

The Speaking Lion. Essay on the Verbal Limits in the Expression of Human Experience

Summary

The book consists of three chapters. The first one describes some cultural phenomena teetering on the edge between “humanity” and “animality”. Moreover, it analyses several literary texts concerning the specificity of communication relations between people and animals. The analyses result in revealing the instability and conventionality of linguistic distinctions between “human” and “non-human”, removing all the features of biological and organic condition of human immersing him in the prehuman experience of reality from the field of conscious cultural experience. However, the category of “humanity” also turns out to be problematic, non-obvious and historically variable.

The second chapter is devoted to H. P. Lovecraft’s works, in which the author of the book attempts to detect and interpret the themes appearing as a result of working through this writer’s fears about instability of the sphere of “humanity” with respect to its dynamic position between the norms and requirements of the culture of the 19th-century West and residues and traces of prehuman and non-human components constantly present in the human sphere of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*).

The third chapter deals mainly with the works of Stanisław Lem, to be more precise – with those aspects and motifs that contain hidden messages of the subjects repressed from the biographical experience of this artist.

All the considerations included in the book aim to present the limit possibilities of expressing some extreme experiences (partly identical with “limit experiences” as understood by Karl Jaspers) by means of the literary language used in the European and American 20th-century prose. In the analysis, cultural, anthropological, literary and psychoanalytical tools are used.

Keywords: experience, literature, language, speaking, voice, *Lebenswelt*, Minotaur, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Stanisław Lem