

Clashes in Fairy Tales : The Analysis of the violence between Humans and Nonhuman Animals in the Grimms' Fairy Tales

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Abstract

This paper focuses on different types of conflicts that arise from encounters between humans and nonhuman animals. The selected fairy tales demonstrate the brutality, ruthlessness, carelessness and negligence of humans towards non-human animals and depict the incessant scuffle between the two species for living space and survival at different levels. The selected fairy tales that address brutality and cruelty to non-human animals and exploitation of animals are critically read from the perspective of Critical Animal Studies.

Keywords : *literary tradition, folk, culture, human-animal relationship, oral tradition, storytelling.*

Introduction

This paper is primarily concerned with the different types of conflicts and violence that arise from encounters between humans and nonhuman animals. The fairy tales selected for the analysis are famous fairy tales collected by Brothers Grimm in 1812, *Cat and mouse in company*, *The wolf and the seven young kids*, *The fox and the godmother*, *On the death of the chicken*, *The frog prince or the iron Henry*, *The Bremen town musicians*, *The old sultan*, *The dog and the sparrow*, *The owl*, *The strange minstrel*, *The ragamuffin*, *Puss in boots*, *The wren and the bear*, *The wolf and the man*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The wolf and the fox*, *The fox and the cat*, *Bunny bride*, *Mr. Korbes*, *The sparrow and his four children*. These imagined fairy tales show the brutality, ruthlessness, carelessness, negligence of humans towards the non-human animals and depict the incessant scuffle between the two species for living space, food and continued existence on different levels. The selected fairy tales that address brutality, cruelty and exploitation of non-human animals are read critically. This paper also attempts to read literary, diegetic and semiotic animals critically. An animal-sensitive text interpretation is done by *contextualizing*, which means reading animal texts together with non-literary context, e.g. zoology, ethology, etc.; *historicizing*, which means the historical background of the text, when did the author write it, *poetizing*, which means all animal texts must be interpreted, no animal text speaks for itself. Animals are bio-cultural hybrids.. These textual interpretations reveal the cultural and social influences and, as a result, to which non-human animals, humans, and their relationships are subjected. Instead of an anthropocentric approach, there is a multi-species approach. In general it can be said that these tales are imaginary, can be something unreal as they are attributed

to non-human animals' language ability and also other special abilities, but nevertheless these fairy tales are very real and true in everyday human society. These kinds of narratives present so many aspects of human society; they evoke human behavior towards non-human animals. Each fairy tale selected reveals the depiction of non-human animals in human cultures and societies. This paper describes not only the brutalities inflicted by humans on nonhuman animals, but also the cruelty and danger humans experience during encounters with nonhuman animals. This paper also considers everyday demeaning language for non-human animals. Peter Singer and Richard Ryder remain important scholars whose works are frequently referred. This paper not only presents the account of exploitation, but also pays attention to and critically analyzes the power relations between human and their counterparts on earth.

Human-non human animal conflict occurs because encounters between them produce negative outcomes, e.g. the loss of habitat, possession, livelihood, life. Human-animal conflict occurs when growing human populations intersect with established animal territories. The destruction, fragmentation and alteration of non-human animal habitats by human activities have resulted in an extreme stream of threatened and endangered non-human animal populations at an alarming rate and magnitude. In the economic and social acceleration of industrialization, the exploitation of animals and human workers are closely linked. Humans hunt and kill nonhuman animals illegally. They raid habitats of non-human animals and conquer their natural habitat. Humans employ a variety of methods of discrimination and cruelty toward nonhuman animals. It is worth another destructive human activity. Non-human animals are slaughtered in enormous amount for human consumption every year. Animals die as a result of hunting, industrial animal husbandry, environmental destruction and animal experiments. The exploitation of animals takes place in a variety of ways: animal transport (the development of extreme infections, space is suffocating), industrial agriculture, laboratory experiments in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries, and illegal trapping of exotic animals.

Phenomena such as global warming, pollution, environmental degradation, climate change, floods lead to the killing of many animals. One cannot deny that these phenomena are the result of human activities in the name of development and experimentation. As Peter Singer points out: "We think of lions and wolves as savage because they kill; but they must kill, or starve. Humans kill other animals for sport, to satisfy their curiosity, to beautify their bodies, and to please their palates." All of the above activities can actually be eliminated when there is common consciousness among all humans. In my opinion, human-animal studies play an important role in making humans sensitive and aware of their actions against non-human animals. Animal Studies can be "descriptive/neutral or critical/sensitive".¹

In some cases, violence perpetrated by nonhuman animals against humans is a form of response to human encroachment and exploitation. The reasons for this scramble between humans and non-human animals are human urbanization, development that threatens animal habitat. Farm animals are further and further away from us, locked up in factory farms and secretly slaughtered. In this context, Corine Pelluchon, a French philosopher, speaks of the

exploitation of animals and humanity of humans in today's world, especially in Western culture. According to Corine Pelluchon, the humanity of human animals is in crisis as they continually bring discrimination against non-human animals. The cages and pens in which billions of loving creatures are reduced to mere meat, and are experimented on in laboratories worldwide, circuses, where elephants, hippopotamus and other wildlife are deprived of their liberty and forced to parade and live unnatural lives. These are no entertainment media but a reflection of common shame to humans and their animalistic nature. The streets where nearly ten thousand pets are abandoned each year; the overcrowded animal shelters; the distant primeval forests, which are burned down for human consumption, there is unhappiness and injustice everywhere. "Our relationship with animals is a mirror [...] In that mirror we see not only the horrors our species is guilty of in exploiting other sentient beings, but also the pallid face of a humanity that has its soul threatens to lose."

The analysis of brutality, speciesism, and animal phobia in fairy tales is categorized as :

1. Zoophobia in fairy tales

There are numerous examples of animal fear in the fairy tales mentioned in the introduction, such as *The Owl*, *The Frog Prince* or *Iron Henry*. Many people are afraid of different types of other creatures. This fear is in some ways a result of our belief system. Different animals are considered terrifying creatures in different cultures. For example, in Hindu tradition, still, crying dogs and black cats crossing roads bring bad luck and misfortune. This thinking leads to fear of animals and hence killing of the animal out of fear. A survey of 8,000 people was done in United States and the results were shocking. The results showed that 21.9 percent of humans have an intense fear of their non-human fellows. When a fear significantly affects your life or when you are distressed by being afraid, the condition is considered a phobia. This fear was strong enough that it could be called a "phobia". The fears of different animals can be classified as follows :

Amphibians (e.g. frogs, newts, salamanders) – Batrachophobia

Animals – Zoophobie

Ants – Myrmekophobie

Bees – Apiphobie/Melissophobia

Birds – Ornithophobia

Cats – Ailurophobie, Elurophobie, Galeophobie oder Gatophobie, Hühner – Alektorophobie

Dogs (or rabies) – Cynophobia

Fishes – Ichthyophobia

Frogs – Ranidaphobie²

These phobias should be ignored and treated. In the specific circumstances when the person with a specific fear/phobia encounters a specific non-human, the outcome can be devastating. In the name of defense, they harm or even kill these non-human animals. In the fairy tale *The*

Owl, the owl is named as the beast and the villagers are afraid of it. They want to get rid of the innocent owl that they burn down the whole barn. The innocent owl dies because the villagers saw it for the first time in their lives and no one knows who it is. Instead of appreciating, humans kill non-human birds out of fear or ornithophobia.

2. Speciesism and human domination in fairy tales

We never dream of using another human in the brutal way, but we don't think sensitively when treating nonhuman animals like this. This thinking that non-human animals are inferior to humans is an ancient viewpoint. Presented here are the views of some of the greatest Western philosophers about non-human animals. Aristotle suggested that animals have some anthropomorphic characteristics, but only humans have reason and the ability to speak. This makes humans superior to non-human animals. Opposing views, such as that of Gaius Plinius Secundus, claimed that animals might in fact have their own languages; Even though humans don't understand them, nonhuman animals speak and are therefore rational. Descartes said that animals are incapable of feeling pain, which most of us find absurd today, and his indifferent accounts of experiments on living animals seem terrifying. René Descartes wrote in his work that animals were only "mechanisms", "*automata*" — basically mere machines devoid of experience, consciousness. In the words of Nicolas Malebranche "*They eat without pleasure, cry without pain, grow without knowing it; they desire nothing, fear nothing, know nothing.*" According to Immanuel Kant, non-human animals have no self-confidence; people should not owe them any respect and should be allowed to treat them as a mere means. "Animals have an end. That end is man." According to Kant, animals have neither rights nor dignity. Kant reserved his famous moral philosophy and rational morality only for humans, or more precisely, for rational beings. He believed that the only reason to avoid animal cruelty and exploitation is that it might allow humans to develop cruel habits that we would inflict on other humans. According to Jeremy Bentham in his work *Principles of Morality and Legislation*, he gave answers to all the above mentioned Philosophers, by putting simple question: "Can they suffer?"

Contemporary Australian philosopher Peter Singer uses the word "speciesism", and this word means to give preference to our own species over another species when there are no morally relevant differences. In one of the most seminal works on Animal Equality *Animal Liberation*, Singer defines "speciesism" "as a prejudice or biased attitude in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of other species." Peter Singer wrote that it is high time people stopped eating animals and became vegetarians.

"It is easy to take a stand about a remote issue, but speciesists, like racists, reveal their true nature when the issue comes nearer home. To protest about bullfighting in Spain, the eating of dogs in South Korea, or the slaughter of baby seals in Canada while continuing to eat eggs from hens who have spent their lives crammed into cages, or veal from calves who have been deprived of their mothers, their proper diet, and the freedom to lie down with their legs extended, is like denouncing apartheid in South Africa while asking your neighbors not to sell their houses to blacks."³

In the above quotes, Peter Singer compared racism and speciesism and said they are the

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same. If we are against racism and speciesism and we care about animals, then we must act accordingly. Speciesism is an institutionalized form of 'animal oppression'.⁴

Grimm's fairy tales are full of instances of people killing animals for meat. In *Bremen Town Musicians*, owners want to eat their pets that have served them lifetime. There are fairy tales where masters want to kill their faithful dogs just because dogs have gotten old and can no longer work. Threatening one's life, considering one's life to be more valuable than the life of another are also examples of "speciesism". All creatures on the Earth deserve to live equally in harmony with nature, regardless of whatever humans think of them. Most of humans have been steeped deeply in "speciesism" entire their lives; we must take steps to overcome this destructive mindset. Singer also recalls that there was a time when most Americans thought it perfectly normal and right for members of one group to own members of another group as slaves based on a morally irrelevant difference - race. And today, members of the oppressor group look back with horror and shame at their ancestors. Well, Singer predicts that a time will come when our descendants will look back at us and our dealings with nonhuman animals with the same reaction, criticizing us for our actions. In short, Singer says, if it's not okay to do it to a human, it's not okay to do it to an animal either.

The term *speciesism* became the foundation of the animal rights movement." Ryder viewed *speciesism* as equivalent to racism, patriarchy, other oppression, and wrote extensively on the subject. "The ultimate goal of the animal rights movement is to put animals "out of use" for humans and to end exploitative industries and practices, including laboratory testing, whaling, and mass farming." Richard Ryder also used the expression "*speciesism*" in his writing to describe "human chauvinism" toward their fellow species. In 1975 Ryder wrote,

" 'speciesism', to describe the widespread discrimination that is practiced by man against other species ... Speciesism is racism, and both overlook or underestimate the similarities between the discriminator and those discriminated against."⁵

"Speciesism, like racism, is discrimination and was considered a serious problem by Richard Ryder. According to Ryder, there are no differences among creatures. We exist in a same manner :

"The word 'species', like the word 'race', is not precisely definable. Lions and tigers can interbreed. Under special laboratory conditions it may soon prove possible to mate a gorilla with a professor of biology –will the hairy offspring be kept in a cage or a cradle?"⁶

*"Our concern for the pain and distress of others should be extended to any "painient" - pain-feeling - being regardless of his or her sex, class, race, religion, nationality or species. Indeed, if aliens from outer space turn out to be painient, or if we ever manufacture machines who are painient, then we must widen the moral circle to include them. Painience is the only convincing basis for attributing rights or, indeed, interests to others."*⁷

According to Ryder, any creation, including extraterrestrials, should not be harmed by human action, evolution. If they suffer pain from human actions, then we, the human beings have a righteous duty for every natural creation, thus these actions cease.

3. Speciesist language in fairy tales

The “cunning” fox, the “stubborn” donkey, the “filthy” sow, the “busy bees”, the “lazy” grasshopper, the “stupid” sheep, the “shy” deer, the “bad” wolf are common expressions in almost all human languages and cultures. Almost every day, this and several idioms that insult non-human animals are used. Joan Dunayer notes this in his book of monumental importance for animal rights, *Animal Equality Language and Liberation*, that “words can foster oppression or liberation, deception or truth”.⁸ Joan Dunayer has discussed domains of human animal/non-human animal interactions to show how language affects perceptions of relationships with animals. „*A noun is a person, place, or thing*”. Which is the category of nonhuman animals? They do not come under the categories of either “people” or “places”. Traditionally, in English language, animals are things (pronoun-it). Human Animal Studies, and to an even greater extent Critical Animal Studies, explicitly reject the use of “es/it” for non-human animals. Animals are also present in everyday idioms. *“It glorifies the human species and belittles all others. Just as sexist language demeans women and excludes them from full consideration, speciesist language demeans and excludes nonhuman animals. When we classify other animals as things, we obscure their sentience, individuality, and right to autonomy.”* Dunayer further claims that “speciesism can’t survive without lies” and “honest words will grant [nonhuman animals] the freedom and respect that are rightfully theirs.”⁹ “In human animals, cognition, emotion and behavior are intricately linked. Language is just one of many variables affecting cognition, while cognition is just one of many variables affecting behavior. Given all the other variables supporting the ongoing abuse of nonhuman animals, it seems unlikely that changes in language alone will bring freedom to animals.” For example: Sport hunting in particular has disturbing, abusive language among its supporters.

“Hunters also claim to “**interact**” with their victims. They call “**game animal’s**” birth and death “**recruitment**” and “**attrition**,” as if the animals signed up to be hunted and turned in letters of resignation from life. After slaying a deer, Richard Nelson “whisper[s] thanks to the animal for giving itself to me,” even if the deer had started to flee. Ted Kerasote likes to believe that hunted animals “**sacrifice**” themselves as part of an “**accord**” with him and “**permit themselves to be taken**.”¹⁰

The highlighted words show everyday usage of speciesist language. The hunt aims at appropriating the animal, its body, its attributes and perhaps also its essence.¹¹ “While changes in language practice alone do not bring animal liberation, such changes must certainly be an element of the animal liberation movement. Language changes are necessary but not sufficient to end human exploitation and abuse of non-human animals. We understand that much of the language used when referring to non-human animals is inherently speciesist. As we strive not only to change the systems that oppress nonhuman animals, we must also unlearn the oppressive language our society has been indoctrinated with.” Vivid descriptions of hunting, sport fishing, zoos, aquatic prisons, vivisection and captivity and slaughter in the food industry reveal the cruelty that misleading words legitimize and conceal.

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According to Joan Dunayer, "Speciesism is clearly related to sexism and racism as they share certain traits." Joan Dunayer provides the following example :

"Cow characterizes a woman as fat and dull. Kept perpetually pregnant and lactating, with swollen belly or swollen udder, cows enslaved for their milk are seen as fat. Confined to a stall, denied the active role of nurturing and protecting a calf (so that milking becomes something done to them rather than by them), they are seen as passive and dull. "Milk cows" then become emblematic of these traits. Their image easily transfers to women because their exploitation focuses on uniquely female capacities to produce milk and "replacement" offspring. When these capacities decline, a cow is slaughtered."¹²

Richard D. Ryder has also written extensively about the sharpest vocabulary found in any language. The use of the term "animal" opposite the term "human" is clearly an impression of preconception and partiality.

"Some aspects of the language I use may surprise the reader. This is because I have tried, when appropriate in the context, to dismantle the speciesism inherent in the words we use. Phrases like 'men and animals', for example, insult not only women but nonhumans also, for humans are animals too. [...] All I can say is that no such inferiority is intended or understood. In the absence of other appropriate words, I use 'nonhuman' or 'nonhuman animal' in the hope that their use reminds the reader, as it does me, of the kinship between those of my own species and others."¹³

"In addition to supporting an arbitrary hierarchy with humans at the top, speciesist language asserts a false dichotomy between animals and humans." "Like sexist language, speciesist language legitimizes exploitation and violence." According to Dunayer, "only compassionate and sympathetic words can help set our wordless relatives free. Humans or speciesists openly use many common expressions that invoke other ways to insult other human: For example, Sly like fox, majestic like lion, dumb like donkey. These comparisons belittle our nonhuman fellows onto which we project our own negative traits. In the fairy tale *The Owl*, the owl is named as the beast. One should avoid expressions that make humans superior over other creatures. Derrida's 1997 Lectures were published in 2006, in which he spoke about the questioning and problematization of the term "the animal". According to Derrida, humans have ignored the immense diversity of life forms in order to find a convenient generic term that can function as the opposite of humans, i.e. "animal".¹⁴ The word animal is self-constructed because it suits our purposes. There are different creatures, there are lions, bees, butterflies, ladybugs, and there are no "animals". In response, Derrida proposed the term 'animot', which is a homophone of animaux, but at the same time he draws attention to the justness of the common singular. "The animal" (l'animal) is a construct, a word (mot in French) that Western thinkers have used for centuries to invent an identity against which man could be defined. Animaux means animals in French. As suggested by Jacques Derrida, the term "Animot", can be used to pluralize non-human animals and give the creatures their identity, is a scholarly review that explores the issue of animality in the context of animal studies. Animot proposes a rethinking not only of our relationship to non-human animals but, more importantly, of our notion of human and animal identity.¹⁵

4. Slavery

This paper discussed at length the oppression of animals. This oppression and violence is a kind of slavery that humans have been doing to nature, animals and plants for a long time. Non-human animals as farm animals and pets are kept as slaves in fairy tales.

Humans use animals in every way imaginable, including as sex slaves. There are countless examples and statistical data available. According to Thomas White, animals should be considered as persons. “He wants the following attributes to be necessary for being a person: being alive, being conscious, feeling positive and negative sensations, having emotions, having a sense of self, controlling one’s behavior, recognizing other people, and having cognitive abilities.”¹⁶ Scientists have proved that all these properties are clearly present in non-human animals.

After Richard Dawkins, no civilized person accepts slavery, so why accept cruelty to animals. “It is possible non-human animals are capable of feeling more intense pain than we are.”¹⁷

5. Animal Disappearing Trick

Susan Mchugh made a very important statement about the need for scholars to get rid of animal metaphors and comparisons in literature. Not every animal represents human characteristics and traits. If there are animals in a story, then that animal is present and has its own identity and does not imply that animals are a metaphor for human characteristics.¹⁸ A wolf is a wolf, it can be fiery like in most fairy tales, it can be stupid like in *The Wolf and the Man*. A fox is a fox and each fox has its own characteristics, it is not necessary that each fox is clever and knows how to escape death, which is not true in *The Fox and the Cat*. Susan Mchugh advocates reading animals with respect and attention. Making animals disappear in the text is also a form of brutality and justification done to them. Making animals disappear by ascribing human cultural and traditional traits to them are forms of violence, because in doing so, humans deprive nonhuman animals of their agency and subject status. Animals, as depicted in discussed fairy tales I have mentioned, do not speak and act for them, but merely represent the evils and goods of humans, as if non-human animals were destined to do all of this. They are intentionally removed. It’s called the Animal Disappearing Trick. Susan McHugh wrote, “Reading animals requires more than just recognizing the failures of traditional humanist models that separate and elevate people over all “things” animal.”¹⁹

Conclusion

“Es vermittelt die Einsicht, daß dem Menschen nicht zu trauen sei, „durch seine intellektuellen Fähigkeiten und die von ihm entwickelten Technologien hat er die Natur aus dem Gleichgewicht gebracht und sich zum Herrn über alles gemacht” (EM 5, 582). Das Thema der vom Menschen bedrohten Umwelt, der die ihm entgegenkommenden Tiere kaltblütig vernichtet, interessierte damals allerdings nicht, und so wurde darüber auch kein Wort verloren.”²⁰

Instead of being silent, you have to come out and tell the truth that humans are the most brutal of creatures and they still do. The sooner people realize the better. The central theme of

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the fairy tales selected in this paper is the struggle for survival among different creatures on the planet Earth. Animals, birds, reptiles are increasingly being driven from their homes because people are not considerate of other species in the world. Then animals and birds begin to invade and disturb human settlements. These fairy tales show the harmful consequences of disturbing nature. Humans exploit almost all nonhuman animals in their own way. On Earth we live and enjoy ourselves at the expense of others, non-human animals, environment, etc.

In the fairy tales analyzed above, speciesism is clearly portrayed. There is a clear division between humans and their non-human counterparts. People in fairy tales think they are superior to non-humans and can do anything to them, harm them, no matter if they are in pain like in the fairy tale *The Owl* and *The Curious Minstrel*. Examples of the use of speciestic language can also be clearly seen in some cases. The examples of bestiality, slavery is clearly presented. The selected KHM support the ideas of animal oppression, zoophobia, meat eating and speciesism. The people in KHM hunters, sir, lady, mayor, owner, robber, etc., exploit animals on a daily basis without even realizing it and without feeling guilty. We consider Grimm's KHM to be a cultural asset and are the result of human experiences and everyday life at the time. Therefore, people were actually brutal at that time, and this practice continues, perhaps the degree of brutality is greater. In conclusion, humans have never been kind to their animal cousins, so human history is automatically told.

There is still a long way to go to give nonhuman animals a justification and the animal rights movement to reach its ultimate goal. Fortunately, many cultures in different nations are turning to be vegetarians, vegans and have pledged to lead a life free from animal-cruelty. They come together and protest against the brutality against non-human animals. The NGOs and organizations are formed to formulate, execute policies on animal rights. "Equality of species is the logical conclusion of post-Darwin morality."²¹ "Humans must bring nonhuman animals into the realm of moral concern and stop treating their lives as expendable for trivial ends."²² Our non-human companions are subjects of life, not just objects of study, and should be treated as well.²³

Endnotes :

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