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“WHAT CATS HAVE TO DREAM ABOUT”?

CHALLENGING ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN “A DREAM OF A THOUSAND CATS”, TEETH AND PRINCESS MONONOKE

Abstract: *Relying on recent theoretical work in the field of critical animal studies and ecocriticism, the paper discusses several fantasies across different media and genres (a comic book series, a young adult novel, and an animated film), whose common characteristic is a critical stance towards anthropocentrism, also known, tellingly, as “human exceptionalism”, “human supremacy”, and “human chauvinism”. The selected corpus consists of Neil Gaiman’s “A Dream of a Thousand Cats”, Hannah Moskowitz’s “Teeth”, and Hayao Miyazaki’s “Princess Mononoke”. Dissimilar as they are, these fantasies share common thematic concern with the relationship between the human and the nonhuman – primarily animals – as well as commitment to challenging the notions of natural, just and desirable human supremacy over all other forms of life. In the selected works, human exceptionalism is challenged by unmasking human exceptional brutality at its root, and, perhaps more unnervingly, by the exploration of the fundamental kinship between human and nonhuman animals. Although these popular fantasies do not voice explicit or simple ecological messages, due to the abovementioned concerns, they function as ecocritical texts as well. In the context of the global environmental crisis, it is in this ecocritical potential that some relevance of fantasy arguably lies.*

Key words: *anthropocentrism, critical animal studies, ecocriticism, fantasy, nonhuman animals*

Introduction: decentring humanity¹

The general idea behind the present collection of papers is to examine the relevance of fantasy, or the fantastic, in a cultural context. Obviously, such a task could be approached in any number of ways, depending on the specifics of culture, the definition of fantasy/the fantastic, and, especially, the meaning of relevance. This particular paper will be developing the hypothesis that in the context of contemporary Western² (late capitalist, biophobic, animal-consuming) culture, some relevance of fantasy – defined as “the deliberate departure from the limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal”³, and exemplified by the heterogenous narratives under discussion – is to be found in the challenges fantasy poses before culturally entrenched and omnipresent anthropocentrism. “Some relevance of fantasy”, moreover, is not meant to convey scepticism towards the mode of the selected works: always more interested in praxis rather than theoretical considerations, I am merely sceptical of the effect of the challenge itself. We are, after all, already inhabiting a dying world, and the life-saving reversal potentially realized by turning away from anthropocentric assumptions and practices may well be out of reach.

The reasons for the dramatic description of the world as “dying” are plentiful, and range from rapid climate change, the unprecedented levels of pollution, soil degradation, and desertification of the planet, to irreversible, and accelerating, mass species extinction. Significantly for my purposes here, this global environmental collapse is coupled with, and exacerbated by, increasing demand for animal products and especially the growth of “factory farming”, which results in deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and the massive loss of animal lives in industrialized slaughter, where “an animal is killed every twelve seconds”⁴. Although one has to be mindful of the political and ideological work involved in accusing “greedy humanity”⁵ for

1 Prepared as a part of the project *Innovations in the Teaching Process and Research in the Domains of English Linguistics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture*, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Philosophy No. 360/1-16-1-01.

2 Anthropocentrism is, of course, global, but the examples of anthropocentric practices and discourses provided in this paper come from the Western culture exclusively, hence this adjective.

3 Hume, K. (1984) *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, New York and London: Methuen, p. XII

4 Pachirat, T. (2011) *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and The Politics of Sight*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, p. 9.

5 Malm, A. (2015) The Anthropocene Myth, *Jacobin*; <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/anthropocene-capitalism-climate-change/>

this systematic destruction of nonhuman life – the issues outlined above are the consequences of the capitalist modes of production rather than the greed of abstract humanity – it is nonetheless hard to deny that they are the outcome of an anthropocentric ethos which views the planet and the nonhumans only as resources for the humankind: “a treasure chest for human consumption”⁶ and “a stage for civilized humanity to manifest its great destiny [...] a sort of cosmic human property”⁷. Specifically, the countless instances of ecocide and animal abuse exemplify not only the capitalist terror of infinite production and consumption, but also “an anthropocentric species hierarchy, with humans positioned at the top, [which] underpins the world’s dominant political economies and ecologies, and justifies acts of domination and appropriation of other species”⁸. It is not surprising, therefore, that from the perspective of the fast-developing critical animal studies (CAS) and ecocriticism, dismantling anthropocentrism – “decentering civilized humanity and rejoining Earth’s community of life” – is regarded as “the vital work of our time”⁹. The fantasies discussed in this paper attempt to decenter humanity in a variety of ways, some of which align with the ecocritical and CAS agenda of “trans-species social justice”¹⁰. Yet, before the examination of individual texts, some theoretical background on anthropocentrism should be provided.

In CAS and ecocriticism, the term “anthropocentrism” means placing *anthropos*, human being, “at the centre of material and ethical concerns”¹¹; this positioning is predicated on the simultaneous relegation of all other forms of life to the periphery of the subhuman and the nonhuman, the crucial distinction between these locations being life and death. Anthropocentrism is thus at the root of the political, ethical, and

6 Moore, B. L. (2017) *Ecological Literature and the Critique of Anthropocentrism*, Palgrave Macmillan, p. IX

7 Crist, E. and Kopnina, H. (2014) Unsettling Anthropocentrism, *Dialectical Anthropology* Vol. 38 Issue 4, Springer, p. 389.

8 Collard, R-C. and Gillespie, K. Introduction, in: *Critical Animal Geographies: Politics, Intersections, and Hierarchies in a Multispecies World*, edited by Collard, R. C. and Gillespie, K. (2015) in Abingdon and New York: Routledge, p. 13. “Species hierarchy”, crucially, does not mean that the concrete, flesh-and-blood “human resources” of late capitalism are spared the horrors of infinite production, but it does mean that even the most exploited of humans still has unquestionable power over the nonhuman animal. The seeming paradox is evident, for instance, in the abusive treatment of domestic animals by the abused slaughterhouse workers.

9 Crist, E. and Kopnina, H. op. cit. p. 392.

10 I’m borrowing this phrase from the title of the edited collection, *Critical Animal Studies: Towards Trans-Species Social Justice*, edited by Matsuoka, A. and Sorenson, J. (2018), London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

11 Crist, E. and Kopnina, H. op. cit. p. 387.

legal distinction between subjects with certain rights within a political community (i.e. fully human), and living beings who are always potential subjects to the “noncriminal putting to death”¹². Anthropocentrism, moreover, informs the near-totality of Western philosophy¹³, as well as Christianity marked by *contemptus mundi* which, as Bryan L. Moore traces, extends well into the 20th century.¹⁴

Though not restricted to the use of animals, anthropocentrism as the doctrine and practice of human exceptionalism, and unlimited violence as its *modus operandi*, are arguably clearest in the so-called human animal divide, or the “Big Gap”, as Donna Haraway famously nicknames it. Human exceptionalism rests on a set of qualities (such as language, the knowledge of good and evil, reason, tool use, civilization, free will¹⁵), which are seen as exclusively human, though most of them have by now been problematized by animal research and postmodernism. Yet the differences, regardless of their problematic nature, are treated as absolute and more often than not mean abuse and death for the animal and the animal-like. One of the founders of modern philosophy and science, Rene Descartes, for instance, was adamant about the unbridgeable gap between men and “brutes”: “After the error of those who deny the existence of God . . . there is none that is more powerful in leading feeble minds astray from the straight path of virtue than the supposition that the soul of brutes is of the same nature with our own”¹⁶. Descartes’ thoughts on the “brutes”, however, have to read in the light of his well-known vivisection of hundreds of dogs. “When one of his

12 Derrida quoted in: Wolfe, C. (2003) *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p. 7.

13 Steiner, G. (2010) *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

14 Moore B. L. *op. cit.* p. 9.

15 It is worth noting that, as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin write, “our emphasis in differentiating ourselves from animals has rarely stressed the anatomical or physiological; rather, we prefer to designate animals as ‘lesser’ through mentality, singling out those traits we regard as peculiar to ourselves – a practice which is not just anthropocentric but often ethnocentric as well” (Huggan, G. and Tiffin, H. (2010) *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 154). Jeremy Bentham was aware of this, too, which famously led him to attempt to reformulate the criterion for the legal recognition and protection of animals – “The question is not, Can they reason?, nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being?”.

16 Deyo, B. Tragedy, Ecophobia, and Animality in Anthropocene, in: *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, edited by Bladow, K. And Ladino, J. (2018) Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p. 203.

visitors remarked on the poverty of his library, Descartes pointed to the animals he had been dissecting and replied, ‘These are my books.’ Descartes’ texts were alive and the great methodologist believed that the cry of an animal was not due to pain, but could be compared to the creaking of a wheel”¹⁷.

Human exceptionalism, therefore, creates conditions under which the nonhuman animals can be forced into various human economies, some of which exploit their physiological *similarities* with humans, while being excluded from moral consideration and legal recognition and protection. From being dissected by Descartes in search of knowledge to being test subjects in biomedical research, pharmacological and beauty industries, nonhuman animals are reduced even further into “the material of cultural reproduction”¹⁸ as symbols, metaphors, and stereotypes negotiating and expressing exclusively human concerns. Human exceptionalism allows for the nonhuman animals to have their bodily functions, such as giving birth, lactating and ovulating, instrumentalized for profit by dairy and egg industries; to have their bodies subjected to invasive surgeries and modifications, including but not limited to “beloved” pets. Yet pets – or companion animals, as is the preferred term in CAS – are particularly vulnerable to the intersection of anthropocentrism, aestheticism, and profit: in Gaiman’s “A Dream of a Thousand Cats”, for example, suckling kittens are killed because they are not purebred Siamese like their mother, and therefore “aren’t worth diddly-squat”¹⁹. Moreover, whereas “the animal” is deployed in the anthropological machine for its symbolic capital and variously turned against Jews, the colonized people of color, or slaves²⁰, actual animals, such as police dogs, are used to terrorize rioters and protesters into obedience even today. This represents the continuation of the historic utilization of snakes, scorpions, elephants, lions etc. for the torture and the execution of human beings. Even as wildlife, nonhuman animals do not escape human influence, as they are in increasing danger of having their lives, their families and habitats destroyed due to man-made pollution, fires, desertification, poaching, recreational hunting, monoculture and monocropping. Still, at this point in the Earth’s history, wildlife represents a mere fraction of the animal

17 Visvanathan, S. On the Annals of the Laboratory State in *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*, edited by Nandy, A. (1989), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 103.

18 Simons, J. (2002) *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, p. 85.

19 Gaiman, N. (1990) *A Dream of a Thousand Cats*, Vertigo, p. 8.

20 Agamben, G. (2004) *The Open: Man and Animal*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 37.

population: of all the mammals on the planet, for instance, 60% are livestock in captivity on factory farms, 36% are humans, and only 4% are wild mammals²¹. Because it is a crucial matter, it merits repetition: this massive interference with, and destruction of, nonhuman lives is done under the assumption that it does not affect humans. (At this point it arguably still hasn't fully affected the privileged ones.) Yet degraded living and dying conditions for the nonhuman animals do not miraculously pass humans by, and it has already become obvious that the human populations who are experiencing the extremes of the environmental collapse are those least responsible for it. It is this insight that *Princess Mononoke* poignantly delivers through the early infection of Ashitaka with demonism created by Lady Eboshi's bullet. The "little ball of iron" lodged in the body of an animal-god, driving him insane and violent, travels far from Irontown to poison an innocent boy on the margins of society. Challenging anthropocentrism – coupled with the dismantling of capitalism – is thus clearly a task that might benefit human, as well as nonhuman animals²².

The fantasies that are discussed here (Neil Gaiman's "A Dream of a Thousand Cats", Hannah Moskowitz's *Teeth* and Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*) challenge anthropocentrism in a variety of ways, from anthropomorphising animals, to identifying the basis of monstrosity in the attempt both to deny and affirm kinship between the human and the nonhuman, and revealing the violence with which human supremacy, as all other kinds of supremacies, is maintained. *Princess Mononoke*, additionally, tests the limits of ethics founded on the absence of hate, while positioning its human protagonist near the nonhuman – not only animals but divinized and demonized nature as well. While "not all texts that call anthropocentrism into question do so from an ecological basis"²³, the selected narratives can be regarded as ecocritical, too, the definition of ecocriticism being "the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself"²⁴. Crucially, these fantasies have significant ecocritical potential when their animals and other

21 Murray-Ragg N. (May 28, 2018) 60% of all mammals on Earth are livestock, says new study. <https://www.livekindly.co/60-of-all-mammals-on-earth-are-livestock-says-new-study/>

22 The demand to "decenter humanity", on the other hand, is not without its problems, the greatest being its appropriation at the hands of various ecofascists, whose guiding principle is literally "kill the humans, save the forest" – primarily the humans of color, and the disabled ones.

23 Moore B. L. op. cit. p. X

24 Garrard, G. (2004) *Ecocriticism*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 5.

nonhumans are read literally, *without any irritable reaching after symbolism and allegory.*

“I wonder what cats have to dream about?”

Neil Gaiman’s “A Dream of a Thousand Cats” (1990), one of the four self-contained episodes which form *Dream Country*, the third volume in the *Sandman* comic book series, deploys fantastic anthropomorphism – attributing human characteristics, here the ability to speak human language, to nonhuman animals – in order to challenge the notion of natural and justified human supremacy over nonhumans. Specifically, through the voice of a cat narrating her experience at the hands of her human owners, Gaiman undermines the assumption of human superiority based on excellence of reason and morality, and reveals only brutality towards the most helpless at its root. It is all the more significant that the cats in this episode are pets: compared with the cats in biomedical research, or the homeless ones in the streets, pet cats appear multiply privileged. Indeed, at the end of the episode, there is a frame depicting TV commercial for cat food, in which cats are referred to as human “best friends”. The reality of a pet life, however, is revealed to be a series of acts of violence committed with impunity by the human owner, and thus very far from trans-species friendship and justice.

The episode opens with a white kitten sneaking out of her house one night to hear a speech, delivered by a charismatic Siamese cat at the cemetery. The Siamese begins by accurately summarizing the human treatment of their companion animals: “Once, many yesterdays gone, I, like many of you, was in the thrall of human beings, living in their world: *plaything, possession and toy*”²⁵. While saying this, the cat is sitting on the tombstone statue shaped like an angel, the position potentially suggestive of the Siamese’s function as an agent of destruction in service of (divine) justice. Then the cat reveals her life-altering trauma: she mated with a stray tom-cat, gave birth to a litter of kittens, and enjoyed motherhood profoundly, only to have the kittens taken from her and killed by her human owner. She recounts all of this in rich, poetic sentences. “They [the babies] whispered to me in their delight: in having taken flesh in my bloodline, of tasting air, and milk; whispered their belief in the future”²⁶. But as their father was not a “pure-bred blue point Siamese” like her, the human male owner, Paul, was not happy: “These

25 Gaiman, N. (1990) *A Dream of a Thousand Cats*, Vertigo p. 7. Italics in the original.

26 Ibid, p. 8.

little bundles of fluff aren't worth diddly-squat"²⁷. (Unlike the Siamese, Paul, whose human exceptional status and privilege rest on language, is not very eloquent.) The very next image depicts a pair of male hands grabbing a tiny kitten by the neck – incidentally, this is how mother cats carry their young, usually when relocating them for protection – and putting the kitten into a bag. The kitten protests weakly, uttering “meep”²⁸. The image draws attention to death as the most common outcome of human exceptionalism: the nonhuman other is put to death on the grounds that it is radically different/deficient, here, in terms of language. Yet a big part of this “radical difference” is the product of human effort to create and maintain it. While it is easy to understand the cat highly proficient in spoken English, it is equally easy to understand the kitten’s “meep”. Although the kitten’s message is not verbal, it is painfully clear: it is the same kind of message sent by calves on their way to slaughter who try to suckle on the human fingers that will kill them. Paul’s disregard of the kitten’s “meep”, therefore, belongs to the same kind of deliberate deafness as Descartes’ interpreting the screaming of a vivisected dog as the creaking of a wheel.

The next image depicts the bereaved mother from behind, staring at the fire – a vivid visual clue as to what she is experiencing. Directly defying the entrenched cultural notion that animals lack awareness of death and the range and complexity of human emotion when faced with loss²⁹, the Siamese’s voice tells a story that differs from the one given by the man who non-criminally put her offspring to death. It is the story of helplessness, of the struggle to live, of existential terror, and deep empathy: “I felt them from afar, in the dark, as the cold water took them. Felt them thresh and claw sightlessly, felt them call me, in their panic and their fear. And then they were gone.”³⁰ Paul’s vision is different; while the Siamese is staring at the fire and grieving for her children, he is depicted as arguing with his wife who “can’t help feeling a little guilty” (sic!) – “For God’s sake, Marion! It’s not even as if she understands. I mean, look at her. She’s

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 On a side note, because their brains are similar to human brains (90% similarity), especially in terms of emotion centers, cats are particularly “popular in neurological experiments” (Bisgould, L. Power and Irony: One Tortured Cat and Many Twisted Angles to Our Moral Schizophrenia about Animals in: *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World* edited by Castricano, J. (2008), Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, p. 266). In other words, what makes cats so widely abused in neurological experiments is that their brains store and process emotions just like human brains.

30 Gaiman, N. op. cit. p. 9.

probably relieved. She's practically a kitten herself. She would have exhausted herself..."³¹

Anthropomorphism is frowned upon when complex and supposedly unique human qualities – love or grief for the offspring – are projected onto “dumb” animals³². Yet here Paul projects the feeling of relief onto the bereaved cat, reinforcing a harmful cultural stereotype of cats as selfish creatures incapable of genuine attachment. Instead of “generating sympathy or empathy through similarity”³³, anthropomorphism as utilized by Paul functions as justification for the Big Gap, the human-animal divide which allows humans to be the absolute (and sadistic) masters over nonhumans’ lives, deaths, bodies, and offspring. This particular cat, however, is emphatically not relieved; she continues with the narration of her stubborn dream-quest to find the answer to the crucial question: “Why could they take my children from me? Why do we live the way we do?”³⁴. It is this question that she poses to Morpheus, who appears briefly in the form of a Dream-cat in the Heart of Dreaming. The answer is, of course, “anthropocentrism”, but Morpheus reveals to her the alternate past in which cats were huge and ruled over tiny humans, indulging in “the game of cat and man”. In this alternative history of cats and humans, it is humans who are treated like unprofitable kittens; cats, moreover, treat the world like people: “This whole world was created for our pleasure.

31 Ibid.

32 And even when the existence of love is evident, it still does not save the animal, or her babies: “Belgian Andreas Vesalius (1514–64) and his students in Padua, Italy, illustrated public lectures on anatomy by using systematic non-human vivisection. An animal, usually a dog, would be cut open while still alive and the function of each organ would be speculated upon as it was located. (...) Maehle and Trohler (1987) recorded that the experiments of one of Vesalius’ pupils, Realdo Colombo (1516–59), involving pregnant dogs, were greatly admired by members of the Catholic clergy: ‘Colombo pulled a foetus out of the dog’s womb and, hurting the young in front of the bitch’s eyes, he provoked the latter’s furious barking. But as soon as he held the puppy to the bitch’s mouth, the dog started licking it tenderly, being obviously more concerned about the pain of its offspring than about its own suffering. When something other than the puppy was held in front of its mouth, the bitch snapped at it in a rage. The clergymen expressed their pleasure in observing this striking example of motherly love even in the ‘brute creation’” (Monamy, V. (2009) *Animal Experimentation: A Guide to the Issues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 9). When they are hypothesized as radically dissimilar from humans, nonhuman animals are exploited brutally. When the similarity is proved “scientifically”, nonhuman animals are exploited brutally. There is no animal winning in the rigged game of anthropocentrism.

33 Huggan, G. and Tiffin, H. (2010) *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 152.

34 Gaiman, N. op. cit. p. 14.

We roamed it as we would, taking what we wanted.”³⁵ But, the Siamese continues, it took only a thousand humans, urged on by their leader, who dreamed a different world, the anthropocentric one – “a world in which we [humans] are the dominant species, in which we are the kings and the queens, and the gods”³⁶ – to change “the universe from the beginning of all things, until the end of time.”³⁷ And the reader finally realizes the point of the cats’ clandestine cemetery meeting: the Siamese is calling for a revolution based on a dream. “If they could dream it, we could change things back. If we believed. If we dreamed.”³⁸ The white kitten is impressed, but her enthusiasm is partly dampened by the older orange cat who invited her to the meeting: “Little one, I would like to see anyone...Prophet, king or God...persuade a thousand cats to do anything at the same time. It will never happen.”³⁹

The episode, nonetheless, ends with the white kitten back home, dreaming and twitching in her sleep. Her owner comments that she is “hunting something” in her dream, “some small animal” – most likely, a tiny human. The owner’s comment that the kitten’s dream behaviour is “really cute”⁴⁰ is meant to be ironic, as *Sandman* is, after all, dark fantasy: unsuspecting humans are sharing their home with their potential killer. Yet in the context of the human treatment of nonhuman animals, pets included, the reality is exactly the opposite: it is cats and dogs that are locked in with their potential abusers and killers at night. (Still dark, but not a fantasy.) And if this is how domestic cats are treated – human “best friends” as they are called in the TV commercial for cat food on the last page – then what can other animals hope for? The revelation that the Siamese has after the killing of her kittens is true for all nonhumans: “While we lived with humanity, we could not call ourselves free.”⁴¹ How could there be any justice, or friendship under such radically unequal circumstances? Dinesh Wadiwel summarizes the disastrous consequences even of “peaceable coexistence between humans and animals”, where “this bond is placed in question by the modes of discipline, surveillance, containment and control that attend and are inherent to the practice of ‘pet ownership’ and ‘domestication.’ The millions of pets ‘euthanised’ in animal

35 Ibid, p. 15.

36 Ibid, p. 17.

37 Ibid, p. 19.

38 Ibid, p. 20.

39 Ibid, p. 23.

40 Ibid, p. 24.

41 Ibid, p. 9.

shelters annually highlight that even examples of seemingly happy cohabitation between humans and animals are framed within an ‘adopt, foster, euthanize’ context of over-arching, and deadly, violence⁴². In this context, the kitten’s dream of “the game of cat and man” is an understandable and justified response.

*“It’s time to stop eating my siblings, okay?
Please. I’m saying please”*

In a scene from Terry Pratchett’s *Snuff*, constable Feeney, who is very fond of his “mum”, is propelled from his racism towards the goblins into greater understanding and eventual acceptance of them as his equals, all through the shocking new knowledge that goblins, too, have families:

“I keep thinking of the goblin girl, sir. She looked like a statue, and the way she spoke, well, I don’t know what to say. I mean, they can be a bloody nuisance – they’ll have the laces out of your boots if you don’t move quick enough – but when you see them in their cave you realize there’s, well, kids, old granddad goblins and—”

‘Old mum goblins?’ Vimes suggested quietly.⁴³

Yet the feeling of being propelled from the comfortably familiar into radically new and different is not necessarily the pleasant one, Pratchett continues, so Feeney immediately tries to re-establish his old racist worldview, by drawing an implicit parallel between the goblins and the domestic animals used for food: “Well, sir, I dare say cows make good mothers, but at the end of the day a calf is veal on the hoof, yes?”⁴⁴. Cows may be good mothers and goblins may form families, but at the end of the day none of these qualities can save them from their designated slot in the various human-centred hierarchies and economies: unless they start talking, and they don’t, good mothers’ babies end up as veal, and goblins remain marginalized creaturely life-forms, worthy of interest only as the subject of a dispassionate scientific study⁴⁵, but not of legal protection.

42 Wadiwel, D. J. (2015) *The War against Animals*, Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, p. 200.

43 Pratchett, T. (2012) *Snuff*, London: Corgi, p. 210.

44 Ibid.

45 It is no accident that *Snuff* opens with the description of the goblin religion being read by Lord Vetinari: bare life is brought into contact with the sovereign via science. In fact, the very plot of the novel revolves around transforming the goblins from bare life i.e. killable creatures into citizens worthy of legal protection, whose deliberate destruction is murder and not merely the noncriminal putting to death.

The meaning of family and kinship – for the privileged humans and the marginalized creaturely life-forms – is at the heart of Hannah Moskowitz’s young adult novel *Teeth* (2013). The titular character is a half-boy, half-fish (“fishboy”, as the narrator and the protagonist, Rudy, calls him affectionately), who lives on the mysterious island, populated predominantly by old people and a group of sinister fishermen. Rudy, a teenager, comes to the island with his family, his parents and a five-year-old brother, Dylan, because they are desperately seeking cure for Dylan’s cystic fibrosis. As official medicine cannot help, they reach for magic: “We came here from middle America. We stepped into a fairy tale”⁴⁶. Namely, the sea around the island is home to the island’s jealously-guarded secret, the magic Enki fish which heal the person consuming them. The catch, as in all fairy tales, is that one must not stop consuming them, hence so many old people on the island. Rudy recognizes that the desire for the preservation of human life, literally dependent on consuming these specific nonhumans, is the reason entire families get trapped: “Way back, decades ago, one of them was sick. And then they never left the island.”⁴⁷ On the island, Rudy is bored out of his mind, he misses his friends back home, and is tired from witnessing daily breakdowns in his parents, because Dylan is “better but not well”⁴⁸, and his initial rapid progress is halted. As the novel begins, the four of them are already transformed, through the extremes of progressive illness and faith in magic cures, into “a family alone in a dark room with everything crashing”⁴⁹. It is here that Rudy, as if in defiance of Spinoza’s anthropocentric dictum against “associating ... with the beasts, or things, whose nature is wholly different than our own”⁵⁰, befriends the monstrous fishboy, who is a beast, a thing, a fish, and a boy.

The fishboy, whom the islanders call “ghost”, is another secret of the island. His existence is denied by everyone, including his human mother, who literally threw him out once he started growing a fish tail at the age of four. When he was merely “half a boy with no legs”⁵¹, *Teeth* had a human name, Daniel, and was still a part of the human family, no matter how small and obscure. Yet he was easily and dramatically expelled from

46 Moskowitz, H. (2013) *Teeth*, New York and London: Simon Pulse, p. 3.

47 Ibid, p. 11.

48 Ibid, p. 4

49 Ibid.

50 Quoted in: Deyo, B. Tragedy, Ecophobia, and Animality in Anthropocene in: *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, edited by Bladow, K. And Ladino, J. (2018) in Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p. 206.

51 Moskowitz, H. op. cit. p. 138.

humanity – thrown into the water, where he cannot live – once he started developing animal characteristics, which coincided with his mother giving birth to his sister, “a real kid instead of half a kid”⁵². As 25-year-old Teeth recounts in his strange, childlike idiom⁵³, “And this woman, she could handle half a baby, she could hug that and put it to bed and cry about it, but she can’t handle half a baby and half a fish, because she hated fish, and she just wanted to eat fish all the time and kill all the fish, and after the boy . . . after the fishboy got his tail she didn’t even look at him ever again and she says she doesn’t know what to do and she throws him into the ocean and loves her new baby and eats more fish than any person ever should”⁵⁴. While “animals and disabled humans have been denied moral consideration because they fall below the threshold of the ‘normal human adult’”⁵⁵, Teeth, because he is both a fish and a disabled human, and not fully adult despite his age, is doubly denied any consideration, which results in him being treated the way he is, particularly at the hands of the fishermen. Namely, in addition to his fish tail and fin, the fishboy has a mouth full of hundreds of needle-like teeth – hence the name, Teeth, given to him by Rudy – and he uses them to slash open the fishermen’s nets and release the Enki fish, who he insistently refers to as his siblings. In retaliation, the fishermen beat and rape him: the novel opens with Rudy listening to strange screams all night, every night, trying to desensitize himself so he would get some sleep. However, “[i]t doesn’t work”⁵⁶, as Rudy ultimately cannot practice the kind of deafness exemplified by Descartes and Neil Gaiman’s Paul. Rudy gets attached to Teeth, and even accompanies the fishboy on one of his animal liberation expeditions. The problems arise once the successful liberation of Teeth’s siblings is translated into empty nets the next morning and no fish for Rudy’s sick sibling.

52 Ibid.

53 Teeth cannot breathe underwater, so he spends time on the shore, literally on the boundary between the human community on the island, and the sea with his fish “siblings”. Since no one taught him human language after the age of four, he taught himself listening to people from his hiding places: occasionally, Rudy feels that Teeth is using words whose meaning he doesn’t understand.

54 Ibid. There is a reason for Mrs Delaney’s hatred of fish: Teeth is the product of her being raped by the Enkis.

55 Jenkins, S. Against Performance Criteria, in: *Disability and Animality: Crip Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*, edited by Jenkins, S., Struthers Monford, K. and Taylor, C. (2020) in London and New York: Routledge, p. 98.

56 Moskowitz, H. op. cit. p. 2.

Instead of the expected, by no means irrelevant, black-and-white criticism of the destruction of nonhuman lives, their habitats and their families, Moskowitz in *Teeth* chooses to confront, through the medium of fantasy, the uneasy aspect of human engagement with nonhuman animals: the inevitability and even the necessity of the abovementioned destruction. Destruction of nonhuman life, crucially, does not have to be motivated by any hatred for the nonhuman, merely love for human family. If human life – the life of a sibling, parent, wife, or a child – depended on destroying somebody else’s life, if the preservation of one’s human family was directly predicated on the violent destruction of other families, especially if they were nonhuman, would one do it? Teeth, the monstrous secret and the ghost of the island, knows enough of humans for this to be a rhetorical question. Under the circumstances of human exceptionalism which posits that human life is always superior to nonhuman, that human family is more valuable than animal families, any notion or even practice of solidarity with the nonhuman – Rudy helping Teeth to release his siblings from the fishermen’s net – is dismissed as pretence:

“God, you’re even worse than [fishermen], you know? Because you walk around with your cute little family like you’re so fucking whatever, then you come down here and start hunting all of us. Yeah, you’re such a little hero, saving the one fish and going home and eating a whole father-whatever-baby set for dinner”⁵⁷. Donna Haraway, a human, would describe this relationship as “always asymmetrical living and dying, and nurturing and killing”⁵⁸. Teeth, who is only half-human, has a different, more visceral and infinitely less privileged perspective – “you [humans] come down here and start hunting all of us [fish and/or monsters]”⁵⁹. Even Teeth’s pleading with Rudy who is his friend – “So it’s time to stop eating my siblings, okay? Please. I’m saying please.” He swallows. “Magic word and all that.”⁶⁰ – does not change anything about this “asymmetry”. In a fairy tale of magic cures, “please” is not magical enough when it comes to sparing nonhuman life, and family in particular is revealed to be yet another site of human privilege.

Although Moskowitz, through Teeth, constantly faces the reader with the notion that the “magic fish” are someone’s siblings,

57 Ibid, p. 43. “Whatever” in Teeth’s idiom always replaces the word “mother” and all the associated words like “mothering”, “motherhood” etc.

58 Haraway, D. (2007) *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 42.

59 Moskowitz, H. op. cit. p. 43.

60 Ibid, p. 95.

too, the novel's ultimate acknowledgment of the necessity of killing and eating nonhumans for the preservation of human life sounds as far as possible from challenging anthropocentrism. A proper challenge to anthropocentrism is to be found, rather, in Moskowitz's mobilization of Teeth's monstrosity – his literal embodiment of human animality and animal humanity – to examine what human kinship with animals entails in the anthropocentric world. Most obviously, Teeth shares with the animals their vulnerability, their near-constant exposure to harm at the hands of humans, and the use of their bodies in industries of food, medicine, and even entertainment (Teeth's torment is undeniably a source of fun for the fishermen). But there is another aspect to this theme of monstrous kinship, reflective of real-life issues of challenging anthropocentrism. Namely, Teeth as a monster who liberates fish from the nets – subverting the fishermen's monopoly over the Enkis, and potentially sentencing ill humans, like Dylan, to death with his commitment to nonhuman freedom – offers a complex case study of animal liberation movement and its human agents. It is well-known that Animal Liberation Front (ALF), for instance, is classified as a terrorist organization despite its explicit commitment to non-violence, and that in mainstream culture animal rights activists are regarded virtually as human-hating monsters. Moreover, just like these species outlaws who face the legal and punitive state apparatus harnessed by dairy and meat industries' lobbies against them, Teeth endures considerable brutality from the fishermen who directly profit from enslaving and killing fish. The islanders, as representatives of ordinary people, turn a blind eye to this, and thus condone it, knowing that the lives of the people they love depend on the dead Enkis. They do not even like to think that someone like Teeth could exist, hence the moniker, ghost. While Teeth's stance appears morally superior – non-killing is better than killing; liberation is better than enslavement; self-sacrifice is better than self-centredness – like real-life animal activists, he is entangled in the meshes of moral grey zones, especially if we bear in mind the lethal consequences his actions may have for another helpless and disabled child. Finally, just like real-life animal rights activists, Teeth is suffering from overwhelming mental and emotional exhaustion that accompanies the affirmation of kinship with the nonhuman animals against massive and omnipresent anthropocentrism: “I hate being responsible. I mean, I like the idea of being responsible. [...] I like the idea of being fish Robin Hood. But I wish I could just . . . go. You know. Leave.”⁶¹ Being fish Robin Hood has become his identity (“I don't even

61 Ibid, p. 136

know what to be if they don't need me"⁶²), alienating him even further from the anthropocentric human community for which he occasionally longs.

"This is what hatred looks like"

The most obvious challenge that Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1997) places before anthropocentrism lies in the unflinching depiction of the disrespect and violence with which the nonhuman animals and the natural world are treated in industrialized modernity: the film is set in the Muromachi period (1336-1573)⁶³, which saw the transition of feudal Japan into an early modern era. Famously not interested in accurate depiction of medieval Japan, Miyazaki utilizes this transitional period primarily as an opportunity to meditate on the influence of industrialization on the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. In fact, having finished the film, Miyazaki stated, "I've come to the point where I just can't make a movie without addressing the problem of humanity as part of an ecosystem"⁶⁴. From the start of *Princess Mononoke*, however, humanity struggles with accepting such a role, and the relationship between the human and the nonhuman is represented as an escalating war. The very first words in the film, after scenes depicting beautiful fog-covered mountains and forests, empty of human presence, are: "In ancient times the land lay covered in forests, where from ages long past dwelt the spirits of the gods. Back then, men and beast lived in harmony, but as time went by, most of the great forests were destroyed. Those that remained were guarded by gigantic beasts who owe their allegiance to the great forest spirit. For those were the days of gods, and of demons."⁶⁵ What immediately follows is an abrupt, life-destroying intrusion of modernity – in the shape of a boar-god turned demon by Lady Eboshi's bullet – into the quiet village of the Emishi people. Marginalized Emishi, the viewers learn, were "almost wiped out 500 years ago", and are "still resisting assimilation": it is their young prince, Ashitaka, who gets infected with demonism and death created in the industrialized west. From the start, thus, *Princess Mononoke* – set in the early modern era, released in 1997 – foretells "the unnecessarily imperilled futures that

62 Ibid, p. 137.

63 Lenburg, J. (2012) *Hayao Miyazaki: Japan's Premier Anime Storyteller*, New York:Chelsea House Publications, p. 70.

64 Lenburg, J. op. cit. p. 69.

65 All the quotations are transcribed from the English-dubbed version of the film.

await the world's most vulnerable"⁶⁶, which are currently being realized.

The examples of human violence towards the nonhuman are numerous in *Princess Mononoke*: oxen are beaten in the rain; wolves and a wolf-girl are shot at; in the final battle the people of Irontown fight Okkota, the blind boar-god and his tribe, resorting to land mines and grenades to fight off boars, killing dozens of them with a single mine. Natural world, though obviously divine and populated by spirits and gods, is mercilessly mined for resources for human industry; contrary to the shallow anthropocentric perspective which views these resources as infinite, very early in the film the viewers are informed by one of Lady Eboshi's workers that "the iron in the sand by the lake" is already "used up". Indeed, the final battle between the humans and nonhumans is initiated by Lady Eboshi's plan to destroy the forest in order to continue with her production of iron, which is further transformed into rifles. The parallel hunting of the forest spirit, Shishigami, in order to cut off his head for the Emperor, is another symbolic dramatization of this disregard for the sanctity of nonhuman life; the fact that is the Emperor himself who demands the spirit's head also points to the legal and political conditions favouring this large-scale destruction of nonhumans. The ecocritical "emphasis upon humanity as part of a total environment or system and acknowledging the absolute dependence of humanity upon that system"⁶⁷, moreover, is to be found in the unambiguous multiplication of the human cost paid for the supremacy over natural world. The film opens with one particular human life, Ashitaka's, being destroyed by the consequences of the industrial rape of nature; near the end, all life, including all human life, is in danger from it. This insight is visually conveyed by the black goo spilling from Shishigami's headless form, covering and then almost swallowing the whole area of the forest and Irontown. Yet physical destruction of the nonhuman, conveyed so clearly by the spirit's severed head in a box, is not the only form violence takes in *Princess Mononoke*. A special kind of brutality is to be found in the cynical indifference to life and death in general, as expressed by Jigo (Jikobo), the Shishigami hunter in the service of the Emperor who poses as a monk: "These days there are angry ghosts all around us...

66 Knox-Russell, A. Futurity without Optimism: Detaching from Anthropocentrism and Grieving Our Fathers in Beasts of the Southern Wild, in: *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, edited by Bladow, K. And Ladino, J. (2018) Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p. 229.

67 Elgin, D. D. Literary Fantasy and Ecological Comedy in: *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, edited by Sandner, D. (2004) Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, p. 264.

dead from wars, sickness, starvation and nobody cares. So you say you're under a curse? Well, so what? So is the whole damn world." Miyazaki juxtaposes the hostility imminent in the designation "the whole damn world" with long scenes depicting stunning mountains, clouds, the forest, birds in flight and even the tiny *kodama* (tree spirits), all of which convey the message that the nonhuman world is beautiful, and alive.

Yet, just like *Teeth*, Miyazaki's film does not offer only black-and-white visions of natural beauty and the violence of the human agents of industrialization. The film, after all, opens with the claim that there was a balance in the past between "man and beast", but, also, that those were "the days of gods and demons". There is always a potential for all that spiritual presence in the natural world to turn demonic, and life and death, as the forest spirit shows, are close relatives. Shishigami's other incarnation is the ghastly Night Walker; the ground bursts into flowers under his feet, but leaves wither and die from his breath, as well. The wolves are as fierce and merciless as Lady Eboshi, and red-eyed monkeys haunt the Irontown at night, intent on eating humans. While preparing for the final battle, a boar in Okkoto's tribe's states unambiguously, "We are here to kill the humans and save the forest". San, the titular monstrous princess, who identifies as a wolf, has blood around her mouth in her first appearance; throughout the film she remains intent on destroying Lady Eboshi, and dedicated to bloodshed as the way of dealing with humans. In addition to this depiction of "animal resistance" which is far from fantastic⁶⁸, Miyazaki also faces the viewer with the more ambiguous aspects of industrialization. Lady Eboshi's female workers, for instance, are all former prostitutes who are fiercely loyal to her – one of them, Kyio, even shoots Ashitaka for attempting to leave Irontown with unconscious San. These women are unanimous in their assessment that work in Irontown "beats work in the brothel in the city". The lepers are even more grateful: "She [Lady Eboshi] is the only one who saw us as human beings. We are lepers, the world hates us and fears us, but she took us in, washed our rotting flesh and bandaged us." Osa, the leper saying this, continues, "Life is suffering, it is hard. The world is cursed, but still, we find reasons to keep living." Yet this commendable behaviour is not motivated by Lady Eboshi's commitment to social justice: the lepers design and make rifles, trying to make them as light as possible so that women could use them (one of them comments that the rifles they have already designed are "still too heavy for the girls"). The girls are employed to pump the bellows; when Ashitaka tries it, his only

68 See: Hribal, J. (2011) *Fear of the Animal Planet: The Hidden History of Animal Resistance*, Counterpunch.

comment is that it is “hard work”. Immediately after this, the viewers learn that the former prostitutes’ bodies are engaged in four-day-long shifts of this exhausting physical labour. Gender inequality, moreover, is not eradicated if women are given work other than prostitution – “We’re pumping those bellows while you pigs [male guards] are in bed”. And, of course, the rifles that the lepers design and see as their reason to keep living, will end many other lives. One person’s liberation from social stigma through industrialization is another’s death – is everyone’s death, potentially, in *Princess Mononoke*.

In addition to challenging anthropocentrism by revealing aggression and disregard for the nonhuman as its modus operandi, *Princess Mononoke* has significant ecocritical potential, bearing in mind that ecocriticism, as already established, entails “critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself”⁶⁹. Lady Eboshi is the embodiment of brutal and self-destructive anthropocentrism i.e. “human chauvinism”: “not afraid of gods”, armed with her rifle and her smoke-surrounded fort at the edge of the forest, she sees herself the rightful master of the natural world. Though she loses her arm to the dead wolf’s bite, Lady Eboshi remains unwavering in her perspectives on the nonhumans: resources to be extracted, resistance to be forcefully put down. San, “a cross between Kipling’s Mowgli and Boudica”⁷⁰, like Moskowitz’s Teeth, embodies the human-animal kinship which does not really have a place in human society (nor is San interested in it). It is Ashitaka, ultimately, who comes closest to the redefined human of ecocriticism. Yet, for the greater part of the film, he is a non-person who occupies the liminal state between life and death: a dying boy with an infected arm, already dead to his village and cast out, with his hair ceremoniously cut off and face covered like a leper. It is this human, no longer tethered to any specific community, who sets out on a quest to the west to see “with eyes unclouded by hate” the source of demonism. Ashitaka’s heightened and liminal humanity proceeds from his following the advice of the Emishi Wise Woman: “You cannot alter your fate, my Prince. However, you can rise to meet it, if you choose.” The boy rises to meet his terrible fate by choosing not to take sides, and choosing not to engage in violence⁷¹. As he is destined to become a hate-filled demon before death,

69 Garrard, G. (2004) *Ecocriticism*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 5.

70 Odell, C. and Le Blanc, M. (2015) *Studio Ghibli: The Films of Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata*, Harpenden: Kamera Books, p. 107.

71 In a scene early in the film, Ashitaka intervenes against the samurai mercenaries, and his infected arm is represented as sending arrows that chop off people’s arms and heads, like an axe. As if the symbolism were not already clear, one of the mercenaries even calls Ashitaka “a demon”.

Ashitaka struggles against hatred every chance he gets⁷². In the scene where he stops the fight between San and Lady Eboshi, for instance, Ashitaka even transforms his infected arm into a didactic instrument to send the crucial message to the humans of Irontown: “This is what hatred looks like. It’s eating me alive and very soon now it will kill me. Fear and anger only make it grow faster”. In an ironic comment on the effectiveness of his lesson, it is after these words that Kiyo shoots Ashitaka. True to his choice to refrain from violence, Ashitaka leaves Irontown bleeding and still carrying unconscious San, addressing all the inhabitants gracefully, with “You have my thanks”.

The same refusal of hatred is found in Ashitaka’s conversation with the wolf goddess, Moro, who is getting ready for the war.

Moro: “Will you join forces with San and fight the humans?”

Ashitaka: “No. All that would do is cause more hatred.”

Yet regardless of his liminal, radically non-violent and non-hating stance, Ashitaka never questions his human identity and his loyalties, which are firmly with the members of his own species. This loyalty is not expected of San – at the end of the film, she does not return to her “proper” place amongst the humans; the feral child is not forcibly civilized. But Ashitaka’s offer to her – “You’ll live in the forest and I’ll help rebuild the Irontown. Yakul and I will visit you whenever we can, alright?” – while immensely respectful of their differences, points to the continuation of the war rather than the radical human potential which Ashitaka, now healed, once embodied.

Conclusion

The three fantasies under discussion in this paper all pose specific challenges before anthropocentrism, while also illuminating its other designations, such as “human exceptionalism”, “human supremacy”, and “human chauvinism”. Although “A Dream of a Thousand Cats” invites interpretation as an allegory about the world-making power of dreams and the imagination, it is equally about human supremacy and the abuse to which humans subject their nonhuman “best friends”. The episode, in particular, problematizes pet ownership as the realization of trans-species friendship, revealing it as characterized, as Dinesh Wadiwel argues, by the same modes of control and violence applied to other nonhuman animals. In Gaiman’s hands, moreover,

⁷² Because Ashitaka is dying, moreover, Miyazaki does not have to confront non-violence as a privilege and examine the problems potentially attending its wider application, but only celebrate it as ultimate humanity. (Incidentally, both these perspectives on non-violence – privilege and ultimate humanity – are correct.)

anthropomorphism is mobilized to confront the issue of brutality towards the nonhuman animals based on their supposed absence of language; its utilization by the cat owner Paul, conversely, is revealed as yet another aspect of human chauvinism, as Paul attributes only indifference and selfishness to the cat in order to justify his own, profoundly unjust, treatment of her and her children. All the humans in this episode are never clearly depicted, apart from Paul's murderous hands in one frame, as opposed to several frames depicting the Siamese in great detail, as gigantic, and fully individualized. Such drawing choices additionally disturb the species hierarchy which rests on human exceptionalism; in the course of the episode human exceptionalism is revealed as a concept which merely covers, and condones, resistance-inducing violence.

Hannah Moskowitz's *Teeth* depicts the titular monster as a demonstration and a warning. "Fishboy" demonstrates human connection with the nonhuman animals in terms of his body, his vulnerability, and the near-total erasure of his existence and suffering by the majority of humans; he is also a warning, "reminding one of the limits of a culture's self-definition and of the consequences of transgression"⁷³. As *Teeth* shows, the consequence of transgressing the species boundaries and hierarchies in the anthropocentric world is abuse – the more unstable the boundaries, the greater the violence needed to reinforce them. Moskowitz's young adult novel can also be read as a commentary on animal rights' activism, which directly and materially challenges anthropocentrism in real life. *Teeth* does not only comment on the negative reception of this kind of activism in the mainstream animal-using culture, it also acknowledges the emotional and mental cost involved in attempting to challenge omnipresent anthropocentric assumptions, discourses and practices. Because the novel is centred on human illness treated by the magic fish, it necessarily touches on the moral grey zones which animal rights activism entails in this particular context. Although the nonhuman fish are obviously innocent victims of the human desire to live, in Moskowitz's treatment, human illness inevitably, and understandably, helps solidify the value of human family and human life.

Miyzaki's film, finally, shows immense respect for the divine-demonic natural world, but also understanding for the (self) destructive humans. Ecocritical texts, even when they challenge anthropocentrism, do not necessarily express anti-humanist ideas, Bryan L. Moore warns, and *Princess Mononoke*

73 Uebel, M. Unthinking the Monster: Twelfth-Century Responses to Saracen Alterity in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, edited by Cohen, J. J. (1996), Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota, p. 281.

arguably bears witness to Miyazaki's humanism as well as environmentalism. While the humanist aspect of the film is clear – as evidenced by the celebration of Ashitaka's best qualities of agitating against violence while being victimized by it, rising to meet his terrible fate with dignity, and truly watching both nonhumans and humans with “eyes unclouded by hate” – the environmentalist politics of *Princess Mononoke* remains undeveloped, apart from the recognition of the holiness and terror of the natural world, and the human and nonhuman cost paid in its destruction. (Perhaps that is enough?) But the conflict between the humans and the forest is not resolved in favour of either; Irontown, though destroyed, will be rebuilt, and the war can only continue.

All three fantasies, precisely because they are not reducible to simple ecological messages about protecting the environment, exemplify the complex issues that have been urgent in critical animal studies, ecocriticism, and global politics for quite some time now. At this point in history, the necessity of counteracting climate change and environmental degradation is a matter of life and death for the future generations of both nonhumans and humans. Yet whether or not “[w]e might find a way to live”, as Ashitaka tells Moro, remains an open question.

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„О ЧЕМУ САЊАЈУ МАЧКЕ”

ИЗАЗОВИ АНТРОПОЦЕНТРИЗМУ У ФАНТАЗИЈАМА
„САН ХИЉАДУ МАЧАКА”, ЗУБИ И ПРИНЦЕЗА МОНОНОКЕ

Сажетак

Рад се ослања на новије теоријске увиде из области критичке анималистике и екокритике да би размотрио неколико жанровски различитих фантазија (стрип, анимирани филм, и роман за младе) којима је заједнички критички став према антропоцентризму, који се такође одређује и као „људска изузетност”, „људска надмоћ”, и „људски шовинизам”. Корпус чини епизода „Сан хиљаду мачака” из стрип серијала *Сендмен* Нила Гејмена, роман за младе *Зуби* Хане Московиц, и анимирани филм *Принцеза Мононоке* редитеља Хајао Мијазакија. Иако врло различите, ове фантазије деле заједничку тему, а то је однос људског и нељудског, пре свега животиња. Такође, свака од њих критички преиспитује идеју природне, праведне и пожељне људске надмоћи над свим другим облицима живота. У делима која сачињавају корпус рада, људска изузетност се доводи у питање откривањем изузетног људског насиља у њеној основи, као и истраживањем суштинског средства људских и нељудских животиња. Мада ове популарне фантазије не исказују ни експлицитне, а ни једноставне еколошке поруке, с обзиром на наведене теме, оне функционишу и као екокритички текстови. У контексту глобалне еколошке кризе, извесну релевантност фантастике могуће је наћи управо у овом екокритичком потенцијалу.

Кључне речи: антропоцентризам, екокритика, фантазија, критичка анималистика, животиње