

Zuzana Luckay Mihalcinova

Human dignity in the transmodern

Perceptions of human worth change with time. Perspectives on what constitutes human value interact with concurrent socio-political circumstances and find outlets in literary creativity. The range of perspectives is wide, from elevating the human species on a pedestal above other sentient beings to total dehumanisation and annihilation of some groups of people.

Using arguments from philosophy, psychology, political and social sciences I propose an interdisciplinary viewpoint on perceptions of human worth via literary activities. The advent of psychoanalysis for example influenced early modern novels and vice versa (the theory of the subconscious and the stream of consciousness). Which, in turn, helped drive social change toward raising awareness of the value of the individual e.g. feminism and also scientific inquiry to the cognitive studies. Also, how the tragedy of holocaust gave way to human rights which reformulated the legal aspects of human dignity. How post-colonial literatures reacted against the dehumanisation. And, most importantly how it all culminates in the current, transmodern trend. The question is, what is the role of human worth in the postmodern, metamodern and transmodern era and how is it reflected in literature in general and the novel in particular.

I will present an overview of the changing value of human person and human life in the transmodern yet harking back, as literature always does, via memory, trauma and evocation. I refer to specific narratives, especially novels (mainly South African and European) but remain in the theoretical territory. The attempt is not to create a chronology as any linearity would only be forced rather a cross incision through current modernities with the topical focus of human worth.

Keywords: dignity, literary theory, human dignity, modernism, transmodern

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Bio: Dr. Zuzana Luckay Mihalcinova is a linguist and literary scientist with a research focus of dignity and human dignity. She has earned her degrees, worked at, collaborated with and done research at universities in Pecs at PTE (Hungary), Kosice at UPJS (Slovakia), in Pretoria at UP (RSA), Brussels at VUB (Belgium) amongst others. Her doctoral dissertation is on possibilities of regaining dignity in the post-apartheid era. She has studied the many facets of dignity, human dignity and the correlation between them in various contexts e.g. the EU, migration, boundaries, identity etc. She co-initiated and opened the Viennese Week of Dignity in 2018 (<http://weekofdignity.org/>) and she continues to support ways of bridging the theoretical with the practical.

She is a member of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (<https://www.humiliationstudies.org/>) and you can read more about her here too

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