

An Ecocritical Approach to Fyodor Abramov's Story "What Do the Horses Cry About"

Badegül Can Emir* 

Karadeniz Teknik University, Trabzon, Turkiye

*Corresponding author: canbadegul@gmail.com

Abstract

Human's destructive behaviors toward the environment also harm animals. Fyodor Abramov's story, "What Do The Horses Cry About". focuses on this issue. While this story reflects the world through the eyes of an animal, it reveals people's changing behaviors towards animals. The study tries to read the changing attitude of man toward nature in the modern age on the axis of Fyodor Abramov's story called "What Do The Horses Cry About". On the other hand, it tries to understand how the relationship between the human and other living things has penetrated the fiction of the story. It shall be emphasized that transformation of nature by humans according to their wishes threatens the existence of the whole planet; and for a habitable world separation between human and non-human must be ended. Thus, the study aims to direct people to ecocriticism and contribute to growing more environmentally conscious individuals for a planet where ecological balance prevails. The first condition of a sustainable environment is human education. The people we will raise will shape the environment in which we will live in the future.

Keywords: Ecological Balance, Ecocriticism, Animal ecology, Russian Literature, Fyodor Abramov

Introduction

“Loving nature means loving the motherland”

(Любить природу – значит любить Родину)

M. Prishvin

The modernization and change in man's nature-integrated life have caused irreversible problems in nature. All kinds of man-made hazards, such as the

destruction of forests and extinction animal species, air, water, and environmental pollution caused by humans in nature, destabilize the ecological system and eventually harm humans as a part of the system (Özyön, 2019: p. 108). At this stage, under the influence of human activity–nature turns into a supreme force threatening the biological basis of human life (Girusov, 2009: p. 76). For this reason, it is crucial for people to choose sociality rather than individuality in terms of the environment. In his article named “Ecological Culture as a Supreme Form of Humanism (Экологическая культура как высшая форма гуманизма),” E. V. Girusov (2009: p. 79) mentions that man faces with a choice at this point. Man will either maintain his dominant approach in his interaction with nature and bring about the end of the planet or radically change his strategy and make the planet habitable. In other words, people should give up arrogance and keep their self-awareness high and be open to being educated about nature. All the elements that make up the ecological system—air, water, soil, and other living and non-living things—form a balanced integrity, and one is not superior to the other. In this balance—expressed by Barry Commoner (1972: p. 19) as one of the four fundamental laws of ecology—everything is connected with everything! There is only one ecosphere for all living organisms, and it affects everything that affects each other that interacts with another one. Therefore, the ecological balance established by the relations of the earth's inhabitants in this balance is sensitive. Environmental issues becoming visible have revealed discussions about the relationships of all living things that share the planet. One of the discussion topics is the human-animal relationship based on their biological commonality. Man is different from others in nature but not superior. According to Aristotle, man is an animal that nature gives a chance to think and speak. Humans' speaking and thinking skills make them different from other living things. Arda Arıkan (2011: p. 43-44) states that the human body is organically no different from the animal body and has no superior biological features. Anna Barç (2017), on the other hand, expresses this new process, where the human-animal relationship is in the discussion, with the following words: “In this new setting, the animal has been rediscovered as a character with a different cognitive model, with a

mediating function in the perception of the world beyond human experience as a missing link between man and nature.” Karolina Gansovskaya (2019) mentions that humans would not be aware of their role in the world without animals because self-identification through competition is an integral part of human existence. Mihail Epšteyn (1990: p. 88) approaches the interaction with nature through animals and says, “Animal images in literature are a kind of mirror of humanist self-awareness. Just as the self-determination of individuals is impossible without a relationship with another person, the self-determination of the human race is impossible without a relationship with animals.” Therefore, in this new environment that destroys the anthropocentric model, animals come to the fore as a missing link between humans and nature and function as a mediator in the perception of the world beyond human experience (Barç, 2017).

Literature tries to render people environmentally aware by discussing environmental problems. No matter how alien the connotations of nature in modern culture may be, literature opens up a world that combines perspectives beyond human understanding of reality, various forms of perception, and other forms of being (Barç, 2017). In a way, writers look for practical, ethical, and moral possibilities to solve ecological problems in ecological texts. Thus, ecology, the branch of science that examines the relationships of all kinds of flora and fauna with each other and with their physical habitats, integrates with literature (Yıldırım, 2021: p. 1). Since the 1970s, ecocriticism emerging from combining ecology and literary criticism has examined the relationship between literature and the environment. Therefore, it is necessary to approach the texts as planet-centered rather than human-centered. Every living being in nature is significant in the continuity of life. The neglected and exploited nature may be irreversible. Therefore, ecocriticism seeks to change the perception of the environment by drawing attention to the harm done to nature and all living things. Ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between science, art, and literature in a theoretical dimension, reveals the changing perception of nature by interpreting literary works and observing all living things and their problems in nature. On the basis of environmental problems lies the changing perception of nature with

modernization and the deteriorated ecological balance (Kuru, 2022: p. 44). With the changing ecological balance and nature perception, animals are harmed. In recent years, physical and psychological violence against animals has increased. The theory of ecocriticism, which tries to draw attention to the way of thinking towards living things, tries to be the voice of these creatures by examining the negative behaviors against them under the name of animal ecology, and awareness is created by working on animals in various branches of art (Kuru, 2022: p. 49). Animal studies in ecocriticism tries to improve people's approaches to animals by criticizing changing behavior and perceptions towards animals and nature over time. In the modern world, animals are under the threat of extinction because they are ousted from their habitats by human selfishness and aggression (Kuru, 2022: p. 45). Human-animal studies also focus on this threatening process on animals and cover many topics, such as exploiting animals in the health, clothing, and entertainment industries or utilizing them as toys. Literary works draw attention to relatively broad issues and problems related to animals and their role in the natural world and human life.

The current study, which focuses on demonstrating environmental problems by examining animal descriptions in literary works, aims to draw attention to the educational aspect of ecocriticism, reveal the appearance of ecocriticism in Russian literature, exhibit the change from past to present, and make suggestions for humans' future.

Man and Animal in Ecocriticism

Ecological balance is essential for all living things on the planet. Ecocriticism, which consists of three phases¹, tries to remind all people who forget that they are a part of the ecological whole balanced integrity of their place in the system. In the third stage of ecocriticism, people's destructive behavior towards the environment is particularly common. Based on the research, one can say that the living species most affected by the blows of nature are animals and plants (Kuru, 2022: p. 47).

Between humans and animals, there is a difference of which one pole was

determined by Plato and the other by Aristotle. According to Plato, the hierarchy of beings and the secondary position of the animal are eternal; human is different by nature. According to Aristotle, man recognizes himself as an animal but is superior to them and controls them with the help of knowledge of law (Kuchinov, 2019: p. 34). As a matter of fact, the animal problem stemmed from humans' superiority complex accepted in religion and philosophy. This problem arose from the lack of empathy towards the animal (Kuchinov, 2019: p. 34). When we talk about animals, we always discuss the concepts of human and animal which are separate but at the same time inextricably linked together – the problem of the humankind's relationship to other animals and the humankind's relationship to itself as an animal species. Just as humans position themselves above other animals, so the concept of human is positioned above the concept of animal. There are several theories related to the reason why humans are so concerned about separating themselves from other animals and separating humanity from animality (Ford, 2016: p. 71). Over time, the attitude towards the animal started changing. An example of this change can be found in abolitionism which discussed the moral status of animals in the last quarter of 20th century. The abolitionist approach recommended ending the animals' property status and abandoning all animal use altogether (Olgun, 2020: pp. 3941-3942). One of the radical names of the proposal was Gary L. Francione. In Francione's three-pronged abolitionist approach—equal consideration of interests, removal of the property status of animals, and animal welfare reforms—mental development differences between the human and the animal can never be put forward as an excuse for ignoring the interests of animals (Olgun, 2020: pp. 3941). Therefore, the negative situations experienced by animals are also a result of human actions. For this reason, today, scientific disciplines focus on issues such as the global consequences of human activities, ecological issues, and the interaction between the planet's stakeholders. The human-animal relationship is also a popular topic in the scientific community.

In his article, "Human All Too Human: Animal Studies and the Humanities", Cary Wolfe (2009: p. 565) states that animal studies began in the 1970s as an animal rights

movement. The main philosophical works of this movement are Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (Gergöy, 2017: p. 14). Animal studies as a scientific direction emerged, especially after the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* book in 1975. *Animal Liberation: "A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals"*, has been dedicated to the relationship between humans and animals and the maltreatment on animals. *Animal Liberation* details what happens to animals in research laboratories, animal farms, and other animal-using industries (Gansovskaya, 2019). Singer's book, examining the concept of speciesism² in detail, proposing a new approach to the relationship between humans and animals, focusing on their situation in research laboratories, fur farms, and other animal-using industries, leads researchers to bring new methods and new perspectives on the cultural ecology problem in the field of scientific research (Gansovskaya, 2019: p.192). Thus, animal studies question the position of anthropocentrism, which claims that animals are radically different from humans. Animal studies seek to answer many questions about the human-animal relationship, such as "How can a person understand the emotions of other animals and find common ground with them." According to Berger (2022. p. 6), animals offer people a different friendship from any human interaction. The difference is that this friendship is presented in response to the loneliness of the human species. Other researchers express and detail the same idea: today, humans oppose nature, whereas a human can be defined through the natural world. However, we are trying to describe the natural world only through humans. In animal studies, the focus is on human-nonhuman relations. Animal studies reject anthropocentrism and insist that the world should strive for a green environment. The modern world has built an almost insurmountable border between humans and animals. This limit is evident not only in the constant urbanization of the environment but also in the non-existent human efforts to seek a common language with other animals on our planet (Gansovskaya, 2019). In terms of examining the animal problem from an aesthetic point of view, John Berger's article "Why Look at Animals" is remarkable. This work by the Booker Prize-winning British author argues that industrial capitalism has

radically changed human relations with the natural world. According to Berger, animals have been gradually disappearing over the years due to urbanization and other changes in the world (Berger, 2022: pp. 12-13). The solution to the problem is to eliminate the distinction between humans and non-humans and to be able to look at our environment from a planetary perspective.

Ecocriticism, aiming to eliminate the distinction between humans and non-humans, is based on the discovery of a vein called posthuman by the literature and continues to expand with animal rights theories that led to the rise of the movements in this direction, especially in the 80s (Tekin, 2018: p. 250). Animal studies have developed their network with many qualified publications after 2000. Matthew Calarco, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Val Plumwood are prominent theorists in this field. This field tries to break the hierarchical relationship between humans and animals through "animal rights" by offering alternatives to humanistic concepts—such as subjectivity, comprehension, and response—that distinguish humans from animals and demands a framework similar to human rights for animals (Gergöy, 2017: p. 15). Academic studies with an environment-oriented approach have affected the perspective of environmental efforts. The environmental criticism theory, which draws attention to the fact that not only humans but also other species live in the world, strikingly reveals the events experienced by animals. Texts include and represent these living things (Kuru, 2022: p. 53). Literary texts present animals through different methods, such as description, symbol, allegory, metaphor, etc., and display them in distinct forms. In narrative genres such as fairy tales and fables, in which animals appear as the story protagonist, animals appear anthropomorphically, with symbols or allegories that point to human types and characteristics. Animals increasingly appear in realistic literary texts, and some narratives are even dedicated to animals only (Tekin, 2018: p. 246). Namely, as Nuray Tekin states, from myths, rituals, oral stories, legends, and fairy tales to the romantic period when the tendency towards nature-culture interaction came to the fore, from the pastoral and nature poems to the modern fantastic or realistic narratives, almost all kinds of animal representations are encountered in the literature

(Tekin, 2018: p. 246). However, animal representations in literary texts increasingly point to a different message. According to Anna Barç, animals that once depicted human problems in fairy tales now talk about their own world–nature–perceived as the background in ecocriticism (Barç, 2017). This is why the concept of representation at the center of ecological interpretations emerges. Such collaboration between nature and culture can arise as a modern approach to the study of literary work: animals can also play the role of narrator and tell the reader about their world through the coexisting and ecocentric position of the author (Gansovskaya, 2019). Thus, the message is delivered to the relevant channels through fiction to change the current situation.

An Ecocritical Approach to F. Abramov's Story "What Do The Horses Cry About?"

Although ecocriticism in Russian literature appears to be a belated theory compared to the West, animal studies and animal representations in art have been accepted as one of literary themes. Especially animals have become the main literary object in Russian folklore and are included in the works of many great Russian writers from ancient times to the present day. A. Platonov's *The Pit* (Котлован), L. Leonov's *The Thief* (Вор), F. Abramov's *Wooden Horses* (Деревянные кони), V. V. Voynovich's *Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Soldier Ivan Chonkin* (Жизнь и необыкновенные приключения солдата Ивана Чонкина), Nikolay Leskov's *The Wild Beast* (Зверь), Boris Pilnyak's *A Dog's Life* (Собачья судьба), Belov's "Ordinary Work" (Привычное дело), Mikhail Bulgakov's "Heart of a Dog," etc., are among the valuable contributions of Russian literature to animal studies (Abdo, 2019: p. 245). Besides literary works, scientific studies also touch on the subject of animals: P. Belogurova's thesis, "Animalism as a Cultural and Artistic Phenomenon in Social Thought at the Beginning of the 19th-20th Centuries," (Анимализм как культурологический и художественный феномен в общественной мысли рубежа XIX—XX веков), N.Lihina's "Animalism Motif in Russian Literature"

(Бестиарный мотив в русской литературе 2011), etc., are examples of academic studies. The 20th century provides a rich context for studying the animal problem as a process in which a new human was created with the identity shaped by the first years of the Soviet Union and the climate of the war, the revolution and the following events. The researches challenging the traditional hierarchy and value systems provide flexible means of representing animal depictions and the concepts of identity, meaning and value; in this process, there is a particularly strong tendency to define dichotomies such as old/new, right/wrong based on these depictions. We see the concept of animal as opposed to human, and how our ideas about animals directly affect both our perception of self and our attitudes towards those whom we see as "other" (Ford, 2019. pp. 1-2).

Damage to the environment will inevitably harm the living things dwelling in it. Similar to ecocritics, authors want to prevent attacks on animals by drawing readers' attention to this situation through environment-oriented texts. Russian writer Fyodor Abramov is a well-known name in this respect. Fyodor Abramov (1920-1983) was born in the village of Verkola in Arkhangelsk. Growing up in this town, the writer met all the beauties of village life and the magnificence of Russian nature at a young age. He participated in the Second World War in 1941. Returning to the university in 1945 after the end of the war, Abramov completed his doctorate in 1951 and started to work as a lecturer at the Department of Soviet Literature at the Leningrad State University. The village theme is central in the art of F. Abramov, one of the representatives of village prose (Gürsoy, 2017: pp. 644-645). Nature and the forests surrounding him, while he was growing up, played a critical role in his works. Witnessing the destruction of nature and human negligence over time, the author realized that the source of environmental disasters is humans.

F. Abramov wrote the story "What Do Horses Cry About (Чем плачут лошади)" in 1973, in which he talked about capitalism destroying animal habitats in the environment and sought a solution. Horses are the main fictional element in the story told in the first person. In the story, the narrator is one of the primary characters and stands out with his love for horses. On the slopes of the village, the narrator's

excitement about meeting the horses—which he perceives as the joy of the villagers and the ornament of nature—and the love and affection shown are signs of his love for them. F. Abramov builds his work in the form of a fairy tale. In this story, the event develops on three planes. The first is the narrative of the years in which people cared about their environment and valued horses. The second plane concentrates on the times when people begin to live richer and better, and now technical materials and beautiful outfits are more prominent than horses. The third is the plane in which the author is forced to act as if everything is fine when he realizes the impossibility of influencing human nature, which deteriorates over time, and the indifference of human beings (Literaturovedçeskiy analiz, 2022). In this text, where horses are treated as characters, an ecocritical reading is initiated by pointing out that horses are much more than being used as riding animals in the real world; they are a part of nature.

The summary of the story “What Do Horses Cry About” is as follows: when the narrator comes to the village he was born, he is fascinated by the beauty of nature, the scent of grasses, and the sound of dragonflies' wings, as in the old days. On the other hand, he upsets when he notices the horses are not well cared for on the collective farm. Mikolka, the groom in charge of the horses, is a drunkard who hasn't been to work for days, forgetting to feed and water them. All day, the horses graze in the meadow around the pole to which they are tied, eating only the grass they can reach, and suffer from thirst and the attacks of sandflies. They are doomed to the mercy of villagers who might pass by and put a bunch of grass before them. Feeling guilty and longing, the narrator takes a loaf of bread and runs to the plain where the farm horses graze. He wants to see Rijuha, whom he loves very much. However, Rijuha shows no joyful approach like before. She turns her head without even taking the bread given to her. The narrator worries that the horse is sick or has forgotten him because he spent two weeks in a far barn, but later notices the tears in the horse's eyes. Rijuha, who starts to speak, transfers a discussion between the horses to the narrator. The subject of that discussion is whether there were times when horses were cared for and protected. In a distant pasture, Rijuha meets an old mare teaching songs

about the good times of the horses. When she listens to these songs, she forgets about stifling heat, hunger, and bad guys who whip the horses. When she returns to the meadow, she tells her friends about the old mare's songs and the stories about the times when the horses are well treated, but her friends do not believe in these stories and make fun of her. Rijuha, looking so upset, asks the narrator if this is true. The narrator deeply evaluates what he has heard and ponders the past days when events were as told to Rijuha. He remembers the Maslenitsa Feast, the days horses were a treasure and their bells were the joy of the Russian soul. He thinks that, in his childhood, all village life was on horses from birth to death. However, in the first years of Kolkhoz, the situation changed, and the horse became the cause of all fights. Meanwhile, he remembers his first horse, Karko, whom even the war could not make him forget. When he returned from the front, he searched for his horse's grave but could not find it due to the changed environment. After feeling the curious eyes of Rijuha and the other horses, he says to them, "Do eat your bread," and leaves hurriedly. But he notices the horses do not eat the bread he gave. When he crosses the drying meadow and reaches the border of a field that used to be full of grass, he feels bad for deceiving the horses. He could not confess that Rijuha's words were correct and lost her friendship and trust. Now he—as a creature descended from horses—sees himself useless.

In "What Do The Horses Cry About", the author begins with small details about nature and animals from his childhood: "Whenever I descended from the hillside of the village into the meadow, I would always go back to my distant childhood, into the world of fragrant grasses, damselflies, and butterflies, and of course the world of horses—grazing horses with their bridles tied to stakes" (Abramov, 1982: p. 390). This definition shows the longing for smelly horses and the happiness of animals in their own world. Indeed, from the first pages, attention is drawn to the changed relationship between humans and horses and the longing for the old days. The story seeks to compare the old and new periods of the horse world and reveals the differences. As a result of this comparison, the work exhibits the fact that there are changes in attitudes towards nature and animals over time with examples. As

understood from the following passage, in the old days, horses meant almost the whole village: “A village boy's first toy is a wooden horse.

The horse would watch the boy from the roof of his father's house, and his mother would sing songs and tell stories about brave horses like Sivka-Burka (the magic horse of Russian fairy tales). When he grew up, he would decorate the spinning wheel he made for his fiancée with horse motifs (...) Everything was horses, and everything was from horses. All village life, from birth to death...” (Abramov, 1982, p. 395).

Horses were as valuable as treasure for the villagers, and these people appreciated these creatures making their daily lives easier and sharing their difficulties. The narrator conveys this "value" with these words in the story:

The old mare had told everything correctly; she had not made anything up. Yes, there were such times, and as I recall, it seemed like yesterday when we lived and breathed with horses, feeding them the most delicious pieces, sometimes the last corner of bread left. We would somehow endure and suffer until morning on an empty stomach; we were used to it. And in the evenings, when our horse, who was tired of working all day, entered her corner, the whole family would rush to greet her, say kind, loving words to her, lovingly remove her harness, take care of her, water, groom, and clean. The hosts would get up several times a night to check if their "treasures" were all right! Yes, exactly, it was a treasure. It was the main support and hope of all village life so much that without a horse you would not go anywhere: neither to the field, to the forest, nor the promenade” (Abramov, 1982, p. 394).

From these lines, we see the traditional roles of horses such as animals used for riding or agriculture works. The horse named Rijuha—one of the characters—mentions a song and a narrative she heard about those beautiful days:

I have never heard anything like this in my life," says Rijuha. “I learned from those songs that they used to call horses "the pillar of my house," in old days, caress them, look after them carefully, and decorated them with ribbons." When I listened to these songs, I forgot stifling heat, horseflies, and evil villager's incessant belt blows (...). Had she made up all these beautiful songs about the carefree life of horses? However,

he convinced me that all this was true and that her mother sang these songs to her. Her mother singing these songs when she was a baby had learned these songs from her own mother (Abramov, 1982: p. 393).

In the new order, the relationship between man and horse has been sacrificed to urbanization, industrialization, and other global factors. With modernization the need in these traditional roles disappeared, and humans drew away from horses. These expressions show the situation:

Surprisingly, in the early years of the collective farm, the main reason for all the fights was the horse. The workers would jostle next to the barn, showing off their rude manners from morning to night. Someday, they hit on Voronok's back of the neck, left Gneduha without water, put too much weight on him, drove another one too fast, and when the shouting started, they beat them by hitting her face" (Abramov, 1982: p. 395).

People who are done with horses begin to act extremely ungrateful and reckless. The story clearly states that the crying of the horses is due to the indifference of the people responsible for them. Here, the author raises the issue of value, particularly the value we give to lives of other living things, and questions the depreciation of lives of non-human living things. The following statements are remarkable:

Miholka, who was constantly drunk, would not go to the horses either day or night on some days. A patch of grass around the stake, gnawed and battered, was the sole food of the horses. The horses were constantly devastated and thirsty. On calm, windless evenings, the mosquitoes and insects above them formed gray clouds in clumps. It was challenging for horses to live like this" (Abramov, 1982: p. 391).

Again, one of the environmental problems that the author wants to draw attention to in this story is human's selfishness which is the reason for the horse deaths in the new order. In the story, the overloading on horses appears as the reason for their death: "Karko's life had ended right on Victory Day. Such a day should be celebrated. But how? At that time, they had decided to sacrifice the most powerless and weakened horses. One day, when Karko was barely making his way out of the

forest with his usual load, they cruelly loaded heavy log stacks on top of him.” (Abramov, 1982: pp. 395-396). Horses were also a part of the war:

I remember returning to the village in 1947, a time when hunger, destruction, and abandonment were everywhere. Every house was weeping for those who did not return from the war. However, I had first thought about seeing my horse; Karko came to my mind: Karko is dead, replied the old horse groom. He passed away on the forest front. Did you think only humans fought in this war? No, the horses also spent great efforts in the victory” (Abramov, 1982: p. 395).

The author reveals the dominance established over animals over time. Humans influenced the destiny of animals by seeing them as material goods at their service. Fyodor Abramov also emphasizes in his work that the change between the old and the new order now affects the nature of horses. In the story, the narrator describes the differences in his favorite horse, Rıjuha, over the years:

Rıjuha had taken her share of the hardship as much as the others. In 4 or 5 years, her back was crushed under the saddle, her stomach was sagging, and even the veins in her groin began to swell. Yet, Rıjuha stood out among the fellows with her lucrativeness, whereas some did not seem healthy at all. This scruffy and slumped horses' appearance showed their blind obedience and their condemnation to death; all of them had a hopeless and hunched stance.” (Abramov, 1982: p. 392).

The marginality and cruelty of the period were so intense that the horses could not believe in the good old days depicted. Rıjuha begs the narrator: “Tell me... You are human, you know everything, and you are the ones who rule us all your life. Tell me, were there times when horses lived well? The old mare did not lie to me, did she? She did not cheat, did she?” (Abramov, 1982: p. 393). But, now, that kind of life is so foreign to other horses that they never believe in it and break Rıjuha's heart by saying it is a lie. Rıjuha shares this with the narrator: "When I was in the pasture in the morning, I started to sing the old mare's songs. All the other horses that heard this song cried out in unison: These are all lies, fabrications! Shut up! Do not reopen our old wounds: we are suffocating, so sick to our stomach” (Abramov, 1982, p. 393).

Fyodor Abramov ascribes human roles to horses to address social and cultural problems in the human world. In this work, speaking and thinking, which are only human traits, are also attributed to horses. This situation suggests the concept of Animalism. R. Gromyak defines animalism in his dictionary as follows: "Animalism is an artistic depiction of animals, birds, plants, etc., through the prism of human attitude" (Abdo, 2019: p. 245). The work introduces animalism to readers with a fairy-tale narration: "Today, Rijuha did not show even any slightest sign of revival against my approach. It stood motionless and catatonic around the stake. It was in no sense absolutely indistinguishable from other mares and horses. I thought anxiously. She had been in a far pasture for two weeks; had he forgotten me?" (Abramov, 1982: p. 392). As understood from the example, in the story, the horses talk, get offended, and cry:

While I was walking, I took a big piece of my bread and gave her—our friendship had started with a piece of bread like this—but the mare completely surprised me because she turned her head exhibiting her refusal. "Rijuha.., Rijuha.., but this is me." I grabbed her bushy and gray hair, which I had cut off three weeks ago because it had completely closed her eyes. Then I pulled her towards me. What is that? Tears. Huge, pea-sized tears. "Rijuha, what's wrong?" Rijuha continued to cry in silence (...). "There was an argument here. Among the horses." "You had an argument," I said, puzzled, "About what?" "About the life of horses. I said to them, there were times when humans showed mercy to us and protected the horses above all else. But they made fun of me" (Abramov, 1982: pp. 392-393).

In another example, the narrator makes statements such as "sulking" and "filling heads with nonsense," as if they were a human being in front of him: "Okay, okay, enough sulking! Enough filling your head with this kind of nonsense! Come on, nibble your bread while you can do it" (Abramov, 1982: p. 396). Therefore, horses can express their own feelings and thoughts like humans in the story. The author, making the horses talk, tries to reveal changing attitudes, exploitation, and cruelty in the lives of animals.

Fyodor Abramov, on the other hand, draws attention to the friendship of the narrator

and Rijuha by mentioning the closeness of humans and animals to each other and that they can be good friends. “Rijuha, who usually saw me coming down the slope, would immediately get up, approach the fence, neigh, and sometimes run around the stake as wide as her rope would allow; namely, she would greet me cheerfully” (Abramov, 1982: p. 392). These two living species value each other, and therefore they get excited when they see each other. According to deep ecologist philosophy, the idea that every living thing is valuable is the only key to mutual understanding and a sustainable environment. In his article, “Why Look at Animals,” John Berger (2022: pp.1-27) notes that man has changed his relationship with the natural world. The author states that the mutual agreement between these two species can be established by looking at the issues from the animals' side and looking into the eyes of the animal. Ideas of friendship and brotherhood between man and animal are characteristic of animal-themed literature, and various motifs and subjects are associated with it. Philosophical reflection becomes an arena for images of the relationship between man and nature, man and animal. On the other hand, Anthropomorphism draws attention (Abdo, 2019: p. 246). “Rijuha raised her huge, still wet, sad eyes towards me with hope, with a plea, and I suddenly saw myself in their purple depth: a small, tiny person” (Abramov, 1982: p. 393). The work indicates that mutual agreement, friendship, and trust disappeared with the narrator's silence.

I expected the horses to begin gnawing and chewing the grass and bread in the meadow with their familiar growl and panting. Not even the slightest sound came from that side. I realized what a terrible thing I had done; I had deceived the horses, and the sincerity and trust established between Rijuha and me until then would never happen again. A heavy horse longing came over me and bent me to the ground. Before long, I began to see myself as a meaningless creature. A creature who is a descendant of horses... (Abramov, 1982: pp. 396-397).

Here, the narrator points out that human beings are ordinary like all other living things, that he is a part of the universe like them, and thus that he is cognate with them. Here, the phrase “a creature who is a descendant of horses” constitutes the

essence of the story. When the narrator thinks about the past and the present, he feels guilty and sad for these animals and approaches them with pity:

They excited and cheered up my peasant heart, adding a unique beauty to the willow grove on the hills and empty meadows. I could watch these good and intelligent creatures and listen to their monotonous chewings, interrupted sometimes by a disgruntled gasp and sometimes by a short grunt for hours. But these horses often aroused in my pity, even a kind of inexplicable guilt towards them” (Abramov, 1982, p. 391).

The sense of guilt felt by the narrator is also a result of violating the rights of the living creature that humans dominate and torment, despite having equal rights with humans. Therefore, F. A. Abramov's story teaches us not only to be more careful and attentive to defenseless animals but also to be true and honest with ourselves and admit our mistakes. Thus, in the 20th century Russia, Abramov's narratives serve as a convergence point for religious and social issues that concern the society; in some points, they call to continue with the past. The themes discussed by Abramov constitute the essence of his literary works. Abramov uses horses to call his audience to examine their views and resolve the things they used to take for granted which proved to be wrong.

Conclusion

As a result of the apparent increase in violence against animals with the changing way of thinking, animal ecology has found a broad place in ecocriticism in recent years of this modern age. Animal ecology brings up the issue of the need to develop a universe-centered perspective towards non-humans by examining negative behaviors towards them. It is a significant guide with the power to reveal possible ecological disasters.

With the changing ecological balance and nature perception, animals and other living things suffer. In our environment, animal representation is in every field, and these have been the subject of much research recently. Literary works are also one

of the representation areas of animals. Books affect humans' emotional and mental processes and seriously transform the view and cultural perceptions about animals. Many works have featured violence toward animals from the past to the present. Literature, which tries to grab attention to the "animals' fear from humans" and "animal exploitation," wants to build a caring society by including animals in many works and gradually expands its perspective. While these works reflect the world through the eyes of an animal, they introduce the changing perception of the environment over time. Fyodor Abramov's work, "What Do The Horses Cry About", chosen as the focus of the study, is remarkable in terms of expressing humans' self-centered understanding and their changing environment and animal perspectives. "What Do The Horses Cry About" is also an expression of nostalgia for the old times, when people were intertwined with nature, valued the creatures, and guarded horses like a jewel. Fyodor Abramov has placed animals in the storyline to draw attention to the changing role of horses in village life, the changing behavior of people towards animals, and the hard fate of horses. In the work in which human behavior is attributed to horses through anthropomorphism, people are confronted with the negative consequences of their behavior. This work emphasizes that "empty places" converted into human settlements are not actually "empty," contrarily, these spaces belong to animal and plant species. The narrator's definition of himself as "a creature descended from horses" is reminded once again that man has no superiority. It is advised not only to be more careful and merciful to defenseless animals but to fight for the happiness of the entire planet. Thus, the fundamental message of Fyodor Abramov's story is that the distinction between humans and non-humans must be abolished for a livable world since man's superior attitude to nature and transforming it as he wishes will pose a threat to the entire planet's existence.

In his narrative reacting to the changing status of horses in Russia, another message of F. Abramov is that environmental collective development of Russians requires them to be more concerned for Russia's problems, more sensitive to them, and more willing to search for solutions in a historically informed, practical, and morally

sensitive way. From now on, raising people with a planet-centered perspective for the future is essential. Therefore, what kind of world we will live in depends on the people we grow. Individuals who approach environmental issues with sensitivity today are the investments for our future. Individuals should be more conscious of the environment because humans and non-humans will share the same world in the future as today.

Notes

1. The theory of ecocriticism is divided into three phases. In its first stage, ecocriticism which tries to remind all people—who forget that they are a part of the ecological whole—of their place in the system, opposes the superiority of humans over nature. The second phase includes various society-related issues in the environmental criticism theory. Society and nature are an inseparable, balanced integrity. The theory aims to develop environmental awareness in individuals by revealing the meanings attributed to nature, its connection with plant and animal species, thought patterns, and its relationship with society. The third phase of ecocriticism is about the perception of nature in the recent period. While criticizing humans' exploitative behaviors, increased urbanization and its environmental damages are explained through animals (Kuru, 2022: p.47).

2. Singer developed Jeremiah Bentham's ideas about the happiness of all beings. Jeremy Bentham writes about the difference between humans and animals: “What else can draw the line (between humans and animals)? Ability to judge or use language? However, an adult horse or dog is incomparably more rational and can communicate better than a baby in a day, a week, or a month. And if not, what difference does it make? The question is not whether they can judge or speak, but whether they can feel pain.” (Bentham, 2019).

References

- Abdo, M. D. (2019) 'Animalistika v russkoy literature na materiale proizvedeniy A.İ. Kuprina'. *Philology* 72, pp. 241-270.
- Abramov, F. (1982) O çem plaçut loşadi. Ye. Bolşakovga (Ed.), *Sobraniye soçineniy v tryoh tomah*, tom 3, in (p. 390-397), Leningrad: hudojestvennaya literatura.
- Arıkan, A. (2011) Edebi metin çözümlemesi ve ekoeleştiri. *Mediterranean Journal of Humanities*, 1(1), pp. 43-51.
- Barç, A. (2017) Ot ekokritiki k korove i obratno. *zvezda*, 7, Available from: <https://magazines.gorky.media/zvezda/2017/7/ot-ekokritiki-k-korove-i-obratno.html>. [Accessed 14 Sep. 2020].
- Bentham, J. (2019) An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation, 1823, 144. Pieejams: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/bentham1780.pdf>. [Accessed 12 mar. 2022].
- Berger, J. (n.d.) Why Look at Animals?, Available from: <http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/gustafson/FILM%20161.F08/readings/berger.animals%202.pdf>. [Accessed 9 Feb. 2022].
- Commoner, B. (1972) *The closing circle: Nature, man and technology*. New York: A Bantam book, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Epşteyn, M. N. (1990) *Priroda, mir, taynik, vselennoy: sistema peyzajnih obrazov v russkoy poezii*. Moskva: Vısshaya şkola.
- Ford, E. D. (2016) *Revolving beast: Identifying the animal in post-revolutionary Russian Literature*, Doctoral thesis, the University of Michigan, Michigan.
- Gansovskaya, K (2019) *Ekoliteratūra un human-animal Studies (Par Metodoloğijas, Terminoloğijas un Žanru Klasifikācijas Problēmu)*. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/40065741/EKOLITERAT%C5%AARA_UN_HUMAN_ANIMAL_STUDIES_PAR_METODOLO%C4%A2IJAS_TERMINOLO%C4%A2IJAS_UN_%C5%BDANRU_KLASIFIK%C4%80CIJAS_PROBL%C4%92MU. [Accessed 11 Nov. 2020].
- Gergöy, A. (2017) *Bilge Karasu'nun hayvanları: Etik ve politik karşılaşmalar*. (Unpublished master thesis), İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent Üniversitesi Ekonomi ve Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara.
- Girusov, E. (2009) 'Ekologiçeskaya kul'tura kak vısshaya forma gumanizma'. *Filosofiya i obşçestvo*, 4, pp. 74-92.
- Gürsoy, Y. (2017) 'Fyodor Abramov ve bir uyanış öyküsü geçmişe yolculuk'. *Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 4 (11), pp. 643-656.
- Kuçinov, Y. (2019) 'Denis Şalaginov, Jivotnaya politika i yeyo vragi'. *Sociology of Power*, 31 (3), pp. 31-56. Available from: Doi: 10.22394/2074-0492-2019-3-31-56.

- Kuru, K. (2022) 'Ekoeleştirel perspektiften edebiyat alanında hayvan çalışmaları'. Bitig Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 2 (3), pp. 43-54.
- "Literaturovedçeskiy analiz" (Mar. 2022). Available from: <https://varplace.ru/tips/otnosheniya-k-prirode-na-primere-rasskaza-o-chem-plachut.html>. [Accessed 17 Mar. 2020].
- Olgun, H. (2020) 'Batı felsefesinde hayvanın ahlâkî statüsü: francione'nin abolisyonizmi üzerine bir değerlendirme'. Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi, 15, pp. 3916-3948.
- Özyön, A. (2019) Zülfü Livaneli'nin Son Ada'sı ile ütopyadan distopyaya: Bir ekoeleştiri denemesi. 2nd International Multidisciplinary Congree of Eurasia (IMCOFE' 16), pp. 106-112, Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325486377_Zulfu_Livaneli'nin_Son_Ada'si_ile_Utopyadan_Distopyaya_Bir_Ekoelestiri_Denemesi_From_Utopia_to_Distopia_with_Zulfu_Livaneli's_Son_Ada_An_Essay_on_Ecocriticism. [Accessed 10 Apr. 2020].
- Tekin, N. (2018) Edebiyatta hayvan temsili: Yokluk olarak varoluş. Doğu Batı Dergisi, 82, pp. 245-252. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324529563_Edebiyatta_Hayvan_Temsili_Yokluk_Olarak_Varolus. [Accessed 10 Nov. 2021].
- Wolfe, C. H. (2009) 'All too human: "Animal studies" and the humanities', PMLA 124 (2), pp. 564-575.
- Yıldırım, R. S. (2021) Sait Faik Abasıyanık'ın hikâyelerinin çevreci eleştiri ışığında incelenmesi. (Unpublished master thesis) Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara.