

Research project objectives/ Research hypothesis

The scientific objective of the project is to examine and systematize the relationships between three seemingly mutually exclusive orientations of research in literary studies: contemporary literary theories, analytic aesthetics and broadly understood cognitive literary studies. The choice of these lines of research together with their suggested division is motivated by the current state of literary theory, interest in which seems to be declining, especially in western academic circles. As a result of this crisis of theory, in recent decades humanities have witnessed a development of new directions of research, such as literary analytic aesthetics and cognitive literary studies, which claim to be entirely cut off from literary theory and unrelated to its methods and achievements.

Initial research allows to formulate the main hypothesis of the project which questions the opposing nature of the three research approaches. Despite the openly expressed criticism of other approaches voiced within each of the traditions, the relationship between the three mentioned research directions seems to be hierarchical and complementary, without, however, any possibility of carrying out a simple reduction of these disciplines. Cognitive literary studies rely on a claim about a close relationship between the everyday use of language (including narrative) and the structures of both literary language and literary work which reveals the natural human potential for creating and experiencing art, including literature, and points to the foundations of aesthetic categories and procedures governing the institutionally defined rules for the interpretation and evaluation of art within the artworld, laying the ground for higher-order research in both aesthetics and in literary theory. Another specific hypothesis will point to the existence of an analogous relationship between contemporary literary theory-motivated research (poststructuralist, cultural and ideological approaches) and analytic aesthetics (institutional and historical theories): a reliable research based on poststructuralist and cultural concepts of the "text" is possible only after performing appropriate aesthetic (in the sense of analytic aesthetics) reading of the literary work.

2. Research project methodology

The research method used in this project will be a comparative analysis of both the theoretical work and the examples of its application in specific studies of literary texts as put forward by leading scholars associated with cognitive literary studies, analytic aesthetics, and contemporary literary theories. In the most general sense, the research will be contained within the scope of literary theory, albeit understood in a broad sense of a general philosophy of literature that explains the conditions of using concepts peculiar to the discipline, rather than being a specific method of textual analysis. On the hand, then, the investigation will be metatheoretical, although still contained within general literary-theoretical reflection, analyzing the status of the concepts used and of the discourse generated by each of the disciplines; on the other hand, the theoretical assumptions under question will be continually confronted with examples of their application in actual literary research taken from the works of scholars associated with each of the research areas.

3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of science, civilization and society

The planned popularization of the effects of research includes talks at conference, publishing reviewed articles, a monograph and finishing a doctoral dissertation.

The innovative nature of the project is expressed in the attempt to analyze an issue that has

not been yet thoroughly explored both in Polish and in international academia, although analyzing it can considerably expand the scope of current debates and revise the established understanding of the basic concepts and processes governing the creation and reception of literary art, reconciling the fundamental assumptions of the aforementioned research directions and demonstrating the existence of a hierarchy and continuity between the study of the literary mind, aesthetics and literary theory, all within a broad literary-theoretical reflection which rejects crude interdisciplinary reductionism and preserves the autonomous character of the respective research areas at the same time.

Systematizing knowledge about the relations between cognitive literary studies, analytic philosophy of literature and contemporary literary theories, while rejecting the confrontational mode of debate or isolationist tendencies within each discipline, can definitely produce more opportunities of interdisciplinary cooperation, as well as lead to a beneficial and reliable use of each discipline's research.