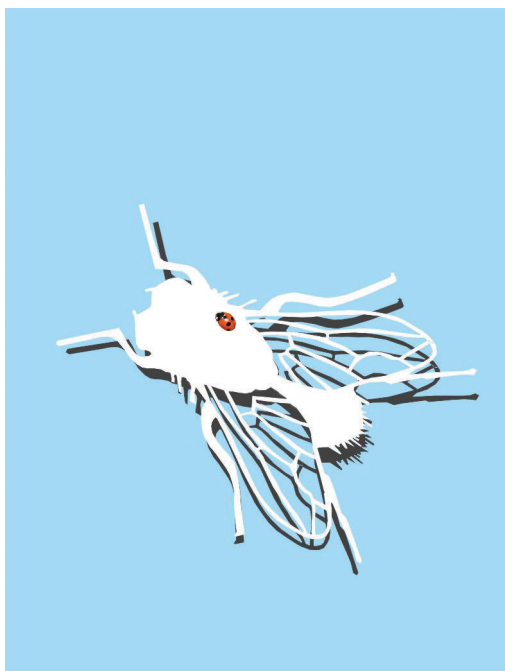




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FOREWORD

The collection of research articles titled *Nature as a Culture Constituent: Creativity and Place in Art*, which is the first issue of *Comparative Studies* Volume 4, focuses on diverse representations of natural world in culture – folk art, literature, painting, cinematography. Human beings have always been in constant interaction with nature. The early reminiscences of civilization and its culture testify to persistent bond between the humankind and world of flora and fauna the latter having gradually become an object of the former's intensive perception. Various artists representing different cultural epochs have been inspired by nature as they chose concrete images from it and used them as signs, regulators, symbols or indicators of either heavenly or earthly spheres, top or bottom spaces. The dual system representing the conception of the relationship between human and nature in contemporary situation is not so explicit though. A human as a part of nature and nature elements as constituents of the civilized world in the age of global interconnectedness emphasize the blurred state of the borderline previously characterized by rather strict boundary disputes.

The present collection is structured into two parts. Chapter 1 *Insects in Real and Virtual World* entails research papers that were presented at the scientific seminar four years ago – on June 5, 2008. It was the first manifestation of the mutual cooperation between two research institutes of Daugavpils University, i.e., The Institute of Systematic Biology and the Institute of Comparative Studies. The idea of collaboration between philologists and biologists arose due to the recognized and at the same time ever-growing value of interdisciplinary research. Taking into consideration that significant opinions often go beyond the reach of a single discipline Prof. Arvids Barševskis, the rector of Daugavpils University and at that time the director of the Institute of Systematic Biology, who is well-known in the entomological community for his discoveries of new species of insects, and Prof. Fjodors Fjodorovs, the director of the Institute of Comparative Studies, a literary scholar and devoted researcher of different cultural phenomena, commonly teamed up for one idea. Research articles were planned to be published in a separate issue of *Baltic Journal of Coleopterology* published and distributed with the support of Daugavpils University. Unfortunately the economic situation brought this intent to a halt.

The idea has materialized at another time and in a different format. The papers included in the chapter under the title of the seminar are a reflection of the sunny day on the bank of the lake in Kurcums village 20 km from Daugavpils where among the scientific target audience grasshoppers were chirring, flies – buzzing, butterflies – fluttering, gnats – sneezing, beetles – moving, bees – murmuring, dragonflies – dancing, ladybirds – perching, ants – hustling and bustling.

To extend the relatively narrow thematic sector marked by the scientific seminar, some other authors were invited, whose contribution forms the Chapter 2 of the compilation *Animals and Animalistic Representations in Literature*.

The editor of the collection hopes that each reader of the issue will find useful information and specific inspiration for new discoveries on the investigated phenomena to be included as valuable material in the following issues of *Comparative Studies*!

Ilze Kačāne

INSECTS IN REAL AND VIRTUAL WORLD

Fjodors Fjodorovs

INSECTS IN THE SPACE OF CULTURE

Summary

Since ancient times insects have been the object of intensive perception by a human. In the mythological world picture insects used to be not just a segment of space but its signs, its regulators. Initially, the world of insects, like the human world, was divided into positive, which was represented by bees and lady-birds, and the negative one, represented by harmful insects. History of culture is the history in which insects are considered in the light of their conformity to ethical and aesthetical mechanisms. In this respect, they are represented either as 'harmful' creatures or totally withdrawn from the fictional and aesthetic works, or – during the epochs of relativity – as creatures endowed with both beauty and ethics.

Key-words: The Old Testament, Donne, Lotramont, Kafka, locust, flea, louse, transformation, metamorphosis, religion, culture

*

Human has always been in constant contact with insects. Since ancient times insects have been an object of intensive perception. In the mythological world pictures they used to be not just segments of space, but its signs; even more, its regulators. A lady-bird and a bee, for instance, represented heavens, the superior world. The inferior world is naturally associated with harmful insects; dragon-flies used to be the draught-animals of the devil. Insects were found in one company with chthonic animals – snakes, grass-snakes, mice, etc.; moreover, they acquired their features. The functions of insects varied: bees bring spring, determine fertility; harmful insects are created to punish people and animals. One of the most widespread plots in the world mythologies is when the deity or a human is transformed into an insect. Athena turns a weaver Arachne into a spider. Hera, according to one myth, is turned into a gadfly to chase Io who was loved by Zeus and who had also been turned into a cow. Human souls are turned into butterflies, moths, etc. In folklore a hero or heroine is often transformed into a bee or a mosquito to reach their destination getting through a crack. This motif has become the leitmotif in Pushkin's *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (1831). The Swan drenched the knight prince from head to toe:

*And he hovered, then and there,
A mosquito, in the air.
Buzzed, and flying rapidly,
Overtook the ship at sea,
Settled noiselessly, and stole
Out of sight, into a hole.¹*

In *Saltan's* kingdom Gvidon-mosquito punished *the royal cook and weaver, with their mother, the sly deceiver* who are to blame for the grieves committed to him and his mother:

*Our mosquito waxed most furious
 And, with his mosquito might,
 Stung his aunt's right eye, in spite.
 Turning pale, she swooned from pain –
 But her eye ne'er saw again.
 Sister, serving maids and mother
 Chased him, tripping one another,
 Screamed: 'You cursed insect, you!
 Only wait!' But he just flew
 Through a casement, o'er the main,
 Swiftly to his own domain.²*

Some insects were used as totemic ancestor images.

Insects played a great role in ritual acts. For example, the sanctuary of Artemis used to represent an imitation of a snake; Artemis was associated with the holy bee – a repository of fertility. A bee was considered a cult animal of Artemis; the priestesses of the sanctuary were called bees, priests-eunuchs – drones; the ritual was guided by Queen-bee. This is where the ritual role of honey originates from, and through honey – of bees (when an infant, Zeus was brought up on the milk of the goat Amalthea and on bee honey).

On the whole, a bee has been the most widespread insect all over the world, at all times, and all religions.

Next, it is worth referring to the Bible. It is interesting that insects are not mentioned among the living creatures of the Lord in the *First Book of Genesis* of the *Old Testament*. Most probably, they had been created on the sixth day, not long before Man was made:

24 And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures after his kinds, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.³

The situation with the flood is the same. The LORD repented that he had created all of these creatures and commanded Noah:

2 Of every clean beasts thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are nor clean by two, the male and his female.⁴

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth 9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.⁵

It might happen that insects have been ranked with 'creeping things', which is natural when mythical identification of insects with reptiles is borne in mind. Nevertheless, insects are mentioned, though not often, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Out of insects with a positive connotation, bee is mentioned as endowed with numerous virtues: 1) diligence and wisdom (Solomon: *6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest⁶*; 2) purity, courage, thrift, prudence; 3) bees are guards of their 'home' (beehive) and they are furious in chasing those who have broken into their life (*They compassed me about like bees.⁷*);

4) a bee symbolizes virginity of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, and of honey. Christians used to compare themselves with bees, but Church was compared to a beehive.

Out of insects with a negative connotation, *locust* stands out; it embodies diseases, disasters, death; locust is a disorganizer of the cosmic order.

The Second Book of Moses of the Old Testament contains a conspicuous narrative about ten plagues in the land of Egypt (God punishing the land of Egypt for Pharaoh had refused to let the children of Israel go to their land):

1. *Plague*: 20 [...] *all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.* 21. [...] *and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river.*⁸

2. *The plague of frogs*: 2 *And if thou refuse to let them go, behold I will smite all thy borders with frogs:* 3 *And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into the bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs:* 4 *And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thee people, and upon all thy servants.*⁹

3. *The plague of lice*: 16 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.* 17 *And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.*¹⁰

4. *The plague of flies*: 24 *And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.*¹¹

8. *The plague of locusts*: 12 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land even all that the hail hath left.* 13 *And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, [...] and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts.* 14 *And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they for the locusts; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.* 15 *For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.*¹²

The New Testament: REVELATION 9: 1 – 11:

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of the great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.* 3 *And there come out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.* 4 *And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those man which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.* 5 *And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as a torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.* 6 *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.* 7 *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto*

*horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as a hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*¹³

Apart from this, we find fleas, flies, mosquitoes, spiders, and scorpions there.

Entomological motifs of the Bible are interwoven into the European culture of both the Middle Ages, which is natural, and the post-medieval period, up to nowadays, but they are conveyed, obviously, in the desecrated way, as relieved from the sacrament.

Herein, two models are revealed.

The first model: tabooing – de-tabooing of harmful insects (harmful insects under taboo – harmful insects off taboo).

European culture functions as a culture of continuous complication of the structure which corresponds to the more and more complicating comprehension of the objective reality by Europeans, wherein this objective reality is both natural and social. But at the same time the European culture has a binary structure of its evolution: one definite type of culture is displaced by the controvert, to this or that extent, type of culture: 1) Antiquity – the Middle Ages; 2) the Renaissance – the Baroque; 3) the Classicism – the Romanticism; the closer to the present the less universal and more numerous in their variety the cultures become.

What does it signify in relation to insects, obviously, the harmful ones, as harmless insects (e.g., bees) always preserve the right to exist? The Renaissance, for example, introduces the culture based on the main semantic paradigm of beauty, perfection, and harmony as a norm. Therefore, the Classical Renaissance thinks in poetry, and in the framework of poetry – in sonnet – a complex and, simultaneously, harmonious-symmetric genre. Evidently, abnormal fleas may occur neither in the sonnets of Petrarch nor in the chivalric poems of Ariosto or Tasso; fleas, along with other harmful insects, constitute the scope of tabooed realia, similar to, for example, defecation. Naturally, defecation is an inevitable factor of a human and any living organism; naturally, louse and fleas which used to lord it in the castles and palaces in the past, which, by the way, was a cause of dreadful epidemics that killed inhabitants of whole cities and even countries. But the art was constructing and introducing the world of norm, the world deprived of defecation and other physiological acts. At the turn of the 16th century in the Renaissance cultural space there appeared John Donne (1572 – 1631) whose poetry, due to a whole range of semantic and structural mechanisms, did not conform to the mechanisms of the Renaissance culture. Firstly, beauty and perfection of the Renaissance heroism are turned inside out by their grotesque ugliness like in the elegy *The Anagram*:

*Marry and love, thy Flavia, for she
Hath all things, whereby others beauteous be,
For, though her eyes be small, her mouth is great,
Though they be ivory, yet her teeth be jet,
Though they be dim, yet she is light enough [...].*¹⁴

And, naturally, a flea makes an unavoidable segment of the anti-beauty-space, which is proclaimed in the poem *The Flea*. More than this, it is a flea that demonstrates the inevitability of love intercourse:

*Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deny'st me is;
It suck's me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be [...].¹⁵*

The inferior in the European daily occurrence, in the European way of life used to be an obvious fact; insects, in particular fleas, made a constituent part of a house. But in the normative space of art, the inferior was tabooed. Donne removed any normative models; he filled his sonnets, elegies, and songs with 'abnormity' to be the fact of life.

Donne's antibeauty, Donne's flea signified a change of the cultural code. The Renaissance models were displaced by the Baroque models. Figuratively speaking, Flavia and the flea unveiled the Renaissance and introduced the Baroque.

The second model: harmful insects as reality and as symbols.

Realism of the 19th century is called realism because it is focused on reality. Moreover, initially, its orientation on the reality has a demonstrative character, which is manifested in the rapt attention to the 'inferior' reality. It is not only the aristocratic world of St. Petersburg that becomes the topic of representation like in *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, but it is also the world of Petersburg slums. One of the programmatic texts of this type is the sketch of Nikolai Nekrasov *A Usurer of St. Petersburg*.

The quotation of one fragment follows:

The backyard of the house I have entered was extremely large, decrepit, and untidy; I faced unendurable smell [...]. At the entrance there lied a man with his face down, his body stretched out [...]; he was asleep; [...] thousands of flies were strolling on his face, in swarm they were jostling on his lips, and thousands of them more were hovering over his head and buzzing, waiting for their turn.¹⁶

The physiological sketches of the mid-19th century demonstrate the inferior space of the capital city Petersburg or Paris; in the borders of the capital city space they show real slums inhabited by 'slummed' people. In the novel by Vsevolod Krestovsky the action is set in 'the slums of Petersburg' which construct the real state in the space of Petersburg, and the chief point is that they are situated next to Nevskiy Prospekt.

In works by Nekrasov, Krestovsky, and others, flies are represented like flies, fleas – like fleas, cockroaches – cockroaches. All this is representation of the reality of the social life, naturally, the inferior one.

Nevertheless, realism has its own system of taboo, that is, what makes the very fact of reality but has either ethical or aesthetical prohibition to be actualized.

These bans are, eventually, lifted by Naturalism.

In 1869 in Paris a book by Lautréamont, *The Songs of Maldoror* (*Les Chants de Maldoror*) – was published; this was one of the basic works of the second half of the 19th century and also one of the most terrifying works that was anti-aesthetic and amoral as well as rejected all values of the European civilization. One segment of the book, significant for its volume and meaning, is devoted to flea. It is necessary to say that the flea, when being an important fact of reality, nevertheless, did not make the frequent subject of representation:

Tous les quinze ans, les générations de poux, qui se nourrissent de l'homme, diminuent d'une manière notable, et prédisent elles-mêmes, infailliblement, l'époque prochaine de leur complète destruction. Car, l'homme, plus intelligent que son ennemi, parvient à le vaincre. Alors, avec une pelle infernale qui accroît mes forces, j'extrais de cette mine inépuisable des blocs de poux, grands comme des montagnes, je les brise à coups de hache, et je les transporte, pendant les nuits profondes, dans les artères des cités. Là, au contact de la température humaine, ils se dissolvent comme aux premiers jours de leur formation dans les galeries tortueuses de la mine souterraine, se creusent un lit dans le gravier, et se répandent en ruisseaux dans les habitations, comme des esprits nuisibles. Le gardien de la maison aboie sourdement, car il lui semble qu'une légion d'êtres inconnus perce les pores des murs, et apporte la terreur au chevet du sommeil. Peut-être n'êtes-vous pas, sans avoir entendu, au moins, une fois dans votre vie, ces sortes d'abolements douloureux et prolongés. Avec ses yeux impuissants, il tâche de percevoir l'obscurité de la nuit; car, son cerveau de chien ne comprend pas cela. Ce bourdonnement l'irrite, et il sent qu'il est trahi. Des millions d'ennemis s'abattent ainsi, sur chaque cité, comme des nuages de sauterelles. En voilà pour quinze ans. Ils combattront l'homme, en lui faisant des blessures cuisantes. Après ce laps de temps, j'en enverrai d'autres. Quand je concasse les blocs de matière animée, il peut arriver qu'un fragment soit plus dense qu'un autre. Ses atomes s'efforcent avec rage de séparer leur agglomération pour aller tourmenter l'humanité; mais, la cohésion résiste dans sa dureté. Par une suprême convulsion, ils engendrent un tel effort, que la pierre, ne pouvant pas disperser ses principes vivants, s'élanche d'elle-même jusqu'au haut des airs, comme par un effet de la poudre, et retombe, en s'enfonçant solidement sous le sol. Parfois, le paysan rêveur aperçoit un aérolithe fendre verticalement l'espace, en se dirigeant, du côté du bas, vers un champ de maïs. Il ne sait d'où vient la pierre. Vous avez maintenant, claire et succincte, l'explication du phénomène.

Si la terre était couverte de poux, comme de grains de sable le rivage de la mer, la race humaine serait anéantie, en proie à des douleurs terribles. Quel spectacle! Moi, avec des ailes d'ange, immobile dans les airs, pour le contempler.¹⁷

In the history of the European culture, *The Songs of Maldoror* are significant in two aspects – the ethical and aesthetical ones.

Firstly, it is an apology of decadence wherein decadence is a total rejection of ethics proclaimed in *The Sermon on the Mount of Jesus* referring to the ethics which constitutes the basis for the Christian civilization:

'No man can serve two masters. [...] You cannot serve God and Mammon.' –
Let there other Gods, other objects to worship and pray!

'Honour your father and mother..' – You shall not honour your father and mother!

'You shall not murder.' – Murder!

'You shall not commit adultery.' [The Bible prohibits unisexual love – the 19th century glorifies it, to say nothing of the 20th century – F. F.] – You shall commit adultery!

'You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house!' – You shall!

And so on and so on.

Secondly, *The Songs of Maldoror* is a symbolic-mythical text. The flea of Lautréamont is not a real flea but a symbol, a myth. The harmful insect becomes a cultural symbol, a cultural myth.

The 19th century makes an attempt to create, while the 20th century does create, the whole library of symbolic-mythical works that introduce the mythology of harmful insects.

At first, it is necessary to mention the novella by Franz Kafka *Metamorphosis* (1915). The mythological structure of metamorphosis, known to Europeans by Ovid and Apuleius, constitutes the basis of the novella. With Kafka, metamorphosis becomes a device for creating a paradoxical neomyth about absolute alienation in the modern society; however, this myth is rather polysemantic:

One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug. He lay on his armour-hard back and saw, as he lifted his head up a little, his brown, arched abdomen divided up into rigid bow – like sections. From this height the blanket, just about ready to slide off completely, could hardly stay in place. His numerous legs pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumference flickered helplessly before his eyes.¹⁸

A man who has turned into an insect gets more and more humane, while his family, having preserved a human image, becomes more and more inhumane.

To the assertion of his interlocutor – ‘*Metamorphosis*’ – *is a nightmare, dreadful vision* – Kafka responded: *Dream removes the cover from the reality which cannot be compared to any other vision. That is the dreadfulness of life and the power of art.¹⁹*

In the culture of the 20th century harmful insects are represented as myths of varied meanings. But in any case they demonstrate the tragic absurdities of life.

The flies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus have become integrated into the mythology of the 20th century. The novel *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding is one of the well-known novels of the second half of the 20th century.

With similar triumph spiders, cockroaches and the other Divine creations of the type strode into art.

It is necessary to mention one aesthetic phenomenon that spread in the 20th century, the century of reconsideration of all values. Whenever there appears a text marked positive in value (that is to say, opposite to the previous) in the space of the inferior entomological mythology, the latter leads to the value-semiotic explosion. In this respect one of the most significant fictional culturological texts is the tale by Korney Chukovsky *Buzzer-Fly* (*Муха-Цокомуха*, 1923), which is referred to as children’s but it is not just a children’s poem.

Some quotations follow:

*Buzzer-buzzer-buzzer fly,
Golden tummy, shiny eye,*

*Over fields she roamed and flew,
At the market, not so far,
She bought herself a samovar.*

*‘Listen, cockroaches, to me
Leave your holes
And come for me.’*

*Came the cockroaches in masses,
And they drank from cups and glasses.
[..]*

*With a present came the fleas
High boots reaching to the knees.
[..]
To the party came the granny bee
For the fly some honeycomb brought she.*

Next, nearly the whole chthonic synod is presented here: beetles, various small insects, a grasshopper, bugs, ants, midges, etc.

*Suddenly,
Without a word,
Unseen,
Unheard,
An old spider caught our fly;
'You shall die!'*

All the guests got frightened and ran away.

*Of a sudden comes on wings
Out of the night
A mosquito.
In his hand
Shines a searchlight bright.

To the spider straight he flies
Draws his shining sword.
Cuts the spider's head in two
Like a paper cord.*

The happy end follows with the wedding party and dances, the bugs excel themselves:

*And the reach farmer-bug,
Horned, handsome and snug,
Waves his hat very high
Dancing with the butterfly.²⁰*

The change in the function of the textual segment, in this case, of the fly and the mosquito, affects the change of function of the whole text. First, according to Korney Chukovsky, the world and life are a total game. Second, the world game is an action wherein traditional vital-historical roles have been replaced by the opposite ones; the main point is that harmful insects, starting with the fly and mosquito, get their positive, even heroic role on the historical stage. Third, ethical and aesthetical values appear to be relative. Fourth, creating a serious mythological text, Chukovsky passes it off as a merry children's tale. Fifth, he did manage to do it throughout the 20th century, moreover, in the time of totalitarian regime. (By the way, harmful insects make a broad space in the creative work of such a prominent phenomenon of the Russian culture of the 1920 – 1930s as the oberiuts.²¹)

It is not hard to notice that insects have been the subject of keen perception by the humankind since mythological times; they make up not just a mimetic segment in the human's world picture, but turn to be an important device of its [humankind] self-realization and self-establishment. To cut it short, the world of humans is found in the dialogical relation with the world of insects even when the artists, following the normative ethic-aesthetic postulates, withdraw the world of insects from their texts of fiction.

Still, to exclude this world from the perceptual act seems impossible as far as the artists represent a segment of the natural reality. Besides, nearby an artist, there is always present a biologist who does not necessarily perceive the ethic-aesthetic experience of an artist.

¹ Pushkin A. S. *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*. Translated from Russian by L. Zelikoff. New York, 1996. – p. 21.

² Ibid. – p. 23.

³ *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*: Translated Out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised, by His Majesty's Command; Appointed to be Read in Churches, Genesis I. Oxford: Oxford, 1867. – pp. 24–25.

⁴ Ibid. – p. 2.

⁵ Ibid. – pp. 8–9.

⁶ Ibid. – pp. 7–8.

⁷ Ibid. – p. 12.

⁸ Ibid. – pp. 20–21.

⁹ Ibid. – pp. 2–4.

¹⁰ Ibid. – pp. 16–17.

¹¹ Ibid. – p. 24.

¹² Ibid. – pp. 12–15.

¹³ Ibid. – pp. 1–11.

¹⁴ Donne J., J. Carey *John Donne: The Major Works*. Oxford, 2000. – p. 17.

¹⁵ Ibid. – p. 89.

¹⁶ Некрасов Н. А. *Петербургские углы*. Москва: Советская Россия, 1984. – с. 132, 142.

¹⁷ *Les Chants de Maldoror. Le Comte de Lotréamont*. Paris et Bruxelles en vente chez tous les libraires. 1897. – pp. 98–99.

¹⁸ Kafka F. *The Metamorphosis*. Kessinger Publishing, 2004. – p. 1.

¹⁹ Кафка Ф. *Замок. Новеллы и притчи. Письмо отцу. Письма Милене*. Москва: Политиздат, 1991. – с. 548.

²⁰ Geldern von J., R. Stites. Korney Chukovsky. 'Buzzer-Fly', in: *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917 – 1953*. Indiana University Press, 1995. – pp. 52–54.

²¹ Ронен О. Персонажи-насекомые у Олейникова и Обэриутов. / *Звезда* № 8, 2000. – с. 192–199.

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Marina Reiskarte

THE INTERACTION OF HUMAN AND INSECTS IN THE BOTTOM LITERARY SPACE

Summary

The Russian physiological sketches of the 1830 – 1840s formed a certain approach to depicting the bottom city world in Russian literature. The concept of home in its regular meaning had been excluded from the bottom place. A dosshouse, a den, a corner, a prison, penal servitude in Siberia, and slumps became human daily topoi. Thus, insects function as a sign of the dirty world of slums and make up the bottom artistic space coupled with such semantic elements as rubbish, smell, and lack of furniture, personal belongings and others. The interaction of human and insects is not only a daily factor but a cultural event as well.

Key-words: physiological sketches, slums, bottom space, insects, dosshouses

*

The choice of topoi, artistic details, motifs, chronotope material that helps every author design an artistic picture of the world in their work of art is determined by each author's plot. The physiological sketches of the 1830 – 1840s defined a further interest of Russian literature in the bottom space where a dosshouse, a den, a corner, a prison, penal servitude in Siberia, slums function as human daily topoi. The collection of essays edited by Nikolai Nekrasov (Николай Некрасов) was published in 1845. In Russian literature the epoch of essays started in the 1840s when the so-called physiology gained popularity and in the period between 1839 and 1849 at least seven hundred physiological essays were published. The term 'physiology' was introduced by the French writer and lawyer Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin who issued the book *The Physiology of Taste*. The essay as a genre ideally addressed the tasks of physiology to depict any social events with photographic precision and biological details. The lack of plot, replacement of narration with characteristics of social events, a tendency for setting up human types – all these are intrinsic structural features of a physiological essay.

In Russia physiology became widespread straight after Europe; however, it would be wrong to speak about its unoriginality and imitation. It is necessary to point out a twofold genesis of the Russian physiological essay. Apart from the European component, Russian essays included the traditions of the everyday Russian essay of morals and manners of the early 19th century. At the same time, a tradition of depicting urban space originated in the Russian essay. Mikhail Otradin (Михаил Отрадин) points out that *the finds made by the authors of 'physiology' have been useful to 'great' literature. First of all, it is related to an ability to show how life experience is accumulated in humans, how environment influences their inner world.*¹

The idea of determination of human existence by social reasons created an artistic interest in depicting the environment in which a slumdog person has to abide. The concept of home in its regular meaning is excluded from the bottom place. In connection with this, the essay *St. Petersburg Corners* (*Петербургские углы*) by Nekrasov which is included in the collection *The Physiology of St. Petersburg* (*Физиология Петербурга*) can serve as a representative sample. The title of the essay introduces readers to a world where the concept 'home' is replaced by the notion 'corner', which means a complete and utter degree of hardship for a human abiding there:

*Corners are the last degree of relation with home, with its four walls. 'The corner' is two walls at most. Behind these two walls is a street.*²

In our opinion, this remark is true as the topos of 'corner' consists of several semantic details which are widely used in the bottom literature later on. A dwelling of such a type in Nekrasov's work starts with a street. This is a run-down, untidy house with signs; these are yards with puddles and mud as indispensable parts of it:

In the yard there was terrible dirt, at the gate there was a puddle which, flowing into the yard, took in all the puddles at each porch, and then at last it flowed into a rubbish pit magnificently with much noise and buzz.

[На дворе была еще ужасная грязь; в самых воротах стояла лужа, которая, вливаясь во двор, принимала на себя лужи, стоявшие у каждого подъезда, а потом уже с шумом и жужжанием величественно впадала в помойную яму.³]

When entering the house, characters have to cope with the stairs and they fly down the stairs as if falling into the hell, *seni*⁴, where *it is dark, it stinks of foul water and cabbage* [*темно, пахнет гнилой водой и капустой*⁵.] It is necessary to discuss the semantics of smell in the essay. The author describes the smell outside the houses as *unbearable, unpleasant* and *pungent*, in the room he mentions *special air similar to the one you can feel in wine cellars or sepulchres* [особенный воздух, подобный которому можно встретить только в винных погребах и могильных склепах⁶.]

Stale air, lack of light, a rotten ceiling, and collapsed floor – these are the details which make up the space of a basement divided into 'corners'. Being a shelter for characters, the basement is not home in its regular meaning. This place is dirty – there is filth, rubbish, flea-infested dogs, swarms of insects:

The main decorations of walls were oblong bloody, though quite innocent, spots reflecting the traces of fingers and ending in thin skeletons of the perished victims, and also the thick layers of spider's web in a form of garlands and curtains located in corners and under windows, thin strings of which crossed the room in various directions and got into your mouth and entangled your face in the web.

[Главное украшение стен составляли продолговатые кровавые, впрочем невинные, пятна, носившие на себе следы пальцев и оканчивавшиеся тощими остовами погибших жертв, да густые слои расположенной по углам и под окошками, в виде гирлянд и гардин, паутины, которая тонкими нитями в разных направлениях пересекала комнату, попадая в рот и опутывая лицо.⁷]

Thus, insects become a sign of the dirty world of slums and make up the bottom artistic space coupled with such semantic elements as rubbish, smell, and lack of furniture, personal belongings and others.

In the novel of the essay genre *The Slums of St. Petersburg* (*Петербургские трущобы*), Vsevolod Krestovsky (Всеволод Крестовский) uses this artistic technique widely to create the world of the hungry. St. Petersburg's dens, dosshouses, prisons, dram shops become his characters' places of residence. Here is a description of one of Malinnik's dens [притон Малинника]:

Full darkness does reign here, under its cover there is dirt and myriads of various insects.

[Тут уже царствует полнейшая темнота, под покровом которой кроются грязь и мириады всяческих насекомых.⁸]

Spiders, bugs, and cockroaches form an indispensable part of the bottom slum space. Wild dogs, cats, and rats inhabit the yards of Vyazemskaya lavra⁹ (Вяземская лавра), there on sultry days *the air teems with myriads of big, green and greyish-yellow flies so that there is such a buzz in the air as if a great number of bee swarms have flown here* [кишат мириады больших, зеленых и серовато-желтых мух, так что в воздухе стоит такое жужжание, как словно бы сюда слетелось множество пчелиных роев.¹⁰]. But inside dosshouses people are surrounded by insects:

It was a one-room flat with two tiny windows. The flat was very small, no more than six square sazhen¹¹, with a low sooty ceiling on which bugs walked in abundance whereas spiders have woven their webs in all possible corners and places. A Russian stove occupied one part of the flat where a whole army of cockroaches were crawling about and rustling. The walls were illuminated with stains of bugs crushed by fingers, damp fungous patches, flaked plaster, and some stains of unknown origin. Stink, dirt, and desperate wretchedness are the words to describe this dirty shelter.

[Квартира состояла из одной комнаты в два маленьких окошка. Комната была очень невелика, не более шести квадратных сажень, с низким закоптелым потолком, по которому в изобилии гуляли клопы, а пауки заткали свои паутины по всем возможным углам и закоулкам. Одна часть этой квартиры была занята русской печью, где кишмя кишела, копошилась и шуршала целая армия тараканов. Стены сплошь иллюминировались мазками раздавленных пальцем клопов, потеками грибчатой сырости, отлупившейся штукатуркой и какими-то пятнами неизвестного происхождения. Смрад, грязь и неисходное убожество – вот слова, которыми можно охарактеризовать это нечистое убежище.¹²]

This expressed anti-aestheticism by Krestovsky describing Petersburg's slums is undoubtedly related to that artistic problem which the author sets for himself – reality in its extreme bottom display.

One can observe that the world of slums is a distorted, dirty one, and insects as well as other semantic elements become signs of distortion of this world. Showing readers the wildness of this world, its dirtiness, the author reveals how the distortion of human consciousness takes place: having accepted dirtiness, humans accept their bottom position and become uncivilized themselves:

Under the bottom nara¹³, as if spiders or worms, creatures, which had some features of human beings, were crawling out. But those were just their features whereas the character was hidden under tousled dishevelled locks, under the bruises acquired in yesterday fights, under the dirtiness and dust which could be found under bunks in abundance. Rags and tatters were creeping out, the naked parts of human body were creeping out. All this was scratching, rubbing, and stretching.

[Из-под нижней нары, словно пауки или черви, выползали существа, носившие признаки образа человеческого. Но это именно были только признаки его, а самый образ скрывался под всклокоченными космами, под синяками, приобретенными во вчерашних драках, под грязью и пылью, которою слишком избилуют места под нарами. Выползали рубища и лохмотья, выползали обнаженные члены человеческого тела. Все это немилосердно чесалось, скреблось, потягивалось.¹⁴]

In the novel *The Slums of St. Petersburg*, the author, who was depicting the animal state of a human being, uses animalistic metaphors and similes to animals widely, the essence of which is the following statement: living a bestial life, humans turn into animals. Describing the dwelling of such a slum person, Krestovsky calls it *a lair, a cowhouse, a hole, horses' stalls, klopovnik¹⁵*. The author uses the epithet *stray* in relation to humans as well as dogs. Stray women are the whores of the lowest rank who do not have passports. The author compares the dinner of the poor to *feed of wild animals*, a dosshouse and its inhabitants – to *human kennels*:

It was a kind of human kennels, a stinky shed where caught in the street, in a stray condition, heterogeneous dogs with different coats of hair were driven into by night furmanschiki.¹⁶

[Это была какая-то человеческая псарня, вонючий сарай, в который ночные фурманщики загоняют захваченных на улице, в бродячем состоянии, разношерстных и разнородных собак.¹⁷]

The lack of resistance to circumstances, despair, the loss of human dignity turn humans into animals, lead them to a bestial state when the search for food and shelter become the main care. However, the comparison of humans to insects takes characters beyond the boundaries of human existence. Describing the fate of stray women, the author exclaims:

How often they do sell themselves and not for a penny but just for somebody to feed them somehow; and they shelter not in a little room but in some worst kind of a back street of a dirty yard, a dark staircase, an attic, or an abandoned basement.

[А как часто даже и не за грош торгуют они собой, а просто за то только, чтобы их как-нибудь накормили; и укрывает их не каморка в квартире, а какой-нибудь последний закоулок грязного двора, темная лестница, чердак или заброшенный подвал.¹⁸]

Looking for some type of shelter, these women find it in *Derobertyevsky house* [Деробертъевский дом], *notoriously known as a 'klopovnik'* [Клоповник], *where they, indeed, as bugs, hid into every hole and plucked up courage to creep out of these holes at night only* [... в Деробертъевском доме, известном под именем «Клоповника»,

где они, действительно, подобно клопам, забились во всевозможные щели и только ночью решаются выползть из этих щелей.^{19]}

The comparison with bugs isn't only aimed at emphasizing the depths of uncleanness and untidiness of characters' lives though the context of narration convinces readers of impossibility and senselessness of personal cleanliness in slums, dens, prisons. In his travelling notes *Sakhalin Island* (*Остров Сахалин*), Anton Chekhov (АНТОН ЧЕХОВ) depicts a conversation with a convict, a former honourable citizen:

I am asking, 'Why are you so untidy?' He said to me, 'Because my tidiness would be inappropriate here'. The author exclaims, 'And that's true, what for should a convict care about his own tidiness if tomorrow a new party will be brought here and they will put a neighbour next to him from whom insects will crawl apart in various directions and stifling stench will come'.

[«Почему вы так неопрятны?» Он мне отвечает: «Потому что моя опрятность была бы здесь бесполезна». Автор восклицает: «И в самом деле, какую цену может иметь для каторжного собственная его чистоплотность, если завтра привезут сюда новую партию, положат с ним бок о бок соседа, от которого ползут во все стороны насекомые и идет душливый запах.»^{20]}

The aim of the comparison with insects is to reflect the extreme degree of humiliation of a person who has irreversibly lost both human looks and personal dignity. Thus, the comparison with insects is an artistic technique used by Krestovsky which helps him build the paradigm of degradation of slum dwellers: a human – an animal – an insect.

The author often supports the idea of the insignificance of slum dwellers, their extreme position in society at the level of nomination as well. According to Yuri Tinyanov (Юрий Тынянов), *in an artistic work of art there are no meaningless names. There each name used is a colourful symbol which shines with all colours.*²¹

The characters of Krestovsky's novel are often given names and nicknames which are non-typical for a person. So, a young prostitute from the den in Malinnik is nicknamed Rat (Крыса) and she is convinced that this is her real name. Styopka-kapelnik²² (Степка-капельник) is called Zhuchka or Diyanka (Жучка или Дианка) which are dog's nicknames. In Malinnik den he works as a dog entertaining the public, presenting *kiyatra*²³ (киятра), *Come on, show us a dog. Son of a bitch!* [А ну-ко валяй собаку! Сучий сын!²⁴]. The part of the dog becomes Styopka's second nature. The main character of the novel, Anna Chechevinskaya (Анна Чечевинская), who lost her family name long ago, is nicknamed Chukha²⁵ (Чуха). The nickname Chukha reflects the external simplicity of the character, not in vain the author uses the word *ugly* together with the nickname Chukha, *it was an ugly old woman in rags; to cut a long story short, it was Chukha* [...] [это была оборванная, безобразная старуха; короче сказать-это была Чуха [...]]²⁶].

If we trace the etymology of this nickname, it is possible to assume that it is connected with the word 'chukhatsya' (чухаться) – to scratch. This is how Vladimir Dal defines this word in his dictionary.²⁷ In the slum environment, a name or a nickname does not indicate belonging to a family, it is rather a sign of relation with the world of the outcasts. The name is parodied and reduced to the level of external features; it is a display of nature. In the chapter *Klopovnik of Tairovsky Lane* (*Клоповник Таировского переулка*), Krestovsky depicts the evening entertainments of Louka Letuchiy (Лука Летучий) (a fight with prostitutes) and describes his appeal to some female dwellers of

the den. None of them have a name, anyway the author does not mention them, but starting a wrangle with them Letuchiy appeals to each of them as *insect*:

‘Come on, you, insect, shut up!’ Letuchiy yelled to her.
‘Can you, such an insect, can you let me say a word?’

[— Ну ты, насекомое, молчать!— цыцнул на нее Летучий.
— Можешь ли ты, насекомое ты эдакое, можешь ли ты мне слово такое сказать?²⁸]

It can be assumed that the word ‘insect’ is used here as a swear-word, however, if this word is compared to the title of the chapter and the absence of female characters’ names, it can be concluded that it is a means of nomination. The author uses the word ‘insect’ as a common noun, which coupled with semantics and stylistic nuances allows the author to create the image of pariahs rejected by society and thrown down to the very bottom of life.

Thus, we see that the loss of experience of interacting with society, removal of the moral component from behaviour, giving up home, everyday life, family lead to the physiological degradation of human beings, their becoming wild. In the book *Sakhalin Island*, Chekhov tries to evaluate the public idea of setting up a penal colony where people will find home after being released from prison. According to Chekhov, this idea is utopian. Prison cannot become home. The prison psychology ruins a human being and even living in a penal colony does not help people restore the lost feeling of efficient housekeeping. In human mind, the penal servitude forms such a model of life from which home is excluded. Describing the dwelling of a settler Chekhov creates a picture of lack calling the *izba*²⁹ [изба] – *a cell for solitary confinement, no grandfather or grandmother, no old icons, no antiquated furniture, red corner, no customs* [камерой для одиночного заключения: нет деда и бабушки, нет старых образов, нет дедовской мебели, нет красного угла, нет обычаев.³⁰].

In this chain of the lack the author stresses the lack of a cat and a cricket as parts of a peasant’s house. It is interesting to point out that describing the bottom *topoi* – dosshouses, corners, dens – authors do not mention the cricket. In comparison with cockroaches, bugs, and spiders the cricket is a symbol of domestic comfort and warmth, its presence in a place which is not a home is impossible.

One may conclude that, while depicting the bottom space inhabited by a slum person, authors often use various insects as part of this space.

This use has different functions in an artistic text:

- insects as a sign of dirty space;
- insects as an indicator of distortion of the space surrounding a human being and the human consciousness itself;
- insects are used as metaphors and similes;
- insects are used to nominate characters;
- references to various insects as a marker of the home space and the slum space.

The bottom essay literature introduces the slum world to the cultural consciousness of the readers of the first half of the 19th century and the interaction of human and insects becomes not only a daily factor but a cultural event as well.

- ¹ Отрадин М. Главный герой – Петербург. *Петербург в русском очерке 19 века*. Ленинград: Детгиз, 1983. – с. 27.
- ² Трофимов И. «Петербургские углы» Н. А. Некрасова, in: *Пространство и время в литературе и искусстве. Дом в европейской картине мира*. Выпуск 11, часть 1, Даугавпилс: DU “Saule” 2002. – с. 66.
- ³ Некрасов Н. Петербургские углы, in: *Физиология Петербурга*. Москва: Советская Россия, 1984. – с. 132.
- ⁴ *Seni* – inner porch in a Russian peasant’s house.
- ⁵ Некрасов Н. Петербургские углы, in: *Физиология Петербурга*. Москва: Советская Россия, 1984. – с. 133.
- ⁶ Ibid. – с. 132–134.
- ⁷ Ibid. – с. 134–135.
- ⁸ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 311.
- ⁹ *Lavra* – an ironic name of a dosshouse; a big monastery (literally).
- ¹⁰ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 420.
- ¹¹ *Sazhen* – old Russian measure of length, 1 *sazhen* – 2.134 meters.
- ¹² Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 438–439.
- ¹³ *Nara* – a wooden shelf used for sleeping in a dosshouse or prison.
- ¹⁴ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 445.
- ¹⁵ *Klopovnik* (derived from the Russian word ‘klop’ – a bug) – a dirty house infested with bugs, used in the text as a sign of untidiness.
- ¹⁶ *Furmanschik* – a catcher of stray dogs.
- ¹⁷ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 439.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. – с. 314.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. – с. 313–314.
- ²⁰ Чехов А. Остров Сахалин, in: *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в 30 томах*. Т. 14 – 15. Москва: Наука, 1978 – с. 193.
- ²¹ Cited from: Марченко Е., Э. Архангельская *Лингвистический анализ текста*. Даугавпилс: Retorika, 1998. – с. 50.
- ²² *Kapelnik* (derived from the Russian word ‘kaplya’ – a drop) – a person who eats and drinks leftovers.
- ²³ *Kyatra* – a distorted form of the word ‘theatre’.
- ²⁴ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 329.
- ²⁵ *Chukha* (derived from the word ‘chukhatsya’ – to scratch) – the nickname of an untidy, degraded woman.
- ²⁶ Крестовский В. *Петербургские трущобы*. Роман в 2-х книгах. Т. 2. Ленинград: Художественная литература, 1990. – с. 544.
- ²⁷ Даль В. *Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка*. Москва: Государственное издательство иностранных и национальных словарей, 1955. – с. 616.
- ²⁸ Ibid. – с. 421.
- ²⁹ *Izba* – a peasant’s house, dwelling.
- ³⁰ Чехов А. Остров Сахалин, in: *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в 30 томах*. Т. 14, 15. Москва: Наука. 1978. – с. 73.

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Ilze Kačāne

INSECTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY BRITISH CULTURE: PRE-RAPHAELITISM AND AESTHETICISM

Summary

In the second half of the 19th century British culture, insects included among various images of flora and fauna world are richly represented in the Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic art. The perception of nature attributes in the framework of the category of beauty conforms to idealism and specifics characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite and aesthetic style of expression. In Pre-Raphaelite paintings, mythological and religious symbolism of insects intertwined with the real world objects offers a new interpretation of Biblical and mythological images. In aesthetic writing of 'art for art's sake' advocates, which in the paper is exemplified by the analysis of Oscar Wilde's creative writing, insects possess several functions; they can be researched on the basis of the juxtaposition of 'natural – artificial'. Insects as nature attributes (belonging to the category 'the natural') in Wilde's works represent the worldview of Romanticist writers inspired by Rousseau's ideas, they represent the exotic nature segment of the eastern or the southern space, and stand for the micro-space of the harmonious world contrary to the disharmonious macro-space. Insects as attributes of culture (belonging to the category of 'the artificial') emphasize the aspect of exotic decorativism and ornamentation inspired by Victorian interior design and domestic arts. Exoticism and mysticism of insect symbolism (butterfly, scarab) attracted many artists of the time. Images of insects used as details in emblems of their personalities reveal the philosophical system of their worldview. In the paper, it is analyzed as a creative process of image-building that is an organic part of the 19th century dandyism.

Key-words: insects, Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, art, natural, artificial, category of the beautiful, decorative

*

Introduction

For the majority of people, insects very often arouse negative associations; the sight of insects might push back and make them turn away in a feeling of intense dislike. In many cases aversion to insects is explained by the fact that their existence is possible due to the death of some other living forms. However, as a result of scientific discoveries and wide research in the field of coleopterology, as well as by virtue of human's creative approach in culture, a new striking world is revealed – it is the world of beauty where colour, form, sound, and movement become admirable parts of the aesthetic category.

In the middle and during the second half of the 19th century, several British writers dissociated themselves from the mainstream objective perception of the real world –

instead of describing the rural or urban environment, where insects are shown as an indispensable part of poverty and depressiveness, they started depicting them as objects of colourful and sensuous surrounding world and perceiving them with piety and respect. In many creative works of the investigated time period, insects, the same as other representatives of flora and fauna, are included in the category of the beautiful thus becoming praiseworthy objects not only in art and culture as such, but also in humans' social and private life.

Insects in Pre-Raphaelite Art

In the 1850 – 1880s, under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood artists (Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt and others) the realm of visual art was gradually included in the context of aestheticism. Though the expression style of Pre-Raphaelite painters can be characterized as objective portrayal of the real world (the members of the Brotherhood regarded precision as the most perfect 'instrument' of painting), the typical and customary in their works were later supplemented by the individually original and indistinctive, especially reproducing religious and mythological images. Beside the realistic world perception, some of their paintings might be regarded as symbolically realistic, thus giving impetus for other types of art (such as decorative art, interior design, and literature) to develop later within the framework of Aesthetic paradigm. Insects (butterflies, bees, dragonflies) in their paintings and poetry became highly characteristic features revealing fetishized sensuality and undoubtful fascination.

The painting *Venus Verticordia* (1864 – 1868) by British Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882) is one of the most vivid examples in the framework of the discussed theme where the significance of the visual attributes is enhanced by symbolic butterflies. The yellow butterflies are drawn around the head of the Goddess of Beauty and Love in the same way as radiant light of a saint; they are also depicted on the apple and the arrow – the symbols of Eros and Thanatos. Thus, mythological and religious symbolism intertwined with the realia of the objective world, offers a new interpretation of Biblical and mythological images – a butterfly becomes a symbol of sensuality and passion and it is associated with the word 'sensual'. In Rossetti's works a butterfly is also represented as the emblem of the soul, as is obvious in his *Sibylla Palmifera* (1866 – 1870) or *Soul's Beauty*.

A direct reference to the reproduction of the sensual world relevant in the art of Pre-Raphaelitism is observed in John Everett Millais' (1829 – 1896) photographic painting *The Blind Girl* (1856). The blind girl in the picture is surrounded by the beauties of nature that she cannot see. Beside several details (flowers, domestic animals, a rainbow) of the magnificent nature, a butterfly on the girl's shoulder emphasizes the significance of senses (smelling, hearing, and touch) in the perception of the surrounding world. The external world invisible for the girl is a symbolic representation of her inner beauty, the butterfly in this context can be analyzed as a symbol of the rebirth confirming the 'life outcast's' predestined status in the higher – spiritual sphere.

Religious symbolism occupies a special place in Pre-Raphaelites' artistic world; for this reason the image of a butterfly was later organically adapted into the paradigm of

Aestheticism where in many ways the religious became a limitless space of inspiration. The garden of paradise is one of spatial units encountered in works by Pre-Raphaelite painters combining the religious and the aesthetical features. Also in Charles Collins' (1828 – 1873) famous painting *Convent Thoughts* (1850 – 1851), the religious and the aesthetic have been intertwined. In the precise performance of the real world, each of the constructed details possesses a special symbolic meaning. A butterfly on the passion-flower held by the nun is the synthesis of the religious interpretation (Christ's coronation and resurrection) with the category of the beautiful.

Insects as an organic part of Pre-Raphaelites' artistic world also widely occur in their poetry. The beauty of nature grasped by the eyes of two lovers is depicted in Rossetti's sonnet *Silent Noon* from the book *The House of Life*. The meadow surrounded with flowers is their 'nest' of love where insects single out not only the romantic atmosphere, but also the category of love that is related to the category of beauty:

*Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragonfly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky –
So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.¹*

Insects 'tied to threads' are symbolical messengers of God, thus both categories – love and beauty – can be viewed in the framework of eternity.

Insects in Aestheticism and Aesthetic Writing of Oscar Wilde

Literary Aestheticism was the direct follower of Pre-Raphaelitism; it was marked by explaining the interaction of visual art and literature by the common category of the beautiful. In Great Britain, the formulators of the ideological platform 'art for art's sake' considered art as the only means to quench thirst for the beautiful and the harmonious in the world ruled by practicality and utilitarianism. The artists-aesthetes used to compare their activities in the field of Aestheticism to the work of a jeweller who revealed the real beauty of the artefact via the synthesis of the refinement, delicacy, exquisite, and at the same time simplicity and artlessness. Insects as elements of the admired nature, the same as birds and flowers, in the creative writing by writers-aesthetes possess several functions. One can follow these functions in the creative writing of one of the most original literati of the second half of the 19th century, the world-wide known apostle of the beautiful, Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900) – the author of two collections of fairy-tales (1888, 1891), the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, 1891), a number of plays and other works.

Wilde's fairy-tales are constructed by means of several juxtapositions, 'nature – civilization' and 'nature – culture' being most important in the context of the researched theme where nature is marked by the notion of 'the natural', whereas civilization and culture – by the notion of 'the artificial'. The world of nature is represented by the images and attributes closely related to the ideal world (freedom, movement and unconstraint). Decorativism, artificiality, and unnaturalness are the most striking features of civilization and culture. Insects in Wilde's fairy-tales are organic components of both nature and civilization / culture spaces emphasizing that the interaction of the opposed spheres always leads to a conflict.

Nature space (a forest)	Civilization / culture space (the king's castle)
<i>the sun</i> / natural light	<i>a chandelier</i> / artificial light
<i>wind</i> / freedom, movement	<i>stifling, stuffy air</i> / static, limitations
<i>flowers</i> / genuineness, reality	<i>flowers</i> / artificiality, conceit
<i>birds and animals</i> / music and life	<i>birds and animals</i> / silence and death
<i>insects</i> / naturalness, natural beauty	<i>insects</i> / artificial decorativism

Insects as Attributes of Nature Space

The binary opposition ‘nature – civilization’ became significant in European culture during the epoch of the Renaissance, however under the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s (1712 – 1778) philosophical system it acquired innovative meaning.² Rousseau contrasts nature with civilization the same as the good with the evil, freedom with tyranny, beauty with chaos, and heart with reason. The nature space is characterized by the infinite and marked positively, whereas the space of civilization – by the finite and it has a negative connotation.

The style of the spokesmen of the paradigm of the beautiful denies nature as something ordinary and mundane. The ideal world of nature space in Wilde’s fairy-tales becomes apparent in the theme of the unity of nature and a human. The existence of insects, flowers, birds, animals and a human in the space of nature created by the supreme force is shown as an absolute entirety, the writer calls all forms of living on the earth as *God’s things*³:

*The fly is thy brother. Do it no harm. The wild birds that roam through the forest have their freedom. Snare them not for your pleasure. God made the blind-worm and the mole, and each has its place.*⁴

The quotation is a striking example of influences from the Pre-Raphaelite circle, for instance, Christina Rossetti (1830 – 1894) in her rhyme *Hurt no Living Thing* from *Sing-Song. A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1893) expresses a similar attitude to the nature:

*Hurt no living thing:
Ladybird, nor butterfly,
Nor moth with dusty wing,
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep.*⁵

According to Rousseau, nature is the substance created by God where a human being is a part of it, the item of the harmonious system of nature. Thus, Wilde’s perception of nature and a human being in it coincides with the worldview of Romanticist writers inspired by Rousseau’s ideas. Nature worship typical of the Romanticist culture paradigm is also demonstrated in Latvian translations of Wilde’s fairy-tales by Ziedone Sērmūkša⁶ and other translators where many attributes of nature, including insects, are often used in their diminutive forms. Suffixation (*a fly* – *muša* (*mušīna*), *a beetle* – *vabole* (*vabolīte*), *a butterfly* – *tauriņš* (*taurenīts*), *wings of butterflies* – *tauriņu spārni* (*tauriņu spārniņi*),

grasshopper – *sienāzis* (*sienāzītis*) and others) conveys not only the smallness of the named objects, but also endearment and admiration.

Insects as nature attributes in Wilde's fairy-tales are the representatives of the exotic segment of the East or the South, for instance, in the space descriptions of Spain, butterflies, similarly to flowers, symbolize the sunlit and colourful space of the South, *The purple butterflies fluttered about with gold dust on their wings, visiting each flower in turn [...]*.⁷

Insects as nature attributes in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* stand for the micro-space of the harmonious world contrary to the disharmonious macro-space. At the end of the 19th century in British and European literature, urban space became closely associated with the living area of a modern human. For the promoters of Aestheticism, city is a symbol of philistine existence; the only possible way to survive in the world determined by industrial development and materialism is the construction of one's own ideal space that is easily achieved by imaginative people, namely, artists. The micro-space of the harmonious world is vividly presented in Wilde's novel when depicting the artist's studio and garden. Both of these spaces in the text are introduced in the first sentence of Chapter One. It is important to note that they are united by a peculiar channel – an open door that erases the border between the two spatial structures. The worship of senses important for Pre-Raphaelites attracts also the members of the Aesthetic Movement: the garden as a nature space is constructed with the help of the aesthetic categories – smell, colour, form, sound, and movement, for instance, the light dance of mottled butterflies, odour coming from colourful flowers, etc.:

*A grasshopper began to chirrup by the wall, and like a blue thread a long thin dragon-fly floated past on its brown gauze wings.*⁸

*Two green and white butterflies fluttered past them, and in the pear-tree at the corner of the garden a thrush began to sing.*⁹

Identical mood is also depicted in the artist's studio, the characteristic feature of which is sensuous atmosphere enhanced by the odour of roses, heavy scent of the lilac, light summer wind coming into the room through the open door, and by the shadows of birds in flight. Thus, the garden and the artist's studio as idealized spatial structures stand out against the background of real London; they function as an artist's perfect micro-world – a symbolic Eden. Insects as representatives of the ideal world in this context are the carriers of the sounds and formers of the sonorous scenery of the daytime city. The stillness of the garden, as well as monotonous sounds emitted by insects (*sullen murmur of bees, buzzing of bumble bees, chirrup of grasshoppers*) are outlined against the dim roar of London; these sounds create a surreal – dreamy and imaginative – mood:

*The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive.*¹⁰

Insects as Attributes of Culture

Insects as attributes of civilization single out the idea of all the artificial prevailing over all the natural, which during the second half of the 19th century was widely circulated by the contingent of the Aesthetic Movement. One of Wilde's ideas was that real life and nature imitate art and not vice versa; the more aesthetes examined art, the more they alienated from the romantic perception of nature:

*I desire to point out the general principle that Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life. [...] Nature, no less than Life, is an imitation of Art.*¹¹

Pure nature lost its field in the competition with art. In *The Decay of Lying* Wilde's character Vivian singles out the paleness of nature before artificial world created by artists:

*But nature is so uncomfortable. Grass is hard and lumpy and damp, and full of dreadful black insects. Why, even Morris's poorest workman could make you a more comfortable seat than the whole of nature can.*¹²

Separate attributes of nature entered the world of aesthetic art to become symbols or fulfil ornamental functions in designs after nature. Like Pre-Raphaelites, Wilde increasingly preferred symbolic and mythological images to realistic ones. In several works by Wilde, insects depicted in the garden space acquire a symbolic connotation associated with eroticism and sensuality. A flower in Wilde's text embodies the feminine, whereas a bee or a bumblebee – the masculine beginning:

*A furry bee came and buzzed round it [lilac – I. K.] for a moment. Then it began to scramble all over the oval stellated globe of the tiny blossoms. He [Dorian – I. K.] watched it with that strange interest in trivial things that we try to develop when things of high import make us afraid, or when we are stirred by some new emotion for which we cannot find expression, or when some thought that terrifies us lays sudden siege to the brain and calls on us to yield. After a time the bee flew away. He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro.*¹³

The aesthetic philosophy of 'art for art's sake' was to a great extent influenced by national motifs of different cultures and elements of ornamentalization and decoration. Oriental symbolism had a tremendous influence on the 19th century British art. European interest in the Eastern world was associated with the influx of segments of exoticism into everyday life and texts, at the same time it served as one of the means of escaping a world determined by positivism. Eastern art as a representative of the ideal word was contrasted to the Western pragmatism and practicality. Great enthusiasm in Victorian culture for Japanese art was fostered by market relations commenced in 1854. As a result of it, varied artefacts of 'living art of Japan' became an organic part of the British decorative and applied arts as well as domestic decoration offering a new Anglo-Japanese taste. Having benefited from the abilities of several artists and architect-designers, the subject of domestic arts at that time enjoyed an unprecedented ascendancy. Under the influence of *Morris, Marshal, Faulkner & Co.*, and *Arts and Crafts Movement* artists the oriental motifs such as drawings and decors with exotic birds (mainly peacocks), flowers, leaves, stalks, and colourful, graceful, delicate insects (especially bees, bumblebees and dragonflies) were widely used in furniture design, soft furnishings, carpets,

textiles, tapestries, blinds, china, chimney pieces, jewellery, fans, etc. For instance, William Morris' (1834 – 1896) wallpaper designs *Trellis*¹⁴, the pattern of which is said to have been inspired by the gardens at his Red House (given also the name – ‘palace of art’) with square flowerbeds enclosed by trellises for roses and insects, emphasize the significance of the fresh shapes and colours in aesthetic interior and become essential attributes of the *House Beautiful*. Japanese decorative art attracted Western artists with the possibility to oppose the culture determined by utilitarian consciousness with such essential manifestations of the category of the beautiful as colour diversity, sensuality, the feelings of all-embracing easiness and abstraction. Varied objects of British domestic space with the attributes of nature space reveal a significant aspect of ornamentation. Ornamental world in the works by several British artists and writers later favoured in Europe the development of anti-traditional movements – *art nouveau* and literary modern style.

The novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Wilde is one of the British author's works containing rich and colourful examples of exotic decorativism. According to the writer's philosophical conception incorporated in the novel, all the artificial, also culture that is man-made world of art, prevails over the world of the natural. Thereby, the attributes of the nature sphere become the components of the world of culture and the means for ornamentalization; they are included in the paradigm of Aestheticism.

Among many spatial structures depicted in the novel, the home space is the most striking ‘illustration’ of decorative aestheticism. Wilde offers the concept of the *House Beautiful* and sets a vivid example of ‘artistic’ (Aesthetic) interior. The author considers the aesthetic features of the domestic area prior to the functional. The house in Wilde's prose works may be analysed focusing on three main categories: the house as a museum, a church, and an artwork, where all the accumulated objects possess aesthetic qualities. When focusing on the main character Dorian's varied interests and passions, the author allots much textual space to the descriptions of his never-ending hobbies, one of them – accumulation of beautiful objects such as luxury embroideries and tapestries. Beside the motifs of flowers and birds in colourful textiles, one may trace the patterns with insects, for instance, ornamentations with beetles' iridescent wings in thin muslin and silk curtains, embroideries, which had *five hundred and sixty-one butterflies, whose wings were similarly ornamented with the arms of the queen*¹⁵, or *the mortuary cloth of King Chilperic, with its three hundred golden bees*¹⁶. Also in some fairy-tales, according to the principles of Aestheticism, Wilde synthesizes the aesthetic and the exotic. Insects are not only the representatives of the nature sphere; producing a momentary Japanese effect in interior design they clearly depict the influence of the Eastern art on the 19th century British Aesthetic tradition, *Across the windows [of a heavy palanquin – I. K.] hung thin curtains of muslin embroidered with beetles' wings and with tiny seed-pearls [...]*¹⁷.

In the same manner, the English author and illustrator Aubrey Beardsley (1872 – 1898) describes the lower world space and objects in it in his unfinished romantic novel *Under the Hill* (1904):

- the Venus Hill discovered by Chevalier Tannhäuser:

The place where he stood waved drowsily with strange flowers, heavy with perfume, dripping with odours. Gloomy and nameless weeds not to be found in Mentzelius. Huge moths, so richly winged they must have banqueted upon tapestries

*and royal stuffs, slept on the pillars that flanked either side of the gateway, and the eyes of all the moths remained open and were burning and bursting with a mesh of veins.*¹⁸

- different aesthetically attractive objects, for instance, fans of *big, living moths stuck upon mounts of silver sticks*¹⁹.

For Wilde and Beardsley, insects outside the nature space are more beautiful and inspiring, thus a ‘landscape’ created by the artist becomes more vivid than real nature.

When introducing insects in the framework of the category of the beautiful, Wilde follows the writers he feels strong affinity with and employs similar means of expression. The French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848 – 1907) in his decadent work *À Rebours* (1884) uses indistinctive for the epoch comparisons, thus highlighting the atypical, extraordinary, and at the same time – the aesthetically attractive and beautiful. When describing gorgeous jewels on dancing Salome’s dress and her eroticism in Gustave Moreau’s (1826 – 1898) painting *Salome* (1876), Huysmans refers to colourful and splendid insects, thus emphasising Salome’s beauty and burning lust:

*A pensive, solemn, almost august expression on her face, she begins the lubricious dance which is to awaken the slumbering senses of the aging Herod; her breasts rise and fall, their nipples hardening under the friction of her whirling necklaces; the diamonds adhering to her moist skin glitter; her bracelets, her belts, her rings, flash and sparkle; on her triumphal gown – pear-seamed, silver-flowered, gold-spangled – the breastplace of jewellery; each of its links a precious stone, bursts into flame, sending out sinuous, intersecting jets of fire, moving over the lustreless flesh, the tea-rose skin, like a swarm of splendid insects whose dazzling wing-sheaths are marbled with carmine, spotted with saffron yellow, dappled with steely blue, striped with peacock green.*²⁰

[La face recueillie, solennelle, presque auguste, elle commence la lubrique danse qui doit réveiller les sens assoupis du vieil Hérode; ses seins ondulent et, au frottement de ses colliers qui tourbillonnent, leurs bouts se dressent; sur la moiteur de sa peau les diamants, attachés, scintillent; ses bracelets, ses ceintures, ses bagues, crachent des étincelles; sur sa robe triomphale, couturée de perles, ramagée d’argent, lamée d’or, la cuirasse des orfèvreries dont chaque maille est une pierre, entre en combustion, croise des serpenteaux de feu, grouille sur la chair mate, sur la peau rose thé, ainsi que des insectes splendides aux élytres éblouissants, marbrés de carmin, ponctués de jaune aurore, diaprés de bleu d’acier, tigrés de vert paon.²¹]

In the tragedy *Salome*, when accentuating the main character’s dreadful, sinful and wicked beauty, Wilde compares her hands to white butterflies. The author names the concrete insect that is traditionally associated with the soul’s purity, but which under the influence of Pre-Raphaelites is often used as a symbol of beauty and sensuality. Because of its ambiguous nature (transformation, change), the butterfly becomes one of the symbols associated with Aestheticism. With the mediation of the butterfly, the aesthetes declared self-sufficient, independent art’s reaching for new heights of complexity, refined detail, and radiance. The traditional in Wilde’s work is supplemented by the original: the symbol emphasizes the aesthetic and decadent mood of the tragedy; it also offers the structure of the double. Thus, the main character’s outward beauty confronted with her inner sinfulness results in the new aesthetic conception – ‘the frightening beauty’:

THE YOUNG SYRIAN:

*The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dovecots. They are like white butterflies. They are just like white butterflies.*²² (1894)

[LE JEUNE SYRIEN:

La princesse a caché son visage derrière son éventail! Ses petites mains blanches s'agitent comme des colombes qui s'envolent vers leurs colombiers. Elles ressemblent à des papillons blancs. Elles sont tout à fait comme des papillons blancs.²³ (1893)]

Victorian fascination with beetles was greatly fostered by the work of Victorian natural historian Charles Darwin and systematic analyses of other scientists whose amassing and studying collections of insects over the course of the 19th century became a part of the apparatus of the rational.²⁴ Wilde contrasts the scientific approach to the perception of nature with that of the aesthetic one, for instance, collecting different attributes of nature world in his novel is shown as inconsequential and uninteresting. Lady Narborough is forced to simulate her interest and pretend listening to *the duke's description of the last Brazilian beetle that he had added to his collection*²⁵. Rationalistic world perception is strictly denied by idealistic worshippers of beauty. The representatives of the pragmatic world are included in the category of the past and characterized as experiencing intellectual backwater, whereas the admirers of 'art for art's sake' are shown as progressive part of the nation looking into the future, they are often described using the adjective 'new'.

Insects as Artists' Personal Emblems in Real and Virtual World

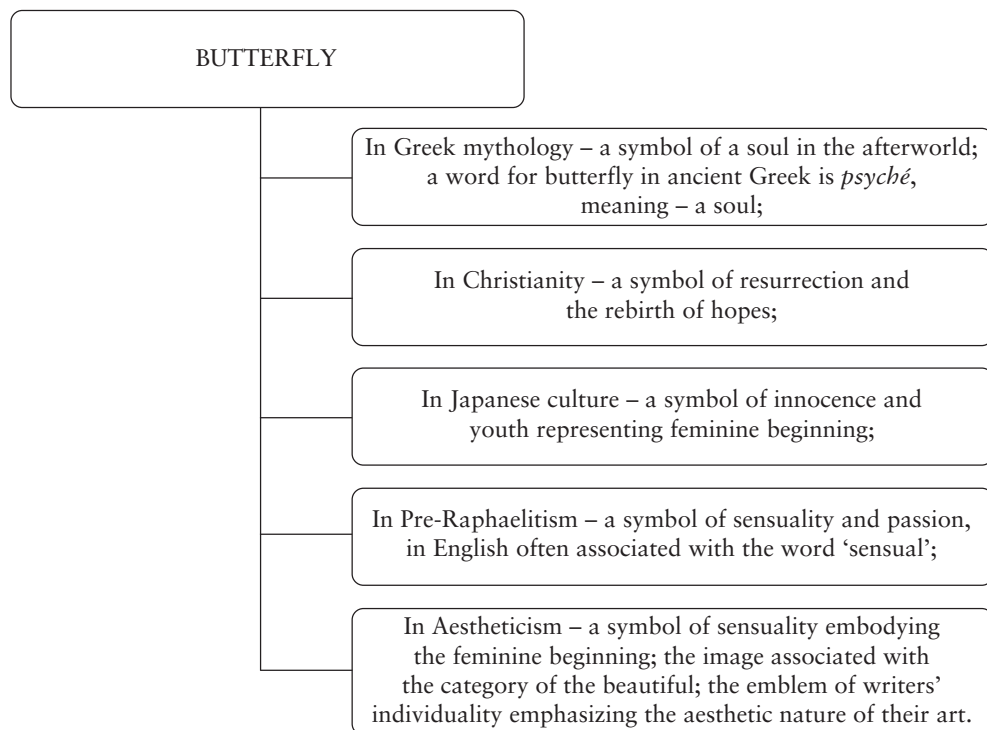
Each epoch related to the history of civilization offers a definite conception of a human. In the second half of the 19th century, which is a turning point of social and artistic orientations, not only pure art's value is emphasized, but also the conception of a man (in a narrower sense – an artist) as a true creator of beauty widely declared. An artist in the framework of Aesthetic paradigm is not a simple creator of beautiful things, he is the equivalent of the world Creator since [...] *the very basis of his nature was the same as that of the nature of the artist, an intense and flamelike imagination*²⁶. An artist creates the world of his imagination for the real world to copy it; he also creates himself for the members of the society to follow his personal image. As a result, a human becomes an admirable work of art and an icon for adoration and worship. Similarly to the perception of aesthetic domestic space as a peculiar artistic work and a depository of different artworks (symbolical museum), from the aesthetic perspective the occupants of the house also become original works of art worth of imitation.

At the end of the 19th century, image-building and its advertising organically fell in the system of values and artistic expression declared by aesthetic and decadent writers. The outer visible image of a human (niceties of dress, haircut, jewels, accessories, language and deportment) is an important ideologically semantic feature that in the same way as a mask²⁷ offers a deeper comprehension of a human's philosophical and artistic conception. Striving for the beauty not only in the subjective world of art but also in the surrounding real world – things around and within oneself, brings forward one of the striking individualist images of the epoch characterized by romantic rebellion, risk,

freedom, extravagance, and dandyism. With their insistence upon the importance of the pose, aesthetes and dandies *had made an art of their lives*²⁸ becoming outstanding models of the day. Insects in the context of dandyism are used as symbolic emblems, through which writers' originality or personal attitude towards life in general and art in particular is revealed.

Among the conspicuous dandies of the time and inspirations of the Aesthetic Movement the American expatriate artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834 – 1903) could be mentioned; he is known to have adopted a butterfly signature-monogram (evolved from his initials 'JW') to stress the decorative quality of his works and his self-stressed unique personality. A butterfly as an emblem of human's individuality was also used by American 'butterfly poet' Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892) who advisedly created his own image. The Greek name of the insect had prompted the poet to choose butterfly as the best symbol to reveal his soul. The motif of a butterfly on a human's hand repeatedly used in his creative writing became an integral part of the writer's own image. In his life-time and after his death, Whitman's biographical analyses were frequently supplemented by photographs that singled out his tolerant attitude towards nature, thus, in his circle the writer became known as modern St. Francis of Assisi. Crucial is the photograph that shows white-bearded Whitman with a butterfly²⁹ (later discovered as a cardboard butterfly) landing on his hand. The image-making for Whitman was a deeply conscious and strategic step with the aim to attribute a new dimension of his creative expression to his personality.

The graphic representation below summarizes the most important connotations of the butterfly image through the cultures important for Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism (including them).



Oscar Wilde is one of the brightest 19th century image-makers. Working on his own 'portrait' he considered clothing, accessories, and a pose as man's outer visible form significant for the manifestation of his aesthetic views. Whistler's and Whitman's influence played a very important role in the formation of Wilde's personality. For several years, Whistler was one of Wilde's heroes³⁰; in the letter from circa February 23, 1885 Wilde addressed Whistler as *Dear Butterfly*³¹. Wilde's friendship with Whistler ensured his interest in Japan and *the artistic side of Japanese life*.³² Whitman has been mentioned in Wilde's correspondence since at least 1876³³, but both worshippers of beauty met in 1882 during Wilde's lecture tour in America, after which the British author wrote to Whitman in an idolizing manner, *Before I leave America I must see you again. There is no one in this wide great world of America whom I love and honour so much*.³⁴

Among many signs of Wilde's dandyism and aestheticism, such as theatrical dress, epigrammatic style of speaking, and flowers (sunflower, lily, green carnation), an emerald scarab ring is an important emblem of Wilde's personality³⁵. Wilde 'withdraws' himself from the company of 'butterfly artists' and singles out his uniqueness by choosing the symbol of exoticness and mysticism. Throughout all his life, Wilde was fascinated by Egypt – he was influenced by his father William Wilde (1815 – 1876) who was a passionate Egyptologist, as well as by other artists who were infatuated by not only Japanese or Chinese decorative art, but also by the enigmatic and mystical Egyptian culture.

Scarab in Egyptian culture and religious iconography is a symbol of soul and renewal that is closely connected with the God of dawning sun Khepri depicted mainly as a whole scarab beetle or a human male with a scarab as a head. The transformative aspect of chrysalis of the insect from larva into a winged beetle (beetle's continuous motion of rolling its eggs toward the rising Sun) was considered to be synchronous with the Solar principle.



Giant sculpture of a scarab beetle in British Museum (brought to England in the 19th century)
© Trustees of the British Museum

Wilde's father wrote in great detail on the genus *Scarabaeus* describing the sacred beetle as creator and from here *the emblem of creative power, of the earth, and of the sun*³⁶. Creativeness for Wilde was one of an artist's most significant qualities; hence he considered the beetle as a perfect sign for emphasizing the artist's extraordinariness and individuality. The colour of the ring plays an important role since green for the 'Apostle of Aestheticism' was the colour of artists, self-assertion, and risk. Wilde's green carnation and green signature, together with the green scarab ring formed the quintessence of his outer visible form representing also his inner self. For Wilde, the famous scarab ring was *this perfect accessory for a man whose constitutional habit was to nourish his soul by taking risks, whose byword in fashion was freedom*³⁷. Several of Wilde's contemporaries mention the writer's scarab ring in their memories, for instance, Gedeon Spillet wrote:

*These precious stones are engraved with cabbalistic symbols and come from an Egyptian Pyramid. He [Wilde – I. K.] claims that the emerald on his left hand is the real cause of all his happiness, and that the one on his right hand is the cause of all his unhappiness. To my observation – which was logical enough, I think – that he should have taken off the evil ring, he replied with a changed voice: 'To live in happiness, you must know some unhappiness in life.'*³⁸

Wearing a scarab ring at the end of the 19th century in British Isles signified certain affiliation to a definite social or artistic group, for instance, Wilde's devoted friend and later literary executor Robert Ross' (1869 – 1918) turquoise scarab ring confirmed his belonging to Wilde's cult and aesthetic world perception. Wilde's iconoclasm aroused negative associations and ironic attitude in the pragmatic Victorian society, the writer and other representatives of the Aesthetic Movement became the objects of condemnation, they were often referred to as members of the 'aesthetic sect'.

However, great individualities and image-making of separate artists, as well as the influence of Egyptian nature and culture on Western art, are not the only sources of inspiration. The influence of other writers' literary heritage containing the image of a scarab might have left some traces on Wilde's consciousness. By the time he started wearing his scarab ring, European society had got familiar with the American poet and writer Edgar Allan Poe's (1809 – 1849) short story *The Gold-Bug* (1843), first translated into French in 1845.³⁹ Due to the mysterious atmosphere of the story and the puzzle of a cryptogram, it was later organically adapted into the British adventure literature of the second half of the 19th century. The image of the beetle *scarabaeus caput hominis* in Poe's story is the synthesis of nature in its primitive, even wild beginning with its supreme pure and mystique values.

The image of a scarab is not traced in Wilde's creative writing; nevertheless it has become a striking sign representing the author in other cultures, also in the first half of the 20th century Latvian culture. Influenced by the works of Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes, as well as personalities of the British artists, Latvian literati were seeking innovative and symbolic modes of expression. Many of them borrowed and included in their writing images and attributes from not only the 'Bard's of Beauty' works, but also from his life. The writer representing the 'new generation' of the so-called decadent writers of the 1930s Anšlavs Eglītis (1906 – 1993) was one of the followers of Wilde's style of artistic expression and philosophical ideas. In his collection of stories *Maestro* (1936) and the

novel *The Hunters of Brides* (*Līgavu mednieki*, 1939), Eglītis' 'bizarre' literary characters are presented as poseurs and dandies containing detailed references to Wilde's persona and individualism. For instance, in the ironical story *Vāraus*, the main character Jūlijs Pīpkalējs is striving for building his unique image focusing on the examples set by 'cultural icons' of different epochs, people who had challenged the society and fought for their fame. Among many historical names there is also Wilde and Whistler mentioned:

Have many great talents [...] not been fighting for recognition and fame not confining themselves to the weapons of their art? Have they not provoked scandals, spread disgraceful gossip about themselves, and even committed a crime? Did Oscar Wilde not dress and behave like Nero, speak the craziest paradoxes and exaggerate his bad habits just to highlight he was not the same as the others? Didn't Whistler, this little and naughty hubby, dress as a scarecrow and with his lemon yellow gloves shock the whole drowsy society of English gentlemen?

(Translation mine – I. K.)

[Vai gan mazums lielu talantu [...] cīnījušies par ievēribu un slavu ne tikai savas mākslas ieročiem vien? Vai viņi nav provocējuši skandālus, izplatījuši neticamas baumas par sevi, pat noziegušies? Vai Oskars Vailds neģērbās un neizturējās kā Nerons, nerunāja vistrakākos paradoksus un nepārspilēja savus netikumus, lai tikai pasvītrotu, ka viņš nav tāds kā visi? Vai Vistlers, šis mazais un negantais vīrelis, neģērbās kā putnu biedēklis un ar saviem citrondzelteniem cimdiem nešokēja visu miegaino angļu džentlmeņu sabiedrību?⁴⁰]

The sacred scarab ring on the main character's finger in the Latvian author's text represents the individual emblem of Wilde as a dandy, i.e., the sign of creativeness, freedom, it is also a simple talisman with a slight Egyptian emphasis that is perfectly matching the 'personality' of a human-mummy.⁴¹

Conclusions

It is evident that in the second half of the 19th century British culture, the process of perceiving insects underwent certain transformations. Under the influence of scientific discoveries, insects portrayed in Victorian visual art and fiction invoke a diverse range of aesthetic judgements. Precise and accurate images of insects in Pre-Raphaelite art based on analytical studies and rational investigations of scientists were later supplemented by mythological and Biblical symbolism. The symbolic expression mode of Pre-Raphaelites conceptually conform to the highly decorative beginning of aesthetic art, thus lowly insects are included in the category of the beauty. The obsession with insects for aesthetic rather than scientific purposes confirms the analysis of the literary works where insects are allocated the function of forming the romantic atmosphere and are included in the category of 'the natural'. Insects may also be viewed as integral elements of decorative 'interior' and are included in the category of 'the artificial'. The decorative and ornamentation function in aesthetic art prevails over the purely romantic one. Different signs containing images of insects are used by writers-aesthetes as the emblems of their personal images emphasizing the aesthetic nature of their art and their individual creative self. Being a part of symbolically realistic Pre-Raphaelite visual and poetic culture, as well as Aesthetic fictional art, insect images contradict their representations

in the mainstream flow of realistic literature. In general, aesthetic perception of insects is a protest against overall Victorian insectomania (beetlemania) aroused by rational scientific discoveries, thus they can be viewed in the framework of the oppositions 'science– sentiment', 'knowledge – passion', 'regularity – beauty'.

¹ Rossetti. D. G. Silent Noon, in: *In the Realm of Beauty*. Сост. И. С. Строганская. Москва: Высшая школа, 1967. – p. 41.

² Станкевича А. "Книги джунглей" Редьярда Киплинга. Даугавпилс, 1998. – с. 32.

³ Wilde O. The Star Child, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 109.

⁴ Ibid. – p. 108.

⁵ Rossetti C. Hurt no Living Thing, in: *Sing-Song. A Nursery Rhyme Book*. John Mark Ockerbloom. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania June 4, 1999 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/rossetti/singsong/singsong.html> (accessed 2011)

⁶ Vaidls O. *Pasakas*. Tulkojusi Z. Sērmūksa. Rīga: Atēna, 2002.

⁷ Wilde O. The Birthday of the Infanta, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 93.

⁸ Wilde O. The Picture of Dorian Gray, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 8.

⁹ Ibid. – p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid. – p. 7.

¹¹ Wilde O. The Decay of Lying, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 318.

¹² Wilde O. The Decay of Lying, in: *Oscar Wilde. The Complete Works*. Collector's Library Editions, 2006. – p.137.

¹³ Wilde O. The Picture of Dorian Gray, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 12.

¹⁴ Gere, C., L. Hoskins *The House Beautiful. Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior*. Lund Humphries in association with the Geoffrey Museum, London, 2000. – pp. 41–42.

¹⁵ Wilde O. The Picture of Dorian Gray, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 38.

¹⁶ Ibid. – p. 38.

¹⁷ Wilde O. The Fisherman and His Soul, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 102.

¹⁸ Beardsley O. *Under the Hill*, in: *In Black and White. The Literary Remains of Aubrey Beardsley*. – pp. 20–21. <http://www.cypherpress.com/books/index.asp> (accessed 2011)

¹⁹ Ibid. – p. 41.

²⁰ Huysmans J-K. *Against Nature*. Translated by M. Mauldon. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. – p. 45.

²¹ Huysmans J-K. À Rebours <http://cage.ugent.be/~dc/Literature/AREbours/AREbours05.html> (accessed 2011)

²² Wilde O. Salomé, in: *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Harper Collins UK, 2003. – p. 585.

²³ Wilde O. Salomé. <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext98/salme10h.htm> (accessed 2011)

²⁴ Schmitt C. Victorian Beetlemania, in: Morse D. D., H. A. Danahay (eds.) *Victorian Animal Dreams. Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007. – pp. 35–52.

²⁵ Wilde O. The Picture of Dorian Gray, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 51.

²⁶ Wilde O. De Profundis, in: *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. HarperCollins UK, 2003. – p. 1027.

²⁷ *Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.* – Wilde O. The Critic as Artist, in: *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Geddes & Gosset, 2002. – p. 339.

²⁸ Calloway S. Wilde and the Dandyism of Senses, in: Raby P. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. – p. 36.

²⁹ See the picture in: Prints and Photographs Online Catalog <http://memory.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html> (accessed 2011)

³⁰ See Wilde's letter from circa March 20, 1882. Holland M. (ed.) *Oscar Wilde: A Life in Letters*. London, New York: Fourth Estate, 2003. – p. 60.

³¹ See in: Holland M. (ed.) *Oscar Wilde: A Life in Letters*. London, New York: Fourth Estate, 2003. – p. 88.

³² Gere, C., L. Hoskins *The House Beautiful. Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior*. Lund Humphries in association with the Geffrey Museum, London, 2000. – p. 53.

³³ First publications of Whitman's works in the British Isles were issued in the time period from 1868 till 1886 under the editorship of William Michael Rossetti. The book *The Leaves of Grass* (1855) was well-known to Wilde since childhood. In 1870, one of the first analytical critical essays *A Woman's Estimate of Walt Whitman* by Anne Gilchrist was published. See in: Callow P. *From Noon to Starry Night: A Life of Walt Whitman*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992.

³⁴ Holland M. (ed.) *Oscar Wilde: A Life in Letters*. London, New York: Fourth Estate, 2003. – p. 58.

³⁵ Schmidgall G. *The Stranger Wilde: Interpreting Oscar*. Dutton: A William Abrahams Book, 1994. – p. 78.

³⁶ Coackly D. *Oscar Wilde. The Importance of Being Irish*. Dublin: Town House, 1994. – p. 15.

³⁷ Schmidgall G. *The Stranger Wilde: Interpreting Oscar*. A William Abrahams Book, Dutton, 1994. – p. 78.

³⁸ Spillet G. An Interview with Oscar Wilde. Quoted from: Coackly D. *Oscar Wilde. The Importance of Being Irish*. Dublin: Town House, 1994. – p. 15.

³⁹ Silverman K. *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991. – p. 320.

⁴⁰ Eglitis A. Vāravs, in: *Maestro. Raksti*. Rīga: Jumava, 2006. – 126. lpp.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* – 128. lpp.

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Tatjana Lavrecka

IMAGES OF INSECTS IN ALEKSANDRS ČAKS' PROSE

Summary

Images of insects occur rarely in Aleksandrs Čaks' prose. In the collection of novellas and sketches 'An Angel behind the Bar' they are especially accentuated in the works 'The Queen of Insects', 'The Flies', and 'The Bottle of Ants'. The images of insects in Čaks' prose are of two types: symbolic and functional. In the novel 'The Queen of Insects' there is a wide spectrum of insect images. In the foreground of the work, the feeling of openness of an old person and these nature objects is set forward, the ability to get along, to live together, and to be useful to each other. The images of flies and ants in Čaks' prose function as memory codes. In the novel 'The Bottle of Ants', the protagonist, having incidentally detected an ant heap, recalls his childhood, that strengthens his romantic perception of the world. The image of a fly in the sketch 'The Flies' functions as an object of cognition of the surrounding area and the initiator of human inner trial and psychological transformations.

Key-words: memory codes, mythical thinking, initiation

*

Aleksandrs Čaks (1901 – 1950) belongs to the generation of Latvian modernists who confidently enter the poetic world of the 1920s. He released four small books at his own expense: *Me and This Time*, *A Heart on the Pavement*, *Apashes in a Tailcoat* and *The World's Pub*. A. Čaks is widely known as a Latvian poet-urbanist, who captivates reader's perception with the help of unique metaphors, epithets, hyperboles and other stylistic devices used to create a lively sketch of a city. Altogether with the bright stylistics and the diversity of the protagonists, the ability to look at ordinary things from an uncommon angle displaying a new worldview, idealizing recent Latvian history and actualizing seemingly marginal phenomena such as poor outskirts of Latvian capital city Riga, the author combines problems appealing to the readers of high literature and the literature for the masses.

The poet participated in the organization of the publishing, the release of the magazine, worked as a journalist, as a theatre and literature critic. However, Čaks' prosaic talent is not to be neglected. There are twenty-seven stories summarized in two books: *An Angel behind the Bar* (1935) and *The Closed Door* (1938). His friend and contemporary Anšlavs Eglītis claims that the poet was going to write two more prose books; he spoke about them and even chose the titles: *The Bare Marrowbones of My Childhood* and *My Old Coat*. However, they have never been published up to this day. Many stories were not included in the published volumes.

The focus of attention in Čaks' stories remains the same as in his poems: people, streets of the city, wildlife, and nature. Particularly, Čaks is interested in human nature,

unusual emotions and feelings. Some stories are created as psychological studies, which show the peculiar life conditions or the revelation of spiritual search. *All the events are fulfilled with a thoughtful, slightly ironic and self-ironic narrator's view of life and love, his deep yearning for another – more considerate world.*¹ The author achieves the subtle portrayal of human nature with the contexture of the word, images, and good humour. The texts are rich in tactile, audible, olfactory, and visual images, which give them such peculiar emotional sharpness and at the same time poetical lyricism.

In this world of emotions, feelings, and inner trial of the main characters there is a small but a very significant place for the images of insects, yet it is not a hall-mark of Čaks' prose. In the story collection *An Angel behind the Bar*, the author refers to it in the stories *The Queen of Insects*, *The Flies*, and *The Bottle of Ants*.

Dealing with the images of insects, the author does not view them according to the tradition of the ancient world. (Also, in this case it is important to mention that Čaks rejected the suggestion made by one of the first publishers, Augusts Petersons to name the collection *Everyone Has Its Own Louse*.) The main goal of the author is to reflect these living creatures as real elements of nature, which are in a close contact and interaction with the world of humans.

Čaks' prose is slightly marked by Fricis Bārda's poetically striking European philosophical pantheism, as well as the mysticism of the literary tradition, e.g., the bond with nature – animal typical of Oriental or Latin people; still, in his prose Čaks also seeks and finds his own ways of expression.

Čaks' characters (as well as the author himself) are and remain city dwellers who outside their accustomed surroundings, coming into contact with the vastness of nature, often retreat into themselves, get immersed in thoughts or share the observer's position (e.g., in the story *The Queen of Insects*). It does not mean that Čaks is not in love with nature because his feeling of nature in his works is really deep and modest:

*The waters beneath my feet started to steam like the lathered backs of the horses. The ditches are wide and shallow; there always bewails water [...]; In a distance steams azure. Pine-trees wash their tops in its brightness. A crow sits on a pine-tree and considers her next caw.*²

The contrasts of the world, where the infinity of nature and life are opposed to the temporary life-time of the humankind, seems to be very important for Čaks.

The images of insects become an integral part of nature in Čaks' prose, which comprise two different notional meanings: symbolic and functional.

The story *The Queen of Insects* stands out in the works by Čaks because of the widest spectrum of the images of insects offered: moths, flies, ants, ladybirds, spiders, cockroaches. Every insect has its own place and role, but there is no evidence that any of them is better or superior to another.

In the outskirts of the town, on the second floor of an old wooden house next to a new lodger there lives a very quiet and tolerant grey-haired granny, who has converted her house into a paradise for insects:

*She definitely loves all the insects. When a little ladybird perches on her hand in her yard, she can talk to the little insect in a soft, pampering voice for hours. The granny does not use human words and sentences in such cases. These are incomprehensible, strange sounds which overflow her lips, slow humming with a sibilant undertone. And insects understand it.*³

In the antechamber and in the kitchen, which are shared by the neighbours, and, also in her room, granny does not allow to kill any fly, croton-bug or cockroach despite the fact that there are large numbers of them. The only one who endures certain restrictions is a spider, which is immediately caught and let out in the yard, but its cobweb is destroyed without remorse. All the rest are taken care of – fed, nursed, and even mourned in case of an accident.

My neighbour conceived her work with insects especially deeply. She could recognize every fly by their ping and their wings' movement; she knew every croton-bug and cockroach that crept in front of her on the top of the table or on the warmth of the oven. She knew their weak points, longings, and characters of each and every insect by its movement, the iridescence of its attire, the waggle of wings and whiskers.⁴

Granny's world outlook is deeply rooted in mythical thinking, according to which human is closely related to animate nature; that is why every creature is perceived as of the same kind. In the same way the huge universe is impersonated:

*– Neighbour, I don't believe in the feelings of these small, tiny disgusting insects. This is only your phantasm.
– You are naive, – she retorted. – Even the floor knows what we are talking about, look, the floor is grinning...
– Neighbour, I can't see its grin.
– It's because you don't believe it. Disbelief is the root of every deafness and blindness.
– And do you believe in it?
– Yes, I do. I do believe that everything in the world is equable and resembling me. This floor, this stool, this cloth, our thoughts, the blossom of an apple-tree and stars there, in the distance, – it's all one. And also this unfortunate, doomed to death is equable to me. Even though he looks like a murderer, like an old dagger tainted with man's blood, he still has a sensitive and delicate heart inside. It is not afraid of death and is capable of talking to the stars, the sky and the stones in the middle of the mountain because it instinctively believes in the things that we deny.⁵*

In the course of time the sense of unity between men and nature has outgrown into the ability of jogging along with insects, to cohabit with them, and be useful and grateful to each other. The old lady accepts large numbers of insects as God's blessing, *that gives happiness, imparts a benevolent outcome in severe illnesses, gives a shine to eyesight and cures abscesses⁶:*

Every day hundreds of flies die in our kitchen and antechamber. My neighbour mops up their dead bodies with a small, thick brush in the middle of the kitchen and then puts into a bottle, each and every layer of the dead bodies scattering with a thin layer of sugar.

The bottle filled that way the granny put in the sun of her window and left it there for three days; then she took a dimmed and a little ruddy bottle and filled a half of it with vinegar and the second half of it filled with spirit. In the long run this mixture became dark brown like overripe grown cherries and immensely limpid, without any flake of mustiness and dark cloudy piles. My neighbour sold it to the neighbouring workers as a remedy for rheumatism, boneache and joint dropsy.

Dead croton-bugs were also put to use by granny. She put them in a line one by another on a tin pan and dried them on a steady glowing coal in the oven of the

cooker for a whole week. After that she added slices of baked chestnuts, young juice-exuding and buds of a birch-tree. Then filled half of a bottle with this mixture and poured above still lukewarm boiled water. In two nights the water became acrid, solid and lively red, and at the same time also astoundingly clean and clear like cut glass and mountain crystal.

I don't know what a severe disorder was this remedy for, but most likely it diminished fertility because women of all ages and estates were coming to get it like obsessed.⁷

Then the granny takes off her kerchief and stretches it on the floor. Soon enough it becomes full of the dead bodies of cockroaches, which had crept on it in order to get warm. After a week I have seen a dying child being wrapped in this kerchief and survive.

With the gluey liquid made of cockroaches the granny cures make bites and the dry rot.⁸

The granny becomes the mistress of these living creatures; she not only cares about them, but also determines the limit of their existence. *Insects obey their mistress like blind puppies⁹* and never step over a doorstep of a neighbour till the moment when their harmonic routine is deranged by the illness and death of the old woman. Chaos breaks into the world of insects. And there is no turning back to peace and order because there is no one who could replace the granny. The inferiors of the granny – flies, croton-bugs and cockroaches – assemble in her coffin never to get out again.

Čaks balances on the borderline of the real, the mythical, and the mystical in real space and time – on the second floor of the wooden two-storied house called *Bieriņmuīža* in spring – the grey-haired rallies of swarms of different insects, which by miracle obey the rules she had established and, finally, she is able to talk to a ladybird in a unique language which is understandable only for insects. Ladybird *according to the mythical notions of Latvian people was related to the cognition of destiny and deities of destiny (one of the names of a ladybird – the steed of happiness) widely connected to the chthonic deity of women.*¹⁰

At the end of the story the neighbour nails up the sticky cover of the coffin in that way carrying out a certain symbolic act – he is not only bidding farewell to his neighbour and the swarm of loyal companions, but also tears the connection with the mythical world, which he has never really made sense of because of his belonging to a completely different – new generation.

In the stories *The Flies* and *The Bottle of Ants*, the images of insects function as the codes of memory. Generally characters in Čaks' prose are dreamers and romantics who till the end of their days – just as the protagonist Fēlikss in the novel *The Bottle of Ants* – gaze upon the worlds with eyes full of love:

Fēlikss immoderately loved life, trees, flowers, brown seminals, beautiful eyes and charming words, which smell like roses, but didn't know that it only brings misfortune to a man. Sometimes in the middle of a forest, where nobody could see it, he suddenly stopped, took a handful of sand and kissed it, as if his lips were burning affected by the inner ineffaceable fire.¹¹

He constantly seeks for harmony with reality but it is destroyed by bitter prose of life. Misunderstanding among people brings about deep emotional experience. Loneliness as a psychological problem becomes the main topic of the novel *The Bottle of Ants*.

In order to alleviate the acting of his own heart, Fēlikss seeks oblivion in alcohol. *He drinks whenever he has some money. When he is not drunk, he feels lonely; when he is drunk, he does not feel so deserted any more, then he has a friend – drunkenness. They are together – he and his drunkenness.*¹² Only in such moments he does not perceive this inviolable gap so acutely, which separates him from the cool intellect of the surrounding people, their petty practicality, disdainful looks, and scoff. The intractability of this conflict becomes the reason for the protagonist's death.

In the providential night in August, Fēlikss, wandering in the forest, felt a new wave of never-ceasing ache of soul. This time even drunkenness could not suppress it. The yellow moon suddenly revived the memory and those moments of sinecure of his childhood when he felt truly happy. Fēlikss strives to the moonlight which becomes the only desire. However, as it is impossible to capture moonlight, it is also impossible to return to one's childhood.

Fēlikss is impertinent and unwanted in this real world, but it is impossible to reach the happy dreamland of childhood. Death is unavoidable for Čaks' sensitive and vulnerable romantics; it frees people from this endless life in a cage.

Seeking for his dreamland, Fēlikss falls down with his face and hands in a big anthep:

*Only with a big effort he could stand up. 'Ants,' – he murmured. – 'Ants.' Then he took some steps forward and again stopped. Strange. A lot of ants got into his mouth and he had already masticated them. Now, the top of his tongue was covered in a bitter salty acrimony.*¹³

Ants' meal, a handkerchief weaved by ants – the symbols which are often used in initiation rites. Feeding the ants, ants' bites as the element of the initiation trial can be found in folksongs. According to Janīna Kursīte in her book *In the Mythical Looking-glass of Latvian Folklore*, the initiation rites, which are closely connected with ants' bites, are mentioned in the folklore of many nations.

In this situation Fēlikss gets through a certain stage of initiation when he retraces the smell and taste of a Granny's yellow mysterious bottle, which has a miraculous power, in his memory. There was blue spirit poured on ants, needles, and dried chestnuts, which were kept for months and ages and had become light yellow as an apple in summer, strong and sour in the continuum of life.¹⁴ With the contents of this bottle Granny had rubbed the boy's aching legs when he was a child.

Fēlikss follows these memories. Those yearnings that had smoldered in his soul for years now erupted. This unquenchable thirst for something old, good, bright leads the man to a yellow, light flower, his own last sip. The man dies under the train's locomotive engine. *Once again the bottle of ants sparkling in brains flashes up and then everything sinks in the darkness.*¹⁵

The end of the novel remains open because the author's question 'Did he reach his longing, his happiness?' remains without answer.

The story *The Flies* is one of eleven stories by Čaks where he depicts the world of children and teenagers. The story is based on a man's childhood memories that emerge when he sees a boy playing with flies in a morning train.

This story contains autobiographical features. As well as that of the protagonist's mother, Čaks' mother was of German origin and he was the only child in his family,

where all the attention (also when he was grown-up) was paid to his upbringing, supervision, and care:

As I was her only child, she loved me very much and paid much attention to me. My mother rarely left me alone, never allowed me to do something on my own without her knowing [...]. At the age of twenty-nine, when I had already earned my own money, my mother still had it all in her hands.¹⁶

Her desire to protect her child from bad influence and to bring him up as a decent man makes her limit the freedom of her son. The boy seeks for freedom, he cannot stand limits anymore getting mature:

On the water surface of the cask some dried flies were floating; and one among them was as big as nail and dark blue as ink; and, also, one spider which surely appeared here to have some water but lost its balance and fell in. All these unfortunates I wanted to fish out of the water with my boats, to bring them to the shore and to lay them by the edge of the yard next to the dunghill, where the soil was the loosest for digging.¹⁷

Games and entertainment in the yard were replaced by aimless pining indoors:

It was hard for me to get used to these new circumstances. The days lingered for much longer time. Mentally I have recounted all the joys that could be waiting for me in the yard and I felt indescribably sad.¹⁸

When all the possible books had been read and the games played to the end, the boy focuses on a fly, which *slowly and slackly like a small black speck floated in the warm air of the room from one wall to another, up to the ceiling and down to the floor.¹⁹*

The unquenchable craving for cognition makes the boy focus on the only living object of the confined area. He becomes overtaken by the unclear and at the same time scary and tempting, sweet surprise of its each and every tiny thing and creature, its uniqueness and significance to the world, because both a small fly and a human have something in common:

The body of a fly doesn't differ a lot from my body or the body of my friend's sister, who we have observed very carefully. The fly has its own head, breast and stomach as well as we do. Let us say it has a little bit more legs than we do, but their role in flying isn't so crucial. In addition, these legs are much more fragile and powerless, and ours are much more substantial. So, in the long run – we are one and the same. The only question left unanswered was about the wings. Yes, the wings. Indeed, I didn't have such wings. And I haven't seen any man with wings ever. People have arms instead. And the fly didn't have them obviously. It must be that human's hands and fly's wings are the same things. They were attached to the breast as well as human arms. A small reciprocal difference meant nothing.²⁰

In a strong determination to learn to fly the boy ascends the wardrobe and spreads his arms as a fly spreads its wings, jumps down and hurts himself:

My body and head were aching terribly; but I was incredibly happy to be safe and sound. Hence, I have never tried to fly once again.²¹

In the words of the protagonist, *I have calmly and properly reached my journey's end²²*, one can feel deep sorrow and pain for the lost ability of wondering at the world,

to cognize it. The image of a fly rakes up this smart feeling of the magic of the moment, which will hardly be experienced once more in a lifetime.

Čaks begs, educates, orders one to be more attentive, profound, sensitive, and beautiful; to see more clearly the equivalence of every living thing and nature, big and small; and in this process of depicting the images of insects are indisputably helpful.

¹ Paroleks R. *Baltijas literatūras salīdzinoša apcere*. Rīga, 1985. – 25. lpp.

² Čaks A. *Kopoti raksti 6 sējumos*. 3. sējums. Rīga: Zinātne, 1994. – 8.–9. lpp.

³ Ibid. – 10. lpp.

⁴ Ibid. – 11. lpp.

⁵ Ibid. – 13. lpp.

⁶ Ibid. – 11. lpp.

⁷ Ibid. – 12. lpp.

⁸ Ibid. – 15. lpp.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kursīte J. *Latviešu folklorā mītu spoguļi*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1996. – 390. lpp.

¹¹ Čaks A. *Kopoti raksti 6 sējumos*. 3. sējums. Rīga: Zinātne, 1994. – 106. lpp.

¹² Ibid. – 107. lpp.

¹³ Ibid. – 109. lpp.

¹⁴ Ibid. – 110. lpp.

¹⁵ Ibid. – 111. lpp.

¹⁶ Ibid. – 74. lpp.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. – 76. lpp.

¹⁹ Ibid. – 77. lpp.

²⁰ Ibid. – 78. lpp.

²¹ Ibid. – 79. lpp.

²² Ibid.

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Anna Stankeviča

NATURE AND CIVILIZATION IN ARKADIY SHTEINBERG'S POEM *BARK BEETLES*

Summary

Arkadiy Shteinberg (Аркадий Штейнберг, 1907 – 1984) was a person of a unique talent, a poet, translator, musician, sculptor, and an artist. The analysis of the world picture of his poem 'Bark Beetles' shows that it is based on an unexpected hierarchy: the human world, since the times of Adam and Eve up to the contemporary epoch, is a bottom world and a rather primitive sphere. The natural for Shteinberg is always the sphere of the absolute ideal, a kind of mysterious temple where each particular phenomenon of nature acquires also universal sacred connotations. Hence the world model reconstructed by Shteinberg is amazing, in the centre of the universe of nature the bark beetle is essentially similar to God (let it not seem sacrilegious), while the human and humanity on the whole have not developed so far as to be able to comprehend the great wisdom and expediency of beetles.

Key-words: Shteinberg, bark beetles, entomology, culture, civilization

*

Introduction

Culture entomology is one of the rapidly growing spheres of the contemporary integrated science. Interesting materials on this topic may be found, e.g., in the journal *American Entomologist*. Each of its four annual issues in 2001 – 2006 offers several articles dedicated to the interpretation of insects by diverse cultures and kinds of art, from mythology up to the present day.¹

The topic of bark beetles in literature has a tradition of its own, at least in the framework of Russian culture. The biologist and writer Ivan Shevryov (Иван Шевырѳв) already in 1910 wrote something like a detective novel *The Mystery of Bark Beetles* (*Загадка короедов*²), in which he tells how the analysis of the passage ways of these insects helped disentangle a case of economic crime. The novel is based on an actual case that the scientist had to take up. Foresters were accused of lumbering and selling fine quality wood for a cut price. Almost the whole of the prepared wood had already been sold abroad; hence the inquest had at its disposal just the evidence of workers who had lumbered the wood under suspicion as well as stumps, tree tops, and discarded logs left at the place of lumbering. The proof was insufficient; therefore the inquest did not succeed in reaching any final judgement in the course of several years. Finally Shevryov was invited and asked to study the case and infer a conclusion whether bark beetles had attacked the trees before lumbering or after that. It is hard to state the possible conclusion of the inquest, had Shevryov not paid attention to the passage ways of another species

of bark beetle – flat bark beetles. These beetles usually attack stumps and trunks of freshly cut trees and also deteriorating ones, that are not yet dry, that have been damaged by other bark beetles, hence being companions to typographers. Having gnawed into the trunk of the tree, the flat bark beetle moves towards its core, always staying on the same horizontal plane. Studying the stumps remaining after the ill-fated lumbering, Shevryov detected gnawed passage ways of bark beetles on the surface of many of them. According to their location, it was clear that the trunks of the trees had been gnawed before lumbering. The scientists submitted these arguments to the inquest and the case was terminated.

Bark Beetles by Arkadiy Shteinberg

It is not incidental that prose writers, poets, jewellers, and artists use the image of bark beetles as these insects represent a kind of mystery in their action. Bark beetles suggest a whole complex of questions to scientists that have not received direct answers up to the present day. The coleopterologist and promoter of science Mikhail Mandel'shtam has put it as follows:

How do bark beetles find and populate one particular damaged tree out of a great number of trees in the forest? How do bark beetles build their passage ways – galleries beneath the tree bark and why their passage ways and those of their larvae do not cross beneath the bark? What is the reason for the strong divergence of sexual correlation and totally different types of family organization for different kinds of bark beetles within the species? Why is the body of bark beetles ‘decorated’ by strange applications – merlons and cavities on wing-cases and sometimes horns on the forehead or frontal spine?

[Как жуки-короеды находят и заселяют совместно одно больное дерево из множества деревьев в лесу? Как короеды строят свои ходы-галереи под корой и почему ходы жуков и их личинок под корой не пересекаются? В связи с чем в пределах семейства короедов у разных видов наблюдается сильно отличающееся соотношение полов и совершенно разные типы организации семьи? Почему тело короедов «украшено» странными приспособлениями – зубцами и впадиной-«тачкой» на надкрыльях, а порой рогами на лбу или переднеспинке?]^{3]}

An interesting answer to these questions is provided by the outstanding poet Arkadiy Shteinberg in his poem *Bark Beetles* (*Короеды*) Shteinberg was a person of a unique talent, a poet, translator of *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, Chinese poetry, poems by English and German romanticists, Bertold Brecht, Rudyard Kipling, etc. He was also a musician, a sculptor, and an artist. He lived a tragic life that was nevertheless a happy one: several arrests, eleven years spent in GULAG, manuscripts taken away upon search and never returned to him, impossibility to see his poems published did not make this person devoid of the main thing – love of life in the highest, most sacred meaning of this word. His friend Yan Probshtein recalls:

[...] Shteinberg treated nature with no less love than he did humans, and respected craft no less than intellectual activity. He could build a house with his own hands, he had know-how in engines, tools, he adored boats and had three of them if I am not mistaken, he was good at a thousand of things that we all had the vaguest

notion of. [...] He could deliver a lecture on minor Dutchmen, tell how canvas was made and colours ground by hand in Middle Ages, discuss recent political events. Shteinberg had encyclopaedic knowledge. He never fussed and even made an impression of a languid man, yet he managed to do surprisingly much and never halted in his striving to find out and learn what he did not know yet.

[...] Штейнберг с не меньшей любовью относился к природе, нежели к человеку, а к ремеслу с не меньшим почтением, чем к интеллектуальной деятельности. Он мог своими руками построить дом, разбирался в моторах, инструментах, обожал лодки, которых, если не ошибаюсь, у него было три, и еще в тысяче вещей, о которых мы все имели самое смутное представление. [...] Он мог прочесть лекцию о Малых голландцах, рассказать, как в эпоху средневековья изготавливали холсты и вручную перетирали краски, обсудить последние политические события. Штейнберг обладал энциклопедическими знаниями. Никогда не суетящийся и даже производивший впечатление ленивого человека, он удивительно много успевал сделать и ни на минуту не останавливался в стремлении узнать и научиться тому, чего не знал и не умел.^{4]}

BARK BEETLES

*In the impassable wind-fallen thicket / Since the times immemorial reside
A wise and industrious nation, / Guild of typograph beetles.
Hardly had Eve managed to eat the forbidden fruit / When immediately in Paradise
Typograph beetle on the fibers of the Tree / Gnawed its first inscription.
Taking after his ancestor, till this time, / It is the heroic deed of each beetle –
To gnaw curves of complex lines / Of the letters of inhuman language
And to scribble on the frail sap-wood / By means of the natural carver
The authentic chronicle of the Universe / From its top to its end.
The unknown six-legged Nestor, / The humble hard-winged Herodotus,
Moving beneath the tree bark, / Write this kind of a chronicle.
So, year after year in the spring time / The sacred code of the world
With each new turn of generations / Is supplanted by a new chapter.
The chain of events in their causality, / Up to the minutest link,
On the tablets of the beetles' Bible / Is comprehensively recorded.
These runes have the key to the last mysteries, / They provide explanation for
the good and the evil;
What humans consider incidental, / Has acquired regularity there.
The essence of being, inconstancy / Of the universe, the whole circle of phenomena,
Matter and time and space / Have been expressed by formulae here.
Our idle talk, each blunder / Of the frail thought, vanity of our matters
In the charter of the meticulous insects / Have been inscribed in a special chapter.
Our unsolved tasks, / Faith that has not resurrected,
Truths that the blind reason is trying to perceive,
The list of our fates to come, / Sentences of the Final Judgement,
Fates of stars – burning and extinguished – / Have already been inscribed here.
The book created in the dark / Hides many a good message,
But its mysterious signs, / Unfortunately, no one can read –
We have neither will nor skill, / It is under seven seals,
And these inhuman writings / Do not yield to deciphering.*

[КОРОЕДЫ

В непролазной буреломной чаше / Обитает испокон веков
 Грамотный народец работающий, / Гильдия типографов-жуков.
 Не успела плод запретный Ева / Надкусить, как тотчас же в раю
 Жук-типограф на волокнах Древа / Выгрыз надпись первую свою.
 По примеру пращура, доньне / Подвиг жизни каждого жука –
 Выедать изгибы сложных линий / Литер нелюдского языка
 И строчить на заболони брэнной / С помощью природного резца
 Подлинную хронику Вселенной / От ее верховья до конца.
 Шестиногий Нестор неизвестный, / Скромный жесткокрылый Геродот,
 Продвигаясь под корой древесной, / летопись подобную ведет.
 Так из года в год порой весенней / Сокровенный кодекс мировой
 С каждой новой сменой поколений / Новой пополняется главой.
 Цепь событий в связи их причинной, / Вплоть до наименьшего звена,
 На скрижалях Библии жучиной / Всеохватно запечатлена.
 В этих рунах ключ к последним тайнам, / Истолковано добро и зло;
 То, что людям кажется случайным, / В них закономерность обрело.
 Сущность бытия, непостоянство / Мироздания, круг явлений весь,
 Вещество, и время, и пространство / Формулами выражено здесь.
 Наше суесловье, всякий промах / Утлой мысли, тщетность наших дел
 В хартии дотошных насекомых / Внесены в особенный раздел.
 Нами не решенные задачи, / Вера, не воскреснувшая впредь,
 Истины, которые незрячий / Разум наш пытается прозреть,
 Перечень грядущих судеб наших, / Приговоры Страшного Суда,
 Судьбы звезд – горящих и погасших – / Внесены заранее сюда.
 В книге, созидаемой во мраке, / Скрыта не одна благая весть,
 Но ее загадочные знаки, / К сожаленью, некому прочесть, –
 Нет у нас охоты и сноровки, – / За семью печатями она,
 И не поддаются расшифровке / Эти нелюдские письмена.^{5]}

This poem was written in 1969 and published after twenty years, in 1989, in the magazine *Ogonyok*. The analysis of the world picture depicted by the poet here shows that it is based on an unexpected hierarchy: the human world, since the times of Adam and Eve up to the contemporary epoch, is a bottom world and a rather primitive sphere. It is not incidental that the life of human society is determined by the poet through such notions as *idle talk, blunder, frail thought, vain matters, unsolved tasks, not resurrected faith, blind reason* [суесловье, промах, утлая мысль, тщетные дела, не решённые задачи, не воскреснувшая Вера, незрячий Разум].

The problem of culture and civilization, on the one hand, and nature, on the other, as represented in this poem, is very topical for the whole creative writing by Shteinberg, e.g., on one of his engravings he depicts culture and civilization as something like a dummy or scarecrow composed of individual artifacts.

The progress of human civilization is treated with specific modality, as if in passing mentioning the names of the great chroniclers and historians Herodotus and Nestor. A particular range of great culture monuments created by the humanity is constructed: *writings, signs, formulae, runes, codes, chronicles, a book, the Bible, charter*. Each of these notions may be extended as a computer file as they bear huge information, e.g., charter is both Magna Charta and the Olympic charter, as well as the charter of women's equality, the Atlantic charter, the charter of human rights, etc. However, all this complex

of the experience of civilization and culture in Shteinberg's hierarchy is placed much lower than the experience and meaning of the existence of nature, *vanity of our matters / In the charter of the meticulous insects / Have been inscribed in a special chapter* [..] тщетность наших дел / В хартии дотошных насекомых / Внесены в особенный раздел].

This reveals the principle of interpreting the surrounding world by the poet when the creation of a human being is corrected by nature: the charter is that of insects, the Bible – that of beetles, Nestor is six-legged, whereas Herodotus – hard-winged.

The natural for Shteinberg is always the sphere of the absolute ideal, a kind of mysterious temple where each particular phenomenon of nature acquires also universal sacred connotations. The tree gnawed by a bark beetle turns into the tree of the world, a symbol of the relation of all times and spaces. Another example: typograph bark beetle is a biological term, for which Shteinberg provides an amazing explanation – bark beetle really records in its own language **what has come to pass**:

Hardly had Eve managed to eat the forbidden fruit / When immediately in Paradise / Typograph beetle on the fibers of the Tree / Gnawed its first inscription.

[Не успела плод запретный Ева / Надкусить, как тотчас же в раю / Жук-типограф на волокнах Древа / Выгрыз надпись первую свою.]

Runes of bark beetles record also **what will come to pass**:

The list of our fates to come, / Sentences of the Final Judgement, / Fates of stars – burning and extinguished – / Have already been inscribed here.

[Перечень грядущих судеб наших, / Приговоры Страшного суда, / Судьбы звёзд – горящих и погасших – / Внесены заранее сюда.]

Bark beetle in Shteinberg's interpretation is a subject, the creator of the universe, a prophet, an oracle who deals with the categories of the mundane:

The essence of being, inconstancy / Of the universe, the whole circle of phenomena, / Matter and time and space / Have been expressed by formulae here.

[Сущность бытия, непостоянство / Мироздания, круг явлений весь, / Вещество и время, и пространство / Формулами выражено здесь].

One of the investigators of this poem has paid attention to the fact that the list of categories, associated by Shteinberg with the 'recordings' by bark beetle, is similar to the Biblical archetypal structures:

The good and the evil, regularity and incident, the circle of phenomena, time, space, matter, our idle talk, vanity of matters, faith, truths inaccessible to the blind reason, fates to come, sentences of the Final Judgement, good message [..]. The poem is similar to the Book of Genesis: the parts are named, however their content is hidden from us.

[Добро и зло; закономерность и случай; круг явлений: время, пространство, вещество; наше суесловье, тщетность дел. Вера. Истины, недоступные незрячему разуму. Грядущие судьбы. Приговоры Страшного Суда. Благие вести [..]. Стихотворение подобно оглавлению в Книге Бытия: части названы, однако содержание их закрыто от нас.⁶]

For the bark beetle, the nature on the whole – the logic of the world organization – is perfectly clear. The beetle is able to record these regularities in its writings:

*These runes have the key to the last mysteries, / They provide explanation for
the good and the evil; /
What humans consider incidental, / Has acquired regularity there.*

[В этих рунах ключ к последним тайнам, / Истолковано добро и зло; /
То, что людям кажется случайным, / В них закономерность обрело.]

Hence the world model reconstructed by Shteinberg is amazing, in the centre of the universe of nature the bark beetle is essentially similar to God (let it not seem sacrilegious), while the human and humanity on the whole have not developed so far as to be able to comprehend the great wisdom and expediency of beetles:

*The book created in the dark / Hides many a good message,
But its mysterious signs, / Unfortunately, no one can read [-]*

[В книге, создаваемой во мраке, / Скрыта не одна благая весть,
Но её загадочные знаки, / К сожаленью, некому прочесть.]

*We have neither will nor skill, / It is under seven seals,
And these inhuman writings / Do not yield to deciphering.*

[Нет у нас охоты и сноровки, – / За семью печатями она,
И не поддаются расшифровке / Эти нелюдские письма.]

Conclusions

Shteinberg's poem made a huge impact on its contemporaries, first of all on scientists. Coleopterologists perceive this text almost as the anthem of their branch of science; in any case this poem is placed on several popular scientific websites. And another small example: in Nature reserve museum in Yaroslav (Russia) there is a permanent exhibition *The Six-Legged Masters of the Planet* telling about insects. Its exposition is opened by the panel by Dmitriy Vlasov and Alexandr Grekov where the passage ways – writings of bark beetles are depicted along with Shteinberg's poems.⁷

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³ Мандельштам М. *Короеды* (Scolytidae) <http://www.zin.ru/ANIMALIA/COLEOPTERA/RUS/incosl.htm> (accessed 2011)

⁴ Пробштейн Я. «Я вернусь молодым чудодеем...» Об Аркадии Петровиче Штейнберге (1907 – 1984) / *Флейта Европы* №4, 2006 <http://www.igraigr.com/steinberg-4.htm> (accessed 2011)

⁵ Штейнберг А. *К верховьям. Собрание стихов*. Сост. В. Перельмутер. Москва: Совпадение, 1997. – с. 48.

⁶ Смирнов А. Духовный дар. / *Новый Мир* №2. 1998. – с. 78.

⁷ Иллюстрация Дмитрия Власова и Александра Грекова к стихотворению Аркадия Штейнберга *Короеды* <http://www.zin.ru/animalia/Coleoptera/rus/koroedy.htm> (accessed 2011)

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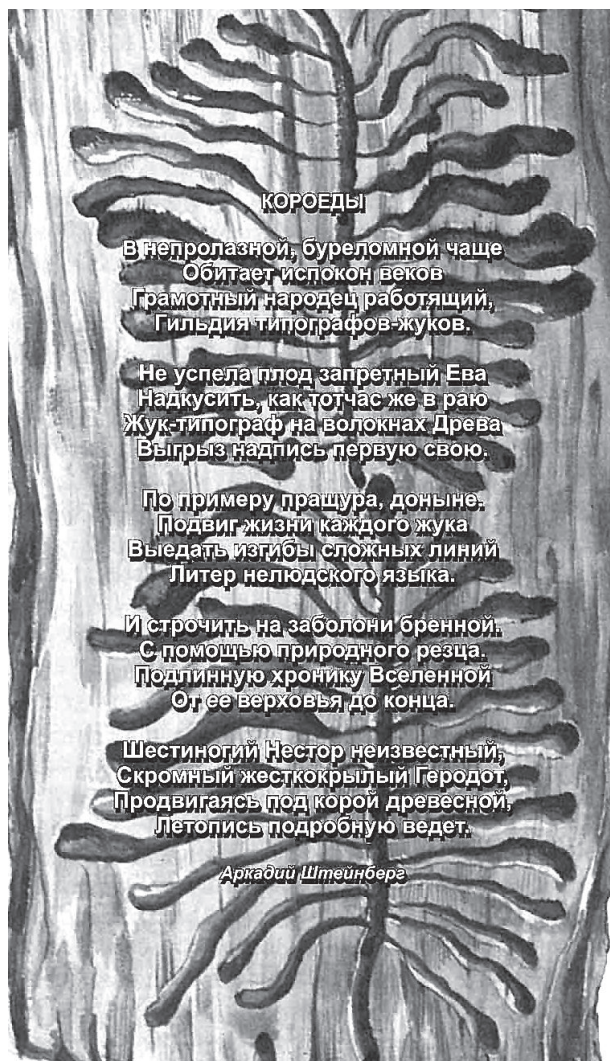
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Asta Gustaitienė

GNAT IN LITHUANIAN LITERARY FAIRY-TALE

Summary

The article is meant to discuss Lithuanian literary fairy-tales, written at different time, with gnat as a more or less prominent character. The present paper is concerned with the works by classics of Lithuanian literature, Antanas Vaičiulaitis, Pulgis Andriušis, Kazys Boruta, Albinas Žukauskas, focusing on the works by the representatives of the younger generation, Urtė Uliūnė, Vytautas V. Landsbergis and Herkus Kunčius. As a literary character, gnat proved to be interesting to émigré tale writers as well as those in Soviet Lithuania. More often gnat does not function on its own but helps people understand their foolishness or narrow-mindedness (Vaičiulaitis), gnats are also viewed in an allegoric manner (Andriušis, Boruta, Žukauskas). Gnats have no names or they are named in a traditional way using the onomatopoeia to associate their names with buzzing. Looking at them diachronically, one notices that nowadays writers are more and more inventive when choosing names for gnats acting as characters in their tales (Caklius, Zyzla, Kyzla, Parsnip, Prisci, etc.), rejecting the traditional ones related only to buzzing (Zyzėnas, Zuzė, Zirzėnas, etc., derived from the Lithuanian verbs 'zyzti', 'zirzti' – to buzz). Most often contemporary writers choose to have gnat as a character in nonsense tales. Gnat manifests itself in the most interesting and inventive manner in the tales by Uliūnė, Landsbergis, Sigita Siudika, Kunčius.

Key-words: children's literature, gnat, literary fairy-tale, nonsense poetics, play

*

Introduction

It is possible to distinguish different types of literary fairy-tales on the grounds of their relationship with folklore (folklore type, that of modernised folklore and having no associations with the folklore tradition), implied addressee (children of different ages), themes, etc. According to psychologist Alfonsas Gučas, at about the age of 5–6 children start ascribing human characteristics to animals and plants – it is because of the psychological traits of this age period that folklore animal tales as well as literary tales about plants and living creatures become mostly favoured by children.¹ The usual dynamics of transition from a folklore tale to a literary tale was well defined by Romualdas Skunčikas, a tale investigator, who asserted that *children are able to understand the modern literary tale only after having familiarized themselves with the structure of folklore and author's tale.*² Antanas Giedrius, Vytautas Tamulaitis, Konstantinas Bajerčius and others, the first creators of the Lithuanian literary fairy-tale in the first decades of the 20th century, wrote literary fairy-tales about animals and plants. Traditionally, the characters of fairy-tales, especially those meant for younger children, are creatures smaller than the child, however, always good and nice – these are little frogs,

hare, mice, butterflies, crickets, domestic animals such as cats, dogs and others. However, it was already in the middle of the 20th century that traditionally ‘nasty’ characters, wreckers (crab, gnat, flea, moth and others) started appearing in a literary tale – they have a clearly defined function: to show that the exterior of those ‘nasty’ ones conceals their very special individual traits and having made friends with them, as in *The Beauty and the Beast* or *Cinderella*, their true values are discovered and the nasty one becomes beautiful. Lately, a gnat has become one of the most popular characters of the contemporary Lithuanian literary fairy-tale – it acts both on its own and together with other characters. A gnat is a small insect belonging to the order of the two-winged, but it is only she-gnat which sucks blood. There are the ordinary gnat (*Culex pipiens*), the marsh long-foot gnat (*Tipula paludosa*), the ordinary malaria gnat (*Anopheles maculipennis*).

The aim of this article is to reveal the functions and semantics of a gnat, one of the most annoying insects, in the Lithuanian literary tales written at different periods of time. We refer to the insights of literature scientists Kestutis Urba, Skunčikas, Džiuljeta Maskuliūnienė and folklore investigators Lina Petrošienė and Jūratė Šlekonytė.

Gnat in Lithuanian Folklore

As one can imply from proverbs, human consciousness associates a gnat with being small, obtaining power, ability to hide, etc. In many cases they repeat the logic of a fable about a gnat and a bull by Aesop (*The Gnat and the Bull*). The fable tells us of a gnat which alighted on a bull’s horn – before leaving, it apologized to the bull, which did not notice the gnat either when it alighted or flew away. The moral of the fable is as follows: *We are often of greater importance in our own eyes than in the eyes of our neighbour. The smaller the mind the greater the conceit.*³ If compared with Lithuanian fables, there are more semantic shades present. They are revealed in the following proverbs and riddles: *A hundred of gnats can kill a mare* (the power of being united); *Impossible for a gnat to thrust its bill* (no space left); *Buzzes into the ear as a gnat playing for a mass of insects in the evening* (irksome); *Fights as a gnat with a lion* (courage); *Devours as a bull, works as a gnat* (laziness); *A gnat stepped on a bear’s foot* (the insignificance of harm done); *A gnat would not peck another one* (those of the same kin do no harm to each other); *With mouth open as if having swallowed a gnat* (surprised); *Looking haughty as a dog having swallowed a gnat* (no reason to pride oneself); *Feeding a gnat provides no grease* (one cannot live without working); *Though being a gnat, unsettles a horse* (inspite of being small, one can accomplish a lot); *As a gnat in the sea* (impossible to find); *Stood up as a bull, alighted as a gnat* (no reason for being conceited). A riddle: *In May a bird will come flying from a grove – whoever kills that bird, will lose blood* (A gnat).

In spite of all the negative associations, a gnat is quite popular in Lithuanian folklore. As one can see from the catalogue of Lithuanian folklore tales compiled by Bronislava Kerbelytė⁴, it appears in the so-called tales of self-deceit: willing to settle down in the house of a rich man, a gnat has its wings singed by a candle. Also, we come across a gnat in folklore tales exposing human power. One of such tales is *The Gnat, the Lion, and the Man*: a gnat tells a lion it knows human beings very well because *I drink his blood whenever I want* [...]⁵. The gnat helps the lion to look for a man who turns out to be a rifleman riding a horse. Having met a ‘true’ human being, the lion understands that

he is really very dangerous. As the research of the folklorist Šlekonytė shows, a gnat manifests itself in a very interesting way in the tales about magpies, for instance, in a humorous Lithuanian folk-tale encoded ATU 1932. It tells the reader a story of a man who unexpectedly finds himself in a magpie church (according to folklorists, a magpie church means a graveyard): while cutting a tree, a chip hits his head and the man dies. Different variants of this tale present a gnat, a crow, a butterfly, or some beast which take the man to the magpie church. In her article, Šlekonytė highlights an interesting observation of Russian scholar Michail Tolstoy who points out that in Russian folklore gnats and other insects carry the human soul to the place it is destined to be. Referring to the insights of Gintaras Beresnevičius, Šlekonytė confirms that it is characteristic of Lithuanian tales, too.⁶

A gnat is especially popular in Lithuanian humorous folk songs – like a spider, a sparrow, a goat, or a hare; it has lots of different adventures. Lina Petrošienė⁷ states that the song *A Gnat Fell off a Tree* is very popular in the Highlands as well as in the Lowlands. Perhaps the most popular folk song of this type is *A Gnat Went Flying* and some of its variants.

Lithuanian folklorists do lots of research investigating the semantics and functions of different folklore ‘characters’. Within the span of the last few years articles were written concerning a magpie (Šlekonytė *The Image of a Magpie in the World Outlook of Lithuanians and Other European Nations*⁸), a bull (Šlekonytė *A Gigantic Bull in the Lithuanian Folklore: the Issue of the Peculiarities and Genesis of the Image*). However, a gnat is still in need of a more detailed scientific investigation.

Tales about Gnats in the Middle of the 20th Century

The world of beetles and insects attracts lots of Lithuanian emigrant tale writers. Jurgis Jankus (1906 – 2002) wrote a tale *The Golden Beetle*, Vytautas Tamulaitis (1913 – 1993) created a tale *The Adventures of the Ant Quick-Legged*. However, it is the tale *The Beetles’ Marriage* by one of the most fascinating émigré writers Pulgis Andriušis (1907 – 1970) that shows the gnat from the most interesting perspective. This tale was created in 1948 and published in Germany. In general, it is one of the most beautiful Lithuanian tales about insects. It is a tale, alegorically showing beetles and insects with no man taking part in the action. The most important role in the story is played by gnats embodying the worst traits and thus very unpopular. They are the only ones which are not invited to the wedding – because of that they are angry and eager to avenge the whole beetle community, however, eventually the gnat Buzzer itself becomes a victim. The tale finishes with the moral characteristic of folk-tales: the community regains harmony and the guilty one whose behaviour did not correspond to the traditional ethics, is punished. When analyzing the tale and, specifically, the ‘gnat’ episode, the literary scholar Laima Arnatkevičiūtė maintains that *Andriušis is much more concerned about the attitude of the righteous. Mrs. Centipede, the closest neighbor of the Gnats, who has suffered most because of their tiresomeness and bitterness, is very sympathetic with Mrs. Gnat after the misfortune happens: a chatterbox he was, it’s his loose tongue that killed him, however, he was kind and caring – thus Mrs. Centipede tried to comfort Mrs. Zirzeklis caressing her.*⁹

Another émigré writer belonging to the same paradigm is Antanas Vaičiulaitis (1906 – 1992), the classic of Lithuanian literature, whose grotesque and allegoric tale

The Gnat is likewise very important in the context of this article. It is a story of a highly respected king who is paid honour wherever he goes. The Gnat is the only one who being stupid did not bother to behave himself and kept hovering round the head of his majesty. Frightened, he gets right into the king's nose. The impertinent Gnat is arrested and condemned to death – a pompous execution is about to be carried out. The whole community tries to find out who is that horrible beast which dared to do harm to his majesty king. No one believes the peasant's words that it is a *gnat, which lives among rushes, in marshes and quagmires, where a devil broods his children*.¹⁰ By the way, in his article *The Tales by Antanas Vaičiulaitis* the literary scholar Vytautas Kubilius repeatedly mentions the tale *The Gnat* maintaining that *Vaičiulaitis not only looks for exterior events in the plots, but in the swaying mood [...], in the picture of flickering details, filled with fantasizing reason and expression (the king's cloak, his escort, description of the gnat's trial in the tale 'The Gnat')*.¹¹

The tale about gnats *The Audacious Death of Three Gnats* was created by the classic of Lithuanian literature Kazys Boruta (1905 – 1965). It is a story revealing the absurd circumstances of courageous gnat-warriors – it helps to show the absurdity of frequent death cases and unreasonable fuss about the life of the dead in general. The central character of the tale, the gnat king convenes his army to check it and finds out that lots of the 'warriors' are dead. They tell him that the three bravest ones died as heroes: one got in between the horns of fighting bulls, another one was trampled by the hooves of stallions kicking each other, and the third one got in between two fighting giants and was thrown into the fire.¹² It seems that Boruta was interested in gnats in general as we can guess from his poem *The Wedding of the Gnat and the Fly* presenting the very unhappy marriage of the two, *the fly knows not to spin nor weave linen, only to romp from dawn to evening*.¹³

In 1978 the well known Lithuanian poet Albinas Žukauskas (1912 – 1987) published the collection of tales *When the Gnat Sneezed*. The fact that the title of the book is the same as that of the particular tale shows that the author considered it to be the best among other tales – perhaps he chose it because of the paradoxical title of the tale raising the question to the reader – can such a small being sneeze and what the after-effects of its sneezing might be – probably, none. Thus the title defines the logic of the artistic literary tale. Its central character is the little Hummer (child gnat) and Mrs. Hummer (mother gnat). Master Hummer is caught by a storm with no one to help him and escapes death by a narrow margin. Meanwhile his mother is fearfully waiting for him. When finally the little son is back, he starts boasting – as if the lightning and the tempest were caused by his sneezing: *his vanity started hustling and bustling, his boastfulness woke up, spread its wings and flew away sweeping him along as if it were a hundred of bats*.¹⁴ It is not before long that the boaster is pecked up by an owl, however, his 'immortal soul' remains. The tale distinguishes itself by its ending which makes it similar to the logic of etymological legends, because it explains in the end:

*[...] whenever it starts thundering, the gnat breed raise their eyes towards the sky, shake their heads and proudly buzz: the little Hummer's soul is sneezing.*¹⁵

To sum up, we can state that as a character gnat proved to be interesting to émigré tale writers as well as those in Soviet Lithuania. We would like to point out that more often gnat does not function on its own but helps people understand their foolishness or

narrow-mindedness (Vaičiulaitis), also, gnats are viewed in an allegoric manner (Andriušis, Boruta, Žukauskas). Gnats have no names or are named in the traditional way using onomatopoeia to associate their names with buzzing.

Literary Tale after Restoration of Lithuania's Independence: Nonsense Tales

When ascribing contemporary Lithuanian literary fairy-tales for children to certain types according to themes, we can distinguish 1) those transforming and paraphrasing traditional plots of Lithuanian folklore tales; 2) invoking Christian themes; 3) combining literary qualities with the cognitive function – literary tales based on cognition are being created; 4) therapeutic tales, written following the example of the Polish psychologist and writer Maria Malicka – they highlight and with the help of artistic means solve certain problems faced by children: fear, conflicts, etc. 5) tales meant to consolidate a child's identity – they help a child to accept himself/herself the way he/she is, 6) nonsense tales. In this chapter we regard the tales by émigré writers created in 1990 – 2011.

As concerns the Lithuanian literary tale of the end of 20th century, the literary scholar Kęstutis Urba noted that a new generation of writers had emerged in the Lithuanian literature for children: Vytautas V. Landsbergis, Sigitas Poškus, Nijolė Kepenienė, Rimantas Černiauskas, Saulius Žukas and others, who started changing the strategies of communication with a child and *Thus the stylistics of nonsense, absurd, allegoric plays of words and things, boring clichés of language and folklore, not characteristic of the Lithuanian literature for children before, became established*¹⁶. Quite often a gnat is the acting agent in nonsense tales, considered to be a suitable representative of this type of tales. It performs in *The Stories of Brown-Noser* by Landsbergis, *The Gnat* by Žukas, *Short Tales for Children, Hawks and Earthworms* by Černiauskas, *Chattering Letters* by Ieva Babilaitė and others. The stylistics of nonsense is characteristic not only of tales, but also of poetry. According to Jurgita Brasiūnaitė, nonsense, mostly manifesting itself when playing with meaningless words, creating unbelievable situations, *is based on the psychological aspect, trying to comprehend the mentality of the little addressee, to fire his/her imagination*¹⁷. It is to be pointed out, though, that a gnat, having the traditional connotation of a wrecker, an evil character, a blood sucker, causing pain, quite often acquires completely different meanings in nonsense tales.

Perhaps the most interesting characters of gnats are portrayed by Sigitas Siudika in his book *What Gnats Buzz about in the Evening*. Here not only the gnats' actions are senseless, but their names also have funny associations (Zyzla, Kyzla, Parsnip). Blue-eyed, witty, ironic gnats entangling themselves in different stories are real characters of nonsense tales. Five stories have no common plot – we see gnats taking away the door, helping the king Flowerman to find his stepdaughter Vilytė (an obvious modification of *Cinderella*), or to cure the cow of the old couple. We share the opinion of the literary scholar Džiuljeta Maskuliūnienė who says that *an immense value of such tales is their ironic style, quite uncommon in our prose. Irony manifests itself in the words of the story teller (Returning home Parsnip carried the door of the stable, Zyzla with a deformed eye and wounded Kyzla), the characters ('Guys, it's not the right time to die, but to elect the most beautiful one', after an unsuccessful feat Kyzla mocks Zyzla calling it falcon). The relationship among Zyzla, Kyzla and Parsnip is the embodiment of true 'cool' masculine friendship*.¹⁸

Juozas Erlickas, the author of the ironic poem *The Gnat* expresses his witty resentment at the gnat's 'principles of acting': spy's mysteriousness, impoliteness, precision of actions, highlighting all the moments of life when one might need blood – for analysis, donation, or to serve science: *Do you think he takes blood / for analysis from the vein? / Is he doctor Pain reliever / Or student Avicena? [...] He analyses blood scientifically / Thus honouring me highly. // Maybe his good friend / Has had a car accident / And the surgeon asks for blood / operating on his belly. / To sew belly – help the lad //*.¹⁹

The character of a short tale entitled *A Tasty Tale* by Černiauskas, the boy Izidorius talks to a fly asking her to tell him a tale. She starts with a story about Izidorius, another one about a dragon with nine heads, however, the boy does not find them tasty. He loses his patience when the fly utters the introductory sentence of one more tale, *Once it happened that the gnat got a splinter into his finger*.²⁰ The boy gets so angry with the fly for her lies that he catches her and throws into the bucket of whey, then he *took the book of tales, chose the tastiest one and, having spread margarine on it and sprinkled some cinnamon, chewed it up*.²¹ The motif of a gnat with a splinter in his finger might have been taken from a humorous Tajik folk-tale *The Gnat*, portraying a gnat who lived long long ago – having alighted in the bush where *he got a thorn*.²²

The tale entitled *The Gnat Belly-Button* by Landsbergis is also based on nonsense poetics. The gnat's name 'Belly-button' itself has lots of meanings and we can interpret it as 'the navel of the world' which means making a big thing of oneself, perceiving oneself as an exceptional being or 'navel-ache', which is a synonym of envy. The name of 'Belly-button' can be explained etymologically – it springs from a story: *once the gnat bit the belly-button of the honourable minister*²³. As Regina Koženiauskienė points out, *the titles of literature works for children seem to be separate mini creations, undoubtedly being a structural part and a credible introduction into the whole work*.²⁴

Using his style to play with the double addressee, Landsbergis is oriented towards a child and adult, conveying the latter a political 'message'. The attention of a grown-up person is drawn to the helplessness of the earthly rule against nature, senseless wandering between the political right and left. The minister, bitten by a gnat, orders the vice-ministers to find the criminal, alive or half-dead. (By the way, this motif was also important in the tale *The Gnat* by Vaičiulaitis mentioned above.) The absurd task turns out to be impossible to carry out because of the simple reason that the gnat has wings. This motif reminds us of the classic tale by Hans Christian Andersen *The Wicked Prince* (*Den onde Fyrste*), telling us of a wicked prince craving for absolute power both on earth and in heaven, who has defied God himself and is eager to fight him – his helplessness manifests itself when he is confronted by very small insects, gnats. In this context they become the metaphor of insurmountable human helplessness, vulnerability, and narrow-mindedness: *the mad prince, who wished to make war with God, and was overcome by a single little gnat*.²⁵

Gnat's Image in the Perspective of the Evil and the Good

Returning to the gnat Belly-Button, the character created by Landsbergis, we would like to note that in 2008 the writer wrote a play using this and other characters from the book *The Tales of Gnats*. Commenting on the play, Landsbergis said that *a gnat is an extremely Lithuanian living being, which buzzes loudly and then silently sucks someone's*

blood. [...] *The gnat* [symbolizes – A. G.] *all that we would like to be less prominent in Lithuania. [...] Is the gnat able to love and how it shows its love? One thing is clear: aggression in all its forms, grumbling, and readiness to bite usually are provoked by lack of love.*²⁶ Through the character of Belly-Button the play shows that even the most wicked gnat is capable of transformation when he falls in love.

The topic of gnats' love seemed to be attractive not only to Landsbergis. The Danish film directors Jannik Hastrup and Flemming Quist Møller have made an impressive cartoon *Cykelmyggen og dansemyggen*. The dancer gnat Dagmar is very fond of the gnat Egon. However, he is not that much interested in love – he has an ambition to win the race and go cycling round the world.

As we can see from the logic of the lately written tales, the gnat's image helps to change the usual perspective of the evil and the good. In that sense the tale *The Gnat* by the literary scholar Saulius Žukas is a noteworthy text – here, the human world is seen through the gnat's eyes, the story is presented from the gnat's perspective seeing it as sabotage, wrongdoing, destructive (*Why is it that humans grudge giving the smallest drop of blood? Everyone wants to eat, don't they?*²⁷).

Using the gnat's image, contemporary writers of Lithuanian literary tale do not insist on its importance, proving its significance for keeping the balance of nature – such is the approach of the contemporary British writer Jan Blake who reveals the connection between cause and effect which preconditions the life of all living creatures in her tale *All Things Are Connected*. The tale, by the way, is a clear allusion to *The Wicked Prince* by Andersen: the prince's evil is hyperbolic, he is eager to fight anyone who might infringe his grandeur – God in the tale by Andersen or God's created beings: frogs and gnats in the latter tale:

*'Once upon a time, there was a chief who ruled his people through fear. One night the chief's sleep was disturbed by the singing of the frogs. The frogs kept the mosquitoes at bay by eating their larva. The next morning the chief gathered his people and said: 'The frogs disturb my sleep. They must die. All of you take sticks and stones, go to the swamp and kill each and every one of those frogs.' The people were confused. Was their chief mad? But they knew not to contradict him. So they all left the village, all but one, an old woman, who walked up to the chief. She said: 'You are a fool. Soon you will discover that all things, my friend, are connected.' The chief was taken aback by her defiance, but did nothing. What did an old woman know anyway? That evening the people returned, their sticks bloodied by the frogs. That night the chief slept peacefully, and the following night, but on the third night bzzzzzzzzzz – mosquitoes! – mosquitoes filled his house – mosquitoes filled the village. The next morning, the chief gathered his people: 'The mosquitoes disturb my sleep! Take sticks and stones, go and kill each and every one of them.' This time the people did not listen to their chief; instead they packed up their belongings and left, including the old woman. It was then and only then that the chief understood her words: all things are connected.'*²⁸

By the way, Landsbergis considers the philosophical question of gnat's 'significance' to be of no small importance – in the interview mentioned above he maintains that the idea of writing a play was prompted by the question why God decided to create a gnat.²⁹ This might be the reason writers try to portray a gnat as an attractive character. Commenting on the book *Adventures of the Kitchen Cockroach* by Kunčius, the Lithuanian poet Aidas Marčėnas noticed a general principle, characteristic not only of Kunčius:

[...] different characters, such as the Cockroach himself, the Fly, the Spider, the spearman-jumper Earthworm living in the flower-pot, the Flea, the Moth and others, at first sight not very sympathetic characters, if you have a closer look, turn out to be nice and attractive.³⁰

In the chapter *Gnats' Reanimation*, we see them as professional doctors, helping a Cockroach who fell ill because of eating too much cream. They pump out pesticides, perform artificial respiration meanwhile encouraging the patient: they intend to dance at the Cockroach's wedding after he recovers. Here the writer clearly emphasizes the ecological theme which is very important in the contemporary literature for children.

Lithuanian literary tales do not present such a positive image of a gnat which we find in the literary tale *The Gnat's Merit* by the Latvian writer Anna Sakse. The tale is written in the form of a dialogue between a farmer and a gnat – the latter constantly urges the farmer to do his everyday chores. Here the gnat acts as the farmer's conscience. His character acquires new shades only at the end of the story when he says: *Do you think the peasant would have sown and reaped if I hadn't kept urging him?*³¹ – here the gnat's conceit and boastfulness come to the surface.

One of the most popular contemporary Lithuanian tale writers of the young generation, is a writer with the penname Uliūnė. In her tale *The Fraud Priscil* she, too, chooses to present not only the evil gnat, but also a kind one. Her two published tale books *Sleeping Lady-birds* and *A Different Day in the Cricket's Life*, are dedicated to insects and beetles. The latter takes the reader into the mysterious and beautiful world of the smallest and often unnoticed insects and animals. Allegoric stories, which are not difficult to recognize and decode, mercilessly chastise the maladies of the contemporary society: love for things, conceit, emigration, larceny, wrong competitiveness, when one tries to show off disregarding the means. The society is shown as if in a distorting mirror – disclosing even the mechanism and dynamics of the character's decadence. The tale *The Fraud Priscil* starts by introducing an honourable family of gnats Zyzėnai which used to own a shop of delicacies. However, when Priscil inherits the shop, life there changes. After the first time the gnat succeeds in deceiving the animals, he continues doing it all the time (*The Fraud Priscil*), while the hornet starts stealing induced by the collector's passion (*Collector Hornet*).

Conclusions

As a character, a gnat in creative works of Lithuanian authors may be perceived on different semantic levels. When summarizing all the tales, we can conclude that a gnat with all the possible nuances of meaning is a frequent character in tales. Looking at them diachronically, one notices that nowadays writers are more and more inventive when choosing names for gnats acting as characters in their tales (Caklius, Zyzla, Kyzla, Parsnip, Priscil, etc.), rejecting the traditional ones related only to buzzing (Zyzėnas, Zuzė, Zirzėnas, etc. derived from the Lithuanian word 'zyzti', 'zirzti' – to buzz). Most often contemporary writers choose to have gnat as a character in nonsense tales. The gnat manifests itself in the most interesting and inventive manner in the tales by Uliūnė, Landsbergis, Siudika, Kunčius. The writers allow readers to see the environment through the eyes of gnat (Žukas). In the fairy tale *The Gnat* by the classic of Lithuanian literature, Antanas Vaičiulaitis, the gnat who is attempted to be killed becomes the metaphor for foolishness.

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- ²⁰ Černiauskas R. Skani pasaka, in: *Vaikams, vanagams ir sliekams*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2003. – p. 28
- ²¹ *Ibid.* – p. 28.
- ²² The logic of the tale springs from a dialogue between the begging gnat and the passing by beasts. A she-goat is the first one that is asked by the gnat to eat the thorn, however, she refuses as there is plenty of good grass around. Then the gnat asks a wolf to eat the goat, but he remarks that he likes fat sheep better. The hunter refuses to shoot the wolf because he prefers partridges and quails. A mouse refuses to gnaw the wick of the gun as she likes grapes and almonds better. Even a cat refuses to catch the mouse because she prefers delicacies from the people’s table. Instead of chasing a mouse the dog gnaws a bone. Playing children refuse to ‘skin’ the dog as they are involved in their game. The wind is the only one who feels pity for the gnat: [...] *papūtėit started blowing with all its might and seized the sticks. The children ran after the dog, he started chasing the cat who caught and ate the mouse; frightened, her friend gnawed the wick of the gun. The hunter fired at the wolf, the latter chased the goat who helped the gnat with the thorn. This is the story of a gnat who got rid of a thorn. The Gnat* See: <http://www.pasakorius.lt/tadziku-pasakos/uodas/> (accessed 2012)
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Indrė Žakevičienė

INSECTS AND PLANTS IN LITHUANIAN POETRY: METABLETICAL ASPECT

Summary

The present article aims at revealing the most important aspects of Metabletics or the theory of changes suggested by the Dutch phenomenologist and psychologist Jan Hendrik van den Berg (1914) and applying it to the analysis of the possible interpretations of the images of 'insects'. Metabletics could be described as a systematic study of the changing nature of phenomena of human life as they are lived and experienced. Regarding literature as a phenomenon we chose some poetry texts by Kristijonas Donelaitis, Antanas Baranauskas, Maironis, Stasys Santvaras, Juozas Žlabys, Salomėja Nėris, Janina Degutytė, Antanas Kalanavičius, Aldona Ruseckaitė, Kęstutis Navakas, Valdas Daškevičius and Enrika Striogaitė containing the images of insects and of plants. The analysis made it clear that the so called 'mirroring' of insects during the period of more than hundred years has not changed or the changes were really subtle: we cannot observe any vivid changes – bugs and insects sustained their main characteristics and remained almost the same as in Donelaitis' poetical text, written in the 18th century, only the frequency of the use of such images varies – insects and bugs were rarely mentioned in the first half of the 20th century and 'revived' at the beginning of the 21st century, in the era of high technologies. After this pilot research we can make a conclusion that the main principles of Metabletics could be applied only after a deep and precise analysis of different periods of history and culture, producing research on really important cultural symbols (such as a symbol of tree) or specific events. Nevertheless, even this sketchy research reveals particular changes in our minds reflected in literary texts that seem to vindicate the influence of electronic intelligence on our human consciousness – the smallest ones in some ways became closer and even bigger.

Key-words: insects, bugs, Metabletics, analysis, poetry, image, mimesis, deixis, nature, culture

*

Introduction

Nowadays literary research does not fit into its traditional frame – text and its analysis or interpretation could be treated only as a specific preliminary study, particular common ground for further research. Interdisciplinary look at literary problems suggests more abilities to expand one's outlook and to enrich purely philological knowledge with different information from other spheres of culture at the same time making the boundaries of those spheres wider and the dividing line thinner. The aim of the present article is to consider the original field of Metabletics and to make a pilot research of the validity of its postulates in literary analysis.

Though this preliminary research bears only weak hints at interdisciplinarity, the metabletic method itself stipulates a multiple look and provokes original ideas about the possibilities to read culture and to relate it to the history of a human being. *Metabletics was first introduced by J. H. van den Berg as a systematic study of the changing nature of human existence. It can be described as the systematic study of the changing nature of phenomena of human life as they are lived and experienced. It addresses and explores human existence as given in relationship within a specific historical and social – cultural context.*¹ Before introducing theoretical and practical principles of Metabletics, it should be mentioned that, in this case, the usage of the images of different insects will be discussed having in mind Lithuanian poetry of the last century and of the beginning of the third millennium.

Referring to the results of previous research made in 2011² that concluded that the image of a tree in Lithuanian literature had experienced great transformations and ‘degraded’ from the specific code of human unity and particular security to the metaphor of violence and solitude, an assumption could be made that those images of insects (or the associations they provoke) have been transformed as well. The main principles of Metabletic should help to confirm or to reject the formulated assumption.

The Main Principles of Metabletics

The Dutch phenomenologist and psychologist Jan Hendrik van den Berg (1914) suggested three theoretical and three practical principles of Metabletics; theoretical principles – the principle of non-disturbance of phenomena, the principle of reality, and the principle of change – stipulate practical ones (the principle of synchronicity, the principle of the unique event, and the principle of emphasis).³ The most interesting and informative theoretical principle is the second one, according to which *Metabletics sees a phenomenon as real and endorses a single reality. Herein it departs and differs from Husserlian phenomenology in that it rejects the distinction between a phenomenon as it appears and its existence in reality. It holds instead that the phenomenon as it reveals itself is real and exists as such in the world. Metabletics also rejects the Freudian notion of the unconscious as a different reality. Instead, it claims that there is only one reality, i.e., the single, concrete, materialistic reality of our daily life – that is, the way we live, eat, drink, work and travel. Van den Berg emphasizes that we live in the primary structure of daily realism, in contrast to the secondary structure invented by science.*⁴

The main aim of the article could be reached after completing one of the main tasks – to discuss the changes of the images of bugs and insects in Lithuanian poetry. The starting point of such analysis could be Kristijonas Donelaitis’ (1714 – 1780) epical poem *The Seasons (Metai)* written in the period of 1765 – 1775 and published by Liudvikas Rėza in 1818. The author of *The Seasons* gave the closest look at the smallest creatures – bugs and insects living side by side with people and making influence on their everyday life; those creatures are equally important as birds, animals, and plants, and live their small lives under the same rules dictated by the sun and the cycles of nature:

*The countless flies and bugs, mosquitos, gnats and fleas
In ever growing swarms were rallying each day
And gaping all around to sting the rich and poor.*

[..]
*Secluded in the nooks, lean spiders spun their threads,
 Or, scaling up and down, stretched long entrapping nets.*⁵

[Musės ir vabalai, uodai su kaimene blusų
 Mus jau vargint vėl pulkais visur susirinko
 Ir ponus taip, kaip būrus, įgelt išsižiojo.

[..]
 O vorai kampuos sėdėdami verpalus audė
 Irgi medžiot tinklus tyloms kopinėdami mezgė.^{6]}

Donelaitis established a particular spectrum of roles those bugs and insects could play in literary texts; in his case the roles distributed were very close to the functions of insects in reality.

According to J. H. van den Berg, cultural phenomena usually reflect the psychological state of the society. *His extensive metabletic investigation, in which he always situated the human being in a historical, social, and cultural context, revealed that, from the Middle Ages up to the 17th century, Western society was still relatively coherent and relationships between people were visible, accessible, and comprehensible. However, towards the end of the 18th century, society had changed and had become increasingly divided, separated, and disconnected.*⁷ The philosopher was speaking about Western society, but the situation in Lithuania should not have been so different. Possibly this generally experienced separation stipulated a better common focus on and closer look at the smallest creatures and inspired the attempts to depict them in the most persuasive ways?..

Another Lithuanian poet, Antanas Baranauskas (1835 – 1902), famous for his great poem dedicated to Lithuanian nature and to the homeland he loved so much, *The Forest of Anykščiai (Anykščių šilelis)*, has not mentioned any bugs or insects at all, though has depicted all the apparent hierarchy of the wood – from the variety of mushrooms and moss to different birds and animals. Various soothing sounds and sweet aromas do not embrace any drone or buzz of the smallest inhabitants of the forest. The same could be said about the creative work of Lithuanian classic Maironis (1862 – 1932); in his selection of verse *Voices of Spring (Pavasario balsai)*, 1895) he used the image of butterflies only once and made no other allusions towards any bugs or insects (though he was fond of lilies, roses, rue, oaks, birches, etc.). As it is stated in the first principle of non-disturbance of phenomena, *a metabletic investigation of a phenomenon should leave the phenomenon intact as it manifests itself in a particular time and place in history and within a certain context. The phenomenon should not be disturbed or distorted and no detail should be isolated or eliminated.*⁸ We can make an assumption that Baranauskas and Maironis, inspired by romantic ideas and living in the period of Lithuanian National Revival, felt obliged to create a wider and richer landscape and historical panorama of their homeland, therefore this separation or division of the 18th century was replaced by spiritual unity with those who were not indifferent to their country and its people. Such small creatures as bugs and insects could not represent any noble and sublime ideas, therefore they gave place to the images of trees and flowers, growing in groups and representing the possibility for the human society to flourish.

Images of Insects in Lithuanian Poetry of the First Part of the 20th Century

A superficial look at the representatives of Lithuanian poetry of the first half of the 20th century invites the conclusion that the images of insects are no rivals to those of plants – the latter were much more popular in the texts by the poets of the *interbellum* period (1918 – 1940). In 1929, a book of verse was published that was dedicated to the tenth anniversary of Lithuanian Independence under the title *Eighteen Poets. The First Decade*. The editor of the book, Petras Kubilevičius wrote in the Introduction:

*The authors of the anthology are the younger and the youngest poets. The book is being dedicated to the anniversary of our Independence. Because of that almost all the members of the anthology are the poets who started writing during the first decade of our independent life.*⁹

The poems for the anthology were suggested by the authors themselves and, according to the editor, they represented the most characteristic features of the particular poets' work. In one hundred and twenty five poems there are only three texts of poetry where you can find the image of **butterfly** and the image of **lightning-bug**. It is obvious that this period of specific modernisation of culture was represented by blooms, roses, cloves, and flowers – inseparable guides of secession. *Speaking about the motifs characteristic to the works of art created in Art Nouveau usually one should mention the motifs of flora, fauna, microorganisms, figure of a woman, the motifs of organic fantastic creatures; admiration of all the living world was one of the life-forces of this style.*¹⁰ The artists were especially fond of the processes of growth and development; the constructs of 'youth', 'spring', 'dance' or 'kiss' were extremely popular.¹¹ Vitality and power of feelings could be better expressed by means of the images of lush swinging trees, odorous blooms, and graceful girls resembling swans. Butterfly could be the best of all small creatures to convey the joy of love and intensity of life in blossom.

In Stasys Santvaras' (1902 – 1991) text of poetry, *The Tales of the Days Thawed* (*Atšilusių dienų pasakaitės*), published in the anthology mentioned above, the image of butterflies adds to the poem the vitality of springtime and creates the dynamics of the whole text:

*The butterflies are going mad / And frogs appear around the ponds.*¹²

[Antai jau peteliškės dūksta / Ir varlės renkas pabalais.¹³]

Butterflies encode the variety of colours, fragile joy of spring, and hopes for the future fulfilment. Salomeja Nėris (1904 – 1945) used this image in her poem *To the Burning Fireplace* (*Į degantį židinį*) reviving the same emotions and expanding their realm with some more of them:

*Farewell, my dreams, farewell, my butterflies! – / The flowers of far-away shores
unreached!*

[Sudievu, svajonės, sudievu, plaštakės! – / Jūs gėlės anų, nepasiektų, krantų!¹⁴]

Butterfly turns into a particular ideal aim – easy to dream and difficult to reach. Ephemeral dream encloses all possible characteristics of a butterfly – it can be bright, not so easy to catch, without any limitations and therefore requiring no obligations.

The third case in the anthology is represented by Juozas Žlabys' (1899 – 1992) poem *Springtime Christ* (Pavasario Kristus) where he uses the image of butterflies as a metaphor to denote young girls:

And bells were calling to the church: / Be quick, be quick, you butterflies!

[O varpas šaukė į bažnyčią: / Skubėkite, skubėkite, plaštakės!¹⁵]

In this text, the metaphor of butterflies could be compared with the butterflies used by Santvaras; if we try to concentrate on free associations and images, it occurs that Santvaras' butterflies bear the same emotional charge as the images of two other poets mentioned, characterised as the authors of richer metaphors or provoking more 'flights' of imagination. So a conclusion can be made that the metaphor of butterflies used in three poems of one hundred and five other poetical texts is rather clear and sort of universal, conveying a rather wide but unambiguous meaning.

Literary Representation of Insects in the Soviet Period

During the Soviet period, Lithuanian poetry was really rich in different nature images. One of the most famous women poets of that period, Janina Degutytė (1928 – 1990) is well known for her unbelievable attention to nature: in her selection of verse *Proximity* (*Artumas*) issued in 1995 the titles of her poetical texts are rather telling in this respect – *Oak Trees, Birches, Apple-trees in Blossoms, A Tree, A Fern, Thymes, Heaths* and so on. Extremely deep bond to nature is one of the most vivid and important features of Degutytė's poetry, but in this volume of one hundred eighteen pages you can find not a single bee, grasshopper, butterfly, or any other small creatures. Particular characteristics of the epoch – Soviet grandiosity and stagnation – could have influenced the atmosphere of the texts: Degutytė was not inclined towards any ideological time-serving, but it is obvious that her texts contain more calm serenity than vital existence or high-spirited emotions, easy to encode invoking images of swift winged insects.

Van den Berg's principle of change *is clearly the most central to the metabletic method. It holds that phenomena have not always been the same but that they have changed, or have newly emerged, over the course of history. Van den Berg emphasized the reality and the concreteness of change and provided ample illustrations of the way people and things have changed over the course of time.*¹⁶ The 20th century marked great changes in human cultural history:

*After World War I, transnational bonding manifested itself in several forms and levels, among them Marxism, surrealism, and comparative literature. The universal man in the framework of a one-world image was the basis of all three movements, which of course were far apart in terms of the particular content of such images. In contrast, the second part of the century will be noted in history for its drive to split: split the atom, split nations into underlying ethnicities, split the ego in a formidable dialogism with the 'other', even split the two sexes into five.*¹⁷

The situation in Soviet countries was slightly different, sort of doubled – imaginary unity and solidarity concealed this split and gave birth to ambiguous texts and specific images. Antanas Kalanavičius (1945 – 1992) was a master of such images; his texts are full of vitality of nature and harmony in everything that is around us. In his cycle of

poems *Slender Chants (Progiesmiai)*, he used images of different insects to represent unique authentic states of being, encoding deep understanding of the power and charm of one's existence and complicated but harmonious relations between the members of one powerful system which is called life on Earth:

*Green twilight
as if
the flight of dragoon-fly
is sparkling.*

[Prietema žalia
nelyginant jau
laumžirgio
lėkimas blizga.¹⁸]

Unexpected parallels provoked by original metaphors reach to the so-called ecological unconscious eco-psychologists are so interested in, reconnecting the reader with the essence of being – creating the primary sense of unity with one's environment. *Greenish twilight* could be grasped as a miraculous space that encompasses mysteries of nature and of one's being at the same time; the image of dragoon-fly could be treated as a sign of temporariness and transiency, sparkling moment of particular enlightenment, when everything seems clear and fair. The same specific moment of encompassing the power of nature is inscribed in other six lines of the cycle, only in this case free associations bring one to the realm of sounds:

*Only the chirr of grasshoppers
on other evening in the grass –
the stream of dew, could say,
among the stones,
its wavelet just sparkles
rippling.*

[tiktai žiogų čirpimas
vakarą aną žolėj –
sakytumei rasos
šaltinis, jisai tarp akmenų
taip žėri, čirenanti
bangelė jo.¹⁹]

The same reconnection with nature is being revived by sounds and music of the smallest ones, so in this text the grasshopper – as in previous poem the dragoon-fly – encodes traditional meanings – dynamics and music of nature.

One more state of being – grief or painful longing – is represented by another emotionally strong image of flying ants, provoking associations with stinging bites of little black creatures:

*The rain is sharp as if
those bloody tears were falling,
as if were falling
feathered ants like
little horses.*

[Aštrus lietus tarytum
lytų kraujo ašarom,
tarytum lytų
sparnuotais skruzdėlių
žirgeliais.²⁰]

The energy of the horse and the intensity of pouring rain associated with *feathered ants* emphasize the power of little creatures and even place them above a human being: falling of ants as falling of rain cannot be stopped by human will. So in this case it is clear that, as in the preceding examples, the small beings are represented by emphasizing their most vivid characteristics and using them as a specific link between the worlds of culture and nature, which should be united for the sake of people and their environment.

Kalanavičius used to write at the same time as Degutytė, so according to the principles of Metabolics his texts should reflect the same hints of stagnation and gloom of the Soviet regime; nevertheless, his poetry is full of life and mysteries of nature. Such contradiction could be explained by the practical principle of unique event:

[...] we should pay attention to the words, the acts, and the writings of a leading person – in short, to his or her unique event. Van den Berg believes that the discovery or insight of one or a few people is more important than the discovery of a group.²¹

The effect of such ‘ecotexts’ made on the readers depends on the position of the author towards the whole biosphere, on his or her attitude towards everyday existence and himself or herself, when one’s personal *ego* is grasped not as the centre of everything, but as the spring of one powerful flow of life. Kalanavičius’ unique talent to listen to nature and to hear it is transformed into poetical texts.

Insects in Recent Lithuanian Poetry

The end of the 20th century and the third millennium brought in some new tendencies of the images discussed. In the books by four randomly chosen authors, Aldona Ruseckaitė (1950), Kęstutis Navakas (1964), Enrika Striogaitė (1967) and Valdas Daškevičius (1961), there are rather many images of insects and a lot of them are really significant for the general meaning of the texts. It would be useful to have a closer look at some of the poems.

Ruseckaitė’s poetry is the most suitable for such analysis because of its great attention to nature as a teacher of a human being. Insects and plants are the main subjects of her poetical texts in her selection of verse under the title *Run, Wagtail, Run (Bėk, kiele, bėk)*, published in 2006. A human being and an insect are connected by the invisible bond of faithfulness to life:

*I will not give my life to death to illness and despair
I’ll claw at it as at the shield – take hold
stay hand in hand together with the weakest ones on earth.*

*The butterfly appears out of the ray
yellow and black strange ornaments
and flutters over the blooms of lilac and plays amid the shadows
it’ll be strong only until the rain and storm
but at this moment its beauty is eternal and amazing.*

[Neatiduosiu savo gyvenimo mirčiai ligai ir nevilčiai
įsitversiu tarsi į skydą – laikykis
kartu su pasaulio silpnaisiais susikibus laikykis.

Iš spindulio išsiritą drugelis
juodai geltona ornamentika keistokas karpinys
plevena virš alyvos žiedlapių ir žaidžia tarp šešėlių
užteks jėgų kol nepakils čia vėjas ir nesušniokš lietus –
bet šitą mirksnį jo grožis amžinas ir įstabus.^{22]}

The image of ‘butterfly’ has exactly the same meaning as in the texts written in the first half of the 20th century, only in Ruseckaitė’s case it is used not as a code but as particular direct reference to butterfly, as citation of reality.

American experts in Ecocriticism, William Howarth and Aaron Duncel emphasised the role of mimesis and deixis in literature; according to them the function of language to represent (mimesis) is equally important as its function to point (deixis):

Through deixis, meaning develops from what is said or signed relative to physical space: I-you, here-there, this-that. Common as air or water, deixis expresses relative direction and orientation, the cognitive basis for description [...]. In learning to read land, one can’t just name objects but point to what they do.²³

As regards mimesis, Duncel points out that, *the more ‘true’ and technically perfect the representation is, the more alienated from the original the reader or viewer becomes. [...] the closer the simulated experience comes to appearing ‘actual’, the farther removed one is from real contact with the environment. [...] whereas mimesis implies alienation and objectification, deixis implies familiarization and the place of the subject in relation to objects. Mimesis encourages us to accept a dualistic conception of nature and culture, but we learn to live in the world through deictic act of orientation. Orientation and ‘reading’ or ‘translation’ are conceived as two basic facets of the linguistic procedure by which we familiarize ourselves with our environmental home.²⁴* While reading literary text, we are losing touch with the world outside and at the same time getting in touch with those invisible links poetry reveals. Mimesis fulfilled by Ruseckaitė is complete and precise, almost the same as in Donelaitis’ text.

Navakas has a bit more of ‘deictic orientation’ and is capable to create the effect of greater alienation; his poem *In the Domain of Insects*²⁵ could be a good illustration of this assumption:

*in this pure domain of insects we both
are lying in one other’s palms – have a look
fragile life above us and how much of it
swings in spiky air – have a look
they observe us with eyes seen by us
in those greyish paper magazines
have a look ...*

[vaiskioj vabzdžių viešpatijoj abu
gulim paėmę kits kitą į delnus – žvelki
kiek virš mūsų trapios gyvybės
pašinuotam ore tyvuliuoja – žvelki
jie stebi mus akimis kurias matėme
andai pilkšvuos popierinius žurnaluos
žvelki...^{26]}

Insects and human beings represent their own realities and observe each other with equal curiosity. Deictic movement to *greyish paper magazines* seems to make the reality closer – mimetic representation appears more real than reality itself.

Striogaitė's poems could be treated as specific fusion of Kalanavičius' vitality and easy to grasp associations encoded by the *interbellum* poets mentioned above. Fragile world of insects mirror shifting emotions of a human being:

[..] *and that is all, water around / and butterflies sunk in waters / beating with wings
autumn is high / bloodsuckers fly nonstopping [..]*

[[..] *regis jau viskas, aplinkui vanduo / ir vandeny išmirkę drugiai / plaka sparnais
aukštai ruduo / skrenda kraujalakiai [..]*^{27]}

Daškevičius uses the images of insects as if enlisting other members of biosphere into one big circle of life and constant change, emphasizing unity and equality of all the bonds of this living chain:

*This land belongs to grass
to snails, to mice, to butterflies
this land – for quails and moles
for bushes, mushrooms and for rabbits.*

*This land was rented for the sake of us
until the end of term and later
we'll be able to use it without restrain ...*

[Ši žemė yra žolės,
sraigių, pelių, drugelių,
ši žemė – putpelių, kurmių,
krūmokšnių, pievagrybių, kiškių.

šią žemę jie mums išnuomojo
iki terminas baigsis, vėliau
ja galėsime naudotis be apribojimų...^{28]}

Plants and animals in this case become central and far more powerful than *homo sapiens*. So why did such a specific need to pay attention to the smallest creatures and to admire them occur exactly at the beginning of the 21st century? Could Metabletics provide an answer to this question? Could it be so that the era of high technologies stipulates the demand of rethinking the place we are living in considering all other inhabitants, insects included? Maybe this enormous electronic network helps us encompass all those schisms and separations of the 20th century and build virtual bridges to every visible object of our environment, even the smallest one, and in order to see and understand better we need virtual reality, for this genuine reality most often is out of reach because of the lack of time. Maybe because of that insects and bugs are revived in literary texts once again, only not as mimetic creatures, but as deictic tokens of the authentic reality.

Conclusions

As it was mentioned at the beginning, the former research of the metabletic development of the image of a tree revealed a rather interesting fact: during several hundred years the forest (or friendly community of powerful trees) has turned into an oasis of harmony and beauty, refreshing or even animating human spirit and at the same time reflecting it. The emotional field of the image of tree has obviously changed in the 20th century: the former forests ‘disbanded’ and the images of separate trees remained, the trees usually hold no former aura of careful ‘supervisors’ and kind-hearted supporters, sometimes they even cannot keep on their roots. So this preliminary sketchy analysis revealed the obvious change of the meaning (or maybe, to be still more exact, the ‘mirroring’) of a tree, affirming the assumption that human generations do change. One of the main Baltic symbols – the tree – is still important nowadays, but it starts losing its symbolic sacredness and gains more and more characteristics of a human being. While speaking about the images of insects used in Lithuanian poetry during the period of more than hundred years, we cannot observe any vivid changes – bugs and insects sustained their main characteristics and remained almost the same as in Donelaitis’ poem written in the 18th century, only the frequency of the use of such images varied – insects and bugs were rarely mentioned in the first part of the 20th century and got ‘revived’ at the beginning of the 21st century, in the era of high technologies. The present pilot research invites the conclusion that the main principles of Metabletics could be applied only after a deep and precise analysis of different periods of history and culture, studying really important cultural symbols (such as the symbol of a tree) or specific events. Nevertheless, even this sketchy research revealed particular changes in our minds reflected in literary texts and as if vindicating the influence of the electronic intelligence on our human conscious – the smallest ones in some ways become closer and even bigger.

¹ Mook B. The Metabletic Method: An Interdisciplinary Look at Human Experience, in: *Phenomenology & Practice*, No. 1, 2009. – p. 26.

² The results of the research were published in the literary magazine *Acta Humanitarica Universitatis Saulensis* No. 13, 2011, in the article by Indrė Žakevičienė *Medis metabletikos aspektu*.

³ Mook B. The Metabletic Method: An Interdisciplinary Look at Human Experience, in: *Phenomenology & Practice*, No. 1, 2009. – p. 27.

⁴ Van den Berg, J. H. *Het menselijk lichaam*, Deel II. Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1965. The material of the research was referred to in the article of Betha Mook.

⁵ Translation by Nadas Rastenis was made in 1967. Quoted from <http://members.efn.org/~valdas/spring.html> (accessed 2012).

⁶ Quoted from *Lietuvių klasikinės literatūros antologija* <http://www.antologija.lt/index.html> (accessed 2011)

⁷ Mook B. The Metabletic Method: An Interdisciplinary Look at Human Experience, in: *Phenomenology & Practice*, No. 1, 2009. – p. 28.

⁸ *Ibid.* – p. 26.

⁹ Kubilevičius P. Redaktorius žodis, in: *18 poety. Pirmas dešimtmetis*. Kaunas: Mikas Gudaitis, 1929. – p. 4.

¹⁰ Wallis M. *Secesja*. Warszawa: Arkady, 1967. – p. 206.

- ¹¹ Mykolaitytė A. *Gražiosios epochos stilistika: literatūriniai XX a. pradžios žaidimai*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla, 2010.
- ¹² Here and henceforth word by word translations of the poems cited are made by Indrė Žakevičienė.
- ¹³ Santvaras S. Atšilusių dienų pasakaitės, in: *18 poetų. Pirmas dešimtmetis*. Kaunas: Mikas Gudaitis, 1929. – p. 163.
- ¹⁴ Nėris S. Į degantį židinį, in: *18 poetų. Pirmas dešimtmetis*. Kaunas: Mikas Gudaitis, 1929. – p. 142.
- ¹⁵ Žlabys J. Pavasario Kristus, in: *18 poetų. Pirmas dešimtmetis*. Kaunas: Mikas Gudaitis, 1929. – p. 254.
- ¹⁶ Mook B. The Metabletic Method: An Interdisciplinary Look at Human Experience, in: *Phenomenology & Practice*, No. 1, 2009. – p. 27.
- ¹⁷ Balakian A. Theorizing Comparison: The Pyramid of Similitude and Difference, in: *World Literature Today*, Spring, 1995. – p. 263.
- ¹⁸ *Lietuvių klasikinės literatūros antologija* <http://www.antologija.lt/index.html> (accessed 2012)
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Mook B. The Metabletic Method: An Interdisciplinary Look at Human Experience, in: *Phenomenology & Practice*, No. 1, 2009. – p. 27.
- ²² Ruseckaitė A. *Bėk, kiele, bėk*. Kaunas: Naujasis lankas, 2006. – p. 108.
- ²³ Dunckel A. Mont Blanc. Shelly's Sublime. Allegory of the Real, in: Glotfelty Ch., H. Fromm (eds.) *The Ecocriticism Reader*. The University of Georgia Press, 1996. – p. 212.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Navakas K. *Pargriautas barokas*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1996. – p. 13.
- ²⁶ *Lietuvių klasikinės literatūros antologija* <http://www.antologija.lt/index.html> (accessed 2012)
- ²⁷ Striogaitė E. *Lyja*. Kaunas: Nemunas, 2004. – p. 58.
- ²⁸ Daškevičius V. Nuosavybės teisė, in: *Misterija*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2006. – p. 28.

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Arkādijs Neminuščijs

VLADISLAV STAREVICH AND HIS 'TRAINED' BEETLES

Summary

Vladislav Starevich (1882 – 1965) occupies a special place in the history of the 20th century Russian and European culture. Though he did not receive any systematic education, Starevich was nevertheless interested in collecting and investigating insects, particularly beetles of diverse species and types. Cinematography was another object of his interest. At an early stage of development of cinematography, Starevich demonstrated ingenious experiments and invented a unique technology of producing insect cast models for filming in the format of three-dimensional animation. The best animation films by Starevich became veritable cultural events and as such they can be regarded along with Walt Disney's masterpieces.

Key-words: Starevich, biology, beetles, culture, cinematography, animation

*

Introduction

Vladislav Starevich is a unique and in many senses mysterious personality who up to now has been almost totally forgotten. At present there is no complete and feasible biography of this person, and sources like fragmentary memories of his contemporaries, short articles and reviews in magazines and newspapers, interviews with his relatives often create an imprecise and contradictory picture. Hence, even his exact birth-place has not been registered: in some cases Moscow is mentioned, while other sources mention Kovno (Kaunas). If we ignore obvious guesswork and legends, it is possible to state with relative certainty that Starevich, who was a descendant of a poverty stricken Polish gentry family, really learned at gymnasium in Kaunas. After leaving it he for some years worked as a treasury official in Wilno (Vilnius). Though in some publications it is stated that he was a biologist, there is no information concerning his studies at any university. Obviously, this may be explained by his grand-daughter's assertions in her memoirs that Starevich as a child was passionately carried away by observing insects, even to such a degree that because of these observations he used to miss compulsory church services and classes at gymnasium (he was even expelled from it for punishment)¹. Cinematography was another of his passions; this list may be extended to painting and photography. Most probably, all of these factors together gave rise to the phenomenon of Starevich.

The Phenomenon of Vladislav Starevich

During his life, Starevich gathered a huge collection of insects, particularly beetles of diverse species. His hobby turned into professional activity in 1909 when Starevich came to Moscow and applied for work to French cinema companies *Pathe* and *Gaumont*,

yet his offer was rejected. After some time he got acquainted with the founder of Russian cinematography, Aleksandr Khanzhonkov who noticed the talent of the young provincial eccentric and signed a contract with him trusting him with cine-camera. Starevich's first filming experience was related to short documentaries about dragonflies and scarab beetles; however, this was just preparation for his major projects. Having settled in Moscow, he started working at Khanzhonkov's cinema factory and his work turned out to be revolutionary in the format of animation. This happened in 1912 when Starevich, in fact completely alone, just supported by his family, for the first time in the history of cinematography created several three-dimensional animation movies: *Beautiful Lucanida* (*Прекрасная Люканида*), *Aviation Week of Insects* (*Авиационная неделя насекомых*), and *Revenge of the Cinema Cameraman* (*Месть кинематографического оператора*).

Undoubtedly, on the one hand, Starevich just continued the rich tradition of depicting insects in diverse cultural texts. Without going into the mythological layer, one may just mention the most conspicuous examples of this, e.g., images of sacred scarab beetles were used in jewelry ornaments in the ancient Egypt as well as in Albrecht Dürer's prints and paintings by Bosch and the *Little Dutchmen*. The literary range of insect imagery is no less impressive including *Golden Beetle* by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Beetle Hunter* by Arthur Conan-Doyle, *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka as well as a great number of poetic texts of various genres. However, none of the visual or verbal texts had equal opportunities to those that were granted to Starevich by cinematography.

As he later recalled, his initial intention was filming the coupling ritual of stag-beetles. Male and female beetles were placed into a specially constructed setting and after some time they started moving, but as soon as the light was switched on the beetles stiffened. After several unsuccessful attempts it became clear that it was impossible to work with live insects. This urged the amateur naturalist to seek for a cardinaly new solution. The main idea of his invention could be regarded from two aspects: the entomologically cinematographic and the aesthetic one. Starevich invented a unique technique, the details of which remain unknown even nowadays. Making use of his excellent knowledge of the anatomy and behaviour of insects, Starevich produced insect puppets from fragments of dissected beetles, painted wax, rubber and other materials; he supplied all their moving parts with microscopic pivots, and by means of the so-called sequenced shooting delicately imitated movements of live insects².

In April, 1912, Starevich with great effort completed his first ten-minute film based on his own screenplay and offered it to the audience. The reaction to this film may be described as a shock mixed with rapture. Even the connoisseurs of film criticism perceived what they saw on the screen as the result of some kind of magic training by means of which the author of the film had not only made the beetles move in the frame in a particular way but even turned them into 'actors'. One of the reviewers referring to the opinion of the majority of the audience wrote, *It is clear for us that the insects have been trained in a most amazing way, it just remains unclear how he made them dress up*.³ By the way, this myth was for a long time sustained by both Starevich himself and his colleagues from Khanzhonkov's cinema company.

However, the amateur film artist's invention was not just a technical 'trick'; it also entailed an aesthetic element as was stated above. To appreciate it, several conditions should be taken into consideration. One may say that Starevich since his young days had been endowed with a critical and ironic frame of mind. Hence, while learning at the

gymnasium, he produced not only a hand-written entomological journal but also a satirical publication *Scribblings and Blots* (*Каракули и кляксы*); later during his work career he edited the satirical magazine *Wasp* (*Оса*) where he openly ridiculed his bosses also drawing caricatures. Therefore it is natural that the most successful début works by Starevich, *Beautiful Lucanida* and *Revenge of the Cinema Cameraman* were created in the parody genre. The most popular with the mass audience kinds of cinematography became objects of his parody, melodrama being one of them. All Europe was shedding tears when watching in the movie theatres the twists of love stories with the stock set of pseudo-romantic characters and sentimental collisions that soon turned into clichés. In the pre-war years, the Dutch actress Asta Nielsen was a superstar of such 'chef-d'oeuvres'; in Russia her competitor was Vera Kholodnaya. Adultery was a stock element of the plot of these films. Costume historical movies (or colossus movies) were another very popular genre, with mass battaglia scenes, episodes of nature catastrophes (e.g., *The Last Days of Pompeii*) that were produced *en masse* by the Italian film director Mario Caserini⁴.

The film *Beautiful Lucanida* brought together the features of melodrama and pseudo-historical 'blockbuster'. Besides it must be taken into account that it had been intended by Starevich not as a naturalistic film sketch but a feature animation. Therefore he endowed his insect characters with human features. Biologists know very well that insects lack any mimicry, but the main characters of Starevich's film do have it. In order to produce mimicry expressions, hundreds of masks were made from soft material and one by one were put on the puppet. According to the well-known cultural theorist Mikhail Yampolskiy, the appearance of mimicry masks of insects became one of the parodic features of the film.⁵ Starevich's film has a set of characters associated with the tradition of chivalry novel: king Cervus with his wife Lucanida (long-horn beetles) and the noble count Heros who is in love with the queen (snout beetle). In the names of his characters Starevich plays with the Latin names of insects (Lucanus cervus is the name of stag-beetles) and the ancient Greek name Heros can be translated as 'hero'. The film has a complete set of elements – a passionate love story, rivalry between the old king and the young count, a wide-scale war between the troops of diverse beetles, and the death of the lovers. However, Starevich mocks the intrigue so skilfully that even during the most touching scenes the audience roared with laughter instead of shedding tears. This film was on for almost ten years; yet it should be noted that after the revolution in 1917 it was given a new title, *Courtesan on the Throne* (*Куртизанка на троне*), and it was shown even after the author's emigration to France where he stayed until his death.

The film *Revenge of the Cinema Cameraman* was made in a slightly different, yet also comically-parodic variation, where the plot was again based on a love story with adultery elements. The main heroes of this film are a married couple, the Zhukovs (their roles are again played by stag-beetles), artist Usacini (snout beetle), grasshopper-cameraman, and a ballet dancer dragonfly, in whom the audience of those days easily recognized the famous dancer Isadora Duncan. The tangled relations among the characters bring the offended grasshopper to shooting through a key-hole the adulterous joys of Zhukov and the ballerina; this exposing film is afterwards shown in a movie theatre where the grasshopper's rival comes to relax with his wife. Here the author obviously ridicules not only salon melodrama but also cinematography as such that had by that time started chasing scandalous smart set sensations.

Starevich's cinematography career was rather long; all in all he created more than fifty innovative works. Until his emigration from Russia he managed to produce several animation films for children and screenings of Russian classical fiction, first of all by his favourite author Gogol (in this case he also for the first time in the world practice joined the play of real actors and puppet characters). In 1913 the film *Dragonfly and Ant* (*Стрекоза и муравей*) after the well-known fable by Ivan Krilov was produced, in which Starevich as a real connoisseur of the life of insects did not hesitate to correct the Russian classical writer. In his film the dragonfly is in fact a grass-hopper just because, unlike the approximate poetic interpretation of the dragonfly by Krilov, dragonflies do not sing like cicadas do, neither do they sit beneath the bushes but always only upon them.

At the end of the 1930s he completed the ten years long work at the puppet variant of screening of the medieval novel *Le Roman du Renard* (once again, for the first time in the practice of cinematography, a full-length animation feature film was produced) where apart from insects there are other animals involved in the action that were perceived by European audience as live and excellently trained. Notwithstanding the insistent invitations, Starevich did not agree to move to America to work in Hollywood; he limited himself to consultations because he highly valued his individual freedom. The high estimation of his creative work is manifested in the words of Starevich's great contemporary Walt Disney who said that this man had outpaced all animators of the world for several decades.

Conclusions

Starevich's creative work is one of the few samples of the history of culture that demonstrates the huge potentialities of the synthesis of science and art. On the basis of fundamental knowledge of biology, the amateur cinematographer made a revolution in the techniques and poetics of animation. The results of his inventions were applied in the genre of animation of the 20th century as well, also at the level when computer technologies started to be used in cinematography.

¹ Conversation between Leona Beatrice Starevich-Martain and Francois Martain about Vladislav Starevich and his puppets <http://www.otkakva.ru/interview/starevich> (accessed 2009)

² Гинзбург С. *Рисованный и кукольный фильм*. Москва: Искусство, 1957. — с. 123.

³ *Вестник кинематографии* № 26, 1912. — с. 37.

⁴ Теплиц Е. *История киноискусства в 4 томах*. Т. 1. Москва: Искусство, 1971. — с. 83.

⁵ Ямпольский М. Старевич: Мимика насекомых и культурная традиция, in: *Язык — тело — случай: Кинематограф и поиски смысла*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, 2004. — с. 151.

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Zeltīte Barševska

A LADYBIRD MOTIF AS AN ENTOMOMORPHIC ELEMENT IN CROCHETED TOWEL END LACE OF LATGALE

Summary

Geometrical ornament is a characteristic feature of Latvian folk art, nevertheless plant or floral and animal or zoomorphic elements are rare. The article provides information about entomomorphic (beetle) element – a stylized ladybird motif – in the crocheted towel lace in Latgale (Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi). The ladybird has two big and two small spots on each wing, with a pronounced elytral suture, six legs, and a head with two antennae.

Key-words: ornament, entomomorphic element, ladybird motif, towel, crocheted lace, Latgale.

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The adornments of towel end lace have developed centuries ago. The most ancient of them are tied and braided warp fringes, which George Manzel (*Georgius Mancelius*, 1593 – 1654) mentioned already at the beginning of the 17th century.¹

Later, at the beginning of the 19th century, knippelled lace appeared in towel ends. In the middle of the 19th century, knitted lace was to be found, but by the end of this century (1880s) and especially in the early 20th century, crocheted lace became very popular as a towel end adornment. However, embroidered tulle lace was still rare. The local trade traditions, European fashion tendencies in hand-made articles and art styles of the investigated period, which appear in the Latvian territory, with a certain offset in time caused these changes in towel end adornment.

Those handicraft techniques that best of all correspond to the mentality of the nation, its sense of style, and the depiction of the characteristic Latvian geometric ornament were preserved and perfected in the nation's experience. Therefore, it seems that the craftswomen of Latgale have chosen the crochet technique as one of the most popular techniques for making towel end lace.²

The aim of the present research is to identify the popularity of entomomorphic or beetle elements in the traditional Latgalian towel design, in particular, in crocheted towel end lace used at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century. The research material has been collected by the author of this article and Daugavpils University students (1997 – 2010) in 117 different places of Latgale region. The collected material visually characterises 326 traditional towels (photographies, ornament report technical drawings, ornament samples) and provides information about the authors of these materials (names, place of their residence, purposes for which the towels were made, etc.).

An original classification of towels has been developed after summarizing and analysing the results of the research. The basis of this classification is common features of crocheted lace (colour, the number of lace, crocheting manner and technique, form, composition), placing a special emphasis on ornament elements.³

Geometrical ornament is a characteristic feature of Latvian folk art, nevertheless plant (floral) and fauna (zoomorphic) elements are rare. Stylized and geometrized animal motifs are seldom used in crocheted towel end lace design. In the collected research materials, the laces of seven towels (2.14% of all the collection) have zoomorphic ornaments: birds and hares. These towels were mainly made in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s. Animal motifs may appear in the syntheses with the elements of plants (see Figure 1).

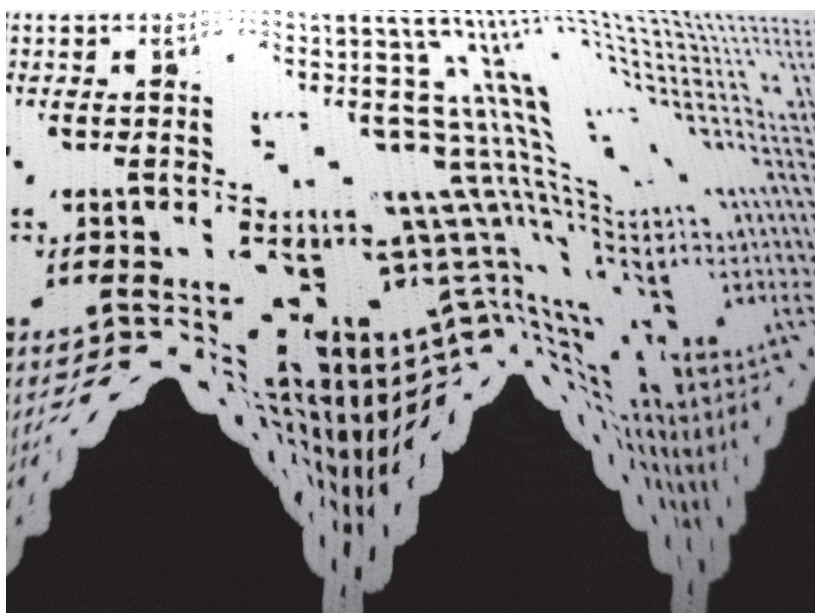


Figure 1. Floral and animal (birds) ornaments in the towel end lace.
Ludza district, Rundēni. Author unknown (early 20th century).
(Photo by Arvīds Barševskis)

According to our research materials, the entomomorphic beetle motifs in crocheted lace composition are used in the lace of only one towel (0.3% of all collection). The author of this towel is Albīna Plinta (Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi) who made it in the 1970s.

The beetle ornament in the crocheted towel lace is a stylized ladybird. The ladybird has two big and two small spots on each wing, with a pronounced elytral suture, six legs and a head with two antennae (see Figure 2).

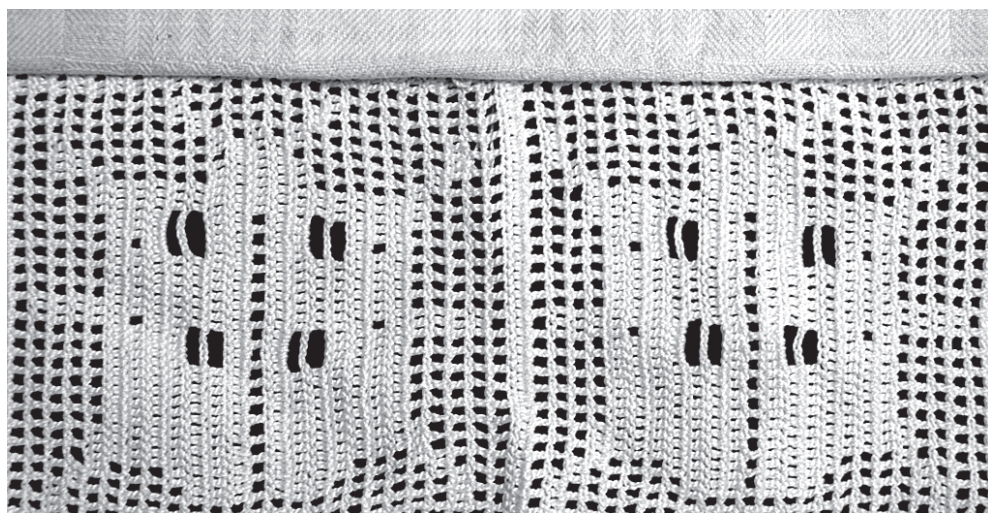


Figure 2. A ladybird entomomorphic element in the towel end lace.
Krāslava district, Kombuļi civil parish, Skadiņi. Author A. Plinta (1970s).
(Photo by Arvids Barševskis)

In semiotics, ladybird is a symbol of luck. Janīne Kursīte draws attention to the fact that a ladybird has been given many names in the Latvian folklore: *dievgosniņa*, *Margrietiņa*, *bizmaniņa*, *Laimas kumeliņš*⁴. It is mentioned seldom and is used mainly in one meaning: as a symbol of future. In Latvian mythology, ladybird is associated with foretelling people's fates and witchcraft. J. Kursīte concludes that in our folklore a beetle often functions as a form of expression for deity of the earth and kind genius (Laima, Māra and others). In the cosmic tree of the world or in the three zones of the world, a beetle represents lower level.

For Latgale craftswomen, ladybirds were known as positive insects and therefore they were symbolically depicted also in towel design.

¹ Alsupe A. *Audēji Vidzemē 19. gs. otrajā pusē un 20. gs. sākumā*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1982. – 196. lpp.

² Jansone A. *Dvieļu rotāšanas tradīcijas Latvijā (19. gs. 2. puse – 20. gs.)*. Rīga: Zinātne, 2000. – 22. lpp.; Jansone A. *Rotātās telpu tekstilijas Latvijā. 19. gs. beigās – 20. gs.* Rīga: Zinātne, 2004. – 108. lpp.

³ Barševska Z. Ornament Elements in Crocheted Towel End Lace in Latgale (End of the 19th Century – Middle of the 20th Century), in: *Person. Color. Nature. Music*. Daugavpils: Saule, 2005. – pp. 263–270.

⁴ Kursīte J. *Latviešu folklorā mitu spoguļi*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1996. – 389. lpp.

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**ANIMALS AND ANIMALISTIC REPRESENTATIONS
IN LITERATURE**

Jelena Brakovska

'IMMUNDUS HABITATOR' OR EVIL INHABITANTS IN JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU'S GHOST STORIES

Summary

Ghost stories within the genre of Gothic fiction were something at which the Victorians excelled. Characters which appear in the collection 'Best Ghost Stories' written by the 19th century Anglo-Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu cover the spectrum of ghost images and their interaction with humans. Animal ghosts are one of the main elements in these stories, which range from 1837 to 1872; that is why the author's technique and purposes have changed over the years. As a real representative of Victorian epoch, the writer uses a wide spectrum of Irish folklore motifs as well as modern scientific views in order to single out the essence of these creatures. On the one hand, animal ghosts are traditional tools of retribution for those who have committed the crime; on the other, the author tries to explain their appearance by means of the latest contemporary achievements in medicine and psychology. Such ambiguity in Le Fanu's narration leads to parallel decisions and serves as the basis of the reader's specific associations.

Key-words: Le Fanu, Gothic fiction, Irish folklore, rational, irrational, animalistic ghosts, Swedenborg

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Introduction

The world history of literature knows many examples when the intrusion of ghosts into the human world breaks the run of humans' lives and changes their everyday routine. The most remarkable Gothic novels were written by Ann Radcliffe (*The Italian*, 1797), Matthew Gregory Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), and Charles Robert Maturin (*Melmoth the Wanderer*, 1820); their novels put literature back in touch with the irrational, the supernatural, and the bizarre, which had been neglected in 'The Age of Reason'. Prominent features of Gothic fiction include terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, ghosts, haunted houses, castles, darkness, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses. This special atmosphere is created by the system of signs, among which evil spirits play a really significant role.

The 19th century brought great changes in the development of Gothic fiction. In Victorian England, in the age of rapid material and scientific progress the idea of 'haunted' past able to reach and violate the present held an especial potential for terror. That is why, throughout the 19th century ghost stories based on terrifying Gothic novels got extremely developed; consequently, the forms of ghosts and their effect on people and reality also experienced some transformation. In 1830s yearly magazines and literary journals contributed to the rapid spread of ghost stories. A number of English writers of the first part of the 19th century (Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu)

and somewhat later writers like George Eliot, Henry James, Elizabeth Gaskell and many others created stories about ghosts in respectable English families with their ‘own skeletons in the closets’, as William M. Thackeray observed.

Le Fanu and His Epoch

The world devilish bestial catalogue is extremely diverse. Its diversity and vividness attracted Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 – 1873), an Anglo-Irish Victorian writer, whose stories and novels are full of ‘*immundus habitator*’ or animalistic ghosts. Le Fanu is a major figure among Victorian-era writers of Gothic and supernatural fiction. He was a Dubliner, born to a moderately well-to-do family of Huguenot descent who had immigrated to Ireland in the 1730s. On his mother’s side he was the grandnephew of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist. Le Fanu was a prolific and successful writer, with fourteen novels and many articles, ghost stories, and ballads to his credit. His supernatural stories usually appeared in various periodicals – sometimes in his own *Dublin University Magazine* (he was its owner and editor), sometimes in Dickens’s *All the Year Round*, sometimes in Mrs. Braddon’s *Belgravia*. They were later gathered and issued in a book. Critics praise his short stories and novels for their suggestive and detailed descriptions of physical settings, powerful evocation of foreboding and dread, and convincing use of supernatural elements. In addition to Le Fanu’s mastery of these Gothic conventions in his fiction, his works are also admired for their insightful characterizations and skillful use of narrative technique. Everett F. Bleiler, the editor of *Best Ghost Stories of Le Fanu* writes as follows:

*A product of the decaying Anglo-Irish culture of the middle 19th century, he sums up in his work better than any of his contemporaries the fears and dreads that may haunt the sensitive individual.*¹

Other scholars and critics, Victor Sawdon Pritchett, Henry James among them, have observed that Le Fanu’s subtle examinations of the psychological life of his characters distinguish his works from those of earlier Gothic writers. Edward Wagenknecht, a literary critic, goes even further:

*He was his own man always, and whether or not V. S. Pritchett was right in seeing his ghosts as blobs of the unconscious that have floated up to the surface of the mind, it is hard not to feel that the world within was more important to him than without.*²

Although Le Fanu was one of the most popular writers of the Victorian era, he is not so widely read anymore. His contemporaries were more interested in his detective novels than in his supernatural stories, which involve Irish folklore and scientific doctrines. Unfortunately, the result of the unpopularity of some stories is that much of Le Fanu’s work remains out of print in Europe and America, sometimes never printed at all. Le Fanu’s best-known works include *Uncle Silas* (1864), a suspense story, and *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), a murder mystery. His vampire story *Carmilla* (1872), which influenced Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1892), has been screened several times.

As a rule, people become greatly interested in something infernal and mystical in the very crucial moments of the development of any society. This interest is considered to be a human’s reaction to the dull and oppressive atmosphere which surrounds him.

Victorian England in the middle of the 19th century was the country of rapid material and scientific progress. Industrial revolution of the 18 – 19th centuries had led to the foundation of bourgeois society, which changed and sometimes ruined the usual way of human's life. At the same time, the rapid development of science started to exclude religion from people's minds, as well as the fast growth of periodicals and literary magazines caused the splash of interest in the English society to rational and irrational terrifying phenomena. Gothic literature with its use of intense emotions, evocation of terror and horror had the best potential for the purpose. Gothic fiction is generated out of moments of crisis, periods of extreme duress, both for the protagonists of the novels and the social orders out of which the novels are produced. For the Anglo-Irish, however, crisis became a way of life. The Gothic, as literary scholar Terry Eagleton puts it, *might be dubbed the political unconscious of Anglo-Irish society, the place where its fears and fantasies most definitively emerge*.³ It should be also mentioned, Gothic literature of that period felt appreciable genre 'prosiness' as its authors described everyday life thoroughly and with a lot of details; on the other hand, due to rapid development of exact and natural sciences this genre got an extremely strong intellectual impulse.

Thus, English Gothic tradition of the 19th century dispersed into two distinct forms. The first one contains usual positivistic pictures of the world where the writers only flirt with the ideas of irrational in order to create a 'gothic' effect. The second form is focused on the phenomenon which exceeds the boundaries of natural as their authors make an attempt to interpret them with the help of the latest contemporary achievements in biology, psychology, and medicine. Le Fanu artistically implements both these forms into his works; he combines Gothic literary conventions with realistic technique and creates stories of psychological insight and supernatural terror. As a representative of Victorian epoch, the writer uses a wide spectrum of Irish folklore motifs as well as modern scientific views in order to single out the essence of his ghosts, namely, the animalistic ones. In Le Fanu's opinion, Irish folklore gives a wide possibility for such aesthetic categories as 'scenic' and 'mysterious'. He was sure, Ireland *with its wildish and sublime landscape, its ancient legends and traditions, its passion, loyalty and deep sorrow*⁴ could always find the words to express these feelings.

Le Fanu's Beasts and Irish Folklore

Celtic mythic heritage found its reflection in two collections of Le Fanu's Gothic ghost stories: *In a Glass Darkly*, published in 1872, and *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Stories*, which was published only in 1923; both collections range from 1837 to 1872, a year before Le Fanu's death. As it would be expected from such a long life-span, they vary a bit in style, as the author's techniques and purposes changed with the years. Nevertheless, all of them present various folkloristic forms and habits of animal ghosts and retain the breath of horror and mystery. Both these collections represent a unique combination of Irish folklore, Victorian Gothic prose, and local Irish color. In his ghost stories, Le Fanu tends to use ghost images which resemble humans, but sometimes the dead there return to the earth in a form of an animal. Having been influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of animals' evolution and classification (*The Origin of Species*, 1859), Le Fanu tries to make the world of his characters more systematic: 1) his ghosts resemble the living human beings they once were; 2) they come forward as horribly

misshapen; 3) they sometimes take bizarre animal forms. His ghosts' appearance is not connected with the peculiarities of place, but with the actions of a human performed in this place. The appearance of the ghost cannot be unreasonable: the person should pay for his crime or offence. So the ghost appearance is an omen of the presence of hidden past and its mystery, as [...] *the substance of evil spirits, when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by 'correspondence' in the shape of the beast (fera) which represents their particular lust and life, in aspect direful and atrocious*⁵.

In the ghost story *The White Cat of Drumgonniol* (1870), which is set in Limerick, the author compares the white cat to the banshee, one of the most dangerous and famous creatures in Irish myths. The moral dilemma is clear: a dead woman returns to revenge in the image of a white cat. We should mention that there are two kinds of learning the old Irish folklore in this story; those being the tale of the transformation of a princess into a white cat, and the image of a banshee. In the very beginning of the story, Le Fanu opposes his cat-beast to the enchanted princess from Irish folklore:

*There is a famous story of a white cat, with which we all become acquainted in the nursery. I am going to tell a story of a white cat very different from the amiable and enchanted princess who took that disguise for a season. The white cat of which I speak was a more sinister animal.*⁶

The situation is scaring: a cat is sitting on a chest of a corpse, and the peasants are scared with fear. Obviously, the author desires to create the effect of truth, as all the characters see and hear and can describe the beast in detail:

*Don't you think but I'd know a rat or a rabbit from a big white cat, with green eye as big as halfpennies, and its bag riz up like a bridge.*⁷

The cat's big eyes, in this case, remind of the Celtic legend, which narrates about witches who make a special ointment from cats' eyes; that helps to see the devil. On the other hand, a devilish sight in Gothic literature traditionally symbolizes its owner's connection with the infernal world. The white cat's burning eyes recurring many times function as a magnet for the humans and make them surrender to the supernatural. The cat looks furious, and compared to a banshee who *seems to be animated with an affectionate sympathy with the bereaved family to whom it is hereditarily attached*⁸, the ghost from Drumgonniol looks like a messenger of death. The author emphasizes the evil spirit with the words: [...] *its taking the shape of a cat – the coldest, and they say, the most vindictive of brutes – is vindictive of the spirit of its visit*⁹. The picture of a cat sitting beside or on a corpse is also taken from Celtic mythology and Irish folklore as this animal played a great role in ancient customs of funeral. Thus, meeting with a white cat means the time goes quicker – from life to death, as *the omen had never failed hitherto; it did not fail now*¹⁰.

In this way that is traditional for ghost story, Le Fanu's *White Cat from Drumgonniol* presents 'landscape of sin', in which animals convey the supernatural world. The ghost appearance, in this case, is an omen of the presence of hidden past and its mystery.

The story *Carmilla* (1872) from the collection *In a Glass Darkly* is important from a literary standpoint as it introduces the vampire legend in English literature. Set up in an isolated castle in Stiria occupied by a young girl and her father, the story draws on the Gothic conventions to heighten terror. Carmilla is a mysterious young woman who

is brought into a castle to recuperate after a carriage accident. She gives no information about her past, but turns up to be a black cat at night. Differently from *The White Cat from Drumgonniol*, infernal forces occupy not only the humans' everyday life, but the victim's unconsciousness by means of dreams, delirium, trance, and neurotic diseases. Conventionally a vampire transforms into a cat and foretokens death. The victim describes it in the following way:

*I cannot call it a nightmare, for I was quite conscious of being asleep. But I was equally conscious of being in my room, and lying in bed, precisely as I actually was. I saw, or fancied I saw, the room and its furniture just as I had seen it last, except it was very dark, and I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which I first could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long, for it measured fully the length of the heart-rug as it passed over it; and it continued to-ing and fro-ing with the lithe sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. I could not cry out, although you may suppose, I was terrified. Its pace was growing faster, and the room rapidly darker and darker, and at length so dark that I could not longer see anything of it but its eyes. I felt it spring lightly on the bed. The two broad eyes approached my face, and suddenly I felt a stinging pain as if two large needles darted, an inch or two apart, deep into my breast. I waked with a scream.*¹¹

As we see from the story, the author does not make an attempt to give a scientific explanation of the situation; on the contrary, he uses folklore and finds there various measures how to fight a vampire. The cat-vampire turns into a misshapen black mass; according to Le Fanu's view, it proclaims difficulties in defeating the evil. Eventually the beast's grave is open and it is killed with the ancient practice – a sharp stake is driven through its heart. This story is a predecessor to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, but the emphasis in *Carmilla* and in Gothic tradition in general, is with a female subject as both predator and victim.

Moreover, Le Fanu considers that humans who have been trapped by the devil turn out to be animal ghosts themselves. This idea is not new in the world literature. For instance, evil spirits are similar to evil animals in theosophical literature. The literary scholar Alexander Makhov in his book *Hostis Antiquis* writes:

*Those who are alien to humans, who live under the devil's tyranny, once come into animal habitat.*¹²

*[В животную природу переходят те, кто живут под тиранией дьявола, чуждые всему человеческому.]*¹³

Thus, in his story *Squire Toby's Will* (the collection *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other stories*), the squire's younger son commits a crime – he does not follow his father's last will and becomes the owner of the whole estate. He clashes with his elder brother who is going to appeal to the court. In the atmosphere of conflicts and squabble, the evil appears in the image of a *dirty-white dog with a large black head*, which the author compares to the old square:

*The dog was looking up into the Squire's face with a peculiar grim visage of his kind, and the Squire was thinking irreverently how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper.*¹⁴

Le Fanu intentionally emphasizes the dog's breed – a bull-dog. As Darwin's ideas of selection and classification developed, the Victorians obeyed strict forms of dogs' breed selection, that is why the old squire loved bull-dogs and would have never mistaken them for mongrels. According to Gothic tradition, the ghost appears not only in the squire's reality, but even in his dreams and turns out to be a nightmare:

In his nightmare the room seemed all but dark; he heard what he knew to be the dog walking from the door round his bed slowly, to the side from which he always had come upon it. A portion of the room was uncarpeted, and he said he distinctly heard the peculiar tread of a dog, in which the faint clatter of the claws is audible. It was a light stealthy step, but at every tread the whole room shook heavily; he felt something place itself at the foot of his bed, and saw a pair of green eyes staring at him at the dark, from which he could not remove his own [...]. And with a long low growl, the thing began to creep up upon his feet; the growl continued, and he saw the reflection of the up-turned green eyes upon the bed-clothes, and it began slowly to stretch it up his body towards his face. With a loud scream he waked.¹⁵

The dream in the story is a special spiritual place where the evil of the past lives. There we should mention a huge ghastly dog with long sharp claws from the legends of Northern England which appears only at night and foresees death. Obviously, the image of this mystical dog inspired Arthur Conan Doyle to create one of his best stories *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

The doctor who was called to the frightened heir tries to explain the nightmare rationally, his medical verdict is – stomach indigestion! The given explanation is quite common for the Victorians as they were trying to relate physiological processes to the human's body with his consciousness. The author modifies Celtic folklore and mythic motifs and unifies them with the traditional Gothic motif of sin and inevitable punishment. In the given story, the young heir does not follow the ghost's warning and dies, his room at the moment had *an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter*¹⁶.

Beasts: Rational or Irrational?

The collection *In a Glass Darkly* contains a group of the author's most chilling stories. Besides the above-mentioned *Carmilla*, the collection takes files of Dr. Martin Hesselius, a famous German doctor with an interest in psychic phenomena. Each story contains the case from his medical practice. As many other intellectuals, Le Fanu was in doubt with his beliefs and desired to get scientific evidence. The story *Green Tea* is among the best known of Le Fanu's works of supernatural terror. It concerns Reverend Robert Jennings, a clergyman suffering from a nervous condition. Engaged in a study of ancient religions, Jennings reports that he has been haunted by a little black monkey and suggests that, perhaps, it is a hallucination brought on by drinking large amounts of green tea. The presence of the monkey begins to interfere with Jennings' duties and with his research, and the creature begins to urge evil actions on the increasingly distressed clergyman. In his diary Jennings describes the beast in the following way:

I shall describe the monkey as it appeared in daylight. It is a small monkey, perfectly black. It had only one peculiarity – a character of malignity – unfathomable

*malignity. During the first year it looked sullen and sick. But this character of intense malice and vigilance was always underlying that surly languor. During all that time it acted as if on a plan of giving me as little trouble as was consistent with watching me. Its eyes were never off me. I have never lost sight of it, except in my sleep, light or dark, day or night, since it came here, excepting when it withdraws for some weeks at a time, unaccountably.*¹⁷

Ultimately, Jennings commits suicide. Key to this story, as well to other stories of this collection, is the avoidance of overt supernatural effects: the supernatural is strongly implied but a possible 'natural' explanation is left open – in this case, the demonic monkey could be a delusion of the story's protagonist who is the only person to see it. Doctor Hesselius concludes that Jennings drank too much green tea, which unluckily opened his patient's inner eye. In this idea Dr. Hesselius is guided by Emmanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish theosophical scientist and writer of the 18th century and his theory of the spiritual and material parallel worlds and their interconnection. In the introduction to the story Dr. Hesselius wrote:

*When man's interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight.*¹⁸

It also should be mentioned that around the time of the story's publication, green tea was blamed, when a community of Canadian nuns had problems with overexcited nerves. Le Fanu himself drank strong tea copiously and frequently.

The infernal image of a monkey is ambiguous. On the one hand, a monkey's ability to imitate humans' behavior allows to use this image in order to ridicule humans' drawbacks; on the other hand, the saying 'Devil is God's monkey' is quite actual in the story, as the author passes over to the theme of forbidden knowledge. We could suppose, the interest of a clergyman to pagan worships provokes the ghost's appearance. The horror Le Fanu's protagonist encounters is enough to destroy him, yet the finality of his destruction only heightens the uncertainty of the supernatural:

*It is what we can and cannot know – the boundaries and limitations of knowledge – that shapes the dark dream-world of much later nineteenth-century horror, thanks to Le Fanu, and in the anxiety generated by the mind's unavailing struggles to resolve ambiguity into certainty lies the core of modern horror [...]. His failed heroes surrender not to the ghostly, but to the failure of knowing, and that failure attends the readers' experience of the tale as well – indeed, is Le Fanu's primary concern.*¹⁹

Another story, *The Familiar* was revised from the early tale *The Watcher* (included in *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery*, 1851) for the collection *In a Glass Darkly*. The story relates events leading up to the death of Captain James Barton who is followed by a strange figure of a short man. He amazingly looks like Barton's familiar sailor who died many years ago because of Barton's severe punishment. Barton tries to escape from the revenge of the dead but fails. A mysterious owl appears just before Barton dies and he is not the only person who sees it. His death seems to have supernatural causes, but it is not actually witnessed, and the ghostly owl may just be a real bird. His death does not resemble a suicide. Doctor Hesselius tries to explain it from the medical point of view:

The interior sense, it is true, is opened; it has been and continues open by the action of disease. This form of disease may, in one sense, be compared to the loss of the scarf-skin, and a consequent exposure of surfaces for whose excessive sensitiveness, nature has provided a muffling. The loss of this covering is attended by a habitual impassibility, by influences against which we were intended to be guarded. But in the case of the brain, and the nerves immediately connected with its functions and its sensuous impressions, the cerebral circulation undergoes periodically that vibratory disturbance. It is, when excessive, invariably accompanied by illusions.²⁰

The following statement confirms Le Fanu's idea of parallel worlds: only those who are mentally disabled, are able to feel illusions of 'the uncovered' world. In the author's point of view, the supernatural in his latest stories is an unconscious element in the mind and it may leap into emergence when the barriers protecting the conscious ego are temporarily broken down, in the case of *The Familiar* by a sense of guilt.

The well-known researcher of British folklore Katherine Briggs points out ghosts' magic ability of various transformations:

There are many creatures which seem to be animals; as a matter of fact, they are fairies in the images of animals; and those which resemble the birds are also enchanted fairies. Fairies can take any image they wish, but each one will be smaller than the previous.²¹

Such abilities of the supernatural to transform into something smaller explain the logical chain of the follower's transformation: firstly, into a very short man, then into a small bird. Jack Tressider in *A Dictionary of Literary Symbol* writes:

[...] owls in some ancient cultures had ominous, even ghastly symbolism. Their noiseless night flying, lightening eyes and terrible screams prove the fact of their connection with death and occult forces. As a mysterious creature with a night way of life an owl in Christian mythology is considered to be the symbol of witchcrafting and evil spirits, and its portrayal is the symbol of blindness of unbelief [...]. An owl is also an allegorical figure of Night and Dream.²²

Actually, Captain Barton watches the owl in daydreams and in nightmares:

I can't get it out of my head that that accursed bird has got out somehow, and is lurking in some corner of the room. I have been dreaming about him. Get up, Smith, and look about; search for him. Such hateful dreams!²³

Accursed, ghastly owl intrudes into Barton's life, firstly, as an evil spirit of revenge; secondly, the ancient symbol of an owl as blindness of unbelief is a possible key to what happened to the main character. Captain Barton is a godless free-thinker; Le Fanu names him *arrogant* each time Barton tries to understand the intentions of the infernal follower.

Conclusions

It is evident that the themes of retributive justice or punishment, social and moral transgression, godlessness, which repeatedly occur in Le Fanu's stories, testify to their importance for the author. Although Le Fanu started with the folkloristic world where faith in the Devil and his workings can account for his presence, he finally strove to

create an artistically consistent world of philosophical and psychological speculation where the supernatural phenomena could be rationally explained by natural theories. The ambiguity in Le Fanu's narration leads to parallel decisions and serves as the basis for the reader's specific associations. The appearance of animalistic ghosts in his stories can be interpreted in many ways – as a sign of spiritual world, or as a manifestation of psychic phenomena and unconscious, or on allegorical level.

¹ Bleiler E. F. Introduction, in: *Best Ghost Stories of Le Fanu*. Dover Publications Inc., 1964. – p. IX.

² Wagenknecht E. *Seven Masters of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. – p. 21.

³ Eagleton T. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. London: Verso, 1995. – p. 187.

⁴ Le Fanu J. Sh. *The Purcell Papers*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. – pp. 257–258.

⁵ Le Fanu J. Sh. *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*. Ed. by E. F. Bleiler, Dover Publications Inc., 1964. – p. 332.

⁶ Ibid. – p. 408.

⁷ Ibid. – p. 411.

⁸ Ibid. – p. 409.

⁹ Ibid. – p. 417.

¹⁰ Ibid. – p. 412.

¹¹ Ibid. – p. 304.

¹² Translation mine – J. B.

¹³ Махов А. *Hostis Antiquis*. Москва: Высшая школа, 2006. – с. 78.

¹⁴ Le Fanu J. Sh. *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*. Ed. by E. F. Bleiler, Dover Publications Inc., 1964. – p. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid. – p. 11.

¹⁶ Ibid. – p. 28.

¹⁷ Ibid. – p. 196.

¹⁸ Ibid. – p. 189.

¹⁹ Thomson D. *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*. Greenwood Press: Westport, 2002. – p. 250.

²⁰ Le Fanu J. Sh. *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*. Ed. by E. F. Bleiler, Dover Publications Inc., 1964. – p. 209.

²¹ Briggs K. M. *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*. London: Faber, 1987. – p. 71.

²² Tressider D. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. – p. 167.

²³ Le Fanu J. Sh. *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*. Ed. by E. F. Bleiler, Dover Publications Inc., 1964. – p. 215.

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Irina Presņakova

REPRESENTATION OF ANIMALS IN ENGLISH GHOST STORIES

Summary

The present article explores the diversity of ways Victorian ghost story writers in the middle decades of the 19th century regarded and presented animals. English ghost stories of the second half of the 19th century abound in beasts coming in great variety such as dogs, cats, rats, pigs, lions, monkeys, hares, horses, etc. Their literary uses are specific to the species as well as to the literary tradition with reference to the supernatural. In the given paper, an attempt is made to determine the role and function of animals in the selected ghost stories by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Dinah Mulock, Rhoda Broughton, Mrs Henry Wood, George Macdonald and others.

Key-words: Victorian, ghost, animals, beast

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The animal kingdom has been a lavish source of metaphors, similies, and symbols from the earliest literature to the present.

Animals in Victorian literature is a well treated theme of investigation. Much has been said about it in terms of literary criticism as regards the canonical writers of the epoch – Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, and others. Not to provide the endless list of articles, books, and dissertations devoted to the topic, we can resume the findings of the numerous scholars by quoting Teresa Mangum's words that *figures of the animals are pervasive in Victorian fiction as social critique, as caricature, as fantasy – and as proxies for human aspiration and pain.*¹

To fully understand the essence of the given research and provide the rational for the need of such investigation, few remarks should be made concerning ghost story as a very peculiar literary phenomenon, a special paradigm in the 19th century British literature. Victorian ghost stories have consistently maintained their popularity and have fascinated readers throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Their initial popularity could easily be attributed to the Victorian obsession with darkness and evil, as well as Victorian repression and guilt. What is extremely significant for the further analysis is to bear in mind the characteristic features of the ghost story. First, the central theme of classic ghost story is the power of the dead to return and confront the living. Fictional ghosts appear to operate within a moral and physical universe that interpenetrates our own but whose workings are wholly inexplicable to us. Moreover, fictional ghosts take many forms, from the recognizably human to the fearfully alien: insubstantial wraiths or corporeal creatures with the ability to inflict gross physical harm. Or they may never reveal themselves at all, relying instead on an ability to infect and control the minds of the living. These stories are generically related through a common intention of inducing

fear by the use of the supernatural, and are in turn quite distinct from tales of fairies or white magic.² Second, unlike in classical and early modern literature in Victorian ghost story the ghost is all, and the deliberate arousal of fear is the story's primary purpose. Virginia Woolf termed it as *strange human craving for feeling afraid*.³ But the term 'ghost story' can denote not only stories about ghosts, but about possession and demonic bargains, spirits other than those of the dead.⁴ Third, it may seem surprising at first sight that the golden age of the ghost story – supernatural story – has been an age of increasingly rational or skeptical views, of scientific explanations and technical achievements. Throughout the 19th century, Western society experienced ideological changes that affected perceptions about the world and the place of humanity in that world.⁵ Therefore, they often included admonitions to rationalism; others took account of attempts to establish the objective existence of supernatural phenomena by devising narratives in which the author posed as the recorder of events a collection of tales claiming to be based on actual experiences.

The Victorian ghost story shows much evidence that animals make a constituent part of the ghost story space. We merely have to count the number of various animals to realize that animals are 'everywhere' in the Victorian ghostly texts – their physical presence is undeniable. The analysis of twelve selected ghost stories⁶ (covering the period of the 1850 – 1880s), which are included in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*⁷ (1995) compiled by Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert shows that the total number of cases when animals are mentioned exceeds one hundred. Taking into account that these stories are comparatively short, this number is impressive. Nevertheless, the number of references to animals varies from text to text. Among these references it was possible to identify a variety of animal species, such as mammals, herbivorous, amphibian, sea animals, domestic animals and fowls, birds, pets and beasts (cock, geese, pigeons, owls, seagull; mackerel, herrings, fish, shrimps, seal, whale; bear, lion, bull, monkey, rabbits, hares, foxes, deer, snakes, tiger; pigs, horses, ponies, lambs, rats, cats, mouse, bat, dogs, terriers, hounds). Hence, the mentioning of these animals can conventionally be attributed both to direct and indirect meaning. First, some names of animals are applied in the given short stories as figures of speech:

*I bounced into my room again with a feeling of loathing and horror I cannot describe, and locked and bolted my door as if a lion had been at the other side. D-n him or it; curse the portrait and its original! I felt in my soul that the rat – yes, the rat, the RAT I had just seen, was that evil being in masquerade, and rambling through the house upon some infernal night lark.*⁸

*I had had a horrible dream; [...] I yet could hear a pleasant fellow singing, on his way home, the then popular comic ditty called, 'Murphy Delany' I lay down [...], did my best to think of nothing else but the song, which was every moment growing fainter in the distance: 'Twas Murphy Delany, so funny and frisky, Step into a shebeen shop to get his skin full; He reeled out again pretty well lined with whiskey, as fresh as a shamrock, as blind as a bull.*⁹

*He was as dead as a mackerel.*¹⁰

I sprang from the concealment – I had her (a lady) in my grasp; but she tore herself out of my hands, fighting like a wild-cat: she bit, scratched, kicked, shifting her body as though she had not a bone in it, and at last skipped herself free, and

*ran wildly towards the door by which she had entered.[...] She turned and twisted and slipped about like a snake, but I did not feel pain or anything except a deadly horror lest my strength should give out.*¹¹

In this last scene snake appears to play a role of a primarily chthonic symbol of the negative, dark forces of the underworld which is justified in this scene by the arousal of horror in the protagonist involved into this battle.

*I had no idea till yesterday how closely we were packed in this great smoky beehive, as tightly as herrings in a barrel.*¹²

The metaphor conveys the idea that London is a too busy place like a beehive overcrowded and smoky for its inhabitants.

*The girl [Maria – I. P.] seems demented; she has been going in and out ever since daylight like a dog in a fair.*¹³

*He looked so like a beaten hound, so frightened, so fawning, that I felt I could with lively satisfaction have transferred the threatened caning to his own shoulder.*¹⁴

*'I wish we had never come into this house, dear,' said I.
[...] It would be too absurd to run away like frightened hares.*¹⁵

*There are many versions of the matter, but the sum-total of them all is that something uncanny has been flitting round the ship all night. [...] This spectral alarm has a very bad effect upon the Captain. [...] He [a gallant seaman – I. P.] is pacing backward and forward upon the quarterdeck like a caged tiger, stopping now and again to throw out his hands with a yearning gesture, and stare impatiently out over the ice.*¹⁶

A man in despair, at fear behaves like a beast. In the given scenes, characteristics of particular kinds (species) are called for, for example, fear – rabbit, revenge – tiger, very wily and dangerous – snake, etc. For a man to behave like a beast, means to lose control over one's emotions that is equal to losing one's mind. And a man unable to control and adjust the situation to his own needs resembles an animal in a cage.

Various animals appear as the markers of routine life, this way constituting the day-to-day landscape of the protagonists and pointing to the social function of animals as being labour companions and means of profit for people. For example:

*He [Daniel Ferrar – I. P.] liked to be a gentleman. All he did now was to work in his garden, and feed his fowls, ducks, rabbits, and pigeons, of which he kept a great quantity, selling them to the houses around and sending them to market.*¹⁷

*An hour, or more, was got through somehow; meeting one, talking to another, throwing at the ducks and geese; anything.*¹⁸

*[...] our pony-carriage used to convey a varied collection of goods [...].*¹⁹

*I was about half-way on my road home. [...] My horse was walking along an open highroad.*²⁰

My fourteen miles of railway journey soon ended at a place called Bramsford Road, whence an omnibus conveyed passengers to a dull little town called Bramsford Market. Here I found a horse and 'trap' to carry me on to my destination;

*the horse being a raw-boned grey with a profile like a camel, and the trap a rickety high gig which had probably done commercial traveling in the days of its youth.*²¹

*As I neared the bottom of the hill, a dog-cart drawn by a highstepping chestnut dashed up to the door of the 'Greyhound'. [...] I had two schools to inspect tomorrow ten miles the other side of Drumley; that I had a horse and trap waiting.*²²

Dull little places are not always served by omnibus. The raw-boned horse and the trap keep doing commercial traveling as they used to do it in the days of horse's youth. At the same time, in these stories carriages and horses are made to compete with the mechanized industrial economy, with the omnibus.

*A light iron fence divided the avenue from the park, and between the trunks of the trees I could see the deer browsing and cattle grazing. Ever and anon there came likewise to my ear the sound of a sheep-bell.*²³

These examples illustrate the realistic narrative in which animals serve very social and pragmatic purposes. To take horses and cattle, for instance, these animals remain central to Victorian Britain's social and economic operations.²⁴ But images of animals have multiple significations. Traditionally, the horse, as well as hounds in British culture is freighted with denotations of social power, entitlement, and distinction. In the 19th century horses and hounds continue to signify the ideals and prerogatives of the social elite. As Frank E. Hugget states, *a carriage was public proof of social success.*²⁵ The evidence for this we find in the following:

*As I stood by the door [...] the same gentleman [Lord Ladlow – I. P.] I had met in the afternoon mounted on his horse, passed on foot.*²⁶

The motif of heightened attachment to pets is also a commonplace in the ghost stories:

*'Ladlow's daughter – the Honourable Beatrice, riding her funny little white pony. [...] she asked, patting her pony's neck. [...] She said, still patting that fortunate pony. [...] I took the bridle – when I was with horses I felt amongst my own kind – stroked the pony, pulled his ears, and let him thrust his nose into my hand.'*²⁷

*'You will take your own horses, I suppose?' 'That goes without saying. No man who has cattle of his own cares to mount another man's horses. I shall take Pepperbox and the Druid.' 'Pepperbox has a queer temper, I have heard your sisters say.' 'My sisters expect a horse to be a kind of overgrown baa-lamb. Everything splendid in horseflesh and womankind is prone to that slight defect, an ugly temper.'*²⁸

As it was mentioned above, the ghost stories are generically related through a common intention of inducing fear by the use of the supernatural. In some cases animals occur to be the embodiment of these supernatural powers. So, the sudden arrival of 'a lady with a commanding air' in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* destroys the dreamy reverie of the loving family at the walk. In this scene, their quiet musings on the open road are abruptly interrupted by the approach of a carriage drawn by four horses. Supernatural power – evil dark power – controls this carriage: *It seemed to be the traveling carriage of a person of rank*²⁹. The scene is momentous. The language of domination and effacement introduced by the horses's hooves in this passage clearly foreshadows the troubled and

troubling dynamic that will develop between the characters. On the one hand, the horses carry the elite, but this elite is recognized as devilish.

It is a fairly general belief that animals have the psychic faculty developed to a greater extent than humans have. There are numerous stories which tell of animals being scared and frightened by something that is invisible to a human being. Regarding the Victorian ghost story it is a dog (or hound) that shows this very special ability to sense the uncanny and warn its master (a horse is as intelligent and beloved one). At the same time, a dog-ghost proves to be the most frequent apparitional image of these stories. To add more, a dog is commonly associated with the hunt; therefore, it signals death. The evidence of this we find in the story *At Crighton Abbey* by Marry Braddon:

*'I fancy the bounds were kenneled in the stable-yard below my bedroom?' 'Yes,' Mrs Chrington answered gravely; and I wondered at the sudden shadow that fell upon her face. [...] I was startled into wakefulness by a sound that was strange to me. It was a huntsman's horn. [...] I saw the stable-doors opened one after another; gentlemen and grooms alighting from their horses; the dogs driven into their kennel [...]. I stood at my window quite calmly, and watched while the group of man and animals in the yard below noiselessly dispersed. There was nothing supernatural in the manner of their disappearance. The figures did not vanish or melt into empty air. One by one I saw the horses led into their separate quarters. [...] The scene [...] was natural enough.'*³⁰

At this stage it can be summed up that animal images are interwoven into the realia of the ghost story settings and provide a link to the sphere of the supernatural that is the defining feature of ghost story as a genre. In relation to this, another issue to be touched upon is that of realist preoccupation with understanding other consciousness which blossomed through the 19th century into full scale psychological novels that obviously resulted from the scientific discoveries of the period. That the Victorians were worried about the relation between fact and value, between body and mind, between the secular and the ethical, is a commonplace. As it was mentioned above, ghost story denotes not only stories about ghosts, but about possession and demonic bargains, spirits other than those of the dead. In the next passage it will be demonstrated that ghost story tells us about the nature of the beast and the relation of human to this beast wherein the latter is associated with and represented by an animal image. In other words, animal shows as a metaphor of beast and beast as a metaphor of otherness in self-definition in the new different world. In Le Fanu's ghost story *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street*, the protagonist first hears, then sees and fears some beast which later turns out to be but an apparition:

*I distinctly heard the old fellow again 'when I saw, or thought I saw, a black monster, whether in the shape of a man or a bear I could not say, standing, with its back to the wall, on the lobby, facing me, with a pair of great greenish eyes shining dimly out.' From an instinct of terror rather than of courage, I hurled the poker, with all my force, at its head; [...] Then, in a minute more, I heard the horrid bare feet walk down the stairs.'*³¹

To grasp the essence of the seen and the heard, a man is drawing his own image of fear. And as we see it, a 'would' bear stands in the same semantic raw with a 'would' monster. In fact we may treat this vision as the devilish metamorphosis (compare a witch turning into a cat).

Another illustration of the bestial element in the representation of ghost story animals is the man's confrontation with the beast in the ice fields of the Antarctic:

[...] we both saw a sort of white figure moving across the ice field in the same direction that we had heard the cries. We lost sight of it [...], and we could just make it out like a shadow on the ice. McLeod and I went down on to the pack, thinking that maybe it might be a bear. [...] I don't know what it was. It wasn't a bear any way. It was tall and white and straight, and if it wasn't a man nor a woman, I'll stake my davy it was something worth. [...] I fancy what he saw must in spite of his denial, have been a young bear erect upon its hind legs, and attitude which they often assume when alarmed. In the uncertain light (there was a bit of a moon) this would bear a resemblance to a human figure, especially to a man whose nerves were already somewhat shaken.³²

Whenever the nature of some creature, some phenomenon is not identified as belonging to this world, it inevitably evokes some animalistic image in human consciousness, be it a rat, a mice, a bat, or a bear; man tries to attribute the unknown to what he already knows as everything in the positivist world claims to have its definition. In the framework of the ghost story, a man is plunged into the atmosphere of darkness and isolation. Used to perceive this world with open eyes and enabled with human senses – in such circumstances a human feels torn out of the known and therefore friendly universe. He is able to perceive the new space – unknown and strange – showing his primitive and instinctual nature. He sees and makes himself see a beast that embodies itself in the shape of a common animal. Doubt gives rise to anxiety, anxiety develops into fear. Animals-beasts seen by the protagonists, then, are the embodiment of the otherness which a man of this new rapidly changing world neither comprehends nor accepts.

To sum up, animals since ancient times have been the subject of intensive perception. As segments of space they occur to be its signs, its regulators. In the realm of ghost fiction, Victorian writers demonstrate their obsession with animals. Victorian ghost story writers show the diversity of ways in thinking about and presenting animal images. They illustrate the realistic narrative in which animals serve very social and pragmatic purposes. The devaluing of most animal life, on the one hand, and the heightened attachment to pets on the other, is a crucial and inherent contradiction in the 19th century human/animal relation. Images of animals have multiple significations. Animals are interwoven into the realia of the ghost story settings and provide a link to the sphere of the supernatural which makes ghost story a real specimen of the genre.

¹ Morse D., M. Danahay. Introduction, in: *Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007. – p. 6.

² Briggs J. *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. London: Faber, 1977. – p. 12.

³ Woolf V. *Granite and Rainbow: Essays*. The Hogarth Press, 1958. – p. 61.

⁴ Briggs J. *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. London: Faber, 1977. – p. 12.

⁵ Smith E., R. Haas. Introduction: Victorian Literature and the Shifting Use of the Supernatural, in: *The Haunted Mind: the Supernatural in Victorian Literature*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1999. – p. vii.

- ⁶ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* (1853); Dinah Mulock *The Last House in C-----Street* (1856); Rhoda Broughton *The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth* (1868); Henry Wood *Reality or Delusion?* (1868); George Macdonald *Uncle Cornelius His Story* (1869); Tom Hood *The Shadow of a Shade* (1869); Mary Braddon *At Crighton Abbey* (1871); Wilkie Collins *Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman* (1875); Anon. *The Story of Clifford House* (1878); Amelia Edwards *Was it an Illusion?* (1881); Charlotte Riddell *The Open Door* (1882); Arthur Conan Doyle *The Captain of the 'Pole-star'* (1883).
- ⁷ Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003.
- ⁸ Le Fanu J. Sh. An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 27.
- ⁹ Ibid. – p. 30.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. – p. 35.
- ¹¹ Riddell Ch. The Open Door, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 281.
- ¹² Broughton R. The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 75.
- ¹³ Wood H. Reality or Delusion? in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 126.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. – p. 246.
- ¹⁵ Anon. The Story of Clifford House, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 232.
- ¹⁶ Stevenson R. The Body-Snatcher, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 295.
- ¹⁷ Wood H. Reality or Delusion?, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 115.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. – p. 126.
- ¹⁹ Braddon M. At Crighton Abbey, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 172.
- ²⁰ Collins W. Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 215.
- ²¹ Edwards A. Was it an Illusion? in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – p. 240.
- ²² Ibid. – p. 247.
- ²³ Riddell Ch. The Open Door, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 267.
- ²⁴ Gina D. *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. – p. 12.
- ²⁵ Hugget F. *Carriages at Eight: Horse-drawn Society in Victorian England and Edwardian Times*. Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1979. – p. 10.
- ²⁶ Riddell Ch. The Open Door, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. – p. 272.
- ²⁷ Ibid. – p. 276.
- ²⁸ Braddon M. At Crighton Abbey, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – p. 176.
- ²⁹ Le Fanu J. Sh. Carmilla, in: *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*. Ed. by E. F. Bleiler. Dover Publications, Inc., 1964 – p. 282.
- ³⁰ Braddon M. At Crighton Abbey, in: by Dalby R. (ed.) *The Giant Book of Classic Ghost Stories*. London: Magpie Books, 1977. – p. 177.
- ³¹ Le Fanu J. Sh. An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street, in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – pp. 2–26.
- ³² Doyle A. C. The Captain of the 'Pole-star', in: Cox M., R. Gilbert (eds.) *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – p. 287.

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Mārīte Opincāne

FROM HUMAN TO ANIMAL – DEGRADATION OF
PERSONALITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF
DARWINIST IDEAS IN JOSEPH CONRAD’S NOVELLA
THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Summary

In the late 19th century, the natural sciences strongly influenced the view of a human on his/her own personal history. The theories of Charles Darwin helped to extend the significance of empirical science to a great extent, synthesised a lot of works by natural scientists and formed the climax of Victorian evolutionary ideas.

But soon the writers, including Joseph Conrad (1857 – 1924) noticed and started warning in their writings about personality degradation under the influence of civilization. In his vision of colonialism, Conrad does not support the supremacy of the white race, he breaks the opposition between a savage and a civilised human being. He loses the faith in the theories of evolution and the supremacy of some races above others. The technological supremacy does not ensure the moral supremacy. Europe is wrong in its claims to bring light to the darkest places of the planet, in reality the heart of darkness hides in civilisation and the soul of the human being. Civilisation causes stagnation and morally degrades the human being. The Europeans in Africa physically degrade the native inhabitants and morally degrade themselves. Hollowness is a metaphor of this degradation in the novella ‘The Heart of Darkness’ (1892). Civilisation for Conrad’s protagonists is like clothes worn by savages.

Key-words: animals, degradation, evolution, empirical science, savages, civilised human beings, colonialism

*

Introduction

Despite the fact that Joseph Conrad visited a lot of countries as a sailor, hardly any images of animals, birds, and marines are found in his sea prose. It is unusual that Conrad’s jungle is silent – lays and the sounds produced by animals cannot be heard. The Europeans might feel so terrified in the jungle of Africa that they do not hear its sounds. The few animals’ images that have been mentioned in the writer’s sea prose function to reflect human nature. Captain Brierly took care of his dog before he committed suicide. This deed reflects his responsibility. German Stein has a collection of rare butterflies that characterises his educated mind in the late 19th century. In the novella *The Heart of Darkness*, cannibals during the journey up the river eat a rotten hippo’s meat when they are starving, but with the restrictions they neither eat each other nor the Europeans. Cornelius in the novel *Lord Jim* fulfils the role of mythological

animal – a snake. His step is creepy, speech and deeds – ingratiating and full of evil. The mechanic of Patna in delirium tremens sees pink toads, although according to the doctor, he should see snakes. This fact also does not have any explanation.

Darwinism, colonialism, and Joseph Conrad

In the second half of the 19th century, natural science essentially influenced the people's views of their individual and historical fate. Charles Darwin's theories made an essential contribution to broadening the significance of the empirical science, synthesizing the works by many natural scientists, and developed the climax of Victorian evolutionary thought. Conrad treated Darwinism as the depiction of humaneness, its ascription to the natural world that has been led by the same instinct of survival. In his book *The Origin of the Species*, Darwin suggests that some races, many of which he refers to as savages, are considered as sub-species.¹

Colonialism was the main tendency of England's politics in the 19th century, and the main idea of it was to bring enlightenment to the primitive tribes. Being a loyalist of England, Conrad at first supported the colonial policy of England. It is considered that Kurtz's order in Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness – Exterminate all the brutes*² is not only European principle of colonialism, but that it is founded on the evolutionary science of Darwin's work *The Origin of the Species*. In Chapter 6 of this work Darwin declares:

*At some period of future not so very distant [...] the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.*³

Darwin writes in the book *The Descent of Man* that the grade of civilisation seems to be the most important element in the success of competing nations.⁴ Racial superiority can be technological and moral. Allan H. Simmons emphasises that in Conrad's world, race is not guarantee of superiority.⁵

The magazines of that period published pamphlets on Darwin and Darwinism, as well as caricatures on human apes. But humorous reflection of evolution theory hid in itself fear of degeneration and atavism. This fear has been reflected also in the late Victorian literature – the works by Herbert Wells, Robert Stevenson and other writers. Max Nordau – the author of the book *Degeneration* announced that the influence of morally degenerated people corrupted civilisation⁶, and his opinion about a highly gifted, charismatic degenerate, though a demoralised genius may have influenced the formation of Kurtz's image.

In 1897, in the preface to the novel *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, arts and science are equal for Conrad, both having an identical initial aim. An artist, in the same way as a thinker and a scientist, looks for truth and addresses humanity. A thinker immerses himself into ideas, a scientist – into dreams under the influence of the world opinion. An artist, a thinker, and a scientist form a trio of truth searchers for the writer. Every of them has dedicated himself to a particular aspect of the world – human feelings, thoughts, facts and reveals his achievements to the present. When speaking about science, Conrad uses the notion *visible universe, matter, fundamental, essential*.⁷

Sixteen years later Conrad wrote to Warrington Dawson:

Art is superior to science, in so far that it calls on us with authority to behold! To feel! Whereas science at best can only tell us – it seems so! And that's all it can do. It talks to us of the Laws of Nature. But that's only one of its little jokes. It has never discovered anything of the sort. It has made out with much worry and blundering certain sequences of facts beginning in the dark and leading god only knows where. And it has built various theories to fit the form of activity it has perceived. But even the theory of evolution has got a great big hole in it, right at the very root. And it is amusing to see the scientists walk round it with circumspection for the last sixty years, while pretending all the time that it isn't there.⁸

In his book *Joseph Conrad and the Ethics of Darwinism*, Allan Hunter has written that apart from the exploration of the visible universe, Conrad also examined different scientific theories that were topical at his time, testing them, feeling them and finally applying some of them in his writing. Each of the writer's works is exploratory according to its intent, each of them is a reiterative application of the scientific theory in the real world, that has been used in every of his novels.⁹ Conrad also criticises scientific thought.

Conrad admired Alfred Russell Wallace, his book *The Malay Archipelago: the Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise*¹⁰ that was written in 1869 and his attitude to science as a long-term trial to explore the great mystery of the Universe and the Universe of Darwin that consists of the element of opportunity and challenging and inhumane natural energy. A.R. Russell became a prototype of an entomologist and adventurer Stein in the novel *Lord Jim*. Stein's collection of rare butterflies, their classifying and conservation is an attempt to ignore the terrifying possibility of the chaotic Universe. Nordau associates degeneration with different kinds of poisoning, including organic poisons (malaria, syphilis, tuberculosis and others).¹¹

In his later view at colonialism, Conrad repeatedly shakes and reduces the claims of Europeans to a racial superiority, deranging a binary opposition between 'a savage' and 'a civilised human'. The writer considers that the western morality is relative, that it is based only on the conventions, that it is maintained only by sacred fear of the scandal, gallows and asylums. Maybe the most destructive is that where Conrad identifies the transition from a savage to a civilised human, the tendency appears to lessen the objections, revealing the affinity with the first one. In that way Conrad expresses the opinion that the barbarism of the past that became apparent through the screaming, half-naked savages, who were armoured with bows and arrows, exist also nowadays and can be seen in the figures of the politicians, dressed in black coats.¹²

Degradation and hollow characters in Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness*

The novella *The Heart of Darkness* is one of the outstanding works of the late 19th century that pointed at the degradation of the civilisation. In the novella Marlow imagines already at the Central Station that he hears an ichthyosaurus having a bath, later on he remembers that going up the river was as a journey back to the beginning of the world.¹³

The question 'what it means to be human' is the central one in the novella. Conrad keeps a certain belief in mankind, although this belief is very fragile. The writer has used Dante's allusion of the inferno. Conrad uses the metaphor of hollowness to describe

the state of degradation and hollow people who have lost their humanness. The lack of human essence expresses the idea that human nature in its essence is not mean but it is deeply vulnerable.

The Africans who have been exhausted to death have been turned into shadows; their eyes are like windows to hollowness:

They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, and they were nothing earthly now – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. [...] These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young [...].¹⁴

Loss of human individuality has been expressed using the singular – it is individuality, a personality. However, Marlow emphasises to his listeners that these slaves are the people, *Men, I tell you.*¹⁵

Africans have been driven to the state that is lower than a human state, however the imagery of the hollowness relates these victims to those who have deprived them of their human image, degrading them – different clerks of the company. It is obvious that the guilty ones in the novella are real ‘hollow people’ who represent the European culture and are a result of extraordinary conditions. The hollow people are internally unhappy and isolated. The first slaves, whom Marlow meets, pass by him at the distance of six inches, even without glancing at him with an absolute indifference that is similar to death, the dying skeleton in the grove of death grasps the offered cookies, and they all look into hollowness. They do respond neither at Marlow nor at each other. But Conrad examines the hollowness more carefully through the images of the company clerks. When Marlow continues the journey, he meets a variety of different hollow people, including the chief accountant who looks like a hairdresser’s dummy and Kurtz or a hollow deceiver of the impenetrable darkness. Marlow meets the chief accountant exactly after he leaves the grove of death:

When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for assort of vision. I saw a high, starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots. No hat. Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under a green-lined parasol held in a big white hand. He was amazing and had a penholder behind his ear. I shook hands with this miracle and I learned he was the Company’s chief accountant, and that all the book-keeping was done at this station. He had come out for a moment, he said, ‘to get a breath of fresh air’. The expression sounded wonderfully odd, with its suggestion of sedentary desk-life. I wouldn’t have mentioned the fellow to you at all, only it was from his lips that I first heard the name of the man who is so indissolubly connected with the memories of that time. Moreover, I respected the fellow. Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser’s dummy; but in the great demoralization of the land he kept up his appearance. That’s backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character. He had been out nearly three years; and, later, I could not help asking him how he

*managed to sport such linen. He had just the faintest blush, and said modestly, 'I've been teaching one of the native women about the station. It was difficult. She had distaste for the work.' Thus this man had verily accomplished something. And he was devoted to his books, which were in apple-pie order.*¹⁶

At first it seems problematic to perceive the accountant as the sample of degradation because he in his starched collar seems to be the symbol of the civilised humanity. Marlow even seems to admire that someone has a backbone to wear ironed shirts and keep accounting in a perfect order in the times of the huge decline of this country. But further on in the extract his appearance is less related to the particular looks of physical reality than to the lack of the inner essence, with the hollowness that differs from reality. The starched clothes prove to be the result of the local African woman's work. His interest in the appearance does not reach out of himself because there is disorder everywhere else at the station – in the heads, things, and buildings. An ideal but useless order in the accounting, so far from reality, is contrasted to the complete indifference for the sufferings of the dying Africans and the ill agent. The accountant declares that he hates Africans a lot. This extract is marked by a very ironic colouring. The appearance of the accountant separates him from the humankind instead of testifying to his humanity. Kurtz, whom he has never met, whom he deceptively idolises, as he considers that Kurtz will achieve a lot, seems the closest person to him, and he tells lies informing Kurtz that everything is well at the station. It proves that hollowness prevails not only in his isolation from the humankind but also in the hollowness of his own imagination.

Marlow meets the above mentioned type of hollowness in the figure of a brick maker at the Central Station, whom he calls a *papier-mâché Mephistopheles*. When the brick maker maunders about the intrigue of the Company, Marlow considers that if *he tried he could poke his forefinger through him and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt*.¹⁶

Hollow words create this image: gossip, lies, particularly worked out schemes, which are absurd in their alienation from the real world and Marlow's experience. The hollowness of this ungrounded imagination describes not only the brick maker but also his fellows, the so-called pilgrims. It attributes an unreal atmosphere to the station:

*There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else – as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work.*¹⁷

Unfounded imagination is opposed to the real work that includes the particular reality details and makes an independent community possible. But these hollow people are engaged in intrigues, defamation and hate each other, but in reality they are too lazy to do at least some useful work. Despite the fact that he has been called a brick maker, Marlow notices that there is no brick at the Station and this person has lived there for more than a year, waiting for something. Marlow does not manage to make it out what exactly he is waiting for. The lack of work for the brick maker triggers off Marlow's contemplation on the relationship of work with his own reality, *I don't like work – no man does – but I like what is in the work, – the chance to find yourself. Your own reality*.¹⁸

Kurtz, whom Marlow meets, is a completely hollow person. He is the most problematic character who has been influenced by degradation because he seems to embody

a sophisticated humanity in his eloquence. He recites poetry, *You ought to have heard him recite poetry [..]*.¹⁹

However, the imagery of hollowness becomes more intense when Marlow describes Kurtz. He is described as a shadow, indirectly pointing out at the shadows that inhabit the underworld of Homer and Virgil. The shadow in this case is related to the image of a shallow being whose life has passed. Marlow clearly describes Kurtz as hollow in his essence; he speaks about the empty darkness of his heart and his own impenetrable darkness. Kurtz differs from others with his insatiability. He is not just hollowness; he is the whole power of hollowness, the hollowness of desire.

Juliet McLauchlan in her article on *The Heart of Darkness* answers the question about what Kurtz has done from mysterious hints in the text – he has instigated war, degraded and murdered people and he has engaged into ritual murders of people for sacrifice instead of the aims of his publicly recognised improvements and instructions. The heads of the Africans killed by him on the posts around the house express that he has not only performed inhumanities but also enjoyed them. These heads have been directed towards the inside of the house.²⁰

Recognition of other people's rights not only unites us with them but also helps to maintain humanity in ourselves. People become beasts without such civil links or imagine themselves in the place of God, and Kurtz in some respect seems to have become both of them because *there was nothing above or below him*²¹. Conrad reflects the degradation policy of Africa with its isolated and abandoned inhabitants. And the last whisper of Kurtz – *Horror, horror* expresses exactly this kind of desolation – the apprehension of his own putridity and fear of hollowness. Kurtz returns into his primitive state ruled by his unconscious. The criticism of Kurtz's hollow nature in the novella is linked with Conrad's opinion of the human nature.

Morality is in a human and there is a question why the person becomes immoral. The ability to see is very close to the ability to control. The protagonists of Conrad's works as well as those of other modernist writers have been to a great extent characterised by inability to see, they have lost ability to control situations into which they get. The phrase *Do you see the story* is often repeated in the novella *The Heart of Darkness*. The human sees less and less. The industrial community also influences vision.

Conclusion

In his view of colonialism, Conrad does not support the superiority of Europeans as the white race, deranging the linear opposition between a savage and a civilised human. Conrad loses faith in the theory of evolution and superiority of some races over others; he believes that only arts and humanism can save the world. Technological superiority of races does not provide a moral superiority. Europe does not bring light to the darkest places of the Universe, in reality the heart of darkness hides in the civilisation and the human soul. Civilisation creates stagnation and morally degenerate humans. Europeans in Africa degrade the local inhabitants and morally degrade themselves. Hollowness is a metaphor of this degradation in Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness*. Civilisation is like clothes worn by savages for Conrad's heroes.

- ¹ Darwin C. *The Descent of Man*. Norwalk: the Easton Press, 1979. – p. 232.
- ² Kimborough R. (ed.) *Conrad J. Heart of Darkness: Backgrounds and Sources. Criticism*. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971. – p. 51.
- ³ Darwin C. *On the Origin of Species*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009. – p. 43.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* – p. 45.
- ⁵ Simmons A. *Critical Issues. Joseph Conrad*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. – p. 40.
- ⁶ Nordau M. *Degeneration*. London: Heinemann, 1895. – p. 537.
- ⁷ Conrad J. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'. Youth*. London: Pan Books, 1976. – p. 7.
- ⁸ Karl. F. R., Davies L. (eds.) *Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. Volume 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. pp. – 237–238.
- ⁹ Hunter A. *Joseph Conrad and the Ethics of Darwinism: The Challenge of Science*. New York: Croom Helm, 1982. p. – 6, 12.
- ¹⁰ Wallace A. R. *The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise, A Narrative of Travel with Studies of man and Nature*. 2 volumes. London: Macmillan & Co., 1890.
- ¹¹ Nordau M. *Degeneration*. London: Heinemann, 1895. – p. 538.
- ¹² Conrad J. *Nostromo*. London: Penguin Books, 1994. – p. 231.
- ¹³ Kimborough R. (ed.) *Conrad J. Heart of Darkness: Backgrounds and Sources. Criticism*. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971. – p. 30.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* – p. 17.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* – p. 26.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* – p. 25.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* – p. 29.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* – p. 65.
- ²⁰ McLauchlan, J. 'The Value' and 'Significance' of 'Heart of Darkness', in: Kimborough R. (ed.) *Conrad J. Heart of Darkness: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988. – pp. 75–90.
- ²¹ Kimborough R. (ed.) *Conrad J. Heart of Darkness: Backgrounds and Sources. Criticism*. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971. – p. 67.

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Jelena Semeņeca

ANIMALS IN ARTHUR MACHEN'S NOVEL *THE TERROR*

Summary

The development of the 19th century scientific thought was greatly influenced by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin who had identified the actual biological mechanism for evolution, the so-called 'natural selection'. He assumed that the material world (with all its living representatives) is in a constant state of flux, ever changing, ever evolving.

Arthur Machen as a fiction writer produced some texts where he clearly attempted to renounce the 19th century Britain's world of science and naturalism. Thus he objected to the scientific method where the world and human were simply the objects of technical and mechanical investigation. He firmly believed that Victorian science dealt only with the matter, with the surface of the things, forgetting about the existence of the true essence of it – the soul.

The present article studies animals and their functions in Machen's novel 'The Terror' (1916). The text is one of the 'legends of the war'. It deals with the revolt of animals against human when they sense that he is not the king anymore, having rejected the divine soul that may be found in a human being.

Key-words: animals, evolution, degeneration, the matter, scientific development

*

Introduction

If the moths were infected with hatred of men, and possessed the design and the power of combining against him; why not suppose this hatred, this design, this power shared by other non-human creatures. The secret of the 'The Terror' might be condensed into a sentence: the animals had revolted against men.¹

The object of the present investigation is the novel written by Arthur Machen *The Terror*, composed in 1916 and published in 1917. The novel appeared for the first time in the newspaper *The Evening News*, where Machen worked as a journalist. As Wesley D. Sweetser puts it, the aim of this publication was to attract the attention of a wider reading audience to the earlier volumes written by Machen, which had almost faded into oblivion, and to promote the revival of interest in his personality as an author.² As to Machen's attitude to this publication, it should be said that it was derisory since he himself called *The Terror* a *shilling shocker*³.

The 19th Century Scientific Development: Evolution and Degeneration

In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. As John Tyndall in his 1874 Belfast address put it: *the strength of the doctrine of Evolution consisted not mainly in an experimental demonstration, but in its general harmony with scientific thought*⁴. Theories of evolution were not new to the Victorians. At the same time, Darwin's ideas proved to be underbreaking, because Darwin had identified the actual biological mechanism for evolution, so-called 'natural selection'. For Darwin, natural selection referred to a process by which *species only survive if and when they adapt themselves to their environment, although crucially there is a random or chance element to this process of selection; those species which vary successfully are henceforth in a better position to feed and reproduce themselves*⁵. Darwin suggested that the present moment is not the culmination of the past, but one moment in an endless process of positive change. He assumed that life is in a constant state of flux, ever changing, ever evolving. It should be mentioned that Darwin's Evolutionary Theory was accepted critically at that time. This happened largely because the Theory went on to challenge about every conceivable idea and attitude that the Victorians held dear. At the same time, Darwin's work prepared the groundings for the triumph of the Evolutionary Theory.

At the same time philosophers of science began to develop a scientific basis for scientific pessimism in relation to the Theory. It was stated that the innate cruelty of natural selection, together with randomness of evolutionary variation, undermined the notions of historical progress and opened the door to theories of evolutionary degeneration, as well as to visions of the insignificance of human in cosmic progress.⁶

The idea of evolution was accompanied by its flip-side: degeneration. The idea of degeneration had a significant influence on science, art, and politics from the 1850s to the middle of the 20th century. Evolution meant that the humankind's development was no longer fixed and certain, but could change and evolve or degenerate into an unknown future, possibly a bleak future that clashes with the analogy between evolution and civilization as a progressive positive direction.⁷ As a consequence, the supporters of degenerative theory assumed the human species might be overtaken by a more adaptable species or circumstances might change and suit a more adapted species. Degeneration theory presented a pessimistic outlook for the future of Western civilization as it believed the progress of the 19th century had begun to work against itself. The theory of degeneration suggested that poverty, crime, alcoholism, moral perversion, and political violence in Britain and the whole Europe were the evidence of degeneration. It means that the theory observed not only physical degeneration, but the one of moral, spiritual, and intellectual kind.

In the mass consciousness of the British people, there were two dominant ideas: the idea of the great chain of being and that of the hierarchy of individuals (where hierarchy is based on the qualitatively peculiar structural levels of material organisation), which put a human at the top of the tree of life. The distance between human and primordial slime was great; human was viewed as having climbed above the animal kingdom with a possibility to climb further. But it was also understood that there was lurking a danger of falling back, when evolution turns backwards to the apes, and this was what the term 'degeneration' implied.

Animals in the Novel *The Terror*

The Terror is a wartime story (the time of the World War I), in which all animals are infected with a certain contagion of hate or fury produced by the whole world at war, when the great passion of death seems driving all humanity to destruction. It is a story of a great revolt of subjects (the animals) against their masters (the people). Machen *treats with very potent mystery the effect of man's modern repudiation of spirituality on the beasts of the world, which are thus led to question his supremacy and to unite for his extermination.*⁸

The novel is set during the first two years of World War I. Mysterious occurrences and even more mysterious murders with varying frequency happen in different regions of the territory of England:

*[..] a whole district, one might say a whole county, was visited by a series of extraordinary and terrible calamities, which were the more terrible inasmuch as they continued for some time to be inscrutable mysteries.*⁹

*[..] the county in the far west was alone or especially afflicted by the terror that was over the land. [..] There was horror, too, about the Norfolk Broads, and far up by Perth no one would venture on the path that leads by Scone to the wooded heights above the Tay. And in the industrial districts [..].*¹⁰

*All the towns were full of houses of mourning, were full of dark and terrible rumours; incredible, as the incredible reality.*¹¹

Everything that is happening is shrouded in the atmosphere of mystery and top secrecy. British censorship issues an underlined circular, where the newspaper proprietors are prohibited to share the information on the incidents and accidents, especially to mention them in the press:

*The circular forbade any mention of certain events that had taken place, that might take place; it forbade any kind of allusion to these events or any hint of their existence, or of the possibility of their existence, not only in the press, but in any form whatever.*¹²

In the regions where the dead bodies are found, under the pretence that there is a necessity to undertake some serious measures to prevent a military invasion of the enemy and a probable espionage from their side, the authorities post military sentries. The aim of this action is to keep the occurrences in secret, so that they could not become the property of the general public. Those people who dare to discuss these events do it very cautiously; only a doctor, who directly examined some of the victims, and a journalist, who has an interest in all extraordinary events, finally can find the truth considering the whole situation. The others confine themselves to the assumptions about the massive well-planned conspiracy of the German intelligent agents or about a new weapon that is not known to the Allies.

Considering the novel *The Terror* it seems necessary to mention that the given work of fiction differs from the majority of the texts produced by Machen: in them the solution to any strange, weird, or odd occurrence is usually found in the sphere of the supernatural and it is explained by means of a supernatural action; the author traditionally provides the reader with some hints on the existence of another reality – he suggests

hypotheses on possible interaction of the objective reality and the world of supernatural powers, putting these ideas into the mouth of almost all characters. In the novel under consideration, the action logically moves from one event to another. Simultaneously with the narrative development, the author suggests very plausible, realistic hypotheses about the described situation, each of which is announced by one of the characters. There is an impression that Machen tries to draw a certain veil of the reality over any supernatural, mystical explanation of the happening, placing it in the background, with an intention to reveal it only at the end of the novel. It seems that the author is entering the polemics with his own characters, sceptically criticizing their explanations of the events. The described murders are viewed as accidents; they are explained by an appearance of a mentally ill person, by explosions and use of poisonous substances at the factories, by the fact that German military forces used 'Z-rays', which affecting the consciousness of people may cause a fit of violent rage, by the German diversion, who have secretly come to England and now are hiding underground. Machen formulates the explanation to this incredible, agonizing, unbearable mystery, the explanation that is always somewhere nearby only at the end of the narrative.

Thus, it seems significant to elucidate the series of murders that plunged people into the infinite, incomprehensible terror.

The novel starts with an announcement in some local newspapers about the death of a famous aviator. There is no much discussion devoted to the event as this fatal accident finds its rational explanation: the airplane fell to the ground after its propeller had been shattered by a collision with the flight of pigeons. Machen supports the probability of such an opinion:

*It revealed a new danger in the element that we have lately conquered.*¹³

*We have just begun to navigate a strange region; we must expect to encounter strange adventures, strange perils*¹⁴.

Further a very short newspaper article is mentioned. This article tells about an explosion at Munition Works in the Northern District of England. There are a lot of fatalities and the killed people are buried in screwed up coffins, not letting anyone see the bodies as their faces look *as if they have been bitten to pieces*¹⁵. The authorities claim that it has been done by the gas that is used at the works.

After those absolutely terrible accidents, when people die, start happening more frequently. Up to a certain moment all the events are given plain logical explanation that is based on the laws of the objective reality. At the crucial moment, when the number of the dead exceeds that of the alive, the attitude to the situation changes.

Machen continues the enumeration of some terrible and strange events. In the village a little girl, who has gone to pick flowers, is missing. The local people decide that she came to the precipitous brink, slipped, and fell into the sea. The same week after the disappearance of the girl, a body of a young strong man is found on a cliff near the rocks. For everyone's convenience (just to soothe the people's consciousness), it is decided that he has slipped as well. Then, at the bottom of the disused stone quarry, a woman with her neck broken is found, and almost beside her body there is a dead sheep in the pit. The only suitable explanation that may be given is that somebody chased them and threw them down over the brim of the quarry. A little later a dead man and his son are

found in the marsh. They lay some ten yards from the path, *which, it would seem, they must have left deliberately*¹⁶. The affair of the Highway, a lonely and unfrequented by-road was the most horrible of all these horrors. There the whole family of a farmer is found dead:

*[...] there on the roadway lay Williams, his wife, and the three children, stone dead, all of them. Their skulls were battered in as if by some heavy iron instrument; their faces were beaten into a pulp.*¹⁷

The doctor, who was the first to find poor Williams and his family, is convinced that it was done by a madman hiding in the countryside, as it was the only possible solution to the situation in the eyes of the doctor. His *theory was plausible; it explained the lack of purpose that seemed to characterize the murders*¹⁸.

After this accident, the number of murders starts growing with each passing day. Moreover, their geography is widening. Corpses are found in the quarry of Llanfihangel, on the jagged rocks under the cliffs near Porth. In the works in Bairnigan there are more than three hundred coffins. A hovered ship with all sails is set and beaten to and fro in the wind, crossing the Channel. When the ship drives ashore on the sandbanks and pine-woods of Arcachon there is *not a man alive on her, but only rattling heaps of bones*¹⁹. The Germans are accused of mass murders of innocent men and women and children, who, as it is theoretically decided, are hiding deep in the country. The only intention of the Germans is *to sow terror throughout England and fill our hearts with panic and dismay, hoping so to weaken their enemy at home that he would lose all heart over the war abroad*²⁰.

All the explanations, solutions, and theories are based on rational thinking. The characters of the novel try to catch at a straw of rationality, as only in this case it is possible for them to calm down a bit.

In fact, the rational approach to the explanations of the murders is doubted for the first time, when it becomes clear that the murders are committed by animals.

The same day when the farmer's family, the Williams, was brutally murdered, a military camp located close to the Williams's cottage was almost trampled down into the ground by maddened horses:

*They [the soldiers – J. S.] woke up in panic. There was a thundering sound on the steep hillside above them, and down upon the tents came half a dozen horses, mad with fright, trampling the canvas, trampling the men, bruising dozens of them and killing two. [...] They were grazing there peacefully in the morning, and the only sign of the panic of the night before was the mud they had scattered all over themselves as they pelted through a patch of wet ground.*²¹

Besides, the horses are very dangerous for men, as they turn *as wild as wasps and much more savage*²². Once they settled on the face of one man so that it was not possible to see the flesh for the bees were crawling all over it. They stung him so badly that the doctor did not know whether he would get over it, and they had chased a girl who had come out to see the swarming, and settled on her and stung her to death²³.

Mild and trusted sheep dogs out of a sudden turn into savage wolves. They injure *the farm boys in a horrible manner – in one case it was said with fatal results*²⁴. Even old Mrs. Owen's favourite pet, Brahma-Dorking cock, unexpectedly attack her *most savagely, inflicting some very nasty wounds before she could beat it off*²⁵. Swarming

moths settle on people's skin, covering the body, getting into the throat, causing asphyxia and, as a result, death. A cow kills its owner, having butted him into the ribs, got to the heart, and pricked it. Dolphins overturn a boat in the open sea and drown the sailors. Rats get into works, ships and bite people to death. Sheep throw down and hoof to death anyone on their way.

Only at the end of the novel Machen discloses the real reason of such a horrible behaviour of animals, the reason of their rebellion when a kind of mutual agreement between a man and a beast is broken off, *I believe that the subjects revolted because the king abdicated*²⁶. Further Machen upholds the verdict he has made considering the human civilization and human's development:

*Man has dominated the beasts throughout the ages, the spiritual has reigned over the rational through the peculiar quality and grace of spirituality that men possess, that makes a man to be that which he is. [...] between him and the animals there was a certain treaty and alliance. There was supremacy on the one hand, and submission on the other; we may go back into the ages and find the popular tradition asserting that not only are the animals the subjects, but also the friends of man.*²⁷

*All that was in virtue of that singular spiritual element in man which the rational animals do not possess. Spiritual does not mean respectable, it does not even mean moral, it does not mean 'good' in the ordinary acceptation of the word. It signifies the royal prerogative of man, differentiating him from the beasts.*²⁸

The reason of such a behaviour of animals is very simple and lies on the surface: human declared himself a rational creature – in other words he is equal to animals (over whom he was once sovereign), absolutely having forgotten about his spirituality, *he has been putting off this royal robe, he has been wiping the balm of consecration from his own breast*²⁹.

In the novel *The Terror*, Machen comes back to theme of degeneration, of the doom of the world existing at the turn of the centuries. He views this world as a world of the matter; it is the world that has been claimed cognisable by means of science. The physiology of the world could be investigated and studied properly through scientific methods, *science only deals with surfaces; it has nothing to do with realities – it is impertinent if it attempts to do with realities*³⁰.

A human deprived of soul loses the grand prerogative to be called a human and becomes similar to a beast. The world deprived of the world's soul degenerates, falls into decay, as it is the soul that fills the matter shaping it and making sense out of it. Such a world is doomed to disappear:

They [animals – J. S.] perceived that the throne was vacant – not even friendship was possible between them and the self-deposed monarch. If he were not king he was a sham, an imposter, a thing to be destroyed.

*Hence, I think, the Terror. They have risen once – they may rise again.*³¹

The 19th century is the time of Positivism, Realism in the art. It is the time when the philosophy of Materialism was at its peak, and one-sided worship of the spirit was replaced by one-sided worship of the matter as such. The 19th century scientists proceeded from the assumptions that the world is materialistic; the world exists objectively beyond and independently from the consciousness; the matter is primary and the consciousness is a property of the matter; the object of cognition is the objective reality that is cognizable.

Objecting to scientific approach in the process of the investigation of the world, Machen proclaims the objective reality incognizable, and, in his opinion, the matter is only a symbol of the true supernatural reality.

Conclusions

Having declared the degeneration of the material world, Machen objects to Darwin's theory. According to Machen, the world is not evolving from the lowest to the highest, but quite the contrary. A human calls himself not Orpheus taming the wild forces of the Nature, but Caliban, half-man – half-beast, personifying the brute spontaneous cruelty in a human. The human that rejects spirituality, having doubted the universal laws of the world's existence, is seized with unbearable terror. Machen demonstrates a Christian model of the world with its central opposition 'soul – matter' – human cannot alter his nature; he should not give up spirituality.

¹ Machen A. *The Terror*. New York, Robert M. McBride & Company, 1917. – p. 213.

² See: Sweetser W. D. *Arthur Machen*. Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964. – p. 39.

³ Joshi S. T. Arthur Machen: The Mystery of the Universe, in *The Weird Tale: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, Ambrose Bierce, H. P. Lovecraft*. University of Texas Press, 1990. – p. 39.

⁴ Tyndall J. *Fragments of Science 2 vols*. P. F. Collier: New York, 1905. – p. 206.

⁵ Purchase S. Evolution, in: *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2006. – p. 60.

⁶ Kucich J. Intellectual Debate in the Victorian Novel, in: Deirdre D. (ed.) *The Victorian Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2008 – p. 224.

⁷ Herman, A. *The Idea of Decline in Western History*. Free Press, 1997. – p. 110.

⁸ Lovecraft H. P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature & Other Literary Essays*. Wildside Press LLC., 2011. – p. 100.

⁹ Machen A. *The Terror*. New York, Robert M. McBride & Company, 1917. – p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* – p. 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.* – p. 220.

¹² *Ibid.* – p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.* – p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* – p. 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* – p. 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* – p. 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* – p. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* – p. 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* – p. 51.

²⁰ *Ibid.* – p. 53.

²¹ *Ibid.* – pp. 57–58.

²² *Ibid.* – p. 60.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* – p. 61.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* – p. 224.

²⁷ *Ibid.* – pp. 224–225.

²⁸ *Ibid.* – p. 225.

²⁹ *Ibid.* – p. 226.

³⁰ *Ibid.* – p. 212.

³¹ *Ibid.* – pp. 226–227.

NOTES



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Oksana Komarova

KASHTANKA'S COURSE IN LATVIA

Summary

'Kashtanka' (1892; the original title 'In Educated Society' – 1887) has never been the most popular Anton Chekhov's story in Latvia. At the beginning of the 20th century, the socially marked and psychologically deep prose by Chekhov or his rather modern plays were in the centre of Latvian recipients' attention. In spite of this, the analyses of Latvian translations and stagings of 'Kashtanka' in Latvia single out the complicated mechanisms of the reception of the Russian author and his story in Latvian cultural space. As a result of this research, two periods of the reception of 'Kashtanka' in Latvia could be mentioned. The first period is connected with two translations (1902, 1928) of the story and its staging in the State Puppet theatre (1945), when the dog called Kashtanka functioned in Latvian narrative as 'he'. The second period lasts from 1948, when the first translation by Anna Grēviņa appeared, till 2000, when Russian stage director Mikhail Bychkov's staging in the Theatre of Russian Drama in Riga took place. During this time period, translated and staged 'Kashtanka' regained her female nature and became closer to Chekhov's original.

Key-words: Anton Chekhov, 'Kashtanka', reception, Latvian culture space, translation, staging

*

The story by Anthon Chekhov about Kashtanka – a doggy who first lives with a carpenter Luka Alexandritch (Лука Александрыч) and his son Fedyushka (Федюшка), then gets lost, finds shelter with the clown monsieur George, meets a learned pig, cat, and gander, becomes a circus performer and finally returns home, – was first published with the title *In Educated Society* (*В ученом обществе*) in the newspaper *New Time* (*Новое время*) on December 25, 1887¹. In 1892, the story appeared in a separate edition with the title *Kashtanka*, illustrated with pictures by the artist S. Solomko that were unacceptable to the author of the story². During the period of time from 1893 till 1899 the story was issued six more times, but in 1903 the edition by Adolf Marx was published, and again Chekhov was not satisfied with the illustrations, this time drawn by Dmitry Kardovsky³. In 1891, having received after several written reminders the first proof of *Kashtanka* from his publisher Aleksey Suvorin⁴, Chekhov recast it noticeably: he introduced new structure and a chapter *An Uneasy Night* (*Беспокойная ночь*), as well as replaced the episode with the unfaithful wife, who is caught by her husband when committing the crime. In the new version it is a goldsmith who finds out his shop has been lifted. From this moment on the story that had not been originally addressed directly to children⁵, with few exceptions⁶, has been included in the context of Russian children literature,

foregrounding the ability of Chekhov to have an insight into the world of animals and show a dog as a thinking creature being able of human emotions.

At the same time, as it is recognized by Vladimir Kataev, the prominent researcher of the life and writing of Chekhov, the interpretation history of *Kashtanka* in the 20th century shows *how differently, sometimes even completely contrary, the significance of the work can be perceived, being completely clear and close to children understanding*⁷. And really, Maria Semanova in her monograph *Chekhov as an Artist* (*Чехов-художник*, 1976) concludes that *Kashtanka* 'entered' not only the title of the story; the title of each chapter includes her vision of the outer world, her assessment, thoughts, and feelings.⁸ When putting *Kashtanka* on one level with people, the author of the book highlights the ability of Chekhov's character to discover the world with the help of smell and eyesight that allows *Kashtanka* to *guess the tints of the owner's mood and condition of soul*⁹. Alexander Chudakov writes on the distanced vision of the world or defamiliarization (остранение) and on the striving of the author to depict *only the things that could be seen and heard by Kashtanka*, in his book *Chekhov's Poetics* (*Поэтика Чехова*, 1971)¹⁰. Also Kataev, already mentioned above, in his book *Chekhov's Prose: Problems of Interpretation* (*Проза Чехова: проблемы интерпретации*, 1979), when analysing the so-called 'success story' (рассказ открытия) of Chekhov and the compositions of 'seemed – turned out' (казалось – оказалось) that are very characteristic of his writing, uses *Kashtanka* as an example where he sees accumulation of different world visions.¹¹ But, next to the traditional evaluations of *Kashtanka*, the other ones that are more open and even scandalous have been recognized. Thus, for instance, an ideological vision of *Kashtanka* is provided by Yuriy Bogomolov in his research *Kashtanka and Sharik* (*Каштанка и Шарик*, 1990), where the work by Chekhov is compared to Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* (*Собачье сердце*, 1925) and it is indicated that both characters could have met at circus: *Kashtanka* as a performer and *Sharik* as a spectator.¹² A similar road is taken by Edgar Broide in his book *Chekhov. Thinker, Artist* (*Чехов. Мыслитель-художник*, 1980), where Chekhov is shown as a prophet of upcoming revolutionary events, while *Kashtanka* is interpreted as an attempt to overcome the *totalitarian way of thinking, class awareness, and the Party that exploits brutish instincts*¹³. The version of Saveliy Senderovich, American Slavist, seems to be completely shocking, the researcher himself calls it a *fresh reading of Chekhov*¹⁴. As the main method of his book *Chekhov – in Private. A Story of One of A. P. Chekhov's Obsessions* (*Чехов с глазу на глаз. История одной одержимости А. П. Чехова*, 1994) Senderovitch has chosen psychoanalysis¹⁵, while the main research object is the so-called *St. George's culture complex* that is considered by the author to be a part of Russian religious awareness as well as the literary language of the writer.¹⁶ Traces of the myth about the kidnapped maiden, her saviour, and the dragon, according to the Senderovitch's concept, are well seen in many works by Chekhov, including the story *Kashtanka*¹⁷. The American researcher is sure that the role of the maiden is successfully played by *Kashtanka* herself, the function of the dragon is undertaken by the goose Ivan Ivanitch (Иван Иванович) and the clown George is both the saviour of the dog-maiden and the master of the underworld as well as the hermit who is unable to fulfil his sexual fantasies due to *Kashtanka's* departure. Also *Kashtanka* herself obtains an erotic connotation as viewed by Senderovitch. On the basis of the dog's dreams and memories about Fedyusha and Luka Alexandritch, the author of the research defines her as an erotomaniac and manifestation of bestial-erotic nature.

The aim of this paper is to follow the route of *Kashtanka* in the Latvian culture space basically by translations and stagings of Chekhov's story, assuming that the real number of items under study could be greater. A separate part of the research could consist of the analysis of possible literary initiatives of *Kashtanka*, since, as it is known, the image of a dog is widely represented in Latvian literature and, especially, in children texts. Still, as the research material is in the preparation stage and possible influences of Chekhov's text have not been stated till this moment, the author of the article is forced to abandon this line of research.

The translation history of Chekhov's *Kashtanka* began in 1902, when in the section *Friends of the Little Ones* (*Mazo draugs*) of the children newspaper *Jaunības Draugs* (*Friend of the Youth*) Latvian version of this story was published for the first time.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the author of the translation is not mentioned but the detailed analysis of the original text and the translation makes it possible to assume that there could be several ones.¹⁹

First of all, the freedom used by the translator/-s to the structure of *Kashtanka* text is surprising.²⁰ Of course, changes and shortenings of this type are determined by the orientation of *Friend of the Youth* on particular audience, namely, children, since, as it was already mentioned, Chekhov did not regard *Kashtanka* as a children story only. However, in the translation under analysis other, more important modifications have been noted:

1. The division of the story in thematic parts is not observed, as well as titles of these parts have been omitted. As a result the story melts into one flow, while the translator/-s operate quite freely with separate text passages that are easily replaced, their places are changed. Thus, an obvious restructuring of Chekhov's story takes place.
2. Considerable inconsequence is noticed in the use of names of Chekhov's characters. The first owner of the dog – carpenter-drunkard – is firstly named as Luka Alexandrovitch (Luka Aleksandrovičs), but a bit later he becomes Lukas Alexandrovitch (Lukass Aleksandrovičs) that sounds characteristic neither to Russian nor Latvian tradition. It is important that the name *Lukas* in this case is written with one letter 's', though it is declined according to the form of the person name *Lukass* that can be found only at the end of the translation. Equally interesting transformations take place with Chekhov's white cat. In the first part of the translation he is named as Theodor Timofeyitch (Teodors Timofejičs), but in the middle of the story, almost at the same time, he is called Fedya (Fedja), Theodor Timofeyitch (Teodors Timofejičs) and Fyodor Timofeyitch (Fjodors Timofejičs), though Chekhov uses only one variant – Fyodor Timofeyitch (Федор Тимофеич). It should be noted that the tradition of the Russian author to call several characters-animals of *Kashtanka* by a name and a patronymic is not observed also in case of the black pig Havronya Ivanovna (Хавронья Ивановна) as in the first translation she is called Lass (Meiča).
3. Till this moment the major emphasis has been on transformations in the textual structure and sound outfit of *Kashtanka*, but it is equally important to indicate the changes in relation to the very characters of the story and their functions in the text.²¹ In the translation of *Kashtanka* from 1902 this concerns the

protagonist as well as some other characters. Namely, observing the requirements of the Latvian grammar, the translator/-s replaces the Russian word 'собака' ('dog', feminine gender) by the widely used literary Latvian language equivalent 'suns' ('dog', masculine gender). As a result Kashtanka is already used as 'he' not only on the grammatical level of the translation, but also in the artistic meaning that is already in conflict with the concept of the Russian writer. Chekhov designed his Kashtanka as a bitch; it results from his own text, actualized in literary criticism where Kashtanka's feminine gender has become the basis for comparatively surprising and scandalous hypotheses of particular researchers.²² Still, in the Latvian translation this shade is lost:

Kashtanka remembered that on the way he had behaved extremely improperly; he had jumped about, dashed barking after the horse trains, ran into foreign yards [...].

[in the Latvian translation:

Kaštanka atminējās, ka viņš bij ceļā visai neglīti uzvedies: aiz priekiem lēkājis, skrējis riedams zirgu dzelzceļa vāgiem pakaļ, lidis svešās sētās [...].²³]

Along with Kashtanka, one more character is acting in Chekhov's story – it is a gander Ivan Ivanitch, who changes his gender in the translation published by *Friend of the Youth* due to similar grammatical reasons – гусь (goose, masculine gender) – zoss (goose, feminine gender) –, only in the direction opposite to Kashtanka. In the analyzed translation, this character acts as 'she'. Of course, in this case the translator/-s considered the too masculine name of the gander Ivan Ivanitch to be unacceptable, which is replaced by the more simple and corresponding to a woman – *Old woman (Vecene)*. Also Kashtanka's nickname *Auntie* (in the original – *Тетка*) is 'successfully' made 'masculine' that becomes *Godfather (Krusttēvs)* in the Latvian version.

As a result, if compared to the original work, quite interesting combinations have appeared, for instance: *He is dying, Auntie!* – said the owner and threw up his arms (in the original; – *Он умирает, Тетка!* – сказал хозяин и всплеснул руками²⁴) and *She is dying, Godfather!*, said the owner and wringed his hands (in the translation; – *Viņa mirst, krusttēv!* saimnieks sacīja un laužīja rokas²⁵).

Such view of Kashtanka's character is also kept in the second translation of Chekhov's story that was published in 1928 in a separate book titled *Doggy (Dukšelis)* in the series *Jaunības bibliotēka (Youth Library)*²⁶. Significantly, also in the edition of Andrey Jesen the translator and author of illustrations of Chekhov's story are not named, though, if compared to the translation of 1902, the text of *Doggy* is closer to the original both in composition and content. That is proved by the correspondence to the division proposed by Chekhov, lower percentage of textual omissions, and attempts to keep the specific features of characters created by the Russian writer as much as possible. In the Latvian text, we read about a carpenter Luka Alexandritch (Luka Aleksandričs), the grey gander Ivan Ivanitch (Ivans Ivaničs), the cat Theodor Timofeyevich (Teodors Timofejevičs), and the pig Havronya Ivanovna (Rukške Ivanovna).²⁷ Only Kashtanka has obtained a new name – *Dukšelis (Doggy)* – and, by this, a new life – in the form of a masculine gender creature. *Dukšelis* is a diminutive form of a quite frequently met housedog name *Duksis* that is both semantically and phonetically (*Kaštanka* – *Dukšelis*; *Kashtanka* – *Dukshelis*) corresponding to the bitch's name in Russian.

An important date in the translation history of *Kashtanka* in Latvia is 1948, when this work was included in the edition *Chekhov A. Selection of Stories for Youth* (*Čehovs A. Stāstu izlase jaunatnei*).²⁸ Thus, the way of *Kashtanka* to the hearts of young Latvian readers continues. This edition is of double value, since for the first time the name of the translator of the story is indicated – it is Anna Grēviņa.²⁹ Actually the whole story on *Kashtanka*'s translations into Latvian is the story about republishing of A. Grēviņa's translation in different editions with attempts to perfect, rework, and improve the quality and the level of adequacy of the translation of Chekhov's story.³⁰ Since, as it is indicated by the translation theorist Pavel Topor in the article *Translation and Literature: Creative Personality of a Translator* (*Перевод и литература: творческая личность переводчика*, 1998), *artistic translation cannot exist without creative competition; the 'final', end translation is not possible; [...] every following translation allows gathering experience, creates the tradition, every next translator relies on it*³¹.

Looking from the viewpoint of the perception of *Kashtanka*'s image, the first translation seems to be interesting where the dog *Kashtanka* is replaced by the bitch *Kashtanka*, and it is done within the framework of one text. Without delving in the summary of the possible reasons (inattention of the translator or being in the middle of creative search, intervention of proofreaders / editors, or on the contrary – carelessness, etc.), here are some examples that very brightly illustrate this transition that is very important for the perception of Chekhov's image:

A young dog, a reddish mongrel, a mix between a dachshund and a 'yard-dog', with a muzzle very similar to a fox, was running up and down the pavement looking uneasily from side to side. From time to time he stopped and, whining and lifting first one chilled paw and then another, tried to make up his mind how it could have happened that he was lost? [beginning of the story – O. K.]

[in the Latvian translation:

Jauns, ruds suns – takša un sētas suņa jauklis, kura purns stipri atgādināja lapsu, skraidīja pa ietvi no viena gala uz otru un nemierīgi raudzījās visapkārt. Brīžiem tas apstājās un, smilkstēdams, paceldams drīz vienu nosalušo ķepu, drīz otru, pūlējās aptvert: kā tas varēja gadīties, ka viņš noklīdis?³²]

The people Luka Alexandritch worked for lived a very long way off, so that, before he could reach any of them, the carpenter had to drop several times into a tavern to refresh himself. Kashtanka remembered that on the way she had behaved extremely improperly. In her delight that she had been taken for a walk, she jumped about, dashed barking after the trains, ran into yards, and chased other dogs. The carpenter was continually losing sight of her, stopping, and angrily shouting at her [...]. [the same episode of the story – O. K.]

[in the Latvian translation:

Lukas Aleksandriča pasūtīnātāji dzīvoja ļoti tālu un, iekām nokļūt pie katra no viņiem, galdniekam bija vairakkārt jāgriežas traktierī un jāstiprinās. Kaštanka atcerējās, ka ceļā tā izturējās ārkārtīgi nepieklājīgi. Aiz prieka, ka paņemta līdzī pastaigā, viņa lēkāja, riedama metās virsū zirgu tramvajam, skrēja iekšā pagalmos un dzinās pakaļ suņiem. Galdniekam tā bieži pazuda, viņš apstājās un dusmīgi tai uzkliedza [...].³³]

In the rest of the text as well as in all the following translations by Grēviņa, Kashtanka is a 'she' that manifests getting closer to the Russian original on the level of the artistic image. In parallel, better equivalents are being looked for and found for individual details of Kashtanka's description as well as for the lexis used by Chekhov in general.

It is significant that quite recently, i.e., in 2010, a new version of *Kashtanka* was published in a separate, magnificently bound (merit of the publishing house Zvaigzne ABC) and interestingly illustrated (incredible work of the artist Karīna Volbeta) edition. In its essence, it is one more republication of the much earlier translation made by Grēviņa with minimal interference by proofreaders. However, due to reasons known only to the publishers (most probably it is determined by the tendency of place economy as well as the great prime cost of the book), a quite important episode in relation to the scene in the circus when the lost bitch Kashtanka, then called Auntie, finds her real owners in the circus and goes to meet them, is omitted:

Someone in the gallery gave a whistle, and two voices, a boy's and a man's, called loudly:

'Kashtanka! Kashtanka!'

Auntie started, and looked where the shouting came from. Two faces, one hairy, drunken, and grinning, the other chubby, rosy-cheeked, and frightened-looking, dazed her eyes as the bright light had dazed them before ... She remembered, fell off the chair, struggled on the sand, then jumped up, and with a delighted yap dashed towards those faces. There was a deafening roar, interspersed with whistles and a shrill childish shout:

'Kashtanka! Kashtanka!'

[in the Latvian translation (1974):

Galerijā kāds iesvilpās, un divas balsis – viena bērna, otra virieša bals – skaļi sauca:

– Kaštanka! Kaštanka!

Krustmāte nodrebēja un paraudzījās turp, kur sauca. Tāpat kā pirmīt, viņai acīs bija iesitusias spilgtā gaisma, tagad tur pazibēja divas sejas: viena bārdaina, iereibusi un smaidoša, otra apaļa, sārtiem vaigiem un izbaiļu pilna... Krustmāte atcerējās, nokrita no krēsla un sāka ķepuroties smiltīs, tad uzlēca kājās un, priedīgi smilkstēdama, metās pretim šīm sejām. Atskanēja briesmīga rēkoņa, kurai cauri brāzās svilpieni un spalgi bērnu saucieni:

– Kaštanka! Kaštanka!^{34]}

Alongside with translations, it is possible to speak about staging of Chekhov's *Kashtanka* in Latvian theatres. With great interruption (in 1945 and 2000), two stagings of this story appeared in Latvia that in general bring out the change in focus of the perception of Kashtanka corresponding to the translations. In 1945, *Kashtanka* was staged by the State Puppet Theatre (Valsts Leļļu teātris). The text for the show was prepared and revised by the writer Ēriks Ādamsons, and the director of the show was Jānis Žigurs. By expanding the story by Chekhov in a 'song performance' that consisted of six brief scenes, and by placing the main accents on the movement element, language wit, and mime show, directors, as it is indicated in the article *The New Staging of the State Puppet Theatre (Valsts Leļļu teātra jaunais iestudējums, 1945)* by Valdis Grēviņš, the very text of the Russian writer was used *only to provide the basic points needed for*

*the understanding of the contents*³⁵. As a result the staged *Kashtanka* moved away considerably from the original *Kashtanka* by Chekhov. It is most noticeable in scenes where the social context that is little characteristic of Chekhov is stressed and the influence of a particular ideology can be sensed. For instance, in the description of the life and work of the carpenter Luka Alexandritch:

*Days pass in hard work. Masters are severe, pay little for the work, but one cannot complain. The Tsar's gorodovoys are watching at each corner, but when threatening with a gorodovoy, it is possible to control even the naughty Kashtanka.*³⁶

The scene where Kashtanka is beaten: *As soon as Kashtanka wants to get acquainted closer, the cat beats her up with such a rage as if he had gathered the whole hate of cats towards dogs accumulated during centuries*³⁷ and, finally, in the determination of the dog to take the place of the dead goose:

*Kashtanka offers his services and proves that he is no more stupid than the trained goose. Kashtanka can wail according to notes and perform different tricks. And in such a way Kashtanka began acting in the circus together with the cat and the pig.*³⁸

Thus, in general, the character scheme characteristic of the translation of 1902 is observed, namely, Kashtanka is a 'he' (performed by K. Капиш) and the goose is a 'she'. Similarly, a character of free variation rather than a show close to the original appears in the finale of the staging of 1945:

*The old carpenter and Fedya come to the circus show, and they are still missing the lost Kashtanka. Here the happy meeting takes place. Only George is sad as he cannot perform at circus without Kashtanka. Fedya finds a solution: Kashtanka will live at the carpenter's place, but will go with Fedya to the circus each evening. George will pay a fee to Kashtanka, they will have money, and Fedya will study and become an engineer. It will be better for everyone.*³⁹

Such a Utopian end of *Kashtanka* as well as other modifications and transformations of Chekhov's story did not prevent the young spectators from growing fond of Kashtanka since, as it was stressed in the newspaper *Zemgales Komunisti*, [...] *the ball was overcrowded to the last possibility*⁴⁰.

A completely different view on *Kashtanka* to the Latvian public is offered by the director of Voronezh Chamber Theatre, Mikhail Bichkov who gained popularity with his shows (including *Kashtanka*) in theatre festivals of Russia, Poland, and many other countries. Invited by the Board, Bichkov agreed to stage *Kashtanka* in Riga Russian Drama theatre with the local company of actors. As a result in May 20, 2000 the premiere of the story took place that caused wide resonance in the Russian press of Latvia and in several Latvian newspapers, too, and won the prize at the Latvian theatre festival as the best show for children.⁴¹

¹ Чехов А. П. В ученом обществе. / *Новое время* № 4248, 25 декабря, 1887. – с. 1–2. Here and further the information provided in the comments of the edition Чехов А. П. *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в тридцати томах*. Т. 6. Сочинения. 1887. Москва: Наука, 1976 is used (pp. 700–705).

² The letter of January 22, 1892 to A. Suvorin (written in Moscow).

³ Chekhov himself tried to find an illustrator to *Kashtanka*. The first candidate was an animalist and a landscapist A. Stepanov, the second one – the artist who was the writer's acquaintance, A. Hotyaintseva; there is information about Nikolai Chekhov's sketches for *Kashtanka*. Chekhov wrote to his wife Olga Knipere-Chekhova about his dissatisfaction with Dmitry Kardovskis' pictures in the letter from February 20, 1904.

⁴ He wrote about it to Suvorin on May 13, August 30, October 16 and November 22, 1891, while in December 3 letter the writer confirmed the reception of the correction.

⁵ *I cannot write for children at all, I write for them once in ten years, and I do not like nor recognize the so called children literature. Children must be given only things that suit adults as well* (the letter from January 21, 1900, addressed to G. Rossolimo).

⁶ A review by N. Efros published in the edition *Новости дня* on February 28, 1892.

⁷ Катаев В. Б. «Каштанка» в XX веке: из истории интерпретаций, in: *Чехов плюс... Предшественники, современники, преемники*. Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2004. – с. 302.

⁸ Семанова М. Л. *Чехов-художник*. Москва: Просвещение, 1976. – с. 42, 45.

⁹ Ibid. – с. 45.

¹⁰ Чудаков А. П. Повествование в 1895–1904 гг., in: *Поэтика Чехова*. Москва: Наука, 1971. – с. 89, 90.

¹¹ Катаев В. Б. *Проза Чехова: проблемы интерпретации*. Издательство Московского университета, 1979. – с. 47.

¹² See in: Катаев В. Б. «Каштанка» в XX веке: из истории интерпретаций, in: *Чехов плюс... Предшественники, современники, преемники*. Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2004. – с. 305.

¹³ Ibid. – с. 306–307.

¹⁴ Сендерович С. Введение. О чтении писателя на его собственном языке, in: *Чехов с глазу на глаз. История одной одержимости А. П. Чехова*. С.-Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин, 1994. – с. 6.

¹⁵ Ibid. – с. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid. – beginning from с. 13.

¹⁷ Сендерович С. «Каштанка», in: *Чехов с глазу на глаз. История одной одержимости А. П. Чехова*. С.-Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин, 1994. – с. 202–212.

¹⁸ Kaštanka. Čehova stāsts [Tulk. nav minēts]. / *Jaunības Draugs* Nr. 1. 1902. – 23.–25. lpp.; Nr. 2. – 57.–62. lpp.; Nr. 3. – 86.–88. lpp.; Nr. 5. – 154.–158. lpp.

¹⁹ It is mainly manifested in the use of separate person names and designation of objects.

²⁰ In the translation the places with the description of the oblivious behaviour of Chekhov's character during the walk are omitted, the activities of Fedyushka are related briefly, and the part with the piece of meat that the little master first gave to Kashtank and then pulled it out by the thread attached to it with a laugh is omitted; the new master of the dog, monsieur George does not use a whip during rehearsals anymore, the products on the table are not described in detail, etc.

²¹ Any translator is always standing in front of a choice. In fact, these are two most important tasks he must solve: 1. Create a text that could be fully integrated in the target language system and would correspond to its requirements and norms, 2. Maximally adhere to the original and preserve its aesthetic and artistic individuality (Andrey Fyodorov writes on it in the book *Introduction to Translation Theory* published in 1953 (*Введение в теорию перевода*. Москва, 1953. – с. 256) etc.). The latest is closely related to the understanding of the literary image as it is one of the central elements of the structure of a work of art. Of course, in the translation practice such balancing is not always possible. That is why the translator is forced to sacrifice something.

²² Сендерович С. «Каштанка», in: *Чехов с глазу на глаз. История одной одержимости А. П. Чехова. Опыт феноменологии творчества*. С.-Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин, 1994. – с. 202–212.

²³ Kaštanka. Čehova stāsts [Tulk. nav minēts]. / *Jaunības Draugs* Nr. 1. 1902. – 23. lpp.

²⁴ Чехов А.П. Каштанка. *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в тридцати томах*. Т. 6. Сочинения. 1887. Москва: Наука, 1976. – С. 443.

²⁵ Kaštanka. Čehova stāsts [Tulk. nav minēts]. / *Jaunības Draugs* Nr. 3. 1902. – 88. lpp.

²⁶ Dukšelis [Tulk. nav minēts]. / *Jaunības bibliotēka* Nr. 27. Rīga: A. Jessens, [1928].

²⁷ The latter name is a partly Latvian version that, if compared with the previous translation, is closer to the original.

²⁸ Kaštanka. Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Stāstu izlase jaunatnei*. Ilustr. A. Ritova. Rīga: LVI, 1948. – 131.–152. lpp.

²⁹ Born Dēķena (1892 – 1979), who entered the history of Latvian culture with theatre and music criticism, but became popular as a translator of fundamental works – *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* by Lev Tolstoy, *The Lady of the Camelias* by Alexander Dumas, etc.

³⁰ In total the author of the paper has found seven translations of the story *Kaštanka*. Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Stāstu izlase jaunatnei*. Ilustr. A. Ritova. Rīga: LVI, 1948; Tulk. A. Grēviņa. Ilustr. F. Pauļuka. Rīga: LVI, 1950; Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Izlase III sējums*, I sējums. Rīga: LVI, 1953; Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Stāsti*. Rīga: LVI, 1960; Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Kopotī raksti XX sējums*. V sējums. Rīga: Liesma, 1968; Otrais izdevums. Tulk. A. Grēviņa. Ilustr. D. Kardovskis. Rīga: Liesma, 1974; Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Stāsti*. Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, [2005].

³¹ Топер П. Перевод и литература: творческая личность переводчика. / *Вопросы литературы* № 6. 1998. Москва. – с. 193.

³² Kaštanka. Tulk. A. Grēviņa, in: Čehovs A. *Stāstu izlase jaunatnei*. Ilustr. A. Ritova. Rīga: LVI, 1948. – 131. lpp.

³³ Ibid. – 131.–132. lpp.

³⁴ [Čehovs A.] Kaštanka. Otrais izdevums. Tulk. A. Grēviņa. Ilustr. D. Kardovskis. Rīga: Liesma, 1974. – 53. lpp.

³⁵ Grēviņš V. Valsts Leļļu teātra jaunais inscenējums. / *Literatūra un Māksla* Nr. 26, 13. jūlijs, 1945. – 7. lpp.

³⁶ Kacena V. “Kaštanka” Leļļu teātrī. / *Ciņa*. Nr. 156, 4. jūlijs, 1945. – 4. lpp.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ LPSR Valsts Leļļu teātra izrādes Jelgavā. / *Zemgales Komunisti* Nr. 57(273), 9. aprīlis, 1946. – 2. lpp.

⁴¹ Kalna B. Rīgas Krievu drāmas teātris, in: *Latvijas teātris 20. gs. 90. gadi un gadsimtu mija*. Rīga: Zinātne, 2007. – 352. lpp.

NOTES



IEGULDĪJUMS TAVĀ NĀKOTNĒ

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Nadežda Fjodorova

GIRAFFE OF NIKOLAI GUMILYOV

Summary

Neoromanticism as an important European subculture in many respects was set forth by the great geographical discoveries of the 19th century. In Russian prose fiction, Neoromanticism is manifested in Alexander Green's writing in the 1920s. In Russian poetry Nikolai Gumilyov became the singer of neoromantic and the founder of Russian Neoromanticism. He twice – in 1909 and 1913 – travelled to Africa and his poetical sketches were inspired by the real life observations and experience. African landscapes remained in his imagination until the end of his life.

The world of the first book by Gumilyov, 'Romantic Flowers' is that of varied nature, mythological, historical phenomena. Significant role in the book is attributed to flora and fauna that first of all are represented by mammals and, to a lesser degree, birds (lions, jaguars, rhinoceros, giraffes, camels, elephants, kangaroos, etc.)

'Giraffe' (1908) is one of the brightest animal poems by Gumilyov; his book 'African Hunt' is its prose context. Gumilyov's giraffe is the base of existence, a myth of feminine beauty and energy.

Key words: neoromanticism, Africa, giraffe, Chad, captains, princess Zara, Akhmatova

*

Nikolai Gumilyov who spent his youth in Tsarskoe Selo and St. Petersburg, in the space of classical architecture that he remained faithful to until the end of his life, since his childhood and young days worshipped the Muse of distant travel. The 19th century was not only a technocratic positivist epoch but also the age of great geographical discoveries; what had not been discovered during the age of Columbus and Magellan, was discovered by European and Russian travellers, Livingstone, Przewalski; Miklukho-Maklai lived for many years on the islands of the Pacific. Positivist civilization was abandoned for the primeval, i.e. real nature not marred by civilization, e.g. by Gauguin. Gumilyov wrote in 1908:

Paul Gauguin left not only European art but also European culture and the most of his life lived on Tahiti islands. He pursued the dream of the Future Eve, the ideal woman of the times to come [...]. He was searching for her in the tropics as seen by the naïve eye of a savage, with their peculiar simplicity of lines and brightness of colours. He was aware that the orange fruit among the green leaves looked well only in the dark hands of a beautiful aborigine woman that is regarded by loving eyes. And he created new art, profoundly individual and ingeniously simple [...].¹

In 1909, Gumilyov left Paris for Africa, visited Egypt, Sudan, Abyssinia. However, before seeing Africa he sang praise to it in his first books – *Romantic Flowers* (1908) and *Pearls* (1910). The four-part poem *Captains* (1909) became a kind of a hymn to travellers, *discoverers of new lands*. After four years, in 1913, Gumilyov made his second trip to Africa, to Abyssinia and wrote poems and sketches *African Safari*:

[..] against the distant background of the lawn I saw a lion and noticed just the huge head erected above the breast wide as a shield. Next moment I fired.²

African scenes followed him until the end of his life and were depicted in his books *Shater* (1918) and *Fiery Column* (1921). In August 1914, straight after the beginning of the World War, Gumilyov volunteered to the front, in acting army, served in intelligence and wrote as a correspondent articles to the capital city paper *Stock Exchange News* titled *Cavalryman's Notes* that seem surprisingly daring and demonstrate sharp point of view:

I left stooping and expecting each minute to get a bullet like the one I had just sent to the unlucky German. And right before me in the bush I saw a fox. The fluffy red-brown beast was graciously and unhurriedly gliding among the tree trunks. Not often in my life did I experience such a clear, simple, and powerful joy.³

On 3 August 1921, Gumilyov was arrested for membership in a counter-revolutionary organization and was shot together with 60 other 'plotters' at the end of the month. Until 'perestroika' in 1985, Gumilyov's name and *oeuvre* was forbidden.

The geographical boom of the 19th century, equal in its range to the epoch of great geographical discoveries of the 15 – 16th centuries, the time of Columbus, Magellan, Vasco da Gama, gave rise to the significant subculture of Neoromanticism that set forth the splendid constellation of outstanding writers without whom it is impossible to imagine the art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – English writers Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Haggard, French writers Louis Bousсенard and Jules Verne, German author Karl May, Russian writer Alexander Green. Besides, Europeans of the 19th century read with no less enthusiasm reports of the scientific expeditions to Africa, Central Asia and to all parts of the world. Finally, Verne wrote six volume long *General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels* and three volume *History of the World Exploration*. Eventually, scientific works by Alexander von Humboldt must be mentioned, e.g., *Cosmos, The Universe and Humanity, The Earth and the People, General Geography, The Face of the Earth*, and Frenchman Élisée Reclus, the author of nineteen volume series *The Universal Geography* and six volume series *Man and Earth*.

The first two books by Gumilyov – *Romantic Flowers* and *Pearls* are neoromanticist ones, that was ascertained by the author who titles the final poem of the first book *Neoromanticist Fairy-Tale*.

Romantic Flowers consist of fourty-five poems, nineteen of them – chorea, nine – anapaests, seven – iambs, six – amphibrach, one – dactylic, three poems – *Contagious, Lake Chad, Founders* are complex polymetric ones. Gumilyov's metric in general corresponds to the metric canon of the early 20th century, just with the slight prevalence above the average level of amphibrach and with below the average level – iamb.

But in the given case it is not the structure of stanza that matters above all but the content, the ideology of the poetry. Nevertheless, Gumilyov begins his book with a

structural generic 'trifoliate', in fact, to cite Innokentiy Annenskiy. The collection starts with the poem *Sonnet* (1905). This is the only sonnet in the collection and it functions by ascertaining the structural-semantic precision that after some years, since 1913 will be elaborated by Mandelstam. Gumilyov abandons the Romanic sonnet for ballad initiating the national, German tradition. In the third sonnet this tradition is supported by *Ossian* thus consolidating the ideology of pre-romanticism with its Gothic national idea. These three culture segments constitute the conceptual idea of Gumilyov.

The world of the book is that of diverse phenomena: astronomic (sky, dawn, evening, star-lit nights and cold stars, Plough, Hound, Sagittarius, Aries, Taurus, fiery days, the sun, the moon), mythological (Paradise, hell, Lucifer / Satan, Serpent, Queen Mab, wandering Jew, the queen of Sodom), mystical (*Oath, Death, Horror, Behind the Coffin, The Cave of Sleep*), historical (*Pompeii with Pirates, Romulus and Ramos, Manley, Karakalla, Seafarer Pausanius*, etc.), natural (lakes, palm groves and aloe thickets, etc.).

The world of the book is that of unusual colours, sequences and combinations of all entities, great and small. This is the point of the last poem, *Romantic Fairy-Tale*.

Imagery of flora and fauna occupy a significant place in *Romantic Flowers*. Fauna is represented by mammals and to a lesser degree by birds. Fauna appears in the collection in a two-fold manner: 1) as a central world represented by animals portrayed in poems; 2) as an optional one with animals just mentioned in poems. Animals that are portrayed in compositional sequence: 1) *Rat – Hyena – Cheetah – Lion's Bride – Sinbad's Eagle – Giraffe – Rhinoceros*; 2) *Ballad*: horses (6); *Dawn*: mythologized Serpent (3) and Peacock (3); *In the Skies*: mythologized heavenly bodies and animals mentioned once: Plough (2), Hound (2), Sagittarius, Aries, Taurus and bears; *Thoughts*: hawks; *Masquerade*: serpent; *Choice*: panther; *Refusal*: bird, dolphins; *Memory*: bird (2); *Dreams*: raven (2), swan; *Sada-Yakko*: cats; *Suicide*: white dove; *Devil's lover*: horse, fairy bird; *Curse*: birds; *Hyena*: birds (2), dogs; *Cheetah*: jackal, cheetah, dogs; *Horror*: beast, hyenas; *Soul's Gardens*: birds, black panthers, flamingo; *Contagious*: storks (3); *Rhinoceros*: monkeys, rhinoceros, bull; *Lake Chad*: Barbarian horse, camel, birds; *Pompeii with Pirates*: doves; *Games*: tigers (2), pythons (2), elephants (2), bears (2), wild oxen (2), hyenas, beasts (2), wolves; *Emperors*: beasts; *Karakalla*: female tiger, swan, crocodile, snakes; *Seafarer Pausanius*: roes, crocodile (3); *Neoromantic Fairy-Tale*: roes, boars, rhinoceros (3), hawk, bird, pythons, dogs.

From book to book the number of animals and their frequency are reduced. This is first of all testified to by the number of poetry portraits of animals. In *Pearls* there are three portraits: *Eagle – Kangaroo – Parrot*. In *Pearls* a Christian topic prevails. The collection ends with important cycles of poems: *Beatrice, Return of Odysseus, Captains*. Finally, the closing poem is *Adam's Dream*.

The third book, *Alien Sky* is opened by the poem *Guardian Angel*. There is just one poem about animals in the collection, *Hippopotamus*. The last book, *Fiery Column* has two poems about animals: *Baby Elephant* and *Leopard*.

Starting from *Alien Sky*, Gumilyov's lyric assumes completely obvious features of akmeism that is a neo-mythological culture type.

The poem *Giraffe* was printed in 1908 in *Romantic Flowers* and then in 1910 in *Pearls*, in the section *Romantic Flowers*. Obviously, the plot of the poem was rather significant for Gumilyov because it was preceded by the novella *Princess Zara* written

in 1907 and published in 1908 in August issue of *Russkaya Mysl*. In *Zanzibar from the tribe Zogar that lies on Lake Chad*, having made a long way and overcome a lot of difficulties, a herald arrived with a message for Princess Zara:

In our forests lives the Fair Maiden, the favourite creature of Allah, joy and praise for people. Divine and single by nature, she does not die but sometimes leaves her old shell and appears in another among poor human settlements, and then the great priest tells where to find her. The most worthy from the tribe follows her, reveals her supreme mission and takes her to the kingdom of emerald steppes and ruby sunsets. There she lives in a happy solitude. Only sometimes she can be seen. But we pray to her invisible as a token of the supreme dignity that is received by the righteous in Allah's gardens. [...] They are higher than the maids in heavens, higher than angels, they are like souls in the seventh circle of heavenly delights.⁴

'You who call yourself Zara, now the great priest has pointed to you. You are the Fair Maiden of forests and I call you to your domain.'⁵

Princess Zara not only rejected the sacred call of tribe Zogar but also pronounced the words unimaginable for the herald:

'You spoke well, stranger, but I don't know what you were talking about. If you like me and wish to caress me, I will gladly succumb to your desires. You are more handsome than that European who shortly got into the harem having paid in gold. [...] if you wish, I will be yours.'⁶

Proud of her beauty she wanted just to make sure whether her charm is irresistible also in humiliation, she did not realize what she was being summoned to.⁷

With an agonizingly wild look in his eyes the tall herald was watching her. So this is her, the Fair Maid of Forests whom he had been praying to all of his life, whom his fathers and grandfathers had been praying to! [...] Vast valleys, days of joyful hunts, joys of fame, what is it all in the face of inhuman pain that had overtaken his soul?! A sharp dagger secretly drawn. Hard and direct stab in the chest. And the strong soldier staggered and fell with his face down shuddering and spilling his hot blood over the expensive Persian carpets.⁸

The plot of *Princess Zara* is an indubitable pre-text and sub-text of the poem *Giraffe* printed in the same year that the novella.

Gumilyov's poem consists of five quatrains of five-feet amphibrach except for the fourth line of the opening and closing stanza that are three-feet amphibrach. The line, *exquisite giraffe is wandering* [Изысканный бродит жираф⁹] not only closes the poem but also mythologizes its semantics.

Moreover, the poem is composed as a dialogue between 'I', the lyrical subject, and the heroine, the lyrical object, addressee. Nevertheless, it constructs a dialogue of equally significant subjects between whom no dialogic relations arise that is testified to by the *sad* look of the heroine and her subtly bent posture (*And the arms especially thin embracing knees*¹⁰). The heroine's point of view embodied in the first distich is juxtaposed to the hero's calling forth to the natural world, the nature, *Far, far away, on Lake Chad / Exquisite giraffe is wandering*¹¹. This natural world, according to Gumilyov, does not exclude the civilized aestheticism but only suggests it. Truth lies not in the posture of sadness but in its 'exquisiteness' that is perfection in itself.

The second and third stanzas provide giraffe's 'portrait' given in two dimensions – the natural and the comparative ones. Naturalness here is the continuation of the 'exquisite' naturalness of the first stanza: *He is given gracious tallness and bliss / And his skin is embellished by magic design [..]*¹². Yet the second part of the second stanza represents the comparative point of view comparing the *magic design of skin* with the *moon* that in turn *splits and swings* above the surface of the lake. *Gracious tallness* and *magic design* are not cancelled being a fact of reality but, on the contrary, are transformed into verbal-pastel metaphor. In the third stanza there is distant-horizontal point of view comparing giraffe with *coloured sails of the ship*¹³, i.e., with the civilized fact, on the other hand, civilized horizontal is transformed into the natural vertical of *joyous bird's flight*¹⁴.

However, as a united whole, the third stanza is divided into two parts, the first of which is related to the second stanza, while the second part – with the first part of the fourth stanza. And this segment is united by the authorial point of view: *I know [..]*¹⁵ So, the third stanza, its second part runs as follows:

*I know that the earth sees many wonderful things,
When at the sunset it hides away in the marble grotto.*¹⁶

This distich is nothing else but a citation from the novella *Princess Zara*; more precisely, the distich is read only through the prism of *Princess Zara*. To cite some sentences:

*There are groves of tall palms with wide leaves and ripe orange fruit are crowded around silver streams with the odour of irises and dizzy aloe. [...] There bees of dark gold are landing on roses that are more crimson than the cloaks of ancient tsars. [...] You will settle in a beautiful marble grotto and fountains swift as horses will allay your quiet looks [...]. And when at sunset giraffes come to the water, you will stroke the silky rich skin and they will look into your marvelled eyes.*¹⁷

The first part of the fourth stanza (*I know merry fairy-tales of mysterious countries / About the black maiden, about the passion of the young chieftain [..]*) is a simplified version of the preceding distich because *marvellous* is substituted by *merry fairy-tales*; myth is replaced by fairy-tale and this becomes obvious in the second part of the stanza starting with the opposing *but*:

*But you had been breathing the heavy fog for too long,
You do not wish to believe in anything but rain.*¹⁸

Heavy fog and *rain* are symbolic signs of Anna Akhmatova; and these symbolic signs are antitheses to Gumilyov's strength, passion, energy. Alexander Blok in his famous ante-mortem article *Without Divinity, Without Inspiration* (Akmeists' Workshop) written in 1921 singling out Akhmatova from the akmeist circle, called her lyric *weary, sickly, feminine, and self-probing*¹⁹. The distich of the fourth stanza cited above is referred to the initial distich, with the only difference that initially there was a *sad look* but now – *heavy fog* and *rain*.

The last stanza is especially important as the point of destination but with the multitude of signs that were not present before, with two ellipses, with exclamatory address. The first distich is significant: *And how shall I tell you about the tropical garden, / About tall palms, the odour of unthinkable herbs [..]*²⁰. This narrative sentence

testifies to the impossibility of a dialogue, loss of understanding. It was stated in the first stanza: *Listen*. In the last stanza the talk is over. And instead of *Listen* appears *Are you crying?*²¹ However, behind the question there is *Listen...* (with ellipsis). The poem is completed by a compositional ring: [...] *far away on Lake Chad / Exquisite giraffe is wandering*²². This is the only verity, the only end of the dialogue. The talk is over. The rest is the myth – myth about giraffe.

One of the most profound statements concerning Gumilyov was said by Konstantin Mochulskiy. In his article, *Poetics of Gumilyov* he wrote:

Symbolism regarded the world its own idea and thus it was not obliged to have God. Akmeism started believing and the whole relation towards the world was immediately changed. If there is God, it means that there is also 'hierarchy in the world of phenomena', there is 'self-worth' in each thing. Ethics is turned into aesthetics and everything – vocabulary, images, syntax reflect this joy of acquiring the world – not a symbol but living reality. Everything becomes sensible and valuable: all phenomena find their place: everything gains importance, becomes tangible. Balance of forces in the world is denoted by the stability of images in the poem. Rules of composition are installed in poetry because the world 'is constructed'.²³

The space of the poem *Giraffe* is that of Lake Chad from where the herald arrived to Zanzibar and the space where *exquisite giraffe is wandering*. Giraffe is the essential element of the poem that puts the finishing touch to it. Everything that goes beyond Chad and giraffe, all is the outer civilized shell that is finally 'engulfed' in the last word – *giraffe* – that holds the foundation of being, primal existence.

¹ Гумилев Н. С. Два сапога, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 4. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 426.

² Гумилев Н. С. Африканская охота, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 4. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 149.

³ Гумилев Н. С. Записки кавалериста, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 4. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 523.

⁴ Гумилев Н. С. Принцесса Зара, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 4. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 16.

⁵ Ibid. – с. 17.

⁶ Ibid. – с. 18.

⁷ Ibid. – с. 19.

⁸ Ibid. – с. 18–19.

⁹ Гумилев Н. Жираф, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 1. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 76.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. – с. 77.

¹² Ibid. – с. 76.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Гумилев Н. С. Принцесса Зара, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 4. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 17.

¹⁸ Гумилев Н. Жираф, in: *Собрание сочинений в 4 томах*. Т. 1. Вашингтон: Victor Kamkin, Inc., 1962 – 1968. – с. 76.

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Marija Sivašova

WILD BEASTS IN SERGEY MINTSLOV'S PROSE FICTION

Summary

The present article considers the ways of introduction of representatives of fauna in Sergey Mintslov's (1870 – 1933) prose. It investigates the specific use of beast images and interpretation of animals in the artistic picture of the world. The functions and semantics of separate images are studied there. Animals in fiction of Mintslov, beside certain semantic function in narrative, carry out an independent role in composition. The writer often addresses the animal world for decoding of psychological conditions and characteristics of literary characters. The wolf is the key figure, semantic and stylistic counterpoint in the author's artistic bestiary. The image of wolf in the author's interpretation is multifunctional. The wild nature, as a whole, is interpreted as a component of the 'fantastic past'.

Key-words: wild beasts, fiction, interpretation, images, functions.

*

Hans-Georg Gadamer in his article *Play of Art* suggests that animal and human so much resemble each other that it is important to ask whether the borderline between animal and human really holds. Contemporary investigations of human and animal conduct, according to him, in fact more and more distinctly bring out the uncertainty of this borderline. This hypothesis finds justification in fiction as well. The presence of 'human-spider', 'human-animal' in works of fiction by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Emil Zola has been indicated with great certainty by V. Bachinin.¹ Almost a hundred years before the production of émigré writers' works, Adam Mickiewicz who was enraptured by the ideas of proto-language and cemetery of wild animals, in his lecture *Master*, with unbelievable force stressed the identical character of human and animal suffering.²

The works of Sergey Mintslov regarded in the present paper bring out, according to preliminary calculation, **sixty-one** representatives of fauna.

Mintslov's novel *In the Wake of Dead Souls* (*За мёртвыми душами*) has a significant episode that demonstrates the similarity of living beings:

Several times in my life I would observe insane people and animals that developed fear of water. The insanity of people was preceded by anxiety and stress of the whole organism; dogs in the early stage were overtaken by joy, rapture, even ecstasy. And I was always struck by the absolutely similar, specific shine in the eyes of both, the shine so surprisingly resembling that of sanctity; reason seemed to be dissipating into beams radiating through the eyes [...] followed by brain, and then they died. Eyes of the insane start burning with that bluish light that covers the pupils of sane healthy dogs when they are lost and embarrassed. This is a signal of the insanity of animal taking the upper hand that is always latently present in animal and human along with reason.³

According to the author's intention, insanity is far from being the only correlate of living organisms in the artistic field of the text. Author's interpretation of mutual metamorphoses of the world of nature suggests a range of indicators that back up the construction of parallels. The sphere of proximity of human and animal/beast is formed through external features, psychological peculiarities and even the social status of people:

First of all, pole, we are both plebeians, originated from apes, while he is of high descent – from giraffe or non-commissioned officer.⁴

The presence of 'subtle' animal instinct in human is regarded as a privilege:

Tolstoy is like a beast, strong by instinct, not reason. Where he is guided by instinct and not by reason, he is unreachable; while as a philosopher he is tiny [...] small.⁵

In the given context, the documentary sketch from the author's childhood memories is rather telling by declaring instinctual analogy:

Near our porch there was a kennel of the excellent hound Zmeika with her brood. At home people noticed that I had lost appetite and thought that I was ill, but the mystery was soon clarified: the nanny always fell asleep in the sun when walking with me in the yard, but I lay with the puppies and with rapture sucked Zmeika and she would lick me gently [...].⁶

The majority of animals, apart a certain semantic function, perform in the narrative an independent role in the composition. Hence, the chain of philosophical reflections on the search of the aim of life in the story *Enchanted Kingdom* (in the collection *Mystical Evenings*) (*Заколдованное царство (Мистические вечера)*) is structured around the image of a kitten. The traditional division into the 'domestic' and 'wild' animals is supplemented by the group of 'mystical' animals. Besides, the latter semantically include not only wolves and wood-grouses but also other species:

Well, darling, it's fine that you came and visited the old woman! – she said. – I will soon die, you will never see me again! – Come on! – I objected: – You are doing so well, what are you talking about? – No, I know for sure! [...] I saw a black dog today!⁷

Under the sign of 'impure', the group uniting owl, goat, bat, snake is introduced in the narrative. One must note the conditional and flexible borders of the system. The functionally semantic modifications are conditioned, first of all, by the range of tasks and specific character of the artistic and stylistic means of reaching them. For instance, the expressed ironic perspective of the narrator on the numerous everyday life turns of events in the story *In the Power of the Past* (*Во власти прошлого*) is reconstructed by means of transferring bugs from the group of 'harmful insect' to that of a pet of a whole nation:

There were many sleepers; I squeezed with difficulty into the narrow space left for me but hardly had a quarter of an hour passed when I jumped up: well-fed bugs were walking along the back of the sofa. Slavic people love these pets so much – nothing doing!⁸

From the author's point of view the information is transmitted outside as a result of mutual relations of all that exists. This conception suggests the means of comparing characters with certain animals whereby the author manages to create laconic and expressive human portraits of his, *He is both a hedgehog and a materialist [...] but his benevolence is unusual.*⁹

The resource of zoonyms is used for deciphering psychological states and creating the emotionally evaluative characteristics of heroes:

*It seemed to Mark that he would soar up like an eagle and fly above the precipice! [...] it was terrifying and joyful; his hands were squeezing into fists, his face was glowing.*¹⁰

In turn, the epithets that are attached to a person represent the subjects of the world of nature:

*Fashion, – the old woman replied spreading her hands slightly. – All masters keep hounds in their manors, so they also obtained one. A huge, big one, veritable modern specimen! He is called Brutus but he is a rascal and no Brutus!*¹¹

The original descriptions of objects refer to the inclusive system of the 'animal' code:

*Fortunately, the unusual energy of our bus suddenly fizzled out and it stopped. The mechanic pulled the levers like animal's ears, to and fro, but the iron animal remained indifferent.*¹²

The relatedness of human and animal creates additional information on the dramatis personae by means of animal images, live or objectified (e.g., figurines, carved figures). A bright example of this is the significance of the pair of sculpture lions, the presence or absence whereof in the manor house architecture indicates the form of human existence:

*[...] we drove through the decorous rusty iron gates of the manor; near them grew bushy lilac and amongst the green, on dilapidated brick poles, there rested lions roughly carved from grey stone, with sorrowful muzzles on their paws. Straight behind the neglected flower-bed there was a white house, as large as the yard.*¹³

Another instance:

*Two dilapidated round columns with bricks protruding out of the coming off plaster let us into the spacious yard. There were no lions on them: instead of them there were just bent iron sticks [...] this was all that had remained of the pond, the park, the grotto, the magic dreams that had poised above these places [...].*¹⁴

Wolf is a key figure, a kind of semantic and stylistic counterpoint in the author's artistic bestiary. In one of the first stories the image of a predator is implied in a range of features signaling of approaching Tatars:

*And since that night omens followed, – Maxim went on: – a fiery comet appeared in the sky, at night weeping was heard in the church, the sun was like blood, wolves came in hordes. The people got scared. And then there were rumours – Tatars are coming!*¹⁵

The semantic of enemy in the image of wolf is consolidated by comparing Tatars to ‘frightening wolf-like’ people in the historical story *Wolf-Cub* (*Волчинок*, first published in 1909). The story set forth by the writer as *Historical story from the times of Tatar invasion* attracts attention by the degree of relatedness of the zoonym in its title to the main character. The plot is based on the motif of trial, traditional for the picaresque genre that joins the fate of the main characters not only with the fate of the defenders of the fortress but that of the whole people. Wolf-cub is the nickname of the main heroine of the story, a foundling girl. The title first reads as a hint at the external affinity of a small human with animal. This is enhanced by the presence of the wild, beastly quality in the portrait details, e.g., *small figure with a big head, strained attentive slant eyes* as well as impulses of conduct, e.g. *sneaked, snatched, crept up, dashed forth [...] without considering the consequences*. Along with the development of the narration, the hidden connotation of the zoonym referring to the semantic of ‘alien’ is being reconstructed:

*Words, often hurled by children and other residents of the fortress in the face of the alien girl for some reason got deeply stuck this time into her little heart [...].*¹⁶

The text allows for another variant of ‘alien’ in the collocation *damned beast Polovets*, with the connotation of ‘enemy’, *Polovtsi were the ancient enemies of Russians*.¹⁷ This reveals the modelling of the semantic construction encoded in the title: enemy – alien, animal/beast, wolf; consequently, the enemy’s child is alien, animal/beast, wolf-cub (Masha turns out to be a child of Tatars). Keeping away from people accumulates in the heroine’s actions beastly features that reduce the ‘wolf-like’ qualities to the lower, according to the narrator, level of ‘jackal’:

*Driven away by Alexei, the girl was long straying over the fields [...]. In daytime she appeared in the horde but she was sent off from all pots [...]. The girl crept into her cave and just at night, tortured by hunger, she left it again, stole up to the fire-places and, looking around at the slightest sound, bashful as a steppe animal, started examining the pots and eat greedily everything that she found in them.*¹⁸

Under the impact of time and favourable events (return, acceptance, forgiveness), her image is refined from the ‘beastly’ features. Her transformation is excluded by the comparison:

*With him came his wife, a dark and slim black-eyed beauty in whom nobody would recognize the former sloven – wolf-cub Masha.*¹⁹

In the novel with the same title dated by 1899, wolves are drawn from the periphery to the central plane of the narrative. It is rather interesting that the novel, according to Mintslov, underwent four publications with the title *At the Dawn of the Age* (*Ha zape ōeka*) and only in 1927 in Riga it regained its original title *Wolves* (*Волки*) that had been banned by the censorship. The time of the action is chronologically specified – from 1604 to 1606. The geographical contours of the setting are strictly demarcated as Moscow. One of the plot lines is the hero’s search for his bride who was sent to Moscow; it is consolidated by the line of the political fight for the tsar’s throne. Love collision is pushed to a marginal position giving place to the historical conflict. The title orientates

reader to an associative range of animal – predator – danger – blood – death. The sense forming parallel justifies the expectations. The preamble of the events entails foregrounding of wolves, thus predicting the invasion of impostor Dmitriy accompanied by foreigners (Poles):

The described epoch was one of the gravest in the history of Russia. Hunger was pestering the whole land for two years. People were dying by hundreds and thousands. Tsar Boris, wishing to help in the disaster, announced passing out bread in Moscow, yet the reserves made were insufficient; many people died on their way to Moscow, never even reaching it. The roads were covered by corpses. Attracted by the unusual prey, packs of wolves came out of forests and made fierce attacks not only at individual people but whole ranks of people.²⁰ (Cf. stories Forest Burial Mounds (Лесные курганы), Wolf-Cub (Волчонок))

Wolf is interpreted as an allegory of enemy that complies with the version of medieval bestiary equalling beast with devil that *cunningly steals up to the herd*.²¹ The words said by the fool decipher the parable directly pointing to the allies of impostor Dmitriy:

Don't eat me! – the fool repeated looking for a place to hide. – You will eat yourselves and the tsar: wolves, oh wolves!²²

The approach of the throne-seeker is again signalled by the bacchanalia of wolves:

From the west the city was surrounded by packs of wolves coming from everywhere; they broke into houses, streets, tore people and cattle. Communication with Smolensk was temporarily interrupted. At nights the frightened Muscovites heard low howls of wolves; dogs in the city replied them by heart-breaking wailing.²³

Dogs in this case are aligned with the allies of the impostor inside the country. This fact is justified by historical sources stating that in the capital city people impatiently looked forward to the coming of Dmitriy believing that he would bring justice and order.²⁴

The range of depicted predators is extended. Their appearance serves as a starting point of the development of dominant themes and motifs of the novel: hunting, chasing, prey, death. Modelling of the situation of hunt depends on the range and value of prey. The result of the trade, with certain exception, is predictable: it is killing. Human always plays the role of the main victim (no matter whether this is tsarist hunt of goats, wolf hunting, or chase of power). But human is also the main predator who in his fierceness and cruelty is equivalent to beast:

In all directions, along all roads regiments were sent with the order of chasing Godunov. Wrath and hatred to him flared again in everyone [...]²⁵

With the introduction into the narrative of pani Vitevski's dream foretelling the death of Marina Mnishek in the snows of Russia, the sense elements are redistributed in a directly opposite way. Wolves in the dream personify the country:

Why are you crying out, me dear? – pan Vitevski asked and sat down on the bed next to his wife. She told him her dream. – Isn't it a foreboding? [...] – Vitevski uttered thoughtfully playing with his long moustache. – It's no good that we came to this Moscow! It's true – we are in the forest among wolves!²⁶

The final episode of the course of events in its composition echoes the predators' feast:

Let's put an end to this. Dmitriy's death and the crowd's jeering over his dead body and Basmanov's body are known to everyone [...]. Assaults at Poles and robbing went on for a whole day. Streets were flooded with blood; apart from lots of Russians, more than four hundred Poles and Germans were killed. Mutilated corpses were lying on the ground until next morning. People sang aloud and cheered, dividing and selling the plunder.²⁷

Differentiation of one of the novel's protagonists, the people, into groups and regiments goes back to the biological systematization of animals according to taxonomic categories. Relative ordering is destroyed by the crowd (the sea being an indicator of this, a synonym of the crowd). The vitality of masses presented as a deadly natural element is testified to by 'beastly' features:

Blood and fight turned the crowd into beasts; it rushed upstairs and pulled down all seven by hair into the middle of the yard. As if a wave crushed against the cliff and washed all people from it [...].²⁸

Personality is reduced to a body subjected to instincts and reflexes. This regress reaches apogee in mass scenes. Activated masses of people are compared to spiritless substance filling the space:

It seemed to Peter that it wasn't people but the square as such that, having got live and fluffed up, was running towards the castle [...].²⁹

Not only are the spatial borders of the areas of animal and human destroyed. Destruction enters the higher moral and psychological spheres. Modality of depicting heroes, mass scenes and acoustic fulfilment are coded as 'beastly' or, to be more precise, 'wolfish' in its negative evaluation.

Hence, 'wolves' assume a status of extended metaphor characterizing TIME, STATE (space), HUMAN.

In the author's interpretation, the image is polyfunctional that accounts for its leading role in the formation of one of the states of human condition – that of 'human – beast'. Transposed in the novel *In the Wake of Dead Souls* the scheme expressed in the sentence – *Human is, was and will be a wolf to another human!*³⁰ – undergoes significant changes. This is certified by the story *Howl of Wolves* (*Волчий вой*) (collection *Свучмоньн*, 1927). The title as well as the theme of the literary work (its plot is based on the motifs of hunt, chase, and prey) relates text at the structural and semantic levels with the novel *Wolves*:

Do you know what the howling of wolves reminded me of? – the landlord asked – and added without waiting for a reply – the days of the revolution; I was like a wolf among wolves myself... – But how did you manage to survive and escape? – I asked: – you surely were an especially precious prey for Bolsheviks!³¹

Finally the conduct of the dramatis personae is determined by moral categories: honour, duty, salvation. The dominance of the latter is conditioned by the authorial conception announced in the novel *In the Wake of Dead Souls: And still the moral level of people has significantly risen! – I objected.*³²

The philosophical conception of the story is focused on the final confession of the interlocutor: *I took with me more than I had lost [...] trust in human!*³³

The victory of the good over the evil, the “humane” in the heroes, leads to the modifications of meaning of the image of wolf that is brought down to a single figure: an old howling female wolf. The final reduction suggests just the sound embodiment of beast. The howling of wolves is realized as a metaphor of troubled memories about the distant and already foreign country: *Out of the dense dark forests of Russia there came a far-away scary howling of wolves.*³⁴

In the story *Friendly Beasts* (*Звери – друзья*) of the same collection, the construction ‘human – beast’ is transferred to another semantic plane that models a universal paradigm ‘nature – civilization’. Scenes of the very near past relating about some jokers keeping beasts even in towns are just a prelude to the positioning of the philosophical and ethical problem of domestication of wild animals. Small episodes united by the common motif of the relations of human and wild beast develop within the framework of the oppositions of taming and betrayal, whim and duty, memory and oblivion. In tragic-comic situations with tiger, elk, lion, bear as the main participants, human is regarded through the prism of responsibility for the fate of the animals tamed by him. Human as a being of the highest rank does not stand the test. A dilemma arises in that the professional or public duty prevails above the duty before the beast:

*The administration got scared, as evil tongues later claimed before the ‘consequences’, and as a result an order was issued to Malevanov – either to leave the regiment or part with the lion. Malevanov did the latter: the lion was given to a travelling circus company [...].*³⁵

Living among humans for ‘friendly beasts’ ends up, in the best case, being placed in a cage in the zoo (tiger Mashka, bear Mishka) or circus (the lion); in the worst case they die (elk Yashka, the drinking pal of the Tatar coachman, bear Mishka). The parameters separating the conduct of the dramatis personae in the represented tandem are whim, bravery, play. The prerogatives of the primeval world are sincerity, longing, memory. According to the author’s intention, human’s intrusion into nature, in the given case, separation of the wild beast from its natural environment leads to the destruction of the animal’s nature. In this aspect, the figure of bear is most dramatic. The animal that in freedom is strong and dangerous, when domesticated by the human (cf. the scene of hunt in the novel *Shimmer of the Distance* (*Мерцание дали*)) is likened to its folklore image:

*Slantwise from the priest’s house there was a licensed liquor store and when the Tatar, hiding a bottle under his arm, set out for wine, Mishka was attentively watching him sitting at the wicket gate. In the evening the bottle was emptied by both friends and they went to sleep totally drunk in the horse stable.*³⁶

At the beginning of the story, a motif of bestiary is introduced as a historical sketch. In the given format the motif occurs in *Sketches of Lithuania*:

*The first thing that S. Kolupailo wanted to show us was the famous ‘Bestiary’ of Vytautas Magnus. The river Nemunas draws in one place a thirty miles long loop and forms something like an island – it had all been covered some time ago with a protected age-old forest; cavalry regiments drove whole herds of deer, aurochs and other big animals there where they were guarded exclusively for the hunts of princes.*³⁷

In the course of the narration, this motif is developed into a theme of the culture of entertainment of the past continued in the *Latgalian text*. The sketch *In the Grand Nest* (*В барском гнезде*) contains details about the estate of Tuskad. The estate was famous for lots of pygmies being born there; even now three villages of this estate supply the most famous Lilliputians; the majority of human pygmies shown to the public for money come from Tuskad.³⁸

In our opinion, this fact deserves attention. From the moral point of view, the paradigm of ‘nature – civilization’, in the writer’s interpretation, assumes another meaning. Wild animal and human, as a norm, unusual, are equally alien for the world of culture and socialization. In Mintslov’s interpretation, the contemporary urbanized human is alienated from the primeval world. Wild nature, with all its constituent parts, is regarded as a component of the ‘fantastic past’. The dynamic of imagery generating in the writer’s oeuvre the context of the natural being, depends directly on the above mentioned principle. Along with the evolution of the text towards the discourse of the ‘authentic’, wild animals give place to domesticated ones, the frequency of their mention is reduced and then they are completely transferred to the extemporal narrative space: legends, tales, and mystical stories. The virginal world, which is closely related in the artist’s awareness with the ‘bygone’, retreats to its protected borders. Its depiction is marked by definite hardship and overcoming of obstacles. Finally the effort is justified because *again the distant past has stretched its magic wings above us. It feels so good in it, forgetting about the whole damned twentieth century – a salad bowl made of neurasthenia, cubism, futurism and all kinds of insanity!*³⁹

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⁴ Ibid. – с. 314.

⁵ Ibid. – с. 159.

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¹⁸ Ibid. – с. 330.

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- ²⁸ Ibid. — с. 168.
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Elina Vasiljeva

ANIMAL SYMBOLISM IN VLADIMIR ZHABOTINSKY'S NOVEL SAMSON NAZOREY

Summary

Animals take a significant place in Judaist system of commandments as they, side by side with human, are God's creations. In Vladimir Zhabotinsky's (1880 – 1940) novel 'Samson Nazorey' (1928) animal world is integrated with Judaist thinking and founds the author's non-mythological conception. A human life is frequently compared to the animal world and animal names are used to denote humans. In the novel a wide range of animals appear: jackals (Samson's friends), donkeys, horses. A goat and a panther both have a specific role. The panther replaces the biblical lion which is defeated by Samson. The goat becomes the protagonist's symbol: in the world of Philistines Samson is called Taish – the he-goat. However, another aspect of the goat is emphasized – that of the sacrificial animal. Samson's life is an attempt to overcome himself in the role of sacrifice and the final understanding that his role in the history of his people is that of sacrifice.

Key-words: Jewish tradition, he-goat, Samson, animal

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Jewish tradition puts a special emphasis on the bond between the animal world and human – there exists a whole range of commandments or *mitzvot* that human shares with animals.¹ Therefore the presence of animals in fiction performs a specific function.

Vladimir Zhabotinsky's novel *Samson Nazorey* is densely populated by various representatives of the animal world, and they are mentioned in most diverse meanings. Three major groups can be singled out in this respect:

- 1) animals as real characters in the novel;
- 2) using names of animals as emotionally charged lexis (as swear-words or, on the contrary, emphasizing positive characteristics);
- 3) mentioning some animals in a symbolical meaning.

Human and animal worlds are so close to each other that comparison with the animal world has become usual and generally accepted, both in the Israeli land and that of Philistines. Names of animals are used both as the means of giving praise (Judas is strong as a lion, Karni is like an eagle) and as swear-words (Ahtur calls Bergam an old cow, dog is often used as a swear-word). Besides, it is impossible to single out any subdivisions of positive and negative animals. One and the same animal may arouse diverse associations in different situations. There is also a reference to Noah's Arc having saved the pure animals. A kind of an exception on this list is constituted by hyena and wild boar – they are called rascals, wild boar has several times been alluded to as

impure (that corresponds with Halakha), Samson says that he loves all animals except for hyena and it is related first of all to the fact that hyena eats carrion that in Samson's lexicon is one of the basest words.

Human takes over from animals quite a lot, especially instincts, the leading ones being gregarious instinct and that of liberty. According to the conception of the novel, gregarious instinct stands out as a kind of positive beginning leading to union. Samson significantly calls the unit of friends accompanying him in marches jackals, he teaches them to keep together and walk in a file. This is a sign of civilization. Despite his being a loner, Samson summons the people of Israel for uniting and attacking Philistines together. The instinct of liberty is related to the image of dog. Dogs most often bear negative connotations in the text (dogs waiting for alms near the tramp's hut) and most often occur in swearing. This is opposed to Nehushtan's point of view (it must be noted that Nehushtan is associated with another image of the animal world – snake, as this is the meaning of his name and he moves like a snake). Nehushtan suggests his understanding of a dog's life:

Dog is a swear-word for people. Therefore, dog is the freest animal in the world. [...] Who is free? The one who can do things that are not needed. Dog can do this: it jumps like a small child, it puts its paws on my shoulders and howls at the moon and guards both sheep and me, even until death.

[Пес у людей бранное слово. А по-моему, самый свободный зверь на свете – собака. [...] Кто свободен? Тот, кто может делать вещи, в которых нет нужды. Собака может: она прыгает, как малое дитя, она кладет лапы мне на плечи, и воет на луну, и защищает овцу и меня, даже до смерти.^{2]}

The sense of dog's freedom is that the shepherd decides everything for it. Nehushtan performs his function of a dog before Samson taking a liberty of serving Samson. One of the questions in the novel is that of whom it is respectable to serve. Samson reaches this truth by way of searching and testing the right answer to this question for all of his life. And finding a reply to it is related to the awareness of the specific function of king.

Another group – that of the images of real animals in the novel is more varied, however, it also comprises several semantic groups: 1) animals as an object of hunt or agriculture (cattle); 2) animals who function as the means of transport; 3) animals who function as toys.

Donkeys and horses are traditionally used as the means of transport that also function as social markers. Horses belong to the world of Philistines, while donkeys mark belonging to the tribes of Israel. Donkey becomes the first animal to appear in the artistic space of the novel:

Along the road leading from the south, a weary traveller was descending; a donkey was dragging behind him on a leather strip burdened with two rope sacks.

[По дороге, ведущей с юга, спускался усталый путник; за ним на кожаной узде плелся ослик, нагруженный двумя веревочными мешками.^{3]}

The beginning of Zhabotinsky's novel at once demonstrates the openly ironic upside down state of the Christian world of the New Testament. Entrance by riding a donkey is a stable mythologeme referring to the image of Jesus. Yet, by providing similar images,

the author straight away refuses any link to the ideology of the New Testament. Traveller (that is significant) does not ride a donkey but is leading it on the strip, besides neither does the traveller have any resemblance of the image of Jesus – he is the Levite Makbonai ben Shuni who will become the housekeeper of Samson's parents and his chronicler, a man arousing dislike of the main hero, though he sometimes proclaims the truth that even Samson is forced to accept and abide the Levite. Samson's parents ride donkeys on their way to Semadar, Manoï and Makbonai ride donkeys when they come to Samson. Besides, an important detail is stressed – Samson himself cannot ride a donkey, *Samson was walking, as always: no donkey could bear his weight*. [Как всегда, Самсон шел пешком: осли, который выдержал бы такую ношу, не было в природе.⁴]

On the one hand, this emphasizes the unusual might and strength of Samson making him exceptional. Yet, on the other hand, another aspect is important as well – donkey is always carrying a burden. The image of a donkey carrying a burden occurs even more often than riding a donkey. And the thing is not that no weight of burden, however great the endurance of the donkey may be, can compare to the gigantic Samson. The thing is rather that Samson does not agree to become a burden (especially on the back of an animal). He perceives this as a sign of subjection, turning human into a thing. For this very reason, at the moment of his first captivity, Samson seated on the horse of Philistines feels as if he were a thing, besides his captivator Ahish keeps calling Samson 'a burden'. Samson does not ride, he is led being tied up, his fate is decided without his involvement and this is most obscure and painful for Samson. The fact of Samson's first ride on a horse that belongs to the world of Philistines is symbolical. His parting with the world of Dan where he also had been attributed a role of thing happens by means of a donkey but this donkey is semantically associated with the world of the past: a donkey's skull appears whereby Samson kills Ahish trying to revenge the death of Nehushtan at least in this way:

– Revenge, – he said under his breath. On the ground before him there was a huge heavy bone of a donkey's skull, with all teeth inside. He took it up, weighted in his hand and looked ahead: Ahish had finished checking the sacks and was going back, waving with a rod. Samson rushed to him and hurled the bone straight into his face. Two skulls, the human and donkey's, cracked at the same time. Ahish without uttering a sound fell on his back stretching his arms. Samson came up to him and kicked him with his foot. – You may take your silver, ben-Parkhalya, – he said; then he took the tired horse by the bridle and went along the road to the north.

[— Отомстит, – сказал он глухо. На земле перед ним валялась большая, тяжелая кость от ослиного черепа, еще со всеми зубами. Он ее поднял, взвесил, потом взглянул вперед: Ахиш кончил проверку мешков и шел, помахивая хлыстом, обратно. Самсон быстро двинулся навстречу и на ходу швырнул ему кость прямо в лицо. Одновременно треснули два черепа, ослиный и человеческий; не застав, Ахиш, раскинув руки, повалился навзничь. Самсон подошел поближе и ткнул его ногою. — Можешь забирать свое серебро, бен-Пархалья, – сказал он; взял под узцы усталую лошадь и пошел по дороге на север.⁵]

The chapter dedicated to Samson's captivity, Nehushtan's death and the unexpected buying out of Samson, not incidentally has a symbolic title – *Donkey's Jaw*. Yet, on the contrary to the expectations of the Biblical plot, Samson kills, instead of a thousand of

warriors, a single Philistine traitor.⁶ The harmless, lazy, always burdened donkey suddenly, for the first time in the text assumes threatening features – it gains actual weight (heavy jaw), and this is what calls Samson's attention as he chooses a worthy weapon of revenge. But at the same time this is not a living donkey but just its jaw and this is symbolical again. Donkey is bound to the world sinking into past. Samson's life with Israel captivities and the whole preceding history are also in the past. But it is this world that brings death to the land of Philistines, still flourishing and celebrating, yet the chapter *Donkey's Jaw* hides an omen (and not the only one) of its soon expected disappearance.

Horses, unlike donkey, are the signs of the world of Philistines. Besides they do not only bear the function of moving in space but also a military one – horses put in a chariot arouse horror in all the enemies and subjected people of the Philistines. Horses are a sign of the civilized world. And as Samson learned about other attributes of this world, so he got familiar with horses, too. The horse, on which he was put like a burden by Ahish, recognizes Samson and stops protesting. If previously when being a judge Samson walked (except for camels of Rehavites), then leaving the land of Dan he rides a horse. In the real space this will turn out the way to Delilah's tent but simultaneously this is Samson's way towards his departure. The choice of the horse as the means of transport becomes evidence that a part of the civilized space has already been conquered by Samson. This will be the future of Dan and other tribes.

The functions of use of animals by human are extended not only to the sphere of the public business. Animal may be not only an aid but just a toy. Yet it is only Samson who dares to play with animals as he knows the animal world and is in fact akin to it. It is significant that he twice gives animals as toys for presents to women who are close to him and who love him – Karni and Semadar. In distant childhood he gave Karni a rabbit as a token of friendship to her. Karni will never become his wife and the rabbit was just a funny toy for the small girl. When he met Semadar he gave her iguana as a present. The scene of making this present is described in greater detail in the novel:

After a minute a grayish green face of a huge lizard looked out of the crack. It battled in all sides to make the hole bigger; one could see her shoulders and paws labouring under the soil. The young girl was still holding Samson by hand; he felt disgusted, embarrassed, and pleased. When the paws got outside, he quickly bent and stretched his free arm.

[Через минуту из трещины высунулась серо-зеленая мордочка огромной ящерицы. Она колотилась черепом, во все стороны, расширяя дыру; уже видно было, как под землю работали ее плечики и лапки. Девушка все время держала Самсона за руку; ему было жутко, неловко и приятно. Когда лапки показались наружу, он быстро нагнулся и протянул свободную руку.⁷]

Further on Samson knocked the iguana out with a snap and offered Semadar to take it to the garden and feed as a domesticated one. Samson evaluates all animals by comparing them to himself and his strength. However, the idea that he would be able to win an animal never occurs. This is ascertained by Samson's story about various animals he had seen or hunted, or just heard about. By his exotic story about animals he entertained sisters Semadar and Elinoar for a long time. Yet in the given scene another moment is of importance. Like the lizard pushing its head through the crack in the soil

and receiving a snap on the head after which it regained its senses in the garden near the house, at the end of the novel Samson pushes his head through the prison pit and also receives a blow that pierces his eyes, after which he regains his senses as a harmless toy that Philistines will take pride in after some time.

In the scene of meeting Semadar another important moment appears – in his story about animals Samson mentions in passing a lion:

He once killed a lion with a big club in the mountains behind Ayalon, but after that the whole village of Jevusites ran to kiss his feet and they were so unbearably stinking that he does not like to remember this adventure.

[Льва он однажды убил большой дубиной в горах за Айалоном, но после этого целая деревня иевуситов сбежалась целовать ему ноги, и от них так невыносимо пахло, что он не любит вспоминать об этом приключении.^{8]}

The lion that, owing to the Biblical mythology, most often appears along with the image of Samson, the victory over which is perceived as a proof of his strength, in Zhabotinsky's text is mentioned as a pitiful adventure that is not pleasant to recall. In the culminating scene of the close combat the lion is substituted by panther, in her skull bees make a nest and the honey will be offered to Semadar. The wild panther and the sweet honey constitute the basis of the fatal riddle of Samson that will become a reason of an open conflict with Philistia.

No doubt, Samson prefers animals endowed with great physical strength. His own deeds are very often measured by the people around against skidding force:

He was simply stronger than all other people living in the world before him and after; in his mature age he could knock down an ox with a fist, overhaul four horses; and everyone knew this.

[Он просто был сильнее всех людей, живших на свете до него и после; в расцвете зрелости мог повалить кулаком буйвола, перетянуть четырех лошадей; и все это знали.^{9]}

The gates of Gaza that Samson carries away on his shoulders had been drawn by four oxen. Samson's ability to compete in hauling with the strongest animals is perceived by others both as something exceptional and understood. Samson's bond with the animal world is emphasized in another aspect – throughout the narration his animal scent is constantly brought out: he is capable of guessing thoughts and actions of people, he has a very sensitive ear and unusual ability of imitating sounds, he is often guided by instinct. Animal scent gets sharper after the loss of eyesight:

This learning [to swim – E. V.] was easy for him; soon he started swimming very far, so far that he did not hear any longer children's calls from the shore and found the way back only by feeling the sun burning and wind blowing from a certain side; in general by his animal scent that had got even more developed during those months.

[Эта наука [плавать] далась ему легко; скоро он стал заплывать совсем далеко, так далеко, что не слышал уже детских откликов с берега и находил обратный путь только по тому, с какой стороны жгло солнце или дул ветер; вообще по звериному своему чутью, которое за эти месяцы в нем еще больше развилось.^{10]}

The animal aspect is an evidence of Samson's wildness (natural wildness) opposed to the civilized character of the world of Philistines. He is most often alluded to as a *savage*. Samson's physical strength is evaluated by many as an evidence of being wild: he really solves the majority of disputes by his strength. But in his seeming wildness there is an inner logic. This feature of Samson is noticed first by Bergam, Semadar's father who compares the savage Samson to the civilized handsome man Ahtur:

In Bergam's head something was working apart from his consciousness and his will. Today at sunrise the same happened: risen fists and the word 'old'. He replied: yes, I'm old and you are in my house. And that savage did not touch him. And then – right now – he did not take away the sword. And he slept in Bergam's house and ate his bread.

[В голове Бергама что-то работало помимо его сознания и воли. Сегодня на рассвете было то же самое: поднятые кулаки и слово «старый». Он ответил: да, я стар, и ты в моем доме. И тот дикарь его не тронул. И после – только что – не отнял меча. И он спал в доме Бергама и ел его хлеб.¹¹]

In many senses wildness is a sign of the whole world of Dan and all tribes of Israel, this is the idea of Philistines. It is true that this world of civilization is approaching its end and is aware of it. The wild world of Israel is facing a great future but it is possible on condition of learning from Philistines, this is blind Samson's and Hermesh's testament *to collect iron; to elect a king; and to learn to laugh* [чтобы копили железо; чтобы выбрали царя; и чтобы научились смеяться¹²].

Samson himself gradually learns this skill overcoming his savageness. He (contrary to his being Nazorei) can laugh, and though he does it only in the world of Philistines, he is a master of entertaining the crowd and laughing. By the way, ability to laugh is traditionally considered one of the features that distinguish human from animal. In this sense the grim tribe of Dan is actually close to the wild world of animals. Samson's way to accepting iron proved to be long. He understood with reason (and maybe, owing to his instinct, even sensed) the power of iron. But his mighty hand cannot learn this weapon. The scene of fighting a panther is most significant in the respect. Samson steals for this purpose a sword of a man from Ekron (that the latter is not willing to give to him, despite his loss of the game). But, from Samson's point of view, fight with the animal using a sword is unfair as well as inconvenient:

This toy is no good at all, – he told the panther with great aversion on his face. – I will better do it the old way! And, having thrown the weapon deep into the valley, he made himself into a ball getting ready to leap.

[– Никуда не годится эта игрушка, – сказал он пантере с большим отвращением на лице. – Лучше по-старому! И, швырнув оружие далеко в глубину ложбины, он скорчился клубком, готовясь к прыжку.¹³]

The fight with the panther is described in great detail in opposition to the indifferent and concise description of 'fighting' with another cat – Elinoar. It is even not a battle but just a kick in the face that, according to the ring structure selected by Zhabotinsky, is repeated at the end of the narrative. Animal proves to be a worthier rival, though Samson does not treat the panther as equal in strength to him. If at the beginning of the narration iron (sword) hampers Samson, and later – Bergam's sword he will dare not

take away, the iron gates of Gaza is an iron fortune that Samson brings to the blacksmiths of Judas that lays the basis for the future might of Israel.

Samson needs longer time to understand the essence of king. This understanding is also related to the animal world.

One of the most significant animals in the novel is goat. In the world of Philistines Samson is nicknamed as Taish that in translation means ‘he-goat’, *We called him Goat because he has such a thick hair!* [А Козлом мы его прозвали за то, что он такой мохнатый!¹⁴]

Samson’s essence of Dan and Nazorei is totally opposed to the jerk known and prided in by the land of Philistines. His Nazorei appearance is the main object of jokes. Yet, like Philistia understands the world of Dan upside down, the latter perceives the former in the same way. If in Philistia Taish – Goat – is a clown, in the world of Dan Goat is first and foremost associated with the image of sacrifice. To a certain extent Samson is a mythologized scapegoat whose role is that of redeeming the sins of his people. All his life written in the skin of the young kid by Levite Makbonai, is that of a loner, eremite, but still it is life subject to the fate of one’s people. A similar function in the political world order is attributed to king. At the very beginning of the novel, when Samson has not thought that king is the power of a state, at a celebration he entertains people by imitating in voices the assembly of animals for electing a king:

The illusion was total. The ox was roaring, the panther was growling, the hyena was barking in a hoarse nasal voice, the donkey was snoring, the camel was rambling with anger, sheep were bleating, and all this went so fast in a fusion as if the animals were actually arguing and interrupting each other; finally the chorus was suppressed by the solemn and detailed bleating of the old goat and everyone realized who had been elected the king.

[Иллюзия была полная. Вол ревел, рычала пантера, хрипло и гнусаво хохотала гиена, осел храпел, верблюд злобно урчал, блеяли овцы, и все это шло так быстро вперемежку, точно звери действительно спорили и прерывали друг друга; в конце, побеждая разноголосицу, торжественно и подробно замекал старый козел, и всем стало ясно, что он избран царем.¹⁵]

Electing the Goat a king seems to refer to the future way of salvation, transition from the tribal wildness to the civilized world order. Taish’s joke at the beginning of the novel turns out to be Samson’s prophecy addressed to the distant future. He himself performs his function till the end: he is no king but a judge and a prophet, and he is the one who shows the way to the foundation of state.

¹ Телушкин Й. *Еврейский мир*. Москва – Иерусалим: Лехаим – Гершарим, 1997. – с. 448.

² Жаботинский В. (Зеев). Самсон Назорей, in: *Сочинения в 9 томах*. Т. 1. Минск, 2007. – с. 212.

³ Ibid. – 47.

⁴ Ibid. – 171.

⁵ Ibid. – 241.

⁶ In *The Book of Judges* it is told that Samson kills a thousand men at one go with a jaw of a donkey.

⁷ Жаботинский В. (Зеев). Самсон Назорей, in: *Сочинения в 9 томах*. Т. 1. Минск, 2007. – с. 189.

⁸ Ibid. – с. 80.

⁹ Ibid. – с. 81.

¹⁰ Ibid. – с. 266.

¹¹ Ibid. – с. 157.

¹² Ibid. – с. 279.

¹³ Ibid. – с. 62.

¹⁴ Ibid. – с. 54.

¹⁵ Ibid. – с. 52.

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Natalja Šroma

THE SYSTEM OF CATS OF NIKOLAI ZABOLOCKI

Summary

The article is devoted to one of the most important texts written in the period of 'Stolbci', to a poem 'At the Staircases' composed in 1928 (initially entitled 'Immortality'). The analysis and interpretation of this work in the context of other texts with 'feline' motifs of the poet show an exceptional position of cats and their symbolic meaning in the poetic system of Nikolai Zabolocki. An alter-ego of the poet, a blind and risen-above-a-deadly-love-orgy cat – a monk and a holy man, is in the centre of 'the system of cats' of the poem 'At the Staircases'. Thus it is possible to conclude that the author's conception of immortality has already been shaped at the stage of the 'City Stolbci', including all characteristic motifs: a motif of love as deadly physiological passion, a motif of 'food – death', an idea of liberation of a man from his physical mortal body, reframing and discrediting of the Buddhist and Christian concepts of immortality as well as assertion of the cult of the original love and blindness.

Key words: Nikolai Zabolocki, OBERIU, City Stolbci, Mixed Stolbci, concept of immortality, an image of a cat

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The interest of Nikolai Zabolocki towards the world of animals is obvious. The poet explicitly acknowledges that; in the *Conversations* with his friends-oberiuts among the things that *interest him*, he mentions *domestic animals, pets, beasts and insects, birds*¹. Using the same obvious juxtaposition of the world of men and city (*City Stolbci*), on the one hand, and the world of plants and animals, the world of nature (*Mixed Stolbci*), on the other, the poet organizes – conceptually and spatially – his early period of creativity.

The presence of animals (and plants) in the *City Stolbci* (*Stolbci* of 1929) is reduced to a minimum: everything that belongs to the world of nature that still gets into the secluded world of the city becomes a victim and is doomed: *a dog [...] is crushed with its lovely soul*²; *a horse [...] folds the body into a long circle [...] and cuts with sharp legs a flat prison of the limber*³; *the trees [...] in the bars, under lock and key*⁴ etc.

The spatial model of Zabolocki is consistent – even mice share the universal destiny of *poor* and *pale* (the most frequent definitions) city inhabitants:

*in the cracks of the flagstones
the mice faces appeared,
resembling the triangles of chalk
with the funeral-on-each-side eyes.*⁵

An exceptional position (therefore, the commentary is essential) in the artistic world of Zabolocki is given only to cats. First of all, there are comparatively many cats: *the cat in the bakery*⁶, *the cat in the dairy (Repose)*⁷, *shrieking tabby-cats at the attics (Stars, Roses and Squares)*⁸, *many kittens and cats in Temptation*⁹, *cats and tabby-cats at the staircases*¹⁰. Moreover, outside the city space there are almost no cats in Zabolocki's works. Outside the *Stolbci* cat appears only once – in the poem *Forest Path* (1957); however, the cat there is also a human being, since its reaction to *hard-animalistic* is similar to the reaction of a man, forester: *The beast [...] having recognized the man, recoiled back. / The guard seized a rifle, and from the window / The cat flew as a spring under the stairs*¹¹. It supports Zabolocki's definition of the world of the city as *the system of cats*¹². Finally, a meaning of a cat, as a rule, is not indexed (a cat refers not to itself), but symbolic; it is not characteristic of all other cases when Zabolocki refers to the world of animals.

The poem *At the Staircases* is the most important text for understanding of an image of a cat and a tabby-cat by Zabolocki. Composed in 1928, the poem was not included into *Stolbci* in 1929; however, later, changing the titles, it was included into all collections of poems by the poet: in 1933 as *Immortality* (initial title), in 1948 as *A Torture Garden*, in 1957 – *At the Staircases*.

A retrospective look at the work explains the attitude of the poet towards his text (he did not include the poem into the first collection of poems, but expressed a consistently favorable attitude afterwards).

At the Staircases is a transitional (in this case the symbolism of a staircase is precise) text from the space of the city *stolbci* to the space of the mixed *stolbci*. Only a motif of love as a physiological passion fits into the poetics of *Stolbci* of 1929:

*Cats [...] are roaring, as horns, about love.
Naked lady-cats [...] are heating with the love juice, [...]
Developing the smell of passion.*¹³

*They [a big flock of fleshy hussies – N. Š.] are eating heavy sweetmeats,
And husking in unslaked passion.*¹⁴

*[...] the third one is greasy as a spider.
Spreading the living tackles of the hands,
Is husking and writhing from passion,
Caressing the ghostly lady-friends.*¹⁵

The description of love-passion as one of the manifestations of human physiology (not of human soul) is characteristic of all oberiuts:

L. L. (Lipavskiy): Eating and genital union are two consequences of the same principle. [the principle of enjoyment – N. Š.]

*D. H. (Harms): Still this is clear exactly through the genital feeling, through physiology.*¹⁶

Daniil Kharms in the poem under a symptomatic title *Passion* (1933) assigns the love passions to *nature*, opposing them to his 'I', i.e., to his consciousness: *I do not have the power / to hide in myself the love passions, / I got defeated by the nature*¹⁷.

The central image of the poem *At the Staircases* (a cat – a blind monk, hermit, holy man, and hangman) points to the transitional character of the text. An alternative

question – *in a rage or blind* – shows that the situation with the cat is perceived as a dilemma.

On the one hand, the cat is *in a rage* – he is *a devil, became a beast*, i.e., lost his senses and, as a result, perished because of a woman (*a hussy*). Thus he becomes like cats-devils at the beginning of the poem as well as all men who have perished because of love towards a woman (this being one of the frequent motifs of oberiuts).¹⁸ The possibility of the symbolic projection of a cat/a tabby-cat to man/woman is determined by a whole range of author's efforts. Animalistic and human in the artistic world of *Stolbci* are moving towards each other: the cats (animals) are endowed with anthropomorphic traits (for instance, such an attribute as clothing or its absence – *naked tabby-cats, naked birds*, the cat *in the shaggy sheepskin*, i.e., in a fur coat); people are described as zoomorphic creatures (the flock of hussies, lover-spider). There are contextual parallels, such as *coquettes-tabby-cats* and *wenches, longing for grooms*. To compare:

*Naked lady-cats, embarrassed,
are snuggling up to one another, snaking [...]*
Coquettes! There are so many of them all around!
They are moving in a circles [...]

and

Wenches sat down, [...]
they are fluffing up the greasy beds,
and are saying: –
We [...] are sitting in circles,
and are waiting [...]
when the grooms come on the wheels.¹⁹

There is no doubt that Zabolocki is also considering the connotations of an idiom 'to be in love like a cat', as well as the less stable cultural connotations connected with the image of a 'March cat', for instance, in *Wakening of Spring* by Sasha Chorny:

*Yesterday my cat glanced at the calendar
And immediately raised his tail as a trumpet,
Later he dashed to the staircases as he used to do,
And his shriek was warm and bacchanalian:
– Spring marriage! Civil marriage!
Hurry up, my lady-cats, to the attic!²⁰*

Finally, Zabolocki is explicitly referring to *someone else's word* – to an image that is frequent in the works by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, that of *Venus in Furs* – a cat-woman, cruel female demon, naked heathen: *A woman who wears furs is nothing but a big lady-cat*²¹. One of the titles of the poem *At the Staircases – A Torture Garden* – also refers to Sacher-Masoch, and, possibly, a paraphrase of the place and time of the death of the cat and a spiritual fall of Severin, the main character of the novel by Sacher-Masoch *Venus in Furs*. To compare:

in the novel

*Full moon! The moon has appeared out of the tops of the low fir-trees,
bordering the park, and the silver aroma is floating over the terrace, above the
groups of the trees [...]. I am coming out to the garden. [...] A nightingale is singing
painfully.²²*

in the poem:

*The night with no remorse or fear,
All the curious ones could see
The family garden – the cat's scaffold,
Where a slow young moon was coming up.
The friendly trees were swinging
Their big clenched bodies,
Naked birds were shrieking,
Galloping on the unsteady feet.*²³

Thus the usage of *the system of cats* as a symbolic alternate of *the system of wenches*²⁴ gives the possibility for Zabolocki, hiding behind someone else's word and general cultural zoomorphic codes, not only to make the rough nature aesthetic, but also (it is more important for the poetics of OBERIU) to preserve the status of the author's position as demonstratively secluded, detached.

On the other hand, **the cat became blind**. The image of the blind and risen-above-a-deadly-love-orgy monk-holy man precedes a whole range of ideas important for the later works of Zabolocki. The ideas are united by an artistic supra-idea, an author's conception of immortality.

First of all, this is an idea of liberation of a man from his physiological mortal body. A weird, *awkward* deed of the cat, tearing apart the body of a *hussy* (or his own?) (*The cat, sitting on the neck, / Is tearing apart the body, and opening the tendons, / Takes out the bones with his claws, – [...]*²⁵) becomes meaningful in the *Mixed Stolbci*, when the cat that *stands up to two legs* is perceived as a precursor of the Mad Wolf, which *despising the caress of women*²⁶, twisting its neck and tearing apart the tendons, manages to rise to the stars. In the metaphoric *flights to the stars*, overcoming the earthly horizontal and striving up, Zabolocki states an idea of immortality:

*The one, who has seen the brightness of the stars,
Is not afraid of the death [...]*
*Now [...] seizing the air with the horrifying hands
Will rise myself.*²⁷

*Is it possible for the earthly work to fly
And in this way to buy itself the immortality.*²⁸

Beasts [...]
*Are rising up towards the flat tops of the trees
And are standing still upwards, seeing the clean stars.*²⁹

To overcome the physical nature for Zabolocki means, first of all, to get rid of the passions, i.e., to escape from *the digestive human* and *the genital human* (человека пищеvarительного and человека полового³⁰) in the name of the artistic and sensible human.

In the poem *At the Staircases* Zabolocki introduces into the oberiut context a motif of 'meal – death', 'food – the corpse of the world': *There are corpses of washed animals / lying on the cold trays*³¹. To compare: in the poem *There Could be a God Around Here* (*Кругом возможно бог*, 1931) by Alexander Vvedenskiy: *There is lying in the dining-room on the table / the corpse of the world like crème-brûlée*³². In this manner Zabolocki states the second – alongside the sensual love – reason of the loss of immortality by a human.

A frequent device in the poetics of Zabolocki, metathesis, in the poem *At the Staircases* gives the possibility to join the death of the cat (*cat's scaffold*) and the food-death caused by the headless *trunks of the bussies* (*primus – strappado*). Thus Zabolocki puts a human into an active position: it is exactly a human, turning animals and plants into food, who turns life into death. For instance, in the poem *Temptation* a dead girl is transformed into the *cabbage soup* (*uju*): *There was a girl – now only cabbage soup*³³, i.e., the life (*a girl*) → the death (*cabbage soup*).

A suddenly inedible world, for Kharms and Vvedenskiy, on the contrary, brings death to a human. In *A Horrible Death* by Kharms (1935):

*Once a man, feeling hungry,
was sitting at the table and eating meatballs [...]
and he was eating, and eating, and eating, and eating, and eating [...]
And he has suddenly died.*³⁴

In the poem *All* by Vvedenskiy (1929) that is devoted to Zabolocki, a collision in the style of Zabolocki ('a corpse' – 'fish broth') is transformed into the opposite ('curdled milk' – 'corpse').³⁵

The images of cats in 1928 contain hints to Zabolocki's search already in this period of the various cultural variants of achieving immortality, including the evaluation (and later rejection) of various religious doctrines. Thus the comparison of cats with *buddhas* is extended beyond the frames of any formal resemblance and is filled with conceptual meanings in the poem *The Triumph of Farming* of 1929:

*[...] women belly,
Very complex at first sight,
Is the dwelling of the soul
Nine months in a row.
There is a baby in the pose of Buddha
Getting the shape of the body.*³⁶

In the poem *Metamorphoses* of 1937, the poet considers a Buddhist idea of repeated births to be *superstitions*³⁷. This idea is ridiculed also in *Temptation*:

*There was a girl – now only a cabbage soup.
Don't laugh, just wait!
The girl will resurrect at once,
From the shinbone
There will be a tree growing, [...]
And singing a song about the girl.*³⁸

The girl-tree is singing a song about kittens and cats.

To stop the Buddhist circulation of deaths and births for the poet signified to stop the process of degradation of a human personality as well, since for Zabolocki (as well as for Berdajev) *the one who is more birth-giving is less creative*³⁹:

*We prefer the average people –
The ones who give birth, [...]
Who are threatening to no one,
Who create nothing.*⁴⁰

*Won't we go backwards,
If we just give birth?*⁴¹

Therefore, Zabolocki in the same consistent manner rejects the Christian doctrine of immortality. The image of the cat in the poem *The Bakery*, being present during the birth of a *baby*, fits well into the range of antichristian images of Zabolocki:

[..] *having given the birth to a heir*
And having fixed a slim womb,
She is standing embarrassed as a virgin
With a night rose on the chest.
And the cat, sitting in the honorable place,
Is crossing the neb with a tired paw [..].⁴²

The cat from *the bakery* correlates with the image of the pope in the poems *New Household* and *Wedding*, where the ironic image of the attendant of a false cult ('family') expresses the author's negative attitude to Christian compromise, blessing the family and encouraging new births-deaths:

The pope comes in, the legs are shaking,
The relics are kept in the palm,
He wants to bless the walls,
And to present the cross to a bride.⁴³

[..] *and the pope, a witness of all nights –*
Is sitting [..] with a big guitar on the shoulder [..]
But the pope shivered, shrieked, and suddenly
Stroke the golden strings!⁴⁴

The image of the cat in *The Bakery* is ambiguous: it is also organic (together with a parallel 'cat – pope') for the folk-feasting atmosphere of *the city stolbci* with their cult of food. The cat from *the bakery* is related to the Cheshire (or Shrovetide) Cat of Lewis Carroll: *Is sitting-sitting and smiling, / suddenly he has disappeared⁴⁵*. This image does not exclude a quite realistic interpretation – of a broken clay jar with milk or butter: *The cat [..] is sitting like a jar, / and suddenly has disappeared. Only a little bog was left on the clay floor. / And the morning is floating in the corner⁴⁶*. This meaning is not opposed to the feasting imagery of *Stolbci* (for instance, of Shrovetide).

Zabolocki explicitly announces that only the path of the cat – the blind monk and a holy man – is righteous: *He is searching for [..] the world of original love⁴⁷*. The abundance of the blind men in *Stolbci*, endowment of an author's 'I' with the blindness (this is all that is said about the author directly) can be explained with the desire of the poet to bring back his characters and himself to *the world of the original love* and *original blindness*. To compare:

in *Stolbci*

Here I am standing, wearing an overcoat
(with the white eyes of a soldier
A baby several weeks old).⁴⁸

And I am standing at the staircase,
Similarly white, grand [..]⁴⁹

in *Bible*

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman

saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.⁵⁰

The fact that the cat attains to a desirable blindness is reflected also in the significant transformation of the artistic and textual space: *The staircase has disappeared. Nothing is / in the eyes*⁵¹. Thus the text of the poem formally remaining in the confines of the *city staircases*, conceptually departs outwards (*the staircase has disappeared*).

The figure of the blind monk ('monastic complex') has explicit autobiographic implications. In the letters of Zabolocki written in 1929 to Yekaterina Klikova the situation of choice is discussed – 'woman' or 'creativity':

All women are extremely distant from me. It frequently seems to me that the destiny makes me ready for a lonely life – the life with my work, which takes everything [...].⁵²

The art is similar to a monastery, where the people are loved in an abstract way. However, the people have the same attitude towards the monks. Nevertheless, the monks remain the monks, i.e., the holy men. Being isolated from the art, I am an incomplete and bad man. [...] For my whole life no woman was happy with me. It was told at home that I was selfish and rude. [...] I think that the feelings, for the absence of which I am constantly reproached, have just switched in my and are moving along some other path.⁵³

This idea is explicitly stated in the poem *At the Staircases*:

*Monk! [...] Goodbye [...]
I continue your life,
My brave holy man.⁵⁴*

However, such an unveiled position of the author's 'I' for the poetic system of *Stolbci* was inappropriate; therefore, the poem *Immortality / At the Staircases* was not included into the first collection of poems. The statement of the poet who is creating not a 'bodily' but a 'mental child'⁵⁵ that will become a higher, i.e., immortal creature, having paid with his chastity for his immortality, will be proclaimed only in 1953: *Only the heart of the poet is shining eternally [i.e., immortally – N. Š.] / In the chaste abyss of poetry*⁵⁶.

¹ Липавский Л. Разговоры. / *Логос*. № 4, 1993. – с. 7.

² Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Market, in: *Собрание сочинений в 3 томах*. Т. 1. Москва: Художественная литература, 1983. – с. 353. All poems of Zabolotsky are quoted according to this edition. The word-for-word translation is mine.

³ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Feast. – с. 354.

⁴ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Ivanovs. – с. 356.

⁵ Заболоцкий Н. А. A Warder. – с. 349.

⁶ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Bakery. – с. 363.

⁷ Заболоцкий Н. А. Repose. – с. 100.

⁸ Заболоцкий Н. А. Stars, Roses and Squares. – с. 104.

⁹ Заболоцкий Н. А. Temptation. – с. 85.

- ¹⁰ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 62–63.
- ¹¹ Заболоцкий Н. А. A Forest Lodge. – с. 296.
- ¹² Заболоцкий Н. А. The Ivanovs. – с. 356.
- ¹³ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 62–63.
- ¹⁴ Заболоцкий Н. А. Wedding. – с. 358.
- ¹⁵ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Figures of the Dream. – с. 361.
- ¹⁶ Липавский Л. Разговоры. / *Логос*. № 4, 1993. – с. 62.
- ¹⁷ Хармс Д. *Полное собрание сочинений в 3 томах*. Т. 1. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект, 1997. – с. 227.
- ¹⁸ See the following: Шром Н. Чужое слово в антиавторском дискурсе: Пушкин и Заболоцкий, in: *Н. А. Заболоцкий: pro et contra*. Санкт-Петербург: Издательство Русской христианской гуманитарной академии, 2010. – с. 758–770.
- ¹⁹ Заболоцкий Н. А. Immaturity. – с. 368.
- ²⁰ Черный С. *Пробуждение весны* <http://slova.org.ru/chernyy/probuzhdenievesny/> (accessed 2012)
- ²¹ Захер-Мазох Л. фон. Венера в мехах, in: *Наслаждение в боли*. Москва: Эксмо-пресс, 1999. – с. 20
- ²² Ibid. – с. 8.
- ²³ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 63.
- ²⁴ See the following: Незнамов П. Система девок (*The system of wenches*). / *Печать и революция*. № 4, 1930. – с. 77–80.
- ²⁵ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 63.
- ²⁶ Заболоцкий Н. А. Mad Wolf. – с. 140.
- ²⁷ Ibid. – с. 143.
- ²⁸ Ibid. – с. 146.
- ²⁹ Заболоцкий Н. А. Trees. – с. 157.
- ³⁰ Бердяев Н. А. *Эрос и личность. Философия пола и любви*. Москва: Прометей, 1989. – с. 59.
- ³¹ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 62.
- ³² Введенский А. *Полное собрание сочинений в 2 томах*. Т. 1. Москва: Гилея, 1993. – с. 151.
- ³³ Заболоцкий Н. А. Temptation. – с. 84.
- ³⁴ Хармс Д. *Полное собрание сочинений в 3 томах*. Т. 1. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект, 1997. – с. 270–271.
- ³⁵ Введенский А. *Полное собрание сочинений в 2 томах*. Т. 1. Москва: Гилея, 1993. – с. 74–75.
- ³⁶ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Triumph of Farming. – с. 128
- ³⁷ Заболоцкий Н. А. Metamorphoses. – с. 191.
- ³⁸ Заболоцкий Н. А. Temptation. – с. 84–85.
- ³⁹ Бердяев Н. А. *Эрос и личность. Философия пола и любви*. Москва: Прометей, 1989. – с. 77.
- ⁴⁰ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Triumph of Farming. – с. 128.
- ⁴¹ Ibid. – с. 129.
- ⁴² Заболоцкий Н. А. The Bakery. – с. 363.
- ⁴³ Заболоцкий Н. А. New Household. – с. 351.
- ⁴⁴ Заболоцкий Н. А. Wedding. – с. 359.
- ⁴⁵ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Market. – с. 353.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 62.
- ⁴⁸ Заболоцкий Н. А. The Feast. – с. 355.
- ⁴⁹ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 63.
- ⁵⁰ Genesis 3: 5–7.
- ⁵¹ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 63.
- ⁵² Заболоцкий Н. А. *Огонь, мерцающий в сосуде*. Москва: Педагогика-Пресс, 1995. – с. 166.
- ⁵³ Ibid. – с. 117.
- ⁵⁴ Заболоцкий Н. А. At the Staircases. – с. 63.
- ⁵⁵ Вейнингер О. *Пол и характер*. Москва: ТЕРРА, 1992. – с. 266, 330.
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Valentīna Prokofjeva

THE IMAGE OF SERPENT IN VLADIMIR KOROTKEVICH'S NOVEL 'CHRIST HAS LANDED IN GRODNO'

Summary

The article is devoted to the novel by Belarus writer Vladimir Korotkevich (1930 – 1984) 'Christ Has Landed in Grodno'. The novel is connected with the history of Belarus in the 16th century. The narrative is based on the events related to the struggle of Belarus people for their independence. (Belarus lands in those times were a part of Lithuanian principality). To reconstruct the epoch, Korotkevich preserves the peculiarities of the Old Belarus language in his story about Belarus Christ.

The novel by Korotkevich is a work with a difficult fate. First, in 1965, the script for the film 'Life and Resurrection of Yuras Bratchik' was written. The film was made, but it was not widely known on the territory of the USSR because it was banned by censorship. After this failure Korotkevich, however, realised his idea about the story of Yuras Bratchik in his novel 'Christ Has Landed In Grodno' (1966). The novel was written in the period after the ideological 'thaw' in the USSR.

The author of the article investigates the use of the image of serpent in this novel. This image bears several semantic meanings: it is a real animal, a mythical creature, and a symbol. The main character of the novel is the image of the snake symbolizing perfidy, temptation, and evil. The serpent as a mythical creature conveys the apocalyptic motif. The plot of this novel is a version of the story about Christ's advent to the earth. Korotkevich constructs his work as a complex of several semantic layers: in the foreground there is a social conflict – the city and church authorities are feverishly looking for a possibility to liquidate the swelling rebel of the hungry and miserable. Poor wandering actors arrive to the city and perform a mystery from Christ's life. They unintentionally prompt a convenient version for the solution of the conflict. By threats and promises the actors are made to act the advent of Christ to switch the people's energy over to the religious field. Paradoxically enough, Christ's advent to Grodno, first planned as a political game, after the forced wanderings of 'Christ' and his 'apostles' around Belarus, makes Yuras Bratchik [this is the name of a former student who has gathered the company of actors – V. P.] who plays the role of Christ, the defender and saviour of the ordinary people. During their wandering, the company relives many situations related to the New Testament. Thus, social and biblical connotations turn out to be closely entangled. The former cheat and fraud grows into a monumental figure of 'muzhik' Christ. The emergence of a new free personality is another important component of the artistic world of the novel.

Key-words: Korotkevich, novel, the Bible, Christ, serpent, snake, real animal, mythical creature, symbol, evil

Introduction

Images of animals occur frequently in Vladimir Korotkevich's novel. They are constantly present in the lives of the main characters and are connected with their perception of the world, opening up new dimensions of their personality. The most frequent are the images of mice, pigs, and pigeons. Each of these animals is a certain indicator of several allusions and associations which relate to different layers of the world culture.

Snake or, to be precise, the serpent which, according to the tradition for the world culture, is connected with the idea of the evil and deception is the key image for conveying the system of ideas in the novel *Christ Has Landed in Grodno*.

Interpretation of the Image of Serpent in the Text by Korotkevich

The serpent in the novel appears in different manifestations: as a real animal, a mythical creature, and a symbol. Let us give just some examples: terrible famine in Belarus starts from the extinction of tens of snakes in marshes and lakes; the gilded armour on the clergymen's chest is decorated with the image of Medusa Gorgon with snakes on its head. Marina Krivich, the heroine of the novel, watches eels caught by one of 'apostles' and in one of them she sees *the serpent-tempter* who is coming down the tree. Another example is Tatar army troops who have come to conquer the land of Belarus, and who remind of a stretched snake. Very often Korotkevich compares an evil person to a snake: a whore – flexible like a supple snake; a liar has a tongue under which a snake's sting is protruding; similar characteristics are attributed to secret brotherhood, which uses snake poison as a weapon:

Secret brotherhood, – rounded up the carver. – Are the same as crusaders who fight [...] with the help of poison. As if nobody knows anything, but it exists. And see, if they tell the truth, they can get in not only here, but in hell, too.

[Братэрства таёмнае, – скончыў разбяр. – Тыя самыя крыжакі, што [...] атрутай ваююць. Нібы ніхто добра нічога не ведае, але ёсць. І вось, калі праўду кажуць, могуць яны забрацца не толькі сюды, а і ў пекла.¹]

Reference to the image of the serpent is connected with the speculations about darkness, evil, and death:

Towards warmth snakes and serpents crawl. Do you think they won't attack us? And with swords many will openly do, and those, from the underground, with poison. That is why I say: darkness is coming, blood is coming, sword is coming, poison is coming.

[А на цёплае вужакі і змеі паўзуць. То няўжо думаеце, на нас яны не кінуцца?! І з мячом многія адкрыта кінуцца, і тыя, падземныя, з атрутай. Таму я і кажу: цёмнае ідзе, кроў ідзе, меч ідзе, атрута ідзе.²]

Lizards and dragons are often present in the novel as variants of the snake. Korotkevich follows Slavonic, or, in a broader sense, European tradition, where the image of serpent among numerous meanings has one, likely the most important, role, connected with the satanic, infernal world. Here is what Vladimir Dal said about these relations:

*Snake – a reptile, legless animal, the fourth order of serpents.*³

[..] *Dragon – devil, deuce. Fairy tales winged snake. Half-winged lizard in southern countries.*⁴

Biblical Connotations in the Novel *Christ Has Landed In Grodno*

The first pages of the novel plunge a reader into the description of disasters taking place in the territory of Belarus in the 16th century. It is crucial that the place and time in which people live, are characterized through animal images:

To everyone's astonishment few children were born, maybe because there was starvation and famine, maybe it was God's will, so they would not suffer. Not only animals but also serpents and creatures had hard times that year.

[І на дзіва мала ў той год нарадзілася дзяцей, можа, таму, што быў голад і пошасць, а можа, па волі божай, каб не пакутавалі бязвінныя. Не толькі людзям, а і звярам, і гадам, і пачварам падводным даводзілася ў той год цяжка.]⁵

Korotkevich depicts a disastrous scene from people's and animals' life. They suffer from famine, and the author demonstrates the overall feeling of fear, hunger, and senseless life:

[Pigeons – V. P.] *Mad from hunger, having forgotten about fear, fought [..] in dust [for a handful of grain – V. P.] pecked at each other and the ground, rolling in a bundle in front of him. – 'Heralds of God's world', – realising that everything has gone waste, said the muzhik.*

[Голуби – В. П.] *Ашалелыя ад голаду, забыўшыся на ўсялякае самазахаванне, яны біліся [..] у пыле, дзяўблі зямлю і адзін аднаго, сущэльным комам варушыліся перад ім. – Вестуны божага міру, – разумеючы, што ўсё прапала, – сказаў мужык.*⁶

The author lets the reader understand that even more terrible events are going to happen in the future. In the first and second chapters apocalyptic motifs are present, prophetic visions are under discussion, and they foretell a troublesome future. It is especially essential that the images of snake and lizard are almost always present.

This is how the story starts:

Just then snakes which had been described by Ambrosy Kutzeyansky died out in Sennen lakes. He had once condemned them and driven into the lakes so that they did not frighten people.

[Якраз тады выдахлі ў Сенненскіх азёрах цмокі, пра якіх пісаў яшчэ прападобны Амбражэй Куцеянскі; якіх цмокаў ён калісьці заклаў і загнаў у возера, каб не палохалі людзей.]⁷

Thus, the opposition of 'the world of people – the world of snakes' is implied. Snakes are hostile to people, but for the time being they obey the human and the God, it is not a mere coincidence that the priest Reverend Ambrosy Kutzeyansky condemned and drove them into the lakes:

That year even free-thinkers were amazed [..]. One night those lizards and snakes were found on the spit, forty in number, and half of them were rolling in

the deep like floating islands. And the next morning they found a bit less than half of those which had died the previous night. And after one more night the biggest one came onto the surface. One. Smallansk doctor [...] rode to the lake to see the savage and ugly beast [...] and, in spite of the terrible smell, the beasts-snakes were examined and described by him.

[А ў той год і вальнадумцы ахнулі [...] За адну ноч на водмелях тых яшчураў, тых цмокаў знайшлі сорок, ды палова таго хісталася на фалях, як плаваючыя выспы. Ды другой раніцай знайшлі яшчэ трохі менш паловы таго, што выдахла ў першую ноч. А яшчэ праз ноч усплыў самы вялікі. Адзін. Смалянскі лекар [...] паскакаў на тое возера, каб таго дзікага і страхавобразнага звера ўбачыць [...] і, негледзячы на страшэнны смурод, звяроў-цмокаў тых агледзіў ды запісаў.^{8]}

The death of 'frightening' serpents becomes a starting point of tragedy, breach of balance created by God. The violation of God's laws in human society brings chaos to the world of nature with their symbolic prelude. The narrator calls dead beasts either serpents or lizards, which is followed by their detailed descriptions, and depicts them as a seal, snake, lizard, or doe. It is remarkable that the image of animal is depicted as a bizarre combination of human and animal parts of body:

These snakes had a broad and slightly flat body, and they had fins but not like fish have, but exactly those like 'foka' [seal – V. P.] had: flat, broad, but not long. The neck to this body was too thin and long. And on the neck there was a head like snake's and doe's at the same time.

[Тулавы мелі тая цмокі шырокае і трохі пляскае і мелі яны плаўнікі-не такія, як у рыбы, а такія таксама, як у фокі, таўстамясыя, шырокія але не дужа доўгія. Шыю мелі, па тулаву, дык тонкую і надта доўгую. А на шыі сядзела галава, адначасова падобная і на галаву змяі і на галаву лані.^{9]}

The image of serpent is like the apocalyptic beast. Let us compare it to the description in the Bible:

To look at, these locusts were like horses armoured for battle; they had things that looked like gold crowns on their heads, and faces that seemed human', and hair like women's hair, and teeth like lion's teeth. (Revelation: 9; 7, 8)

And sees God, the head was laughing. Maybe grinning, but maybe amusing by our disasters.

[І, дальбог, смяялася тая галава. Мо проста зубы скаліла, а мо-з нашых бедаў.^{10]}

The smile frozen both on locust's head and on the muzzle of snake-lizard brings about a premonition of something incomprehensible, unexpected, and frightening. The second apparition is a strange continuation of the sequence of chance events that shocked people even more because they were frightened by the unknown future. The range of catastrophic events includes the space of heaven:

And there was something incomprehensible and frightening this year. This time not on the earth but in the skies [...]. And from the signs of horror, famine, battles, and heaven it was clear that doomsday was coming, terrible extinction of humankind [...].

[І яшчэ было ў той год страшнае і незразумелае. Толькі ўжо не на зямлі, а на небе [...] І ад жаху, голаду сечаў і знакаў нябесных зразумела было: наступаюць апошнія часіны, смерць лютая людству і выміранне [...].^{11]}

That spring, at night – as seen by the inhabitants of Mir, Nesvizh, and Slutsk and Slonim, all of these towns and villages – hissing and whistling, a fire serpent with a long tail dashed across the sky.

[Вясной той, уначы, – бачылі тое жыхары з Міра, з Нясвіжа, і Слуцка, і Слоніма, усіх тых мясцін і вёсяў, – з шыпам і свістам прамчаў па небе агнявы змій з доўгім зыркiм хвастом.^{12]}

A pit appeared after this celestial body had hit the ground:

That pit [...] a secular chaplain ordered to bury, not looking at it or digging – so that there was no temptation – and not to touch the serpent's footprints. Because everybody knew whose weapon the serpent was.

[Яму тую [...] потым мірскі каплан загадаў, не глядзячы і не капаючыся, зямлёю засыпаць – каб спакусы не было і каб не дакранацца да рэчаў змеевых. Бо ўсім вядома, чыёй зброяю быў змій.^{13]}

Whose weapon the serpent was is known from the Bible, so let us turn to the *Revelation*:

Then a second sign appeared in the sky: a huge red dragon [...]. Its tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and dropped them to the earth [...]. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had deceived all the world, was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. (12; 3, 4, 9)

But for you [...], trouble is coming – because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that his days are numbered. (12; 12)

Having compared Korotkevich's text with the fragment from the *Revelation*, we can make a conclusion that the images of aquatic serpent and that of fire serpent are alike, so the warning about the future atonement for human sins is realized.

In this context the appearance of Yuras Bratchik after the death of Sennensk serpents and the fall of fire serpent also becomes symbolic. Among the general terror and talks about the approaching end, Yuras feels himself confident and calm:

And then he was asked why he was not afraid to sleep so close to the devil's spot. But he said that he was not afraid of any devils and would like to see them or even sleep with them on one oven – as he was indifferent.

[І тады ў яго спыталі, як гэта ён не баяўся так блізка ад д'яблавага месца спаць. А ён сказаў, што ніякіх д'яблаў на свеце не баіцца і з ахвотаю бы на гэты выгляд паглядзеў ці нават выспаўся на адной печцы – бо яму гэта малаважна.^{14]}

Yuras and the company of travelling actors who happened to be in Grodno before people's famine riot are suspected by the local authorities because these authorities are struggling to silence the rebellion spirit. Having proclaimed Bratchik and his company Christ and his apostles, the church and secular hierarchs try to distract the attention of the 'anxious villains' (so the population is called) from real current events. The actors, having been proclaimed Christ with his apostles, are used like puppets who, when the right time comes, can be made 'ascended'.

The picture of the world in *Christ Has Landed In Grodno* has two spheres. One of the strictly opposite parts there is, on the one hand, the world of the rich and clergymen

who have power, and, on the other hand, the world of the miserable, the poor, who have been driven into utter despair, and the humane ones who are compassionate.

The rich and clergymen in the middle of general starvation live in gluttony; only among them there are the fat ones who are like frightening serpents. For example, Czimkun Zhaba:

Fingered with his fat fingers a colourful tie-belt which lay not on his belly, but under his breast. Thick hair fell on his eyes. He coughed. His face became the one Karl the Great could have had for his importance, but at the same time stupid like a pig's thigh.

[Перабіраў тоўстымі пальцамі вясёлкавы шалевы пояс, які ляжаў у яго не на жываце, а пад грудзямі. Тлустыя касіцы чорных валасоў падалі на вочы. Адкашляўся. Твар стаў такі, што хаця б Карлу Вялікаму па паважнасці, толькі што дурны, як свіная левая шынка.¹⁵]

Here is one more expressive characteristic feature of the fat:

They lead a dissolute life and do it with insatiability. Their faces are worse than devil's bottom.

[Яны аддаліся распусце так, што робяць усялякую нечысціню з ненаеднасцю. Морды іхнія горш за д'яблаў азадак.¹⁶]

Clergymen are compared to Sennensk snakes even due to the colour of their clothing. Let us remember that grey colour is the colour of a terrible beast and the Dominican cassock. Bratchick immediately defines this world as extremely negative calling it *entanglement of snakes*.

Florian Bosyacki – The Serpent Tempter

Dominican Florian Bosyacki, a monk chaplain of the Roman catholic church of Pan God's dogs, is one of the main representatives of this 'snakes' kingdom'. Bosyacki is going to become a member of a secret Jesuit order, the attribute of which is chosen to be the snake:

[..] [Lotr – V. P.] *stretched out his hand to the monk, it had a medallion with a snake winding around the foot of the cross. The snake took the upright position as if to guard the cross.*

[І ён працянуў манаху далонь, а на ёй медальён са змяёю, што абвіла падножжа крыжа. Змяя ляжала ў пагрозлівай паставе, баронячы крыж.¹⁷]

Snake – like the behaviour of Florian Bosyacki becomes his constant characteristics, a kind of emblem. Most often Korotkevich mentions three 'snake' characteristics: narrow eyes, a tongue-sting, and the voice of the serpent tempter:

Look into his eyes. Flat. Green ... Serpent. You just wait for him to open his mouth, and – out comes a tongue – a blade of sting.

[Ты зірні ў вочы. Плоскія. Зялёныя ... Змей. Так і чакаеш, што адкрые рот, а адтуль замест языка – травінка джала.¹⁸]

This is how Bosityacki is described when he, after a kind of Last supper, urged Yuras' companions to betray their teacher, false Christ:

A subtle grin appeared on his lips. Grey, narrow, a bit greenish, like lizard's, eyes watched the apostles. [...] A mild voice, extremely rich in intonations voice enchanted, as if extracted one's soul through eyes.

[Няўлоўная ўсмяшка блукала на вуснах госьця. Шэрыя, плоскія, трохі ў зельне, бы ў яшчаркі, вочы аглядалі апосталаў. [...] Мяккі, незвычайна багаты інтанацыямі голас нібы зачароваў, нібы душу цягнуў з вачэй.^{19]}

Like in the former times, the serpent-tempter seduced Eve to try the forbidden fruit, the snake-Bosityacki succeeds in talking the apostles into betraying their Christ, and he pays thirty silver coins to each of them.

It is worth remarking that Sennensk beasts (snakes, lizards) and Bosityacki are described almost in the same words:

And it was frightening to look into these eyes; it makes one feel creepy, as if having seen Eve's serpent.

[І страшна было глядзець у тыя вочы, і мурашкі па спіне, нібы Евінага змяўбачыў.^{20]}

A bit later a smith, looking into Bosityacki's eyes, remarks:

It makes me creepy when I look into his eyes. He is somehow secret, terrifying.

[Непамысна мне, калі гляджу я ў ягоныя вочы. Ён нешта такое патаемнае, страшнае.^{21]}

Yuras Bratchik who has, by chance, been proclaimed Christ by local authorities, becomes the opponent of Bosityacki. The path of Christ-Bratchik is that of clearing himself, gaining moral maturity. He becomes a kind of implementation of the best features of people, the bearer of humane ideas.

Through the universal conflict of Bosityacki and Bratchik, the opposition of the two spheres of the world is realized. We can find the proof of it in the description of the scene when they first get acquainted:

Walking past Yuras, [Bosityacki – V. P.] gently touched his hand. Disappeared. Yuras convulsed. He saw someone this way for the first time. As if something secret-dishonest, cold, inaccessible to any passions, defiled his hand, as if, having waken in the night, terrified felt snake sneaking on it.

[Праходзячы паўз Юрася, ласкава дакрануўся далонню да ягонай рукі. Знік. Братчыка перасмыкнула. Ён упершыню бачыў такіх людзей. Нібы нешта патаемна-нячыстае, халоднае, недаступнае ніякім страсцям, апаганіла руку. Нібы, прагнуўшыся ўначы, з жахам адчуў на ёй слізкі ход змяі.^{22]}

The Dominican was one of the first people who understood that Christ – Bratchik eludes from control, he stops to be a puppet, actor, he starts to poise danger to their snake kingdom:

This False-Christ is a warning. There can be no future if in this world someone like the scoundrel Bratchik is wandering about.

[Гэты лжэ-Хрыстос папярэджанне. Не можа быць будучыні, калі на гэтым свеце швэндаецца такая навалач, як Братчык.²³]

The future depends on who is going to win this struggle. The false Christ destroys ideology with his disobedience; he destroys the belief in the inhumane church which Bosyacky formulates in the novel:

And that is why fight for your own cause, especially against the most terrible heresy, for human pride and wish to think, fight against the most terrible heresy which in Italy is called humanism, because it is the source of constant trouble, because it is the only heresy which will not become belief or dogma, but if it becomes – we all will cease to exist.

[І таму ваюй за сваё, а асабліва супраць самай страшнай ерасі, чалавечага самамнення і жадання думаць, ваюй супраць самай страшнай ерасі, якую ў Італіі завуць гуманізмам, таму што гэта рошчына вечнага неспакою, таму што гэта адзіная ерась, якая не стане верай і догмай, але калі стане-нам усім, і давеку, прыйдзе канец.²⁴]

Bratchik, in his turn, wants to see his country free and independent, without violence and bloodshed:

From this day Grodno is the land of justice. No offended there. No hungry. No gallows anymore.

[З дня гэтага Гародня-зямля праўды. Пакрыўджаных не будзе. Усім роўна і ніў кога болей. Галодных не будзе. [...] Шы-бы-ніц больш не бу-дзе!²⁵]

The opposition of these two characters is shown through their attitude to people. The Dominican came to Grodno to rule, while Bratchik came to love.

The Motif of the Battle Between St. George and Serpent

The opposition of ‘Christ – Bratchik – Dominican’ comes to an end symbolically. Instead of the death of Bratchik who was ready to follow Christ’s fate in order to help people, we witness the unexpected and terrifying death of Bosyacky who dies from an arrow shot by Bratick’s friend from the crowd having gathered to watch the False Christ’s execution:

The arrow stuck in his neck. [...] Gray, narrow, a bit greenish eyes fixed on something, nobody knew on what. And nobody came to help him.

[Страла тырчала ў яго ў горле. [...] Шэрыя, плоскія, трохі ў зелень, вочы ягоня спыніліся на нечым адным. На чым-не ведаў ніхто. І ніхто не кінуўся яму на дапамогу.²⁶]

The climax scene of Bosyacky’s death is undoubtedly influenced by the motif of St. George’s fight against the serpent. It is well-known that St. George pierced the serpent embodying all evil with a spear. For the first time the image of George appears in the scene of arresting the actors. While Bosyacky tries to make him his temporary accomplice, to make a deal, Yuras is examining the picture of St. George:

Here ... look, – said Akila Kiyovy, – here ... George the saint. Above the cross [...] rising over all, threatened, with a sword and attached to the loop of the stirrup spear, the iron covered with tarnished silver horseman, general Patron.

[Гэна ... зірні, — сказаў Акіла Кіёвы, — гэна ... Юры святы. Яшчэ вышэй за крыж [...] уносіўся над усім, пагражаў мячом і рымацаванай да страменнай пятлі дзідай жалезны, крыты пацьмянелым срэбрам конны волат, агульны Патрон.^{27]}

A second time the name of Yuras Bratchik's saint patron is given in the lyrics of the folk song sung by Bratchik's soldiers who go to the battle against Tatars:

*The children of Saint George,
The kids of his fate,
Kill and murder,
Feel no pity,
Feel no pity
For the enemy.*

[Дзеці Юр'я святога, / Дзеці яго удзела, / Біце, забівайце, / Не шкадуйце, / Не шкадуйце / Ворага.^{28]}

It is worth reminding that Yuras Bratchik is a peasant Christ, the symbol of hope and faith in the return of the times when people would not be hungry and would live free on their land, when their land would be fertile and generous to its hard-working people. In Aleksandr Afanasyev's works we find speculations about the image of St. George in Slavonic culture as a mixture of pagan and Christian motifs:

Our peasants acknowledge George a patron of their livestock. [...] In folk beliefs he takes place of [...] creator of spring fertility, the victor of demon serpent and Sheppard of heaven herds. This is the feature common in almost all Christian peoples.²⁹

Therefore, the description of Yuras Bratchik's fight with Bosityack contains interweaving of Christian and pagan motifs, which explain the fight with serpent as the victory of fertility in nature over infertility i.e., triumph of life over death.

Eventually, the serpent dies from the hand of the serpent-fighter, Christ's disciple. It is not only Bosityack's death that shows the end of the serpent-tempter, the defeat of inhumane ideology, but also the victory of Man over his fears, his metamorphosis, and transition from the 'live-stock' position to the birth of an individual and nation, the bearer of high morals. This is the symbol of the possible return of the former times when people and animals used to be happy in White Russia (Belarus). Bogdan Roskash recalls that life while telling about his past, and Yuras Bratchik dreams of such future before his execution.

So what is prophesied in the first part of the novel comes true and changes follow. This fight is won by Yuras and his friends. Yuras, due to the help of his fiends and his people, holds victory in this fight that is completely relevant to Belarus traditions:

In Belarussian tradition there is no single serpent fighter, it means that only united people could exterminate the serpent.³⁰

Conclusion

The mention of the serpent in the novel is, firstly, connected with the Christian apocalyptic, prophetic, and pagan motifs. The image of serpent is also a symbol of infertility in the human world and the world of nature. Of no less importance is the

motif of the serpent as a symbol of cunningness, violence, temptation, that is, devil's essence. Furthermore, the pagan idea of victory over serpent is the victory of fertility over infertility. Korotkevich, combining various interpretations of the image of the serpent in universal culture and Belarussian culture, creates his neo-myth about the struggle of Grodno Christ with the entanglement of snakes, depicting it as the struggle between the good and the evil, powers of the light and darkness, life and death, humanism and Middle Ages.

¹ Караткевіч Ул. *Хрыстос прызямліўся ў Гародні*. Мінск: Ураджай, 1998. – с. 48. Translation mine – V. P. The author of the given article tries to preserve the style of the language used by Korotkevich. Inversion in quotes is also used for the sake of preservation of the style of the original.

² Ibid. – с. 49.

³ Даль В. *Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка*. Москва: Русск. язык, 1989. – с. 686.

⁴ Ibid. – с. 489.

⁵ Караткевіч Ул. *Хрыстос прызямліўся ў Гародні*. Мінск: Ураджай, 1998. – с. 39.

⁶ Ibid. – с. 40.

⁷ Ibid. – с. 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. – с. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid. – с. 8.

¹¹ Ibid. – с. 8–9.

¹² Ibid. – с. 9.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. – с. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid. – с. 34.

¹⁶ Ibid. – с. 334.

¹⁷ Ibid. – с. 16.

¹⁸ Ibid. – с. 48.

¹⁹ Ibid. – с. 394–395.

²⁰ Ibid. – с. 7.

²¹ Ibid. – с. 46.

²² Ibid. – с. 74.

²³ Ibid. – с. 429.

²⁴ Ibid. – с. 18.

²⁵ Ibid. – с. 386.

²⁶ Ibid. – с. 470.

²⁷ Ibid. – с. 73.

²⁸ Ibid. – с. 379.

²⁹ Афанасьев А. *Поэтические воззрения славян на природу в 3 томах*. Т. 1. Москва: Индрик, 1994. – с. 699.

³⁰ Кавалёва Р. *Свет славянского фольклора*. Мінск: БДУ, 2001. – с. 68.

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Bārbala Simsone

THE ANIMAL WORLD OF FANTASY LITERATURE

Summary

The present study is a brief introduction to the animal world of the fantasy genre. The animal world has been characterised as one of the mythical traits that bear a certain subtextual meaning within the context of the fantasy landscape. The introduction to the article briefly describes the specific poetics of fantasy landscape, in which the physical and the spiritual aspects overlap within the same dimension. The first part of the article discusses the mythical creatures most often employed in fantasy works – the dragon, unicorn, phoenix, and centaur – deciphering their mythical value and the ways various authors have interpreted them. The second part of the article turns to the real animals and places them in three major groups according to the roles they play in fantasy works: first, animals as the heroes of the work; second, animals as heroes' companions; and third, animals that are shape-shifters, i.e., human beings adopting animal form or vice versa. The article concludes that the animal figures in fantasy works are by no means chosen at random, but embody specific zoomorphic symbols, whose primary function is to enhance the fantasy landscape.

Key-words: animals, archetypes, fantasy literature, landscape, mythology

*

Introduction

Students and theoreticians of literary fantasy commonly agree that the essential premise of the genre is the existence of another world, remote in space and time. Writer Clive Staples Lewis describes this spatial remoteness as one of the defining characteristics of fantasy literature from its very beginnings:

The less known the real world is, the more plausibly your marvels can be located near at hand. As the area of knowledge spreads, you need to go further afield: like a man moving his house further and further out into the country as the new building estates catch him up. Thus in Grimm's Märchen, stories told by peasants in wooded country, you need only walk an hour's journey into the next forest to find a home for your witch or ogre. Paltock and Swift take us to remote seas, Voltaire to America. Raider Haggard had to go to unexplored Africa or Tibet. It might have been predicted that stories of this kind would, sooner or later, have to leave Tellus altogether.¹

Indeed, at the present day, when our world has been explored, fantasy writers have to set their work in other – imaginary – worlds. Since this parallel world needs to be characterised, first and foremost in geographical terms, the writer's primary task is to create an authentic cosmogony, which must shape a credible image of this world in the reader's mind.

From this point of view one of the most important structural elements of the genre is the landscape of the other world. Once the protagonist crosses the threshold separating the two worlds, the landscape becomes one of the primary characteristics defining the other world. The landscape also defines one of the most significant differences between the fantasy and the fairy tale, because the actions of the protagonists of fairy tales are rarely depicted in the frame of a concrete reality. The setting is most commonly a 'faraway land', and the hero of the tale encounters practically no difficulties related to the journey or the natural conditions, these always being resolved through magical assistance. These characteristics serve to speed up the plot of the tale, but at the same time render the setting less real in the mind of the reader. On the other hand, in fantasy the action takes place in a specific, problematic setting, which often becomes an obstacle for the protagonist, thus lending the story greater credibility.

The Geography of Fantasy Literature

Fantasy geography is highly symbolised: landscape features often represent categories more symbolic than physical. Each feature of the landscape has an 'ideational significance': such features as rivers, hills, canyons, deserts and valleys are significant not only in a geographical, but also in a spiritual sense. They reflect the idea, characteristic of mythical thinking that *perceives nature as an immense ally – an allied form of life*². Descriptions of the landscape are a favourite technique by which writers inconspicuously outline the conditions in which the plot of a novel runs and its possible outcome, the journey indicating a symbolic connection between the protagonist's outer and inner world, between physical and mental life. *The man of the societies in which myth is a living thing lives in a World that, though 'in cipher' and mysterious, is 'open.' The World 'speaks' to man, and to understand its language he needs only to know the myths and decipher the symbols,* writes Mircea Eliade. He continues:

*Through the myths and symbols of the Moon man grasps the mysterious solidarity among temporality, birth, death, and resurrection, sexuality, fertility, rain, vegetation, and so on. The World is no longer an opaque mass of objects arbitrarily thrown together, it is a living Cosmos, articulated and meaningful. In the last analysis, The World reveals itself as language. It speaks to man through its structure and rhythms.*³

Thus, in fantasy space becomes an independent constructive element of the literary work: the landscape and the plot are inextricably linked, perception and knowledge of this world are inseparable from the protagonist's spiritual quest. Moreover, since the route of the protagonist's inner transition is best shown through physical movement, the protagonists are often given professions suitable for travels, connected in the reader's mind with a quest, movement, and exploration.

Alongside the features of the archetypal landscape, the other-world setting of the fantasy genre also includes living beings. This paper does not consider the various fantasy races (elves, dwarves, and vampires), but only animals and birds, and their role in the works belonging to this genre. Since the folkloric basis of the fantasy lies in magical tales, rather than animal tales, the animals depicted are mostly allocated the role of illustrative supplementary elements of the landscape, but in fantasy these characters

also possess specific symbolic associations and functions proceeding from them. Separate treatment is given in this paper to the depiction of mythical and real animals in works of literary fantasy.

Mythical Creatures in Fantasy Literature

Various theoreticians mention the presence of **mythical beings** as one of the essential characteristics of the genre. These may be beings invented by the author, but more commonly they are borrowed from the mythological systems of various peoples. For example, the works about Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling are a true encyclopaedia of mythical beings, where we find such creatures as the mantichore and basilisk (from the medieval bestiaries), trolls (heroes of Scandinavian myths), the salamander, chimera, hippogriff or horse-eagle and sphinx (figures from Greek myths), and so forth. In Peter Beagle's novel *The Last Unicorn*, the witch Mommy Fortuna keeps a whole arsenal of mythical creatures on display in cages, from Arachne of Lydia, who lost the weaving contest to goddess Athena, to Cerberus the snake-furred watchdog of Hades. Since the mythical creatures are generally depicted much more schematically than real animals, we may characterise some of the most frequently encountered species and their functions, without placing them in broader categories.

The **dragon**, described by J. R. R. Tolkien as the trade mark of the land of myth and legend, is a traditional element of the fantasy landscape, the archetypal enemy of the hero from the time of the heroic epics. In the western mythological tradition, the dragon represents the primeval enemy – the dark forces of the underworld – since it incorporates features of many different animals, combining elements of a snake (the scaly body) and the bird (wings) – symbols of matter and spirit. The dragon relates simultaneously to the elements of water, chaos, fire, and air, and is traditionally seen as a guardian of treasure, being endowed with greed and wisdom. Dragons are described in such early examples of the fantasy genre as the *Faerie Queene* by the 16th century poet Edmund Spenser: *His body monstrous, horrible, and vast, / Which to increase his wondrous greatnesse more, / Was swolne with wrath, & poyson, & with bloody gore. / And ouer, all with brasen scales was armd, / Like plated coate of steele, so couched neare, / That nought mote perce, ne might his corse be harmd / With dint of sword, nor push of pointed speare; / His flaggy wings when forth he did display, / Were like two sayles, in which the hollow wynd / Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way.*⁴ This characterisation has changed very little over time.

Predominant in fantasy is the classical image of the dragon, such as Kalessin, the embodiment of ancient wisdom, in the *Earthsea* cycle by Ursula de Guin, along with his tribe of 'dragon-people'; and likewise the evocative Smaug in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*:

*There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber. Beneath him, under all his limbs and his huge coiled tail, and about him on all sides stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver red-stained in the ruddy light. Smaug lay, with wings folded like an immeasurable bat, turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed.*⁵

This type of dragon represents the unbridled, wild, primeval forces that the hero, representing culture, must vanquish, but at the same time the dragon also symbolises the hero's inner, dual nature, so triumph over the dragon can be equated to triumph over oneself. However, not all dragon characters are so straightforward. Several works of literary fantasy depart from the stereotypes relating to mythical beings, so that we also encounter dragons of a different kind. Thus, the novel *Guards! Guards!* by Terry Pratchett features small bog dragons that are favourite pets, and in the work *Another Fine Myth* by Robert Asprin we come across a tamed juvenile dragon named Gleep with *big, blue eyes*. In Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* we find an elderly dragon displayed in a cage, which breathes fire lazily now and then, speaks seventeen languages (badly) and is subject to gout; and finally there is a whole litter of little dragons in Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham*, which shed doubt on the tales about 'mythical knights' that never actually come to defeat them.

A mythical animal encountered somewhat less commonly is the **unicorn**, embodying virginity, innocence, elusiveness and femininity. Interest in the character of the unicorn in literature was revived by one of the most unusual modern fantasy novels, centred on this animal, namely P. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*. *Unicorns*, writes the author, *are immortal. It is their nature to live alone in one place: usually a forest where there is a pool clear enough for them to see themselves – for they are a little vain, knowing themselves to be the most beautiful.*⁶ The author repeatedly emphasises the unicorn's special connection with the female, so the reader is not surprised that in the novel a wizard turns the animal into a woman in order to save it from its antagonist, the Red Bull. In one episode, taking an unusual approach to the theme of the inner dualism of all beings, in a game of life and death the author contrasts the unicorn with another feminine being – that terrifying character of Greek mythology, the harpy, with the suggestion that absolute innocence and absolute danger are possibly just two aspects of the same heroine: *The unicorn heard herself cry out, not in terror but in wonder, 'Oh, you are like me!' So they circled one another like a double star, and under the shrunken sky there was nothing real but the two of them.*⁷ Another vivid unicorn character has been created by J. K. Rowling, a unicorn whose blood has life-giving power. The author returns to Biblical associations and ideas relating to the unicorn in medieval bestiaries. On the other hand, in R. Asprin's comical work *Another Fine Myth* we find an unusual phenomenon – a war unicorn.

The presence of a third frequently encountered being in literary fantasy, namely the **phoenix**, is altogether positive, representing such categories as immortality and wisdom. In medieval bestiaries the phoenix represents Christ in the context of the Resurrection, and Ovid has a record of an Assyrian legend about the phoenix: *How many creatures walking on this earth / Have their first being in another form? / Yet one exists that is itself forever, / reborn in ageless likeness through the years. / It is the bird Assyrians called the Phoenix, / nor does he eat the common seeds and grasses, / but drinks the juice of rare, sweet-burning herbs. / When he has done 500 years of living / He winds his nest high up a swaying palm / and delicate dainty claws prepare his bed / of bark and spices, myrrh and cinnamon / and dies while incense lifts his soul away. / Then from his breast – or so the legend runs – / a little Phoenix rises over him, / to live, they say, the next 500 years.*⁸ In the works of J. K. Rowling the phoenix is the closest ally of Dumbledore, Headmaster of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

It is capable of bearing unimaginably heavy loads and its tears have healing powers. The good wizards of this same parallel world come together in an organisation named the 'Order of the Phoenix'. The phoenix, a creature associated with benevolent elements – air and fire – can be defined as the opposite of the dragon, the principle of chaos. In the second book of the Harry Potter cycle, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the phoenix Fawkes defeats the snake king Basilisk, thus illustrating the characteristic polarity seen in fantasy between the bird and the snake.

Finally, the **centaur** of Greek myth signals the presence of masculine force, aggression and sexuality. Centaurs cannot be tamed, and only certain benevolent centaurs permit the hero to take refuge on their backs in time of danger, as Harry Potter takes refuge from the Forbidden Forest. C. S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, describes centaurs as stern and wise creatures who can live for as long as five hundred years; as a result they spend much time interpreting the movements of the stars over great cycles. It is also mentioned that centaurs are quick to anger and should be neither laughed at nor saddled. The centaur's rough virility and unpredictability places it in opposition to the unicorn as the feminine element.

In addition to these, a whole host of other supernatural creatures appear in fantasy literature.

Animals in Fantasy Literature

The fantasy landscape is also inhabited by **real animals**, which can likewise be grouped according to function.

First, animals can be **active characters in the work**, either central or supporting characters, which behave just like the human heroes. Animals of this kind most commonly appear in what is known as 'animal fantasy' (Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*) or in children's fantasy, for example Brian Jacques's book *Redwall*, which describes a highly developed mouse civilisation. Taking into consideration the nature of their readership, children's fantasy authors make particularly extensive use of animal characters, in order to avoid presenting children in overly close relationships to adults. In C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* cycle the Talking Beasts of the parallel Land of Narnia have the same functions as people in this world, so it comes as no surprise that the world is ruled by an animal character associated with royal power – the Lion Aslan. The majority of supporting characters are also animals: Mr and Mrs Beaver, *one of the great heroes of Narnia* – the knight mouse Reepicheep, the ape as the negative character of the book *The Last Battle*, who becomes a voice for the forces of evil, manipulating the naïve donkey dressed in a lion-skin, etc.

In these works we usually also find a highly developed spiritual and material culture among animals: dress, occupations, elaborate dwellings, as well as folklore, for example, etiological myths: the privileged status of mice and their power of speech in the world of Narnia have been granted to them because in the distant past the mice once cut the bonds of the ruler Aslan when he was bound to the slab where he was tortured. For the animals, language is the equivalent of a soul: when creating the world, Aslan gives the animals the power of speech and warns them that if they misbehave they will lose this ability.

Secondly, animals can serve as the **companions and aides** of fantasy protagonists, most commonly accompanying wizards, so-called ‘serving spirits’ (Latin *spiritus familiaris*). They may be endowed with magical powers, which tend to be directly proportional to the abilities of their master, the wizard. The animal species of this kind in many cases retain an associative link with mythical ideas. In many cases the protagonist is accompanied to the other world by an animal mediator, such as an owl (in the work *The Silver Chair* by C. S. Lewis); Tolkien’s legendary hero Beren is accompanied everywhere by his dog Huan as a trustworthy guard; J. K. Rowling has incorporated into the Harry Potter series medieval ideas concerning particular animals as participants in witchcraft. Thus, the pets allowed in Hogwarts School include cats, toads and owls. The horses of heroes, rulers and wizards have a special place in fantasy, and among them are mythically modified forms – winged and talking horses. Here we may distinguish signs of a horse cult, pointing to the patriarchal structure of the culture of fantasy. Cats, on the other hand, have retained their mythical association with the domestic hearth and fertility, as well as feminine energy, and so are commonly the companions of heroines.

In contrast to fairy tales, knowledge of the language of animals is not a frequently encountered ability for wizards in fantasy, but where an animal language does appear it retains the status of a magical, secret language, conferring special advantages and in many cases acquired only through initiation.

Helpers and companions illustrate the relationship between humans, as representatives of culture, and nature. Thus, the helper assists in situations where the human is helpless, but is most commonly allotted only the kind of functional role that domestic animals had in the Middle Ages: consideration of the animal as a living being is a concept alien to the feudal world. An unusual approach to serving spirits is seen in the trilogy *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman, where each human being is accompanied by an animal (a ‘demon’) during their whole lifetime, representing the visible aspect of their soul and illustrating the character of the master. Right up to puberty, the demon is capable of changing form and thus reflects the child’s changing, developing nature and endless possibilities, in contrast to the rigidity of adults.

Birds and reptiles as creatures of the air and earth are often placed in binary opposition as aides of the forces of good and evil, respectively. In accordance with the mythical code, birds traditionally have a positive image in fantasy, while reptiles have a negative one. Thus, the world of Harry Potter alone includes at least two pronounced bird helpers: Harry’s owl Hedwig, and Fawkes, the phoenix of the headmaster of the school of magic, as well as at least two reptilian monsters, the snakes Nagini and Basilisk, both associated with the evil wizard Voldemort. However, views on particular bird species differ. The eagle retains a mythical connotation as a heraldic aide of the hero (Tolkien’s Gwaihir being a characteristic example), whereas the raven and jackdaw are chthonic creatures, mediators between life and death, and accordingly are often described as the harbingers of death and evil tidings. In the *Lord of the Rings* and likewise in Lloyd Alexander’s *Chronicles of Prydain* we see a raven as an enemy spy. As in the mythology of various peoples, reptiles, especially snakes, are ambivalent creatures: while embodying wisdom, the snake has nevertheless also retained its Biblical negative context. It should be added that in a negative sense, too, animals generally feature as the helpers of the antagonist, rather as central antagonists. (Fluffy and the Basilisk in the Harry Potter books only disguise the true evildoers, who are always human.)

Thirdly, a separate category is represented by what are known as **shape-shifters**: people who can turn into animals and vice versa. In this case only the body of the animal is significant, a body into which the wizard has transmuted in order to act in the guise of an animal. However, such a transformation, in contrast to magical tales, is not a regular occurrence in fantasy. Often the prevailing rules of magic render such transformations dangerous: if the animal dies, then the person who has taken on this guise will also die, and if one stays in animal form overly long, then the power of human thought may be lost. There is a warning to this effect given by the magician in Ursula le Guin's world of Earthsea:

As a boy, Ogion like all boys had thought it would be a very pleasant game to take by art-magic whatever shape one liked, man or beast, tree or cloud, and so to play at a thousand beings. But as a wizard he had learned the price of the game, which is the peril of losing one's self, playing away the truth. The longer a man stays in a form not his own, the greater this peril. Every prentice-sorcerer learns the tale of the wizard Bordger of Way, who delighted in taking bear's shape, and did so more and more often until the bear grew in him and the man died away, and he became a bear, and killed his own little son in the forests, and was hunted down and slain. And no one knows how many of the dolphins that leap in the waters of the Inmost Sea were men once, wise men, who forgot their wisdom and their name in the joy of the restless sea.⁹

In Harry Potter's school of magic transformation into an animal, or Animagi transformation, is classified as dangerous magic, requiring special permission from the ministry. In this regard, an echo of totemism can be seen in certain animal characters: the 'skin-changer' Beorn in Tolkien's *Hobbit*, a human being by day, and a black bear by night, can be identified as the totemic bear ancestor of many peoples, including the Latvians. However, for the most part stories about shape-shifters illustrate the idea of the duality of human nature, the unconscious aspect that every person possesses, a parallel animal essence, which must not be allowed to gain the upper hand.

Conclusions

We may conclude that the symbolic landscape in its different variants is one of the most significant factors bearing a mythical subtext in the genre of fantasy. Mythical and realistic animals in fantasy are allotted particular roles, since the animal characters have not been chosen fortuitously, but embody universally recognisable, mythical zoomorphic symbols. These symbols help to broaden and enhance the reader's image of the parallel world as a structured sacred space in which archetypal figures very familiar from the primary world act and exist. Identification on this level is in fact the primary aim of fantasy.

¹ Lewis C. S. *Of This and Other Worlds*. London: Fount Paperbacks, 1984. – pp. 90–91.

² Kasīrers E. *Apcerējums par cilvēku. Ievads kultūras filozofijā*. Rīga: Intelekt, 1997. – 87. lpp.

³ Eliade M. *Myth and Reality: Religious Traditions of the World*. New York: Waveland Press, 1998. – p. 141.

⁴ Spenser E. The Faerie Queene: Book I, in: *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser* [Grosart, London, 1882] <http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/queene1.html> (accessed 2012)

⁵ Tolkien J. R. R. *Hobbit or There and Back Again*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Anv edition, 2007. – pp. 205–206.

⁶ Beagle P. *The Last Unicorn*. Roc Trade; 1st ROC Printing, 1991. – pp. 1–2.

⁷ Ibid. – p. 33.

⁸ Ovid. The Phoenix, in: *Metamorphoses, Book 15*. Translated by B. More <http://www.theoi.com/text/ovidmetamorphoses15.html> (accessed 2012)

⁹ Le Guin U. K. *The Wizard of Earthsea*. Bantam Books, 1972. – p. 27.

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Vijolė Višomirskytė

BECOMING-ANIMAL AS A TRANSGRESSION
IN THREE POST-SOVIET LITHUANIAN NOVELS
(*VILNIUS POKER, TŪLA AND PAROUSIA*)

Summary

The present article puts into dialogue three novels – Jurgis Kunčinas’s ‘Tūla’, Ričardas Gavelis’s ‘Vilnius Poker’, and Gintaras Beresnevičius’s ‘Parousia’ – with the concept of becoming-animal developed by Deleuze and Guattari, Brook’s concept of the structuring power of ending for narrative, the notion of performatives by Judith Butler, and the concept of transgressive fictions in order to find out how these concepts could illuminate the strategic use of animals in post-Soviet Lithuanian narratives. The paper proposes the idea that the strategy of the deployment of the image of becoming-animal is one of the underlying principles in the construction of these narratives and the becoming-animal is a kind of destruction of the stereotype that to become an animal is a kind of ‘degradation’ or ‘degeneration’.

Key-words: becoming-animal, dog, bat, wolf, escape, post-Soviet, reality, transgression, performative

*

Introduction

Sovietism has had many metaphors related to animals in different discourses and countries. In Lithuanian culture ‘gyvuliniai vagonai’ (*wagon trains for animals*), in which people were deported to Siberia starting from 1940, is one of the strongest images showing the dehumanizing treatment of people like animals, or more precisely like cattle, not metaphorically, but literally. How is this treatment of people like animals or making them into cattle represented in the post-Soviet Lithuanian literature almost after half a century, almost two generations later after those first deportations? And what images of becoming-animal are used?

Though words in Lithuanian – ‘gyvūnija’ and ‘gyvūlija’ – have the same general meaning, i.e., the fauna, the animal kingdom (including humans, dogs, birds, flies, fish, snakes, etc.), they both have the same root ‘gyv’ and ‘gyvis’ – a living thing – but in everyday usage ‘gyvulus’ is used talking about domestic animals (naminiai gyvuliai), and ‘gyvūnas’ – about wild animals (laukiniai gyvūnai). Besides, ‘gyvulus’ is also used for a human to insult him or her, meaning ‘brute’ or ‘beast’. These meanings of the words, especially their insulting performative power, are important in the following discussion of becoming-animal.

The present article discusses the image of becoming-animal in three Lithuanian post-Soviet novels – *Vilnius Poker* (*Vilniaus pokeris*) by Ričardas Gavelis (1950 – 2002),

Tūla (*Tūla*) by Jurgis Kunčinas (1947 – 2002), and *Parousia* (*Paruzija*) by Gintaras Beresnevičius (1961 – 2006). Gavelis's novel was first published in 1989, later it was edited by the author and published for the second time in 1990; *Tūla* was published in 1993. The publication dates show that *Vilnius Poker* and *Tūla* had been written before Lithuania restored its independence (especially if we consider the fact how long it took to publish a book at that time). Still in this article, these novels are considered as post-Soviet, especially because they could not be published as such during Soviet times. Beresnevičius published *Parousia* in 2005. In Lithuanian literary studies those novels have been discussed separately and in comparison, paying attention to the postcolonial, national, gender identity, representation of the city (Vilnius and Kaunas), otherness, and postmodernist narrative techniques. The image of animal, though being mentioned in the relation to these topics, has not been the main focus of analysis yet.

All three novels are very rich texts, providing a strong critique of the system, of Soviet and post-Soviet mentality. Maybe it is paradoxical that in the novels, providing such a harsh critique of the Soviet system or any system, the main characters (those who are a kind of outsiders) turn into animals. The article aims to analyze and compare the strategic use of becoming-animal in the three animalistic novels, trying to answer the questions: What are the functions and meaning of the use of becoming-animal? Why is this element included in the stories?

Though all three novels present criticism of the totalitarian system, the image of becoming-animal is definitely different from the image of animals, which George Orwell has described in his political allegory *Animal farm: a Fairy Story* (1945). Translated in Lithuanian and first published in 1989 as *Gyvulių ūkis*, during Soviet times being on the list of prohibited books, Orwell's book is *an adaptation of the ancient beast fable*¹, containing satirical narrative, *discordant allegory of the Russian revolution and the subsequent disintegration of its ideals under Stalin*². Orwell's vision is written from outside, not inside this system. There is no becoming-animal, it presents anthropomorphic representations, where animal characters are personified as human (which in literature serves almost as a code for 'children's book', not for adults³). Still this vision by Orwell cannot be put aside when talking about the becoming-animal in the Soviet system, because it is one of the strongest and best known allegories of the Soviet regime. Besides, *Animal farm* could be called transgressive fiction *where the disruption of everyday reality makes it possible to create another world which responds not to natural laws, but to principles specific to the text. In such a world, removed from physical and/or organic constraints, transgression may cast social behaviour in a different light*.⁴

The concept of 'transgressive fictions' is also useful talking about the narratives where becoming-animal is represented, especially because the becoming-animal is a kind of transgression itself, if we consider animal as not human. *Transgressive fictions*, as Francis Berthelot writes, *are located in the nebulous area between two distinct realms, into which literary production was divided during the last decades of the twentieth century*:

(1) *general (or 'mainstream') literature, which respects the limits imposed by 'reality', that is the limits imposed by considering the world in its historical and socio-psychological dimensions; and (2) imaginary literatures (fantasy, the fantastic, science fiction, magical realism, metafiction), which overstep those limits, operating under their own sets of rules*.⁵

The author specifies that *the transgression may affect either the level of story (world order) or the level of discourse (narrative rules)*.⁶ World order is transgressed when the natural laws of time and space and other biological and physical laws, which govern our universe, are violated or the supernatural is introduced, by referring to myths and then transforming or distorting. *By contradicting narrative laws at story and/or discourse level, this unconventional element may disturb standard representations, thereby progressively and dramatically challenging reader's perception of reality*.⁷

In the three novels chosen for the discussion, the transgression affects both the level of story and the level of discourse. Transgression on the level of story will be discussed in the article in more detail, as characters that become animals are constituent parts of the story in the narrative. On the level of discourse, the novels break the rules of narration by taking the very principle of fiction and reality as a narrative topic, leaving readers in doubt whether or not the narration is reliable, mixing contradictory reports about the same events and highlighting the fictional nature of texts, inventing words, employing poetic style that blurs the boundary between reality and phantasm, and adopting unusual phrases.

The Concept of 'Becoming-Animal'

Both aspects of this term are important for this article: 1) becoming as a process, change, movement, getting somewhat and going somewhere (way out); 2) and animal as the other species, which is different from human because it does not have the ability to produce a narrative: *our very definition as human beings*, as Peter Brooks has written, *is very much bound up with the stories we tell about our own lives and the world in which we live. We cannot, in our dreams, our daydreams, our ambitious fantasies, avoid the imaginative imposition of form on life*.⁸ And the act of writing a story itself is reflected, though differently, but in all three novels.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* use the concept 'becoming-animal' to designate the *possibility of an escape*⁹, *a creative line of escape*¹⁰; to become animal is *to cross a threshold*¹¹, *to transgress the thresholds of intensity*¹², *it is a unique method that replaces subjectivity*¹³:

*To the inhumanness of the 'diabolic powers', there is the answer of becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape, 'head over heels and away', rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge or judged.*¹⁴

*Kafka's animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their expressions, from the signifier that formalized them. There is no longer anything but movements, vibrations, thresholds in a deserted matter: animals, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold [...] Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum [...].*¹⁵

*Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word.*¹⁶

*[...] for Kafka, the animal essence is the way out, the line of escape, even if it takes place in place, or in a cage. 'A line of escape, and not freedom. A vital escape and not an attack.'*¹⁷

The act of becoming animal is defined as a *plus-value*, but never a reproduction or an imitation.¹⁸

I will begin my discussion of the novels by close looking at the beginnings and ends of the narratives, applying the perspective of narrative dynamics that views *narrative as a progressively unfolding, interconnected system of elements rather than as a succession of discrete events*¹⁹. This perspective stresses the importance of plot to narrative:

*Brooks identifies endings as a primary importance to the dynamic shaping of narrative: the end, as it were, 'writes' the beginning and shapes the middle; in narrating, everything is transformed by the structuring presence of the end, by the meaning the events acquire when viewed from the vantage point of the end. Edward Said, who expresses an equally dynamic conception of narrative, argues instead that is the choice of beginning that determines in advance the sequence that will then unfold.*²⁰

Brook's view is more from the perspective of a reader, and Said's one is from the writer's choice. In this article both of these conceptions are taken into account, regarding both the beginning and the end of narrative as 'writing each other' and closely analyzing them.

The importance of animal and becoming-animal in the texts is marked by their inscription at the beginning and end of the novels, as if framing the narrative. The first sentence of *Vilnius Poker* presents Vytautas Vargalys's dream:

*The narrow gap between two many-storied houses, a gap in the wall, encrusted with blind-windows: a strange hole to a different world – on the other side children and dogs are running about, and on this side – only an empty street and the wind urged puff of dust.*²¹

[Siauras plyšys tarp dviejų daugiaaukščių, spraga aklilangiais inkrustuotoje sienoje: keista anga į kitokį pasaulį – anapus laksto vaikai ir šunys, o šiapus – vien tuščia gatvė ir vėjo genami dulkių tumulai.²²]

Here dogs are contingent to children, and they are in a different world from Vargalys who is given the most space (or time to play) in *Vilnius Poker*.

The last sentence of the novel relates dogs to dreams again:

DOGS DO NOT DISTINGUISH DREAMS FROM REALITY.

[ŠUNYS NESKIRIA SAPNŲ NUO REALYBĖS.²³]

Here dreams and reality, though distinguishable, are metaphorically equated and make a reader go through the entire novel again or at least through the last chapter narrated by Gediminas Riauba who has reincarnated to dog. So the end and beginning relate dogs to different reality and give them different perception of world and reality that humans have. The last sentence equates dreams and reality. Seeing dreams is seeing

reality. While in the first sentence dogs are the ones who are seen and there are no references to becoming animal, the last sentence, which is capitalized, belongs to the dog's voice.

The first chapter of Kunčinas's *Tūla* at first is narrated from the perspective of narrator as a man, but in the middle of this short first chapter the focalization is changed to the narrator as a bat (in the text it is marked at first by repeating words *I walk, I go, I come* (aš einu, aš ateinu), and later it changes to *I fly into* (aš įskrendu):

[..] I step into the foaming, raging water and, slipping on the polished stones, I clamber up to your, Tūla's, shore, and it seems to me that a huge lilac bush gleams blue above my head, – I pick them, and in each hand hold a lavender bouquet as fluffy as spotless white clouds–intoxicating, curly, overflowing with life, dripping in silver streams–and, swaying from exhaustion, I go in the white two-hinged door, on which hangs a modest, worm-eaten, blue mail box, and now I am, Tūla, just a few steps away from you, from your husky voice, your body's fibers, your most secret little corners...

Speak softly, breathe so I can hardly hear it as I fly in through the air vent, opened just barely for the night, clasping both enormous bouquets of lilac, as I now swoop under the vault – a soundless bat – without a sound, without a rustle; all the words of love and despair hermetically sealed within the skull of a tiny, flying, nocturnal beast, careful not to startle the other spirits hiding within your crumpled soul, body, mind, your most secret thoughts, your dignity, tears, your tiny breasts trembling like a ripple in a stream, all of you, Tūla; I fly in, and with my tiny feet clinging to slanting vault of your room I listen to you breathe, to the hoarfrost melting on your alveoli, to the blood turning one more cycle of circulation inside your sleepy body, to you, not realizing it yourself, speaking to the bread molding in the picture, to the boxes full of memories; in the moonlight I see your long bones, pelvic bones, the pearly skull under the short hair; I see how a small, brightly shining bug walks over your stomach, falls into the hollow of your belly button and can't crawl out of it – that's how small it is ...²⁴

This mixed perspective shows the process of becoming-animal already in the first chapter. The voice of a narrator as a man becomes a voice of a narrator as a bat. And this is the same character. What is more, the narrator tells the story of the past, so the whole first chapter, though it is narrated in the present tense, giving impression that these things are happening now, actually could be just memories:

And I dive into the darkness and crash painfully into the window–that would never happen to a real bat! I smile and curl my lip, while black blood oozes from the tiny mouse's snout. No one sees where it drips... And where is that? The black blood drips on your bed, unwillingly soaks through the fabric, and now it's dripping onto the black porcelain tiles under your immortal pallet, Tūla, Tūla...

Lying on my back on the ashen window sill, I see the cloud that had fallen on Bekešas hill suddenly stirring and descending, whistling, at an impossible speed straight at the house with a apse on the bank of the Vilnelė, straight at us, at you, Tūla, at me...²⁵

The first chapter ends with the image of a dying bat and immortality of Tūla who has actually been dead for many years, and the whole narrative is apostrophic. The novel ends also with the image of bat:

It was dripping from the roofs, and above my head the bat slipped. The most real one...

[Varvėjo nuo stogų, o virš mano galvos šmėstelėjo šikšnosparnis. Tikrų tikriausias...²⁶]

Like in Gavelis's novel, Kunčinas' narrator ends up with this image of animal, connecting it to multiple realities.

The first part of *Parousia* is called *The Name of a Bitch* (*Kalės vardas*) and it starts with the sentence: *Azas has dreamt about a bitch.* (*Azas susapnavo kalę.*²⁷). Then the description of this bitch follows, she will be significant to Azas's transmutation into a werewolf later in the novel. Once more the relation between dream and animal is marked: animal exists in a dream, in another reality. The last sentence of the novel is: *And medusa opened her eyes. Widely.* [*Ir medūza pravėrė akis. Plačiai.*²⁸]. Here medusa is Medūziukas, Azas, and Indrė's son. There are also other wolfs-gods participating in the last scene of the novel. But the novel does not end with this last scene, because there is *Final Postscript in the Style of Epilogue* [*Baigiamasis prierašas epilogo stiliumi*²⁹], in which Azas and Medusa are equated:

I am everywhere and I was everywhere, I am both Azas, and Medusa, and sometimes I do not even know what I could not be and where I could not appear. And when.

[..] *I was sent to get into the each own skin. [..]*

I have looked.

For me it was enough.

[Aš esu visur ir buvau visur, aš ir Azas, ir Medūza, ir kartais net nežinau, kuo negalėčiau būti ir kur negalėčiau pasirodyti. Ir kada.

[..] *Buvau atsiųstas, kad įlįščiau į kiekvieno kailį [..]*

Aš pažiūrėjau.

*Man to užteko.*³⁰]

The ending of *Parousia* marks not only the animal, but also like in other two novels and at the beginning the different perception of reality, which is acquired by getting into different skins. Besides, the postscript foregrounds the activity of writing and makes the author's presence an issue in the text itself.

Reincarnation into Dog in Gavelis's *Vilnius Poker*

The becoming-animal does not take much space in this narrative text. Only the last, fourth chapter – the shortest one (pp. 373–399) – *Vox Canina* presents the story narrated by the fourth player of Vilnius poker – Gediminas Riauba, reincarnated into dog, and also the reincarnation of Vytautas Vargalys (the main character of the story-world) into pigeon is mentioned here. The title of the chapter echoes the Lithuanian saying *a voice of dog does not rise to the sky* [*šuns balsas į dangų nekyla*]. Gavelis chooses a dog, which is the best friend of a man, the word 'friend' is important here, because friend has Soviet Russian communist connotations. All Gavelis's characters are under the power, are subjected and cannot escape the Soviet system. But this dog, though being a domestic animal, is a vagrant dog, a dog without a master. And the act of suicide, which the dog commits at the end of the novel, the act which *no man was able*

to commit [nepajėgė padaryti nė vienas iš žmonių³¹] echoes Romas Kalanta's suicide in 1972. The escape from all rules, *to transgress all rules* [pažeisti visas taisykles³²] is possible only by becoming an outsider to the community of people. Having reincarnated into dog, Gediminas Riauba communicates with people living in the city dump.

Though the becoming-animal in *Vilnius Poker* is Gediminas Riauba's reincarnation after death and the suicide as if doubles this death, the last sentence written in capital letters which could be interpreted that everything was just a dream, a nightmare, and thus can deny the reality of events which were told as well as the connection of dogs with children at the beginning of the novel (*All children build or feel these sorts of escapes, these acts of becoming-animal*³³), gives hope in the overall dark and sombre narrative:

Though it is better once again, after one hundred reincarnations, to be reborn as a human. With all the foolish hopes and weaknesses. Most importantly – with foolish hopes. It is better though...

[Geriau jau dar syki, kad ir po šimto persikūnijimų, atgimti žmogumi. Su visomis kvailomis viltimis ir silpnybėmis. Svarbiausia – su kvailomis viltimis. Geriau jau...³⁴]

And this hopeful vision is possible only after reincarnation into animal.

In many discussions of *Vilnius Poker* these reincarnations, this becoming-animal, are interpreted in the light of Orwell's vision as a total defeat, as a degradation, *metamorphosis to 'lower' beings*³⁵, and it is easy to notice that the last chapter of the novel is almost neglected by the critics, trying to find one coherent final signifier or plot to the whole narrative, though the text itself resists such literary interpretation. The concept 'becoming-animal' by Deleuze and Guattari and Brook's notion of plot as a dynamic structuring principle of narrative illuminate *Vilnius Poker* with a different, even opposite meaning, providing hope and the transgression of all the rules, but this escape is possible only by changing. Dogs are those that are not seen by or interesting to *them*, the authorities of the Soviet system who are depicted as so powerful in other three chapters of the novel.

Turning into a Bat in Kunčinas's *Tūla*

Quite different use of becoming animal and its connotations occurs in another novel about Vilnius – *Tūla*, written around the same time, and discussing similar problems but in a different manner, without providing such a dark, sombre, pessimistic view. In *Tūla*, the becoming-animal is given much more space in the narrative world than in Gavelis's novel. The narrator explains his turning into bat as a response to the loss of the woman he loves:

We said good-by to each other, Tūla, but only because of this I learned, if I wanted to, to turn into a flying mouse with a heart of a bird and teeth of a beast.

[Mudu atsisveikinom, Tūla, bet tik todėl aš ir išmokau panorėjęs pasiversti skraidančia pele – gyvybe su paukščio širdimi ir žvėries dantimis.³⁶]

The narrator, becoming a small bat, can escape the prison, can see things upside down hanging on the ceiling, and can see through the body of human.

The image of flying mouse (bat) is an ironic counterpart to the predominant image of writer as a bird in Lithuanian poetry, where a poet is equated to the one who sings (*dainius*). Bat is not a bird, but still having wings is able to fly. Paradoxically this image of bat, which is the only species of flying mammals living in Lithuanian territory, is much closer to the idea of writer than a bird. The narrator-bat knows his difference from other people but also stresses his difference from other real bats. He wants this feeling of community, friendship (either with the former or the latter), but they are not friendly to him. Real bats act upon him the same way as people:

Yesterday, while I was flying back to the Second Section I have been attacked by my colleagues – some real bats – chiroptera, the brown Nyctalus – having not wanted to recognize the stranger in their own possessions, maybe they were from the panslavic organization ‘Severozápad’? Now my arm and shoulder were aching, but I still made ready for the journey to the city – I was tired of the evenings hearing the howling and laughing by the real madmen, sent out to the wire aviary for the evening walk [...]. For the third week already this barrack of summer cottage type was my crib and my lair.

[Vakar, lekiant atgal į Antrąjį skyrių mane buvo užpuolę kolegos – keli tikrieji šiksnosparniai – chiroptera, rudieji naktiniai – nepanorę pripažinti svetimojo savo valdose, gal ir jie buvo iš panslavistinės “Severozapad” organizacijos? Dabar gėlė ranką ir petį, bet vis tiek išsiruošiau į miestą – prailgo vakarai staugiant ir kvatojant tikriesiems bepročiams, išvartytiems vakariniam pasivaikščiøjimui į vielinį voljerą [...]. Jau trečia savaitė tas vasarnamio tipo barakas buvo mano ėdžios ir mano guolis.³⁷]

Still seeing others, who are nearby in his world, is longed for and the main character is looking for a relationship with them, in other words, is looking for an identity. The becoming-bat in *Tūla* can be considered as a kind of transmutation, though ancestry and genes have nothing to do with it. The transformation is caused by the environment (the narrator is in the Second Sector, the prison for alcoholics), this becoming is driven by love to and longing for a woman. Still there are textual interrelations between *Tūla* and the Soviet system. At the end of the novel, the act of digging up her remains takes place in the forest where high rank officers of Soviet Lithuania are hunting, and the nameless narrator feels like a hero who penetrates into the war zone. Taking her out of the militarized zone of hunting, finding a calm resting place for *Tūla*'s remains to be buried at home, reburying her at her house at the end of the novel is a metonymical act of finding a calm demilitarized territory, home for frequent, not one Lithuanian woman (the word ‘tūla’ means in Lithuanian ‘dažna, ne viena’), and for Lithuania itself.

Transmutation to Wolf with Amber Eyes in Beresnevičius's *Parousia*

In Beresnevičius's novel, the becoming-animal is most developed and governs all the story-world.

Transmutation is both a great and a wonderful way out, when you, chased and pressed from within by ancestries and genes, are becoming a werewolf with amber eyes, and your loneliness becomes hard, is getting of a diamond hardness, becomes tangible, so tangible, that you can already share it with others. [...]

I saw as through mist, I was in the mist and saw only shadows, which were boring, but wanted, that I would behave with them like with real ones. The world is a dim/faint museum of the former/old things, the reflector of the past times, having nothing in common with them, and haven't yet grown to itself and will never grow up to. Shadows, shadows.

[Transmutacija yra ir didelė, ir puiki išėitis, kai tu iš vidaus, protėvių ir genų vejamas, spaudžiamas, tampa vilkolakiu gintarinėmis akimis, ir tavo vienatvė sustangrėja, darosi deimanto kietumo, tampa apčiuopiama, tokia apčiuopiama, kad ja jau gali dalytis su kitais. [..]

Mačiau kaip per rūką, buvau rūke ir mačiau tik šešėlius, kurie buvo nuobodūs, bet norėjo, kad su jais elgčiausi kaip su tikrais. Pasaulis – blankus buvusių daiktų muziejus, buvusių laikų atšvaitas, neturintis su jais nieko bendra, o iki savęs dar nepriauges ir nepriaugsiantis. Šešėliai, šešėliai.^{38]}

The *amber eyes* of the werewolf refer not only to the national identity but also to the author's first name – Gintaras, exposing the material activity of the author as the ultimate ontological grounding of this fictional world and probing ontological issues. The eyes as a metonymy of the werewolf mark the seeing ability (in all three novels the seeing, the perspective is stressed). The marking of ancestries and genes which make you become animal (the use of the second person narration is important here) distinguishes Beresnevičius's novel from Kunčinas and Gavelis where becoming-animal was not reflected as related to the past or national (that is, group) identity. 'Prigimtis' in Lithuanian means not only nature but also nationality (the words 'genai' and 'protėviai' stress this meaning of the word). Besides, mutation in biology is explained as changing of genes under the influence of the environment, while the reincarnation has nothing to do with the environment or genes. Sharing with others is a social, communal act:

And in the meantime I need to gather my owns, which are the powerful ones, which have transmuted, who not see, but behold, and who do not stammer, but act, and who do not flutter in an inter-material intoxication, but are new with their bodies and future, to gather my own ones and to invite for a party of game. Or for the game party.

[O kol kas reikia surinkti savus, surinkti savus, kurie yra galingieji, kurie transmūtavę, kurie ne mato, o regi, ir kurie ne stena, o veikia, ir kurie ne plazdena svaiguly tarpdaiktiniam, o yra nauji savo kūnais ir ateitimi; surinkti savus ir pakviesti partijai žaidimo. Ar žaidimo partijai.^{39]}

Becoming-animal is explicitly reflected as a way out, as an escape. The following fragment of the text explains an escape from what:

Neat straight drive, there are few variants, the order is not transgressable, and when you try not against the stream, but just only obliquely – then nothing good. A system is in order to crush you. If you a part of it, still you are already half-broken. It is like that – neither good, nor bad, it breaks in two. Unless – you would pull over the wolf fur. Unless – you would create an island for yourself.

Becoming-wolf is like producing a layer. I think, this is also a beginning, also going still by sense of touch, but to the target, 'vilkėti' in Lithuanian also means to wear, and 'dėvėti' (to wear) – this is a word, leading through becoming-god toward god; werewolves – the old one mystics, the priests and shamans of the old religion,

whose footprints in brains are still dry, but they let themselves to be revived; a werewolf is a dreamer looking for god, running in the thicket of woods with its fur tousled by the fingers of moon.

[Tvarkingas važiuojimas tiesiai, yra keli variantai, tvarka neperžengiama, o kai pabandai ne prieš srovę, o dar tik įstrižai – tada nekas. Sistema yra todėl, kad tave triuškinų. Jei esi jos dalis, vis tiek esi perlaužtas. Ji tokia – nei gera, nei bloga, ji perlaužia. Nebent – užsivilktum vilko kailį. Nebent – susikurtum salą.

Vilkėjimas kaip sluoksnio gaminimas. Manau, tai irgi pradžia, irgi ėjimas dar apčiuopomis, bet prie tikslo, ‘vilkėti’ lietuviškai dar reiškia dėvėti, o ‘dėvėti’ – tai žodis, vedantis per dievėjimą dievopi; vilktakai – tai senieji mistikai, senosios religijos žyniai ir šamanai, kurių pėdsakai smegenyse dar sausi, bet leidžiasi atgaivinami; vilkolaikis – tai dievo ieškantis svajotojas, lekiantis girios tankmėje mėnulio pirštų pašiauštu kailiu.^{40]}

In *Parousia* to become werewolf is like in Kafka’s animalistic stories *to participate in movement, to shake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.*⁴¹

Thus, *Parousia* could be characterized, using Brian McHale’s words, as a post-modernist allegory, because it [seems] *to promise allegorical meaning soliciting an allegorical interpretation from the reader, yet withholding any indication of ‘specific’ allegorical content. Everything is ‘potentially’ allegorical, but nothing is ‘actually’ an allegory; the trope seems lack a specific literal level or frame of reference.*⁴² The novel *invites us to read allegorically but refuses to satisfy our drive.* [This is] *overdetermined [allegory]: [it has] too many interpretations, more than can possibly be integrated in a univocal reading. The result of overdetermination is indeterminacy; and this indeterminacy has profound ontological consequences, for it sets in motion a game of musical chairs involving the literal frame of reference.*⁴³

Description of the woman’s death is one more thing that is stressed and relates to the becoming-animal in all three novels. The women characters in all three novels are love objects of the main characters. In these descriptions the woman’s body is defragmented into parts and is described as meat; making a love object into animal as well. But this death – in all cases murder – has a different meaning, causes, and consequences. While in *Tūla* and *Vilnius Poker* it is a mysterious death – the reader never knows who is really guilty for the death of Lolita and Tūla (there are different versions), in *Parousia* it is Azas who transmuting to wolf kills Indrė. But this murder is treated as a light and clean act:

Maybe a werewolf is a monster, but who then is a man? No, it is not, a werewolf is bright and clean.

This is not murder, Indrė, that is a spill of nature, and what can be more natural and more gentle than the unfolding of nature, the nature itself.

[Gal vilkolakis yra pabaisa, bet kas tada žmogus? Ne, taip nėra, vilkolakis yra šviesus ir švarus.

Tai ne žudymas, Indrė, tai prigimties išsiliejimas, o kas gali būti natūraliau ir švelniau nei prigimties skleidimasis, pati gamta.^{44]}

Becoming wolf has also one more meaning, this is becoming-wolf as rapacity – for something, but also becoming-wolf for freedom and nature, opened till the end. Rapacity is characteristic to wolf, but less than to man. You are rapacious sometimes, when you need it, when others need it, you are silent in your cave and silently monitor the environment, waiting while your turn will come to become involved and to unmake. To transform. To become-wolf maybe very close to death; in one and in other case there are acquired more powers and love. Coldish one, looking from this side.

[Vilkėjimas turi dar vieną reikšmę, tai vilkėjimas kaip plėšrumas – dėl ko nors, bet ir vilkėjimas dėl laisvės ir prigimties, išskleistos iki galo. Plėšrumas vilkui būdingas, bet mažiau nei žmogui. Būni plėšrus retkarčiais, kai tau to reikia, kai to reikia kitiems, tu tyli savo urve ir patyliukais žiūri į aplinką, laukdamas, kol ateis tavo eilė įsitraukti ir viską perdaryti. Pertvarkyti. Vilkėti galbūt labai artima mirčiai; ir vienu, ir kitu atveju įgyjama daugiau galių ir meilės. Šaltokos, iš šiapus žiūrint.^{45]}

This rapacity, this murder is seen as necessity not only for Azas, but for others, too. Besides, murder as *destruction opens construction. Destruction shows how the structure was created. Both its advantages and disadvantages* [destrukcija atveria konstrukciją. Destrukcija parodo, kaip buvo sukurta struktūra. Ir jos privalumus, ir ypač trūkumus.^{46]}

While in *Tūla* and *Vilnius Poker* living together with a woman is impossible and impotence, childlessness is stressed, Azas and Indrė are family and have a son Medūziukas who is born in the cemetery, after Azas has buried Indrė. Besides, in the novel Azas not only transmutes to werewolf but has other incarnations, like other characters of the novel:

Anyway – Indrė is Ilona, and Ilona – Indrė, and it is natural, because Žvorūna is Medeina, Diana – Artemis; Azas–Tadas–Pūzras. It was his incarnations, avatars, but, unfortunately, having acquired an independent vision of the world and having chosen their own path. After all, you never know who is else you in this world. Maybe it is a unique charm, perhaps a source of longing.

Azas – the one, which I am – I am sufficient. I can start. Although I had already started, from ancient times.

[O šiaip – Indrė yra Ilona, o Ilona – Indrė, ir tai natūralu, nes Žvorūna yra Medeina, Diana – Artemidė; Azas–Tadas–Pūzras. Tai buvo jo inkarnacijos, avataros, bet, deja, įgijusios savarankišką pasaulio viziją ir pasirinkusios savo kelią. Juk niekada nežinai, kas šiame pasaulyje dar yra tu. Gal tai savitas žavesys, gal ilgesio šaltinis.

Azas – tas, kuris esu, – man to pakanka. Galiu pradėti. Nors aš jau pradėjęs, nuo senų laikų.^{47]}

Indrė is dead-living, living-dead. After her death, she bears a child who opens wide his medusa eyes at the end of the novel. It seems that this is why Indrė was murdered, to be able to give birth to this child having supernatural powers. This whole story about life and giving birth after death, and also the title of the novel (*Parousia* – as second coming) at first seem to distinguish Beresnevičius's novel from Kunčinas's and Gavelis's novels that were written in the Soviet times and published just in the first years after Lithuania restored independence. Still, the idea of second life or second death, life after death or suicide after death is also employed by Kunčinas and Gavelis. The figure of a child is the only thing that distinguishes these novels.

The strategy of using the image of becoming-animal in the three analyzed novels which tell the stories about the Soviet and post-Soviet Lithuania could be seen as similar to the strategy used by Queer theorists to name their theory by the insult name. As Jonathan Culler writes explaining the performatives:

What gives the insult its performative force is not the repetition itself but the fact that it is recognized as conforming to a model, a norm, and is linked with a history of exclusion. [...] It is the repetition, the citation of a formula which is linked to norms sustaining a history of oppression, that gives a special force and viciousness to otherwise banal insults [...]. They accumulate the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices, speaking as if with the voice of all the taunts of the past.

But the performative's link with the past implies the possibility of deflecting or redirecting the weight of the past, by attempting to capture and redirect the terms that carry an oppressive signification, as in the adoption of 'Queer' by homosexuals themselves. It's not that you become autonomous by choosing your name: names always carry historical weight and are subject to the uses others will make of them in the future. You can't control the terms that you choose to name yourselves. But the historical character of the performative process creates the possibility of a political struggle.⁴⁸

The idea about the deflecting or redirecting signs is reflected in Beresnevičius's novel in relation to being werewolf – confusing the signs as finding the way out:

[...] the confusion of signs also protects, as an introduction to transmutation. Signs show that you find yourself on your own island.

The mastery of the being werewolf, weathers, thoughts, rain – everything obeys you on that island.

[...] The werewolves are players, but even island does not know what to expect from them.

[[...] saugo ir ženklų supainiojimas, kaip įvadas į transmutaciją. Ženkilai rodo, kad atsiduri nuosavoje saloje.

Vilkolakystės įvaldymas, orai, mintys, lietus, – tau viskas paklūsta toje saloje. [...] Vilkolakiai yra žaidėjai, bet net sala nenutuokia, ko iš jų tikėtis.⁴⁹

Conclusions

Animal – dog, bat, and wolf – is an important and integral part of the plots of *Vilnius Poker*, *Tūla*, and *Parousia* as the textual analysis of the ends and beginnings of the narratives has shown. The becoming-animal – reincarnation into dog, becoming-bat, and transmutation to werewolf – is needed for the characters to transgress all the rules (*Vilnius Poker*), the system (*Parousia*), the imprisonment (*Tūla*) and win a different being and different experience. Such transgression is possible by choosing to become the animal, which in all three novels is aware of his being different from real animals, but is also different from humans. In both realms he is different from others. The becoming-animal in the novels is represented as a creative and the only possible way out, not only for the one who becomes an animal but, what is more important, for those who are just human – the community of people he lives or lived with. Thus, the becoming-animal as a transgressive act has collective value, casting social behaviour in different light, and as a performative act is political, redirecting the term 'animal', which carries oppressive Soviet significations.

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- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* – p. 13.
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- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* – p. 13.
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- ³⁰ *Ibid.* – p. 291–292.
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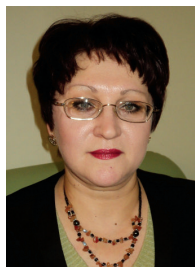
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