

Poetics of Entanglement. The Nonhuman Side of Polish Literature in Econarratological Approach

Today, in the face of increasing crises, such as the climate catastrophe and negative consequences of the Anthropocene, at the same time we participate in rapid technological progress, and we learn from biological sciences about the discoveries of previously unknown ways of communication, feeling, interdependencies and agency of plants and animals. Along with the disclosure of successive levels of human relations with the nonhuman world, linear language of the story about reality becomes more and more narrow and insufficient. Both in the humanities and in literature, there is an ongoing search for alternative forms of narrative about the complex world, which will cover not only man but a whole spectrum of other actors: environment, animals, plants, objects, hyperobjects, machines, algorithms, and artificial intelligence. Here, the following questions arise: have there been fictions among the literary works of Polish authors in recent years, trying to break through the present paradigm? In what ways might the story form evolve combined with posthuman changes in the real world?

The aim of my research project is to analyze the poetics of entanglement, that is new writing strategies that go beyond the human perspective and anthropocentric hierarchy while proposing the organization of stories in accordance with the specificity of complex environmental systems of interdependence. I would like to prepare the first econarratological identification of this phenomenon on the basis of recent Polish prose. To that end, it is necessary to answer the question of how individual elements of more-than-human narratives (organic and inorganic characters, non-linear plot, networked narrators, multiscalarity, unnatural world) are formed into an alternative, non-anthropocentric structure of the story. Nonhuman threads in selected fiction of contemporary Polish writers will serve as a basis for describing the characteristics of entangled writing.

I see entangled literary stories as an emancipatory attempt to give voice to beings without it and to think about the environment in categories of a mesh of relational connections. The authors, through various diegetic tools, including defamiliarization, networking, embodiment or a change of perspective, give the reader a chance to exceed the current cognitive framework and empathetically enter into a radically other experience. In order to properly examine the structures of entangled stories and their socio-cultural message, I will use the latest methodology of econarratology which combines postclassical narratological methodology with posthumanism, ecocriticism, or animal studies.

Identification and interpretation of the nonhuman side of contemporary Polish prose will be the first attempt of this kind in Polish literary studies. The necessity to comprehensively trace the phenomenon of entangled writing is evidenced by the fact that some of the Polish-language texts of culture I propose have received an initial econarratological analysis only by scholars from western research centres.

The research will be finalized by two scientific articles, the first in Polish and the second in English, prepared as part of the internship at the Department of Literary Studies at Ghent University in Belgium, which will be published successively in national and international journals.