

Studia Animalia 1: the Image of Animals in Language, Literature and Culture

We are presenting the first of two issues of “Poznań Slavic Studies” under one title: *Studia animalia: the image of animals in language, literature and culture*. The proposed theme proved inspiring for an exceptionally large group of Slavists, and the response to the invitation to participate in research on animals in the Slavic culture exceeded our expectations. Several dozen innovative papers submitted to the journal prompted the editors to decide to publish two editions of *Studia animalia*.

Since ancient times, scholars have been trying to understand the nature of animalism and to find out the essence of the relationship between humans and animals, since animals are creatures that are the most similar to humans and are present in all spheres of reality and culture. Aristotle believed that animals have the ability to feel and suffer, but he treated them instrumentally, claiming that inflicting pain on them is justified if it leads to the well-being of man, whom he called an *animal rationale*. Descartes went a step further and proposed the concept of the animal as a machine, in which he not only denied that animals possessed reason, but also feelings, which contributed significantly to the way in which animals are bred, treated and understood today. Philosophers also considered the animal problematic later on in time, with John Locke saying that reason exalts man above all other sentient beings and gives him superiority and dominion over them.¹ For centuries, this distinction would appear as the key to defining the moral and legal status of animals. Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation*, which focuses on the problem of systemic cruelty towards animals in the area of breeding, entertainment (zoos, circuses), laboratories, etc., is located at the antipodes of such a view and is important

¹J. Locke (1955). *Rozważania dotyczące rozumu ludzkiego*. Przel. B. J. Gawecki. Warszawa: PWN, p. 195.

not only for philosophers and supporters of animal rights. Its ultimate aim is to abandon speciesism. Animals are now more often treated as subjects, also in the growing number of animal rights theories, one of the initiators of this approach being the American philosopher Tom Regan. There is also a growing number of movements defending the rights and welfare of animals, as well as those combining the approaches of social and political groups. The importance of animals in human life, culture and society is demonstrated, inter alia, by interdisciplinary projects that aim to break away from the anthropocentric paradigm that has dominated for centuries.

Humans have always formed different conceptions of animals, based primarily on subjective experience gained from direct contact with particular species. Creatures that were beyond human reach were considered threatening and mysterious – they were feared but also admired. Human qualities were attributed to tame animals that were close to humans, while wild animals were feared and perceived as uncanny, which made people attribute unjustified characteristics to them. In both cases, stereotyping occurred. What is interesting, animals closest to man were most often “endowed” with pejorative characteristics, while the distant and wild ones were treated with a more benign approach. In this respect, the relation between man and animal can be reduced to the statement: everything that is close to me is alien and distant, and that which is distant and alien becomes close.

The interdependence between animals and humans is quite peculiar, and its essence seems still not to have been fully unravelled, above all because the attitude towards nature and animals, despite attempts to overcome it, is still clearly anthropocentric. As Nikola Visković rightly states: “The basic attitude of man towards animals was and remains to this day material and utilitarian.”² However, the role of animals is highly diversified; they have always been man’s companion, guardian and protector, but also an inspiration for artists and a fundamental element of folklore. The role of animals in human life has changed over time. The diversity of their roles also depended on the place where they were found. In earlier times animals were an unquestionable element of religious and magical rituals,

²N. Visković (2009). *Kulturna zoologija. Što je životinja čovjeku i što je čovjek životinji*. Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, p. 14.

nowadays this role has been considerably reduced, and they are more and more often considered only as a source of food or raw materials. The holy books of various religions, and especially the Bible, have influenced the collective perception of some animals as clean and others as unclean and unworthy, which has contributed to the creation of stereotypes that can be considered universal. Although today this division has lost its importance, the collective consciousness still retains the old patterns of thinking and symbolism attributed to animals. This state of affairs is well reflected not only in language but also in culture in general – literature, ethnology, cinematography, etc. Some of these fields are dominated by the *double metaphorisation* typical of attributing human characteristics to animals.

The twentieth issue of “Poznań Slavic Studies” contains studies of a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character, focused on the presence of animals in various spheres of human life. It includes texts from the fields of linguistics, literary studies, ethnology and cultural studies, among others. They share a common goal of research into the image of animals and their nature in Slavic languages and cultural texts, and of deepening knowledge of human-animal relations.

The first chapter of the volume *Studia animalia 1: the image of animals in language, literature and culture* opens with the work of Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, who searches for the beginnings of zoonimic terminology in Bulgarian in the translation of Aesop’s fables by Sophronius of Vratsa. The author approaches the analysed lexis from a diachronic point of view, indicating the reasons for the choice of particular animal names, with which the Bulgarian speaker of the time had no contact, and then comments on the difficulties in translation which resulted from this decision. The most extensive part of the first chapter consists of articles giving an insight into the impressive linguistic phraseological production, at the centre of which is the animal. The analysis of phraseology makes it possible to uncover the remnants of ancient beliefs, rituals and historical events, still providing fertile ground for the study of linguistic worldviews and animal stereotypes, which may vary from culture to culture. Zoonimic phraseology is the common denominator of several papers in this issue. Katerina Veljanovska and Biljana Mirchevska-Bosheva take a closer look at Macedonian zoonimic phraseologisms, represented by the phraseosemantic field “time,” and point out how the group of zoonimic phraseological

units belonging here differs from the others. Ilona Myroshnichenko writes about zoonimic phraseologisms being an interpretation of two opposing concepts of laziness and industriousness in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian with a particular focus on the frequency of names of individual animals. The linguoculturological approach, based on Irina Zykova's conceptual theory, is taken up by Gordana Štrbac in her thorough and comprehensive analysis of Serbian phraseologisms, including ornithonyms. Ornithonyms are also the subject of an article by Josip Lasić, who examined their presence in Croatian anthroponomastics. Branka Barčot, combining her scientific experience with phraseological and phraseographic knowledge, writes about anthropomorphic and zoomorphic phraseological compounds in the Russian-Croatian phraseological dictionary (*Rusko-hrvatski frazeološki rječnik*) published in 2019 in Zagreb. Joanna Szerszunowicz's paper *New Lexical and Phraseological Faunal Units in the Language Observatory of the University of Warsaw from a Cross-Linguistic Polish-English Perspective* brings new insights into the lexis and phraseology of hitherto unexplored material.

The articles on literary studies are equally diverse. They are collected in the section *Animal Studies: the image of animals in literature*. Yaroslav Polishchuk and Oksana Pukhonska deal with a contemporary Ukrainian novel in which the role of narrator is played by a dog. Dejan Ajdačić analyses the nature of werewolves on the basis of selected nineteenth-century Slavic prose texts, placing most emphasis on the dichotomy between the human element and the element of the beast. Animal stereotypes interested Magdalena Ślawska, who analysed Dunja Kalilić's Croatian children's war novel *Crobinhoodovi*; in her analysis she also used the methodology developed within *animal studies*. Ana Batinić's focus was on Croatian nature-art prose. Ana Tomljenović, in her article *The Two Winged Truth in The Wild Duck: Plato, Ibsen, and Krleža* examines the symbolism of the wild duck, offering an interesting and innovative comparative approach.

The third chapter, entitled *Studia animalia: the image of animals in culture*, included four papers. Aleksander Mikołajczak interprets the significance of bees and their wax in the process of forming Slavic script from an anthropological-philosophical perspective. The presence of cockroaches in oral traditions and beliefs on the material of ethnotraditions and contemporary advertisements is introduced to the reader by Suzana Marjanić,

whose paper is based on the intersection of the folkloristic (zoofolkloristic and ethnozoological) and critical-animalistic spheres. Eli Lucheska writes about St. Mina the Martyr, a tamer of wild animals – especially wolves. The author is interested in the wall paintings from the Church of St. Petka in Brajchino, popularised, among others, by Viktorija Popovska-Korobar's studies; her considerations also touch upon the history of art. The chapter closes with Lidia Bajuk's article on real and unreal animal motifs in time and space, known from traditional concepts of the world and also present in Croatian folklore. The article is also part of anthropological research and animal studies.

In the section *Beyond the theme* there is a work by Svetlana Tomić *Neki metodološki problemi u savremenom istraživanju socijalnih feminitativa u srpskom jeziku*, devoted to the problems of methodology in the study of social feminatives. The author critically examines the assumptions of two trends in Serbian and Croatian linguistics: normativism and sociolinguistics (feminist linguistics). Jelena Redli's review paper is a continuation of this theme, presenting a collective work dedicated to Professor Emeritus Svenka Savić, and talking about her achievements in the field of gender studies, among others. In the same section, Yaroslav Polishchuk discusses the memoirs of the Ukrainian literary scholar Mykhail Nayenko. The issue closes with a report by Irina G. Guliakova and Valeriy M. Mokinenko on the international conference dedicated to the centenary jubilee of the distinguished German russicist Dr. Johannes Baar.

Thematic diversity, innovative methodological approaches and, in some cases, unknown, as yet unexplored source material of the papers included in the present issue of "Poznań Slavic Studies" enrich and complement the knowledge possessed so far in the field of *animal studies*. It is our conviction that they will meet the expectations of even the most demanding recipients, encouraging them to reach for the currently prepared second issue of the series: *Studia animalia 2: the image of animals in language, literature and culture*.

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