

**Henrietta Mondry**  
University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
henrietta.mondry@canterbury.ac.nz  
ORCID: 0000-0001-6354-4847

POZNAŃSKIE STUDIA SLAWISTYCZNE  
NR 22 (2022)  
DOI: 10.14746/pss.2022.22.10

Data przesłania tekstu do redakcji: 1.10.2021  
Data przyjęcia tekstu do druku: 7.01.2022

## **An Appeal for a Creaturely Attitude to Animals in Vasily Rozanov's Writing**

**ABSTRACT:** Mondry Henrietta, *An Appeal for a Creaturely Attitude to Animals in Vasily Rozanov's Writing*. "Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne" 22. Poznań 2022. Wydawnictwo "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne," Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, pp. 195–215. ISSN 2084-3011.

The work of Vasily Rozanov offers a relevant case study of our changing relation to natural-cultural contact zones with animals. Rozanov used a comparative approach to human-animal connections to change the societal attitude to the physical body and erase boundaries between human and animal corporeality. I focus on his narratives that promote a creaturely attitude to animals in the context of societal problems. The issues he addresses have special relevance to the current pandemic realia. I argue that Rozanov used both ethico-religious and secular arguments, as well as logic and emotion as part of his strategy to appeal to wider audiences. The hybrid genre of his narratives was a new form of literature that employed multiple rhetorical devices in creating creaturely poetics.

**KEYWORDS:** creaturely poetics; human-animal contact zones and reciprocity

How far does flesh go down?

Deep enough to know that their [animal] bodies are also our bodies, and so your futures are also our futures (Moore, 2014, 16).

## 1. Introduction

The on-going COVID-19 pandemic situation presents a significant challenge to recent thinking in human–animal relations in a wider framework of ecological thought. A cross-disciplinary academic field of human-animal studies has been driven by the quest to cross the boundaries between human and non-human animals, to de-emphasise the differences and to look for similarity. One of the disputed sources of the pandemic—‘the wet market’ in Wuhan province relates to the very core of the issue of borders and boundaries in human-animal interactions. If the pandemic started at the market by human contact with animal transmitters of the virus, then the inevitable questions lead to the issue of boundaries which should or should not exist between humans and certain animal species. The set of issues relates to contamination and breach of the safe borders between humans and animals, making us think in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the spread of the virus from animals to humans proves our material commonalities, on the other hand, it cautions against dangers of close contacts. The slaughter of animals not consumed in Western societies raises the question of cultural and religious differences, and calls for unbiased comparative thinking (Chang, Corman, 2021; Lee, 2021). Turning to cultural and religious differences in attitudes towards animals has been an integral part of the development of human–animal studies, and in scholarship the Scriptures have been called into question as a source of Western conceptualisation of hierarchical anthropocentric attitude to animals, while non-monotheistic religious beliefs are often cited as an alternative model of interacting with the physical world and other living organisms. The divisive discourse around the assumed source of the COVID-19 pan-

demical calls for a new look at the role played by cultural, religious and mythopoetic beliefs in our construal of the parameters of relationships between us and non-human animals.

Recent scholarly work in animal studies coming from theology and ethics in search for “creaturely theology” and “creaturely solidarity” has turned to Scriptures regarding issues of animal treatment (see: Moore, 2014, 1; Kao, 2014, 743). A number of new studies are devoted to offering nuanced interpretations and to refute the notion of the Bible as a source of anthropocentric views on animals. Contemporary Russian theologian and environmentalist Tat’iana Goricheva was among the first to write about God’s covenant with all of creation and to argue that the difference between humans and animals is not a matter of subordination but part of “one entelechy” (Горичева, 1997, 60; on Goricheva’s views in the context of the Anthropocene v. Costlow, 2020). Notably, she uses the term ‘solidarity’ in relation to animals based on her reading of Scriptures. Work in literary studies, in turn, while admitting that western literatures of modernity used animals as blank canvasses for projection of human needs, nevertheless admit that anthropomorphism in literature is a powerful tool in developing discourse to end discrimination against *all* species (Simons, 2002; Armstrong, 2008). These arguments are backed by recent research in experimental social psychology that shows that association with animals creates empathy (Butterfield et al., 2012). Anat Pick’s influential definition of creaturely poetics in literature is based on “the ethico-religious exploration of creaturely [...] being oriented toward vulnerability as a universal form of exposure” (Pick, 2011, 5).

I have chosen for this study the writings of Vasily Rozanov (1856–1919) whose “philosophy of life” was dedicated to breaking the boundaries between physical and metaphysical, between the human and animal and to rethinking the meaning of human–animal contact zones. Literature is one of the traditional vehicles to educate the public with its emotional appeal to injustice, including cruelty to animals. Russian writers of the nineteenth and twentieth century produced some striking images of animal suffering and argued for vegetarianism and putting an end to hunting and the exploitation of working animals (v. Costlow, Nelson, 2010). Rozanov went further in his animal advocacy than claiming

that animals are sentient beings. By using diverse cultural and religious sources he broke the boundaries between humans and animals, sensationally claiming there was divine presence in the human and animal body. He was, thus, one of the first Russian writers to search for evidence of embodied continuum between divine and earthly creatures, and to advocate on this basis a creaturely attitude towards animals. For this he often turned to examples in various religions and beliefs, including Judaism and the ancient Egyptian religion. In the following analysis of Rozanov's texts I study his approach to a range of issues related to human-animal interaction, including his opposition to animal cruelty, his support for integrating domesticated animals into the family domain as a contact zone, his call for reciprocity in individualised human-animal relationships as a form of futurity underpinned by his interpretation of ancient cultural beliefs. I conclude that by turning diachronically to examples across ancient cultures and religions and synchronically to various contemporary ethico-religious beliefs and practices he advocated creaturely practice in everyday life.

What is relevant to my focus on boundaries and contact zones is the fact that Rozanov's new form of writing in itself broke the boundaries between various genres, such as essays, short stories, commentaries and notes.<sup>1</sup> It will become clear from the examples provided in this article that his new form of literature allowed him to achieve affective and effectual communication with diverse audiences. The question of the impact writing has on readers in terms of ecology is relevant to contemporary environmentalism, and the search for the effective medium to appeal to audiences is an integral part of the current eco-activism.

## **2. The animal Sabbath and ethno-religious differences**

The concept of the animal Sabbath as outlined in the Torah (or Pentateuch) has attracted a considerable attention in posthumanist writing,

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<sup>1</sup> Shklovsky defines this form as "intimate to the point of being offensive, it opens the writer's soul"; presented as scattered notes, the form "has no borders" (Шкловский, 1995, 328).

including Agamben's foundational book *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004). Reflecting on the dividing boundaries between the human and the animal, Agamben wants to "show the central emptiness" of this boundary and to develop a "Shabbat of both animal and man" (Agamben, 2004, 57). This quest has been identified in literary animal scholarship as "the quasi-messianic hope that each might let the other be, in peace" (Marovich, 2014, 137). The notion of the domestic animal Sabbath is a law outlined in Exodus 20.08.11 and it states that, like humans, animals must rest on this day. Moreover, as noted by Shaffer (2013, 168), the paradigm shift of Exodus 23.10.12 expands the definition of animal rest as being also God's rest. Other Biblical passages shed more light on nonhuman Sabbath repose, implying responsibilities for all humans regarding animal rest and care. The notion of similarities between God and animals regarding the eligibility to rest on the Sabbath is linked to human-animal correlation in more than one way. Additionally, Shaffer argues, it suggests that God the creator needed to rest on the seventh day and this need to rest indicates the Creator's "own vulnerability" (Shaffer, 2013, 170). The rest on the Sabbath is thus an intersection of God-human-animal physicality, a kind of physicality that has common needs. The law that humans must let animals rest on the Sabbath is a form of human obligation to God the creator who looks after his creatures. This intersection of the divine/human/animal in relation to the body finds its representation in Rozanov's works, and it is for this reason that he turns his attention to a case of practising the animal Sabbath in his contemporary society.

In 1903, Rozanov read a newspaper letter in *Novoe vremia* (New Times) about a decision made by farmers of Staryi Krym in the Crimea to give domestic animals, such as horses and oxen, rest on a Sunday. Rozanov responds to this initiative in his essay "O milosti k zhivotnym" (On Mercy to Animals) (1903), published in the newly founded periodical *Novyi put* (New Path). This particular periodical was started by a group of leading intellectuals and members of the Religious Philosophical Society of which Rozanov was an active member. Given the intellectual character of the journal, Rozanov explains the Crimean community's initiative in terms of the local ethno-religious and multicultural context. According to him, the influences of Karaites and Crimean Tartars, two groups that

adhere to the principles of religious sources and ethnic customs, have played a major role. Karaites, followers of Judaism, and Tartars, who are closely connected with Turkish Islam, have, in Rozanov's opinion, knowledge related to the treatment of animals which Russian communities have lost. He quotes passages from the Bible about the law of the human and animal Sabbath, and reminds his readers of a cultural custom of not harming stray dogs in Istanbul, viewing both cases as manifestations of understanding that there is God in animals. He puts this alternative cultural and religious knowledge and practise in contrast to "the all-Russian" (*Vserossiiskoe*) cruelty to animals manifested in numerous atrocities, such as skinning animals for commercial use. In a characteristic of him, cross-cultural comparative approach, he views the loss of a religious attitude to animals as a source of cruelty to life itself. He calls this attitude "a loss of transcendental value of blood and life" of both animals and humans, which has resulted in a separation of materiality and spirituality (Розанов, 1995а, 212). His parataxic narrative allows him to achieve a maximum rhetorical impact in a short form, bringing together elements of religion, philosophy, social events and alternative cultural beliefs and practices, all distilled through his personal subjectivity:

Жизнь (чужая) стала дешева; кровь — как бы сукровица из нарыва — не вызывает видом страха. «Льется или не льется она — что нам, людям духа и духовности до нее?» Отсюда учащённость убийств, самоубийств; отсюда войны, и их последствие — постоянные армии. Я, между прочим, ссылался в тех статьях на Турцию и известный Константинопольский обычай не убирать (не убивать) с улиц собак. Это сделало улицы несносными, но стяжало славу доброты османам (Розанов, 1995а, 212).

(Life of the other became cheap. Blood, as if it was ichor from a boil, does not evoke fear with its appearance. "What does it matter to us, people of spirit and spirituality, whether it flows or not flow?" This is where frequent murders and suicides come from; this is where wars and military armies stem from. Incidentally, I have referred in my previous articles to Turkey and their well-known custom of not removing [not killing]

street dogs. While this made the streets inconvenient, it gave the Ottomans a reputation of kindness.)<sup>2</sup>

The passage above serves as an example of creaturely thinking and creaturely poetics intended to appeal to diverse audiences. This intensive narrative allows Rozanov to allude to arguments related to a wide thematic domain: a philosophical debate about the Cartesian dualism between matter and spirit, the Biblical sacredness of blood which contains spirit, questions of religious fear of breaking the commandment “You shall not kill,” social issues of criminality, the aetiology of suicide, militarism, respect for alternative ethno-religious customs. Importantly, an example of tolerance to street dogs in Constantinople serves as a case of coexistence with stray and feral animals in urban spaces, creating a form of heterotopia without demarcated borders between humans and animals (on discourse of species in relation to dogs of Istanbul v. Mondry, 2019). This instance is particularly pertinent in terms of the history of human–animal coexistence. The current research on human interaction with feral and street animals, specifically dogs of Istanbul, is of particular relevance. In their book, *What is a dog?* (2016), an investigation of dogs as a species and as a cultural construct, biologists and science writers Raymond and Lorna Coppinger maintain that the dogs of Istanbul found a new ecological niche—something that Rozanov is clearly alluding to. Yet the Coppingers show that, in spite of the cultural beliefs connected with protecting dogs, in times of epidemics, governments organise culling of street dogs in fear of the spread of zoonic infections. The Coppingers’ study shows the rift between cultural beliefs and policies of controlling infectious diseases when they threaten animals and humans. In normal times, however, the streets function as zones of tolerance between humans and animals. When it comes to Rozanov’s writing, he searches for alternative cultural examples of a merciful attitude towards animals which could be juxtaposed with “the all-Russian” cruelty based, in his opinion, on a loss of mythopoetic and religious knowledge. Indeed, as the Coppingers report, their Muslim interlocutors justify their tolerance of street dogs by their belief that God is

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2 All translations from Russian into English are my own.

present in these animals. This allows the Coppingers to write about the cultural differences in attitudes to street dogs (Coppingers, 2016, 33).

### 3. “Look for God in an animal”

Rozanov concludes this text with a personal appeal to his readers that advocates embodied, deeply sensed mercy to animals:

Я написал статейку «О милости к животным». Правда, хочется вы-  
молить ее у читателя. Но это — европейская транскрипция моей  
мысли, которая едва ли приведет к чему. Не научимся мы *миловать*  
животных, пока не почувствуем их *милыми* себе: а это уже семити-  
ческая или эллинская точка зрения, по коей нужно животных или  
художественно созерцать, или чувствовать их родными себе, не-  
множко «единокровными» (Розанов, 1995а, 213).

(I have written an article “On Mercy to Animals.” Truly, I want to beg our  
readers for mercy. But this is a European transcription of my thought,  
which no doubt will lead nowhere. We will not learn to have *mercy* on an-  
imals until we start perceiving them as *dear* to us: and this is already  
a Semitic and Hellenistic point of view, according to which it is either  
necessary to perceive animals creatively or to feel them as our kin, as  
being a bit “consanguine.”)

I suggest that Rozanov creates a form of creaturely poetics based on the necessity of a holistic, embodied, and visceral response to narratives about animals, hence his choice of words such as “to feel” animals. He italicises words such as *milost’* (mercy) and *milyj* (loved one, dear) to define the cognate closeness of words denoting both emotions and praxis that are based on a visceral attitude to humans and animals. Characteristically, Rozanov regards the European rationalist view of animals as lacking spirituality and rejecting the embodied relation between human, animal and divine essences—something that, in his opinion, ancient Semitic and Hellenic peoples understood. His notion of “consanguinity” alludes to ancient religious views that perceived monistic



continuity in the human/animal/god(s). This concept of consanguinity, *edinokrovnost*, is a building block of his creaturely poetics.

The idea of consanguinity in Rozanov's wider thinking relates to the understanding of blood as a seat of the soul. He developed this idea by perusing the Pentateuch, and it is against this background that his turning to "Semitic" sources in this article needs to be read. He has in mind those passages in Leviticus that set out laws in treating animals, which makes him one of the first to notice that these laws speak of God's protecting his animal creation. Contemporary anthropologist Mary Douglas gives a similar interpretation in her ground-breaking study *Leviticus as Literature* (1999), maintaining that God's "love for his animal creation lies behind his laws against eating and touching their corpses" (Douglas, 1999, 1). She argues that the law does not allow profane slaughter, and for this reason "the only shedding of animal blood it permits is in the consecrated killing of sacrifice" (Douglas, 1999, 68). Rozanov's notion of human and animal consanguinity, as well as his stressing that blood is sacred, is similarly used by Douglas, who maintains:

Leviticus explains the rule against eating blood by saying that the life (or soul) is in the blood (Lev 17:11) and sets it in a chapter in which God warns that he will demand accountability for every animal life (Douglas, 1999, 72–73).

Rozanov views his contemporary Russian society as part of secularised Western culture. Particular cases of animal cruelty committed on an industrial scale in Russian villages suggest to him that the lower classes of Russian society have lost a mythopoetic view of animals. This secularisation of society across classes resulted in a loss of respect for animal life. Characteristically of his comparative and synthesising approach to belief systems, he does not discriminate between epos, fables about animals, and canonical religious sources, such as Scriptures. The loss of belief in anthropomorphic fairy tales among the lower classes of the Russian society is for him another source of animal cruelty.<sup>3</sup> He addresses

<sup>3</sup> Rozanov infamously misused his notion of the special value of blood for "Semitic" people during the blood libel trial, the Beilis Affair (1913), by conflating animal and human sacrifice. Before his death he ordered his book *The Olfactory and*

this particular issue in his essay “O sostradanii k zhyvotnym” (On Compassion for Animals) (1902) written in response to a report on the cruel mass skinning of cats for fur in a village in the Viatka region. The report was published in the newspaper *Novoe vremia* with the title “V zashchitu koshek” (In Defence of Cats). Having read the report, Rozanov vividly describes the way in which cats are mutilated and left to suffer in convulsions for hours before being finally processed. Sensitive to the needs of both animals and people, Rozanov notes that he is fully aware of the social and economic role of animal industries that provide income to humans. While he admits that even settling on a painless method of animal slaughter is a compromise, he urges the Society for Animal Protection to introduce laws against the “barbaric killing of cats” (Розанов, 1995b, 319).

In conjunction with considering the practical side of the situation, Rozanov turns to deeper reasons underpinning human cruelty in the treatment of animals. Dealing with the practice of animal slaughter in rural Russia, Rozanov chooses a cultural domain appropriate for this social stratum—the loss of mythopoetic worldview. He considers “the feeling of nature and of kinship (*rodstvo*) with animal epos as a fundamental antidote to industrialised cruelty and a consumer attitude to them, manifested in the beastly (*zverskoe*) dismembering of the cats” (Розанов, 1995b, 319). Of note is Rozanov’s use of the discourse of animality in application to humans in a negative way, which points to human capacity of “beastly” cruelty. This trope displaces the divide between humans and animals, simultaneously pointing to the projective mechanism of assigning cruelty to animals.

Our contemporary theologians and ethicists search for “creaturely theology” (2014) and address the necessity to extend Christian principles of neighbourly hospitality to animals. Hobgood-Oster in her book *The Friends We Keep: Unleashing Christianity’s Compassion to Animals* (2010) appealing to her reader’s (assumed) “highest religious aspirations” (Kao, 2014, 749), uses vignettes of Christians who have responded hospitably to animals, including the *gattare* (cat ladies) in Rome who have fed stray cats for decades at an excavated ancient ruin. Of special relevance

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*Tactile Attitude of Jews to Blood* to be burned and asked the Jewish community for forgiveness (v. Mondry, 2021, 73–91).

to Rozanov's belief in the presence of God in the animal is Hobgood-Oster's suggestion that those who show hospitality to other animals might be entertaining angels "just as the biblical characters did so long ago" (Hobgood-Oster, 2010, 143). The notion of extending hospitality to animals finds its reflection in Rozanov's "О сострадании к животным" (On Compassion for Animals), which suggests that pet keeping in a family is the start to the re-thinking of the attitude to animals by including them into family membership.

While a religious thinker, Rozanov often viewed his contemporary Russian Orthodox church and the clergy critically accusing them of promulgating somatophobia and asceticism. In this disrespect for the physical body, both human and animal, he saw the source of a general lack of respect for physical life and appealed to correct this attitude to life (v. Розанов, 1995c; Mondry, 1999; 2010). In our contemporary context, Tat'iana Goricheva's recent theological ecological work presents the Russian Orthodox Church as an example of a "unity of differing parts," in which "difference" is not a matter of subordination but a "democratic hierarchy" submitted to "one meaning, one entelechy" (Горичева, 1997, 160). Like Rozanov, she views animals as part of the incarnational theology (Costlow, 2020, 170). In her work she aphoristically uses citations from an eclectic set of sources, including the Bible and the *Lives* of Orthodox saints. Some of these stories describe animals who help and are helped by humans, show obedience to saints' teachings to not act violently against humans and other animals. Goricheva maintains that "paradise interdependence has returned" in these stories, and animals follow saints into the "new eon" to become united with God (Горичева, 1997, 153). Like Rozanov, Goricheva grounds her discussion of animals in the Genesis account of God's covenant with all creation and postulates that animals possess "a soul." Unlike Rozanov, she does not separate biblical texts from religious praxis. Rozanov, on the contrary, saw a gap between early Christian sentiments and the dogmatism of later Christianity. He also maintained that contemporary Russian church and the clergy have forsaken the teachings of compassion and love for all God's creatures. While Goricheva's work is aimed at returning religious knowledge to the generation of post-Soviet readers brought up in an industrial and atheistic society, Rozanov's aim was to influence

both religious and secular members of the society at the time when it was becoming industrialised and losing its mythopoetic worldview. In his quest to reform his society's attitude to life he was not cataloguing multicultural material, but used it to foster creaturely thinking and behaviour by rhetorically weaving historical and contemporary facts into his narratives. His narratives contained personal responses and experiences and often intentionally shocked and provoked the reader to pause and think out of his/her comfort zone. As will become clear in the next part of my article, his aspirational comfort zones consisted of human-animal cooperation and cohabitation.

#### **4. Creating zones of reciprocity in human-animal interaction**

Contemporary creaturely thinking advocates and searches for an alternative, non-exploitative relationship with animals. Philosopher Christine Korsgaard suggests a plausible idea of a reciprocal relationship between humans and animals based “both on our reason and our feeling of solidarity” (Korsgaard, 2009, 15). Looking for ways which would be effective rather than unattainable in interaction with farm animals, Korsgaard comes up with the idea of a “consent” given by animals to provide us with wool, dairy products, or eggs, and that this praxis of consent “depends on whether there are methods of gathering those products that are genuinely compatible with a normal and happy life for animals” (Korsgaard, 2009, 14–15). Rozanov comes up with alternative, non-exploitative ways to interact with animals based on personal, individual interrelation with them. Similar to current ecofeminist methodology of telling personal stories in order to express personal experiences as a form of appealing to audiences, Rozanov's new form of literature was also based on his subjective personal narratives in which he distilled thoughts and emotions through his personal visceral perception. Often intimate, some of these details shocked his readers, which in itself can be viewed as a strategy for making an impact in matters of animal advocacy and human-to-human violence. In our contemporary eco-narratives sharing personal pain as a result of a loss of companion animals, or witnessing animal abuse has become

a way to break boundaries between the writer and audience. Rozanov resorts to this narrative strategy in his minimalist plots which have an impact on readers, giving them plenty of time to think in the pause between short messages. His literary form includes fragments of conversations, spontaneous recollections of events and incidents, some of which he shared in his letters. One such narrative typifies this form and a strategy to express an intimate experience of a relation with an individual animal is found in his letter to an art historian Erik Gollerbach. In this passage Rozanov offers an example of a non-exploitative cooperative relationship between humans and animals which parallels philosopher Christine Korsgaard's notion of reciprocity and consent:

И вот коровка умерла.

Она была похожа на мамашу и чуть ли тоже «не из роду Шишкихных». Но сильная.

Она перестала давать молока. Затвердение в вымени. Призвали мясника. Я смотрел с сеновала. Он долго разбирал шерсть в затылке: наставил и надавил. Она тотчас упала на колени и я тотчас упал (шалость, страх).

Ужасно. И какой ужас: ведь — КОРМИЛА И — ЗАРЕЗАЛИ. О, о, о... печаль, судьба человеческая (нищета). А то все молочко и молочко. Давала 4–5 горшков. Черненькая и «как мамаша».

Кисилек. Сметана. Творог. Сливочное масло. «Как все хорошо». «Масло в барашке» к рождеству (Розанов, 1970, 541).

(And here, our cow died.

She looked like my mother and was “from the Shishkins clan.” But she was strong.

She stopped giving milk. A hardening of udder. So they called a butcher. I observed everything from the straw hill. He thoroughly separated the fur on her neck, positioned and pressed the knife. She instantly dropped to her knees and so did I [prank, fear.]

Terror. True terror: she FED us—and was SLAUGHTERED. Oh, oh, oh... sadness, human destiny [poverty]. It used to be milk and milk. She gave 4–5 pots. She was black-haired and “like mother.”

Kissel. Sour cream. Cottage cheese. Butter. “Everything is well.” “Butter lamb figurine” for Christmas).

In this narrative Rozanov uses italics and capital letters idiosyncratically to delineate important notions. He uses hyphens to provide pauses, the meaning of which readers have to fill in by themselves. This form, while highly personal, is nevertheless dialogic as it invites the reader to participate. In this format the writer addresses the notions of an animal being part of a family and providing for it in a sustainable way. Yet the question of the exploitation of a domestic animal manifests itself in human betrayal of this relationship of reciprocity. Once not suitable for production of milk, the cow is slaughtered for its meat, skin and bones, thus laying bare the principle of self-interest in the human use of animals. To stress the fact of the cow being a member of the family, Rozanov lets us know that it came from a stock which historically belonged to his mother's family. Moreover, he stresses physical likeness between the cow and his mother. Yet the utilitarian killing of the cow emphasises the borderline between the treatment of humans and working animals. A human family betrays the principle of hospitality once the reciprocity in the chain of supply and exchange stops. An aged animal whose body gets an illness of the organ most exploited by humans—the udder—falls out of the domain of family obligations. Taking care of the aged in society does not include domestic and working animals. While Rozanov understands that a family's extreme poverty is a factor in the disposal of an animal, his story evokes many important themes of the relationship between humans and animals that have been identified by our contemporary ecological thinking (Hobgood-Oster, 2010; Korsgaard, 2009). The call to create sanctuaries for displaced or ‘retired’ animals is one such theme which current ecological ethics calls for and which is embedded in Rozanov's narrative. The main powerful question that the story asks is why the principle of looking after elders does not include animals. Rozanov's establishing the correlation between his mother and the family cow helps to dramatize the issue. Equally, his own (child's) mimetic reaction to the cow's collapsing is a manifestation of creaturely solidarity.

Rozanov clearly cannot find examples of warmth and love in the relations between humans and animals in his contemporary Russian family and society at large. Alternatively, ancient cultures provide him with the much desired, different examples of relationships with animals. He finds such fundamentally different relations in the culture of ancient Egypt. In his text *Deti Egipetskie* (Children of Egypt) (1917) he gives a provocative depiction of interspecies relations, based on studying drawings from Napoleon's expedition to Egypt and ancient historical sources in which he finds a statement by Herodotus: "Among other nations humans live separately from animals while Egyptians live with animals":

Там люди лежали в середочках между животными постарше и животными помоложе, между животными потяжелее себя и животными полегче себя. И в середочках им было «тепло-тепло». И они уж не знали, которые «ребятки» и девчонки родятся от них, а которые ребятки и девчонки родятся от коров, ягнят и свиней. И без семьи не воображали животных, как и себя (Розанов, 2002а, 87).

(There the human beings lay in the "middle places" between the animals that were a little older and those a little younger, between animals a little heavier than they were and those a little lighter. And in these "middle places" they were as warm as they could be. And now they did not know which male and female offspring were born of them and which were born of cows, lambs and pigs. And they did not imagine animals outside of the family as well as themselves.)

Rozanov juxtaposes the Western essentialist tradition with the perceived non-essentialist attitude to animals in ancient Egypt, noting a separation of human-animal essences as the source of hierarchical and discriminatory treatment of animals:

И они объединились с миром, не написав диссертаций «De rerum essentia», а нарисовав везде, что «essentia» всего мира одна, что нет многосущия, есть одно-сущие, едино-сущие. [...] Это-то и образует универсализм Египта (Розанов, 2002а, 87).

(And they united with the world without writing dissertations *De rerum essential*, but having depicted everywhere that the “essentia” of the whole world is one, there is no “multiplicity of essence,” but singularity of essence, mono-essence. [...] And it is precisely this that the universality of Egypt represents.)

A distinguishing feature of Rozanov’s creaturely thinking and poetics is his method of intertwining human and animal physicality. As with our contemporary eco-thinking, he links the well-being of humans and animals, and makes them interdependent on each other. The ancient Egyptian drawings provide him with examples of intimate zones of ties and contacts based on inter-species reciprocity and homology of essence. In his text “Istoricheskie kategorii” (Historical Categories) (1917), advancing the idea of alternative categorisations of species, he cites a description of a drawing:

Фараон сосет корову.  
Олень с рогами. Из рог—  
мужчина, и он держит олененка.  
Несут овец на руках (Розанов, 2002b, 249).

(Pharaoh sucks cow.  
A deer with horns. From the horn—  
[springs] A man, and he holds a baby-deer.  
[People] carry lambs in their arms.)

When Rozanov depicts a futuristic idyll, he promotes creaturely thinking by stressing reciprocal contacts with animals. In 1918, thinking of hunger and illness devastating Russia in the post-Revolutionary famine, he returns to his source of inspiration, human-animal contacts represented in ancient mythologies:

Я хотел бы быть Полифемом и пасти коз и овец, а молоко бы у них высасывал СОБСТВЕННЫМ РТОМ. Кстати, меня давно уже манит собственным ртом напиться у коровы молока, насосаться из вымени. Это так красиво. Именно — красиво. И, уверен, ужасно ЦЕЛЕБ-



НО. Это меня лет 12 манит. В старости в будущие лучшие времена будут давать родителям живую козу или корову для пососанья (Розанов, 1970, 545).

(I would like to be Polyphemus and to look after goats and sheep, and I would suck milk from them with MY OWN MOUTH. By the way, for a long time now I have been tempted to drink milk from the cow with my own mouth, to suck from her udder. It is so beautiful. Truly—beautiful. And I am quite sure, very HEALTHY. This thought has attracted me for twelve years. In the future, in better times, people will give their aged parents a live goat or a cow to suck from.)

Fittingly for Rozanov's religious and mythic underpinning of human-animal relations, in this passage he recalls that Polyphemus was dubbed a "Divine shepherd." For Rozanov, future relationships between species should be based on consent and reciprocity. Additionally, he promotes new aesthetics which sees beauty in human-animal alliances. Through this fantasized connection between human lips and animal udder, Rozanov breaks antithetical categories. He forms assemblages, at the same time envisioning a posthumanist futurity based on his understanding of the premodern cultural beliefs about inter-species communications. Notably, while thinking about the family of the future with its relations of care between children and aging parents, he includes domestic animals as part of the family. While he evokes ancient Greek mythology in the image of Polyphemus, this utopian family idyll also implicitly alludes to the ethics of the Torah regarding domestic animals. In Rozanov's visualization of the idyll, domestic animals are treated as part of the household, which is in line with the ethos that grants animals rest on the Sabbath.

## 5. Conclusion

Rozanov's texts present a case of creation of what Donna Haraway calls "other tropes, other metaplasms" in human-animal relationships (Haraway, 2003, 96). His thinking in deciphering the logic of ancient

views on God's protection of animals in the Scriptures or in drawings on ancient Egyptian artefacts moves in the posthumanist direction and by a century predates current scholarly arguments. His writing has strong relevance to the COVID-19 pandemic as it provides both sources and pointers on remedies for the crises in human–animal coexistence. It addresses the issues of distancing and separation, safe contact zones, domains as quasi-bubbles, and even the issues of economy of reciprocity in interspecies relationships. Most importantly, it pictures futurity based on a radical rethinking of human–animal relations. Characteristic for Rozanov's thinking is a vision of human–animal contacts that are safe because they are based on principles of emotional ties and reciprocity. His zones of contact with animals are safe in spite of and because they are based on individual and personal relations of loyalty, care and mutuality. Typically, all methods of industrial treatment of animals present examples of exploitation, abuse and cruelty. This cruelty in turn aetiologically relates to human-to-human violence. Domestic animals, including working animals, are treated as part of the family domain. They contribute to the economy of the family and this particular notion has a pragmatic appeal, much echoed in our current eco-thinking. (He never uses the word *skot*—beast, as in “beasts of burden.”) His thinking about zones of cross-species cohabitation and coexistence without fear of contamination are intentionally as provocative as posthumanist thinking is today. The connection Rozanov makes between family and animal abuse is similarly relevant to our contemporary research findings in the intersection between human–animal studies and studies of family violence which show that domestic animals, children and women suffer identical forms of mistreatment (Taylor, Fraser, 2019, 4). His monistic homologising of the human and animal body simultaneously explains violence and appeals against violence. His search for alternative and forgotten religious and cultural practices and beliefs is a strategy to provoke, educate and motivate change in thinking based on creaturely solidarity. For eco-writing to be effective, it needs to employ strategies similar to Rozanov's methods of using multicultural sources in search for multi-species solidarity. His writing teaches us to be critical rather than defensive of our own national, macro and micro cultures.

The new form of literature invented by Rozanov allows him to use syncretic sources effectively, appealing to the reader by eliciting his/her intellectual and emotional responses. The intensification of the narrative form parallels the intensity of the subject matter without the risk of losing the reader's attention. This short literary form articulates complex and sophisticated concepts in the highest degree of concentration without compromising clarity and focus. This narrative form is effective and affective because it allows a pause for thought, generated by profound and challenging ideas expressed in an intimate and personal chat-like form. As such his texts present an exemplary form of creaturely poetics.

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- **HENRIETTA MONDRY**—professor of Russian in the Department of Global, Cultural and Languages Studies and a Professor in English at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She is a fellow of the New Zealand Royal Society and a member of the New Zealand Centre for Human–Animal Studies. She is the author of twelve books, and over a hundred articles and book chapters. Her research interests include literature and cultural history. Her latest books include *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Russian Culture* (2015) and *Embodied Differences: The Jew's Body and Materiality in Russian Literature and Culture* (2021).

