Summary

Representation of Animals in Contemporary Canadian Fiction in English

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the representations of nonhuman characters in selected contemporary Canadian novels in English published since the closing years of the 1990s from the perspective of animal studies. The dissertation endeavours to present diverse methods of portraying animals in literary texts, paying special attention to nonhuman particularity that can serve as a tool to blur traditionally enforced human-nonhuman borders. The analysis covers physical and discursive levels, including plot, characters, narrators and narration, as well as the stylistic devices employed to recreate nonhuman actors and their language. Furthermore, juxtaposing scientific facts with the literary representations, frequently burdened by anthropomorphisation and symbolism, challenges cultural stereotypes about nonhumans.

The aim shall be achieved through the use of the posthumanist perspective that redefines the position human beings hold in philosophical discourse. On account of that, animal studies emphasise the significance of interspecies dependencies, nonhumans' subjectivity and agency, as well as their participation in historical and cultural events. The research methodology elaborated in Chapter 1 draws on various theories, including feminist literary studies, postcolonialism, ecocriticism, and trauma studies, as well as interdisciplinary studies on animal language, cognitive abilities, emotions, and pain perception. Furthermore, Chapter 2 presents a historical context for the development of nonhuman presence in literature from the territory of present-day Canada.

The analytical part is comprised of four chapters that examine following novels: Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* (2010), Colin McAdam's *A Beautiful Truth* (2013), Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (*Oryx and Crake* [2003], *The Year of the Flood* [2009] *MaddAddam* [2013]), Alissa York's *Fauna* (2010), and Cary Fagan's *The Animals* (2022), and Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *A Recipe for Bees* (1998). Of these novels, only the volumes of the *MaddAddam* trilogy have already been translated into Polish. The texts are grouped into thematic chapters, starting with nonhuman narration and language in Jessica Grant's *Come, Thou Tortoise* and Colin McAdam's *A Beautiful Truth* (Chapter 3). The analysis shows that

Grant's story interweaves human and nonhuman first-person narrative voices, revealing the moral responsibility of caregiving. In contrast, the collective chimpanzee's voice emphasises group bonds and instincts that resist human interpretation. Both novels, together with Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, in particular its first volume, *Oryx and Crake*, are subsequently analysed in the next chapter (Chapter 4) in terms of the exploitation of animals for medical purposes as well as crossing the genetic border between humans and animals. In scientific or experimental contexts, the animals are routinely portrayed as victims of systemic violence, especially when their individuality is effaced by technoscientific discourse. Using Alissa York's *Fauna* and Cary Fagan's *The Animals*, I investigate the problem of human-nonhuman societies, which is addressed in Chapter 5. Asserting that language possesses the power of enforcing species hierarchies, my analysis suggests that a sustainable interspecies community requires recognition of the needs of all participants. Employing Donaldson and Kymlicka's categories of citizenship helps to address nonhuman requirements regarding the benefits they derive from contact with humans. In Chapter 6, I juxtapose the second volume of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, and Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *A Recipe for Bees* to elaborate on bees as collectiveness and their relationship with the caretakers. The hives operate as a model of a decentralised community, in which communicative behaviours, expressed through complex somatic and sensual patterns, undermine the priority of human language in shaping a democratic community. The analysis highlights the inherently collective nature of bees, redirecting attention to the colony as a living whole.

In my conclusions, I assert that the dissertation fulfils its stated aims by demonstrating that contemporary Canadian novels in English employ a wide range of strategies to represent nonhuman beings that are able to destabilise the rigidity of human–animal boundaries. I argue that animal studies enable us to approach animals not only as tropes and symbols (though such readings are not erased) but as characters with specificity that challenge anthropocentric norms. The analysis highlights recurring contexts in which animals are present: laboratories and biotechnological sites, domestic settings, and urban environments. I argue that nonhuman subjectivity can be achieved through narrative strategies, either by witty first-person narration or the collective chimpanzee voice, marked by linguistic distortion. Anthropomorphism, as I demonstrate, operates ambivalently: it can foster empathy and narrative proximity, but also risks effacing nonhuman particularity. By bringing this ambivalence into focus, the dissertation proves that a representation is a site of

negotiation with context. Simultaneously, the amplification of nonhuman voices and anthropomorphisation shape a sensitivity to the needs of nonhuman beings. Across these modes, the tension between symbolic figures and embodied subjects is still present.

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