpark, with the deepest center field in all of baseball, 483 feet from home plate to the fence, which meant that Wertz’s monumental

fly ball, which would have been a home run anywhere else, was not going to make it to the bleacher (Auster 2017: 43)

However, such parts of the text do not dim, diminish, or in any way alter the significance given to baseball in the novel, as an ideological status of a phenomenon that goes far beyond the boundaries of ordinary sport.

3.6. Criticism of American Policy and Society

Brendan Martin expresses the opinion that, in his novels, Paul Auster “promotes the viewpoint that the author must critique his surroundings, and the policies enforced by the controlling elite”. Due to that, he notices that “there is a political dimension to many of Auster’s writings” (Martin 2007: ix). In other words, in many novels, Paul Auster often directly or indirectly criticises different aspects of American policy and society, both domestic and foreign. The criticism is commonly directed towards a certain period of American history, which sometimes matches with the time in which a novel occurs, and sometimes does not. The first traces of such criticism can be found in *The Moon Palace*, a novel dealing with the myths and mythologisation of the American West. It continues with a discussion of the problematic issue of terrorism in *Leviathan* (a “commentary on the ethos of late twentieth-century America” which “highlights the lack of spirituality evident within contemporary America, and emphasizes the need for institutional change” (Martin 2008: 177)). Later, the main protagonists criticise Bush’s government, the war in Iraq (*Man in the Dark*, *Sunset Park*), and American policy overall, both in terms of internal and foreign affairs and the creation of alternative, parallel Americas involved in a civil war (*Man in the Dark*, *Travels in the Scriptorium*).

In *4 3 2 1*, with most of the novel’s action(s) happening between 1950 and 1970, the criticism is primarily associated with the war in Vietnam, but also with the relationships among different races and attitudes toward Jewish people in American society at the time. The novel contains both Archie’s attitudes and opinions, and those of the young people he interacts with on these issues, with a dominant anti-war ideology, and large amounts of true information, especially related to the student protest on the campus of Columbia University, where activists were separated on the basis of their race. The elements of policy and social criticism visible in the novel are well summarised in the following excerpt:

ON FEBRUARY SEVENTH, eight American soldiers were killed and 126 wounded in a Vietcong attack against a military base in Pleiku—and the bombing of North Vietnam began. Two weeks later, on February twenty-first, just days after the end of the high school basketball season, Malcolm X was gunned down by Nation of Islam assassins while delivering a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Washington Heights. Those were the only two subjects that seemed to exist anymore, Ferguson wrote in a letter to his aunt and uncle in California, the expanding bloodshed in Vietnam and the civil rights movement at home, white America at war with the yellow people of Southeast Asia, white America in conflict with its own black citizens, who were more and more in conflict with themselves, for the movement that had already split into factions was

splitting further into factions of factions and perhaps even factions of factions of factions, everyone in conflict with everyone else, the lines drawn so sharply that few dared step over them anymore [...] (Auster 2017: 391-392)

The entire range of political and social issues that trouble the America of Archie's time can be seen from the excerpt, and in the entire novel, i.e. in all its storylines, there is an expression of a strong and undoubtful criticism directed towards the political authorities responsible for the situation.

4. Conclusion

We conclude that the novel *4 3 2 1* was created in the ideological context of Paul Auster's previous novels, containing, within its narrative and stories, a compilation of ideological elements from these novels. If observed in the ideological context of the previous novels, *4 3 2 1* presents a comprehensive overview of ideological positions from the entire Paul Auster fictional literary opus.

In a wider sense, relating to the ideological beliefs of a character, society, community, state, or nation directly or indirectly (re)presented in a literary work, it can be said that the novel *4 3 2 1* primarily summarises Paul Auster's views and opinions regarding various aspects of the United States of America, which, at least to a certain degree, have already been seen or expressed in some of his previous novels, in which he observed it both as his home country and through its political and ideological position in the world.

On the other hand, in a narrower sense, and associated only with the character(s)-focaliser(s) of a literary work, the ideological context of Auster's previous novels results in a clear set of views, standards, principles, and ethical norms which can be seen and identified in Archie Ferguson, the main protagonist of *4 3 2 1*. It can be said that his character inherited some ideological traits of all the main characters of Auster's novels written and published prior to *4 3 2 1*. Also, due to the fact that, in every literary work, the communication of ideology is performed through the words of the author, with language as the only means which can communicate the ideology, there is also a significant amount of personal ideology embedded by Paul Auster into the characters of his novels, including the ideological aspect of Archie Ferguson's personality. Observed in the ideological context of Auster's previous novels, Archie's personality also presents a sort of compilation of the writer's personal traits given to some of his previous protagonists.

Our conclusion does not decrease the originality or literary value of the novel in any way, but only contributes to its quality and uniqueness. *4 3 2 1* is a unique literary work due to its dimension, complexity, topics, and narrative, and stands as a remarkable crown of an already rich and impressive opus.

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4 3 2 1 POLA OSTERA U IDEOLOŠKOM KONTEKSTU NJEGOVIH PRETHODNIH ROMANA

Rezime

Roman Pola Ostera *4 3 2 1*, objavljen 2017. godine, predstavlja jedinstvenu književnu tvorevinu, kako zbog svog obima (866 strana) tako i zbog specifičnosti u vezi sa sadržajem, organizacijom i narativom. Naime, roman se sastoji od četiri toka priče koja počinju iz iste osnove, a onda se, iz poglavlja u poglavlje, paralelno razvijaju u četiri pravca, kao četiri različite verzije života glavnog junaka romana, Arčija Fergusona. Međutim, ukoliko se roman *4 3 2 1* posmatra u okviru čitavog opusa Osterovih romana koji mu prethodi, moguće je pronaći njegove brojne veze sa različitim elementima prethodnih Osterovih romana, posebno u smislu ideološkog konteksta koji proizilazi iz njihovog sadržaja i moguće ga je uočiti primarno kroz ideološki aspekt fokalizacije. Cilj ovog rada je da se takvi elementi pronađu i objasne, kao i da se ukaže na način na koji oni doprinose sadržaju, organizaciji i narativu romana *4 3 2 1*. U razmatranju teorijskih pitanja u vezi sa konceptima ideologije i ideološkog konteksta u književnosti, korišćene su studije *Poetika kompozicije* B. A. Uspenskog i *Narativna proza: savremena poetika* Š. Rimon-Kenan.

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