Tomasz Sikora
Pedagogical University of Cracow
ORCID 0000-0001-9537-4184

Performing The (Non)Human: A Tentatively Posthuman Reading of Dionne Brand's Short Story *Blossom*[1]

> "My story, no doubt, is me, but it is also, no doubt, older than me. Younger than me, older than the humanized. Unmeasurable, uncontainable, so immense that it exceeds all attempts at humanizing. But humanizing we do, and also overdo, for the vision of a story that has no end – no end, no middle, no beginning; no start, no stop, no progression; neither backward nor forward, only a stream that flows into another stream, an open sea – is the vision of a madwoman."[2]

"Posthumanity" made its triumphant entrance into the academic, as well as cultural, scene over the 1990s, largely as a response to the postmodern critiques of (or explicit calls for the abolition of) the Enlightenment project of Man. It is clearly indebted to Nietzsche, for whom the death of God entailed the death – or the overcoming – of Man. In the postmodern setting this line of linking concentrated largely on the critique of the modern liberal-humanist subject, the mainstay of rationality, free will, agency, political and economic liberty, etc. The spectacular developments of science and technology also contributed to the sense that the traditional notion of the "human" was critically inadequate. Technophiles began to prophesy the end of the human as we know it, not just in terms of philosophical definitions, but very literally and physically: we are all turning into cyborgs, they would assert, moving to another level of evolution, possibly with a view to discarding the body completely in the future. Much of this angst mixed with hope was fuelled by the postcolonial framework of the second half of the 20th century. The massive colonial enterprise launched at the end of the 15th century brought Europeans in contact with new "beings," whose precise status in relation

---

[1] The article originally appeared in: "TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies" 2010, vol. 3, s. 113–123.

[2] T.T. Minh-ha, *Grandma's Story*, in: eadem, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 1989, s. 123.

to humanity was yet to be established. This, of course, forced Europeans themselves to reflect upon their own humanity, which finally led to a more or less stabilized concept of Man (clearly Eurocentric, yet often claimed as universal) by the early eighteenth century. No wonder, then, that the collapse of the colonial world order caused a new crisis in the definitions of the human, threatening the Enlightenment idealization with various postcolonial "hybrids."

To some proponents (particularly to techno-oriented trans-/posthumanists), post-humanism is an ontological claim: human nature itself, or the "human" mode of existence, is transforming. We may argue about the actual phase of that transformation, but the direction seems clear and inevitable. To others, the claim is more modest and involves a revaluation of the Eurocentric notions of the human that have dominated much of the world over last centuries; it is just a particular historical notion of "Man" that is changing. The use of the term may be descriptive and/or proscriptive: it may be a strategic gesture that calls for a redefinition of the human in the face of the felt failure of the Enlightenment project (combined, as it certainly was, with the colonial project). Thus, posthumanism may be understood as a new form of humanism, perhaps a democratization of that notion and a critical investigation of its boundaries and regulatory uses. Whether a radicalization of humanism, or a new philosophy in its stead, posthumanism certainly calls for a repositioning of the human vis-à-vis various nonhumans, such as animals, machines, gods and demons, as well as for a careful investigation of the Eurocentric notions of the human which have been granting "humanity" to certain subjects only provisionally.[3]

On the other hand, posthumanism may be treated with suspicion by those groups that, in more or less recent history, have been subjected to various forms of dehumanization (due to their skin color, for example). It may be seen as another trendy "post-" formation, in line with post-racialism, post-gender or post-sexuality. In an impassioned book on the currency of "race" in today's world, David Theo Goldberg investigates carefully what is at stake in the general calls to "erase race." While the goal seems noble – a world without race as a category that polices people's lives, experiences and social engagements – "we are being asked to give up on race before and without addressing the legacy, the roots, the scars of racisms' histories, the weights of race. We are being asked to give up on the word, the concept, the category, at most the categorizing. But not, pointedly not, the conditions for which those terms stand."[4] One of the dangers of this antiracialism is that "[d]ehumanizing is no longer so readily recognizable when 'the human' is either only recognized as those like us or the limit conception is so porous, so nebulous, as to make no one sure of who counts and who does not, of who is first person and who avatar."[5] The notion of the "posthuman" may thus be employed to cover up the instances in which humanity is painfully denied to certain people, or granted to them "on principle," but without any social or political commitment. The erasure of the category "human," it could be argued, works for the

---

[3] See: D. Brydon, *Dionne Brand's Global Intimacies: Practising Affective Citizenship*, 13 March 2010, s. 3, https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1993/32319/Brydon_Diana_Affective_Citizenship.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [access: 2023/05/24].

[4] D.T. Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden 2009, s. 21.

[5] Ibidem, s. 361.

benefit of those who occupy in the "family of man" privileged positions. Paraphrasing bell hooks, "it's easy to give up your human status if you got one," if it has never been problematized for you, if it just "goes without saying."

As a black, immigrant, Marxist, lesbian, woman writer (I juxtapose the terms 'lesbian' and 'woman' on purpose, given the occasionally troubled relationship between the two) Dionne Brand is keenly aware of the legacies of various forms of dehumanization. As a writer and a professor, she participates in the critical investigation and contestation of 'human history' and 'human nature.' In our post-Derridean times it is a commonplace to say that every professor is (to some extent) a writer, just as every writer is (to some extent) a professor, which is not to conflate the two terms or deny the distinctive roles that professors and writers usually play in social life. Both weave the fabric of the textual and conceptual universe in which we are fully immersed. Even if writers are more commonly regarded as repositories of experience, whereas professors as repositories of knowledge, the distinction between experience and knowledge escapes clear demarcations: there can be no knowledge without experience (and experiment), just as, arguably, there can be no experience without knowledge (at least the self-knowledge of being an experiencing subject). In other words, if knowledge is understood as sedimentation and systematization of experience, the way we experience also depends immensely on structures of knowledge, on how we know the world and ourselves in the world. The difference could also be rephrased with reference to the classical terms of Aristotelian narratology: writers could be described as more mimetic and imaginative in that they "enact" experience as well as invite novel ways of experiencing through writing, whereas professors are more diagetic and discursive in that they attempt to communicate ideas at a level abstracted from direct experience; writers are more about showing, professors more about telling. Yet neither of these 'techniques' seems sufficient in itself; no wonder that some scholars who see the limitations of academic modes of textualizing and conceptualizing the world decide to complement their production of knowledge with authoring literary texts, while some writers for whom literature has an important educational and self-reflexive dimension take up university positions. In their production of texts and ideas, both groups move inevitably between the particular and the universal, the concrete and the abstract, the word and the idea; but also: between the known and that which is only starting to emerge *as* knowledge, from the first stirrings of experience, perception and realization.

It could be argued, further, that every 'body of knowledge' entails or projects a world of its own, an *umwelt,* to use Jakob von Uexküll's famous term; and that every 'body of knowledge' needs a living material body. I am referring here to the mostly phenomenological and feminist tradition of thinking about knowledge as (always already) situated, embodied, "in-history-ed." From this insight one could go as far as to claim that the idea of "one world" (so prevalent in a time defined primarily through globalization) is somewhat suspicious and derived from the universalistic humanist framework that posthuman thought attempts to challenge. A posthumanist perspective, then, might posit instead a multiplicity of "world-knowledges" and, consequently, a multiplicity of "lived" worlds. This is, indeed, the starting point for my reading of Brand's short story *Blossom*. By presenting a *radical* experience (radical, that is, in the context of a modern Western socio-political space), the story may be read as advocating a *multimundialism*, i.e. a de-hegemonization and de-homogenization of the notion of "one world" inhabited

by "one humanity" with a fundamentally unified "human experience." In this sense my reading is a posthuman one in that it "aims to open up possibilities for alternatives to the constraints of humanism as a system of values."[6] It certainly does not promote a solipsistic atomization of subjects nor a dehumanization; rather, it examines the "catalogue of assumptions and values about 'what it means to be human'",[7] the way the appellation "human" is invoked in the present "global" regime, so indebted to the humanistic universalism of the Enlightenment.

Blossom is a black, old, mad woman, an immigrant, an obeah, a speakeasy owner – enough to make her a figure of abjection, fear and fascination in the Western, specifically Canadian, context. From the moment she arrives in Toronto, she occupies a liminal position not only in relation to the category of "citizen," but also that of "human." Probably the first thing that strikes the reader is the heavily non-standard English employed by the narrator, which is one of the strategies of challenging "the fixity of Western hegemonic positions," as Charlotte Sturgess has it.[8] "No language is neutral," as we know: Western societies invest heavily in the "proper" use of language: eloquence still serves as a measure of education, intelligence, national or ethnic belonging, and even humanity itself. No wonder, then, that a denial of a "proper language" proved to be a useful tool in the centuries-long project of dehumanizing the colonized other. With her mingling of the tenses, disregard for the subject and verb agreement (in person and number), and avoidance of possessive forms and objective pronouns, Brand's narrator poses a threat to the prevailing Western conceptualizations of "objective" time and space, separate "persons" and their interconnections, as well as the relationships between the human and the nonhuman. Charlotte Sturgess points out the shifting degrees of opacity and transparency that characterize the language of the narration and concludes that "language itself partakes of the radical 'shape-shifting' going on in the story, as subjectivities merge and distinctions between the natural and the supernatural collapse."[9] In my reading, these shifts indicate not only a critique of a unified, consistent, self-contained subject promoted by the Western "subjectivity regime," but also a critique of the Euclidean concept of a universal and uniform "space," in which local distinctions do not amount to much. Just as language is to be understood as a medium – with its materiality, density, opacity, etc. – so is space. What is more, if the Euclidean space corresponds to the space of writing (a reproducible inscription that can travel noiselessly through time and space), Brand's narrator's sense of space is much closer to an embodied "hereness," or a closeness, presupposed by orality as narrative style.

Indeed, critics have repeatedly stressed the importance of spatial categories in Brand's work, particularly the relationship between a "here" and an "elsewhere." In part, this may be the writer's deliberate dialogue with, and a problematization of, Northrop Frye's famous "Where is here?" question, so central, according to him, in the Canadian literary imagination. Brand asks this question again in a new context,

---

6 S. Herbrechter, I. Callus, *What Is a Posthumanist Reading?*, "Angelaki" 2008, vol. 13, no. 1, s. 107.

7 Ibidem, s. 95.

8 Ch. Sturgess, *Redefining the Subject: Sites of Play in Canadian Womens Writing*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York 2003, s. 61.

9 Ibidem.

in a world undergoing rapid diasporization and globalization, even as it continues to struggle with its complex postcolonial legacies in particular localities and particular bodies. Diana Brydon, for instance, states that "[f]rom the beginning, she [Brand] has stressed the ways in which lives lived in one place are implicated as much in what happens elsewhere as in what happens here."[10] This presupposes a notion of geographic, political and social space that is not simply based on a two-way relation between the local and the global, but rather imagines space, in keeping with an ecological paradigm, as an endless field of densities and forces in which every embodied locality is specific, but simultaneously always related though a series of mediations to every other locality. Cultures, like people, do travel, but the travelling is never simply repositioning a stable element from place A to place B in uniform space, but a constant process of translation, mediation and transmutation.

This "ecological" sense of space could also be applied to the "space of humanity," i.e. the imaginary space in which humans can claim to be humans. It should not be understood as uniform space, simply divided into geographic "quarters," as some prophets of globalism see it. Being human means different things to different people in different places. As people (and cultures) travel, "humanness" must necessarily face a never-ending chain of translations and hybridizations. If some kind of universalism could still be attached to the notion of humanity, an apt metaphor for it should be the Earth's atmosphere and ecosystem rather than a flattened plane inhabited by interchangeable and fundamentally identical subjects, abstracted from local conditions and interrelations. "Local," however, should not have a fixed referent, it should be construed as infinitely scalable between micro and macro levels (in her dream Blossom inhabits a place "big one minute, […] small, next minute, as a pin head"[11]). I agree with Brydon's statement that "Brand's writing counters versions of humanism in which white privilege constitutes full humanity, assigning racialized others only provisional acceptance within its parameters"[12]; the critic then borrows the term "planetary humanism" from David Scott to describe Brand's rearticulations of local, national and global citizenship.[13] It might be more fruitful, however, to substitute the notion of a "planetary humanism" with that of a *multihumanism.* Not only would the latter term help discard the undesirable baggage of the colonizing and hegemonizing uses of the "human," it would also emphasize the irreducibility and unfixability of every instance of "being human." Multihumanism would not, in any case, aim to archive a finite number of variations "on the theme Human",[14] but it would be constantly alert to any new formations and configurations arising within the space of the "human"; ultimately, it would point in the direction of an even more daring notion, that of "ecohumanism."

Such is the case, I believe, with Blossom. She is much more than a "universal human subject with some local colour" imagined, arguably, by Canada's official policy of multiculturalism. (The word "colour" sounds sadly ironic in this context, and it almost

---

[10] D. Brydon, *Dionne Brand's Global Intimacies*…, op. cit., s. 3.

[11] D. Brand, *Blossom*, in: *Likely Stories: A Postmodern Sampler*, ed. G. Bowering, L. Hutcheon, Coach House Press, Toronto 1992, s. 38–39. Editorial note: cited henceforth as B.

[12] D. Brydon, *Dionne Brand's Global Intimacies*…, op. cit., s. 3.

[13] Ibidem, s. 7.

[14] S.A. Smith, *Suckers*, "differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies" 1998, vol. 10, nr 1, s. 189.

inevitably presupposes the apparently neutral whiteness as the non-colour of uni-versalism.) Her transformation "from servant to goddess," as Renk puts it,[15] happens through madness and possession, i.e. a violent dismantling of the forms of subjecthood offered to her by the Westernized, globalized, postcolonial world. What motivates her (even beyond her conscious intentions) is accumulated rage: against male domination, white moral "ugliness," suffering (which seems almost genetically inherited), the cage of victimization, the forces of social coercion, and ultimately – against dehumanization practiced in the name of a certain hegemonic concept of the human. One could go as far as to claim that temporary madness is a necessary (if dangerous) step on the way to breaking free from the stifling normativism of the notion of the human as a rational being, sustained through centralized self-control, self-management, and self-regulation. Blossom breaks out of the shell with a force that threatens her very being *as* a subject. That the source of her self-empowerment comes from the non-human Other is of utmost significance: her power, agency, and dignity are not "granted" by any socio-political regime; they are derived from the very marginality she inhabits, from her own story. She moves from "less-than-human" to "more-than-human," from victim to warrior, from re-active to proactive. Interestingly, each significant step on her way to self-empowerment involves a displacement or a "decentring" of her subject position. The first time she explodes into frenzy, she keeps shouting "Make me a weapon in thine hand, oh Lord" (B, 33); the second bout of madness is also characterized by a loss of a subjective self: she hears somebody scream and only after a while does she realize the scream comes from her (B, 37). But even at a less intense moment, a moment of making a conscious decision about her life (getting a man), she "jumps" out of herself: "Something tell she to stop and witness the scene" (B, 35). Progress is only possible through acts of transgression, crossing or even losing boundaries,[16] releasing the conscious grip on one's identity and allowing oneself to be "possessed" by an idea or a spiritual force transcending one's present self. The act of transgression, says Taussig in a different context, is "in itself fraught with the perils of indeterminacy constitutive of Being no less than threatening it with dissolution."[17] In a sense (definitely in the *Western* sense) Blossom is no longer *self-possessed:* by giving up self-control and self-possession she gains self-empowerment, as beautiful and frightening as her "freeness" dance.

Jumping is what the story begins with: "Blossom's was jumping tonight" (B, 31). The form of the protagonist's name causes instant confusion: why the possessive case? By shifting the expected nominative to the genitive, is the sentence supposed to usher us into the problematic of "possession" and/or indeterminable subjectivity? Should it be read as "Blossom's body"? Movement and dance are certainly an important trope in the story, a physical manifestation of the "war" that the protagonist wages against Suffering and the world that produces it, but also an expression of beauty and free-dom. Peggy Phelan has remarked perceptively that "[i]n moving from the grammar of words to the grammar of the body, one moves from the realm of metaphor to the

---

[15] K.J. Renk, *Caribbean Shadows & Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 1999, s. 105.

[16] See: Ibidem, s. 103–105.

[17] M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, Routledge, New York and London 1993, s. 162.

realm of metonymy",[18] where metaphor stands for the order of stable and reproducible identities, whereas metonymy stands for contiguity, movement, an escape from the rigid logic of identitarian categorizations. She goes on to assert: "In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of 'presence.' But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else – dance, movement, sound, character, 'art.'"[19] In the case of Blossom the "something else" is not so much "art" as the non-human Other, the spiritual force that allows her to perform her being, her more-than-human "self" with freedom and beauty. Through dance Blossom's body loses its initial fixity and "governability" only to become a body "under erasure," clearly present (how else could the dance be performed?), yet always on the point of falling, disintegrating, erasing itself in the trance-like performance. Just as she experiences a loss of her body in her dream ("she feel as if she don't have no hand, no foot and she don't need them"; B, 39), so she "loses herself" in the grotesque dance she performs for the speakeasy patrons, "dancing on one leg all night, a calabash holding a candle on she head" (B, 41). What a display of fragile equilibrium, of strength and possession! Blossom's dancing body is a body she no longer fully possesses; rather it is possessed by, or shared with, the goddess Oya. In this way Brand's character falsifies the Western claim that "one body" can only host "one self" (which is not so distant from the "one nation–one state" equation). If the dancing body is metonymic of presence, as Peggy Phelan puts it, we can never be sure what/whom exactly Blossom's body "presences" for us in her dance.

To what extent Blossom *is* Oya? Possession explodes the Western economy of identity, being one with oneself. Sometimes Blossom and Oya merge, at other times they remain distinct. In this case, therefore, identification follows the logic of mimesis: identity "has to be seen not as a thing-in-itself but as a relationship woven from mimesis and alterity within [post-]colonial fields of representation."[20] What is more, Blossom's dance is certainly not performed for "entertainment," but as ritual. This turn to magic (Blossom also becomes a healer) may be seen as a turn to "primitivism" with its extensive use of mimesis, as elaborated by Michael Taussig. Following Walter Benjamin, Taussig asserts that modernity as an "age of mechanical reproduction" witnessed a resurgence of the mimetic faculty, richly represented in "primitive" cultures. Mimesis itself is broadly explained as the compulsion to become the Other, while the mimetic faculty is defined as "the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other. The wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power."[21]

Mimesis is thus closely related to "what was once called sympathetic magic",[22] it fuses the copy and the original, thus undermining the primacy of the original and the derivational character of the copy. As far as Blossom is concerned, through mimesis she

---

[18] P. Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London and New York 1993, s. 150.

[19] Ibidem.

[20] M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*..., op. cit., s. 133.

[21] Ibidem, s. xiii.

[22] Ibidem, s. xviii.

becomes a copy / a representation of Oya, and consequently she acquires the goddess's power. But it could also be said that she actually *becomes* Oya, at least on certain nights, when Oya "comes to her." She *is* Oya and she *is* not; sometimes she becomes the thing she represents, at other times she does not, which of course undermines the very logic of representation and identity. During her night dance the distinction between the two entities disappears, Blossom loses her "human" individuality. Copy and original are never stable in their positions, they exist in a continuous tension, in mutual co-definition, in the open space of mimesis. It is the material body of the priestess that provides the necessary "substance" to the spirit and is thereby invested with magic powers; but it would be equally true to say that it is Oya that becomes a representation of Blossom's rage and her mental victory over Suffering, and it is this very "appropriation" of the goddess's image that is the source of Blossom's strength and fearlessness.

Blossom's turn to Oya could easily be misread as a return to a mythical past, a restoration of an "original spirituality" that stands for a prelapsarian (i.e. precolonial) paradise. However, it seems more plausible that, if anything, it is a return to the power of mimesis. Blossom does, of course, draw on her experience of the past (which seemed irretrievable, unusable, "dead"), yet the past is not a "tradition" to be reproduced, but a force to be exercised; it is not a paradise lost and regained, but an alternative, an elsewhere (let us remember, however, that every "elsewhere" is also, on a different perceptual scale, a "here"). Through dance Blossom re-enacts the spiritual drama that merges her own experience, the collective experience of black people and the mythical struggle between Oya the warrior and Suffering. She thus escapes the "organized mimesis" (Adorno and Horkheimer's term) of modern civilization where racism is a "manifestation of what is essential to modern civilization's cultural apparatus, namely continuous mimetic repression – understanding mimesis as both the faculty of imitation and the deployment of that faculty in sensuous knowing, sensuous Othering."[23] But before she eventually escapes the fossilized structures of racial degradation and abjection that have been pressing her into her "proper" social place, Blossom tries out several other possibilities: she immigrates to Canada, like many other Trinidadians; she takes the menial jobs available to "people like her"; she attempts to improve her status through education; after the doctor's attempted rape, she resorts to a street protest, in the best tradition of the civil rights movement; she decides to get a man because "all she girl pals had one" (B, 35). All of these are more familiar avenues to dignity and self-empowerment in a modern socio-political regime, but none proves effective in her case. It is another plot, another drama – the one happening as if beside her, beyond her conscious control – that finally takes over her previous self (could we see this as an ironic act of "reverse colonization"?) and creates the Blossom-Oya hybrid. Only the violence of spiritual possession seems capable of countering the violence of the "organized mimesis" that produces racism.

Blossom's empowerment does not come from any social or political institution, certainly not from the State. It is the politics of recognition, according to Charles Taylor, that underlies the modern idea of multiculturalism as practiced, for example, by the Canadian regime. This is what Blossom rejects and transcends: rather than claim an "authentic identity" that needs recognition and protection, she develops a different route to self-affirmation which can do without the Western identitarian logic. In the

---

²³ Ibidem, s. 68.

end, it is not the good old-fashioned civil rights method that she endorses; rather, she starts somewhere else, from a different economy of the self. She succeeds in freeing herself from the economic and sexual exploitation, as well as the stifling definitions of being a "proper" human subject, by becoming Other and carving a space (or a heterotopia) that is beyond the reach of the State apparatus, however well-meaning the State attempts or professes to be (significantly, most of her activity takes place at night, as if "out of sight" of the State, in an obscure place only known to "those who had to know"; B, 42). Her performance of the "human" is embarrassingly, terrifyingly, beautifully different from our received notions of humanity. It is "primitivistic." Hers, I think, is a shift from metaphor to metonymy, from reproduction to mimesis, from recognition to magic, from representation to medium, from human to "transhuman," where "trans-" does not refer to the technological enhancement of human capacities (as it most often does), but to the ability to go outside of the little box that modernity has called "human." From my (tentatively) posthuman perspective, to "be" human is to constantly perform human by becoming – or blossoming into – Other.

Thus, multiculturalism seems to have little to offer to Blossom-Oya, even if it does recognize Dionne Brand's talents and rewards her accordingly. Multiculturalism applies to, as well as demands, the liberal humanist subjects of the modern western political regime, while Blossom is part of a different grouping, a different (postsecular?) "constituency" which involves the world of spirits, goddesses and hybrids. Undoubtedly, at a certain level multiculturalism may be conducive to the empowering of racialized subjects, but at another level it stabilizes the category of race and turns human difference into a museum, a catalogue, an archive. Blossom, on the other hand, *is* and *is not* woman, black, human; there is no measure for her, she will not be turned into a stable unit, she dwells in excess. She is authentic in being Oya's copy, in becoming Other, rather than claim an authentic "native" identity, a pre-defined essential truth about self that seeks recognition. Her truth is always in the making, always unpredictable; not detached from history, but never determined by it; a blossoming of self-creation which draws from the beyond-human, the more-than-human, the nonhuman in order to perennially create and perform the human.

Literature

Brand Dionne, *Blossom*, in: *Likely Stories: A Postmodern Sampler*, ed. George Bowering, Linda Hutcheon, Coach House Press, Toronto 1992, s. 31–42.

Brydon Diana, *Dionne Brand's Global Intimacies: Practising Affective Citizenship*, 13 March 2010, s. 3, https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1993/32319/Brydon_Diana_Affective_Citizenship.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [access: 2023/05/24].

Goldberg David Theo, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden 2009.

Herbrechter Stefan, Callus Ivan, *What Is a Posthumanist Reading?*, "Angelaki" 2008, vol. 13, no. 1, s. 95–111.

Minh-ha Trinh T., *Grandma's Story*, in: eadem, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 1989, s. 119–151.

Phelan Peggy, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London and New York 1993.

Renk Kathleen J., *Caribbean Shadows & Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 1999.

Smith Stephanie A., *Suckers*, "differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies" 1998, vol. 10, nr 1, s. 175–208.

Sturgess Charlotte, *Redefining the Subject: Sites of Play in Canadian Womens Writing*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York 2003.

Taussig Michael, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, Routledge, New York and London 1993.

Taylor Charles, *The Politics of Recognition*, in: *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutman, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey 1994, s. 25–73.

Abstract

The article, which originally appeared in "TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies", offers a posthuman reading of Dionne Brand's short story *Blossom*. It starts with a general discussion on posthumanism, providing some critical insights about posthuman thought. It then offers a reading of Dionne Brand's short story *Blossom* through a problematization of the (liberal humanist) notion of the 'human'. In particular, it focuses on the specific language used in the story, the spatial categories employed by Brand, and the act of giving up one's self-possession to more-than-human powers as Blossom's way to self-empowerment. By becoming a priestess of the goddess Oya (or, indeed, the goddess herself), Blossom is able to escape the modern Western socio-political discourses of authenticized and stabilized identities based on race, gender, religion, cultural background, and Western-inflected 'humanity'.

Performując to, co (nie)ludzkie. Próba posthumanistycznej lektury opowiadania Dionne Brand *Blossom*

Streszczenie

Artykuł, który pierwotnie ukazał się w czasopiśmie "TransCanadiana: Polish Journal of Canadian Studies", proponuje posthumanistyczną lekturę opowiadania Dionne Brand *Blossom*. Rozpoczyna go ogólna charakterystyka posthumanizmu, która zawiera pewne krytyczne wglądy w myśl posthumanistyczną. Następnie artykuł oferuje odczytanie opowiadania Dionne Brand *Blossom* poprzez problematyzację (liberalno-humanistycznej) koncepcji „człowieka". Skupia się zwłaszcza na szczególnym języku używanym w opowiadaniu, wykorzystywanych przez Brand kategoriach przestrzennych oraz rezygnacji z samo(o)panowania na rzecz sił więcej-niż-ludzkich jako sposobie Blossom na uzyskanie upodmiotowienia. Stając się kapłanką bogini Oya (albo, zaiste, samą boginią), Blossom jest w stanie wyjść poza nowoczesne zachodnie społeczno-polityczne dyskursy uwierzytelnionych i ustabilizowanych tożsamości, które opierają się na rasie, płci, religii, pochodzeniu kulturowym oraz naznaczonej myśleniem zachodnim „ludzkości".

Tomasz Sikora – habilitated doctor, works at the Institute of English Philology at the Pedagogical University of Krakow. His research interests focus on queer theory, biopolitics, posthumanism, cultural studies, and media studies. He is the author of two scholarly monographs: "Bodies Out of Rule: Transversal Readings in Canadian Literature and Film" (Krakow 2014) and "Virtually Wild: Wilderness, Technology and the Ecology of Mediation" (Bielsko-Biała 2003), as well as numerous articles in journals and collective volumes. Recently (2023, with E. Macura-Nnamdi), he edited a special issue of the academic journal "Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities" dedicated to the blue humanities. By practicing engaged humanities, he actively opposes the erosion of fundamental academic values.