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Human and Non-human Representations in Maja Lunde's Fiction: A New Materialist and Post-Speciesist Approach

The article focuses on Maja Lunde's "climate quartet," read from the perspective of post-speciesist theory and new materialism. Apart from dealing with climate change and dystopian futures, Lunde's fiction also tackles the poetics and politics of the *non-human* (be it non-human animals or the non-human environment), which is no longer perceived as inherently submissive and dependent on *the human*, but possesses a life of its own. In new materialism's terms, non-human (organic/inorganic, animate/inanimate) bodies are self-generative and self-sufficient, able to affect and influence other bodies.

Keywords: ecocriticism, new materialism, animal studies, post-speciesism, eco-fiction

Climate change, the extinction of various animal species, and environmental pollution have become important themes in contemporary literature, giving birth to what is called today climate fiction or eco-fiction. Even though this type of discourse was initially typical for American literature, since the *wasteland* as a space of non-life and absence is a concept profoundly ingrained in the American collective imaginary and literary tradition, eco-fiction has entered the European literary scene as well. One of the most important voices in European eco-fiction today is the Norwegian writer Maja Lunde, who has so far written three novels on climate change and the Anthropocene and is currently writing a fourth novel. *Bienes Historie* (2015), *Blå* (2017), and *Przewalskis Hest* (2019) are all part of what Lunde calls her *klimakvartetten*, the climate quartet.

The first novel consists of three different timelines: (1) District 242, Shirong, Sichuan, China, in 2098; (2) Maryville, England, in 1852; and (3) Ohio, USA, in 2007. In the first timeline, we encounter Tao, a young mother, suffering a family crisis (Bârlădean 2020: 346) because her young son seems to have disappeared. Here we are also told that the bees disappeared in 1980, the main reason behind this being the use of pesticides. In the second timeline, we meet William, "a naturalist with high aspirations" (Bârlădean 2020: 346) who wants to create and build a new,

innovative hive that would help beekeepers to better observe and control the insects. Finally, in the third timeline, we encounter George, a traditional(ist) beekeeper devoted to fighting modern farming. The second novel, *Blå*, uses the same structure, but it follows only two storylines, instead of three. The first one revolves around Signe, a seventy-year-old woman, who “sets out on a voyage to France, where she plans to meet her long lost lover, Magnus. [...] The second narrative, set in a near, dystopian future (the year 2041, France) follows the story of David and his young daughter Lou. They are climate refugees, running from the drought and the fires that threaten the whole continent” (Moldovan 2020: 350). The third novel, *Przewalskis Hest*, consists again of three different timelines. In 1881, in Saint-Petersburg, Mikhail, a zoologist, plans an expedition to Mongolia in order to capture and bring to Russia’s zoos examples of the famous and rare species of wild horse called Przewalski’s horse. The second narrative takes place in Mongolia in 1992 and presents the story of Karin, a veterinarian who tries to repopulate Mongolia with wild horses, after they seem to have completely disappeared from their natural habitat because of excessive hunting and capturing. In the third storyline (Norway 2064), we meet Eva and her teenage daughter Isa, who own a small farm in a Europe that seems to be completely destabilized as a result of climate change and a shortage of water. In all three novels, the timelines ultimately converge and create a grand, all-encompassing narrative that embraces the fate of humans, animals, and the environment. Everything is interconnected, and every little thing can influence the outcome of the story.

Apart from dealing with climate change and dystopian futures, Lunde’s fiction (and eco-fiction in general, as well as ecocriticism) also tackles the poetics and politics of the *non-human* (be it non-human animals or the non-human environment). New materialist theories, along with post-human criticism and animal studies, destabilize our humanistic and anthropocentric view of the world, by rethinking the way in which we perceive and understand the *non-human*. Therefore, the purpose of my paper is to analyse Lunde’s climate fiction from the viewpoint of new materialist theory. My discussion is divided into two parts: representations of non-human animals and representations of the non-human environment in Lunde’s fiction, both parts following a new materialist approach and focusing on the self-organisation and autonomy of non-human (organic or inorganic, alive or inanimate) bodies.

1. Representations of the non-human animal

“The question of the animal,” as Cary Wolfe calls it, has been a subject of philosophical debate ever since classical antiquity, when Aristotle studied, classified, and wrote about animals, but also about the relationship between human and non-human beings. Later, Descartes, for instance, portrayed animals as radically different from, and implicitly inferior to, humans (Garrard 2004: 25): they function automatically and display machine-like behaviour, being, therefore, unable to experience pain.

Descartes identified the *cogito* (I think) as “ontologically other than matter” (Coole and Frost 2010: 8). Thus, since the animal is perceived as a machine, an object, matter without agency and awareness, the gap between human and non-human beings becomes deeper than ever. This Cartesian understanding of matter and the non-human “yields a conceptual and practical domination of nature” (Coole and Frost 2010: 8), as we will see in Lunde’s novels as well.

This domination, and the anthropocentric paradigm it creates, has been today slowly replaced by a post-human world, in which human and non-human animals share a mutual fate and are equally affected and overwhelmed by climate change and the effects of the Anthropocene.

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2005) already discuss the fact that the interrelations between species constitute a rhizomatic structure, and not an arborescent one: there is no centre and no periphery in a rhizome, and, therefore, no hierarchy or privileged viewpoint(s). Jacques Derrida writes about the same things in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, stating that the relations between human and non-human animals “are at once intertwined and abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified” (Derrida 2008: 46).

In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway further emphasizes this rhizomatic structure that is created by the interactions between species:

we are in a knot of species co-shaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down. Response and respect are possible only in those knots, with actual animals and people looking back at each other” (Haraway 2008: 55).

Haraway’s post-speciesist future is inevitably linked and associated with a post-human world; cyborg criticism implies the same instability and dissolution of the notion of the “human” as post-speciesism does:

Ecocriticism therefore shares with liberationist and cyborg criticism a sustained and sustaining interest in the subjectivity of the non-human, and in the problem of the troubled boundaries between the human and other creatures. All three critical discourses invite an encounter with the pleasures and anxieties of a possible post-human condition (Garrard 2004: 161).

Just like post-humanism and animal studies, the theories of new materialism dismantle the idea that human life and human bodies are radically different from other life and other bodies. Non-human bodies are not just inert, passive matter (as Descartes postulated), but they display the same capacities of agency as human bodies do. Human beings, the dominant force that has controlled other species, is now portrayed as just another knot in the post-human network or just another link in the ecosystem.

1.1. Artificial spaces and obtrusive gazes

In his essay *Why look at animals?* from the volume *About Looking* (from 1980), John Berger states that “Animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them” (Berger 1980: 14). Therefore, non-human animals become objects of our “imperial gaze,” as Greg Garrard calls it. They are unable to turn this gaze back on us, to reciprocate it: “the eye/ I derives pleasure from an obtrusive gaze that its object cannot challenge or return” (Garrard 2004: 154). Berger goes even further and brings into discussion the issue of zoos, which he classifies as “artificial spaces.” The man-made environment created in these artificial spaces is, according to Berger, an “illusory environment,” an unnatural, fabricated, manufactured space that functions like a Baudrillardian simulacrum, and in which the life of the confined animals becomes synthetic and denatured:

Zoo animals cross the same boundary as feral animals. As Berger shows, they are the objects of the imperial gaze we turn on wild animals, in which our alienated distance is proportionate to our power. Liberationists claim that zoo confinement is cruel, which may be true in some cases, but an ecocritical perspective is more concerned with the politics of representation implied by the zoo experience. [...] zoos distort our perception of animals as well as being a spectacle of imperial or neocolonial power (Garrard 2004: 150).

Finally turning to Lunde’s climate quartet, we can notice that her narratives bring into discussion the same concern: in many episodes in these novels, the non-human animal’s identity is negated; it is only perceived as an object, never as a subject. However, Lunde uses this type of discourse only as a decoy, as a way of criticizing the western way of seeing animals, as I will demonstrate later. We come across this discourse of power and control especially in *Przewalskis Hest*, the third novel of the *klimakvartetten*, where we stumble upon Berger’s artificial spaces directly, since a lot of the action in the novel revolves around a Russian zoo. Mikhail Aleksandrovitsj is a zoologist who embarks on a journey to a remote part of Mongolia, in order to bring to Russia’s zoos a few specimens of the *takhi*, a species of wild horse that roams freely on the Mongolian plateau. These animals are supposed to help the country’s economy. On his way back to Sankt Petersburg, however, because of the improper conditions in which the animals are being transported, one of the animals (a young foal) dies. The only conclusion that Mikhail and his colleague Wilhelm draw is that “Det kan være vanskelig å holde dem i live. Han er vår første, vi må tenke på ham som et objekt for vår forskning. Gjennom ham kan vi lære hva vi bør gjøre annerledes neste gang, ved det neste føllet vi fanger”¹

¹ “It can be hard to keep them alive. He is our first, we must think of it as an object for our research. In this way we can learn what we can do differently next time, with the next foal that we will catch” (transl. C.M.M).

(Lunde 2019: 311). Earlier in the novel, Mikhail makes his opinions clear once again, by stating that:

De siste årene var det kommet på moten med slike reservater. Wolff var blant dem som talte varmt om å plassere dyrene i mer «naturlige» habitater, å la dem få beite fritt i stedet for å plassere dem i bur, samt gi dem større områder til fri disposisjon. Personlig undret jeg meg over denne tenkningen. Hensikten med å plassere dyr i fangenskap var jo å benytte dem som objekter for observasjon² (Lunde 2019: 114).

We come across the aforementioned power discourse in both these episodes, which use a rhetoric of dominance and oppression that becomes so powerful that it strips the non-human animal of its identity as *a subject*, and renders it a mere *object*. Even more than that, the non-human animal seems to be deprived of its vitality or its organicity. The horses become passive, inert matter just waiting to be dominated and controlled by the all-powerful *Man*. They do not have another purpose except for being a commodity, a product that will help Russia's economy.

This type of artificial space and the obtrusive gaze it presupposes are present in *Bienes Historie* as well, represented by the beehive. Bees are enclosed in these confined and manufactured homes. The beehive's purpose is not to accommodate the insect, but to ensure and facilitate a future invasion of privacy. William is a biologist who is constantly trying to improve the beehive's infrastructure. However, his purpose does not seem to be the well-being of the insects, but their observation and constant supervision:

Det måtte da gå an å videreutvikle dette, å arbeide frem en løsning som var bedre, hvor høstingen kunne skje uten å skade biene, og hvor røkteren fikk enda bedre innsyn og oversikt over dronning, yngel og produksjon? Jeg merket med ett at jeg skalv av iver. Det var dette jeg ville, det var her min lidenskap lå. Jeg klarte ikke ta øynene fra tegningene, fra biene. Jeg ville inn dit. Inn i kubene!³ (Lunde 2015: 80).

Later in the novel, William continues to search for the perfect model for his new beehive, but his purpose, that of controlling the bees, remains the same: "Det

² "In recent years, these reservations became very popular: Wolff was among those who argued fervently that the animals should be placed in more 'natural' habitats and allowed to graze freely instead of placing them in cages. Personally, this way of thinking made me wonder. The purpose of keeping animals in captivity was of course to use them as objects for observation" (transl. C.M.M).

³ "It had to be possible to develop this further, to work out a solution that was better, so the harvesting could be done without hurting the bees and the beekeeper could more effectively inspect and keep an eye on the queen, larvae and production. Suddenly I noticed that I was trembling with excitement. This was what I wanted, this was where my passion lay. I was unable to take my eyes off the drawings, off the bees. I wanted to go in there. Into the hive!" (All English translations used from now on belong to Diane Oatley, unless otherwise indicated).

skulle være menneskeskapt, for bare vi mennesker kunne reise skikkelige byggverk, et bygg som var mulig å overvåke, som ga mennesket, ikke naturen, kontrollen”⁴ (Lunde 2015: 138).

The beehive becomes therefore a fabricated, artificial space, a panopticon in which the bees are constantly supervised, watched, studied, essentially unable to return this obtrusive gaze. Their life becomes a spectacle, just like the life of Mikhail’s horses imprisoned in Sankt Petersburg’s Zoo. They are ultimately deprived of individuality and autonomy and their existence becomes synthetic. However, the ending of *Bienes Historie* is strangely optimistic in this respect. The bees seem to reclaim the autonomy of their homes and their bodies:

Kuben var fra oppfinnerens hånd ment for honningproduksjon og observasjon, i den ønsket han å temme biene. Men bier kan ikke temmes. De kan bare røktes, få vår omsorg. Til tross for det opprinnelige målet med kuben var den likevel et godt hjem for biene. Her lå alt til rette for at de skulle få yngle og formere seg. Honningen beholdt de selv, ingenting skulle høstes, aldri utnyttet. Den skulle få lov til å være det den fra naturens side var ment som: mat for de nyfødte⁵ (Lunde 2015: 386).

Lunde’s post-speciesist approach will be discussed in the next subchapter of my paper. Her narratives destabilize the hierarchy presented in the examples above and succeed in depicting a world in which human and non-human animals are both subjects, or, in new materialism’s terms, *actants*.

1.2. Lunde’s *menneske-dyr*⁶

A lot of Lunde’s characters often experience epiphanic revelations throughout the narrative, revelations that cause powerful emotional responses and make them aware of their humble role in the ecosystem. Mikhail Aleksandrovitsj is one of these characters. When touching the skin (or should I say “the leather”?) of a dead *takhi* horse brought to Russia from Mongolia, Mikhail has a revelation: he becomes mindful of the fact that he touches that which had once been an animal, an actual living being, an individual, not just an *object*, or a machine:

⁴ “It should be man-made, because only humans could construct proper buildings, a building it was possible to monitor, which gave humans, not nature, control”.

⁵ “The hive had been intended for honey production and observation – that’s where he had wanted to tame the bees. But bees cannot be tamed. They can only be tended, receive our care. Despite the original purpose of the hive, it was still a good home for the bees. In it everything was arranged to enable them to breed and reproduce. They kept the honey for themselves; nothing was to be harvested, never to be used by humans. It would be allowed to remain as nature had intended: food for the newborns”.

⁶ “Human-animal” (transl. C.M.M.).

Benmaterialet var kaldt og tørt. Jeg lot fingrene fare over det, lukket øynene halvt igjen, som en blind kjente jeg meg frem, forsøkte å se for meg hesten den hadde tilhørt. Det var som om det kroppslige møtet med dette som en gang hadde vært et dyr, gjorde noe med meg: Fingrene mine gjenkjente med ett et annet levende vesen⁷ (Lunde 2019: 40).

The hierarchy presented in the first subchapter no longer functions here. The non-human animal is perceived and understood as an individual. However, one could argue that the skin/leather is actually detached from the rest of the (dead) body and is, therefore, not alive or animate anymore, but still, senseless matter. Either way, what Mikhail touches is a non-human body that has the ability to create a powerful affective state inside him. Affect theory states that bodies affect other bodies, and that is the reason why Mikhail's revelation is essentially physical. He touches and feels the *Other's* body with his own fingers, with his own body. Scholars in the field of new materialism agree that these theories should not privilege human bodies (Coole and Frost 2010: 14): all bodies, "including those of animals and perhaps certain machines too" (Coole and Frost 2010: 14) are capable of *affecting* other bodies.

The boundaries that separate human beings from non-human beings become dimmer than ever. That is why Lunde's novels create the ideal background for a fusion or a synthesis between the two. There are situations in which these boundaries seem completely to fade away, leaving room for what could be called *et menneske-dyr*, a hybrid creature of the Anthropocene, constantly caught between culture and nature. For this "human-animal" there is no power hierarchy.

In an interview from 17 October 2019, for the NRK radio station, Lunde states that "Jeg har skrevet en roman som handler om forplanting og menneske som dyr, og driftene i oss"⁸ (NRK Radio 2019). Lunde is talking here about her third novel, *Przewalskis Hest*, but this statement does actually apply to all three novels from the climate quartet. In a post-collapse world like that described by Lunde in her stories, human beings are doomed to turn to a pre-civilization state, since they need to survive at all cost. As a consequence, the bestial identity and animal identity (as speciesist as these two terms are) of humans is bound eventually to come out.

Lunde's *menneske-dyr* is depicted in different circumstances throughout the narrative. First, this human-animal's existence seems to revolve around procreation, just as Lunde mentions in an interview. There are several episodes in the three novels that hint at an animal-like, instinctual urge to procreate, an urge that does not imply feelings or emotion, just pure physical attraction. Corporeality is, again, important. There is no difference between human bodies and non-human bodies:

⁷ "The bone was cold and dry. I let my fingers slide over it; with my eyes half closed, feeling like a blind man, I tried to imagine the horse it had belonged to. It was like this physical contact between me and that which had once been an animal awakened something inside me: my fingers immediately recognized another living being" (transl. C.M.M).

⁸ "I have written a novel about reproduction and the human as animal, and about our instincts" (transl. C.M.M).

1. “Jeg ble likevel drevet mot henne med et dyrs instinkt, en drone. Igjen og igjen, forplantningsklar, til tross for at det siste jeg ønsket, var etterkommere. Som dronen ofret jeg livet for forplantningen”⁹ (Lunde 2015: 124).
2. “Den kom fra mamma og pappas soverom, jeg hørte det nå, og det var ikke bare lyden av én, men flere, for en lavere og dypere uling hadde falt inn, og det var ikke dyr, det var mennesker, mennesker som var dyr, en underlig uling, som om noen hadde det veldig vondt”¹⁰ (Lunde 2017: 97).
3. “Det må være fint å ha blitt til som et resultat av kjærlighet. Jeg klarer ikke tenke på det som skjedde mellom mamma og Einar som noe annet enn det som skjer mellom dyr. De parete seg”¹¹ (Lunde 2019: 184).
4. “Han er bare en mann. Et hanndyr. Jeg er et hunddyr. Vi to, her oppe, ikke rart at det skjedde noe til slutt. Jeg er lurt av mine egne drifter, mine egne instinkter”¹² (Lunde 2019: 353).

In all these situations, Lunde’s *menneske-dyr* is compared to non-human beings. There seems to be no difference between the bodily impulses of a bee, for example, and those of a human being. The characters are not controlled by emotions, but by their senses and primitive needs (Johnsen 2019: 41). Second, we witness that this human-animal deals with hunger and the absence of food in the same way, controlled by urges and impulses:

1. “Den eneste driften som nå drev mine handlinger, var sult. Sulten kan få et menneske til å opptre irrasjonelt, kan minne om galskap, sulten kan drive oss til å gjøre hva som helst”¹³ (Lunde 2019: 10).
2. “Jeg var så lei av mat, vår avhengighet av mat. Så lei av å tenke på mat, på mat her og nå, fra jeg våknet om morgenen”¹⁴ (Lunde 2019: 157).

Food is, for Lunde’s characters, more than a necessity: it becomes an obsession, the one thing (besides procreation) that shapes and defines their existence. Once again, in new materialism’s terms, matter (represented here by bodies, since both

⁹ “I was nonetheless drawn to her with the instinct of an animal, a drone. Again and again, ripe for procreation, even though the last thing I wanted were descendants. Like the drone, I sacrificed my life for procreation”.

¹⁰ “It was coming from Mommy and Daddy’s bedroom, I could hear it now, and it was not just the sound of one, but of several creatures, because a lower and deeper moaning had commenced, and it wasn’t an animal, it was a person, as if somebody were in a great deal of pain”.

¹¹ “It must be nice to be conceived out of love. I can’t think of that which happened between mom and Einar as something else than that which happens between two animals. They mated” (transl. C.M.M.).

¹² “He is just a man. A male. I am a female. Only the two of us, up here; no wonder something happened between us in the end. I’m fooled by my own impulses, my own instincts” (transl. C.M.M.).

¹³ “The only impulse which now controlled my actions was hunger. Hunger can make a human being behave irrationally, almost like madness; hunger can compel us to do anything” (transl. C.M.M.).

¹⁴ “I was so fed up with food, with our dependence on food. Fed up with thinking about food, here and now, from the moment I woke up in the morning” (transl. C.M.M.).

the two instincts mentioned above are ultimately carnal, corporeal urges) seems to be more than a “carcass for the soul”: it is the core of our very existence. It is not inert and submissive, but rather an active force that functions in the same way for human and non-human animals.

Last, I would like to bring this section to a conclusion by discussing a last quote from *Przewalskis Hest*. Karin is a researcher who tries to bring the *takhi* horses back to their natural habitat in Mongolia and helps them adapt to their new home (or re-adapt to their old home). While transporting the horses from Germany to Mongolia in a Soviet plane, she seems to feel whatever the horses are feeling. She empathizes so deeply with them that their pain becomes hers:

Kassene står i to rader foran oss. Jeg kan ikke skimte noe gjennom de små pustehullene. Flyet overdøver lydene deres, men jeg syns likevel jeg kan høre dem. Som om jeg er der inne. Som om det er meg som hele tida skubber borti veggene og slår hodet mot plankene jeg er omgitt av¹⁵ (Lunde 2019: 43).

Even though she is not imprisoned in a tight space, like her animals, Karin feels suffocated, claustrophobic just like them. She understands their struggle on a physical level, like her body would be the body of a horse entrapped in a small box in the Soviet plane. There is not a human identity and a non-human identity anymore: they seem to merge, to dissolve into each other. The barriers that separated these two dimensions are shattered when Karin completely identifies herself with her animals, with their struggle.

2. Representations of the non-human environment

The second section of my discussion focuses on non-human surroundings, from manmade objects to natural artifacts or landscapes, elements that can essentially be considered lifeless, inert matter, with no capacities of agency. However, the new materialist turn “creat[es] new concepts and images of nature that affirm matter’s immanent vitality” (Coole and Frost 2010: 8). We have previously seen that new materialist and post-speciesist thinking sees no difference between the bodies of human and non-human animals. However, new materialism goes even further than that: it does not privilege “alive” organic matter, but acknowledges that inorganic, lifeless bodies have the same power to affect other bodies, to be self-generative and self-sufficient. If in the past “matter was corpuscular, passive, and inert” (Merchant

¹⁵ “The two rows of boxes are placed in front of us. I can’t glimpse anything through the small breathing holes. The plane is numbing the sounds coming from [the horses], but I think I can hear them nonetheless. As if I was in there. As if I was the one who tried pushing the walls away and hit her head against the plank I was surrounded by” (transl. C.M.M.).

1990: 124), it can be now considered dynamic and in a constant process of becoming and mutating.

the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces themselves manifest certain agentic capacities and in which the domain of unintended or unanticipated effects is considerably broadened. Matter is no longer imagined here as a massive, opaque plenitude but is recognized instead as indeterminate, constantly forming and reforming in unexpected ways. [...] In this monolithic but multiply tiered ontology, there is no definitive break between sentient and nonsentient entities or between material and spiritual phenomena (Coole and Frost 2010: 9).

We witness this new materialist turn in Lunde's narratives as well. In the second novel from the climate quartet, *Blå*, we meet Signe, a former activist who fought in her youth for the preservation of a glacier near her village. Having spent her whole childhood in its surroundings, she gets so close to it that the glacier becomes, in her eyes, more than an inanimate block of ice: it becomes a breathing, living organism, capable of feeling and suffering. The following episode is extremely telling in this respect: "Jeg tar den ene votten av, legger hånden mot isen, den lever under fingrene mine, breen min, et stort, rolig dyr som sover, men den er et såret dyr, og den kan ikke brøle, den tapperes hvert minutt, hvert sekund, er døende allerede"¹⁶ (Lunde 2017: 12). Signe describes the glacier as a living ("den lever") animal, a hurt animal, hinting at the fact that it is not only a living organism, but it can feel and experience pain. An important thing to be mentioned and emphasized here is that just as in the case of Mikhail, who touches the skin of a dead animal, Signe connects with the glacier through *touch*: matter stimulates matter, bodies affect other bodies. The non-human environment is no longer "a framing device," part of the natural tableau but "an active presence" (Buell 2005: 35).

Later in the novel, we notice that not only the glacier is perceived as a living being. Signe describes her boat (which she names *Blå*) as a sentient living being, able to feel: "Blå er en trist skapning, amputert, bandasjert og forbundet på en brun elv"¹⁷ (Lunde 2017: 186), even though "det er bare en båt, aluminium, plast og glassfiber, tre og tau"¹⁸ (Lunde 2017: 120). Once again, the boat is not an object or a thing, but "en skapning," meaning "et levende vesen"¹⁹ (*Bokmålsordboka*).

Additionally, it is also able to experience pain, just like the glacier. The fact that Signe mentions the materials the boat is made of is further evidence that matter is no longer perceived as passive but flowing, becoming. *Blå* is not a boat, an object, but an entity that has the power to generate and create (emotions, affects). This

¹⁶ "I take off one mitten, place my hand against the ice; it is alive beneath my fingers—my glacier, a huge, calm animal that sleeps – but it is a wounded animal, and it can't roar, it is being drained minute by minute, second by second, it is already dying".

¹⁷ "Blue is a sad creature, amputated, bandaged and bound on a brown river".

¹⁸ "it's just a boat, just aluminum, plastic and fiberglass, wood and ropes".

¹⁹ According to *Bokmålsordboka*, available at www.ordbok.uib.no.

process, of “ascribing agency to inorganic phenomena such as the electricity grid, food, and trash” (Coole and Frost 2010: 8) has been called by theorist Jane Bennet “enchanted materialism,” and one can follow its traces back to Thoreau’s *Walden*, where electricity is described as lively and shimmering.

The same thing happens in *Bienes Historie*: “Landskapet bølga rundt oss. En maskin passerte på et jorde et stykke unna. Som et gigantisk insekt. Maskinkroppen, tanken med gift, var stor og rund, romma tusenvis med liter, den hadde lange, roterende vinger som spredde stoffet på jordene i ei sky av små dråper”²⁰ (Lunde 2015: 180). George compares the machine he passes by with an insect, a living being, further highlighting the power of inorganic matter. However, not only the machine is described as alive, but also the whole landscape. Lunde uses the verb “bølger,” which automatically implies movement, fluctuation, flow, and thus implicitly life, dynamism. We notice that not only humans are described as animals, but so are other apparently lifeless objects/artifacts, natural or manmade. Everything seems to be alive in Lunde’s novels, possessing a life of its own: “alt i naturen har en sjel”²¹ (Lunde 2019: 49), explains the researcher Karin in *Przewalskis Hest*, confirming matter’s undeniable enchantment.

Conclusion

The non-human and the new materialist turn are nowadays important subjects of discussion in the fields of ecocriticism and post-humanism, but also in literature, as we have already seen. These narratives of the Anthropocene propose a new sensibility: humans are no longer the measure of all things, the centre. Classical Cartesian dualisms (like for instance human/non-human, subject/object, animate/inanimate) have become meaningless and non-functional.

Lunde’s fiction creates a world in which there are no fixed but fluid identities. The traditional anthropocentric perspective that promotes the superiority of human beings over non-human animals is undermined and eroded. There is no difference between the impulses of a human or those of an animal, and Lunde’s characters oscillate between culture and nature (choosing nature for the most part, as we have seen, and becoming more of a hybrid *menneske-dyr* than an actual human being). Therefore, Lunde’s narratives depict a post-speciesist and post-human future: non-human animals are not just commodities, but agents, subjects, autonomous and free.

²⁰ “A machine drove past in a field a distance away. Like a gigantic insect. the body of the machine, the tank of pesticide, was huge and round, contained thousands of gallons. It had long, rotating wings that spread the material on the fields in a cloud of tiny drops”.

²¹ “Everything in nature has a soul” (transl. C.M.M.).

Just like animals, matter is no longer depicted as inert and unresponsive, as a framing device, but as an active presence that communicates with other bodies and is able to generate emotions and affects. Boats, glaciers, machines, they all seem to have a life of their own, to be self-generative and self-sufficient. “Bodies” and “corporeality” are important concepts in the field of new materialism, as the non-human communicates and comes in contact with the human mostly through touch.

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