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**NON-HUMAN NARRATIVE INSTANCES IN THE  
POSTHUMANIST LITERATURE**

**ABSTRACT**

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Key words: posthumanism, posthumanity, non-human narratology, cyborgization, feminism, corporality, agency.

### **NON-HUMAN NARRATIVE INSTANCES IN THE POSTHUMANIST LITERATURE - summary**

This research focuses on the non-human narrative structures in the posthumanist literature, especially the way in which the narrative discourse is shaped from the perspective of a non-human, emphasizing its implications in the social and cultural fields. The work is structured in a theoretical first part in which are established the conceptual limits of the research and a second analytical part in which the concepts from the first part are applied in order to sustain the concepts that were developed.

Firstly, it analyzes the posthumanist phenomena as a social movement, but also as a cultural-artistic realization. Because posthumanism is not a cohesive movement and it revokes the ideological identities, it is hard to define it as a crystallized structure. This is the reason, in this thesis, the posthumanism is presented by defining some of the key concepts which stands to its basis, concepts as: transhumanism, antihumanism, new materialism, feminism etc. As we can see, posthumanism is an umbrella term which covers many ideological movements, and as a whole, it is an instrument of social diagnosis, through all its levels. The main objective to this study is to define some major lines which can stand to a social redefinition from a posthumanist point of view.

The fact that *human is dead* brings a shift in the humanistic vision of reality which cannot fit in the contemporary form of humans. The technologized human, the figure of the cyborg came with an opening for all the existences from the world. This is the result of the identity crisis of

humanity and the need of the human to redefine himself in relation with all the forms of existence which surround him. In this process, the human develops a form of acceptance for the entire existence of the planet, and the enhanced attention provided to the animals, objects and plants reconfigure the hierarchical structures which were the base for the modern society, and from this point the distinction between human and non-human is exceeded.

Generally, the posthumanist aspects of the research focus on the non-human and its relation with the human, even though posthumanism overcomes the cultural and sociological identities. Posthumanism changes the way in which the non-human is viewed and traces a form of cohabitation for human and non-human at a point of equality. This fact is sustained by the New Materialism's theories which came with a new form of agential vitality specific for all bodies and materiality. Any materiality from this planet is part from a microsystem which influences each part of it, but also is influenced by its parts. In this point, the human is no longer an organizer of the world, a measure for all the things, but an integrant part of the system that needs to be restructured by the new ontological structure of humanity.

The non-human is the recurring element in posthumanism, the finite result of the processes that take place in transhumanism. At this point it is difficult to identify a limit of the human, so the non-human will be all the more difficult to outline, as the reference element has a vague delimitation. Thus, the result of an excessive development of human nature through technology, such as cloning, prosthesis, etc. results in one form or another of the non-human. Technological creations that have nothing to do with the human, but that have been endowed by man with certain human features, are all the more a representation of the non-human. Another form of non-human is the animal kingdom. In this situation, the question arises whether the interaction with animals occurs on the basis of a personification or is a step beyond the human criteria of existence. The same goes for objects or plants.

The second theoretical part of the research focuses on the narratological aspects of the texts that are written in posthuman formula, in this case the texts that have a unique narrative formula through the non-human narrative voice that allows a different vision of the world we live in. Based on the function of social diagnosis (respectively prognosis) that literature has, the issue of a non-human perspective about the world appears. If the non-human is at the level of existential equality with the human, then the existence of a non-human consciousness that allows the formation of an existential experience that is different from the one projected by man is also

acceptable. Here comes the corporality through which the self-consciousness of any existence is formed. In this situation, posthumanism appears as a form of transgression of the limits, of the barriers between the binary structures that have sustained human identity for a long time. Outside these limits, appears a society that generates a new culture, a discursive structure that corresponds to the contemporary context and the posthuman man who is in a state of transition from anthropocentrism to postanthropocentrism.

Non-human narratology is an old form of literary discourse, but along with posthumanism it is revalued and the narrative instances receive more credible credibility, speaking due to philosophical and cultural transformations. It is not uncommon for an animal or object to have its own consciousness or to speak, although it does so through human language and relates to the world through man-made cultural elements. Posthumanism confers this openness to the non-human, to the one next to us, especially to the marginal, the one who has been excluded, the *non-* that could not be integrated into the structures that man has developed to define himself.

For the most part, behind the mechanisms that underlie a non-human narrative are two processes by which the reader breaks away from the context in which he or she lives and attempts a form of unusualness. Thus, as a human being, the reader must distance himself from the way man thinks, respectively from the way he culturally constructs the surrounding reality. Here comes the acceptance that man is no longer the only one who sees reality and that thing can be observed and perceived through another corporality. Under these circumstances, the phenomenon of empathy of the reader with the non-human existence that narrates the text appears. In order to truly understand the essence of the story and to be able to perceive the world of the entity that speaks in the text, the reader takes over, ideally, the functions of that entity and creates a new self-awareness through the body taken from the narrator. Corroborating the double dialectic between *defamiliarization* and *empathy* with the posthumanist view of the world, a new discursive structure develops in which man lives in perfect communion with all other entities of this world, and through these narrative structures in posthumanist literature opens the door to a new perspective of the reality around us, a prosthetic reality in which the central element is the non-human as an existential entity and not as a form of identity.

As an applied form of research, the paper includes nine case studies on narrative texts in which the narrative voices belong to a non-human entity. These entities question the relationship

between human and non-human, being in the form of manifest texts, which allowed the identification of four positions that non-human narrators approach towards man as follows: *rival*, *marginal*, *otherness* and *alter ego*. Of course, narrative voices are the integrative formulas of these positions from which they relate to man, so a non-human narrative voice can address even two or three of these previously mentioned positions. The more distant the image of the narrator is from human values, the more aggressive is the position from which the narrator manifests himself towards man. The rat in Zanievsky's novel and the woodworm in Julian Barnes's novel represent two rivals for human beings. Both are considered parasitic existences by man and as a result, they manifest themselves as such towards him. Both the rat and the woodworm see a rival in man and try to deconstruct the image that he has shaped throughout history.

The rat in Sam Savage's novel is one who reads, adheres to human values, which is why he really wants to become a human being. The same situation appears in Stein's novel. In this case, there is a rapprochement between human and non-human in terms of the values that man has just before the posthuman turn. Another strong connection between man and the animal kingdom can be seen in Julio Cortázar's prose where man really becomes an axolotl. In this situation we can even speak of a transformation of the human into the non-human. It is the situation in which man, undefined by his own existence and corporeality, feels the need to experience a different existential identity. If in the novels of Sam Savage and Garth Stein, animals want to become human, Julio Cortázar shows the reverse of the process, the axolotl being a latent form of human *alter ego* that is found through the transition from human to animal consciousness.

We can also talk about an alter ego position in the case of the cat-narrator from Hiro Arikawa's novel where the animal builds its identity based on the relationship it develops with its owner. Although the form of reporting to the human from a non-human perspective is similar to Hiro Arikawa and Julio Cortázar, there is a difference in how humans relate to the non-human. Satoru, the owner of the cat Nana in Hiro Arikawa's novel, has a great openness to the non-human, but not so much that he wants to become a cat. At this point we cannot talk about a transfer of identity between human and non-human, but it is a form of reflection of the human in the non-human and vice versa. Satoru finds himself in the cat he saves from the street, and Nana finds himself in the figure of her master, Satoru. Each of the two outlines an identity through the

prism of the other in a posthumanist manner where the human and the non-human are two constituent entities of the same world.

Humans are not the only beings on the planet and posthumanism is trying to build such a critical mindset, as can be seen in Julian Barnes's novel *A History of the World in 10 and a Half Chapters*, where the woodworm rewrites the history of humanity from an animal perspective. Things don't just happen the way we see them (as humans), but they can have many nuances that we probably don't realize. Giving a voice to the non-human allows access to such a world in which man does not live alone. The bottle of wine from Joanna Harris's novel, in her role as narrator, presents human events from her own perspective, which gives a unique color to the story which, in the absence of such an artifice, would have been a simplistic one. Both, the wood worm from Julian Barnes's novel and the bottle of wine from Joanna Harris's novel, offer the reader the opportunity to look at things from a different angle, to "think outside the box." The difference between the two narrative instances mentioned above consists of the position they approach in relation to the human. If the wine bottle builds its identity positively based on its relationship with man, the wood worm is positioned in opposition to people, being rather in the position of their *rival*.

Certainly, every non-human narrative hypostasis mentioned in the present research draws attention to the fact that there is always a different way of looking at things, and valuing the non-human from an existential point of view is a way for man to redefine himself in a posthumanist way. Italo Calvino in *Cosmicomics* also presents a form of recording historical facts from a non-human perspective. Qfwfq is the non-human polymorphic entity which, in its position of otherness towards the human, presents events from the past of existence in which man did not take part. Although Qfwfq is a non-human existence, it thinks and expresses itself humanly, makes itself understood and empathizes with the reader who, in turn, empathizes with this indefinable existential form. The narrator goes through several hypostases throughout the text and accumulates several narrative voices, as happens in Orhan Pamuk's novel, *My Name Is Red*, where the position of narrator belongs, in turn, to each character in the text. In these two novels, a non-human narrative polymorphism is created and generates the shaping of several non-human identities and positions.

Posthumanism is the context in which any individuality can manifest its presence and existential formula. Posthumanism accepts the perspective of the wood worm on the world, the

cat, the dog, the rat and all non-human entities as well as the perspective outlined by man. Anthropocentrism did not allow this, which degenerated into a crisis situation in which man, as part of a very large existence, becomes alienated from it and no longer recognizes himself. Man can accept at this point only the entities that belong to the set of values defined by anthropocentrism, all other existential forms being marginalized or disregarded. Posthumanism has allowed access to a unique perspective on the world in which the non-human has his own vision and can contribute to an overview of the reality in which the human and the non-human live alike. In other words, the non-human is the recurring element in post-anthropocentric posthumanism not through an ontological deconstruction of man that would allow an exclusively non-human existence, but by redefining the human so that it is part of existence and not its "measure".