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SUMMARY

The thesis analyses forms of expressing commitment in the fantastic Italian novel of the first two decades of the 21st century. The writer aims thus to fill a critical gap in the studies of the contemporary committed Italian literature. The analytical corpus includes: *2038: La rivolta* (2000) by Francesco Grasso, *Sirene* (2007) by Laura Pugno, *Cinacittà* (2008) and *Panorama* (2015) by Tommaso Pincio, *I dannati di Malva* (2008) by Licia Troisi, *La seconda mezzanotte* (2011) by Antonio Scurati and *Qualcosa, là fuori* (2016) by Bruno Arpaia.

The novels are approached from various points of view, with the aim of bringing out different aspects of the committed fantastic fiction, including fantastic subgenres, motifs, topoi, narrative techniques, and protagonists, as well as linguistic solutions. Given the multitude and complexity of the rhetorical, semantic and formal procedures employed by the authors, a hybrid methodology has been applied, based on two main approaches: the centripetal approach (the aesthetic function and structure of the narrative, the analysis of characteristics and motifs the novels have in common) and the centrifugal one (the social function of novels, the analysis of the main themes and ways in which these themes are linked to the extraliterary social, cultural, and political reality in which the author operates). The centripetal approach makes it possible to identify the intrinsic characteristics of committed fantastic literature, while the centrifugal approach makes it possible to highlight the important relationship between the text and the author's commitment. Furthermore, the basic methodology has been complemented by methodologies characteristic of the studies of peritext, apocalyptic literature, and mechanisms of cognitive estrangement.

Given that there are two schools of defining the term *fantastic* and considering the equivocality of the concept of *commitment*, Chapters one and two specify the definitions adopted in this work, presenting them in a philological-historical perspective in order to systematize the concepts. Given that the genres of the examined novels are not clearly definable and that the writers do not identify a priori the intended reader of their narrative, the thesis adopts the inclusive definition of the fantastic, according to which *fantastic* is conceived as an ahistorical form of non-mimetic narration, which, regardless of genre and content, creates a world that does not correspond to sensorial, physical and objectively experienceable reality. Commitment, on the other hand, is understood as the basic attitude of the writer, who deems it necessary to take a decisive position on the great environmental, geopolitical, cultural, and social problems of their time.

Given that the fantastic novel is used by the authors as a means of communication with the reader, the conducted analysis has been ordered in accordance with the components of the linguistic act (locution, illocution, and perlocution), which coincides with an order from the crucial external elements of the book to the text itself and to the aimed effect on the reader. In Chapter three, elements of the peritext, such as title, subtitle and epigraphs, are analysed as tools employed by the authors to open the communication channel and establish the transaction with the reader as an interlocutor. Chapter four explores apocalyptic and dystopian motifs (the locutionary dimension) and investigates whether the novels offer catharsis and consolation, and therefore whether they exemplify an apocalypse with eschaton, an apocalypse without eschaton or a psychopathological model of apocalypse. Furthermore, taking the issue of humanity's survival into consideration, it is analysed whether the novels present the possibility of a new transhuman world or exclusively of a posthuman one. Finally, Chapter five studies the procedures of transfiguration and transposition of crucial issues of the time by means of cognitive estrangement (the illocutionary dimension), and highlights that those are used by the authors as a formal expedient capable of activating an unconditional reaction of the mirror neurons in the reader (the perlocutionary dimension).

Although facing different problems (global warming, environmental changes of anthropic origin, pandemics, geopolitical conflicts, social injustice, ecomafia, unethical animal breeding, obsession with spectacles of extreme violence), the novels share apocalyptic and dystopian discourses as a unifying characteristic on the level of the genre. The works revisit dystopia and apocalypse in relation to the renewed cultural needs, closely linked to the current social, political, and ecological phenomena, often slipping thus into the genre of climate fiction. The analysed writers, considering the realism of the 20th century as exhausted and unreliable in the face of the unstable and fragmented reality of the 21st century, see the fantastic as the modality of realism which, thanks to the strategies of cognitive estrangement, represents the only way to describe appropriately the current world and intervene on political, social, and environmental issues. Furthermore, the meticulous textual analysis and the collation of its results with the vast authorial epitext allow to conclude that the narrative and authorial voices in all the examined novels coincide: the narrators convey the opinions and beliefs of the authors themselves, which inserts the studied novels in the long and considerable tradition of Italian literature which combines the fantastic and the author's commitment.

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