

# “A BUNNY IS A BEAUTIFUL THING” OR ANIMALS AS MACHINES (!?)

## THE PERCEPTION OF THE ANIMAL WORLD IN SLOVENIAN FOLK SONGS

MARJETKA GOLEŽ KAUCIČ

*The article proceeds from the human-animal relationship as presented in selected folk songs and seeks to redefine the traditional view of animals (as some sort of animate machines). Using ecological and philosophical premises, the author seeks to demonstrate that animals belong where human beings have already ensconced themselves. In analyzing animal ballads and humorous songs, the author discovers various images and roles of animals as well as human perceptions of the animal world either as a real microcosm or merely a metaphorical one. Research thus shifts from an analysis of motifs and themes to the concrete or cultural relationship of the human towards animals in folklore. It is shown that the relationship between humans and animals in folk songs is explicitly anthropocentric and based on two types of historical views on animals: the synanthropic view, which treats animals as harmful, and the anthropophilic view, which regards animals as useful; however, because of certain ethic dimensions this often switches to ironicization, concealing the horror of certain human acts towards animals.*

*Keywords: Slovenian folk ballads, animals in songs, human-animal relationship, synanthropic and anthropophilic view, cultural zoology, ethnozoology, zoological folklore, zooethics, antropomorfizem.*

*Članek izhaja iz razmerja človek–žival, kot nam ga prikazujejo izbrane ljudske pesmi, kjer si avtorica prizadeva redefinirati tradicionalni koncept pogleda na žival (kot nekakšen živalski stroj). S pomočjo ekoloških in filozofskih premis skuša dokazati, da žival sodi tja, kamor se je že usidrilo človeško bitje. Ob analizi živalskih balad in šaljivih pesmi odkriva raznovrstne podobe in vloge živali in odnos človeka do živalskega sveta, ki ga v njegovem mikrokozmosu dojema kot resničnega ali le kot metaforičnega. Raziskava se premešča od motivno-tematske analize vlog živali v pesmih do konkretnega oziroma kulturnega razmerja človeka do živali, kakor se izraža v ljudski pesmi. Ugotavlja, da je človeški odnos do živali v ljudskih pesmih izrazito antropocentričen in izražen v dveh tipih pogleda na živali, ki jima lahko sledimo v zgodovini: v sinatropskem (živali so obravnavane kot škodljive) in antropofilnem (živali so koristne). Kljub temu pa lahko v pesmih zaznamo etično razsežnost, upesnjeno v ironizaciji posamičnih grozljivih človeških ravnanj z živalmi.*

*Ključne besede: slovenske ljudske balade, živali v pesmih, živalsko-človeška razmerja, sinatropski in antropofilni princip, kulturna zoologija, etnozoolgija, zoofolklor, zooetika, antropomorfizem.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the human-animal relationship as presented in selected folk songs and seeks to redefine the traditional view of animals as some sort of animate machines. Using ecological and philosophical premises, it will be demonstrated that animals belong where human beings – who are supposed to have a soul (or *anima*) – have already ensconced themselves. *Anima* also refers to ‘air’ or ‘living being’, and ‘life’ in its broadest sense. The Latin word for animal (*animal*) and even the English word (animal) draw attention to the fact that the word itself conceals an expression denoting the soul – that is, *anima*. One can thus see the etymological relation between animals and humans through the category of soul. The word *anima* can also mean ‘breath’ and ‘life’, and the word *animalis* can denote a ‘living being’ or ‘animal’ (Marjanić and Kiš 2007: 11). For Aristotle, this word denoted a

principle of life. The German Tier ‘animal’ and the English deer originate from the word Dunst, denoting ‘evaporation of spirit’ (Duden 1963: 709). Or as J. M. Coetzee (2007: 37) put it: “To be alive is to be a living soul. An animal – and we are all animals – is an embodied soul.”



Figure 1. “On the little island of Gressholmen in Oslo Fjord, humans are always in the minority.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I was so surprised to see this picture in the airline publication depicting animal and human cohabitation in Norway. But then I was told by my colleague from Norway that the rabbits at Gressholmen were killed off in 2007 to protect the vegetation on the island. So, animals are nowadays still objects and not subjects, even in such a progressive country as Norway.

Research thus shifts from the field of motifs and themes to cultural zoology (Visković 1996: 10–11) or even animal anthropology (Noske 1993; Marjanić 2006: 180); in this area, this article seeks to study ethnozoology (or zoological folklore as presented in folk ballads and songs). Roy Willis begins his volume *Signifying Animals* by stating that animals are certainly part of cultural tradition: "The many facets of the varying relationships that have developed between humans and animals, as they are reflected by the diversity of cultural traditions" (Willis 1990: viii). The author goes on to say that human relationships towards animals differ: "Ecological, psychic, cultural and utilitarian considerations are all involved in peoples' attitude to, and treatment of, other species" (1990: viii). In his paper "Cultural Attitudes to Birds and Animals in Folklore," Jawaharlal Handoo (1990) establishes that primarily the motif-thematic role of animals has been studied in folklore and not the concrete or cultural relationship between humans and animals. This paper focuses on the latter concept and on this basis seeks to trace and analyze the animal patterns and other phenomena in folklore. Can we say that real life is transformed into folklore? In songs, animals eat, drink, think, and suffer like people, and thus some sort of parallel can be drawn between them.<sup>2</sup> In addition, this paper even uses its title to highlight the ecological, ethical, and animalistic idea that an animal cannot be a thing – or, as stated by the well-known researcher and defender of animal rights, Tom Regan: "Our culture has a throw-away attitude towards animals, as if these sensitive beings were products and things" (Regan 1983: 368). An animal has its cultural patterns and is thus also part of human culture (Visković 1996: 17).

Anthropomorphism is observed in songs: human attributes are ascribed to animals (e.g., this is strongly attested in folk songs about the lovesick cat whose misery compels him to hang himself, the brutal wolf, the impure dog, and so on), and animals behave like people (a transfer of the human to the animal world). In addition, this study focuses on the observation of zoomorphism: animal characteristics are ascribed to people (Visković 1996: 34). If one says that a fox is cunning, this is an example of anthropomorphism (but it is actually cunning in order to survive); if one says that a man is brave like a lion, this refers to zoomorphism – which is derived from totemism.<sup>3</sup> The ethologist Konrad Lorenz felt differently. He believed that, if one said that a bird fell in love, this is not anthropomorphizing but is the truth because this really happens in life (Lorenz 1989: 64–65; cf. Visković 1996: 36). Some have criticized anthropomorphism for being harmful, but according to Peter Singer (1995), the idea that animals are like clay that can be shaped to one's desire is more dangerous than the idea of sentimental anthropomorphism.

<sup>2</sup> There are also animal themes in folklore and art (e.g., Breugel's human gluttony); for example, one can in this context mention existing animal themes in art (painted beehive fronts, naive painting) and animal themes in folklore (folk songs and narratives with animals as the main characters).

<sup>3</sup> In some songs, metamorphosis is also used – one example is the theme of transformation from human into animal as punishment (e.g., in the fantastic ballad "Sinova – vrani" [The Sons: The Crows], when the mother transforms the children into crows as punishment; see: Kumer et al. 1970: 31, 32.

Precisely with these relatively new concepts in folklore research, I seek to elucidate the ways in which people in Slovenian folk songs depend on animals, how they perceive them, what the expression is then like in songs, and how people use animals in economic, religious, artistic, moral, emotive, and everyday life. In addition, I try to elucidate how people threaten or are threatened by animals, which animals are their competitors and which their friends, how and to what extent people have gotten to know the animal features within themselves.

## HUMAN AND “ANIMAL” ANIMAL

Humans' inability to think like other beings and explain them without making analogies with themselves despite human's link to them (because people are also animals) is extremely great (Visković 1996: 35). Even worse, people believe that they are incomparably smarter than animals, although we cannot understand what a dog tells us, whereas he immediately understands the order “sit.” Human supremacy is a dangerous myth, arising from human egoism and animals' lack of resistance – or, as Coetzee wrote in his book *The Lives of Animals* (2007/1999), animals defend themselves from humans by remaining silent.

The researcher and professor of law Nikola Visković believes that in the real world humans have at least six different attitudes toward animals: (1) the economic attitude (the oldest human interest in “other animals”), in which animals are the object of our material needs related to food, clothing, work, and transport, as well as material to be used in production, medicine, and entertainment. They are thus merely a means to an end, an object and not a subject that exists only to satisfy our biological and economic egoism and is often subject to human cruelty. In human history, hunters' and farmers' livelihood and economic dependence on useful and harmful animals has been extremely long, as has been their moral responsibility. According to Visković, there are two types of historical views on animals, which can also be applied to folklore: the synanthropic view, which treats animals as harmful, and the anthropophilic view, which regards animals as useful. (2) The second is the symbolic attitude, which means that animals represent symbols of certain important collective ideas (especially magical, religious, moral, and political). In the past, every culture had some sort of animal cult in its folk beliefs, spells, magic, fables, bestiaries, fairytales, stories, and even folk songs. This also includes the artistic approach with animal motifs in literature, film, and painting even as independent themes. (3) The third is the sentimental or compassionate attitude, which is typical of urban culture, although it is well-known that archaic communities could also have a compassionate attitude towards animals in addition to an economic one. For example, a dog or a piglet could have a similar status to a child, but in these communities the reasons for this were different than today. (4) The ecological attitude is also becoming important today, seeking to grant a privileged status to endangered species in comparison to other species. (5) The fifth is the scientific attitude, which uses animals as research subjects (this was even discussed by Aristotle in his *Historia*

Animalium). This includes zoology and, for example, vivisection, in which human cruelty knows no limits, finding excuses in humanity and claiming that these experiments can help people (the animals again being employed as a means to an end). Other disciplines that can address the issue of animals' status include anthropology, ethnology, and folklore studies; other disciplines such as history, sociology, economics, and political science do not deal with this issue although it could be one of their research subjects. (6) The sixth and last is the ethical approach, which is the most poorly developed today, although it can be traced back to Pythagoras, Plutarch, Da Vinci, and Montaigne<sup>4</sup> and was theoretically constructed by Albert Schweitzer, radical ecogism, and the animal rights movement. In its genesis, the ethical attitude owes a great deal to Schopenhauer's moral theory based on compassion. The ethical approach demands recognition of all animal species and every animal as an individual as well as the responsibility of all people to respect these rights. Therefore, this is not an issue of love or affinity but a legal issue based on (a) the recognition of an ecological balance, upon which the future of the humanity also depends, and (b) the expanded categorical imperative of a Kantian type, which means respect of any living being as a subject (summarized and adapted from Visković 1998: 11–15). But why is this ethical approach not followed?

One could say that the only difference between people and animals is in the level and not the quality. Darwin in his book *The Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals* (1872) determined that the greatest similarity between people and animals lies in their emotions. In his book *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (1996), James Serpell provides an elaborate answer to this question in Chapter 9, titled "The Myth of Human Supremacy," as well as in Chapter 10, titled "Killer with a Conscience." This unfortunate idea of human supremacy is a myth that was created as a combination of biblical and classical sources, and then in the 13th century acquired formal expression in the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Both religious and secular authorities managed to perpetuate this myth for nearly seven centuries despite a few attempts at alternative views on the human role in the world. Human predominance is attached to human egoism, which is why this concept was able to predominate and in the 17th century even obtain a philosophical basis through works of René Descartes. Descartes introduced the mechanistic doctrine, claiming that animals are machines and therefore do not suffer, and that people can kill them as they please without feeling guilty because animals do not have a soul. The combined early Christian and Aristotelian view on animals, according to which animals are merely beings created to benefit humans, and the Cartesian idea provided "a license to kill." In the majority of cultures with rural features (i.e., agricultures) this concept and the economic approach to animals predominate because people did not consciously deal with their relationship with animals because survival was the most important.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch was an ancient animalist because he believed that animals had reason (*Moralia I–XV*, Cambridge 1957); Michel de Montaigne was a philosophical animalist (*Apologie de Raimond Sebond, Essais 2*, Paris, 1965, 78).

Nature was considered to be dangerous and threatening, and this image of nature is also reflected in folklore or, in our case, ballads and humorous songs about animals in which animals play the main role. In addition, fairytales and stories present nature as frightening and certain animals, such as wolves, as dangerous. The Grimm brothers' *Little Red Riding Hood* also presents human entry into the forest as a dangerous place and the wolf as an animal that must be exterminated. Perception and attitudes toward animals are very important in folklore because they shape people's attitude toward animals and their later perceptions. Visković (1996: 316) suggests a revision of this fairytale with an ecological connotation. Folklore has the power to become rooted in the human way of thinking and attitude towards the world, especially when this involves a Christian view of the world. Thus the Cartesian and Christian concept of the attitude towards animals predominated; people killed animals because this was admissible. The theologian Eugen Drewermann (1981: 18–20) says the following: "Christian doctrine has one of the worst drawbacks: it only applies to human beings, although it is interesting that the majority of animal depictions are found in the Bible and in folk heritage."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, in the Bible God overlooks Cain's cereal offering and looks with affection upon Abel, who sacrifices an animal. However, an allusion to possible harmony between man and animal can be found in the Bible as well: "And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11: 7, 6). Does this depict a utopia?!

#### ANIMALS IN SONGS – ONLY AS OBJECTS?

With Aristotle's concept of natural hierarchy and Descartes's view of animals as machines, a process of absolute and irrelative distinction between animals and humans developed. The selectivity in liking and disliking animals is different in different cultures. In Europe, for example, a mouse in a laboratory is the object of vivisection, a dog can be a family member or chained and forced to lead a miserable existence its whole life; the attitude towards pigs can be an attitude towards a source of meat, and slaughter is now hidden from the public, with the alienation resulting in the fact that the farm animal truly no longer has its own form because it is delivered to people as a sterile product in a piece of neatly packaged meat. If it is really that easy to kill animals and to feel nothing in doing so, the leap to killing people is very easy; this can be illustrated with an example discussed by James Serpell in the chapter "The Fall from Grace:"

*In Britain and Europe during the medieval and early modern period human life was similarly cheap. Public executions and torture were regular events*

<sup>5</sup> "There should be fewer human beings in order to preserve the majority of animal and plant species" (Drewermann 1993: 2).

*that provided the masses with entertainment. Sir Thomas Pope Blount referred to the uneducated rabble as "brutes" and argued that it was only "by favour of metaphor we call them men, for the best they are but Descartes's automata, moving frames and figures of men, and have nothing but their outsides to justify their titles to rationality." Of course, depersonifying people in this way, and viewing them as beasts, conveniently allowed them to be treated accordingly. As Keith Thomas points out: "The ethic of human domination removed animals from the sphere of human concern. But it also legitimized the ill-treatment of those humans who were in a supposedly animal condition."* (Serpell 1996: 227–228)

Later on, slavery followed the same principles (in Africa and America), which justified itself using the words barbarism and uncivilized "animals." Then Nazism – which paradoxically had some of the most protective animal legislation – arose in Europe; nonetheless, it referred to inferior races as some sort of laboratory rats. Today this is shocking, but animal slavery (and killing) is still socially and legally acceptable. What do songs that ironize the killing of animals tell us? Perhaps it is this ironization of the human attitude toward animals and the scorning of human acts that point to the fact that deep down in the human soul, people are aware that their role in the world is only a myth, and they have no right to kill animals. It is interesting that the majority of animal songs entered children's folklore and became a part of it, which arises from the fact that anthropomorphism is strongly present among children because they are not yet indoctrinated with the adult perception of the world and treat animals like persons or subjects and not like creatures that are supposed to be subordinated to them. The human perception of animals as a means of exploitation (for food, clothing, and so on) – that is, the economic approach, which also follows the Cartesian view of animals, which start functioning only as living machines and thus do not suffer and feel because they are deprived of thinking and feeling – is also evident from certain songs, but this time through ironizing people (or even an indicated conviction of their acts), which mitigates the objectification. This approach is typical of the folk song tradition of humorous ballads about animals, in which human reception of the animal world focuses only on the objects of everyday use, or which ironize the animal world by seeking to inject humor into the human treatment of animals in order to cover up gruesome slaughter (for the people's sake, not that of the animals').<sup>6</sup>

This article analyzes humorous ballads about animals and humorous songs with animal themes. For example, the ballad "Ponesrečena snubitev" (A Failed Marriage Proposal, GNI 0 9399) thematizes the following story: A snail would like to marry the miller's daughter, but he already has a rival: the rooster. The rooster says that if he, who has such beautiful and

<sup>6</sup> Following Rudolf Schenda (1995) a coarse (or, more precisely, human) series of prejudices of "speciesism" is still evident in various views on animals; it resembles racist and colonialist vocabulary (which can be seen from various stories about animals) and is strongly connected with hatred of foreigners and widespread sexism (the author mentions writers from Saint Augustine to Shakespeare). More about speciesism can be found in Joan Dunayer's work titled *Speciesism* (Derwood, Maryland: Ryce Publishing, 2004).



Figure 2. Rabbits are playing on the snow. Beehive panel (Helmut Kroppej, *Poslikane panjske končnice*. Celovec: Mohorjeva založba, 1990, 70).

shining feathers, cannot marry the girl, a slimy snail certainly will not. This is an example of anthropomorphism because both animals represent humans; it is interesting that both of them are representatives of the afterlife as psychopomps: The rooster is the harbinger, announcing the sunrise and conducting souls to the afterworld, and the snail symbolizes awakening and is a Christian symbol of virginity and the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception as well as a symbol of slowness and laziness (Germ 2006: 179–186, cf. Golež Kaučič 2002: 39). In the next song, titled “Smrt polža – ženina” (Death of a Snail Groom, Š 999), the snail proposes to the female snail, but unfortunately a mare tramples him to death before she accepts his marriage proposal. There are no humans involved here, at least not directly. However, they may be hidden behind the animal figure; a marriage proposal and a wedding are anthropocentric practices even though animals also court. The song “Petelin ukani lisico” (The Cock Tricks the Vixen, Š 961) has the character of a fable and contains a moral. A vixen meets a cock that she would like to eat and so she tricks him by telling him to demonstrate to her how a lamb sleeps. When the cock shows her, she grabs him. The cock then says that she should thank God for such a nice piece of young meat. When the vixen does this, the cock runs away. The vixen's slyness is thus beaten by the cock's cleverness. This probably has to do with a representation of three human characteristics – that is, slyness, cleverness, and gluttony, which are built into the song (cf. Golež Kaučič 2002: 34). The humorous song “Bolni polž” (The Sick Snail, Š 8615) shows that a snail represents a “high-value” beast because he has a shell (literally, a ‘house’ in Slovenian) and so people catch and chain him. He becomes sick and so they call a healer who not only cannot cure him but also runs away when the snail shows his horns. This song ironicizes people as well as the healing profession while also addressing the issue of the human-animal relationship. In the song “Odrt in zaklan maček” (A Skinned and Butchered Cat, Š 8650), a cat is skinned and the meat is given to the judge, who then ends up having indigestion because he ate a “bunny that brings mice to the stables.” This is a thematicization of gluttonous high society.



*"Zajček je lepa reč" (GNI R 17.818)*

*Zajček je gorički sin,  
vince rad pije,  
ko pa je treba kopat,  
se pa v grm skrije.*

*Zajček je lepa reč,  
repa pa nima več,  
pesem bi tudi pel,  
pa je ni več.*

*'A Bunny is A Beautiful Thing'*

*A bunny is a son of the hills,  
He likes to drink wine,  
But when it's time to hoe the vines,  
He hides in the bushes.*

*A bunny is a beautiful thing,  
But no longer has a tail.  
He could also sing songs,  
But they are no longer here.*

This song, used as the title of this article and preserved only in a 1978 manuscript by Albina Kvenderc, objectified a rabbit. However, because the rabbit may only be a metaphor for a lazy man, the man is merely a thing as well. The rabbit is objectified and the observation that he quickly loses his tail (which, of course, is removed by humans) is wrapped into a joke; however, zoomorphism is also present in the song because the rabbit can also be a metaphor for a lazy man. The next song, "Neubogljivi zajček ubit" (A Disobedient Bunny is Killed, GNI M 20.395), points to the fact that a farmer is entitled to kill a rabbit if it causes damage. The text is interesting because it presents an expressly anthropocentric view of animals or an economic attitude toward animals (the synanthropic principle): first, it involves a harmful animal and, second, the farmer warned the rabbit to stop. The human speaks to the animal because, in his superiority and stupidity, he believes that the animal understands him, thus humanizing the animal. Of course, the animal uses a different form of communication. Third, the song includes a moral, when another rabbit "speaks up" and reproaches the dead rabbit for not obeying the farmer's warning. So, the human first treats the rabbit as a living being and even communicates with him. However, in the end, he assumes a view based on human righteousness when killing the rabbit because the rabbit does not stop doing things that are typical of rabbits. Namely, the rabbit does not cause damage to the farmer but only eats in order to survive, whereas the farmer perceives this as causing damage. This is the main stumbling block in the human-animal relationship.

♩ = 136 - 148

V zelj - nik je ho - diw zaj - ček na ze - lje, praz - ni - ka ni se baw, ni - ti ne - de - lje.

♩ = 148

Tra la la la la la, tra la la la la, tra la la la la la tra la la la.

Figure 3. First stanza of the song (with melody) "Neubogljivi zajček ubit" (A Dissobedient Bunny is Killed), recorded 1956 in Šegova vas, Dolenjska region. Sung by a group of singers (Archive of the Institute of Ethnomusicology, GNI M 20.395).

*V zeljnik je hodiw zajček na zelje,  
Praznika ni se baw, niti nedelje.  
Tralala lalala, tralala lala,  
Tralalala, tralalla tralala la.*

*A bunny went to eat cabbage in the farmer's patch,  
He feared no holiday, nor Sunday.  
Tralala lalala, tralala lala,  
Tralalala, tralalla tralala la.*

*Kmetič ga ... zdaj u zeljniku ugleda,  
ravno, ko mlado glavo objeda.*

*The farmer spots him in the patch,  
Just as he is nibbling on a fresh head of cabbage.*

*Hudega neče ... storiti,  
Le ga pokara, več ne hoditi.*

*He does not wish to harm him,  
But only to warn him not to come back.*

*Zajček ne sluša tega svarila,  
Škoda čim dalje večja je bila.*

*The bunny does not listen to his warning,  
And the damage gets worse and worse.*

*Drugič grozi mu kmetič ostreje,  
Puško pokaže mu izza meje.*

*The second time the farmer is stricter,  
And points his rifle at the rabbit from behind the bushes.*

*Tretjič za mejo kmetič zdaj čaka,  
Ravno ko zajček v zeljnik priskaka.*

*The third time the farmer waits in the bushes,  
Just when the bunny hops into the patch again.*

*Poči zdaj puška, zajček naš pade,  
Ker ni opustil grešne navade.*

*The rifle fires away, and our bunny falls to the ground,  
Because he refused to give up his sinful ways.*

*Brat pa mu reče izza grmiča:  
»Mar bi biw pustil zelje kmetiča!«*

*His brother calls out to him from behind the bushes:  
"You should have left the farmer's cabbage alone!"*

"Zabavljica Kosmu" (A Satirical Song about Kosem, GNI M 23.094) is a song about how a farmer buys a dog that soils his yard and then runs away to another village, where the farmers throw stones at him and then decide to kill him. The dog is the animal from which the majority of terms of abusive are derived. It is the most frequently insulted animal, one that in the eyes of the farmer is only useful when it guards the house, but otherwise does not deserve to live. This is the true image of a dog's life in the countryside that can often be observed even today. The jocularly is merely superficial, connected with the mockery of the farmer that bought a useless animal. In the song "Obdolžen maček" (The Accused Cat, GNI M 20.529) someone asks a cat why he is crying.



Figure 4. First stanza of the song (with melody), recorded 1956 in Hrib, Loški potok, Dolenjska region. Sung by a female singer (Archive GNI M 20.529).

10.614 *Štucasti maček.* Odbor za nabiranje slovenskih narodnih pesmi.

10.373  
60  
*Capriccioso.* (Pojanje pri *Staju.*)

1. Múj-ček si je múj-čka zbral,  
Vsa-ko noč se k njoj go-dal,  
Ni se bal ne gro-ma, bli-ška,  
Le-po go-dil si poj-doi.

2. Mújčka ga je rada mela,  
Nigdar ne ga praskala,  
Nigdar ne ga v tace vjela,  
Niške sta si tabala.

3. Celo noč sta se igrala,  
Tudi slepo miškala,  
Nove streke prepopalaj,  
Spoh, klobase krala sta.

4. Gda se v jutro je zdavilo,  
In zvonilo jüternco,  
Mújček si gondra nemilo,  
Po od mújčke gre domu.

5. Mújčka je vsa skostrava,  
Zdaj počivat se poda;  
Dekla vstane, ravno sama,  
V jeno postelo mima:

6. "Oj mercina ti mačkija,  
Lekko si zadremava, -  
Gnes de zveda gospodinja  
Da si mela mújčka!"

7. Mújčka ji nič ne kriva,  
Niške je naganzala,  
Ena se je nogi(!) živa,  
Drúge je vse spoklala.

**Opomba.** Pišite samo na prvo in tretjo stran!

Figure 5. Manuscript of the song (first page) "Štucasti (brezrepi) maček" (The Tailless Tomcat) (Archive GNI O 10.617).

The cat replies that a girl accused him of stealing a sausage from her, but that she was the one who did it and took it to the servant boy. Here anthropomorphism is clearly visible; in addition, some compassion for the cat can also be perceived. "Štucasti (brezrepi) maček" (The Tailless Tomcat, GNI O 10.617) is a Schwank ballad.

A version from Pacinje near Ptuj contains the entire story of a tomcat that courts a kitten and then the maid angrily sets a trap for him because the kitten will no longer catch any mice. The tomcat gets caught in the trap and the maid cuts off his tail. The act of violence is horrible but softened by black humor. A moral lesson is also added: boys should not court girls because they will end up like the cat. The second Schwank ballad is an art song by Simon Jenko that has become a folk song (GNI O 2118 (7074)). It is titled “Naš maček je ljubco imel” (Our Tomcat Had a Lover) and is about a tomcat that was in love. However, his lover died, and he hanged himself out of despair. The song ends with the warning that boys should not fall in love because love brings death. Again, this is a metaphorization of the human into the animal in order to warn people. In this case, anthropomorphism is visible in the ballad but only in the function of warning people and of complete alienation from animals. There is no empathy; the animal is merely a means to achieve a higher (human?) status. “Od brsniškega psa” (About a Dog from Brsnice, GNI O 11.191) is a song about the gluttony of people that butcher a dog for Easter in order to stuff themselves. Oh, kaj požrešnost stri ‘Oh, what gluttony seizes them’ sings the singer. The song titled “Lovci ustrelje psa<sup>7</sup> namesto volka” (Hunters Shoot a Dog Instead of a Wolf) – or a vixen (or even a calf in one song) – reflects the exploitation of animals through hunting. A dog that was used in hunting suddenly replaces the wild animal as the victim. This song ridicules the hunters and expresses affinity with the dog and the calf. It is obvious that hunters were not especially popular, and in Slovenia the expression zelena bratovščina ‘green fraternity (of hunters)’ is mostly pejorative. The version titled “Lovec ustrelji kuzlo, meneč, da je lisica” (A Hunter Kills a Bitch Thinking It Is a Vixen, GNI O 9293) harshly criticizes hunters because already in the first line the singer sings:

*Jagru je preveč na svejt,  
zverine je premalu,  
zato pa kuzle streljajo,  
ki pridejo na tnalo.*

*There are too many hunters in the world,  
There are not enough beasts,  
And this is why they kill bitches,  
Who end up on a chopping block.*

Heavy irony is visible here and continues in the following stanzas, saying that the hunter is so dumb or cruel that even when he wants to skin it he does not see the difference. The primitiveness of the hunter’s act is reprehensible, although it seems that not only the act of shooting the dog is being condemned but also the profession as such. Hunters were (and are still) hated. In addition, the hunter’s inability as such is also highlighted, and perhaps the song also contains a little empathy – subtly expressed – for the killed dog. A similar topic is used in the version titled “Volk naj plača dolg – Lovec ustrelji psa, misleč, da je volk” (The Wolf Should Pay His Debt: The Hunter Shoots a Dog, Believing It Is a Wolf). This is a negative representation of animals: the wolf as the devil, the dog as an impure animal, and so on. A note below the song reads: “This is a true story.” The first stanza is as follows:

<sup>7</sup> The song “Mrtvi psiček” (The Dead Puppy), with the first line *Liejp moj pesec* ‘The Beautiful Puppy of Mine,’ from the municipality of Lusevera/Bardo in Slavia Veneta, Italy (GNI R 19.243), transcribed in 1894 by Ella Schultz-Adajewska, and sung by Giovana, has unfortunately been lost. This is one of the few songs lamenting a dead dog.

*Jager ima vesele, če vovka ustrelji,  
u mejstu ga pripele,  
pa lep tringelt dobi.*

*A hunter is pleased to shoot a wolf,  
He brings him to town  
And receives a nice tip.*

So, once upon a time, a hunter was even rewarded for having shot a wolf. However, in this song, compassion for the shot dog is evident for the first time; the owner liked the dog and was satisfied that it was buried and lamented or, in short, that they prepared a funeral for the dog, albeit at the knacker's. At the same time, a negative attitude towards hunters or casting them in clearly ironic terms is expressed. A negative attitude towards hunters depicted as lazy, clumsy, and shooting their thumbs off is also noticeable in the "true story" or the song titled "Lučka lovska pesem od jelena leta 1874." (An 1874 Luče Hunting Song about a Deer, GNI O 1974). Unfortunately, the mockery is one-sided; the butt of the joke is a hunter that shoots a deer that is not eaten by him but by a priest – that is, a representative of the ecclesiastical authorities, who should be the first to condemn such killing.

In societies, in which totemism – that is, the worship of animals and their depiction as divine creatures – was present, hunters were connected with animals because they identified themselves with them. However, in such a case hunters were confronted with a severe moral dilemma: if their quarry was as important as they were, the act of killing was actually murder, and feeding on the animal an act of cannibalism (following Serpell 1996: 177). Therefore, hunting was considered to be a ritual used in order to survive, especially in places with difficult hunting conditions and where there was no other food (It is worth mentioning as an example a statement made by an Inuit Eskimo that human food is composed of souls that can take revenge on people by disappearing or going away and taking their bodies, which people eat and use for clothes, elsewhere and thus make people starve; Serpell 1996: 178). This of course does not apply to Slovenia, where there is plenty of other food and the killing of animals is not necessarily for human survival. Therefore one could say that a reflection of the irony used in the song specifically concerns the hunters' disrespect for the animal. He does not care what he kills, it only matters that he kills something with the least effort possible. This was also morally disputable in Western culture; James Serpell cites Plato: "Plato in his Laws for instance, strongly condemns cruel, lazy or deceitful methods of hunting" (Serpell 1996: 181).<sup>8</sup> In the rural environment, the moral dilemma is even greater because people raising animals must have some sort of affinity to these animals, but must suppress this affinity when they kill them.

A clear economic perspective is seen in the following song, which is a Schwank ballad, as well as a lack of affinity for animals because the act of butchering is only possible when

<sup>8</sup> The remains of bear's bones found in Neanderthal caves in Switzerland and Germany, used for "venerating spirits of animals killed for food" (Serpel 1996: 181), or the Neanderthal flute (the oldest in the world) found near the Slovenian town of Idrija (Divje babe), which can still be played, indicate that a bear cult or bear worship was present in these areas; the bear was the most worshipped prey, but at the same time also personified or in some places even used as a symbol of motherhood, which deepened the dilemma over hunting even further because of the strong affinity to bears. Bears are rarely mentioned in Slovenian folk songs.

1974

Yas. Horban.

Lučka lovska pesem od jelena l. 1874.

Zmogamo koster, saljivo  
 2. 1853 [var. v 1853.]

ke- pa je pač let- ka ja- me  
 pod se- par- jem ju m ja- sa;  
 tam se ču- de- ii go- de,  
 da- bi šo- li da slo- ve.

Tam je vrede sorte jagri  
 so počasi in tuč nagli;  
 tako por je dohli tam,  
 da se je pa čudil nam.

Tam je jih pa slupaj plika  
 jim lastnost vce pogin,  
 lakine h ta por jona,  
 da jim popet ne jita.

Jagri se pa slupaj vstopi,  
 vrah, por gor se flet, vtervdi,  
 jih, over nme, močije,  
 por jim trpejajo.

Stemor goča, je je hvali;  
 "Lahko bi ga bi, pograbi!"  
 Tu, pa vce, se gode,  
 da mu, noza, spodati.

ODBOR ZA REKREATIVO  
 SLOVENSKEGA NARODNEGA PESNIŠTVA

Figure 6. Manuscript of the song (first page) “Lučka lovska pesem od jelena leta 1874.” (An 1874 Luče Hunting Song about a Deer) (Archive GNI O 1974).

the animal is truly merely an object to be used in various ways. The song “Mesar deli žival” (The Butcher Divides an Animal, Š 8651) from Ljutomer thematizes the economic aspect of the human view of animals. The butcher slaughters the cow and then sells all of its body parts to the representatives of various professions: the head to the judge, who will use it as a lamp, the lungs to the gypsy for bagpipes, the tail to the farmer for a whip, the legs to the cartwright, the horns to the tailor, and so on, until he uses up all the parts only to discover that all the profit will be taken away from him by the innkeeper. Even more horrific is the version of this song titled “Šuštar je čuka klal” (The Shoemaker Slaughtered the Screech Owl, GNI M 47.125) – in which the shoemaker sells the owl’s parts.

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 160$

Šuš-ter je ču-ka klal, ju hu hu hu. Kam boš pa glav-co djal, ju hu hu hu.

Glav-co bom sa-bo vzel, da bom za klad-vo imel, da bom za klad-vo i,jnel, ju hu hu hu.

Figure 7. The first stanza of the song (with melody) “Šuštar je čuka klal” (The Shoemaker Slaughtered the Screech Owl), recorded 1997 in Pišcece, Štajerska region. Sung by two female singers (Archive GNI M 47.125).

Thus the song moves from the world of domestic animals to the world of wild animals, with the screech owl also having a death connotation (in folk belief, it was a harbinger of death).

## CONCLUSION

In *The Anti-Christ*, Friedrich Nietzsche points out the following: "Man is by no means the crown of creation: every living being stands beside him on the same level of perfection. ... Man is the [animal that] has strayed [most] dangerously from its instincts ... but of course the most interesting" (Nietzsche 1989: 282). In *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873–1876)/The Untimely Meditations, Nietzsche also writes: "as though nature, after having desired and worked at man for so long, now drew back from him in fear and preferred to return to the unconsciousness of [animal] instinct" (1988: 52) The following citation says everything that needs to be said in today's world:

*It is not so much that we avoid killing the animals with which we are friendly. It is more the other way around. Unconsciously or deliberately we either avoid befriending the animals we intend to harm, or we fabricate elaborate and often mythological justifications for their suffering that absolves us of blame. The sad thing is that we have been practising this form of self-deception for so long that, by and large, we are scarcely aware that we are doing it any more. The myths have become reality, the fantasies, fact. The truth is that it is normal and natural for people to empathize and identify with other life forms, and to feel guilt and remorse about harming them. It is the essence of our humanity. The sooner we come to terms with this novel idea the better, since our future on this planet may depend on it.* (Serpell 1996: 210–211)

The utilitarian view reflected in the folk songs presented is clear and comprehensible, and also a reflection of the time and situation. Nonetheless, empathy for animals is also present in them, as well to a certain extent a sense of ethical commitment; they surely do not present such a horrible alienation from animals and nature as is typical of the present. A special value of these songs is that, despite thematizing people as the apex of the "pyramid of the world," human cruelty is wrapped in humor, and often also in irony, in the making fun of the people, not animals.

Today, when we see that by exterminating animals and destroying the environment we will also destroy ourselves, this necessity has started encouraging people to reject anthropocentrism and other philosophical ideas that have existed for a good 10,000 years. Unfortunately, it is illusory to think that a global synergy with animals or even some sort of a paradise on Earth awaits us. There has never been such a paradise, but it is high time for people to become aware that human supremacy is a dangerous phantom as well as a myth that can even threaten our survival. Therefore, let us listen to the ballads and songs

that call for a redefinition of our perspective on the environment, on animals, and on other people. It is only Homo faber himself that can stop this biocide, although he will only do this when, in his selfishness, he realizes that his end is approaching.

## REFERENCES

- Cambi, Nenad and Nikola Visković (eds.)  
1998 *Kulturna animalistika*. Split: Književni krug.
- Coetzee, John Maxwell  
2007 (1999) *Življenja živali*. Ljubljana: LUD Šerpa.
- Darwin, Charles  
1872 *The Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals*. London: John Murray.
- Drewermann, Eugen  
1981 *Der tödliche Fortschritt*. Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet..  
2008 *Über die Unsterblichkeit der Tiere*. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag.
- Duden Etymologie  
1963 *Duden Etymologie. Herkunftswörterbuch Der Deutschen Sprache*. Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut. .
- Germ, Tine  
2006 *Simbolika živali*. Ljubljana: Modrijan.
- Golež Kaučič, Marjetka  
2002 Živalske pripovedne pesmi - vloga in pomen živalskih podob. *Traditiones* 31 (2): 23–42.  
2004 "The Blackbird Mocks the Hunter": Human and Animal Relationships in Slovene Animal Ballads. In: Peere, Isabelle and Stefaan Top (eds.), *Ballads and Diversity: Perspective on Gender, Ethos, Power and Play*. Trier: WVT, 127–137.
- Handoo, Jawarharlal  
1990 Cultural attitudes to bird and animals in folklore. In: Willis, Roy (ed.), *Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World*. New York: Routledge, 37–41.
- Kumer, Zmaga [et al.] (eds.)  
1970 *Slovenske ljudske pesmi I. Zgodovinske, junaške, bajeslovne in pravljicne pripovedne pesmi*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica. [= SLP]
- Lorenz, Konrad  
1989 *L'anello di Re Salomone*. Milano: Adelphi.
- Marjanić, Suzana  
2006 Književni svjetovi s etnološkom, ekološkom i animalističkom nišom. *Narodna umjetnost* 43 (2): 63–186.
- Marjanić, Suzana and Antonija Zaradija Kiš (eds.)  
2007 *Kulturni bestiarij*. Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich  
1988 *Considération inactuelles*. Paris: Gallimard.  
1989 *Somrak malikov. Primer Wagner. Ecce homo. Antikrist*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica.
- Noske, Barbara  
1993 *Humans and Other Animals: Beyond the Boundaries of Anthropology*. London: Pluto.



- Regan, Tom  
1983 *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Schenda, Rudolf  
1995 *Das ABC der Tiere. Marchen, Mythen und Geschichten*. München: Beck.
- Serpell, James  
1996 *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human – Animal Relationships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Singer, Peter  
1995 *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for our Treatment of Animals*. London: Pilmico.
- Š = Štrekelj, Karel (ed.)  
1895–1923 *Slovenske narodne pesmi* [Slovenian Folk Songs]. 4 Vols. Ljubljana. Cankarjeva založba.
- Visković, Nikola  
1996 *Životinja i čovjek. Prilog kulturnoj zoologiji*. Split: Književni krug.
- Willis, Roy (ed.)  
1990 *Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World*. New York: Routledge.

»ZAJČEK JE LEPA REČ« ALI ŽIVALI KOT STROJI (!?).

DOJEMANJE ŽIVALSKEGA SVETA V SLOVENSKIH LJUDSKIH PESMIH

Članek obravnava razmerje med človekom in živaljo, kakor nam ga prikazujejo izbrane ljudske pesmi. Pri tem gre za poskus redefinicije tradicionalnega koncepta človeškega odnosa do živali kot objekta in ne subjekta. S pomočjo ekoloških in filozofskih premis skuša avtorica dokazati, da žival sodi tja, kamor se je že usidralo človeško bitje. Raziskovanje premešča iz smeri motivno-tematskih raziskav na področje t. i. kulturne zoologije ali celo antropologije živali, in želi raziskati t. i. etnozozoologijo (zoofolkloro), kakor se kaže v šaljivih ljudskih pesmih in živalskih baladah, saj v uvodu ugotavlja, da so živali nedvomno del kulturne tradicije. V folklori jo zanima konkreten oziroma kulturno oblikovan odnos človeka do živali. V tem obzorju opazuje in analizira t. i. živalske vzorce in druge pojave v folklori.

Članek že z naslovom poudarja ekološko, etično in animalistično misel, da žival ne sme biti stvar, temveč subjekt, enakovreden človeškemu. S temi, relativno novimi koncepti v folklorističnem raziskovanju skuša ugotoviti, na kakšne načine so ljudje v slovenskih ljudskih pesmih odvisni od živali, kako jih dojemajo, kako se to izraža v pesmih in kako so živali instrumentalizirane v ekonomskem, verskem, umetniškem, moralnem, emotivnem in vsakdanjem življenju. Uvodoma sta poudarjena zelo pogosta pogleda na živali v pesmih, in sicer antropomorfizem (človeške lastnosti so pripisane živalim) in zoomorfizem (živalske lastnosti so pripisane ljudem), ki ju pozneje razbira v analizi ljudskih pesmi.

V razdelku »Človeška in živalska žival« razpravlja o problemu, kako velika je nemoč človeka, da ne zna misliti kot druga bitja ter jih pojasniti brez analogije s seboj, čeprav gre za sorodnost, saj smo ljudje tudi živali. Na podlagi raziskav hrvaškega znanstvenika Nikola Viskovića, začetnika kulturne zoologije, uporabi v raziskavi živali v slovenski ljudski pesmi nekatere njegove ugotovitve

*o šestih načinih odnosa ljudi do živali v realnem svetu. Ti vidiki so: ekonomski (s sinatropskim pogledom na živali, po katerem so živali škodljive, ali antropofilnim, po katerem so živali koristne), simbolni (žival kot znak), sentimentalni ali sočutni, ekološki, znanstveni in etični. Nato na podlagi filozofskih spoznanj o uprašanju mesta živali v človeškem svetu ugotavlja, da je človeška nadvlada pripeta na človeški egoizem in da je zato koncept človekove moralne superiornosti uspešno prevladoval ter dobil v 17. stoletju še filozofsko podlago, in sicer z Renéjem Descartesom, ki je postavil t. i. mehanicistično doktrino, ki pravi, da so živali stroji in zato ne trpijo; človek jih torej lahko ubija, brez slabe vesti, saj nimajo duše. Zgodnji krščanski in aristotelovski pogled na živali, po katerem naj bi bile živali le bitja, ustvarjena za človekovo korist, in kartezijska ideja, sta združena ponudila človeku dovoljenje za ubijanje. V večini kmečkih kultur je seveda ta koncept in ekonomski pristop do živali prevladujoč, saj se ljudje niso zavestno ukvarjali z odnosom do živali, kajti pomembno je bilo preživetje. Narava je bila nevarna in grozeča, kar se navsezadnje izraža tudi v folklori, v našem primeru v živalskih pripovednih pesmih in šaljevih pesmih, v katerih so živali v glavnih vlogah. Zato avtorica meni, da sta percepcija in odnos do živali v folklori zelo pomembna, ker gradita naš odnos do živali in njegovo poznejšo recepcijo. Sta torej odsev resničnosti, hkrati pa skušata to resničnost preseči in jo prenesti z ekonomske na ekološko-etično os.*

*V razdelku »Živali v pesmi – le objekti?« ugotavlja, da se je v procesu uveljavljanja Aristotelovega koncepta naravne hierarhije in Descartesovega pogleda na žival kot stroj ustvaril proces absolutnega in ne relativnega razločevanja med živaljo in človekom. Predmet premisleka je, ali se ta percepcija zrcali v pesmih ter, ali je morda v njih vendarle več antropomorfizacije.*

*V članku so analizirane živalske šaljive balade ter šaljive pesmi z živalsko tematiko, in sicer baladi »Ponesrečena snubitev«, »Odrt in zaklan maček«, pesmi »Zajček je lepa reč«, »Neubogljivi zajček ubit« in druge; v njih prepoznava izrazito antropocentričen pogled na živali; predvsem zadnja kaže na ekonomski odnos do živali (sinatropsko načelo). V »šaljivih« pesmih »Lovec ustrelil kuzlo, meneč, da je lisica«, »Lovec ustrelil psa, misleč, da je volk«, »Lučka lovska pesem od jelena leta 1874.« in drugih je človekov odnos do živali izrazito antropocentričen, a tudi antropomorfičen. Zaradi nekaterih usebovanih etičnih razsežnosti se velikokrat sprevrže v ironizacijo, ki prekrije srhljivost človekovih dejanj. V pesmih zato lahko odkrivamo tudi t. i. etično kritiko človekovih nesprejemljivih dejanj in predvsem lovskega stanu.*

*V sklepu članka ugotavlja, da je utilitaristični vidik, ki ga zrcalijo predstavljene ljudske pesmi, jasen in razumljiv, je odsev časa in razmer. Pa vendar je v njih navzoča tudi empatija do živali, ne pa tudi enakovreden odnos do njih. Človeška večvrednost je nevaren fantom, mit, ki celo grozi našemu preživetju, zato prisljubimo baladam in pesmim, ki nas opozarjajo, naj spremenimo naš pogled na naravo, živali in sočloveka.*

---

Assoc. Prof. Marjetka Golež Kaučič, research advisor, ZRC SAZU  
Institute of Ethnomusicology, Novi trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana,  
Slovenia, marjetka.golez-kaucic@zrc-sazu.si