Ecosystemic worldview in Russian fairytales

Zaure Kadyrbekova

Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures-Russian Studies

McGill University

December 2013

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

Table of Contents:

Abstract

The majority of interpretations of literary animals focus on the animals' metaphoric or symbolic significance, overlooking the actual animal, which often completely disappears behind its metaphoric or mythological representation. Such traditional interpretations of animals expose the dominant anthropocentric focus of the humanities in general, and literary studies in particular. Yet, even as textual representations a lot of literary animals still exhibit some basic species-specific characteristics. By analyzing selected Russian fairytales through the animal studies perspective I will show that in a lot of Russian fairytales animals exercise their agency, retain their animal specificity and are involved in complex companionate relationships with humans. Such portrayal of animals in Russian fairytales warrants identifying traditional Russian worldview as ecosystemic – in which humans are positioned on an equal plane with other living beings. Given the insufficient number of interpretive works on Russian fairytales, and the lack of work on fairytale animals, the present application of animal studies to Russian folktales can be one of the first steps to filling this niche.

Les analyses des animaux dans la littérature se concentrent pour la plupart sur la signification de l'animal métaphorique ou symbolique et negligent par là même l'animal réel qui disparaît souvent derrière sa représentation métaphorique ou mythologique. Ces interprétations traditionnelles révèlent l'anthropocentrisme qui domine dans les sciences humaines en général, et les études littéraires en particulier. Pourtant, les animaux dans la littérature retiennent encore des caractéristiques spécifiques à leur espèce. En analysant certains contes de fées russes du point de vue des études animales, je vais montrer que les animaux gardent leur capacité d'être agent, qu'ils conservent leur spécificité animale et qu'ils sont impliqués dans des relations complexes comme compagnons des humains. Cette représentation des animaux dans les contes de fées russes montre que la vision traditionnelle du monde russe est écosystémique – c'est-à-dire que les humains sont sur un même plan d'égalité que les autres êtres vivants. Compte tenu du nombre insuffisant d'analyses sur les contes de fées russes, et du manque d'analyses sur les animaux dans les contes de fées en général, la présente étude représente une étape importante pour combler cette lacune.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Anna Berman for her meticulous comments, patient guidance and engagement through the learning process of this Master thesis. Her constructive critique and our long discussions were an enormous help to me.

I am deeply indebted to Prof. Stephanie Posthumus for introducing me to and helping me navigate through the complex interdisciplinary animal studies, as well for her insightful and always challenging questions, extensive editorial help and assistance with the French language.

Also, I would like to offer my special, heartfelt thanks to Graduate Coordinator Lynda Bastien for her always efficient support with all technical and administrative aspects of the thesis submission process. In addition, I would like to thank our liaison librarian Tatiana Bedjanian for her knowledgeable help in my bibliographical search. Furthermore, I owe my deepest gratitude to my wild and tame non-human friends, and to my human animal loving friends and wildlife rehabilitators who generously shared with me their own experiences with various animal species. And I am deeply grateful to my loved ones, who have supported me throughout the entire process.

Introduction

Quest for the meaning (or meanings) of folk and fairytales has resulted in a great number of interpretative scholarly approaches. Some scholars, such as Jack Zipes, insist that the folk and fairytale cannot be understood without analyzing the "socio-political-cultural context" of their production and reception (Zipes *Breaking the Magic Spell* ix). Freudians and Jungians apply psychoanalytical and psychological theories to uncover hidden ways in which fairytales are supposedly helping children and adults grapple with their psyche. Scholars such as Sandra Gilber, Susan Gubar, and Ruth Bottigheimer look at gender bias and constructs, reclaiming a voice for “silenced and muted" female characters. But amidst this scholarly search for lessons, hidden meanings and messages of folktales, there is another category of beings who are often overlooked and "muted" -- animals.

Animals abound in folk tales, but most of the time, fairytale animals are interpreted from the point of view of their metaphoric, symbolic and/or mythological meaning only as opposed to the significance of their actual animality for the text. It is not surprising because such reduction of animals to their symbolic and metaphoric significance for humans is typical of the majority of readings of literary animals. Such traditional interpretations of animals expose the dominant anthropocentric focus of the humanities in general, and literary studies in particular. They have little to do with the actual animal, which often completely disappears behind its anthropomorphic symbolic representation. Even as textual representations with symbolic or metaphorical meanings, a lot of literary animals still exhibit some basic species-specific characteristics: a wolf is a carnivorous predator, a duck is a waterfowl and so on. By analyzing selected Russian

fairytales I will show that in traditional Russian worldview animals exercise their agency, retain their animal specificity and are involved in complex companionate relationships with humans. Such closeness of humans and animals, with animals deemed not only equal, but also often superior to humans, warrants identifying traditional Russian cosmology as "ecosystemic" drawing upon Laurie Shannon's term. By "ecosystemic" she means a worldview in which humans receive an equal, and often humble, at times even inferior position among all other living beings (474). An ecosystemic worldview emphasizes what makes humans and diverse non-human beings similar and close, rather than fundamentally and irreconcilably different. This human-animal opposition is Rene Descartes' legacy, who separated humans from the rest of the living world by proclaiming them the only beings endowed with a rational soul. In the present analysis I will demonstrate that such human-animal opposition is not found in the ecosystemic cosmology of Russian fairytales.

The term "fairytale" receives slightly different interpretations in Western and Russian scholarships. Although, some scholars such as Zipes emphasize orality/performance of the folktale and the written form/reading of the fairytale, the most common approach to defining and classifying tales in Western scholarship considers fairytales to be one of the types of the folktale. The name 'fairy' came from the French *contes de fees* (fairytale) – the term French writers coined to distinguish magic tales from other types of folktales. Other basic types of folktale include:

a) fables – didactic and/or moralistic tales;

b) jokes – humorous tales (including so-called "tall" tales);

c) novella – romantic tales;

d) animal tales – tales in which anthropomorphic animals often represent human virtues and vices. They are often included in fables, as “animal fables,” because a lot of them are moralistic.

Thus, the main distinction between fairytale and other types of the folktale is the magic or marvel that is depicted as a normal part of human experience, and that is how fairytales are understood in Western scholarship.[1] Even though such fairytales acquired a written form, they are still considered “folk,” as different from “literary” fairytales that have specific authors.

In the Russian language, the Russian word *skazka,* which is often translated as both, “folk tale”, and “fairytale,” usually encompasses all types of folk/fairytales. Commonly accepted classification of Russian tales (*skazki)* divides them into three groups: magic, or fairytales, tales of everyday life, and animal tales (Alexander 14). The different types are distinguished by a qualifying adjective: magic tales - *volshebnye skazki,* animal tales - *skazki o zhivotnykh*, household tales (or tales of everyday life) - *bytovye skazki* and so on. Moreover, the words "folk" (*narodnye)* and "fairy" (volshebnye) are often used interchangeably, or alongside each other. Thus, the same tales can appear in different collections as *russkie narodnye skazki* (Russian folk tales),

[1] Some scholars consider "fairytale" an inaccurate term because a large number of tales do not necessarily have fairies. But, perhaps, such an approach is somewhat narrow. In a broader sense the word "fairy" can refer not only to fairies per se, but to the entire "other" world of fairy realm, inhabited not only by actual fairies but other fairyland beings and operated according to the magical, wondrous (fairy) laws. According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, even though the word "fairy" came to the English language through French from Latin Fata "goddess of fate," since the Middle English it came to mean 'fairyland, enchantment' (449). Scholars, such as Steven Swann Jones concur with such interpretations of the word "fairy," cautioning against understanding this word too literally (9). Jones writes that even though these stories may not have fairies in them, they are still fairytales because they incorporate the fairyland world as an essential part of their reality (ibid). That is why such tales are often referred to as magic or wonder tales. Thus, the attitude towards magic can be a good criterion for distinguishing fairytales from other types of folktales.

russkie volshebnye skazki (Russian fairytales)*, russkie narodnye volshebnye skazki,* (Russian folk fairytales) and so on. The same way as in the Western scholarship, folk fairytales are distinguished from literary, or "authored," fairytales. Thus, I will be using the terms "fairytale," and "folk fairytale" interchangeably since in the Russian language both of them refer to the folktale of magic.[2]

Because there is a category of animal tales, people usually turn to these animal tales and not fairytales to discuss animals in folktales. In fairytales the protagonist is human, while in animal tales all (or most) of the characters are animals. However, I will be examining fairytales instead of animal tales because in the majority of animal tales animals act as "stand-ins" for humans, often representing human vices and virtues (e.g., the fox represents slyness and cunning, the owl wisdom and so on). Animal tales often have a strong didactic/moralistic bent because animals personify human vices, virtues, character traits, different personalities and so teach a lesson based on that. It is fairytales that offer the most interesting and complex animal characters. It seems as though once freed from the burden of representing a human in disguise, animals can be animals as

[2] It should be mentioned though, that while generally within the Russian folktale scholarship "folktales" and "fairytales" are used synonymously, some differences among scholars' approaches can be observed. For example, Helena Goscilo uses "folktale" (*skazka*) to refer to folktales that do not necessarily have magic as an important element. Thus, to describe fairy (magic) tales, she uses the term "folk fairytale" (*volshebnaya skazka*), and authored tales that appropriate folk plots, characters, and motifs she calls "literary fairytales" (*literaturnaya skazka*) (17). Marina Balina, on the other hand, translates "fairytale" as *skazka* (108), often uses "fairytale" and "folkloric fairytale" interchangeably, but, too, distinguishes between "literary" fairytales, that are created by writers, and "folkloric" fairytale that come from traditional folk culture and do not have an individual specific author (ibid). Another folklorist Maria Kravchenko chooses to use *skazka* (folk tale) as a general term that comprises all types of folk tales. She considers the fairytale (*volshebnaya skazka*) to be a type of folktale in which magic is very important. However, similarly to what has been said previously, she, too, points out that *volshebnaya skazka* (fairytale) in Russian literature is often referred to as simply *skazka*. English terms "fairytale" (*vloshebnaya skazka*) and "folktale" (*skazka*, or *narodnaya skazka*) are used interchangeably because in Russian literature they are synonymous (Alexander 15) and most tales in the Russian language are referred to simply as *skazka*.

much as a given text can allow because human protagonists are there to fulfill their "human" roles.

Although, the sources of Russian tales are quite rich, Russian folktale scholarship has a rather limited interpretive focus. In contrast to Western scholarship, like the earlier Russian folktale scholars, current Russian folklorists tend to focus on the origin, classification, typologies and oral transmitters of tales rather than on diverse interpretative possibilities (Goscilo 9).[3] Due to such limitations of Russian folktale scholarship both in Russian and English, and limited access to the works on folktales in Russian published in Russia and unavailable in North American libraries, and a still rather young Russian animal studies, I have relied on the Western scholarship in these fields. Frequent references to the German (Brothers Grimm) and French (Perrault) folktales result from the fact that Perrault's collection of classic French tales (1697) and the Grimm Brothers' collection (1812) have become the standard canon of Western fairytales for the overwhelming majority of Western folktale scholars. Alexander Afanasiev's *Popular Russian Fairytales (Narodnye russkie skazki*, 1855-64) were published later.

The application of Western folktale scholarship to Russian folktales is justified by a decades-long fruitful exchange and dialogue within literary studies in general, and

[3] The works that deserve attention are Yu. M. Sokolov's *Russkii Folklore* (Russian Folklore) (1966), E.M. Meletinskii's *Structural-Typological Study of the Folktale* (1971) and *Problems of the Structural Analysis of Fairytales* (1974), S.B. Adon'eva's *Skazochnyi Tekst i Traditzionnaia Kultura* (Folktale Text and Traditional Culture) (2000) and others. Helena Goscilo points out that anglophone scholarly work on the Russian folktale is rather scarce. Some of the authors worth mentioning are Maria Kravchenko's *The World of the Russian Fairytale* (1987), Jack Haney's *An Anthology of Russian Folktale* (1999), *Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairytales* (2005) edited by Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo and Mark Lipovetsky. Thus, in addition to potentially contributing to Russian literary studies, this thesis can provide possible future venues for Russian folktale research.

folktale research in particular, between Western and Russian scholars. For example, the geographical-historical method of the Finnish school that aimed to document as many versions of each folktale as possible, recoding the date and location of its performance, and that resulted in the classification of primarily northwestern European folktales according to their motifs (*The Types of the Folktale,* started by a prolific Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne, 1910), served as the basis for N. P. Andreev's first Russian classification of folktales, *Index to Folktale Types According to the System of Aarne* (1929). Later this classification was expanded by an American scholar Stilth Thompson into *Aarne-Thompson (A-T)* and became a foundation for the comprehensive *Comparative Index of Types. The East Slavic Folktale* (Barag et al. 1979) is the most recent and complete for East Slavic tales (Haney 14). Another relevant example of the prolific exchange between Russian and Western literary and folktale scholarship is Vladimir Propp's influential *Morphology of the Folktale.* Due to this work, V. Propp is often recognized as one of the founders of structuralism, influencing such famous structuralists as Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, who built upon and expanded his method.

In addition to scholarly exchange, similarities in many plots and motifs warrant the application of Western folktale scholarship to Russian folktales. A lot of plots, motifs, and basic characters in folktales "transcend national boundaries" (Goscelo 11) and can be found in French, Italian, German, Irish, as well as Russian folktales. According to the *Aarne-Andreev* index out of 192 magical subjects, Russian folktales share 144 with

Western Europe, lack 48 and claim 38 as uniquely Russian.[4] Thus, the application of Western folktale and animal studies scholarship to Russian fairytales will prove fruitful.

Most fairytale scholars believe that one of the secrets of the appeal of fairytales lies in their layers and layers of seemingly never ending lessons, messages and meanings. As scholars look for these lessons and meanings in the protagonists, magic beings, gender stereotypes and social structures, they seem to overlook a very prominent fairytale presence – animals. Interested only in the mythological, symbolic, or metaphorical significance of fairytale animals, they cause the actual animals to disappear behind metaphors and symbols. Animal studies, on the other hand, pursue the animal. But as animal studies scholars seek to deconstruct the Cartesian animal-human binary opposition and re-read literary animal representations, they rarely turn to fairytales, especially, Russian fairytales. Thus, both fairytale scholarship and animal studies have neglected Russian fairytale animals.

The most common and authoritative interpretive approaches that emerged over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in fairytale scholarship reveal a very strong anthropocentric focus. Some of the most common are: anthropological, sociological, psychoanalytic, psychological, and aesthetic.

The anthropological perspective was one of the earliest modern approaches. As John Bierhorst explains, generally "anthropologists approach traditional tales as a source of cultural information[5]" (48). This approach can be divided into the "anthropological

[4] Even though plots and motifs in 144 tales may be similar to Western European tales, the details in the tales are specifically Russian (e.g., Russian *bogatyrs* serve at Prince Vladimir court, future heroes lie on a Russian stove (*pech*) and so on) (Goscilo 11).
[5] Mythologies, rituals, beliefs and traditions of a given nation/ethnicity/etc.

school" of the nineteenth century and scholars working from this perspective in the twentieth century. The “anthropological school" originated in Great Britain in the late nineteenth century and opposed the then prevailing "philological" movement that viewed fairytales as degraded myths and remnants of solar mythologies. These British cultural anthropologists, James G. Frazer and Andrew Lang being the most prominent, viewed tales as based on the religious and other social practices of modern "primitive" non-European peoples (ibid). They were interested in analyzing the functions and meanings of folktales in the contemporary oral tradition. Their contribution to folklore and folktale scholarship includes James G. Frazer’s notion of the "ritual theory of myth," according to which all myths go back to ancient rituals (ibid). Although animals occupied a prominent place in ancient mythology and pagan symbolism, they were also essential to the every day life of ancient people, whether nomadic or agrarian. But this anthropological school seemed to pay little attention to how the real animals’ significance in ancient cultures might have been reflected in folktales.

In the twentieth century, the question of the relationship between folktales and myths began to be replaced with concerns about how folktales reflected culture, especially, values and patterns of a society. In the 1920s, Bronislaw Malinovski proposed to view myth as "charter," suggesting that the purpose of tales was not only to entertain, but also to "legitimize the values of an entire society" (ibid). Another prominent cultural anthropologist of the time, Ruth Benedict, declared in her *Patterns of Culture* (1934) that folktales reflect and express the values, common patterns and overall personality of a given culture. Although, the view of the folklore and folktales in particular as a mirror of the corresponding culture was valid, they failed to recognize what the historian Harriet

Ritvo later pointed out that the “personality” of a culture can also be found in people’s interactions with animals (8). A greater awareness of and attention to the non-human presence in folklore could have led to a consideration of both folklore and interactions with animals as reflecting cultural values and patterns, which might have led to more interest in animal representations in folktales.

As the twentieth century progressed, the anthropological approach moved in new directions, most significantly European structuralism and American ethnopoetics. While structuralists were concerned with various patterns in folktale narratives, scholars of ethnopoetics explored style, "discovering stanzas, couplets and other features" that would help interpret folk narratives as a kind of poetry (Bierhorst 50). One of the most well-known works often associated with structuralism is Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). This Russian scholar's work remained rather obscure until 1958 when it was translated into English, after which it proved to be very influential (Ashliman 145). Propp defined morphology as "a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to the whole" (Propp *Morphology* 19). According to his theory, the "skeletal" structure of a hundred seemingly diverse Russian tales (and by implication, many others) is remarkably uniform, consisting of 31 "functions." Propp maintained that these functions underlie the structure of all tales. They frame the plotline common and basic to all fairytales of the hero setting out on a quest (the “departure” function) for something that he needs or is missing (the “lack” function). In addition to these "functions," Propp identified seven "roles" and associated with them

"spheres of action" (e.g., villain, donor (provider of magical objects), helper, the hero and so on)[6].

As influential as Propp's theory was, its thoroughly anthropocentric nature was manifest in Propp's view of fairytale animal helpers as replaceable. His theory bunched together magical objects and fairytale animals, because according to this theory whoever or whatever performed the function of a helper – whether it was a magical creature, a magical object or a fairytale animal – did not matter. But as the following analyses of Russian fairytales show, fairytale animals' animal specificity was often essential for their roles in the tales and could not be replaced with a magic object, or even another animal without altering the plotline.

Along with cultural anthropology, sociology was another field that emerged as a separate academic discipline in the nineteenth century, and offered its own ways of interpreting folktales. A sociological approach focuses primarily on two areas: the "sociology of story-telling, collection and publication" and the sociology in folktales, i.e.,

[6] Although, *Morphology of the Folktale* has been very influential, some scholars pointed out a number of weaknesses in it. For instance, some of the elements Propp identified, such as "Villany," "Lack," or "Helper" proved to be too general and applicable to any narrative, not just a folktale (Jones 14). Zipes points out such weaknesses in Propp's approach to folktales as a certain idealization of the "folk," overlooked questions of the patriarchal dynamics that often dominates in folktale narratives, a generalized, schematic presentation of the historical development of folktale (*Classical Folklore Research Revisited* 90). Modern structuralists, including Levi-Strauss and A.- J. Greimas, write that despite constant references to the "structure" of folktales, Propp's analysis turned out to be "strictly formalistic" (Tatar *Folkloristic Phantasies* 83). Levi-Strauss argued that by focusing on the syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic relationships in folktale, Propp dealt with the obvious elements of tales and failed to identify "more fundamental structures" and patterns of meaning (ibid). But despite some of its weaknesses, *Morphology of the Folktale* has inspired a number of scholars. For instance, A.- J. Greimas, "the champion of Levi-Strauss' critique of Propp", borrowed Propp's "seven spheres of action" to create his "actantial model" (ibid). Another prominent modern scholar Alan Dundes used *Morphology* as the foundation for his own model, but took a step further by condensing Propp's functions into "related pairs" (e.g., lack/liquidation, interdiction/violation etc.) and "compressing" tale characters into eight types according to their sphere of action (e.g., sought-after person, his/her father, the hero, the false hero etc. (Jorgensen 775).

various social relationships and institutions as presented in tales (Ashliman 146). Scholars interested in the first area of sociological inquiry research the dynamics between the audience and the teller, ethnographic and other activities of editors and collectors as they find, edit, prepare texts for publication. The central focus of the sociological approach to the folktale is on the family. This includes such issues as parent-child and sibling relationships, cooperation and rivalry, problems of large families with insufficient income, the institution of marriage (e.g., arranged marriages, remarriage etc.), care for elderly parents and many others (ibid). In addition to the familial relationships, sociological approaches look at social order (e.g., monarchy), governing institutions, religion and so on[7]. In her landmark *Postmodern Fairytales* (1999) Christina Bacchilega seeks to understand "contemporary transformations of fairytales" (3). Zipes insists that the fairytale be "examined as part of the intricate civilizing process in the Western world" (Zipes Breaking *the Magic Spell* 2).[8] But as these scholars make important observations about familial, sociocultural and political complexities of the Western world, they overlook the relationship of human and animal. As Donna Haraway writes, human and animal histories evolved alongside and cannot be fully understood without each other, whether these animals are pets, livestock, or wildlife -- all of which inhabit the fairytale world in great numbers.

From the larger sociological view, the Marxist perspective emerged, interested in the conflicts between rich and poor. Vladimir Propp argued that the study of folklore is

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[7] Some of the notable scholars working in this vein are Cristina Bacchilega, Ruth B. Bottgheimer, Marina Warner, Jack Zipes and others.

[8] In his books and reviews he stresses the importance of the socio-historical context of the origin, transmission, reception and interpretation of tales. His contributions to the fairytale scholarship include such works as *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993), *Fairytale as Myth, Myth as Fairytale* (1994) and *Fairytales and the Art of Subversion* (2012).

unavoidably the study of ideology, because folklore is the fruit of collective artistic labor by all "strata of population except the ruling one" (Propp *Theory and History of Folklore* 5). Thus, being the "art of the oppressed classes, both peasants and workers," as well as various social groups that tend to gravitate to "the lower social classes" (ibid), folktales reflect some issues and dynamics of social class inequality. Therefore, it is important that folktales (and folklore in general) be studied in relation to social formation within a socio-historical context[9]. Unfortunately, focused solely on class inequality and ideology in fairytales, fairytale scholars working within the Marxist perspective failed to recognize animals as "the bearers of meaning and catalysts for social change" (McHugh, *Literary Animal Agents* 490). As Harriet Ritvo writes about dog breeding practice in Victorian England, just by virtue of their breed dogs often act as markers of a social class, and can promote their non-aristocratic owner's social mobility.

Another offshoot of the sociological perspective is the feminist approach. As Ashliman notes, folk tales "provide substantial raw material for gender-related studies" (148). Lewis Seifert indicates "three broad areas of feminist concern:" i) how the negative portrayal of women in folktales affects, shapes and constructs the societal view of women; ii) "the female use of folklore;" and iii) the recognition and validation of female folk artists (337). Thus, the feminist perspective investigates a great number of questions, such as the role and influence of women as creators and transmitters of tales, how the

[9] Although, most major fairytales show these struggles not as "class conflicts, but rather individual battles" (Ashliman 147), some less known tales, and, especially, later literary fairytales provide a much more fertile ground for Marxist scholars. Some examples of such literary tales are Tamara Gabbe's *The City of Masters*, *or A Tale about Two Hunchbacks (Gorod Masterov, ili Skazka o Dvuh Gorbunah)* (1965), in which master-laborers free their city from rich foreign usurpers; Sophia Prokofieva's *While the Clock is Striking (Poka Biyut Chasi)* (1967), that shows a class conflict between ordinary, often poor citizens and their cruel greedy king.

changes in female roles over time reflect changing societal attitudes towards women, how traditional concepts of femininity (and masculinity) are formed and many others. There is much evidence that a large number of folktales were created and told by women.[10] Although, a lot of tales reveal a versatile and wide range of female characters – from traditional "stereotypically" passive heroines, to clever and resourceful women who often rescue their male suitors, to garrulous and domineering wives, from tales that are considered more archaic to more modern ones – a certain change can be observed in the gradual decline of independence, power and importance given to female characters[11]. In *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys*, Ruth Bottigheimer, a prominent folklorist and Grimm scholar, often writing from a feminist perspective[12], continues to analyze speech in folktales, focusing on the textual silencing of female characters[13].

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[10] For example, the majority of the contributors to the Grimm's collection were women, including the Grimm brothers' mother-in-law and two sisters who eventually married into their family (Cashdan 7, Ashliman 148). Marina Warner pointed out that although Charles Perrault is the most well-known "pioneer of fairytales," during his time he was "outnumbered" by female authors (*From the Beast to the Blonde* xii).

[11] However, paraphrasing Maria Tatar, "for every critic who is convinced that fairytales perpetuate gender stereotypes, there is one who asserts that they unsettle gender roles" (*The Classic Fairytales* xiii-xiv). Tatar quotes Alison Lurie who wrote that folktales show social order with "commendable gender equality" (ibid). Margaret Atwood disagreed with fairytales being "sexist," pointing out the difference between popular anthologies that recycle famous Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty type of stories, while leaving out less known and more obscure tales in which there are as many passive princes as there are active, resourceful female rescuers (ibid).

[12] Among other well-known scholars who explore female characters in tales is Marie-Louise von Franz. Although, being a Jungian scholar, she approached the subject from a psychological perspective (which will be described in more detail below). According to her *The Feminine in Fairytales* (1972), female characters in tales do not always necessarily reflect female psychology, but "represent certain aspects of the man's anima" (1). In this very well-known work she offers an interesting analysis of the interaction and interconnection between the real woman, and the anima, as it is reflected in fairytales. Among her other books, in which she addresses the feminine are *The Cat: A Tale of Feminine Redemption* (1999) and *The Golden Ass of Apuleius: The Liberation of the Feminine in Man* (1970). Other notable works within the feminist approach include Donald Haase's ed. *Fairytales and Feminism: New Approaches* (2004), Christina Bacchilega's *Postmodern Fairytales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (1999), Jack Zipes' ed. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairytales in North America and England*

Unfortunately, fairytale scholars working within feminist perspective fail to observe that there is another culturally "muted" being in tales – the animal. This may be because of the continuing influence of Descartes' animal-machine concept that denied animals the status of sentient beings and placed them in the same category as clocks and other mechanisms. So even though fairytale animals talk, and sometimes, talk authoritatively, fairytale scholars do not hear them and do not pay much attention to them. Thus, even though a lot of fairytale animals have voices, they seem to be mostly in the "mute" mode in scholarly interpretations. Even fairytale magic female humanoids, such as the Russian witch Baba Yagah receive more attention than animals[14]. Thus, it seems that even as fairytale feminists work on destabilizing gender stereotypes, they remain unaware of and so indirectly reflect anthropocentric speciesism[15] of literary and folktale scholarship.

Out of all the modern interpretive perspectives, it is the psychological approach that seems to be the most popular and prolific, as well as anthropocentric (Ashliman 140). Some scholars use the term "psychological approach" to refer to both a psychoanalytical

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(1986), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979).

[13] For instance, she points out that in *Rapunzel* instead of giving Rapunzel her own "voice" and allowing her to speak for herself, Wilhelm Grimm describes her feelings and thoughts. In another well-known tale *Hansel and Gretel*, Bottigheimer notes that not only does Hansel speak more than Gretel, but also his first words to Gretel are "Quiet, Gretel" - a good example of "narratively muting" a female character (51-70). In *Silenced Women* Bottigheimer notes that Wilhelm Grimm took words away from positive female characters and gave them to male, or negative female characters (115-31).

[14] For example, in Novikov, N.V. *Obrazy vostochnoslavianskoi volwebnoi skazki,* Nauka, 1974 Baba Yagah is included twice: as the hero's helper and as his enemy. This particular work looks at women-*bogatyrs* and tsar-girls as the heroes, weakening the feminist argument about gender stereotypes within the context of Russian fairytales.

[15] Speciesism – 1: prejudice or discrimination based on species; esp: discrimination against animals 2: the assumption of human superiority on which speciesism is based (*Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary,* 11th ed.).

perspective, based on Freud's theories, and a psychological perspective, founded on Jung's teachings (Ashliman 140, Jones 127-132), while other authors list them separately (Bottigheimer, *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys* ix, 16; Cashdan 11-15, Ziolkowski 9-14). Generally, two directions within both psychoanalytical and psychological perspectives are identified. On the one hand, scholars working with a psychological framework can explore the psychological mechanisms behind the story telling process (including the creation of tales, recollection, transmission, performance and so on). On the other hand, they can investigate psychological challenges and motivation of the characters in folktales. Both, psychoanalytical and psychological interpretive methods are based on the premise that one of the central functions and meanings of folktales lies in the fact that they reflect emotional, psychological struggles of a child's maturation process, and help children to resolve those inner conflicts successfully.

Just like the preceding approaches, the psychological approach proves to be thoroughly anthropocentric, failing to pay attention to the animals' complex place in collective and individual behavior, in the "collective unconscious," as well as failing to pay attention to the psychology and dynamics of diverse human-animal relationships, such as with pets, farm and hunting animals. Although unavailable during Freud's and Jung's lifetimes, a great amount of evidence about animals' mental and emotional capacities, and the complexity of human-animal relations, discovered by such fields as animal/comparative psychology and cognitive ethology that emerged in the twentieth century, could be incorporated within the broader context of human behavior as it is analyzed in fairytales. Such incorporation of discoveries in animal psychology, cognitive ethology and related fields is not only justified by the inherent interdisciplinarity of

folktale scholarship, but also strongly encouraged by such animal studies scholars as Cary Wolfe. He writes that in their assessment of a literary work, literary, cultural (and humanities in general) scholars can no longer ignore the findings about animals' "remarkable capacities" and the fact that animals "undergo an ontological shift from things to, in some sense, persons" in real life (567). Although, even such incorporation of new understandings of animals into folktale and literary criticism may still be seen as essentially humanist (and hence, anthropocentric)[16], it can still be a step forward towards taking literary animals seriously, focusing not only on their metaphoric or symbolic meanings, but recovering the real animals behind their literary representations and possible implications of such re-interpretations.

Unlike scholars of preceding approaches, Max Luthi – a well-known scholar of the aesthetic perspective that interprets and analyzes fairy and folktales as any human artistic creation from the point of view of their aesthetic value and effect[17] – did

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[16] Wolfe cautions against humanist "pluralism" – the tendency to extend the "sphere of consideration (intellectual or ethical) to previously marginalized groups" without questioning the "schema of the human" who initiates this extension. In other words, although we might be studying animals, we may still continue to remain anthropocentric because our perspective remains humanist (568).

[17] In his numerous well-known works on the traditional fairytale, Luthi seeks to show that all tales possess certain universal features. Although, in his search for the "universal" he may be similar to Propp, his approach is different in that he looks at universal stylistic features, rather than structural elements that were the focus of Propp's work. According to Luthi, the universality of these features results from the abstract style of fairytales, which is timeless, in which characters are types, and beauty is very general in nature, conveyed not through detailed description of its specific facial or bodily features, but through the effect it has on those who see it. He believes that such elements were "remnants of ancient myths" (*Once Upon a Time* 23), reflecting an "ancient intuitive" worldview, and it was because of such origins that these details carried with them their universal value.

Yet, some scholars point out certain weaknesses in his method. Zipes criticized Luthi's approach for losing "a sense of national and regional differences," for making sweeping generalizations, for being too descriptive and overlooking "historical origins and social functions" (*Classical Folklore Research Revisited* 89). Zipes also pointed out that Luthi failed to address the influence of tellers, collectors and audience members on tales (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 60).

acknowledge the presence of "real" animals in fair tales. He writes that in addition to the symbolic and metaphoric meanings of fairytale animals, European folk fairytales "reflect the relationship of man to real animals" (*Once Upon a Time* 70). But in his interpretation of animals, he, too, remains essentially anthropocentric. He focuses primarily on the symbolic significance of the human-animal interactions, and often includes psychological concepts. For instance, he writes that an animal helper may represent a human unconscious – the "natural," or instinctual in us, i.e., the "lower natures" that must be transformed into "higher ones" (*Once Upon a Time* 80). He uses this interpretation to explain the fairytale motif of when an animal helper is, in fact, an enchanted human, and to break the enchantment, this animal (or the "lower nature") must be killed so that the human can be freed (ibid)[18]. When he writes that our "lower natures," often represented symbolically in the form of a helper animal, must be "redeemed and purified by the power of the intellect," he seems to be suggesting that the "lower natures," or the helper animal, lacks intellect. Ascribing animals to the "lower natures" that are somehow incomplete or deficient unless they are transformed into the "higher" or human nature reveals a thoroughgoing anthropocentrism. [19]

Even though most of the authors and approaches mentioned above deal mostly with Western European fairytales, some of these interpretive methods were applied to Russian folklore and folktales. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Russian scholars employed mostly the same approaches for the study of fairytales that were used

[18] The Grimms' tale *The Golden Bird* is a good example of such tales: the fox who helps the protagonist asks the protagonist to kill him and chop off his head. Once killed, the fox turns into the enchanted brother of the protagonist's bride.
[19] This might also stem from a view of the human as the pinnacle of the evolutionary process that reveals an anthropocentric bias as well.

in the West (Haney 824). Thus, the pioneering folklorists Alexander Afanas'ev (1826-1871) and Fydor Buslaev (1818-1898), who worked in the second half of the nineteenth century, followed the mythological perspective considering folktales to be remnants of old myths. Like their Western colleagues, Russian scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were mostly interested in the history and origin of tales (ibid). Modern Russian folktale scholarship focused on the ethnographic approaches and geographical-historical method of the Finnish school (Pirkova-Jakobson xx). *The Aarne-Thompson Index* was translated into Russian and widely applied to Russian folktales, resulting in such works as N. Andreev's *Ukazatel skazochnyh syuzhetov po systeme Aarne* (1929). At about the same time the scholarly focus gradually began to shift to the investigation of structural components, formal and stylistic aspects, reflected in the active work of Russian formalists. Although Propp was a member of the Russian formalist group, his *Morphology of the Folktale*, published in 1928, is often categorized as structuralist, especially, after structuralists, including Levi Strauss, built up and extended Propp's method.

A Marxist perspective was very popular during the Soviet times. Through the Marxist lens, many tales were interpreted from the point of view of class struggle, or the poor protagonist's intellectual and physical superiority over his/her rich oppressor(s). Such interpretations of folklore are especially evident in Pavel Bazhov's tales/*skazy* from *The Malachite Casket* collection that depict the life and struggles of the Ural working class. Overall, even modern scholars, such as Elena Shastina and Elena Novik, tend to show "the Russians' predilection for tracing the history of folktales" (ibid), their origin and connections with other forms of folklore rather than adopt some more radical

interpretive method. For example, Maria Kravchenko's *The World of the Russian Fairytale* (1987) explores various cultural sources (e.g., ancient beliefs, ideas, myths etc.) of the motifs, themes and images of Russian tales (1). Another work, *Skazochnyi text i traditzionnaya cultura* (2000) by S.B. Adon'eva investigates the relationship between Russian folktales and traditional folklore in general. She looks at how Russian folktales reflect a certain "picture of the world" (*kartina mira*) or worldview, and analyzes "cultural categories" of causality, space and time to support her argument.

As diverse and numerous as these ways of reading and interpreting tales are, for the most part they concentrate on the human only in the tales. While scholars analyze human protagonists and magic beings, denouncing the "silencing" of women and social inequality, most of them continue to overlook animals. Most of the earlier works about animals in Russian folklore, such as by Afanas'ev, L. Kolmachevky's *Animal Epos in the West and Among Slavs (1882)*, and V. Bobrov's *Russian Fairytales about Animals (1909)*, offer a traditional reading of fairytale animals, focusing on their symbolic, mythological and/or allegorical significance. Grace Halstead Young's 1996 dissertation *The Role of Animals in Russian Fairytales* is one of the first attempts to offer a different reading of the familiar tales. She points out that the human-animal relationship is much more complex than a symbolic or mythological interpretation can reveal. However, she still heavily relies on the symbolic meaning of animals, contrasting pagan views of animals with their place in Christian beliefs. And although she writes about animals being "creatures in their own right," animals here are still analyzed from the point of view of "what they can do to and for humans." Alexander Gura's *Animal Symbolism in Slavic Folk Tradition* (1997) also explores folklore animals as symbols rather than creatures in

their own right. Determined and intent on understanding and expanding the many "portraits of men,"[20] fairytale scholarship reveals a very strong anthropocentric focus, where anything and anyone, including animals, that does not seem to contribute another brushstroke to the "portraits," is laid aside. This is somewhat paradoxical because as animal studies shows, "animals are good to live with"[21] and humans' self-perception often arises from their ways of understanding animals. Thus, including animals can make "the portrait of (hu)man(s)" much richer.

To counteract the strong anthropocentrism of fairytale studies and to recover the "muted" and disappearing animals, fairytale studies can collaborate with the field that strives to be equally decidedly non-anthropocentric, that is animal studies. Animal studies is a field in which animals, human-animal relationships and intertwined human – animal histories are studied from various interdisciplinary perspectives[22]. The field being fairly new and interdisciplinary, different scholars often place a different emphasis when they define it. For example, if Susan McHugh – a well-known literary animal studies scholar – considers animal studies "an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that coalesces around

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[20] This expression is taken from the title of Max Luthi's book *Fairytale as Art Form and the Portrait of Man.*

[21] I am paraphrasing here Donna Haraway's assertion that "dogs are here to live with" (*Companion Species Manifesto* 5).

[22] Often critical animal studies and literary animal studies are distinguished. "The field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS) formed to investigate and challenge the complex structural, institutional and discursive dynamics surrounding human-animal relationships. CAS exists to facilitate the end of both human and nonhuman exploitation, oppression and domination based on this intersectional analysis of human and animal oppression" (http://cstms.berkeley.edu/current-events/one-struggle-intersectionality-and-critical-animal-studies/). Literary animal scholars explore how such issues have been reflected, reinforced, and deconstructed in literary texts. But due to the interdisciplinarity of animal studies, such distinctions within the field itself are not always clear-cut.

questions of agency and the social" (*One or Several Literary Animal Studies* 488), another well-known name in the field – Cary Wolfe – argues that it is "ethical differences" of our relations with inanimate and animate beings that have been the primary interest of "the literary and philosophical end of animal studies" (Wolfe 569). Despite certain variations in how different scholars describe the major focus of the field, animal studies can be characterized by the engagement with concepts such as agency and subjectivity as a way of understanding animals as beings-in-themselves, with issues related to the humanity/animality binary opposition, and with questions about human-animal relations in the past and now and about literary animal representations.

Before animal studies was established as an independent field of scholarly inquiry, various works on animals in a number of humanities and social sciences fields began to emerge during the 1970s and 1980s (Wolfe 565). In addition to the animal rights movement in the 1970s pioneered by Peter Singer and Tom Regan, extensive work about animals and their emotional and mental capacities in the fields of cognitive ethology and ecology over the last two to three decades led to the emergence of animal studies initially as a branch of cultural studies. As a result of the new findings about the abilities of animals in such fields as cognitive ethology, the prevailing Cartesian view of animals has increasingly been revisited and questioned. *The Animal Estate* (1987) – an examination of the roles of animals in Victorian culture by Harriet Ritvo, an American historian with particular interests in environmental history and natural history – is one of the earliest works. Another important work of the 1980s was Andree Collard and Joyce Contrucci's *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence Against Animals and the Earth* (1986) - a major work of ecofeminism that made a strong connection between ecology and Radical Feminism.

James A. Serpell, who is currently Director of the Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society (PA, USA), is another author who contributed to the development of what would become animal studies. He analyzed the behavior and welfare of companion animals and other topics pertaining to human-animal interactions, in many of his books including *In the Company of Animals* (1996).[23]

At the same time scholars in philosophy were exploring similar issues. Among landmark works are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), and Jacques Derrida's *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (1991) in which he investigates Heidegger's notion of the animal as "poor in world." All these scattered works and discussions of the 1980s and 1990s laid a solid foundation for animal studies as an independent discipline in the 2000s. As Wolfe points out, a sure sign of the consolidation of animal studies as a discipline these days is not only the "opening up of a theoretical and critical space of its own" (565), but also the increasing number of symposia, conferences publication venues and so on not only in North America, but in other countries, such as Australia, Great Britain, and France. Some of the most discussed and debated concepts and ideas include animal agency, the human-animal divide, and human-animal relationships.

This human-animal divide – a Cartesian legacy – insists on human exceptionality, claiming that the differences between humans and animals are differences in kind, and that animals' capacities, including intentional behavior (often used interchangeably with

[23] Among other literary scholars whose works laid the foundation of what would come to be known as animal studies are Carol J. Adams - an American feminist writer, and animal rights advocate (*The Sexual Politics of Meat* 1990 and *The Pornography of Meat* 2004), Margot Norris (*Beasts of the Modern Imagination*), of course, Donna Haraway with her seminal *Primate Visions* (1990), *Companion Species Manifesto* (2004) and *When Species Meet* (2008) and many others.

agency), are insurmountably and forever inferior to those of humans. The question of whether animals can act, i.e., be agents has raised one of the most recent and heated debates. Scholars in different fields advance different arguments against assigning animals intentional behavior (i.e., agency or moral agency[24]). A lot of them follow the Cartesian line of reasoning, according to which the source of agency, or free will, is the rational soul (or "mind"). Human agency, manifest in our actions and choices, does not result from external or internal (instinctual) influences, but from our rational mind. Since they believe that animals do not have a soul, or rational mind, they conclude that animals cannot be agents. Arguments against animals as agents by such scholars as Stephen Stich and Donald Davidson advance various requirements: a belief system, language, the capacity to pretend or an awareness of mistakes (Routley 385).[25] In *Why Animals Can't Act,* Ralf Stoecker claims that "strictly speaking there is no animal action, only behavior" (255). As people strip animals of a "rational mind" and along with it agency, the human-animal relationship is essentially reduced to subject/master-object/thing dynamics. In real life, this leads to complete disregard for and various forms of abuse of real animals, while in a critical assessment or interpretation of literary works scholars this leads to overlooking literary animal representations, or emphasizing instead their metaphoric or symbolic significance.

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[24] As McFarland and Hediger point out, "theory of agency moves among a number of closely related terms – free will, ability, rationality, mind, morality, subjectivity" and so on (3). Agency and moral agency are often used interchangeably because "agency" has to do with how humans, and animals, live in the world (ibid). The possibility of animal morality, or moral agency is the point of contention closely associated with agency.

[25] For a detailed explanation of the above arguments see Richard Routley's "Alleged Problems in Attributing Beliefs, and Intentionality to Animals" in *Inquiry*, 24.

Along with the problem of animal agency, animal specificity (or animality) is one of the most problematic questions in animal studies, and literary animal studies in particular. How much of the specific real zoological characteristics a literary animal representation retains often determines how visible in the text the "real" animal is behind that literary animal's metaphoric or symbolic role. And this matter of visibility and representation is one of the similarities between animal studies today and women's studies, as well as minority, ethnic, and gender studies in their early days. Like previously marginalized, underrepresented (or not represented at all), silenced and often objectified minority, gender and voiceless groups, animals have long been invisible, non-existent, considered only from the perspective of what they could do for humans. As Susan McHugh noted, the most common form of literary animals has long been metaphors (*Literary Animal Agents* 488). Employed as a metaphor, the animal loses its value as a being-in-itself and is of interest only as a means of representing certain qualities and/or characteristics of humans. As an example, McHugh gives what is arguably "the most famous representation of the Romantic artist's transcendence of human society" (*One or Several Literary Animal Studies* 2) - Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*. In this poem an aspect of the nightingale's animal specificity - a bird singing at night, thus as if removed/distanced/alienated from the rest of the world and life - is used to represent Keats's ideas about a Romantic poet's condition.

A lot of animal fables and allegories are another example of how literary animals can make the real animal completely disappear. In animal fables and allegorical stories, animals usually represent vices, virtues or certain character traits. For example, a fox stands for guile and cunning, an owl wisdom, a hare frightfulness, a bear gullibility of

dimwittedness, a cockerel - vanity and so on. So, while sometimes in metaphors, animals can retain at least some of their animal specificity (such as a nightingale's nocturnal nature in Keats), in a lot of such fables and allegories, this specificity is completely lost behind anthropomorphic assumptions and stereotypes. Thus, in the tale *Little Sister Fox and Wolf* (*Лисичка-сестричка и волк)* about a cunning fox who steals a peasant's load of fish, but tells the wolf that she fished it out of an ice-hole on a frozen river, the actual fox and the actual wolf are of no interest. It is the stereotypes about them – the fox as sly and cunning[26], and the wolf as dim-witted – that justify their roles in the tale. Precisely because it is the stereotypes and not the real animals that matter in such tales, the bear, considered equally dim-witted, frequently replaces the wolf in different tales, while a magpie can become the sly and cunning one, often outwitting the fox[27]. By contrast, in fairytales, very often the animal's specificity – some basic species specific zoological characteristics – is important for the story so that replacing a given animal would often necessitate changes in the story line. While fairytales do employ symbolic and mythological associations of fairytale animals, they often "magically" balance such associations with some essential real zoological characteristics of the animal species in question. For example, a horse is not only a magical fairytale steed, whose wisdom and power are often attributed to the horse's mythological

[26] That is also often meant to represent a sly and cunning woman (Afanas'ev v. 1, variant #7, 13).
[27] Other examples of such tales include *A Bast Shoe – for a Hen, a Hen – for a Goose (За лапоток-куточку, за курочку – гусочку), Fox the Midwife (Лиса – повитуха), Peasant, Bear and Fox (Мужик, медведь и лиса)* (Afanas'ev's Collection v. 1 – 3); *Bear and Fox* (*Медведь и лиса), Milk Mushroom, Magpie and Fox (Груздь, лиса и сорока), About Fox and Wolf (Про лису и волка)* (Shastina's Collection).

associations with Sun worship, but also a real horse that needs to eat in green pastures to be healthy and strong.

Surprisingly, even literary animal studies scholars who are resolved to explore human-animal relationships and question literary animal representations seem to be paying little attention to fairytale animals. Aside from a few works, such as Lewis Seifert's article *Animal-Human Hybridity in d'Aulnoy's 'Babiole' and 'Prince Wild Boar'* (2005), or Boria Sax's book *Animals in Folklore* (2013), fairytale animals appear neglected. Within Russian fairytale scholarship, fairytales animals receive equally insufficient attention. For example, one of the most recent efforts to explore the "other animals" ("other" than human) in Russian literary scholarship is a collaborative volume by Jane Costlow and Amy Nelson, published in 2010, that resulted from a 2007 international interdisciplinary conference, titled *The Other Animal: Situating the Non-Human in Russian Culture and History*, held in Roanoke, VA. Contributions to the volume vary from writings about specific animals (*The Contested Portrayal of Wolves in Nineteenth Century Russia* by Ian M. Helfant, and *Human-Bear Encounters in Late Imperial Russian Writing* by Jane Costlow), to animals in Soviet, late-Soviet and post-Soviet literature. But animal representations and human-animal relations in Russian fairytales remain overlooked.

Such lack of scholarly research on animals and human-animal relationships in Russian folktales could be due to the overall orientation of Russian folktale scholarship towards the origin and classification of tales rather than their interpretive possibilities. Another reason could lie in the fact that animal studies as a mode of inquiry originated in the West. As a brief review of literature on animal studies shows, most critical and

theoretical works on the literary animal have been interconnected with and reflect "political concerns of Anglo-European culture," such as a preoccupation with individual rights, problems of subjectivity, as well as the moral consequences of oppression (Costlow 2). In his overview of animal studies, Wolfe himself admitted that he was covering only the animal in Western literature and culture, because an investigation of the animal in non-Western literature and culture would need a completely separate work (Wolfe 564). Consequently, the question of the animal in Russia, Russian literature and Russian fairytales in particular has been much less explored. Most works on fairytales animals, beginning as early as V. Bobrov's *Russian Fairytales About Animals (1909)* and later works, such as Afanas'ev's famous collection (1936) and A.B. Gurov's *Animal Symbolism in the Folk Slavic Tradition (1997)*, focused on the symbolic significance of fairytale animals and offered their mythological interpretation only (for example, a hedgehog's wisdom is explained by his special role in the myth of creation of the universe). They did not investigate whether or not actual animals, and not just their symbolic meaning, were important in the tales. Given the insufficient number of interpretive works on Russian fairytales, and the lack of work on fairytale animals, the present application of animal studies to Russian folktales can be one of the first steps to filling this niche.

The fairytales for my analysis come from two collections. I will use Afanas'ev 's *Russian Folk Tales (1958 6th ed.)*[28] as my primary source as the most well-known and the largest collection of Russian folktales. In addition to the Afanas'ev 's work I will use a collection of *Russian Fairytales from Siberia and Far East: Magic and Animal Tales*

[28] 1st ed. of Afanas'ev's folktales was published from 1855-1863; 2nd ed. – 1873; 3rd ed. – 1897; 4th ed. – 1913-1914; 5th ed. – 1936-1940.

(1993), edited by E.I. Shastina. Although, Shastina's collection is much smaller than Afanas'ev's, it provides a wider geographical range by bringing ethnic Russian tales from Siberia and Far East. A wider geographical representation is important because this paper explores the view on animals in the Russian oral tradition as a whole, and so is not limited to just one geographical area. If a certain perception of human-animal relationships can be traced in tales from diverse parts of the Russian land, it is stronger evidence that such a perception has more to do with the Russian people's sense of cultural identity than with possible local influences, animal species available in the area, or geographical conditions. The tales from Afanas'ev's collection include: *The Magic Steed (Волшебный конь), The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa (Жар-птица и царевна Василиса), The Sea Tsar and Elena the Wise (Морской Царь и Елена Премудрая),* Prince Ivan, the *Firebird, and a Grey Wolf (Царевич Иван, жар-птица и серый волк), The White Duck (Белая уточка)* and *The Magic Ring (Волшебное кольцо).* I have chosen these tales because: 1) they contain some of the most common motifs (such as the motif of *Little Hunchback Horse (Конёк-Горбунок),* the battle of beasts and birds), 2) they are well known, especially, *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa, Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf,* and *The Magic Ring;* 3) they show some of the most interesting animals and human-animal relationships. From Shastina's collection I have selected a Siberian version of *The Magic Ring, Ivan the Tsar's Son with Golden Locks (Иван Царь-*

с к и й С ы н З о л о т ы х К у д р е й), Ivan the Peasant's Son (И в а н к р е с т ь я н с к и й с ы н) and Sivko, Burko, Prophetic Kaurko (С и в к о Б у р к о, в е щ и й К а у р к о) – these tales show continuity and similarities in the tales that come from such diverse regions.

Even though Alexander Nikolaevich Afanas'ev (1826-1871), Russian folklorist and the author of the largest collection of Russian folktales, himself indicated that some of his tales came from old 17th and 18th centuries manuscripts, suggesting that the tales might have been created much earlier, precise dating of fairytales is impossible. Due to the problematic dating of tales, I will refer to the period during which these tales might have been created and disseminated as "traditional Russian culture," or "traditional oral Russian culture," with "cosmology," and "worldview" used interchangeably.[29] I will explore what traditional Russian cosmology thought of animals and human-animal relationships as it comes through in fairytales. I chose folktales as an object of such exploration because since the age of Romanticism, folktales and folklore in general are considered to be a repository of national character, reflecting national culture and revealing much about a given society's way of life. As Costlow points out, questions about animals will be "inflected quite differently" to a certain extent because of Russia's historical and cultural background (3). This includes Russia's "preoccupation with issues of identity, marginalization, and uniqueness" that are intertwined with the "animal other"

[29] Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines *cosmology* as a) a branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of the universe; b) a theory or doctrine describing the natural order of the universe. It defines *worldview (weltanschauung)* as a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world, esp. from a specific standpoint. Given the common underlying idea of a certain perception of the natural order in the world, these two terms will be used interchangeably to describe how people who created and disseminated these tales might have thought about the natural order of the world and their place in it.

(ibid), as well as Russian Orthodox hagiography of saints interacting with animals and agrarian and hunting realities that wove human and animal histories together.

My exploration of animals and human-animal relationships in Russian fairytales is comprised of three chapters. The first chapter focuses on the portrayal of animals as agents in the tales *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and a Grey Wolf (Царевич Иван, жар-птица и серый волк)*, *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa (Жар птица и царевна Василиса),* and *The Magic Ring (Волшебное кольцо)*. Using speech analysis, based on that of Ruth Bottigheimer's in *Grimms' Bad Girls and Brave Boys*, and analyzing the organizational/structural conventions of fairytales, I will show how expected anthropocentrism becomes weakened, how the human shifts off center, and how as a result the animal emerges as an active agent, a leader, who expresses feelings, instructs, guides and even reproaches the human.[30]

The second chapter looks at animal specificity – how fairytale animals often exhibit some characteristics specific for their species. In addition to the tales mentioned in Chapter One, I will look at *Ivan the Tsar's Son with Golden Locks (Иван царский сын золотых кудрей)*, *Ivan the Peasant's Son*

[30] Throughout this work I will be using the expression "the animal" not only because it reflects common modern usage, but also because other possible expressions such as the "nonhuman animal" might be either unfamiliar or debatable to a broader range of readers. Alongside "the animal" I will be using "nonhuman beings," or "nonhuman creatures" whenever the context necessitates referring to the human as one of many life forms.

(Иван крестьянский сын), *The White Duck (Белая уточка)*, *The Tale About a Slashing Fellow, the Apples of Youth, and the Water of Life (Сказка о молодце-удальце, молодильных яблоках и живой воде)*, *The Frog Princess (Царевна лягушка)* and *The Tale About the Frog and the Bogatyr (Сказка о лягушке и богатыре)*.

I will be discussing animal specificity as species specific, rather than individual animal specific. For instance, when analyzing a wolf from *Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf*, I will be looking for features that characterize this wolf as a representative of Canis Lupus species, and not for features that distinguish this wolf from a wolf of another tale. Since most fairytales show not so much a specific individual hero but *man*, or *every(hu)man*, so it is possible to look at fairytale animals as representatives of their diverse species.

The third chapter explores human-animal relationships in the tales[31] already introduced in Chapters One and Two, using Donna Haraway's concept of *companion species*, which will be explained later. This chapter will analyze complexities of the

[31] *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and a Grey Wolf* – the relationship between the human protagonist and a grey wolf; the relationship between the protagonist and his horse – *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa*, *The Magic Steed, Ivan the Peasant's Son, The Tale About a Slashing Fellow, the Apples of Youth, and the Water of Life;* the relationship between the protagonist and an eagle – *The Sea Tsar and Vasilisa the Wise.*

companionate human-animal relationships as they are shown in Russian fairytales, including affection, suffering and dynamics of the relations of use.

The conclusion of my thesis addresses how such re-reading of fairytale animals in Russian folktales can contribute to Russian studies, what insights into the "eternal" Russian questions of identity and national uniqueness it can bring. On the one hand, the investigation of human-animal relations is intertwined with the examination of what it means to be human, how humans perceive themselves as they construct the animal. As Ritvo writes, people's interactions with animals reflect their culture and self-perception. On the other hand, as I mentioned above, folktales are believed to reflect a people's worldview. Therefore, analyzing human-animal relations in the context of Russian folktales can provide insights into how Russians perceived themselves, and deepen the understanding of the difference and similarities between Russian traditional cosmology and other cultures. Thus, exploring how people related to animals in traditional Russian culture can expand our understanding of Russian national identity, and, potentially, raise questions and concerns about current human-animal dynamics and human-nature issues in contemporary Russia.

Chapter 1. Animal Agency

The issue of animals in general and animal agency in particular has been problematic for literary studies. As McHugh writes, "literary critics historically have rendered the animal a non-issue" by reading them as metaphors, symbolic and anthropomorphic figures (*Animal Farm*'s *Lessons* 24). The same holds true for folktales, often considered the basic form of literature[32] and art in general (Luthi, *Once Upon a Time* 146). In this section I will argue that Russian fairytales are not as anthropocentric as traditionally believed, and that in a lot of Russian fairytales, animals are shown as agents – independent characters, capable of making choices and initiating action.

As the starting point of their argument for animal agency, defenders of animals as agents often refer to Darwin who stated that the difference in mind between humans and animals is that of degree, not of kind. And "various emotions and faculties […] of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition in the lower animals." Thus, as they try to define animal agency, they focus on working out the "degrees of difference," as well as refining current definitions of human agency. Derrida, as one of the scholars who focus on the degrees/complexities of difference, points to the reductive nature of the commonly used word "animal," which not just minimizes, but almost erases the richness, diversity and "degrees" of animal life, from lizard to dog, shark to lamb, camel to eagle (34)[33].

[32] Although some scholars believe that folklore is separate from literature, other scholars, such as Max Luthi, consider it to be a form of literature

[33] Describing ecosystemic early modern humanity, Shannon observes how uncommon the word "animal" is, with beasts, birds, and fish used instead. The following analyses of Russian fairytales will demonstrate that the tales do not use the singular term "animal" and instead categorize non-human beings differently.

Some scholars, such as Helen Steward, approach the problem of animal agency using evidence from psychology. Steward starts by questioning a conception of intentional agency that connects agency to other capacities, especially, to language and propositional attitude concepts, which include "the capacity to have beliefs, and the capacity to ascribe beliefs to others"(218). Citing research findings from developmental psychology, she argues that a basic concept of agency is innate and is acquired by sentient beings early on before the development of propositional attitude concepts. She critiques common interpretations of animals' potential intentionality as a mere reflex or a stimulus-prompted reaction. While recognizing the importance of instinct in the lives of animals (e.g., food prompts the cockerel to move across the yard), she emphasizes that it is crucial for the concept of agency "to allow the animal a certain freedom and control over the precise movements" that will help it satisfy those instinctual wants and needs (225). The animal is an agent when it controls its bodily movements "from moment-to-moment," when it chooses how to satisfy its desires and needs, and possesses some representational and emotional states (even though we may not have precise terminology for these) (229). Ryan R. Judkins refers to agency as the ability "to be aware of the world and to be capable of acting in it" (159). Drawing on Darwin’s idea that emotions are the catalyst for the evolution of morality, Marc Bekoff argues that some animals have moral codes of behavior, because having been subjected to evolution as everything else,

emotions are not unique to humans (88).[34] As the present study will demonstrate, animals in Russian fairytales not only act, but also express a wide range of emotions.[35]

Although animal studies scholars supported by the evidence from such fields as cognitive ethology and comparative psychology argue that animals do have agency, they often define animal agency in different ways. While McHugh often talks about "a spectrum of agency forms" (*Literary Animal Agents* 489, *Animal Farm*'s Lessons 26), there is a clear underlying concept: no matter what specific form it might take, agency is closely associated with an active stance. As she analyses Orwell's *Animal Farm*, she points out that 'living meat animals' become agents in the acts of "community formation, reformation and revolt" (32). For example, when pigs break lose, in their desperate attempt to escape they act as "feral' agents" not only in their attempt to regain control of their lives, but also by the fact that it is their act of escape that creates the situation, which threatens both humans and animals. In *Literary Animal Agents* McHugh writes about rethinking animals as "active participants in all sorts of cultural production" (490). She

[34] Although, for Bekoff the "degree of difference" lies in the fact that animals do not have ethics, meaning the ability to "contemplate 'why good is good'" (ibid).

[35] Responding to the point about language and pretend play as requirements for agency, animal studies scholars refer to recent findings about behavior and capacities of some animals. Dr. Steele was one of the first to offer evidence that squirrels, for instance, exhibit deception behavior, only pretending to bury a nut if they think someone is watching them and might steal (www.wilkes.edu/images/aboutwilkes/front_page.pdf). As for language, Irene Pepperberg (McFarlane and Hediger 1), well known for her work in animal cognition, worked with Alex the parrot who was able to communicate with her using verbal language at the level of a two-year old child. Pepperberg's experience with Alex will be important for the discussion of talking animals in the selected fairytales. Moreover, it is a common knowledge that animals engage in play behaviors. Bekoff argues that playing supports moral agency of animals because playing requires certain trust that other participants will follow the rules, and an understanding that they may choose not to (180). Even these few examples show that a "massive amount" of evidence relating to animals' capacities, including agency, language, and some basic morality has accumulated, indeed, that "students of literature and culture [cannot] safely leave to the side" (Wolfe 567).

suggests that animals reveal their agency, first of all, through their intentional action of asserting control over their lives. And, secondly, the agency of animals manifests itself when they become "the bearers of meaning and catalysts for social change" (490) without intending it, but just by being the animals they are.[36] Thus, animal agency can be defined as the capacity to act, not only to respond, and also to initiate; to choose how to respond, to express feelings. Although, as McFarland and Hediger write, "postulating animal agency is not a new idea" (3), it needs to be reaffirmed, refined and effectively applied if a new understanding of animals and a new ethical relationship with them, freed from the Cartesian legacy, are to be achieved.

As I present animals in Russian fairytales as agents, I will support my argument by demonstrating how fairytales allow animal agency to become visible by decentering the human and empowering the animal. The most significant ways in which such decentering and empowerment can happen in fairytales are through the absence of a distinct narrative authorial voice, and through the treatment and distribution of speech. As Bottigheimer explains, "discourse can be understood as a form of domination, and speech use as an index of social values and the distribution of power within a society" (*Grimms' Bad Girl*s 51). Direct speech is associated with an active stance, while indirect speech, and silence in particular, is associated with a passive, often powerless, position (ibid 51-80). Since speech use can be understood as a form of domination, distribution of power and social hierarchies (Bottigheimer, *Grimms' Bad Girls* 15), the analysis of the distribution of

[36] As an example, she refers to Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* - a work on breeding practice in Victorian England. Show dog breeds, just by virtue of who they were, could promote their common non-aristocratic owner's social mobility, thus acting as agents.

direct and indirect speech and the verbs that introduce speech occurrences can reveal how fairytales decenter the human and empower the animal.

The absence of a distinct authorial[37] narrative style is characteristic of folktales in general, and fairytales in particular. This absence is manifested in the predictable, conventional, formulaic construction of the majority of fairytales. Narrative conventions and formulaic structure are what give fairytales their consistency despite a great variety of motifs, themes, and plot lines. This paradox of a recognizable consistency in tandem with great variety in tales was one of the factors that instigated Vladimir Propp's influential work. Although the underlying structural system as formulated by Propp is one of the binding blocks of the resilient, consistent fairytale structure, there is another such "building block" – folktale narrative conventions that include framing introductions and conclusions, repetition, tripling (Luthi's term, or "trebling" in Propp's terms).

The majority of tales begin with conventional framing introductions and conclusions. For example, *The Tale about Prince Ivan, Firebird and a Grey Wolf* begins with very familiar and recognizable, "In a certain kingdom, in a certain state there lived a king by the name of Vyslav Andrinovich. He had three sons" (Afanas'ev v.1 415). *Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* greets its audience/readers with another all too familiar and recognizable "in a certain kingdom, beyond the thrice ninth land, in the thrice tenth

[37] Traditional folktale scholarship holds that folk and fairytales do not have an "author" as a literary fairytale does. They consider folk and fairytales to be the product of a collective effort: "gifted narrators told tales to audiences who actively participated in their transmission by posing questions, suggesting changes and circulating tales among themselves" (Zipes *Breaking the Magic Spell* 7). Thus, when I write about the absence of an "authorial" style or voice, I mean the absence of a distinct author that is present in literary works. However, recently there have emerged scholarly revisions of the interpretation of the origin of folktales. According to these new interpretations, folktales were not created by 'folk,' but by specific authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For more information see Bottigheimer's *Fairytales. A New History*.

realm, there lived a strong and mighty king" (Afanas'ev 424).[38] And not only do the tales begin with a conventional formula, but also they end with it, mostly of the "lived happily ever after" type. Thus, *The Tale about Prince Ivan, the Firebird and a Grey Wolf* ends with "he married Princess Elena, and began to live with her in concord and in love, so that they could not spend a single minute away from each other" (Afans'ev v. 422). *Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* does not necessarily pronounce that they lived "happily ever after," but simply states that after the Princess found out that it was the young man, who had been fulfilling her commands, they had a grand honorable wedding.[39]

Repetition is another highly conventional stylistic element of most folktales that contributes to the absence of a distinct authorial style. The "rigidity of form" and style (Luthi *Once Upon a Time* 53) of the fairytale that demands repetitions significantly

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[38] *The Magic Ring* in the Siberian version begins with a similar "in a certain kingdom, in a certain state, in the very one where we live, there lived a peasant with his wife" (Matveeva, Leonova 223). The beginning of the Siberian version is almost identical to Afans'ev's variant #191 of the same tale: "In a certain kingdom, in a certain state there lived an old man with his wife'" (v. 2 44). Afansiev's version #190 of the same tale varies the place of living, but essentially follows the same formula: "In such and such places, in such and such big villages there lived a man" (v.2 40). The tale *The White Duck* may seem different at first because it does not begin with "a certain kingdom, a certain state," but starts right away with a *certain* prince who, no sooner had he married, then had to leave his young wife (Afanas'ev 325). Despite the absence of "in a certain kingdom," this introduction still falls within a traditional structural formula because first, there is the "certain" (that is easy to take for granted and overlook), and second, it complies with the conventional initial situation and initial actions/functions of the heroes as described by Propp. Thus, "the initial situation" – a term Propp used to distinguish the beginning of tales as an important morphological element – enumerates family members (the prince and his wife) and their status (he is a prince and not a commoner) (Propp 25). Moreover, the first two functions/actions that follow this initial situation are exactly as Propp listed them in the *Morphology*: first, the prince "*absents* himself from home," and leaves an "*interdiction*" for his wife not to leave the house " (Propp 26). Thus, even though *The White Duck* opening does not start with "a certain kingdom," it is still conventional and formulaic.

[39] Again, as the beginning of *The White Duck* such endings may seem somewhat nontraditional, but it is not so. It, too, falls precisely into the conventional final functions/actions as listed in *Morphology of the Folkale* - right after the villain is exposed and punished (in this tale the villainous king gets cooked in the boiling milk), the hero is married (function "wedding") (Propp 63).

reduces the possibility for stylistic creativity.[40] As a result, fairytales do not possess a personal individual authorial style. Repetitions, as other formulaic compositional elements, negate an individualistic dominating point of view so prevalent in most literary works. The narrator/teller as a creative individual recedes far into the background, serving as a channel to tell a story without inputting any personal touches. As a teller's personality-marked perspective on the events diminishes and even disappears, so does the traditional anthropocentric[41] perspective on the events in the story. Fairytales exhibit generality of representation (Luthi, *Fairytale as Art Form* 19), and a lot of Russian fairytales relate stories without taking anyone's side, or point of view. Although, fairytales may not be able to let go of the "*anthropo*"[42]-part completely since they are created by humans and so some degree of human presence will always be there, the "*anthropo*" is no longer in the center since the narrator's presence is minimalized. The events are presented without the author's "*anthropo*"-commentary so common to literary works.

Repetitions can be traced in structural units, motifs, themes, and descriptions. They are often manifested verbally and in actions, and they are often associated with the principle of tripling. For example, in *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa*, the king gave a new order three times, and every time the same words were always repeated that the

[40]Other reasons that explain why repetitions have become an integral structural element of fairytales include the fact that repetitions provide both the narrator and listeners a moment to relax (Luthi *The Fairytale as Art Form* 76). They also serve as a strong organizing element, making it easier for the narrator and the listener to follow the story line.

[41] Anthropocentric – 1. Considering human beings are the most significant entity of the universe 2. Interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed.)*. Based on this definition of "anthropocentric" due to their "crystal-clear narrative technique" (Luthi *Fairytale as Art Form* 69) a lot of fairytales lack a strong anthropocentric point of view.

[42] Anthropo [L. anthropo from Gr. anthropos] – human being (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed.*).

"huntsman shed bitter tears and went to his valiant horse," and the valiant horse always met him with the unchangeable: "Why are you weeping, master" and "Fear not, grieve not. This is not trouble yet, the real trouble lies ahead" (Afanas'ev v.2 25-29). Similarly, in *Prince Ivan, Firebird, and a Grey Wolf* there are triple repetitions: three brothers attempt to catch the firebird three times, and Prince Ivan commits mistakes by disobeying the wolf three times. In *The White Duck* the motif of the witch asking the boys if they were asleep yet, and the youngest replying that they weren't sleeping, but were instead thinking of how to escape the impending killing by the witch, is repeated twice word for word (Afanas'ev 326).

Such interpretation of the narrator's presence may be in disagreement with the view that since a lot of tales have variants, there should be a distinct authorial presence because varying is a reflection of the author, or the narrator/teller's individual "authorial" style. Although, two or more versions of many tales do exist, what varies in those versions are details that do not affect the essential stylistic and compositional building blocks, including the principle of repetition. For example, in three versions of *The Magic Ring* chosen for this paper variations can be observed in the name of the characters. In Afanas'ev's version #190 all characters are nameless, while in version #191the young man, the dog and the cat receive names: Martyn, Zhurka and Vaska respectively. And in the Siberian variant of the tale the young man's name is Petr Ivanovich, the dog becomes Sobolka, the cat remains Vaska, and the princess gets the name of Elena Ivanovna. Names or the absence of them has no effect on the structure, style or plotline of the tale. Moreover, the repeated motif of saving the animals does not change significantly. It is almost identical in Afanas'ev's version #191 and the Siberian one: in both Martyn/Petr

rescues the dog, the cat and the snake that gives him the magic ring. The only difference in Afans'ev's version #190 is that the young man saves the dog and the cat, but there is no snake. However, these differences are minor because they do not change the neutral narrative style that lacks a distinct personal authorial perspective. Such formulaic devices, such as the use of traditional framing introductions and conclusions, and the use of repetition, that are some of the most common and easily recognizable, make a distinct author disappear. They move the readers and listeners further away from an individualistic authorial point of view, decentralizing the human and weakening a traditional anthropocentric interpretation of the events. As the human authorial presence is subdued (as much as it is possible within a human work), the animal becomes more visible and *heard.*

In addition to the impersonal narrative style, the way speech is reported by the narrator is another significant aspect of how fairytale animals acquire their own voice, are heard and seen as independent agents. The analysis of the voiceless, the muted and the silenced in various literary texts has often helped different marginalized or silenced groups reclaim their voice and agency. It is especially effective in feminist, gender and postcolonial studies. But there is a paradox that while some feminist and gender studies scholars who work outside of fairytales view animals as co-sufferers and associates in their voiceless and marginalized state of being (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 82-83, 303-304), fairytale feminist scholars and authors who have been trying to reclaim the agency and voice for female characters seem to have overlooked animals. Instead of lumping together talking animals and seven-league boots, pots that provide a never-ending supply of porridge and enchanted mirrors as fairytale "wonders" (Warner *From the Beast to the*

Blond XVI), it is worth asking the same questions about fairytale animals that Ruth Bottigheimer asks regarding muted women in fairytales: "who speaks?" and "under what circumstances?" and what are the implications of the answers to these questions? (*Grimms' Bad Girls* 51-52). Although a detailed analysis of direct and indirect speech utterances per character per tale and tale variant similar to Bottigheimer's in *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys* (51-80*)* is outside the scope of this work, an analysis of "who speaks" and "under what circumstances" can help to understand how fairytales can empower animals through speech distribution.

Writing about "muted" and "silenced" women in Grimms' tales, Bottigheimer outlined five ways in which speech and silencing in literary texts could be investigated (*Grimms' Bad Girls* 52). First, at the historical level, the literary critic can ask who writes the text. From the feminist prospective historical silencing can occur when male authors dominate due to a number of socio-historical factors. Second, at the narrative level, silencing occurs when a character is condemned to a period of silence (e.g., as a result of a curse, or an oath in order to save someone). Third, at a textual level, "silencing" can be traced through the distribution of direct and indirect speech among the characters. Fourth, at the lexical level, silencing happens through the choice of verbs depending on whether they validate or invalidate the speech that follows. Fifth, at the editorial level, silencing can result from the editor's or the author's comments on the text within the text.

When applied to texts about animals, the historical level, as defined by Bottigheimer, is irrelevant since animals never author literary texts. On the one hand, this could be viewed as potentially undermining their agency since they have no choice about what can be written about them, or whether or not they want anything to be written about

them at all. On the other hand, their agency manifests itself in the very fact that they compel humans to consider and include them in texts, by the fact that animals are so inextricably connected with humans, whether as livestock, pets, entertainment, wildlife, or "the other" against whom humanity can be defined and asserted.

The application of the editorial level to Russian fairytales is problematic. The editorial and the authorial aspects of such speech analysis could be quite applicable when the texts in questions are authored and there is enough material to identify editorial commentary in the text. But in regards to the fairytales collected by Afanas'ev, this level is not applicable. First, Afanas'ev's fairytales are folk fairytales that have no individual author. Second, Afanas'ev's editorial work resulted in minor stylistic corrections (Propp *Notes* 465). An in-depth comparative analysis of Afanas'ev's editorial work, subsequent posthumous editions of his collection, and some of the original manuscripts with transcribed tales would require accessing archives of the Russian Geographical Society that at the moment is not possible. Therefore, for the time being the editorial level of speech silencing will not be considered, either. Thus, the levels of the speech analysis that I will be applying to the Russian fairytales are textual, narrative and lexical. Following Bottigheimer's model, my analysis of these levels will consider:

1) frequency of direct and indirect speech between the human protagonist and the animal(s);

2) the nature of verbs that are used to introduce direct speech and in the speech itself;

And since my focus is the agency of animals, I will also look at

3) the degree to which any given discourse/speech initiates action and/or motivates the plot.

In a lot of fairytales, animals initiate conversations. In *The Magic Steed* after the tsar gives Ivan the daunting task of bringing him the princess Nastasia, Ivan, crestfallen and despondent, goes to his good steed. The steed initiates the conversation by asking why Ivan looks so sad. After Ivan tells him what the tsar ordered him to do, the steed comforts and cheers him up by telling him what to ask of the tsar before they set out on their journey. The animal not only initiates, but also finishes the conversation. Moreover, the steed's question forwards the action of the plot because it was only after he told Ivan that they would be able to fulfill the task that the journey (and thus subsequent events) could take place. The steed's first question/utterance is direct speech, and it is introduced by a verb *vozgovorit' (возговорить),* which is loftier, more solemn in style than the stylistically relatively neutral *говорить* – 'to say,' 'to ask,' 'to reply' that humans use in conversations in the exposition of the tale.

As the story progresses, the animal – the horse – assumes more authority by doing all the speaking while the human – Ivan – remains 'muted.' After the steed and Ivan travel for some time, they reach a marble palace where princess Nastasia lives. Again, the steed starts the conversation by giving Ivan instructions on how to steal the princess. Ivan does not reply (i.e., he is 'muted' here). When evening comes, it is the steed who tells Ivan that the time has come for them to act. After Ivan disobeys his steed's instructions, gets caught and put in prison, the steed comes to the rescue. And again – the steed addresses Ivan with direct speech. This time Ivan follows his steed's instructions to the letter and successfully obtains the princess. During this entire ordeal of stealing the

princess, Ivan does not speak at all. Not only is all speaking done by the animal, but also it is all in direct speech, and it is the steed who devises the plan and brings it to fruition. Ivan is completely silent, and the readers/audience know only about his thoughts in prison when he is afraid that he is going to die. The only time when Ivan takes initiative and starts a conversation is when he talks to the princess, i.e., returns to human-to-human interaction. Ivan's complete "muteness" during both attempts to steal the princess and even his own imprisonment are examples of textual silencing of the human. When the human is muted and passive (which moves the human from the center), the animal – the steed – comes to the foreground as the sole agent and initiator of the action.[43]

The tale *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* is another good example of an animal's textual primacy that shows the animal as an agent. There are two versions of this tale in Afanas'ev 's collection. The main difference between the versions (#169 and #170) is minor and does not affect the plot: the second version #170 gives a short introduction about the protagonist's origin and how a passer-by old man told him how to obtain the horse. In both versions it is the horse who speaks the very first words in the exposition of the tale.[44] The animal's agency is especially clear in version #169 that doesn't have background introduction because it is the horse who initiates the very first conversation of the tale, and utters the very first direct speech of the tale. The first direct speech

[43] The title of the tale – *The Magic Steed* – is significant in itself because it supports the animal's importance in the tale's action that is manifested in the distribution of speech. Even though Ivan is the protagonist of the tale, a closer look reveals that he is passive. He owes most of his successes to his steed.

[44] The old man's speech in the short introduction in version #170 does not count because: 1) this work focuses on dynamics of human-animal interactions, not human-human ones; 2) this introduction is not part of the exposition and is essentially optional.

utterance of the first conversation is significant because it is a strong indicator of who has the authority; and in this tale it is the animal, not the human.

After a short, conventional, formulaic beginning about the tsar who lived in a "certain kingdom in the thrice tenth realm" and who had a young archer, who had a *bogatyrskii* (from Russian *bogatyr'* – a mighty, courageous warrior) steed, the archer finds a firebird's golden shining feather. His horse tells him not to pick it up. The textual contrast and its implications for the horse's agency are especially vivid because not only does the horse speak first, but also uses direct speech. At the same time, the archer does not speak at all. Instead, the narrator tells the readers/audience about the archer's thoughts as the latter hesitates whether to heed his horse's advice or not. The fact that the narrator describes the archer's thoughts instead of giving him his own voice completely silences the human protagonist textually.

Moreover, the first time the archer begins to speak is *in response* to the horse's question. After the tsar sees the archer's firebird feather and dispatches him to bring the firebird, the archer starts crying "bitter tears" and comes to his horse. The horse initiates the conversation with direct speech by asking why he is crying. And that is when the archer utters something for the first time in response to his horse's question. Speaking only in response to someone weakens the human protagonist on the textual level. As Bottigheimer points out in her analysis of speech distribution in the Grimms' tales, "answering" is often associated with the subordinate, somewhat passive position, and more often appears in the female voice that responds to the male voice (*Grimms' Bad Girls* 54).

Furthermore, the human – the archer – has a total of five direct speech moments. Of these five moments, there is only one when he begins to speak first, and that is when he addresses princess Vasilisa. In the remaining four instances of direct speech, he only responds to the horse. By contrast, the horse has nine speaking instances, and in all of them it is the animal that initiates the conversation, moves the action, and thus acts as an independent agent.

*Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wol*f and *The Magic Ring* show not only similar empowerment of the animal through speech distribution, but also the animal as agent who initiates action and expresses feelings. In the tale *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf*, there are a total of fourteen conversations (verbal exchanges) between Ivan and the wolf. Of these conversations, they grey wolf initiates twelve, and/or he has the first direct speech utterance. Moreover, the grey wolf initiates their acquaintance. Having chosen the path on which he would remain alive, but his horse would be killed, Ivan travelled for a few days when suddenly a grey wolf stepped out to meet him. The narrator does not say that Ivan came across the wolf, but that the wolf came out to meet Ivan. Before they even met, the animal – the wolf – is the initiator or the agent, while the human is rather passive, being on the receiving end of the wolf's action. One might object that initially it was Ivan who chose to follow this path, and thus was active rather than passive, setting everything in motion. But, first of all, this work focuses on the dynamics of the relationship between the human and the animal, and in that regard Ivan's choices and actions (or inactions) outside of that relationship are of secondary importance. Secondly, the narrator could have chosen to say something along the lines of "Ivan met/saw/came across/stumbled upon/etc. the wolf," thus making Ivan the active

subject (or the agent) instead of the wolf. Not only does the wolf step out to meet Ivan, but he is also the first one to talk using direct speech, asking Ivan why he chose this path if he knew that his horse would die. Having said that, he eats the horse and leaves.

The grey wolf further reinforces his agency when he offers to help Ivan. After the wolf ate the horse and left, Ivan cried over the horse and started walking. He had been walking all day and was exhausted when the wolf caught up with him and having expressed regret over eating his horse, offered to help: "I feel sorry for you, prince Ivan, that you got so tired walking; and I am sorry for having eaten your good horse. All right. Mount me and tell me where you need to go and why" (Afanas'ev v.1 417). While the narrator uses direct speech for the wolf, he uses indirect speech to say that Ivan told the wolf where he needed to go (ibid). Not only does the wolf reinforce his textual and narrative authority by speaking first again and using direct speech, but he also expresses his feelings and makes a decision – as a truly independent agent.

The relationship between Ivan and the wolf is the key relationship in the tale because Ivan owes not only his success, but also literally his life to the grey predator. Because of the indispensability of the wolf's role for the story, this tale could be viewed as having a double exposition: the first exposition introduces the readers/audience to Ivan and the main conflict (Ivan's father wants to have the firebird); the second exposition introduces the grey wolf – the key character for the remainder of the tale. Precisely because Ivan and the wolf's relationship is central to the tale, the way the tale distributes speech and shows who initiates their acquaintance is important as it presents the animal as agent. It suggests a special regard accorded to animals in traditional Russian culture. If the creators and tellers of this tale chose the animal as the leader in the most important

relationship in the tale, it strongly suggests that they viewed animals as agents. The grey wolf acts as an agent here, reasoning with the human ("why have you chosen this path if you knew your horse would be killed?"), expressing his feelings ("I am sorry for you, Ivan…") and making choices, offering help ("Mount me and tell me where you have to go)[45].

Even when Ivan does receive direct speech, his position as an agent within the human-animal relationship does not become one of domination because when he does talk, it is either to himself, or to another human. But in his interaction/exchanges with the wolf, he remains quiet and passive. The first time Ivan regains his voice is when he decides to disobey the wolf's instructions. Ivan got the bird, "but then thought of it and said to himself: "What am I going to do with the firebird without a cage? Where am I going to put it?" (Afanas'ev v.1 417). Even though the narrator uses direct speech to express Ivan's thoughts, this direct speech does not strengthen the human because Ivan's "speech" is addressed to himself. The next time Ivan receives direct speech is in a conversation with another human. He is caught and interrogated by the king who owns the firebird. After this king gives him an order – to bring a golden-mane steed in exchange for the bird – Ivan comes to the wolf and tells him what happened. But the readers/audience do not hear how Ivan talks to the wolf, because the teller relates it using

[45] The fact that the wolf chose to help Ivan further weakens the possible objection mentioned above (that Ivan's choice of the path determined what followed next). Even though Ivan chose the path on which he was to remain alive, but the horse was to die, his choice of the path did not influence the wolf's decision in any way. In fact, right after eating the horse, the wolf left. And only a day after, he came back catching up with Ivan, expressing his regret over eating Ivan's horse and his compassion towards exhausted Ivan and desire to help him. The wolf's decision to help Ivan did not result from Ivan's choice of the path. Thus, throughout the entire second exposition of Ivan and the wolf's meeting, the animal has a voice and acts completely independently, being an agent, while the human has no voice, and is at the mercy of the circumstances.

indirect speech. Again, the first direct speech in this conversation between the human and the animal belongs to the wolf, who reproves Ivan for disobeying, to which Ivan replies: "I am guilty before you" (Afanas'ev v.1 418). The animal once again reproves, instructs and devises a new plan, and by so doing acts as an agent, while the human admits his fault and follows. Due to the principle of tripling, this pattern of disobeying the wolf's instructions and receiving another difficult task as a result is repeated two more times: to get a firebird he has to bring a golden-mane steed, then to get a golden-mane steed he has to bring princess Elena. Such trebling only reinforces the view of the animal as an active leader and the human as a passive follower.

Ivan does not acquire an active voice even when he needs to express his wants and wishes. As Ivan obtains first the princess, and then the steed, he does not want to part with either. It would seem logical to grant Ivan direct speech to express his unwillingness to give them away. But even in this situation that could allow the human – Ivan – to regain at least some active role, the tale does not let it happen. When the time comes to give away the princess, Ivan is not proactive, devising plans and making decisions. He just starts crying, and it is the wolf, again, who initiates the conversation by asking directly what the matter is. Ivan could have regained some of his agency by asking the wolf directly to help him keep the princess. Instead, Ivan somewhat "manipulatively" tells the wolf about his growing feelings for the princess and his sorrow for having to part with her. And again, it is the wolf who suggests a plan on how to keep the princess.

The only time when prince Ivan seems to be regaining some initiative is when it is time to give the steed away, and he does not want to. This is the first and only time when he addresses the grey wolf first, using direct speech. But here his "proactivity" is

seriously weakened lexically. The Russian language distinguishes two verbs – *попросить* and *спросить* – that in English can be covered by one verb "to ask." First of all, the narrator uses a weaker verb *попросить* to say that Ivan asked the wolf to help him. In English it is generally translated as "to ask," which is also often used to translate a stronger verb *спросить*. "To ask" is a rather strong verb, generally used to introduce questions from "acknowledged authority figures" (Bottigheimer *Grimms' Bad Girls* 54). But Russian *спросить* and *попросить* are significantly different from each other in this respect. While the former closely corresponds to the English "to ask," connoting more of an authoritative or interrogating stance, the latter is more typical of a less demanding, subordinated inquiry, closer to *begging*, or *pleading*. Thus, Ivan is not so much asking the wolf, as begging/pleading for help. As a result, even though it is Ivan who initiates the conversation this time, his "active" voice is weakened lexically by the verb *попросить* used to introduce his one and only initiating, or proactive, verbal utterance.

Another factor that weakens Ivan's "active" voice is the subjunctive mode he uses to express his desire: "could you (do you think you could/would you be able to) turn into a steed with a golden mane instead of this one, because I do not want to part with him" (Afanas'ev v.1 420). Even interpreting such speech as a mere polite form weakens the position of human domination/authority because a polite form connotes respect and regard for the addressee. Thus, Ivan's only "proactive" direct speech moment does not follow the pattern of the modern human/animal hierarchy in which the human is the agent making choices and dominating, while the animal, agency-less, follows and is dominated. Furthermore, when the time came for the wolf and Ivan to part, again, it was the wolf who said "where" and "when." As soon as they reached the place where the wolf had

eaten Ivan's horse, the wolf said that he would not be helping Ivan anymore and left. Again, the wolf expressed himself through direct speech while Ivan was "speechless" and simply cried. Thus, the animal – the wolf – not only initiated his acquaintance with Ivan the human, but also was the one who terminated his relationship with the human.

Moreover, not only does the tale *the Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf* empower the animal as an independent agent textually and lexically as the preceding tales do, but also it does so narratively by presenting a different turn in the story that isolates the animal – the wolf – as the sole agent. After the wolf left, Ivan and princess Elena fall asleep at a rest stop on their way home. Having come across sleeping Ivan and Elena, Ivan's brothers kill their younger brother and steal Elena, the firebird and the steed with the golden mane. Ivan's dismembered body lay there for thirty days when the grey wolf stumbled upon it. Having recognized Ivan by smell, the wolf wanted to help. This episode presents an animal as an agent in his own right, acting out of his own volition and not out of the initial obligation, or any coercion, or yet any form of human dominance: "the wolf wanted to help the prince, to revive him, but didn't know how to do that" (Afanas'ev 623). This time, the human is not simply a passive follower, but completely incapacitated, unconscious and narratively silenced. To suggest that despite being dead, the human was still affecting the situation indirectly by prompting the wolf to help since they were friends would be misleading because the key to the wolf's actions here is "friend," and not "human." Dead Ivan "prompted" the wolf's desire to help him not because he was human, but because he was the wolf's friend. It is safe to assume that if the wolf's friend were a bear, or a fox, or a magician, the wolf would feel the same desire and would make the same choice to help.

The Magic Ring presents a similar way of showing animals as agents at the narrative level, in addition to the textual and lexical levels. All three versions (two of Afanas'ev and one Siberian) are consistent in this. After the protagonist (who has different names in two versions and remains nameless in one) rescues a cat and a dog and obtains the magic ring (by saving a snake in two versions), he marries a princess who fishes out of him his secret about the ring and leaves with the palace and other riches. The king who is the princess' father imprisons the protagonist believing it is his fault that the princess disappeared along with all his possessions. Up to this point in the story, the cat and the dog had remained silent. But they weren't muted narratively or textually (as it would be if they had participated in the plot events but remained without speech). Until the princess steals the ring and all the riches, the plot deals with specifically "human" events of proposing, marriage, some degree of the newly-weds' life and so on, in which, naturally a cat and a dog are not decision makers. But as soon as their owner finds himself in deep trouble, the cat and the dog, grateful for his kindness, decide to help him. As soon as the human protagonist becomes narratively "disabled" the cat and the dog acquire their voices and begin to exercise their agency by stealing the ring from the deceitful princess, thus helping the protagonist regain the ring and life.

Discussing animal agency in Russian fairytales only in terms of empowered animal vs. passive human would be incomplete. A lot of Russian fairytales not only empower animals, but also show how humans and animals enable each other's agency. For example, in the beginning of *The Magic Ring* the human protagonist's decision to rescue a cat and a dog allows them to remain alive and express their gratitude by saving his life when he ends up in prison (narratively unable to act). The grey wolf's desire to revive his

friend brings prince Ivan back to life and by doing so restores his freedom to act. The archer's wise horse expands his agential possibilities by helping him to become a tsar.

Recognizing animals as agents in fairytales requires not only a close reading of the plot, but also and more so analyses of less immediately noticeable aspects, such as speech distribution and the absence of a strong anthropocentric perspective. As this analysis demonstrates, Russian fairytales often emphasize animals' agency narratively, textually and lexically. Receiving a voice and being heard is closely associated with acting independently, being an agent, because as the selected Russian tales show, active speech leads to and is associated with action. Through speech the grey wolf, the steed, the dog and the cat initiate action and move the plot along.

Chapter 2. Animal Specificity

Traditionally, scholars use animal tales to discuss folktale animals. But animals in animal tales rarely retain their animal specificity, and most of the time act as personifications of virtues and vices, teaching moral lessons. Animal tales are closely related to animal fables[46] and that explains why they are often didactic and moralistic. The opportunity for the tale tellers to distance themselves from the objects of their didactic and/or moralistic critique is one of the reasons for such popularity of anthropomorphic animals. Such distance, or indirect criticism, allows the tellers to denounce human weaknesses and injustice without incurring punishment (Ashliman 37). This is the main reason why so many animals from animal tales are not real animals. Their animal specificity completely disappears behind their metaphoric, symbolic meanings and anthropomorphic representations. Animals in fairytales (*волшебные сказки*) can be much more "animalistic" and real. Even though animals in fairytales are rarely as anthropomorphic as the animals in most animal tales or fables, traditional anthropocentric interpretative approaches still overlook them.

In this chapter I demonstrate that animals in many Russian fairytales retain some of their species-specific characteristics along with their mythological and symbolic meanings. This allows them to be and to act not only as magic creatures, but also as real animals as well. Such inclusion of animal specificity in animal representations in Russian fairytales suggests that in traditional Russian culture animals were important in people's lives (e.g., as livestock, means of transportation, in hunting and tilling the land, companions etc.).

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[46] Some animal fables, such as those by LaFontaine, do show animals that retain some of their specific "real" characteristics.

The tales *The Magic Steed* and *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* are a good place to start because they use one of the most common animals in Russian fairytales (and in Russian agrarian traditional culture) – a horse – as their main animal character, who even gives the title to the first tale. A traditional interpretive perspective would, most likely, explain the importance of the horse based on its symbolic or mythological significance. For example, the horse's mythological origin from Underworld could explain its providence and insight. This is reflected in the fact that according to the East Slavs the horse could foretell the future, while the Baltic Slavs revered them almost as gods (Kravchenko 134). In Indo-European mythology the horse accompanies the sun-God as it carries its chariot across heaven (Young 9).

Such mythological and symbolic interpretation says nothing about the horse as a living, breathing animal. Just because ancient Slavs revered horses does not explain why horses and not other animals were chosen for certain roles in fairytales like *The Magic Steed* and *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa*. After all, pagan mythologies often worshipped diverse animals. Like horses eagles are often associated with heavenly powers and viewed as masters of the sky and heavenly elements (Gura 611). As magic helpers, eagles can carry human protagonists on their backs. The eagle, too, possesses wisdom and also magical powers because it knows the secret of eternal youth, health and life (ibid). Another powerful bird – falcons – often accompanies hunters and archers, and at the same time embodies very powerful male symbolism and could command hail clouds (Gura 681). Mythological and pagan meanings of these strong birds are as powerful as those of the horse, but that does not mean that all three are interchangeable,

nor does it explain why the horse is chosen as the protagonist's companion and not a falcon. Thus, we must look beyond mythological and symbolic interpretations.

Looking at the horse as animal provides the needed explanation. In ancient times, as far back as Roman Empire, horses became indispensable to humans of many civilizations and cultures, including Slavic, because of their strength and versatility. No other domestic animal could rival the horse in speed, physical power and endurance, all characteristics that were crucial to warfare, farming, transportation, hunting and even entertainment.[47] This is the kind of animal the protagonist in *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa*, *The Magic Steed* and many other tales needs. Being an archer, or hunter, he needs an animal that is strong enough to endure prolonged hunting chases and fast enough to succeed in chasing the hunting prey. Ivan from *The Magic Steed* is not a hunter, but a warrior, the tsar's military officer whose service is not possible without a strong and fast horse. Both protagonists are facing long and exhausting adventures as they set out to fulfill their tsars' orders. These tales require a domestic animal, and no other domestic animal but a horse is physically strong enough to carry them and endure the journey "whether far away or near, long or short, […] to the thrice ninth land, to the thrice tenth realm" (Afanas'ev v.2 27).[48]

It is not only physical strength, speed and endurance that make horses most suited to being such human protagonists' companions. Horses love consistency and have an

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[47] In addition to that, nomadic peoples (e.g., Mongols, Tatars who influenced Slavs after the Tatar-Mongol conquest) depended on horses for food. Unlike horses, cattle could not withstand rigorous and often harsh nomadic lifestyle.

[48] *Близко ли, далеко ль, скоро ли, коротко ль,[...] за тридевять земель, в тридесятое королевство*

excellent memory, often following the same trails to feeding areas.[49] Although, they are curious about new things (e.g., new items in their usual pasture), they are very cautious and careful when approaching them. They sleep only about two hours lying down in a twenty four hour period. The rest of the time they take "cat" naps while standing, and if the herd is lying down, at least one horse will remain standing and paying attention, guarding their sleep. Both the archer from *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* and Ivan from *The Magic Steed* need just such a consistent and reliable companion, who can remember old trails and paths, stay awake for long periods of time, thus remaining attentive to the surroundings and raising alert if necessary, while also exercising cautious when dealing with the unknown.

But it is not only these unique physical and mental qualities that helped the horse to become so important to humans. The horse's personality, its receptiveness to taming and bonding with the human were essential. Strong emotional and psychological connections exist between humans and diverse non-human species, such as dogs, cats and other farm animals, but the human, especially, a hunter or a soldier, is dependent on his horse for life. Even non-military, professional and serious recreational riders admit that compared to, say, dogs or cats, there is a different degree of bond and trust between the horse and the rider because once mounted, the rider trusts his/her horse with his/her life. It is because of this kind of special bond with their horses that the archer-hunter and Ivan could follow their horses' instructions in overcoming obstacles and fulfilling their tsars' impossible commands.

[49] The following information on horses has come from diverse experiential accounts of seasoned horse trainers and riders, and is also available as common scientific knowledge.

Russian fairytales show a special bond between a human and a horse not only during riding, but also in various situations when the protagonist must trust his horse's decisions with his life. Awareness of such a bond casts a completely different light on a common fairytale motif of having to jump into a caldron of boiling water/milk/some sort of liquid.[50] This is the motif that leads to the finale in *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa.* Before the tsar can marry her, princess Vasilisa willfully tells him to order his archer-hunter to bathe in boiling water. When the archer learns about this, he, as always, goes to his good steed for help. His steed cheers him up, "Don't be afraid, don't cry, you will live"[51] (Afanas'ev v.1 426), and puts a spell on him. The archer not only survives bathing in boiling water, but also comes out as handsome as ever. The tsar wants to become as handsome, jumps in the water and dies, after which the archer takes his place and lives long, happily and in love with princess Vasilisa. A traditional interpretation will explain this motif as magical and miraculous, and there is much magic, indeed, because horses do not cast magic spells, and live beings, human or not, do not survive bathing in boiling water.

However, behind this magical fairytale "lie"[52] there is a certain "hint" about the importance of the horse for the human's survival because in Russian fairytales with this

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[50] Depending on the tale, there are various reasons for this motif. Sometimes, the tsar is informed or finds out that bathing in boiling milk or water has a powerful anti-aging affect, but instead of jumping himself, he orders his servant to do it first. Other plots have a princess who willfully demands that before marrying her the tsar must bathe in boiling milk or water. Again, afraid, he usually sends his servant, who (with the help of his horse) not only survives, but emerges with much improved looks, youth and vitality. It is often associated with the tale *The Little Hunchback Horse (Конёк-Горбунок)* (Propp, *Notes* 505).

[51] *Не бойся, не плач, жив будешь!*

[52] A fairytale is a lie, but there is a hint in it – a lesson for the youth (A.S. Pushkin), (*Сказка ложь, да в ней намёк - добрым молодцам*

motif the horse is the only animal who saves the protagonist. The classification[53] of tales with this motif as the tale type of *The Little Hunchback Horse ((К о н ё к – Г о р б у н о к)* – the horse giving the motif its name) – emphasizes the significance of the strong and persistent connection between the horse and the horse's life-saving role in people's lives, whether as a military or household companion and help.

In *The Magic Steed* Ivan's horse, too, saves his life by instructing and helping him to fulfill the tsar's requests, but there is another important (and often overlooked) motif - the importance of letting the magical horse eat and grow in green pastures. An elderly stranger (Propp's advice giver/donor) advises Ivan to buy a certain scrawny horse and to let it feed in green dewy pastures for twelve days to allow the horse to become strong. Ivan follows the stranger's advice and his horse becomes as strong and intelligent as can be. This motif of the importance of letting the fairytale horse feed in green pastures so that it can gain strength can be found in a lot of Russian tales.[54] Fairytales are full of miracles and magic makes a lot of things possible; therefore, magic could have made Ivan's horse strong and powerful. But the fact that this motif appears in a lot of tales suggests that Russian people saw in magic steeds a real animal with its real physiological needs and not just a magic creature. This motif emphasizes the preeminence of the horse-animal over the horse-magical creature in Russian fairytales. Even a steed with magical

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[53] Afanas'ev, A. N. *Russian Folktales*, Moscow, 1958. V.1, 505

[54] Other tales that have this motif include*: Ivan the Tzar's Son with Golden Locks (И в а н ц а р с к и й с ы н з о л о т ы х к у д р е й)* (Shastina' Collection*), A Fairytale about a Young Slashing Fellow, Apples of Youth and Water of Life (С к а з к а о м о л о д ц е-у д а л ь ц е, м о л о д и л ь н ы х я б л о к а х и ж и в о й в о д е)* (Afanas'ev's Collection)

powers is also a real horse for whom it is crucial to eat what real horses eat – grasses, plants and whatever else they find in "green pastures." Only by being raised in "green meadows and pastures" (Afanas'ev v.1 26) – like a real horse – can a magical horse grow into a strong, fast and beautiful steed.

Another very specific aspect of dealing with real horses that is present in a lot of fairytales is the process of taming a horse. In *Ivan the Tsar's Son with Golden Locks (Иван царский сын золотых кудрей,* Shastina 102-105) the wild untamed nature of the magic horse is conveyed poetically through the twelve chains that it rips apart trying to break free. The taming process is rendered poetically as well: before the horse agrees to serve Ivan, he must be able to endure as the horse jumps on his shoulders. The tale *Ivan the Peasant's Son (Иван-крестьянский сын,* Shastina 192-196) shows the horse's wild nature not only through the twelve chains, but also through the flame coming out of its mouth and sparks out of its nostrils. But the taming process is portrayed differently in that the horse agrees to serve Ivan after Ivan asks it for some service respectfully.[55] Again, ubiquitous fairytale magic could easily have done away with taming a horse, especially since this process does not influence the action of the story in any way. The fact that descriptions of taming a horse, along with the "green fields and pastures," survived

[55] Other tales that show the wild nature of horses and the necessity of the taming process include *Sivko, Burko, prophetic Kaurko (Сивко, Бурко, вещий Каурко)* (Shastina 204-213), *The Golden Bristle Little Pig, the Golden Feather Duck, the Golden Antler Deer, and the Golden Mane Steed (Свинка золотая щетинка, утка золотые пёрышки, золоторогий олень и золото-гривый конь), A Fairytale about a Young Slashing Fellow, Apples of Youth and Water of Life (Сказка о молодце-удальце, молодильных яблоках и живой воде)* (Afanas'ev's Collection).

centuries and editions strongly suggests that Russian people must have thought it significant to keep many of their fairytale horses as close to real animals as possible.

A lot of Russian tales either dedicate paragraphs to the process of choosing the right horse by the protagonist, or at the very least acknowledge the horse's presence by mentioning throughout the tale how the protagonist mounts, rides, feeds his "good horse" (*добрый конь*). The phrase itself – *добрый конь* – conveys how the protagonist feels about the horse, *добрый* connoting "good, strong, reliable, trustworthy."

While *The Magic Steed* and *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* show a domestic animal, the horse, *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf* presents a completely different animal, a wild carnivorous predator. Generally, interpretations of the wolf in Russian folklore reveal a traditional focus on the mythological and symbolic meanings of this animal. Thus, in ancient Slavic pagan cosmology, which is similar to Nordic mythology, the wolf was associated with the diabolic forces and chthonic symbolism that connected him with the dead, vampires and other such creatures (Gura 122-158). The wolf's anthropomorphic representations often show somewhat dim-witted and ungrateful characters (Matveeva 45). At the same time, alongside such negative images, ancient Slavs often viewed the wolf as the destroyer of demonic forces (Gura 122-158). A wolf that crosses one's path is a good omen that brings luck, prosperity and happiness (ibid). Such an ambivalent view of the wolf may reflect the ancient Slavic belief in the wolf's dual nature as a mediator between God and people, this world and the Otherworld and so on (ibid).

However, as rich as the wolf's metaphorical and symbolic meanings are, when they are applied to the interpretation of the fairytale wolves, the real wolf gets lost. Reading the grey wolf from *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf* as a mediator between humans and the underworld, or as an omen of success fails to explain why the wolf and not any other animal is chosen for this tale. Is it absolutely necessary to have the wolf as prince Ivan's helper in this tale, or could another animal replace the wolf and perform this role just as well?

As is the case with the horse, there are other animals that have metaphorical and symbolic associations similar to those of the wolf. A bear is a good example. Just as the wolf, the bear is viewed as a predator, and in Russian folklore the wolf and the bear are considered to be close and similar (Gura 159). Just like those of the wolf, the anthropomorphic representations of the bear are meant to show a slow and clumsy person (Matveeva 45). Similarly to the wolf, the symbolism of the bear in Russian folklore is ambivalent. On the one hand, the bear is often associated with demonic powers (Gura 164), like the wolf. On the other hand, very much like the wolf, the bear that crosses one's path is an auspicious sign that promises luck. And similarly to the wolf, the bear is believed to be capable of averting, reversing and dispelling diabolic spells and enchantment over the house, cattle and so on (Gura 165). Even this brief description of the bear's symbolic and metaphorical meanings demonstrates that the real bear is completely obscured, and unless it is clearly indicated which animal is described it is easy to confuse the bear and the wolf because their traditional symbolic, mythological and other such interpretations are almost identical.

Although there is no denying that mythology, pagan beliefs and symbolism affected the understanding and representation of fairytale animals, Russian fairytales seem to be able to balance the symbolic with the real by retaining some characteristics of an animal's specificity. In *Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf* the presence of the wolf and the three different paths (two of which often deal with death)[56] can be traced back to some mythological beliefs of the ancient Slavs about the Otherworld. One of the ancient Slavic pagan beliefs that meeting a wolf on one's path is auspicious may be reflected in Ivan's final success. But none of these interpretations addresses the wolf's animal identity in the tale.

The grey wolf is presented as a real, "normal" wolf, i.e., a wild carnivorous predator, "in the fullness of its [wild canine] being" (Norris 4). This is why the wolf eats Ivan's horse. It is not a metaphorical representation of some human vice, or stupidity, or greed (as often happens in anthropomorphic animal tales and fables). Nor is it an idealized generic magical beast, or a personification of evil (as a traditional reading of the wolf might conclude). And prince Ivan seems to be not only fully aware, but also accepting of the wolf's wild nature. He neither gets angry at the wolf, nor tries to fight with him. Neither the teller, nor the protagonist passes a common anthropocentric judgment on the wolf's eating of the horse as "evil, or bad," nor is there any attempt to moralize and comment on this act of predation using traditional humanistic binaries of good/bad, kind/evil and so on. It seems that the natural reality of wolf-predators preying on large hoofed animals, such as horses, remains intact in this fairytale world.

[56] The three paths usually follow the pattern as shown in this tale: going straight will bring privations and starvation to the traveller; going to the right will preserve the traveller's life, but will kill his horse; going to the left will kill the traveller, but will preserve his horse (Afanas'ev v.1. 417).

One might object that any other predator common to Russia could fulfill this role. But it is precisely the wolf's animal specificity that refutes such objections. Other common predators include the bear, the fox, and the boar. Since the fox and the boar do not prey on ungulates (hoofed animals) at all, the bear remains the only option because potentially the bear could kill a horse. Tigers, or other exotic animals are unlikely because most Russian fairytales tend to show animals native to the area where the tales originated. This is especially characteristic of older tales, such as Afanas'ev's collection. Afanas'ev's collection presents folklore of Eastern Slavs that reflects animals native to those territories. Shastina's collection focuses on Russian tales from Siberia and tends to reflect Siberian fauna. Many tales in Shastina's collection present more recent versions (late nineteenth, first half of the twentieth centuries), and that is reflected in the vocabulary, as well as in the choice of animals – some non-native animals are used, such as a lion. Thus, for this particular Eastern Slavic fairytale the bear remains the only potential predator. But could the bear replace the grey wolf in this fairytale?

Although considered carnivorous, it is more accurate to describe bears as opportunistic omnivores, with plant foods comprising 75-90% of their diet (*Human-Black Bear Conflicts* 9), while wolves are true carnivores. Thus, it would not be convincing to place a bear on a path where the horse must be killed. Wolves' primary food source is large, hoofed animals such as deer, moose and elk (www.wolf.org), so, killing a horse is natural for the grey wolf.

Furthermore, a bear could not perform the task of travelling long distances over varied terrain. It is common scientific knowledge that although bears can run very fast and outperform a racehorse over short distances, bears do not have enough endurance to

cover long distances (www.bearsmart.com). Wolves, on the other hand, have high levels of endurance. They are able to pursue prey for long distances, long hours and over rough terrains (ibid). Thus, no other wild predating animal other than a grey wolf could help Ivan on his journey.

Neither could any fairytale magical humanoid have replaced the wolf. Being omnivores, non-predators (let alone predators of ungulates) and unable to rival grey wolves in strength and endurance (let alone carry another person on their back), fairytale humanoids, even if they may know some magic, are completely unfit for this role.

To replace a wolf with a bear, or a magical humanoid, such as Baba Yagah, or some old wise man, or Kashchei the Deathless, would necessitate re-writing the story, or being less realistic. Thus, the wolf's "real" specific nature is just as important for the tale as his mythological and symbolic associations. Such attention to species-specific characteristics of fairytale animals suggests that the traditional tellers of tales and their audiences must have been interested in more realistic animal representations, keeping Ivan's animal helper the grey wolf as close to his "real" nature as fairytale conventions would allow. The same specialized attention is given to the animal helpers in *The Magic Ring.*

The Magic Ring tale brings us back to the household realm by presenting the most common and familiar domestic animals – a cat and a dog. An analysis of the specific animal characteristics needed for this tale shows that only a cat and a dog, and not any domestic animal, can fulfill the roles of animal helpers in this tale. In Afanasiev's version #191 the protagonist rescues the dog from a butcher who wanted to kill her for ruining a beef carcass, and the cat from being drowned for stealing a pie off someone's table. In the

Siberian version the protagonist rescues both from being used to make a fur hat. Then, during their adventure of getting the ring back, the dog swims carrying the cat on his back because the cat cannot swim (A. version # 191 and Siberian version), while both of them swim in Afanas'ev's version # 190. In Afanas'ev's version # 191 and the Siberian version the cat and the dog ingratiate themselves into the deceitful princess's household and gain her trust. In both of Afanas'ev's versions, the cat forces a mouse to help in order to steal the ring, while in the Siberian variant he becomes the princess's cat who was allowed to sleep on her bed. Overall, to obtain the ring the cat and the dog have to travel long distances, a long time (about a year in Afanas'ev's version # 191, three months in version # 190). Thus, based on these key points in the plot, this tale needs domestic animals that meet the following requirements: 1) their fur can be used as a cheap material for poor people's winter hats (Siberian version); 2) at least one animal should eat meat, and at least one animal should be able to steal food off humans' tables (Afanas'ev version #191); 3) at least one animal should be able to swim and carry another animal on its back (all three versions); 4) people should be accustomed to having these animals indoors (Afanas'ev version #190 and the Siberian version); 5) at least one of these animals should be a mice predator (Afanas'ev's versions); 6) both animals should be very loyal, able to travel long distances and have an excellent memory to find their way back home. A few more requirements could be given, but these suffice to show that the species-specific characteristics of cats and dogs are essential for *The Magic Ring*.

Anyone familiar with ancient Slavic pagan beliefs and animal symbolism will easily trace them in *The White Duck* – a tale with a common theme about a rich man's wife turned into a duck by a witch who then replaces her, kills her children, but gets

punished in the end. The most easily recognizable symbolism lies in the white duck herself. First of all, according the etiological legends of the ancient Slavs ducks participated in the creation of the Earth and were associated with the devil, various "unclean" spirits and even death (Gura 667-670). Moreover, some Slavic people believed that the soul of a drowned person appears as a blue duck for some time after death (ibid). This belief finds its direct reflection in the tale since the witch turns the woman into a duck when the woman immerses herself in her garden brook. In the musical folklore of the eastern Slavs the duck often represents a young bride. This association with wedding rites is reflected in the tale because the enchanted woman is a newly wedded wife.

The symbolic and mythological meanings of the duck in this tale are significant, but they do not completely overshadow the real animal. Even though *The White Duck* is a very short tale (two pages), its anonymous creator took care to retain "duck" characteristics. Even though she is not a real duck, but an enchanted woman, the white duck still conforms to the way ducks live as waterfowl. First of all, she hatches her human babies through laying eggs. In a magical fairytale, an enchanted woman, no matter what her outer form could have born children as women do. The white duck continues to live on the lake, swimming in it and apparently sustaining herself with what ducks usually eat. And she flies. Taken together, these features characterize a waterfowl.

Another detail that is tied to the real "animal" duck is the fact that she speaks "duck." The Russian "К р я" and its English equivalent "quack" are the way duck vocalizations are perceived by a Russian and English ear respectively. They are often used poetically to convey duck vocalizations. After her children had not come back home, she flew to the prince's (her husband's) courtyard and found them lying there

lifeless; she "rushed to them, spread her wings, and put them around her children, and cried with a mother's voice[57]" (Afanas'ev 326):

Quack, quack, quack, my children

Quack, quack, quack, my little doves!

I nursed you with fears,

I fed you with tears,

I spent dark nights without sleep,

And for worry over you did not eat.[58],[59]

Upon hearing this her unsuspecting husband tells his false wife, "My wife, do you hear this extraordinary thing? The duck is lamenting" (ibid). His false wife's response - "You only fancy it" - confirms that he did not understand the actual words, but sensed the

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[57] Female ducks, called "hens," are dedicated mothers according to common scientific information and numerous experiential accounts. For example, in 2008 in Great Britain (Newcastle upon Tyne area), six mallard ducklings fell into the sewer and were carried through the sewer system for two miles. Their mother followed them on foot for two miles, and when they got stuck, she sat there for about four hours guarding, but unable to help. A group of local people spotted her, opened the manhole under which the ducklings got stuck and rescued the ducklings (www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-102801).

[58] Some waterfowl species, especially, geese and swans, become emaciated following incubation because they do not feed enough as they care for their eggs and then, the young (www.ducks.org/conservation/waterfoul-biology/parental-care). Since hens (female ducks) are known to be dedicated mothers, and belong to waterfowl species, it is possible that peasant folk attributed to them such emaciation while caring for the young as observed in other waterfowl species – geese and swans.

Such lack of sleep and rejection of food, resulted from worrying over one's children, is also typical of human mothers. But the fact that the white duck may exhibit human traits does not undermine her animal specificity since she is a human in a duck form.

[59] *Кря, кря, моу деточки! Кря, кря, голубяточки! Я нуждой вас выхаживала, Я слезой вас выпаивала, Тёмну ночь не досыпала, Сладок кус не доедала!*

message, the lament. Had he understood the duck's words, the witch would not have been able to dismiss him with "you fancied it." His inability to understand the duck's exact words proves that she talks using "duck" vocalizations, and not human.

Other fairytale animals whose animal specificity is emphasized by their "natural" language are the dog and the cat from the Siberian version of *The Magic Ring:* the dog barks and the cat meows along with speaking a human language throughout the tale. Such a "bilingual" dog and cat might reflect a later version of the tale when the human-animal divide and emphasis on differences began to arise. Afanas'ev's versions of the same tale, which are supposedly older, have "seamless" communication between the dog and the cat, whose animal specificity is conveyed through their actions and capabilities as described above. Maintaining that these fairytale animals from Russian tales retain their animal specificity (often despite of, or along with mythological and symbolic meanings) might be in disagreement with the view that these animals' ability to understand and be understood by humans undermines any "real" animal specificity these animals may have. Such human-animal communication may seem too "magical and wondrous" to recognize "real" animal nature behind these fairytale animals. However, the ability to speak a human language that so many fairytale animals demonstrate is not so much fairytale magic as the reflection of the closeness and a completely different level of interaction between humans and animals characteristic of Russian traditional culture. People across Slavic cultures did not consider having a language to be a uniquely human prerogative, and believed animals had their languages, too. Some people even held beliefs that animals could both understand and speak human languages, and some scholars, such as modern Russian philosopher Tatiana Goricheva, speculate that loss of such

communication happened after the Fall (ibid), or at the Tower of Babel. Therefore, in the context of traditional Russian culture when these tales must have been created talking animals are not fairytale magic, but a real possibility, a reality of the paradisiacal past and, probably, something they might have hoped to regain.

Even these selected examples show that any given animal's "real" nature is just as important in many Russian tales as any possible symbolic mythological associations and meanings. Although, the mythological and symbolic significance of the fairytale animals cannot and should not be minimized, they work in tandem with every species' animal specificity without obscuring the real animal, and often emphasizing it. In every selected tale it is the specific animal species in the tale that is essential for the story, making this species not interchangeable with any other species. Thus, only the horse could be the archer-hunter's and Ivan's companion, only the grey wolf could help prince Ivan in his adventures, only the cat and the dog could return the magic ring. To replace any of these animal species with another species would entail changes in the plot line.

Such irreplaceability (or at least, difficult" replaceability") of the specific animal species exposes certain limitations in Vladimir Propp's theory about magical helpers. As Propp delineates 31 functions (or actions) of "dramatis personae" of the fairytale, he distinguishes the assistance give to the fairytale protagonist as a function of magical helpers. He writes that "functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled" (*Morphology of the Folktale* 21). Based on this statement, it does not matter whether a grey wolf, or a horse, or an eagle, or Baba Yagah, or some old magical wise man helps prince Ivan. But as it was

shown previously, to replace the grey wolf by another animal species, or even a magical humanoid would require reworking of a lot of details and the plot line.

Not only does Propp state that it does not matter "how or by whom" assistance is provided, but he also proceeds to say that "objects act the same way as do living things," thus making living things, objects, and qualities, from "the morphological point of view," interchangeable (*Morphology of the Folktale* 82). It is for the convenience sake that he uses the terms "magical helpers" and "magical agents" to refer to the living things and objects respectively, because otherwise it does not matter whether it is a magic carpet or a grey wolf who helps prince Ivan. This problematic situation with animals as helpers from the *Morphology's* point of view reflects the theory's overly generalized nature that some scholars have critiqued. Although from "the morphological point of view" it may seem inconsequential how the protagonist receives the help he needs, from every other point of view – motifs, theme, plot or story line, important details and so on – it does.

If the grey wolf is replaced by a magic carpet, it may not change the fact that Ivan "gets help," but it will require a complete reworking of the story and will result in a completely new tale. For example, the entire motif of Ivan's horse being eaten would be eliminated because without the grey wolf there would be no one to eat it. The only other creature that could eat Ivan's horse is a dragon or some other magical being. But dragons are usually enemies, and, therefore, bringing a dragon into this role would require at least a battle in which Ivan kills the dragon. Thus, without the grey wolf, Ivan's arriving at the crossroads would have to be removed because his choice of the path was needed to lead to the grey wolf. Replacing the grey wolf with a magic carpet would also require a donor who would give Ivan this carpet. It would also necessitate at least one more helper who

could instruct Ivan how to obtain the firebird, the steed and the princess. Then, either one of the previous helpers or a new one would be needed to revive Ivan after his brothers kill him. Introducing all these helpers and donors would involve new plot turns and situations, resulting in a new fairytale. After all these changes, the basic "skeleton" of a fairytale – a hero on a journey to obtain something – would remain. But as Propp argues in his *Morphology*, all fairytales are about a hero's quest.[60] It is the various motifs, themes, and, most importantly, characters that make them so different. Moreover, replacing the grey wolf, or the horse with a magical object would affect not only the plot, or motifs, but also another important aspect that fairytale animals bring with them – the relationship between the animal and the human.

[60] Lack and its liquidation is another way to describe the underlying structural pattern of the fairytale (Luthi *The Fairytale as Art Form* 54)

Chapter 3. Human-Animal Relationships

Recognizing and acknowledging animal specificity in fairytale animals allows to recover not only the actual animal, but also human-animal relationships that are often reduced to those of the human protagonist and an impersonal magical helper. Once animal specificity of a given fairytale animal becomes visible, the relationship between this animal and the human protagonist is no longer simply that of a hero and yet another magic helper, but one of a human and an animal. Nor is the human-animal relationship reduced to that of master-slave. Animal agency adds complexity to this human-animal relationship as the animal's agential stance intertwines with the human's. Cary Wolfe underlines the importance of human-animal relationships by saying that, ultimately, "the literary and philosophical end of animal studies has been interested [in the] ethical differences that attend out interactions with inanimate and sentient agents" (569). Simply investigating literary animal representations, or arguing for animal agency may not be worth much unless such investigations influence how we treat and think about real animals. Although investigation of such differences is beyond the scope of this work, analysis of the selected Russian fairytales will show that human-animal relationships in a lot of Russian fairytales are very much like human relationships. Haraway gives us a compelling concept that will enable us to explore these human-animal relationships.

In order to explain *companion species*, Haraway starts by pointing to the etymology of the constitutive words. Companion's origin is from Latin *cum panis* – "with bread" (*When Species Meet* 17). It implies a special closeness of breaking bread together, being "messmates at table" (ibid). Species comes from Latin *specere* "to look, to behold" and through *respecere* "to respect" it leads to "to hold in regards, to respond, … to have

courteous regards for, to esteem" (ibid. 17-19). As she writes further, "to knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who* and *what* are precisely what is at stake" (ibid.) Who and/or what are parties/partners/companions becoming with each other in often "unpredictable kinds of "we,"" world- and meaning-making figures.[61] Thus, companion species encompasses a gamut of human-animal relationships that are in a "constant dance of relating," continuously evolving and involving necessarily instrumentality, reciprocity, emoting, observing, responding and, ultimately, love. As she considers various interspecies companionships, she explores various instrumental relationships (i.e., relations of use to each other) and suffering, both of which are relevant to the human-animal relationships in fairytales.

Human-animal (or animal-human) relationships in Russian fairytales are often either completely overlooked by traditional interpretive approaches, or are seen as a "magical animal helper and the protagonist." This is not surprising given the traditional disciplinary avoidance of animals in literature (McHugh, *One or Several Literary Studies*) and other fields. For example psychology – the very science that studies not only the mind and behavior, but also "all aspects of human experience" (www.apa.org) – "historically has ignored and continues to resist" paying attention to human-animal relationships (Melson 347). In this chapter I will show that fairytale animals do not

[61] Haraway's world making is closely tied to *alter-globalisation* and *autre-mondialisation.* These terms come from European activists who stressed that "their approach to militarized neoliberal models of world-building are not about antiglobalization but about nurturing a more just and peaceful other-globalization" (*When Species Meet* 3). In the context of human-animal relationships world-making can refer to the possibilities of "how to live, to interact, to relate, to perceive" that arise as both parties evolve with each other, co-shaping and co-making. For more information on the nuances of the terms, see Haraway's *When Species Meet* pp. 303-304.

simply fulfill the function of "helpers," but often form strong bonds with humans in interspecies companionships. Exploring human-animal relationships in Russian fairytales will help us understand how people of traditional Russian culture related to animals.

In keeping with its abstract style[62], the fairytale provides hardly any explicit psychological characterization and motivation. Its one-dimensional, depthless, isolated, and generalized world might be one reason why any potential and implicit psychological motivation is difficult to identify. This contributes to the difficulty of recognizing and understanding the human-animal relationships in the tales. But it becomes much easier if one remembers that fairytales can show the effect of something rather than explicitly speaking of the thing itself. Max Luthi illustrated this by showing that the degree and intensity of Beauty in the fairytale is conveyed more strongly by its effect than by its comparison, and without detailed descriptions (*The Fairytale as Art Form* 1-39). Similarly, the nature of the relationship between the human and the animal, the depth of the bond between the protagonist and the animal helper is conveyed primarily through its effects, its various manifestations, or what results from such a relationship.

Thus, in *The Magic Steed* the depth of the bond between Ivan and his magic horse becomes clear when the audience/readers learn about a very intuitive, almost uncanny mutual understanding that results from such a bond: "his horse turned out to be so intelligent – no sooner does Ivan think of something than his horse already knows about it"[63] (Afanas'ev v.1 27). The same idea is implied in *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa*

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[62] In *The Fairytale as Art Form, and the Portrait of Man* Luthi analyzes in detail the fairytale's abstract style, emphasizing such features as generality of representation, lack of individualization and details.

[63] *с д е л а л а с ь е г о л о ш а д ь т а к а я р а з у м н а я - ч т о*

in the very beginning when the archer-hunter stumbles across a firebird feather. In both versions of the tale the horse must have known (i.e., "read his mind") that the archer wanted to pick up the feather before he could say anything. In version # 169 it says that "he came across a firebird's golden feather: like a fire it is shining! But the horse tells him: 'Do not take it'" [64](Afanas'ev v.1 424). In this version there is nothing in the text to suggest the archer's intentions[65], and the audience/readers realize that he wanted to take the feather only because the horse, who must have sensed the archer's intention, tells him not to. In version # 170 it says that when he saw the feather, he dismounted his horse and wanted to pick it up, but the horse told him not to (Afanas'ev 170).

Any traditional interpretive perspective will most likely dismiss this "mind reading" quality of the horse in both tales as an ordinary characterization of a magical fairytale animal. But if one acknowledges the possibility that these horses are real horses, this "mind-reading" ability acquires a new meaning, conveying the depth and nature of the bond between the horse and the rider.

Although fairytale animals undeniably possess magical powers, a lot of them also retain some of their "real" species-specific characteristics. Some of these magical powers reflect poetically the "real" animal's capabilities about which the creators, tellers and

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только Иван на уме помыслит, а она уже ведает.

[64] *наехал на золотое перо жар-птицы как огонь перо светится! Говорит ему богатырский конь: "Не бери золотого пера. Возьмёшь - горе узнаешь."*

[65] Although, the archer's fascination with the feather that was shining like a fire may be potentially interpreted as his desire to take the feather, the most important point is that he did not utter anything that would make his intention to pick up the feather audible to his horse. Even though the archer may have wanted to pick up the feather, he did not say anything out loud, and that means that the horse must have sensed his intention.

contemporary audiences of these tales must have known, but modern audiences do not. To a lot of dedicated horse riders the fairytale horse's "mind reading" abilities may not seem as miraculous. A renowned American horse trainer and clinician Mark Rashid is known for his uncanny ability to understand the horse's perspective that enables him to solve many difficult issues in horsemanship through communication with a given horse. He often stresses that after a certain point the riding stops being about technique, but about communication on a different, much deeper level when the rider looks inside of the horse to find that center where the rider and the horse can connect. Although technique is important, especially in the initial stages of horse training, Rashid "sees horses as "energy" and his work centers around ideas of redirecting energy, of softness that is the power and source within of the horse's lightness, of moving with the horse as "one energy" (Lindley).[66] Rashid is able to reach such a level of "being one" with the horse by communicating with the horse not so much using physical cues (e.g., feet, pulling reins etc.), but using thoughts. "The rider's thought becomes the horse's cue" (ibid.)[67]. Such riders strive to communicate with their horses through energy, correct breathing, state of mind, the touch that originates not so much from the physical/mechanical/muscular motion, but from one's inner center or mind. Through such horsemanship "miraculously" there develops a strong bond between the rider and the horse when the rider and the horse begin to sense each other's intentions. When such knowledge informs the reading of fairytale horses, the magic steed's ability to read Ivan's mind is no longer just another

[66] The French ethologist Jean-Claude Barrey writes that "talented riders behave and move like horses. . . . Human bodies have become transformed by and into a horse's body. . . . Both human and horse are cause and effect of each other's movement. . . . Both embody each other's mind" (Despret 115).

[67] Thus, "[riders]-jumpers can think their horse into landing on a particular lead after a jump. Other riders can think their horses into transitions and stops" (ibid).

example of fairytale magic. It is a manifestation of the deep bond and mutual understanding between the two that must have been natural to the ancient Russians, but has became lost to most modern readers who have never interacted with a horse, let alone experienced such an intimate bond with one.

Such intuitive, perceptive communication and understanding between humans and their companion animals seem to echo what Donna Haraway advocates in her *Companion Species Manifesto* when she writes about dog agility training: "*both* dog and handler have to be able to take the initiative and to *respond* obediently *to the other*" (62) (emphasis mine). She writes about the crucial importance for successful agility training of trusting one's dog and responding to the dog's authority in overcoming obstacles, to be attuned to the dog so as not to "overhandle" the dog's performance (*When Species Meet* 224). Like Haraway's dogs and their handlers, fairytale hunters, soldiers and their companion horses "engage in a joint dance of being that breeds respect and response" (ibid), there is no longer domination, "the owner," the *anthropo*-centre, but two companions who are becoming with each other.

Afanas'ev's version # 170 of the tale *The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa* illustrates Rashid's horsemanship as such "joint dance," of riding with the horse as one. One of the tasks that the princess wanted the tsar to fulfill before she would let him marry her is to bring her seventy seven mares.[68] Again, the protagonist comes to his steed for

[68] The princess's request in full specifies: "[bring] my seventy mares that are pasturing in green meadows between crystal mountains"
([*пригонитe] сюда семьдесят семь кобылиц моих, что в зелёных лугах промеж гор пасутся*)(Afanas'ev v.1 429) – another detail that shows that fairytale animals, no matter how insignificant their role in the story might be, often retain their animal specificity.

help. When the moment comes to shepherd the mares to the tsar's stables, the steed says to the protagonist: "Well, get on my back quickly and *drive me* in such a way *so that I will run* as fast as I only can, otherwise the mares will devour us."[69] This steed's instruction to the protagonist emphasizes the importance of the complete and total connection between the rider and the horse that sounds very similar to what Mark Rashid refers to as riding as one. The steed could have said something along the lines of, "now, I will run as fast as I can, just hold on tight," or the teller could have simply described the protagonist as mounting his steed and heading to the tsar's stables with the mares. But not only does the teller insist that the steed utters this statement, but he also indicates that the steed uses direct speech. Such narrative and textual emphasis brings attention to the importance of the steed's words. The steed cannot run as fast as he can without the rider's – the protagonist's – help. Their friendship, or companionship – when "the rider's thought becomes the horse's thought" so they ride as one – is essential for their survival and successful completion of the princess's request.

The taming of the horse that emphasizes the horse's animal specificity also shows how the protagonist and his horse's companionship begins. Poetic language conveys the untamed nature of the horse, the taming process itself, as well as the human's respect for the horse that underlies such human-animal companionships. For example, in *Ivan the Peasant Sun (*Shastina 192) in order to "tame" the horse with "flame out of its mouth and

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Here, just like Ivan's magic steed, fairytale mares need to feed in green pastures like real horses do.

[69] *Ну,- говорит жеребёнок- садись скорей на меня да погоняй больше, чтобы я что есть силы скакал не то кобылицы съедят нас* (Afanas'ev v.1 429)

sparks out of its nostrils"[70] Ivan must bow to the horse's right hoof and ask: "Give me some service, good horse, like you served my father"[71] (ibid.). Versions #176 and # 177 of Afanasiev's *Tale about a Slashing Fellow, the Apples of Youth, and the Water of Life* show instances of rough taming, when the protagonist uses "strong" language. Thus, in #176 Ivan calls the horse "wolf's meat," "wretched forty-ruble nag" because the horse rips all its chains and wants to run away. But once they become partners, or companions, Ivan compensates his initial frustration with the horse's intractable wild nature by feeding the horse well and referring to the horse as *любезный* that is often translated into English as "good," but in Russian in the context of partners or companions connotes a more personal and affectionate address than the English "good." Such rather consistent attention to describing how the protagonist and his horse meet, how the horse is tamed, how the protagonist asks the horse to serve him and then cares for his horse's physical needs, and how their bond is formed strongly suggests that in the traditional Russian culture people treated horses as their companions and not just means of transportation or agricultural tools, including them in a larger ecosystemic view of the world.

Horses are not the only animals in Russian fairytales that become involved in human-animal relationships. The tale *Frog Princess ((Царевна-лягушка),* with a well-known motif of an enchanted princess/prince, suggests that amphibians, too, can become human companions. Afanas'ev recorded four tales with this motif: three versions of *The Frog-Princess (Царевна-лягушка)* and

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[70] *изо рта пламя пышет, из ноздрей искры сыплются* (Shastina 192)

[71] *Послужи мне, добрый конь, как отцу служил* (Shastina 192)

The Tale about a Frog and a Bogatyr' (Сказка о лягушке и богатыре). Although, understandably, the protagonist is sorrowful because it is not a beautiful princess, but a frog that he has to marry, none of these versions states that a frog is no companion for a human. Even when in version # 239 Ivan says that a "frog is no match for him" the Russian word he uses for "match" (*ровня*) does not necessarily mean species differences and is used among people to refer to different social/cultural/material standing. So Ivan's words that the frog "is no match for him" (*Квакуша мне не ровня)* connote not only and not so much the irreconcilable species difference (which are certainly there), but also the difference in social standing because he is a prince, a king's son, and she is not of a noble, let alone royal origin (while his brothers married women from rich, noble, respectable families). All versions suggest that Ivan lives with his frog for some time (before he learns about her enchantment, tries to break it too early and as a result loses her), thus showing that in the traditional Russian culture, as it is reflected in fairytales, even such an unlikely for modern sensibilities "pet" as a frog could become a human's companion.

Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf shows a different human-animal friendship – that between a human and a wild predator. This friendship starts with an acceptance of each other's species natures. Ivan accepts the grey wolf as a carnivorous predator who ate his horse, while the grey wolf exercises patience as he deals with the human who consistently disobeys instructions. The growth of the grey wolf and Ivan's friendship as they go through their adventures together is reflected lexically in the ways Ivan addresses the wolf. When it was time for Ivan to give princess Elena away to the tsar

who owned the steed with the golden mane in exchange for the steed, Ivan becomes very sorrowful and begins to cry. When the wolf asks him what he is crying about, Ivan replies by addressing him "My friend, grey wolf"[72] (Afanas'ev v.1 420). Then, as Ivan travels with the princess, while the wolf is temporarily left behind disguised as the princess to mislead the tsar, Ivan remembers his friend and is thinking about him:"Ah, where is my grey wolf?"[73] (ibid). The possessive pronoun "my" turns this simple question into a personal concern, it indicates not possessiveness, but a connection between them, as in "my friend."

The strengthening of their bond shows in Ivan's increasingly more endearing choice of words he uses to address the wolf. When he asks the wolf to help him to keep the golden mane steed, he tells him: "Listen, my dear friend, grey wolf"[74] (ibid). The Russian word *любезный,* that is often absent in English translations, adds an even more personal and affectionate address. Then, when it came time for the wolf and Ivan to part, once the wolf left, Ivan "wept bitterly over the grey wolf"[75] (Afanas'ev 421). Based on the fact that their relationship did grow into a true friendship, it is safe to conjecture that what might have made Ivan's last weeping so "bitter," was the realization that as much as they grew attached to each other, and crossed their species boundaries in becoming friends, both of them – the wolf and Ivan – had to abide by their species specificity: the wolf has to return to his natural habitat, and Ivan should go back to his own kin.

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[72] *Друг мой, серый волк!*
[73] *Ах, где мой серый волк?*
[74] *Слушай, друг мой любезный, серый волк*

[75] *Иван-царевич горько заплакал по сером волке*

An anthropocentric and oversimplifying interpretation could object to the description of these protagonists and their animals' relationship as "friendship," or "companionship" by pointing out that the words "service" *служба*, "to serve" *служить/послужить*, "master" *хозяин*, supposedly, imply subordination rather than friendship. But such an interpretation would be reductive. First of all, the words "served" and "servant" used by the wolf do not undermine the identification of his and prince Ivan's relationship as friendship, but refer to the initial reason for the wolf's joining Ivan (he ate Ivan's horse and wanted to pay him back by helping, or serving), and not to the relationship that grew between them towards the end of their journey. The wolf's use of the word "servant" is just as nominal as the horses' use of the term "master." Mutual support and help are essential to any friendship. Frequently, even human friendship starts when people find themselves in circumstances that put one person (and often both) in need of the other's help. Deep friendship often grows out of need, and friends often "serve" each other. The wolf's desire to revive Ivan confirms that he became just as attached to prince Ivan as Ivan was to him. When the wolf stumbled upon Ivan's dead body, he recognized his friend by smell and "wanted to help the prince, to revive him" (Afanas'ev 623). Interpreting human-animal relationships as one of animal-to-human subordination reflects the still prevalent Cartesian view of animals. This perceived "master-servant" dynamics of the human-animal relationship belongs among the terms that are often used to describe multispecies relationships and that need a thorough revision. "Multiple instrumental relationships" (Haraway's term) permeate not only human-animal interactions, but human-human interactions as well and they are not always equal either.

In addition to being a manifestation of the wolf's attachment to prince Ivan, this episode presents an animal - the wolf - as an agent in his own right, acting out of his own volition and not out of any initial obligation, or coercion, or yet any form of human dominance: "the wolf wanted to help the prince, to revive him, but didn't know how to do that" (Afanas'ev 623). Thus, the relationship between the advice giver/helper - the grey wolf - and prince Ivan is not a formulaic and impersonal formal element, but a strong affectionate bond, a genuine friendship, without which prince Ivan would not have succeeded and later survived. Again, contrary to Propp's view, having become Ivan's friend, the grey wolf transcended the narrow boundaries of a formulaic helper and became irreplaceable.

Thus, certain inequality is often unavoidable in instrumental companionship because companionship is not static, but always in a state of becoming, with entities co-constitutively evolving and becoming with each other through complex interactions. The archer's "becoming" is in discovering the limitations of his own human reasoning and capabilities, and, at the same time, learning to trust his horse with his life. Meanwhile, the horse gains greater patience, as he stops repeating, "I told you so" at the end of the tale, and prince Ivan comes to realize that a wild predator is a better friend than his own brothers. As Haraway writes, such relationships "should not be expected to take on symmetrical shapes and textures for all parties. Response cannot emerge within relationships of self-similarity" (*When Species Meet* 71).

Haraway's insight about the necessary inequality in interspecies companionship could be taken further by suggesting that there might be multiple inequalities that in the end balance each other out in true companionships. When it comes to friendship and

various familial relationships of unequal instrumentality, the qualities of affection, appreciation, attachment, and mutual respect that often arise out of such relationships make everything equal. Thus, although it may look like the archer's horse and Ivan's magic steed are their "servants," or subordinates, the archer and Ivan are the ones obeying and following their much wiser and more insightful non-human companions. What formally may be interpreted as human-the-master and animal-the-servant dynamics, at a closer look turns out to be human-the-apprentice (the follower) and animal-the-wise-mentor (the leader) companionship. Although applying such notions to the human-animal relationships reveals an anthropomorphic[76] projection of forms of relationships typical of and very familiar to humans, what matters is how they relate to each other, how they "break bread." Their "co-constitutiveness," mutual "becoming with" and responding to each other often result in what Haraway describes as a "developmental infection called love" (ibid. 16). Only love (affection, attachment, gratitude, mutual respect) can co-exist with unequal instrumentality and maintain harmony despite the inequality.

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[76] As Timothy Clark notes, "anthropomorphism [is] a term of uncertain and perhaps undecidable status" (193). Usually anthropomorphism – "the attribution [usually falsely] of a human form or personality to a god, animal, or thing" (Illustrated Oxford Dictionary) – is closely associated with anthropocentrism, and hence often acquires the same negative connotation. But such understanding of anthropomorphism may be too narrow and simplistic as it reinforces the Cartesian irreconcilable differences between the human and the animal. It fails to address the growing scientific evidence of animals' complex mental and emotional capacities that strongly suggest that humans and animals share much more than the Cartesian view was willing to admit. Thus, to assert that it is anthropomorphic (and hence, false) to say that dogs, for example, can feel joy or be sad is to imply that only humans are capable of feeling joy and sadness. As Clark writes, it might be more reasonable to apply "anthropomorphism" to "undue ascription of human qualities to a non-human animal, [as in] accusing a snail of a religious heresy" (ibid). And to say that a dog feels joy upon seeing its human owner may not be anthropomorphic in the sense of being a "false" attribution of a human trait to an animal. However, as Clark notes, the question of anthropomorphism may remain debatable, because "all human knowledge must be anthropomorphic in some way" (ibid).

The sharing and responding in the instrumental companion relationships includes the sharing and responding to suffering. Suffering, including dying, might be the most problematic and difficult thing to discuss and deal with in virtually any context because most of the time it is never symmetrical (Haraway ibid). Learning and knowing how to respond and share in the suffering is another lesson that a lot of fairytales demonstrate. A very good example is the tales with a motif of a human relenting and caring for an animal after the latter begs the human not to kill him. In Afanas'ev's collection there are four versions of the tale *The Sea Tsar and Vasilisa the Wise* with this motif. In all four versions a human comes across an eagle (in three versions the eagle is injured) and attempts to shoot the eagle three times. Each time the eagle pleads with the human not to shoot him, and promises to repay if the human agrees to care for him. After the human cares for the eagle for three years, the eagle recovers, regains full strength and decides to thank the human with a magical gift. But on the way to the gift, the eagle gives the man a lesson on suffering. Once they set out with the man on the eagle's back, the eagle rises high over the sea, asks the man what the sea below looks like. When the man replies that it looks like a wheel, the eagle drops him into the sea, but picks him up before the man can drown. The eagle repeats this two more times, each time rising higher so that the sea below looks the size of a chicken egg, and then, like a poppy seed. Then the eagle asks what it felt like, and the man answers that he was frightened to death. To which the eagle replies that now he knows what the eagle felt and experienced when the man threatened to kill him three times.

This is a lesson on what Haraway calls "mimetic" suffering (*When Species Meet* 45) – the human got to experience in the flesh what the eagle felt when the human

threatened his life. But there is also an element of "non-mimetic" sharing in suffering (ibid) – fully understanding the pain and suffering one inflicts on animals should lead to actions, to help minimize and prevent them whenever possible. If the man truly learned the lesson the eagle taught him, he would not subject another sentient being to such terror. It is about living "responsively" and responsibly, never settling in to self-certainty, and anthropocentric "separateness" from the rest of the non-human *mortal* beings with whom humans are equal in mortality. New awareness and insights that flow from such experiences can help humans remember such a common shared vulnerability and relate to non-human mortals accordingly. In dog-training interaction, dogs and humans "train each other in subject-changing ways" (*When Species Meet* 51). Similarly, as such fairytales allow their audience/readers to vicariously interact with the grey wolf, the eagle, the steeds and other animals they present potentially "subject-changing" (ibid.) lessons.

Any discussion of human-animal relationships in fairytales, as well as of suffering in the context of human-animal interactions would be incomplete without mentioning the harsh reality of the natural order of mortality. In Russian fairytales humans hunt animals, some animals prey on other animals, and threaten humans. The world of Russian fairytales also has a place for cattle, livestock and beef. But even in such a harsh reality that Russian fairytales reflect, humans do not occupy an exclusive position – they are on equal footing with other living beings. One of the most illustrative examples is *The Tale about a Young Slashing Fellow, Apples of Youth, and Living Water* in which a human protagonist acknowledges his place in the natural order (or "food chain." A large bird (a falcon in one version, and a white stork in another) agrees to bring the human up from the Underworld, but needs a significant supply of meat to sustain his energy during their long

non-stop flight. As they near their destination the human runs out of beef and cuts a piece of his own flesh to feed the bird. When they reach the destination the bird regurgitates that piece and restores the protagonist's body. As it was with the grey wolf's eating Ivan's horse, there is no anthropocentric judgment or any moral commentary about this – there seems to be acceptance of a certain equality between the fates of beef and human flesh. Even the restoring of the hero's body does not change this equality because at the time when the hero cuts off a piece of his flesh, he does not know that the bird will return it.

Such tales also convey the same sense of equality when the killed hero's body becomes vultures' food[77]. For example, in version # 175 of this tale an old man-helper uses the word *myша* "carcass" to refer to the killed protagonist's remains. This word's primary usage is to refer to butchered livestock carcasses, often intended for eating, or any dead animals.[78] Such equality between human and non-human beings is consistent with an ecosystemic worldview that acknowledges the "right to sustenance" of both animals and humans (Shannon 476). And such awareness, acceptance and sharing of mortality are essential to interspecies companionship because it is all about "complex relations of mutual instrumentality with respect," and "about living responsively as mortal beings when dying and killing are not optional" (Haraway *When Species Meet* 74).

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[77] *Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf* shows the same situation when his brothers kill Ivan and crows arrive to peck at his body.

[78] ТУША - ж. битая и опрятанная скотина, стяг. туша говяжья, туша свиная, баранья; тушка поросячья. шкуру сняли с медведя, и сало обобрали, а тушу покинули. экая туша валит! о человеке огромный, тучный. тушевый, тушный, к туше относящ. туша стоит: шея есть, головы не бывало (*Толковый словарь Даля*).

These may not be the obvious lessons summed up in a concluding rhymed moral like those of Perrault. These are the lessons hinted at by fairytales, and, perhaps, such unwritten but implied lessons are the most significant and powerful because they encourage the audience/readers to ponder. Extracting deeper implicit lessons might have been part of the audience's active discussions that usually followed the telling of the tale, during which the audience would often contribute to the modification of the existing tales and creation of new tales. Such unspoken lessons that leave it to the audience/readers to draw conclusions and extract morals are in complete harmony with the abstract style of fairytales as described by Luthi. His explanation of Beauty could illustrate this.

As he writes, Beauty is never described in fairytales. The degree of the beautiful in fairytales is conveyed through its "shock effect" and not detailed description.[79] Thus, for example, the audience/readers realize how beautiful a princess is by learning that the prince was stuck in his tracks when he first saw her. As the fairytale seeks the universal validity it leaves the details to the audience/readers' imagination (*Fairytale as Art Form* 4). Similarly, open-ended lessons on human-animal relationships allow everyone to relate to them in individual ways because each companionate relationship is unique, and what one is becoming with one's non-human companion will be uniquely one's own. Thus, as Russian fairytales show animals as real, not only metaphoric or symbolic, who exercise their agency and form companionate relationships with humans, these tales lead their audience/readers to a mirror, helping them to look at themselves and the non-human other not as separated, forever distanced and removed from each other, but as "knotted, embodied and interdependent entities: companion species" (Haraway ibid).

[79] This is true for anything and anyone beautiful: a poor damsel, a princess, a prince, a palace, a flower, a precious stone, a treasure chest and so on.

As the tales analyzed in this section demonstrate, such careful attention to human-animal relationships might be characteristic of the ecosystemic character of traditional Russian culture. The portrayal of the interconnectedness of humans' and animals' lives, the insistence on the shared vulnerability of suffering and death as well as the ability to "hint" at the implications of such awareness warrant identifying traditional Russian cosmology as "ecosystemic" drawing upon Laurie Shannon's term. By "ecosystemic" she means a worldview in which humans receive an equal, and often humble, at times even inferior position among all other living beings (474). An ecosystemic culture emphasizes what makes humans and diverse non-human beings similar and close, rather than fundamentally and irreconcilably different. This is the opposite of the modern Western worldview heavily influenced by Descartes' view on animals as automata, with the emphasis on the human supremacy and consideration of everything else, including non-human beings, from the point of view of their utility for humans. Such view persisted for over three hundred years, resulting in real animals being treated as things, and literary animals being used as metaphors, symbols and allegories.

Conclusion

Russian fairytales do not reduce animals to their metaphoric, symbolic or allegorical representations. Mythological and pagan symbolic meanings have their place in such tales, but they should not be constructed as the sole way of understanding and interpreting the animals represented in the tales. Russian fairytales integrate each animal's specificity into the plot along with the animal's mythological and symbolic meanings. Thus, although the original listeners of the tales must have been aware of the horse's pagan association with the Sun-God, the horse's specific qualities are also incorporated into the plot and become indispensable to its role in the tales. Similarly, although it is fairly easy to identify the grey wolf's dual pagan symbolism as a connection to the dark forces and a good omen on one's path, the grey wolf as a wild carnivorous predator becomes just as important to the plot. In the world of Russian fairytales the human-animal relationship, despite its unavoidable often asymmetric instrumentality, becomes a companionship, in which humans and animals are becoming with each other, as they learn to be responsive and responsible, to hold each other in regard, share in suffering, and express affection. Such a portrayal of animals and of human-animal relationships presents a world that does not know the modern human-animal opposition and hierarchy.

Such tales present a worldview that cannot be considered anthropocentric, i.e., with the human as the center and a measure of value of all things (Clark 3). The worldview of Russian fairytales is closer to being "ecosystemic" (Shannon 477), in which the human is positioned off center and on a fairly equal plane with other sentient forms of

life. Generally, an ecosystemic[80] perspective is "a way of thinking and organizing knowledge that emphasizes the interrelatedness and interdependency" among beings (Queralt 17). As Shannon analyzes animals in Shakespeare's works, she emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and non-human beings, writing that "early modern humanity is relatively ecosystemic: it always has animality (and divinity and plants and elements) in or with it" (477).

An ecosystemic worldview or cosmology acknowledges the differences, but focuses on the common, the similar, the shared. Using Shakespeare and scriptural references to illustrate her concept, Shannon points out that the generic and hence problematic word "animal" was "uncommon" then (475). Diverse non-human species were not bunched together under the generic, impersonal term "animal" as the human's "persistent, solitary opposite" (ibid). Instead, there were viewed as living things that included beasts, fowl, fish and humans. The latter measured themselves "as much in contradistinction to angels as to animals," taking their place in a worldview much larger and more diverse than the more "contracted" modern human-animal divide (ibid). An ecosystemic cosmology does not know the modern binary of human/animal. Throughout the fairytales I have analyzed, as well as many others,[81] the word "animal" (*животное*)

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[80] The term "ecosystemic" should be distinguished here from such similar terms as "biocentric" and "ecocentric." "Biocentric" is closer to ecosystemic in that it extends "the status of moral object from human beings to all other living things in nature […], emphasizing the value and rights of organic individuals, [giving] moral priority to the survival of individual living beings" (Mouchang, Yi 422). "Ecocentric," on the other hand, gives moral priority to ecosystems and whole species, willing to sacrifice individual organisms to ensure the survival of an ecosystem or a species (ibid).

[81] *Seven Simeons (Семь Симеонов)*, *The Tale about Strong, Courageous and Undefeatable Bogatyr Prince Ivan and his Wonderful Spouse Tsar-Girl (Сказка о сильном и храбором богатыре Иване-царевиче и о прекрасной его супружице царь-девице), The*

is not used at all. Instead, there are either beasts[82] and birds, or specifically horses, wolves, bears, cats, dogs, ducks, lobsters, mice and so on. The introductions of two versions of *The Sea Tsar and Vasilisa the Wise* (*Морской Царь и Василиса Премудрая*) in Afanas'ev's collection are particularly illustrative of this. They echo a common motif of the battle of the beasts and birds that clearly distinguishes between beasts (mammals) and birds, instead of clumping them together under the generic and vague "animal." Furthermore, in such tales as Afanasiev's *Go Do not Know Where, and Bring Do not Know What (Пойди туда не знаю куда, принеси то не знаю что)* and Shastina's *Vasilisa the Wise (Василиса Премудрая)*, in which a wise person (usually, a woman) helps the protagonist by summoning and asking all animals for help, this helper does not summon them clumping them all as "animals." Instead, the helper summons beasts (*звери)*, then birds (*птицы*) and then "creeping" beings (*ползучие гады*), such as amphibians and reptiles, and fish (*рыбы*). Such distinctions are consistent with the ecosystemic worldview as described by Shannon.

In addition to the awareness and acknowledgement of the diversity of non-human beings, the human's equal (and often even inferior) position to animals further identifies traditional Russian culture as ecosystemic. Animals display wisdom and insight; they

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Tale about a Ring with Twelve Screws (Сказка про перстень о двенадцати винтах) (Afanas'ev)*, Vasilisa Vasilievna (Василиса Васильевна)* (Shastina).

[82] Beast – Russ. '*Зверь*' usually refers to quadruped mammals, and excludes birds, fish etc.

instruct and guide the human protagonist. The human turns out to be poorly equipped to deal with this world. In order to survive and overcome challenges, he has to rely on the animal's wisdom and guidance, while the animal "is understood to arrive prepared" (Shannon 477).

Understanding traditional Russian culture as ecosystemic adds a new dimension to the "eternal" Russian question of identity. Jane Costlow points out that as a result of its geographical position and history, Russian culture became dominated by "issues of identity, marginalization, and uniqueness" that consider "the animal other" within a much broader issue of human identity (3). A new look at human-animal relations in Russian fairytales suggests some answers to the questions about what it meant to be human in traditional Russian culture. The ecosystemic cosmology of the traditional Russian culture never set up the animal as "humanity's persistent, solitary opposite" (Shannon 474).

While this modern human-animal binary may have made its way into Russian thought as a result of the gradual spread of western European influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it appears to be absent in traditional Russian culture. According to Walicki , the two traditions of thought remained separate for a long time with Russian philosophy failing to become an independent discipline (Walicki xiii). He explains that "the involvement [of Russian traditional thought] with 'philosophy' has rarely been pure" before the twentieth century (Leatherbarrow 3). Well into the twentieth century peasantry constituted the majority of Russia's population (Costlow 18). As Michail Alekseevsky shows, traditional rituals and cosmologies shaped their agrarian lives, coexisting with Russian Orthodox beliefs. On the one hand, agrarian life wove human and animal histories in complex relations of use and companionship at the same time. On the other

hand, “the contemplative spirituality” of Russian Orthodoxy held a vision of the harmonious interspecies communication and communion that was believed to have been lost after the Fall. The realities of agrarian peasant life were such that animals were extensively used for food. At the same time, animals shared various spaces with Russian peasants, including the peasant’s house that welcomed farm animals during the coldest winter days (Costlow 18). By the same token, Russian hagiography offers a lot of accounts of Russian saints’ meaningful and respectful interactions with animals, encouraging a reverent treatment of them (Goricheva *Sviatye zhivotnye*).[83] With such a complex background, Russian traditional cosmology held much more fluid notions of animality and human- animal relations than Western modernity. Human superiority and exceptionalism are absent, the human protagonist is often inadequate and helpless, while animals possess insight, wisdom and authority. As it comes through in the fairytales, the ecosystemic worldview of the traditional Russian culture represents humans as one of and with many other living creatures.

Furthermore, as Jane Costlow points out, Russian thinkers have often viewed Russian people as "more natural" than people in the West (3). A soulful and affectionate relationship to "Nature" was often central to the discourses on national identity and "Russianness" (ibid). In the discussions of Russia’s relationship to nature, animals were often assigned key roles, whether as national metaphors, or “reflections of environmental, geographic and political realities” (ibid). The bear is one such easily recognizable metonym, as used during the Cold War and 1980 Olympic Games. Identifying Russian culture as ecosystemic helps to understand the inclusion of animals in the discourse on

[83] For more on animals in Russian Orthodoxy see Goricehva, Tatiana. “Sviatye zhivotnye” in *Khristianstvo i ekologia. Sbornik statei*. St. Petersburg, 1997.

national identity and how people in traditional Russian culture related to animals. They recognized, acknowledged and accepted undeniable differences between the human and the animal, but focused on the common and the shared. Addressing these differences the philosopher Cora Diamond writes that such differences may start out as biological, but they become *something* that separates the human and the animal only when "the human thought takes up such difference and makes something of it" (351). In the ecosystemic worldview of traditional Russian culture as it appears in Russian fairytales such difference does not become the dividing *something. The Tale about a Ring with Twelve Screws (Сказка про перстень о двенадцати винтах)* from Afanas'ev's collection illustrates an ecosystemic focus on the commonalities of humans and animals when the hero's mother refers to animals as "souls." Similarly to the protagonist in *The Magic Ring,* instead of saving money the hero chooses to buy, first, a puppy and then a kitten. His old mother becomes very upset because they are very poor, and each time she exclaims that now they have two more *souls (души)* to feed. Calling the dog and the cat "souls" – a word that is usually used to talk about the human – bypasses biological differences and focuses on the ecosystemic sharing as sentient living beings. Such a view of animals is completely opposite of the Descartes' idea of animals as soul-less machines ("machines sans âme").

Identifying traditional Russian culture as ecosystemic suggests continuity with the "soulful affection" for "native nature" (Costlow 7) observed in Russian literary and artistic classics, and in the Russian Orthodoxy's reverence for animals. In *Я и мир объектов (I and the World of Objects)* Berdiaev writes that humans can find true,

genuine communion (or companionship, using Haraway's term) with animals. And as Costlow notes, Leonid Heller identifies "the communal solidarity of humans and animals" in Russian philosophy and science (7). Such continuity suggests that the modern opposition human/animal and anthropocentrism are essentially absent from Russian traditional culture. But this problem of importation of Western ideas and how they affected the treatment of animals and human-animal relations in Russia is outside the scope of the present work and would require extended interdisciplinary and comparative research.

Following Cary Wolfe's urging to the students of literature and culture (567), the present re-reading of the Russian fairytales is one of the much needed attempts to respond to the rapidly growing evidence about animals and their capacities presented by such fields as cognitive ethology[84] and anthrozoology.[85] As he points out, critical scholarly assessment of a literary work must change when the animals in it "undergo an ontological shift from things to, in some sense, persons" in real life (ibid). Or, as in the case of Russian fairytales in which animals were never things to begin with, but in scholarly interpretations ended up either overlooked or among fairytale "wonders" along with flying carpets and magic boots, scholarship must recover such "person-animals" from a pile of magic objects, and reject the anthropocentrism of literary studies in general, and fairytale scholarship in particular.

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[84] Cognitive ethology studies animal behavior under more or less natural conditions, and how conscious awareness and intention influence animal behavior.

[85] Anthrozoology, also known as human-animal studies, or HAS, is an interdisciplinary field that studies human-animal interactions and their effect on everyone involved. It overlaps with anthropology, zoology, psychology, veterinary and human medicine.

As anthropocentric as treating animals as metaphors and symbols might be, metaphorical meanings and specific animality may not be mutually exclusive. Russian fairytales find a way to combine mythological and symbolic meanings of animals with their specific animal nature. Thus, the white duck's association with a young bride and a drowned person does not obscure the duck's specific "waterfowl" characteristics. Exploring in what ways and to what extent metaphors and symbolism can help understand "real" animals can be another interesting research relevant to Russian literary scholarship since a lot of great Russian writers employed metaphoric and "real" animals.[86]

As the massive amount of evidence about the richness and complexity of animals' emotional and mental lives, their interactions, social structures and forms of communication is leading to re-readings of literary animal representations, one might ask: to what are such re-readings leading? Repeating one of the quotes found at the beginning of this work, I would like to once again assert that fairytales have a way of "imparting a knowledge of the self and the world that would otherwise be inaccessible" (Metzger 7). As Russian fairytales tell stories of animals and humans engaging in complex companionate relationships, these tales suggest ways of interacting with and relating to both humans and non-humans, whose histories are inextricably connected. The world in Russian fairytales is far from idyllic: there is suffering, grief, need for detachment, losses. These tales do not teach an idyllic "happily ever after," but how to negotiate differences

[86] Examples: Dostoevsky's flogged horse, spider as human evil; Tolstoy's Kholstomer and Frou-Frou; Chekhov's little dog and Kashtanka; Turgenev's Mumu and others.

in a complex and complicated real life. Paraphrasing William Cronon,[87] one can respond that re-reading Russian fairytales is a way of recovering animals, and thereby expanding our understanding of Russia's human-animal past. In turn, this can help uncover deep cultural assumptions and misconceptions, recover old and discover new, perhaps, more ecosystemic ways of relating to diverse non-human forms of life.

[87] Cronon states that "the special task of environmental history is to assert that stories about the past are better, all other things being equal, if they increase our attention to nature and the place of people within it" (1375).

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