

【シンポジウム】

The World of *Cosmos*: Science and Fiction in Bulgaria in the Second Half of the 20th Century

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1. Introduction

When asked to name a science-fiction author from their country, many Bulgarians will not manage to produce a single name, as I found out when I informally surveyed a dozen or so of my acquaintances and relatives of different age groups (the oldest in their seventies and the youngest in their early twenties). They will often mention the well-known classic writer Elin Pelin, but among his works we find children's fantasy novels, rather than "science" fiction. Even when it comes to self-proclaimed sci-fi fans, domestic authors do not seem to feature prominently among their favourite. In 2015, a Bulgarian science-fiction online magazine, *ShadowDance*¹ (active since 2000), published its list of the "Top 15 Science-Fiction Novels" ever, which did not contain a single Bulgarian writer: 1. *Dan Simmons*; 2. *Frank Herbert*; 3. *Roger Zelazny*; 4. *Douglas Adams*; 5. *Robert Silverberg*; 6. *Thomas M. Disch*; 7. *Ursula Le Guin*; 8. *Peter Watts*; 9. *Samuel R. Delany*; 10. *Stanisław Lem*; 11. *Arkady and Boris Strugatsky*; 12. *Iain M. Banks*; 13. *William Gibson*; 14. *Hannu Rajaniemi*; 15. *Neal Stephenson*. In the comments below the magazine article in question², 14 registered users of *ShadowDance* posted their own top 10 to 15 science-fiction novels where, out of 150 listed works by 64 different authors, only two Bulgarian writers were mentioned: Lyuben Dilov (three times) and Nikolay Tellalov (once).

A breakdown of all the authors appearing in those *ShadowDance* users' comments will give us some idea of the kind of science fiction popular among Bulgarian fans of the genre in recent years (with the digits in square brackets indicating the number of times an author was mentioned when greater than one): *Isaac Asimov* [10], *Dan Simmons* [8], *Frank Herbert* [8], *Arkady and Boris Strugatsky* [7], *David Brin* [6], *Philip K. Dick* [6], *Robert Heinlein* [6],

¹ *ShadowDance* [<https://www.shadowdance.info>] (accessed January, 2022).

² Топ 15 научнофантастични романи // *ShadowDance*, 06 ноември, 2015. [<https://www.shadowdance.info/magazine/articles/top-15-sf-novels/>] (accessed January, 2022).

Stanislaw Lem [6], Douglas Adams [5], Roger Zelazny [5], Arthur C. Clarke [4], Clifford Simak [4], Ray Bradbury [4], Ursula Le Guin [4], Frederik Pohl [3], Joe Haldeman [3], Lyuben Dilov [3], Orson Scott Card [3], Alastair Reynolds [2], David Zindell [2], Iain M. Banks [2], John Wyndham [2], Lois McMaster Bujold [2], Peter Watts [2], Robert Silverberg [2], Samuel Delany [2], Sergei Lukyanenko [2], Adrian Rogoz, Alan Dean Foster, Alexander Belyaev, Alfred Bester, Alfred Elton van Vogt, Bernard Werber, C. J. Cherryh, Carl Sagan, Carolyn Cherry, David Wingrove, Evgeny Gulyakovsky, George Orwell, Hannu Rajaniemi, Harry Harrison, Ilona Andrews, Jack Chalker, James White, John Brosnan, John C. Wright, Kim Stanley Robinson, L. Ron Hubbard, Larry Niven, Neil Gaiman, Nikolay Tellalov, Peter Bogáti, Richard Matheson, Robert Merle, Robert Sheckley, Sergey Pavlov, Stephanie Meyer, Stephen Baxter, Suzanne Collins, Terry Pratchett, Theodore Sturgeon, Thomas Disch, Timothy Zahn, Vernor Steffen Vinge. Of the 26 authors mentioned multiple times in this list, 23 were born during the first half of the twentieth century.

In 2017, a Bulgarian online news and views magazine, *Webcafé*, published an article with the title “Lyuben Dilov: The Great Bulgarian Writer Who We Forgot”³. The opening lines read: “For better or worse, Lyuben Dilov Jr. is one of the well-known names in Bulgarian public life. But how many would remember who his father Lyuben Dilov was? One of the most talented Bulgarian writers remains hidden in the shadow of time. Whether it be because of the fact that his works are not among the literary works studied in school, or because somebody decided that science-fiction is second-hand literature, Lyuben Dilov has not received sufficient recognition, such as the kind he has received abroad”⁴.

The general Bulgarian reader may thus be hard-pressed to name many, or any, compatriot science-fiction writers, but there is one name that almost anybody in the country (especially people born before the mid- to late 1980s) will surely know— “*Cosmos*”.

Cosmos (Космос) was last century’s emblematic Bulgarian magazine focusing on popular science and science fiction, ostensibly being aimed at a young audience. It was published on an almost monthly basis (usually ten issues per year) and lasted from 1962 to 1994, when it had to be stopped due to financial and other difficulties during the years of heavy economic depression, following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist system of government. At the height of its popularity in the 1970s and 80s, it reached a circulation of 210,000 copies, according to former vice editor-in-chief Svetoslav Slavchev⁵—

³ Любен Дилов: Великият български писател, когото забравихме// *Webcafé*, 25.12.2017. [<https://webcafe.bg/onya-deto-ne-go-triyat/1732865912-lyuben-dilov-velikiyat-balgarski-pisatel-kogoto-zabravihme.html>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁴ All translations from the original Bulgarian and Russian texts are provided by the author.

third in the country behind *The Woman Today* (*Жената днес*, 400,000 copies) and *Health* (*Здраве*, 300,000 copies). For comparison, the main organ of the Communist Party at the time, *The Workers' Cause* (*Работническо дело*) came out in a volume of 750,000–800,000 copies. Slavchev also claims that the circulation of *Cosmos* could have been much larger, had it not been kept artificially low by the Central Committee of the Dimitrov Communist Youth Union (the publisher of the magazine), as “decisions of that kind were imposed from above and did not necessarily reflect the readers’ interest”. This is corroborated by the publisher of the modern successor of *Cosmos* (see the last section of this article): “It was a magazine which, during the years of socialism, your friend working at the newspaper stand had to keep for you under the counter, so that your family could read it”⁶.

A (nearly) complete set of archives of all *Cosmos* issues published in the 20th century is currently available in scanned format from a Bulgarian technology-oriented website, *Sandacite* (*Сандъците*)⁷.

2. *Cosmos*—a period-defining popular science magazine

The first-ever issue of *Cosmos*, published in 1962, starts with the words: “*Погледнете в тиха безлунна нощ звездното небе. Безброй светлинни (sic) мигат в черната бездна на Вселената. Кои далечни светове се крият из необятните простори? Приличат ли те на нашата Земя? Има ли на тях живот, разумни същества, или ние, хората, сме сами в безкрайната Вселена?*”⁸. (‘Look at the starry sky on a quiet, moonless night. Countless lights glimmer in the black abyss of the Universe. What distant worlds could be hiding in the boundless expanses of space? Are they like our Earth? Can life and sentient beings be found there, or are we, humans, alone in the endless Universe?’). This was to set the tone of the publication over the next thirty years, and the slightly unfortunate typographical error in only the second sentence (i.e., the adjective *светлинни* as in *светлинни години* ‘light-years’, rather than the noun *светлини* ‘lights’) is almost forgivable. Furthermore, the focus of *Cosmos*’s “outlook” was to be shared with the inner imagination of the one looking, as we find out later in the same inaugural article: “*Но човекът е велик с разума си, който може да обхване*

⁵ Оруш, А. За космоса и списание Космос (Интервю с д-р Светослав Славчев) // Наука OFFNews, 20 март 2015. [https://nauka.offnews.bg/news/Novini_1/Za-kosmosa-i-spisanie-Kosmos_6375.html] (accessed January, 2022).

⁶ Космос // Медийна група България [<https://www.mgb.bg/Publisher/Magazines/7499525>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁷ Сандъците [<https://www.sandacite.bg>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁸ Космосът // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1962. № 0. С. 1.

както безкрайно далечните звезди, така и изчезващо малките атоми, който може да си представи не само как е изглеждала Земята преди милиони години, но и как ще изглежда далечното бъдеще на хората. Човек е велик с мечтите си... Мечтайте!”⁹. (‘But Man¹⁰ is great with his Mind, which has managed to reach both the immeasurably distant stars and the vanishingly small atoms, a Mind which has been able to imagine not only what Earth looked like millions of years ago, but also what the distant future of humanity might be. Man is great with his dreams... Dream on!’). Thus, the imagination is given its rightful place at the helm of the human scientific enterprise, even though the editorial board would have to obligatorily adhere and persistently refer to the tenets of socialist realism and its materialist dogmas in the tradition of Marx and Lenin, the latter being ostentatiously quoted on the very cover of that first *Cosmos* issue: “В света няма нищо друго освен движеща се материя.” (‘Nothing exists in the world except moving matter.’).

In the pages that follow the editorial quoted above, we find three science fiction short stories—“An Emergency Case” by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, “The Fog Horn” by Ray Bradbury, and the almost prophetically¹¹ titled “Virus 2015” by Bulgarian author Svetoslav Slavchev. The remainder of the issue consists mostly of other short stories, articles on popular science and ancient civilizations, as well as accounts of domestic and foreign technological achievements. *Cosmos* would keep, more or less, this kind of content balance for most of its existence, with the addition of a “party-line” editorial or two at the start of some issues, praising the successes of the Bulgarian and Soviet socialist progress (this was a trend that intensified from the 1970s onwards).

Almost invariably, each *Cosmos* issue contained articles on astronomy, space exploration, astrophysics, and at times even quantum physics, possible dimensions and parallel universes. The magazine also strived to introduce to its readers cutting-edge technologies, discoveries and perspectives, such as: lasers (1963/10)¹², antimatter (1965/3), climate change

⁹ Космосът // Космос (cf. Note 7), p.3

¹⁰ The translation here aims to reflect the original Bulgarian, which was written decades before our time of heightened sensitivities to the use of gender-based language.

¹¹ Or perhaps even better than that, considering the reported history of Coronavirus gain-of-function research, funded by the US National Institutes of Health and related institutions, and later exported to the infamous Wuhan Laboratory in 2014, around the time when “under pressure from the Obama administration, the National of Institutes of Health instituted a moratorium on the work” in the US. Cf. Guterl, Fred. “Dr. Fauci Backed Controversial Wuhan Lab with U.S. Dollars for Risky Coronavirus Research”. In *Newsweek*, April 28, 2020. [<https://www.newsweek.com/dr-fauci-backed-controversial-wuhan-lab-millions-us-dollars-risky-coronavirus-research-1500741>] (accessed January, 2022).

(1967/4), chess-playing machines (1967/8), natural-language communication between humans and machines (1967/9), cymatics (1970/6), AI (1970/9), plant memory and emotions (1971/4), super-fast trains (1972/2), electric and “electronic” cars (1973/1), solar energy (1977/3), cloning (1975/2)¹³, holography (1981/8), biocomputers (1984/10), mobile phones (1985/2), genetically engineered vaccines (1985/8), the human genome project (1988/9), telework (1989/2), microrobots as a precursor to nanorobots (1989/8), the universe seen as a computer (1990/3). Articles of this sort would often present a forward-minded outlook, speculating on the various possibilities awaiting mankind, and as such were a source of anticipatory science fact/fiction, expected to stir the imagination of the magazine’s readers. Indeed, some of the Bulgarian authors publishing science-fiction stories in *Cosmos*, such as Dimitar Peev and Svetoslav Slavchev, were at the same time frequent contributors of materials on the latest advances in science and technology.

The magazine also frequently looked at mankind’s ancient past, which is perhaps as full of mysteries and possibilities as its future. One can find articles on ancient Thracians (1967/3), the provenance of the Moon (1968/2), ancient astronauts (1969/8), the Nazca Lines (1969/8), alchemy (1969/10), civilizations preceding the biblical Flood (1970/1), the enigma of the Egyptian pyramids (1971/2), ancient astronomy (1971/7), *Homo habilis* (1971/9), ancient civilizations on the territory of Bulgaria (1972/3), Atlantis (1978/3), Neanderthals (1984/5), crystal skulls (1984/6 and 1994/9), ancient snake/dragon cults and legends (1987/2), mythology and extraterrestrials (1990/1), Jesus in India and Japan (1990/5), and Egyptian pharaohs as drug addicts (1994/9), among others.

Cosmos also had a noticeable penchant for crime novels (authors like Agatha Christie were a frequent staple in the magazine), adventure stories and the wonders of the animal world—with articles covering various species from frogs and bears to tigers, kangaroos and dinosaurs.

3. Science fiction in *Cosmos*

During its 20th-century existence, *Cosmos* published 347¹⁴ science-fiction stories and novellas.

¹² The dates in brackets here and below indicate the year a relevant issue of the magazine was published, followed by its number.

¹³ Interestingly, the term of choice at the time was “клонинг”, rather than the modern “клонирание”.

¹⁴ This figure should be considered fairly accurate but not a hundred percent definitive, since there might be disagreement about some of the stories as to whether they fall within the realm of science fiction or not. This author has included all stories with a “fantastic” element, including a small number of items about prehistoric man. *Cosmos* also published a large number of crime stories,

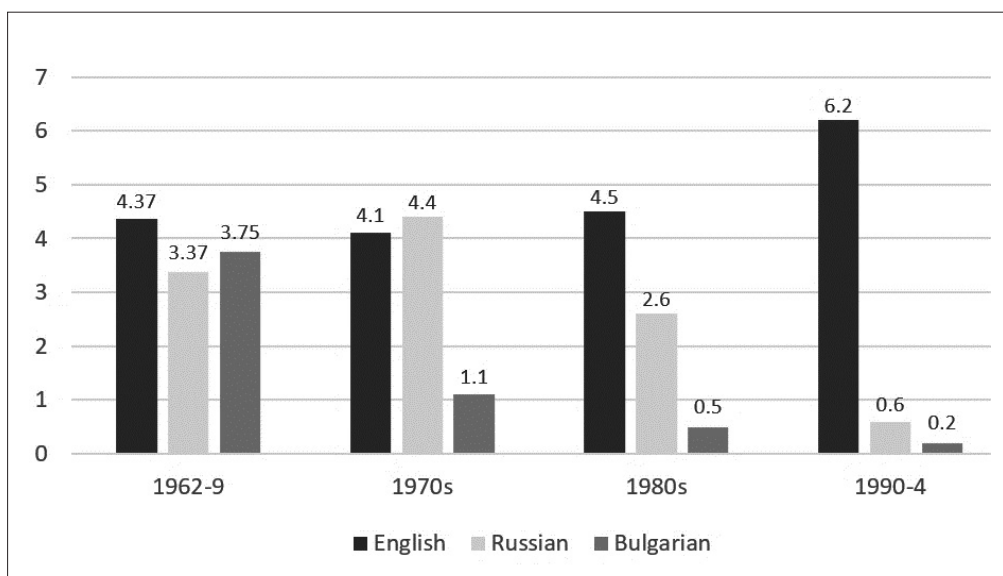


Figure 1: English-, Russian- and Bulgarian-language science-fiction works published in *Cosmos* per year between 1962 and 1994.

Interestingly, despite the predictably large number of works by Russian and Soviet writers (98 stories by 50 different authors), the most numerous subset comes from English-speaking writers (150 stories by 69 different authors)—mostly American and British. Forty-seven Bulgarian pieces by 31 different authors were also published but, significantly, each passing decade saw a smaller number of domestic sci-fi works appearing on the pages of the magazine: 30 in the 1960s, 11 in the 1970s, five in the 1980s and only one in the 1990s (cf. Fig. 1).

There is also a clear trend of *Cosmos* featuring fewer Russian-language and more English-language works of science fiction in each decade after 1970. 1989 was the year after which the countries of the former Eastern Bloc officially turned their back to the Soviet Union and started looking west for inspiration, guidance and capital, but in terms of the increasing permeation of Western thought and literature, our *Cosmos* data provides further attestation of the well-known fact that the trend had been going on for quite a while, intensifying in the 1980s.

Here is a list of all English-speaking science-fiction authors whose works were featured in the magazine¹⁵: *Alfred Bester*, *Ann Warren Griffith*, *Anne McCaffrey*, *Arthur C. Clarke* [11], *Arthur Conan Doyle*, *Arthur Porges*, *Arthur Sellings* [2], *Avram Davidson*, *Bob Shaw* [2],

which have all been excluded from the analysis here.

¹⁵ The digits in square brackets indicate the number of published stories by the same author if greater than one.

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Charles Bernard Gilford, Clifford D. Simak [11], Colin Kapp, Damon Francis Knight, Edmond Hamilton, Edward Wellen, Edwin Charles Tubb, Eric Frank Russell [5], F. L. Wallace, Fredric Brown, Fritz Leiber, Gordon R. Dickson [2], H. G. Wells [5], Harlan Ellison [2], Harry Harrison, Henry Kuttner, Isaac Asimov [18], Jack London, James H. Schmitz, Jay Williams, Jerome Bixby, Joe Gores, John Morrison, John Wyndham [5], Karen Anderson, Katherine MacLean, Kent Patterson, Larry Eisenberg, Lawrence Watt Evans, Lewis Padgett, Lois McMaster Bujold, Lyon Sprague de Camp, Mark Twain, Marshall King, Mildred McElroy Clingerman, Murray Leinster [2], O.H. Lesley, Orson Scott Card, Paul J. Nahin, Philip K. Dick, Poul Anderson, Ray Bradbury [7], Richard McKenna, Robert A. Heinlein [4], Robert Arthur, Robert F. Young [2], Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Sheckley [14], Robert Silverberg [2], Robert Toomey, Roger Zelazny, Stan Dryer, Stephen King [2], Theodore Thomas, Tom Godwin, Ursula Le Guin [2], Walter Tevis, William F. Nolan, William Morrison, and William Tenn [2].

Russian and Soviet authors appearing in *Cosmos* are as follows: *Aleksandr & Sergey Abramov, Aleksandr Gorbovsky [2], Aleksandr Kolpakov, Aleskandr Klimov & Igor Belograd, Aleskandr Mirer, Anatoly Dneprov [3], Andrei Salomatov, Andrey Balabukha [2], Andrey Kapitsa, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Boris Rudenko, Dmitri Bilenkin [9], Gennadiy Prashkevich [2], Genrich Altshuller [3], Georgii Gurevich, Igor Akimov, Igor Rosokhovatski [9], Ilya Varshavsky [6], Kir Bulychev [9], Leonid Kudryavtsev, Leonid Panasenko, Lev Edzhubov, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Mikhail Pukhov, Mikhail Shalamov, Mikhail Yemtsev & Yeremey Parnov [2], Natalia Sokolova, Paul Amnuél, Roman Podolny [3], Sergei Drugal, Sergey Kozmenko [2], Sergey Snegov, Sever Gansovsky [6], Valentin Berestov, Valeri Tsyganov, Vasily Zakharchenko, Victor Shenderovich, Viktor Kolupaev [3], Viktor Komarov [2], Viktor Saparin, Vladimir Firsov, Vladimir Grigoriev, Vladimir Mikhailov, Vladimir Mikhanovsky, Vladimir Savchenko, Vladimir Shcherbakov, Vyacheslav Rybakov, Yuri Konstantinov, Yuri Medvedev, and Zinovi Yuriev.*

Bulgarian science-fiction authors included: *A. Efimev, Aleksandar Dimitrov, Angel Sarafov, Anton Donchev, Anton Donev, Dimitar Peev [8], Dimitar Velikov, Emil Zidarov, Georgi Genov, Hristo Geshanov, Hristo Polihronov, Ivan Efremov, Ivan Kozhuharov, Lidiya Popkirova, Lyuben Dilov, Lyubomir Cholakov, Lyubomir Nikolov, Mladen Denev, Nedialka Mihova, Nikola Chuparov [2], Petar Lyochev, Petar Stapov [2], Stoil Stoilov, Svetoslav Slavchev [6], Tsoncho Rodev, Tsvetan Severski, Vasil Raikov [2], Vasko Delev [2], Velichka Nastradinova, Vladimir Ganchev, and Yosif Perets.*

Polish science fiction was represented by 21 stories by nine authors: *Andrzej Majchrzak, Czesław Chruszczewski [2], Jacek Sawaszkiewicz, Jan Stanisław Kopczewski,*

Janusz Zajdel, Jerzy Surdykowski, Konrad Fialkowski [5], Stanisław Lem [8], and Stefan Weinfeld. German and Austrian works included 10 stories by three authors: *Herbert W. Franke [3], Manfred Weinert, and Erik Simon [6].* There were also seven science-fiction stories by French authors (*Claude J. Legrand, George Langelaan [2], Gérard Klein, Henri Troyat, Marcel Aymé, Pierre Gamarra*), and five by Czechoslovakian authors (*Jaromír Šavřda, Jaroslav Veis, Ondřej Neff, Vlastislav Toman, Zuzana Nagy*). Also featured were two stories from Norway (*Jon Bing and Tor Åge Bringsværd*), two from Sweden (*Fredrik Kilander and Börje Crona*), two from Japan (*Koji Tanaka and Sakyo Komatsu*), as well as one Romanian (*Camil Baciú*), one Hungarian (*Gyula Hernádi*), and one Danish (*Niels E. Nielsen*) works of science fiction.

Fig.2 summarizes the numerical data on the science-fiction authors listed in the preceding paragraphs of this section.

Figure 2: Summary of science-fiction published in *Cosmos* between 1962 and 1994, by language (of original publication).

<i>Language</i>	<i>Works</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Works/Author</i>
English	150	69	2.17
Russian	98	50	1.96
Bulgarian	47	31	1.51
Polish	21	9	2.33
German	10	3	3.33
French	7	6	1.16
Czech	5	5	1
Norwegian	2	2	1
Swedish	2	2	1
Japanese	2	2	1
Romanian	1	1	1
Hungarian	1	1	1
Danish	1	1	1
TOTAL	347	182	AVG. 1.90

4. Lost & found in translation and technical difficulties

It is important to note that, during the 1960s and 70s, science-fiction works originally written in English would more often than not appear in *Cosmos* in a translation from Russian, which was a tendency that persisted until the mid-1980s. Given the differences in transcribing English proper nouns between Russian and Bulgarian, this would sometimes lead to (somewhat comical) discrepancies in the spelling of certain authors' names as they turned up in the magazine in different years. For example, H. G. Wells would appear as “Херберт Уелс” in 1962, “Хербърт Уелс” in 1969, and “Хърбърт Уелс” in 1970 and onwards. Arthur C. Clarke's name was spelled “Артур Клерк” in 1964 and “Артър Кларк” in 1966 and later. Isaac Asimov was “Айзек Азимов” in 1969 and “Айзък Азимов” from 1970 on. Japanese names and terms were also affected by Russian-style transcriptions: Koji Tanaka (“Кодзи Танака” in 1985, rather than “Коджи Танака”) and *ninja* (“ниндзя” in 1983, while “нинджа” in 1994).

Ironically, Russian names themselves were sometimes the victim of spelling discrepancies, as transcription standards were apparently not quite settled yet in those years. Kir Bulychev's name, for instance, appears as “Кирил Буличъв” in 1972, changing to “Кирил Буличов” in 1977, “Кир Буличов” in 1981, only to revert to “Кир Буличъв” in 1985. This was, of course, when he wouldn't appear under his real name—“Игор Можейко” (1968), or “И. Можейко” (1972).

Publication and editing standards in general during the Soviet years will often leave the modern reader slightly confused. A good example would be a short story by Lyuben Dilov, who was described by the prominent twentieth-century science-fiction critic Ognyan Saparev as the “foremost” Bulgarian writer in the genre¹⁶, despite the fact that he was featured in *Cosmos* only once, as far as we can tell from the available archives. The story in question¹⁷ is “More on the Question of Dolphins” (“Още по въпроса за делфините”, 1976)¹⁸, which was published in the Russian popular-science magazine *Knowledge-Power* (*Знание-Сила*, the Soviet equivalent of *Cosmos*, of sorts) in 1979 under the title “On the Question of Dolphins” (“К вопросу о дельфинах”)¹⁹, and also in the Russian adventure, science-fiction and mystery

¹⁶ *Сапарев, О.* Скептичният смях на Любен Дилов // в Дилов, Л. Двойната Звезда // изд. Георги Бакалов, Варна, 1979. [<https://chitanka.info/text/26081-skeptichniyat-smjah-na-ljuben-dilov>] (accessed January, 2022).

¹⁷ This is not the story that *Cosmos* published, which was called “Напред, човечество!”.

¹⁸ *Дилов, Л.* Още по въпроса за делфините // Българска фантастика (Антология) / Ред. Сапарев, О. // изд. Христо Г. Данов, Пловдив, 1976. [<https://chitanka.info/book/358-bylgarska-fantastika>] (accessed January, 2022).

anthology “On Land and Sea” (“*На суше и море*”) in 1980 under the title “Conversation on a Moonlit Night” (“*Беседа в лунную ночь*”)²⁰. Most striking, however, are the changes made in the text itself. In the original, the first paragraph says: ‘Recently, a number of scientific, quasi-scientific and all kinds of other reports have been published about the life of dolphins and the human attempts to penetrate the world of these mysterious creatures. The Black Sea countries even agreed to ban [dolphin-] hunting in their shared waters.’ (“*Напоследък често се публикуват научни, полунучни и всякакви други съобщения за живота на делфините, за опитите на човека да проникне в света на тия загадъчни същества. Черноморските държави дори се споразумяха ловът да бъде забранен в тяхното море...*”). While missing in *Knowledge-Power*, the second sentence of the passage quoted above appears in the aforementioned Russian anthology as: ‘In the Soviet Union, dolphin-hunting has even been banned’. (“*В Советском Союзе даже запрещена охота на дельфинов.*”). The first sentence of the next paragraph, too, manages to raise the reader’s eyebrows in one of the Russian versions: ‘At the time, I was on the other side of the globe...’. (“*Тогда аз се намирах на отвъдната страна на глобуса...*”). In *Znanie-Sila*, this was translated accurately (“*Я находился тогда по ту сторону глобуса...*”), while in “On Land and Sea” the translation is: ‘At the time, I was in the Western Hemisphere...’. (“*Находился я тогда в западном полушарии...*”). Reading on, one finds still more inaccuracies and slight content changes in both translated versions.

Unless we undertake a detailed cross-language examination of the actual texts, we can only speculate as to the number of inconsistencies and mistakes in the translations of the science-fiction stories published in *Cosmos*, which we are likely to find, especially considering the fact that they were often secondary translations via Russian and also considering the liberties taken by Russian translators, as we have just demonstrated.

Still, was there something to be gained in translation at all, given the way in which sci-fi literature from abroad got to the twentieth-century Bulgarian reader? One thing we can look at, apart from the usual benefits to do with bringing in foreign ideas, etc., is the fact that there was always a time lag between the publication of a work of science-fiction (or any type of fiction for that matter) in its original and translated form. Furthermore, this time lag would, on average, be longer for literature coming from the “enemy camp”, i.e. the West. In terms of contemporary works, this would not be such a great thing, of course, but when it came to older texts, Bulgarian readers definitely benefited from being able to read more modern-sounding

¹⁹ Дилов, Л. К вопросу о дельфинах // Знание-Сила. 1979. № 624. С. 47–48.

²⁰ Дилов, Л. Беседа в лунную ночь // На суше и море / Под ред. С.А. Абрамова, М. Э. Аджиева и др. // Мысль (Москва) 1980. С. 376–385.

versions than the originals. For instance, H. G. Wells' "Æpyornis Island" was first published 1894, but arrived on the pages of *Cosmos* almost seventy years later, in 1962. Fredric Brown's "Arena" came out in 1944, while the readers of the magazine first saw it in 1988. Science-fiction already has the problem of tending to age as rapidly as the technology that informed it does, but when its language and style begin to sound outdated as well, it naturally becomes harder for a modern reader to draw inspiration from it. Which would be a great pity, especially if one were to agree with the words of Lyuben Dilov that 'The best truths will always be uncovered not by science, but art!' ("*Най-добрите истини винаги ще ни открива не науката, а изкуството!*")²¹.

One more group of problems that a look at the *Cosmos* archives reveals are various inconsistencies and errors of a typographic sort. For example, in the 1967/3 issue, the American author William F. Nolan is given as "Уйлям Полан", instead of "Уилям Нолън", and the story published is "And Miles to Go Before I Sleep" ("*Но остават още много мили*"). The surname is clearly misspelt, while the phonetically incorrect spelling "Уйлям" was a *Cosmos* practice which lasted until 1978, when William Morrison appeared as "Уйлям Морисън". This cannot be regarded simply as a foreign influence, given that the name is rendered as "Уильям" in Russian. To make this particular spelling even more inexplicable, one also finds William Shakespeare's name spelled in Bulgarian as "Уилямъ Шекспиръ" as early as 1936²², while the modern Bulgarian "Уилям", already appears in a 1969 *Cosmos* issue in the Bulgarian spelling for the name of author William Tenn.

Another striking example of editorial or perhaps in this case typesetting negligence would come from the late 1980s, when *Cosmos* went through a period (circa 1987-8) of conspicuously sloppy printing and a constant supply of typographical errors, with an especially large number of instances where the letters "a" and "e" would appear in each other's place, for example:

Друг ученик стои на кр[e]я на стола, наклонил се напред, опир[e] се н[e] ръката, главата му е леко наведена. Учителката няма да сгреши, ако реши, че именно този ученик слуша с инт[a]рес. (1987/8, p.53)

²¹ *Дилов, Л.* Зеленото ухо // Българска фантастика (Антология) / Ред. Костурков, О. // изд. Христо Г. Данов, Пловдив, 1983. [<https://chitanka.info/book/396-bulgarska-fantastika>] (accessed January, 2022).

²² *Шекспиръ, У.* Макбетъ: Трагедия въ петъ действия // прев. Г. Жечевъ // Библиотека „Свѣтовни писатели“, № 1, София 1936.

Or:

Ако привържениците на геномния проект постигнат успех и проектът се осъществи с подкрепата на правителството, то всеки човек би могъл да се възползва от неговите р[а]зултати. Би било още по-добре, ако проектът ст[е] не интерн[е]ционален. Японците вече имат автоматични секвенсери и са постигн[е]ли договореност с промишлеността за осъществяването на свой собств[а]н проект, а европейците отдавна са лидери в г[а]нетиката. Възможно е в последователността на ДНК да има американска, японска и европейска част и тов[е] ще стане урок не само как трябва да се прави голямата наука, но и к[е]к в сътрудничество трябва да живеят хората от целия свят. (1988/9, p.15)

It is almost as if someone was doing it on purpose.

A *Cosmos* editorial from 1991²³ does refer to some of the problems that the magazine had been experiencing in the previous years. It talks about “deliberate” efforts to “take down” the magazine in 1988, alluding to the forced merger of *Cosmos* with another magazine, *Science and Technology for the Youth* (*Наука и техника за младежта*). The editorial also mentions an attempt of the state-owned printing house Georgi Dimitrov to “get rid” of the magazine as its large volume of circulation was causing it “headaches”, as well as a severe “lack of paper” caused by the sudden and enormous proliferation of all kinds of printed material (magazines, newspapers, etc.) after the advent of democracy, which resulted in only six issues coming out in 1990. All this does not quite explain the above-mentioned typographic oddities, but *Cosmos*’s frank letter to its readers at least sheds light on some of the many difficulties it was beset with in its later years.

5. The boundaries of the unknown

Keeping a constant focus on stirring its audience’s intellect and imagination, and not afraid to ask the “What if?” types of questions, *Cosmos* frequently went into areas of research on ancient civilizations and a hypothetical alien presence, which would usually be described by the sceptical twentieth-century scientific mind as fringe theories or pseudo-science. A good example is the article “More on the Ancient Astronauts”²⁴, published in the 1969/8 issue of the

²³ Уважаеми читатели! Какво стана с “Космос”? // Космос / Гл. Ред. Исаева, М. // Изд. АФ ВИКОМ. 1991. № 1. С. 11.

²⁴ Славчев, С. Още за древните космонавти // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1969. № 8. С. 16–19.

magazine, and written by Svetoslav Slavchev. Modern TV viewers familiar with the long-running American series “Ancient Aliens” (2009–present) might find it surprising that a lot of the same information that has been a staple of the show can already be found in a publication from an Eastern European country in the middle of its socialist experiment four decades earlier. The article in question mentions the Nazca lines, ancient Indian accounts of flying machines, the Japanese *dogū* humanoid figurines, and the now-famous Piri Reis map, among other things. Much of this material undoubtedly came from the then recently published book by Erich von Däniken, “Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past”. In 1970, the magazine also published an article by von Däniken himself, titled “Back to the Stars!”, which proclaims in its opening paragraph that “Nowadays, however, nobody doubts the existence of extraterrestrial life.”²⁵

Aliens and UFOs were a favourite topic on the pages of *Cosmos* through the years. Besides the two articles mentioned above, examples include: “Flying Discs: A Pseudo-Scientific Sensation or a Fantastic Reality?” (1967/1), “More on the Flying Discs” (1967/7), “Discs or Not?” (1967/8), “Flying Disc over Sofia” (1968/1), “More on the Flying Discs” (1968/5), “Who Is Sending Those Flying Saucers?” (1977/6), “Flying Discs and Disconauts” (1980/2), “UFOs – Myth or Reality” (1983/1), “Extraterrestrial Civilizations” (1984/5), “Are There Pyramids on Mars?” (1986/4), “Encounters of the Third Kind” (1989/6), “The Universe and I” (1989/8), “Mythology and Aliens” (1990/1), “Extraterrestrial Intelligence Drizzles over Sofia” (1993/1), “The Witness Is More Right Than Many Believe” (1993/3), and “Aliens, Please Call!” (1993/7).

The views expressed by the Bulgarian contributors to the magazine on the possibility of aliens visiting Earth varied while remaining mostly negative. However, we can see a trend of them slowly becoming less sceptical over time. In 1967, the readers were told that “The editorial board of *Cosmos* wholly supports the opinions of our scientists about the so-called flying discs. Our view is that, apart from cases involving mystifications and involuntary delusions, all observed phenomena can be explained with known physical, meteorological and technical earth phenomena”²⁶. In 1977, Dimitar Peev wrote: “The flying saucers turned out to be one of the most amusing sensations of the post-war era. It has its socio-psychological basis (it is no coincidence that the country most favoured by the flying saucers happens to be the US) but, from a scientific point of view, it can be categorically said that flying discs (in the

²⁵ Деникен, Е. Назад към звездите! // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1970. № 5. С. 29–33.

²⁶ Летящите дискове: Лъженаучна сензация или фантастична действителност? (продължение) // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1967. № 2. С. 28.

sense of flying machines of extraterrestrial origin) do not exist. This, of course, doesn't mean that there are no intelligent beings other than humans in the Galaxy"²⁷. And, in 1989, Yordan Kostov wrote: "As far as the descriptions of UFOs, 90 percent of them can be explained through atmospheric phenomena and other, purely earthly, causes. But that fact that the other ten percent remain unexplained forces scientists to refrain from sweeping conclusions"²⁸.

Thus, the opinions featured in *Cosmos* regarding alien visitors did become slightly more open-minded over time, but perhaps the most significant thing was that, even when they were dismissed as "hallucinations" or "delusions", many people's experiences with strange encounters and UFOs (including a number of Bulgarian sightings) did find their way onto the pages of the magazine for the readers to make up their own minds. There was also the problem of getting through the communist censorship, and while this might explain the predomination of carefully crafted conservative opinions, it is still remarkable that topics of this kind were permitted to be discussed at all—every now and then even favourably. Or could it be that such "unproven" and "unorthodox" speculations were tacitly allowed as a kind of antidote to the severe lack of freedom of expression about contemporary social and political issues in socialist Bulgaria? After all, we might be witnessing something similar happening at present—at a time of extremely low public confidence in government institutions and mainstream media coverage of current events, we have seen the release of US military videos of UAP (or "Unidentified Aerial Phenomena", as UFOs seem to have been rebranded), along with Pentagon teams even investigating UFOs (see, for example, this NBC News article²⁹).

A well-known example of the complex relationship which the Bulgarian communist authorities had with the mysterious and the other-worldly is the Baba Vanga phenomenon. According to Krasimira Stoyanova, niece and biographer of the famous Bulgarian healer and clairvoyant, "They banned her from seeing people looking for help, then allowed her, then banned her again. In the end, in 1967, she was officially permitted to work as a state seer; all the profits went into the state treasury"³⁰. The latter half of a 1976 documentary³¹ about Vanga

²⁷ Пеев, Д. Кой изпраща лелящите дискове? // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1977. № 6. С. 14.

²⁸ Костов, Й. Срещи от "третия вид" // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1989 № 1. С. 82.

²⁹ Seitz-Wald, Alex. 'Truth embargo': "UFOs are suddenly all the talk in Washington", in *NBC News* June 13, 2021. [<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/truth-embargo-ufos-are-suddenly-all-talk-washington-n1270560>] (accessed January, 2022).

³⁰ Ничия земя: Непознатата Ванга – разказът продължава / Сезон 7 Епизод 21 // НОВА ТВ, 06.02.2021. [<https://play.nova.bg/video/nichiya-zemya/season-7/nichiya-zemya-2021-02-06/543593>] (accessed January, 2022).

(which was censored at the time) features a discussion among a group of eminent Bulgarian academics, predominantly psychologists and psychiatrists, on the nature of her abilities. With the single exception of a person who had received an actual “reading” from Vanga, most of the participants are very sceptical, with some even calling her a “charlatan” and a “crook”. However, one discussant notably sums up the problem they all face: “From the point of view of scientific atheism, Vanga is not a subject of interest... However, she is a *phenomenon*, and the very fact that we are all assembled here is proof of the fact that she constitutes some kind of phenomenon... This phenomenon exists and must be analysed and studied in a multi-faceted way”.

A broad examination of the “materials” published by *Cosmos* during Bulgaria’s socialist years shows that it usually shied away from topics to do with mysticism, the possibility of life after death, communication with entities from other dimensions or the “beyond”, etc., which would not have fitted in well at all with the socialist system’s materialist worldview and its aversion to anything remotely “spiritual”. The same could of course be said about the prevailing attitudes of the positivist, reductionist and (narrowly) materialist enterprise of mainstream Western science of the same period, famously epitomized by the views of figures such as British biologist Richard Dawkins, but be that as it may, it was easier for *Cosmos* articles to ponder questions like “Who is sending those flying saucers?”³², than wonder about the nature of the “voice” inside Vanga’s head which she said was giving her information about the dead or about future and past events.

When it did address such phenomena, *Cosmos* would typically denounce them with a sceptical no-nonsense attitude. For instance, an article titled “Encounters with the World beyond the Grave” was featured in a 1979 issue of the magazine³³, and dealt with what we would now call Near Death Experiences, only to conclude that “the studies undertaken by the proponents of ‘Life after Life’ are simply anti-scientific”. A 1982 article, called “Nostradamus, or the End of Oracles”, finishes with the emphatic words: “And what kind of prophet is he who for no less than four centuries and a half was always ill understood? And when were gullible people being deceived during all this time, whether in centuries past or now? The answer is—

³¹ Феномен // Българска Телевизия / Главна редакция за документални филми // Интерфилм, Агенция София Прес. 1976. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoTOIn0RIIM>] (accessed January, 2022).

³² Пеев, Д. Кой изпраща летищите чинии? // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1977. № 6. С. 11.

³³ Среци със “задгробния” свят // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1979. № 4. С. 21–22.

always!?”³⁴

Still, the remarkable thing about the magazine was that it somehow managed to sneak in more daring opinions, or to at least admit possibilities beyond the conservative consensus at the time, especially if they could be framed in an acceptable way. Telepathy seemed to receive a slightly kinder treatment, for example: “If we assume that, though rarely, there are seer-telepaths, then palm reading, astrology and coffee reading lose their mystique. We just have to get rid of their religious aspects and to not be afraid of the ‘occult’ sciences, but to soberly investigate every case to find out if we are dealing with trickery, a highly developed ‘detective’ skill, or telepathy... And what about predicting the future? Let’s take it from the hands of the fortune-tellers and give it to the thinking machines. They would, somehow, be more reliable...”³⁵. Again, it was Yordan Kostov who in 1984 would dare go further than many of his colleagues: “If science formerly used to view the living organism as a system which takes in, processes, and excretes substances into the environment, and later as a system consuming, processing and eliminating energy, then why not regard it as a system capable of receiving, processing and transmitting information? And such a system, according to the laws of evolution, should constantly improve itself [in the direction of developing prognosticating mechanisms], because a ‘good prognosis’ is key for survival.”³⁶. He continued this line of thinking in 1989: “If we assume that an information-energy field exists around the Earth, we will have to accept that, because of the wave character of that field, we will be able to find information about a given living creature in every point of the space surrounding the planet, albeit in a very ‘rarefied’ state. Why, then, cannot we also admit the possibility of Man evolving towards interpenetrating the [field of the] human mind? Towards reading other people’s thoughts and, as it were, telepathy?”³⁷.

Of course, the old guard was not to give up easily, and Pavel Bachvarov, in the very next issue and on the very same page, struck back with a vengeance, writing about an experiment he had conducted live on national radio when he challenged all Bulgarian clairvoyant wannabes to guess what he had written in an envelope that he placed on the studio

³⁴ *Бъчваров, П.* Нострадамус или края на оракулите // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1982. № 5. С. 39.

³⁵ *Славчев, С.* Ясновидството – да или не? // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1968. № 4. С. 9–13.

³⁶ *Костов, Й.* Ясновидство, пророчество, или прогностичен механизъм? // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1984 № 5. С. 50.

³⁷ *Костов, Й.* Отвъд сетивното // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1989 № 1. С. 58.

table. His conclusion: “[The result] wasn’t very complicated or far from the clear logic of any intelligent man. Not one of the fortune-tellers got close to the truth. And this was logical, seeing that mysticism is powerless”³⁸.

Baba Vanga was never talked about in *Cosmos* until its publication ceased in 1994³⁹ thus turning out to be a scarier monster than Nessie of Loch Ness fame (which received at least four dedicated articles: 1964/9, 1975/7, 1984/4, 1989/7), or poltergeists (1988/9). This in spite of the fact that, after 1990, the magazine was much more open to all kinds of new horizons and former taboos, as were the times in general, with articles covering Jesus in India and Japan (1990/5), the Qi life force (1990/6), reincarnation (1991/7 & 1994/9), homeopathy (1991/9-10), transsexualism (1990/3 & 1993/1), channelling and mediumship (1992/3), Krishna consciousness (1993/2), Peter Dunoff and his Universal White Brotherhood (1993/3), euthanasia (1993/3), the Christian Bible (1993/5), homosexuality (1993/5), Islam (1993/6), ayahuasca (1994/8), the human soul, angels and demons in Christianity (1994/12).

“Prophecies” were all right, provided they were issued by Arthur C. Clarke⁴⁰, but even the treatment of Nostradamus had taken a positive turn—his popularity was explained purely as the product of “people’s ignorance and superstition”⁴¹ in 1982, while in 1994 it was stated that “Despite the ambiguity of his predictions, there are some which are quite remarkable.”⁴²

Cosmos’s oscillating interest in human paranormal abilities is also evidenced in its coverage of psychics. After an early article about Roza Kuleshova who was said to be able to “see with her fingers” (1964/10), published undoubtedly also thanks to the fact that she was a Russian phenomenon, the readers of the magazine had to wait all the way until the late 80s and early 90s for the topic to resurface, with a mini-explosion of materials: Albert Ignatenko and his remote psychic abilities (1989/2), the powers of the Bulgarian healers Momera Pencheva (1989/7) and Vera Kochovska (1989/9), followed by a sceptical view on psychics in general

³⁸ Бъчваров, П. Кога гадателите познават? // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1989. № 2. С. 58.

³⁹ Bulgarian (and Russian) media have more than compensated for this in the subsequent years and up to the present day; Baba Vanga and her “prophecies” have been the subject of multiple documentaries and a great many books and news articles, to the extent that there are now probably more fictional or imagined Vanga predictions than actual things that she did say.

⁴⁰ Пророчеството на Артър Кларк // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. Издателски комплекс “Труд”. 1993. № 6. С. 6.

⁴¹ Бъчваров, П. Нострадамус или края на оракулите // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1982. № 5. С. 39.

⁴² Славчев, С. Нострадамус веща апокалипсис сега // *Космос* / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. “Медиа” Холдинг АД, София. 1994. № 12. С. 31.

(1991/6), which did however acknowledge the sudden great popularity of the topic: “In the beginning was Djuna [Davitashvili]. Then, the miracle assumed the names of [Allan] Chumak and [Anatoly] Kashpirovsky, while there are dozens more in this country. The mass media reacted at once and the Bulgarian, whose sense of the mystical had faded in the last few years, started to deliriously consume the avalanche of information. As soon as a new miracle worker appeared, crowds of suffering people rushed towards his temple”⁴³.

The fact that *Cosmos* talked about all these people with paranormal abilities, as well as others, makes it all the more remarkable that Bulgaria’s most famous psychic and seer (as well as its most celebrated mystical export to Russia itself) did not receive any attention⁴⁴. Is it because she was bigger than a holy cow⁴⁵, and more like the elephant in the room?

6. Final Remarks

Twenty-three years after its disappearance, *Cosmos* was suddenly reincarnated in September, 2018, as an 80-page long monthly edition, with a new publisher (Media Group Bulgaria, *Медийна група България*), and with a smaller sales volume but also an online version⁴⁶. The magazine is currently being put together by the editorial team of the Bulgarian newspaper *168 Hours (168 часа)*.

The first issue of the modern version of the magazine was, fittingly, “dedicated to survival”⁴⁷ and featured on its cover a picture of the Formula One driver Michael Schumacher, next to the title “Schumacher: Will He Wake Up?” (“Шумахер: Ще се събуди ли?”).

The void of the magazine’s prolonged absence had been filled “to some extent” by *Magazine 8 (Списание 8)*, according to Svetoslav Slavchev⁴⁸, but the news that the “legendary” publication had reawakened was undoubtedly met with joy by many of its fans. Judging from the comments under a Facebook post made by the *Cosmos* editors on November 4, 2018⁴⁹, the

⁴³ Трифонова, М. Екстрасенси! Екстрасенси? // Космос / Гл. Ред. Исаева, М. // Изд. АФ: ВИКОМ КО. 1991. № 6. С. 16.

⁴⁴ To be fair, this undoubtedly would have eventually happened if the magazine had not met its untimely demise in 1994. Cf. note 39.

⁴⁵ There have been frequent discussions in Bulgaria about whether she should be canonized, although the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has so far refused to do so. Cf., for example, Тахов, Р. Защо църквата не канонизира Левски и Ванга, а божиите отци почитат един крал-българоубиец. // 24 часа, 16.07.2014. [<https://www.24chasa.bg/ojivlenie/article/4194678>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁴⁶ [<https://www.168chasa.bg>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁴⁷ Ти купи ли си списание “Космос” за дългия уикенд? // 24 часа, 21.09.2018. [<https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/7066339>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁴⁸ Оруш, За космоса и списание Космос (Интервю с д-р Светослав Славчев) (cf. note 4)

reception was mostly warm. However, there were a few criticisms by people disappointed with the content—too “yellow” and “not enough science”. A Bulgarian science blogger summed up the latter kind of sentiment after the first two issues of the new *Cosmos* had come out⁵⁰: “The past of the magazine is great and storied, and sets a very high bar...The reality [of the new magazine], however, is dull and sad. The aim of the new publishers is obviously to make money on the back of those old laurels, with a few cosmetic changes... From the very beginning, a look at the contents reveals chaos, and shows how far the new version of the magazine is from the original... Science is simply absent... There are two main ‘occult’ topics... Conspiracy theories are also a main theme... Where is the strictly scientific point of view?”. In a twist of irony, this passionate blogger is accusing the publication of doing what we saw its former incarnation often reluctant to do, thus limiting its scope of examined possibilities. But who is to decide where the fine line between scientific possibility and pure fiction lies? We would all like to shine a light on the truth but, as the twentieth-century American philosopher Terrence McKenna used to say, “the more powerful the light, the greater the surface area of darkness revealed”⁵¹.

It is clear that filling the shoes of that old Cobbler, nay *Cosmos*, is going to be an uphill task, better braced with *Schumacher* crampons if the new magazine is to be able to climb on top of frosty remarks like the above blogger’s. Apart from the 21st-century commercial Bulgarian reality, which is indeed very different to the old socialist days and has, in many people’s minds, fostered a dumbing down of publication standards and artistic output, the modern Internet content space is obviously very segmented. Gone is the common ground for a greater social consensus which existed until at least the mid-1990s and sanctioned social facts (despite those “facts” frequently turning out to be mere fiction in retrospect) —a result of the dominant role of mainstream mass-media. People can no longer easily agree about what constitutes reality anymore. “Conspiracy theory” has always been a derogatory term, but we have seen some of the greatest lies told by the proverbial “powers that be” in front of our very eyes on the TV screen or on the front page of newspapers, which has resulted in great mistrust of official information. As far as science, there is currently no real consensus even about topics of a literally vital importance, let alone harmonious agreement about less pressing problems,

⁴⁹ *Cosmos*’s Facebook page [<https://www.facebook.com/pg/spisaniecosmos/posts/>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁵⁰ Стефанов Й. (aka biologist). Пародията “Космос” // Блог Science & Critical Thinking, 02.10.2018. [<https://b9ine.net/2018/10/02/пародията-космос/>] (accessed January, 2022).

⁵¹ McKenna, Terence. *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge. A Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p.49.

or other more subjective realms of existence. Paradoxically, social and other media in some countries priding themselves on their traditions of “freedom of speech” have been actively censoring points of view that dissent from those of the establishment. For people familiar with the old Soviet social reality centred around a very narrow range of acceptable opinions, it is ironic that in self-professed “bastions of democracy” there are now officially proclaimed “correct” and “incorrect” views, the latter to be banished from the sphere of “manufactured consent”, to use a Chomskyan phrase. Everybody is talking about “fake news” these days, but a critical look at how the term rose to abrupt prominence just a few years ago in Western mainstream media suggests not so much that fake news was suddenly a new phenomenon which urgently needed to be talked about (it absolutely wasn't!), but that the term was promulgated in a concerted effort to try and discredit alternative points of view.

In any case, the Information Age has also turned out to be the age of disinformation. Which was always the case, but thanks to the weakened monopolies of those disseminating the information, this realization is nowadays easier to arrive at. “What can you trust in a world where nothing, in the old sense, is real?”, asked British historian James Burke in his 1985 TV series *The Day the Universe Changed*⁵². It is a world in which it is really down (or up) to each individual to decide for themselves what the “facts” are and to choose who to trust, for if they leave the task entirely to so-called “fact-checkers”, he or she or (...⁵³) is unfortunately too often at the mercy of their agenda. This is certainly easier said than done, and therefore ours is also an age which urgently requires a new Renaissance Man and Woman, having been educated well enough in more than one narrow field and capable of thinking for themselves, so that they can see further into the truth stripped of political, ideological and commercial interests. Easier said than done...

Such are the times in which the modern *Cosmos* has to try and engage its audience, and continue to not only exist but also be loved by the inquisitive Bulgarian reader. We can only hope that it will at least stick to its original aspirations, as well as its guiding philosophy, which was reaffirmed in 1989: “*Редакцията на сп. «Космос» смята, че младите читатели трябва да бъдат информирани за всичко. И за това, което многократно и всеки момент може да бъде повторено в научните лаборатории, и за онова, което е на границата на фантастиката и само малцина смелчаци под недоумяващите погледи на сериозната наука се наемат да обяснят. Защото, убедени сме, загадъчното, труднообяснимото много повече провокира творческото въображение на човека.*” (“The

⁵² Burke, James. A Matter of Fact: Printing Transforms Knowledge. *The Day the Universe Changed* (Episode 10 of the TV Series). BBC Productions. 1985.

⁵³ fill your blank here

editorial board of *Cosmos* is of the opinion that young readers should be informed of everything—both about phenomena that can be reliably reproduced in the science laboratory and about what lies on the border of the fantastic, which only a brave few dare try to make sense of, under the bewildered gaze of serious science. For we are convinced that the mysterious and the hard-to-explain stimulate the human creative imagination far more.’⁵⁴.

ABSTRACT

ブルガリアでは、国内の作家による空想科学小説より海外のサイエンス・フィクション小説が盛んに読まれてきたが、20世紀後半にSF界やポピュラーサイエンス界で最も大きな存在となった出版物は「コスモス」という月刊誌である。この論文は、「コスモス」の主な内容について紹介し、雑誌の32年間にわたる前世紀の歴史の中で掲載されたポピュラーサイエンス記事及びSF作品を整理しながら、さまざまな傾向、焦点、問題点、更に諸問題に関する雑誌のスタンスや編集上の制約について報告している。

NOTE:

A talk on the same topic was presented at the「スラヴ世界のSF——K. チャペック『ロボット』初演100周年によせて——」online symposium（日本スラヴ学研究会, Nov. 28, 2021）.

⁵⁴ Космос дискутира // Космос / Гл. Ред. Дичев, С. // Изд. ЦК на ДКМС. 1989. № 2. С. 70.