

**The Significance of Animal Metaphors:
Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* and
Patrick Suskind's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer***

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දර්ශන විද්‍යාවේ එන පුද්ගල ස්වභාවය ගැන වූ සත්ත්ව ක්‍රියාකාරී සංකල්පයෙන් හැඟීම්වලට යටත් වීමේ සහජ ගති ලක්ෂණය හේතුවෙන් මානවයා තිරිසන් සත්ත්වයකු වන බව විස්තර කෙරේ. ප්‍රංශ ජාතික නවකතාකරුවකු වූ එම්ලේ සෝලාගේ *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) නැමැති නවකතාවේ කතානායිකාව වන Thérèse හා ජර්මන් ජාතික නවකතාකරුවකු වූ පත්‍රික් සුස්කින්ඩ්ගේ *Das Parfum* නැමැති නවකතාවේ ජෝන් ඊ. වුඩ්ස් ඉංග්‍රීසි පරිවර්තනය වන *Perfume: the Story of a Murderer* (1985)හි Grenouille යන චරිත පිළිබඳ තුලනාත්මක අධ්‍යයනයක් මෙහි දී සිදු කෙරිණි. දහ නව වැනි සිය වසේ ප්‍රංශ සාහිත්‍යයේ හා විසි වැනි සිය වසේ ජර්මන් සාහිත්‍යයේ යොදාගැනුණු සත්ත්ව රූපකවල (animal metaphors) විශේෂත්වය ඒ අනුව මෙහි දී සාකච්ඡා කෙරේ. කතානායකයන්ගේ සදාචාර පරිහානිය පිළිබිඹු කිරීමට සෝලා හා සුස්කින්ඩ් විසින් සත්ත්ව රූපක ඔවුනට ආදේශ කරනු ලැබ ඇති බව මේ පර්යේෂණයෙන් හෙළිදරව් වේ.

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සංස්. පී. ඒ. අමීල මදුසංක, ජයමලේ ද සිල්වා, දිල්ෂාන් මනෝජ් රාජපක්ෂ,
චන්දන රුවන් කුමාර, එච්. ඒ. ගිහාන් මධුසංඛ, නන්ද්‍රලා පෙරේරා
'ප්‍රභා' ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, සිවු වැනි කලාපය - 2014/2015
මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

“Human behaviour was believed to be able to exert a direct influence on the operation of Nature and *vice versa*. This means that man’s nature and behaviour are in some ways determined by natural events” (W. T. Chan, 1992, p. 212).

The above citation indicates that the human is affected by nature and is influenced by its external forces. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), a human is “of, belonging to, or characteristic of mankind, distinguished from the animals by superior mental development, power of articulate speech, and upright posture” (p. 473). Thus, moral sentiments, ethical behavior and intelligence distinguish the human from the animal. According to *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy* (2010), the concept of animalism is about personal identity and animalism means that humans are animals by nature as they are instinctive and the absence of morality and spirituality make them inhuman. Thus, it is evident that the human is reduced to the level of bestiality due to their lack of spiritual, moral and ethical behaviour. As stated in the *New World Encyclopedia Online* (2008), naturalism is a genre of literature which attempts to apply scientific theories to its study of human beings as they present the stark reality of life in a pessimistic and a philosophical point of view. The naturalists highlight that the environment and the social condition play a pivotal role in sculpting the human being. In his text *Le roman français au XIX è siècle* (1982) Rose Fortassier states that Zola (1840 - 1902), the pioneer of the genre naturalism was inspired by the theories of Charles Darwin at that time. *Oxford Dictionary Online* (2015) defines magical realism that appeared in the 20th century, as a literary genre “in which realistic narrative and naturalistic techniques are combined with surreal elements of dream or fantasy.” Alejo Carpentier defines magical realism as “an unexpected alteration of reality (...) an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale

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and categories or reality.” Magical realism is also called fabulism. It has a fantastical element. It portrays fantastical events in an otherwise realistic tone. Thus, the fantasy elements in real world provide the basis of magical realism (www3.dbu.edu, 2009). In the article *At the border of SF: Magical Realism* (2012) Karen Ostertagre marks that Patrick Suskind’s *Perfume: The story of a murderer* belongs to the genre of magical realism.

The objective of this research is to present the significance of animal metaphors depicted in 19th century French literature and in 20th century German literature by examining the protagonists: Thérèse in the French novel of Émile Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and Grenouille of John E Woods’s English translation of the German novel *Perfume: The story of a murderer* (1985) by Patrick Suskind. *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), defines metaphor as a figure of speech in “which describes a person or object in a literary way by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics to the person or object you are trying to describe” (p. 890). Then the definition of animal; “a living creature, not a plant, which has any or all of the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, and which can move all or part of its body.” (1995, p. 45). This research interrogates whether Thérèse and Grenouille are presented as animals. This study further explore whether animal metaphors that are associated with the protagonists in Zola’s and Suskind’s novels depict a lack of spirituality and intellectuality. The significance of this study lies in comparing the animalistic traits of Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin* and of Grenouille in *Perfume: The story of a murderer*.

Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* revolves around Thérèse, Laurent and Camille. Thérèse, a melancholic orphan girl who lives with her aunt is forced to marry her sick cousin Camille. Thus, the unhappy marriage leads her to commence a dangerous liaison with Laurent,

Camille’s childhood friend. Then, the lovers deliberately plan to kill Camille in order to continue their adulterous relationship. One day in a boating accident Camille is found dead. Thérèse and Laurent get married but eventually they become victims of culpability. This obsessional guilt leads them to their doom and finally they commit suicide. The German novelist Patrick Suskind in *Perfume: The story of a murderer* weaves his story around a young orphan named Jean-Baptist Grenouille. The narrative takes place in 18th century France. Grenouille is born in Paris. Suskind introduces Grenouille as a person who is gifted with a heightened olfactory sense. Grenouille becomes obsessed with inventing perfumes as he seeks to create a perfume by blending the actual scents of young women he murders. Eventually, his obsession of creating an ideal perfume leads him to his doom.

Firstly, it is important to observe the similarities of the protagonists of Thérèse and Grenouille. In *Thérèse Raquin*, Zola compares Thérèse to a feline. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) describes that a feline is “of or pertaining to cats or their species, cat-like in form or structure. Resembling a cat in any respect, cat-like in character or quality” (p. 813). In Zola’s novel, the animal imagery associated with Thérèse evokes her complex personality. In the beginning of the novel Zola presents the felinity of Thérèse; when she put a foot forward one could feel the feline liveness and taunt powerful muscles, all-stored up energy, and passion lying dormant in her quiescent body (Tancock, 1962, p.39) the words such as “feline liveness” (1962, p. 39) « *souplesse félines* » (1956, p. 25), “taunt powerful muscles” « *des muscles courts et puissants* », “her quiescent body” « *sa chair assoupie* » present her form as a feline. In the preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin* (1956) Émile Zola states that the protagonist in his novel is a human animal as Thérèse is not a character but a temperament, a creature

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that responds to her instincts (Tancock, 1962, p.6). Furthermore, in his preface Zola affirms that Thérèse is dominated by her instincts as she was lead on to every action of her life involuntarily; Thérèse and Laurent are human animals, nothing more. The author states that he has carefully followed these animals through the crafty working of their passion and the urge of their instincts (1962, pp. 14-15). In this manner the fusion of the man and animalis brought out by the author. For example, Thérèse mimics her domestic cat François when she is with Laurent; putting a cat-like movement poking out her fingers like claws and doing feline undulation with shoulders (1962, p. 66) emphasises Thérèse's sensuality. In his text *Les Animaux ont une histoire* (1984) Robert Delort, declares that the French Zoologist in the 18th century Buffon Pape says that; a cat is an unfaithful domestic animal that one keeps only for the necessity (...). And these animals especially when they are young possess kindness but at the same time they inherit maliciousness and a false character, that develops by age and is hidden by education. It indicates that the metaphor of feline depicts her maliciousness. The narrator states that Laurent feels his mistress with her feline suppleness and sinewy flexibility had worked her way into every fiber of his being (Tancock, 1962, p. 77) which suggests her manipulative nature; Thérèse says to Laurent "if my husband were to die she slowly repeated we could get married, have nothing more to be afraid of and enjoy each other to our hearts' content. What a lovely sweet life it would be" (p. 80). Thus, it's evident that Thérèse subtly seduces Laurent. She knew that Laurent is emotionally dependent and the narrator states that for him she was "a necessity of life like food and drink" (p. 77). In the night Laurent considers the possibilities of killing Camille; "racked by insomnia and tormented by the pungent scent left by Thérèse, Laurent was now setting traps working on the chances of a mishap going over the advantages he would trap being a murderer." (p. 81).

Then, in *Perfume* (2010) Suskind compares Grenouille to a tick; “(..)like that tick (...) for which life has nothing better to offer than perpetual hibernation. The ugly tick, which by rolling its blue-gray body up into a ball offers the least possible surface in the world” (p. 10). Moreover, in Suskind’s novel (2010) the narrator presents Grenouille as “a strange cold creature” who “lay there on his knees, a hostile animal” and then he questions “were he not a man by nature prudent, (...)” (p. 09) the words such as “creature”, “animal”, “not a man” indicates that Grenouille is not a human but an animal in disguise. Suskind associates the metaphor of a tick with Grenouille. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines tick as “the common name for several kinds of mites or acarids esp. of the genus of *Ixodes* or family of *ixodidae*, which infest the hair or fur of various animals, as dogs, cattle etc; and attach themselves to the skin as temporary parasites” (p. 53). As stated in *The Mind Alive Encyclopedia: the Animal Kingdom* (1984) affirms that ticks/blood suckers/hangers-on obtain nourishment in effective ways such as by drawing the sap of trees or the blood of animals. The parasites live among species as they depend on others (p.109) indicates the danger of a tick as it affects the health of a species and can even cause death; “the tick had scented blood, it has been dormant for years encapsulated and had waited” (p.29). For instance, when Grenouille lives under the protection of Baldini working in his perfumery he begins to master the technique of creating perfumes but when Grenouille decides to leave him, Baldini dies a fatal death. Therefore, the narrator suggests that like a tick that saps the blood of its species, Grenouille also causes danger for those who nurture him.

Besides, in both texts the protagonists possess dual personality. Grenouille deceives his surrounding by adopting an apparent innocence in order to gain sympathy; “Grenouille stood (...) with a look of apparent timidity but which in reality came

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from a cunning intensity” (p.29). Infact, Grenouille is associated with the metaphor of a tick throughout the novel. He metaphorically waits till the moment to seize or fall upon his victims. Besides, the narrator reveals Grenouille’s master Baldini’s feelings about Grenouille; “he had always avoided so much as touching him out of some kind of sanctimonious loathing as if there were some danger that he could be infected or contaminated” (p. 44) indicates Grenouille’s irresistible power over others. Suskind presents this human animal who behaves in a tick like way. Further, the narrator creates the subconscious link between Grenouille and the putrid environment he is born. Grenouille has a damaging effect on others. He is inhumane and a morally detestable creature. The selfish motivation behind his despicable behavior is evident in the novel. Thus, Grenouille, the tick symbolises the dehumanised, insignificant and selfish creature who murders young women to obtain what he desires. Therefore, it is evident that in the novels the animal metaphors: feline and tick are associated with the protagonists to denote a negative connotation.

Moreover, in both novels *Thérèse* and *Grenouille* manifest instinctive behaviour. In *The Origin of Species* (2011) Charles Darwin explains that instincts are not learned through experiences as they are unconscious and unintentional (p. 268). Thus, Darwin reveals that instincts are inherited. *Thérèse* is impulsive “who kept all the impulsive ardour of her nature carefully hidden” (1962, p.39) as it signifies her aggressive instinct. In Zola’s novel, *Thérèse* does not kill her husband for mere amusement but to gain eternal happiness by continuing her adulterous relationship with Laurent. Thus, it is a crime of passion as the murder is a consequence of adultery. For example, when she sees her husband on the bed, his sickly face resting on the pillow she feels an urge to push her clenched fist into his mouth (1962, p. 83) which signifies her violent instinct and hatred towards him as she had the intention of killing

Camille even before the actual murder happens. A.W.G Manning in *An Introduction to Animal Behavior* (1972) affirms that pain and frustration arouse aggression. In addition, according to the *Oxford Companion to Animal Behavior*, McFarland (1981) states that pain “is an instigator of attack. If an animal is severely hurt, but cannot flee, it tries to escape the inflictor of the hurt by driving it away” (p. 06). In McFarland’s view (1981) cats display the characteristics of fear and aggression (p. 287). In Zola’s novel, aggressiveness of Thérèse is a result of frustration over her marriage. As Pierre-Yves Coulbeaux in his article *Thérèse Raquin* (2015) suggests that Thérèse’s passivity is an essential point in the novel as it indicates her external tranquility that concealed bursts of passion. In *Perfume* (2010) Grenouille is a ‘cold creature’ and a ‘hostile animal’ who sniffs, sucks and snorts out air, “nose wrinkled” and the narrator states that “the child saw him with its nostrils” (p. 8-9) which indicates that his internal traits are made physical as it makes him animalistic. The narrator states that Grenouille is possessed by the devil as he emits an evil smell; “Does some evil stench come from him?” (p. 6) indicates that Grenouille is criminalistic. Grenouille murders young innocent women to fulfill his ambition of creating an ideal perfume. Suskind suggests that Grenouille does not possess any humane qualities as he does not know what security, attention, tenderness, love are called and God, joy, responsibility, humility, gratitude are alienated to him (p. 11). In his article *A Killer, Haunted by Smells*’ (1986), Peter Ackroyd states that the young Grenouille survived “as an outsider only through some stubborn instinct”. The hostile environment in which he grows up turns him into a murderer as he believes that it “must like blood be sucked out” (Ackroyd, 1986, p. 01). Thus, the innate trait of bestiality of the protagonists is evident in the novels.

Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) defines sense as “any of the five physical abilities to see hear, smell,

taste and feel (...) a sense organ is a part of the body which makes it possible to experience the physical characteristics of a situation: *ears, eyes, tongue, nose and skin are your sense organs*” (p. 1293). Humans and animals possess all the five senses and apart from the traditionally recognised senses, species have multitude of other senses (Mcfarland, 1981, p. 61). Thérèse and Grenouille are dominated by their senses. Thérèse is driven by her internal sense of lust and Grenouille is dominated by the sense of smell. According to *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995) lust is “a very strong desire, either sexual or to get or possess something” (p. 848). In Zola’s novel (1956) Thérèse is dominated by lust. Thus, her primal instinct is to do anything to obtain what she desires. Thérèse is compared to the image of cat in the novel. In fact, one of the dominant traits of cats is selfishness (Delort, 1984, p.430). Her selfish desire was to continue an adulteress relationship with Laurent as she manipulates him in killing Camille; “her organism demanded Laurent’s violent love-making. She was a prey to a nervous crisis that had unhinged her, and the truth was that she was scarcely using her reason at all” (p. 139). Throughout, the novel Thérèse is portrayed as a sensual and a selfish creature. Delort (1984) reveals that in French literature image of cat signifies sensuality (p. 430). He states that a cat is in essence wild, untamed as these are their primary aspects and not its delicate or its graceful movements (p. 444). Thérèse’s and Laurent’s act of passion appears brutal and violent revealing the animalistic nature of their personalities; they would have liked to tear off bits of each other’s flesh in their fingers (1962, p. 85). The words such as “her lips were moist” (1962, p. 63) « les lèvres humides » (1956, p.58), “her eyes shining” « les yeux luisants », “she was radiating”, “her face had been lit up from within and fire leaped from her flesh”, “her boiling blood and taut nerves radiated warmth” « son sang qui brûlait ses nerfs qui se tendaient »

reveal her yearning passion which ends in destruction. In fact, A.F Fraser in *Feline Behaviour and Welfare* (2012) states that “a cat is highly kinesthetic” it’s termed as the ‘Jekyll and Hyde reaction’ also known as ‘stroke and bite syndrome’. It’s a term which defines the sudden change in behavior; “it can be observed in a cat that appears to enjoy its handler’s attention only to suddenly become aggressive and tear into him or her” (p. 124). Further, he explains that “the Jekyll and Hyde reaction resembles the female reaction to the male immediately after mating has occurred” (p. 124). In fact, this reaction is considered “as a natural, instinctive action and not a calculated assault on the handler” (p. 124).

In Suskind’s novel, Grenouille is dominated by his sense of smell. Suskind describes Grenouille’s sense organ as being more acute than any beast in the lines, “greedy little nose”, “using its nose to devour something whole” and “nose seemed to fix on a particular target” (2010, p. 08). Mcfarland’s text (1981) suggests that when compared with many animals, human beings have a rather reduced sense of smell and taste whereas in a variety of insects the olfactory sense is precise and keen. The narrator affirms that Grenouille grows up in the foulest environments and thus these environments had an impact on his olfactory sense. Similar to an insect, Grenouille’s sense of smell is heightened as it enabled him to survive. Suskind describes Grenouille’s art of survival in; “(...) he never took a light with him and still found his way around and immediately brought back what was demanded without making one wrong move-not a stumble”(p. 12) as he was able to catch the scent with a nose that smelled things precisely and keenly. He uses his olfactory sense as a mode of survival. However, his heightened sense of smell leads him towards destruction; “the goal of the hunt was simply to possess everything the world could offer in the way of odors” (p. 16). Therefore, it’s evident that Thérèse and Grenouille are more animal than human.

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In *Thérèse Raquin* the name Raquin is nearer to the word 'requin' which means shark in French language. The image of shark has a negative connotation in western culture as it symbolises "predatory behavior, greed, gluttony, danger and deceit" (mesa.edu,2005). This name is apt for Thérèse who is invasive, manipulative, dominating and dangerous. From a western attitude, sharks have a negative connotation as they are viewed as "mindless eating machines" (mesa.edu, 2005). Thus, in the novel Thérèse's predatory prowess is revealed through her name. In *Perfume* the name Grenouille in French language means 'frog'. A frog is a small, cold blooded, tailless, slippery creature. It is slippery because it makes it to escape from predators (Newworldencyclopedia.org, 2013). In the novel Suskind states that Grenouille "hissed in reptile fashion," "snarl", "rasp", "gurgled" and his "lurking look" (2010) indicate his animalistic traits. Metaphorically Grenouille's 'slipperiness', 'cold bloodedness' and his ability to deceive others through camouflage suggest his enigmatic nature. According to cultural beliefs, "toads have a more sinister reputation. It was believed in European folklore that they were associated with witches as their familiar spirits and had magical powers" (liquisearch.com,2016).

In conclusion, it's evident that the animal metaphors are used by Zola and Suskind to signify the moral degradation of the protagonists. Thérèse and Grenouille are human beings who manifest dominant animalistic traits as they are driven by their internal instincts of lust, violence and aggression.

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