Traditiones

53 | 1 | 2024

ISSN 0352-0447 (tisk / print) | ISSN 1855-6396 (splet / online)

TRADITIONES
Zbornik Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje in Glasbenonarodopisnega inštituta Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti / Journal of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology and Institute of Ethnomusicology at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Naslov uredništva / Editorial Address
Traditiones, ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
Spletna stran / Website: http://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/traditiones

Založnika / Publishers
Založba ZRC in / and Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti / Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Letna naročnina / Annual Subscription
Za posameznike 30 €, za ustanove 90 €, za študente 15 €; posamična številka: za posameznike 15 €, za ustanove 40 €. Revija izhaja letno v treh zvezkih. / 30 € for individuals, 90 € for institutions, 15 € for students; Single issue: 15 € for individuals, 40 € for institutions. The journal is published yearly in three issues.

Naročila / Orders
Založba ZRC, Novi trg 2, SI–1001 Ljubljana, Slovenija, e-pošta / e-mail: narocanje@zrc-sazu.si

Tisk / Printed by
CICERO, Begunje, d. o. o.

Naklada / Print Run
400

Revija *Traditiones* je vključena v naslednje podatkovne zbirke / The Journal *Traditiones* is included in the following databases: Anthropological Index Online; ERIH – European Reference Index for the Humanities; FRANCIS – Institut de l'information scientifique et techniques (CNRS); IBZ – International Bibliography of Periodical Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences); MLA International Bibliography; Ulrich's International Periodical Directory; Scopus.

Revija izhaja s pomočjo Javne agencije za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije. / The Journal is published with the support of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

Traditiones

53 | 1 | 2024

TRADITIONES

ZRC SAZU

SLOVENSKA AKADEMIJA ZNANOSTI IN UMETNOSTI

Vsebina / Contents

ŽIVALI V ŽARIŠČU: NOVI KONCEPTI RAZISKAV ŽIVALI V HUMANISTIKI
ANIMALS IN FOCUS: NEW CONCEPTS FOR ANIMAL RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES

Gostujoča urednica / Guest Editor: Marjetka Golež Kaučič

ŽIVALI V ŽARIŠČU: NOVI KONCEPTI RAZISKAV ŽIVALI V HUMANISTIKI

ANIMALS IN FOCUS: NEW CONCEPTS FOR ANIMAL RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES

Traditiones 53 (1): 7–23 | COBISS: 1.03 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530101

Animals in Focus: Creative and Social Imagination

Marjetka Golež Kaučič
ZRC SAZU, Institute of Ethnomusicology, Slovenia
marjetka.golez-kaucic@zrc-sazu.si
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5369-9984

Placing animals in focus through imagination and reality, we are thinking about their position in new ontological paradigms in a multidisciplinary way. The article presents the relationship between man and animal through folklore, literature, film, language, and photography. The authors derive their research from the theoretical discourses of ecocentrism, new animism, ecocriticism, semiology, antispeciesism, cognitive ethological studies, and critical animal studies.
▪ **Keywords**: animals, representations, folklore, literature, film, animal-human relations, critical animal studies, imagination, animal body

Ko v fokus postavljamo živali v imaginaciji in realnosti, multidisciplinarno premišljamo o njihovem položaju v novih ontoloških paradigmah. V prispevku so prikazana razmerja med človekom in živaljo, kakor se kažejo v folklori, literaturi, filmu, jeziku in fotografiji. Avtorji in avtorice se teoretsko opirajo na diskurze ekocentrizma, novega animizma, ekokritike, semiologije, antispeciesizma, kognitivnih etoloških študij in kritičnih animalističnih študij.
▪ **Ključne besede**: živali, reprezentacije, folklora, literatura, film, živalsko-človeška razmerja, kritične animalistične študije, imaginacija, živalsko telo

Introduction

The anthropocentric perception of the world that surrounds and accommodates humans, of nature on the one hand and of culture on the other, where we are asserted to have complete control over ourselves, nature, and other living beings, can be considered an anachronism in the 21st century. However, the anthropogenic factor is still one that causes widespread destruction of the natural (more-than-human) world, especially so the animal world. To transform or end this paradigm we need "robust biological-cultural-political-technological recuperation and recomposition" and "multispecies eco-justice" (Haraway, 2016).

Because of the new ecological and ethical findings (bioethics, cf. Francione and Charlton, 1992; James, 1997; Klampfer, 2010; Grušovnik, 2016; Vičar, 2020) within the broad social and cultural spaces and in the changed state of the world (the epistemological and paradigmatic shift, Kuhn, 2012 [1962]) that led to the shift of focus from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, it was necessary for world science to establish complex multidisciplinary research of animals and nature, as well as how humans relate to these concepts in the humanities, which would then use different findings to redefine the relations of people-animals-nature-environment-society on new ecological and ethical foundations. This process can be observed since the 70s of the 20th century,

and much more transformatively in the 21st century (see Golež Kaučič, 2017, 2023; Nocella, George, 2022: 3).

We have to start rethinking animals for them to no longer be trapped between the concepts of zoé[1] and bio (Wadiwel, 2015; Agamben, 1998). According to Paul Taylor (1986), from the viewpoint of biocentric equality, all organisms, regardless of their species, have the same intrinsic value and the right to be treated with respect. In this way researchers have already started their journey towards biocentrism and ecocentrism: Gary Steiner (2008) introduces the so-called discourse of kinship with animals, discussing the problem of the placement of animals in the moral society solely on the basis of their cognitive or verbal abilities, asserting that the animal in relationship with the human should function as our kin – an entity that has intrinsic worth in this multispecies community. Gary Francione (2000, 2008), however, thinks time has come for an abolitionist view with regard to animals, John Sanbonmatsu (2007, 2014, 2017) advocates for a critique of speciesism as a system of domination, Steven Best (2014) for a shift from bare academic thinking to activism, Atsouko Matsuoka and John Sorenson (2021) think it is time for trans-species justice, and Natalie Khazaal and Nüria Almiron (2021) write about an ethic of interspecies empathy or compassion at a global level. If we want to follow the ontological turns in the humanities, it is necessary to rethink the difference between humans and animals, the ethical and ontological status of animals, and to go beyond the distinction based on new insights and political practices. Vittorio Hösle (1996 [1991]) argues that we are on the threshold of a new moral and political paradigm – the ecological paradigm – and that, in addition to economics, various scientific disciplines in the humanities can contribute to the implementation of this paradigm. The so-called new environmental paradigm (Dunlap et al., 2000) is oriented towards the claim that nature is an ecosystem with all intrinsic rights, regardless of its importance for humans. The concept of the intrinsic value of animals, arising from a growing interest in the boundary between us and them becoming more fluid or non-existent due to the research of evolutionary biologists and ethologists (Griffin, 1984, 1992; Waal, 1999; Bekoff, 2007) writing about animal languages, cultures, emotions and even morality, and the ethical awareness that humans are only one of the species in this world, has also inspired semantic turns and concepts: i.e. the animal turn, the social turn, the political and ontological or posthumanist view which ensures that the recognition of personhood belongs not only to humans, but also to other living beings.

In order to break down the mental barriers in the human mind that prevent us from seeing and knowing what is happening to the animal Other, along this progression a

[1] We reject the binary position of the "bare life" and "qualified life", aware of Agamben's concept of 'zoé' as a critique of the mechanisms of power and sovereignty regarding the bare life of industrial animals. We point out Giorgio Agamben's distinction between bios (political form of life) and zoé (generic form of life), or the understanding of biopolitical caesura, where violence in the human relationship with animals is used as a dividing line between life and death, and the animal is squeezed into a perspective "in between".

shift in our attitude towards animals must happen. But if we put animals in focus, we have to change the way we think about them, go beyond social dualisms and start from the animal standpoint.

The thematic issue of this journal originates from the research project Thinking Animals: Transformative Aspects in Research of Animals in Folklore, Literature and Culture and inscribes various findings about new transformative views on the position of animals in the world, based on a new ontological paradigm (Gröling, 2014: 106; Telban, 2017; Golež Kaučič, 2017, 2023) and the animal turn (Andersson Cederholm et al., 2012; Magliocco, 2018).

Thinking animals

The project is based on extensive theoretical and methodological reflections of various national and international scientific discourses in folklore studies, ethnology, ecocriticism, philosophy, anthropology, biology, and ecology. We aim to establish a new so-called imaginative counter-discourse and analytical criticism of anthropocentrism, through detailed and composite interdisciplinary research on folklore, literature and cultural heritage, with an emphasis on critical discourses about the complex analogies between natural and cultural ecosystems, and parallel research on contemporary cultural practices and dynamics.

Within the project, we are intensively developing the scientific discipline of zoofolklore studies or zoofolkloristics, a relatively new discipline within folklore studies. It makes a critical assessment of the traditional knowledge of animals, which on the one hand conveys remarkable messages about the coexistence of humans and animals, and on the other reveals certain attitudes and practices that are no longer acceptable in our time. The subject of the discipline is animals in folklore, namely in all spheres of folk spiritual culture, i.e. in songs, tales, fairy tales, fables, legends, proverbs, sayings, riddles, jokes, folk language, cultural practices, folk drama, mythology, folk medicine; but studied from new perspectives, with a new perception and reception. Zoofolkloristics should enable a distinct paradigmatic change, moving from the role and importance of animals to a redefinition of tradition. This would also enable changes in perspective from the animal as an object to the animal as a person. Furthermore, we could also point out positive examples of the coexistence of the two entities, not only on a metaphorical-symbolic or mythological level, but by looking at real relationships with the help of the testimonies of people who in the past coexisted with animals, which in some way also reflect folklore texts, songs, stories, etc. (Golež Kaučič, 2015, 2023).

We have conducted the research in the field of ethnology and folklore studies; however, we did not restrict ourselves to either, but rather shifted away from anthropocentric views and positioned within ecocentric ones, with the awareness that the subject

concerns new relationships between humans and animals, coexistence, and recognition of the animals' intrinsic value – at the moment only recognised by humans in a specific moral community. At the same time as scientific research, we want to integrate all these new insights into the educational process, so that at least at the university level we can introduce different discourses on attitudes towards the Other.[2]

The voice of animals is missing

This issue places animals in focus – even if their voice is missing – indirectly through human thinking about animals, at least along conceptual lines. What is most important is outlined: to hear the animal's voice (Brooks Pribac, 2021: 33), to contemplate its point of view, and replace the anthropocentric stance with the zoocentric one. That is why we theoretically and methodologically follow different insights, interwoven from various scientific sciences and not just the folkloristic-ethnological-anthropological. If so, then we are talking about the "anthropology of animals" (Noske, 1989),[3] since some new concepts of animal studies and critical animal studies talk about animal persons or even about animal people, or about their subjectivity (Hall, 2004: 3; Calarco, 2008: 5; Weil, 2012: 37–38) and no longer only about animals, thus transcending the binary divisions we have created in our human-animal relationships. Some anthropologists reject critical animal studies because their acceptance in anthropology would be "suicidal" for anthropology. They also see in the animal turn a cessation of interest in farm animals (Baskar, 2023: 24, 26), which can be refuted not least by Brooks Pribac's research on living with sheep in Australia and their study (2021; see also Despret, 2005; Marino, Merskin, 2019). Anthropologists beginning to recognize the subjectivity of animals, even domesticated ones, likely should constitute progress for anthropology, at least in the light of ethics and the findings of cognitive ethology (Bekoff, 2007; Bekoff, Pierce, 2009; Best, 2014: 121–135). This would show that past practices can be changed without changing the past but rather the future of the human-animal relationship. By adopting new paradigmatic shifts, the attitude of the farmer towards the farm animal would also be shifted, negative traditional practices would thus be unlearned, across time replaced with positive ones. This dialectic would be "to unlearn outmoded harmful practises and re-learn compassionate forms of praxis such as love, liberation, and abolition" (Kirk, Hall, 2021: 8; Poirier et al., 2024: 6).

---

[2] More about the project: https://gni.zrc-sazu.si/sl/programi-in-projekti/misliti-zivali-transformativni-vid-iki-raziskav-zivali-v-folklori-literaturi.

[3] Noske's work is a call to expand the field of anthropology and to include a more comprehensive and empathic understanding of animals, challenging scholars to reconsider long-held assumptions and to develop new methodologies that acknowledge the significance of animals in human life. Barbara Noske explores the idea that animals possess subjective experiences and agency, arguing against the traditional view that regards animals as mere objects or resources for human use. Noske's work contributes to the broader discourse on animal subjectivity and the ethical implications of human-animal interactions.

Already in 2012, Kari Weil wrote the book *Thinking Animals. Why Animal Studies Now*, in which she reflects on the relationship between human and animal at the point when we stand in front of animals and see them eye-to-eye. Yet we do not know what the animals see when they look at us, i.e. whether they, according to Lotman (1990), see a "mad creature", or, according to Agamben (2011), an "anthropological machine", or just a fear-inducing and totally unpredictable mass of flesh. John Berger and many others have reflected on how animals are perceived. Berger even wrote that animals have vanished from human consciousness and view and have become invisible and meaningless (Berger, 1980: 17, 22). Does man really know how to observe a real-life animal, or only sees some illusory animal image created in the mind's eye, or the notion of it that society has constructed? Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman in *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (2005) put forth a criticism aimed at anthropomorphisation, on the grounds that to imagine animals thinking like humans is a form of egoistic narcissism, since humans see the world only through their own reflection in a mirror. When people project their own thoughts and feelings onto other species, there is of course a close link between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, placing man at the centre. Daston and Mitman point to another argument against the use of anthropomorphism, which has to do with the human desire to transcend the limitations between ourselves and other species, the desire to understand them from within, or even by becoming an animal.

Though it is crumbling, albeit very slowly, the social construct of animals remains central. We should therefore abandon the anthropocentric view of nature and replace it with syntheses on the roles of the animal in cultural history, moving from natural zoology to cultural zoology, understanding that this constant intrusion of animals into the human world, both on a symbolic level as well as physically, urgently requires a response to their needs and interests, which must first of all be recognised. Autopoetics is no longer sufficient, multispeciesism, interspeciesism, and intersectionality are looming, because we are becoming increasingly aware, as Daniel Elstein argues (2003), that "species" is a socially constructed category and not a natural given – the great fallacy of the hierarchisation of species came to be out of this construction. But are we really aware of what it means to think animals differently? This presupposes actually stepping out of oneself and into the other, as far as we are able to do so.

When a person is thinking animals, does that mean they are really thinking "of animals" and simply projecting the human mental map onto them? Or do they consider animals as conscious and sentient real beings? Doing so, existing human illusions might shatter. But what does it actually mean to think about animals, and perhaps even to think like an animal? Can we even think animals without stepping before a deep chasm of ignorance, of misunderstanding, an abyss that we did not and are still very reluctant to cross? We have constructed a bipolar and binary world in which the "us" and "others" are still rigidly set. Man has therefore created mental concepts by which he judges,

reacts to and acts upon the world. Will we ever find out how animals actually think? Is it not time we finally started learning from them? And not just from cats and dogs, from every single creature we encounter and establish a relationship with. Only when we discover that there is not just one mind, the human mind, but that there are different minds, when we recognise them, will we be able to take the crown of anthropocentrism from our heads. But the mind is not the only distinctive trait, there are also emotions, consciousness, self-awareness, etc. Subjectivity, the sense of existence, is so different from what we can observe scientifically that the two cannot even be described using the same language. An encounter with the animal mind can have the same function as a great work of art or a religious experience: the unusual becomes familiar and reminds us that reality encompasses much more than we normally assume. Leaping over the abyss, we realise that animals are not mere creatures from other worlds, they are not visitors to this world, they are those who live here, independently of us, and this planet belongs to others than just us.

Berger (1980: 6) argued that because we do not have a common language, the animal's silence ensures that it is different from man, distant and excluded from his community. Will we understand animals better if we learn their language? We ought to connect our communication channels to the animal plane(s), just as Sue Savage Rumbaugh already knew how to ask chimpanzees what they wanted and "how to talk" to them (see Bekoff, 2010: xxxviii – xxxix). Humans are yet to learn animal languages. A century ago, Sarah Orne Jewett asked:

> Who is going to be the linguist who learns the first word of an old crow's warning to his mate ...? ... How long we shall have to attend school when people are expected to talk to the trees, and birds and beasts, in their own language! (Orne Jewett, 1881: 4–5)

Recently, the concept of animal languages has been revived. For example, Patric Murphy (1991) suggested that humans should learn the languages and dialects of animals, which he called "ecofeminist dialogue" (1991: 50; cf. also Donovan, 2006). Cognitive ethologists have identified animal languages in countless species. The biologist Con Slobodchikoff e.g. identified the language of prairie dogs (Slobodchikoff, Coast, 1980; Slobodchikoff, 1998; Phelps, 2008: 5). Unfortunately, knowledge of animal languages and communication will not be achieved if they are denied subjectivity. Barbara Smuts (2001) e.g. used sympathy, empathy, and mindfulness in her study of baboons. It was a "creative and caring intersubjectivity" that enabled her to develop "a feeling for what it means to be a baboon" (Smuts, 2001: 293). Twenty-five years later, she had developed her knowledge of baboonish to the point where the animals could understand her, despite her "outrageous human accent" (ibid.: 307). Max Scheler believes that compassionate intellectual capacities need to be fostered in order to understand animal experience and

decode a "universal grammar" (Scheler, 1970 [1923]: 11; House, Williams, 2022: 9). A cow calls loudly when she feels distressed after being separated from her newborn calf (Marchand et al., 2002: 19–28).

Maybe we should live with animals, not just dogs and cats, but pigs and stags, too. Sharon Nuñez Gough shows how the human-pig relationship can be different. Nuñez Gough (@CARE, 2019), animal activist, rescued and adopted piglets from factory farms and offered testimony, narrating her life story about their emotions and personalities. The three pigs grew into big sows and were given names. Through observation and autoethnography (Chang 2008), she found that they had very different personalities, maintaining a strong dialogical relationship with the animals. (Corman, Vandrovcová, 2014: 144–145).

In an article on the three ethologies (mental, social, and environmental), Mathew Calarco analyses the experience of ethologist Joe Hutto, who published the testimony of seven years of living with stags (deer) in Wyoming in a book that completely transformed the usual anthropocentric view of stags and deer. He found that individual stags[4] have an entirely unique personality (Ohrem, Calarco, 2018: 55). Hutto could no longer support hunting because he began to sympathise with the deer and the stag in their pain caused by the hunter – he shared their sorrow. (Calarco, 2018: 57). In his book *Touching the Wild: Living with the Mule Deer of Deadman Gulch*, Hutto wrote:

> This community, this family, into which I have assimilated in a strange way, has undoubtedly reshaped and redefined my identity. More and more it seems that my world – my frame of reference – has irrevocably changed. Maybe I really do see a different perspective – I see the world through the eyes of other beings. (Hutto, 2014: 294)

Researcher Barbara Smuts (2006) has found that it is only by paying close attention to an animal that we can establish a proper relationship with it. Her attitude towards her own companion, the puppy Safi, showed that only a humble understanding and appropriate response to animal behaviour, dialogue, and the absence of dominance can bring about a relationship of equals. Or as Smuts puts it: it is a "dialogical exchange" and "embodied communication" (2006), which is a kind of language. In Smuts, Safi speaks and Smuts listens (cf. Smuts, 2009). Corman and Vandrovcová suggest that:

> Here we see that when animals have the opportunity to interact between different species, they also engage in dialogue. The anthropocentrism of the liberal humanist subject does not and cannot hold in the context of

[4] Compare a completely different view of roe deer in an agro-cultural society, where deer and stags as live animals are perceived as pests (Kozorog, 2023).

> such a profound interspecies relationship. The Western conception of the human subject, which operates in a passive world where only humans are subjects, is clearly a deception. (Corman, Vandrovcová, 2014: 143)

The Earth is full of animal species that have found solutions to live well in a way that 'discredits' human hegemony, as shown by at least two early texts in history that deal with the relationship between animal and human and speak of the superiority of animals rather than humans. The first is Pliny the Elder, who wrote in *Natural History*: "All other (underlined by the author) animals know their own natures: some use speed, others swift flight and yet others swimming. Man, however, knows nothing unless by learning – neither how to speak nor how to walk nor how to eat; in a word, the only thing he knows instinctively is to weep." (Pliny, Natural History, Vol. 7, Chapter 1, cited in Sax, 1998: 17). The second text is the medieval text *Ikhwan al-Safa* (Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity) which is a 10th century Arabic encyclopaedia, namely its 51st epistle (The Debate Between Men and Animals), which deals with the meeting of species (quoted in *Razgovor čovjeka sa životinjama*, 2008), where animals argue that they are at least equal, if not superior to humans, and that lacking speech does not make them inferior since animals use different sounds to communicate which are not understood by humans in turn. Therefore, claims that knowledge, skills, speech, intellect and upright posture give people the right to enslave, torture, and exploit animals are nothing more than empty ostentation. Nagel, who doubts that we will ever understand what it is like to be a bat, nevertheless gives the imagination a chance, saying "it may be easier than I suppose to transcend inter-species barriers with the aid of the imagination" (Nagel, 1974: 442).

Imaginative and real animals

Through social and creative imagination (Poirier, Tomasello, George, 2024: 6), the topic of this thematic journal is addressed by five authors who belong to cultural or critical animal studies, although they come from different humanistic sciences, such as history, literary science and ecocriticism, folkloristics, ethnology, anthropology, and linguistics. Multidisciplinarity, which combines methodologies and theoretical aspects, is necessary today, as monodisciplinarity limits innovative thinking. We aim to use the ethical and ecological discourse on the so-called "poetics of the species" and the "poetics of the individual", i.e. bear(s).

Bears are discussed by two authors of this thematic issue, Zoltan Nagy and Lizanne Henderson, who examine the image of the bear in culture and society, the contemporary discourse of the present-day encounter with the bear, as well as its objectivization or subjectivization. In the article 'Bears and Humans' (Nagy, 2024), Nagy discusses the

issue of the relationship between humans and bears (specifically the Siberian bear), the concept of "more-than-human society", where the attitude towards the bear is changing in the Khanty community. He asserts it is necessary to adopt the "native view" that one should gain knowledge of animals the indigenous way, but at the same time explores how the indigenous society perceives the bear, since they believe that the bear is similar to a human and that it understands human speech, but not vice versa. He notes that the border between bear and man in this folklore is liminal, that they may pass into one another, or that they are not in a binary opposition as is the case in Western ontology. In his article, through the stories of informants, Nagy furthers the concept of new animism, which was established by Viveiros de Castro (1998). Although it seems that the bear is placed in focus, or that man defends its subjectivity (Kernev Štrajn, 2007), man nevertheless destroys this very subjectivity when he hunts and kills the bear for one reason or another.

If we put the animal in focus also through different representations, we can find that these representations vary to a great extent. Mario Ortiz-Robles recognizes four ways of animal representations in literature: anthropomorphic, fantastic, symbolic, and realistic. Different modes of representation also include different figurative functions of animals in literature, each of them establishing a specific relationship with the referent, i.e. with a real animal (Ortiz-Robles, 2016: 23). Lizanne Henderson in the article 'Ways of Seeing Polar Bears in Fantasy Films, Fiction and Folklore' illuminates the representations of the bear in folklore, film, and literature, where it more or less exists as a human substitute or is demonized, and at the same time discusses the so-called "therianthropy" (the ability to shapeshift from human to animal form). The bear as a monster, its demonization in fantasy films, literature and folklore, robs it of its subjectivity. In this case, the fiction does not help in the rehabilitation of the animal and does not represent its real life and role, instead the animal becomes a demonic creature (cf. Calarco, 2008: 42; Vičar, 2020). Henderson also discusses a different view of the polar bear when she presents the attitude towards it in Inuit tradition, as bears become "creatures with their own agency" (Henderson, 2024). The representation of the bear as a beastly creature that attacks and devours people is still present in fiction (cf. Golež Kaučič, 2018), but the author emphasizes that the reality of polar bears is much darker, as they are threatened with extinction due to climate change. The bear goes from abstraction and symbolization to the liveliness of a real being, which is losing the battle for life in the Anthropocene.

Anthropocentrism in language is presented by Saša Babič in the article 'Animals as a Stereotyping and Characterizing Element in Slovenian Name-Callings' (2024), which, through the stereotyping of animals in short folklore forms, notes that animals often appear in linguistic structures as substitutes for humans in the anthropomorphic way (Lockwood, 1989), but the transfer of animal characteristics to humans is also frequent, namely as zoomorphism. Anthropomorphization is one of the most common

representations of animals in folklore, found in all genres of folklore. Furthermore, anthropomorphizations can be representations of human concepts applied to animals, which the folklore creator has often imprinted in songs and stories; or just a virtual or post-reality, something that may have originated from a specific relationship with an individual animal or species. Frans de Waal (1999: 255–280) developed the concept of "animal-centric anthropomorphism", which could be understood as an attempt to go beyond the hope for a total and perfect representation of the animal being, or to introduce a tolerant attitude towards the borrowing of human concepts to explain animal behaviour (Simons, 2002: 116–139). By its very definition, anthropomorphism is the misapplication of words used to describe humans to animals (Bekoff, 2010: 69). According to Eileen Crist (1999: 161): "crossing the border between nature and culture is not anthropomorphic, by giving animals a human mind – but zoomorphic, by indirectly revealing the animal face of human society." Babič notes that the properties attributed to animals are socially constructed and have scant connection with real beings and their intrinsic nature. With language, which is then semantically realized in metaphors, animals become objects and generalized images (cf. Stibbe, 2001; Vičar, 2011).

Anthropomorphization and zoomorphization is the generator of literary works for children, so it is extremely important how children are educated through imagination, as this represents the foundation on which humans build all further relationships with animals. Through these imaginative images, a critical response to the real existence of animals is also possible, if it is not merely romanticized and allegorized. Helena Pederson emphasizes the great importance of implications for pedagogical practice and their potential consequences for the position of animals in education and in society at large. She posits it is necessary to use analytic tools such as "critical pluralism" and "immanent critique" in relation to animals in education (Pedersen, 2019). Criticism of the objectification and commodification of animals is expressed by Kalina Zahova (2024) in the article 'Representations of Nonhuman Animals in Bulgarian Literary Education'. Her concern for the position of animals is reflected through the exploration of negative and positive representations of animals in children's textbooks, in the literature curriculum developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Sciences. In these textbooks, "anthropodomination" and the normalization of violence towards animals is manifested, and animals are rarely shown as the subjects of their own lives. The author discusses how the selection of literary works can affect students' attitudes towards real animals, when the reality of their lives is carefully masked. It is, in fact, an analysis of the absence of critical judgment about the inclusion of literary works in education, which are supposed to serve establishing a positive attitude towards animals and to criticize human negative attitudes and practices. She unfortunately notes that imaginative realizations of human attitudes towards animals are subject to the prevailing dominant ideology, although proactive teachers do have the option of presenting students with a different view of animals. Zahova believes that it is high

time these curricula include content that addresses transformative relationships with the planet and its animal inhabitants.

Precisely by criticizing the objectification of animals and their bodies in various positions of exploitation and abuse through the photographic gaze and the gaze of animals back into our eyes, in the article 'Exposed Animal Bodies: The Photographic Observation of the Body-Space of the Anthropocene', Branislava Vičar (2024) expands upon the new concept of transcorporeality defined by Stacy Alaimo. The photographs highlight the fundamental postulates of the Anthropocene, which represents a larger, intertwined, global system of domination (Freeman Packwood, 2010; Best, 2014) that influences animal imagery. These are not just images but the reality of bodies and their existence in the capitalist system, returned to our consciousness through the photographic capture. Not only that: just as we are looking at the animals, so the animals are looking back at us, and this look is full of pain – it is not just a suffering automaton but rather a being that watches us in our guilt of destroying the world, where animal bodies and souls are constantly exploited and used. Regardless, their eyes tell us that their lives matter. Through the analysis of photographs the author also highlights the issue of speciesism and notes that it is closely related to the climate crisis, which means that the photographs are not only photographs of bodies but of subjectivity, and also witnesses of the injustice of the world (cf. Marjanić, 2023).

Conclusion

We live in a system that allows us to dominate over animals physically and psychologically. This system ignores the fact that animals are sentient beings, capable of developing deep social relationships and of expressing themselves in natural conditions. To recognize these immanent realities, the system would have to change radically, the social constructs of the animal would have to be redefined, and it is particularly important to understand that the attitude towards the animal must be perceived as an ethical and ontological turn that allows us to see the animal as an individual being, as a moral subject and as knowledge of what is happening to it, because only in this way is such an ontological turn even viable. If we conceive of animals as persons, free and formally protected by law, an animal turn may in fact be possible – and it will be possible to truly think of animals in a different way. Therefore, people need to conceptualise their existence in a way that does not diminish the value of animals or create a hierarchy of living beings. The conceptualization of animals in the presented articles is already tending to new ways of thinking in critical opposition to anthropocentrism. It is still man who constructs the animal, establishes some or another relationship with it, abstracts or symbolizes it, but is also beginning to realize that the animal exists regardless of humanity and its interests. It is important to put the animal in focus in

all imagined and real situations in which it encounters a human being, but at the same time vital to deconstruct the social position of animals today through imagination and witnessing, and through imaginative and poetic justice (Nussbaum, 1995; Brooks Pribac, 2021; Golež Kaučič, 2024), so as to move to multi-species communities and cross-species social justice.

Acknowledgements

The article was written as part of the research project Thinking Animals: Transformative Aspects in Research of Animals in Folklore, Literature and Culture (J6-3129) and the research programme Research on Slovenian Folk Culture in Folklore Studies and Ethnology (P6-0111), financially supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2011. *Odprto. Človek in žival*. Ljubljana: Študentska založba.

Andersson Cederholm, Erika, Amelie Bjorck, Kristina Jennbert, and Ann-Sofie Lonngren, eds. 2018. *Exploring the Animal Turn*: *Human-animal relations*. Lund: Pufendorfinstitutet.

Babič, Saša. 2024. Animals as a Stereotyping and Characterising Element in Slovenian Name-Callings. *Traditiones* 53 (1): 69–84. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2024530104.

Baskar, Bojan. 2023. Mesto kmetijskih živali v »večvrstni etnografiji«. *Svetovi: revija za etnologijo, antropologijo in folkloristiko* 1 (2): 16–32. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4312/svetovi.1.2.16-32.

Bekoff, Marc. 2007. *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Joy, Sorrow and Empathy, and Why They Matter*. Novato, California: New World Library.

Bekoff, Marc. 2010. *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*. Santa Barbara, Dnever, Oxford: ABC-Clio.

Bekoff, Marc and Jessica Pierce. 2009. *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Berger, John. 1980. *Why Look at Animals? About Looking*. New York: Vintage International.

Best, Steven. 2014. *The Politics of Total Liberation. Revolution for the 21st Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian.

Brooks Pribac, Teya. 2021. *Enter the Animal. Cross-species Perspectives on Grief and Spirituality*. Sydney: Sydney University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1dv0vz1.

Calarco, Matthew. 2008. *Zoographies. The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia University Press.

@CARE: Conference on Animal Rights in Europe. 2019. Sharon Nunez Gough: How Connection Inspired Change and Growth. A Brief History of Animal Equality in the Context of the

European Animal Rights Movement. YouTube video, 11.9.2019, duration 54:57. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=l3xsC_rD-2o (accessed 6.9.2023).

Chang, Heewan. 2008. *Autoethnography as Method*. London, New York: Routledge.

Corman, Lauren and Tereza Vandrovcová. 2014. Radical Humility: Toward a More Holistic Critical Animal Studies Pedagogy. *Counterpoints* 448: 135–157.

Crist, Eileen. 1999. *Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt14bst6x.

Daston, Lorraine and Gregg Mitman, eds. 2005. *Thinking with Animals. New Perspectives on Antropomorphism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Despret, Vinciane. 2005. Sheep Do Have Opinions. In *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 360–370. Cambridge, USA: M.I.T. Press.

Donovan, Josephine. 2006. Feminism and the Treatment of Animals: From Care to Dialogue. *Signs* 31 (2): 305–329. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/491750.

Dunlap, Riley E. et al. 2000. New Trends in Measuring Environmental Attitudes: Measuring Endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A Revised NEP Scale. *Journal of Social Issues* 56 (3): 425–442. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00176.

Elstein, Daniel. 2003. Species as Social Construction: Is Species Morally Relevant? *Animal Liberation Philosophy & Policy Journal* 1: 1−9.

Francione, Gary and Anna E. Charlton. 1992. *Vivisection and Dissection in the Classroom: A Guide to Conscientious Objection*. Jenkin-town: American Anti-Vivisection Society.

Francione, Gary. 2000. *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Francione, Gary. 2008. *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Freeman Packwood, Carrie. 2010. Embrasing Humananimality: Deconstructing the Human/Animal Dichotomy. In *Arguments about Animal Ethics*, eds. Greg Goodale and Jason Edward Black, 11−30. Lamham: Lexington Books.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2015. Zoofolkloristics: First Insights Towards the New Discipline. *Narodna umjetnost* 52 (101): 7–30. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15176/vol52no101.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2017. Ontološki obrat v folkloristiki in/ali zoo/ekofolkloristika. *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 57 (3−4): 38−42.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2018. Pes v filmu: od resničnosti v fikcijo. *Traditiones* 47 (2): 119–132. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2018470207.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2023. *"Človek je najhujša zver". Živali v folklori, literaturi in kulturi.* Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU.

Griffin, Donald R. 1984. *Animal Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Griffin, Donald R. 1992. *Animal Minds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gröling, Jessica. 2014. Studying Perpetrators of Socially-Sanctioned Violence Against Animals Through the I/Eye of the CAS Scholar. In *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies. From the Margins to the Centre*, eds. Nik Taylor and Richard Twine. London, New York: Routledge, 88−110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203797631.

Grušovnik, Tomaž. 2016. *Etika živali: o čezvrstni gostoljubnosti*. Koper: Annales ZRS.

Hall, Donald. 2004. *Subjectivity.* London, New York: Routledge.

Haraway, Donna. 2016: *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373780.

Henderson, Lizzane. 2024. Ways of Seeing Polar Bears in Fantasy Films, Fiction and Folklore. *Traditiones* 53 (1): 51–68. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2024530103.

Hösle, Vittorio. 1996 [1991]. *Filozofija ekološke krize. Moskovska predavanja.* Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska.

House, Paislee and Amanda R. Williams. 2022. The Preservation of Injustuice: Human Supremacy, Domination, and Privilege. In *Critical Animal and Social Justice*. *Critical Theory, Dismantling Speciesism, and Total Liberation*, eds. Anthony Nocella J. II and Amber George, 79−96. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books.

Hutto, Joe. 2014. *Touching the Wild: Living with the Male Deer of Deadman Gulch*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Ihvanus-s-safa (Ikhwan-al-Safa). 2008. *Razgovor čovjeka sa životinjama*. Translated by Enes Karić. Zagreb: V. B. Z.

James, Rachel. 1997. *Can Ethics Provide Answers?* Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kernev Štrajn, Jelka. 2007. O možnosti ekokritiškega pogleda na tematizacijo ne-človeške subjektivnosti v literaturi. *Primerjalna književnost* 30 (1): 39–54.

Khazaal, Natalie and Nüria Almiron, eds. 2021. *Like an Animal. Critical Animal Studies Approaches to Borders, Displacement, and Othering*. Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi.

Kirk, Gwyn and K. Melchor Quick Hall, eds. 2021. Maps, Gardens, and Quilts. In *Mapping Gendered Ecologies: Engaging with and Beyond Ecowomanisim and Ecofeminism*, eds. K. Melchor Quick Hall and Gwyn Kirk, 1–16. London: Lexington Books.

Klampfer, Friderik. 2010. *Cena življenja. Razprave iz bioetike*. Ljubljana: Krtina.

Kozorog, Miha. 2023. Divje živali v družbenih razredih: poskusni model. *Svetovi: revija za etnologijo, antropologijo in folkloristiko* 1 (2): 103–117. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4312/svetovi.1.2.103-117.

Kuhn, Thomas. S. 2012 [1962]. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University Press.

Lockwood, Randall. 1989. Anthropomorphism Is Not a Four-Letter Word. In *Perceptions of Animals in American Culture*, ed. R. J. Hoage, 41–56. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Lotman, Yuri, 1990. Interview by Toomas Tammaruga. *Via Aeterna* 5: 12–20.

Magliocco, Sabina. 2018. Folklore and the Animal Turn. *Journal of Folklore Research* 55 (2): 1–7. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2979/jfolkrese.55.2.01.

Marchand, Jeremy, N., Daniel M. Weary, and R. M. Marchand-Forde. 2002. Responses of Dairy Cows and Calves to Each Other's. Vocalisations After Early Separation. *Aplied Animal Behaviour Science*, 78 (1): 19–28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/s0168-1591(02)00082-5.

Marino, Lori and Debra Merskin. 2019. Intelligence, Complexity, and Individuality in Sheep. *Animal Sentience* 25 (1): 1–26. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.51291/2377-7478.1374.

Marjanić, Suzana. 2023. Zoocentrična perspektiva naravnih nesreč: Potres v Baniji leta 2020. *Svetovi: revija za etnologijo, antropologijo in folkloristiko* 1 (2): 134–145. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4312/svetovi.1.2.134-145.

Matsuoka, Atsouko and John Sorenson, eds. 2021. *Critical Animal Studies. Towards Trans-species Social Justice*. London, New York: Rowman Littlefield.

Murphy, Patric D. 1991. Prolegomenon for an Ecofeminist Dialogics. In *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic*, eds. Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry, 39–56. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Nagel, Thomas. 1974. What Is It Like to Be a Bat? *The Philosophical Review* 83 (4): 435–450.

Nagy, Zoltan. 2024. Bears and Humans. *Traditiones* 53 (1): 25–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2024530102.

Nocella, Anthony J. II and Amber George, eds. 2022. *Critical Animal and Social Justice*. *Critical Theory, Dismantling Speciesism, and Total Liberation.* Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books.

Noske, Barbara. 1989. *Humans and other Animals*. *Beyond the Boudaries of Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 1995. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Ohrem, Dominic and Mathew Calarco, eds. 2018. *Exploring Animals Encounters. Philosophical, Cultural and Historical Prespectives*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillian.

Orne Jewett, Sarah. 1881. River Driftwood. In *Country By-Ways*, 1−33. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ortiz-Robles Mario. 2016. *Literature and Animal Studies*. Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Pedersen, Helena. 2019. The Contested Space of Animals in Education: A Response to the "Animal Turn". Education for Sustainable Development. *Education Sciences* 9 (3): 1–11. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9030211.

Phelps, Norm. 2008. Rhyme, Reason, and Animal Rights: Elizabeth Costello's Regressive View of Animal Consciousness and its Implications for Animal Liberation. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 6 (1): 1–16.

Poirier, Nathan, Sarah Tomasello and Amber E. George, eds. 2024. *Expanding the Critical Animal Studies Imagination. Essays in Solidarity and Total Liberation*. New York, London: Peter Lang.

Sanbonmatsu, John. 2007. The Subject of Freedom at the End of History. Socialism beyond Humanism. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 66 (1): 217–35.

Sanbonmatsu, John. 2014. The Animal of Bad Faith: Speciesisim as an Existential Project. In *Critical Animal Studies. Thinking Unthinkable*, ed. John Sorenson, 29–45. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Sanbonmatsu, John. 2017. Capitalism and Speciesism. In *Animal Oppresssion and Capitalism.* Volume 2, ed. David Nibert, 1–30. Santa Barbara, Denver: Praeger.

Sax, Boria. 1998. *The Serpent and the Swan. The Animal Bride in Folklore and Literature.* Blacksburg, Virginia: The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company.

Scheler, Max. 1970 [1923]. The *Nature of Sympathy*. Translated by Peter Hetah. Hamden: Archon.

Simons, John. 2002. *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*. Whiltshire: Palgrave.

Slobodchikoff, Con. 1998. The Language of Prairie Dogs. In *Kinship with the Animals*, eds. Michael Tobias and Kate Solisti-Mattelon, 65–67. Hillsboro, Oregon: Beyond Words Pub Co.

Slobodchikoff, Con and R. Coast. 1980. Dialects in the Alarm Calls of Prairie Dogs. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 7: 49–53.

Smuts, Barbara. 2001. Encounters with Animal Minds. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8 (5–7): 293–309.

Smuts, Barbara. 2006. Between species: Science and Subjectivity. *Configurations* 14 (1): 115–126.

Smuts, Barbara. 2009. Paying Attention to the Noise: Barbara Smut's Research with Dogs, Wolves, and Non-human Primates. *Animal Voices* [Radio Show Website], 25.8.2009. URL: https://animalvoices.ca/2009/08/25/paying-attention-to-the-noise-barbara-smuts-research-with-dogs-wolves-and-nonhuman-primates/ (accessed 20.11.2022).

Steiner, Gary. 2008. *Animals and the Moral Community: Mental Life, Moral Status, and Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Stibbe, Arran. 2001. Language, Power and the Social Construction of Animals. *Society and Animals* 9 (2): 145–161.

Taylor, Paul. 1986. *Respect for Nature. A Theory of Enviromental Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Telban, Borut. 2017. Ontološki obrat v antropologiji deset let po izbruhu. *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 57 (3–4): 7–11.

Vičar, Branislava, ed. 2020. *Pojmovanja živalskih smrti: antropocentrizem in (ne)možne subjektivitete*. Koper: Annales ZRS. 9–19.

Vičar, Branislava. 2011. Moralna vrednost živali v diskurzu biotske raznovrstnosti. In *Meddisciplinarnost v slovenistiki*, ed. Simona Kranjc, 509–514. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete (Obdobja, 30).

Vičar, Branislava. 2024. Exposed Animal Bodies: The Photographic Observation of the Body-Space of the Anthropocene. *Traditiones* 53 (1): 99–115. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2024530106.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. Cosmological Deixis and Ameridian Perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (3): 469–488.

Waal, Frans de. 1999. Anthropomorphism and Antropodenial: Consistency in Our Thinking about Humans and Other Animals. *Philosophical Topics* 27: 255–280.

Wadiwel, Dinesh. 2015. *The War against Animals*. Leiden: Brill.

Weil, Kari. 2012. *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now*? New York: Columbia University Press.

Zahova, Kalina. 2024. Representations of Nonhuman Animals in Bulgarian Literary Education. *Traditiones* 53 (1): 85–97. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2024530105.

Živali v žarišču: ustvarjalna in družbena imaginacija

Zaradi novih ekoloških in etičnih spoznanj v širšem družbenem in kulturnem prostoru in spremenjenega stanja sveta, ki so povzročili tudi premik pogleda iz antropo- v ekocentrizem, je bilo treba v svetovni znanosti razviti kompleksne multidisciplinarne humanistične raziskave tako živali in narave kakor razmerij človeka z njimi, da bi z različnimi spoznanji redefinirale razmerja ljudje-živali-narava-okolje-družba na novih ekoloških in etičnih temeljih. Ob premiku fokusa od ljudi k živalim in ob sledenju ontološkim obratom v humanistiki je neogibno premisliti razliko med ljudmi in živalmi, etični in ontološki status živali in preseči razločevanje na podlagi novih spoznanj in političnih praks. Zato predstavljamo tudi osnovne izhodišča projekta Misliti živali in cilj, tj. izoblikovanje transformativnih pogledov na živali v folklori, literaturi in kulturi ter preseganje dvojnosti človek-žival. Uveljaviti želimo nove smeri raziskav

živali v humanistiki, tudi ob spoznanjih novih smeri v biologiji, npr. varstvene biologije, in njihovo povezovanje.

Na podlagi teoretskih spoznanj, ki uveljavljajo biocentrično enakovrednost vseh organizmov, diskurza sorodnosti z živalmi, kritike speciesizma kot sistema dominacije in uveljavljanja čezvrstne pravičnosti ter etike globalne medvrstne empatije ali sočutja, se sprašujemo, ali vsi ti diskurzi različnih avtorskih pogledov na žival, kakor se nam kažejo v ustvarjalni in družbeni imaginaciji, predstavljajo t. i. imaginativni protidiskurz. Obravnavamo tudi poglede na žival in odsotnost njenega glasu, ki izvira iz nerazumevanja njene raznovrstne komunikacije. K njenemu razumevanju zdaj že prispevajo nekateri kognitivni etologi, ki so se naučili različnih živalskih jezikov. Poleg tega je mogoče ob tesnem sobivanju z različnimi živalmi rekonstruirati njihove družinsko-družbene odnose (poetika vrst), hkrati pa spoznavati posebnosti živalskega individuuma (poetika posameznika).

Multidisciplinarni pogled na žival je ponazorjen s pogledom na sibirskega in polarnega medveda. V prvem primeru je s konceptom »več kot človeška družba«, po katerem je meja med medvedom in človekom zabrisana, predstavljen medved; človek na eni strani brani njegovo subjektiviteto, a jo na drugi strani uničuje. Polarni medved, kakor je predstavljen v folklori, filmu in literaturi, je demoniziran in simboliziran, hkrati pa je v očeh Inuitov prikazan kot bitje z lastno zmožnostjo delovanja.

Živali so predstavljene tudi v kratkih folklornih obrazcih. So stereotipizirane, antropomorfizirane in zoomizirane, ko se živalske lastnosti prenašajo na človeka ali nasprotno, kar pomeni, da so družbeno strukturirane in generalizirane.

S tem je povezano tudi izobraževanje o položaju živali in odnosu človeka do njih, ki vpliva na družbo kot celoto. Izbor literarnih del o živalih je predstavljen v analizi bolgarskih učbenikov za književnost. Prevladujejo negativne reprezentacije živali ali antropodominacija in normalizacija nasilja do živali.

Kritika objektivizacije živali in njihovih teles je prikazana s fotografijami živalskih teles ob upoštevanju novega koncepta čeztelesnosti. Z analizo fotografij je osvetljen speciesizem, ki je tesno povezan z podnebno krizo. Fotografije teles so tudi fotografije subjektivitet, ki pričajo o nepravičnosti v svetu.

Žival je pomembno postaviti v fokus v vseh imaginativnih in realnih situacijah, v katerih se srečuje s človekom. Ob tem je pomembno tudi dekonstruirati družbeni položaj živali danes v imaginaciji in pričevanjih. Imaginativna in poetska pravičnost omogočata prehod iz monoskupnosti v večvrstne skupnosti in uveljavljata medvrstno socialno pravičnost.

Traditiones 53 (1): 25–49 | COBISS: 1.01 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530102

Bears and Humans

Zoltan Nagy

Department of European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Pecs, Hungary
nagy.zoltan@pte.hu
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0522-4371

This paper concerns the relationship between bears and humans among the Khanty people: in particular, what is meant by their claim that the bear is "half man, half animal, half god". Within this focus, it introduces the Khanty concept of a 'more-than-human' society and examines the interconnections between its constituent parties. It explores the worldview in which the dividing lines between human and natural, and human and divine, are not as sharp as Cartesian logic would have them.
▪ **Keywords**: Siberia, Khanties, bears, neo-animism, perspectivism

Članek obravnava razmerje med medvedi in ljudmi, kakor je dojeto med sibirskim ljudstvom Hanti. Njihova oznaka, da je medved »pol človek, pol žival, pol bog« priča o konceptu »več kot človeške« družbe in usmerja pozornost na vzajemne povezave med njenimi konstitutivnimi deli. V tem pogledu na svet ločnice med človeškim in naravnim ter človeškim in božanskim niso tako ostre, kakor jih predstavlja kartezijanska logika.
▪ **Ključne besede**: Sibirija, Hanti, medvedi, novi animizem, perspektivizem

In the eye of the wild

In 2021, Nastassja Martin, a French anthropologist with interests in new animism and the relationship/boundaries between humans and animals, published her own life story under the title *In the Eye of the Wild*. While conducting fieldwork in Kamchatka, Martin had been attacked and nearly killed by a bear, which had all but shattered her skull and left her scarred for life. As she drifted from hospital to hospital, first in Russia, then in France, she tried to understand what had happened to her. Finally, she returned to Kamchatka to try and puzzle out what it meant to have become, as the local indigenous people put it, a *medka* – half human, half bear – as a result of the attack, or rather, of the infinitely close and intimate relationship it had created between them. Her book speaks of the traversibility of worlds – the state of existing between them – its heroine-narrator tottering in the balance between life and death, Russia and France, the human world and the animal one: "The bear and I speak of liminality, and even if this is terrifying, no one can change that" (Martin, 2021: 80). As time went on, the author increasingly adopted the "native view" that she should "gain knowledge of animals the indigenous way: should open herself to them as to her fellow humans, making their experiences her own" (Ingold, 2004). In the meantime, she experienced one of the foundational assertions of new animism: that there is never any sharp boundary between human and animal (Pedersen, 2001; Willerslev, 2007), human and god (Carrithers et al. 2010; Oehler, 2014), or even human and lake (Mészáros, 2016), glacier (Cruikshank, 2005),

or indeed, any other being or "more-than-human creature" (Ingold, 2004).[1] Thus, as she endeavoured to make sense of her own life, she gained increasing comprehension of that perspective from which the usual European dividing line between human and natural appears a dead end.[2]

Another to have claimed that Western Cartesian thought draws too sharp a division between cultural and natural, human and animal, is Rane Willerslev. In the Western mentality, he proposes, humans have exclusive claim to the constituent aspects of personality – e.g. intentions, moral awareness, and philosophical thought – while animals are natural beings whose actions are automatic, instinctive. The Yukaghir, by contrast, take a radically opposite view: there is no distinct dividing line between human and animal, other species are viewing things and seeing and thinking about the world just as humans do, though from a different angle or standpoint, depending on the momentary form they have taken (Willerslev, 2004). For Vivieros de Castro, this type of perspectivism turns Western uninaturalism and multiculturalism into uniculturalism and multinaturalism, as Western ontology rests upon the notion that nature is uniform and cultures diverse, while perspectivism holds out for a unity of intellect and spirit across a variety of corporeal forms (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 470).

Martin's book, which, with its peculiar language, not only slaloms back and forth between worlds, but also teeters between leisure and scientific literature, sets the reader thinking as to just how the relationships between humans, animals, and gods might be described in words that render comprehensible – even to the logical mind – these porous and in no way acute boundary lines, divisions that frequently bind rather than separate. How to understand a world where the boundaries between humans and animals are neither sharp nor impassable? One way to draw closer to a solution is to try to talk about the bear from the Khanty perspective, as we shall do here.

---

[1] "It's always like that here; nothing ever turns out how you want, it resists. I think of all the times when the shot doesn't fire, when the fish don't bite, when the reindeer won't go on, when the snowmobile misfires. It's the same for everyone. We try to maintain some poise, but we trip, we sink deep, we hobble, we fall and pick ourselves up again. Ivan says that only humans think they do everything well. Only humans attach such importance to how other humans view them. Living in the forest is partly this: being a living thing among so many others, going up and down along with them." (Martin, 2021: 106)

[2] "On that day, August 25, 2015, the event is not: a bear attacks a French anthropologist somewhere in the mountains of Kamchatka. The event is: a bear and a woman meet and the frontiers between two worlds implode. Not just the physical boundaries between the human and the animal, in whom the confrontation opens fault lines in their bodies and their minds. This is also when mythical time meets reality; past time joins the present moment; dream meets flesh. The scene unfolds in our time, but it could equally have happened a thousand years ago. It is just me and the bear in this contemporary world that's indifferent to our tiny personal trajectories – but this is also the archetypal confrontation, the unsteady man with his erect sex standing face-to-face with the wounded bison in the Lascaux well. And as in the Lascaux well scene, the incredible event depicted is dominated by uncertainty about its outcome, although it is inevitable. But unlike the well scene, what happens to us next is no mystery, for neither of us dies, we both return from the impossibility that has happened." (Martin, 2021: 101–102)

The field

I have been carrying on my field research along the Vasyugan[3] in west Siberia in the Russian Federation for over twenty years, spending a total of nearly two years on location. Today, the area of the Vasyugan administratively belongs to the Kargasok district of Tomsk province. The centre is the Novy Vasyugan settlement and its outlying precinct, the Ozernoye colony without permanent inhabitants. When my fieldwork began, the male members of the Khanty families born there would go out to the camp to fish or hunt, practically the only occupation that brought the families some income. By now, the Khanty hunters having grown too old or died, only non-Khanty men married into the families go out hunting, usually to eke out the earnings from their permanent jobs. In the course of a few decades, the Khanty of Vasyugan dwindled from the overwhelming majority into an insignificant minority in the region, owing to the intense resettlement of people under Stalin's collectivization and anti-kulak program in the 1930s-1940s, the shifting of other masses accused of collective guilt affecting mainly Baltic and German people in the 1940s, and to migration motivated by the upswing of oil mining started in the late 1950s.

A diverse network of relations evolved between the Khanty and non-Khanty people – the latter called "Russian" in the colloquial language. This entailed a high degree of assimilation and the emergence of peculiar patterns of identity and ethnicity, the Khanty of Vasyugan being dissolved, as it were, among the incoming Russian and other non-Khanty settlers.[4]

During fieldwork I spent much time in the forest in the company of different hunters, taking note of their comments on spotting bears or their tracks; watching their behaviour when they sensed a bear somewhere near, and registering their innumerable bear-related activities. I heard, took part or initiated conversations about the bear all the time, and listened to endless series of stories about encounters with bears.

The language of my fieldwork and the conversations was Russian: along the Vasyugan practically all speak Russian, even the very few old Khanty who are able to communicate in Khanty, but the meeting of two Khanty equally fluent in Khanty communication would be quite extraordinary now along the Vasyugan.

The longer texts below are transcribed from recordings made during everyday chats, interviews, group interviews. Other occasions of telling such stories, however, clearly determine the possibility of collecting. In the woods, after skiing for tens of kilometres, in temperatures well below minus 40 degrees, there is no technique or fieldworker who could record stories narrated while drinking tea. The researcher has to resort to taking

[3] The Vasyugan is a left-side affluent of the Ob about one thousand kilometers south of the mouth of the Irtish.

[4] Jordan (2003: 46) acknowledges that the most massive Russian influence affected the Khanty along the Vasyugan in addition to the areas of the Ob and the Salim.

written notes. I conversed about the bear with nearly a hundred people. I recorded all the italicized quotations personally, so I do not annotate them separately.

Research literature on the Obi-Ugrians ascribes a salient role to the bear, and the writings on the bear stress the sacral aspects of this beast. The sacrality of the bear is one of the most frequent themes of discussions on the Khanty (and the closely related Mansis),[5] quite obviously as the bear is a focal point of Khanty religion, a key symbol that organizes the whole of the Khanty religious mentality. There is less literature on the everyday life of bears and hunting, and mostly its technological, less frequently its legal aspects are considered (e.g. Sirelius, 1914; Kulemzin, Lukina, 1977; Adayev, 2007: 44–46). Moreover, hunting stories are rarely narrated in Khanty folklore publications (e.g. Munkácsi, 1892–1921; Kulemzin, Lukina, 1978) but occasionally crop up in linguistic compendia (Honti, 1986). The relationship, similarities and differences between bears and humans in this lore have not been discussed until now, to my knowledge.

Bears and humans

> In their interpretation, the bear is the protector of honour on Earth. As for his origins, he is the son of Torem, with whom he once lived in the unattainable heights. From there he was cast out for the vice of conceit, plunging naked to the earth, where he landed between two trees. In this position he lay for such a long time that he became overgrown with moss. He then begged Torem to free him from his straitened circumstances and give him a life of liberty, but not to deprive him of his high origins. The god told him: "I will give you life – let you become a bear! Men will fear you and will swear upon you, this shall be your heavenly gift; but they will also hunt you and will bury you with great honour." Then the moss became fur. But the bear did not lose his divinity in its entirety, nor has he to this day: he still sees and hears everything, even in death. (Dunin-Gorkavich, 1996: 37)

Here, Aleksandr Dunin-Gorkavich recounts the story he has heard of the bear's origin, a tale that reveals the most important aspects of the Khanty's relationship to the animal. What important motifs can be extracted from the story? First, that the bear is a being of celestial provenance, the son of a god that, having created the world, retreats

[5] To pick but the most important titles from the extensive literature: Gondatti, 1888; Karjalainen, 1927; Munkácsi, Kálmán, 1963; Sokolova, 1972; Csernyecov, 1977; Kannisto, 1977; Bakró-Nagy, 1979; Kulemzin, 1984; Schmidt, 1989, 1990; Lukina, 1990a; Golovnev, 1995; Mandelstam Balzer, 1999; Moldanov, 1999; Moldanov, Moldanova, 2000; Jordan, 2003. For a brief review of the investigations see Nagy, 2008: 106–109.

into inactivity (a *deus otiosus*). Though the son is cast out of heaven for reason of his transgressions, the god bestows upon him a new opportunity: to continue life as a bear. He must therefore change into an animal, meaning primarily that the moss that covers his naked body will become fur. Despite this transformation, the beast retains its divine ability to see and hear all: its omniscience. As a result, humans respect and fear the bear, though they still hunt it. In other words, the bear possesses godly, human, and animal traits simultaneously and indeed, most frequently all three at once: "the bear is half animal, half human, and half god," (Mandelstam Balzer, 1999: 190).

In his travels, Dunin-Gorkavich covered much of the former Tobolsk Governorate, but did not visit the valley of the Vasyugan, then part of the Tomsk Governorate and home to the Khanty among whom I would conduct my own fieldwork approximately a century later. Still, it is no error to quote his writings in introduction to my own, as the conclusions that emerge from his story in essence coincide with the Vasyugan Khanty's own views.

The body and characteristics of the bear

When analysing the relationship between bear and human, the first thing we must realise is that, by the Khanty, bears are held to be extraordinarily similar to humans. This similarity manifests in both their physical and psychological traits, as well as in behaviour, temperament, and habits. Given the constraints on the length of this study, for the present, I will have leeway to flesh out only this single aspect of the question, I cannot discuss in detail the relationship between the bear and the gods.

The people of the Vasyugan see the resemblance between humans and bears as extending to outward appearance as well: both have roughly the same height when standing erect, for example, and possess similar internal organs. *"Bears are just like us, only with claws: if you remove their skins, they are more or less the same."* One tale makes the claim that they are like people, only smarter and stronger. Another that is frequently told has to do with a pathologist who was charged with dissecting a corpse found on the outskirts of the village, and who noticed only after quite some time had passed that the body was actually that of a bear, not a human. In this case, it is clearly not the veracity of the story (or lack of it) that matters, but that to the locals, it was indisputable fact.

Beyond morphology, the bear's behaviour, too, cleaves closely to that of humans. For one thing, bears know how to medicate themselves, rubbing fir resin on cuts, eating red willow bark to cure the hangover-like headaches they get following hibernation in spring, chewing a fungus that grows on Swiss pine to alleviate stomach ache, and eating fly agaric as a courage-enhancing drug during rutting season. Additionally, bears mark their living quarters, i.e. their caves, by breaking the branches around their entrances.

Only before hibernating for the winter do they erase the signs to keep themselves safe from hunters. They also mark their hunting grounds in a manner similar to the way humans mark forest paths, with claw marks in place of human hatchet marks on trees. Bears suck their thumbs, cry, and when ransacking a house and finding vodka there, drink themselves into oblivion, waking up the next day with a human-like hangover. A bear will sometimes even climb to the top of a high fir tree out of mere curiosity, or chew on a Swiss pine cone like their human counterparts: *"They eat Swiss pine like we do. They'll gather up a few, sit down, and eat them. Not the cones themselves, but the pine nuts inside."* Inside the bear's den it makes a regular bed – just as man – kneading a pillow out of moss. I know of a Vasyugan man who, having been trapped in the forest slept in a bear's cave in summer, when the bear no longer visits its den, and it was more comfortable than any covert he could have made out of twigs.

Bears cry when they are sad, hum to themselves when happy and, as the following story shows, love music:

> *There was another bear there at the time, one that was a bit smaller – a smaller one. Every evening, people would play the guitar and sing – here, in our area, by the house where the oil well was. Everything around was all beaten down. In the woods, too, it was all well-trodden. At first I didn't know what it was. It was traipsing all over here and there, scampering around them where their house was, there at the old health station. And I said: Yuri Fyodorovich, there's a bear churning around out there. Then I saw it, it was walking about, eating raspberries. Just eating raspberries, visiting them every evening. As they played the guitar and sang, it was crawling all over – found it interesting. It went over there, had an ear out and all. Even there, where my grain crib is, it sat around, listening to the music – held its interest, too, it did. Just sat there, all eyes and ears. Listening.*

But it not only likes to listen to music, it makes music itself:

> *– We were gathering Swiss pine cones on the Tuχ Siγe,*[6] *where we had a little hut, too. Have you been there? Haven't you seen the hut?*
>
> – I have and I've seen it, but it's since rotted to pieces.
>
> *– Yeah, yeah, we used to live there, right on the bank. We'd gone quite far, collecting cones. We were bringing them back to the hut, which was a bit closer. The house was here, on the bank, and we were gathering cones. There was a big fire pile there. And as we came up: "come on,*

[6] A river that springs from the lake near Ozernoye.

> *let's look for those sheets!" Iron sheets, simple iron sheets. They'd covered something with them, covered something up, when they sifted or baked the cones. Dried them. Anyway, we went looking for them: 'where can our metal sheets be?' But there ... the bear, as he comes in, turns them over, and with that they begin to clank. The bear liked that. Was listening to the music. He pushed them about, and as they flew off, they kept clanking. He kept playing that way, entertaining himself. We hardly found them again, those sheets. There were four of them, nice big ones. Anyway, that's how the bear made a mess of the place.*

Yet another parallel between humans and bears in the Khanty conception has to do with their habits – some of them not necessarily good ones. Bears, like people, can be either good or evil, a judgement the Khanty observer reaches fundamentally on the basis of how they relate to humans: the good ones avoid people, disturbing neither them nor their hunting shacks or larders; bears that steal stored up food, on the other hand, are regarded as gluttonous and mischievous; those that cause serious damage or are even aggressive are clearly bad or evil. Like their human counterparts, bears are willing to forgive, but can also carry grudges, and will punish those who provoke their ire.

The many similarities notwithstanding, bears are seen as more perfect than humans in certain regards: they are *"just like us, but faster, stronger, and more intelligent"*.

Figure 1. A rowanberry tree broken in half by a bear. Photograph by the author.

Figures 2 and 3. Markings on trees: The marks of a bear's claws as compared to the marks made by a hunter's hatchet. Photographs by the author.

To the Khanty, the bear's strength, readable in the numerous signs left in fallen or broken trees, is beyond dispute. It sometimes occurs that a bear leaves unambiguous proof of its greatly superior strength, as in the case of the hunters who, with the help of their dogs, disturbed a bear that had just downed an elk. The bear dropped its prey in the water, where it sunk. No matter how hard the hunters tried, they could not pull it back out, even with a rope. The next day, all that was left of the creature were its bones on the shore. The bear had retrieved it: *"He showed us. 'You couldn't pull it out, but I sure could! See?'"*

One cannot run from a bear, because the bear is faster; one cannot escape a bear in water, because the bear swims faster than a human can row; and one cannot get away from a bear by climbing, as bears are much better at that than people. Though bears understand human speech, the reverse is not true. This clear hierarchy is levelled only by human weapons: to meet a bear without one is irresponsible; with weapon in hand, a human at least has an equal chance, possibly better. As the Khanty say: *"With a shotgun, one might just possibly pick a fight with a bear."* It is perhaps no coincidence that in the narratives of the northern groups of Khanty, when a hero turns into a bear, he chews up his weaponry and armour, then spits on himself, at which his weapons become teeth and claws, and his armour a furry pelt.

The man-bear relationship – precisely because of the undisputed hierarchy between them – is in a delicate balance sustained by both the bear and man basically shunning an encounter. The realm of the bear and that of the humans in fact appear as parallel worlds. They coexist, use the same trails, hunt and gather the same produce. Their worlds permanently intersect, the bear's time of day being mainly the night, that of the man being the day. Walking the hunting paths, hunters inspect the tracks of the bear crossing man's trail again and again, and the next day they check to realize that the bear has similarly inspected the traces of man. Local people believe that there are two masters of the forest: people and bears, but they put the bear ahead of people, claiming that a bear could attack them any time and kill them, but it doesn't usually do so. In the final analysis, the real lord of the forest – to the mind of the local people – is the bear. Both keep tabs on the other, but they shun face-to-face encounters: *"We may traverse each other's hunting grounds, but I don't go up to its signs so there would be two hunters at one place. It is the lord of the forest, we are only its guests. How shall I put it, our race is its rival. We are not welcome guests in each other's hunting field."*

The bear-man relationship is fundamentally determined by respect: man respects the bear, and he thinks the bear respects him as well; the basic ideology of this coexistence is *"I let it go along its path and it lets me go along mine"*. The latter sentence is very often uttered when the conversation is about the coexistence of man and bear, even in cases when the two did meet but parted in peace.

As evidenced above, the power relations must be preserved in the forest, a neutral relationship based on respect is to be maintained. This also implies that people

should not behave as its rivals, should not compete with the bear. When a hunter finds a scratching on a tree which the bear demarcated its hunting ground with, and also indicates its height, he should not provoke the bear. Some opine that if man and bear should begin to compete, and the bear sees that man reaches higher, it will leave its former hunting field, in acknowledgement of the superiority of the other party, but the hunter who triggered this competition must also observe the primacy of the bear if it wins: he must not shoot it and has to shun that part of the forest.[7] This solution is, however, mainly seen as a fundamental mistake and stories are listed to prove that the bear takes such provocation for a challenge, and does take revenge on the hunter.[8]

There are myriad explanations for the bear's – mentioned above – intelligence in Khanty folklore, to which many of its habits are attributed. Its success as a hunter, for example, is ascribed to intelligence, as is its ability to sense when the first snow will fall so that it can lie down to hibernate, generally on the day prior. Bears will similarly sense the approach of a hunter (*"It knew they were coming, saw it in advance; it can see what will happen the day before in its dreams"*). Also attributed to intelligence is the bear's habit of avoiding jars when raiding a hunting lodge in favour of food in bags and cans, which cannot cut it. The bear's mental faculties are frequently seen as supernatural, particularly when being chased. A bear on the run will muddle its tracks in order to mislead its pursuers, or will simply *"conceal its tracks and scent"* to fool the dogs.

The close relationship between bears and humans is also reflected in the fact that, like humans, bears evaluate danger according to the categories of "own" and "stranger": local red bears are calculating, alien black bears that come from other regions are aggressive and dangerous: *"Our brown bear would rather evade us, but this black one is aggressive, it would even attack technical equipment."*[9]

Close relationship between the human and bear societies is also indicated by the fact that there are no major rites of passage among the Vasyugan Khanties, but no man

---

[7] A similar story was recorded as a tale along the Vasyugan by N. V. Lukina (Kulemzin, Lukina, 1978: 154).

[8] *"The bear marks its territory, leaving scratches on trees. It marks its territory and makes regular rounds. The hunter who owns the area found this little path, he went along making his own marks, scratching the trees, often above the bear's marks. The bear then went and put its marks higher. The hunter notched the tree even higher. Four or five times, perhaps, they took turns, but then it lay in wait and it killed the hunter*.
- Does that mean they became rivals?
- *Yes, you see, its territory … it had made it quite clear that it was its territory. And the hunter put his notches even higher, still. He shouldn't have done such a thing. If you put them below its marks, there's no problem, the bear won't harm you. But you see, he put them above the bear's signs, challenging it*."

[9] Though zoologists regard the brown bear as a unified species, local people differentiate three kinds. The smallest is the "ant-eater bear" (Russian: *муравейник*, Khanty: *kotŋi iχ*, both words derived from the word for 'ant'), which usually digs up anthills and eats ants, its neck is often white. The red bear (Russian: *красно-бурый* 'reddish brown', Khanty: *wörterипow iχ* 'red-haired bear') got its name for its color, it weighs about 200 kg; the black bear (Russian: *чёрно-бурый* 'blackish brown', Khanty: *pöχte ритow iχ* 'black-haired bear') which is wholly black is the largest (up to 300–500 kg) and the most aggressive. Black bears are said to have come from the Altay region, while the ant-eater bears grow into red bears when they get old.

is regarded as a fully initiated hunter until he has killed a bear or at least a reindeer. References to hunting as symbols dominated the rites of passage of Khanty males before the mass influx of Russians: at birth, the placenta was hung up with a miniature bow and arrow at a sacral place; the appearance of bow or arrow in a dream predicted the birth of a boy; a young man was initiated into adulthood when he had killed its first big game (bear, reindeer); in death symbolism it also had a great role: those had to be regarded as dead who were no longer able to hunt, to catch anything, and the weaponry – including the bow and arrow – was compulsory grave accessory.

The soul of the bear

To begin with, Khanty believe that bears have identical personalities to those of humans, as well as both a "life-force soul" (*ilt*, *lil*), and a "shadow soul" (*iles*, *kurr*), just as humans and other animals do. Because the shadow soul is so closely bound to the human form, it is no coincidence that the souls of bears, who resemble humans so closely, are also extraordinarily human-like (cf. Kulemzin, 1984: 155–156; Adayev, 2007: 166–167). This belief in the bear's human or human-like soul is held by the Vasyugan Khanty expressly, to the extent that to them, the bear even has the faculty of thought, which they ascribe to the workings of another soul, called the *ńomes*. Only three other animals besides humans and bears have this ability, namely elk, beavers, and swans.

There is therefore an elemental similarity postulated between bear and man, based fundamentally on the similarity of the souls constituting their personalities. Tim Ingold posits (Ingold, 1986: 247) that animals do not have personalities, but their owners who represent all the specimens of a species do, because in the stories they are not personified or addressed by personal names.[10] Disagreeing with this statement, Willerslev, whom I agree with, claims that an animal species can also have personality which it does not receive from the owner spirit but possesses it in its own right. In the Vasyugan area research can only find very vague and indirect hints to the owner of the bears, whereas each bear is described as a specific personality with its particular character. As mentioned above, some bears are benevolent, some are ill-willing, and others are unpredictable. Willerslev (Willerslev, 2004) and those who agree with him[11] argue on this basis that owing to the identity of souls, other species look at and see things and think about the world like people do, with the reservation that their optic angle and viewpoint changes depending on the form they inhabit.

[10] For the 'owner of animals' concept, see: Hultkrantz, 1961, 1965; Kulemzin, 1984; Lot-Falc, 1953; Munkácsi, 1892–1921; Paulson, 1961, 1968.

[11] Cf. also: Pedersen, 2001, for the Khanty's views on animate and inanimate things, see Jordan, 2003: 102–106.

This correspondence of souls is the reason that bears understand human speech – even hear and understand human thought. It is also the reason a bear will show himself to a human who concentrates on the possibility of their meeting:

> *– Have I told you about the time I first saw a bear while duck hunting?*
>
> – Yes.[12]
>
> *– I was hunting ducks. The ducks – ducklings – were already half-grown. You could shoot twenty or thirty of them at a time. Come evening, I'd take them home and my mother'd prepare them. Sometimes she made soup, sometimes pierogi. My father had told me that if you met a bear and didn't have your rifle, and it attacked you, you should curse, berate it, everything like that. Of course, I didn't have my rifle, just a shotgun. Usually I took six or seven bullets with me, but this time I'd taken them out, put cartridges in their place so I could shoot that many more ducks. Before I used to have a dog, too, a young male, but at that time, during the war, I didn't. He wasn't with me. Miron's*[13] *wife brought some dog – tied it up, brought it from Vasyugan and gave it to me so I could take it with me. That dog was good at flushing out ducks. I thought a bear would come. That was what I had thought that morning – those were the kinds of thoughts I had running about my head. If it went on its hind legs, would it hold its nose in the air? Would its arms hang at its sides? That's what I was thinking about. I thought that would be interesting to see – something I'd be glad to see. That's what I was thinking – as I walked, that's what I was going over in my head. Up to that point I didn't see the bear, though it had already showed signs of itself.*
>
> – How old were you?
>
> *– Oh, about twelve. At the time. Okay, so. I went to hunt ducks, and by that time, some of them were already of flying age. They were nice and big.*
>
> – Toward the end of August.
>
> *– Right, toward the end of August. Every year I shot a lot of them, sometimes twenty-five, sometimes thirty. It was the end of August. Or maybe closer to the middle – the middle of August.*
>
> – The middle of August, when half of them can fly and the other half can't.
>
> *– We'd had a duck blind down there on the river Tuχ Siγe. One day I was walking along like this and I thought: 'fuck, how is this possible?' I*

[12] Here, the storyteller posed the question to me then told the story to a friend.

[13] The storyteller's paternal uncle.

> *had tossed the bullets out of my pack – for ducks it would be fine. I went toward the hayfield, in the rowboat, and I looked – aha – he's sitting. He was red, and also black – he had a black stripe on his leg: it was later that I saw him that well. He was sitting there, and I said to myself, 'crap, here he is – he's going to charge me'. He was on the bank of the stream, and I said to myself, 'damn, he's going to chew me up'. And of course I didn't have my bullets with me. 'Come on,' I started to slow myself with my oars. The dog was looking at him. 'Come on,' I swore, shouted at him, 'alright now,' but he just sits there. Then he stood up, stood there, I was shouting, but he just stood. There were about twenty-five metres between us, maybe a bit more. 'Well, fuck,' I thought, 'he's not leaving'. I swore, screamed, shouted. And all of a sudden, boom, he was on all fours and took off into the bushes. He'd only have needed three or four jumps to get me, but he chose the brush. I let the dog out on the other side, thinking he'd get away, but instead he crossed the stream and where the bear had disappeared, so did the dog. Gone – he was nowhere, nowhere at all. Then he was back. 'Aha,' I thought, but then he left once more. The dog went after him, for four or five minutes in the brush. 'Okay,' I thought, 'he's gone. To hell with them.' I went on with the boat on the far side, but as I did, I kept looking back at the side where the bear went. 'Damn,' I thought, 'he'll come after me yet'. Finally I went home and told everyone that it was like this and that with the bear. Then I made myself stop. I didn't think about him in the woods anymore. 'Okay,' I thought. This morning I was puzzling about the way he walked – like a man, nose in the air or whatever. That's what I was thinking about. I'd never seen it before. Anyway.*

A bear can also hear what is said in its absence and by the same token, can hear what is said about it beside its carcass at bear festivals. This is one of the reasons it demands that people behave respectfully even when it is not there, which among the Khanty includes refraining from frivolous mention of its name: though in the Vasyugan region, the word for 'bear' is *iχ*, in general, the taboo name *kakə wajaχ* 'brother animal' is used instead.

Bears will not only hear what is said of them, however, but even foresee or dream in advance of a human's approach:

> *– There was a cottonwood tree there that had fallen. It was behind it that* [the bear] *had been lying, across from the road, watching.* [He looked] *like this with his head.* [He looked] *back,* [surveyed] *his own tracks. He felt* [our presence]*, probably. It was just a day before that he'd passed there.*

Figure 4. To illustrate his story, my conversation partner drew this picture of the bear, showing how it held its paws and nose while standing on two legs. Piotr Mihailovich Milimov's drawing from the author's field notes.

– Aha.

– *He must have seen us in a dream. He can do that. His mind is as clever as a human's.*

– He saw you in a dream?

– *Right. He must have seen us in a dream. He felt* [our presence]. *That's why the beast*[14] *left. Just a day before us.*

That the personalities of bear and human are fundamentally identical, hardly differing from one another intellectually or spiritually, is what gives the bear its power of transformation. The Vasyugan Valley is one of multiple regions where stories suggest that people, upon death or other circumstances, can turn into bears:

> According to the stories of the elders, the bear came into this world via transformation from human flesh. This change from man to bear transpired under the following circumstances:
>
> Once there was a hero, who in his life was extremely fond of walking the woods. He went there often, and always returned home again. Once, he went into the forest for meat, as was his wont, and got lost: so far did he go and to such a place that there was simply no way of return, whether forward or back. One possibility of escaping the impenetrable woods did present itself, however: to climb over an enormous stump covered in moss. Yet in the clothing he was wearing, every attempt was unsuccessful, so he did the only thing he could: he took it off, outer garments and undergarments, for the sake of reaching the other side. Placing them next to the stump, the hero climbed over, stark naked.
>
> As he did so, at that same moment, he felt something heavy upon his body. He checked himself over and noticed that he was covered in fur, the same that we now see upon the bear. Seeing himself so, the hero was frightened and quickly turned about to try and reach his clothing, so that he might make his body smooth again and the fur invisible. When he climbed back, however, and began looking for the place where his clothes had been placed, he could not find them anywhere: neither where he had let it fall, nor anywhere else. In the explanation of the Ostyaks, the hero's garments had been carried away by a spirit, and were transformed into the fur on his body as he passed over the stump. In this way the man, by the spirit's cunning and intervention, became a bear. Because the hero had no human clothing and his body was covered in fur, he did not dare walk among other men. He remained alone in the woods for

[14] The bear.

> all his days, wandering and eating whatever he found. And so it was that the bear came to the earth according to the beliefs of the Ostyaks. (Lukina, 1990b: 79–80)

A typical idea in the transformation stories is that of a man trapped in the forest, adapting to the life there by becoming a bear. On the one hand, this refers back to what we have already discussed, that the bear is in some aspects more than man, but it also reflects the closeness that links it to man. The most direct example of these stories is when a man trapped in the forest marries a bear and has offspring. However, the resulting children are doomed to be outcasts in human society.

The godlike qualities of the bear

That the Khanty view the bear as unequivocally more powerful than they are can be attributed to their ideology regarding the animal's similarity to the gods, any differences being merely social, rather than ontological. In Khanty mythology, the bear is sometimes described as the son of the Father of Heaven. Other stories say that various gods, too, may take bear form. At other times they say the animal is itself invested with supernatural abilities, as its origin myths suggest.[15]

What we have described above as the bear's cleverness is in fact also a divine quality to the Khanty, features that would previously have been interpreted as clearly supernatural.

Both the bear-human correspondence, and the supernatural powers ascribed to the bear specifically, are expressed in the Khanty custom of addressing the animal by alternate names. It has already been mentioned that even today, Khanty-speaking hunters refer to bears using the descriptive "taboo" name, "brother animal". Even in Russian, the clear *lingua franca* of the Vasyugan Valley, bears are not necessarily named as such, the preferred reference being the third person singular without qualification. Other possibilities include the concise "wild animal" (Russian *звер*), or, not uncommonly, "Mishka" or "Uncle Ványa" (Russian *Дядя Ваня*). As to how much the Russian word usage of elderly Khanty is, generally speaking, influenced by their understanding of the foreign-language designation as a taboo word, I cannot judge.

One interesting aspect of the Khanty attitude toward the bear is the seeming tension between the indisputable existence of bear-hunting, the consumption of bear meat, and the use of bear grease and bile as medicines in the region and the normative proscription of harming bears on the basis of their divinity. This inconsonance is, however, merely

[15] On the bear's relationship to the sacred and the various ways in which bears are conceived see Schmidt, 1990.

illusory: the culture in fact legitimises the option of hunting in multiple ways and from many different fundamental stances. Although the bear is a sacred animal, it was nevertheless created for them, as suggested, among other things, by the Dunin-Gorkavich story. Also, though bears supervise the human world and punish its inhabitants for their sins, making bear society a super-society with respect to humanity; at the same time, human society is a super-society with respect to bears: if a bear commits a transgression against the rules imposed by its progenitor, the Father of Heaven, then humans have the right to kill it – and indeed, must do so. The basis for this according to an alternate origin story is that the Father of Heaven ordained his son should live peacefully, attacking only those who sinned against or behaved disrespectfully toward him. But his bear-son soon violated this prescription, either because he could not resist the temptation to raid larders, or because, hungry, he plundered human graves, thus investing humankind with the right to hunt him. As a result, from that time forward, whenever a hunter saw a bear – that is, when a bear showed itself of its own free will – it meant that it was ready to die. Naturally, such occurrences were regarded as a privilege and an honour, and if the hunter upon which the opportunity was conferred then failed to kill the bear in question, he would have to atone for the failure by being ripped apart by the bear himself (Mandelstam Balzer, 1999: 190).

In the same way, the Yugan Khanty, too, hold that to kill a bear is a necessity where its signs have been spotted or its cave discovered. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the discoverer himself must dispatch the bear: he may sell the right to another hunter, though the fact of the transaction may not by any means be kept secret. In the early winter of 1998, I myself witnessed the discovery of a bear's cave by a Yugan Khanty man who, having never hunted bears before, was terrified of the prospect and decided to sell the opportunity to another. This was better for everyone, in his opinion: for him because a local entrepreneur paid him a motorised saw for the information; for the bear (and the social order) because it was able to meet its end, as desired. If he had kept the occurrence a secret, it would not have gone well for him; either he would have had to suffer being torn apart by a bear or would never again have had the opportunity of finding a bear cave.

In the strongly acculturated Vasyugan region, on the other hand, such beliefs and rules are no longer upheld. There, a meeting with a bear need not be followed by a hunt, except in the singular case where the bear's death is deemed absolutely necessary: *"Once you set out to hunt a bear in winter, you have to finish what you started, because if he wakes up and doesn't return to his sleep, you may have a* shatun[16] *bear on your hands."* It may therefore happen that a hunter fails to shoot a bear he has spotted, or that bears are hunted that have not "shown themselves" in advance. It may

[16] A *shatun* bear, or "winter walker," is a bear that fails to hibernate in winter and is therefore particularly dangerous to humans.

even happen that a bear is hunted by snare. A loop of strong wire is set up in a path a bear is expected to take, and the other end attached to a strong tree or birch stump of about one metre's height. As the ensnared bear tries to free itself from the loop, it tightens so that the creature slowly suffocates itself. Most often, however, the hunters tie the snare to a tree, then retreat into an area home or hunting lodge to wait. Upon hearing the bear's far-reaching cries, they then return to the spot to shoot the animal in the midst of its death throes.

Thus, the bear's supernatural abilities justify its status as a power that punishes or protects. Although the population of the Vasyugan Valley no longer remembers the above-cited custom of the "bear oath" described in detail by Dunin-Gorkavich (Munkácsi, 1891), the animals are still thought of as deliverers of supernatural punishment there. For this reason, when once a woman disappeared without a trace, having "doubtlessly been torn to pieces by a bear", many attributed the matter either to supernatural punishment or to a foreseeable fulfilment of fate. The most frequent explanation for the story was that she had returned to her homeland specifically to die: that at the time she had entered the woods to put her family's graves in order, she was clearly preparing for her own passing; after all, she hardly took any food with her, nor were her clothes adequate for the task. Another interpretation was that her death had been punishment, as in the course of dealing with her parents' graves she had dismantled and scattered an

Figure 5. A bear snare. Photograph by the author.

enormous anthill, a grievous sin to be sure. There did, however, arise a third explanation: that her boyfriend's wife, who had been dead for years, could not permit the man to find love again, and it had in fact been *she* who had caused the woman's disappearance.

Illustrative of the bear's protective role is the state of my host's Ozernoye home attic, where, in accordance with the former Khanty custom, I found a number of bear skulls had been preserved. Though he was the only one who still did so, even those of non-Khanty descent would consistently tell me that it was the skulls' presence that had protected his home from bear attacks: *"How many times have bears upturned everything at the hunting lodge, the streetside oven, the barn!? But the house, it never touches!"*

What we have described above as the bear's cleverness is in fact also a divine quality, traits that would once have been interpreted as clearly supernatural.

Lastly

Everything we have talked about so far concerns the fact that there is no sharp distinction between humans and animals in the Khanty mythology. The bear is a being "that defies categorisation according to clear structures" (Mandelstam Balzer, 1999: 68). This is already implied by its name: *kakə wajaχ*, meaning 'brother-animal'. The bear is an animal because it is referred to in the group of animals, because it can be hunted and eaten – with certain limitations – on account of being similar to other animals. At the same time, its closeness to man is unquestionable to the Khanty, since it is spoken of in terms of kinship, which also links it to human society.

The Khanty believe bears and humans are similar in their bodies, but more importantly, that the physical similarities can be explained by their souls. It is because of this that the boundaries between bear and human can be crossed, that man can transform into bear, that their origin stories are inseparable. These texts are not about distance, but about proximity: suddenly something takes on a different form, man becomes bear, which is almost a surprise to those who have been watching and telling the story. This would be unthinkable without the essential similarity between them.

In the stories, bears think in the same way as humans, they have the same good and bad manners: that is, as Willerslev argues, they are not irrational, and especially not simply instinctive (Willerslev, 2004), nor, I am convinced, are they without morals. According to the Khanty, the bear is conscious, as it plans how to capture its prey, cunningly traps it, chooses its bedding, and selects the best time to lie down. But the bear also has a moral sense, for it does good and bad deeds, is aware of the difference between the two, having been told by its father, the Father of Heaven; and endures the consequences of these. This binds it still more closely to man, for man is punished for his moral transgressions by the bear, who in turn obtains its penance at the hands of man. Morally they are each other's supersociety, overseers. So, in the Khanty perspective,

both man and bear live their lives as a series of rational and moral decisions in a jointly owned, mutually shared world.

The human and the bear are members of the same "more-than-human" society, one that shares worlds, lives, and thoughts, even where encounters are rare and, in fact, mutually avoided. The relationship is accompanied and regulated by emotional states such as admiration, even terror.

Bears are like people, sometimes greater, sometimes lesser; are supervisors and supervised; hunters and hunted. What really differentiates them, for all their external similarities, is the body: the hairy body, which is the defining moment of the bear's transformation. The other difference is the loss of speech: the bear can understand human language, but it can no longer respond in a way that humans can understand. And there is one more thing that strongly separates them: the bear's divine abilities, or, as the Khanty say its divine wisdom, which makes it overwhelmingly more powerful than man. It is the physical difference that makes it huntable by the Khanty, yet the divine qualities that are the source of respect and fear.

Both similarity and difference are evident, and both are necessary for the world to function ideally. As we have pointed out, the mixing of the two worlds poses a problem of categorisation: in the stories, the common children of bear and man are outcasts. As in Martin's book cited at the beginning of my study, the point of the book is to confront the transgression of boundaries and its consequences. Indeed, by understanding it – putting it into words – we learn much more than merely how the Khanty think about animals; in fact, we learn about ourselves, and about the human place in a "more-than-human" society. What we gain and experience is a mode of thinking that opens up new perspectives in the management of relations between humankind and nature, one of the greatest challenges we face today – and one to which Western thinking has, to date, failed to provide an adequate response.

References

Adayev, Vladimir Nikolayevich. 2007. *Traditsionnaya ekologicheskaya kul'tura khantov i nentsev.* Tyumen': Vektor Buk. [*Традиционная экологическая культура хантов и ненцев.* Тюмень: Вектор Бук.]

Bakró-Nagy, Marianne. 1979. *Die Sprache des Bärenkultes im Ob-ugrischen*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Carrithers, Michael, Matei Candea, Karen Sykes, and Martin Holbraad. 2010. Ontology Is Just Another Word for Culture. Motion Tabled at the 2008 Meeting of the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory, University of Manchester [ed. Soumhya Venkatesan]. *Critique of Anthropology* 30 (2): 152–200. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X09364070.

Cruikshank, Julie. 2005. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Csernyecov, Valerij Nyikolajevics.1977. Az obi-ugor medvekultuszról, [About the Ob-Ugrian Bear Cult]. In *Uralisztikai olvasókönyv*, ed. Péter Domokos, 198–205. Budapest: ELTE.

Dunin-Gorkavich, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich. 1996. *Tobol'skij sever. Etnograficheskij ocherk mestnyh inorodcev. Tom 3.* Moskva: Liberiya. [*Тобольский север. Этнографический очерк местных инородцев*. Том 3. Москва: Либерия.]

Golovnev, Andrey Vladimirovich. 1995. *Govoryashchie kul'tury: traditsii samodiytsev i ugrov*. Yekaterinburg: UrO RAN. [*Говорящие культуры: традиции самодийцев и угров.* Екатеринбург: УрО РАН.]

Gondatti, Nikolay Lvovich. 1888. *Sledy yazychestva u inorodtsev Severo-Zapadnoy Sibirii*. Moskva: Tipografiya Ye. G. Potapova. [*Следы язычества у инородцев Северо-Западной Сибирии.* Москва: Типография Е. Г. Потапова.]

Honti, László. 1986. *Chrestomathia ostiacica (osztják nyelvjárási szöveggyűjtemény nyelvtani vázlattal és történeti magyarázatokkal)* [a collection of separate dialect texts with grammatical sketches and historical explanations]. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.

Hultkrantz, Åke. 1961. The Owner of the Animals in the Religion of the North American Indians. Some General Remarks. In *The Supernatural Owners of Nature: Nordic Symposium on the Religious Conception of Ruling Spirits (Genii Loci, Genii Speciei) and Allied Concepts*, ed. Åke Hultkrantz, 53–64. Stockholm, Göteborg, Uppsala: Svenska Religionshistoriska Samfundet.

Hultkrantz, Åke. 1965. Type of Religion in the Arctic Hunting Cultures. A Religio-Ecological Approach. In *Hunting and Fishing. Nordic Symposium on Life in a Traditional Hunting and Fishing Milieu in Prehistoric Times and Up to the Present Day*, ed. Harald Hvarfner, 265–318. Lulea: Norrbottens Museum.

Ingold, Tim. 1986. Hunting, Sacrifice and the Domestication of Animals. In *The Appropriation of Nature: Essays on Human Ecology and Social Relations*, ed. Tim Ingold, 243–277. Manchester: University Press.

Ingold, Tim. 2004. Foreword. In *Cultivating Arctic Landscapes: Knowing and Managing Animals in the Circumpolar North*, eds. David G. Anderson and Mark Nuttall. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Jordan, Peter. 2003. *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape. The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Kannisto, Artturi. 1977. A vogul medveünnepek. In *Uralisztikai olvasókönyv*, ed. Péter Domokos, 186–197. Budapest: ELTE.

Karjalainen, Kustaa Fredrik. 1927. *Die Religion der Jugra Völker III*. Helsinki, Porvoo: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia (Folklore Fellows Communication, 63).

Kulemzin, Vladislav Mikhailovich. 1984. *Chelovek i priroda v verovaniyakh khantov*. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta. [*Человек и природа в верованиях хантов.* Томск: Изд-во Томского университета.]

Kulemzin, Vladislav Mikhailovich and Nadezhda Vasil'evna Lukina. 1977. *Vasyugansko-vakhovskie khanty v kontse KhIKh – nachale KhKh vv. Etnograficheskie ocherki*. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta. [*Васюганско-ваховские ханты в конце XIX – начале XX вв. Этнографические очерки*. Томск: Изд-во Томского университета.]

Kulemzin, Vladislav Mikhailovich and Nadezhda Vasil'evna Lukina. 1978. *Materialy po fol'kloru hantov*. Tomsk: Izdatel'stvo Tomskogo universiteta. [*Материалы по фольклору хантов*. Томск: Издательство Томского университета.]

Lot-Falc, Éveline. 1953. *Les Rites chasse chez les peuples sibériens*. Paris: Gallimard.

Lukina, Nadezhda Vasil'evna. 1990a. Obshchee i osobennoe v kul'te medvedya u obskikh ugrov. In *Obryady narodov Zapadnoy Sibirii*, ed. Nadezhda Vasil'evna Lukina, 179–191. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta. [Общее и особенное в культе медведя у обских угров. В *Обряды народов Западной Сибирии*, ред. Надежда Васильевна Лукина, 179–191. Томск: Изд-во Томского университета.]

Lukina, Nadezhda Vasil'evna. 1990b. *Mify, predaniya, skazki khantov i mansi*. Moskva: Nauka. [*Мифы, предания, сказки хантов и манси*. Москва: Наука.]

Mandelstam Balzer, Marjorie. 1999. *The Tenacity of Ethnicity: A Siberian Saga in Global Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Martin, Nasstasja. 2021. *In the Eye of the Wild*. New York: New York Review Books.

Mészáros, Csaba. 2016. A tavak és az emberek kapcsolata. Az animizmus jelensége Jakutiában [The Connection Between Lakes and People: The Phenomenon of Animism in Yakutia]. *Ethnographia* 127: 391–411.

Moldanov, Timofey Alekseevich. 1999. *Kartina mira v pesnopeniyakh medvezhikh igrishch severnykh khantov*. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta. [*Картина мира в песнопениях медвежих игрищ северных хантов*. Томск: Изд-во Томского университета.]

Moldanov, Timofey Alekseevich and Tat'yana Aleksandrovna Moldanova. 2000. *Bogi zemli Kazymskoy*. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta. [*Боги земли Казымской.* Томск: Изд-во Томского университета.]

Munkácsi, Bernát. 1891. A medveeskü népszokása a voguloknál [The Folk Custom of the 'Bear Oath' Among the Voguls]. In *Hunfalvy-album*, ed. Viktor Hornyánszky, 113–132. Budapest: Hornyánszky.

Munkácsi, Bernát. 1892–1921. Vogul népköltési gyűjtemény [Vogul Folklore Collection] I–IV. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia.

Munkácsi, Bernát and Béla Kálmán. 1963. *Manysi (vogul) népköltési gyűjtemény* IV [Mansi (Vogul) Folklore Collection]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Nagy, Zoltán. 2008. Profannyy Medved' v okhotnich'ikh istoriyakh khantov Vasyugana. In *Arkheologiya i etnografiya Priob'ya: Materialy i issledovaniya. Sbornik trudov kafedry arkheologii i etnologii*, ed. Pletneva Lyudmila Mikhailovna, 106–125. Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. [Профанный Медведь в охотничьих историях хантов Васюгана. В *Археология и этнография Приобья: Материалы и исследования. Сборник трудов кафедры археологии и этнологии*, ред. Людмила Михаиловна Плетнева, 106–125. Томск: Изд-во Томского государственного педагогического университета.]

Oehler, Alexander. 2014. Anima Borealis: Power and Conflict in Northern Landscapes. Lecture at University of Aberdeen, Scotland. 31.7.2014. URL: https://www.academia.edu/7674006/Anima_Borealis_Power_and_conflict_in_northern_landscapes (accessed 16.9.2024).

Paulson, Ivar. 1961. Die Vorstellungen von den Seelen und Schutzgeistern der Tiere bei einigen nordasiatischen (sibirischen) Völkern. In *The Supernatural Owners of Nature: Nordic Symposium on the Religious Conception of Ruling Spirits (Genii Loci, Genii Speciei) and Allied Concepts*, ed. Åke Hultkrantz, 38–53. Stockholm, Göteborg, Uppsala: Svenska Religionshistoriska Samfundet.

Paulson, Ivar. 1968. The Preservation of Animal Bones in the Hunting Rites of Some North-Eurasians Peoples. In *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*, ed. Diószegi Vilmos, 451–457. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Pedersen, Morten A. 2001. Totemism, Animism and North Asian Indigenous Ontologies. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7: 411–427.

Schmidt, Éva. 1989. Bear Cult and Mythology of the Northern Ob-Ugrians. In *Uralic Mythology and Folklore*, eds. Mihály Hoppál and Juha Pentikainen, 187–232. Budapest, Helsinki: Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Schmidt, Éva. 1990. Az obi-ugor mitológia és a medvetisztelet [Ob-Ugric mythology and bear worship]. *Ethnographia* CI: 149–193.

Sirelius, Uno Taavi. 1914. Über das jagdrecht bei einigen finnischen-ugischen völkern. *Mémoires De La Société Finnougrienne* 35 (14): 1–34.

Sokolova, Zoya Petrovna. 1972. *Kul't zhivotnykh v religiyakh*. Moskva: Nauka. [*Культ животных в религиях*. Москва: Наука.]

Viveiros De Castro, Eduardo. 1998. Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4: 469–488. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157.

Willerslev, Rane. 2004. Not Animal, Not *Not*-Animal: Hunting, Imitation and Empathetic Knowledge Among the Siberian Yukaghirs. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10: 629–652. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2004.00205.x.

Willerslev, Rane. 2007. *Soul Hunters Hunting, Animism, and Personhood Among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Medvedi in ljudje

Izhodišče razprave je nedavno izdana knjiga Nastassje Martin (*In the Eye of the Wild*, 2021, slovenski prevod *Verjeti v zveri*, 2023), v kateri skuša avtorica razumeti razmerja med človeško in živalsko družbo, potem ko je doživela napad medveda nase. Govori o prepustnosti svetov, o medsvetovnosti svetov, zabrisovanju ločnic. Zelo dramatična knjiga skuša odgovoriti na vprašanje, kako bi lahko razmerja med ljudmi, živalmi in bogovi opisali z besedami, ki bi omogočile razumeti luknjičave in nikakor ostre meje, delitve, ki večinoma bolj povezujejo kakor ločujejo. Odgovore na podobna vprašanja skušam najti – pri tem pa ostajam v pojmovnem okviru znanstvenega jezika – v odnosu sibirskega ljudstva, danes zelo akulturiranih vasjuških Hantov, do medveda.

Medved se po prepričanju Hantov spremeni iz boga ali človeka v žival in ima tako živalske, človeške in božanske lastnosti: »medved je pol žival, pol človek in pol bog«, bitje, ki »se upira razvrstitvi po jasnih strukturah«.

Podobnosti se kažejo v fizičnih in psihičnih lastnostih kot tudi v vedenju, temperamentu. Medved je videti zelo podoben človeku, tako zelo, da se zdita skoraj nerazločljiva. Povezujejo ju tudi dobre in slabe navade. Toda medvedi na neki način veljajo za popolnejše od ljudi: so kot ljudje, le da so hitrejši, močnejši in inteligentnejši. Zato je razmerje med človekom in medvedom najbolje označeno s sožitjem: človek in medved sta člana iste »več kot človeške« družbe, ki si deli svetove, življenja in misli, tudi kjer so srečanja redka in se pravzaprav

vzajemno izogibata. Odnos spremljajo in uravnavajo čustvena stanja, kot sta občudovanje ali celo strah.

Medved je tudi po duhu zelo podoben človeku, ima enako osebnost kot ljudje. Hanti verjamejo, da sta oba, medved in človek, zavestni in moralni bitji ter drug drugega moralno nadzirata in kaznujeta. Zaradi tega je tudi mogoč prestop ločnic med njima, človek se lahko spremeni v medveda, njunih zgodb o izviru ni mogoče ločiti. Besedila ne govorijo o razdalji, marveč o bližini.

Kar ju ob vsej zunanji podobnosti resnično razločuje, je telo, dlakavo telo, izguba govora in medvedove božanske sposobnosti oziroma, kakor pravijo, njegova božanska modrost, zaradi katere je vedno močnejši od človeka. Zaradi telesne drugačnosti jih Hanti lahko lovijo, božanske lastnosti so vir spoštovanja in strahu.

Z razumevanjem ubesedenega hantskega stališča o razmerju med človekom in medvedom zvemo veliko več kot zgolj to, kako Hanti razmišljajo o živalih: pravzaprav se učimo o sebi in o mestu človeka v družbi. Pridobimo in doživimo način razmišljanja, ki odpira nove perspektive pri urejanju razmerij med človeštvom in naravo, enim največjih izzivov, s katerimi se danes spoprijemamo in na katerega zahodno razmišljanje do danes ni zmoglo ustrezno odgovoriti.

Traditiones 53 (1): 51–68 | COBISS: 1.01 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530103

Ways of Seeing Polar Bears in Fantasy Films, Fiction and Folklore

Lizanne Henderson

School of Social & Environmental Sustainability, University of Glasgow, Scotland
lizanne.henderson@glasgow.ac.uk
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5784-9900

The polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) has had many archetypal functions throughout time and across cultures and has been a key character within traditional tales and mythologies across the Arctic regions. Within Inuit and Greenlandic hunting cultures the polar bear is an important resource for food and clothing, but the bear has also held folkloric and spiritual significance. However, within the realm of anglophonic fantasy-horror films and fiction, the polar bear has frequently been portrayed as a figure of fear, recalling nineteenth century European explorers descriptions of encounters with bears in accounts of Arctic expeditions. A sample of negative representations of polar bears within fantasy-horror film, television, and fictional adaptations are explored and compared to traditional Inuit perspectives, revealing profoundly different perceptions of the natural world.
▪ **Keywords**: Arctic, Inuit, folklore, fantasy, horror, media studies, human-animal relationship

Polarni medved (*Ursus maritimus*) ima v času in v različnih kulturah številne arhetipske funkcije ter je osrednji lik v tradicionalnih zgodbah in mitologijah na arktičnih območjih. V lovskih kulturah Inuitov in Grenlandcev je polarni medved pomemben vir hrane in oblačil, ima pa tudi folklorni in duhovni pomen. Vendar je v anglofonskih fantazijskih filmih in fikciji pogosto prikazan kot lik strahu, kar spominja na opise evropskih raziskovalcev o srečanjih z medvedi v poročilih o arktičnih odpravah iz 19. stoletja. Vzorec negativnih upodobitev polarnih medvedov v filmskih fantazijskih grozljivkah, televizijskih filmih in igranih priredbah je avtorica raziskala in primerjala s tradicionalnimi pogledi Inuitov, ki razkrivajo zelo drugačno dojemanje naravnega sveta.
▪ **Ključne besede**: Arktika, Inuiti, folklora, fantazija, grozljivka, medijske študije, razmerje človek-žival

The many faces of *nanoq*

The polar bear, *Ursus maritimus*, largest of the ursine family, has had many faces and archetypal functions throughout time and across cultures. Known as *nanoq* to the Inuit, the polar bear is an iconic symbol of the north, and has featured in traditional folktales, legends, and mythologies across the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. South of the Arctic Circle the polar bear has emerged in modern day Children's Literature, with some regularity, as a central character (Henderson, 2020). Numerous themes, motifs, and sub-genres can be detected within Northern hemisphere bear tales more generally – focussed on black, brown, and polar bears – such as origin or creation stories, success or failure at hunting, the importance of family and community bonds, interspecies communication and the ability to understand one another's language,

elements of shamanism, and connections with the supernatural that might incorporate therianthropy (the ability to shapeshift from human to animal form). In recent years, mainstream environmental communication messaging has made liberal use of the polar bear to convey the multitude of threats posed by anthropogenic climate change and global warming. The various cultural imaginings and manifestations of the polar bear are, however, often contradictory or at odds with one another.

As Steve Baker (1993) argued, culture shapes our reading of animals and there are many competing cultural representations of animals in numerous different contexts, to the point that "animals can apparently be used to mean anything and everything". Furthermore, some of the most extreme contradictory representations are found in popular culture (Baker, 1993: 4, 167). Given the vastness of the topic, this article specifically explores negative anglophonic fantasy representations of polar bears within modern day film and television, including some fictional adaptations. Once the selected sample has been discussed the article shifts to how such horror-driven imaginings differ from traditional Inuit perspectives, revealing profoundly different perceptions of the natural world and, indeed, of the Arctic as a whole. For clarity, the methodological influences taken here have not been predominantly guided by media or film studies, but rather by folkloristic and semiotic approaches.

Modern-day literary and film interpretations of polar bears sometimes retain the magical motifs associated with folktale. An excellent example is the magnificent character of Iorek Byrnison, king of the panserbjørne armoured polar bears of Svalbard, in English writer Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000), adapted as a film, *The Golden Compass* (2007) and a British BBC TV series, *His Dark Materials* (2019). Byrnison, whose name has been concocted from Norwegian *Bjørn sønn*, or 'bear son', is reminiscent of medieval Nordic traditions of the bear as a guiding spirit, or *fylgia* (plural *fylgjur*), as in *Njal's Saga* where the hero Gunnar's *fylgia* is a massive bear (Bieder, 2005: 77). In most instances this would have been the European Brown Bear though Scandinavians were well acquainted with the Ice Bear, or *Isbjørn* in Norwegian, *hvítabjörninn* in Icelandic, so a polar bear *fylgia* is not out of the question. Pullman's characterization of the polar bear king, Byrnison, is an intriguing blend of the folkloric and the biological behaviours of polar bears; he is solitary, incredibly powerful, and able to travel great distances, but he also wears body armour and can communicate in human language. Despite his initial gruff and hostile exterior, the mighty Byrnison is befriended by the determined child-heroine Lyra, and the two form an unlikely partnership in pursuit of rescuing kidnapped children. Lyra is even permitted to ride on Byrnison's back. Pullman's literary vision seamlessly blends the magical with the natural and creates a powerful image of human-bear cooperation and mutual respect. However, many popular television shows of the twenty-first century, such as *Lost* (2004–2010), *Fortitude* (2015–2018), and *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) have preferred to use the polar bear purely as a figure of fear and horror.

Bears on the box

In the hit American ABC series *Lost*, the premise of the show is that an aeroplane, *Oceanic* Flight 815, has crash-landed on a tropical island where the survivors quickly discover all is not as it seems. In the pilot episode, some of the key characters are charged by a polar bear who is then quickly shot. In a neat piece of foreshadowing, the little boy Walt had just been looking at a scary drawing of a polar bear in a comic book before the "actual" bear attacked some of the group, and Walt himself, 14 episodes later, is attacked by another polar bear and forced to hide in a banyan tree. The whole series is littered with passing polar bear references – including another foreshadowing appearance in season 3 of a ferocious bear in John Locke's dream that helps him to rescue Mr Eko from the "real" bear. It is eventually revealed in the third season that the bears had been brought there to be used in electromagnetic research and made to push a wheel that could transport them through space and time, one ending up in Tunisia. Like many things in this series, it is not explained how polar bears could survive on a steamy, seal-devoid, tropical island! What, perhaps, is of interest within the show is the geographical and temporal juxtapositions of realism with fantasy: "the castaways, and the viewers, confronted with a space that does not adhere to the laws of nature" (McManus, 2011).

Sky Atlantic's horror/psychological thriller series *Fortitude* was filmed in Iceland but is set in a fictional Norwegian Arctic modelled on Longyearbyen, Svalbard. The show starts off as a murder-mystery but evolves into a body-shock, invasion by parasitic wasps that were frozen inside a woolly mammoth, safe in the permafrost for 30,000 years until the prehistoric animal starts to thaw out and the wasps begin laying their larvae, contaminating the local wildlife with a contagious disease. Chaos ensues, in the icy, and previously crime-free island, beginning with psychotic, cannibalistic polar bears of which one is witnessed in the very first episode disembowelling a man while he is still alive. Meanwhile the reindeer, a species that are herbivores, are observed grazing on a polar bear carcass. It does not take long for the human population to also start displaying signs of infection. The threat of the crazed polar bears remains ever present, including a scene in the second season of one rampaging through the primary school. The storyline is basically about the devastation wreaked by anthropogenic climate change but, regrettably, the environmental theme starts to wane and is overtaken by more familiar demonic possession confusingly infused with Inuit shamanism and East Greenlandic traditions of the *tupilaq* – a vengeful spirit (Rasmussen, 1908: 155; Romalis, 1983). Confusingly because Svalbard has never had an indigenous population of Inuit or Saami. There is also an uncomfortable paring of the polar bear as dangerous predator with the dangers of human sexual predators, when one of the characters, a victim of rape, says, *"In this place, things can come at you from nowhere. Monsters. You won't see them, you won't hear them, until they*

have you in their teeth [gnashes her teeth] and then they're gone, into the darkness, before you know it".

Arguably one of the more inventive manifestations of polar bear as monster appears in HBO's hugely successful series *Game of Thrones*, when a white walker zombie bear attacks Jon Snow and his crew, killing one of their number and mauling another. Out of the frozen gloom the undead bear makes its attack, and Thoros and Beric set the bear ablaze with their fiery swords, which looks impressive yet fails to destroy the undead bear. It takes a stab from Jorah Mormont's dragonglass dagger to finally put the monster down. However, the bear served its purpose by reminding our heroes "the night is dark and full of terrors".

What these three televisual examples share in common, and with the fantasy genre in general, is the deliberate use of space and place, at once real and unreal, situationally located in reality but also dislocated from it or, as Daniel Baker puts it, "what is real is what we perceive, and what we perceive is filtered by subjectivity" (Baker, 2012). Reality, in other words, is relative. For the fantasy to succeed in drawing the reader or viewer into its constructed world, this shifting between the unreal and the marvellous, on one hand, and the real and mimetic on the other, must be seamless. The fantastic or magical elements "enters a dialogue with the 'real' and incorporates that dialogue as part of its essential structure" (Jackson, 1981: 36; Barnim, 2020). Good examples of where this has worked, while also drawing heavily from mythological tropes and motifs, is in the aforementioned trilogy by Philip Pullman, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, or George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (on which the televised *Game of Thrones* series was based).

Another area of commonalty these three examples display is that they play into longstanding Anglocentric depictions of the polar bear as a savage monster driven by an anthropophagus desire to eat human flesh. Imagery of animals attacking humans, also referred to as the "revenge-of-nature" plot, is relatively common within the horror film genre, with a notable rise of this theme from the 1970s (Molloy, 2022). In the Western world the classic film example of the relentless man-eater is another apex predator, the great white shark in Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), adapted from Peter Benchley's novel of 1974. The film received numerous Academy Awards nominations in 1976, including best picture, winning Oscars in sound, film editing, and original score. The tremendous and long-lasting success of the movie was in part due to the creation of a predatory, foreboding menace, tapping into deep-rooted fears of terrors lurking beneath the surface of the water, its presence signalled to the viewers by two simple notes from John Williams's unforgettable soundtrack. However, the negative impact of *Jaws* on sharks was devastating, a species that has been on Earth for millions of years, pre-dating the age of dinosaurs, turned into a monster and thus another victim of human misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the natural world. Interestingly, on the 25th anniversary of the film, interviews with Peter Benchley revealed the author

had some regrets, claiming he would not write such a book again, recognising that "the perception of animals has changed" and he "wouldn't try to demonize an animal" or cast it as a villain as this was no longer "morally and ethically" acceptable (Rothfels, 2002: viii). On the "revenge of nature" theme we might also acknowledge the enduring success of the *Godzilla* (*Gojira*) franchise, the original Japanese film debuting in 1954. *Godzilla* belongs to the Kaiju genre, identifiable for its use of giant monsters. This gargantuan reptile is no ordinary monster but is metaphorical of nuclear holocaust, a theme which resonated well with post-WWII Japanese audiences. The underlying premise that Godzilla has arisen as a response to human folly, through our creation of the atom bomb, has been retained in the recent string of American movies from the franchise since 2014 (Skipper, 2022). Godzilla is accompanied by a whole panoply of 'monsters', such as Mothra and King Kong, who are not really monsters at all but are responsible for restoring balance and repairing damage to nature caused by humans. In other words, humanity is the true monster.

Creating a monster

Characterization of polar bears as villainous monsters is not new, intensifying in the nineteenth century, the "Golden Age of Exploration", through accounts and illustrations of Arctic expeditions. The popularity of Arctic-themed narratives fed an increasingly hungry British, European, and North American reading public looking for excitement and adventure, tinged with a splash of terror, to whet their appetites. The explorers were searching for the Northwest Passage, a sea route through Greenland and the Canadian Arctic that, if discovered, would boost trade between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Part of their mission was to record anything of scientific interest, including the animals and the Inuit people. In these nineteenth century accounts polar bears were often drawn in angry poses, rearing up, with gaping jaws, or described as hunting down the intrepid explorers in packs, like wolves, despite the fact they are not pack animals but solitary hunters. These sorts of stories and images nurtured colonial notions of brave, strong, fearless, conquering white men, taming the savage lands for imperialist glory. On the polar bear Scotsman Sir John Leslie, *Narrative of Discovery* (1831), surmised:

> This fierce tyrant of the cliffs and snows of the north unites the strength of the lion with the untameable fierceness of the hyena . . . this bear prowls continually for his prey . . . he is sometimes left for weeks without food, and the fury of his hunger then becomes tremendous. At such periods, man, viewed by him always as his prey, is attacked with peculiar fierceness. (Leslie, 1831: 65)

"Fierce" appears three times in this short passage, and he goes on to give harrowing accounts of sailors attacked by bears, including an early report from a Dutch whaler and sea captain in 1668 who found himself "beneath the assailant, who, placing both paws on his breast, opened two rows of tremendous teeth, and paused for a moment, as if to show him all the horrors of his situation. At this critical instant, a sailor, rushing forward . . . succeeded in alarming the monster, who made off, leaving the captain without the slightest injury". Well, the bear, it turns out, was defending itself from the sailors who had injured it with a lance giving it a "dreadful wound in the belly", so this "monster" probably did not survive the encounter (Leslie, 1831: 67).

Leslie evidently, and erroneously, attributed polar bears with an almost unnatural desire to hunt down and consume humans. There is little in his account that honours or shows respect for the bear. In the early twentieth century, nature writer and illustrator, Ernest Thompson Seton, reported divergent views on the ferocity of the polar bear, its mood and temper:

> One portion [of evidence] proves that the creature is timid, flying always from man, shunning an encounter with him at any price. The other maintains that the White Bear fears nothing in the North, knowing that he is king; and is just as ready to enter a camp of Eskimo, or a ship of white men, as to attack a crippled Seal. (Seton, 1925–1928: 217)

Seton, whose works on Natural History were prolific, came under sustained attack for anthropomorphizing the animals he studied. One of the works he is most associated with, *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), contains the story of a wolf he named Lobo and his mate Blanca. Seton expresses deep admiration for the wolves but is quite unapologetic when he kills Blanca, using her body to lure Lobo into a snare (Seton, 1898: 17–54). Andrew Isenberg notes Seton's views reflected nineteenth century perspectives "which sought the destruction of most wildlife, particularly predators, in order to domesticate the environment", but that his "characterization of Lobo and his pack heralded a new representation of wildlife" as the animals "inhabit a moral universe of honour, love, and choice". In a similar vein to Jack London's *Call of the Wild* (1903), Lobo the wolf is depicted by Seton in ways comparable to the "noble savage" personification of First Nations and Inuit peoples (Isenberg, 2002). The ennobling process of the wolf did not, however, remove the stigma of fear or desire to exterminate it. A significant turning point in public perceptions of the wolf was, arguably, Canadian author Farley Mowat's inspirational *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), adapted on film by Disney in 1983, though it has received criticism for purporting to be based on truth when it should be regarded as fiction. Criticisms aside, Mowat's story did help people to see wolves less as ruthless predators and more as creatures deserving of our respect and empathy. This ennobling and re-evaluation of the wolf

has not, seemingly, extended to the genre of fantasy-horror where wolves continue to be demonized with Jaws-worthy voraciousness.[1] But what of the polar bear?

Polar bear as monster or the monstrous human? *The Terror* versus *The North Water*

A distinguishing feature of monsters found in the horror genre, as opposed to monsters encountered in folktales, is "the attitude of characters in the story to the monsters they chance upon". Noël Carroll observed, "in works of horror, the humans regard the monsters that they encounter as abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order" while in folktales "monsters are part of the everyday furniture of the universe". In horror, the monster is "an extraordinary character in our ordinary world", whereas in folktales the monster is "an ordinary character in an extraordinary world". A further differentiation is that characters within the horror genre are typically described as having an emotional reaction or physically affective response to the monster, such as nausea, revulsion, disgust, and, of course, terror. The monster is often associated with disease, filth, decay, uncleanliness. In the presence of the monster, the characters scream, recoil, shudder, cringe, or are paralyzed with fear (Carroll, 1987). Such intense emotional and physical responses to monsters are not normally attributed to characters in folktales. Distinctions between the horror genre and folktale will emerge again, in the section below, when we come to look at how Inuit stories depict the polar bear.

AMC's mini-series *The Terror* (aired US 2018–2019; UK March 2021), an adaptation of Dan Simmons' novel (2007), consciously plays to the fantasy-horror genre and notions of the 'Arctic sublime', though it is loosely based on an actual expedition led by Captain Sir John Franklin in search of the Northwest Passage in 1845 with two aptly named ships, *Erebus* (in Greek Mythology the place of darkness on the way to Hades through the Underworld) and *Terror* (a warship that had seen active duty before succumbing to the frozen north), and not one of the crew survived to tell us what terrible fate befell them during those three years trapped in the ice. The most shocking revelation, made by Scotsman John Rae of Orkney, was his discovery that some of the men had resorted to cannibalism (Barr, 2019; Cowan, 2023: 316).

The Terror was directed by Ridley Scott and there are overtones of his acclaimed film *Alien* (1979) on display here, such as the unfamiliar "alien" landscape (the Arctic) or spacescape (Outer Space), the relentless feeling of impending doom, and gruesome deaths by highly intelligent and remorseless predators that enjoy ripping people apart, an Alien from another planet or, in the case of *The Terror*, a malevolent polar bear in the

[1] A few movies continue to cast wolves as villains, mercilessly hunting humans, e.g. *Frozen* (2010), *The Grey* (2011), or as lycanthropic shapeshifters in werewolf-themed movies, e.g. *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Dog Soldiers* (2002), among many others.

Arctic called Tuunbaq. The bear, as Maria Lindgren Leavenworth observes, "becomes an embodiment of the hostile and unpredictable landscape, intimately connected to the ice which in itself is difficult to comprehend" (Leavenworth, 2010).

Tuunbaq is a fictional creation of American author Dan Simmons though inspired by a traditional East Greenlandic vengeful spirit known as *Tupilaq*, despite the fact the events of the story take place in the Canadian Arctic, or Nunavut, and not Greenland. *Tupilait* were created using sorcery and were sent out to harm or kill one's enemy. In Simmons' novel, the author takes great pains to provide the reader with a detailed back story for Tuunbaq, created by Sedna, a powerful female supernatural who lived beneath the sea. Later, Tuunbaq is banished from the spirit world to the north pole where it was forced to adopt the form of "the most terrible living thing it could find on Earth", the polar bear. Sedna knew the *angakkut*, the Inuit shamans, would learn how to control Tuunbaq's desire for havoc and, in time, they did learn to communicate with it, but the cost was that the *angakkoq* who spoke with Tuunbaq would no longer be able to speak with their fellow humans. Furthermore, no trespassers would be allowed to enter Tuunbaq's northern domain. Unfortunately, this equilibrium between Tuunbaq and Inuit was destroyed with the arrival of the *kabloona* (Inuktitut word for white people) whose presence started to poison the Tuunbaq who would sicken and die. But the death of Tuunbaq also meant the destruction of the Inuit way of life, they would forget their language, their culture, and their social structures would crumble into drunkenness and despair. Simmons' literary creation could, therefore, be seen as a criticism, or reflection on the negative impacts of colonialism.

In the televised version of *The Terror*, Tuunbaq's relentless ravaging of the frostbitten and scurvy-infested crew is reminiscent of the grisly and unsettling vision of the supreme Victorian animal painter, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Man Proposes, God Disposes* (1864), also inspired by Franklin's last expedition, in which we see two voracious, sharp-toothed and pointy-clawed polar bears ripping apart the Union Jack and feasting on the bones of the sailors with apparent relish, tearing, quite literally, at the fabric of British sensibilities and notions of civilization (Donald, 2010).

Turning to *The North Water* (2021), a co-production between British BBC and Canadian CBC, the five-part mini-series is based on a novel of the same name by English author Ian McGuire (2016). The story begins in 1859 – close to a decade after the events of *The Terror* – but this time the ill-fated British and Irish victims of the frozen north are entirely fictional, an imaginary crew aboard the imaginary whaling ship *Volunteer.* The men face a multitude of dangers, though not supernatural as the crew of *The Terror* experienced, but of an altogether more monstrous variety; the sinister, brooding menace of Henry Drax, a thieving, violent, murderous rapist, with no conscience but a hearty appetite for blood. Drax is the true monster in their midst (Lindbergh, Surrey, 2021).

A polar bear turns up in the fourth episode, enticed by the characters Otto and Sumner who by this stage in the story are camped out on an island and slowly starving to death. The men attract a bear with the intention of eating it. When a bear does appear, they attack it but only manage to wound it, forcing Sumner to go off on a lengthy pursuit, eventually managing to kill the angry but weakened animal. However, a storm comes on and he is forced to eviscerate the bear and climb inside its carcass for shelter. He is rescued by an Inuk hunter who takes him to the home of a Scottish Catholic priest and his Inuk housekeeper. The Inuit hunters believe Sumner was reborn from the polar bear, he is given a knife decorated with a bear carving.[2] It is this knife that eventually allows Sumner to kill Drax in the final episode.

The North Water and *The Terror* share close similarities, including the underlying premise that the real 'monsters' are not the natural or even the supernatural inhabitants of the Arctic, but rather it is the *kabloona*, who have come to the Arctic to exploit its wildlife, its people, and its resources. These stories are set against a backdrop of colonial greed and ambition. And yet, both stories utilize a threatening image of the polar bear to signify disharmony and the beginning of the end of a way of life for the Inuit. In *The Terror*, Tuunbaq is a spiritual and ecological response to the disharmony brought by the explorers and although Tuunbaq is vanquished, order is not restored until the white men are dead. *The North Water* eerily concludes with Sumner gazing through the bars at an emaciated polar bear held captive in a zoo, a grim reminder of his own experiences in the kingdom of the ice bear, but perhaps also a metaphor of the destruction of the Arctic caught in a trap not of its own making.

The largely Anglocentric treatment of the polar bear, filtered through the nineteenth century lens of the "Arctic sublime", raises questions around the role of invention and representation. Dan Simmons, author of *The Terror*, has appropriated elements of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (traditional knowledge and history) with his fictional creation Tuunbaq. However, this demonic, blood-thirsty bear is not just a reinvention of Inuit spirituality but, arguably, a complete misinterpretation of traditional beliefs about the spirit world. Derek Thiess draws fair comparisons with Disney's handling of Pacific Polynesian cultures in the film *Moana* (2016). Like Disney, "*The Terror* presents a pastiche of individual elements of Inuit culture connected by a fictional thread entirely of its author's creation" (Thiess, 2018).

[2] Traditional Inuit and Greenlandic *angakok* rituals sometimes involved spiritual consumption by the polar bear, opening a mystical connection to the natural and supernatural worlds.

Isuma: Thinking with bears

There is no generic word for 'animal' in Inuktitut but rather a series of words to identify the species according to those that walk (*pisuktiit*); marine mammals, or those that breathe (*puijiit*); birds, or those that fly (*tingmiat*); fish (*imarmiutait*); insects (*qupirruit*); and domesticated dogs (*qimmiq*). Animals that are eaten are referred to as *uumajuit* and *nirjutiit*. The conceptual understanding the Inuit have with certain species is therefore complex and the relationship with the animal differs depending on the category being discussed. Inuit knowledge of the animal kingdom is deep, developed over millennia of shared existence. Animals are not, however, considered as something to be "managed" or controlled by humans, but rather are creatures with their own agency (Laugrand, Oosten, 2014; Laugrand, Levesque, 2017).

The Inuit have long had a respect and admiration for the polar bear, regarding it as highly intelligent, capable of emotions and understanding when it is being disrespected or ridiculed (Rasmussen, 1929: 56). The bears possess *isuma*, the capacity for thought and states of thoughtfulness. Polar bears were, and still are, often viewed as individuals who have agency. The Greenlanders referred to them as *Pisuartartut*, "the always wandering ones" (Sonne, 2017: 154). Before widespread Christianization, Inuit hunters put the animals in control of the hunt, whereas the European explorers put the human in control. Furthermore, Inuit culture was based on cooperation. A slain bear was divided up and shared among the community whereas the explorers frequently shot bears for self-defence, sport or trophies, occasionally for food.

For the Inuit, the polar bear, as with all living things, consisted "entirely of souls", who would be offended if they were not given proper respect. This extended to treatment given after death. In Greenland, for instance, polar bear skulls were kept indoors and given gender-appropriate gifts (Sonne, 2017: 154). If the animal spirits were angered, the sea spirit Sedna or Nuliajuk (she has many names) would trap the marine animals, including the bear, in her hair and would only release them – by combing her hair – when appeased by an *angakkuq*, shaman-like figures. Souls were also capable of transmigration. For instance, in a story collected in Igloolik, a woman escapes domestic violence through a gradual series of animal reincarnations, her name-soul journeying from sled dog, to wolf, caribou, walrus, and raven, learning new things and experiencing different perspectives as she goes. In her aerial raven form, she is killed and eaten by a polar bear and decides to become a ringed seal. The bear, an amphibious animal, has mediated her transition from land and air creature to one of the sea. Finally, she is harpooned by her brother and so she decides to enter her sister-in-law's womb as a fetus, choosing to be reborn as a human boy (d'Anglure, 2018: 152–176). Inuit theories of soul transmigration from one animal to another are arguably different from Western European notions of therianthropy (shapeshifting). In this Igloolik example, the woman's name-soul makes a series of choices on what form to adopt next, living a

full life in either human or non-human animal forms, gaining a range of perspectives and understandings from each transmigration. Her soul does not temporarily inhabit the selected animal, as is typical of European shapeshifting stories, but rather fully becomes that animal for the duration of its lifespan. The ability to change genders is also a notable difference.

Polar bears were a particularly good ally for *angakkut* because, as we have just seen, they were good spiritual mediators. They were regarded as transitional or liminal creatures who crossed worlds, both naturally – belonging to both land and sea – and supernaturally, found in the constellations of the night sky and at the bottom of the ocean (D'Anglure, 1994: 182). *Angakkut*, who were generally a force for good, were called upon for healing, or to help ensure successful hunting, and restore balance in times of crisis, communicated with and sought assistance from a range of helpful spirits, known collectively in Greenland as *toornat* (sg. *toornaq*) and in Nunavut as *tuurngaq*. These spirits assumed many forms including that of the polar bear. A particularly powerful spirit, in Greenland and Labrador, was Tornarssuk (or Torngarsuk), master of the helping spirits. He often took the form of a mostly benevolent polar bear spirit and was also associated with initiation rituals of the *angakkut* (Nansen, 1893: 240).

As previously alluded to, non-human animals within modern-day horror depictions are distinctive from traditional folktale. Within the horror genre, animals are invariably portrayed as 'monsters' that intrude into our ordinary world, are extraordinary, unnatural and abnormal in appearance or behaviour, or are automatons lacking in personality or any real purpose beyond murder and mayhem. In folktale, while animals, both natural and supernatural, might well be considered monstrous in some regard, generally they are understood to be creatures with intention and individuality, an ordinary character that exists within the extraordinary world of folktale (Carroll, 1987). Inuit tales featuring animals such as the polar bear reveal similar distinctions from the horror genre.

The theme of many Inuit folktales is about the continual struggle for existence (Rink, 1997 [1875]: 89), whether that be from the elements, hostile neighbours, malevolent spirits, or angry predators. As with European tales, animals feature prominently. Polar bears are regularly portrayed as kinfolk, descendants of a time when animals and humans were much closer and understood one another's language. In some tales, the bears can remove their bearskin revealing a human body within. These bear-humans were not 'shapeshifters' as such, like a werewolf that could physically change its shape, but more akin to the Scottish and Irish Selkie, supernatural seal folk, that similarly wore a removable sealskin (Thompson, 1954). One major point of divergence between Inuit and European folktales is that in the Inuit tales to be a bear is not treated as a curse, whereas in European tales, such as the Norwegian tale 'White Bear King Valemon', to be a bear is a curse that needs to be broken. In the Greenlandic tale of Sitliarnat and his brothers, while out hunting the young men are caught in a storm and blown far from home on an iceberg. Landing on an unknown shore, the men encounter an old

man and his wife who feed the starving hunters and give them shelter. In time the old man offered to take the hunters back across the sea to their homeland, which he did by jumping into the sea and reemerging as a polar bear. He instructed the hunters to get on an iceberg and to close their eyes while the bear pushed them across the sea. On arrival the men asked the bear to join them for a meal to show their gratitude, but the bear replied he wanted no reward wishing only to do a good turn. Before departing the bear requested that should they or anyone in their community see a bear with a bald head not to hunt it but to offer it food. The following winter a bald-headed bear was spotted coming ashore. The hunters did as they were instructed, offering it several seals which it consumed and then swam into the sea, never to be seen again. It was said the descendants of Sitliarnat prospered greatly (Rink, 1997 [1875]: 193–197).

Polar bear characters are often cast as helpers, as well as teachers, mentors, or responsible for saving lost or abandoned humans. There are numerous stories of a bear adopting an orphan boy, feeding and protecting him, then teaching him how to hunt before eventually returning him to his community as an able and useful member of his human society. In other tales, humans adopt a male bear cub and raise it as their own son. The bear-son tale type is popular in European stories as well, but with a brown bear. In a Greenlandic variant, an old, childless couple adopt a bear son who hunts seals for them but when one day they ask their bear-son to bring home some polar bear meat, the son obliges, but then walks out and never returns. With no son to provide for them, the old couple soon starve to death. A taboo has been broken and results in tragedy (Bieder, 2005: 64–65). Tales of bears, or other animals harming or turning against humans, are usually connected to the breaking of taboos or other mistreatments. For instance, if the caribou (reindeer), another key species, are mistreated they can become invisible spirits known as *ijirait* (Laugrand, Levesque, 2017: 22). Revenge lies at the heart of many other tales, such as that of Ailaq's mother who, upon discovering his friend Papik has drowned her son out of jealousy, seeks retribution. She enacts her vengeance by wrapping herself in a bearskin and going into the sea. A few years later an enormous and frightful-looking she-bear was spotted heading into the village, heading straight for Papik's home whereupon the she-bear killed him and dragged him through the village by his intestines. After she had eaten him, she lay down to sleep. However, when the people cautiously approached her all they found was Ailaq's mother's bearskin and some bones covered with sea snails (Millman, 1987: 161–162).

Transcendent horrors

The focus on fantasy-horror interpretations of the polar bear from twenty-first century anglophonic culture has demonstrated this is a different visualization of the bear as understood by Arctic-dwelling peoples. As a genre, horror has been explained as a

reflection of societal fears and, beyond its purpose as entertainment, can be an outlet for social anxieties (Skal, 1993). If so, the prevailing message behind most of the examples cited is fear of the natural world, or that nature will turn against us, often in the context of a punishment for human recklessness. In the case of traditional Inuit stories the threat generally comes from other humans. In Greenlandic tales, for instance, coastal dwellers fear inlanders. While the polar bear might be interpreted as a threat, or a manifestation of revenge, invariably it is described as kin or as a helper or mediator of the natural and supernatural worlds. There has been no space here to discuss the polar bear as cute and cuddly fodder in Children's Literature – which again stands in contrast to Inuit associations – or its widespread usage within environmental campaigns against anthropogenic climate change, depictions that recast humans in the role of 'monster' rather than the bear who is seen struggling to survive, clinging to fragments of the disappearing ice.

What place does the polar bear hold in the human imagination? It rather depends on where you live. For Arctic-dwellers, who live with the bear and understand it, or have deep cultural ties and associations with *nanoq*, the bear is viewed, in practical terms, as a source of food, clothing, and a fellow hunter of seals, and culturally was once understood as a powerful ally, kinfolk, and link to the spirit world. The peoples of the Arctic and sub-Arctic could not survive without the animals. For those not from the Arctic, whose experience of the bear is limited or non-existent, the bear is often portrayed as a figure of fantasy or a symbol of fear and savagery, or to quote Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*:

> Witness the white bear of the poles, and the white shark of the tropics; what but their smooth flaky whiteness makes them the transcendent horrors that they are? That ghastly whiteness it is which imparts such an abhorrent mildness, even more loathsome than terrific, to the dumb gloating of their aspect? (Melville, 2023 [1851]: 197)

Such dichotomous views towards the natural world – between affinity and no affinity – inform interpretations and imaginations as to whether the bear, or indeed Nature itself, is perceived as friend or foe or something in between. In many of the fantasy-horror examples discussed, the human characters are under attack or pitted against nature; the natural world equates with chaos, hostility, suffering and death. There is, according to Thomas Birch, an almost Hobbesian attitude that "we exist fundamentally in a state of war with any and all others" (Birch, 1995), or in this case, with the polar bear. Nor is there any awareness of individuality of bear behaviour. They are, quite simply, automatons, stripped of personality, on a quest for blood. Moreover, the bear is not, in the sample discussed, a central character but rather is used as a semiotic device to communicate threats posed by the natural and supernatural worlds.

In stark contrast, Inuit culture takes a more pragmatic attitude towards the bear, fully recognising the dangers posed by living alongside the Arctic's top predator but casting it not as a villain or unthinking monster within mythological and folkloric comprehensions. If folklore can be used as a reflection of a society's fears and fetishes, or as Alan Dundes once said, as a "mirror of culture" (Dundes, 1969), traditional Inuit and Greenlandic folklore communicates a deep connection to and understanding of the polar bear, and towards the natural world in general. However, folklore is not static. It shifts and evolves to reflect the concerns and interests of the group or society. This is typically a gradual and slow-moving process – sometimes extending to centuries – but with the staggering scale and rapidity of change that has and continues to occur within the Arctic regions what impact will this have on the Inuit relationship with the bear? Europeans began travelling to the Arctic in the late sixteenth century and, to varying degrees, have arguably contributed some positives but many negatives to Inuit culture (Cowan, 2023). In the context of the Canadian Arctic the most profound and unsettling changes to the Inuit way of life occurred not in the nineteenth century Age of Exploration but in the twentieth century with a troubling record of forced relocations and suppression of culture sanctioned by the Canadian government (Alunik et al., 2003). In a few short decades peoples who, for centuries, had lived off the land, followed the animals, and fully adapted to one of the harshest climates on earth, were moved into settled communities and small towns. Technological influences have changed traditional hunting culture and, in turn, the relationship between hunter and prey animals. As with other parts of the world, the once vibrant Inuit oral tradition is being eroded in favour of the printed word. The kingdom of the ice bear, the Arctic itself, is facing the devastating effects of climate change faster than many other regions of the world which will doubtlessly force further adaptations upon Inuit culture and traditions (Stuckenberger, 2007), not to mention threaten the very existence of the polar bear and other Arctic animals. Reality, it would seem, is the true transcendent horror.

In twenty-first century environmental communication and conservation campaigning, the ferocious qualities of the polar bear, once relished by consumers of early Arctic explorers' accounts, have since been replaced with imagery of the bear as vulnerable, walking along the edges of extinction, no longer stereotyped as man-eating beast but as emaciated and ice-starved victim in need of human assistance for its very survival. And yet, in the realm of fantasy-horror, there is still, seemingly, a place for this icon of the north to dredge up old fears of a beast that can stalk people and devour them whole.

References

Alunik, Ishmael, Eddie D. Kolausok, and David Morrison. 2003. *Across Time and Tundra: The Inuvialiut of the Western Arctic*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books.

Baker, Daniel. 2012. Why We Need Dragons: The Progressive Potential of Fantasy. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23 (3): 437–459.

Baker, Steve. 1993. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Barnim, Douglas A. 2020. The Inner Consistency of Mythology: The Mythological Kernel and Adaptation in *The Golden Compass*. *Mythlore* 39 (1): 97–116.

Barr, William, ed. 2019. *John Rae, Arctic Explorer: The Unfinished Autobiography*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Bieder, Robert E. 2005. *Bear*. London: Reaktion.

Birch, Thomas H. 1995. The Incarceration of Wilderness Areas as Prisons. In *Deep Ecology for the Twenty First Century*, ed. George Sessions, 339–355. Boston, London: Shambhala.

Carroll, Noël. 1987. The Nature of Horror. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 51–59. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/431308.

Cowan, Edward J. 2023. *Northern Lights: Scots and the Arctic*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

D'Anglure, Bernard Saladin. 1994. Nanook, Super-Male: The Polar Bear in the Imaginary Space and Social Time of the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic. In *Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World*, ed. Roy Willis, 178–195. London: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203169353.

D'Anglure, Bernard Saladin. 2018. *Inuit Stories of Being and Rebirth: Gender, Shamanism, and the Third Sex*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Donald, Diana. 2010. The Arctic Fantasies of Edwin Landseer and Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime. *Tate Papers* 13. URL: https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/13/arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-wilderness-and-notions-of-the-sublime (accessed 17.9.2024).

Dundes, Alan. 1969. Folklore as a Mirror of Culture. *Elementary English* 46 (4): 471–482.

Henderson, Lizanne. 2020. Bear Tales: Ways of Seeing Polar Bears in Mythology, Traditional Folktales and Modern-Day Children's Literature. In *Contemporary Fairy-Tale Magic: Subverting Gender and Genre*, eds. Lydia Brugue and Auba Llompart, 250–261. Leiden: Brill.

Isenberg, Andrew C. 2002. The Moral Ecology of Wildlife. In *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels, 48–64. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Jackson, Rosemary. 1981. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen and Co.

Laugrand, Frederic and Jarich Oosten. 2014. *Hunters, Predators and Prey: Inuit Perceptions of Animals*. New York: Berghahn.

Laugrand, Frederic and Francis Levesque. 2017. Spotlight on Arctic Animals: Introduction to the Inuit Bestiary. *Etudes Inuit Studies* 41: 17–28.

Leavenworth, Maria Lindgren. 2010. The Times of Men, Mysteries and Monsters: *The Terror* and Franklin's Last Expedition. In *Arctic Discourses*, ed. Anka Ryall, 199–217. Cambridge Scholars.

Leslie, Sir John. 1831. *Narrative of Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions*. New York: Harper.

Lindbergh, Ben and Miles Surrey. 2021. Between "The North Water" and "The Terror", AMC is Obsessed with Gloomy Nautical Dramas. *The Ringer*, 16.8.2021. URL: https://www.theringer.com/tv/2021/8/16/22623929/amc-the-terror-the-north-water-colin-farrell (accessed 17.9.2024).

McGuire, Ian. 2016. *The North Water*. London: Scribner.

McManus, Elizabeth Berkebile. 2011. Protecting the Island: Narrative Continuance in *Lost*. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 22 (1): 4–23.

Melville, Herman. 2023 [1851]. *Moby Dick*. New York: Norton and Company.

Millman, Lawrence. 1987. *A Kayak Full of Ghosts: Eskimo Tales*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press.

Molloy, Claire. 2022. Animals, Avatars and the Gendering of Nature. In *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human*, eds. Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway, 177–193. New York: Berghahn Books.

Nansen, Fridtjof. 1893. *Eskimo Life*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

Njal's Saga. 2001. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials* trilogy; *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). London: Scholastic UK.

Rasmussen, Knud. 1908. *People of the Polar North*. Ed. G. Herring. London: Kegan Paul.

Rasmussen, Knud. 1929. *Intellectual Culture of the Hudson Bay Eskimos*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Rink, Hinrich. 1997 [1875]. *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*. New York: Dover Publications.

Romalis, Sheila. 1983. The East Greenland Tupilaq Image: Old and New Visions. *Etudes Inuit Studies* 7 (1): 152–159.

Rothfels, Nigel, ed. 2002. *Representing Animals*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Seton, Ernest Thompson. 1898. *Wild Animals I Have Known*.

Seton, Ernest Thompson. 1925–1928. *Lives of Game Animals*. 4 volumes. Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company.

Simmons, Dan. 2007. *The Terror*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Skal, David J. 1993. *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*. New York: Faber and Faber.

Skipper, Graham. 2022. *Godzilla: The Official Guide to the King of Monsters*. London: Welbeck.

Sonne, Birgitte. 2017. *Worldview of the Greenlanders: An Inuit Arctic Perspective*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

Stuckenberger, Nicole. 2007. *Thin Ice: Inuit Traditions within a Changing Environment*. Hanover: University Press of New England.

Thiess, Derek J. 2018. Dan Simmons's *The Terror*, Inuit "Legend", and the Embodied Horrors of History. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 29 (2): 222–241.

Thompson, David. 2000 [1954]. *The People of the Sea*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Načini videnja polarnih medvedov v fantazijskih filmih, leposlovju in folklori

Polarni medvedi se pojavljajo v ljudskih pravljicah, legendah in mitologijah na arktičnih in subarktičnih območjih. V njih lahko odkrijemo številne teme, kot so zgodbe o izviru, uspehu ali neuspehu pri lovu, pomenu družinskih in skupnostnih vezi, o medvrstni komunikaciji, šamanizmu in spreminjanju oblik. Južno od arktičnega kroga se je polarni medved pojavil kot osrednji lik v sodobni otroški literaturi, medtem ko ga okoljska komunikacijska sporočila uporabljajo za posredovanje groženj, ki jih prinašajo podnebne spremembe in globalno segrevanje. Vendar so različne kulturne predstave o polarnem medvedu pogosto protislovne. V tem članku so obravnavani vzorčni primeri negativnih anglofonskih fantazijskih predstavitev polarnih medvedov v sodobnem filmu in televiziji. Po obravnavi primerov se osredinimo na to, kako se takšne, na grozljivkah oblikovane upodobitve razločujejo od tradicionalnih inuitskih pogledov, ki razkrivajo povsem drugačno dojemanje naravnega sveta. Inuitske zgodbe, na primer, večinoma poudarjajo inteligenco medvedov kot posameznikov, ki so zmožni delovanja.

Članek razkriva podobnosti v obravnavanih televizijskih primerih – *Skrivnostni otok (Lost)*, *Fortitude* in *Igra prestolov (Game of Thrones)* –, ki v anglocentričnih upodobitvah polarne medvede predstavljajo kot divje pošasti ali skladno z zapletom »maščevanja narave«. Takšne upodobitve niso nove, okrepile so pripovedi raziskovalcev Arktike in ilustracije ekspedicij iz 19. stoletja. Drugi elementi domišljijske grozljivke so v televizijskih mini serijah *Severne vode (The North Water)* in *The Terror*, ki sta si precej podobni, vključno z osnovno podmeno, da resnične »pošasti« niso naravne ali celo nadnaravne, temveč vpliv kolonializma, saj so kolonisti na Arktiki izkoriščali divje živali, ljudi in vire. Ozadje obeh zgodb sta kolonialni pohlep in cilj, obe pa uporabljata grozečo podobo medveda, da označita disharmonijo in konec tradicionalnega načina življenja Inuitov.

V širšem žanru grozljivk so živali vedno prikazane kot »pošasti«, ki vdirajo v naš vsakdanji svet, so izjemne, nenaravne, nenormalne po videzu ali vedenju, ali pa so avtomati brez osebnosti ali kakršnega koli resničnega delovanja, ki presega umora in uničenje. Nasprotno pa so v ljudski pravljici živali sicer lahko pošastne, vendar se jih na splošno razume kot bitja z namenom in individualnostjo, kot navadne like, ki obstajajo v izjemnem svetu ljudske pravljice. Inuitske medvedje zgodbe razkrivajo podobne razločke od žanra grozljivk. Liki polarnih medvedov so pogosto v vlogi pomočnikov, učiteljev, mentorjev ali odgovornih za reševanje izgubljenih ali zapuščenih ljudi.

Osredinjenost na fantazijsko-grozljive interpretacije polarnega medveda iz anglofonske kulture 21. stoletja kaže na to, da gre za drugačno vizualizacijo, kot jo razumejo ljudje na Arktiki. Prevladujoče sporočilo, ki se skriva za navedenimi fantazijskimi grozljivkami, je strah pred naravnim svetom ali da se bo narava obrnila proti nam kot kazen za človeško nepremišljenost. V inuitskih zgodbah grožnja na splošno prihaja od drugih ljudi. Čeprav bi medveda lahko razlagali kot grožnjo, je vedno opisan kot sorodnik ali kot posrednik naravnega in nadnaravnega sveta. Za prebivalce Arktike je medved vir hrane, oblačil in tovariš pri lovu na tjulnje, vendar so ga v kulturi nekoč razumeli kot močnega zaveznika, sorodnika in vez z duhovnim svetom. Ljudstva na Arktiki ne bi mogla preživeti brez živali. Za tiste, ki niso tam doma, so izkušnje z medvedom omejene ali jih sploh ni, zato je medved pogosto prikazan kot domišljijska figura ali simbol strahu in divjosti.

V obravnavanih primerih fantazijskih grozljivk se človeški liki spopadejo z naravo. Poleg tega medved ni osrednji lik, temveč se uporablja kot semiotično sredstvo za sporočanje groženj, ki jih prinašata naravni in nadnaravni svet. V nasprotju s tem ima inuitska kultura do medveda bolj pragmatičen odnos, v celoti priznava nevarnosti, ki jih prinaša življenje ob glavnem plenilcu Arktike, vendar ga ne obravnava kot zlobneža ali brezobzirno pošast. Čeprav folklora Inuitov sporoča globoko povezavo s polarnim medvedom, folklora ni statična. Spreminja se in razvija, zrcali pomisleke in interese skupine ali družbe. To je običajno postopen in počasen proces – včasih se razteza prek stoletij –, vendar z osupljivim obsegom in hitrostjo sprememb, ki so se in se še vedno dogajajo na arktičnih območjih, postavlja vprašanje, kako bo vplivalo na odnos Inuitov z medvedom?

Traditiones 53 (1): 69–84 | COBISS: 1.01 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530104

Animals as a Stereotyping and Characterising Element in Slovenian Name-Callings

Saša Babič

ZRC SAZU, Institute of Slovenian Ethnology, Slovenia
sasa.babic@zrc-sazu.si
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3050-757X

The article discusses deeply rooted linguistic comparisons as stereotypical images in the form of name-callings. A very common element of these comparisons are animals as living beings with their own characteristics, living in a common environment: A human characteristic is compared to a prescribed, but not necessarily intrinsic, characteristic of a particular animal. The characteristics ascribed to animals are socially stereotyped and disseminated as generalised images using a metaphorical language that form so-called collective symbols.

▪ **Keywords**: ethnolinguistics, short folklore forms, language, name-calling, animal

Članek obravnava zakoreninjene jezikovne primerjave kot stereotipne podobe v obliki vzdevkov. Zelo pogost element teh primerjav so živali kot bitja s svojimi značilnostmi, ki s človekom živijo v skupnem okolju: človeška lastnost se primerja s predpisano, a ne nujno intrinzično lastnostjo posamične živali. Živalim pripisane lastnosti so družbeno stereotipne in se kot posplošene podobe razširjajo v metaforičnem jeziku in ustvarjajo t. i. kolektivne simbole.

▪ **Ključne besede**: etnolingvistika, folklorni obrazci, jezik, vzdevek, žival

Introduction: Language and culture, stereotypes and animals

The aim of the article is to show how the imprint of society's worldview and stereotypes can be seen in such, sometimes even overlooked short forms, as nicknames. With this discussion is presented the interweaving between language and culture, and their circular interactions.

Language is not only a means of communication in everyday social contexts. With and through language, we also observe and think about the surrounding world; words are carriers of meanings embedded in a social context. With the researching language we can discuss the "cultured view of the world" as it is expressed with the linguistic signs (Kržišnik, 2005: 67). From the cognitive point of view, "language is not an objective mirror of the world, but it rather reflects the way we construe the world, reality, and society" (Dąbrowska, 2023: 39), therefore language is even an element of socialisation – with language we also share social stereotypes, values, and worldviews. In this context we can claim that language is a fundamental building block of our mental, emotional, and social world. Researching it thus reveals a social worldview, the images and concepts of a certain society.

Our mental, emotional, and social worlds co-create our culture, which is perceived as a system of symbolic communication (Lévi-Strauss, 1974), where the symbolism can be expressed (also) in stereotypes. The stereotype is inevitably linked with generalization, which governs also polysemy, inference patterns, novel metaphorical language, and patterns of semantic change, all of which are the ground base for the system of conventional conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, 1992: 205). The stereotypes are defined within a so-called kinship system according to the components (connotation (for example, soft mammals vs. scaly reptiles), sex (for example, women's tears vs. men's' tears), colour (for example the meaning of black colour vs. white colour), family etc.); for each system one might ask what relationships are expressed, what connotations – positive or negative – they carry in the following relationships (Lévi-Strauss, 1974). Therefore, it does not surprise that stereotypes are often expressed as structures, which are mentally represented in terms of metaphor; these metaphors are a cognitive phenomenon and present mental mappings (Deignan, 2008: 287), influencing how people think (Gibbs, 1996), therefore we can perceive the described also as concepts.

Animals in short folklore forms are presented as a stereotype, i.e. generalised image of phenomena expressed in a word, and often form the "metaphoric construal of a concept" which in "some contexts results in a concept that is independent as a temporary representation apart from source domain information" (Gibbs, 1996: 314). The meaning of a given expression reveals not only inherent properties, but also our human subjective construal of it (Dąbrowska, 2023: 39), the conceptualisations are not necessarily according to the objectivist truth: Linguistic worldview is based on the cognitive function of the sign (ex. word, proverb, riddle) – it invokes the cultural aspects of language and its relation to the speakers' mentality.

Stereotypes are an important part of language, since they give people the feeling of security and adaptation. Stereotypes are a generalised image of the reality of specific observations (Schaff, 1984); they can be a stereotyped image of a sun, a tree or a sheep, or a stereotyped abstract concept or worldview of a phenomena. They are not meant to facilitate truth knowledge in an intellectual manner – they can "vary from a true index to a vague analogy" (Lippmann, 1961 [1922]) – but to prolong one's life and make it easier: with stereotypes even communication is made easier, sometimes even more manageable. Lippmann defined stereotypes as "preconceptions": "We are told the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them" (Lippmann, 1961 [1922]). These preconceptions can govern the whole process of perception, they are often rigid and involve valuation and emotional attitude. That is why stereotypes usually have a negative connotation, nevertheless as a part of a language they show how speakers construe the world, reality, and society: the meaning of a given expression reveals not only the inherent properties that reside in the entity or situation, but mostly our human subjective construal of it (Dąbrowska, 2023). Stereotypes can be detected in any everyday language, but as extensive concepts are especially condensed

in folklore; the genres that pass between generations can contain the longest concepts and stereotypes which persist in society. Even the smallest memetic units can bring forth telling metaphorical meanings.

Name-calling as a part of the short folklore forms and folkloristics

Language is one of the most important mediums in folklore: it expresses cross-generational (even very old) conceptions, metaphors, and observations. Folklore is shaped into more or less given forms, especially short folklore forms, which are characterised by the limited length and the high level of figurative language (including personification, metonymy, ellipsis, etc.) used intentionally. Short folklore forms like proverbs and riddles[1] are considered as authoritative conceptions – as wisdom inherited from our predecessors – that are usually highly metaphorical, i.e. they use figurative speech that describes an object or action in a way that is not literally true, but helps to explain an idea or make a comparison (Babič, 2015). Shorter expressions, like greetings or name-calling, use mostly metaphor, metonymy and ellipsis. The basic definition of metaphor is that it is a figurative language, though for folkloristics, more useful is the psycholinguistic definition of the metaphor as a specific mental mapping that influences a good deal of how people think, reason, and imagine in everyday life (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1996: 309; Kövecses, 2015). In the field of folkloristics (similarly as in ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognitive linguistics), metaphors are part of everyday communication, and as such they are passed between the generations. As the folklore adopts the images and understanding of everyday life into its language, plots and messages, it also influences the perception of it. Many concepts, especially abstract ones, are mentally represented, structured and delineated (Dąbrowska, 2023: 41), where we must add also the concept of the way – how to express something. The expressiveness most surely increases with metaphoricality, therefore it is used also in the fixed folklore forms like swearwords, nicknames, even greetings, etc. These can be also observed as metaphorical expressions based on stereotypes, linked to the first semantic level, which refer to a linguistic realization of a "cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system", that is conceptual metaphors, such as *theory is a building* (we build and construct, or demolish theories)*, love is a journey* (the relationships hit a dead-end street, or the couple split up and went their separate ways …) etc. (Lakoff, 1992), or in our case *a human is an animal*.

Name-calling is a common communication practice; it ranges from affectionate nicknames to insults and mocking, from intimate relationships to relationships that cannot

[1] The linkage between proverbs and riddles can be seen and argued also by the trespassing from one genre to the other, when the text of the riddle question becomes a proverb or vice versa (see Hasan-Rokem, 1974).

be considered as close. Nicknames are often given by the characteristics that is (by the stereotypical view) common to the targeted person and the metaphorical phenomena, for example a person is called an oaf if they are clumsy, boorish, inconsiderate. If the function of affectionate nicknames is to emphasize cuteness and the caring relationship, insults are used for mocking and excluding someone from the group of "us" (Šrimpf Vendramin, 2019). Nicknames are not often a part of research within folkloristics, usually because of two reasons: first being that they frequently consist of a single word used metaphorically, and therefore are not considered as a representative genre in folklore; second that the nicknames are quite often very individualistically chosen, e.g. to call a spouse "pumpkin" or "mouse" is usually linked with the personal set of expressions. Nevertheless, every society has a set of nicknames that is rather general and known widely, some are even lexicalized and included in dictionaries. This set of nicknames is linked with stereotypes on what is good and what is bad, what is fast or what is slow, etc. Many of the stereotypes are linked with animals – in the manner how society perceives them – and they are further used according to the learned stereotype, and not according to the knowledge.

Zoofolkloristics

All folklore includes the imprint of the surroundings, the observations and the experiences. That is why the chosen elements can be observed in a relatively fixed context or use. Animals were, and still are, the everyday companions of the human being, therefore it is not surprising that the observations and convictions regarding the animals were recorded in folklore forms of various lengths. Most of the animals mentioned in folklore are from the immediate environment, although we must point out that some of the material also includes "exotic" animals such as lions or camels, which are associated in the folklore material with stereotypes either from biblical or oriental tales.

Animals in folklore are the focus of a relatively newly-founded academic discipline (Golež Kaučič, 2015, 2023), zoofolkloristics. Its theoretical and analytical discourse is focused on enabling insight into changes and human attitudes towards animals in folklore as well as in ritual practices; many of the research ideas base on ancient myths and folklore tradition (Golež Kaučič, 2015: 7–8). Zoofolkloristics deals with animals in folklore: how some animal was seen in the past and how it is seen today. Diachronic research can show traditions and cultural practices (Golež Kaučič, 2015: 9, 2023: 19, 36), but also concepts that have been "frozen in time". Zoofolkloristics is focused on various genres, yet mostly on folk tales and folk songs. Separately, merely as an element, animals were discussed in phraseology with the goal of showing the diversity of the animals in the phrasemes, rather than their characterisation.

Naming the animals in different contexts and (metaphorical) functions in folklore results in two different meaning-makings: anthropomorphism (Lockwood, 1989),[2] where human characteristics are given to animals by "humanising nature" (ex. birds fall in love), and zoomorphism, where animal characteristics are given to the human (ex. fast as an eagle) (Visković, 1996: 36). Anthropomorphism is the most frequent kind of animal representations in folklore (Golež Kaučič, 2023: 68), though Crist (2000: 161) emphasises the more complex understanding: the perception of the nature – human border is zoomorphic by indirectly revealing the animal face of human society. A special type of morphology are "zoonyms", as geographical, settlement, and personal names (Visković, 1996: 36). Omakaeva et al. widen the term "zoonym", i.e. zoomorphic name, to both common lexemes and proper names of animals, and proposes the term "zoosemism" for the polysemous lexemes that denote "acting as the name of a certain animal (mammal, bird, insect, etc.)" (Omakaeva et al., 2019: 2532).

The lexemes denoting representatives of the animal world are termed as "zoomorphic lexemes", they are usually polysemantic, i.e. have multiple meanings (Omakaeva et al., 2019: 2530–2532). Therefore, the image of name-calling of an animal based on a zoomorphic metaphor, when a person (man or woman) is compared to an animal, is associated with the zoomorphic code of culture. It is a set of ideas about the animal world whose representatives are as symbols or standards for certain characteristics. The transfer of animal characteristics to humans developed from the observation of their external characteristics, behaviours, habits. Zoosemism is therefore defined as a metaphorical category of human zoomorphism[3] (Omakaeva et al., 2019: 2532). All the described quite often appears in folklore genres, no matter the length or genre. Zoosemisms co-create the (con)text in folklore and present some of the most important (metaphorical) expressions. They are also one of the topics of zoofolkloristics (Golež Kaučič, 2015).

Animal nicknames are metaphorically convincing, and they, as Ingold put it, expose "close ontological equivalence of humans and animals" (Ingold, 1994: XXIV). The equivalence in name-calling is conveyed mostly with anthropomorphisms.

Methodology

The analysed material is from the collection of proverbs at the Institute of Ethnology ZRC SAZU (Babič et al., 2023), the Dictionary of Slovenian Language (SSKJ, 2014), the repository Giga Fida (Krek et al., 2019), and gathered from the fieldwork on the

[2] Lockwood (1989) names five different meaning-makings which reveal perception of animals in different narratives, but for the needs of this article we focus on the given two (the first and the fifth).

[3] In the article, zoomorphism is discussed also with analogy to fauvism, animalism, totemism (Omakaeva et al., 2019: 2531).

topic of the nicknames. Units in the databases were searched by the keywords marking animals on the first semantic level (ox, cow, donkey, bear, wolf, etc.). Keywords were chosen on the basis of Slovenian language use in the contemporary time: I used the common nicknames (insults as well as affectionate nicknames) denoting animals on the first semantic level, and established what stereotype the animal is marked by. The analysis is based on the folkloristic approach of collecting and description, as well as ethnolinguistic and conceptual linguistic approach in the interpretation.

Anthropomorphisms and zoomorphisms as characterisers in nicknames

The contemporary nicknames that use animal naming are animal signs, whereby the metaphoricity is exposed from the characteristics given to the animals by people. Nicknames are part of expressive speech acts; with them the speaker expresses their mental state and emotions towards the addressee (Jakop, 2014: 158). Contemporary meaning is to be obtained by examining the metaphors underlying the nickname, motivated by various contextual factors, e.g. the gender of the user of the nickname and discourse registers in which the phrase occurs. The structure of the metaphor of these nicknames occurs between the domain of [A HUMAN BEING] and [AN ANIMAL], and determines the schematicity levels of these mappings into conceptual metaphor [HUMAN BEING IS AN ANIMAL].

The extension of the meaning derives from, as well as proves, the social stereotype of the animal's characteristics (Dąbrowska, 2023: 40), such that a strong, hairy man is characterised e.g. as "a bear", "being like a bear" (*biti kot medved*), exposing the characteristics of strength, size, strong posture and hairiness. The metaphor is here linked solely to the appearance. The property of strength is also linked to the ox, while the extended connotation of this metaphorical nickname is also lower intelligence, coarseness, clumsiness (whereas the bear has no psychological characterisation in metaphoric use). Both nicknames, relating to ox and bear, are in Slovenian language used exclusively for males.

On the other hand, "being like a wolf" (*biti kot volk*) marks the semantic field of loneliness, also in the metaphorical dictionary sense; it characterises only the male gender and such a man is a loner, often misunderstood by the community, a person only partly socialised, carrying secrets. The wolf is considered as a being that unconsciously leaves marks where it stays. "Where the wolf lies, it leaves its fur" (*Kjer volk leži, dlako pusti*),[4] a characterisation that can be replaced also with the donkey "Where the donkey lies, it leaves its fur" (*Kjer osel leži, dlako pusti*). In the figurative language stands the difference that the wolf is considered a smart, dangerous animal, while the

[4] The wolf does not leave behind fur in fact, this social prediction is mistaken.

donkey is considered stupid; therefore, the variations are used contextually – if one is talking about a person considered smart having left a trace, chosen will be the wolf metaphor, whereas a careless foolish person leaving traces is metaphorically marked as a donkey (see also further).

The cunning animals are the fox and the bird. The fox in Slovenian is gendered: *lisica* (female fox) and *lisjak* (male fox); both marking a sly, daring and shrewd, but at the same time a hypocritical, scheming, even greedy and lustful animal (Kropej, 2007: 115); similarly goes for the bird: *(p)tica* (female) and *(p)tič* (male). These animals are used for both genders, nowadays usually with some humorous connotation, marking a person that has a knack of turning things to their own benefit. Intelligence is part of being witty: the fox and, in this context as a counterpart among domestic animals, the donkey, are considered relatively intelligent animals that learn from experience: "The fox/donkey step only once on thin ice/do not step twice on thin ice" (*Lisica/osel gre samo enkrat na led*). On the other hand, "donkey" is also a personal insult, usually male coded, marking foolishness and recklessness.[5]

The bird is considered a free being, and therefore carefree in life, which is apparent already from the phraseme "to live free as a bird". Society sees birds as animals that live a good life, emphasizing liberty. They go wherever they please, they find food on the ground or in the bushes, they are quick and agile; all these connotations can be found in the phraseme "to live as a bird on a branch" (*živeti kot ptička na veji*), i.e. to have a good, free life.[6] The bird goes with the wind, which emphasizes some sort of (over-)adaptation to the circumstances ("he goes with the wind" (*gre z vetrom*)). Nevertheless, as a nickname, "to be a bird" is linked either with weirdness ("he is an odd bird" (*on je čuden tič*)) or being a witty person ("she is such a birdy" (*ona je ena taka tica*)). The nicknames "foxy" and "birdy" imply also some sexual connotations – a woman attributed these nicknames is presumably young and attractive.

The lynx is characterised as an angry creature, which is detected in the comparative phraseme "as angry as a lynx" (*besen kot ris*). The corpus of Slovenian written standard language gives 124 results, which shows quite regular use still. In parallel we find anger-themed comparison also with the tiger (2 results), the bull (2 results), dog (6 results), snake (2 results), and even viper (2 results).[7] In general, the lynx is very rarely presented in folklore, also in short folklore forms, presumably because it was very rare to observe it and its habits, yet nevertheless represents and metaphorises the angry subject who even "hisses as a lynx in anger" (*piha kot ris od jeze*).

The mouse is connected with two characterisations: one is connected to its size, i.e. to be as small as a mouse, to its quietness (linked to its quiet motion: "to be as silent

[5] A clear example showing a binary social view, often adjusted to the context.

[6] This set phrase is often also used ironically and negatively nowadays; nevertheless, the implication to the free, good life is obvious even in the background of the ironical use.

[7] Available at https://www.clarin.si/skelog/#dashboard?corpname=gfida20 (19.2.2024).

as a little mouse" (*biti tih kot miška*)), as well as to its cheerful disposition when there is no threat ("When the cat is not at home, the mice dance" (*Ko mačke ni doma, miši plešejo*)). We can find characterisations of a mouse rather in short folklore forms,[8] while nicknames are used mostly as an affectionate calling, for example "you are my little mouse" (*ti si moja miška*) used quite often for baby girls. Transfer was partly made also to young attractive women. A notorious case of such use of this nickname with a sexual connotation was in May in 2015, when a former Slovenian president shouted *"To mi deli, miška mala!"* ("Give it to me, little mouse!") during an all-Slovenian high school dance event. This exclamation was voted as the most sexist remark of the year.

The snake as a symbol is represented in almost all mythologies, it tends to be associated with fertility, earth, the female reproductive force, water, rain on the one hand; and the hearth, fire (especially heavenly), as well as the male fertilizing principle on the other. In Slovenian folklore the metaphorical meaning is linked mostly to the Bible – it is presented as an evil, treacherous animal. Snake as a nickname is a pejorative for an insidious human, especially women. It is often accompanied with the adjective "treacherous snake" (*izdajalska kača*). The expression, based on the human understanding of the snake's behaviour is the *razkačiti se*[9] with the meaning 'to be very angry', which might be explainable from the snake's warning action when it feels endangered.

Bugs are mostly unwanted animals, even in present day. They arouse disgust, society tries to keep them away from populated areas. Therefore, it does not surprise that bugs such as the louse or its nits denote strongly negative characteristics. A louse is a worthless, exploitative individual, and is often even gradated with the adjective "lousy louse" (*ušiva uš*). The nit (*gnida*) likewise marks an insignificant, worthless person which ought to be removed. Not surprisingly, at the dawn of his infamous "final solution", Adolf Hitler stated that Jews should be "exterminated as lice", as well Jews were called also as rats which are even nowadays stereotyped as dirty low beings (Agamben, 1998: 114).

Bugs such as lice, cockroaches or flies were in the folk context used for name-calling of the other, usually from some nearby village, as in "Tolmin louse" (*tolminska uš*), "cockroaches" (*ščurki*) for the inhabitants of Vrba, Gorenjska, "flies" (*mušice*) for those of Godovič and Koseze. There is no reliable data why these name-callings became current, but they evidently mark rival villagers as worthless, or at least lower on the social value scale.

If thus far we discussed mostly wild animals, it should be emphasized that domestic animals are also often used as nicknames. Feral animals are supposedly free from the human world, but domestic animals live in the human world (Thompson, 2019: 60).

---

[8] For example in the Slovenian riddle: "Tall as a house, small as a mouse, bitter as gall yet delicious to all" – Walnut.

[9] The very approximate literary translation would be "to be angry as a snake".

Although the domestic animals were/are part of the homestead and cherished, livestock especially tends to be characterised as beings of lower intelligence. They are robust, sturdy, showing no manners, and slow in learning.

Cattle, i.e. cow, ox, or bull are nicknames that are labelled as lower colloquial language according to the Dictionary of Slovenian Language. The signs, i.e. words are gendered, and they are metaphorically used as gender-targeted nicknames: cow[10] (*krava*) is always female, bull (*bik*) and ox (*vol*) are always male. These signs connote an uneducated human, a stupid and obtuse person, all of them are insults. On the other hand, a bull and an ox also metaphorically mark a strong man, and having a cow's eyes connote that a woman has big eyes with long eyelashes.

Horse (*konj*)/mare (*kobila*) is a metaphor for a big, clumsy man/woman. A mare has the additional connotation that such a woman is manly in her appearance.

The nickname donkey (*osel*) also connotes a "brainless, stupid human" (SSKJ, 2014). It is a pejorative language and used as an insult, usually for males. This characterisation appears also in Slovenian fables, where the donkey is always the stupid animal (Kropej Telban, 2015: 21). The stereotyped low intelligence in the metaphorical meaning is in opposition to the paremiological unit "A donkey doesn't step twice on thin ice" (*Osel gre samo enkrat na led*), where it is emphasised that the donkey might be naïve, but it learns fast.

Pig (*pujs, prašič*) pejoratively denotes a sexually aggressive man, and/or a dirty person (often a child). The first level characterisation is linked with the pig's habit of rolling in the mud, which is from human perspective dirt. On the second level, where the speech or acts of a man are characterised as obscene or dirty, it is again linked to the pig as an unclean animal. The salacious behaviour is therefore not the behaviour of a pig but rather a dirty behaviour; if dirt is a part of the pig's characterisation, then dirty behaviour is attributed to that animal. The phraseme "to be drunk as a pig" (*biti pijan kot prašič/prase*) is rather linked to clumsy slow movin of a person; the expression denotes strongly drunk men.

Goats and sheep are herd animals, as such they are understood as animals without their own will, requiring a shepherd. Goat (*koza*) as an insult for a woman denotes a stupid, rude, stubborn woman. As a nickname it is often set with an adjective such as "stupid goat" (*neumna koza*), or even as hyperbole "goatish goat" (*koza kozasta*). As a nickname for a man, a goat is a stupid, unserious or raunchy person ("The old goat won't leave her alone" (*Stari kozel ji ne da miru*)). It is usually used in a phrase with the adjectives stupid and old. Thompson emphasizes that "horny old goat" refers exclusively to men, and links it with the hyper-masculine great god Pan and the later-assigned to cultural representations of Satan (Thompson, 2019: 59).

[10] Set phrases and proverbs, conversely, generalise the sign to both genders: "to be drunk as a cow" (*biti pijan kot krava*), where the stereotype of slow, swaying movement of a bovine is metaphorically transferred to an inebriated human.

Sheep (*ovca*) is an expressive word for the meek, obedient human. It is not gender-marked. People called sheep lack their own conviction. In the nickname "black sheep" (*črna ovca*), negative connotation exposes a subject standing out of the common, regular, expected. To be a black sheep in the family denotes being a bad, embarrassing family member. The colour black denotes a devilish colour, and something that is not stereotypical: among white sheep, black ones are rare and immediately noticeable.

Breeding birds show similarities with livestock: hen (*kura*) is a woman that is confused, unintelligent and ignorant of consequences. A rooster (*petelin*) is a man that is loud and boastful, fancying himself better than others. Both hen and rooster are also linked with looks: these metaphors are attributed to people that place a lot of attention on their appearance.

Discussing birds as nicknames, we cannot overlook the parrot (*papiga*) and the nightingale (*slavček*), which are used for nicknames with specific characteristics: a parrot is a person that keeps repeating what someone else says, while a nightingale is a person that sings beautifully.

Nowadays, cats and dogs are mostly pets; we don't see many stray cats or dogs which are taken into shelters. Cat (*mačka*) as a nickname is used for a clever, attractive, usually young woman. The nickname is often used in a sexist context. On the other hand, dog (*pes*) denotes a vicious or violent person; the nickname could be interchangeable with the devil. Domesticated animals also offer a way to discuss human sexuality in ways particularly close to home, yet still distinct from the human world. It is especially visible in the common name of one of the most common sexual positions (Thompson, 2019: 59). However, in contrast to the Slovenian historical viewpoint, from the paremiological units the dog is nowadays labelled as "man's best friend" (see also Babič, 2024), while a female dog is characterised as a mean, lascivious woman, i.e. a bitch (*kuzla*) is primarily encountered as an obscene insult for a woman (Thompson, 2019: 59).

Positive nicknames

If most of the animals are used as a negative name-callings in colloquial language, there are still some animals used for a positive name calling. These animals are usually either small (even offspring), soft and harmless, or very working. Positive name callings are used for an affectionate naming or for praising someone's effectivity.

A person considered "an animal" is one of great capability; this marks a relentless person displaying great strength that can be either physical or mental. Usually, it is used in sports. It carries a positive connotation, applied as a compliment: a sportsman is called "an animal"/"a beast", related to animal, when they are considered formidable.

There are some animals that are marked only with positive characterisers, such as "ant" or "bee" denoting a good/diligent person (despite being insects). Observation of

their work and selfless input elevated these animals almost to the "heroic" stage on the work-value scale – they do everything for their community, for the common wellbeing, they even risk their life for others: therefore, calling someone a busy bee or a good little ant characterises the person as diligent, focused, productive, a person that gives their best for the good of everyone else.

Offspring animals of mammals, especially furry soft ones like the kitty (*mucka*), bunny (*zajček*), little mouse (*miška*) are coded as cute or adorable, used as an affectionate nickname. They often relate to little girls. They might also be applied to young women, usually in a sexualized manner where these nicknames lose positive connotations and acquire sexist ones (as already mentioned earlier). These characterisations are linked to the age, innocent look, maybe even naiveté as a characteristic of the offspring or at least youngsters. The attributes are anthropologically predictable, concerning neoteny: large eyes and soft features are interpreted as beautiful, even irresistible, predictably so that the parents or even communities do not ignore the offspring but rather take care of it.

Discussion

Language is the storage and carrier of the culture with which mankind continually creates and engages in reflection about itself. It carries stereotypes and concepts that are, in condensed manner, embedded in folklore in particular. Short folklore forms use many metaphors for expressing various connotations, therefore they use stereotypes as generalised images of phenomena utilized for characterisations or descriptions of actions. Nicknames are one of the shortest, usually one-word folklore forms, or even only a part of folklore figurative language. They consist of a semiotic circle of meanings with its own rhetorical weight: from the pejorative to the affectionate. Nicknames express the relationship towards a person, as well as signs to the connotation carried by the nickname. This occurs at the second denotative level, the metaphorical level revealing the stereotypes attributed to the first denotative level, i.e. to the signified. This article has focused mostly on the Slovenian nicknames created by using animals' names, further used as a zoomorphism or anthropomorphism. Zoomorphism in the analysed material is used mostly when evaluating appearance: to be hairy as a bear refers solely to the visible characteristics; while anthropomorphism is used in the material when intelligence, psychological characteristics or behaviour of animals are in focus the human characteristics and behaviours are given to the animals, although these are obviously wrong: calling someone a wolf because they are a loner, although wolf is not a solitary, but pack animal, or calling a woman "foxy", which bases on the imagined behaviour of the fox, not realistic one, is a comment on the perceived behaviour of both, women and foxes/men and wolves (Thompson, 2019: 58). This is

"establishing a link between the behaviours of human and nonhuman animals […], the cultural binary and its effects further back, ultimately to its mythological origins, in order to illuminate how representation of the "alluring beast" or "distant beast" connects to "human-animal" division" (Thompson, 2019: 58). The deeper we are trying to explain zoo- and anthropomorphism, the more it shows that on certain level they become so intertwined that we cannot divide them; but we certainly cannot deny our anthropocentric view (Golež Kaučič, 2023). Could this prove the Crist's (1999) thought that we are revealing the animal part of society with zoomorphism? Our passing of the border between nature and culture obviously brings out the parallels, and our effort to move away and to move closer to the nature and the nonhuman-animal world.

The majority of the Slovenian nicknames are conceptually and nominally the same, or at least similar, as in all Indo-European languages (Gura, 1997: 122, see also Thompson, 2019): a cow or an ox denotes a person of poor intellect, a fox(y) is a young, witty or/and sexually attractive woman, etc. Analysis of the material quickly shows that domestic animals are conceptualised as stupid, clumsy animals, although they were also the part of "our world" and daily life on the farm, helping society survive. Domestic animals were trained to obey and to be dependent on the human, they were surveilled and overpowered daily. Due to this, society has characterised these animals as inferior species with low or no intelligence. These animals are seen as obtuse, often clumsy, dirty, immoral. Somewhat surprising when taking into account the human dependence on these animals and at the same time the human restricting of the animals' choice or decision making. Thompson (2019: 58) explains domestic animals as liminal figures, both us and not us, neither civilised nor wild, "their own placement sits uneasily in this balance: the idea of 'taming the wild beast' represents both the domestication process, and the process of civilizing ourselves".

Nicknames based on the names of wild animals present "the other", are coded with liminal behaviour (wolf, fox), and in that manner even a free world (birds). Freedom is a phenomenon that is linked to the wild in the conceptual metaphor [THE WILD IS FREE] in the phraseme "to run/to live wild and free". From that point of view, wild animals are others, that which is non-domesticated, and carry both marks: of beings that can live as they want but as well are not appropriate for our socialised society. We cannot abide with them, understand them or live with them side by side. Feral animals can only be hunted (in that manner, we can also understand the slang use of language when young boys are going "to hunt young women": young women are wild and will require domestication). Especially the human-mating language reflects society's fantasies as well as the educated wish to overpower the primal, feral and uncontrollable in other people (as well as in ourselves), similarly as in hunting. When the wilderness is under control and not independent anymore, it turns into "stupid, meek, intellectually feeble" phenomena requiring our care. In this context it seems that society understands all the care-requiring beings as less intelligent.

On the other hand, most of the bug-like animals cause disgust in human beings. These are not understood as wild animals but rather as the animals from the "base world", even "hell"[11] (worms, lice etc.), easily dispatched because of human size and strength. Nevertheless, these animals appear in recurring manner, society cannot get rid of them, they are pests. They are used as a nickname for the most despised persons, or even the inhabitants of such neighbouring villages with which the community is in competition (for whatever reason).

With livestock, the connotation is mostly negative; emotional name-calling motivates phrasemes like *to be a dairy cow*, or *even a blind hen can find a seed*, etc. (Jakop, 2014: 159).

Conclusion

Human culture is based on the repression of individual instinctive desires. Thus, the ideas grounded in the sense of "othering" emanate and reflect our culture much more than reflecting the actual lives of animals (Thompson, 2019: 61). Human characterisation of animals is not experiential; it is instead based on the fantasy and apparent connections that society has superficially attributed. Considering the animals' nicknames, the answer to the respective questions of Alan Dundes' (1980: 19) "Who are the folk? We are!" and Tok Thompson's (2019: 14) "Can animals be the 'folk' as well?", is rather: no, animals are not treated in society as the folk or that they could not have its own folklore, they represent the other. Although domestic animals were, and still are a big part of our society, members of the family or farm, according to the analysed material they are characterised as "others" in western society, as a being in the liminal world between our socialisation and the wilderness; in western society where the anthropocentrism is rampant (Golež Kaučič, 2023: 31), feral animals are the "other" belonging to wilderness or even to the lower world and therefore cannot be part of us. Domestic animals as liminal beings carry a negative connotation and are used for negative characterisation, while feral animals are used either for nicknames that carry the connotation of formidable, even dangerous ("animal", "bear"), or divergent behaviour – from the stereotypically expected. Bugs, with the exception of some social insects, tend to carry connotations of disgust and aversion. Wilderness in itself is generally associated with freedom. Those animals that are used as positive metaphors are acknowledged either as highly productive, or highly likable (e.g. puffy offspring). Most stereotypical images and connotations are based on superficial observations of the animals (e.g. bees, ants, wolf), therefore, the stereotypes of animals used for nicknames are often mistaken in characterising the true features the animal.

[11] The connection between worms and the underworld is frequent also in worldwide mythology.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency: Thinking Animals: Transformative Aspects in Research of Animals in Folklore, Literature and Culture (J6-3129), and Ethnological, Anthropological and Folklore Studies Research on Everyday Life (research core funding, P6-0088).

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Babič, Saša. 2015. *Beseda ni konj. Estetska struktura slovenskih folklornih obrazcev*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/9789612547660.

Babič, Saša et. al. 2023. *Collection of Slovenian Paremiological Units Pregovori 1.1*. Slovenian language resource repository CLARIN.SI. Online: http://hdl.handle.net/11356/1853.

Babič, Saša. 2024. What Is Proverbial Dog Like? In *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: A Festschrift in Honour of Wolfgang Mieder on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*, eds. Saša Babič et al., 561–576. Osijek: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek.

Crist, Eileen. 1999. *Images of Animals*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt14bst6x.

Dąbrowska, Anna. 2023. Levels of Schematicity in Metaphorical Animal Nicknames: The Case Study of *Koczkodan* Nickname in Polish. *Roczniki humanistyczne* 71 (6): 39–62. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rh23716.3.

Deignan, Alice. 2008. Corpus Linguistic Data and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. In *Confronting Metaphor in Use: An Applied Linguistic Approach*, eds. Mara Sophia Zanotto, Lynne Cameron, and Marilda C. Cavalcanti, 149–162. John Benjamins Publishing Company. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.173.

Gibbs, Raymond W. Jr. 1996. Why Many Concepts Are Metaphorical. *Cognition* 61 (3): 309–319. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(96)00723-8.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2015. Zoofolkloristics: First Insights towards the New Discipline. *Narodna umjetnost* 52 (1): 7–30. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15176/vol52no101.

Golež Kaučič, Marjetka. 2023. *»Človek je najhujša zver«. Živali v folklori, literaturi in kulturi*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU.

Gura, Aleksandr [Гура, Александр]. 1997. *Символика животных в славянской народной традиции* [Animal Symbolism in Slavic Folk Tradition]. Moscow: Indrik.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit. 1974. Riddle and Proverb. The Relationship Exemplified by an Aramaic Proverb. *Proverbium* 24: 936–940.

Ingold, Tim, ed. 1994. *What Is an Animal? One World Archaeology*. London, New York: Routledge.

Jakop, Nataša. 2014. Živali v pragmatičnih frazemih: na primeru slovenščine. In *Životinje u frazeološkom ruhu. Zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa Animalistički frazemi u slavenskim jezicima održanog 21. i 22. III. 2014. na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, ed. Ivana Vidović Bolt, 153–163. Zagreb: FF Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17234/9789531755139.11.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2015. Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor. New York: Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190224868.001.0001.

Krek, Simon et al. 2019. *Corpus of Written Standard Slovene Gigafida 2.0*. Slovenian language resource repository CLARIN.SI. Online: http://hdl.handle.net/11356/1320.

Kropej, Monika. 2007. Lisica. Njena vloga in sporočilnost v slovenskem in srednjeevropskem izročilu. *Traditiones* 36 (2): 115–142. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2007360206.

Kropej Telban, Monika. 2015. *Tipni indeks slovenskih ljudskih basni. Živalske pravljice in basni.* Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3986/9789612547707.

Kržišnik, Erika. 2005. Frazeologija v luči kulture. *41. seminar slovenskega jezika, literature in kulture 27. 6. 2005–15. 7. 2005. Zbornik predavanj*, ed. Marko Stabej, 67–81. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani.

Lakoff, George. 1992. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1974. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Lippmann, Walter. 1961 [2022]. *Public Opinion*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Lockwood, Randall. 1989. Anthropomorphism Is Not a Four-Letter Word. In *Perceptions of Animals in American Culture*, ed. R. J. Hoage, 41–56. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Omakaeva, Ellara, Viktoriya Ochirova, Zhanna Chedzhieva, Galina Bovaeva, and Tatyana Buraeva. 2019. Zoomorphic Code of Culture in Reflexion of Kalmyk and Mongolian Proverbs. *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences: International Scientific Conference "Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism 2019*, eds. Dena Karim-Sultanovich Bataev et al., 2529–2535. Future Academy. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.12.04.339.

SSKJ: Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika, druga, dopolnjena in deloma prenovljena izdaja. 2014. URL: https://fran.si/133 (accessed 23.2.2023).

Schaff, Adam. 1984. The Pragmatic Function of Stereotypes. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 45: 89–100.

Šrimpf Vendramin, Katarina. 2019. "Medanc Podklanc je figo zagledal, je mislil, da je žganc". Oblike, vsebina in funkcija medkrajevnega zbadanja na Slovenskem. *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 59 (2): 92–102.

Thompson, Tok. 2019. *Post Human Folklore*. Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi.

Visković, Nikola. 1996. *Životinja i čovjek. Prilog kulturnoj zoologiji*. Split: Književni krug.

Živali kot stereotipizacijski in karakterizacijski element v slovenskih poimenovanjih

Članek obravnava način (so)bivanja med ljudmi in živalmi, kakor je vpisan v človeški jezik: jezik odseva družbo. Pogost element človekovega izražanja je primerjanje z različnimi (okoliškimi) pojavi. Primerjave se lahko utrdijo,

prevzamejo funkcijo metafore in dobijo trajno obliko, hkrati pa so očitno zakoreninjene v stereotipnih, tj. posplošenih družbenih podobah. Stereotipne podobe se oblikujejo tudi kot folklorne oblike, v vsakdanjem jeziku kot folklorni obrazci (frazemi, pregovori, pozdravi, kletvice, žaljivke itn.). Opazne so tudi v enobesednih metaforah, ki označujejo človeka.

Živali so pogost element v kratkih folklornih obrazcih – kot bitja s svojimi značilnostmi, ki s človekom živijo v skupnem okolju: človeška lastnost se v folklornih obrazcih in oznakah primerja s predpisano, a ne nujno intrinzično lastnostjo posamične živali. Živalim pripisane lastnosti so družbeno stereotipne, posplošene in se kot take v obliki posplošene podobe (konceptualizacije) razširjajo v metaforičnem jeziku in ustvarjajo t. i. kolektivne simbole.

Človeške stereotipne karakterizacije živali večinoma ne temeljijo na izkušnjah, temveč na domišljiji in navideznih povezavah, ki so jih ljudje izpeljali iz površnih opazovanj. Analiza vzdevkov v slovenskem jeziku je pokazala, da živali niso obravnavane kot del naše družbe. Čeprav so domače živali bile in so še vedno člani družine, kmetije, so okarakterizirane kot »druge«, saj so v liminalnem svetu med našo socializacijo in divjino, medtem ko so divje živali »druge«, pripadajo divjini ali celo nižjemu svetu in zato ne morejo biti del nas. Domače živali kot liminalna bitja imajo negativno konotacijo in se uporabljajo za negativno karakterizacijo, medtem ko se divje živali uporabljajo bodisi zaradi vzdevkov s konotacijo nepremagljivosti, celo nevarnosti (žival, medved), ali zaradi drugačnega vedenja, ki ne ustreza stereotipnim pričakovanjem vedenja. Žuželke, na primer, nosijo konotacijo gnusa in prezira. Hkrati je divjina izenačena s svobodo.

Živali, ki so uporabljene za pozitivne prispodobe, so priznane kot zelo produktivne ali kot zelo simpatične (večinoma kosmati mladički). Večina stereotipnih podob in konotacij temelji na površnem opazovanju živali (npr. čebele, mravlje, volk), zato stereotipi živali, ki se uporabljajo za vzdevke, pogosto napačno označujejo prave lastnosti živali.

Traditiones 53 (1): 85–97 | COBISS: 1.01 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530105

Representations of Nonhuman Animals in Bulgarian Literary Education

Kalina Zahova

Institute for Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria
kalinaz@abv.bg
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7051-3029

Through an educational perspective, the paper traces the attitudes towards nonhuman animals, the human-nonhuman relations, and the ideologies included in the literature curriculum developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Sciences. Comparing the official programmes with certain literary textbooks, I examine various representations of nonhuman animals in the latter. I study which authors who wrote about nature and nonhuman animals are included in the curriculum, which of their literary works are studied in school, what interpretational directions are offered, what approaches to human-nonhuman relations are chosen, and what types of thinking are encouraged and cultivated.

▪ **Keywords**: Bulgarian literature, curriculum, textbooks, critical animal approaches

Prispevek s perspektive izobraževanja predstavlja odnos do nečloveških živali, razmerja med človekom in nečlovekom ter ideologije, vključene v učni načrt književnosti, ki ga je razvilo bolgarsko ministrstvo za izobraževanje in znanost. Ob primerjavi uradnih programov z nekaterimi učbeniki književnosti avtorica v slednjih preučuje različne upodobitve nečloveških živali. Razpravlja o tem, kateri avtorji, ki so pisali o naravi in nečloveških živalih, so vključeni v učne načrte, katera njihova literarna dela se obravnavajo v šoli, kakšne interpretacijske smeri so ponujene, kakšni pristopi k razmerjem med človekom in nečlovekom so izbrani in kakšna razmišljanja spodbujajo in razvijajo.

▪ **Ključne besede**: bolgarska književnost, učni načrt, učbeniki, kritično animalistični pristop

Introduction

There is much to worry about in the contemporary world. This article, along with other texts I have written in the recent years, is an expression of my ever-growing concern over what has been happening to nature on the planet Earth, to human nature, to the unnecessarily cruel human treatment of other creatures.

In the contemporary world, there are numerous practices through which violence towards nonhuman animals is normalised and habituated. They include consuming animal flesh, conducting medical laboratory experiments, raising "farmed" or "working" animals, exterminating "vermin", using animals in "entertainment" industries, shooting "game", and the cultural representations of nonhuman animals. All these practices are usually perceived as normal and legitimate. Furthermore, they are based on violence towards nonhuman animals that is often habituated, institutionalised, and/or concealed.

My work in the field of Critical Animal Studies aims to undermine this objectification and normalisation of violence and, in so doing, strip human cruelty of its corporate and

cultural masks, thus presenting living creatures as such and not as objects. Finally, it strives to perceive a number of human practices as relations between humans and other animals – relations bound with certain engagements and responsibilities.

Children and nonhuman animals

Like all basic values, care for other living beings is also an aspect with a profound pedagogical significance. Most would agree that what we teach children is of crucial importance – be it the habitualisation of anthropodomination, or care towards other living beings. In the present Western world, cruelty is systematically normalised through a complex system of components that mask its reality. This occurs at home, at educational institutions from preschool to the university, and through artistic, cultural, media, and market channels.

In my 2020 book, *Why Is the Laughing Cow Laughing? Relations between Humans and Other Animals* I presumed that children have an innate understanding with nonhuman animals, and that anthropodomination is imposed upon them by adults until they grow accustomed to it. In the words of Elizabeth Costello from J. M. Coetzee's remarkable 1999 book *The Lives of Animals*:

> And of course children all over the world consort quite naturally with animals. They don't see any dividing line. That is something they have to be taught, just as they have to be taught it is all right to kill and eat them. (Coetzee, 1999: 61)

The same presumption is followed by Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart in their 2014 book *Our Children and Other Animals: The Cultural Construction of Human–Animal Relations in Childhood*:

> How could it be that presenting children with a figure of a loved animal character alongside dead pieces of other animals is not only tolerated but enjoyed by children? What happens in the walk across the multiplex car park, from screen to restaurant, which transforms the strong affective feelings towards nonhumans represented and encouraged in themes common in children's films to an acceptance of the utility of nonhumans as toys or food? How do we teach young humans so swiftly and so robustly that these contradictory relationships are 'normal' and unproblematic? (Cole, Stewart, 2014: 4)

While I was presenting my book to various colleagues, some expressed certain reservations with regard to the innate understanding and kindness of children toward nonhuman animals, as well as their later internalization of anthropodomination and violence. Some children do enjoy hurting animals, they pointed out, kids might tear insects' wings, hit birds with slings and other tools, burn the tails of cats and dogs, catch frogs etc. Professor Inna Peleva, for instance, suggested that it could be the other way around – that perhaps the little one is authentically natural, part of which is their ability to react aggressively toward the surrounding environment, and that perhaps it is precisely culture, or segments of culture, that recondition this cruelty and teach children to be compassionate (Peleva, 2021: 3).

This debate will not be the centre of my present paper, but it is a good starting point as it exemplifies the importance of upbringing and education when it comes to care about other living beings. Whether children are born with a natural bond with nonhuman animals and later taught to dominate and hurt them, or they are born naturally cruel and later taught to respect and protect other living beings – in both cases, and in all the cases in between, what we teach children is of utmost importance. It makes a difference whether the literary curriculum contains hunting short stories or environmental ones, whether culture brings problems closer or further, and whether violence is being stigmatised or normalised. The ways we socialise children and the relations they build with other animals are essential to the relations between humans and other animals in general.

Scope of this paper's research

Before I focus on the Bulgarian literary curriculum, let me unequivocally state: all school curriculum is important, and insofar as any text consists of ideologemes (to follow Kristeva's famous intertextual arguments; Allen, 2000: 37), no discipline is purely factological or smoothly objective. Let us take geography for instance. Recently, the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences developed a new educational portal titled Geography of Bulgaria Geo10, in aid of teachers, students, and interested publics. The portal has a section 'Environment' with a subsection 'Use and Protection of Animals in Bulgaria'. From this subsection we learn that "animals are renewable resources": a resource for the development of agriculture and farming, a resource for the development of the leather and shoe industry, a resource for the development of the food industry, development of hunting and bird-watching, aesthetic and cultural values.[1] I find this approach to nature and its creatures unacceptable. If we teach children that anthropodomination

[1] Translation from the Bulgarian educational sources into English in this paper is mine – K. Z.

is the proper attitude, we can never escape the vicious circle of comprehending our fellow creatures as "resources" that exist only to be used by us, superior humans. In the words of Jhan Hochman, we must "ensure that plants and animals are granted separateness, independence, and liberation (an apartness distinct from excusing and advocating separation because of superiority)" (Hochman, 1998: 16).

A few words about the scope of my research, briefly exposed in this paper. First of all, why literature? The logical explanation would be: because I am a literary scholar. But this is not the only reason – above all, literary education teaches us not only about worthy literary works; literary education teaches us how to read, how to apprehend texts, how to perceive the world, how to write, how to think, how to internalise and express certain values and views. Through an educational perspective, I shall here examine the attitudes towards nonhuman animals, the human-nonhuman relations, and the ideologies included in the literature curriculum developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Comparing the official programmes with certain literary textbooks, I have identified various representations of nonhuman animals in school materials. I will trace which authors who wrote about nature and nonhuman animals are included in the curriculum, which of their literary works are studied in school, what interpretational directions are offered, what approaches to human-nonhuman relations are chosen, and what types of thinking are encouraged and cultivated.

The scope of my examples will range between 5th to 12th grade, leaving the initial grades aside. Not because they are insignificant, but precisely because they are of crucial importance and deserve separate attention. As shown by Catina Feresin and Snježana Močinić in their 2017 article 'Do We Need to Train Teachers and Students to Care about the Other Living Beings?', the "educational process should start at the level of primary school to create a significant imprinting in students who are very young" (2017: 33). Indeed, respect and care towards other living beings should be taught from a very young age, and I intend to focus on this subject in my forthcoming research work. Here, I address the curriculum for grades 5th to 12th, with a focus on literature rather than the Bulgarian language, and with limits to the standard curriculum rather than specialized education.

Bulgarian literary curriculum

A brief overview of the curriculum shows that animal welfare is not an evident priority, neither is respect and care towards nonhuman animals. With individual exceptions, non-human life is included from different anthropocentric angles, and not as a harmonious coexistence of all living creatures. The choice of literary works in the curriculum already contains a deficiency of engaged attitude.

In the 5th grade, the curriculum includes mythological and folklore models as well as authors' tales, such as Charles Perrault's *Puss in Boots* and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*, in which, according to the instructions of the Ministry of Education and Science, the student should be able to "distinguish the attribution of human characteristics to an animal and to explain their significance for the building of the text's meaning" (Bulgaria, 2016). Notably, such emphasis on anthropomorphism already serves to enforce the anthropocentrism characteristic of contemporary culture in general.

As the few exceptions of note are found in the 6th and 10th grades, I will presently skip them and return to them shortly.

In the 7th grade, matter for instruction does not presuppose a critical animal approach in terms of criticizing human attitudes toward nonhuman animals. The only short story that includes nonhuman animals as characters is Yordan Yovkov's *Along the Wire* – but its main animal character, the white swallow, is a symbol that is supposed to be interpreted from the viewpoint of human destiny (faith in the good, love, hope, the white bird, the holy Spirit, etc.; whereas the snake, respectively, appears as sickness). Yovkov has written significant works that include nonhuman animals as characters as well as various aspects of their relations with humans, but these do not appear in the curriculum. Unfortunately, this applies to other important authors as well.

In the 8th grade, the literary curriculum gallops through the Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance; and in the 9th grade through European Enlightenment, Modernism, and back to the Bulgarian National Revival.

In the 11th grade, the curriculum includes a section called 'Nature' which comprises three literary works, all of them (as if on purpose) lacking nonhuman animals as characters (apart from some sporadic ones, as part of the landscape). Ivan Vazov's ode *At the Rila Monastery* praises nature as a home of humans and is charged with patriotic pathos; Peyo Yavorov's poem *Hailstorm* presents nature as dramatic and uncontrollable; and Pencho Slaveykov's lyrical miniature *The Lake Sleeps* presents nature as still life. Shared by the three literary works is the (almost complete) lack of fauna.

The 12th-grade matter for instruction consists of literary works arranged in groups around certain themes, such as "love", "faith and hope", "labour and creative work", and "choice and mind division" – none of which gets connected with animal welfare or the improvement of people's relations with other living beings.

To sum it up, the literary curriculum as a whole lacks an engaged attitude towards nonhuman animals. There are two notable exceptions, which I will state below.

In the 6th grade, the 'Human and Nature' section of the curriculum offers an interesting combination: a poem by the Bulgarian National Revival revolutionary Lyuben Karavelov *You Are Beautiful, My Forest*; Ivan Vazov's 1884 poem *Kind Fatherland, How Beautiful You Are!*; and… the fourth chapter of Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals*. I must admit I was quite shocked by this unusual combination and at

the same time pleasantly surprised by the presence of Durrell's work in compulsory literary education. The selected chapter – 'A Bushel of Learning' (with abridgment) – is not the most engaged with critical animal thinking in the book, but it does offer an excellent introduction to approaching human-nonhuman relations.

The other exception appears at the end of the 10th-grade curriculum: Yordan Radichkov's short story *The Gentle Spiral*, which was previously included in the literary curriculum for the 8th grade. This is the single Bulgarian literary work in the curriculum to contain explicit criticism of the violent behaviour of humans toward nonhuman animals. On the other hand, Radichkov was not only an excellent writer, but an excellent hunter too, which is a fact that should not be ignored. And also, the short story is not unambiguous and is not interpreted unambiguously.

In the following chapters, I will examine various representations of nonhuman animals in certain Bulgarian literary textbooks.

Not-so-good representations of nonhuman animals

When discussing the various representations of nonhuman animals in Bulgarian literary textbooks, the examples might be good or not so good. By "good" I will here understand instances of cultivating a respectful harmonious human treatment of other creatures. To first give a set of not-so-good examples, concerning paratexts and images: The major subject in the literary curriculum for the 6th grade is "The Worlds of the Human" (*Световете на човека*) – anthropodomination per se; where the "worlds" in question are:

I. Human and Nature (*Човекът и природата*)

II. Human and Art (*Човекът и изкуството*)

III. Human and Other Humans (*Човекът и другите хора*)

Within this classification already, nature is framed as a world of the human, a world that belongs to and is dominated by humans. In this case, the unfortunate formulation is not just a question of not-so-good paratexts, it is also a conceptual issue, stating in outspoken terms that the human is supposed to be the master of all the worlds in question.

Further with the not-so-good examples, certain pictures contain hidden messages that are not particularly well considered – for instance, as an illustration for the 'Human and Nature' section in a 6th-grade textbook (Protohristova et al., 2019b: 7) appear three happy kids running in a park with a lovely retriever. The park and the domesticated animal, I infer, are supposed to represent "nature". In a picture for the same section from another textbook (Gerdzhikova et al., 2019: 13), the kids are depicted on a mountain instead, there are birds and insects around them.

Another not-so-good example – or perhaps suitable from a literary point of view, but not from a critical animal thinking one, is an exercise with four photos of nonhuman animals and the task: "Choose one of these animals as a character in a story of

yours and describe it" (Inev et al., 2018: 193). The species (Emperor tamarin, Pygmy armadillo, Frill necked lizard, Proboscis monkey) are chosen for their remarkable features that might spur the descriptive abilities of the child, but on the other hand, the exercise clearly promotes speciesism by suggesting some species are funnier or uglier than others – one can imagine if those were photos of people with specific features, the exercise would be considered discriminatory.

Following are two not-so-good textual examples. The 6th-grade curriculum contains chapter XXI from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* – the chapter in which the Little Prince meets the fox who teaches him what it is like to tame somebody and develop a special bond. During the dialogue, the fox also complains about the "hunting people", whom he finds disturbing: "People have guns and they hunt. It's quite troublesome" (Saint-Exupéry, 2000: 56); "My life is monotonous. I hunt chickens; people hunt me" (Saint-Exupéry, 2000: 59). In the examined Bulgarian textbooks, there is not a single trace of the hunting theme or the way it is expressed by the fox – instead, the focus of the interpretation is on relations between humans. Such as: "The wise fox shows the Little Prince how to carefully build interpersonal relations" (Mihaylova, Shishkova, 2023: 68) or "The fox is part of the natural wildlife, which is why it associates friendship with taming" (Gerdzhikova et al., 2019: 165).

In this context, it is important to observe that even though some authors and their nonhuman animal-related works are not in the curriculum, they are sometimes mentioned from a comparative angle. One such author is the most prominent Bulgarian hunting writer – Emiliyan Stanev. In an 11th-grade textbook, we find a problematic example of substituting his real life and works with a beautiful fragment about profound human feelings in nature. The text reads:

> Calling himself a "cruel realist", Emiliyan Stanev holds no romantic attitude toward nature. Many of his works treat nature not from the perspective of a "guest", but rather that of a hunter penetrating the wild as an enemy. Nevertheless, in his long short story *When the White Frost is Melting* one encounters soulful imagery of nature inspiring serenity, greatness, and beauty. (Hranova, Shishkova, 2019: 245)

Shifting the focus from Stanev's hunting life and similarly themed works to such a text is not a good approach in terms of critical animal thinking. Neither is labelling him as an "animalist", along with Gerald Durrell and Yordan Yovkov, defining "animalists" as "writers whose works are about animals" (Protohristova et al., 2020: 59). In Bulgarian literary history, namely, there is a tradition (recently more often disputed than confirmed) of differentiating a certain literary branch called "animalist fiction" or "animalist literature". The basis for distinguishing this section is predominantly thematic – the so-called "animalist fiction" tells stories about nonhuman animals. I suggest we

substitute this simple (and to a great extent useless) definition based on *what* (literary works about animal characters) with a much more effective approach based on *how* (how those literary works contribute to human-nonhuman relations, how are they involved in the construction of culturally modified organisms, to what degree do they support anthropodomination and to what extent do they oppose it). In other words, I suggest the substitution of the predominantly thematic distinction with an ethical perspective.

Better approaches to the relations between humans and nonhumans

As a better approach, I would point out a 12th-grade textbook in which Yordan Yovkov is presented through a broader examination (Inev et al., 2020: 148–156). The 12th-grade curriculum includes his short story *The Song of the Wheels* in the thematic section 'Labour and Creative Work', where the textbook authors have chosen to characterise Yovkov's creative work more widely and in detail, not omitting his carefully developed theme of human-nonhuman relations.

> The observations on human nature's dark sides give good reason to one of Yovkov's characters […] – the wise Uncle Mitush – to conclude that animals excel humans in their goodness: "To tell you the truth, I value the cattle higher than man". (Inev et al., 2020: 149)

The textbook authors stress Uncle Mitush's praise of nonhuman animals and the values he finds unchangeable in them but diminishing in humans: nobleness, patience, and stability (ibid.). I find such a flexible approach productive – not only does it broaden the students' general knowledge of literature and literary history, but it also brings forward thematic aspects that are quite important in the contemporary world, among them of course being our relations with the other living beings.

Another exemplary chapter appears in an 11th-grade textbook, where the 'Nature' section is introduced through a comprehensive examination of "Nature in Bulgarian literature" (Inev et al., 2019: 242–246). While introducing important authors and literary works connected with nature, the chapter also brings forward environmental and philosophical problems: "the transition from the natural to the cultural human destroyed the connection with nature and as a consequence destroyed humans' inner world" (ibid.: 243); "humans entered into a rivalry with nature" (ibid.); "humans increasingly kept taking possession of nature and transforming it, and using it instead of enjoying it" (ibid.: 244); "literature presents nature as an oasis for the soul and at the same time as an unprotected zone for unscrupulous profit" (ibid.). Confronting young teenagers with such problems through literature – to me, this means exploring the pedagogical potential of literary education to the highest degree.

Continuing with the better approaches to the relations between humans and nonhumans, let me mention a few fruitful representations of nonhuman animals in Bulgarian literary textbooks.

Some 6th-grade textbooks approach Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals* with an accent on Durrell's biography, which is quite beneficial. By emphasising certain aspects of his naturalist experience and his love for animals, the textbook authors encourage children to think about loving animals as a value and as an important cause.

> The fundamental topic in Durrell's book is the relations of humans toward animals. The writer is one of the earliest propagandists of ecological awareness. The main theme of his overall creative work is the idea that people should understand, respect, and protect all the other living beings on Earth, and take care of them. Durrell was a champion of a responsible and considerate attitude toward nature and its wealth, among which he attached the highest importance to animals. (Protohristova et al., 2020: 57)

The life and work of Gerald Durrell is inspiring in terms of considerate human-nonhuman relations. Some textbook authors skilfully follow this potential by also encouraging additional work: "Find on the internet and/or in books by Gerald Durrell statements in defence of nature and wildlife. Make your classmates familiar with them by emphasising Durrell's role as environmentalist" (ibid.: 50); "Find in a library or on the internet information about Gerald Durrell's activities as an environmentalist and as a writer. Prepare a presentation" (Gerdzhikova et al., 2019: 40).

In certain textbooks we encounter broader tasks such as "Draw a map of wildlife in Bulgaria" (Protohristova et al., 2020: 58) or discussion topics like "Do you think zoos should exist? Why?" (ibid.). Thus, by extending the attention area beyond the compulsory literary texts in the curriculum, some textbook authors stimulate the students to think, write, and discuss important issues concerning human responsibilities and irresponsible actions. Similar thought-provoking discussion topics are found in textbooks for the other grades as well, and are in my opinion excellent keys to engaging the students with critical animal thinking and environmental commitment. Here are a few highly welcome examples: "Write an essay on the topic *Contemporary human – a child of nature or a guest of nature?*" (11th grade; Hranova, Shishkova, 2019: 244); "Discuss the topic *Human – a master or a friend to nature?*" (10th grade; Penchev et al., 2019: 271); "Carry out a discussion on the topic *Could we clean nature in Bulgaria in just one day*?" (11th grade; Inev et al., 2019: 261); "Discuss the most important contemporary debates regarding nature" (11th grade; Hranova, Shishkova, 2019: 253); "Discuss the topic *Contemporary world – concrete or nature?*" (10th grade; Penchev et al., 2019: 271); "Plan for a discussion on the topic *Construction of new ski lifts in Bulgarian mountains – for or against?*" (11th grade; Inev et al., 2019: 289).

The aforementioned short story *The Gentle Spiral* by Yordan Radichkov (10th grade), as noted, is not unambiguous and is not interpreted unambiguously. The text depicts the strange winter experience of a group of hunters, finishing with the dramatic killing of a wood pigeon. *The Gentle Spiral* is often analysed in the direction of the complex and problematic relations between humans and nature. In this, textbooks differ considerably. Some offer expressive accusing statements, such as "unprovoked cruelty", "lack of interest and even indifference to the environment", "suddenly unleashed aggression towards nature", and "killers"; the main topic of the short story is framed as "the broken harmony between human and nature", since people considered themselves "masters of nature" (Protohristova et al., 2019a: 264). Such examples show that certain literary works have very strong thought-provoking environmental potential, but also the way we approach them is crucial. The same literary work is in another textbook (Biolchev et al., 2019) approached through the incognoscibility of death, with no accent on the hunters or on human aggression; the interpretations are more philosophical and underestimate the significance of the text's critical animal potential. Since the curriculum includes so few literary works with such explicit potential, in my opinion, it is essential not to overlook it.

Conclusions

Based on the research of the literature curriculum for grades 5th–12th developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, the comparison between the official programmes and certain literary textbooks, and the study of the interpretational directions offered, I would formulate the following conclusions:

1. Animal welfare is not an evident priority in Bulgarian literary education; the choice of literary works in the curriculum contains a deficiency of engaged attitude towards nonhuman animals.
2. The authors of textbooks do have certain (limited) freedom to include in the exercises other literary works, and to comparatively or thematically bring forward certain environmental aspects.
3. Teachers are constrained by the limitations of the curriculum, the logic of the textbooks, and the pressure of time. Still, in the end, it is up to them to include certain values in the way students read, write, think, and perceive the world, among these values being also our fundamental attitude toward other living beings.

Conclusion one calls for a more considerate national educational policy – it is high time the curriculum (and not only the literary one) included more attention to the problems of the planet and its inhabitants.

Conclusion two benefits from more flexible textbook approaches, and this would mean that textbook authors should focus not only on the currently popular "functional literacy", but also on the not-so-popular, and yet much more important, values, principles, and views of life.

Conclusion three is our best course for systemic improvements. Critically conscious educators can model any material into proper food for thought and empathy, and above all – good teachers cultivate not only ways of thinking, they cultivate thinking itself.

Acknowledgements

This article is written as part of the joint research project Sound and Text in Intercultural Context (2023–2025), carried out by the Institute for Literature (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts). Financial support from ZRC SAZU and BAS is gratefully acknowledged.

References

Allen, Graham. 2000. *Intertextuality*. London, New York: Routledge.

Biolchev, Boyan, Boris Minkov, Neli Ilieva, and Veselina Toneva. 2019. *Literatura 10. klas*. Sofia: Klett Bulgaria. [Биолчев, Боян, Борис Минков, Нели Илиева и Веселина Тонева. 2019. *Литература 10. клас*. София: Клет България.]

Bulgaria. Ministry of Education and Science. 2016. *Curriculum for the 5th grade 2016/2017*. [България. Министерство на образованието и науката. 2016. *Учебни програми за V клас в сила от 2016/2017*.] URL: https://web.mon.bg/bg/2000 (accessed 23.12.2023).

Coetzee, John Maxwell. 1999. *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cole, Matthew and Kate Stewart. 2014. *Our Children and Other Animals: The Cultural Construction of Human–Animal Relations in Childhood*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Durrell, Gerald. 2017. *My Family and Other Animals*. New York: Penguin Books.

Feresin, Catina and Snježana Močinić. 2017. Do We Need to Train Teachers and Students to Care about Other Living Beings? *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 5 (1): 33–45. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2017.513.

Geo10. *Geography of Bulgaria Geo10*. URL: https://geo10.ngic.bg/ch2/t07 (accessed 23.12.2023).

Gerdzhikova, Mariya, Olga Popova, and Iliyana Krasteva. 2019. *Literatura 6. klas*. Sofia: Klett Bulgaria. [Герджикова, Мария, Олга Попова и Илияна Кръстева. 2019. *Литература 6. клас*. София: Клет България.]

Hochman, Jhan. 1998. *Green Cultural Studies. Nature in Film, Novel, and Theory.* Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press.

Hranova, Albena and Lyubov Shishkova. 2019. *Literatura za 11. klas*. Sofia: Prosveta. [Хранова, Албена и Любов Шишкова. 2019. *Литература за 11. клас*. София: Просвета.]

Inev, Ivan, Petya Markova, Violeta Ineva, and Tsvetana Mincheva. 2018. *Literatura 7. klas*. Sofia: BG Uchebnik. [Инев, Иван, Петя Маркова, Виолета Инева и Цветана Минчева. 2018. *Литература 7. клас*. София: БГ Учебник.]

Inev, Ivan, Albena Runevska, Mariana Bakardzhieva, Iliya Grigorov, Violeta Ineva, and Kostadinka Naldzhieva. 2019. *Literatura 11. klas*. Sofia: BG Uchebnik. [Инев, Иван, Албена Руневска, Мариана Бакърджиева, Илия Григоров, Виолета Инева и Костадинка Налджиева. 2019. *Литература 11. клас*. София: БГ Учебник.]

Inev, Ivan, Albena Runevska, Mariana Bakardzhieva, and Vanya Maystorska. 2020. *Literatura 12. klas*. Sofia: BG Uchebnik. [Инев, Иван, Албена Руневска, Мариана Бакърджиева и Ваня Майсторска. 2020. *Литература 12. клас*. София: БГ Учебник.]

Mihaylova, Vesela and Lyubov Shishkova. 2023. *Tetradka po literatura za 6. klas.* Sofia: Prosveta plyus. [Михайлова, Весела и Любов Шишкова. 2023. *Тетрадка по литература за 6. клас*. София: Просвета плюс.]

Peleva, Inna. 2021. Peer review for competition for the academic position "Associate Professor". Institute for Literature at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences [official website], 21.4.2021. URL: https://ilit.bas.bg/bg/1852-2021-04-21 (accessed 14.10.2024).

Penchev, Boyko, Violeta Gerdzhikova, and Iliyana Krasteva. 2019. *Literatura 10. klas*. Sofia: Klett Bulgaria. [Пенчев, Бойко, Виолета Герджикова и Илияна Кръстева. 2019. *Литература 10. клас*. София: Клет България.]

Protohristova, Cleo, Svetla Cherpokova, Adelina Strandzheva, Tatyana Ichevska, and Ekaterina Petkova. 2019a. *Literatura 10. klas.* Sofia: Klett Bulgaria. [Протохристова, Клео, Светла Черпокова, Аделина Странджева, Татяна Ичевска и Екатерина Петкова. 2019a. *Литература 10. клас*. София: Клет България.]

Protohristova, Cleo, Svetla Cherpokova, Nikolay Daskalov, and Ekaterina Petkova. 2019b. *Literatura 6. klas.* Sofia: Anubis i Klett Bulgaria. [Протохристова, Клео, Светла Черпокова, Николай Даскалов и Екатерина Петкова. 2019b. *Литература 6. клас*. София: Анубис и Клет България.]

Protohristova, Cleo, Svetla Cherpokova, Nikolay Daskalov, and Ekaterina Petkova. 2020. *Kniga za uchitelya 6. klas.* Sofia: Klett Bulgaria. [Протохристова, Клео, Светла Черпокова, Николай Даскалов и Екатерина Петкова. 2020. *Книга за учителя 6. клас*. София: Клет България.]

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. 2000. *The Little Prince*. Translated by Richard Howard. Boston, New York: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Reprezentacije nečloveških živali pri pouku književnosti v Bolgariji

Prispevek s perspektive izobraževanja predstavlja človekov odnos do nečloveških živali, razmerja med človekom in nečlovekom ter ideologije, vključene v učni načrt književnosti, ki ga je pripravilo bolgarsko ministrstvo za izobraževanje in znanost. Ob primerjavi uradnih programov z nekaterimi učbeniki književnosti avtorica v slednjih preučuje različne upodobitve nečloveških živali. Razpravlja o tem, kateri avtorji, ki so pisali o naravi in nečloveških živalih, so vključeni v

učne načrte, katera njihova literarna dela se obravnavajo v šoli, kakšne interpretacijske smeri so ponujene, kakšni pristopi k razmerjem med človekom in nečlovekom so izbrani in kakšna razmišljanja spodbujajo in razvijajo.

Kot vse osnovne vrednote je tudi skrb za druga živa bitja pomembna z vidika izobraževanja. Večina bi se strinjala, da je tisto, kar učimo otroke, osrednjega pomena – naj bo to navajanje na antropodominacijo ali skrb za druga živa bitja. V sodobnem zahodnem svetu je krutost sistematično normalizirana s kompleksnim sistemom prvin, ki prikrivajo njeno resničnost. To se dogaja doma, v izobraževalnih ustanovah od vrtca do univerze ter po umetniških, kulturnih, medijskih in tržnih kanalih. Pomembno je, ali učni načrt za književnost vsebuje lovske ali okoljske zgodbe, ali kultura približuje ali oddaljuje probleme in ali se nasilje stigmatizira ali normalizira. Način socializacije otrok in razmerja, ki jih oblikujejo z drugimi živalmi, so bistvenega pomena za razmerja med ljudmi in živalmi nasploh. Na podlagi raziskave učnega načrta za književnost za 5.–12. razred, ki ga je razvilo bolgarsko ministrstvo za izobraževanje in znanost, primerjave med uradnimi programi in nekaterimi književnimi učbeniki ter študije ponujenih interpretacijskih usmeritev, so oblikovani naslednji sklepi:

1. Dobrobit živali ni očitna prednostna naloga bolgarskega književnega izobraževanja; izbira literarnih del v učnem načrtu je z vidika angažiranega odnosa do nečloveških živali pomanjkljiva.
2. Avtorji učbenikov imajo omejeno svobodo, da v vaje vključujejo tudi druga književna dela ter da primerjalno ali tematsko poudarijo določene okoljske vidike.
3. Učitelji se spoprijemajo z omejitvami učnega načrta, logiko učbenikov in pritiskom časa. Kljub temu je naposled njihova naloga, da v način, kako učenci berejo, pišejo, premišljajo in dojemajo svet, vključijo določene vrednote, med katerimi je tudi naš temeljni odnos do drugih živih bitij.

Prvi sklep zahteva bolj premišljeno nacionalno izobraževalno politiko – skrajni čas je, da se v učne načrte (pa ne le v tiste o književnosti) vključi več pozornosti do problemov planeta in njegovih prebivalcev. Drugi sklep se opira na prožne učbeniške pristope, kar pomeni, da se avtorji učbenikov ne bi smeli osrediniti ne le na trenutno popularno »funkcionalno pismenost«, temveč tudi na manj priljubljene, a precej pomembnejše vrednote, načela in poglede na življenje. Tretji sklep je najboljša pot za sistemsko izboljšanje. Kritično ozaveščeni vzgojitelji lahko vsako gradivo spremenijo v primerno hrano za premišljanje in empatijo. Predvsem pa dobri učitelji ne gojijo le načinov mišljenja, temveč negujejo mišljenje samo.

Traditiones 53 (1): 99–115 | COBISS: 1.01 | CC BY 4.0 | DOI: 10.3986/Traditio2024530106

Exposed Animal Bodies: The Photographic Observation of the Body-Space of the Anthropocene

Branislava Vičar

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Arts Maribor, Slovenia
branislava.vicar@um.si
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3878-9439

Using Stacy Alaimo's theoretical concept of trans-corporeality, the paper analyzes photographs of five award-winning photojournalists, capturing various sites of exposure of animal bodies in the Anthropocene. It is not only the exposed animal bodies (i.e. confined, depleted, or genetically modified animal bodies, impacted by the industrial agricultural system, climate crisis and ecological destruction) that are of interest but also the environments in which these bodies are photographed. These environments do not merely serve as backdrops but also affect animal bodies and reveal their interconnectedness with global economic, industrial, and environmental systems.

▪ **Keywords**: Anthropocene, animal body, transcorporeality, new materialism, photography

V prispevku so s teoretskim konceptom čeztelesnosti Stacy Alaimo analizirane fotografije petih nagrajenih fotoreporterk_jev, ki prikazujejo različna mesta izpostavljenosti živalskih teles v antropocenu. Pozornost je usmerjena tako na izpostavljena živalska telesa (tj. telesa, ki jih ogrožajo industrijski agrikulturni sistem, podnebna kriza in ekološko uničenje; ujeta, izčrpana ali gensko spremenjena živalska telesa) kakor tudi okolje, v katerem so bile fotografije posnete. Okolje ni zgolj ozadje, ampak učinkuje na živalska telesa ter razkriva njihovo povezanost z globalnimi ekonomskimi, industrijskimi in okoljskimi sistemi.

▪ **Ključne besede**: antropocen, živalsko telo, čeztelesnost, novi materializem, fotografija

Introduction

In this paper, I analyze photographs capturing the devastation wrought by industrial and agricultural systems and environmental destruction in the 21st century. The analysis opens up a space for introducing what Stacy Alaimo has called the "ethics of exposure" (Alaimo, 2016: 77), i.e. the new ethics of living in the Anthropocene. In the paper, I adopt this sense of exposure not as a state of complete unprotectedness but as "openness to the material world" (ibid.: 91), i.e. radical openness of animal bodies to their environments.

The main research focus will be placed upon the relationship between animal bodies and agricultural environments or ruined ecosystems as depicted through the lenses of the five award-winning photojournalists. To address the conceptualization of the issue, Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of visual communication (1996, 2001) will be used. Aspects of composition such as placement of images, salience of depicted elements, and the framing of elements will be considered. The relationship between the viewer

and the depicted animals that is constructed in the photographs will be analyzed through the modes of camera distance, camera angle, and the gaze of the depicted animals. It is not only the exposed animal bodies (confined, depleted, or genetically modified animal bodies, impacted by the industrial agricultural system, climate crisis and ecological destruction) that are of interest but also the environments in which these bodies are photographed. These environments do not merely serve as backdrops but also affect animal bodies, whose vulnerability, when exposed, is demonstrated through an exploration of the various sites of exposure in the analyzed photographs. The photographs demonstrate the material interconnections between specific bodies and specific places – places that could be called, according to Rob Shields, "liminal zones of Otherness" (Shields, 1991: 6), bringing attention to animals' corporeal connection to the global economic, industrial, and environmental systems. Exposure in this sense "signifies the need for environmental protection, justice, or peace" (Alaimo, 2016: 68).

I aim to illustrate how speciesism can materialize across bodies and places. The analysis focuses on actual animal bodies as they are transformed by their encounters with places, substances, and forces. I explain the relations between animal bodies and their environments using Stacy Alaimo's theoretical concept of transcorporeality (Alaimo, 2010, 2016), i.e. "a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments" (Alaimo, 2016: 112).

For the purposes of the paper, I have selected five photographs that depict various sites of exposure of animal bodies, i.e. animal bodies' experience of climate change, environmental pollution, and the animal-industrial complex. All of the analyzed photographs manifest, according to Susan Sontag, "[t]he dual powers of photography – to generate documents and to create works of visual art" (Sontag, 2003: 68). Four of them are included in the book *HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene* (McArthur, Wilson, 2020), a photojournalism book that documents exploitative human-animal relations across the planet, as depicted through the lenses of 40 award-winning photojournalists.

The analyzed photographs can be placed within the genre of photojournalism, which has built up a sense of the photograph's role as bearing witness, or recording, of reality. In this case, the photograph carries what Julianne Newton has called "the burden of visual truth" (Newton, 1998). Susan Sontag places conflict photography among "the realm of photographs that cannot possibly be posed" (Sontag, 2003: 51–52). She focuses on our ability to consider, reflect upon and rationalize images of mass suffering, i.e. "regarding the pain of others" (Sontag, 2003). When the other is the animal, the photojournalist Jo-Anne McArthur talks of a special subgenre, which she calls animal photojournalism. Since the human condition is the central focus of photojournalism, animal photojournalism means shifting the focus to animals and their lived experiences (McArthur, 2023). McArthur, who claims her work was inspired by conflict

photography, compares animal journalism with conflict photography in that both aim to show "both context and those caught within it" to enable "to see the individuals, to connect with their grief" (McArthur, 2020: 93). She defines animal photojournalism as an emergent genre of photography that "exposes and memorializes the experiences of animals who live amongst us but who we fail to see". These are, she continues, "particularly those animals that are historically underrepresented, but with whom we have very close contact, named by their product" (McArthur, 2023). As with conflict photographers, animal photojournalists put themselves at physical and psychological risk to document a practice or an event (ibid.). Because animals used by humans are often caged and concealed, animal photojournalists may need to gain access to a place of animal exploitation undercover.

Animal photojournalists employ photography most potently as a form of evidence. Photography has become a tool for them to become involved in the fight for animal rights. McArthur considers her work as a "bold and urgent statement" (McArthur, 2020: 93), and Lozinski describes the role of an animal photojournalist as follows: "When I take photos, I try to think of images as open wounds that can't be ignored. They should communicate pain" (Lozinski, 2020: 31).

The exposure of bodies in the Anthropocene

One of the most important aspects of the Anthropocene is, as David Farrier (2019: 6) states, humankind's radical interference with deep time, which has become a striking and paradoxical element of our everyday. Our present is accompanied by deep pasts and deep futures: our dependence on fossil fuels, rare earth minerals and plastics puts us in touch with the distant past; the pre-human Earth shapes our present both in terms of geological layers and evolutionary biodiversity, as well as in terms of the textures, means and processes that express our experience of modernity. At the same time, the various disruptions that have shaped these dependencies, such as changes in the chemical composition of the atmosphere, soils and oceans and the decline of biodiversity, illuminate our relationship with the deep future. In the context of the deep time of the Earth's history, recognition is growing that in the Anthropocene, human activities have become a geomorphological and geological force (Grinevald et al., 2019: 5) that is "pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*" (Steffen et al., 2011: 614).

The understanding that human activities have changed the planet in terms of geological and biospheric processes has challenged the assumption that the world exists as a background for human subjects, and this has placed the trajectories of Anthropocene theories in dialogue with new materialisms, materialist feminisms, and materialist ecocriticisms. The materialist assumption that the human is always intertwined with the more-than-human world underlines the inseparable connection of human bodies with

"the environment" (Alaimo, 2010: 2). "Nature", according to Stacy Alaimo, "is always as close as one's own skin – perhaps even closer" (ibid.). New materialisms insist on material agency, i.e. they refuse the notion of matter as passive or inert, and emphasize "the interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures" (ibid.). A strong model of material agency was developed by Karen Barad in their seminal work *Meeting the Universe Half-Way* (Barad, 2007), where agency "is cut loose from its traditional humanist orbit" (ibid.: 177). Barad explains that agency is not an attribute, but it is "'doing'/'being' in its intra-activity" (ibid.: 178). Barad's conception of intra-action is based on quantum physics and extends beyond the term interaction, which suggests a reciprocal influence between separate entities. The term intra-action refers to a fundamental entanglement whereby agency is not understood as an inherent property of an individual entity but as a dynamic of forces (ibid.: 141), where things constantly shift and are exchanged, influencing and acting on each other. Individual entities therefore do not previously exist as such but are realized in intra-action, i.e. in their co-creative relations with other entities.

The understanding that human corporeality is interconnected with the more-than-human world marks a turning point in the conception of subjectivity and opens up space for thinking about subjectivity within the framework of posthumanist theories. In their work *Bodily Natures* (2010), Stacy Alaimo develops the concept of transcorporeality by drawing upon new materialist theories of non-human agency, especially Karen Barad's notion of intra-action (Barad, 2007). Agency is, therefore, not conceived as the property of a concrete, isolated entity but is distributed and moves across the networks into which these entities are embedded. Alaimo argues for a conception of transcorporeality that traces the material interchanges across human and animal bodies and the wider material world. While transcorporeality as an anthology begins with the human, it does not exclude any living being in order to undermine the Western tradition of human exceptionalism (Alaimo, 2018: 435). It should be emphasized that the effects of the Anthropocene on different groups of human and non-human entities are connected to geopolitical processes and global injustices that already exist in the capitalist socio-economic system. The transcorporeal subject is therefore generated through the intertwining of "biological, technological, economic, social, political and other systems, processes, and events" (ibid.: 436). Transcorporeality suggests a new figuration "of the human after the Human", which is not founded on dichotomies and hierarchies and which does not remove the human from the world they survey (ibid.). The prefix *trans-* in the derived word transcorporeality contains the meaning of multiple horizontal crossings, transitions and transformations. The transcorporeal subject does not exist as an isolated entity (Alaimo, 2010: 146) since the subject, if we proceed from the theory of new materialism, cannot be separated from networks of intra-active material agencies (Barad, 2007); human and non-human bodies imperceptibly transmit biopolitical modulation, genetically modified organisms, carbon dioxide, everyday

chemicals and other substances (Alaimo, 2016). Transcorporeality denies that human and animal bodies are a stable entity, discrete in time and space; rather, as Alaimo argues, they are "caught up in and transformed by myriad, often unpredictable material agencies" (Alaimo, 2010: 146). The concept of transcorporeality, therefore, suggests that bodies are intertwined with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them and is transformed by them.

The concept of the transcorporeal subject is further developed by Alaimo's work *Exposed* (2016) utilizing the assumption of new materialism that subjectivities are a priori intertwined with non-human substances and forces as a starting point for elucidating an "ethics of exposure" (Alaimo, 2016: 77). This ethic foregrounds the material susceptibility and vulnerability of the exposed subject and thereby directs attention to the variety of lived experiences within the Anthropocene. Alaimo articulates the uneven distribution of power within this sphere:

> Vulnerability is paradoxical in the Anthropocene, as it is these very bodies, soft or not, participating in larger technological and economic systems that weaken the glaciers, and yet the enormity of collective human agency is countered by the sense of powerlessness that looms large here, as it does within nearly any other climate change scene. (Alaimo, 2016: 80)

Here, Alaimo draws attention to the significant paradox that human bodies are simultaneously capable and incapable of enacting geological changes (Christie, 2018). The paradoxical (lack of) strength of "dwelling in the dissolve" (Alaimo, 2016: 2) that characterizes Stacy Alaimo's ethics of exposure enables an understanding that exposure is an inherent part of the Anthropocene.

Photographic art of exposure

Animal bodies and agricultural environments

In this section, I explore transcorporeal materialities in the work of the photographers Jo-Anne McArthur and Andrzej Skowron, who capture the intersection of animal bodies and industrial farms. Their art suggests that animal bodies and animal health are interconnected with the material, often toxic flows of industrialized agricultural environments. The material interrelations between animals and industrial farms call our attention to systemic violence towards animals. As Sanbonmatsu states, animals "born into the industrialized agriculture system spend their whole lives in entirely artificial environments where their bodies, behaviours, and minds are forced to conform utterly to the needs of the administered world of capital" (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 2). The bodily substance of animals is vitally connected to the broader agricultural

environment and its supportive networks of the global corporate system, "an exploitative, repressive, and unsustainable juggernaut that treats all living beings as resources within a swollen production and marketing regime, as disposable commodities far removed from any moral status" (Boggs, 2007). The very emergence of corporate industry, followed by the creation of mass consumer markets, made possible the extraordinary expansion of animal products. Although exploitative human-animal relations were also characteristic of earlier epochs, capitalism "removed the last of the cultural and technical barriers to nonhuman animal exploitation which in previous epochs had set at least some limits to the scale and intensity of speciesist exploitation" (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 25).

McArthur's and Skowron's photos illustrate Alaimo's conception of transcorporeal space, in that the animal body is never disentangled from the material world. McArthur's photograph (Figure 1)[1] captures the collecting of eggs from caged hens at an industrial farm. It depicts intensively confined egg-laying chickens in battery cages – small, barren wire enclosures, stacked several tiers high and extending down long rows in a windowless shed. As many birds as possible are crammed into these tiny cages, one on top of the other – with the faeces of the birds on top falling on those below. However, it is not the individual bodies that are of interest here but rather the environment. In this photograph, McArthur depicts an environment in which animals blend into their living spaces, underscoring that farmed animals' spaces are never merely a background, i.e. their bodies are inseparable from their surroundings. The most salient figure in the photograph, which occupies a central place in the composition, is the worker collecting the eggs. While she is wearing a face covering to avoid inhaling the toxic dust and ammonia in the air, the birds are left exposed to inhale all these substances, which plays a crucial role in increased disease susceptibility.

We cannot see microbes within the birds, but McArthur's photograph discloses the transcorporeality, as it intermeshes animal bodies and environment, and therefore helps us to envision the invisible movement of substances across animal bodies and their surroundings. The environment runs right through animal bodies, i.e. water, air, feed, microbes and toxins enter their bodies through their digestive tract, respiratory system, skin and conjunctiva. Microbes that spread through animal bodies act as material agents, which affect animal health. These animal bodies are also vulnerable, or open to ostensibly benign utilitarian objects, such as shoes or equipment, which are no longer inert but interact with them. For example, they may transmit bacteria belonging to the genus Salmonella, which may cause salmonella infection.[2]

[1] Photographs 1, 2, 3, and 5 are published on We Animals Media under an open non-commercial use licence.

[2] The most common bacterial diseases in hens exploited for their eggs include (in addition to salmonella infections) colibacillosis, fowl cholera, infectious coryza, mycoplasma infection, to name a few (Yaman, Yapicier, 2019). Bacterial diseases account for approximately half of the non-outbreak-related mortality in hens used in the egg industry and broiler chickens (Thøfner, Christensen, 2021).

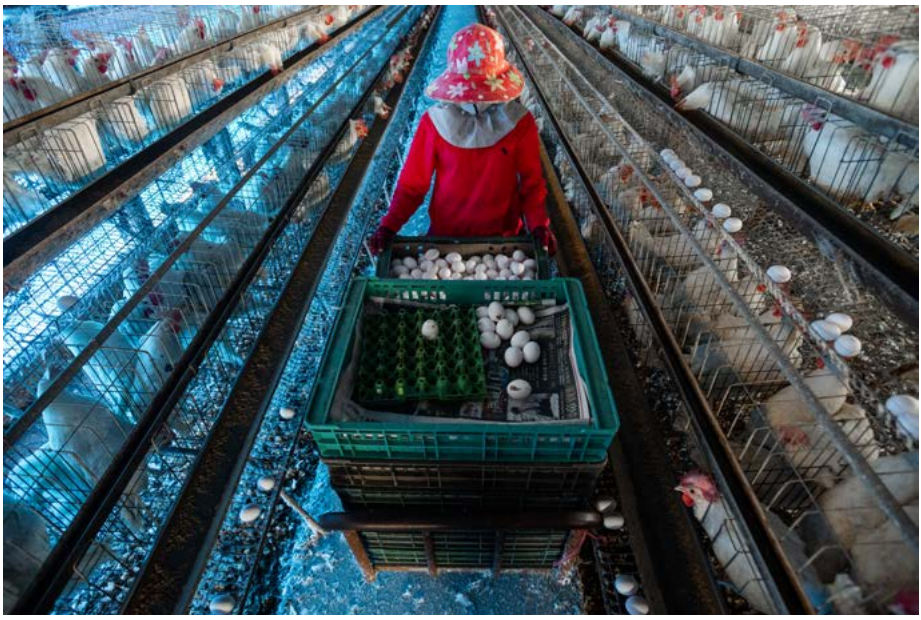

Figure 1: Collecting eggs from caged hens at an industrial farm. Photo: Jo-Anne McArthur. Source: We Animals Media.

Figure 2: A broiler chicken sits with splayed legs on the floor of a broiler chicken farm. Photo: Andrzej Skowron. Source: We Animals Media.

Compared to McArthur's photograph, Skowron's image depicts an individualized chicken (Figure 2). The individualization of the chicken is realized through its salience in the image, with the other chickens remaining out of focus. The frontal perspective reveals the existential suffering of the chicken, and the horizontal angle brings the viewer into alignment with the issue. The photograph portrays a broiler chicken who at just six weeks old has already put on too much weight to be able to stand. He/she sits with splayed legs on the floor of a broiler chicken farm. Skowron's portrayal of the chicken's body as profoundly altered by the industrialized agricultural systems introduces a conception of the animal body "that is not genetically determined, nor firmly bounded" (Alaimo, 2010: 63) but rather a body in which social power and economic forces intra-act. The photograph demonstrates an example of transcorporeal space, where the capitalist system generates environments that infiltrate animal bodies and render them disabled. Animal bodies at a broiler chicken farm are biologically engineered for profitable exploitation. Chickens are treated "not as conscious, feeling beings but as matter to be shaped according to the needs of the capitalist system" (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 2). The metabolic demands of intensive production, such as accelerated growth rates, coupled with the physiological stress associated with both confinement and the various physical modifications, leave animals extremely prone to disease. Chickens with rapid growth are at risk of increased immune dysfunction, disease morbidity, and disease mortality (Greger, 2007: 253–254).

The enmeshment of animal flesh with place

In this section, I examine how the model of transcorporeality is emerging in photographic art, focusing on the exposure of vulnerable animal flesh at a wet market. The photograph by photojournalist Luis Tato (Figure 3) captures the bloody aftermath of a duck slaughter for the market. The photograph suggests violence, executed in duck flesh. The actual fleshy creatures that were killed are absent from the photograph but we can read the photograph through indexical signs. Duck feathers falling to the floor, and grains of corn index the presence of the ducks while the large blood-soaked surface indexes their slaughter. The image of this blood points to a corporeality that is violently exposed.

Wet markets as unique social spaces, shaped by the context of modernization and advanced urbanism (Mele et al., 2015: 105), "operate in the transformation of animals raised in a regime of confinement into various 'essential protein' commodities (aka meat)" (Segata et al., 2021: 98). Before being transported and caged at wet markets, animals are most commonly raised in intensive, captive production farms under poor sanitary conditions. Tato's photograph was taken in Spain but we can find this type of market all over the world. Since wet markets are essentially places where animals can be slaughtered at the time of purchase, they are also places where human bodies collide with animal flesh and blood. Both human and animal bodies are therefore "vulnerable,

Figure 3: The bloody aftermath of ducks slaughtered for market. Photo: Luis Tato. Source: We Animals Media.

fleshy, or interconnected with material processes" (Alaimo, 2016: 32).[3] The interchange of animal flesh and non-human materialities (bacteria and other microscopic life forms) builds the right environment for diseases to evolve (Segata et al., 2021: 98).[4] Bearing in mind that in our speciesist society ducks are considered food, and their flesh thus enters human bodies, the relation between the wet market, animal bodies and human bodies provides a clear example of transcorporeal transit.

Although the fleshy creatures are absent and we do not see their faces, the photograph evokes concern and empathy and suggests "posthumanist vulnerability that denies the possibility of any living creature existing in a state of separation from its environs" (Alaimo, 2016: 167). Portraying circumstances under which animals are traded and consumed, Tato's work simultaneously manifests conceptions of animal justice, environmental justice, food justice, and broader social justice and suggests that not only animal bodies but also injustice towards animals is inseparable from physical environments.

Waters as transcorporeal space

In this section, I examine photographs portraying locations where the animals' embodiment meets water. As Neimanis argues, "'[w]ater' constitutes one of the so-called

[3] The wet market as a site of the collision of animal flesh and human bodies is also portrayed in a sequence from the dystopian fiction *Contagion* (2011), depicting the stages of a highly contagious zoonotic disease.

[4] Recognition of entanglement in the market system has, as Segata et al. argue (2021: 107), "repositioned health and disease as complex interactive processes between humans, animals, microbes, and environments."

Anthropocene's most urgent, visceral and ethically fraught sites of political praxis and theoretical inquiry" (Neimanis, 2019: 25). Our reshaping of this planet is occurring not least through the rematerialization of its waters: dams, canals, and diversions threaten many vital waterways, large-scale extraction pollutes huge quantities of water, oceans are acidifying, and the composition of life they sustain is changing at an incredible rate (ibid.). Alaimo dissolves the persistent cultural conception of the ocean as impervious to anthropogenic harms, trying to raise awareness that dispersing substances or forces across the breadth and depth of the seas – as in the contemporary global practices of dumping garbage, microplastic pollution, sewage, weapons, toxic chemicals and radioactive waste – will not make them disappear (Alaimo, 2016: 221). They further examine aquatic materialism, i.e. to what extent transcorporeality can extend to the seas, and argue for the importance of new materialism to capture the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic, and human habitats (ibid.: 113).

Water is not, as Neimanis emphasizes, "simply something 'out there' – environment, resource, commodity, backdrop" – it is also the stuff of human and non-human bodies, and never separate from their materiality (Neimanis, 2019: 27). Anthropocene waters therefore dam other aspects of the water imaginary: water's transcorporeality. Alaimo pushes "the idea of exposure, or radical openness to one's environment, to the extreme in an imaginary psychedelic dissolve – a figuration of Anthropocene seas and their scenes of extinction" (Alaimo, 2016: 13). This idea incorporates the various ways in which humans are interconnected with ocean ecology, i.e., in terms of the consumption of sea foods, which connects humans in a transcorporeal manner to the health of the seas,[5] as well as in terms of the human use of the banal, ostensibly benign objects intended for momentary human use (such as plastic bottles, bags, wrappers etc.) that affect ocean and marine animals as they float in the sea (ibid.: 130).[6] Marine habitats are riddled with radioactive waste, toxic chemicals, plastics, and microplastics, all of which become part of the marine animals "that lack the means to discern danger, and the impermeability that would exclude it" (ibid.: 167).

The photograph of an oil-soaked pelican (Figure 4)[7] is a particularly vivid example of transcorporeal space. The fact that the oil spill affects the pelican's body highlights the substantial interconnections between the pelican and the environment; the pelican's vulnerable body is not separable from the ocean but is radically open to it. The pelican's body is not static but is in constant interchange with the ocean, i.e. it is vulnerable to

[5] Those who eat marine animals suffer from high levels of dangerous heavy metals in their bodies since the oceans are riddled with mercury and organochlorides, resulting from coal-burning power plants, pesticides, and flame retardants which threaten marine life (Alaimo, 2016: 129).

[6] Beside abandoned fishing nets that trap certain marine animals, plastic bags that block the digestive tracts of turtles, and the various (plastic) objects that seabirds mistake for food, toxin-laden microplastics pose another risk to marine life, as many creatures such as benthic worms, sea cucumbers, krill, and birds "will ingest tiny plastic particles" (Kaiser, 2010: 1506).

[7] The photo is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

Figure 4: An oiled brown pelican. Photo: Courtesy of Governor Bobby Jindal's office. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

its substances and flows. Specifically, the photograph presents what Alaimo calls "a transcorporeal landscape" (Alaimo, 2016), as it suggests the movement of oil through the ocean to the body of the pelican.

The photograph was shot after the crude oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico, the largest marine oil spill in history, caused by an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in 2010. Oil and natural gas continuously and uncontrollably burst into the ocean for nearly three months. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in all, 134 million gallons of oil was released (NOAA). Exposure to oil resulted in the death of countless marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, fishes and invertebrates and areas of the seabed covered by bacterial byproducts essentially became dead zones (Pallardy, 2024). Several animals are still experiencing previously unreported health consequences (Farrell, 2023). Beside the many diseases detected in the animals in the affected area, it has also been established that many dolphins suffered from lung and adrenal disorders known to be linked to oil exposure, and the larvae of several fish species, including tuna, "likely developed heart defects after exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from the oil" (Pallardy, 2024). Many species "experienced increased mortality, developmental defects and reproductive declines due to exposure to the oil" (Farrell, 2023). Birds were particularly vulnerable to the oil's effects, and the brown pelican was one of the most affected species.[8] Many birds died from "ingesting oil as they tried to clean themselves or because the substance

[8] Coastal Louisiana is home to about a third of all brown pelicans in the eastern US but the oil spill has devastated this community – between 100,000 and one million birds died straight away (Farrell, 2023). It is estimated that 12% of brown pelicans died in the area affected by the spill (Pallardy, 2024).

interfered with their ability to regulate their body temperatures" (Pallardy, 2024). Oil-soaked feathers have a particularly devastating effect on birds, as feathers help them maintain a healthy and stable body temperature when the outside temperature changes (Farrell, 2023).[9] The photograph portrays how severe forms of environmental pollution can profoundly alter an animal's life. It focuses on the pelican's body, as it is altered by its encounters with oil, depicting the gravity of the pelican's condition. The chemical byproducts of oil – as invisible material agencies – penetrate the tissue of birds: their blood, livers, and feathers (Farrell, 2023), which may trigger serious health conditions. The photograph suggests that the body of the pelican, the ocean and the oil are simultaneously material and social; the oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico cannot be separated from the social and economic relations of power that enable industrialisation. This work helps us illuminate how socio-political forces generate marine landscapes that infiltrate animal bodies. The very existence of the body of the oil-soaked pelican serves as a site for interconnections among various movements, such as ocean health, marine animal health, animal rights, environmental justice, and anti-globalization. The non-frontal perspective signals that we are, in a sense, observers. However, the pelican looks directly at the camera with his/her left eye, impacting upon the viewer. The pelican's gaze brings us into alignment with the issue, and the recognizable contextual features makes this alignment seem like a responsibility.

Considering "the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crises that our planet currently faces – from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination" (Neimanis, 2019: 3), the issue of speciesism is inseparable from the global climate crisis. A photograph by Kelly Guerin (Figure 5) captures surviving pigs wading through flood waters along a stretch of highway after escaping a factory farm. The photograph was shot in September of 2018 after Hurricane Florence began its approach along the coast of North Carolina. North Carolina farms raise more than nine million pigs each year, making it the second largest producer of pigs in the USA. Although the flood zones are well known and recurrent, hundreds of buildings designed to house animals were constructed there. Animals are kept in long, rectangular barns known as CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), which house hundreds of pigs in a single facility (Guerin, 2018). The massive farming systems that keep them inside make them particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods and fires. For thousands of pigs trapped inside the barns, "there would be no evacuation, no supplies left behind, no official rescue to come" (ibid.).[10]

According to Alaimo, "all creatures of the Anthropocene dwell at the crossroads of body and place, where nothing is natural or safe or contained" (Alaimo, 2016: 167).

[9] The oil intrusion even has cascading effects on how birds' DNA functions. Researchers have found that the birds have lower nesting success due to exposure of their bodies to the oil (Farell, 2023).

[10] Among millions of animal deaths, 5,500 pigs died in the floods (Guerin, 2018).

Figure 5: Pigs who survived the hurricane and escaped their farm swim through flood waters in North Carolina. Photo: Kelly Guerin. Source: We Animals Media.

Guerin's photograph presents two animal bodies that are among the most vulnerable to climate disturbances.[11] They have no means to protect themselves from such harm. And, ironically, the photograph suggests that their escape may well be life threatening, that there might be no person to save them, that no place is safe for them, since in speciesist categorization they are labelled as "farm animals". The photograph therefore inevitably evokes the question of the power relations that are at stake in the various water crises that our planet currently faces.

Conclusion

In the paper I have analyzed five photographs from the genre of animal photojournalism that capture, contest, and reconfigure the relations between animal bodies and specific places of exposure, i.e. animal bodies' experience of climate change, environmental pollution, and the animal-industrial complex. Recognizing how the animal bodies intra-act with their environments – with the flow of water, toxicants, chemical byproducts

[11] Given the speciesist categorization, animals of certain species are disproportionately affected by environmental risks. As Guerin, who as a photojournalist documented the aftermath for animals of Hurricane Florence, notes, while families with homes in high-risk areas evacuated their "pets" before the hurricane, millions of farmed animals were left locked in the barns (Guerin, 2018).

of oil, and other substances – fosters an ethical stance that we are accountable for our practices in a material world "that is never merely an external place but always the very substance of ourselves and others" (Alaimo, 2010: 158). Adopting a transcorporeal consciousness can therefore engender ethical responsivity and a political orientation towards questions of animal rights, climate change, and environmental justice. Thinking in terms of interdependencies and interrelationships, we do not only "recognize our own implications in the climatic conditions around us" (Neimanis, Loewen Walker, 2014: 573), but we also manage to destabilize anthropocentrism, raising consciousness that climate change and environmental racism do not concern humans alone. Due to economic policies and corporate interests, various groups of living creatures are being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous substances and natural disasters based upon race and species. To paraphrase the poet Stevie Smith's poem title "Not Waving but Drowning": *Which bodies are waving, and which bodies are drowning?*

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), research core funding No. P6-0215 (Slovene Language – Basic, Contrastive, and Applied Studies).

References

Alaimo, Stacy. 2010. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Alaimo, Stacy. 2016. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Alaimo, Stacy. 2018. Trans-corporeality. In *The Posthuman Glossary*, eds. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, 435–438. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury.

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Boggs, Carl. 2007. Corporate Power, Ecological Crisis, and Animal Rights. *Fast Capitalism*. URL: https://fastcapitalism.uta.edu/2_2/boggs.html (accessed 1.3.2024).

Christie, Alex. 2018. Stacy Alaimo's Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times. Review of *Exposed*, by Stacy Alaimo. *ASAP Journal*, 1.4.2018. URL: https://asapjournal.com/stacy-alaimos-exposed-environmental-politics-and-pleasures-in-posthuman-times-alex-christie/ (accessed 1.3.2024).

Farrell, Riley. 2023. The Oil-soaked Bird that Shocked the World. *BBC Future*, 5.10.2023. URL: https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20231002-the-photo-of-the-deepwater-horizon-bird-that-shocked-the-world (accessed 1.3.2024).

Farrier, David. 2019. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extincion*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Greger, Michael. 2007. The Human/Animal Interface: Emergence and Resurgence of Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. *Critical Reviews in Microbiology* 33 (4): 243–299. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10408410701647594.

Grinevald, Jacques, John McNeill, Naomi Oreskes, Will Steffen, Colin P. Summerhayes, and Jan Zalasiewicz. 2019. History of the Anthropocene Concept. In *The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit*, ed. Jan Zalasiewicz, 4–11. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guerin, Kelly. 2018. Documenting the Aftermath for Animals of Hurricane Florence. *We Animals Media*, 13.10.2018. URL: https://weanimalsmedia.org/2018/10/13/hurricane-florence/ (accessed 5.3.2024).

Kaiser, Jocelyn. 2010. The Dirt on Ocean Garbage Patches. *Science* 328 (5985): 1506. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1126/science.328.5985.1506.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. 1996. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. 2001. *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Edward Arnold.

Lozinski, Konrad. 2020. A Short, Miserable Life. In *HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene*, eds. Jo-Anne McArthur and Keith Wilson, 31. We Animals Media.

McArthur, Jo-Anne. 2020. Testament and Memorial. In *HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene*, eds. Jo-Anne McArthur and Keith Wilson, 93. We Animals Media.

McArthur, Jo-Anne. 2023. Animal Photojournalism: Seeing from Another Species. *VII Insider*. URL: https://theviifoundation.org/animal-photojournalism-seeing-from-another-species (accessed 15.2.2024).

McArthur, Jo-Anne and Keith Wilson, eds. 2020. *HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene*. We Animals Media.

Mele, Christopher, Megan Ng, and May Bo Chim. 2015. Urban Markets as a 'Corrective' to Advanced Urbanism: The Social Space of Wet Markets in Contemporary Singapore. *Urban Studies* 52 (1): 103–120.

Neimanis, Astrida. 2019. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Neimanis, Astrida and Rachel Loewen Walker. 2014. Wathering: Climate Change and the "Thick Time" of Transcorporeality. *Hypatia* 29 (3): 558–575.

Newton, Julianne H. 1998. The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality. *Visual Communication Quarterly* 5 (4): 4–9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15551399809363390.

NOAA. 10 Years of NOAA's Work After the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: A Timeline. *NOAA Fisheries* [official website]. URL: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/10-years-noaas-work-after-deepwater-horizon-oil-spill-timeline (accessed 1.3.2024).

Pallardy, Richard. 2024. Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*. URL: https://www.britannica.com/event/Deepwater-Horizon-oil-spill (accessed 1.3.2024).

Sanbonmatsu, John. 2017. Capitalism and Speciesism. In *Animal Oppresssion and Capitalism*, vol. 2, ed. David Nibert, 1–30. Santa Barbara, Denver: Praeger.

Segata, Jean, Luiza Beck, and Luísa Muccillo. 2021. Beyond Exotic Wet Markets: COVID-19 Ecologies in the Global Meat-Processing Industry in Brazil. *eTropic* 20 (1): 94–114. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.25120/etropic.20.1.2021.379.

Shields, Rob. 1991. *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London, New York: Routledge.

Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin Books.

Steffen, Will, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill. 2011. The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature? *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* 36 (8): 614–621.

Thøfner, Ida and Jens-Peter Christensen. 2021. Bacterial Diseases in Poultry. In *Advancements and Technologies in Pig and Poultry Bacterial Disease Control*, eds. Neil Foster, Ilias Kyriazakis, and Paul Barrow, 199–227. Academic Press.

Yaman, Sibel and Ozlem Sahan Yapicier. 2019. Bacterial Diseases Affecting Egg Production of Laying Hens. *Dairy and Veterinary Sciences Journal* 11 (3): 555814. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.19080/JDVS.2019.11.555814.

We Animals Media [official website]. URL: https://weanimalsmedia.org/about/ (accessed 30.9.2023).

Izpostavljena živalska telesa: fotografsko opazovanje telesa-prostora v antropocenu

V prispevku je s teoretičnim konceptom čeztelesnosti Stacy Alaimo analizirana izpostavljenost živalskih teles v antropocenu, kakor je predstavljena v fotografski umetnosti. Analiza odpira prostor za vpeljavo nove etike življenja v antropocenu; Stacy Alaimo jo je poimenoval_a »etika izpostavljenosti«. Izpostavljenost ni pojmovana kot stanje popolne nezaščitenosti, temveč kot »odprtost materialnemu svetu«, tj. kot radikalna odprtost živalskih teles okolju. Prispevek se osredinja na razmerje med živalskimi telesi in uničenimi ekosistemi oz. agrikulturnim okoljem; prikazano je skozi objektive nagrajenih fotoreporterk_jev Jo-Anne McArthur in Kelly Guerin, Andrzeja Skowrona, Luisa Tatoja in Wina McNameeja. Pozornost je usmerjena tako na izpostavljena živalska telesa (tj. telesa, ki jih ogrožata podnebna kriza in ekološko uničenje; ujeta, izčrpana ali gensko spremenjena živalska telesa) kakor tudi okolje, v katerem so bile posnete fotografije. Okolje ni zgolj ozadje, temveč učinkuje na živalska telesa ter razkriva njihovo povezanost z globalnimi ekonomskimi, industrijskimi in okoljskimi sistemi.

Fotografije živalskih teles na industrijskih farmah opozarjajo, da so živalska telesa in zdravje živali medsebojno povezana s širšim agrikulturnim okoljem in podpornimi mrežami globalnega korporativnega kapitalizma. Fotografije predstavljajo koncept čeztelesnega prostora Stacy Alaimo, po katerem živalsko telo ni nikoli ločeno od materialnega sveta. Fotografska umetnost, ki prikazuje okoliščine uživanja živali in trgovanja z njimi, povezuje koncepte živalske,

okoljske, prehranske in širše družbene pravičnosti ter predpostavlja, da s fizičnim okoljem niso neločljivo povezana le telesa živali, temveč tudi nepravičnost do njih.

Fotografije o čeztelesnosti voda pomagajo osvetliti, kako družbeno-politične moči ustvarjajo morske krajine, ki prodirajo v živalska telesa. Če upoštevamo različne antropogene in medsebojno povezane vodne krize, s katerimi se trenutno spoprijema naš planet, se vprašanje speciesizma kaže kot neločljivo povezano z globalno podnebno krizo. Živalska telesa so med najobčutljivejšimi telesi za naravne nesreče, kot so poplave in požari, saj živali nimajo sredstev, da bi se zaščitile pred njimi.

ŽIVALI V ŽARIŠČU: NOVI KONCEPTI RAZISKAV ŽIVALI V HUMANISTIKI

ANIMALS IN FOCUS: NEW CONCEPTS FOR ANIMAL RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES

ISSN 0352-0447

9 770352 044014

ZRC SAZU

SLOVENSKA AKADEMIJA ZNANOSTI IN UMETNOSTI