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A Multi-species World in the Poetry of Alenka Jovanovski and Vesna Liponik*

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The article examines selected poems that deal with the inter-species relations in a multi-species world, from the collections of poems *Tisoč osemdeset stopinj* (Thousand Eighty Degrees) by Alenka Jovanovski and *roko razje* (Eats Away the Hand) by Vesna Liponik. Through the analysis and interpretation, we investigate how their poetics work when it collides with the demonization of the other and the overt or covert social and environmental speciesism. In doing so, we discuss the symbolic and active power of poetry, the poets' critique of the binary divide between man and other beings, and their emphasis on the inherent value of animal and, in a wider context, their political-economic critique of global capitalism and linguistic, symbolic, material human violence against other species and nature.

KEYWORDS: Alenka Jovanovski; Vesna Liponik; poetry; animal; inter-species relationships

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1. Introduction

The article examines the question of animals and other living beings in the context of poetry by two Slovenian female poets, Alenka Jovanovski and Vesna Liponik, using the analyses of selected poems from their collections *Tisoč osemdeset stopinj* (Thousand Eighty Degrees) and *roko razje* (Eats Away The Hand) respectively. The poets do not look at their animal subjects as a symbolic representation of something or somebody else; their animals are realistic beings, representatives of their species, or even individuals. The article is based on the criticism of the binary nature of the human–animal relationship and on the theory of a multispecies world, which is based on the ontological turn. The latter allows us to at least think zoo/ecopoetically and to “enter” the living beings or become the other, be it an animal, a plant or a river, from their unique perspectives. Based on various theoretical discourses,¹ we aim to discuss the authors’ poetry mainly through the prism of those thinkers who are already able to see animal lives as intra-species or interspecies communities and who are developing the criticism of anthropocentrism. In addition, we will consider the question of the power of poetry, the true power, which could affect change in the existing relationships among species in the so-called new ecological paradigm. We will also look at the works of both poets with the aim to determine the phenomenon of the “deconstruction of the binary divide between the human being and the animal” (Vičar, 2020, 11), accentuated inherent values of animals or animal abolition (Francione, Charlton, 2015), multi-species communities and cross-species social equity (Haraway, 2016; Grušovnik, 2016; Matsouka, Sorenson, 2018). Additionally, we will aim to answer the question whether the authors’ poetry contains political-economic criticism of global capitalism and topical linguistic, symbolical, mate-

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1 I mostly follow the theoretical discourses of critical animal studies and less the theoretical discourses of animal studies. The first is “engaged theory,” and it is reflected in Liponik’s and Jovanovski’s poems.

rial abuse of animals and nature perpetrated by humans (Best, 2014; Taylor, Twine, 2015, 6).

2. The realities of the world and the (im)potence of poetry

The exploitation of animals, hierarchical system and the binary perspective on animals and people continue to exist in the current era of the Capitalocene. This exploitation stems from a “vicious and violent system of species apartheid”² and animal slavery (Best, 2014, 8; Francione, Charlton, 2015; Sorenson, 2014). Wilson (2005, 5) states that “at least half of animals will have (should) become extinct by 2100, marine life even sooner.” The rare species that are on the increase are pets. In his essay *Why Look at Animals*, John Berger (1991) states his belief that we are forgetting other species of animals. The awareness of large-scale killing of animals and ecocide in the twenty-first century has led to a broad scientific discussion within different sciences on the change in the attitude to animals and nature (cf. Golež Kaučič, 2017). According to Marc Bekoff, this is to be the century of research and articulation of animals, although rarely as realistic animals but rather as a substitute for something else (Bekoff, 2010, X). In the words of Theodor W. Adorno, literature is virtually the only place where “suffering [can] still find its own voice” (Adorno, 2013, 252). Literature and poetry as its inherent part should generate, among others, awareness of the realities of animal death, extinction of species, killing for food and other types of abuse or use of animals. Teresa Mangum believes that animal representation in literature “cannot escape the binary opposition that segregates people and animals” (Mangum, 2007, 156). Mario Ortiz-Robles finds that “texts about animals are often on the fringes of literary cannon” and that most of thematizations of animals in literary texts are too anthropocentric (Ortiz-Robles, 2016, 147).

2 As early as 2014, Best determined that it was possible for the SARS virus to kill millions of people as a result of horrific exploitation of animals that in turn affects people sociologically, physically and ecologically (Best, 2014, 99), in a way predicting the disaster that indeed happened in 2020.

In his work *The Lives of Animals*, Coetzee proves that, compared to philosophy, poetry can more empathically represent animals as they inherently are, especially when focusing on a single animal. Elizabeth Costello, a character in the novel, thinks very highly of the type of poetry that represents meetings with a single animal and less of the poetry that abstracts it into a species (Coetzee, 2007). Even Derrida points out the value of poetry: “thinking about animals, if at all possible, stems from poetry” (Derrida, 2008, 7). Kari Weil states that literature may enable us “to understand and give voice to others” (Weil, 2012, 7). Josephine Donovan believes “that literature can accurately present animals only if they are in and of themselves treated as subjects and are not used merely as literary devices intended to indirectly mediate the human condition” (Donovan, 2011, 203–204). Naama Harel emphasises that the meaning of a text depends on the reader’s interpretation, claiming that the readers will recognise substitute meanings if they move away from their own anthropomorphic perspective (Harel, 2009, 19). According to Oerlemans, poetry can help with new ways of representing people and animals.³ He emphasises that “animals are intrinsically interesting” (Oerlemans, 2018, 53). This is precisely the reason why zoopoetics takes into consideration animals’ agency (Moe, 2014, 9). Can poetry actually reach the core of animals’ existence? These beings are so foreign to us but also so close. Can it actually capture this complexity and represent it in its entirety? Can the reader decipher it (cf. Tüür, Tønnessen, 2014, 11)? In her poem “The Animals in That Country,” Margaret Atwood contemplates the foreignness of animals and our alienation from them. An animal can be only a reflection in sheet metal or headlights of a car, it is something we catch a glimpse of and then forget it existed at all. Or we see it only when we use it in one way or another. Moreover, an animal’s death is not nice, we do not want to see it because this is merely an animal and not a person (Atwood, 1976, 2–4).

3 That was demonstrated in the analysis of Emily Dickinson’s “A Bird, came down the Walk,” which discusses a meeting with an individual animal; it is a poem about a specific bird (Dickinson, 2017, 142). Therefore, Oerlemans believes that a poem is able to “recognise a community as one that deserves attention and care” (Oerlemans, 2018, 25).

According to Jure Detela, the signals of poetry could help us “put the animal into our minds,” these signals would allow us to think zoo/po/et/h/ically in a new multispecies community created with the transformation of relationships among the species. Detela said that animals in poetry should not be treated as production material and the connotation of animals outside the circle of humanity should be changed (Detela 2011, 107). Besides the ability to shape awareness of animal life and to present the human relationship with animals, the power of literature lies in the strength of experiencing reality. Or as Mario Ortiz-Robles puts it, “Literature helps us imagine alternative ways to live with animals, and animals help us imagine a new role for literature in a world where our animal future is uncertain” (Ortiz-Robles, 2016, 5). Its power is also in the ability to empathise with the life of the other, even though the animal world appears to exist in a completely different dimension as that of humans, where the actual human domination of people over animals has completely overrode that very experience (cf. Golež Kaučič, 2021).

3. Multi-species community of the world and poetry

In her work *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*,⁴ Donna Haraway points out that we live in a multispecies world in which we need to be aware of genocide, biocide and even speciescide. Consequently, autopoetics is no longer sufficient and is replaced with *sympoetics*, i.e. togetherness of species. Haraway gives prominence to all types of lives, all types of existence (Haraway, 2016, 15). She calls for an exit from the reproductive model of life in the biological, patriarchal family, which would open the possibility for a “cross-species hospitality” or other forms of communities or kinship (Haraway, 2016, 162; cf. Grušovnik, 2016). Just like Haraway, who talks of a “multispecies equity” in which there is no place for dominance but there is for the Earth, Steven Best also believes that:

4 The expression derives from the Greek word *kthōn*—earth; *Chthulucene* refers to the period of the earth, as opposed to the phrases such as *Anthropocene*, *Capitalocene* (cf. Baker, 2019, 159).

What is required is nothing less than a radical broadening of ethics and community to include all sentient beings and ultimately the earth itself. This demands overcoming entrenched dogmas, discrimination, bias, prejudice and hierarchical institutions of all kinds—not only the domination of human over human, but also the elevation of humans over other animals and the natural world as a whole (Best, 2014, 140).

According to Haraway, a community of individuals must be considered a species. We should talk about an individual animal and not only about a species in order to emphasise the individual, which happens when we call someone by their name (Haraway, 2008), where the interspecies alliance, e.g. a person and a dog, truly is a network of two existences. Consequently, we should introduce new relations with animals, similarly as Jure Detela, who tried to communicate with a dog on another level (Detela, 2018, 26; cf. Komelj, 2020, 78):

Detela's attempt to establish the kind of relation with a dog that would go beyond humanistic ideology would not mean copying the animal's behaviour in order to familiarise with something that is purportedly the nature of the dog but to establish communication on another level; in one letter he writes of his desire for the language so that the animals would be happy to hear their names—and for the human language, which would be able to translate those signs in animal messages that communicate consciousness of human presence in their worlds.

The poetry of Liponik and Jovanovski can be set in the departure from the single-species community of the world to its multi-species community, where multi-species kinship is possible. Their poetic creativity can be identified as thematizations of the multifaceted nature of the world, within which they are able to use poetic processes to step out of the rational into the irrational and merge thought with feeling and thus place the animal in the position of “ontological equivalence” (Ingold, 1994, xxiv). The animal is no longer a metaphor, it becomes a subject and the authors do not conceal the realities of the world nor the position of animals in it. Their poetry occasionally allows the animal to enter the reader's mind and reveals those worlds that either deny or

thoroughly expose their binary and hierarchical characters. The analyses and interpretations of the authors' poetry will reveal the way they introduce the other of animals, plants and humans to the reader.

4. The poetry of words enraged and eaten away

Vesna Liponik's collection of poems *roko razje* (Eats away the hand) explores companionship speciesism or multispecies kinship in "za pako," a poem about Paka, a dog that has been her other-species companion. The two parts of the poem depict their incredible interspecies connection; even in pain there is a special bond. The strong bond between the dog and the human is ruptured after the death of the dog. The pain is the same or even more intense than the pain of losing a human companion. At the end, the author finally lets the dog go:

in ona me čuva	(and she protects me
oklepa se	hangs on
s pastmi vseh dlak	with the trappings of all the hair
nad vodo plane	lunges to the water
zaostri se	she tenses up
rastje mokro mirno	undergrowth wet quiet
telo z vso težo	the body with all its weight
do	to
kožuha do	the fur to
pospešim	I hurry up
potrga	tears up
tačke izpod odeje	paws from under the blanket
tresla si se	you were shaking
ko ne bom mogla več	when I can't any more
kako si težka	you are so heavy
ne vem kje naj držim in ne	I don't know where to hold and
vem kje	I don't know where
ne boli	it doesn't hurt
prestaviva te	we move you

dol po hribu stojim samo	down the hill I stand only
tačke še	the paws
daljšam da	I lengthen that
padajo	they fall
dol po hribu dol	down the hill down
do vode do ničesar	to the water to nothing
ne držim ne primem ne	I don't hold I don't grip I don't
ustavim se	stop. ⁵)

(Liponik, 2019, 41–42).

Multispecies kinship is certainly possible, but only when the binary ceases to exist (cf. Komelj, 2020, 78). Liponik's collection creates poetry of distinct equivocalness. There is poetry in a human (the author's father) who merges with an apple tree in "humor" (Liponik, 2019, 7); in a multispecies world where nature is not absent, there is no alienation from the other, on the contrary, it is possible to merge within it. The author also discusses the so-called animal action or animal revolt, when the animal refuses to be a victim, to end on the plate of human gluttony, rather, the animal chooses to flee from death. However, instead of a happy story of a bull's escape from a slaughterhouse, Liponik discusses the violence of the human against the animal, which becomes even more terrible. In the end, there is no escape from the propaganda machinery, which links the slaughter of the bull with the manufacture of products made with love, as seen from the motto of the Košaki slaughterhouse. The smell of blood is the smell of love, the poet's sarcasm turns into the sad reality of the everyday life the animals are trapped in, seen merely as food as their bodies are objectified. Adams states:

The most efficient way to ensure that humans do not care about the lives of animals is to transform non-human subjects into non-human objects. This is what I have called the 'structure of the absent referent' (Adams, 2010 [1990], 51; 2014, 19).

5 Most of the poetic texts in the article are rough translations and have been translated for the purposes and use in this text only.

From the point of view of inter-species geographies, intersectional violence can be identified in the areas of human-animal relations, especially in hidden geographies of violence, such as slaughterhouses (see: White, Springer, 2018, 163; v.Adams, Gruen, 2014). The absurdity of linking slaughter with love is much more efficient than direct criticism. Therefore, it is possible for the poem to become perceived reality and to reach beyond the conscious, but only if the recipient has the empathy, if they read the poem, if the poem actually reaches the reader:

Iz klavnice je pobegnil bik	(A bull escaped the slaughterhouse
taval je po ulicah	he roamed the streets
oblike	forms
so ga zbegale	confused him
prišel je do dreves	he came to the trees
ni jih prepoznal	he did not recognise them
možje s puškami	men with guns
uporabljajo nože za rast in	use knives for growth and pleasure
užitek	
so mu prestrelili	they shot him through
lobanjo prsi trebuh	the skull chest stomach
[...] bika so odnesli	[...] they took the bull
in razkosali	and chopped him up
[...] če se zjutraj pelješ mimo	[...] if you go past the slaughterhouse
klavnice	in the morning
lahko vonjaš	you can smell
ljubezen	love)

(Liponik, 2019, 29–30).

The bull's escape is an instinctive act. However, animals' revolt can also have political and social connotations because they possess agency. Sarat Colling believes that animals' "resistance is an act that stems from the desire to escape captivity, violence and suffering existing in violent and dominant systems" (Colling, 2018, 25–26). It is in this poem that the two authors, Jovanovski and Liponik, connect spiritually. Alenka Jovanovski corresponds with Liponik through her poem "Pesem

za Vesno Liponik" (A Poem for Vesna Liponik) (Jovanovski, 2018, 27). It also includes a bull, but unlike in Dane Zajc's "VELIKI ČRNI BIK"⁶ (A BIG BLACK BULL), children chant three words and "practice the normalcy of killing to survive." Jovanovski writes that she believes in Vesna Liponik's poem as "she enters the core of pain and goes through it," saying all female poets should "think of possibilities glaring from the abyss" (see: Adams, Gruen, 2014). The world needs to be discussed with the use of true words rather than metaphors "because a meadow is not full of flowers, this is not a meadow and these are not flowers, they are motley wounds" (Jovanovski, 2018, 27).

Later on, Liponik dejectedly concludes that "itak nekje drugje itak / vedno / najebejo živali" (Of course somewhere else of course / always / the animals are fucked) (Liponik, 2019, 40). In her cycle *raz grabež*, the author discusses the killing of animals; the poem "ob večerih dolgo čakaš" (You wait long in the evenings) talks about the violence of humans who grab, snatch and tear and kill the bodies that live in water. The violence in human relations with animals is used as the dividing line between life and death (Wadiwel, 2015, 2018, 79–98). Liponik does not call the bodies fish, she discusses only the act of killing and the end of their existence:

uloviš jih	(you catch them
in ubiješ	and kill them
tolčeš ob kamen	bash them against a rock
dokler telo ne utihne	until the body is quiet
dokler ne trzajo več [...] da	until the twitching stops [...] that
jih je vsak dan manj	every day there are less of them)
(Liponik, 2019, 27).	

6 This is a well-known poem by Dane Zajc, and is translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak. http://www.thezaurus.org/index0094.html?/literature/zajc_dane_great_black_bull/, (date of access: 13.01.2022). Children chant: "Veliki črni bik rjove v jutro. / Sonce na vzhodu brusi/ bleščečo mesarsko sekuro." (Be silent, great black bull. / The great black bull bellows in the morning. / The eastern sun sharpens its glistening hatchet. Liponik rejects any killing of animals. Her poem is an attempt to reveal the suffering of animal).

She links the killing to ecocide and pollution of nature. In her poem “bela mačka” (White cat) she unscrupulously tears up another false tourist imagery; with an image of abandoned, hungry feral cats and dogs she presents the reality of their lives in tourist places. The word ‘physicality,’ which she repeats in the poem, makes us understand an animal as something more than a metaphor or a symbol. Physicality connects the animal and the human, which creates a new physical subjectivity, only to be all changed with the dominance of the human:

bela mačka	(white cat
udrte kosti manjkajoč	sunken bones a missing
rep	tail
se ozira za sitostjo	looking for satiation
na <i>lebuh king</i>	on lebhuh king
telesnost	physicality
rane	wounds
telesnost indijskega mesarja	physicality of an Indian butcher)
(Liponik, 2019, 33–34).	

One of the most heartbreaking poems, “privezan” (Chained), is about an unnamed dog who, tethered to a chain, yearns to find a way out of loneliness, anxiously awaiting the one who chained him. However, when the one he was waiting for arrives, nothing changes and the dog wishes to be alone again. Human dominance over the animal is complete.

privezan na verigo	(tethered to the chain
ko je sam	when alone
čaka na drugega	waits for the other
privezan na verigo	tethered to the chain
ko ni sam	when not alone
želi da drugi	wishes the other
odide	away)
(Liponik, 2019, 36).	

Liponik discusses kinship with animals in another poem about dead horses: “nosili so jih / to so bili mrtvi konji / vem da je bil njegov brat

konj” (They carried them / these were dead horses / I know his brother was a horse) (Liponik, 2019, 39). Not only animals, even plants are the focus of her poetry; apple trees, ferns, a river and a forest that is burning only because it belongs to somebody (Liponik, 2019, 83).

5. The unbearable heat of words flowing like lava

Zoopoetics signifies writing from the animal’s perspective or taking an “animal standpoint” (Best, 2014, 1–20; v. Linné, Pedersen, 2014). The profound zoo/po/et/h/ics of Alenka Jovanovski’s poetry tries to melt, to burn the unbearable and the deadly by calling for something new. Jovanovski looks critically at human relationships and at the relationship of humans with animals, the latter being distinctly hierarchical. These topics are discussed in her poem “Priprave na praznik v Salòju” (Holiday preparations in Salò). The words in the poem do not mean what they should, or indeed, they mean exactly what they should. None of the words denote violence directly, these are merely constructed words that pretend to be something else in order not to present violence against people, plants and animals directly; they are like a linguistic lie, linguistic speciesism (Dunayer, 2009), they are a hindrance, “like an existential tampon zone” (Grušovnik, 2020, 28) so that we do not see real death.

Učbenik hortikulture zahteva:	(The horticulture textbook
	dictates:
Brezam—ljudem odžagati	Birches’—people’s fingers to be
prste.	cut
[...]	[...]
Vmesnik se prijazno zadre	The inbetweener kindly pierces
v meso.	the meat.
Piščančja glava in kravje oko	A chicken’s head and a cow’s eye
s poslednjo solzo, zmleto v kašo.	with the last tear, mixed into the
	mush.
Simulaker vode, ki se ga vbrizga	The simulakra of water that is
	injected

v izpraznjena mesta:	into the emptied places:
V torteline, prsne vsadke, koline	Into tortellini, breast implants, the slaughter)

(Jovanovski, 2018, 12)⁷.

Jovanovski also draws from the analysis of Giorgio Agamben's distinction between *bios* (political form of life) and *zoé* (generic form of life), or the understanding of biopolitical caesura, where violence in the human relationship with animals is used as a dividing line between life and death, and the animal is squeezed into a perspective *vmes* (between) (Jovanovski, 2020, 14). Jovanovski presents this *vmes*, this terrible knife she calls *vmesnik* (inbetween) which separates people from animals, but this image is bloody, violent.⁸ The true meanings of words are hidden in order to conceal the differentiation. Farmed animals represent "life-only" while the human being is a verbal, political and cultural being (according to Heidegger, animals represent "being-only" and non-existence) (Heidegger, 1983, 374). The poem's simulacra of water is, symbolically, a negation of reality. This is not water; it is

7 Australian poet Les Murray's poem "The Cows on a Killing Day" is especially poignant. He speaks from the perspective and feelings of a cow that used to be exploited for milk and breeding. When the animal is completely used up, she is slaughtered: "Me in the feed yard. A stick goes out from the human / and cracks, like the whip. Me shivers and falls down/ with the terrible, the blood of me, coming out behind an ear. / Me, that other me, down and dreaming in the bare yard" (Murray, 1998).

8 In her book *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry* (Davis, 2009), Karen Davis talks about the hell lived by chickens in battery-cages or any other types of rearing. When humans eat chickens, they eat the animals' misery. While her book analyses misery and suffering, Charles Simic's poem "Fork" is a poetic expression of "sticking pieces of a chicken's body on a fork": "This strange thing must have crept / Right out of hell. / It resembles a bird's foot / Worn around the cannibal's neck. // As you hold it in your hand, / As you stab with it into a piece of meat, / It is possible to imagine the rest of the bird: / Its head which like your fist / Is large, bald, beakless, and blind" (Simic, 1999). The poem reminds us that we are stabbing the body of a bird and our habit of eating animal bodies is not conscious, it is actually internal and therefore perpetuated day in, day out. Despite the findings of cognitive science that chickens are highly intelligent and can understand the world far better than we do, we cannot comprehend this fact, or rather, do not want to see (Davis, 2018, 83).

the dead tissue of a once living being that has been replaced by something resembling a mixture which is injected as if it were nothing else but food or medicine.

For the author, writing poetry is like using her legs; it means going on further and further, but also seeing the world in detail: *kako izginjajo čebele / in je travnik v gluhoti / samo na videz podoba obilja. // Da človeka pretepejo, / ko ignorira oblast* (How the bees are disappearing / and the meadow in its deafness / merely looks like an image of abundance. // That a person is beaten / when ignoring the powers). The poem is a strategy for survival for the author; there will always be someone who will use their legs and “hug the trees,” someone who will continue to search and will not give up (Jovanovski, 2018, 14–15). She thinks it is critical that “nima nihče pravice pozabiti / ničesar, kar je živo” (No one has the right to forget / anything that is alive) (Jovanovski, 2018, 29). Her words flowing like lava stop only when it comes to those who preserve, which she discusses in her poem “Prezervatorji” (Preservers). However, this preservation is one of capital profit preservation: “s solzo v očesu jih spremljajo, / telesa izrinjenih, odvržena v smeti, / s solzo v očesu spremljajo svoje dobičke” (With a tear in their eye they are looking at / bodies of those pushed away, thrown away, / with a tear in their eye they are looking at their profits). We are left with something the author calls a reservation “kjer so osebki prostozamenljivi, / kjer nasilje razglašajo za ljubezen, / kjer so terapije recepti za smrt” (where the subjects are freely interchangeable, / where violence is announced as love, / where therapies are prescriptions for death) (Jovanovski, 2018, 35). In “Empatiki” Jovanovski reveals false empathy of people who believe they are sympathetic; they feel sorry for little tits in winter but that is all—they do not act on this feeling, they do not even provide food for them in winter. The tit leaves a sign in the snow for them, which remains unrecognised, invisible to people without fire in their souls: “Tri vejice se odtisnejo v sneg. / Sinička: / abeceda brez besed” (Three little twigs printed in the snow / Tit: / alphabet without words) (Jovanovski, 2018, 45).

The author believes that all living beings are subject to the capitalist logic or “structural imperatives of capitalism,” which dehumanises them, both people and animals. (Nibert, 2002, 2017; Sanbonmatsu, 2017). Em-

pathy (v. Gruen, 2018, 141–153) is merely on the outside (it is false empathy), all beings in this world are in the clutches of exploitation and profit. She discusses this in “10 pesem” (Poem 10) of her cycle *ih bin ajn bin*:

Neoliberalna metlica miksa ljudi,	(The neoliberal whisk mixes
kot da so jajca	people like eggs
lupine vrže v smeti	throwing shells away
živali miksa v nekakšno kostno	mixing animals into a kind of
moko [...] rakušev mlin	bone meal [...] the Rakuš
gori, strašno	mill is burning, terrible
prodali ga bomo za nova	we will sell it to make parking
parkirišča in obtožili	lots and blame
cigane	the gypsies
[...] boga babica, zdaj nima	[...] poor granny, she has
kje prespati	nowhere to stay
ste opazili posnetek glasu	did you notice the voice
	recording
poudarek je na boga	the emphasis is on poor
ne na tem, da bi poiskali	not on finding a place to live).
bivališče	
(Jovanovski, 2018, 107).	

Jovanovski's analysis and synthesis of the world can be found in “13 pesem” (Poem 13) (Jovanovski, 2018, 110–111). Her critical view on anthropocentrism and the ecological devastation of the land is presented through an image of, or an ode to, a doughnut. The doughnut consists of ingredients linked to the exploitation of workforce, the killing of invisible beings in the soil, trees that produced apricots, poisoned water, dead seagulls and laying hens. All the ingredients are not just foodstuffs, they are a product of nature, people, animals and plants that die while providing these ingredients; they are poisoned, polluted and leave a carbon footprint. A doughnut with an apricot jam filling is not just a doughnut; according to the author, it is magma that operates on several levels. Therefore, the ode to a doughnut is not just an ode to a doughnut, it is an ode to life in its entirety, it is not an ode to joy but an ode to sorrow. A completely mundane food item is made and then

consumed, actions that reveal a network of death and destruction. The wordiness of the poem, its structure and meanings underpin the intertwinement and interactivity within a hierarchy of production, and aim to point out things we are not or do not want to be aware of. Interspecies kinship (Steiner, 2008; Fuentes, Porter, 2018), something that should be self-evident, is important for people and animals to coexist: “Odhajam z ljudmi, vračam se s taščicami. / Kaj poješ, taščica? // Ki sem, ki sem, ki sem. // Vejnata sled se topi / v odprto: korak do objema” (I am leaving with people, returning with the robins. / What are you singing robin? // I am, I am, I am. // A trace of twigs is melting / into the open: a step towards the hug) (Jovanovski, 2018, 46). The last poem “za zaključek naj bo reka” (At the end, let there be a river) starts with a seemingly idyllic image of a little house, smoke is coming through the chimney and all is quiet. The author then abruptly turns towards reality—she contemplates whether the wheat could demolish the walls behind which the human is hiding, the regulated flow of the river hosting only a selection of animals (a duck, a drake, a grey heron); a white goose is revealed to be a white plastic bag carrying rubbish in its belly. With this image, the author exposes the misery of ecologic destruction caused by humans and using this truth she calls for a radical change. The reality is also revealed in the actual existence of animals and environment as discussed by Calarco: “Ecological problem can only be adequately addressed by developing a generalized ecological philosophy, or *ecosophy*, that is structured simultaneously along three ecological registers: social, environmental, and mental” (Ohrem, Calarco, 2018, 45). We might add that it could also be discussed through poetry. Jovanovski believes that from poetry or a poem “a specific perspective can arise, which joins together everything based on one form—life” (Jovanovski, 2020, 52). This may be the only way to bring change to practices also on the basis of zoo/eco/poetics.

6. Conclusion

The poetry of Vesna Liponik and Alenka Jovanovski treats the animal as an inherent being by looking critically at discursive, symbolic and material placement of animals that represent hierarchical relationships

between humans and animals. The authors base their work on the observation of different types of discrimination of the other. They point out that a poem should discuss the realistic experience of animals, their vulnerable physicality, and should depict them as subjects in their own lives, which differ from those of humans. Poetry should shed light on the relationships between people and animals that predominantly still originate in violence or ignorance. Both collections of poems, *Tisoč osemdeset sopinj* and *roko razje*, employ individual poems to highlight the need to change the flow of life; to dissolve and melt the existing anthropocentric view of the world with words flowing like lava, and to transform the world of Anthropocene and Capitalocene into a world of Ecocene. The human hand should eat away at the terrible attitude towards animals that reduces them to creatures from slaughterhouses and concentration camps that are farms. Our human gaze should be focused on the suffering and death of animals, and the destruction of the environment should be brought to the fore and fought against. Poetry as such, and that of the authors, can give animals, plants and all living beings and non-living matter an image, substance and realism. It can intensify the sensibilities of those who create it and those who read it.

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