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ENTANGLED TEMPORALITIES OF MULTIVERSE NARRATIVE:  
*LIFE'S LOTTERY* BY KIM NEWMAN

Narrative constitutes one of the fundamental categories whereby human experience of temporality is expressed. In his monumental *Time and Narrative* Paul Ricoeur argues that “time becomes human time to the extent that it is organised after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent it portrays the features of temporal experience” (3). Accordingly, time figures prominently in all the major strands within narrative theory, not least because “the analysis of tense, i.e., temporal verbal inflection, in narrative can be argued to have initiated narratological study at the turn of the twentieth century” (Fludernik 608). H. Porter Abbott begins his introduction to narrative with an assumption echoing Ricoeur’s argument—“narrative is the principal way in which our species organises its understanding of time” (3)—and so does David Herman, for whom “narrative ... is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change” (2).

Narratological conceptualisations of time build upon Gerard Genette’s seminal discussion of tense as an aspect of narrative in his *Narrative Discourse*. Following Tzvetan Todorov, he notes that narrative is characterised by double temporality—“the time of the story and the time of the discourse” (29)—and bases his account of narrative time on the relation between these two levels, which he analyses in terms of order, duration and frequency. In doing so, he develops a typology of various types of discrepancy between discourse-time and story-time, which proves to be much more common than isochrony (35–36). This classical approach to narrative temporality implicitly relies on common-sense axioms concerning time, aptly summarised by Marie-Laure Ryan:

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1. Time flows, and it does so in a fixed direction.
  2. You cannot fight this flow and go back in time.
  3. Causes always precede their effects.
  4. The past is written once for all.
- (“Temporal Paradoxes in Narrative” 142)

Apparently unassailable in reality as we know it, these rules can easily be challenged with a flight of imagination, and this is exactly what numerous authors have been doing since the appearance of first literary texts. As Ryan demonstrates, multiple narratives violate these principles by envisioning retrogressive temporality, time travel, backward causality and mutable past. In recent narrative research, these and related departures from temporal verisimilitude are predominantly conceptualised within the framework of unnatural narratology as “physically, logically, and humanly impossible scenarios and events” (Alber 25), challenging the cognitive frames we derive from our everyday experience. The two most important representatives of this approach, Brian Richardson and Jan Alber, both point to non-standard temporality as the key aspect of narrative unnaturalness, with the former identifying “the large number of narratives whose temporality transcends merely human time” (Richardson 58) and the latter concluding that “in fictional narratives time can attain an incredible (and indeed physically or logically impossible) flexibility” (Alber 150).

However, what appears to be (un)natural from the everyday point of view need not be such when juxtaposed with scientific accounts of time. As Rüdiger Heinze points out, “many of our commonsense intuitions about time are scientifically untenable, while what science tells us about the actual nature of temporality is frighteningly counterintuitive” (32). Arguably, one of the most striking challenges to our intuitive understanding of time comes from the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics. David Deutsch, one of the most famous exponents of this approach, insists that “time is not a sequence of moments, nor does it flow.... Other times are just special cases of other universes.” His repudiation of conventional temporality stems from his conviction that quantum physics “rules out the possibility that the universe we see around us constitutes the whole of reality. In fact, the whole of physical reality, the multiverse, contains vast numbers of parallel universes,” which constantly come into being whenever more than one outcome of a particular situation is possible and which are all equally real. Consequently, in a multiverse

approach there is no passing of moments within the flow of time but constant multiplication of minutely different worlds.<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely multiverse cosmology that underpins Kim Newman's *Life's Lottery*, a novel that employs the gamebook format to enact universe splitting on the level of the textual organisation in its depiction of the life—or rather multiple lives—of an average Englishman born in the mid-twentieth century. Just as timelines thus engendered not only fork, but also crisscross one another and loop upon themselves, the reader's engagement with the book is far from linear, for the interplay between unnatural discourse-time(s) and story-time(s) produces entangled temporalities, subverting classical narratological models of narrative time.

Central to the gamebook as meaning-generating structure is a rudimentary form of interactivity, achieved by mobilising the classical narratological assumption that a narrative consists of a series of kernels, to use Seymour Chatman's designation for "nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more possible paths)" (Chatman 53).<sup>2</sup> While in Chatman's model kernels ensure the reader's involvement by raising questions as to what a character will do next, moving along the path already designed by the author, in the gamebook they become actual choice points for the reader, who becomes the protagonist, designated by the second-person pronoun.

In *Life's Lottery* the reader is invited to identify with one Keith Marion and choose from two or occasionally three alternatives at certain points in his life, each decision forging a new path in the forking narrative structure of the novel. The response to the apparently innocuous question about his favourite character from a TV series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*: "If you like Napoleon Solo, go to 3. If you like Illya Kuryakin, go to 4"<sup>3</sup>—determines whether young Keith is accepted by a bully gang or ends up as one of the victims, just as the decision whether to pass the Eleven Plus exam and go to a grammar school has a significant

<sup>1</sup> This extremely brief and selective exposition of Deutsch's reasoning, necessitated by space constraints, cannot possibly do justice to his and other thinkers' nuanced discussions of the many-world theory. While Deutsch's monograph *The Fabric of Reality* develops his own, highly original understanding of multiverse, assuming the possibility of interaction between various universes, a general overview of multi-world cosmologies, from the ancient to the postmodern ones, can be found in Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Worlds without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse*, Columbia UP, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The fixity of print as medium precludes full-fledged interactivity in gamebooks. As Noah Wardrup-Fruin elucidates in his discussion of playable media, interaction involves "a change to the state of the work—for which the work was designed—that comes from outside the work. Interaction takes place through the surface of the work, resulting in change to its internal data and/or processes" (11).

<sup>3</sup> Kim Newman, *Life's Lottery* (Titan Books, 2014), p. 20. All the subsequent parenthetical references are to this edition.

impact on his future social status. Depending on the reader's choices, Keith can become a businessman or a drug addict, a happily married man or a lonely sexual offender, a feted journalist or a car crash victim.

In her discussion of multiverse narratives, a category she has proposed as a designation for texts exploring the idea of multiple worlds, Ryan insists that "for a text to impose a multiverse cosmology, it must be based on a decision tree or on a diagram with parallel branches (for those texts that do not assign a common origin and a genealogy to their component worlds), and all the branches must possess equal ontological status" ("From Parallel Universes" 656) and argues that in choose-your-own-adventure stories "the world shown by the current branch is the only actual one; the others are just nonactualized possibilities" (669). Often construed as "predigital roots of interactive narrative" (Salter 11), choose-your-own-adventure gamebooks indeed seek to produce the reader's immersion in the current storyline by including many dramatic or difficult situations the reader-cum-player is supposed to resolve in his or her quest for a successful outcome, which more often than not involves victory over a villain or achieving an objective, specified in the opening sections. From Ryan's perspective, just as in games, a single "read-through," an instance of the reader's interaction with the book, thus produces a single universe with a single story, which ends for the reader-cum-player as protagonist with either victory or failure.

However, as Paul Wake points out, owing to the latter the gamebook invites repeated acts of reading until the desired outcome is achieved. Drawing on Alice Bell's discussion of hypertext as a multilinear structure, presupposing cumulative reading experience, he argues that the gamebook can be said to project simultaneous multiple worlds, not only because each subsequent reading builds on and incorporates the previous one(s) but also because "the print medium precludes any illusion of the single-track text" (Wake 202). A deeply ingrained cultural convention dictates that all the parts of a book with a single title belong in equal measure to a single work of literary art it is a physical container for. Furthermore, the book is a random-access medium: the reader has at his or her disposal a complete text, which he or she can start (re)reading at any point he or she likes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In this respect a print gamebook can usefully be juxtaposed with interactive digital narrative, which Hartmut Koenitz defines as "an expressive narrative form in digital media implemented as a computational system containing potential narratives and experienced through a participatory process that results in products representing instantiated narratives" (98). As highlighted by his definition, interactive digital narratives are systems containing multiple potential narratives, to which the interactor has no other access than through his or her interaction whereby he or she

In *Life's Lottery* the equal status of all the branches is further reinforced by the protagonist's verisimilar concretisation in the opening sections, which set his story in a particular milieu of the English 1960s small-town middle class. In this respect Newman's novel diverges from "a defining 'unnatural' property of the gamebook genre" (Wake 198), which involves aligning the identity of reader, narratee, and character. As Wake points out, lack of detail facilitates the reader's identification with the "you," in which the protagonist and the narratee are already conflated into a single figure simultaneously belonging to the fictional storyworld and to the communicative circuit.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, inclusion of details precludes identification and promotes empathy, "a function of difference ('I' empathize with 'you')" (Wake 198). With the exception of the readers who share Keith's background, the latter is the case with *Life's Lottery*. The novel invites the reader not so much to identify with the protagonist in order to find out which sequence of decisions accomplishes victory as to examine multiple branches into which his life splits at various crucial junctures. The self-conscious, if somewhat diabolical, narrator insists that exploration is the proper mode of engagement with the novel:

What I want of you is quite simple. I want you to keep doing what you have been doing. You can go back to the beginning, to 1, if you wish. Or re-enter wherever you choose. You'll learn you're not just one Keith, but a legion of Keiths, and that a legion of lives are affected by you, or even depend on you. (457)

Just as the protagonist multiplies in *Life's Lottery*, so does time. Newman's employment of the gamebook format to create the multiverse representation of Keith endows *Life's Lottery* with temporal complexity, which resists conceptualisation in classical narratological terms. Not only does the novel split, bend and stretch time on the level of the story, but it also subverts unidirectional linearity, often attributed to the text-time on account of its paradoxical spatiality. For Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan text-time cannot but be contingent on textual materiality:

Strictly speaking, it is a spatial, not a temporal, dimension. The narrative text as text has no other temporality than the one it metonymically derives from the process of its reading. What discussions of text-time actually refer to is the linear (spatial) disposition of linguistic segments in the continuum of the text. (46)

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produces a particular narrative, though one could argue that—just as in the case of gamebooks—all the subsequent interactions build on previous ones, endowing digital narrative with multiverse characteristics.

<sup>5</sup> The gamebook genre thus lays bare the cognitive mechanism which, according to María-Ángeles Martínez, governs our engagement with fictional characters and which involves the reader's projection of a "storyworld possible self" (2).

The standard protocols of reading, on which the Genettean model of narrative temporality is based, assume that this one-directional arrangement of elements is reflected in and prescribed by the physicality of the book, which should be read from the first to the last page. The gamebook format, in which the reader is required to move back and forth between sections, skipping some parts only to return to (some of) them later, subverts linearity prescribed to the book as an object and thus “undermine[s] received notions of narrative temporality by inviting an iterative reading experience in which the texts are read repeatedly in order to reach desired conclusions” (Wake 201).

The peculiar form of Newman’s novel turns it into an instance of ergodic literature, in which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text” (Aarseth 1). Not only does he or she need to jump from one section to another, which mode of engagement goes beyond the mere turning of pages, but he or she also needs to devise a strategy for dealing with two major types of *cul de sac* terminating all but one timeline: in a vast majority of cases Keith sooner or later dies, which is signalled by an instruction to go to the non-existent section 0, while in a relatively few his life is petrified into a set pattern, indicated by the dismissive phrase “and so on.” Paradoxically, this dissolution of death as closure into multiple quasi-endings is juxtaposed in the novel with a convoluted timeline leading to the final section 300, offering—somewhat ironically, to my mind—a happy ending, in which Keith discovers true fulfilment by renouncing the world: “Only here do you feel, of all the possible paths you could have taken, that you have really won the Lottery. Life’s Lottery” (558). Finding the way to this ending or returning to any earlier decision point(s) is no easy task, as the novel is not accompanied by any diagram that would visualize the links between sections. The reader is therefore forced either to remember the number of a previous section or to design some method of marking his or her individual path through the text. From the perspective of narratological temporality, his or her return to earlier sections, enforced by the very construction of the novel, involves travelling back in text-time, which proves not to be as “one-directional and irreversible” (Rimmon-Kenan 46) as poetics of narrative fiction make it out to be.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Space constraints do not allow an extended comparative analysis of print and e-book editions of *Life’s Lottery*, the digital (im)materiality of the latter precluding a completely analogous conceptualization of its narrative temporality in relation to the medium. Let me just note that it seeks to elicit a comparable ergodic effort from the reader by subverting received notions of digital (hyper)textuality. Contrary to what might be expected, it lacks hyperlinks that would facilitate transition from one section to another, so after each part the reader needs to call up the table of contents. User-unfriendly as this mode of engagement might appear, it highlights the integrity of the text, irreducible to a single

The non-sequential arrangement of sections/branches on the level of textual materiality spatializes time and turns *Life's Lottery* as a book into an embodiment of multiverse temporality. Each individual section represents Deutsch's snapshot, "a [particular] universe at a particular time," but they are neither arranged nor amenable to being re-arranged into a linear temporal continuum. Admittedly, the simultaneity of multiverse temporality could theoretically be even further "materialized" by means of parallel page layout, as employed, for instance, in B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* and J. M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*: the former uses at some point two columns of the text to represent the interplay between the external stimuli and the inner voice, while the latter divides the text into three separate unconnected sections, which are divided by horizontal lines and continued independently on subsequent pages. The more conventional textual organization of *Life's Lottery* is necessitated by the demands of readability: parallel sections, whether vertically or horizontally arranged, would quickly multiply beyond legibility.

The manifestation of multiverse cosmology on the story level of *Life's Lottery* involves two major temporal anomalies, transcending the scope of Genettean tense theory as well as received notions of temporality: timeline forking and time travel. As already mentioned, the former constitutes the primary device whereby Newman introduces and explores the notion of parallel universes. As Alber elucidates, branching plots produce unnatural temporality, for they "violate the principle of noncontradiction by representing mutually exclusive story versions or event sequences so that time is fragmented into multiple (logically incompatible) itineraries" (171–72). Far from being completely unrelated, some events in particular timelines differ only in significant detail, with the text re-using verbatim earlier descriptions of the setting and the context. This is, for instance, the case with sections 6, 10 and 14, which represent Keith and his younger brother James's confrontation with Hackwill, a bully who in one timeline tormented them at school. They all open with the same sentence—"In 1982, the week after your father's funeral, you are in town, early in a spring evening, going for a drink in the Lime Kiln with your brother" (29, 36, 51)—and use the same words to describe James's reaction when he recognizes the bully: "James, flinching from the touch, turns to accept... and freezes. Pressed close to James by the crowd, you sense the tension which draws your brother tight as a bowstring an instant before you recognise the man with the money" (30, 37, 51). The

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"read-through." Functionalities of ebook-reading software can make it easier to travel back in text-time, though: the back button in Apple Books will, for instance, take the reader back to the previous section.

outcome of the situation depends on the response of the reader as Keith to his brother being bullied for the first time, but all the three sections appear uncannily similar to one another. Consequently, from the reader's perspective, the distinction between singulative (telling once what happens once) and repetitive (telling  $n$  times what happens once) representation of a particular event collapses: the reader returns to the event, which he or she recognizes but which is not the same.

In the multiverse of *Life's Lottery* the incompatibility of timelines does not implicate the lack of interpenetrability. The reader's dissatisfaction with the life he or she is leading as a successful Keith can induce a transition to a completely different universe:

It happens in an instant. It doesn't so much hurt as wear you out, as if you'd fast-forwarded through three hours of running after a bus. There's a lurch, and an instant hangover, which instantly vanishes, leaving your brain fogged with the memory of throbbing fuzziness only fractionally different from the sensation itself.

You're trapped in a tiny room. You're dragged down on to a ratty couch and lie there.

You're different. There's a bulge of stomach, a thin fungus of beard, and your arms and legs are feeble. It's as if you've spent years in a prison camp on a diet of chips. (439–40)

With the protagonist's consciousness having thus substituted the mind of an unemployed Keith, the reader can now either remake him(self), which paradoxically culminates in recreation of the life he (or she) has tried to escape or succumb to the passivity of the other Keith. By the same token, the underprivileged Keith can become the wealthy version of himself with a possibility of dismantling from within the prosperous life he has miraculously been transported to.

Even more striking is yet another instance of ontological entanglement envisioned by Newman. Keith, working as an overdraft officer at a bank, receives a package containing five severed human digits, which turn out to bear the same fingerprints as his. While the police in his universe cannot solve this mystery, the persistent reader may well come across a timeline in which a bankrupt Keith cuts off his own fingers and sends them to the overdraft officer "to appease the Gods of Money with an offering of flesh" (217). This transition of the fingers from one timeline to another, which has profound influence on Keith the overdraft officer, can be interpreted as a hyperbolic representation of multiverse "interference [i.e.] the effect of a particle in one universe on its counterpart in another," which—according to Deutsch—is the only logical explanation for paradoxical patterns observable in the double-slit experiment, fundamental to quantum physics.

The multiverse of *Life's Lottery* permits not only transition across universes but also along the axis conventionally called time. Again, in some cases the protagonist's "current" self, pondering on what would have happened if he had made different choices, is transported to his child or teenage body:

You're still you, but you're a kid. You're about seven, which would make this 1966. A good year to put a bet on England winning the World Cup. They were sentimental favourites anyway, so you wouldn't get great odds. Thinking about it, you wish you'd paid more attention to sport. You could grow up rich if you remembered a few long-shot winners. Here, in the past, you know a lot of things: election outcomes, wars, investment tips (get into computers—now!), storylines of hit books and movies, chart-topping songs. (472)

Not only does Newman explore the not-so-easily foreseeable drawbacks of being an adult in a child's body, such as the parents' total control, but he also gives the reader a choice between repetition of an act of hiding the childhood treasure, which the adult Keith remembers, or escape from the set patterns of the past. The former choice induces the protagonist's relapse into his childhood self, whereas the latter allows him to wait through his childhood until his knowledge from the future comes in handy.

Another form of temporal dislocation that the gamebook format allows involves transition to an earlier stage in the protagonist's multiple lives, with the reader being forced to consider again some of the choices he or she has already made. The adult protagonist's uncontrollable fit after he and his brother have again been defeated by Hackwill, their childhood tormentor, suddenly takes the reader to the very first choice he or she had to make in answering the question that determined his status at the primary school: "'Who do you like, girl?' Shane asks, 'Napoleon Solo or Illya Kuryakin?'" (404), with an option to either return to section 3 or section 4. Even if the reader gives a different answer than the first time, in some timelines he or she may find himself again in the face of the same choices. Not only do such circular temporalities violate our commonsense understanding of time, but they also "transcend the scope of Genette's ... tense theory" (Alber 165) by telling us infinitely what happened once. In this respect Newman's storyworld diverges from Deutsch's multiverse, in which time travel "may or may not be achieved one day," but which always involves transition between universes and forking of new ones.<sup>7</sup> But then again, *Life's Lottery*

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<sup>7</sup> Deutsch illustrates this point with his own take on the often-evoked example of an encounter with the famous figure, which paradoxically changes the course of history: "In the multiverse view, the time traveller who visits Shakespeare has not come from the future of that copy of Shakespeare. He can affect, or perhaps replace, the copy he visits. But he can never visit the copy

does not seek to provide a fictional illustration of his theory, but employs the concept of multiverse for its own purposes, the protagonist's return(s) to childhood dramatising the common fantasy of having a chance to live one's life again and make different decisions.

In the multiverse of *Life's Lottery* multiple timelines, into which time is split with every decision made by the reader as Keith, not only run in parallel but also crisscross one another and occasionally loop upon themselves. The temporal structure of the novel thus exceeds the simple tree-like pattern that Ryan assigns to choose-your-own-adventure narratives in her discussion of interactive narrativity and veers towards the maze, in which "there may be one or more ways to reach the goal; the graph may or may not allow the user to run in circles; terminal nodes may be dead ends or allow backtracking" (Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 251). Following Espen Aarseth's rhetoric of hypertext, she notices that complexity of the labyrinthian structure produces an effect which can be conceptualized as an interplay between aporia, an impasse produced by a dead end or a loop, and epiphany, when the way forward is discovered. This is precisely the reading experience that the temporal entanglements of *Life's Lottery* induce, with the book-bound limitations mentioned above encumbering the return to earlier decision points.

Frustrated by the effort the ergodic structure of the novel requires, the reader has two strategies at his or her disposal, apart from a simple refusal to continue reading. He or she can return to a random section and then explore a timeline created by his or her new choices, repeating this procedure until he or she is satisfied with the outcome of his or her explorations. Or he or she can start reading *Life's Lottery* page after page. The opening section of the novel admits that it can be thus approached, but it denounces linear reading as a sign of unforgivable weakness:

It is possible you'll go through your whole life this way, allowing others to choose for you, following the path of least resistance, unable to decide a preference....

Such people are not rare.

If you are one, **go to 3 and 4 and 5** and all subsequent possibles. But don't get involved. It can't hurt you, but it can't transport you to raptures either.

By the way: if this is you, I'm sorrier than I can say. Believe me, you will die having never really been alive. You riffle through all the possibles but in the end you **go to 0** having been **0** all along. (170)

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who existed in the universe he started from. And it is that copy who wrote the plays. So the plays had a genuine author, and there are no paradoxical loops of the kind envisaged in the story."

While indeed linear reading from the very beginning goes against the grain of the novel and precludes reconstruction of at least one of the protagonist's many possible lives, it makes more sense as a strategy applied after a few "read-throughs," when the reader has an idea of various possible directions Keith's life could take. Subsequent sections become then glimpses of multiple universes into which his life has branched and create the impression of their simultaneity and independence from linear temporality on the level of the storyworld. Approached in this way, the structure of *Life's Lottery* becomes a literary approximation of Deutsch's idea of a multiverse as "a complex, multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle."

It is only by diverging from the interconnected, branching structure that the reader can discover other universes with their own temporal dimensions. Interspersed throughout the novel are nine sections suggesting that Keith has for five years been suffering from a coma-like syndrome, involving a retreat into a fantasy world, in which "he's living life in multiples. Fragmenting himself, spreading himself thin, sometimes almost to invisibility.... He's weaving a tapestry of lifelines, crissing and crossing. Some are wish-fulfillments, some are nightmares. Some are achingly real" (434). While some of these sections interpret the syndrome as an escape from the reality that has taken a weird turn with the scientifically unaccountable invasion of arachnid creatures, which would explain Keith's returning nightmares involving spiders, another section—in yet another twist—suggests that Keith Marion is actually a woman, named Marion Keith, who "has constructed a male self, an equivalent man if you like, and tried to live through the life she might have had. The lives she might have had, rather" (239). A frame narrative of sorts, these interspersed sections further complicate the temporality of *Life's Lottery* by introducing an unnatural element of time dilation: apparently, time is moving much slower in the inner multiverse of Keith, whose multiple timelines span decades, than in the external reality, in which his body has been comatose for only five years. More importantly, at first sight they seem to invalidate the multiverse reading of *Life's Lottery* by suggesting an interpretive strategy dubbed by Ryan mentalism and described as follows: "The multiple worlds described in the story do not exist objectively: they are the products of dreams, hallucinations, the imagination or they are the symptoms of mental conditions, such as schizophrenia or multiple personality disorder" ("From Parallel Universes" 669). Admittedly, this interpretation explains the ostentatiously fantastic and escapist timelines, in which Keith and his brother take out their arch-enemy Hackwill in a violent shootout in the middle of London or Keith alone becomes the

invincible leader of human resistance against arachnid alien invaders. However, the stability of this supposedly external universe is undermined by the section claiming that Keith is a woman responding with her fantasies to gender inequality. The frame narrative turns out to represent not one but two new universes, in which the protagonist is male and female respectively. By the same token, while the patently fantastic timelines may well be read as the protagonist's fantasies, they can be assumed to be such only in one of multiple universes into which his life has been splitting, the complex multiverse tapestry of *Life's Lottery* allowing an interplay between parallel (i.e., existing independently) and possible (i.e., projected) worlds.

As befits multiverse narrative, the novel allows multiple possible interpretations of its unnatural, entangled temporalities and their dissolution of the conventional concept of time, underlying our everyday perceptions as well as classical narratological models. It can be read as an enactivist exploration of common human desire for a possibility to amend past decisions and live one's life again (and again). Or it can be construed as a new form of realism, dramatising life's contingency, the give-and-take between choice and chance, instinct and coercion, free will and determinism. A massive volume of over 500 pages, *Life's Lottery* seeks to represent major directions the life of a mid-twentieth-century middle-class Englishman could take and is in this respect reminiscent of never fully attainable grand realist projects of the nineteenth century novelists. Its singularity lies in Newman's decision to replace a wide social panorama with multiple parallel lives of a single character to achieve a comparable effect. The escapist timelines evoke, in turn, familiar generic conventions of science fiction, action movie and crime story and can therefore be read as metafictional instantiations of meaning-imposing structures, not unlike Jean-François Lyotard's grand narratives or Hayden White's master tropes of historiography, whereby life's vicissitudes are explicated. Taken together, they demonstrate the representational potential of multiverse narrative with its mutable temporality, as enacted in the gamebook format.

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*LIFE'S LOTTERY* BY KIM NEWMAN

S u m m a r y

Drawing on recent developments in unnatural narratology, this paper reads entangled temporalities of Kim Newman's gamebook novel *Life's Lottery* in relation to David Deutsch's quantum theory of the multiverse. The forking narrative structure of the novel, which allows the reader to influence how a particular storyline will develop by choosing from a set of predetermined options, subverts such commonly assumed characteristics of time as unidirectionality and immutability, and undermines classical narratological models of temporal relations between story and discourse. In *Life's Lottery* time constantly branches into contradictory timelines, which not only run in parallel but also

crisscross one another and loop upon themselves, thus allowing transition between universes and times. Far from a mere exercise in narrative interactivity, a complex multiverse thus created can be construed as a paradoxically verisimilar representation of life's contingency.

**Keywords:** Kim Newman; *Life's Lottery*; gamebook; temporality; multiverse; unnatural narratology.

SPLĄTANE CZASOWOŚCI NARRACJI WIELOŚWIATOWEJ:  
*LIFE'S LOTTERY* KIMA NEWMANA

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Odwołując się do najnowszych tendencji w narratologii nienaturalnej, artykuł poddaje analizie powieść w formie gry książkowej *Life's Lottery* Kima Newmana w odniesieniu do kwantowej teorii wieloświata Davida Deutscha. Rozwidlająca się struktura narracyjna powieści, umożliwiająca wpływ czytelnika na rozwój danego wątku poprzez wybór spośród określonych z góry opcji, odrzuca powszechnie zakładane właściwości czasu, takie jak jednokierunkowość i niezmienność, oraz podważa klasyczne modele narratologiczne relacji czasowych między historią a dyskursem. W *Life's Lottery* czas nieustannie rozwidla się w sprzeczne linie czasowe, które są nie tylko równoległe do siebie, ale mogą się także przecinać i zapętląć, co pozwala na przemieszczanie się w czasie i przestrzeni. Stworzony w ten sposób złożony wieloświat jest nie tylko kluczem do narracji interaktywnej w powieści, ale może także zostać odczytany jako paradoksalnie realistyczne przedstawienie przygodności życia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Kim Newman; *Life's Lottery*; gra książkowa; czasowość; wieloświat; narratologia nienaturalna.