

Henning Howlid Wærp, *Dyr og mennesker i norsk litteratur*,
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At a time when Anthropocene narratives are subjected to a discursive shift reshaping the grand narrative of planetary change and the human-nonhuman dichotomy, Henning H. Wærp's most recent book, *Dyr og mennesker*, is committed to a local, cohesive examination of interspecies entanglements. The author makes a valuable contribution to the Animal Studies field by rereading and reframing animal depictions in Norwegian literature. The study spans from the 18th century to the present, with an exclusive focus on prose.

Although the author mentions in the preface of the volume that the study is not exhaustive (p. 9), it provides a substantial insight into different types of prose. The book consists of 14 chapters, ranging from early depictions of wilderness and human-animal bonds to ecological narratives addressing environmental collapse, posthumanism, and Sámi science fiction. Interestingly enough, all of these chapters can be read separately, each having its own methodology and conceptual framework. They function both as individual essays and complementary parts of the unitary structure of the book. Consequently, the animal representations are not treated hierarchically either. Each chapter, whether it deals with pets, wild animals, aquatic life, or insects, explores its subject on equal terms, based on close readings of the literary works. Accordingly, it does not assign greater value to one species or category over another. What is more, each chapter is followed by a fitting Norwegian illustration to the extent that the author showcases the convergence between the literary and visual imaginary and their integration in the animal turn.

As the author's method is more exploratory than purely systematic, one of the key questions guiding this volume's chapters concerns the engagement with the animals beyond their symbolic or anthropocentric frameworks. In this regard, the book reaffirms the necessity of exploring alternative methods to relate to animals (p. 15), without examining only literature that deals directly with the topic, but also changing the hermeneutic perspective (p. 17).

This shift in the perspective gave rise to a series of questions: What type of language do we use to refer to animals and animal rights? What are the insufficiencies of other ways of representing animals and how can literature be explored as a prosperous meeting point between humans and animals? These are just some of the leading questions that end the first chapter and open up the trajectory of intentional or non-intentional environmental debates in Norwegian literature that will be examined in the following chapters.

The second chapter examines how dogs are represented in four different novels. Two of the novels are from the 18th century: *Berre ein hund* (1887) by Per Sivle and *Ulveslaget* (1892) by Jacob Breda Bull, while the other two are from the 19th century:

Revir (1994) by Ingvar Ambjørnsen and *Hunden* (1994) by Merethe Lindstrøm. Following Donna Haraway's argument from *The Companion Species Manifesto* regarding the rich yet chaotic relation between humans and dogs, the author extends the feminist-cultural lens to the literary medium. While the story *Berre ein hund* is considered by the author as "fineste hundepotretter" (p. 46), the story *Ulveslaget's* biographical stance makes it stand out as a portrayal of the multiple dimensions that human-dog interactions can have. Similarly, *Revir* is analyzed by the author as representing a shift in Ingvar Ambjørnsen's writing, with a newer focus on "angst, ensomhetsfølelse og en opplevelse av tilværelsens meningsløshet" (p. 50). At the same time, the story *Hunden* is critically examined as an attempt to eradicate the dog-human differences through exaggerated anthropomorphism that often leads to not recognizing the specificity of the interspecies interactions.

In the third chapter, the author applies an ecocritical lens to Knut Hamsun's *Victoria*. Little attention has so far been given to an interspecies-centered reading of Hamsun's works, including this book, as the author mentions in the introduction of this section. The author makes an interesting point about how this work goes beyond being just a piece of representative decadence literature. Although symbolism is highly prevalent, Wærp identifies a distinctive type of symbolism that is not separated from the sensory and corporeal experience. Guided by Arne Næs' deep ecology, the author explains how Hamsun's spiritualization of nature can be traced back to Spinoza through the intermediary book *Den nyere Filosofis Historie*, written by the Danish philosopher Harald Høffding. Although *Victoria* does not specifically deal with a specific animal, the author's contribution lies in refining the subtle trajectory of how Hamsun is parting ways with the symbolism and decadence that influenced him heavily.

The fourth chapter takes us further north, to polar expedition literature and Otto Sverdrup's *Nyt Land. Fire Aar i arktiske Egne*, published in 1903, that depicts the second expedition of Fram. While the author questions Sverdrup's literary style, he still manages to acknowledge a certain thematic merit of the book. This owes much to how the author is mostly interested in the representations of the arctic wildlife, as well as sledging dogs. Although the sled dogs keep the utilitarian value, Wærp emphasizes how they are referred to in human terms (p. 74). The author stays critical of the story's imperialistic and exploitative view of the Arctic, yet acknowledges its take on wildlife.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to Regine Normann's debut book, *Krabvaag Skil-dringer fra et lite fiskevær* (1905). This section inquires into the debates centered around belonging and spatial inclusion of animal representations in literature, with a focus on Normann's novel. Building on Erin James' term of "storyworld", the author seeks to examine a type of decentralization that opens space for animals. While the encounters with animals are not individualized, Wærp reframes this narrative in ecological terms because it reveals a shared human-nonhuman environment. Starting from the interpretations of how birds are at place in the fishing village

and highlighting how children and adults alike perceive them with joy (p. 90), to the farm animals perceived as receiving the most attention in the novel (p. 91), the author depicts how this novel stands out as a localized portrayal of the sense of home and place.

The sixth chapter reintroduces another ecological reading of Knut Hamsun's works, this time with a surprising focus on insects. Wærp offers an insightful inquiry into how insects are depicted in Hamsun's bibliography. He starts by noticing Hamsun's interest in insects as depicted in *Pan* (1894), especially in relation to other animals that could be found in the forest, but were intentionally omitted. Next, he focuses on spiders and other insects' depiction in Hamsun's biographical short story, *Under høststjernen* (1906), and the novel *Rosa* (1908). The author also showcases how Hamsun's engagement with insects is depicted in his nonliterary works as well, by revealing his review of J.-H. Fabre's *Instinktets mysterier hos Insekter og Edderkopper*.

The topic of the seventh chapter is the author Mikkjel Fønhus and his place in Norwegian literature in regard to wild animal depictions. Grounded in Margaret Atwood's account of differences between English, American and Canadian wild animal representations in literature, Wærp attempts to explore the same debate in the Norwegian literary space. The author focuses on four books with animal protagonists: *Der villmarka suser* (1919, bear), *Det skriker fra Kverrvilljuvet* (1920, hawk), *Jerv* (1959, wolverine), and *Villgås flyr mot nord* (1968, goose), concluding with general reflections on animal depictions in Fønhus' work, including *Trollelgen* (1921). Accordingly, as he further mentions, in Fønhus's books, there is no room for a complete appropriation of wildlife through anthropomorphism. This is due to his attempts to capture the human-nonhuman complex network by focusing on specific animals and their vulnerability, experiences and feelings.

Moving next to the eighth chapter, the discussion centers around Trygve Gulbrandsen's *Og bakom syngerskogene* historical trilogy. A notable point of the analysis undergone here is the metaphorical language used to describe, this time, the humans. Consequently, the author builds on Garrard's term of *zoomorphism*, highlighting how wild animals are the main imaginary elements. Similarly, the forest and wildlife experience is conducted through hunting, but also synesthetic modes of interacting with and rejuvenating it through a comparison to a song (p. 144). While keeping a critical lens on outdated social representations of family dynamics, the literary relevance is brought into discussion due to a form of resistance to dominant narratives that advocate for the occupation and modernization of the environment.

The ninth chapter aims to challenge the widespread view on Tarjei Vesaas' four first books: *Menneskebonn* (1923), *Sendemann Huskuld* (1924), *Grindegard* (1924) and *Grinde-kveld* (1926) as "sentimentale eller dyster-romantiske" (p. 149). Shifting from literary theory to sociological inquiry, the author addresses the experience of *resonance*, in Hartmut Rosa's words, with the nature encounters in Vesaas' literary works. This section aims not only to showcase the nonhuman representations

(that are extended from animals to the vegetative world or celestial objects), but to emphasize how they are precisely the elements that could reframe the general view on Vesaas' earlier works as equally central as his other works that are more dominant in the academic discourse (like *Det store spelet*, for example).

The next chapter, *Isbjørn i nordisk barne- og ungdomslitteratur*, takes the reader back north, to the literary explorations of the polar bears. Here, the author is interested in how polar bear literary representations potential to take on a formative and educational role. This section is a comparative analysis of the history of the polar bear in Norwegian literature. Starting with Rasmus Løland's *Kvitebjørnen* (1906), children's books gradually shift from Svalbard as a test of manhood: Peder Flints *Speidergutter på Spitsbergen. To norske gutters sommereventyr* (1922) to ecological themes in the 1970s and '80s Harald Sverdrup's *Isbjørn. En ishavsberetning for barn og voksne* (1977) and Thor Larsen's *Espen i isen* (1981), while Lars-Henrik Olsen's *Isbjørn mod hvalros* (2009) features animals without human traits.

The eleventh chapter analyses how Cora Sandel, Brit Bildøen and Tove Nilsen depict their connections to the animal world. The author uses Don Scheese's term of "nature writing" to place these writings within a framework between classical categories. Cora Sandel's *Dyr jeg har kjent* is examined through Greg Garrad's concept of "critical anthropomorphism", with a focus on the exploratory function of literature and companion animals. Similarly, Brit Bildøen's *Over land og hav. Eit år med trekkfuglar* is deemed a risk-oriented ecological depiction of ethical bird-watching. In other words, it means that it both makes the risks visible and depicts possible responses to environmental uncertainties. Finally, Tove Nilsen's *Nordens elefanter og andre bekjente* is addressed as a highly relevant study in the animal studies field, especially regarding animal depictions in artworks and research.

The twelfth chapter is introduced by the cover illustration of the book and focuses on Ole Robert Sund's trilogy: *Penelope er syk* (2017), *Jeg føler meg uvel* (2019) and *Langsom marmor* (2020). The focus here is on how the character is dealing with a traumatic experience, after the loss of his wife because of a terminal illness. The author integrates theoretical points between humanistic disease research (for example, Unni Langås' analysis) (p. 217) and ecocriticism while also considering that it has autobiographical features. Thus, he succeeds in depicting how the active perception (p. 218) and the experience of the environment and nature can be a means of working through trauma.

The thirteenth chapter deals with the dystopic work of Knut Faldbakken, *Uår. Aftenlandet* (1974). The author identifies utopian characteristics in this novel, as he also recognizes alternatives outside of the social order, in Norheim's words (p. 232). The landscape depicts a total wasteland, which is thought to reflect the title of the novel's reference to the German philosopher Oswald Spengler's pessimism regarding the decadent state of the West. It is a depiction of an almost completely lost animal life. As the author suggests, however, what has been lost is the human-nonhuman interconnections in a highly dystopic environment.

The fourteenth and the last chapter of the book includes both an examination of the Sámi science-fiction book *Fugl* (2019) by Sigbjørn Skådens and its nonhuman (non)depictions. Here, the author explores ways in which the Sámi identity is portrayed, by not being engaged with directly, neither geographically (as the setting is a fictional planet called “Heim”), nor explicitly (as the same culture is not mentioned). What is most impressive in this chapter is that the animal life is depicted in its absence (p. 246), a key element that makes this section one of the most provocative chapters. In this regard, the author identifies the community that colonized that planet as the Sámi people, tracing several key points to his argument. The barren planet that has almost no traces of vegetation and no animal life is perceived (not even traces of previous such life), in contrast to the rich Arctic life that surrounds Sámi communities. The author demonstrates how the book is both an allegory for the colonialism and systemic violence that the Sámi people were subjected to, as well as a climate dystopia.

In conclusion, this study represents an enriching contribution to the history of Norwegian literature that takes an interest in animal and nonhuman depictions. Lying at the intersection of ecocriticism and animal studies, it can be considered both a history of animal depiction in Norwegian literature, as well as a homage paid to all the literature that contributed to complementing these representations.

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