



**POSTHUMANISM EXPLORATIONS IN JAPANESE FOLKLORE FROM THE
SELECTED STORIES IN JAPANESE FOLKTALES-CLASSIC STORIES FROM
JAPAN'S ENCHANTED PAST BY YEI THEODORA OZAKI AND JAPANESE
LEGENDS AND FOLKLORE BY A.B. MITFORD**

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the animal, human-animal relationship from few selected stories in Japanese folklore by focusing on two animals which are sparrow and monkey. By analyse these animals, posthumanism theory by Cary Wolfe (2010) will be utilised to adapt in this study to challenge the human-centred concept in order to redefines that human is not the centre of the world through animal and human-animal relationship aspects to bring out the result to emphasis the concept of posthumanism is well-matched in this study. By using qualitative textual analysis in this study from two Japanese folklore book by Yei Theodora Ozaki (2018) and A.B. Mitford (2020), it bring out the main focus on animals as the characters in the selected stories play an crucial role to foster the animal status and their relationship with human through their characteristics and impact that contribute to this study. Hence, through the lens of using posthumanism theory into the sparrow and monkey in the selected stories is to establish animal is not as a tool for human and they are interconnected with human and form the relationship with them in the world. Overall, this study illustrates that Japanese folklore provides an impactful impact to be analyse by its animals in the selected which are rich in various aspects that is suitable to be using for examining and result in the outcome such as ethical, cultural and ecological aspects which are credible and insightful.

Keyword: Japanese folklore, posthumanism, animals, human-animal relationship, ethical, culture, ecological

PN1-6790: Literature (General)

PN45-57: Theory. Philosophy. Esthetics

PL700-889: Japanese literature

PN (905)-1008: Folk literature

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 gives a summary of the research by outlining the structure and primary topic. It starts with background of study which defines folklore, emphasises the value of Japanese folklore and presents posthumanism as the conceptual framework. The problem statement describes the reasons why Japanese folklore has received less posthumanism than Western traditions. After that, the study's goals are made clear by presenting the research questions and objectives. Besides, in order to guarantee knowledge and clarity of major concepts, the chapter also provides definitions for key terminology, and the significance of study is finally explained along with the contribution of this research that aims to make especially in bridging posthumanism viewpoints with Japanese folklore.

1.2 Background of the study

Folklores is an umbrella term of folktales, myths, traditional beliefs and practices that shared by a particular community (Baker, 2024). Folklore has been divided into folklore, tradition, popular literature, pop-lore, oral literature, orally-transmitted literature, folk speech, folk-beliefs, humorous-art, folk songs, folk melodies, pop tunes, music of the people, ceremonial art, art of the people, folk dance, games of the people, folktales, ballads, fables, myths, etiological tales, folktales, proverbs, riddles, jokes, tall tales, and so forth (Kato, 2025). Folklores divide into few types based on different culture in different places that develop their own unique folkloric traditions which reflect ethical, culture and so on (Baker, 2024). In this study, folklores that will be focused on is Japanese folklore.

Japanese folklore is origin from Shinto, Japan and it come from Japanese cultures, ethical, beliefs and so on. Japanese folklore involves a lot of folktales, myths, traditional beliefs that make it become one of the famous folklores around the world (Baker, 2024). Besides, Japanese folklore also focuses on ethical, cultural which it has some famous tales that draw out

how Japanese folklore is especially on animals and humans-animals relationship. For example, tales of parents selling their children to Oni, ghostly yurei haunting the sins of their living offspring (Baker, 2024). Additionally, as Makoto Oguma (2016) addresses, Japanese folklore is an essential lens that allows to view the cultural and historical development of Japan.

Folklore which has been rooted in rural life, consists of beliefs connected to common experiences, agricultural activities, rituals, and oral histories. In order to represent local worldviews that are frequently overlooked by dominant narratives, scholars such as Kunio Yanagita stressed folklore as “the people’s history” (Oguma, 2016). Studies of Japanese folklore have developed to tackle contemporary issues such as mass media and urban traditions, but they still focus on how traditions and beliefs uphold social cohesiveness and regional identity (Oguma, 2016). As significant cultural symbols woven into myths, folktales, and everyday beliefs, animals are emphasized in Makoto Oguma’s (2016) investigate of Japanese folklore studies. In local myths and rituals, animals like foxes (kitsune), raccoon dogs (tanuki), and snakes are commonly depicted as boundary-crossing creatures with moral or spiritual importance (Oguma, 2016). These nonhuman agents are a reflection of Japan's traditional belief that animals have personality, agency, and a close relationship to human concerns, especially in rural and agricultural settings (Oguma, 2016).

According to Cary Wolfe (2010), posthumanism is not posthuman in the sense that it is “after” society. It is only posthumanism in that it denies the autonomy and disembodiment ideals that humanism itself embraced (Wolfe, 2010, p. xv). Cary Wolfe emphasizes that posthumanism presents challenges by demonstrating how humans are interconnected and dependent on many other forms of life and systems. Wolfe criticizes posthumanism as not meaning transcending humans and their thinking because humans are always seen as independent, more important than animals, machines, or nature, and they can deliver their thinking from traditional humanism (Wolfe, 2010, p. xv). Therefore, posthumanism alert

humans to stop seeing themselves as the centre of the world and start to accept and practice the relationships between humans and animals, ecology in the world.

Cary Wolfe's posthumanism theory challenges traditional thinking that holds that humans are entirely distinct from and superior to animals. To give humans a deeper meaning, he explains that the distinction between humans and animals is made by culture, ethics, and philosophy rather than biology (Wolfe, 2010, p. 102). This idea has been used to ignore animals' experiences and exclude them from moral concern (Wolfe, 2010, p. 103). Wolfe argues that all living things should be given ethical focus since they are all vulnerable and finite because all life is embodied, suffers, and inevitably dies (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 62–64). This contrasts with basing ethics on characteristics like reason or language. In addition, he thinks that relationships rather than merely language or thought are the source of subjectivity, or an individual's perception of self (Wolfe, 2010, p. 130). Especially in Japanese culture, where animals are frequently regarded as morally significant, knowledgeable, or spiritual beings, this concept is helpful while researching folklore. Wolfe's theory helps to understand these animal figures not just as symbols for human traits, but as meaningful characters with their own kind of presence and agency.

By looking through Cary Wolfe's posthumanism theory, it demonstrates that posthumanism theory can be applied to Japanese folklore because its perspective is in path with the animistic foundations of Japanese folklore, which frequently depict animals like foxes (kitsune), racoon dogs (tanuki), snakes, and monkeys as spiritual beings with agency, emotion, and moral influence instead of as symbols or metaphors (Oguma, 2016). According to Oguma (2016), a cultural propensity for integrating nonhuman beings into social life is reflected in Japanese folklore studies, which examine not just folktales but also belief systems and human-natural connections. Wolfe's theory that ethical subjectivity develops via relationships rather than through reason or language is supported by these tales, which usually portray animals as

guardians, cunning, or bridges between the human and spirit realms. (Wolfe, 2010, p. 130). Thus, posthumanism provides a theoretical foundation that both critiques Western human exceptionalism and affirms the relational ontologies already present in Japanese cultural narratives.

Throughout this study, two animals will be used to analyse through posthumanism lens by discuss about stories that included these two animals which is monkey and sparrow from two books which is “Japanese Folktales- Classic Stories from Japan’s Enchanted Past” and “Japanese Legends and Folklore”.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Most of the studies conducted by using posthumanism theory that related to futuristic aspects such as technology, cyborgs, AI takeovers rather than applying it into Japanese folklores. For example, studies that apply posthumanism theory have been using in technology such as nonhuman animal and artificial being (AIs) and multispecies justice (Nayar, 2023). Besides, this cause that there are less studies that using posthumanism theory on analysing Japanese folklore which it only briefly discussed posthumanism in general (Thompson, 2018).

The fact that Cary Wolfe’s posthumanism theory has a solid foundation in Western intellectual traditions critiquing frameworks that are essential to Western modernity and frequently mirrored in Western folklore, such as liberal individualism and enlightened humanism is one of the main reasons why it has been applied rarely in Japanese folklore (Wolfe, 2010, p.138). Wolfe also criticizes the human-animal dualism that lies at the root of Western civilization as well as the “fantasy of disembodied rationality” (Wolfe, 2010, p. xv).

Furthermore, the second reason is that animals are depicted as being subordinate to humans in Western folktales on two different levels, either through their supplicating positions or their immoral actions (Cooper, 2013). Western folktales demonstrate that animals and humans are not on same footing because they portray their traits in a negative way, making it

impossible for them to have positive relationships and share the same status (Cooper, 2013). However, in Japanese folktales, people are frequently depicted as assisting animals or getting along with them because people believe that animals do not pose a threat to them (Cooper, 2013). This allows them to share an equal status with humans and foster positive human-animal relationships (Cooper, 2013). This research fills in these gaps by rerouting the application of Cary Wolfe's posthumanism theory which is frequently applied to futuristic contexts including technology, artificial intelligence, and diverse species justice (Nayar, 2023) on Japanese folklore. According to Oguma (2016), the study focuses on the stories of the sparrow and monkey to show how animals are portrayed in Japanese culture as active individuals with moral and spiritual value rather than only as symbols. This viewpoint differs from Western folklore which often depicts animals as being less valuable or unfavourable (Cooper, 2013; Wolfe, 2010). The study thereby bridges the scholarly gap noted by Thompson (2018) and shows how posthumanism can be utilised in a meaningful way away from Western intellectual frameworks. Hence, the research broadens the theoretical scope of posthumanism by bringing posthumanism concepts into line with Japan's animistic perspective which already decentralises humans and acknowledges the existence of nonhuman entities (Oguma, 2016). In the end, it adds new insights to discussions about human-animal connections from a cultural, ethical, and ecological standpoint.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study aims to scrutinize these research objectives:

1. To investigate the ways in Monkey and Sparrow and how these animals and human-animal ties are illustrated in Japanese folklore.
2. To explore how posthumanism theory redefines the depiction of animals and human-animal relationships.

1.5 Research Questions

The objectives listed above aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How are animals and human-animal ties illustrated in Japanese folklore?
2. What insights does posthumanism theory offer into the depiction of animals and human-animal relationship?

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Non-human Animals/Animals: Nonhuman animals encompass those that are indeed animals or that exhibit animal-like traits, including animal-related yokai such as kitsune and tanuki (Hirota, 2021).
2. Folklore: A group's traditional beliefs, practices, and stories that have been passed verbally through the generations are known as folklore (Michalopoulos & Xue, 2021).
3. Human-animal relationships: The term "human-animal relationships" describes the multidisciplinary exploration of the relationships between human beings and animals (Knight, 2018).
4. Posthumanism: Instead of being "after" the human, posthumanism acknowledges the interconnected and embodied aspects of human existence while denying the liberal humanist beliefs of autonomy and disembodiment (Cary Wolfe, 2010, p. xv).
5. Animistic: The belief that the universe is made up of living beings, only some of that are human (Harvey, 2006).

1.7 Significance of Study

This study is crucial to analyse posthumanism theory in Japanese folklore which lack of exploration on this topic as posthumanism theory usually use to analyse on futuristic applications. By applying posthumanism theory into Japanese folklore, it can derive more analysis as Japanese folklore is rich with nonhuman or animals such as yokai which is spirit, kami (gods), animal shapeshifters like foxes and racoon dogs that present the challenges into

human-animals binaries. By using Japanese folklore, it can also criticise that Japanese folklore is sharing the same concept as posthumanism theory which it aims to decentring human and clarify that human is not the dominant of the world which it can be explore and analysis a lot through Japanese folklore. Besides, Japanese folklore rooted in traditions such as Shinto animism presents a less rigidly anthropocentrism compared to Western humanism as it creates nonhuman characteristics such as animals that own spirit which coexist with human in the world. These animals reflect cultural logics which the boundaries between human and animals.

By applying posthumanism theory, stories in Japanese folklore will be interpreted through human not the centre of the world and how human and animals form the relationships and live together in the world. Moreover, ethical aspects will also be brought out to from analysing animals and human-animal relationships in Japanese folklore through posthumanism theory and emphasises the importance of humility, reciprocity and respect toward human-animal world. Furthermore, this perspective can broader environmental discourses and help booster ecological education as human-animal world also link to ecology as ecology play a significant role in the human-animal world as. Overall, this study will benefit future researcher who would like to analyse posthumanism theory more on Japanese folklore as this theory will provide the guideline on how to apply this theory on more Japanese folklore in future and conduct more study on other folklores as well.

This study contributes to the field of literature studies by showing the way conventional literature like folklore can be analysed using critical frameworks like posthumanism. Although posthumanism is frequently employed in technology or futuristic contexts, its application to Japanese folktales demonstrates that earlier forms of literature also include insights about cultural values, ethics, and human-nonhuman relationships. By encouraging researchers to apply modern theoretical frameworks to analyse oral histories and cultural narratives in addition to classic or current texts, this widens the theoretical dimension of literature research.

Furthermore, this work challenges Eurocentric conceptions of literature analysis and emphasizes the significance of numerous cultural viewpoints in global criticism of literature by bringing attention to the animistic and interconnected vision found in Japanese folklore. By accomplishing this, it enhances the study of literature in comparison, develops new possibilities for ethical and ecologic texts analysis, and shows how folklore is still relevant nowadays in addressing concerns like sustainability in the environment and human-animal relationships.

In conclusion, this chapter mainly address about folklore Folklores is an umbrella term of folktales, myths, traditional beliefs and practices that shared by a particular community and Japanese folklore been chosen to analysis through posthumanism theory. Besides, posthumanism theory also been explain in detail that it is a theory by Cary Wolfe about decentering human and clarify that human is not the centre in the world from few aspects. In addition, the reason of why less studies been conducted by applying posthumanism theory in Japanese folklore compared to Western folklore in statement of problem. Lastly, this chapter is to make an introduction on what result will bring out by applying posthumanism theory in Japanese folklore through human-animal relationship.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Analysis of Japanese Folklore Narratives

This section will explore two book authors which their books were chosen to analyse in this study. The first part of this section will begin with authors' backgrounds and follow by their contributions in Japanese Folklore and other fields. Then the last part of this section will be examining the contents of the two chosen books, selected stories and summary of the selected stories.

2.1.2 Cultural Transmission and Literary Legacy: A.B. Mitford and Yei Theodora

Ozaki's Contributions to Japanese Folklore

The first author to be discussed is Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford, known as A.B. Mitford (1837–1916), a British diplomat, writer, and cultural mediator who was crucial in bringing Japanese culture to the West in the Victorian era. Mitford worked as a secretary for the British embassy in Japan from 1866 till 1870 and he started to become very interested in Japanese storytelling, customs and traditions during this period of time (Mitford, 2020, p.4). One of the earliest and most significant English Language compilations of Japanese folklore and tales, *Tales of Old Japan* (1871) was published which combining folktales and descriptions of specific Japanese traditions (Mitford, 2020, p.4). Besides, Mitford served as a cultural diplomat by presenting Japan's ethics, aesthetics and historical traditions in order to shape a more nuanced and favourable image of Japan in Victorian England (Gobinskaya, 2020). In the book, *Japanese Legends and Folklore* also further highlights Mitford's noteworthy position as a participant and observer in Meiji-era Japan which highlighting how his intimate contacts with Japanese officials and citizens that provided him with unique access to customs and stories (Mitford, 2020, p.5-6). In addition, Mitford's made a lot of contributions especially in Japanese folklore which he not only published the book, but also vibrant achievements of his own descendants have eclipsed him in the memory of Britain and later Western interpreters, scholars, and journalists (Mitford, 2020, p.8).

Japanese Legends and Folklore by A.B. Mitford is a compilation of traditional Japanese stories that provide insight on the cultural values, beliefs, and practices during the late Edo and early Meiji eras in Japan. There are more than 20 stories in the book including romantic tragedies, Buddhist moral fables like *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, supernatural tales like *The Vampire Cat of Nabéshima*, and historical and heroic tales like *The Forty-Seven Rōnin* (Mitford, 2020, p.6). Alongside these stories, Mitford provides in-depth analysis of Japanese

traditions such as funeral rites, the roles of women and servants, and the ritual suicide (hara-kiri) practice that he observed firsthand (Mitford, 2020, p.7). The book serves as an early ethnographic record and literary anthology that helped demonstrate Japanese tradition to Western readers through the combination of storytelling and cultural observation.

Yei Theodora Ozaki (1871–1932) was a trailblazing Anglo-Japanese author and translator who was instrumental in bringing Japanese folklore to English-speaking audiences in the early 20th century. She was raised in London by a Japanese father and an English mother which gave her a distinct perspective and the ability to build a bridge between Eastern and Western literary traditions (Ozaki, 2020). Her most famous work, *Japanese Fairy Tales* which also published as *Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan’s Enchanted Past* is a collection of traditional stories she translated and adapted with a strong emphasis on preserving the original spirit and appeal of the tales. Furthermore, according to the 2018 edition, Ozaki highlighted that she had translated the stories “freely” rather than “literally” to preserve the beauty and ideals of Japanese culture while attempting to remain more appealing and intelligible to Western readers (Ozaki, 2018, p. 9). Her works have endured for over a century and continue to be republished, a testament to their literary value and cross-cultural significance (*Japanese Fairy Tales*, 2020). Yei Theodora Ozaki made a substantial impact on the preservation and internationalization of Japanese folklore, especially with her readable and culturally competent English translations of classic fairy tales. Her best-known work, *Japanese Fairy Tales* (1908) which was republished as *Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan’s Enchanted Past* (2018) includes stories such as Momotaro (The Peach Boy), Urashima Taro, and The Bamboo Cutter and the Moon Child, which she adapted to suit Western readers while preserving the values and essence of Japanese culture (Ozaki, 2018). Moreover, her works had grown to be an essential resource for everyone who interested Japanese literature, children’s literature, folklore, and communication between cultures (Ozaki, 2018, p.10). They are

frequently utilised in Japanese literatures and film by the imaginative power of landscapes and creatures from the tales and these tales provide fascinating backdrop for visitors to Japan, study Japanese language and devotees of Japanese literature, manga, film and culture more broadly (Ozaki, 2018, p.12). In addition, Ozaki's work is also frequently cited by academics who study postcolonial identity and multicultural narratives because of her distinctive Anglo-Japanese background and her role as a storyteller who mediates two cultural worlds (Ozaki, 2020).

Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan's Enchanted Past by Yei Theodora Ozaki is a thoughtfully selected compilation of 22 classic Japanese fairy tales that capture Japan's mythological imagination, moral principles, and cultural legacy. The book contains a wide variety of stories, including moral fables like *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, heroic epics like *Momotaro (The Peach Boy)*, and supernatural tales like *The Bamboo Cutter and the Moon Child* (Ozaki, 2018, p.10-13). All of these stories provide insights into topics like justice, kindness, loyalty, and the relationship between humans and nature. In order to maintain the spirit and meaning of the originals, Ozaki's translations are modified to accommodate Western readers rather than being identical (Ozaki, 2018, p.7).

2.1.3 Selected animals with the stories and summary of the stories

Based on the two chosen books, there are two animals been chosen to be analysed from the stories which are related to them. The first animals that are chosen is sparrow and it is chosen from the book, *Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan's Enchanted Past* with the story "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow". This story is discussed about a kind old man who take care of a wounded sparrow and bring it home, but his harsh and greedy wife become jealous of the care he given to the sparrow, so she cuts out the sparrow's tongue and chases it away. This cause the old man feel sad and go out to find the sparrow and he is greeted with warmth into the sparrow's inn after he found the sparrow and he is given a choice of treasure chests as reward of his kindness but he chooses the smaller one which turn out to be loaded with wealth

instead his greedy later visit the sparrow herself and demand the largest chest and open it impulsively only to be cursed or punished by it (Ozaki, 2018, p.29-38).

Besides, the second animal that is been chosen to analysed is monkey and it is chosen from the books, *Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan's Enchanted Past and Japanese Legends and Folklore* with the four monkey-related stories. The first story is “The Jellyfish and the Monkey” which is discussed about the Dragon King of the Sea falls sick and is informed that the only thing that can heal him is the monkey’s liver so he send a jellyfish to bring a monkey from the land but the smart monkey realise the plan so it deceives the jellyfish by saying it left it liver at home so the jellyfish went back to the sea without the monkey’s liver and the Dragon King furious at the jellyfish’s failure and beat it until its bones are shattered (Ozaki, 2018, p.170-180). The second story is “The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab” which talk about a greedy monkey murders a crab after defrauding it of its food and the crab’s children collaborate with their friends to get revenge on the monkey and the monkey is punished for his selfishness and cruelty in the end (Ozaki, 2018; Mitford, 2020). The third story is “The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar” which is discussed about a clever monkey and a boar end up becoming good friends but the monkey plans revenge as the boar insults him by acting innocently and displaying its power so the monkey deceives the boar into sticking his nose into a tree trunk then slams the trunk shut to trap the boar under the pretence of searching food and the monkey kills the boar by calling the villagers and eats its meat (Ozaki, 2018, p.138-141). Lastly, the fourth story is “The Adventure of Golden Boy, Kintaro” which illustrated that a boy who owned supernatural spirit be friend with animals which included monkey as one of the most important animals to form relationships with him and how they interact and result in a harmony relationship between human and animal (Ozaki, 2018).

In a nutshell, this section examines the vital contributions of A.B Mitford and Yei Theodora Ozaki in the preservation and transmission of Japanese Folklore to the Western world.

Besides, this section has established the groundwork for more in-depth analysis by looking at their background, selected stories, moral and cultural themes woven throughout their stories and the selected animal-related stories also demonstrate the depth of symbolism and richness of Japanese folklore.

2.2 Unveiling the Spirit of Japanese Folklore

2.2.1 Tracing the Roots: Historical Foundations of Japanese Folklore Studies

According to Oguma (2016), the area of Japanese Folklore studies is concerned with “all aspects of Japanese people’s lives” which includes daily routines, social customs and religious practices rather than just mythological stories or legendary characters. He places this scope in the context of the Folklore Society of Japan’s institutional structure pointing out that the field’s in progress scholarly activity and vitality are reflected in the fact that *Nihon-Minzokugaku* which is the word of Japanese Folklore in Japanese, its official journal that has published over 1,500 articles since its inception in 1958 (Oguma, 2016). Besides, Oguma draws attention to a joint project between the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology and the Folklore Society that resulted in a series of articles in the *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology* that focused on seven domains of inquiry which are family and kinship, the natural environment and livelihoods, religion, ritual and festivals, performing arts, oral tradition, material culture and public folklore (Oguma, 2016). He also acknowledges the influence of Western ethnology and anthropology in this process when discussing the field’s intellectual development by addressing that early researchers like Kunio Yanagita aimed to adapt and reinterpret foreign methodologies to correspond with Japan’s own cultural realities (Oguma,2016). Hence, Yanagita contributed to develop an epistemological framework that was both modern and distinctly Japanese through the implementation of this synthesis (Oguma, 2016).

2.2.2 Theoretical Perspectives and Scholarly Approaches

Bukenya (2025) defines folklore as an active, evolving force that continues to influence literature, media, identity and social values which it is more than a vestige of the past (Bukenya, 2025). This theoretical viewpoint is in alignment with Japanese folklore studies which also view folklore as an aspect of systematic scholarly study (Oguma, 2016). Moreover, according to Bukenya who frames folklore through literary, anthropological and historical perspectives affirm that folklore and folklore studies can be interpreted as the people and their cultural output such as tradition-based, expressive, made durable and collective and the science or knowledge intent on the analysis of these (Bukenya, 2025). This dual concept is equivalent to Yanagita Kunio's core idea for Japanese folkloristics which blended Western anthropological methods with insights from indigenous cultures (Oguma, 2016). In addition, Bukenya urges acknowledgment of writing, print, recordings and so on in a manner beyond the scope of the oral by challenging the dominant concept that all folklore is oral (Bukenya, 2025). This expanded perspective is in tandem with current Japanese folklore research which is looking more deeper at the way traditional stories have been adapted for contemporary media like anime, manga and digital media (Bukenya, 2025). By characterising folklore as a continuous dialogue between tradition and innovation, both global and Japanese viewpoints indicate its function as a dynamic cultural force that negotiates continuity and transition in response to evolving societal circumstances (Bukenya, 2025).

2.2.3 Themes, Motifs, and Cultural Functions

The intricate repertoire of stories, symbolic characters and thematic motifs found in Japanese folklore is woven throughout the historical, religious and social structures of the country. According to Oguma (2016), folklore has an unbreakable connection to all aspects of Japanese people's lives and its motifs frequently express mythological views, moral lessons and communal values. Recurring characters include shape-shifting animals like tanuki

(raccoon dogs) and kitsune (foxes) as well as supernatural beings like kami (deities) and yokai (mystery entities) whose numerous layers indicating that ranges from moral lessons to manifestations of societal anxiety (Oguma, 2016). In addition, heroic characters such as Momotaro and Urashima Taro portray the relationship between human agency and fate while embodying the traits of loyalty and determination (Oguma, 2016).

Apart from that, while Japanese folklore studies have constantly defined yokai as malevolent supernatural beings, Hirota (2021) emphasised them as mysterious phenomena that can utilise extraordinary power in their interactions with humans however most instances do not fit this description. He also examines the super naturalisation of yokai and their relocation to the otherworld which are the yokai growth of the late 1960s, the importation of Western concepts of the supernatural in the early twentieth century and the advancements in kokugaku cosmology in the early nineteenth century (Hirota, 2021). On the other hand, this process indicates not only to thematic flexibility but also changing intellectual and cultural frameworks that transformed yokai from ambiguous natural phenomena into standardised supernatural beings (Hirota, 2021).

Bukenya's description of folklore as a living dialogue between tradition and innovation highlights how resilient these themes are especially when they are reimagined in contemporary media like anime, manga and videogames. Bukenya (2025) notes that folklore retains original themes while challenging and developing those aspects which is consistent with the Japanese belief in transformation whether spiritual, physical or moral. The practical relevance of folklore in maintaining spiritual and traditional agricultural practices while embracing metropolitan modernity is further illustrated by periodic ceremonies such as Obon and Setsubun (Bukenya, 2025; Oguma 2016). Overall, these viewpoints emphasise Japanese folklore as a living area of cultural innovation as well as accumulation of historical concepts.

2.2.4 Transmission, Adaptation, and Contemporary Relevance

In order to preserve its cultural importance, Japanese folklore has shown incredible versatility through evolution in a variety of media and societal shifts. The use adoption of traditional yokai (supernatural entities) in contemporary culture is a noteworthy example. Suzuki (2019) explores at how Mizuki Shigeru's manga has successfully revived and reinterpreted folklore for modern audiences by spreading into transmedia platforms like anime and television. This evolution emphasises how folklore is dynamic as it moves through many cultural manifestations. Besides, historical stories like Chushingura, the story of samurai devotion and retaliation have been reinterpreted in a number of film adaptations which reflects how traditional stories are being interpreted in modern cinema (Daliot-Bul, 2024). Other than that, cultural tourism is also influenced by Japanese folklore rather than media. As an illustration of how folklore still plays a significant role in local cultural identity and economic growth, Aomori Prefecture incorporates fantasy and folklore into its heritage tourism strategies, fusing historical narratives with creative storytelling and foreign tourists (Drianda et al., 2021). These instances demonstrate how adaptable and dynamic Japanese folklore is, showing how it may flourish in modern settings while maintaining its cultural core.

In a nutshell a diverse range of themes, motifs, and traditional roles that have been sustained and modified over decades are embodied in Japanese folklore. Its dynamic nature and enduring significance in modern society are highlighted by its transmission through oral traditions, rituals, and modern media. Furthermore, folklore has a crucial role in forming cultural identities both in and out of Japan, as evidenced by the widespread interest in and reinterpretation of these traditional tales. As a result, Japanese folklore is still a living tradition that preserves its rich history while continuously developing.

2.3 Animals and Human–Animal Relationships in Japanese Folklore

2.3.1 Symbolism of animals in Japanese folklore

In Japanese folklore, animals are not only supporting characters instead they are essential representations that convey cultural values and ethical concepts (Wibowo, 2016). For example, the crane (tsuru) usually associated with longevity, faithfulness and thankfulness and qualities that are indicative of traditional Japanese values of social responsibility and devotion. Besides, Wibowo (2016) conducts a structural research of Tsuru no Ongaeshi (The Grateful Crane) that shows how the folktale dramatizes interchange within species as in this story the crane changes into a lady who makes beautiful cloth as compensation after being rescued by a human however the interchange cycle breaks down when the human betrays her real identity by spying on it which causes her to disappear. According to Wibowo (2016), this loss reflects underlying cultural fears about dishonesty and the weakness of species relationships. Therefore, animals serve as a symbolic role that extends beyond pleasure and serves as a moral guide for human behaviour. In addition, other creatures such as carp (koi) and turtles (kame) also demonstrate determination and durability and highlight perseverance as a fundamental in Japanese culture (Wibowo, 2016). Hence, folklore uses these common themes to infuse animal characters with cultural values and utilising them as messengers for conveying ethical values to future generations.

2.3.2 Shapeshifting and supernatural beings

Stories of shapeshifting creatures that combine human and non-human identities are particularly prominent in Japanese folklore (Cardi, 2022). The most well-known are the tanuki (raccoon dog) and kitsune (fox) who both appear to be intelligent beings that use trickery and trouble to disturb the daily lives of humans. For example, the kitsune is placed within a broader multicultural analysis of trickster figures by Cardi (2022) as he highlights how they challenge human trust and expose weaknesses in norms of society. The kitsune's capability to change into

a stunning lady frequently attracting men or misleading communities, exposes profound cultural concerns related to power, sexuality, and trust. This is also similar to tanuki which represents chaos and entertainment by transforming itself to deceive people or using magic to turn leaves into cash (Cardi, 2022). These animal characters are not just being naughty; they also serve as a crucial narrative role by testing human's ethical behaviour and resilience. Furthermore, cats also play a transitional role by manifesting as supernatural creatures with fascinating abilities (Shen, 2024). According to Shen (2024), stories of bakeneko (monster cats) and nekomata (cats with forked tails) demonstrate how rural Shimane communities linked unexplainable illnesses or bad luck to feline spirits. Shen (2024) also points out that the villagers viewed these beliefs as moral lessons to respect animals and preserve harmony between the human and non-human worlds rather than dismissing them as simple belief. Therefore, shapeshifting stories show how Japanese folklore constantly pushes limits of human morality by using animals as intermediates between order and chaos.

2.3.3 Human-Animal Interactions and Relationships

The concept of mutuality in human-animal relationships is central to Japanese folklore (Wibowo, 2016; Shen, 2024). These stories emphasize that while harshness or betrayal results in punishment, empathy and kindness toward animals attract benefits. For instance, Urashima Tarō describes a fisherman who saves a turtle and earns a trip to the undersea Dragon Palace as a reward. However, he faces disaster when he refuses instructions not to open a mystery box (Wibowo, 2016). This is reinforced by Wibowo's (2016) analysis of Tsuru no Ongaeshi which highlights the weak point of reciprocity by demonstrating how human fail to maintain trust with animals and cause the breakdown of relationships with animals. This topic is further developed by Shen's (2024) anthropological study which shows how common people integrated such folklore as ethical guidelines for interactions between humans and animals. For example, the idea that abused cats can become spiteful spirits that helped maintain the values

of kindness and caution in everyday interactions. The Shinto belief that animals have kami (spiritual essence) and can respond to human behaviour with loyalty or revenge is thus reflected in these folktales (Shen, 2024). This cultural trend is carried over into modern children's literature by Shimatani and Koda's (2021) research which indicates that picture books usually include dogs and cats as friends who actively influence kids' development in morality. The connection between traditional stories and modern media illustrates the way folklore values endure and guaranteeing that concepts of empathy and reciprocity are still relevant to culture in Japan today.

2.3.4 Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Dimensions

Human-animal relationships become further complicated by the spiritual aspect of Japanese folklore. In Shinto, animals are considered sacred creatures that serve as the gods' messengers rather than passive symbols. As messengers of Inari, the fertility and rice deity, foxes are probably the most well-known example as their presence at shrines is symbolic of wealth and favour from God (Shen, 2024). In the same way, it was previously illegal to harm deer in Nara since they were considered divine messengers (Shen, 2024). These implications of religion transform animals from simple plot elements into spiritual mediators with practical implications for morality. Buddhism also has an impact on animal metaphor especially through its concepts on karmic mutuality and empathy (Cardi, 2022). Moreover, stories of animals appreciating good deeds are in line with Buddhist beliefs that treating sentient beings with compassion produces favourable results. These religious and ethical frameworks are not abstract ideas instead they are lived experiences that shaped daily behaviour, as demonstrated by Shen's (2024) research on rural belief in animal spirits. These concerns are still found in present day ecological research. Nowadays, Japan's animistic traditions continue to influence modern wildlife management by promoting coexistence rather than being dominance. According to Gu & Sakanashi's (2025) Interactions research, these studies demonstrate how

Japanese culture has long ingrained animals within a moral world where treating them with respect is both a practical necessity and a spiritual responsibility by connecting folklore, religion, and ecological ethics.

In conclusion, animals are portrayed in Japanese folklore as symbolic, spiritual and moral beings that influence how people see reciprocity, ethics and coexistence. The latest research demonstrates how these stories continue to communicate cultural norms while addressing everlasting problems about the boundaries between humans and animals' world by analysing aspects of symbolic significance, shapeshifting, human–animal reciprocity, and religious aspects.

2.4 Past Studies on Cary Wolfe's Posthumanism Theory

2.4.1 Early Foundations and Intellectual Context

Scholars' approaches to issues of individuality, autonomy, and ethics experienced a significant change with the rise of posthumanism as an important topic in the humanities in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Cary Wolfe is frequently mentioned as one of the key contributors in this evolution. Wolfe is part of a group of early theorists such as Rosi Braidotti and N. Katherine Hayles who aimed to expand postmodern and deconstructive critiques into new areas especially regarding nonhuman life and systems as explained in the Posthuman Glossary (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p. 356). These contributions set posthumanism apart from previous "posthuman" discussions which were frequently restricted to futuristic fantasies or developments in technology. Besides, Wolfe emphasized in his earlier works that posthumanism should not be limited into stories of human development or technology transcendence. Instead, it embodies a significant shift in perspective that challenges the historical privileges given to humans. According to the Posthuman Glossary, Wolfe's work challenges anthropocentrism by addressing how nonhuman forms of life and power have been left out of humanist traditions using the concept of systems, Derridean deconstruction and

animal studies (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p. 357). These fundamental concepts set the stage for his future theoretical contributions to have a widespread effect.

2.4.2 What is Posthumanism? (2010) and Theoretical Contributions

Wolfe's position as a prominent figure in posthumanism studies was established in 2010 with the release of *What is Posthumanism?* Wolfe critiques "humanist posthumanism" in this text claiming that it is a weak extension of humanist principles posing as development (Wolfe, 2010, p. xvi). For instance, humanist posthumanism may maintain beliefs about human independence, competence, and significance while simultaneously embracing technological innovation. According to Wolfe, these methods fall in the category of challenging the conceptual frameworks that uphold human distinctiveness. In contrast, Wolfe presents an innovative posthumanism that reinterprets humanity as interpersonal, distributed and integrated into extensive technological, ecological and semiotic frameworks (Wolfe, 2010, pp. xxv-xxvi). He emphasizes how humans are not separate individuals but rather participants in interwoven structures that include meaning, biology and environment that drawing primarily on Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (Wolfe, 2010, p. 43). By combining this systematic approach with Derrida's deconstruction, Wolfe shows how nonhuman aspects of existence have an unbreakable connection to language, conversation, and materiality. This interpretation is supported by the *Posthuman Glossary* which characterizes Wolfe's writings as a paradigm shift in understanding posthumanism as a reconsideration of the concepts of ontology, epistemology and ethics in addition to a critique of anthropocentrism (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, pp. 356-357). *What is Posthumanism?* has received a lot of attention in previous research that Wolfe's paradigm has been used in ecocriticism to analyse the Anthropocene where the interdependence of climate systems and human activity highlights the shortcomings of human-centred conceptions (Wolfe, 2010, p. 123). His criticism of representationalism in culture and media studies has prompted researchers to examine at the ways that material practices and language

contribute to meaning which is consistent with posthumanism performative perspectives (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p. 359). These uses demonstrate the text's applicability as a conceptual and practical contribution.

2.4.3 Institutionalization and Applications in Scholarly Fields

Beyond his written works, Wolfe has influenced the institutional structures that support posthumanism studies. One important step in bringing posthumanism academics together is his position as founding editor of the University of Minnesota Press's Posthumanities series. According to the Posthuman Glossary, the series is an intellectual intersection of a variety of ideas, such as feminist theory, ecocriticism and animal studies (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p.356). Wolfe has promoted collaborative discussion and research that challenges anthropocentrism through this medium. The way that Wolfe's theories have been used in a variety of previous studies demonstrates the influence of his work. His criticism of animal hierarchies and his emphasis on the moral significance of nonhuman existence have influenced the discussion of multispecies relationships in animal studies (Wolfe, 2010, p. 99). His systemic approach has impacted study on ecological crisis and climate change in environmental humanities where scholars emphasize the interdependence of human and nonhuman characters (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p. 357). Wolfe's efforts have contributed to the development of posthumanism as a key framework for reconsidering humanities research in the 21st century by providing conceptual tools and an organizational framework.

Overall, previous research shows that Cary Wolfe has significantly influenced posthumanism philosophy through his organisational efforts and theoretical innovations. Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism?* (2010) offers the most comprehensive discussion of his criticism of humanist traditions and the Posthuman Glossary (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018) places his works in the context of the broader topic. These sources collectively demonstrate how Wolfe's theories continue to influence humanities and other fields of study by providing a

framework for reconsidering humanity, ethics, and understanding in the context of the nonhuman.

In conclusion, this chapter discusses from the anthology that chose to be analyse in this study which is Japanese folklore and briefly explain the selected stories and animals that be selected to focus. Besides, Japanese folklore also been discussed in this chapter in a deeper dimension, human-animal relationships in Japanese folklore, the outcome that will be bring out by analysing through Japanese folklore also been illustrated. Moreover, this chapter also provide the lens on Cary Wolfe's posthumanism theory by reviewing his past studies and how other scholars using his theory in their studies.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter adopts posthumanism theory to analyze Japanese folklore in order to develop the theoretical and analytical framework. This study uses qualitative textual evaluation to investigate folklore as literary pieces with the goal to reveal the authority of nonhuman entities like yokai and kami, who are animals that may alter their appearance. These stories challenge anthropocentric notions by portraying humans, animals, and supernatural beings as interrelated characters in similar patterns of obligations and goal. Besides, the conceptual framework for analysing how Japanese folklore demonstrates cultural principles of preservation, humbleness and relationships by integrating primary posthumanism, posthumanism ethics, Wolfe's theoretical concepts, and ecological perspective is also laid forth in this chapter.

3.2 Methodological Orientation

The primary methodological approach used in this study is a qualitative, interpretive analysis of the text. In folklore studies, where the message is conveyed through illustrations, figurative language, and cultural traditions woven into stories rather than facts, this method is

especially suitable. As highlighted by Nassaji (2015), qualitative methods are particularly useful for investigating interpretation and defining meaning pathways. In a similar vein, Singh (2021) contends that exploratory qualitative study is best suited for projects that expand conceptual frameworks into comparatively unexplored domains. Since posthumanism's application to Japanese folklore is still relatively unexplored, a qualitative approach provides the adaptability and depth needed to make new discoveries.

Besides, the selection of textual evaluation is intentional. The metaphorical variety of folktales and the theoretical challenges of posthumanism would not be sufficiently captured by quantitative methods like frequency estimation of themes or surveys of public sentiment. The growth of yokai or kami through the years could also be traced through archival and historical study but doing so runs the danger of overlooking the stories' profound ecological and ethical connotations. Therefore, textual analysis provides the best instrument, by allowing the study to go beyond simply listing stories to analyze how they contradict anthropocentric worldviews and disclose nonhuman power.

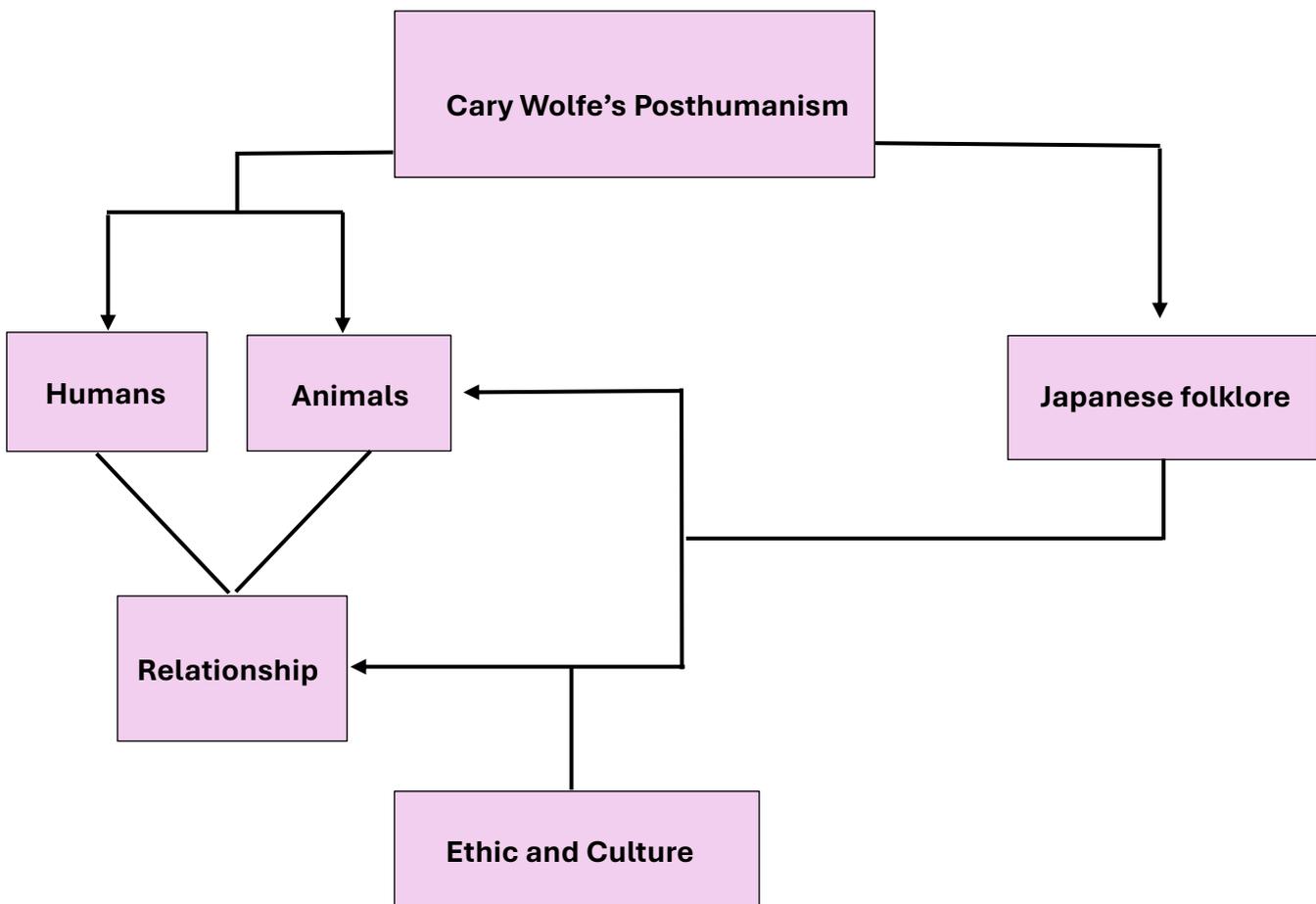
Apart from that, close reading is the primary technique in this qualitative approach. By discovering deeper dimensions of meaning in texts requires close reading which entails paying close focus to the language, images, and structure, this approach is particularly helpful in folklore since stories frequently use symbols to convey ethical values and environmental knowledge. For example, foxes (kitsune) are depicted as both clever liars and kind protectors that represent opposing viewpoints on animal intelligence and the interaction between humans and nonhumans. Next, river spirits, or kappa, represent cultural conceptions of rivers as both life and death acting as both dangerous attackers and entertaining tricksters. Hence, through a thorough analysis of these stories, the study can show how folklore represents a "trans-species cultural system," whereby spirits, animals, and humans all contest roles and borders (Thompson, 2018).

The study’s data collection consists of tales from Baker’s (2024) *Tales of Japanese Folklore* as well as secondary research like Fraser’s (2018) examination of animal autonomy in *Hakkenden* and Bradt’s (2019) analysis of yokai in Japanese cultural imaginary. These choices guarantee that both authentic folktales and academic analyses that emphasize nonhuman existence are included in the analysis. Moreover, this also particularly noteworthy is Hirota’s (2021) research on yokai, which emphasizes how these creatures’ crossover between the natural, supernatural, and cultural domains, making human-centered classifications more challenging.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Cary Wolfe’s Posthumanism Theory



Note. Figure created based on Wolfe’s (2010) *Posthumanism Theory*

3.3.1 Definition and Evolution of Posthumanism

The anthropocentric approach of humanist views is challenged by the conceptual perspective of posthumanism. Humanism has always placed humans beyond other beings and ecological structures by emphasizing knowledge, independence, and personality as characteristics that are specific to humans. Wolfe (2010) asserts that it is impossible to fully understand humans apart from the broader interconnections of animals, technology, and environment in which they are positioned. Thus, posthumanism deconstructs the uniqueness of humans and redirects analysis toward relationships and interconnection.

Moreover, Nayar (2023) distinguishes three major posthumanism domains. Firstly, the goal of transhumanist posthumanism is to enhance human capacity through technology and multispecies relationships and ecological connections are highlighted by ecological posthumanism. This work is influenced by critical posthumanism which challenges human-centered structures and emphasises how literature and culture undermine anthropocentric perspectives. Besides, Pribac and Golež Kaučič (2024) establish the idea of zoofolkloristics, which interprets folklore as a medium where human-animal relationships are actively redefined while Barcz (2015) shows how literary texts disrupt human-centered perceptions by emphasizing the portrayal of animals.

This study places itself within the framework of critical posthumanism as it provides an opportunity to examine the ways in which human-centered concepts are challenged by Japanese folklore. Folktales about Kitsune, Tanuki, and Yokai emphasize the value of nonhuman agency and the fluidity of species borders. As a result, Japanese folklore embraces posthumanism concepts as a narrative practice in addition to being an outcome of culture and ethic.

3.3.2 Posthumanism Ethics and Nonhuman Agency

The restructuring of ethics above the boundaries of human exclusivity is a fundamental aspect of posthumanism. By highlighting the interdependence of every living thing, Wolfe (2010) challenges conventional humanist ethics for removing nonhumans and animals from ethical consideration. By discussing the “animal gaze,” Derrida expands on this criticism which anthropocentric paradigm views humans as superior to other living beings collapses when people are challenged by an animal’s gaze which forces them to acknowledge their own weakness and accountability (Bolton, n.d.).

When these philosophical points are adapted to literature and folklore, they become more popular. Schnurre’s postwar animal stories are a part of the 2018 research *Posthuman Ethics*, which demonstrates how representations of nonhuman struggling weaken human-centered frames regarding obligation and force readers to recognize the weakness of creatures (Kleinhans, 2016). In addition, folklore also frequently portrays animals and spirits as moral beings who guard, rule, or mentor people. For instance, the river spirit (kappa) upholds obedience to ecosystems by challenging individuals who abuse river systems, while the fox (kitsune) has the power to punish selfishness or reward kindness. These stories serve as moral stories where ethical values are actively developed by nonhuman beings.

Apart from that, Yokai represent a particularly strong type of supernatural power in the Japanese culture. According to Hirota (2021), postwar portrayals of yokai mirrored societal concerns about modernization and uncertainty. Yokai were active agents who challenged restrictions and affirmed their autonomy and freedom instead of being silent symbolism. Their capacity to defend or cause harm illustrates how folklore integrates a nonhuman ethical which disputes human authority.

Finally, this posthumanism morality of obligation aligns with the ecological principles discovered in folktales. Stories of mountain supernatural beings punishing overexploitation or

gods holding gifts for disrespect, for example, highlight the negative consequences of human selfishness. In addition to serving as supplementary characters, nonhuman characters in these tales possess ethical attractions. Therefore, the study can show how cultural practices already impose an ethic of kindness, humbleness, and sympathy for nonhuman beings by including posthumanism ethics into folklore study.

3.3.3 Wolfe's Systems Theory

Wolfe (2010) highlights the fact that power is not restricted to people but rather flows across relationships with others, adding a crucial new angle to posthumanism theory. By focusing on theorists like Niklas Luhmann, Wolfe makes it evident that personality emerges in complex systems of interaction involving humans, nonhumans, and social structures. This scattered notion of power weakens the humanist assumption that humans are independent by establishing value among interrelated settings.

However, there are also notable instances of disputed power in Japanese folklore. For instance, Fraser's (2018) research on Hakkenden shows how dogs are story characters whose dedication and faith impact the plot and broader cultural values. Furthermore, Bradt (2019) emphasizes that yokai tales are a component of larger historical and religious practices, such as festivals, ceremonies related to religion, and oral histories, rather than existing as distinct stories. To support this viewpoint, Pribac and Golež Kaučič (2024) introduce the idea of zoofolkloristics, which views folklore as an organized kind of innovation in which both humans and animals continuously reassess their connections with one another.

This study interprets mythical creatures like Kitsune and Kappa as more than simply individual beings by applying Wolfe's systems theory to Japanese folklore. For instance, Kitsune behaves as animals in the framework of ecosystems, as transmitters of Inari in the context of spiritual conviction, and as enemies or guardians in the setting of cultural tales. Their strength is in their place in the complex interrelationships between society, beliefs, and nature,

not in any one viewpoint (Fraser, 2018; Bradt, 2019). Similarly, kappa are not merely river demons; they are a component of an ecosystem that includes rivers, techniques for agriculture, environmental protection measures, and ethical principles relevant to environmental consciousness (Hirota, 2021; Bhattacharyya, 2024).

As a result, this system-based perspective on folklore highlights the meaning-sharing between humans and nonhumans. The fact that power is divided among numerous cultural structures rather than concentrated in human characters lends credibility to Wolfe's claim that posthumanism suggests an interconnected instead of self-centered standpoint.

3.3.4 Ecological Perspectives in Posthumanism

In addition to emphasizing ecological viewpoints, posthumanism challenges human-centered domination and places humans within the framework of interconnected species. According to Cord (2022), this change is a component of the "nonhuman turn," which advocates the perspectives that the relationships between humans, animals, and the natural world. Apart from that, this research is furthered by Bhattacharyya (2024) who demonstrates how folktales serve as ecological archives, retaining knowledge regarding preservation and cultural maintenance of ecology.

These ecological viewpoints are extensively reflected in Japanese folklore. For example, stories about river spirits responding against pollution or mountain gods punishing excessive harvesting relate ethics among humans to ecological equilibrium and an underneath understanding of ecological interconnectedness is encoded in these tales. As postwar yokai reflected societal concerns about industrial expansion and the influence on the environment, Hirota (2021) argues that folklore functioned as an approach for illustrating and discussion of ecological issues.

This study uses ecological posthumanism to analyse folktales as stories that emphasize cooperation and preservation. These tales do not remain of the past, rather they convey timeless

truths that are relevant to nowadays' critical global issues which include the rights of the environment, the decline of biodiversity, and the effects of climate change.

3.4 Integration into This Study

The analytical instruments for analyzing Japanese folklore from a posthumanism perspective are provided by the theoretical and conceptual framework established in this chapter. The study frames folktales as stories that both depict and challenge human-nonhuman connections by integrating critical posthumanism with qualitative textual analysis.

The study may demonstrate how animals, spirits, and yokai operate as contributing participants in cultural structures since their agency beyond humans is acknowledged. A framework for interpreting nonhumans as key players in story and culture is offered by Fraser's (2018) analysis of the dogs in *Hakkenden* and Hirota's (2021) examination of yokai as unforeseen cultural entities. Through comparable analyses of foxes, tanuki, and kappa, this study illustrates how folklore undermines human-centered viewpoints.

First and foremost, folklore can be interpreted as ethical stories in which nonhuman beings seek ethical acceptance according to the theory of posthumanism ethics that is consistent with Derrida's analysis of the animal gaze (Bolton, n.d.). In addition, Wolfe's (2010) criticism of anthropocentrism and the findings of *Posthuman Ethics* (2018) show how representations of nonhuman sustaining force accountability. For instance, stories of kami taking away good fortune or yokai punishing rudeness serve as examples of how ethical concepts about humbleness and mutual respect are encoded in Japanese folklore.

Apart from that, the study can also place folklore within greater ecological and cultural interconnections due to systems theory. The study views folktales as structural techniques that constantly mediate interspecies connections which building on Pribac and Golež Kaučič's (2024) concept of zoofolkloristics and Wolfe's (2010) explanation of distributed power. For example, by situating nonhuman authority within the structures such as social customs,

agricultural conservation, and river ecosystems, Kappa narratives demonstrate how nonhuman authority is ingrained in cultural structures. Finally, incorporating ecological perspectives highlights the importance of folklore as a medium of ecological knowledge. Bhattacharyya (2024) argues that folktales embody ecological facts that enable cultural longevity, while Cord (2022) understands this as a component of the “nonhuman turn” in cultural analysis. By placing Japanese folktales inside this ecological framework, the study emphasizes their relevance to contemporary environmental concerns, such as protecting biodiversity and ethical dilemmas related to climate change.

Hence, these frameworks assure that the analysis provides an insightful reconstruction of folklore that reaches above explanation. The research views folklore as a historical record where anthropocentrism is challenged, the obligation of ethics toward nonhumans is acknowledged, and ecological interconnectedness is established through the integration of posthumanism into Japanese tales. This combination demonstrates the idea’s uniqueness although posthumanism has been extensively used in fields like literary studies, philosophy, and ecological studies, its methodological implementation to Japanese folklore is still a relatively undiscovered but interesting path.

In a nutshell, this chapter has outlined the theoretical and analytical basis of posthumanism research on Japanese folklore. A comprehensive review and qualitative analysis of texts may expose the ethical and literal significance of folktales. Besides, the conceptual framework which has its roots in critical posthumanism combines posthumanism theory, ethics, and ecological viewpoints to provide methods for decentering people and acknowledging the power of nonhumans and these aspects will be further discussed in the next chapter by using posthumanism theory as the medium to analyses selected animals from few selected stories in Japanese folklore to demonstrate the outcome and the perspectives on it.

Chapter 4: Textual Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores on three animals which are sparrow, and monkey from few selected stories in Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan's Enchanted Past and Japanese Legends and Folklore by A.B. Mitford to analyse how these animals embody ethical, cultural and ecological concepts in Japanese folklore. Furthermore, posthumanism theory also implies to discuss how these animals challenge human-centred viewpoints, alter the connection between humans and animals, and showed how they shared authority which foster a deeper understanding of the ethical, cultural, and ecological elements embedded in these animal stories.

4.2 Depiction of the Sparrow in The Tongue-Cut Sparrow

4.2.1 Representation and Symbolism of the Sparrow

The folktale, "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow" in Japanese Folktales: Classic Stories from Japan's Enchanted Past by Yei Theodora Ozaki demonstrate the sparrow plays a significant ethical and symbolic role which indicates morality, humbleness and gratefulness. The story portrayed an elderly man who is kind with his cruel wife to emphasise the moral consequences of sympathy and selfishness, themes that are mainly focus on Japanese folktale traditions. The story begins with an example of empathy: "One day as the elderly man chopped woods in the jungle, a sparrow, extremely hungry, dropped down near him." The elderly guy took up the hungry bird and fed it rice (Ozaki, 2018, p. 33).

This minor act of generosity acknowledges the sparrow as an embodiment of humanity and gratitude. The sparrow extends an invitation to the old man to visit her mountain home, where "she showed all her family, provided tables with delicious foods, and delighted him with performing and music" (Ozaki, 2018, p. 34). This is an act of kindness which the moral code built on peace and mutual obligation and values that are essential to both morality and classical Japanese culture that demonstrated by the Lady Sparrow.

However, the awful old woman's behaviours are a symbol of human greed and moral degeneration. Her violent act in a display of frustration she cut off the sparrow's tongue for eating rice paste indicates a breakdown in the ecological and ethical equilibrium that binds the relationship between animals and humans (Ozaki, 2018, p. 36). The punishment she faces after she rudely chooses the larger treasure box only to discover ugly demons who came out and attacked her is an example of the Buddhist concept of karma penalty (*inga ōhō*) which asserts that every breach of ethical behaviour has corresponding implications (Ozaki, 2018, p. 38; Phuntsho, 2023).

4.2.2 Human-Animal Relationships in The Tongue-Cut Sparrow

The human-sparrow relationship in "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow" delivers profound ethical lessons about kindness, cruelty, and cooperation while illustrating a broader Japanese standpoint of peace between animals and humans. The old man's relationship with the sparrow is based on empathy rather than authority. Besides, when the sparrow gives him a treasure as an expression of her thankfulness, he respectfully selects the smaller box that displaying self-control and fulfilment. These characteristics signify honest feelings along with appropriate behaviour. According to Ozaki (2018, p. 37), "the old man took the smaller box home, and when he opened it, he discovered it filled with gold and silver and priceless jewels." The word *on-gaeshi*, or the behaviour of repaying kindness is a concept of ethics that underlies in many Japanese folktales and is exemplified in this story as it depicts animals as a living beings by owning ethical that can identify and bring back goodwill toward humanity (Gunawan & Puteri, 2024).

On the other hand, the old woman's mistreatment of the sparrow highlights the negative effects of greed and disregard for nonhuman animals. Ozaki describes how "terrible-looking monsters burst out and attacked her, thrashing her till she fell down dead" (Ozaki, 2018, p. 38) as she opens the bigger box and unleashes the demons. The karmic logic that underpins

Japanese cosmology, a moral equilibrium among humans and the natural world is reflected in this punishment which is not arbitrary. Hence, the sparrow thus acts as a mediator of ethical justice, rewarding harmony and punishing greed. By emphasizing the idea that the environment has its own ethics and awareness, the story supports the Shinto belief that everything is blessed with kami (spiritual soul). As a result, Ozaki's tale establishes an ethical environment in which the sparrow assumes the function of its own voice, showing humanity that while cruelty and selfishness foster punishment, humility and empathy preserve moral order. The sparrow-human interaction in the story therefore operates as an image for the vitality of sustaining ecological and spiritual balance within the interdependent chain of life.

4.2.3 Posthumanism Elements in the Depiction of the Sparrow

From a posthumanism perspective, "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow" challenges human-centred ethical structures by portraying the bird as an intelligent animal with moral and emotional power. According to Cary Wolfe (2010), posthumanism "redefines the limits of the human by revealing the restrictions of humanism's humanistic prejudice" (Wolfe, 2010, p. 47). The idea that ethics and intellect are unique to humans is directly challenged by the sparrow's manners, sympathy, and fairness in Ozaki's story. By planning generosity and expressing appreciation in a manner that both reflects and transcends human appropriateness, the Lady Sparrow exhibits ethical judgment and depth of feeling through her words and actions. Wolfe's idea that "ethical concern must be expanded to all aspects of life beyond the human" (Wolfe, 2010, p. 99) is illustrated by her kindness which changes the ethical order between humans and nonhuman beings in contrast to the elderly woman's greed.

Furthermore, an extensive amount of conventional ethical thought is based on a human-centred viewpoint which is undermined by the ethical autonomy of the sparrow. Ozaki encourages readers to view the nonhuman world as living, interactive, and able of moral behaviour by providing the sparrow with an identity, a place to live, and a community. In

contrast to the human world of greed and materialistic desires, the sparrow's mountain home serves as an image of the world where ethical behaviour and ecological balance dominate. The story clearly ties ethical thinking to the sparrow's behaviour rather than to human or divine power when the elderly man subsequently informs his wife, "It is not the sparrow's problem; it is your immorality which has paid off with its reward" (Ozaki, 2018, p. 38).

This dynamic corresponds with Wolfe's (2010) claim that posthumanism demands "rethinking personality as a dispersed ecology realm instead of a human-centred structure" (Wolfe, 2010, p. 123). Therefore, "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow" can be viewed as a narrative story in which the sparrow stands for ethical standards, cultural beliefs and emotional awareness that emphasizing the value of interconnectedness and diversity in the ecology system. In addition, when evaluating under the prism of posthumanism, Ozaki's folktale exceeds its mythical nature to become an expose of human-centred thought and a message to recognize animals as moral protagonist in the interwoven structure of life.

4.3 Depiction of the Monkey in The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar

4.3.1 Representation and Symbolism of the Monkey

In Japanese folkloric tradition, monkeys can often cover the distance between people and animals. This multiplicity can be seen in Ozaki (2018)'s, "The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar" which is based on a Japanese folktale in which intelligence, narrational shiftiness, and pathos combine. For instance, the monkey says to himself, "Barbarous indeed is my lord!" and at the same time he discovers his master will sell him to the butcher. I've served the butcher so long and faithfully and he is going to let me be chopped by the butcher (Ozaki, 2018, p. 138). In addition, it can not only portray the thinking and contemplation of the monkey but also show his deep emotional salience for injustice and disloyalty as evidence that these are all traits closely related to human disposition

Moreover, his response indicates the monkey's calculating a survival plan which raises an even more important issue. For instance, he is nervous as he does not know what he can do and he thinks not long after he grasps that his situation is unstable then said, "Ah! I've hit a bright idea!" before he consults to the wise boar (Ozaki, 2018, p.138). By dreaming the hardship into creation is a case of self-generated problem solving as observed in action, an example not only of the monkey's ability to autonomously think its way through logical structures that are apart from his stereotype cheater nightmare but also his own morality and freedom to define what he will become.

These traits connect the monkey to more extensive cultural and religious connotations in Japan. The monkey represents the duality of brilliance and weakness since it is connected to both wickedness and ethical instruction in folklore. His emotional reactions of gratitude for help, fear of death, and commitment to the kid he rescues enhance his value as a symbol of the wide range of ideals share in Japan's culture and society. The folklore also upholds the long-held notion that monkeys are reflections of people by illustrating human shortcomings and surpassing human ethical criteria by depicting the monkey as capable of overcoming intense anxiety, possessing tactical rationality, and coming to moral decisions.

4.3.2 Human–Animal Relationships in The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar

"The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar" provide a striking example of the diverse, flexible and frequently depicting human-animal relationships found in Japanese mythology. The monkey's bond with its human master seems to be founded more on practicality than emotion at the start of the story. The monkey's performances bring in money for the master, who takes the animal to various locations to display its tricks. However, the master immediately disregards the monkey's years of work and decides to sell him to the butcher as soon as it gets old and can no longer perform well. The unexpected change from entirely reliant to refusal highlights the awfulness of that relationship is and reminds human of humankind's persistent

propensity to respect animals only for amusement or profit. However, even the master is a bad guy, both the monkey and the boar have plans to save the infant, and the monkey has far higher morals and emotions than humans believe he would have as humans have discovered in the past.

In Japanese animal stories, this ethical shift in which the animal eventually becomes more upright than the human is a well-known notion. The monkey's behaviour itself is a reflection of human ungratefulness and ego. He picks up the baby after the boar carries him away, even though he is aware that the kid is a part of a cruel scheme to be kidnapped and does not get the slightest empathy. Even in terms of the child's actual lack of danger, it is a level of commitment to preserving the infant that surpasses what his human master would ever to have. The monkey is frequently utilized in these kinds of tales as a metaphorical lesson that although he will also make mistakes, but he still capable of great things in life. In terms of human cultural studies, he is convincing and emotionally controlling human in order to draw awareness to the relationships that transcend conventional boundaries between different animal species rather than to make fun of them.

The folktale also emphasizes how animals may have moral qualities that have implications for human advancement. The master experiences a moral awakening after discovering that the monkey rescued his children. His perspective on the monkey drastically changes to one of appreciation, empathy, acceptance, and an entirely new comprehension of the animal's feelings. This growth exemplifies the moral vitality of compassion and reciprocity in relation to animals. Through this story, the animal transforms from a simple companion or inspiration for humans into a mentor who demands that humans comprehend moral obligations that transcend animal boundaries.

4.3.3 Posthumanism Elements in the Depiction of the Monkey

The examination of the humanistic presumptions in *The Sagacious Monkey and Boar*, which gives the monkey its own morality and intelligence, is strongly supported by Cary Wolfe's (2010) posthumanism theory. Posthumanism rejects the Western monotheistic model of thought in which humans are understood to be fundamentally different from and above other creatures and instead focuses on the mutual reliance and communal susceptibility that characterise life everywhere. The narrative trick of presenting the monkey as a credible being gives weight to that perspective, since throughout the story it's hard to tell what humans can or cannot do compared with animals.

Moreover, the monkey's sense of analysis, emotional sense and willingness to cooperate with the boar are also consistent with Wolfe's assertion (2010) that animals have diverse types of knowledge and character not reducible to primitive forms. The idea that humans are the only ones who can think logically is directly challenged by his logical thought process, grasping an understanding of his predicament, forming an agreement and making a strategy and executing it. Furthermore, the monkey's way of ethical reasoning when he saving the human child deceived and confused human with that it is not only a human's ethical rules. The monkey likewise represents the ethical values that human professes to keep but seldom does in another form.

The story also demonstrates how monkey narratives in Japanese folklore erode the boundary between humans and animals by depicting animals as sentient beings with consciousness and strength that are comparable to the human state. The monkey exhibits emotions that should not be simply ignored although he is not human, but he experiences serenity, gratitude, hope, and anxiousness which human also own inherent. Wolfe (2010) argues that recognizing such emotive and cognitive situations is essential to undermining human distinctiveness and rethinking ethics against human-centred viewpoints. In the story, the

monkey is not only a funny trickster or a powerless victim, rather he is the primary source of direction for the moral growth of the story itself. His actions force readers beyond the story as well as humans within it to consider the ethical consequences of undervaluing or taking advantage of nonhuman animals. This posthumanism interpretation reframes the monkey as a character whose intellect, feelings, and choice-making challenge the core principles of humanistic thought rather than as a representation that is dependent on human interpretation.

4.4 Depiction of the Monkey in *The Jellyfish and the Monkey*

4.4.1 Representation and Symbolism of the Monkey

The monkey in Yei Theodora Ozaki's "The Jelly Fish and the Monkey" is shown as a cunning, nimble, and cognitively complicated creature whose behaviour frequently resembles and criticizes human behaviour. This portrayal is in accordance with widespread Japanese traditional beliefs. The monkey is characterized by fast thinking and flexibility from the very beginning of the story. The monkey shows his ability to consider thoughtfully by expressing both intrigue and concern when the jellyfish offers to take him to the Sea King's palace. His question of wonder, "Is it so beautiful as all that?" (Ozaki, 2018, p.175) show both surprise and instinctive doubt that makes him a being who will not believe humans without question. The monkey's description as an individual who can transcend ethical contradiction by acting in a way that makes its genuine capacity for thought which is kind of connection between animal, human, and human cognition fits in absolutely with the notion of curiosity and mistrust. The monkey's reflection, consideration and subsequent employment of circumstance is emblematic of what we as human beings gain and risk through our consciousness.

The monkey's crucial liver-related deception is the most overt representation of his allegorical function. At the end, when the jellyfish puts everything together for us that what the Sea King really demands from the monkey is its liver to cure his Queen, how brilliantly and calmly does the chattering monkey act. For example, "During daytime I generally hang my

liver on a branch of a tree.”, “And I completely forgot all about it and left it in my room when I came down to greet you” (Ozaki, 2018, p. 177). This lie takes him not just off the hook but solidifies the monkey as universal trickster, a creature whose smarts allow it to finesse those who are stronger or positioned higher up within society. Tales of monkeys are frequently employed in Japanese folklore to serve as moral guidelines which acknowledge the wisdom needed to survive and warning others of the ill-effects from lies.

Meanwhile, the tale gradually reveals that the monkey is proud and full of himself. “Of course I didn’t give you my liver, so take it if you can,” he replied to the jellyfish playfully after he had escaped (Ozaki 2018, p. 178). This reveals the attitude of pride, which diminishes human’s estimation of him, despite it all being played for comedy, a moral about the perils of intelligence with a lack of compassion. Besides, his behaviour is like the mad with chaotic mind wavering between sense and folly, an attribute typically ascribed to monkeys in Japanese folklore. Hence, monkey’s behaviour is neither simply noble nor all dirty, but it has mixed blessing of the higher intelligence and inferior wisdom of human-like beings. As a result, the monkey’s cunning is not only noble but also ethically ambiguous, reflecting both the advantages and disadvantages of intelligence comparable to that of humans. The monkey represents wider cultural conceptions of knowledge, flexibility, pride, and the delicate equilibrium between protecting oneself and moral behaviour through this representational diversity.

4.4.2 Human–Animal Relationships in The Jellyfish and the Monkey

The relationships that exist between the monkey and other animals in “The Jelly Fish and the Monkey” exhibit profoundly humanistic dynamics that reflect human social structures, despite the absence of human protagonists because it resembles a discussion between two people negotiating reliability, convincing, and hidden motives, the relationship between the monkey and the jellyfish is extremely significant. In an effort to persuade the monkey to go

with him to the Sea King, the jellyfish makes extensive use of emotional attraction, complimenting the palace's magnificence and beauty, saying, "It is certainly to my mind the loveliest place in the world" (Ozaki, 2018, p. 175). This argumentative strategy is comparable to interactions between people in that persuasion usually depends more on emotional or imaginative arguments than on logical. The monkey's answer in which prudence and curiosity are combined, reflects a human way of discovering the intentions of others. Instead of describing an exchange of thoughts between two simple animals, their exchange appears to be a savvy relationship born from wants for trust and respect in one another.

Throughout the plot, human view that their relationship is wrist-thin and wavering, triggered more by self-interest rather than devotion. As the monkey realises that it is his liver the jellyfish really wants to take back for the Queen, he quickly rethinks their friendship and goes from being a servant friend to a trickster. In addition, the monkey is turning the relationship bitter because of some inconsistent access to information which it obtains through staging its fake-liver story. "That commitment was false, and anyhow it is now broken (Ozaki 2018, p. 178) are emotions that really seal the harmony between the two beasts. Moreover, minus the clever monkey, jellyfish is susceptible to emotions and see him getting bummed when the monkey teases. The telling fact of animal interactions in folktales is epitomized by the cruelty of the monkey, relationships between animals often parallel human social organization, where power is enforced through guile rather than might.

The monkey can serve as a legitimate judgment of humanity because of this relationship. His falsehoods encourage readers think on some challenging issues regarding the morality of self-defence. It symbolises the moral conundrums that people have when it comes to commitment, obligation, and protecting oneself. Additionally, rather than being a conflict, the narrative explores the relationship between kindness and disagreement as two interconnected ideas rather than antagonistic. In the end, the jellyfish's terrible punishment being whipped into

a state of being “boneless” by Sea King’s servants (Ozaki, 2018, p. 179) depicts the horrific results that can obtain when human is pulled between competing moral duties. The story resituates human-animal relationships as ecosystems within which moral diversity rather than hard and fast moral boundaries, flourishes through these deeply intimate transactions.

4.4.3 Posthumanism Elements in the Depiction of the Monkey

A posthumanism perspective on the monkey shows how this story impedes humanistic notions of morality, power and cognition. Cary Wolfe (2010) argues that far from dismissing humanity, posthumanism challenges the ordering systems through which humans are valued above their non-human counterparts. In the story, the monkey challenges this preconceived notion by demonstrating behaviours indicative of intelligence beyond human consideration, such as logic and deception and love emotionally. As he could perceive peril, contrive expedients, and make changes in things so he is regarded as an agency being who cannot be confined to instinct or natural law. Instead of representing genius as a human quality, the story extends the concept of ethical and cognitive autonomy to include non-human persons, in line with Wolfe’s claim that posthumanism prompts the readers to reconsider the limits of humanity.

Moreover, the monkey’s perceiving style works against the moral schema in the sense that it demonstrates that nonhuman consciousness can have as much ethical depth to it as human perception itself. When the monkey decides to lie to the jellyfish so he can save himself, he is using a kind of moral reasoning that closely resembles how humans make decisions. According to Wolfe (2010), posthumanism deconstructs such ideas that view animals only through human moral standards through emphasizing an understanding of non-human behaviour on the latter’s own terms, in its own environment and narrative context. Instead, human should think of the monkey’s lying as trying to adapt in an ecology that threatens his continued existence by external forces, which forces that threatening to put him out there on predator radar. This method undermines the anthropocentric assumption of the importance of

human morality in being by presenting an extended perspective on moral behaviour in the animals.

In the other hand, the sympathetic representation of sensation violates the distinction between animal mentality and human mentality in the story where the monkey is afraid, self-confidence and snarky, and the jellyfish possesses regret, exasperation and nerves. The depictions support Wolfe's (2010) claim that rather than disregarding animals as human-centred conceptual beliefs, posthumanism draws attention to their intricate behavioural and cognitive experiences. By providing the monkey an intricate emotional life, the story enables readers to recognize nonhuman emotion as genuine and essential. The monkey, a figure who defends his independence in a society where powerful people such as the Sea King wish to subjugate him comes to represent posthumanism's resistance to hierarchical dominance. In this instance, the monkey represents a shift in viewpoint from one of human supremacy to one that acknowledges the diversity of ethical principles and insights that exist outside the realm of humankind.

4.5 Depiction of the Monkey in The Adventure of Golden boy, Kintaro

4.5.1 Representation and Symbolism of the Monkey

In The Adventures of Kintarō, the Golden Boy, monkey is shown as an animal with keen intellect, lively appearance with a sense of self-importance that often reaches comical vanity. When the story introduces the group of animals that follows Kintarō, “the bear, the deer, the monkey, and the hare,” the monkey rapidly demonstrates his agility and eagerness to participate in any form of contest or talent performance (Ozaki, 2018, p. 68). In reacting to the deer's invitation for an excellent fight, he “hopped right up, without any hesitation or reluctance when invited onto the wrestling stage,” demonstrating his consciousness and eagerness (Ozaki, 2018, p. 69). The monkey's capacity to swiftly transition between entertaining and aggressive behaviour echoes underlying Japanese folklore representations of monkeys as transitional

animals situated between the inherent freedom associated with ecosystems and the rules assumed of people. Due to his acts which give the audience the impression that he is knowledgeable while simultaneously raising the possibility of weaknesses, he is a protagonist who can serve for both playful amusement and ethical values.

In Japanese folklore, monkey is strongly associated with a cunning wit which is similar to human thought, but in this case, it is not founded upon knowledge or moral understanding. The wrestling episode makes the contradiction plain as day. The monkey's overconfidence in his ability to succeed either by skill or willpower causes him to be too rough with the hare, of whom he demand a little courtesy but who can only provide what is normal or conventional (Ozaki, 2018, p. 69), leading the monkey to lose his balance and "came leaping off the platform with a leap" (Ozaki, 2018, p. 69). The moment turns into a comical flop, instead of the show off success he intended. His exaggerated emotional reaction including wiping his back and screaming aloud is also another drama that he injects to the scene (Ozaki, 2018, p. 70). This only serves to reinforce the traditional perception of the monkey as an animal whose outward expression of emotion is both exaggerated and adorable.

In addition, Kintaro's animal society and the monkey's place in it show that his role is more than just fun as he is clever, observant which as a symbol of the potent force of native intelligence he is both brilliant and anaemic. But his intelligence is also represented as the recklessness of fearless young opposition to evil rather than as an inhuman or calculating mind which suggesting a moral lesson about the significance of unassuming self-awareness. This perspective is consistent with the Japanese mythological interpretation of monkeys, which often associate them with slyness and utilize their mistakes as a teaching tool to humans, drawing both emotional and intellectual insights. Thus, the monkey is a richly ambiguous metaphor in the work and standing for power, creativity and intellectual agility yet also for the dangers through complacency or arrogance and untamed emotion. His role does indeed

effectively position him as a moral mediator; an animal whose human traits reflect human frailty and an embodiment of prudence.

4.5.2 Human–Animal Relationships in The Adventure of Golden boy, Kintaro

The relationship between Kintaro and the monkey is characteristic of many Japanese folktales, in which humans coexist with animals in a state that mixes respectful cooperation, rivalry and emulation. Kintaro is indeed obeyed by the animals as we see them respect his commands, listen to his orders and follow him everywhere. Besides, Kintaro holds the wrestling tournament in open space such that when the gang discovers a large ground clear of trees, which is good for wrestling, but with a monkey which joins happily as if it were participating in a humanistic communal event rather than just following orders (Ozaki, 2018, pp. 69-70). His involvement represents a mode of friendship characterized more by common interests and connection to emotions than by loyalty.

In the same vein, the quarrel of the monkey and hare illustrates what human beings do and are criticized for. The monkey's eagerness to follow and his grief at being short-changed is an object lesson in the perishableness of pride and the temptation to regard competition as a threat to personal dignity. The monkey holds an anthropocentric view of selfishness if it regards the hare's victory as an insult even when both animals are on equal footing at the start (Ozaki, 2018, p. 70). This humanness is by design in that it allows animals to have human-like emotional responses as the story sets readers on this fictional landscape where we can comfortably and laughingly examine human failings. The monkey thus becomes a mechanism of reflected representation and through his performative nature, shows that the same anxieties about being humiliated and seeking approval inform social dynamics among human beings. Rather than mocking a monkey, it's an illumination of the relationship dynamics that inform human-animal relationships.

Therefore, these moral outcomes are depicted through sympathy, connection, and a justice of empathy. In this regard, Kintaro rewards the winner and soothes the loser which practices discipline but not through brutality as he is fair and respectful to his animals (Ozaki 2018, p. 70). Even though they each have different personalities the even way in which they are treated allows them to interact harmoniously, the animal's willingness to keep on being involved in cooperative activities despite his losing also shows the strong commitment underlying human-animal relationships. The story expresses moral lessons on teamwork, humility, anger control through this animal encounters which is key value of Japanese folktale. The monkey's participation is most important because his strong impulses reflect how critical it is to maintain positive relationships when hostility and egotism collide. Consequently, the monkey in folklore becomes both protagonist in and commentary on human-animal ethical relations, demonstrating how animals in folklore can embody moral lessons that transgress species boundaries.

4.5.3 Posthumanism Elements in the Depiction of the Monkey

Through a posthumanism lens, the narrative depiction of the monkey subverts traditional norms that elevate humans above animals in terms of virtue and rationality. Recent research on posthumanism has shown how nonhuman life shapes what it is to be human and challenges the foundational belief in human exceptionality (Wolfe, 2010, pp. xvi–xvii). The problem as the monkey in *The Adventures of Kintaro* aptly demonstrates that he already engages in more sophisticated emotional, intellectual and cognitive processes typically attributed to humans. His ability to judge fairness, respond to verbal cues, understand wrestling rules and display complex emotions suggest a level of sentience that undermines the myth that such faculties are uniquely human (Ozaki 2018, pp. 69–70). In posthumanism terms, monkey's human-like behavioural variability demonstrates that moral and mental development cannot be neatly delineated at the animal divide.

Moreover, by representing the animals as involved in a moral world of which Kintaro is not just a part, it undermines any distinction between human and animal consciousness. The monkey's intelligence is represented as a legitimate expression of his own thoughts rather than an imitation of human ones. This image reinforces Wolfe (2010)'s commitment that it is posthumanism that moves thought in the direction of recognising different modes of cognitive activity among creatures rather than just from an animal to human potentiality. The monkey's ability to communicate his ego and disappointments based on his being interested in getting the approval of that other who dared to treat a master as a slave indicates that there is also personality which may be not weaker than human defeatism but organized otherwise. Hence, although he loses that wrestling match, but his dominion is not reduced, and it points to how emotion is just as complex and brittle as in any human.

Lastly, as the story deconstructs ethical power out of institutional and into inter-relational forms there is Kintaro in a world where animals have social rather than just moral significance. Along with the bear, deer, hare and Kintaro, the monkey participates in ethical conduct to establish a mixed network of moral relationships which reflects Wolfe's insistence on taking ethics into account apart from people. By arguing that these traits result from interactions between humans rather than connection with an animal, the monkey's behaviour encourages readers to reevaluate traditional concepts of moral behaviour, intellect, and intellectual well-being. Through this lens, the monkey grows into a posthuman being, an animal whose existence brings into question the divide between humans and nonhuman beings, promoting a discussion of the various ways in which stories can communicate authority, intelligence, and moral value from animal perspectives.

4.6 Depiction of the Monkey in The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab

4.6.1 Representation and Symbolism of the Monkey

The monkey is frequently portrayed in the monkey-crab story as a species whose arrogance, greed, and ability for planned trickery overwhelm its intelligence and human-like thought. His argument in which he confidently persuades the crab to exchange a priceless rice dumpling for a totally valueless persimmon seed by matching to the crab's desires for future benefit, demonstrates his smarts instantly (Ozaki, 2018, p. 181). He is also secretly pleased with the strategy, "chuckling to himself at the excellent deal he had made" (Mitford, 2020, p. 165). The monkey is portrayed as a highly capable but morally questionable character in these two representations the externally compelling speaker and the internally arrogant trickster. His confidence and sense of fulfilment show a symbolic parallel with the monkey's popular characterization in Japanese folklore as both cunning and dangerously self-absorbed.

When he climbed the persimmon tree and starts picking the most mature fruits for himself while throwing away the unripe ones, this metaphorical role becomes more profound. He "ate as fast as he could," leaving nothing but sour remains according to the story that highlights his rapid, impulsive eating habits (Ozaki, 2018, pp. 183–184). Besides, another depicts his actions as ironically offering, inviting the crab to savour the persimmons while throwing all the bitter stones (Mitford, 2020, p. 165). By taken in totality, these are details that help to align the monkey as a figure with symbolic significance for the animal whose intelligence condoned cruelty rather than compassion, image of untampered desire and sham munificence.

In such imagery, monkeys often represent the untrained "monkey mind," meaning a mind that cannot remain still and is led by insatiable desires and capricious emotions (Vago & Zeidan, 2016). The emphasis here is on the violence of the blows, as well as the unexpected outburst of aggression from the monkey who in retaliation to being exposed by its cries assails

with strikes using his hardest persimmons (Ozaki, 2018, p.185–186). The monkey’s blend of cleverness, impatience and moral cluelessness makes it an ambiguous figure that heightens human sense both of the great potential and terrible risk in being intelligent without ethical constraint.

4.6.2 Human–Animal Relationships in The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab

The story of the monkey and the crab illustrate a thorough refraction of human-animal relationship networks: it shows how friendship can change to competition through deceit how cultures of speech use animals as stand-ins to portray human behaviours such as lying and being a parasite and mimicking human society. The monkey uses argumentations and logic to beat the crab at their first duel, which is reminiscent as argues of a human negotiation. This interchange illustrates how animals in folklore occupied roles of behavioural shaming as itself a damning indictment of humans and their predilection towards abusive behaviour, controlling instincts and staged self-interest although they chose not to mimic human appearance but rather mimic the style of human interaction that could lead towards reprehensible actions.

The monkey’s insidiousness unfolds as the story progresses from indirect influence on outright domination. He has the advantage of strength and basks in the fruit once it ripens, leaving the crab, who nursed the tree “with joy hardly,” (Ozaki, 2018, p. 183). This skewed dynamic is reminiscent of actual situations where effort and reward are not equally distributed. Besides, the story introduces one further aspect of the relationship which the crab is aware that he has been betrayed and “made up his mind to play him a trick” suggesting an internalised emotional response instead of sadness (Mitford, 2020, p. 165). The crab’s thinking, planning and outrage are all grist to the mill of those who propose that animals have ethical autonomy and feelings equivalent to ours.

In addition, alongside all that power come stunning examples of animal cooperation that rise from the monkey-crab battle. Other animals like chestnuts, bees, mortar, eggs and

seaweed alternate between animals as the animal is damaged not due to some reflex but through conscious moral reasoning. In the story, they “bandaged his wounds” and all jointly settled to take a revenge on the monkey (Mitford, 2020, p. 166). This shows the methods that human use for achieving communal justice and reflected in scenes of relationships built upon mercy, love and mutual moral responsibility.

Ultimately, the crab and his friends embody lofty moral aspirations toward which human societies should strive justice, unity and ethical cooperation whereas the monkey embodies personal moral failings such as selfishness, deceit and fake morality that echo animal weaknesses. The story therefore uses the animal relationships as a symbolic metaphor through which the human can contemplate the damage caused by betrayal and the power of reciprocal ethical behaviour to heal.

4.6.3 Posthumanism Elements in the Depiction of the Monkey

From a posthumanism standpoint, the monkey is a figure who questions conventional animal-human cognitive polarity, opening spaces in which faceted logics identify our species as being exceptional. Moreover, posthumanism challenges the assumption that ethical thinking or thoughtfulness is the peculiar province of animals (Wolfe, 2010, pp. xvi–xvii). The monkey’s actions illustrate the barrier. From the story can be clearly viewed that his joy after tricking the crab suggests insight and concern for himself (Mitford, 2020, p. 165) and is a clever strategy to persuade the crab to take the persimmon seed is an illustration of the kind of preparation and innovative thought that is frequently considered to be unique to human (Ozaki, 2018, p. 181).

However, the fragility of the monkey reveals characteristics that further confuse the distinction between humans and animals. He is terrified, hurt, and desperate when the crab’s friends attack him, and he exclaims, “Oh! what an unlucky beast I am!” after an egg explodes in his face (Mitford, 2020, p. 166). These feelings are presented in the form of remark on the

pain he experiences rather than as instinctive responses, indicating an analytical acknowledgment of animal individuality.

From a posthumanism perspective, the existence of ethical power exterior of the human realm is even more crucial. In the story, a multicultural community acting with a common ethical goal delivers justice rather than humans. The bee strikes, the mortar smashes the monkey, and the chestnut jumps from the ashes which all coordinated acts based on the understanding that misbehaviour demands revenge (Ozaki, 2018, pp. 186–189). Instead of portraying morals as a purely human concept, these scenes show it as a diffused fact. The animals exhibit deliberate collaboration, sympathy, and moral awareness exactly the traits that human uniqueness asserts it owns.

As a result, the monkey emerges as a posthuman character who highlights the unpredictability of relationships between humans and animals. His emotional expression shows common emotional feeling; his lies and cleverness illustrate that knowledge transcends animal boundaries; and the ethical society that opposes him shows that morality arises via chains of relationships rather than identification with a species. By using this perspective, the monkey-crab story challenges readers' beliefs about intellect, power, and moral behaviour.

In a nutshell, the analysis of two animals which are sparrow and monkey from few stories that been selected illustrates that both animals own their unique characteristics and play crucial role in the stories which bring out the cultural and ethical values that can be redefines by human and perfectly match the posthumanism theory which animal have the power like human which determine they own the same status like human in the world and no longer as a tool for human instead they can be independence and have the abilities to form an harmony human-animal relationship.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

Based on the analysis on animals that have been selected which are sparrow and monkey from few stories in the context of Japanese folklore illustrates that sparrow and monkey in Japanese folklore as the core elements to examine their personality, relationship with human and result in cultural, ethical and ecological aspects. For example, sparrow in the selected stories represent gratefulness, empathy, ethical justice which reflect the lack of these characteristics in human being and emphasise the way sparrow interact with human and form relationship with them. Besides, another animal which is monkey is symbolic as intelligence, moral standards, creative thinking which acts as the good example to be learnt by human and the relationship with human also become a significant aspect to form a harmony environment but in some of the selected stories monkey provide some negative traits such as tricky, violence, betrayal which does not show any good result in the stories but these traits become an crucial components to alert human and redefine the relationship with animal as to establish a positive relationship between human and animal and bring out cultural diverse and ethical values that need to foster in the ecology.

In addition, the most important element that use to analyse animal and human-animal relationship is posthumanism theory by Cary Wolfe (2010) which he emphasis that human is not the only individual who dominance the world as animal also has the right to share the same status and power that human owned. This led to the analysis by using posthumanism theory to examine animals' role, characteristics which is an essential aspect to develop themselves in the world and how they form relationship with human that can become an impactful outcome by bring out cultural, ethical and ecological aspects through utilised posthumanism theory as the ruler of the analysis. Hence, by using posthumanism theory to analyse the animal and human-animal relationship, it does come out with finding that define posthumanism theory is suitable

for the analysis which it concludes aspects that can be examine through animal and human-animal relationships analysis and result in the outcome that bring out various impactful insight.

5.1.1 Scope and Limitations

The limitations of the study might exist when conducting it because there are some aspects that will cause the limitations. Firstly, cultural interpretation and bias might cause the limitations because Cary Wolfe is western philosopher and his posthumanism theory may cause misinterpretation culture if applying in Asian folklores especially in Japanese folklores which it is the scope of the study. This is because Western culture and Asian culture is different that might cause confusion between them.

Besides, the second limitations that might be existed is complexity of Japanese folklore. This is because different places in Japan have different interpretation on Japanese folklore where same folktales, myths will represent different meaning and symbolism in different places because animals in Japanese folklore have different symbolic purpose based on different places that might cause obstacles when analysing them in the study.

Furthermore, there is limited sources and translation issue on Japanese folklore. Although sources on Japanese folklore are more than enough but some of the sources might not be available to access or not readily available. Moreover, translation issues might also cause the limitation of sources due to some of the sources might not have the translation version from the Japanese Language to the English Language.

Lastly, the study might be having theoretical applicability due to Cary Wolfe's posthumanism theory which he only focused on deconstructing humans and animals' binary by focusing on animal rights in the world without focusing on other aspects. This is because there are some aspects that also exist in Japanese folklore such as spiritual, natural which might cause Cary Wolfe's theory may ignore other aspects in Japanese folklore.

5.1.2 Recommendation for Future Studies

As Japanese folklore is very broad and include many stories, myth based on the cultural, place in Japan so researcher can have future research on different aspects in Japanese folklore such as various culture and belief in Japan to establish more findings to strengthen the development of Japanese folklore. Moreover, future research on other Asian folklore such as Chinese and Korean folklore also can be analyse by using posthumanism theory as their folklore also contain variety aspects and stories such as animal stories, cultural stories and can be utilised to doing comparison between these Asian folklore to find out the differences and similarities which can provide an new pathway to be analyse in literature filed.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study provide an insightful pathway on analysis Japanese folklore and go deep into animals and human-animals relationship from few selected stories from Japanese folklore by analysis them through their characteristics, relationship with human and cultural, ethical and ecological aspects that they bring out which contribute to the study and provide more space to have future studies on these aspects in different context. Apart from that, posthumanism theory become an highlight to strengthen the study to form the foundation of the analysis on animals and human-animals relationship and allow more abilities to develop the posthumanism growth in the study by bring out the ideas on the way to analysis and result in an impactful insight and outcome that contribute to the study and literature field. Therefore, by conducting the study on analyse animal, human-animal relationships, it show that animal has the abilities same as human which they have intelligent, creative thinking and bring out a lot of ethical lesson and cultural aspects throughout the ecological aspects and encourages human to rethink their thought and attitude toward animal and relationship with animal which is the most successful result of the study provided.

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