"Beastly Humans and Humanly Beasts in Seventeenth-Century Russia"[1]

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Abstract:

The boundary between human and animal in seventeenth-century Russia was more porous than has been realized. In several witchcraft cases supposedly-bewitched humans were described as speaking like animals. Muscovite hagiography and miracle stories also portrayed the demon-possessed as speaking and acting like animals. This dehumanization of humans as animals constitutes the polar opposite of the anthropomorphizing of animals as humans in bestiaries, which depicted animals as possessing human characteristics. Visual evidence corroborates these connections between the bewitched and demon-possessed on the one hand, and animals on the other, by picturing demons and humans turning to sin with animal characteristics. Early demonic representations featured the eidalon, a Greek-based figure with animal features. This textual and visual material from seventeenth-century Muscovy zoomorphized the bewitched and demon-possessed by categorizing their behavior as beastly, as that of wild animals, and by projecting the attributes and emotions of animals onto human beings. Attributing human traits to an animal might be a compliment but ascribing traits to a human could only be a criticism, thus demonstrating and confirming the Muscovite premise of human superiority over animals.

Keywords:

Animals, Muscovy, witchcraft, miracles, bestiaries, demonic possession, *eidalon*, animal-human hybrids.

Seventeenth-century Muscovite attitudes toward animals had much in common with contemporary Western European attitudes, and with good reason. Muscovite perceptions of animals derived from the same sources as those Western European perceptions, primarily and directly from Scripture, especially the Old Testament, and from Christian theology, and secondarily and indirectly from Indo-European folklore, fable, and fairy tale. Of course, Muscovite images of animals also exhibited unique characteristics as well, as did those in every culture influenced by these common sources**.** And there were contradictions even within received tradition. On the one hand, according to a long established view based

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on the Book of Genesis, God gave humans dominion over non-humans, animals on the ground, fish in the sea, and birds in the air.[2] Church Fathers such as St. Augustine, as well as medieval Catholic theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas, asserted that animals had no immortal souls, and were created for the sole purpose of human exploitation.[3] Such conclusions created a strict boundary between humans and non-humans. On the other hand, such revered spiritual leaders as St. Francis in Western Europe and St. Sergii in Rus'[4] had a very different outlook, seeing (literally and in visions) a unified natural world in which both humans and their "little brothers" were God's creations.

Within the dominant "man as master" camp, some clerics suspected too great human affection for pets was a sign of moral decadence.[5] Human copulation with animals constituted the worst violation of the separation of human from animal. This dualistic religious discrimination between the human and the non-human purported to be consistent and absolute in theory, but the wall between human and animal could not be sustained in practice, first and foremost because of the existence of sin in the world. Satan, demons and witches corrupted and cursed susceptible humans in ways which breached the divide between human and animals. Human victims not only sounded like animals but acted like animals, unless and until saved – metaphorically and literally – by divine intervention, by clerics and often by saints. The porous boundary between humans and non-humans was also broached imaginatively in other cultural areas. Bestiaries portrayed non-humans with admirable, not just execrable, human characteristics, and folklore, fairy tale, and animal fables assigned human personality traits and characteristics, laudable and censurable, to birds, fish, and animals. Theologically humans were humans and animals were animals, meaning sub-humans. However, the existence of evil in the world in human and superhuman form and human imagination produced the perception of some humans as animals and some animals as humans. Visual evidence, in Muscovite iconography, also illustrates the conception of demons as animal-like and the acquisition of animal attributes by humans such as heretics who turned to sin. However, the dehumanization of humans and anthropomorphization of animals did not bring down the wall of separation between humans and animals; it only reinforced the division between human and non-human.

This essay will examine seventeenth-century Muscovite evidence of beastly humans and humanly beasts, identifying what is common and what is (relatively) unique compared to the generic Christian European background adumbrated above. We will examine court

[2] Genesis 1:26 "Then God said: Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on earth."

[3] Joyce E. Salisbury, "Do Animals Go to Heaven? Medieval Philosophers Contemplate Heavenly Human Exceptionalism," *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts* 1, no. 1 (January 2014): 79-80.

[4] St. Sergii of Radonezh (1314-1392), founder of the Trinity Monastery (now located in Sergiev Posad), one of the most influential monasteries in Muscovy.

[5] Jacqueline Stuhmiller, "CFP: Animal Husbandry: Bestiality in Medieval Culture", posted June 14, 2016, https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/128463/cfp-animal-husbandry-bestiality-medieval-culture (accessed June 14, 2016).

cases of witchcraft and vitae narrating and icons and illustrations picturing demons and humans possessed by demons as animals, on the one hand, which present humans as animals, and bestiaries and an animal tale, on the other hand, which present animals as humans.

In her recent study of "desperate magic" in Muscovy, Valerie Kivelson presents digests of several cases of bewitched women whose speech degenerated into animal noises. In 1638 in the Novgorod region, Petr Khmetevskii testified that a neighbor woman had bewitched his wife Mar'ia. "She wails like a cuckoo and shrieks like a rabbit," he testified.[6] The most widespread occurrence of comparable behavior took place in Lukh between 1656 and 1659.[7] In a series of witchcraft cases, husbands and fathers "lamented that their wives and daughters growled like bears, honked like geese, and barked like dogs. They cried out in the voices of wild beasts, birds, bears, hares, and cattle. They hiccupped 'in voices.' They grimaced, fell to the floor, and cried out accusations. In their madness, they bit themselves and other people, and said things 'not pleasing either to God or to man'."[8] One of those accused of causing this animal behavior on the part of the "shriekers" (as the source labels these afflicted people), a town healer, Tereshka Malakurov, who dealt in charms, herbs, and talismans, confessed after his second bout of torture that he had chanted incantations "to be carried around the streets by the wind or by a stray dog."[9] In 1692 Ivashko, a peasant of Tot'ma, pleaded guilty to bewitching a peasant woman. He made her "shriek in bewilderment in wild animal voices."[10] Summarizing these incidents, Kivelson observes that Satan played no role in the generation of these "hiccups, barks, and honks."[11]

The absence of Satan, in Kivelson's analysis, reflects a contrast between Russian (and other) variants of witchcraft and the general conception of European witchcraft, which included a strong Satanic element. In some medieval and early modern European cultures witches were accused of having sexual relations with the Devil or with demons who had assumed animal form, not the everyday type of bestiality,[12] but no Muscovite witch ever faced such an accusation.[13] Nor were witches or warlocks in Muscovy described as utilizing animals to perpetrate their evil as "familiars," known to European witch-trials and folklore,

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[6] Valerie A. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 158, citing *Rossiisskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov* (hereafter RGADA), f. 210, Novgorodskii stol, stlb. 10, ll. 620-24, 643-44.

[7] Ibid, 152-57, based upon RGADA, f. 210, Bezglasnoi stol, stlb. 216, ll. 3-12, stlb. 100, ll. 1-88, stlb. 314, ll. 159-67, 192-93, stlb. 653, ll. 20-87; f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 861, ll. 35-36; f. 210, Vladimirskii stol, stlb. 142, 92-95.

[8] Ibid, 154. For later examples of Russian "shriekers," see Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 137-38, 172, 229.

[9] Ibid, 155. Casting a spell "upon the wind" was a means to bewitch someone from a distance; W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 34-35.

[10] Ibid, 158, citing RGADA, f. 159, Prikaznye dela starykh let, op. 1, no. 326, l. 1.

[11] Ibid, 16

[12] Stuhmiller, "CFP: Animal Husbandry: Bestiality in Medieval Culture."

[13] Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 76, 80-81, relies upon late evidence to attribute to Russians the belief that witches and wizards could turn themselves or others into animals.

and often, but not always, an animal such as a cat.[14] Kivelson concludes that the absence of witches' "familiars" in early modern Russia does not make the Russian case unique, it only sets it off primarily from the English example.[15]

Muscovites did not accuse only bewitched women of barking like dogs. Accusing one's male polemical opponent of "barking like a dog," or being a dog, was a prominent feature of Muscovite invective, oft-utilized by Iosif of Volokolamsk and Ivan the Terrible.[16] Iosif managed to liken his enemies to beasts, pigs, cats, and serpents as well as dogs.[17] Describing one's opponents as "barkers" also figured in disputes about injured honor. On 19 April 1643 an altercation broke out on the Kremlin's Red Porch between members of two middle service class clans, the Izmailovs and the Chirikovs, ending with A. P. Chirikov chasing the Izmailov boys through the crowd and threatening them. Timofei Izmailov, petitioning Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov to order an inquest, declared that his sons were standing on the Red Porch when the Chirikovs came up to them, wanted to beat them, and dishonored his family by saying all manner of unseemly things (literally, "barked"—*i vsiakoiu laeiu nepodobnoiu laiali*).[18] Kivelson cites an instance in 1689 in which one man cursed another as a "dog."[19] Ivan IV's use of dogs' heads on the necks of the horses of his *oprichniki*,[20] seems to be unique in world history.[21] Yet the image of dogs in Muscovy as fundamentally negative did not differ from that in other contemporary Christian and Muslim societies.

No particular principle seems to have governed the selection of animals that bewitched women imitated. Cuckoos, rabbits, bears, geese, dogs, cattle, and goats were all ubiquitous presences in Muscovite life. In theory the Muscovites could have invoked the image of

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[14] Kim Novak's cat Pyewacket in the movie "Bell, Book, and Candle" (1958) might be the most famous "familiar." That best-known Russian witch, Baba Yaga, employed the services of birds, beasts, and creatures of the deep, but the stories, with their rich brew of archaic Slavic cultural vestiges, folkloric elements, and influences from Western fairy tales, were told and retold over the centuries and recorded late; see Sibelan Forrester, Helena Goscilo, Martin Skoro, and Jack Zipes, *Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), and Andreas Johns, *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004).

[15] Valerie Kivelson to Charles Halperin, personal communication, 3 July 2016. How the bewitchers acquired their tradecraft is not specified in these cases. But since in Muscovy professions were generally learned from the family or through working with a practitioner, they most likely learned on the job.

[16] Iosif of Volokolamsk (1440-1515): prominent Muscovite theologian, best known for opposing heresy, founder of the Volokolamsk Monastery. Ivan the Terrible (Ivan *Groznyi*), Ivan IV, born 1530, became Grand Prince in 1533 on the death of his father, crowned Tsar in 1547, died 1584: first Muscovite tsar, infamous for his cruelty.

[17] David Goldfrank, "Litigious, Pedagogical, Redemptive, Legal: Iosif Volotskii's Calculated Insults," *Russian Review* 75, no. 1 (January 2016): 94–95, 99–101; Charles J. Halperin, "You Dog! Ivan IV's Canine Invective," in *Rusistika Ruslana Skrynnikova. Sbornik statei pamiati professora R. G. Skrynnikova, v chest' ergo 80-letiia*, ed. G. Szvák and I. O. Tiumentsev (Budapest-Volgograd: Magyar Ruszisztikai Intézet, 2011), 89–108.

[18] Ivan Zabelin, *Domashnyi byt russkikh tsarei v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh* (Moscow: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2014), 36.

[19] Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*, 184.

[20] The *oprichnina*, created 1565, abolished 1572, was Ivan's special domain, the instrument with which he imposed mass terror upon Muscovy. Its servitors were called *oprichniki*.

[21] Charles J. Halperin, "Did Ivan IV's *Oprichniki* Carry Dogs' Heads on Their Horses?" *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 46, no. 1 (2012): 40-67.

biblical animals too; after all, they believed in the existence of unicorns.[22] However, the choice of animal parallel for evil behavior was not completely unrestricted. To be sure, nearly all animals were or at least were capable of evil, but several breeds of birds, for example, doves, swans, and nightingales, were considered clean and holy, and God protected swallows because they tried to carry off the nails intended for the Cross. Demon-possessed women could hardly chirp like them.[23]

Apart from the sounds made by the demon-possessed, Muscovites did not associate any specific behavior with a specific animal species, nor did they discriminate in how to "treat" people who imitated different animalistic actions. Occurrences of animal sounds or incidents of animal behavior resulted from the actions of witches or, as we shall see below, demons, and the Christian response always involved the intercession of God, the Mother of God, or saints.

Accusations that bewitched women sounded like "birds" are notably undifferentiated. Specific birds have totally different voices, as indicated by the mention of particular species of birds such as cuckoo or goose in these accusations. Doves coo, nightingales sing beautifully, crows crow, owls hoot, geese cackle, various birds chirp or tweet. Describing women as shrieking "like birds" without clarification of which birds they resembled obfuscates the sounds to which they refer by subsuming very dissimilar noises under a generic rubric.

Moreover, different animal sounds conveyed different emotions. The chirping of the swallow suggested joy and lightheartedness, the bleating of sheep, obtuseness, the screams of several types of birds, anxiety or curiosity. Different animal sounds could relate metaphorically to human sounds: singing, laughter, lamenting, whistling, squealing, hissing, wheezing, moaning, growling, or grumbling.[24] Animal analogues could not be random; they had to be phonetically, emotionally, and morally appropriate.

In some cases animal-like behavior was attributed to magic spells, but in other instances Russians looked to a common alternative explanation, demonic possession. Madness was one way in which devils, demons, and unclean spirits tortured humans, whose victims required spiritual healing.[25] Eve Levin, in her examination of the behavior of people

[22] Ol'ga Vladislavovna Belova, *Slavianskii bestiarii. Slovar' nazvanii i simvoliki* (Moscow: Indrik, 2001), 99-103 (two illustrations on 102). A unicorn appeared for the first time on a Muscovite state seal under Ivan IV: Günther Stökl, *Testament und Siegel Ivan IV.* Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfällischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Band 48, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1973), 48-50. Ivan IV also had a unicorn "horn" set in precious stones on his staff. See the description by Jerome Horsey in Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, eds., *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom. Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyages* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 305 "royal staff, an unicorn's horn garnished with very fair diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and other precious stones that are rich in value, cost seventy thousand marks sterling." In the seventeenth century Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich supposedly possessed a unicorn horn worth 10,000 rubles. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 209 n.167, 283, 363.

[23] Aleksandr Viktorovich Gura, *Simvolika zhivotnykh v slavianskoi narodnoi traditsii* (Moscow: Indrik, 1997), 527-28; Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 126. Ryan and Gura sometimes make use of folkloric, and in Gura's case, linguistic and ethnographic, evidence recorded only later.

[24] Gura, *Simvolika zhivotnykh,* 79-81.

[25] Horace W. Dewey, "Some Perceptions of Mental Disorder in Pre-Petrine Russia," *Medical History* 31, no. 1

supposedly possessed by demons in hagiography and miracle tales, found a connection between humans and animal behavior. In the cycle of Saints Ioann and Loggin Iarenskie from the 1640s-1660s, a beneficiary of a miracle suffered from a *liutyi veliar*. Different potential translations of this phrase foreground the demonic or animal aspect of the entity it denoted. Levin translates it as "a feral spirit,"[26] but it might reference "vicious Belial" or it might be translated as "a fierce beast."[27] A peasant, Maria, daughter of Khariton, misbehaved when pregnant because her womb contained not only an infant but two snakes as well.[28] According to the miracles of St. Alexander Kushtskii, the monastic priest Manuil suffered from a demon because he had stolen a saddle. He screamed out animal noises and tried to attack people "like a beast."[29] In a seventeenth-century printed saint's life of St. Sergii of Radonezh, a youth so ferociously attacked by demons that his body turned black from wounds endured fits during which "the boy whistled like a bird and his cries inspired terror in those who heard him."[30] In his vita-autobiography Archpriest Avvakum, revered by the Old Believers, recounted numerous "devil's pranks" intended to frighten and torment him, including flying chasubles and dalmatics. Demons afflicted many he tried to heal, including his brother; when his former maid Anna entered the church behind him, "a devil fell upon her [. . .] She started shouting and crying out, barking like a dog, bleating like a goat, and cuckooing like a cuckoo." Avvakum picked up the cross from the communion table, declaring that the woman had been afflicted enough: "And the devil came out of her."[31] Thus the demon-possessed could sound like animals, bite and attack humans like animals, or even, in the extreme case of Maria, symbiotically fuse with animals in a biological relationship.

The infiltration of a woman's womb by snakes did not contradict Muscovite conceptions of the human body. Kivelson has observed that "surprisingly little" has been written about

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(1987): 84-99.

[26] Eve Levin, "Innocent and Demon-Possessed in Early Modern Russia," in *Culture and Identity in Eastern Christian History: Papers from the First Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of Eastern Christian History and Culture (ASEC), Inc.*, eds. Russell E. Martin and Jennifer Spock, with the assistance of M. A. Johnson (Columbus: Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, OSU, 2009), 126, citing the Hilandar Research Library, Saratov State University Research Library, No. 1344, fol. 46v. We wish to thank Eve Levin for calling our attention to this article.

[27] D. I. Antonov cites an incident in which a demon named Veliar appeared to the imprisoned martyr St. Iulianiia (Ul'iana) of Nicomedia in the guise of an angel. See D. I. Antonov, "*Efiopy*, *Temnozrachnye*, *Sin'tsy*: Besovskii onomastikon drevnerusskikh tekstov," *Vestnik RGGU*, Seriia "Istoriia. Filologiia. Kul'turologiia. Vostokovedenie," No. 2 (11) (Moscow, 2016): 30.

[28] Levin, "Innocent and Demon-Possessed," 127–28, citing Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, St. Petersburg, f. 717, No. 661/719, fols. 17r-17v.

[29] Ibid., 134–35, 146, citing *Sviatye podvizhniki i obiteli Russkogo Severa*, eds. Geliian Mikhailovich Prokhorov and S. A. Semiachko (St. Petersburg: Izd. Olega Abyshko, 2006), 253, 255–56.

[30] Ibid, 160, citing "Zhitie prepodognogo i bogonosnago ottsa nashego igumen Sergiia Chudotvortsa," published 1646, http://www.Stsl.ru/lib/book2/chap_2e.htm#ch_e7 (accessed October 30, 2018).

[31] Translation from *Archpriest Avvakum: The Life written by Himself*, trans. and ed. Kenneth N. Brostrom (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1979), 101–11. For the Russian text, see *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma, im samim napisannoe*, ed. N. K. Gudzii (Moscow: ZAO "Svarog i K," 1997).

Muscovite notions of the body.[32] According to the most recent study of sexuality among medieval and early modern Orthodox Slavs, including Rus', by Levin, the Orthodox held the body in low repute as the site of sin, but the body was also the chosen form of Christ's Incarnation. Man was created in God's image, but even if man was but a pale image of the divine, he was still a reflection of the divine. The body might be a cesspool of sin, but it retained its connection to the sacred. [33] The Muscovite ambivalence about the human body described by Kivelson and Levin manifested itself in the physical penetration of a woman's womb by snakes. Thus, the human body became the material site within which God and Satan battled for a woman's soul.

Demons, like snakes, took up residence in female wombs, tormenting the host tissue like wild beasts with prey. Demons in the form of beasts possessed a woman named Solomoniia, causing her to give birth to litters of demons at a time. The "Tale of the Possessed Wife Solomoniia" (*Povest' o besnovatoi zhene Solomonii*) narrates the miracle attributed to the Mother of God and the holy fools in Christ Prokopii and Ioann of Velikii Ustiug that eventually cured her.[34] The account of Solomoniia's tribulations and eventual deliverance is tied to the regional hagiographical cycle compiled in the late seventeenth century, included as recent evidence of the saints' powers. Its compiler, the Ustiug priest Iakov, was attached to the local Spaso-Preobrazhenskii convent where "possessed" (*besnovatye*) women were often sent for observation and healing, and reportedly knew Solomoniia's story "from her own lips" and the testimony of her father and spiritual father.[35] All the basic variants of the text were created in Ustiug between the 1670s and 1690s. Combining literary and folkloric elements, the account conveys authenticity with precise notations of dates (Solomoniia is cured on 8 July 1671 after eleven years and five months of torment), locations (Solomoniia came from a village twenty-odd miles from Ustiug and was healed at the site of the saints' tomb), the precise number of demons to which Solomoniia gave birth (Solomoniia's womb contained seventy demons, "with a thousand and seven hundred more to come"), and repeated references to witnesses of the events.

Demons took Solomoniia on her wedding night, when they appeared to her in the guise of a wild beast (*zver'*) and a handsome (*prekrasnyi*) young man. Thereafter she survived tortures that Pigin summarizes as "an Old Russian encyclopedia" of possession,[36]

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[32] Valerie Kivelson, "Torture, Truth and Embodying the Intangible in Muscovite Witch Trials," in *Everyday Life in Russian History. Quotidian Studies in Honor of Daniel Kaiser*, eds. Gary Marker, Joan Neuberger, Marshall Poe, and Susan Rupp (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 2010), 367-8.

[33] Kivelson, "Torture, Truth and Embodying the Intangible," 367-68; Kivelson makes reference to Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[34] "Holy fools" were lay ascetics who went about naked or nearly naked, wore chains, spoke in riddles, uttered prophesies, and committed anti-social acts in order to express moral criticism of society.

[35] For analysis of the Tale and variant texts, see A. V. Pigin, *Iz istorii russkoi demonologii XVII veka. Povest' o besnovatoi zhene Solomonii. Issledovanie i teksty* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1998). Note 37 (p. 76) refers to a decree of 12 May 1725 "Ob otsylke besnuiushchikhsia v Sviateishii Sinod dlia raspredeleniia ikh po monastyriam (About sending the possessed to the Holy Synod for assignment to religious houses)," which apparently reinforced an already existing practice.

[36] Ibid, 114.

periodically popping out litters of six to eight demons. Her nourishment during these years consisted of bowls of blood, brought to her by the woman who came to collect the offspring. After numerous efforts to throw off the devilish thralls, Solomoniia was granted a vision of the Holy Mother of God, who told her to go to Ustiug to the tomb of the holy fools in Christ, where she should renounce the world and enter religious life. Finally arriving at the tomb, skin and bones from fasting, she prayed for assistance. The wonderworkers came out from their tomb. Prokopii made the sign of the cross over Solomoniia while Ioann took his lancet and sliced open her womb and began pulling out demons, which were black with tails and plump lips. He handed them to Prokopii, who beat them to death on the church floor—in one version "like puppies" (*iako shcheniat*).[37] The saints sewed her back up, returned to their tomb, and she was "refreshed and healthy."[38]

The ways in which Russians envisioned demons became remarkably varied in the seventeenth century, with images in iconography and illustrated manuscripts providing a wide-ranging panorama of animal-like forms, hybrids, and almost-human figures. The textual description of Solomoniia's baby demons accords with the centuries-old traditional depiction in narrative icons of the miracles associated with St. Nicholas, who vanquished small dark figures with tails, thin hands and feet, and sometimes wings. This creature, the eidalon, originated in ancient Greek art and can be found in the Byzantine iconography of the Nicholas cycle from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The selection of illustrated scenes of St. Nicholas's life remained stable when this iconographic tradition took root in Rus'. Popular among illustrations of the miracles were his contests with the devil (cutting down the cypress, destroying idols, and casting out demons).[39] In the scene "St. Nicholas Heals a Demoniac," the "usual composition, which is based on representations of Christ's healing miracles, shows St. Nicholas standing and raising a hand in blessing toward a nude or half-nude figure, from whose mouth may issue a black winged spirit."[40] A representation of St. Nicholas killing a demon was among the more common Christian motifs in Russian amulets.[41] He also saved a local Russian saint from destruction. In an episode from the seventeenth-century hagiographic narrative written by her son, Uliania Osor'ina (better known subsequently as the Murom wonder-worker Iulianiia Lazarevskaia) entered a chapel with an icon of the Mother of God and St. Nicholas to pray when she was surrounded "by devils armed to the teeth who wanted to kill her," but St. Nicholas appeared and "dispersed" them.[42] Scurrying or flying black figures became familiar to all through association with

[37] Ibid, 249.
[38] On other cases of cures for madness at Prokopii's tomb, see Dewey, "Some Perceptions," 88.
[39] Nancy P. Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1983), 156.
[40] Ibid, 150. On the Russian iconography of St. Nicholas, see Alexander Prus Boguslawski, "The Vitae of St. Nicholas and His Hagiographical Icons in Russia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1982). Boguslawski notes that the number of border scenes varies from two to thirty-plus, with twelve, fourteen, sixteen and eighteen the most common (155); the number increases in seventeenth-century compositions (156).
[41] Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 242.
[42] For the Russian text of the *Povest' o Iulianii Lazarevskoi* with English translation and commentary by Jana Howlett, see www.kk.convdocs.org/docs/index-98158.html (accessed October 30, 2018).

Muscovy's most popular saint.[43]

This generic little black form remained the conventional demon figure in border scenes on Russian icons of St. Nicholas.[44] But demonic iconography became more complex in the Early Modern period, developing a set of signs, "devilish markers," that identified demons and sinners. This trend reached its peak in the seventeenth century when adapted Western motifs joined Russian imagination to create an impressive array of horrific monsters, devilish beasts, and demonic tormenters awaiting their opportunity to provide eternal punishment for unrepentant sinners, what Dmitrii Antonov has termed a "chaotic multiplicity" of forms.[45] The new demon is often a hairy beast-like creature with an animal snout or bird's beak, a tail, and maybe horns. Hybrids symbolize the demon's true nature.[46] Iconographers tried to capture the liminal moment when heretics and sinners revealed that they were less than human.[47] In this visual imagery, demons and sinners reflect the "dark mirror of what humanity is."[48]

In an eighteenth-century illustrated copy of the tale about Solomoniia, the text remains the same but the demons are portrayed in the new style, still with the characteristic absence of light but human in shape and size. The beast-demon who appears to Solomoniia on her wedding night resembles the dog-headed St. Christopher rather than the devil on the label of Underwood deviled ham.[49] The woman who brings Solomoniia her cup of blood and collects the newborns is a *temnozrachnaia zhena*, defined by Antonov as an unclean spirit who appears to people as "dark as an Indian."[50] She is as tall as Solomoniia, and the demons in the litter Solomoniia births are the size of fully developed children, already bearing the mottled markings of sin.[51] When the saints clean out Solomoniia's womb, the demon

[43] The significantly larger number of surviving icons of Nicholas with scenes from his life, in comparison to historiated icons of other saints, is evidence of the wide experience of Russian icon painters in creating illustrated biographical cycles of his life and works; see N. V. Pak and D. Solov'eva, "Zhitie sviatogo Nikolaia Chudotvortsa i ego otrazhenie v drevnerusskoi pis'mennosti i ikonopisi XI-XVII vekov," in *Sviatoi Nikolai Mirlikiiskii v proizvedeniiakh XII-XIX stoletii iz sobraniia Russkogo muzeia* ed. I. A. Shalina and I. V. Sosnovtseva (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2006), 20.

[44] The lack of variation over centuries and regions is evident in examples from the collection of the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg; see *Sviatoi Nikolai Mirlikiiskii*, Cat. Nos. 3, 4, 15, 16, 36, 45, 46, 47, 50, 156. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, 73 recounts the popular belief that a "small black animal," the wizard's soul, could be seen hastening away when a *koldun* (sorcerer) died, but he takes this concept from later folklore.

[45] Antonov, "*Efiopy*," 29.

[46] See D. I. Antonov and M. R. Maizul's, *Demony i greshniki v drevnerusskoi ikonografii: Semiotika obraza* (Moscow: Indrik, 2011).

[47] See, for example, the miniature from the early eighteenth century showing Arians at the Last Judgment, when they turn into monsters; Antonov and Maizul's, *Demony i greshniki*, 265.

[48] Rene Girard, *"To Double Business Bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 156, 168; Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution* (London: Hachette Books, 2009), 130-1.

[49] See the reproduction of the scene from an illustrated manuscript (Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, Moscow, sobr. Vakhrameeva, No. 432, eighteenth century, l. 72) in Pigin, *Iz istorii*, 69.

[50] Antonov, "Efiopy," 32.

[51] Ibid, 77.

hybrids are dark, and the shape and size of human toddlers.[52]

Other visual evidence from the seventeenth century corroborates these connections between the bewitched and demon-possessed on the one hand, and animals on the other, by picturing demons and sinful humans with animal characteristics. Iconographic imagery gave form to the otherwise invisible activities of the dark forces.[53] This textual and visual material from seventeenth-century Muscovy zoomorphized the bewitched and demon-possessed by categorizing their behavior as beastly, as that of wild animals, and by projecting the attributes and emotions of animals onto human beings. However, this concept of the human-animal nexus represents only one side of the coin. On the opposite side, Muscovites also humanized animals.

Muscovite bestiaries humanized animals by anthropomorphically attributing human characteristics, emotions, and behavior to them. For example, of the animals whose noises the bewitched or demon-possessed duplicated: Bears copulate like humans, not like other animals. The male bear respects the pregnant female. Mother-bears care tenderly for their newborn cubs. The bear is also a brawler and a sodomite, with a violent temper**.** Dogs are sagacious, loyal, protective, self-sacrificing, and grateful, but also cautious and envious. They lead a temperate way of life. He-goats are horny and obstinate; they resemble sinners. Different species of birds are simple-minded or astute. Some birds are thieves. Bird voices vary considerably, so some bird names, like the cuckoo, derive from their distinctive sounds. The voice of the cuckoo is sad. Some birds sing beautifully, like the swan and blackbird, while others imitate the voices of men, like the parrot and magpie. Geese are very sensitive to the scent of men, and are likened to the ways of the righteous. Hares are fertile, but cowardly. Wolves and ravens are blood-thirsty, the dove is meek, the fox is cunning, the crow and donkey are stupid, the ant and the bee are hard-working, the stork is faithful to his mate, the crane is untrustworthy, and the beaver is resourceful. Every animal apparently shared some human characteristics. This content of Muscovite bestiaries does not differ from that in Western European bestiaries because both owe their inspiration to classical Greek literature on animals.[54]

Another literary genre with ancient roots, animal tales, also humanizes animals. Fairy tales in which animals behave – and speak – exactly like humans may have existed since time immemorial, but they are extremely difficult to date. Certainly Aesop (c. 620-564 BCE) told the tale of the tortoise and the hare, who demonstrate human emotions in their race. The story of Little Red Riding Hood, with its articulate wolf, has been traced to tenth-

[52] Ibid, 111, 113.

[53] See, for example, the Last Judgment fresco on the west wall of Vologda's St. Sofiia Cathedral; https://sophia-vologda.ru/stenopis/rospis-zapadnoy-stenyi-strashnyiy-sud/.

[54] Gura, *Simvolika zhivotnykh,* 79; *The Book of Beasts being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*, ed. T. H. White (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 45-47, 61-67, 74-75, 103, 153; Ol'ga Vladislavovna Belova, *Slavianskii bestiarii. Slovar' nazvanii i simvoliki* (Moscow: Indrik, 2001), 93-94, 120-22, 144-45, 152, 174-75, 205-6, 236. On animals that represented the noble virtues of the secular state, see E. V. Pchelov, *Bestiarii Moskovskogo tsarstva: zhivotnye v emblematike Moskovskoi Rusi kontsa XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Staraia Basmannaia, 2011).

century folk tales. Fortuitously, seventeenth-century Muscovite literature contains an animal tale which survives in contemporary manuscripts, providing us with a reliable dating of its dissemination.

The "Tale of Ersh Ershovich, the Bristleback's Son" is of unknown provenance. Its original Russian version contains well-known international motifs from world literature animal stories. In the Tale different species of fish satirize Muscovite judicial procedure of the seventeenth century as they contest rights to Lake Rostov. The "hero" of the Tale is a con man, a scoundrel, while the representatives of other species variously constitute his judges or his victims in its different versions. Literary specialists date it to the late sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, but, given the realia of Muscovite judicial proceedings, it must have been created before 1649 when a new law code was issued. Its relation to folklore at the time is problematic. As in folklore, humanized articulate animals, some larcenous, some honest and virtuous, occupy the same universe as and interact with humans.[55] In this case the situation enjoys greater than usual plausibility: there are cases of contested rights to Lake Rostov, in particular, one concerning the claims of the Rostov Petrovskii Monastery.[56]

Christian theology postulated a strict division between human and non-human forms of life. Animals lacked reason and perhaps souls. They certainly lacked speech. Nevertheless, bestiaries and popular animal tales shared an imaginative approach to animals that violated this contrast, assigning animals otherwise exclusively human capacities for speech and reason.

In conclusion, seventeenth-century Muscovites in text and art could not sustain the sharp differentiation between human and animal postulated by Christian theologians. Inspired or possessed by the devil, demons, or witches, sub-sets of humans spoke and acted like animals, violating the ethical and moral standards Russian Orthodox Christian were expected to uphold.[57] In Muscovite art demons looked in part like animals, and sinful, heretical or possessed humans acquired similar animal features. Judicial procedures concerning witchcraft and hagiography demonstrate attempts by state and church alike to stamp out or cure such behavior, by human or divine means. If human intrusion into the

[55] S. A. Semechko and I. P. Smirnov, "Povest' o Ershe Ershoviche," in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi XVII veka*, chast' 3, P-S, ed. D. M. Bulanin (St. Petersburg: RAN, 1998), 119-23; publication of original text: V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, *Russkaia demokraticheskaia satira XVII veka*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 7-16, 143-47, 168-74; English translation: Jack V. Haney, ed. *The Complete Folktales of A. N. Afanas'ev*, v. 1. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 121-33.

[56] "Gramota ot 7153 (1645) g. tsaria Mikhaila Feodorovicha o rybnykh lovliakh v Rostovskom ozere," *Iaroslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti. Chast' neofitsial'naia*, No. 35 (August 31, 1898), cols. 550-2.

[57] Foreigners described all Muscovites, or lower-class Muscovites, or Ivan IV in particular as acting like animals. See *Salomon Henning's* Chronicle *of Courland and Livonia*, tr. Jerry Smith *et al.* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co, 1992), 100-1; Berry and Crummey, *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom*, 80, 245; *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, ed. Samuel H. Baron (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 139, 142, 143, 162, 165, 294. However, such accusations, derived from Russophobic ethnic stereotypes, must be distinguished from the type of virtual metamorphosis of humans into animals when under spells or subject to demonic control adduced by Kivelson and Levin and graphically illustrated in Solomoniia's experiences during her years of "captivity."

animal realm was always a deleterious development, animal incursions into human behavior could be good or evil. Some animals were accorded human virtues, others were accorded human vices; in either case, animals are presented as acting in a manner consistent with either type of human personality traits. Seventeenth-century Muscovites may have claimed to separate the human from the animal completely, but they could not escape the ambiguities between them created by the exigencies of mortal life, namely evil, nor discipline their minds to ignore the human proclivity to imagine animals in human terms. Juxtaposing humans as animals to animals as humans reveals the premise underlying the Muscovite perceptions of animals. Attributing human traits to an animal might be a compliment, but ascribing animal traits to a human could only be a criticism. An animal with human characteristics, in anachronistic terms, might rise on the evolutionary ladder, but a human with animal characteristics could only fall into degeneracy. This contrast is very revealing. In the last analysis, the examples of cross-overs between the human-animal divide adduced in this article ultimately demonstrate the Muscovite premise of human superiority over animals, an axiom reflective of Christian belief and shared by all Christian societies at the time.