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Squirrels as Traffic Lights: Human–Non-human Tropes in the Kola Sámi Writer Oktiabrina Voronova's Poetry[1]

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Introduction

This article discusses manifestations of nature-centeredness in the 1980s work of Kola Sámi poet Oktiabrina Voronova (1934–1990). Particular attention is paid to metaphorical language on the boundaries between the human and non-human, such as personification and tropes, which are the essence of Voronova's nature poetry.[2] "Nature-centeredness" and "nature poetry" in this article indicate that non-human nature is at the core of Voronova's poetry, her texts conveying a notion of a reciprocal relationship between the human and non-human. Theoretically and methodologically, the article contributes to discussions within ecocritical literary studies on the meanings that rhetorical devices may have in the construction of nature relations in fiction.[3] Another important context is the study of Nordic Sámi literature, in which very little attention has been paid to Sámi literature written on the Russian side, presumably owing to the language barrier. Of particular interest in this respect is the way in which nature tropes may be employed to articulate the experience of changes that have taken place in the Kola Sámi people's ways of life during the twentieth century and their future horizon. Voronova's work has previously only been

1 I am grateful to the Kone Foundation (project *Northern Neighbours: Environment and Modernisation in the Literatures of the Russian Arctic Area*) for its generous support of my research, and the Faculty and Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, for kindly providing facilities to conduct my research as a visiting scholar in Autumn 2022. I also wish to thank *Acta Slavica Iaponica*'s two anonymous reviewers for their generous comments, which were very helpful in improving the article.

2 Tropes are figures of speech in which a word or an expression is used in a way different from its usual or familiar meaning. A trope therefore involves a semantic shift, which is manifested in different ways in its different forms, such as metaphor, metonymy, or synecdoche. Personification, commonly defined as a subgenre of metaphor, explicitly concerns the semantic shift between the human and non-human—for example, the representation of something abstract, non-animate, or non-human in human form. See Elizabeth Fowler, "Personification," in Roland Greene et al., eds., *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 1025–1026. In inverted personification, often referred to as zoomorphism, a parallel process takes place in the opposite direction.

3 See Bryan L. Moore, *Ecology and Literature: Ecocentric Personification from Antiquity to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Scott Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

studied in Russia, where the research has often focused on her oeuvre's folkloric and mythological elements.[4] Thus, this article aims to bring her work into the sphere of anglophone literary studies, especially in the field of Sámi literature.

In what follows, I first provide a background for the article by outlining the history and current situation of Kola Sámi literature in relation to Nordic Sámi literature and research. I then introduce Oktiabrina Voronova and her work, focusing on its nature-centeredness, and provide some perspectives for discussion on poetic tropes within ecocritical studies. As a case study, I examine two main categories of nature tropes in Voronova's texts: on one hand, their forest-related imagery, and on the other hand, their animal imagery. The article concludes with a discussion on Voronova's nature metaphors and their potentially ethnopolitic or environmentalist discourses.

Kola Sámi Literature

The Kola Sámi are an Indigenous ethnic minority of less than 2,000 people. Most of them live in the Murmansk region (Murmanskaia oblast') in the Kola Peninsula, which is situated in the European Far North of the Russian Federation close to the Finnish and Norwegian borders. As a result of large-scale colonization and labor migration during the Soviet era, the Murmansk region is now home to almost one million people, representing more than one hundred different ethnic groups, of which the Kola Sámi are one of the smallest (0.2%). They are also a small minority within the overall Sámi population, with between 50,000 and 100,000 people living in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and

4 See, in particular, V. B. Bakula, *Mifo-fol'klornye istoki literatury rossiiskikh saamov* (Murmansk: MAGU, 2020). The existing research focusing on Voronova consists of conference papers by researchers and students at the Murmansk Arctic State University (MAGU) on various motifs in the poet's work, such as home, sun, fire, and land. See L. T. Panteleeva, "Vse na svete imeet svoi golos i zvuk. Tema doma v lirike saamskoi poetessy O. Voronovoi," *Vestnik Barents-tsentra MGPI* 2 (2002), pp. 73–82; A. K. Filippova and V. B. Bakula "Tema prirody i obraz solntsa v sbornike O. Voronovoi 'Snezhnitsa'," in E. N. Kvasiuk, ed., *Molodaia nauka Zapolaria: materialy naucho-prakticheskoi konferentsii studentov i magistrantov Sotsial'no-gumanitarnogo instituta MAGU* (Murmansk: MAGU, 2019), pp. 103–107; A. K. Filippova, "Obraz ognia v sbornike O. Voronovoi 'Snezhnitsa'," in O. V. Pozhidaeva, ed., *XVIII Maslovskie chteniia. Sbornik nauchnykh stat'ei* (Murmansk: MAGU, 2020), pp. 58–62. Conference proceedings discussing Voronova's work from a cognitive-linguistic perspective have also been published; see D. S. Zgazinskaia and O. G. Zgazinskaia, "Tsvetosvetovye obrazy v lirike Oktiabriny Voronovoi," in N. A. Shevchenko, ed., *XIX Maslovskie chteniia: sbornik nauchnykh stat'ei* (Murmansk: MAGU, 2021), pp. 62–67; D. S. Zgazinskaia, "Peizazhnye obrazy Krainego Severa (po sborniku stikhotvorenii "Pole zhizni" O. V. Voronovoi)," in N. A. Shevchenko, ed., *Problemy kontseptualizatsii deistvitel'nosti i modelirovaniia iazikovoi kartiny mira: sbornik nauchnykh trudov* 10 (Moskva–Severodvinsk–Kirov: Mezhregional'nyi tsentr innovatsionnykh tekhnologii v obrazovanii, 2021), pp. 288–300. For a comprehensive overview of Kola Sámi literature in general, see V. B. Bakula, *Literatura kol'skikh saamov* (Murmansk: MAGU, 2022).

Russia. Originally, the Kola Sámi inhabited the entire area that today forms the Murmansk region; however, owing to the Soviet forced relocations that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, most of them now live in population centres such as Lovozero (Lujavv'r in Kildin Sámi), the largest Sámi settlement in Russia.[5] Traditionally, four languages belonging to the Eastern Sámi language group have been spoken on the Kola Peninsula: Kildin Sámi, Skolt Sámi, Ter Sámi, and the already extinct Akkala Sámi. At present, only a small number of Kola Sámi are active speakers of their own languages, and all the existing three Sámi languages spoken in the Russian Federation are highly endangered. Only the strongest among them, Kildin Sámi, seems to have at least some chance of escaping extinction.[6]

The history and current situation of Kola Sámi literature is inextricably linked to the history of the development of Sámi literary language, based on Kildin Sámi, and the language policy of the Soviet Union. In the early stages of the Soviet Union, literary languages were created for the northern Indigenous peoples, and their literatures were maintained as part of a wider policy concerning indigenous languages, literatures, and cultures (*korenizatsiia*, or indigenization).[7] Initially, a Latin alphabet was developed for Kildin Sámi, and in the 1930s, educational materials and translations of Russian and ideological literature were published in that language, including the first Kildin Sámi primer, compiled by the linguist Zakharii Cherniakov and his Sámi students in 1933. In 1937, as the political climate changed, a new Cyrillic alphabet was created. This has been seen as a manifestation of Stalin's policy of Russification and a bridge to the later Russian-language development of the Kola Sámi. From the late 1930s to the 1960s, no literature in Sámi was published in the

5 Elisabeth Scheller, "Kola Sami Language Revitalization: Opportunities and Challenges," in Kajsa Andersson, ed., *L'Image du Sápmi II: études comparées* (Örebro: Örebro University, 2013), p. 393; Florian Siegl and Michael Riessler, "Uneven Steps to Literacy: The History of the Dolgan, Forest Enets and Kola Sámi Literary Languages," in Heiko F. Marten, Michael Riessler, Janne Saarikivi, and Reetta Toivanen, eds., *Cultural and Linguistic Minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union* (Cham: Springer, 2015), pp. 192–196.

6 A study conducted by Elisabeth Scheller in 2007–2008 shows that about 800 people in Russia at that time knew the Kildin Sámi language at some level. However, already back then, the active speakers were only about 100, that is, speakers who spoke Kildin Sámi fluently as their first or second language and used it continuously in different contexts (Elisabeth Scheller, "Situatsiia saamskikh iazykov v Rossii," *Nauka i biznes na Murmane* 69, no. 2 (2010), pp. 18–19). In 2020, there remained altogether 120 Kildin Sámi speakers, 84% of whom were elderly people over 60 (V. B. Bakula, A. V. Koreneva and T. A. Rychkova, "Otnoshenie rossiiskikh saami k izucheniu rodnogo iazyka," *Sovremennye naukoemkie tekhnologii* 8 (2022), pp. 109–110. As for the smaller Eastern Sámi languages, in 2013, about 20 people had some knowledge of the Skolt Sámi language in Russia, and two Ter Sámi speakers actively used the language (Scheller, "Kola Sami Language Revitalization: Opportunities and Challenges," p. 396).

7 See e.g. Lenore Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003); Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 221–225.

Soviet Union, and Sámi languages were not taught in schools. A new phase of language and cultural revival arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, when, among other things, a Kildin Sámi grammar was written, and teaching materials were again published.[8] The last years of perestroika also saw the emergence of literature in Sámi, with Oktiabrina Voronova publishing her bilingual collection *Ialla* ("Life," 1989) in Ter Sámi and Russian. Since Ter Sámi does not have its own writing system, Voronova used the Kildin Sámi alphabet, which had been revised several times in the 1980s, as her basis.[9]

However, most Kola Sámi literature is written in Russian or Kildin Sámi. For example, Askol'd Bazhanov (1934–2012), who, along with Voronova, is the most important Kola Sámi author to date, wrote and published his entire oeuvre in Russian. Bazhanov's father was a Russian and his mother a Skolt Sámi. In his childhood, he understood spoken Sámi, even though at home the family spoke Russian; however, as an adult, he could only recall some phrases in Skolt Sámi.[10] Presently, many Kola Sámi writers publish both in Russian and Kildin Sámi. Since the 1980s, between 30 and 40 separate works have been published in the latter language, often with a small number of pages. Most literature written in Kildin Sámi is aimed at children and adolescents and consists of fairy tales, stories, and poems, often with a link to native folklore. It is frequently published in Norway by Dávvi Girji, a publishing house specializing in Sámi issues.[11] Adult literature is mainly written in Russian. Traditionally, the main genre has been lyrical, often autobiographical poetry, but today's Kola Sámi literature also includes short stories, novellas, and novels.[12] All in all, despite the small number of Kola Sámi, the diversity of Sámi literature written in the Russian Federation is remarkable.

In many ways, Kola Sámi literature is related to the wider tradition of Sámi literature in the Nordic countries, which has been significantly influenced by the possibility of using these countries' own written languages. Thematically, Sámi literature has traditionally been associated with nature, native mythology, and folklore. In particular, the Nordic Sámi song tradition—or *yoik* in its various forms—has influenced poetry, which is the most central genre of Sámi literature in general. Furthermore, Sámi literature in both Nordic countries and Russia can be described as transnational or transcultural writing, characterized

8 Siegl and Riessler, "Uneven Steps," pp. 203–207.

9 For the revisions as well as the problems caused by the different writing systems of Kildin Sámi, see V. B. Bakula, "Neskol'ko pismennykh traditsii kildinsaamskogo iazyka kak snovnaia problema ego sokhraneniia i prepodavaniia," *Pedagogicheskyi IMIDZH* 47, no. 2 (2020), pp. 146–160.

10 Bakula, *Literatura kol'skikh saamov*, p. 37; N. P. Bol'shakova, "K neizvestnym faktam istorii saamskoi literatury: pisal li Bazhanov na rodnom iazyke?," in N. A. Shevchenko and V. B. Bakula, eds., *XIX Maslovskie chteniia: Sbornik nauchnykh statei (*Murmansk: MAGU, 2021), p. 99.

11 Michael Riessler, "Kola Sámi Literature (Kildin Sámi, Ter Sámi, Akkala Sámi)," in *A Writing Hand Reaches Further* (Helsinki: Culture for All Service, 2018), p. 75.

12 See Bakula, *Literatura kol'skikh saamov*, pp. 35–41.

by the crossing of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or nation-state boundaries and the authors' bilingual or multilingual nature.[13] The Kola Sámi have received a Russian-language education and are largely assimilated, both culturally and linguistically, into the mainstream population. The influence of the oral tradition and folklore is visible in their literature, but so is the impact of Russian, Soviet, and world literature. This is further underlined by the fact that several Kola Sámi writers—especially those of the older generation—were trained as teachers of Russian language and literature.

While Sámi literature in Russia has much in common with Sámi literature in Nordic countries, many factors distinguish these literatures as they have developed in different linguistic, cultural, and social contexts, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century. During the last century, efforts have also been made to assimilate Sámi into the mainstream population in the Nordic countries, and the Sámi languages spoken in Norway, Sweden, and Finland have seriously suffered from the consequences of monolingual education policies that prevailed in these countries earlier on. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, the rights of Sámi in the Nordic countries have been supported in a different way than in the Soviet Union and Russian Federation. This development has been significantly influenced by the Nordic Pan-Sámi movement since the 1970s. Today, the Sámi languages in the Nordic countries have an official status in the native regions and their own higher education institutions and administrative bodies.[14]

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13 Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, "The Multilingual Landscape of Sámi Literature: Linguistic and Cultural Border Crossing in the Work of Sigbjørn Skåden," in Heidi Grönstrand, Markus Huss and Ralf Kauranen, eds., *The Aesthetics and Politics of Linguistic Borders: Multilingualism in Northern European Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 88; Hanna-Leena Nissilä, "Sanassa maahanmuuttaja on vähän kitkerä jälkimaku," *Kirjallisen elämän ylirajaistuminen 2000-luvun alun Suomessa* (Oulu: Oulu University, 2016), p. 31.

14 Florian Siegl and Michael Riessler ("Uneven Steps," in *Cultural and Linguistic Minorities*, pp. 192–196, 224–225) provide a useful comparison of the situation of the Kildin Sámi language with that of Skolt Sámi, which is spoken almost exclusively in Finland. These languages are easily comparable thanks to similarities in their early literary development. The revival of both languages and the development of their written languages started anew in the 1970s, and at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union, their future looked quite promising. Today, however, the position of Skolt Sámi is considerably stronger. The reasons for this development are several, including the involvement of the Skolt Sámi in Nordic Pan-Sámi activism, which has been followed by continuous support from the Finnish state for the revitalization work of Skolt Sámi since the early 1990s. Today, Skolt Sámi is one of the official languages of Inari municipality and is taught in kindergartens, schools, and courses for adults. In comparison, institutional revitalization work with the Kildin Sámi language, which was initiated in the 1970s and 1980s, came to an end at the turn of the 1990s, when in connection with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the existing institutional structures were reorganized. Since then, the teaching and use of the language have been dependent on the interests and goodwill of the local authorities and, unlike Skolt Sámi in Finland, have not been the subject of determined and sustained support.

Sámi literature in the Nordic countries has a much longer history than Sámi literature written in the Soviet Union and Russia. Pioneers of Sámi literature such as as Matti Aikio, Elsa Laula, and Johan Turi published their work at the beginning of the twentieth century, that is, about 60–70 years before Askol'd Bazhanov's first publications in Russian.[15] Another substantial difference is that Nordic Sámi literature is more often written in Sámi languages. The Kola Sámi were able to take part in the Pan-Sámi movement only during glasnost and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Nordic Sámi literature was already flourishing. In 1991, famous Sámi writer Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943–2001), who wrote in Northern Sámi, was awarded the most prestigious literary award in the Nordic countries: the Nordic Council Literary Prize. Therefore, discourses associated with ethnopolitical, postcolonial, or environmental issues that have figured prominently in Nordic Sámi literature from an early stage play only a minor role in Sámi literature published in the Soviet Union and Russia. Kola Sámi literature is also less experimental and more conventional in nature than, for example, Northern Sámi lyric poetry. This is likely related not only to the different cultural and historical contexts but also to the fact that a minority of less than 2,000 people can only produce a limited number of writers and literature—a reality that marks Kola Sámi literature in a fundamental way.

Oktiabrina Voronova and Her Nature-centered Poetry

As an educated woman who published in two languages and made her main career as a teacher and librarian, Oktiabrina Voronova was, in many ways, a typical Soviet Sámi writer. She was born in the village of Chal'mny-Varre, one of the Sámi settlements that were closed in the 1960s as part of the Soviet policy of centralization in the Kola Peninsula. Voronova's father was an ethnically Russian Pomor. Her mother, Klavdia Matrekhina, was a Ter Sámi who served as an informant for Sámi language research at the Kola Peninsula in the 1960s–1970s. She is known as the last Ter Sámi *luvt* singer.[16] Voronova was trained as a teacher of Russian language and literature at the Institute of the People of the North (Institut narodov Severa) at Herzen Pedagogical University in Leningrad. The institute was founded in the 1920s in the days of indigenization, and it was a key educational pathway for northern Indigenous peoples in the Soviet Union.[17] Voronova hence represents the Soviet Sámi

15 Matti Aikio's first novel *Kong Akab* (in Norwegian; "King Akab") and Elsa Laula's *Inför lif eller död? Sanningsord i de lappska förhållandena* (in Swedish; "Facing Life or Death? Words of Truth in the Lappish Context") came out in 1904, and Johan Turi's *Muitalus sámiid birra* (in Northern Sámi; *An Account of the Sámi*) was published in 1910.

16 The *luvt* is the general term for Kola Sámi traditional song, focusing on life stories of Sámi individuals that may also intersect with historical events. Chants are typically presented in first-person narration.

17 Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, pp. 180–183, 220–221.

intelligentsia that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. She was involved in Sámi language research when resuming linguistic fieldwork after an interval of two decades became possible during the Thaw. She contributed to publishing scientific works and assisted, for example, the writer, translator, and teacher Aleksandra Antonova (1932–2014) in creating a Kildin Sámi textbook in the 1980s.[18] Voronova's sister, the poet Iraida Vinogradova (1936–2004), also compiled scientific publications, and their younger sister, Tamara Matrekhina (1941–1977), was a linguist.[19] Voronova worked as a teacher of Russian language and literature in Lovozero and later as a librarian in the smaller town of Revda.

Voronova wrote for children and young people as well as for adults. From the late 1970s, her poems, legends, and fairytales were published in literary journals and anthologies, and four separate volumes came out during her lifetime: *Snezhnitsa* ("Snow Water," 1986), *Vol'naia ptitsa* ("A Free Bird," 1987), *Chakhli* ("The Gnome," 1988), and *Ialla* (1989). Several posthumously published collections contain previously published texts.[20] Apart from *Ialla*, all collections were published in Russian: the collections published during Voronova's lifetime were based on her own draft translations, which she apparently prepared for publication together with Murmansk writer and translator Vladimir Smirnov.[21]

A striking feature of Voronova's poetry is its overwhelming naturecenteredness, which characterizes Sámi literature in general. However, Voronova's focus on nature does not mean presenting nature as an entity separate from the cultural environment or as a pure natural environment. Rather, the landscape depicted in her texts often shows—implicitly or ex-plicitly—the imprint left on it by human beings. On one hand, the human presence can be unmarked, as, for example, when Voronova describes a natural landscape where her ancestors have interacted with nature for hundreds of years without leaving a visible trace. However, such invisible signs can also convey the experience of the continuity of generations in the same landscape, as has been observed in relation to Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's and Askol'd Bazhanov's poetry.[22] On the other hand, the imprint may be more explicit—for example, such as

18 Nadezhda Bol'shakova, *Oktiabrina. Povestvovanie o pervoi saamskoi poetessoi Oktiabrine Voronovoi* (Murmansk: Opimakh, 2012), pp. 32, 34–35.

19 Ibid., pp. 31–32.

20 The posthumous compilation *Khochu ostatsia na zemle* ("I Wish to Stay on the Earth," 1995) is the most complete collection of Voronova's poems. All citations in the article are from this collection.

21 Bol'shakova, *Oktiabrina*, pp. 60–61.

22 Hanna Mattila, "Ekologisten ja kolonisaatiokriittisten äänten kohtaamisia. Näkökulmia luontosuhteen kuvaamiseen Nils-Aslak Valkeapään runoudessa," *Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen aikakauslehti AVAIN* 3 (2015), p. 72; Tintti Klapuri, "The Landscape of Longing and Belonging: Temporality in the Kola Sami Writer Askold Bazhanov's Poetry," *Journal of Northern Studies* 16, no. 2 (2024), pp. 9–32.

when an aeroplane appears among the clouds that have been personified as the lyrical subject's ancestors,[23] or when the mountains that have been depicted metonymically as the Earth's hands are told to supply loparite for industry, as in the poem "Gory" ("The Fells," 1986): "[...] The fells are austere near and far. / Smoke floats above the snowy peaks. / And it seems to me / They are the palms of the Earth, / Giving us the mineral / Loparite."[24]

In other words, in Voronova's poetry, Kola nature is not presented as virgin territory but through an awareness of the presence of twentieth-century modernization in the Soviet Arctic. In this sense, her texts may be informed by an understanding of the massive ecological changes that took place in the peninsula particularly during the Soviet rule, such as the displacement of Sámi settlements in favor of hydroelectric power plants.[25] However, these changes are not reflected in her texts as such but through their consequences for the Sámi living environment and their traditional way of life. Modernization is often viewed neutrally or even sympathetically: for example, the poem "Gory," cited above, conveys a certain sense of pride in the contribution of the Kola fells to the common good. As I argue later, texts dealing with changes that have taken place in the Sámi way of life show that the relationship between the cultural and natural environment is not entirely unproblematic in Voronova's writing.

Furthermore, Voronova's poetry is characterized by the representation of human and non-human nature in a mutually interdependent relationship that has been viewed as characteristic of Sámi and indigenous ontology in general.[26] This reciprocity may be rendered in an explicit manner, urging humans to act to preserve the symbiotic relationship, in which case the texts may acquire conservationist elements. An example of this kind of didactic nature poem is "Zemlia" ("The Earth," 1988). The poem emphasizes the symbiosis between

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23 Oktiabrina Voronova, *Khochu ostatsia na zemle* (Murmansk: Murmanskaia oblastnaia nauchnaia biblioteka, 1995), p. 158.

24 [...]
Горы высятся строги вблизи и вдали.
Над вершинами снежными дымка парит.
И мне кажется:
Это — ладони земли,
Отдающие нам минерал —
лопарит.

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 35. All translations from Russian are the author's, unless otherwise stated.

25 On the environmental history of the Kola Peninsula in the twentieth century, see, in particular, Andy Bruno, *The Nature of Soviet Power: An Arctic Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

26 See Anne Heith, *Experienced Geographies and Alternative Realities: Representing Sápmi and Meänmaa* (Göteborg–Stockholm: Makadam, 2020), pp. 22–23.

northern nature and northern people and sets forward a view according to which the earth's protection is the measure of our humanity. The poem describes a situation in which the grandmother of the lyrical I has accidentally kicked a piece of lichen off a stone, thus damaging the relationship between humans and nature:

> Grandmother Anis'ia told me
> How she had ridden by reindeer
> The trail of the sled stretched behind it.
> Suddenly a loud voice was heard
> From below, beneath the grass:
> —Why do you ride so carelessly?
> You've kicked my hat off.
> Come back and fix it.
>
> She looks and it is true:
> The lichen has been knocked off the stone,
> as though with a harrow, torn to pieces.
> If you leave it like that, there will be no more berries.
> [...][27]

Nature-centeredness is also present on the poem's rhetorical level as the stone with the lost hat is personified as an agent capable of a dialogue on an equal footing with humans, even being the more active party. The most interesting dimension of Voronova's nature poetry is the way in which it constantly intertwines human and non-human nature at a linguistic level. This is done by, among other things, personification: in the poems, the stones speak; the fells are the lyrical subject's brothers, and the lake is covered with a warm blanket of snow.[28]

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27 Рассказывала бабушка Анисья,
Как на оленях ехала она.
Тянулся за упряжкой след керёжный.
Вдруг громкий голос
Снизу, из-под трав:
— Зачем ты ездишь так неосторожно?
Ты сбила шапку мне.
Вернись, поправь.

Глядит – и правда:
Сбитый с камень ягель,
Как бороной, разодран на куски.
Оставишь так — не будет больше ягод.
[...]

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 126.

28 Voronova, *Khochu*, pp. 131, 188.

Human–Non-human Tropes: Personification and Zoomorphism

In the context of Sámi literature, the animation of natural elements can be seen in connection with nature religion and animism, where natural objects such as stones are believed to have a soul. Traditionally, the Sámi environment has consisted of two levels: on one hand, the physical, visible ecological reality; on the other, the pervasive, "inwardly seen" mythical landscape in the landmarks of nature and in people's minds.[29] The poem "Zemlia" discussed above is a good example of the presence of a mythical layer in Voronova's poetry. Because of the spirit that dwells in stones, the tradition did not allow peat to be removed from the top of a stone unless, in return, it was covered again.[30] Viktoriia Bakula, who examines Voronova's work from the point of view of its mythological and folkloric elements, sees the central element of animation in the poet's work as reflecting the Sámi nature-centered worldview.[31]

However, such animation is not a characteristic of Sámi or Indigenous literature alone as rhetorical devices that combine the human and non-human, such as personification, have a long tradition in Western literature. In the poetry of the Romantic period, where this elision culminated, personification was used to represent the human condition in allegorical form; in this sense, personification typical of the Romantic period can be seen as anthropocentric humanization.[32] In later, post-Romantic literary history, personification and forms of animation that go with it have often been seen as an old-fashioned, automated trope or, following Ernst Cassirer, as a phase of humanity following mythical thinking, which has since been replaced by rational thought.[33] However, in the realm of nature and environmental poetry, where personification is often used to convey a sense of the intrinsic value of the object depicted rather than used allegorically, the trope has retained a solid position in the twenty-first century.[34] Voronova's texts—like many other texts in Sámi literature—can be considered nature poetry owing to their strong focus on nature, and at times, they may also take on the characteristics of ecologically conscious environmental poetry.

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29 Juha Pentikäinen, *Saamelaisten mytologia* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2018), p. 162.

30 T. I. Itkonen, "Suomen lappalaisten haltijausko," *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* 25–26 (1946), p. 127; T. I. Itkonen, *Suomen lappalaiset vuoteen 1945 I–II* (Porvoo–Helsinki: WSOY, 1948), II, p. 321.

31 Bakula, *Mifo-fol'klornye istoki,* p. 86.

32 Moore, *Ecology and Literature*, pp. 37–38.

33 See Fowler, "Personification," pp. 1025–1026.

34 Moore, *Ecology and Literature*, pp. 13, 186–192, 198.

In metaphor studies, animation has been seen as a form of verbalization characteristic of human beings. It is said to guide all human thinking and is constantly present in our everyday reality. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors largely shape and structure "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day."[35] In Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor, personification is inherent in the way human beings perceive the world around them.[36] As observed by Bryan L. Moore and Scott Knickerbocker, who have studied nature-centered personification—particularly in American nature poetry and environmental writing—the notion of metaphor as a central structuring element of human reality moves tropes such as personification from the margins of literature to its center. Metaphoricity inherent in human thought also means that the animation of nature is specific to us as a species, and therefore, personification of the non-human should not be regarded as an inherently anthropocentric manifestation, as has sometimes been the case.[37] Moreover, from this point of view, by personifying the non-human, poetry can give otherness a voice that it otherwise lacks.[38]

Personification is the most frequent nature trope in Voronova's texts, often combined with other tropes and figures such as metaphors, allegories, similes, and apostrophes when natural elements are addressed as persons.[39] Another common trope connecting the human and non-human is zoomorphism. For example, the poem "Vse prokhodit" ("Everything Passes," 1986), which depicts a mother soothing her small daughter, largely portrays the growth of a young woman using nature metaphors:

—I want
You to be healthy,
To grow like a young forest,
Your voice to ring out on the home porch
Like a brook

35 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 3.

36 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 72.

37 Moore, *Ecology and Literature*, p. 41; Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics*, pp. 4–6.

38 Moore, *Ecology and Literature*, p. 11.

39 Apostrophe is a phenomenon close to personification. It refers, in particular, to addressing an entity that cannot hear the speech addressed to it. It could, for example, be a non-living creature, animal, or dead person. Sometimes apostrophe refers to addressing in general. See William Waters, *Poetry's Touch: On Lyric Address* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 3.

[...]
You will be like a frisky little deer
In the summer tundra you'll gain strength.[40]

Zoomorphism is not as common as personification, especially in earlier literature. However, more recently—perhaps following criticism of anthropomorphism—it has become more widespread as a literary device and has entered the debate on the human and non-human in literary studies. Thus, zoomorphism refers specifically to the semantic shift between a non-human animal and a human being and does not cover the movement between the rest of nature and human beings nor, for example, between different species. Multimorphism has been proposed as an alternative concept that would cover the rather common representation of the human in Voronova's poetry as a tree, forest, or stream.[41]

The Forest and Animals as Human–Non-human Tropes in Voronova's Poetry

The most important images of nature in Sámi literature are the sun and imagery of the earth in its various forms. Solar symbolism is prominently present in Eastern Sámi storytelling and fairytales, such as "Solntse svataet nevestu svoemu synu Peival'ke" ("The Sun is Wooing a Bride for his Son Peival'ke").[42] They derive from Sámi mythology, where the sun is usually understood as

40 — Я хочу,
Чтоб ты была здорова,
Чтоб росла, как молодой лесок,
Чтобы днями у крыльца родного
Ручейком звенел твой голосок.
[...]
Будешь, словно резвый олененок,
В летней тундре набираться сил.

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 31.

41 In her analysis of the metaphor of breathing in contemporary Finnish nature poetry, Karoliina Lummaa observes that multimorphism as a rhetorical device can also be seen to explore the limits of what humanity can mean. The poems she analyzes evoke an awareness of an ecological interconnection between breathing and photosynthesizing human, animal and plant bodies, and breathing and machines. Karoliina Lummaa, "Lungs and Leaves: Ecosystemic Imaginaries and the Thematics of Breathing in Finnish Environmental Poetry," in Amelie Björck, Claudia Lindén and Ann-Sofie Lönngren, eds., *Squirrelling: Human-Animal Studies in the Northern European Region* (Huddinge: Södertorns högskola, 2022), pp. 186–187.

42 V. V. Charnoluskii, *Saamskie skazki* (Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi literatury: Moskva, 1962), pp. 19–24. Charnoluskii's collection contains several fairytales about the Sun and Moon.

a paternal figure and the earth as a maternal figure.[43] The concept of the sun as father and Sámi as sons of the sun is rooted in a myth recorded in the epic poem "The Son of the Sun's Courtship in the Land of Giants" by South Sámi poet Andreas Fjellner (1795–1876), based on oral tradition.[44] In Kola Sámi poetry, solar symbolism is particularly strong in the work of the Skolt Sámi writer Bazhanov, especially in his debut collection *Solntse nad tundroi* ("The Sun over the Tundra," 1983).

"Mother Earth," understood as a nurturing mother, is a universal figure that has been widely used in Indigenous identity discourse. It is markedly present, for example, in the poetry collection *Eanni, eannážan* ("Earth, my mother," 2001) by the Northern Sámi poet Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, in which the earth's motherliness is strongly linked to the harmonious relationship with nature that is viewed as characteristic of Indigenous peoples.[45] The understanding of the earth as a feminine mother figure is not only specific to Indigenous cultures but plays a central role, for example, in Russian-language culture, a context that is relevant for Kola Sámi literature. Here, the universal symbolism of Mother Earth is crystallized in the figure of Mother Russia (*Matushka-Rossiia*)—a concept nowadays more likely to refer to the nation-state or Russian cultural heritage. The symbol has its roots in Russia's traditional agrarian society, where the land that provided sustenance was called mother (*matushka zemlia*) and other elements of the land, such as rivers, were also often given feminine epithets (*matushka Volga, matushka Don*).[46]

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43 For differences between Western and Eastern solar myths, see Jelena Sergejeva, "The Sun as Father of the Universe in the Kola and Skolt Sami Tradition," in Juha Pentikäinen, Harald Gaski, Vuokko Hirvonen, Jelena Sergejeva and Krister Stoor, eds., *Sami Folkloristics* (Åbo: Nordic Network of Folklore, 2000), pp. 237–238.

44 Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, "Äitimyyttejä ja äitisubjekteja. Sukupuolen ja kansallisuuden representaatio saamelaisessa lyriikassa," *Kulttuurintutkimus* 30, no. 4 (2013), p. 18; Heith, *Experienced Geographies*, pp. 46–47.

45 Ahvenjärvi, "Äitimyyttejä ja äitisubjekteja," p. 19–20. As Ahvenjärvi also reminds us, the romanticized notion of Indigenous peoples' special relationship with the land has been criticized within Indigenous studies, which have argued that Indigenous peoples may exploit nature in the same way as other peoples.

46 Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. xiii–xiv. Investigating the ways in which Voronova's use of tropes might reflect the connection between her texts with the Sámi tradition on one hand and the Russian literary tradition on the other is not possible within the scope of this article, but such an examination of Kola Sámi poets writing at the intersection of the two cultures could prove fruitful. Furthermore, with respect to Russian-language literature, taking into account the influence of linguistic features on gendered imagery is also essential: for example, earth (*zemlia*), river (*reka*), winter (*zima*) and spring (*vesna*), which are often personified as feminine in poetry, are also grammatically feminine forms. On winter imagery and the feminine form, see Otto Boele, *The North in Russian Romantic Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 98–100.

In Voronova's poetry, the earth is often manifested as the forest or trees, which are given personalized features. Personifying the forest is common in poetry in general. This is linked to the human-like form of trees, as a result of which the language describing trees and people shows many similarities.[47] Furthermore, in various mythologies, trees are often associated with femininity and fertility.[48] The reciprocal use of these categories—depicting people as trees and trees as people—continues to link people and trees closely together. What is striking about Voronova's imagery of the earth is the way in which the personified forest or other earth-related elements are often presented as humanized agents. The forest is usually gentle and friendly—it hugs one or whispers good words. Sometimes, the forest may speak in a concrete way, as in the short poem "Tuman" ("The Cloud," 1988), where the pine trees talk to the fog:

> On a winter's morning the cloud
> Lay over the mountain, over the forest
> And hung crystal beads
> On the pine trees.
>
> And the trees stand
> And tinkle with their crystal:
> —Are we beautiful?
> —Well of course, very beautiful!...[49]

In Voronova, the imagery of the forest is often associated with femininity and fertility in the sense of the continuation or spreading of the family. The motif of the forest—and especially the pine tree—in depicting the stages of a woman's life is a recurring one. In the poem "Vse prokhodit" discussed above, a young girl's growth is equated with the planting and growth of a young forest until she is finally ready to fulfil her role as a mother.[50] In the poem

47 Lummaa, "Lungs and Leaves," p. 185; Maarit Soukka, "Puut mielen ja kielen maisemassa. Lyriikan puut osana 1950-luvun modernismikeskustelua," *Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen lehti AVAIN* 2 (2022), p. 17.

48 See e.g. R. P. Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).

49 Зимним утром туман
Над горою прошел, по-над лесом
И хрустальные бусы
Сосенкам гусым понавесил

И стоят деревца
И звенят хрусталем что есть силы:
— Ах, красивы ли мы?
— Ну, конечно же, очень красивы!...

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 98.

50 Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 31.

"Sosenka (Rasskaz babushki)" ("The Pine Tree [Grandmother's Tale]," 1988), the grandmother describes the stages of her life as growing from a sapling by a stream into a large tree that reaches for the sky and has taken over the course of her lifelong care of the men in the family, one after the other.[51]

Forest imagery can also be linked to the whole region through the generations. For example, the autobiographical poem "Otchii krai" ("The Ancestral Land," 1988) addresses the different villages of the Kola Peninsula in which the lyrical subject has lived—Lovozero, Varzino, Sosnovka, and Chal'mny-Varre. What is noteworthy in this poem is the continuation and spreading of the family, described metaphorically as the planting of the pine tree and its seedlings, which have been growing until recently. In the final apostrophic stanzas of the poem, in which the lyrical subject addresses the trees of her native region, the forest takes on a dimension that is perhaps even wider than that of her own family, relating to the Kola Sámi people, as Voronova imagines the peninsula on the scale of the entire planet:

> Grow, grow green
> Grieve in your hour of need.
> Let tales of you
> Walk on the planet.
>
> Let your hearts be bound
> To the peace of your native home
> As your roots are fused
> To the earth
> Until the end.[52]

Jonathan Culler has stressed the dialogical and communicative nature of apostrophe as a rhetorical device. Whereas, for example, the process of personifying nature might be understood to objectify its recipient, the function of apostrophe as a trope does not concern the meaning of the word but the communicative situation.[53] As Culler writes, in addressing its object, the

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51 Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 104.

52 Растите, зеленейте
Печалясь в трудный час.
Пусть ходят по планете
Сказания о вас.

Пусть к отчему покою
Привяжутся сердца,
Как слиты ваши корни
С землею
До конца.

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 128.

53 Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophe," *Diacritics* 7, no. 4 (1977), p. 59.

apostrophe's function "would be to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces: forces which can be asked to act or refrain from acting, or even to continue behaving as they usually behave."[54] Bakhtin-based research has also emphasized the potential dialogicity of apostrophe, in the sense that through its way of addressing other entities, lyrical reality is mediated not only by the poem's speaker but also by other consciousnesses or voices.[55] Thus, the address to the forest in the final stanzas of Voronova's poem reinforces the presence of the family—or people—represented as forest in the text. At the same time, the apostrophe also acquires an elegiac dimension of loss that is often associated with it as a form. Although the forest may still be called upon to grow and turn green, it is also presented as rooted in the ground "until the end," which can be interpreted as a reference to the alarming future horizon of one's own community or, more widely, as a reference to death as an inevitable destiny of all living creatures.

The imagery of the forest is thus used in Voronova's poetry as a metaphorical means to depict femininity—in particular, the process of growing up as a woman, the female life cycle, and female fertility. If the forest tropes denote meanings associated with the future of the ethnic community, texts with a focus on animals are more explicitly linked to both Sámi identity and the conservation of nature.

The most important animals in Sámi mythology have traditionally been the mountain deer, which was believed to have come from the sun; the reindeer, that is, a domesticated form of mountain deer; and the bear, considered the most sacred animal of all. In the transition from hunting to reindeer husbandry, the reindeer replaced the bear in Sámi religion.[56] In Kola Sámi literature, the reindeer is a recurring figure, especially in the work of male writers. Conversely, the animals in Voronova's poetry are mainly species used to humans in different ways, such as foxes, sparrows, or squirrels, which she employs to describe, among other things, the encounter between the human and nonhuman.

Voronova's poems about animals are often aimed at young readers and convey an explicit message about the importance of protecting nature and respecting its values. The poem "Doverchivyi Lis" ("A Trusting Fox," 1988), for example, portrays a fox that winters near a village and is accustomed to being given leftover food by the village people. When spring comes, the fox moves to the tundra, but in the fall, it returns from the wilderness—now with a family—to its old winter home. This time, however, Uncle Egor cannot resist

54 Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 139.

55 Michael Macovski, *Dialogue and Literature: Apostrophe, Auditors, and the Collapse of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 12–14.

56 Pentikäinen, *Saamelaisten mytologia*, pp. 411, 413.

the temptation to trap the fox. The poem's outcome is that trust, once lost, cannot be restored. Similarly straightforward in its message is "Vorobei" ("A Sparrow," 1988), which calls into question the human need to control non-human nature: "[...] One should not take birds in one's hand / Let them fly / or— / What will be left of them, / those nimble, motley, mischievous creatures? / Only: / —once upon a time there was..."[57]

More complex in terms of its subject matter is "Belki" ("Squirrels," 1988), which portrays a new residental area built in a pine forest previously inhabited by squirrels. The poem starts with a description of this changed environment; the viewpoint is that of the local (presumably Sámi) community having a housewarming party in the newly built houses. As highlighted in the second stanza, they are "still sitting on the bricks" and sensing the smells of the building site; this underlines that the process of moving in has only just taken place. The children communicate to the adults the presence of the former residents running around in the yard, and the last two stanzas of the poem seemingly focus on the squirrels:

Where there used to be a pine forest,
Where the trunks grew,
And the cones ripened—
There, in the houses that climb up the hill,
People are having a housewarming party...

We are still sitting on the bricks,
It smells of glue and whitewash,
When children shout at the window:
—Look, Mum!
Squirrels! Squirrels!...

They run through the noise and the clamour
Among the benches and swings
Where in the asphalt is shackled
The eternal trail of nomads.

And in spite of prohibition,
Across the road
To another pine wood,
They fly through the red light,
And are themselves
Like traffic lights
Their red sides all lit up.
The squirrels disappear into the dewy gloom,

57 "[...] В руки птиц не нужно брать / Пусть летают / или — / Что останется от них, / шустрых, пестрых, озорных? / Только: / — жили-были..." Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 212.

They are going there where
The pines have not yet been cut down.[58]

The poem builds on various parallels between the natural and cultural environment, playing in particular with the zoomorphic representation of the Sámi as squirrels. Rhetorically, the local Sámi are both equated and juxtaposed with the small creatures dashing around. In their "nomadism," moving from one home to another, the squirrels are connected with the traditional Sámi way of life. However, the Sámi are now being "chained to the asphalt," that is, they have lost their former freedom as they have moved to the population center and thus sedentarized. In this respect, the squirrels' action of moving into woods that have not yet been cut down appears to reflect the situation of the Sámi community, for which this alternative no longer exists. Moreover, the squirrels are depicted as creatures free from the rules that the Sámi are presently obliged to follow, ignoring red lights as they cross the road to another forest; in the context of Soviet Sámi relocations, "the prohibition" to defy "the traffic lights" and move into the woods acquires rather sinister dimensions.

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58 Где раньше был сосновый бор,
Стволы гудели,
Шишки зрели —
В домах, взбежавших на угор,
Справляют люди новоселье…

Еще сидим на кирпичах,
И пахнет клеем и побелкой,
А дети у окна кричат:
— Гляди-ка, мама!
Белки! Белки!...

Они бегут сквозь шум и гвалт
Среди скамеек и качелей,
Там, где закована в асфальт
Извечная тропа кочевий.
И невзирая на запрет,

Через шоссе
к другому бору,
Они летят на красный свет,
И сами —
точно светофоры,
Горят их алые бока.
Уходят белки в сумрак росный,
Туда уходят, где пока
Еще не вырублены сосны.

Voronova, *Khochu*, p. 94.

By juxtaposing and contrasting squirrels with humans, "Belki" hence scrutinizes both the radical change in the squirrels' world and, allegorically, the transformation in the Kola Sámi way of life in the twentieth century. In so doing, the poem also employs the motifs of the forest and trees, which, exploited in different ways, serve as a home for both humans and squirrels. The division between forests as natural environments and human settlements as cultural environments is central to humanistic studies of forests. Moreover, the felling of trees has often been seen as one of the key symbols of the intersection of nature and culture.[59] In this sense, squirrels running through the red lights when fleeing into the uncut forests are also fleeing from nature that is now being transformed into a cultural environment. Meanwhile, the Sámi are positioned as part of the cultural environment and hence viewed as separate from the squirrels.

The presence of these two worlds and their painful disconnection is central to Voronova's poem. In this respect, squirrels being animals who live at the intersection of the natural and cultural environment is important as this opens up the possibility for a reading in which they may acquire meanings associated with the experience of freedom and its loss, thereby functioning as metaphors for the Sámi community. The squirrels who scamper between these two worlds appear as mediating figures; this is highlighted by them not only ignoring the red light but also being equipped with such a communicative function themselves. Hence, the squirrels' red-glowing flanks that are "all lit up" seem to communicate the difficulty and complexity of the Kola Sámi's current situation.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explored human–non-human tropes in Oktiabrina Voronova's poetry. Such tropes can be viewed as manifestations of a reciprocal relationship between human and non-human nature, reflecting a nature-centered worldview at the linguistic level. Several tropes used by Voronova are specific to indigenous literature more broadly; for example, imagery related to land has traditionally played a central role in Sámi literature. Moreover, my analysis of Voronova's human–non-human tropes shows that she often employs forest and animal imagery for metaphorical purposes: in her poetry, trees symbolize (female) life in the north, and squirrels represent the Kola Sámi community. In this sense, Voronova continues a long literary tradition of discussing the human condition through metaphorical language—through allegories such as the nomad-like squirrels or with the help of personification, such as the hatless stone or grieving trees in the poem "Otchii krai."

59 Lummaa, "Lungs and Leaves," p. 182; Mikko Turunen, *Haarautuvat merkitykset*: *Puukuvasto Lasse Nummen lyriikassa* (Tampere: Tampere University, 2010), p. 21.

At the same time, some of her poems that focus on the Sámi situation also deal with environmental issues. In this respect, comparing her nature-centered writing with the Nordic Sámi poetry of the 1970s and 1980s seems relevant. As Hanna Mattila has argued in her postcolonial reading of Valkeapää's and Swedish Sámi writer Paulus Utsi's nature poetry, questions of colonialism are in fact related to environmental issues.[60] A clear link exists between these themes in the poets' writing, as can be seen, for example, in the first few verses of Utsi's famous poem "As Long As" ("Nu guhkka," 1974):

> As long as we have waters where the fish can swim
> As long as we have land where reindeer can graze
> As long as we have woods where wild animals can hide
> we are safe on this earth
>
> When our homes are gone and our land destroyed
> —then where are we to be?[61]

The issues of nature and colonization also intertwine in contemporary Nordic Sámi writing. A good example is the epic poem *Aednan* ("The Land," 2018) by Swedish Sámi writer Linnea Axelsson, which describes the history of the colonization of the Swedish Sámi as a transformation taking place over three generations. In the poem, the Swedish state's harnessing of northern rivers for hydroelectric power plants is related to the relocations and language loss of the Sámi, as well as to the experiences of displacement and social exclusion resulting from these processes.[62] From the perspective of minority literature, the fact that Axelsson has explicitly titled his poem an epic is noteworthy as it seems to be a deliberate reference to the nineteenth-century national epics as a means of constructing a nation's identity. As for the treatment of colonization through animal metaphors, the ethnopolitical situation of the Sámi has already been treated allegorically in early Sámi literature, in the first work in a Sámi language by a Sámi author, namely Johan Turi's *Muitalus sámiid birra* (*An Account of the Sámi*, 1910). As Harald Gaski argues in his analysis of the last chapter of the book, entitled "A Story about Sámiland's Strange Animals," Turi portrays the situation of the Sámi as a colonized people with the help of animal characters who have lost their land. They are presented as difficult to cope with, but since they are timid and frightened, their point of view is ignored.[63]

Compared to the critical decolonizing discourse in Nordic Sámi literature, Voronova's tropes are harmonious and mild. The implicit metaphorical portrayal of the situation of the Kola Sámi is addressed primarily to the local

60 Mattila, "Ekologisten ja kolonisaatiokriittisten äänten kohtaamisia," p. 70.

61 The English translation is by Roland Thorstensson and has been published in Harald Gaski, ed., *In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun: Contemporary Sámi Prose and Poetry* (Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji, 1996), p. 116.

62 See also Heith, *Experienced Geography*, pp. 65–66.

63 Harald Gaski, "Song, Poetry and Images in Writing: Sami Literature," *Nordlit* 27 (2011), p. 40.

community; neither Voronova's extended squirrel metaphor nor the apostrophic greening and grieving trees rooted in the Kola Peninsula are explicitly directed at potential factors outside the Sámi community. Furthermore, although, in her work, nature is also thematized in ecological terms as an object of protection and preservation, these issues are not related to wider environmental ethical problems or to the ecological changes that have taken place in the Kola Peninsula. Although Voronova's poetry was published in the glasnost years, when even open criticism of the Soviet past and present was possible within minority literatures, rhetorically, her texts seem to represent earlier Soviet writing in the sense that the potentially problematic issues they contain are carefully veiled. Additionally, Voronova's nature tropes—and particularly her animal imagery—are anchored in a female lifeworld.

In contrast with Voronova, the Skolt Sámi Askol'd Bazhanov's texts written in the 1980s and especially in the post-Soviet period occasionally play both with a postcolonial and an environmentalist perspective.[64] While Voronova, who frequently uses tropes linking the human and non-human, depicts the natural and cultural environments as intertwined, Bazhanov's work often reflects a confrontation between the modern and traditional way of life. This is true despite the fact that Bazhanov's texts clearly convey the view of "no returning to the hut," as he writes in his poem "How They Loved Us Half-savages" ("Nas, poludikikh, tak liubili," 2009). The poem in question also adopts an ironic minority perspective and especially comments on Soviet-era attitudes toward the Sámi: "How they loved us half-savages / from our district to the Kremlin, / and from childhood they solemnly claimed / that the Saami have their own homeland! / I understood clearly and simply / that there was no one for us to rely on / our Kola Peninsula is rich / but not for my people."[65] The juxtaposition between the traditional Sámi living environment, described as pure nature, and the modernized Kola Peninsula is, in turn, well illustrated in Bazhanov's poem "Aprel'" ("April," 2009). This poem describes two separate realities symbolized, on one hand, by a pure ridge of ice under the feet of the lyrical subject, and on the other, by the truck-polluted highway that can be seen in the distance.[66] In addition to Voronova's metaphorical nature-centeredness, the conceptions of nature in Bazhanov's poetry and their relation to the twentieth-century processes of modernization and colonization of the Kola Peninsula may prove to be a fertile ground for ecocritical analysis.

64 See Klapuri, "The Landscape of Longing and Belonging."

65 Askol'd Bazhanov, *Stikhi i poemy o saamskom krae: Verses & Poems on the Saami Land* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität, 2009), p. 91. Translated by Naomi Coffee.

66 Bazhanov, *Stikhi i poemy*, p. 118.