TALLINN UNIVERSITY

Institute of Germanic and Romance Languages and Cultures

Department of English

ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN ANNA SEWELL'S *BLACK BEAUTY* AND MICHAEL MORPURGO'S *WAR HORSE*

BA Thesis

by

Kadri Sukko

Supervisor:

Lect. Miriam Anne McIlfatrick-Ksenofontov, MA

TALLINN 2015

Table of Contents

Introduction

'We have an immemorial urge to tell stories involving characters who behave in human ways but are not human' (Boyd 217). People around primeval campfires already liked to tell stories about animals, and as storytelling evolved into writing, so anthropomorphism emerged as a literary device in works of fiction for both children and adults. In the late 19th and early 20th century it became popular in British literature to experiment with animal perspectives, and a new genre emerged called animal biography. There was something enthralling for the people of the era in imagining and trying to understand how different animals would see and comprehend the world, and so this new genre found a ready readership.

An example of such an animal biography is Anna Sewell's novel *Black Beauty*, which sold a million copies in its first two years and by now more than thirty million, making it 'reputedly the most popular children's animal story ever written' (Rudd 244). Sewell was a British writer, born in 1820, who, with her novel on the ill-treatment of horses, single-handedly created a genre of first-person narratives told from the perspective of the animal. 'Sewell is an early writer in what would be known as 'animal rights' literature […]' (Rudd 245). Due to a childhood injury which left her an invalid and largely housebound, getting around became possible thanks to a carriage horse. Her dependence on a horse increased her respect for these creatures and motivated her to write about their ill-treatment, which was prevalent in the Victorian era. Hence she spent her last years writing her fictional autobiography of a gentle horse; it was published in 1878, a mere five months before she died of hepatitis.

Another example of the genre is the novel *War Horse*, by the acclaimed British children's writer Michael Morpurgo, who was born in 1943 and has written over a hundred

books. Published in 1982, *War Horse* is a popular war novel, having been made into both a play in 2007, which premiered in Royal National Theatre in London, and a film in 2011 by Steven Spielberg. *War Horse* is exceptional among war novels for its narrative twist on war, with a horse being both the protagonist and narrator. It shows the human conflict from the perspective of horses, who have been unwittingly drafted into battle to work on both sides and even switch sides during the war. Horses were important as war and work animals at the time: 'When six million soldiers marched against each other in 1914, so did two million horses, conscripted from farms and fields in every country of Europe to carry soldiers, pull carts and guns […]' (Hastings). The book has been viewed as an anti-war message and as a psychological novel in which humanity is tested during the worst times. One commentator describes the horse, Joey, as 'the means by which we see the common humanity of the characters. Many of the people with whom he comes into contact show the better side of their nature […] – even as the war rages around them – demonstrating the very worst that humans are capable of' (Lister).

The present graduation paper attempts to analyse the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature, this being the **subject** of the paper. The **object** of the paper is the analysis of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* and Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse*. More particularly, the **aim** of the thesis is to identify the uses and functions of anthropomorphism as a literary device in the two novels. The **problem** of the research lies in examining how this literary device serves to engage with a particular readership and/or to communicate – explicitly or implicitly – views held by the author.

The primary material used for this research is the novels *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* by Anna Sewell and Michael Morpurgo respectively. They are subjected to descriptive-analytical and comparative **methods** of study.

Anthropomorphism in literature has been widely studied, and although Sewell's *Black Beauty* has been a popular choice in such research, Morpurgo's *War Horse* has not yet received the same attention. As the subject has not yet been studied in Estonia, the present paper aims to contribute to local research and in general by studying a 19th-century novel and a contemporary novel in their respective contexts and with the benefit of the most recent theory, Jutta Ittner's 'new anthropomorphism.' Previous related research on anthropomorphism in literature includes the paper *Anthropomorphism and the Necessity of Animal Fantasy* by Maija-Liisa Harju in 2006.

The thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the uses and types of anthropomorphism in literature, and explores how human-animal studies and literary studies combine to explain the appeal of such works to readers and the implications for writers. The second chapter contains a comparative analysis of the uses and functions of anthropomorphic horses in the aforementioned novels.

CHAPTER 1: THE USES AND FUNCTIONS OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN LITERATURE

Anthropomorphism is an enduring feature in the literatures of many cultures and across many ages: from the story-telling of oral traditions and fables and folktales to modern-day satires and postmodern novels. All of them speak of our fascination with animals, and in all of them animals convey recognizable human characteristics. Although it is widely regarded as particularly suited to children and young adults, anthropomorphic fiction is written for both children and adults. The aim of this chapter is to explore how and why this fascination with animals manifests itself in literature.

1.1 Definition of Anthropomorphism and Categories of Anthropomorphic Literature

1.1.1 Defining Anthropomorphism

Broadly speaking, anthropomorphism is a technique that a writer uses to attribute different human emotions, traits or behaviour to animals, non-human beings, natural phenomena or inanimate objects. This means that animals in such works may be seen to behave like humans (e.g. walk, talk, think as they do) or engage in human activities (e.g. wear clothes, prepare meals, compete in sport or work). Anthropomorphic characters may be 'fully anthropomorphic' or simply have the ability to talk or think like humans; they may 'inhabit their own humanless worlds' (Dunn 2) or co-exist with humans in their world, where they may or may not be able to communicate with or speak to humans.

Anthropomorphism is sometimes viewed as a type of personification; there is, however, an important distinction between the two. Personification is a figure of speech where animals or inanimate objects are given human characteristics in order to create a vivid image and enhance the reader's understanding of the idea and the text. This has been explained as follows: 'because we always look at the world from a human perspective. […] it is easier for us to relate to something that is human or possesses human traits' (Literary Devices). In contrast, anthropomorphism aims to make animals or inanimate objects appear to behave as if they were human beings. How and why this is done is the focus of sections 1.2 and 1.3 below.

1.1.2 Categories of Anthropomorphic Literature

1. Fables and Fairy-tales

Aesop's Fables, which have more than 600 narratives and which date from the sixth century BCE, are some of the most popular and well-known animal stories. A fable is a short cautionary story that often depicts anthropomorphic characters. It has been suggested that 'in terms of "humanized animals", the association happened "more or less by accident", in so far as Aesop's fables provided a suitable early example […], which was then emulated by others' (Rudd 242). Some examples of fables, besides Aesop's, could be those of Jean de la Fontaine, who was greatly influenced by Aesop and who targeted his fables more towards the adult audience, and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, the stories of which have strong moral tones. Anthropomorphic characters have also often been depicted in fairy-tales, fictitious fanciful stories mostly intended for children, which typically feature folkloric fantasy characters. Similarly to fables, fairy-tales have also served the purpose of entertaining and teaching moral lessons, with examples like *The*

Fisherman and his Wife by the Brothers Grimm or *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen.

Both fables and fairy-tales have a lasting popularity and impact with many of them having been re-written (e.g. Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des Moralités* has been translated, modernised, and later rewritten for *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter) or adapted for film and stage (e.g. *Beauty and the Beast* by Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont was rewritten by Linda Woolverton for its film adaptation by Walt Disney Feature Animation, which premiered in 1991, and for stage as a Broadway musical that opened in 1993).

2. Religion and Mythology

Generations of religion scholars have acknowledged that in religion and mythology worldwide anthropomorphism has been used to attribute human form and features to deities and fantasy characters. Stewart Guthrie, an anthropologist, believes that 'religion quite simply *is* anthropomorphism' (*qtd. in* Westh 1) being the first to make this belief 'the backbone of a cognitive theory of religion' (1). Greek deities such as Zeus and Poseidon have often been depicted as humans with evident human traits. In the Christian tradition a talking serpent, which is believed to represent evil and Satan, is depicted in the Garden of Eden.

3. Satire

The popular stories of *Reineke Fuchs*, also known as Reynard the Fox in English, compiled of earlier fables by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1794, are an example of a satire, based on medieval epics, about feudal injustice. While accurately portraying animals' instinctive behaviour, these stories also ridicule and mock the daily life, the politics, and the literature of the time. A modern example is George Orwell's use of satire in his novel *Animal Farm*

(1945), in which communism is attacked through humorous animal allegories with animals depicting famous historical figures and their actions. Orwell himself claimed that *Animal Farm* 'was the first book in which [he] tried, with full consciousness of what [he] was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole' (*qtd. in* Hollis). This is why he turned to anthropomorphism, which consequently allowed him to succeed.

4. Animal Biographies and Autobiographies

Perhaps the most popular and definitely the most influential type of anthropomorphic literature is the animal autobiography, in which 'an animal, usually domestic or in close relation to humans, gives a first-person account of their life and experiences. […]', and which nearly always intends 'to argue for the better treatment of animals by humans […]' (Cosslett 63). In the 19th and early 20th century, animal autobiography was one of the most popular and extensive genres; examples are Marshall Saunders' *Beautiful Joe* (1893) and Jane Fielding's *Scamp: A Dog's Own Story* (1913) and *Master Reynard: The History of a Fox* (1913). It has maintained its popularity to the present day, with the example of *A Dog's Life: Autobiography of a Stray* (2005) by Ann M. Martin. Yet one of the most well-known examples of animal autobiography is perhaps Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. The genre allows writers to mask their voice as that of the animal. From the reader's perspective, this 'invites human readers to "change situations" with the animal protagonist, and imagine its feelings' and since it '[...] is done in a realistic mode, not in the fantastic, comic mode […]' (Cosslett 63), it could contribute to the writer's agenda of bringing attention to the ill-treatment of animals. 'The only fantastic element in [this] is the ability of the animal narrator to speak to the reader' (63). A close relation to the animal autobiography is the animal biography in which an author writes about the life of an animal without giving the animal the ability to recount its life. This is what Virginia Woolf does in *Flush* (1933) and, a more recent example, John Grogan in *Marley and Me* (2005).

5. It Narratives

For an anthropomorphic story to qualify as an it narrative, the animal should be both the narrator and the protagonist. Yet over time the genre has changed and now the stories that merely have an anthropomorphic animal character are considered it narratives as well. Although now conceptually similar to animal autobiography, the term "it narrative" pre-dates animal autobiographies, coming into fashion in mid 18th century. Yet both can allow the writer, and the reader, to observe humans and society in a way that does not include the moral standpoint of a human character. An example of an it narrative is *The History of Pompey the Little: Or, the Life and Adventures of A Lap-Dog*, written by Francis Coventry and published in 1751, which follows a lap-dog who describes and observes his life of moving from owner to owner. 'In the eighteenth century there was a particular vogue for such "it narratives" […]' as the 'popularity of pet-keeping [was] then increasing' (Rudd 248).

1.2 Anthropomorphic Fiction: Reception and Production

Naming animals and giving them human features can help readers understand them; as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests in *Totemism*, they are 'good to think [with]' (Lévi-Strauss 89). This could be why anthropomorphic literature has always found a readership, even though today the reception of anthropomorphic literature 'ranges from the delight and fascination of many readers to the critics' disdain […]' (Ittner 2).

Children are known to love games of make-believe and their imagination is much less restricted than that of an adults. The border between themselves and other species is blurred in their imagination, so it is only logical that animal literature is popular among children. '[…] the role of animals is especially prominent in children's literature' (Smith)

since children share a fascination of the interspecies boundaries which provide them 'the pleasure of the *as if* ' (Boyd 225). Hence, anthropomorphism is used by many authors 'as a means to illustrate the magic of childhood, by having inanimate but beloved objects owned by children come to life [...]' (Carswell). As animals are mostly appealing to children, who, in turn, are curious about them, the 'lists of best-selling children's books can easily be dominated by animal stories, indicating that many children prefer books with non-human characters' (*qtd. in* Dunn 3).

For children, anthropomorphism could serve as perhaps their very first education about ethics and society, amiably hidden within the enthralling adventures of the anthropomorphic protagonist; in fact 'early stories of this type were often general life histories, commentary on human behaviour, or anti-cruelty tales' (Mierek 18). It has also been proposed that 'the intellectual and emotional distance, that the animals' role-playing allows children and their mentoring adults, grants space in which to become reflective and critical concerning life problems and life choices' (Burke and Copenhaver 212).

Yet anthropomorphising has also been considered by some as somewhat demeaning. Since the target readers of anthropomorphic literature are often children, they were at first thought of as on the same hierarchical level as the animals depicted in the books, and so considered below the notion of "man": 'Aristotle, for example, in the fourth century BCE, claimed that a child differed little from an animal' (Rudd 242). However, this is a view that by now has evolved. It is clear that children and adults do not perceive anthropomorphic characters in literature the same way but 'for some reason, adults tend to confine themselves to tales of the everyday and consider animal tales to be strictly a part of a child's intellectual world' (Smith). This view places animals predominantly within the realm of children's literature. While some might 'see children as inferior, mentally "primitive," not yet fully humanized [...]' (*qtd. in* Smith), the novelist Ursula K. Le Guin,

in the 2004 May Hill Arbuthnot 'recognizes one of the deeper truths about children and their relation to animals – they have not yet learned that animals don't really speak or communicate, not because they are mentally inferior and underdeveloped, but because they still proudly display the empathetic connection with the animal world' (Smith).

When it comes to anthropomorphic stories and fiction, adult perception is different already because of their more developed view on life and everything around them. However, 'adults still retain the tendency to anthropomorphize. The only difference in this act of projecting human characteristics onto animals in adults is that their greater life experiences change the ideas they project' (Smith). Brian Boyd, whose scholarly interests include literature, evolution and cognition, and Jutta Ittner, whose comparative literature research includes the representation of animals in contemporary literature, both refer to the human fascination with animals. What could it be that gives animals in literature such popularity, even though anthropomorphism in adult fiction tends to be disdained and neglected by literary critics? The latter are not always able to agree as to 'what constitutes [such] a critical perspective and [...] that the literature articulating it is sparse and problematic' (Shapiro and Copeland 344). It is suggested that one reason for its popularity is that anthropomorphic characters 'grant insights not so much into animalness as into the human condition', so anthropomorphic literature's popularity is based on 'a genuine interest in deepening our understanding of the Other' (Ittner 2). Ittner raises the question whether 'these fictional representations of the animal mind [are] just harmless testimonies to the curiosity and playfulness that the animals' Otherness evokes in us?' (2). She goes on to suggest that 'the human interest in animals can be fueled by a self-centered curiosity about how we might be perceived by the animal [...]' (2), as we ourselves actually 'construct [the anthropomorphic animal] within our own consciousness [...]' (3) while reading; hence it is driven by and reflects a 'narcissistic desire' (2) that could be found

behind the popularity of anthropomorphic literature. Humans 'tend to interpret their environment with the "models generated by their most pressing interests"' (*qtd. in* Westh 1) and without a doubt the human nature is most interested in itself. Overall, it seems that we can assume that there is 'a tendency to put human characteristics on animals – the only difference in children's literature is that they take it at face value while adults presumably do not' (Smith).

With a paradoxical duality, humans are simultaneously a part of and separate from the animal world, being both like animals and unlike them. This duality fascinates people and thus is something that anthropomorphism can take advantage of. As animal protagonists are more open to interpretation than human characters, a reader can interpret and construct much from the fictional character's ability to talk, think and act. Ittner suggests that two types of anthropomorphism have emerged – 'a traditional anthropomorphic view where the animal is [...] linked to human consciousness and deprived of its own agency [and] a new anthropomorphism that views the animal as a separate and unknowable entity' (Ittner 2). Humanizing animals by giving them language can make them easier to read and identify with, it is how we inevitably 'project ourselves onto the neutral figures' (Boyd 237). As we are thinking about an animal, we are constructing it 'within our own consciousness and therefore what is reflected back to us is our own existence [...]' (Ittner 2) and so it is in fact impossible to gain access to the animal's perspective. Ittner's so-called new anthropomorphism takes this into consideration 'and integrates it into its inquiry on animal alterity' (2). Readers and writers alike anthropomorphise animals to 'symbolize, dramatize, and illuminate aspects of their own experience and fantasies' (*qtd. in* Ward 23) while at the same time helping them to satisfy their need of interspecies interaction.

But what does it mean as a writer to produce animal protagonists? Anthropomorphism is a powerful literary device that an author can use to explore truths about humans and human society through the creative use of animal characters. In creating anthropomorphic characters the writer attempts to build the images for readers by imagining and filling in the thoughts and emotions and sometimes even the voice and speech of the anthropomorphic character. Animal characters are the construction of the writer who voices the animals and gives them thoughts; they are therefore the product of human thoughts and concerns, making them a 'narrative construct' (Ward 4). This view allowed Ittner to coin the term 'canine construct' (Ittner 3) in her thorough analysis of the treatment of anthropomorphic dogs in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* and Paul Auster's *Timbuktu*; similarly, the notion of an "equine construct" will be applied to the analysis of the anthropomorphic horses in this thesis.

A further question is whether anthropomorphic fiction is purely for entertainment or more of a means of projecting the views or agenda of the writer who imagines and constructs the perspective of the animal. Some believe that anthropomorphism can be used in literature to subtly convey political agendas or social criticism. Rudd writes about this in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, using the example of *Black Beauty*, saying that 'Sewell attacks the then-current cruel treatment of horses, especially the use of the bearing rein,' (Rudd 244); others have claimed that Sewell depicted slavery in her novel. Since anthropomorphism can be read as something rather narcissistic in its projection of human characteristics and values onto animals, such openness of interpretation can also be exploited. This raises the question whether such fascination with animals (anthropomorphic and not) in literature serves the sole purpose of entertaining a target group of readers by being able to evoke empathy or is there perhaps a deeper implication to it.

CHAPTER 2: ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN ANNA SEWELL'S *BLACK BEAUTY* AND MICHAEL MORPURGO'S *WAR HORSE*

The aim of this analysis is to explore the similarities and differences between the equine constructs in the two novels. *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* were chosen because both are written by English writers but over a century apart – the former in the 19th-century Victorian era and the latter a contemporary work of the 20th century; hence, the social and literary contexts are different.

Black Beauty is a novel that follows the protagonist of the same name throughout his life as he changes masters and stables in England. Black Beauty is a well-bred horse meant to serve wealthy people but during the course of his life he has to do the difficult jobs of a cab horse and a job horse that people could rent. He is handled by some people who are considerate and kind, but also by others who are cruel and ignorant. He ends his story living in a good stable and working for kind people. The protagonist narrates his own observations and experiences, making him a first-person narrator.

War Horse is a novel similar to *Black Beauty* in that it too depicts the course of the protagonist's – Joey's – life from his first vivid memory of a horse sale to retirement after the end of World War I. Joey, the thoroughbred horse, has different obligations throughout his life from being a farm horse and the mount of a Captain to pulling the infirmary cart and the heavy artillery, all the while travelling from England to France to Germany and back to England. The plot of the novel exposes kindness, cruelty, injury and loss – all at the hands of men, both soldiers and simple farmers. The main human protagonist in *War Horse* is Joey's first owner Albert, a farm boy, who is opposed to his father's selling of the

horse for war use and promises Joey that he will find him later, which he does. *War Horse* also uses first-person narration.

2.1 The Equine Construct: Among Horses

Both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* have equine protagonists, Beauty and Joey respectively (although Beauty has several names during the course of his life). Both of the books can also be categorised as it narratives since the main character horses in them are protagonists as well as narrators. As anthropomorphic characters the protagonists in both of the books have the ability to recount their life. In the book bearing his name, Beauty has detailed long-term memory of places he has seen as a foal and the horses and people he has met. He remembers things he learned or was told at an early age but such lessons did not come from humans but mainly from his mother, who taught him how to behave in the sense of what was expected by humans of that time and what not to do to humans. This can be seen when Beauty's mother Duchess tells him how to behave while at the same time warning him about different types of men who might ill-treat horses.

> […] there are a great many kinds of men; there are good and thoughtful men like our master […]; and there are bad, cruel men, who never ought to have a horse or dog to call their own. Besides, there are a great many foolish men, vain, ignorant, and careless, who never trouble themselves to think; these spoil more horses than all, just for want of sense; they don't mean it, but they do it for all that. (ch. 2)

Behaving and knowing how to behave was extremely relevant in Victorian times, with the prevalent notion of the importance of morality and social decorum. This is not only advice to the young foal but also social comment on types of behaviour that were disapproved of in Victorian society.

One of the most typical features of anthropomorphic fiction in *Black Beauty* is the horses' ability to talk to other horses and understand each other – the horses are depicted as talking to each other, rather than neighing or simply nickering as is the case in *War Horse*. One such encounter is depicted in Beauty's new home at Squire Gordon's, where his new stable mates – a fat gray pony and a tall chestnut mare – start talking to him, the mare blaming him for turning her out of her nice big box: 'So it is you who have turned me out of my box; it is a very strange thing for a colt like you to come and turn a lady out of her own home.' (ch.4) The use of the word "lady" here seems to refer to the values of Victorian society with its obvious hint that there are correct ways to treat a lady. Also, when Beauty talks of other horses at Squire Gordon's, he speaks of a roan cob who he 'sometimes has a little chat in the paddock' with, but who he, of course, 'could not be so intimate with [...] as with Ginger, who stood in the same stable' (ch. 5). Again, although it is the voice of the horse, this seems to reflect Victorian conventions and the need for members of society to be properly introduced before they could mix in one another's circles.

A further example is that of Merrylegs, who is also a close companion to Beauty, though never referred to as a friend; his explanation to Beauty about why Ginger is so ill-tempered reflects a human voice and opinion on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour: '[...] she says no one was ever kind to her, and why should she not bite? Of course, it is a very bad habit; but I am sure, if all she says be true, she must have been very ill-used before she came here.' (ch. 4). The human voice can be heard in 'if all she says be true', since there is no evidence to suggest that animals have any awareness of truth or lies; at the same time, it functions as a reminder to the reader that it is supposedly the horse's view. However, it can certainly be assumed that it is the author who believes that ill-use breeds bad behaviour.

Likewise, when Ginger speaks of her life and her temper she recalls a man saying that '[…] a bad-tempered man will never make a good-tempered horse' (ch. 7). This is a clear example of human attributes being applied to both man and horse – both may be good- or bad-tempered, but it is the man who has the influence. This also reflects the accepted Victorian view of man as being above animals and governing over them.

Beauty's understanding of human speech and thinking is made clear when two men are talking about a horse that looked exactly like Beauty and was a foal of Duchess (Beauty's mother). In fact, Beauty seems to understand the notions of kinship and family, which are human concepts that have evolved as society has developed and which distinguish human relations from animal relations, such as those between a mare and her foal: 'I had never heard that before; and so poor Rob Roy who was killed at that hunt was my brother! I did not wonder that my mother was so troubled.' (ch. 5) The words "brother" and "mother" refer to relations that are characteristic of human society. In the animal world, foals are usually weaned from mares at the age of six months and a little later the mare reveals no recognition of close relations with the foal.

Horses in *War Horse* are presented as somewhat more recognisably "horse-like" in their mode of interaction; their responses in different situations are revealed through their body language, and neighing and nickering rather than talking, which does not mean that no anthropomorphism is present: 'As we walked forward I glanced up at him and caught his eye. He seemed to acknowledge it briefly.' (ch. 5). It is not said how a horse could or would acknowledge another horse's glimpse, so it cannot be characterised as a horse's natural behaviour. Such acknowledging is characteristic of human social behaviour, however, which seems to be projected onto horses in this case.

Another anthropomorphic characteristic can be seen in *War Horse* when Topthorn, whom Joey thought of as his best friend and companion, died in the war; Joey did not leave

his side even though missiles were being fired all around them, because any fear he 'might have had was overwhelmed by a powerful sense of sadness and love that compelled [him] to stay' (ch. 15) with the corpse for as long as he could. While zoologists and animal studies scholars claim that some form of mourning appears to be evident in horses, they are still prey and instinctively do everything they can to stay alive themselves. Furthermore, when Joey is later escaping from gun fire after having injured his front leg, he thought of Topthorn and 'longed only to be with [him] again', thinking that 'he would know which way to go' (ch. 15). This suggests that the horse has an understanding of the concept of friendship and that his memory functions similarly to human memory. A similar instance can be seen when a French farm-girl finds Joey more suitable for riding than Topthorn, since the latter was too big in size, which prompts Joey to describe their relationship in human terms: 'But between Topthorn and me there was never any jealousy and he was quite content […]'. (ch. 11). Such a use of anthropomorphism brings something humane and human-like to the fictional characters of the equine biography, thereby possibly making the adventures and misfortunes of the characters more directly accessible to readers.

Sewell goes into detailed description of some of the common practices with carriage horses in her day. She skillfully does this from the perspective of the horse who is forced by humans to endure everything that the latter do. She describes how fashion at that time called for horses' tails to be docked, and the pain that this procedure caused the animal, since it was done without medication. For example, an old horse, Sir Oliver, describes to Beauty and Ginger why his tail is so short, when Beauty asks what kind of accident caused him to lose part of his tail.

> […] it was no accident! it was a cruel, shameful, cold-blooded act! When I was young I was taken to a place where these cruel things were done; I was tied up, and made fast so that I could not stir, and then they came and cut off my long and beautiful tail,

> through the flesh and bone, and took it away. […] but it was not only the pain, though that was terrible and lasted a long time; it was not only the indignity of having my best ornament taken from me, though that was bad; but it was this, how could I ever brush the flies off my sides and my hind legs any more? (ch. 10)

It must be said that no research has established whether horses feel shame or indignity – this seems to be a socialised human response. "My best ornament" is also spoken from the human point of view and seems to express the social concern with appearance and vanity. The reference to the practical physical function of the tail, which is what matters to the horse, only comes second.

Sewell also introduces into her narrative the problem caused by the practice of using blinkers on a horse's bridles to partially block the animal's vision.

> When our master's carriage was overturned [...], it was said that if the lamp on the left side had not gone out, John would have seen the great hole that the road-makers had left; [...] but if old Colin had not had blinkers on he would have seen it, lamp or no lamp [...]. As it was, he was very much hurt, the carriage was broken [...]. (ch.10).

Yet blinkers are used on carriage horses to this day and not seen as unnecessary sensory handicaps for horses. In fact, recent studies have concluded that reducing sensory input for horses in stressful situations is actually the humane thing to do. However, Sewell's anthropomorphising of horses takes the typical perspective of her day: humans who imagine themselves working in the streets with their vision restricted would naturally be alarmed. Nobody could be expected to carry out their work safely nor efficiently under such circumstances.

Yet perhaps the most harrowing, fashion-inflicted wrongdoing of the time and in the mind of Sewell was the bearing rein, which forced the horse to hold his head up and his neck arched in an unnatural position that prevented the horse from leaning forward to pull the carriage.

> Day by day, hole by hole, our bearing reins were shortened, and instead of looking forward with pleasure to having my harness put on, as I used to, I began to dread it. [...] for several days there was no more shortening, and I determined to make the best of it and do my duty, though it was now a constant harass instead of a pleasure [...]; (ch. 22).

The impact of the bearing rein made a horse's life and work more difficult and was, over time, crippling to them. Sewell's message is that it is one thing to use an animal, but an entirely other thing to abuse it merely for reasons of style.

Beauty is also heard speaking about the evils of alcohol. An example of which can be seen when Reuben Smith, the man who was left in charge of the stables at Earlshall Park, got drunk one night and did not notice anything wrong with Beauty while riding him, or anything wrong in his own actions for that matter:

> He spoke in a very loud, offhand way, and I thought it very unlike him not to see about the shoe, as he was generally wonderfully particular about loose nails in our shoes. […] He seemed in a very bad temper, and abused the hostler, though I could not tell what for. […], and almost before he was out of the town he began to gallop, frequently giving me a sharp cut with his whip, though I was going at full speed. […] If Smith had been in his right senses he would have been sensible of something wrong in my pace, but he was too drunk to notice. (ch. 25)

Sewell moralises about the evils of alcohol throughout the book. Never do the intoxicated people in her novel behave properly or do right concerning horse care.

In *Black Beauty*, Sewell creates a horse protagonist and narrator who goes through difficult times in his life, and an array of horse characters with whom he talks about treatment and mistreatment at the hands of human owners and carers. Though the attempt seems to be to give the perspective of the horse, Sewell's message is clear and transparent, as the horse is so much humanised, turned into a mouthpiece for her views, a mask she holds up which all can see. Evidence of this might be the fact that *Black Beauty* was

immediately acclaimed and spawned outrage that resulted in a movement to ban the bearing rein.

It has been thought by critics and readers alike that Sewell depicted slavery and misogyny in her novel, the examples of which could be inferred from the protagonist's names (Black Beauty and Darkie), and from the facts that he is born on a plantation, separated from his family, and eventually broken in. Other examples that support this view could be the hunt scene in which the hunted hares could be seen as fugitive slaves, and then the early treatment of Ginger the mare, when several men tried to brutally put a halter on her head, which bears some similarity to a gang rape. In addition to that, there are instances in the book that children of the time could also easily relate to, for example, children from poor families were "broken in", as were horses, and the work these children had to do was often as straining for them as pulling cabs was for horses.

Michael Morpurgo, on the other hand, does not claim to have had any explicit agenda in mind in the writing of *War Horse* nor has anybody engrafted an agenda onto it. The single clear message that comes across in the novel is that it is important to remember all those who are affected by war – the civilians, the soldiers who returned, those who did not, and even the animals used in war, who had no understanding of it and who during the course of the war changed sides several times. The novel, in addition to being an anti-war message, reflects on the need to remember. The author himself has reasoned the use of anthropomorphism in his novel, saying that '*War Horse* works because it is about things so many people long for: peace and reconciliation, and living in hope through the ghastliness of war. People want to believe the stories they love, [...]' (The Scotsman).

The horses in *War Horse* have been kept "horse-like" and have only been given some human features, such as long-term memory, seeming to have free will and understanding human communication. For example, when Joey suddenly meets Albert

again during the war, he recognises the boy's voice almost immediately even after all the time they had been apart: 'A reply that sent a sudden shiver of recognition through me. Quite where I had heard the voice before I did not know. I knew only that those two words sent a tremor of joy and hope and expectation through my body and warmed me from the inside out.' (ch. 17). Morpurgo then anthropomorphises Joey even further so that he seems to have the very human capability of recognising and distinguishing human features: '[...] and I tried all the while to see his face better. But he kept just that much ahead of me so that all I could see was a neatly shaven neck and a pair of pink ears.' (ch. 17). No proof has been produced that this is something that a horse is really capable of, so it appears to be another instance of the character being used to express human voice. Similarly, when Joey was taken to war and Albert reluctantly said good-bye to him, the horse noted that '[Albert] was trying to smile but could not' (ch. 4). This supports the idea that Joey has a proper understanding of human actions and reactions; this is clearly a human characteristic and capability attributed to a horse.

2.2 The Equine Construct: Between Horse and Human

Both Joey and Beauty recall human exchanges and dialogues, which are presented in quotation marks in the texts, making it seem as if the horses understand what is being communicated in human speech.

In *War Horse*, Joey seems to understand everything that his human friend Albert tells him, sometimes even everyday small talk, for example, when Albert told Joey and the farm's mare Zoey about his job as a bell ringer in the village church: 'My Albert was proud of his bell-ringing prowess and as Zoey and I stood head to tail in the darkening stable, […] we knew he had every right to be proud.' (ch. 2). The use of the possessive

'my' here seems to reflect Joey's view of their bond of friendship, as it inverts the usual man owning horse hierarchy. And, 'we knew' in the next line also blurs the boundaries of the usual animal-human relationships by showing the horses as thinking creatures.

Another instance of understanding his master beyond what is considered possible in the real, non-fictional world can be seen when Albert teaches Joey to respond to a certain kind of whistle, which Joey does, 'not out of obedience but because [he] always wanted to be with him' (ch. 2). This seems to be a hint of some notion of free will given to the fictional protagonist.

Beauty can understand humans and their conversations, but not always everything that humans do – something "horse-like" is maintained in the book by not letting the horses know everything, by giving them only a vague or no understanding of some things that people do, for example, hunting with horses and dogs:

> [...] though I am an old horse, and have seen and heard a great deal, I never yet could make out why men are so fond of this sport; they often hurt themselves, often spoil good horses, and tear up the fields, and all for a hare or a fox, or a stag, that they could get more easily some other way; but we are only horses, and don't know. (ch. 2).

This effect is achieved by using the first-person narrator type – Beauty is not an omniscient narrator. This limitation on the horse narrator could serve the purpose of keeping the horse credible as an animal in the eyes of the reader.

In *Black Beauty* humans cannot understand communication between horses, as can be seen when Beauty's master comes to Beauty prior to selling him to Squire Gordon: Beauty 'could not say "good-by [sic]", so [he] put [his] nose into his hand […]' (ch. 4). Thus it can be concluded that the horses in the book do not speak in the same way as humans, among themselves or with their owners, but still have their own means of interacting. This nuzzling of the human hand with the nose behaviour is typical of many animals, but in this case the horse protagonist is portrayed as perceiving his inability

(something he 'could not' do), specifically his lack of human speech. Overall, this depicts the animal as somehow inferior to its master, which is partly a religious view typical of the Victorian era.

Similarly, humans cannot understand horses more than is natural in *War Horse*. Joey, although seen as an outstanding, one-of-a-kind horse, cannot talk (just like all the other horses) and Albert wishes he could speak:

> Come on, you silly you, say something. That's the only thing I've got against you, Joey, you're the best listener I've ever known, but I never know what the divil you're thinking. You just blink your eyes and waggle those ears of yours from east to west and south to north. I wish you could talk, Joey, I really do. (ch. 19)

Albert's wish that Joey would blink or waggle his ears shows that he sees him as different from humans, but still as another 'thinking' creature, even though communication is limited by what the horse cannot do (his inability to talk). This is different from Sewell's depiction of Beauty as a creature that is also unable to talk but that is not viewed by his master as capable of thinking. In the case of Joey, the horse protagonist is presented as what Ittner refers to as an 'unknowable entity' (Ittner 2).

In *War Horse* Joey felt a clear affection for Albert. Later, when he was sold for war use, he got a new rider whom he disliked: 'Even the officers, I felt, went in trepidation of him; […] and I certainly felt for him a degree of respect […]'. (ch. 5). Feelings such as affection, trepidation and respect toward others are characteristic of humans, as is the ability to understand something from someone else's behaviour. These are examples of how Joey has been anthropomorphised in a way that makes him easier to relate to for the reader.

Both books also use anthropomorphic characters to speak of horse care of the time, however, in *Black* Beauty, even this seems to be given a somewhat dark undertone showing how this practice can be unpleasant for the horse.

> Every one may not know what breaking in is, therefore I will describe it. It means to teach a horse to wear a saddle and bridle, and to carry on his back a man, woman or child; to go just the way they wish, and to go quietly. […] He must never start at what he sees, nor speak to other horses, nor bite, nor kick, nor have any will of his own; but always do his master's will, even though he may be very tired or hungry; but worst of all is, when his harness is once on, he may neither jump for joy nor lie down for weariness. So you see this breaking in is a great thing. (ch. 3)

Even though the words are spoken by Black Beauty, the tone is instructive and seems to reflect the voice of Sewell and the Victorian notion of respect for authority, with an emphasis on obedience to one's master. Sewell conveys this with a hint of sarcasm, pointing out everything that horses are not expected to do while being ridden. Even though there is a mention of free will, it is negative in that one must not 'have any will of his own'; it is unlikely that this indicates Sewell's view that horses do have free will, for there are no other instances of this in the book. The whole process is given in detail, as are the descriptions of the equipment needed for riding a horse. This could serve as the first introduction a child gets to the use of bridles, saddles, and harnesses, without overwhelming the young mind with too much technical detail. Yet again, it has been given a sour taste in that it is apparently from the horse's perspective but suppresses any physical discomfort or feelings that the horse might feel. However, the reader is for a moment encouraged to believe that a horse might experience feelings of 'joy'.

The example of the introduction of the bit is another case of cruelty presented as if from the horse's perspective – from the horse's mouth:

> Those who have never had a bit in their mouths cannot think how bad it feels; a great piece of cold hard steel as thick as a man's finger to be pushed into one's mouth, between one's teeth, and over one's tongue, with the ends coming out at the corner of your mouth, and held fast there by straps over your head, under your throat, round your nose,

> and under your chin; so that no way in the world can you get rid of the nasty hard thing; it is very bad! yes, very bad! at least I thought so; […] (ch. 3)

The author's attempt to bring the unpleasantness of the experience closer to the reader can be seen in the gradual change in the possessive pronouns, which go from the most distant 'those', who have never experienced it and who are unable to imagine the feeling, to the impersonal 'one'; then the reader is directly addressed as 'your' by the 'I' that is Beauty himself.

Yet a little later, when John prepared Beauty for riding he was very precise and considerate in his handling of the bridle: 'He was very particular in letting out and taking in the straps, to fit my head comfortably; then he brought a saddle, but it was not broad enough for my back; he saw it in a minute and went for another, which fitted nicely' (ch. 5). This casually shows readers that a horse should be saddled and fitted with a bridle with care, all the while using an anthropomorphic protagonist, thus giving weight to the instructions. Sewell's intention seems to be that no one would doubt a horse when it comes to understanding equine life, if their consciousness could be accessed – and that is what she is constructing in her literary, imagined horse perspective, which at the same time demands the suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader.

Even though *War Horse* also describes how Albert started to ride Joey, it is with much less emphasis on the breaking in process and keeps the atmosphere lighter, presumably because the focus of the book is something else – the even more grim topic of war.

> Gradually during that last summer on the farm, so gradually that I had hardly noticed it, Albert had begun riding me out over the farm to check the sheep. […] I do not even remember the first time he put a saddle on me, but at some time he must have done so for by the time war was declared that summer Albert was riding me out to the sheep each morning and almost every evening after his work. (ch. 3)

This raises the question of animal memory. Since animal science claims that animals do not have the same type of memory as humans do – they only have learnt behaviour – this episode carries a great deal of human voice.

There is also an expression of a human voice in Joey's description of his stall:

> The first stall was a large square one, shut in behind with a wooden gate; the others were common stalls, good stalls, but not nearly so large; it had a low rack for hay and a low manger for corn; it was called a loose box, because the horse that was put into it was not tied up, but left loose, to do as he liked. It is a great thing to have a loose box. (ch. 4)

The phrase 'it was called' shows the horse's understanding of human language and also makes clear that the horse sees himself as different from, or other than, his human masters. 'It is a great thing to have a loose box' is here a logical human conclusion. It is a conclusion of the author about what horses prefer, and although it is a proper and a logical one, it is not something that a horse could have made clear to humans.

Conclusion

The present research has established that the traditional aim of using anthropomorphism in literature moves between engaging different readerships and conveying a message or reflecting an agenda of the author. It is used to attribute human emotions or behaviour, or both, to something that is non-human. Since humans can only see the world from their perspective as socialised individuals, it is easy for them to relate to something that possesses recognisable human traits. Anthropomorphism seems to invite readers to change places with a non-human protagonist. The reasons for using this device in literature range from serving to teach moral lessons to exploring otherness.

In *Black Beauty* horses reveal an understanding of human speech and can speak to each other, though not to humans. This makes them quite contradictory characters, as they are defined by a human attribute (recognisably human speech) and by their lack of it (the inability to speak to humans). They also reveal an awareness of human – specifically Victorian – values, conventions and views, and they voice concern at human misconduct: excessive use of alcohol, lack of control of emotions, and cruelty to others. This concern sometimes extends to moralising (e.g. when Sewell speaks of fox hunting or the use of blinkers on horses) rather than functioning as an integral part of either the characterisation of the horse protagonist or the plot of the novel. At one point, the horse-protagonist even seems to address the reader directly, when describing to a 'you' – which must be the reader, since this is not part of a dialogue with another horse – the process of breaking in. Horses in *Black Beauty* appear to talk about the ill-treatment of animals at the hands of humans, but this is contradicted by the fact that they are depicted as not being thinking creatures. This means that the reader encounters a literary construct, an imagined horse created by the author and whose perspective is heard by the adult reader who suspends

disbelief or the child reader who blurs the boundaries between the real world and the imaginary. This research has shown that this is an equine construct that remains knowable only in human terms.

In *War Horse* the human attributes the horse protagonist is given are an understanding of human speech and of human emotions, a human-like memory, the ability to use human logic, and a hint of free will. Although all of the horses are portrayed as horse-like in their behaviour (neighing, nickering, etc., rather than talking), they are also depicted as thinking, feeling creatures. The range of human behaviour and emotions they understand includes cruelty, friendship, grief, happiness, approval, etc. However, these emotions and behaviours are those experienced by humans in the same situations in which the horse protagonist finds himself – growing up, working life, going to war, losing a loved one. So it appears that the human emotions and behaviours which are part of the plot of the human story are transferred onto the horse or projected through the eyes and constructed voice of the horse. However, the equine construct in *War Horse* is different from that in *Black Beauty* in several ways. Firstly, although there is a clear message (an anti-war cry), the voice of the author is less intrusive. The message comes across in the emotions and thoughts that are attributed to the horse protagonist, which is always a functioning character in the plot of the story; the equine construct never steps out of this role. Secondly, there is a hint of some degree of free will (e.g. the horse responds to his master's whistle out of a desire for companionship rather than obedience), but this is also presented in terms of human emotion and human consciousness rather than offering a view of the horse as other.

On a scale of conveying a message, entertaining the reader, or exploring the other, *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* are rather at opposite ends. While *Black Beauty* seems to have been written with a clear message in the mind of the author, *War Horse* is more of an

attempt to offer a fresh look at a human situation (the horror of war) – the supposedly horse perspective is a new angle on a familiar subject. Both novels still meet in the middle, since both are also works of entertainment.

Further research could be conducted on anthropomorphic horses in other works of fiction, using the same notion of equine construct. Also, the notion of an animal construct could be applied to other animal protagonists in other works of fiction in order to explore to what extent it is possible to create an animal protagonist that would illustrate Ittner's definition of new anthropomorphism.

The present paper can be used as supplementary material in English literature classes, especially those concentrating on anthropomorphic literature and anthropomorphism as a literary device with identifiable functions and uses.

Annotation

Käesolev bakalaureusetöö „Antropomorfism Anna Sewell'i teoses „Must iludus“ ning Michael Morpurgo teoses „Sõjaratsu““ keskendub antropomorfismile kirjanduses. Täpsemalt on töös analüüsitud Anna Sewell'i novelli „Must iludus“ ja Michael Morpurgo novelli „Sõjaratsu“. Töö eesmärgiks on kindlaks määrata, mis eermärgil kasutavad autorid antropomorfismi kui kirjanduslikku kujundit nendes kahes teoses ja uurida, kuidas nimetatud kirjanduslik kujund aitab köita teatud lugejaskonda ja/või väljendada – otseselt või kaudselt – autori seisukohti. Kasutatud on kirjaldav-analüütilist ja võrdlevat meetodit.

Töö koosneb kahest peatükist, millest esimene on teoreetiline ja annab ülevaate eelpool mainitud kirjandusliku kujundi kasutamisviisidest ja kategooriatest ning uurib, kuidas see köidab lugejaskonda ning edastab autorite seisukohti. Teine peatükk on võrdlev-analüütiline ning keskendub Sewell'i ja Morpurgo teostes kirjanduslike antropomorfiliste hobuste kasutusvõimaluste ja otstarvete analüüsimisele. Uurimuse käigus selgus, et antropomorfism köidab erinevaid lugejaskondi, kasutades ära inimeste uudishimu loomaliikide ja inimliigi kohta. Ühtlasi selgus, et antropomorfistlik kirjandus on alati kirjutatud autori vaatenurgast, misläbi on tegu inimmõtete ja –murede saadusega.

Works Cited

Boyd, Brian. "Tails Within Tales." *Knowing Animals*. Ed. Laurence Simmons and Philip Armstrong. Leiden: Brill, 2007. 217-243. May 2014. Print.

Burke, Carolyn L. and Joby G. Copenhaver. "Animals as People in Children's Literature." *Language Arts* January 2004: 205-213. Print

Carswell, Beth. *Abe Books*. n.d. Web. 15 April 2014. <http://www.abebooks.com/books/object-animal-come-alive-life/it-narratives-anthropomorphism.shtml>.

Cosslett, Tess. *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006. Print.

Dunn, Elizabeth A. "Talking Animals: A Literature Review of Anthropomorphism in Children's Books." University of North Carolina, May 2011. MS thesis. April 2014. Print.

Hastings, Max. *DailyMail Online*. 16 January 2012. Web. 24 April 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2087132/War-Horse-review-It-historically-questionable-right-weep-over.html>.

Hollis, Christopher. "Animal Farm Is a Successful Animal Fable." *Readings on Animal Farm*. Ed. Terry O'Neill. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. 43-49. May 2014. Print.

Ittner, Jutta. "Part Spaniel, Part Canine Puzzle: Anthropomorphism in Woolf's Flush and Auster's Timbuktu." *Mosaic* 39.4 (2006): n. pag. January 2015. Print.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Totemism*. Pontypool: The Merlin Press, 1964. Document. 7 January 2015. <https://archive.org/details/Ebooksclub.orgTotemism>. Print.

Lister, Sophie. *Damaris*. 2012. Web. April 2014. <http://www.damaris.org/content/culturewatchguides/content.php?type=5&id=1336>.

Literary Devices. *Literary Devices*. n.d. Web. 15 April 2014. <http://literarydevices.net/anthropomorphism/>.

Mierek, Joanne. "Interrelating with Animals: Nonhuman Selves in the Literary Imagination." Urbana-Champaign, 2010. Diss. April 2014. Print.

Morpurgo, Michael. *War Horse*. London, 2010. EPUB file. 2014.

Rudd, David. "Animal and object stories." *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*. Ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel. New York: Cambridge UP, 2010. 242-257. Print.

Sewell, Anna. *Black Beauty*. Prods. A. Light, Linda Bowser and David Widger. 16 January 2006. EPUB file. 2014.

Shapiro, Kenneth and Marion W. Copeland. "Toward a Critical Theory of Animal Issues in Fiction." *Society & Animals* 2005: 343-346. Print.

Smith, Nicole. *Article Myriad*. 6 December 2011. Web. 16 April 2014. <http://www.articlemyriad.com/anthropomorphism-literature-life-pi/>.

The Scotsman. "War Horse author Michael Morpurgo on his influences." *The Scotsman* 6 January 2014. 13 March 2015. <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/war-horse-author-michael-morpurgo-on-his-influences-1-3257381>.

Ward, Peter. “Animals in the Fiction of John Irving and Haruki Murakami.” Christchurch, 2012. May 2014. Print.

Westh, Peter. “Anthropomorphism in God concepts: The role of narrative.” *Origins of Religion, Cognition and Culture*. Ed. Armin W. Geertz. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2013. 396-414. Print.