

“Zoopoetic Dwelling”: The Ecology of the Connectedness of Animal and Human Homes and Dwelling Through Folklore and Literary Representations*

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The act of dwelling and physical dwellings is not an exclusively human domain: all spaces, environments and homes of various animals are included. The question of whether an animal merely exists or also lives and dwells forms the basis of the article. We examine the types of environment in which nonhuman animals live either together with people or independently and those where they build their dwellings. We look at the difference between dwelling and building. We will present three viewpoint models that consider animals, their dwelling and physical dwellings on the basis of folkloristic, anthropological, philosophical, eco-critical, and critical-animalistic findings. They are the anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, and zoo-centric models as they appear in the works of Fran Erjavec (*Domače in tuje živali v podobah*, 1868-1873), Richard Adams (*Watership Down*, 1972) and Iztok Geister (*Narava, kot jo vidi narava*, 2010). The way these works present animals and their dwellings, more or less closely reflecting reality, will aid in determining whether these dwellings are part of nature or culture. We will be asking, for example, whether the beaver's dwelling is an architectural masterpiece or merely a result of instinctive behaviour. Our starting point is based on the understanding that animals are persons and, as such, are capable of dwelling and intentionally producing their physical dwellings.

KEYWORDS: zoopoetic dwelling, animals, animal culture, anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism, zoo-ecocentrism, zoopoetics, Fran Erjavec, Richard Adams, Iztok Geister

INTRODUCTION

We aim to critically present three models of human viewpoints on animals from the perspective of dwelling, animal dwellings, and their production by critically analysing three zoo-eco literary and folklore works: *Domače in tuje živali v podobah* (*Domestic and Foreign Animals in Pictures*), 1868-1873, by Fran Erjavec, *Watership Down*, 1972, by Richard Adams and *Narava kot jo vidi narava* (*Nature as Seen by Nature*), 2010, by Iztok Geister. Based on zoofolkloristic, eco-critical, and critical-animalistic

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concepts, the analyses of these literary works should allow us to establish, also through literature and folklore, understanding and knowledge of animal individuals and their intrinsic values.

This article aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there awareness to animal dwelling, are their dwellings only part of nature or also culture and are their dwellings a result of an instinctive skill or there is even an element of art?
2. Are animal dwellings a result of intentional, cognitive action, or are they created purely instinctively?
3. What kind of human and nonhuman encounters can we detect when observing different animal dwellings (created by animals and humans) and what are these encounters like when animal dwelling meets human interests?

ONTOLOGICAL EQUIVALENCE OR ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENTIATION OF ANIMALS AND PEOPLE (DWELLING/EXISTING)

The following concepts form the basis of our thought: Jakob von Uexküll acknowledges the *living and active nature of animal beings*; Lorenz and Tinbergen find that animals *communicate* with each other; Adolphe Portmann acknowledges the *existential value of animal manifestation* (Merleau Pointy, 1995: 244-247). In addition, there is Tim Ingold's early anthropological viewpoint on the *ontological equivalence of humans and animals*, which he later substituted with ontological differentiation, which we aim to assess critically:

Now the ontological equivalence of humans and animals, as organism-persons and as fellow participants in a life process, carries a corollary of capital importance. It is that both can have points of view. In other words, for both the world exists as a meaningful place, constituted in relation to the purposes and capabilities of action of the being in question. (Ingold 2000: 51)

These findings take us to the world of animal and human dwelling. Both are equal in all aspects of life. Ingold also emphasises that all living creatures have agency:

The world is not “there” for us or anyone else to represent or to fail to represent; the world is come into being through our activities [...] we cannot exclusively privilege us human beings with this world-producing effort – for the world is coming into being through the activities of all living agencies. (Ingold 1996: 115)

However, he contradicts himself, as on the one hand, he allows for the similarities between people and animals in the way they transfer knowledge to their offspring, while, on the other hand, he attributes cognizant, deliberate production of dwellings only to people:

I felt sure that the models developed by ecologists and evolutionary biologists to account for the relations between organisms and their environment must apply as well to the human as to any other species, yet it was also clear to me that these models left no space for what seemed to be most outstanding characteristic of human activity – that it is intentionally motivated. (Ingold 1995: 57)

In his book, *The Perception of the Environment, Essays of Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000), Ingold, who worked intensively on animal dwelling and animal home production, sought to move closer to the new ecology. He based his thought on Neo-Darwinism, ecological psychology and philosophy, and the works of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He agreed with Heidegger's viewpoint that animals do not shape the world, they merely are, but without their objective reality, “we can build only if we dwell” (Heidegger 1971: 160), which also represented Ingold's point of view: it was the ‘founding statement of the dwelling perspective’ (Ingold 2000). He supported the static model of animal dwelling that derives from the actions of animals' predecessors:

For any animal, the environmental conditions of development are liable to be shaped by the activities of predecessors. The beaver, for example, inhabits an environment that has been decisively modified by the labours of its forbearers, in building dams and lodges, and will in turn contribute to the fashioning of an environment for its progeny. It is in such a modified environment that the beaver's own bodily orientations and patterns of activity undergo development. The same goes for human beings. (Ingold 2000: 186)

Ingold answers the question of whether the beaver's physical dwelling is any different from that of the human positively; unlike the human, by stating that the beaver does not construct creatively: “Wherever they are, beavers construct the same kinds of lodges and, so far as we know, have always done so” (Ingold 2000: 175). He believes that the difference between the animal and the human house is in the construction process, which is purposeful in humans. We can agree to a certain extent with Ingold if we understand human actions, which can be verbalised, in any case. However, defining the beaver's creation of its home as the result of an instinctive process is anthropocentric thinking that predetermines the beaver as being cognitively and creatively inferior to the human. Therefore we need to refute any thought of the instinctive determination of animals, or, in the words of Ramirez Baretto:

An illusion considering the animal as determined, mechanical, instinctive and limited to mere corporeality (ontogenetic constitution); or as an evolutionary past that has been left behind with the acquisition of tools and language (phylogenetic condition), looking upon humanity as purifying and distancing its own human spaces, without animals (social, cultural and historical constitution). (Ramirez Baretto 2009: 84)

Ingold also looked at the works of semiologist and ethologist Jakob von Uexküll, who in his book *A Stroll Through the World of Animals and Men* wrote: “As the spider spins its threads, every subject spins his relations to certain characters of the things around him, and weaves them into a firm web which carries his existence” (1957:14). Uexküll believes that both animals and humans are subjects. The animal inhabits its own world, which he calls *Umwelt*. The world, as seen by the animal, when it decides to create a home or to find an existing home in nature is, of course, different than that of the human. This, however, emphasises the differentiation only in the way a home is created, but not the distinction in the hierarchy and superiority of human production. Uexküll invites people to imagine the inhabitants (a fox, an owl, a squirrel) of an oak tree; they use the tree as their physical dwelling, a home. Humans, however, generally see such a tree only as a simple tree or a source of wood. These animals occupy the oak according to their needs (the owl is in the trunk, the fox burrows between the roots and the squirrel uses it as a ladder to climb from one branch to another). Uexküll does not contemplate what kind of cognitive production animals apply to these actions; he concludes that human understanding of animals’ physical dwellings is completely different from that of animals (1957). The question is whether an individual animal’s occupation of the physical space, for example, a tree, a trunk, a burrow or a beaver’s dam, is intentional, cognizant or the animal only adapts it according to its instinctive behaviour. Moreover, does every animal build its own dwelling space, although it may seem to be one or the same space at first glance? Uexküll believes that “The same tree, thus, figures quite differently within the respective *Umwelten* of its diverse inhabitants” (taken from Ingold 2000: 177; Uexküll 1957: 76-9). He understands *Umwelt* as: “Perceptual and effector worlds together form a closed unit.” (Uexküll, 1957: 6). However, whether this is an intentional, cognizant choice or merely adaptation is the question that cognitive ethology aims to answer. Cognitive ethology sees the animal as a largely cognizant being, a subject whose key activeness consists of “perceiving and acting”. Uexküll believes that cognitive activity is not characteristic of animals, which is still a very much anthropocentric point of view. Although Lotman and Uexküll are both representatives of semiotics or zoo-semiotics, they strived to understand animals’ activeness. Lotman nevertheless thought that the behaviour of some animals was programmed while others might have developed behaviours that could resemble the language of folklore.

I see the principal and for me still inexplicable difference between the living being for which the important moments of life are preprogrammed, and humans whose behaviour may include unexpected actions, and for whom those inherently non-preprogrammed types of behaviour cover an ever larger part of life and gradually become the man. This is quite amazing, come to think of it. (Lotman 1990: 15-16)

His most surprising conclusion, however, is that “evidently, man, when he appeared, resembled a mad animal, and I suppose that was the reason why this relatively weak creature could survive and kill much bigger animals. They did not predict his behaviour.”

(Lotman 1990: 15-16, 19). This may be true, if we base our assumptions on human dominance over other living creatures. Lotman moves entirely within speech and cognition, believing that zoo-semiotics is a part of linguistics only, which takes us again into the area of binary division. Animals, be they mammals or other, will never be able to develop speech in the sense human beings have done. And why should they? They have their own ways of communicating and their own ways of understanding and forming the world. Animals do not care about humans as long as we let them live and develop according to their own laws of nature, do not disrupt their lives and do not push them out of the world we aggressively want to enter. The structures of the animal world are highly complicated, and we cannot claim to understand them, but we can acknowledge them. (cf. Lotman 1995). Lotman also enters the so-called “fallacy of dualism”.

Does the animal possess abilities of crafts, creativity, and skill? If so, are these abilities within the domain of culture or nature? Like others, Ingold speaks of skills typical for people and for animals, for example, a person’s skill to create a wicker basket and the skill a bird uses to make a nest. However, again, he believes that the bird already possesses this skill while the person has had to learn it (Ingold 2000)¹ Is the nest-making skill innate or does the bird learn it from its parents and later develops its own innovative building techniques? It does not seem right to accept inertia as the only drive to build a nest. The bird needs to find material, appropriate space, and then create a sturdy nest. Building a nest requires cognitive processes. Unfortunately, Ingold emphasises human creativity that is cognitively driven. He is ambivalent and uncertain about animal creativity. However, it seems that animal constructions may be seen as a type of architecture, birds’ nests, for example, which reflect inventiveness and design functionality. Therefore, it is safe to say that we can consider the construction of animal dwellings created by animals themselves as the start of cognitive process and aesthetics (e.g., fish mandalas, birds’ nests) and not only as functionality. Ingold is not entirely consistent; even though he talks about an ontological equivalence of people and animals, he believes only humans have the unique tool in the form of language, something he calls “skills of skills” (1998/2000: 361), which allows us to apply our reason innovatively and to plan production and work processes. This belief, however, puts the human being above the animal once again, and Ingold’s viewpoint turns back towards anthropocentrism. He reflects on some types of animal architecture,² on the fact that animals have certain skills, maybe even artistic ability, when building their dwellings. He believes that every animal can have the skill to build its dwelling. His examples include the shell, the beaver’s dwelling and a human house. He sees them on a scale: the shell ranks the lowest, the beaver is a bit higher, while the human house is at the top:

¹ Montaigne believed that animals are better at certain things than humans are: when in danger, oxen, pigs and other creatures form groups. Schools of tuna have been known to form perfect squares, so they understand geometry and arithmetic. A kingfisher can build a structure out of bones that serves both as its nest and as a boat, so the bird can test it on the shore before setting off to sea (Montaigne 1580, taken from Bakewell 2014: 118-123).

² This expression was first used by ethologist Karl von Frisch (1974).

The shell, it is said, ‘just grows’ – there is nothing the mollusc can or need do about it. The beaver, by contrast, works hard to put its lodge together: the lodge is a product of the beaver’s ‘beavering’, of its activity. Likewise, the house is a product of the activities of its human builders. In their respective forms, and levels of complexity, they need not be that different. Should we, then, conclude that the lodge is beaver-made just as much as the house is man-made? (Ingold 2000: 174-175)

Cognitive ethologist Donald Griffin proved that the beaver can be very innovative when building its home:

Captive beavers have modified their customary patterns of lodges – and dam-building behaviour by piling material around a vertical pole at the top of which was located food that they could not otherwise reach. They are also very ingenious at plunging water leaks, sometimes cutting pieces of wood to fit a particular hole through which water is escaping. (Griffin 2001: 1)

Griffin further observed that animals are aware of themselves and the surrounding world, “the animal’s own body and its own actions must fall within the scope of its perceptual consciousness,” (Griffin 2001: 274). Ingold wrote that the genetic determinism of animal organisms, which may be innate to animals and consequently animals should always react and build their homes in the same manner, is “the great delusions of modern biology” and the beaver can only enter the “development process” (Ingold 2000: 186). Still, he was not entirely certain of human and animal equality when discussing the process of human and animal architecture. In his opinion, there is ontological equivalence, but not in the thought process, planning and innovativeness of the building activity. He believes that the latter is only characteristic of the human as the animal is not capable of being innovative predominantly due to being non-verbal and incapable of cognitive planning. From the perspective of critical animalism, Ingold stops halfway. Ontological equality does not suffice – there should be true equality in every way. Difference is possible only because of the difference of species, but there is none on the cognitive level. Ramirez Baretto does not stop at ontological equality; she believes that:

[...] for ontology to be viable it must be in composition with ecological anthrozoology and with the “poetic of dwelling” we hear from different agents (some of them are human), in different contexts. Ontology as a revelation of existence from an isolated subjectivity elevated to a pure and universal form is, in my view, a dull metaphysical delusion. (Ramirez Baretto 2009: 103)

Steven Best, representative of critical animal studies, also points out:

Complex form of intelligence run broad and deep throughout the world of animals. Birds, for instance, have complex memories and abilities to map vast spaces (the speciesist slander ‘bird brain? Could not be more spurious) and some bird species use tools and exhibit problem-solving skills as well... some of the whales, dolphins and gorillas, chimpanzees have significant rational and linguistic abilities. (Best 2009: 17)

Animals are also capable of self-awareness and self-identity. Furthermore, he believes that animals can develop culture:

Their world [i.e., great apes] is governed not only by instincts and chemicals, but also through rules and norms. Like us, they live in a culture of shared communication and learning that is passed down from generation to generation. The intelligence of primates is not innate and fixed, but rather, like ours, an important part is socially constructed in the context of culture and technological innovation. (Best 2009: 18)

Steven Best quite rightly goes against a binary and hierarchical structure of the world that puts the human at the first place:

But humans are not unique in their possession of a neocortex; of complex emotions like love, loneliness, empathy, and shame; of sophisticated languages, behaviors, and communities; and even of aesthetic and moral sensibilities. Human beings stand out in the degree to which they have developed capacities and potential for reason, language, consciousness, aesthetic, ethics, culture, and technology far beyond chimpanzees and other animals. (Best 2009: 22)

Given these words, denying the animals’ ability to plan and to apply cognitive processes when building their homes is a distinct fallacy. Both people and animals are builders and dwellers. Therefore, if we create the world, we build it, and so we both make part of not only nature but also of culture. However, how can we understand the inner world of animals? Does the animal inhabit the world only without changing it? This outlook is highly anthropocentric: the animal does not just appear in the world and then disappears when it dies.

On the contrary, it changes its own world and that of the people within it – it creates its own reality. Just looking at a dog that is shown its bed, we can see that the dog will change it, if only just a little. So, the animal is not only “here”; it fills up “the here” with its attitude. Consequently, it is not only part of nature, it can also have its own culture and forms its own world in its own way, differently from the way a human would. Therefore the poetics of the world is not only the poetics of the human world but also that of nature, animals and plants.

MODELS OF VIEWPOINTS ON ANIMALS AND THEIR DWELLING FROM LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE

1. Anthropocentric model: human superiority + religion + speciesism + empathy = ethical anthropocentrism. The human being in this model is aware of himself and is cognitive (i.e., has agency), while the animal lacks awareness and is cognitively inferior to the human (i.e., lacks agency). Fran Erjavec belongs to this group.
2. Anthropomorphic model: negative or positive/critical anthropomorphism of animals, which either transfers human characteristics into the animal world or presents itself as the ability to empathise with animals and acknowledge their value and characteristics, or as the inability to recognise the true essence of the animal. A representative of this model is Richard Adams, who establishes critical anthropomorphism and partial eco-criticism.
3. Eco-zoocentric model: self-aware and cognitive humans (human agency) and animals as persons, they are self-aware, cognitively different from humans but, nevertheless, their equals. Iztok Geister partly belongs to this group, while Jure Detela is fully representative of this model.

We will present three different literary thematisations of animal dwelling and physical dwellings from the anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, and zoocentric points of view. These three examples will be treated as cases that show the change in the human attitude to animal dwelling and will present the production of animal dwellings as dealt with in the zoo-literature of the 19th century, in fiction novel as the fantasy of anthropomorphic animals and in the so-called eco-literature. We aim to utilise the new readings of these works to present the realities of animal dwelling in the modern world in a zoopoetic way. All three outlooks point to different possibilities of either co-existence or the impossibility of co-existence of animals and humans. They may even reflect the domination of one species over the other in the framework of animal dwellings, their production and then in the way animal dwellings are deserted, lost, gained and inhabited again.

THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC MODEL AND SPECIESISM

What is anthropocentrism? “Anthropocentrism refers to a form of human centredness that places humans not only at the centre of everything but makes ‘us’ the most important measure of all things” (Fiona Probyn-Rapsey 2018: 47). “Anthropocentrism is a model, a concept, a view that places the human being in the decision-making position, at the top of the pyramid where the most important parts of nature are gathered, while the value of those below diminishes gradually on the way to the bottom. The area of morality is limited to the human community, only human interests and needs are of any importance, and on the surface anything is acceptable” (Sruk 1999: 35). Other beings do not possess

inherent value. Anthropocentrism is a model that puts the human in the centre of its viewpoint, concept and discourse and cares only about human interests. Animals are mere objects or a commodity (Grušovnik 2016: 62-64). Animal studies differ between inevitable and arrogant anthropocentrism.

Inevitable anthropocentrism is related to the fact that one is human, with human perspectives that do not negate the possibility that we can also learn to appreciate and understand the perspectives of others. Our “locatedness”, as she calls it, should not preclude an openness to others. If it does, then we have settled into a form of arrogant anthropocentrism that allows us to resign from the problem or claim some superhuman detachment from it. (Gruen 2015: 24).

Anthropocentrism is also called anthroparchy, and human domination (Cudworth 2008: 34). These definitions derive from animal studies and not from critical animal studies. The latter rejects anthropocentrism entirely. Belcourt argues that anthropocentrism is connected to other axes of oppression and that it functions as the “anchor of speciesism, capitalism and settler colonialism” offering “a decolonial ethic that accounts for animal bodies as resurgent bodies” (2015: 3-4). Gary Steiner, who has authored works of critical animal studies, says:

The key to overcoming anthropocentric prejudice towards animals (and perhaps other beings) is to cultivate a sense of kinship with them as fellow members of the Earth’s community of life, a community in which each animal, like each human being, is the teleological centre of life striving to realise its own good in its unique way. (Steiner 2008: 141)

He continues: “Once we recognise that animals are in all essential respect identical with us and that the difference lies merely in the degree of intelligence, we will acknowledge that we owe to the animal not mercy but justice.” (Steiner 2008: 142). Speciesism is similarly discriminatory; it discriminates based on species (Ryder 2011, Dunayer 2009). This discrimination is determined by hierarchy; the human is at the top, and all other species are subordinate. Therefore, we could say that anthropocentrism and speciesism are closely related. Consequently, Bekoff, for example, believes that today the use of the word “species” is problematic. Instead, individuals within a species should be referred to as we cannot define the behaviour of one individual as a model for its entire species (Bekoff 2008: 151).

From this, we can conclude that the anthropocentric model puts the human being at the top of the pyramid, which can be applied to animal dwelling and production of homes throughout the literary discourse.

One noted anthropocentric writer was Fran Erjavec. In addition to placing the human being in the central position, he leaned into Christian theology, which considers the human being the ruler of the world, the only being to possess a soul and verbal abilities. Erjavec was a writer and a zoologist. He worked in the period from the mid-1800s to the end of the 19th century. In a way, he created a two-way connection between zoology and literature, so we could say that his work combines science and literature. His best-known work is *Domače in tuje živali v podabah* (*Domestic and Foreign Animals in Pictures*,

1868-1873). The book describes in detail various animals that are defined based on their species. Erjavec connected literature and environmental writing and presented many different animals and their homes. His view of animals was anthropocentric; for him, the human is the master of the universe. However, he includes the empathic principle by which man is not allowed to torture animals. He used two concepts: the synanthropic view, which treats animals as harmful, and the anthropophilic view, which regards animals as useful (e.g., Visković 1996). The book includes quotations of folk songs, proverbs and peoples' beliefs about individual animals. His way of telling stories about animals and their homes resembles fables. He still distinguishes between nature and culture, and he sees animal buildings and skills only as instinctive acts. In the introduction, he talks about human superiority, the soul, which places the human above animals, and about his verbal and cognitive abilities (Erjavec 1995:10). Nevertheless, he emphasises empathy that derives from marked anthropocentrism:

The human is master on earth. God Himself gave him the ownership of animals to preside over them. But the human should be a merciful and righteous master if he wants to please the Lord, who is love and goodness personified. The man must not force the animal to do the work he is able to do; he should not overburden the animal and should not beat it mercilessly. God allows the man to kill or slaughter livestock needed for food, clothing and other things. He is allowed to kill and hunt animals that present danger to him and his domestic animals or cause damage in general. He can kill all such animals – but torture he must not. (Erjavec 1995: 11)

In addition to his zoological observations of animals, Erjavec quotes Slovenian folk songs that describe individual animal species. He uses them to support his arguments and make them less scientific and readily understood. By applying fable and narrative literary styles, he combines allegoric anthropomorphism with anthropocentric viewpoints on animals (e.g., when he describes a cat fighting other cats, he adds to the description of a night-time fight a quote from a folk song that humanises the cat: “*Prišel je domu ves zaspan / ko mežnar odzvonil je dan*” (He came home half asleep/when the sexton rang the start of the day, Erjavec 1995: 41).

His description of birds is also anthropocentric and anthropomorphic:

The Slovenian man liked to concern himself with birds, and so his songs are as picturesque as a green meadow. The birds share his joy and sorrow. It seems to him that the bird can understand him and he, in turn, seeks to understand its singing. He believes that the bird comforts him in his grief, at other times, it encourages him to work, and then again it mocks his effort. He transfers much of the bird's singing into his own speech. When in spring, for example, he hears a nightingale sing high above him, it appears to him as if the bird is calling him to work saying: ‘work, work, work, plough, plough, plough, sow, sow, throw, throw!’ (Erjavec 1995: 283)

Birds are, according to Erjavec, man's friends, and he uses anthropomorphism in describing their dwelling. He states that freedom is the most important for every bird, and if you cage her/him you take her/him half of hers/his life away. To support that he quotes a stanza of a folk song:

Ptica se brani službe [The bird does not want to work]

*Nečem, nečem, mlada gospa, k tebi,
ti bi mene v beli grad zaprla.
Raj odletim si jaz v log zeleni,
se nazobljem lepe frišne vode,
no zapojem z moje drage volje.*

No, no I will not go to you, young lady,
You will shut me inside a white castle.
I prefer to fly away to green meadows
To drink beautiful freshwater
And sing to my heart's delight.

(Erjavec 1995: 286; Štrekelj 1989, 951 Cerovec, redaction II, p. 789)

When he describes nesting, Erjavec the zoologist does not acknowledge the bird's nest-building skill; he believes this skill does not derive from a cultural heritage: it is merely instinctive.

Every bird makes its nest in its own way, some more and some less artfully. Nesting is innate to the bird. Instinct, which we cannot explain, drives it to make a nest just like its mother did and all the predecessors of its species. We must not assume that it is taught the skill by the old generation. As the young birds start nesting, the old ones have long stopped caring for them. Those birds that nest only once a year would never see their parents make the nest for when they were little in the nest; all they cared for was food and not the nest. (Erjavec 1995: 286)

However, in the 19th century, scientific findings were based on the viewpoint of human superiority. Erjavec does not acknowledge any cognitive activity; he thought that it was impossible for the birds' parents to teach their young. Today, we understand that these activities are connected to thought patterns and do not reflect genetic heritage only. For example, Yi-Fu Tuan wrote: “Weaverbirds are capable of having experience, which means that not all the details of their performance are controlled by heredity” (1977: 77).

Erjavec presents his view on birds while at the same time he is instructive:

Having heard of the benefits of birds so far, a wise person does not need our recommendation, nor endorsement of birds. So, let me just briefly

explain here how best to attract these little workers into your gardens and woods. Your land should be a welcoming shelter where birds must not be disturbed and chased away. Children, especially shepherds, are to be strictly forbidden to search for nests, to destroy them or take eggs or fledgelings from them. In autumn as well, young birds must not be hunted and owls and buzzards must not be shot. If your neighbours will do the same, you will soon see the benefits of such husbandry. (Erjavec 1995: 294)

In addition to being well aware of the benefits, Erjavec advocates good care of birds:

There are other ways you can attract birds into your garden. Make sure they have suitable places to nest, use hollow branches or wood pieces to make bird houses and nail or hang them into the bushy treetops. You will see how happy the birds will be and how quickly they will settle in them. Little birds, like the tit for example, really like the houses some 7 inches long and 3 inches wide; a round hole that the bird uses to go in and out should be an inch wide, and a stick should be placed in front of it so the birds can sit on it. It is good to cover the little house in moss. Starlings like bigger houses, up to two feet high and the hole must be two inches wide. In Germany, you will find several bigger and several smaller bird houses in every garden and that is why the trees there are clean and healthy and the garden is very profitable for the owner. (Erjavec 1995: 294)

He writes that he chooses holes inside trees or in walls and in church towers for starlings. The bird is very grateful for a box nailed up to a tree or under a roof. In the selected hole it accumulates dry grass, feathers, hairs or anything warm and soft for its nest. Each bird can build its nest in its special way. From the perspective of zoology, he describes in detail the homes of individual animal species, sometimes he objectivises an animal completely or tries to endear it to the reader by using the so-called negative anthropomorphism, which presents the animal as the human's shadow; he also uses the same expressions as for the human dwellings, e.g., the rabbit's (1995: 116) or the badger's dwelling:

Its abode is truly something. A rather spacious bedroom is a fathom, sometimes even two fathoms deep underground with several 5-6 fathoms long, well-made tunnels leading to it from different directions [...] As the home is completed, it gathers leaves, moss and grass for a soft bed. (Erjavec 1995: 198)

He states that animal behaviour and building homes derive from instincts and not awareness. He also emphasises the art of nest-building. In short, he acknowledges that some birds apply skill and artfulness when building their nests. When he depicts animal homes and their dwellings, he represents their homes and animal architecture, creativity and skills very clearly.

Erjavec is a representative of anthropocentrism. His descriptions of animals and observations of animal dwellings and homes express a viewpoint that draws a sharp distinction between the animal and the human being and also between nature and culture. For him, the animals' building skills are nothing more than instinct, which he determines from the viewpoint of speciesism.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND ATTEMPT OF LITERARY THEMATISATION OF ANIMAL COMMUNITY

Anthropomorphism is a model or a point of view that ascribes human characteristics to animals, often unwarrantedly. In contrast, a complete rejection of anthropomorphism can be, according to some researchers, an exaggeration as they do not acknowledge any human traits in animals, which leads to the non-personification of animals, denying that animals have any cognitive abilities or other characteristics. This view seems to refuse any understanding of animal behaviour, as it is impossible to comprehend the animal other than from our human perspective (Grušovnik 2016: 69-82). Leesa Fawcett believes that: “Anthropomorphism is a necessary means we employ to make sense of and relate to other species' experience because we still have no real knowledge of animal cognition. We must rely on our imaginations to make this link” (1989: 14). Her anthropomorphism is rather a kind of personalism. She says that “Humans are continuous with nature and not [its] most important member[s]” (Fawcett 1989: 15). Juliet Clutton-Brock also does not object to anthropomorphism, which has become a comprehensive area of ethologic research. “Anthropomorphism does not necessarily disrupt scientific observation but can support the continuity between humans and animals” (2005: 958). She also says, “Treating [animals] as individuals can have a dramatic effect on attitudes to animal conservation, and one can only gain understanding of the animal as an individual through anthropomorphism” (Clutton-Brock 2005: 958). However, many researchers disagree with the anthropomorphic viewpoint, believing it neglects true characteristics and needs of animals and that it merely applies human traits to animals, which fails to acknowledge animals' subjectivity. Mitchell, for example, believes that anthropomorphisation is a mistake or even a scientific error and considers it as dangerous to animals as violence against animals. “But we have a practical problem in regards to the opposite movement (the anthropomorphisation of non-anthropomorphically designed animals), which is equally seen as an epistemological error and an ethical and political danger (Mitchell et al.: 1997). Ramirez Baretto agrees with him:

[the] error of anthropomorphism is the presumption inherent in attributing human attributes to animals. In so doing, we deprive animals of their own subjectivity and impose what Rosi Bradiotti describes as ‘an asymmetric relation to animals’ that is framed by power relations biased in favour of human access to the bodies of animal others. (Ramirez Baretto 2009: 526-32)

Steven Best is open to anthropomorphism. In 2009, he talked about cognitive ethology and acknowledged its value mostly on the basis of research into animals' complexities (Best 2009: 15). He admits that anthropomorphism has value only when it comes to "critical anthropomorphism" as defined by Griffin in his two books *Animal Thinking* and *Animal Minds*. Best says,

But anthropomorphism need not be a scientific sin. Clearly, we don't want to project onto animals characteristics they don't have. But there are core commonalities between nonhuman and human animals, what Griffin calls 'critical anthropomorphism', is our best access to understanding animals, and 'objective detachment' will block insight every time. (Best 2009: 17)

However, in 2014, Best changed his view completely. He sharply criticises anthropomorphism and equates it to speciesism (Best 2014: 97, 99, 154). Rosi Bradiotti, in contrast, criticises both anthropomorphism and the metaphorisation of animals in literature, saying:

The old metaphoric dimension has been overridden by a new mode of relation. Animals are no longer the signifying system that props up human's self-projections and moral aspirations. Nor are they keepers of the gates between species. They have rather, started to be approached literally, as entities framed by codes systems of their own [...] The metaphoric dimension of the human interaction with others is replaced by a literal approach based on the biovitalist immanence of life. The animal can no longer be metaphorised as other but needs to be taken on its own terms. (Bradiotti 2009: 528)

Monica Libell is concerned with the question of anthropomorphism, which she aims to rehabilitate. She looks at the positive side of the anthropomorphic view of animals. "We anthropomorphise in order to predict, understand, and control our environment (Libell 2014: 149; cf. Lorraine Daston 2005; Clinton Sanders 2008).

Lockwood mostly concentrated on anthropomorphism found in the literature. He defined five types of anthropomorphism, which can be used in animal perception in literature, predominantly in fables. The first type is allegoric anthropomorphism, in which the story or the message is either more or less hidden or likeable. Lockwood, for example, mentions two modern fables, *Watership Down* (1972) by Richard Adams and *Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell. The fifth type is applied anthropomorphism, where we can apply our own experience in order to understand the other, understand what it means to be a member of another species (Lockwood 1989: 41-56).

Anthropomorphism should be of service to animals, and if so, it should be accepted. However, it should be looking at an animal as an individuum with interests and not applying human interests on them or putting human interests before theirs. We should open another question about animal communication, to describe and understand animal sounds and postures; if we could decode that, it would be a break-through in our understanding of animals as persons and a step towards embracing them in the social community.

I think anthropomorphism can be used in literature, especially in those stories in which animals are depicted as living creatures with their social and cultural system, but are very realistic and not allegoric. Thus, we can either negate anthropomorphism or apply it by “becoming the animal” or by an understanding of what it means to be a bat, for example, even if only to a small extent. Therefore, it is all the same whether anthropomorphism is an error or an aide in the understanding of our animal brothers and sisters.

Richard Adams’s *Watership Down* (1972) includes both types of anthropomorphism, as suggested by Lockwood. We could also read this work as an attempt to understand animal individuals within a fictional story, the same way Namma Harel suggests we should look at fables. She believes fables do not marginalise nonhuman animals; some describe authentic animal behaviour and provide a critical look at human conduct and relationship to other animals. Consequently, she suggests a non-allegoric, literary reading of fables (Harel 2009: 9-21).

In *Watership Down*, Adams writes about a group of rabbits who have to leave their home, which is about to be destroyed. Unsurprisingly, the destruction of their home comes at the hands of humans. The rabbits set off to find a new home in their native Hampshire (England), which they do at Watership Down – a real place, where the author spent his childhood. Here we have so-called speaking animals; we can observe animals’ social and political structure and culture that is expressed in anthropomorphic or personified manner. Anthropomorphisation can be quite damaging when it thematises a false reality or injects human traits into the animal world.

Nevertheless, anthropomorphisation can be positive. Leesa Fawcett believes, “Anthropomorphism is a way for life (humans) to know life (nonhumans)” (Fawcett 1989: 19). However, is this not still domination? Can we not see animals as animals but only as a reflection of humans? It is true, though, that we cannot entirely grasp the cognitive dimensions of an individual animal, so the anthropomorphism and personalisation of animals help us understand their lives and dwelling, which this book proves. It borrows from the existing scientific research to show the organisation of a group of rabbits and adds anthropomorphisation, which allows the reader to understand the rabbits’ world from the human perspective as it is impossible for us to comprehend it in any other manner.

Furthermore, it describes the rabbits’ homes, the making of homes and the organisation of their dwelling that is intentional and produces innovations that do not have merely instinctive patterns. It enables us to understand that animals do have their own culture. At this point, it should be said that not every case of anthropomorphisation is negative, especially when it presents animals as realistic creatures whose homes are endangered by people and their interests. Adams certainly uses critical anthropomorphism; his animals are aware that only the human being can be a threat, ruin their homes or even kill them. However, how does Adams make his story so believable, even though it is fiction? His description of the rabbits and their homes follows existing scientific observations.³

³ Erjavec also wrote about rabbits’ dwellings. “Wild rabbits prefer to live on sandy hills, craggy rocks overgrown with bushes and other herbs. Every burrow is inhabited by a pair that does not tolerate any other animal. During the day they sit in their holes and at night they graze outside, but they never stray too far from their burrow.” (Erjavec 1995: 116).

He draws from the research of Ronald Lockley, a biologist and ornithologist, who created an artificial rabbit burrow covered with a glass roof and observed the lives of rabbits for four years. Lockley described his findings in his book *The Private Life of the Rabbit*, 1964, which Adams read and later included its findings in his work.

I think we can understand *Watership Down* and rabbits in the environment hidden to us if we use a system of “putting somebody in their place” –, and with this, we could achieve an ecocentric attitude with a consideration that all life is equal and connected. So, animals in such stories will not be considered as only imagined personalities but real animals with needs and interests, without a hegemonic attitude of humans regarding the destruction of their homes. *Watership Down* could be an allegory, but it can also be a book about rabbit homes, how they built their homes, and I think rabbits are more personified than anthropomorphised.

In a book, wild rabbits can have their social structure, folklore, and culture, and the production of their homes shows intention and innovativeness. Looking at the story from the positive point of view, it strives to present the life and dwelling of the rabbit society so that we can have a so-called vision and knowledge of animals that originally feels alien, unknown. Therefore, we could say that in addition to applied and allegorical anthropomorphism, Adams also draws on the so-called constructive anthropomorphism (Bruni, 2018), or, according to Bekoff, “biocentric anthropomorphism” (2000), which means that a fictional story could even become possible.

Adams’s descriptions of rabbit dwelling and the rabbits’ homes, as we can see below, might be called realistic anthropomorphism:

The holes certainly were rough – ‘Just right for a lot of vagabonds like us,’ said bigwig – but the exhausted and those who wander in the strange country are not particular about quarters. At least there was a room for twelve rabbits and the burrows were dry. Two of the runs – the ones among the thorn trees – led straight down to burrows scooped out of the top of the chalk subsoil. Rabbits do not line their sleeping-places and a hard, almost rocky floor is uncomfortable for those not accustomed to it. The holes in the bank, however, had runs of the usual bow-shape, leading down to the chalk and then curving up again to burrows with floors of trampled earth. There were no connecting passages, but the rabbits were too weary to care. They slept four to a burrow, snug and secure [...]. (Adams 1972: 137)

The rabbits have names and a hierarchical social structure in which female rabbits are subordinate. The rabbits also have their own folklore. Adams also includes folklore quotes from English folk ballads. For example, he takes the motto of Chapter 9 *The Crow and The Beanfield* from the ballad *The Two Crows*: “You will sit on his white neck-bone, And I’ll peck out his pretty blue eyes.” (Adams 1972: 50).

The value of Adams’s novel is in having the possibility to identify with animals and to understand them better. Adams also criticises anthropocentrism by condemning the destruction of rabbit homes; the human being destroys everything he encounters without

concern for animals and their homes. Adams quite explicitly presents rabbits' behaviour and places the human as the rabbits' main adversary. He expresses his ecocentric position through the words of Holly, a female rabbit:

There's terrible evil in the world. It comes from men" said Holly [...] "All others ellil do what they have to do and Firth moves them as he moves us. They live on earth and they need food. Men will never rest till they've spoiled the earth and destroyed the animals [...]. (Adams 1972: 159)

A description of people in chapter 27 is not very pretty either:

Animals don't behave like men," he said [Strawberry]. "If they have to fight, they fight; and if they have to kill they kill. But they don't sit down and set their wits to work to devise ways of spoiling other creatures' lives and hurting them. They have dignity and animality. (Adams 1972: 245)

Eco-critic Lawrence Buell believes that rabbits that speak, rabbit sociology, culture, tradition, mythology and folklore included in Adams's book constitute eco-criticism (Buell 2014). Adams does not place rabbits below human beings, so his work can be eco-critical. Rabbits are not metaphors for or symbols of humanity, although some believe they are an allegory. Adams's writing may be fiction, but it is based on reality. Anthropomorphisation, in its true sense, is not an appropriate model for this book. It seems that the rabbits are autonomous in their actions, have agency, and they experience the world in their own way and not in the way people do. Perhaps this book is about personification; the author attempts to de-objectivise the rabbits and portray them as individuals, animal persons instead. Rabbits' emotions, experiences of the world, descriptions of their imagination and cognitive abilities and planning skills all reflect the ecocentric viewpoint of the animal world. Adams acknowledges all these abilities, although it sometimes seems that he still draws from his own human experience. Therefore, we could call this viewpoint fiction cognitive ethology combined with the criticism of human attitude to one of the animal species. The act of dwelling and the physical dwellings of rabbits in Adams's work are the result of intentional activities; the rabbits not only dwell in this world but also change their world, living their lives according to their own rules. Their dwellings are not merely rabbit warren burrows: they are their homes, where they live their rabbit lives.

ZOOCENTRISM, ZOOPOETICS, AND ECO/POETICS OR RESPECT OF OTHERS AND KNOWLEDGE OF ITS INHERENT VALUE

Eco-bio-zoocentrism focuses on the animal (and all living beings, including plants, i.e., nature in general). Animals within zoocentrism have intrinsic value, are appreciated for themselves as living beings and not for being seen as an object of human interest

(Grušovnik 2016: 63). Zoocentrism could be extended to include the question of animal dwelling and physical dwellings, where their cognitive abilities and intentional production of homes is not negated. In contrast, human superiority and dominance are removed, and animals are not marginalised as inferior beings.

Nevertheless, the question of the hegemony of human interests over those of the animal continues to arise when discussing animal production of homes and their cultural patterns, which leads to the destruction of their homes:

Human interests, even those considered most trivial or superfluous, go before the interests of other animals in keeping their lives and environment; this, of course, depending on the legal, social and economic taxonomies established by humans who act with or against those animals. (Kim 2007; Ramirez Barreto 2002)

Human interests destroy animal dwellings, are aggressive towards the animal and are based on the so-called “natural differentiation” between animals and people. They legitimise violence and animal abuse. (Wolh and Emel 1998; Johnston 2008; Ramirez Barreto 2009: 86)

Consequently, it is literature that enables us to understand animal cultural patterns and their so-called poetic dwelling. We might learn about animal productivity, for instance, the birds’ singing that a poet can reproduce or at least place it in the context of poetry. We may discover the poetry of dwelling when we observe a fish that is creating mandalas in the ocean, not because of instinct or to breed or similar instinctive act but merely as a tool of expression. The understanding we thus gain allows us to become aware not only of the ontological status of the animal but also of the truly creative cognitive process of animal dwelling culture.

Zoopoetics was developed by Aaron Moe, who based it in the concepts of ecopoetics of Johnathan Bate. Although Moe originally belonged to eco-criticism, he moved on from it, as he says, “zoopoetics provides a theoretical focus to explore what poem does – as a verb – to our understanding of and relationship with nonhuman animals” (Moe 2012: 28). Moe developed zoopoetics by observing how individual poets use poetry to form zoopoesis, such as animal sounds in poetry or the presence of animals as persons in poetry. In the work *Poetry, Thought, Language* (1971), Heidegger develops a hypothesis on “interdependency between poetry and dwelling: ‘poetry and dwelling belong to one another ... for poetry, as the authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling, is the primal form of building.’” (as cited in Moe 2012: 29). However, Heidegger believes that poetic dwelling or dwelling through poetry is only a human capacity, which is a purely anthropocentric view that Moe disagrees with. When looking at animals, both in life and in literature, we cannot overlook the fact that animals have agency, which in itself is not merely instinctive but means activity that includes complete engagement, different from that of the human but still complex. Therefore, we agree with Moe that “nonhuman animals also dwell on the earth, engaging imaginatively with their own kind, with other species, with the environment, and with the human other.” (Moe 2012: 29). According to Moe,

looking at the bat as an animal that merely flies through space merely sensing it, without changing it, is characteristic of speciesism. Consequently, eco- or zoopoetics may show that that animals also develop a sense of space they populate and “nonhuman animals dwell imaginatively, rhetorically, and culturally on earth.” (Moe 2012: 30). Poetry and literature developed by the human can also reveal how animals understand and cultivate their living space, home production and dwelling.

Ramirez Barreto believes that the existing binary understanding of nature and culture, which sees the latter as a human characteristic only, should be refuted entirely:

I would like to reject an illusion considering the animal as determined, mechanical, instinctive and limited to mere corporeality (ontogenetic constitution), or as an evolutionary past that has been left behind with the acquisition of tools and language (phylogenetic condition), looking upon humanity as purifying and distancing its own human spaces, without animals (social, cultural and historical constitution). (Ramirez Barreto 2009: 84)

How can human literature allow us to perceive animal subjects and their physical dwellings? How can we even see and recognise them, comprehend their value regardless of our interests? Perhaps we can find the answers to all these questions in the poetry of several poets, for example, Jure Detela, and also in the zoopoetics of Iztok Geister’s work *Narava kot jo vidi narava* [Nature as Seen by Nature, 2010], which we have chosen for its zoopoetic descriptions of animal dwellings. The descriptions of animal habitats Geister speaks about in his ecological-poetic essay can be determined as zoopoetics as its thematisation of animals in literature and not for the “animal poesis” as defined by Aaron Moe when he researched the poetry of Cummings (cf. Moe 2013) and others. The contents of the essays speak about the way humans affect their dominance over animals and nature. This also refers to ecopoesis, which allows us to see nature, plants and animals as individual subjects with their habitat, the place where they dwell, build their own cultural and social systems and cry their silent screams when they lose their homes as their world collides with human dominance.

Geister speaks about different types of dwellings:

1. those made and inhabited by animals only,
2. those set up by people – cohabitation or destruction: positive and negative anthropocentrism.

Geister, the ecologist, defines the anthropocentric and economic propensities of people in the 19th century and the fact that the ethics of ecology is only slightly over a hundred years old. The Austro-Hungarian legislation, which was also in force in the Slovenian territory, protected nature purely for economic reasons. Christian ethics was the one to advocate mercy. However, in 1877 a song *Siničja tožba* [A Tit’s Lament] was first written by Andrej Praprotnik in 1844 and later adapted by Fran Levstik. The poem entered the realm of folk and became an educational song for children (in school only a poem), warning them about the unacceptable destruction of bird nests presented as birds’ dwellings (Geister 2010: 14, cf. Golež Kaučič 2003: 262).

*Stoji učilna zidana,
pred njo je stara jablana.*

*Ta jablana je votel panj,
sinica znosi gnezdo vanj.*

*Sinica zjutraj prileti,
na šolskem oknu obsedi.*

*Na oknu kljunček svoj odpre,
tako prepevati začne:*

*»Poslušaj me, učitelj ti!
Kako se pod teboj godi.*

*Vsi dečki tvoji me črte,
povsod love, povsod pode.*

*Zalezli moj so ptičji rod,
iz gnezda vrgli ga za plot.*

*Mladički tam pomrli so,
oči svetle zaprli so.«*

*»Grdobe grde paglave,
masti ste vredni leskove.*

*Kdor v gnezdu ptičice lovi,
ta v srcu svojem prida ni.«*

There's a school built up of brick,
An old apple tree in front of it.

The tree's a hollow stump,
A little tit makes a nest inside.

The tit comes in the morning,
On a windowsill it sits,

And opens now its little beak
It starts to sing its song:

'Oh, listen, teacher to me!
Look what happens here.

All your boys hate me,
They hunt me. They chase me.

They searched out my young ones,
And threw them over the fence,

Where all my little babies died,
There they shut their eyes so bright.'

'You wretched rascals, you,
Worthy of the hazel cane.

Those who hunt for little birds,
Their cold hearts are their bane.'

Geister presents two parallel habitats, one where animals build their homes and the other where people create their cultural environment where animals can find their dwellings or people destroy the animals' original dwellings. He calls these parallel habitats wilderness and culture, for example, a rain forest and a commercially exploited forest where the "ethics of cultural strategy in the forest lags behind the natural ethics" (Geister 2010: 19). Thus, he again allows for the binary nature of the natural and the cultural and does not acknowledge animal culture. William Hoppitt and Kevin Laland believe that:

While the capacity for niche construction is universal to living creatures, human niche construction is extraordinarily powerful, in part as a consequence of our culture. Perhaps what is unique about human culture is that, through niche construction, cultural transmission has become self-reinforcing, with transgenerational culture modifying the environment in a manner than favors ever more culture. (Hoppitt and Laland 2013: 158)

Are ecological niches, natural dwellings that animals occupy, really less true dwellings than cultural niches produced by people? Geister remains within this binary viewpoint. However, his poetics allows us to understand animals and their homes, which they either occupy or build. Still, in his descriptions, we can observe positive anthropomorphisation, which enables us to understand better animal spaces as true homes. He only makes an exception in his description of reed beds, on the one hand, and the site of fire, on the other, where he presents the reeds as natural dwellings inhabited by various animals:

We can imagine a singular reed stalk as a skyscraper with various business or residential niches. Different lower animals live either on the façade or inside, where they feed, mate, lay eggs, spend their early lives, learn for life and lose it as well [...] Birds that live in reeds make their nests among young reed stalks or on the broken wooden stalks. Warblers, birds that have completely adapted to the life in the reed metropolis, have allotted themselves different environmental niches; the Great reed warbler feeds predominantly in the reed flowers, the Eurasian reed warbler among the stalks and Moustached warbler can be found right above the water. (Geister 2010: 69)

In addition to this description, he talks about the human destruction of animal homes and criticises anthropocentric activities that do not consider other – animal – interests but their own:

In winter the countryside marshes that are overgrown with reed beds are traditionally cleared with fire. After the first spring rain, lush green grass will grow on the site of fire. Of course, no one spares even a thought for animals that have lost their lives in the different stages of the fire and for the animals that have become homeless in the middle of winter. (Geister 2010: 70)

In his descriptions, which are rather essay-like, Geister's writing is rather zoopoetic, not from the perspective of animal communication but, in his zooethical attitude to animals, it is reflected in his poetic descriptions of animal dwelling and way of life. This is the poetics of animal and nature combined with ecological findings and distinct anthropocentric attitude to animals and nature. The co-existence of all living beings in an environment is the so-called poetics of space, habitats, and animal homes where animals are visible or invisible, where the human helps to build the homes or destroy them. Geister is aware of nonhuman beings; he does not perceive them as something else or the other. His position is almost critically animalistic as he criticises the dominant human attitude towards creatures that people share their space with but often prevent animals from dwelling and developing their individual existence in that space. Geister sees birds just as birds and not individual specimens of birds, which makes him more of an ecologist than critical animalist, even though he warns about the human appropriation of nature. He believes that nature, animals and plants should find a mutual agreement without human intervention.

Geister compares natural dwellings with “artificial” ones and discusses the so-called space inhabited by different animals, each one with its view of its dwelling, and individual usage that suits its needs and although the dwellings look the same, and they just may be given their names. This is how he describes a creek or a gully:

In the creek: the skunk and the otter find their hiding places among the intertwined bare roots of the riverside trees, in the clay walls of the crumbled gully, there is the kingfisher, a seemingly virtual being created from an apparition and reality. (Geister 2010: 106)

According to Geister, a manmade gravel pond, *mrtvica*, is a “cultural runt” (2010: 124). He compares spontaneously growing vegetation with a park. City parks host numerous animals precisely because they can find dwellings there:

Not only the hundred-year-old trees, the pruned tree shoots and bushes too attract many animal cultural trackers. In addition to bugs and birds, hollow tree trunks host rodents and bats and there are quite a few kinds of finches nesting in the forked boughs. Many different birds nest in city parks, as in a kind of a spontaneous forest, which can be ascribed to the combination of various dwelling types; especially in winter the numbers of members of individual species increase, the result of milder urban micro-climate. (Geister 2010: 159)

Animals, therefore, create their own space and occupy pre-existing dwellings. Sometimes it is their artistic creativity that allows them to produce unique and innovative homes, but they are also happy to accept and settle in dwellings already prepared for them by the people such as the white stork:

There are not many places left where storks will nest on trees or rocks. The majority of them settle on houses, electric or telephone utility poles and in nesting places prepared specifically for them due to the stork’s deep symbolic meaning and value for people. (Geister 2010: 229)

This human charity stems only from specific symbolism traditionally ascribed to the stork. The stork’s interests that are merely for its benefit are not relevant: human interest is.

Although Geister’s understanding of animal dwelling is decidedly ecocentric and ecoethical, it still lacks personalisation; he does not acknowledge individuals within a species nor ascribe any intrinsic value to an individual living being. For Geister, nature is a homogenous entity in which individual species dwell and share space, sometimes more and sometimes less in harmony. Geister does not allow the animal to be in an equal position with the human; his thoughts are devoted to ecocentrism: letting the animals and nature manage their own status and dwelling. Nature becomes an omnipotent person and the human being merely intervenes, destroys dwellings, but with his interventions also, rather absurdly, provides them as well.

CONCLUSION

As long as the animal is considered to be a possession and human interests prevail over animal interests, their ontological equivalence will be no more than empty philosophical and anthropological babble. When humans understand that their actions do not benefit animals, when humans give animals space for their dwellings so that they do not have to keep retreating⁴ or even dying due to human interventions into “nature” and “animal culture and architecture”, then we will be able to talk about the equality of animal and human dwelling. Even more, humans will help build dwellings for those animals that have lost their own.

Can literature and how we read and interpret it aid in achieving this? Can it change our viewpoint and allow us to see the animal as our relative and its dwelling and physical dwelling as untouchable? Yes, literature can enable us to see reality from zoopoetic perspective. According to Lawrence Buell, ecoliterature shows empathy to animals and so human interest in such literature is not the only legitimate one (Buell 1995, from Starre 2010: 23). Ortiz-Robles writes: “Literature helps us imagine alternatives way we live with animals, and help us imagine a new role for literature in a world where animal future is uncertain” (Ortiz-Robles 2016: 5). He aims to focus his critical viewpoint on the damaging social and cultural practices, especially speciesism and any discrimination and demonisation of *the other* and to allow the creative energy of literature to enter the formation processes. Kari Weil thinks that literature could be the voice of *the other* and understands the “animal question” as the “broader question of language, epistemology and ethics women and post-colonial societies already addressed” (Weil 2010: 4, 2012: 7). Literature makes it possible for us to see how animals accept and change the environment in which they live; authors can usurp the generally accepted viewpoint on animal dwelling as something static and naturally determined. Literature that introduces eco-critical, zoopoetic, and critical animalistic points of view in its narrative and refutes the belief that only the human being can possess imagination, rhetoric abilities and the culture of life and dwelling can, based on observation and research, determine how many of these qualities can be attributed to animals as well.

However, do we truly believe that people are so original? Where is the proof based on observation that does not include the same communication as that of animals? Is it true that only scientific observation and experiments enable us to understand animals in their complex lives, creation and dwelling? We are still at the beginning of a different kind of thinking, and we still overestimate ourselves and underestimate the animals. Only when absolute communication with all living beings is possible, beings that will not live in fear of the “mad animal – the human” will the world of the animal other be revealed to us.

So, the answers to all three questions are:

1. Animals’ dwellings and their home production are an element of culture, involving crafts or even arts that are different from human craft or art and would not be considered biological predestination but creativity. Animals have their own cultural patterns and develop special skills.

⁴ The SARS virus in 2002 developed on Chinese markets with wild exotic animals; and most probably the Covid 19 virus also developed on such “wet markets” in Wuhan, China.

2. Animal home production might be an intentional act, but we cannot enter the minds of animals to determine that.
3. Through literature, we can see that negative and positive human and nonhuman encounters can be established, but negative ones still prevail.

Jure Detela, a Slovenian poet, was the only one able to understand that animal geography and animal dwelling and production of homes are the same as those of the human, as he reveals in his poetic description of animal dwelling and dwellings of animals that live underground – either moles or rabbits. His visual horizon encompasses the understanding that everything is straight and plain, equality of all living beings, including those that are completely alien to us.

*Rovi pod zemljo, množica
toplih rjavih teles,
siva megla nad ravnino,
jagode med zelenjem.*

Burrows underground, a multitude
of warm brown bodies,
grey fog above the plane,
strawberries in the green.

*Vse sem že prvič videl
v enem horizontu
krog ene same ravnine,
v celoti popolnoma sam*

I saw it all the first time
in one horizon
across a single plane,
entirely and completely alone.

(Jure Detela, *Zbrane pesmi*, Vol. II, 2018, p. 1140).

This viewpoint can be called pure zoo-ecopoetics and eco/zoocentric worldview. It is this kind of literature that reveals anthropocentrism, speciesism and non-critical anthropomorphism as anarchism and distinct errors of our world.

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»ZOOPOETIČNO BIVANJE«: EKOLOGIJA POVEZANOSTI ŽIVALSKIH
IN ČLOVEŠKIH BIVALIŠČ IN BIVANJ SKOZI FOLKLORNE IN
LITERARNE REPREZENTACIJE

MARJETKA GOLEŽ KAUČIČ



Bivanje in bivališča niso samo človekova domena, pač pa tudi vsi prostori, okolja in domovi različnih živali. Na podlagi vprašanja, ali žival samo živi ali tudi biva, v članku razmišljamo o okoljih, kjer skupaj z ljudmi ali neodvisno bivajo in si gradijo svoja bivališča tudi nečloveške živali. V uvodu smo si postavili tri vprašanja: Ali živali zavestno bivajo in ali so njihova bivališča del narave ali tudi kulture oziroma ali so njihovi domovi zgolj del neke instinktivne obrti ali celo umetnosti? Ali živali gradijo svoja bivališča zavestno ali zgolj instinktivno? Kakšne vrste živalsko-človeških srečanj lahko vidimo ob opazovanju različnih živalskih bivališč, ko so ta oblikovana s strani živali ali ljudi, in kakšna so ta srečanja, ko živalsko bivališče trči ob interes ljudi? V poglavju Ontološka ekvivalenca ali ontološka diferenca živali in ljudi (bivanje/eksistiranje) se ukvarjamo z naslednjimi koncepti: *živost in aktivnost bivanja*, da živali *komunicirajo* med seboj, *eksistenčna vrednost živalskih manifestacij*. Dodajamo pa še antropološko izhodišče Tima Ingolda o *ontološki ekvivalentnosti človeka in živali*. Ugotavljamo, da je izrazita zmeta, da živalim odrekamo sposobnost načrtovanja in miselnih procesov pri oblikovanju lastnih bivališč. Tako ljudje kot živali so graditelji in bivajoči. Torej, če oblikujemo svet, ga gradimo, takrat smo oboji tudi del kulture in ne samo narave. Toda kako bi lahko vedeli za ves notranji svet živali ali trdili, da se žival samo znajde na svetu, ga nič ne spreminja? To je izrazita antropocentrična zazrtost v svet; žival ne skoči v svet in nato iz sveta odskoči v smrt, ne, spreminja svoj svet, svet živali in tudi ljudi okoli sebe, in si gradi svojo lastno stvarnost. Skratka, žival ni samo *tu*, ampak ta *tu* tudi napolni s svojim lastnim odnosom do *tu*. Zato ni samo del narave, temveč ima svojo kulturo, oblikuje svoj svet, drugače kot človek, na svoj način. Zato poetika sveta ni samo poetika človeškega sveta, pač pa tudi narave, živali, rastlin. Na podlagi folklorističnih, antropoloških, filozofskih, ekokritičnih in kritično animalističnih spoznanj predstavljamo tri modele gledanja na živali ter njihovo bivanje in bivališča. To so antropocentrični, antropomorfični in zoocentrični model, ki se kažejo v delih avtorjev Frana Erjavca (*Domače in tuje živali v podobah*, 1868–1873), Richarda Adamsa (*Watership Down*, 1972) in Iztoka Geistra (*Narava, kot jo vidi narava*, 2010). Skozi predstavitve živali in njihovih bivališč v teh delih, ki so večinoma verodostojna slika resničnosti, ugotavljamo, ali lahko ta bivališča klasificiramo kot del narave ali kulture, z vprašanjem, ali je npr. bobrovo bivališče arhitekturna mojstrovina ali le dejanje, ki izhaja iz instinkta. Izhajamo iz temeljnega izhodišča, da so živali osebe in kot osebe zmožne bivati in intencionalno producirati svoja bivališča.

Ti trije primeri so obravnavani kot zgledi, ki pokažejo spremembo človekovega odnosa do bivanja živali in produkcije njihovih bivališč, kot jo tematizirajo zooliteratura 19. stoletja, fiktivni roman kot fantazijski način antropomorfnih živali in t. i. ekoliteratura. S pomočjo novega branja teh del želimo na zoopoetični način predstaviti resničnost bivanja živali v sodobnem svetu. Vsi trije primeri pa kažejo tudi na različne možnosti ali nezmožnosti sobivanja živali in ljudi ali celo na dominacijo ene vrste nad drugo tudi – ali celo najbolj – pri živalskih bivališčih in njihovi izdelavi ter nato zapuščanju, izgubljanju in ponovnem pridobivanju ali naselitvi. Erjavec je predstavnik antropocentrizma, ki s svojimi opisi živali in lastnimi observacijami njihovega bivanja in bivališč izraža stališče, da je ločnica med živaljo in človekom ter med naravo in kulturo ostra. V graditvenih spretnostih živalskih bivališč ne vidi ničesar drugega kot le del nagonskega ravnanja, ki pa ga speciesistično determinira. Adams poskuša na neki način približati bivanje in življenje divjih kuncev, ki jih ne poznamo, ki so nam pravzaprav zelo tuji in njihovo življenje zelo oddaljeno od naše percepcije le-tega. Njegovo stališče je, da imajo lahko divji kunci tudi svojo socialno ureditev, svojo folkloro in svojo kulturo ter da produkcija njihovih domov kaže na intencijo in inovativnost. Če pogledamo na to zgodbo s pozitivne strani, predstaviti življenje in bivanje kunčje družbe, da bi dosegli t. i. videnje in vedenje o živalih, ki so nam tuje in ki jih ne poznamo, lahko rečemo, da je morda Adams poleg aplikativnega in alegoričnega antropomorfizma uporabil še t. i. konstruktivni ali biocentrični antropomorfizem, kar pa pomeni, da je fiktivna zgodba lahko celo verjetna. Geister pa govori o različnih vrstah bivališč: bivališča, ki jih naredijo živali ali se vanje samo naselijo, in bivališča, ki jih omogočijo ljudje – kohabitacija ali razdiranje: pozitivni in negativni antropocen. Geister prikazuje dvoje vzporednih življenjskih okolij, v katerih si živali gradijo svoje domove in v katerih ljudje gradijo kulturna okolja, nato pa v njih živali lahko najdejo svoja bivališča ali pa jim ljudje njihova prvotna bivališča v njih razdirajo. Bivanje živali pri Geistru, četudi je izrazito ekocentrično in ekoetično, pa je še vedno brez personalizacije ali upoštevanja posameznikov znotraj vrste in brez priznanja intrinzične vrednosti posameznemu živemu bitju. Narava je Geistru enovita entiteta, znotraj nje pa bivajo posamezne vrste, ki med seboj harmonično ali neharmonično delijo svoj prostor. Geister še ne omogoča, da bi žival kot posameznik zavzela človeku enakovredno pozicijo, je pripadnik ekocentrizma, ki zahteva, da pustimo živalim in naravi, da same urejajo svoj status, svoje bivanje; narava postaja onipotentna oseba, človek pa po njegovem vanjo le posega, razdira bivališča, a jih hkrati s svojimi posegi tudi – kako absurdno – omogoča.

V sklepu ponujamo odgovore na uvodna vprašanja. Živalsko bivanje in oblikovanje bivališč sodi v kulturo, njihova bivališča so ne samo obrtniško inovativna, so celo artistična, a drugačna od človeških. Niso produkt instinkta, temveč miselnih in ustvarjalnih procesov gradnje bivališč. Živali imajo svoje kulturne vzorce in razvijajo lastne spretnosti v graditvi bivališč. Prek folklorne in literature lahko

odkrivamo negativna in pozitivna srečanja med ljudmi in živalmi, med katerimi žal negativna prevladujejo. Na koncu članka je navedena pesem Jureta Detele, s katero želimo prikazati, da le tovrstna literatura omogoča, da antropocentrizem, speciesizem in nekritični antropomorfizem postanejo arhaizmi in izrazite zmote tega sveta.

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