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## GENRE DIFFERENTIATION IN *A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE MUSEUM OF COMMUNISM* BY SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ

### ABSTRACT

On the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a Croatian novelist Slavenka Drakulić simultaneously in several countries published a collection of essays titled *A Guided Tour through the Museum of Communism*. The collection consists of eight stories narrated by animals: a mole, a mouse, a dog, a cat, a raven, a parrot, a pig and a bear. The animals talk about neuralgic issues of Communism in former Eastern European countries (Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Bulgaria). The genre differentiation is based on determining postmodern variations of basic genre conventions in the process of creating a piece of literature. Fable variations are determined by analyzing the relationship between a fable and other genre forms, such as, an essay, a novella, a legend, a myth. Next to genre differentiation of a literary structure, one can also observe the differentiation of its role that has been conditioned by today's cultural memory. In that manner, mythologized persons, objects and features of Communism are analyzed as universal symbols of a message, as well as elements of a satiric play. This paper will determine in which ways the above mentioned variations enrich the existent genre forms.

**Key words:** genre differentiation, Slavenka Drakulić, fable, ideology, mythology.

### A FABULOUS INTRODUCTION

Ever since the 1980s it has been possible to systematically monitor *women writing* a term most commonly associated with Slavenka Drakulić in Croatian literature and culture. Contemporary, post-modern, self-aware *women writing* in Croatian literary practice, also include writers such as Irena Vrkljan, Neda Miranda Blazevic, Dubravka Ugresic, as well as feminist theory critics like Lidija Sklevicky, Rada Ivekovic, Jelena Zuppa, Ingrid Safranek etc. According to the Croatian theorist Andrea Zlatar, the adjective *feminist* that describes prose fiction of S. Drakulić, also marks "other connotations, social and political meanings that have been associated with her public work from the 1970s to this day, that is, since her first feminist texts to the present day political essays" (Zlatar, 2004, p. 108).

As an advocate of women rights, Drakulić first gained the reputation as a committed publicist with her book *Mortal Sins of Feminism* and subsequently as a writer with the novel *Holograms of Fear*. The problem of the female body and illness, and then sexuality in *Marble Skin* marked an introduction to the author's future novels, and brought her worldwide fame in the first years after the breakup of Yugoslavia. After leaving Croatia, Drakulić printed her most famous books in English. The first in order, a collection of essays *How We Survived Communism and even Laughed*, has been interpreted as one of the best Eastern European travelogue since the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, while the essays collected in books *The Balkan Express* and *Café Europa* are dedicated to areas of former Yugoslavia after the fall of Communism. The author returned to novels with the book *Divine Hunger* which in a bizarre manner questions one body in relation to the *other* - instead of the illnesses, we read about rape, love, passion, and cannibalism. *S. The Novel about the Balkans* in a way represents a sequel to the previous book. The following book, *They Would Never Hurt a Fly* is a collection of essays that talk about war and how it affects individuals, about crimes and the relationship between the criminal and the victim, as well as about crimes based on charges of ICTY. With the book *Body of her Body* the author returned to her first novel in which, after her own organ transplantation, the author speaks about the experiences of American kidney donors who generously decided to save the lives of others. The next novel, *Frida's Bed*, deals with the life of the painter Frida Kahlo and the artistic transformation of illness. In the last published collection of essays, *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* Drakulić returns to the topic of Communism, while in the novel *The Accused* she talks about emotional pain due to family abuse. Although some of Drakulić's novels and essays provoked varying political viewpoints and the evaluation of her literary creativity (Jelčić, 2004, p. 615), Croatian literature historians (Nemec, 2003, p. 343) generally agree on one thing: her works are an "intriguing and engaging contributions to feminist prose" (Novak, 2003, p. 581).

After publishing three collections of essays, *How We Survived Communism and even Laughed*, *The Balkan Express*, and *Café Europa*, by interpreting the Communist regime with the help of an narrator's *we*, Drakulić primarily reveals the domination of "the general over the individual" (Zlatar, 2004, p. 117), but also evokes memories which people of the transitional countries recall with irony. The irony continues in *A Guided Tour Through the Museum of Communism* in which Drakulić plays not only with the narrator, but also with the genre.

The collection consists of eight fables narrated by animals. Features of each animal characterize one of the former communist countries: the mole plays a spy that digs tunnels under the Berlin Wall in Eastern Germany, the mouse as a permanent resident of the Museum of Communism is reminiscent of Czechoslovakian obedience, remembering Ceaușescu's rule, the hungry dog in Romania longs for his master, the cat named Gorby in Poland warns of the division among people by an appeal to the State Attorney General Jaruzelski, the psychotic raven reports about the supposed suicide of the Prime Minister Shehu in Albania, the parrot Koki pronounces Tito's (self)glorification in Yugoslavia, the bear in Bulgaria is a witness to repressive communist regime under Zhivkov, and in London the emigrant and intellectually challenged pig from Hungary writes a cookbook in which it theorizes about the relationship between goulash and gulag.

Although some features of fables by S. Drakulić coincide with conventions of the classic fable where animals depict some typically human traits, the allegory as the main feature is still missing. Also, unlike Orwell's *Animal Farm*, there is no use of the word in a figurative sense, since she describes historical events. The approach to these events is twofold: there are memories and recollections on the one hand, and facts, theory, ideology on the other.

In this sense, the Croatian theorist Zlatar determined that the entire work of S. Drakulić is marked by a "constant switch from the documentary to fiction, from the autobiographical and biographical to the »invented«, from the personal and intimate to the general and public" (Zlatar, 2004, p. 101). In addition to the differentiation of its primary definition, the fable also experiences transformation of the genre - animals speak to the reader in a variety of literary forms, from simple forms such as legends, riddles, jokes, and even gossips, in letters, interviews, scientific discussions and appeals, to different models of autobiographical prose like diaries, memoirs, etc.

Appropriately, the book first appeared in five countries (the United Kingdom, Sweden, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Croatia) on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and a number of translations that followed also point to its popularity. In each fable the meaning of events, people and phenomena is accompanied by certain ethical judgments and morals, and the whole collection has a role of a festive manual and a textbook. It will serve future generations as a source of information on a single ideology, movement, totalitarian system, and utopia called Communism.

## A SHORT GUIDE THROUGH THE MUSEUM OF COMMUNISM

In the fable about Czechoslovakian Communism the setting and the main narrator were carefully chosen; the Museum of Communism and its resident, mouse Bohumil who lives in an old high-school cabinet. The mouse is also a guide to the rat Hans that it informs about the museum exhibit. A *live exhibit*, the cleaning lady Milena, whose destiny exemplifies what happened to an average individual before and after the fall of Communism provides instructive comments on historical figures, objects and phenomena in socialist Czechoslovakia.

In the interpretation by S. Drakulić, the well-known fable conventions gained different meanings due to its topic and the cluster of formal elements. Innovation is evident in the fact that the stories of the mouse are imbued with the oral discourse of a tourist guide, examples, essays and the lecturing rhetoric. Such genre and narrative diversity stems from simultaneous description, narration and reflection which in criticism have already been defined as a poetic characteristic of author's other works.

The fable is constructed as a humorous travel guide through the museum that holds souvenirs such as Soviet military caps, candles in the shape of Lenin, the images of the socialist realism, busts of famous figures such as Marx, a store, a tool room, a living room and a classroom typical of that period as well as the reconstruction of an interrogation room. In the process, the content of some tourist guides that contain lies, distorted facts and irrelevant information about the Communism are treated with irony. The story about the cleaning lady Milena, who became poor after the collapse of the regime, as well as the one about the imprisoned history professor Perlík, are certain examples

chosen out of desire for individualization, the greatest sin of the Communist era. The essayistic manner of the fable about the mouse, or, rather, the fable-like manner of the mouse's narration about the Communist Czechoslovakia, is evident in critical commentary and reflections, interpretation of historical events such as the riots of 1968, but also in political moves - Dubček's reforms and Novotný's regime of cultural policy.

Although the discourse of the interesting tourist guide dominates the text, in written form it reads like an essay, because it includes a subjective perspective in interpreting Czechoslovakian historical factography.

The unusual insight into Communism from an animal's perspective is combined with Bohumil's well informed and learned monologue. The mouse is a character that can be found in the literary tradition of the fable; Aesop's fable about the lion and the mouse is especially well-known. But while Aesop's mouse represents a weak man that later helps the strong one, the mouse is for S. Drakulić a metaphor for the Czechs and Slovaks, and even further, for all those who lived under the Communist regime. The weakness of a tiny mouse is used here to depict passiveness, meekness and obedience as negative qualities of the people who were forced to live under the analyzed regime.

The museum in the fable is based on the real facility opened in the centre of Prague in 2001. *Musealisation* of Communism is a remarkable process because it emphasizes the reduction of once powerful ideologies to historical fact or, as specified in the text, the "rubbish heap of history" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 6). The instructiveness of the fable is certainly maintained, but it is much more complex than in traditional fables. A-effect (alienation effect) avoids direct involvement but the instructive intention of the text is still quite pronounced. It is directed against oblivion, especially between younger generations who might ask, "Communism, what's *that*? A religion? Or a maker of cars perhaps?" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 3).

Also, the goal is not to systematically describe and list all the phenomena of the Communist era, but to gain an idea of how people lived and survived that period. By analyzing the details in everyday life, one can synthesize instructive conclusions about: shortages of basic necessities, formal or active membership in the party due to conformism, lack of solidarity, the aesthetics of ugliness in objects and buildings, mental auto-censorship, etc. Finally, one should not ignore the case of Milan Kundera who told stories about the difficulties of life under Communism, and he has recently been called a Communist informer, which stresses the embeddedness of the inherited mindset even today.

### A COMMUNIST WITH STYLE

A Communist with style is Josip Broz Tito, and the fable about him is narrated by a long-lived parrot Koki. For a handful of peanuts, Koki talks about the Yugoslav dictator to a random tourist who is visiting the famous Tito's summer residence on the Adriatic islands of Brioni. Koki had spent many years in the vicinity of Tito and his successors, Croatian presidents, and so appears in the role of Tito's biographer, an intimate friend, a jester and a critic of his life and work, as well as the critic of the more recent Croatian politicians arising *under Tito's cloak*.

The fable is a mixture of anecdotes, jokes, gossips, biographies and travesties of private and social relations. The constancy of the ironic tone that permeates the majority of author's texts is especially apparent in this collection and it ranges from sneering to cynicism. Like other texts, the fable is told through the first person narrator and by that achieves credibility, as well as the unusual manner of animal's rhetoric as an observer of the dictator's habits and practices. The storytelling is presented in a conversational tone marked by repetitions, profanities and vulgarity, and the parrot's prattle is simulated by Koki's self-reference in the third person. The aim of the fable is to provide data about Tito's life and character, and Koki humorously reports about the dictator's relationship with his wife, friends, celebrities and politicians of his time.

The parrot is chosen as a narrator because it possesses the *gift* of speech. The uncontrolled tirade which suggests a direct honesty and the role of a witness is also achieved by a jester who ruthlessly pronounces the whole truth about his *ruler*. The reversal of perspective is specific - there is no objective narration about the animals that represent people and their virtues and flaws, but the animal talks about Tito as a Communist dictator and the people in his environment, and they all take on some animal features. Koki compares toadying to people in power to the parrot-like repetition of their words, and Tito's statement about his court camarilla to a social animal book: "But I guess this is how every royal household functions, with its parrots and hawks, cats and dogs, cows and sheep - the entire menagerie" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 28). The word gossip is often used when bringing up interesting facts, for example, about Tito's flirting with famous actresses or the affairs with masseuses.

The moral of the fable is to highlight Tito's virtues and flaws and to conclude that Tito was a Communist with style and thus *an exotic bird himself* (Drakulić, 2011, p. 48). One cannot claim that Tito's character is flat, but it is definitely universal because it exemplifies a ruler who is infected by *the personality cult virus* (Drakulić, 2011, p. 51).

S. Drakulić writes about the regime whose leaders belong to the past, so there is no need for her to allegorize people and relationships. One does not form an opinion about the protagonists by further deduction and reading *between the lines*, because S. Drakulić directly named their characteristics. Tito is astute, intelligent, cruel, vain and full of delusions (Drakulić, 2011, p. 31), an aristocrat of his time born with good taste and political talent (Drakulić, 2011, p. 39), a hedonist (Drakulić, 2011, p. 49), etc.

The entertaining feature is also achieved by describing his lifestyle that, paradoxically, gained aristocratic proportions evident in his carefully cultivated appearance and dissolute lifestyle. In Koki's satirical display of Tito's *bad* copies, the first Croatian president Franjo Tuđman is boldly called Twisted Mouth and a *stuffed bird* (Drakulić, 2011, p. 33), and Stipe Mešić the Porcupine (Drakulić, 2011, p. 35). After Stalin, Tito became the most famous Communist leader and his description in the fable is extremely personalized. This additionally pronounced the distinctly used procedure of mediation in which personal stories and experiences of one animal simultaneously shape the issue of Communism.

## THE BEAR AND THE PRINCESS OF LIGHT

The bear is the main character in the fable about the Bulgarian Communism. The text of the fable is written in a form of a dictation that a bear Tosho narrates to Evelina, a young activist for animal rights. By that, she is helping him write a book of testimonies about his own slavery before the fall of Communism in Bulgaria. Tosho confesses that a Gypsy called Angel forced him into dancing on a heated surface for other people's entertainment. The other main character is Lyudmila Zhivkova, the daughter of the Communist dictator Todor Zhivkov, and the fable describes her political career and the decadent worldview of that time.

In this fable, one can notice the apparent confessional discourse and the discourse of the myth and the fairy tale. Autobiographical narration intensifies the bear's moving story and presents him as a double victim; he is dependent on his master who is keeping him hostage, and a victim of the Communist repression that lacked the care for animal rights. Confession, which has a very personal and private tone, is in contrast with Communist ideas of collectivism. With the help of a personal trauma, the confessional statement simultaneously tries to make the public aware of repressed memories, disable oblivion and amnesty of responsibility and guilt for the oppression of both animals and humans. Fairytale in its truest form is visible in the story of Lyudmila Zhivkova whose biography is fictionalized twice; the first time in terms of the fable as an umbrella genre, i.e. by interpreting emblems of the socialist Bulgaria, and the second fictionalization of her biography appears within an ironically imagined tale about the princess Lyudmila. Like the story of Tito as an absolutist monarch, the fairytale-like story of the Zhivkov dynasty is a consequence of *aristocratization* among the ruling class of Communists. When the Council of Elders (Politburo) granted Lyudmila's wish, she became a high commander of culture. Persuaded by her lover, a Russian spy Alex, she unsuccessfully tries to overthrow her father. When she drinks the content of a magical bottle, she turns into a frog and disappears.

The absurd end symbolizes unsuccessful political moves of the *enlightened* princesses. They are shown in their futility, because, besides fulfilling projects of national significance, Bulgaria did not benefit from her advocacy to spirituality, vegetarianism or aesthetic education.

The lack of concern for real people and their problems enforce Tosho's tragedy of a completely disenfranchised and tortured animal. The connection between myth and ideology is also important, because the example described reveals that "ideology can always use the myth" - e.g. Lyudmila's or Communist utopianism - "but it cannot become a myth as long as it is an ideology" (Solar, 2006, p. 104). Here, we are dealing with mythologization because the dead communist ideology in the fable serves as a world of symbols within the cultural memory expressed in the fiction of the fable.

The moral effectiveness in original fables is based on the invisibility of the advisor, so the reader (un)consciously adopts a message that can be enhanced by additional moral beneath the text itself. In the tale by S. Drakulić the process of allegorization has smaller proportions because it only applies to *Communist* objects, phenomena or personalities such as Zhivkov. The text directly interprets literary metaphor so the bears in chains are comparable to the Bulgarians who exchanged their freedom for

security, like available education and employment (Drakulić, 2011, p. 75). Gypsies are compared to modern persecuted wild bears (Drakulić, 2011, p. 77), and Toshō's automatic dance to the iPod music suggests the existence of deeply rooted ways of thinking both in Bulgaria and in other socialist countries.

The bear is a character chosen because of its exceptional strength which can be restrained through discipline (like the Pavlovian reflex - dance to the sound of music). As in other fables, it was also important here to show how identity and values metaphorically change during the transition from one political system to another. After the fall of Communism bears became protected and in the so-called democracy, people have to find their own way in the jungle of market economy (Drakulić, 2011, p. 75). This is the process of reversed mimesis. Reality becomes fable-like because it reveals how the condition and status of the bear were or are similar to the state and status of people before and after the fall of dictatorship.

### THE CAT-KEEPER IN WARSAW: LETTER TO THE STATE PROSECUTOR

The subtitle in the fable *The cat-keeper: Letter to the State Prosecutor* indicates its epistolary form. Analogous to the features of epistolary discourse in the fable, the cat Gorby writes a letter to the State Prosecutor concerning a retired Polish General Wojciech Jaruzelski who in the fable remains unnamed. The eighty-year-old General is accused of ending the work of the union Solidarity. Epistolary form within the narrative structure of the fable is actually a fictional character's (cat's) appeal to the Polish prosecutor and an explanation of his personal views about the general's indictment as an authentic document. Namely, the genre form of a letter supports the selection of a typical role of the character/narrator cat as one of the basic features of the fable. As visible from the title, the cat has a keeper instead of a master which affirms its freedom of movement and expression - writing letters in the first person singular: "To choose is a very important verb to me. I have no problem with freedom, since I did not live in that allegedly *inhuman* period of human history called Communism" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 81). Using the animal connotation of Communism, the cat criticizes both the old and the new social order. There are two reasons for the cat's appeal as stated in the letter: the first is concerned with general's health condition because of which the cat prays for the judgment regardless of the outcome, and the second with Polish society and Communism:

"The important question in the General's case is: What values do you want to promote: retaliation or social consensus; further conflict or reconciliation?" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 84). The first part of the appeal is formulated as a letter that emphasizes the emotional drama, while the second part of the appeal resembles a fable because the cat serves as a carrier of human traits. The relationship between the cat *The Novel about the Balkans Confidant* and the cat *intellectual* are reflected in the genre relationship of a letter and a fable. Apart from the cat, the General also had a dog for a pet, so the extremes of their nature continually intertwine; the dog's blind trust versus the cat's rationality. The relationship between the animals can be applied to the relationship between the past and present social system in which a freedom of thought



has a different meaning. In the second part of the letter, "like a »real psychiatrist«" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 87) the cat manages to induce the General to speak about the circumstances at the time of his decision, so within the narrative structure of a letter one finds a confession marked in italics. In the General's personal confession one learns about the threat of a Russian leader Brezhnev that nevertheless banned the Solidarity movement within Poland, as well as the meaning of the cat's name, Gorby. Named after Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, the initiator of Perestroika which failed to reform Communism and led to its collapse, the cat actually embodies the General's salvation - a permanent symbol that would remind him of the defining moment in life.

The fable holds a special message for the Poles related to the General's judgment. Paradoxically, the *Solidarity generation complex* is in contrast to General's compromise within a totalitarian system in a contemporary democratic society. The only possible solution in the cat's ironic remark is forgiveness in the fashion of a traditionally Catholic country that would redeem all sins, not only those of the General, but of every Pole who passively participated in the Communist regime. Therefore, the personal confession is an intermediary discourse between the individual and the collective conscience of the Polish society through which the fable becomes a meaningful whole.

## THE LEGEND OF THE BERLIN WALL - AS PRESENTED BY A MOLE

The narration in the fable about the East German Communism is formed as a lecture by a Mole based on the Legend of the Berlin Wall. At a scientific conference in Berlin, the mole presents the results of the research on the Berlin Wall. The choice of a mole as the narrator derives from solidarity that Moles had towards People in the moment of digging a tunnel under the Wall, but also from a synonym ascribed to "a person pretending to be a member of the group of escapees while actually working for the police" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 108). The typification of the characters is only partially satisfied because the narrative structure of the fable indicates many variations. The blind mole becomes a scientist that in the Underland seemingly possesses greater knowledge from the Men in the Overland. In its description, the newly enlightened Mole denies the existence of the Mole legend using the evidence based on oral tradition, as well as on *historical* facts. Although "the Legend about the Berlin Wall is still cryptic and confusing concerning some crucial points" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 111), the mole still states some illogical issues of the Men from the Overland. In order to understand the reasons why Men erected the Wall, the mole introduces the enigma of bananas in the narrative structure. Namely, after the Men had raised the Wall around one part of the city (West Berlin) the Mole concludes that prisoners live there, whereas outside of the Wall (East Berlin) one finds free people. However, further research shows that the free people were banned from visiting the prison, and prisoners could walk freely. At the end of the research based on the enigma the Mole concludes: "Obviously, you had either bananas or »socialism«; the two of them didn't grow together" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 111). Instead of being frivolous, the enigma takes on a dose of seriousness on which the mole bases its research.

In addition to the discourse of jokes, enigmas, and oral traditions, the mole uses factual evidence found in a building with many artefacts that the Men call the museum. The Monument, "a remaining piece of the original Wall" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 116) is an additional contribution to the legend's deconstruction. The mole uses it to thank his colleagues for their proposal that, next to the Mole's name, in the *Annals* should also be written: "the Mole who proved the Legend of the Berlin Wall(s) to be true" (Drakulić 2011, p. 116). By that, the Mole came one step closer to civilization. In the remainder of his lecture, the Mole points out one more *illogical logic* of Men from the Overland: there was universal mutual celebration on the day the Wall collapsed. Men from the Overland united and signed the bilateral "Banana Treaty" that gave them the right to consume bananas on equal terms. The metaphor of democracy poisoned with consumerism that both sides embraced in their fight against socialism or communism, simply marked one more misfortune instead of an improved social order. In that order, the guaranteed freedom lasts as long as there are enough plastic cards, specially marked pieces of paper or metal tokens (Drakulić, 2011, p. 120).

There is a direct moral at the end of the fable, a satire of the civilization's progress: "If so, the only thing we Moles can conclude is that there is no help for them (Men), because they really are their own worst enemies" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 124). The blind Mole, which identified with the young generation of Men who "seem to know little about it or still believe (like us!) that it was only another Legend" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 121) but also stood in the way of the older generation who "invented fairytales about what allegedly used to be a »better life«" (Drakulić, 2011, pp. 121-122) finally got her vision back. Therefore, the intention of the fable as a literary genre that deviated from its initial parameters mirrors its instructive mediation between the past and the present.

### FROM GULAG TO GOULASH: THE INTRODUCTION TO *MS PIGGY'S HUNGARIAN COOKBOOK*

The narrator of the fable *From Gulag to Goulash* is a pig named Magda, a Hungarian intellectual and an English immigrant. She writes a cookbook of traditional recipes of her national cuisine, and calls this venture "a sentimental journey into the kitchen of my mother and my grandmother" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 126). It is interesting that Magda has a doctorate in political science, and writing gives her an opportunity to theorize about food, politics, identity and, of course, Communism.

In a very imaginative manner, the fable intertwines the editorial cookbook discourse, the discourse of scientific, feminist and political debates and essay fragments. This enables permeability and enrichment between genres so that, for example, the reader no longer asks how pigs can be intellectuals because it is still a fable with some modified conventions. An open form of an essay enables comments, analysis and evaluation of the phenomenon of Communism that is specifically Hungarian, but also phenomena that are characteristic for other former socialist countries. In the editorial of the Hungarian cookbook the elements of a scientific debate sound unusual but plausible. This contributes to a short circuit effect when an educated pig theoretically interprets the construction of one's identity or semantically associates

the words *gulag* and *goulash*. The examples of correlation between these words highlight linguistic inventiveness and also a kind of a short circuit which holds the whole conceptual message of the fable. As a part of her *literary cuisine* Magda says that there was no goulash in the gulag - correctional labour camp - or gulag in goulash Communism (Drakulić, 2011, p. 136) - the Hungarian version of Communism, that was the result of a compromised "mixing" of (counter)revolutionary ingredients initiated by economic reforms of Hungarian Prime Minister János Kádár. It is obvious that the genre fluidity of the text enabled the linking and merging of linguistics and politics, of the text of a cookbook and feminism, of national specialties and a scientific debate.

The implied symbolism of the narrator/pig marked her status as ironic. Considering her characterization contradictory, Magda describes the derogatory use of the word *pig* for a morally degraded intellectual, who is called the pig when he wants a higher social status (Drakulić, 2011, p. 125). It should be emphasized that Magda is named after Ms. Piggy, the famous character from *The Muppet Show*, and her use of scientific and theoretic ideas in her writing leads to the A-effect. It is also ironic that an animal whose meat is a common ingredient of many dishes writes about the goulash and the kitchen, and the term *feminist pork* is (auto)ironically applied to her division into male and female cooks. She explains the difference between the practicality of female chefs and the demonstration of ego during food preparation of male chefs. Besides that, Magda is disadvantaged for her PhD in political science that has no value at home or abroad, and is thus degraded for having advanced during now non-existent socialism.

The moral of the story about goulash is not reduced only to the repressiveness of the Communist regime or to the use of marking its Hungarian economic and political variations. Goulash has turned into a global metaphor in the editorial of the cookbook. It is a whole different question what happened to that dish in post-communist Hungary. This question is answered by criticism of goulash politicization, the protection of its alleged Hungarian origin and the establishment of strict preparation rules. There is another moral that such a conditioned attitude towards the goulash presents a danger of its transition into the *gulag* because it is in the nature of goulash that its ingredients cannot be controlled. Finally, Drakulić's postmodern fable contains instructions for establishing identity. Combining personal experience with her theoretical hypotheses (Drakulić, 2011, pp. 142-143), the narrator negatively concludes about the static conception of identity. It is once and for all determined by the state, the food, the language and the culture that have to be defended from the enemies, which certainly should be rejected in favour of the sandwich concept of identity. The source of all conflict is the intolerable imposition of a certain rigid and forced lifestyle. Magda finds a solution in a democratic coexistence of the individual, domestic, regional, national and European identity and, moreover, one that is defined by common interests, by belonging to a club or similar. The moral of a post-modern fable is not predominantly concentrated on moralizing virtues and flaws, rather on stating critical insights that can redefine the relationship of the individual and the community outside the strict ideological framework.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE OLDEST DOG IN BUCHAREST

The introduction of the fable about the Romanian dog begins by stating an actual event that compelled a man from Vienna to come to Bucharest: "there are an estimated three hundred thousand stray dogs in Bucharest, a city of more than two million people, and there are up to fifty incidents of biting per day" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 145). The discourse of the fable achieves dominance over that of an interview because the ordinary narration (that consists of a direct speech and the lack of comments and paraphrases) is absent to such an extent that it is merely reduced to a monologue, a confession. Besides, the interlocutor has to be an attractive character, in this case a dog that makes the interview interesting, and the fable as a genre in which the main protagonists are animals is justified. Likewise, a fable in its narration implies fiction that is here equated with reality. Namely, the *dog question* begins in the mid eighties when Ceaușescu's *systematization* destroyed a part of the old centre of Bucharest and when many were forcibly relocated from small villas with gardens into residential areas, leaving their dogs behind. The older dog begins the story by remembering the life before this new situation and paraphrasing George Orwell: "we are all equal, but some are more equal" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 152). The fable narrator becomes a metaphor for all Romanians, dependent on the master and the pack, rejecting his freedom because the "life on the streets is getting bloody tough" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 147) and yearning for what is "very precious nowadays: a master" (Drakulić 2011, p. 147). The new Ceaușescu's *political correctness*, absurdly directed against dogs and not people, has resulted in their increased propagation.

According to basic features of the fable, the dog narrator, apart from his typical traits also bears human characteristics mirrored in a helpless and lost individual who in a contemporary society does not know how to take responsibility for his own life, much less for that of the poor dogs in his neighbourhood (Drakulić, 2011, p. 162). With a certain indifference to the entire society in transition from Communism to capitalism, the dogs have become an ugly sight in front of the new steel and glass buildings. Similarly, the stray dogs became a problem during the NATO summit when a safe passage for foreign politicians had to be ensured, so the problem was, from time to time, at least temporarily resolved by closing "dog questions" in shelters. *Political correctness* that originates in the USA, as well as the scenes of removing "suspicious elements" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 161) from the streets at the time of Ceaușescu's police, have been transferred from one system into another and evolved only this time they are applied to dogs, not humans. Fear has been replaced by greed and possession of things so the fable narrator again resorts to paraphrasing Orwell, "All men are not equal, but some are more unequal than others" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 161).

Romanian citizens, who on a daily basis confront the past, are linked by more similarities than differences, and the pervasive nostalgia is not just a self-defence against the past, but also the criticism of the present. In order to enforce that idea, one finds a moral at the end of the fable - an ironic suggestion to the long-awaited solution of the *dog question* that can be interpreted within the meaning of certain ethical judgments. The narrator provides an example of a *typical American venture*

(Drakulić, 2011, p. 163) called operation *Baghdad Pups*. The operation started after the U.S. troops had befriended stray dogs in Afghanistan and Iraq. The soldiers encountered bureaucratic obstacles when they tried to adopt and transfer the dogs to the United States, but those were later successfully resolved due to humanitarian funds. The conclusion is: instead of the rigid Communist regime one must accept the illusion of American capitalism.

### THE UNUSUAL CASE OF THE PSYCHOTIC RAVEN

The fable begins with a meaningful dialogue between humans, but the genre in which later an animal takes the dominant role is actually a diary. After her mother's death, the unnamed daughter inherits a diary, i.e. notes about one unusual case her mother had experienced while working at the Tirana Psychiatric Hospital (Drakulić, 2011, p. 168). Although the diary is defined as an autobiographical narrative text in which the main character interacts with him/herself, here the main character interacts with the Raven. This narrative structure of the fable is replaced with the one of a diary, while the diary feature (such as a human monologue) is replaced by an animal dialogue. The dialogue between the mother (the psychiatrist) and the Raven is based on historical facts about the murder/suicide of the Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, who remains unnamed in the fable. Next to a partial narrative structure of a diary, notes are also a document about the personal life designated with the date (December 1981), but also an aesthetic experience - a fictionalized fable about an unseen event. "Aesopian language of my mother" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 178) and a horror story perfectly matched the mood of a Communist regime that emits a *Kafkaesque atmosphere* since there is no real information, only symbols, riddles, and guesswork, and it is for a reader to decide which interpretation is more plausible (Drakulić, 2011, p. 175). First of all, the outer layer of the story is shrouded in discomfort, ominous atmosphere created by dramatic bolts of lightning (Drakulić, 2011, p. 176). The horror of the description is enhanced with the enigma of a/an (in)human silhouette, a shadow of the possible executor. A Poesque element of horror in the story is achieved by a tension between a rationally possible and irrationally impossible situation: the shadow represents a guilty conscience that led the Premier to suicide. The detachment from the existing paradigm is obvious in its role that culminates in the narrator's irony of the Premier's character: "But in your interpretation that would mean the man in question had a conscience, which I am not so sure about" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 181).

The selection of a Raven as a narrator contains in itself the symbolism of an ominous bird witch in Albanian mythology represents death or could be a witness to a horrible event. In the genre construction of the fable, the mythology and ideology remain counterparts, much like fiction and reality: "if we are to take the whole fable seriously, which she obviously did" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 183). Nevertheless, the deconstruction of the myth is achieved with a note from 1985: "His [witness's] black coat flew in the wind like the wings of a bird - the report added" (Drakulić, 2011, p. 189). The consequences were serious for the mother: she stopped believing in the leadership of the Party, and in Communism as a system (Drakulić, 2011, p. 191).

Although it was officially claimed that the Premier had committed suicide, there are indications that Shehu had opposed Enver Hoxha's isolation policy and was thus declared a Yugoslav spy. Outside of its communist context, a story that simultaneously conveys characteristics of a horror story, a fable, and even a crime story, can serve as a key to decipher further investigation. A long-awaited possibility to publish the diary, confirms a hint of a spiritual liberation of the Albanian younger generation, but also the conversion of genre roles: fiction in official documents is replaced by historical facts.

## CONCLUSION OR WHAT IS LEFT OF THE FABLE

The analysis of each individual text in the collection *A Guided Tour through the Museum of Communism* is based on consideration of three elements that make up the fable genre structure: a) the narrative, b) the characters and c) the moral of the story. There are visible overlapping and substantial deviations from the classical content and formal design of the fable. Numerous examples show the genre differentiation of the fable based on postmodern variation of basic genre conventions.

In the version by S. Drakulić the fable is no longer a concise literary form reduced to one event with a clear and short action. On the contrary, her fables are characterized by a well indented plot and many details and digressions. The plot in its classical sense is also broken up because it is not designed as an action in which the animals are actors in a short instructive event. Her collection lacks objective narration about animals in the third person since she explicitly uses the first person narrator. By that, the narration adopts an explicitly subjective character that contrasts the narrator's personal testimony as a victim or as an observer of the Communist regime that eliminated all forms of individuality. Although the text differentiates between positive and negative human traits, i.e. ethic and moral issues, the objective of the fables is not entirely focused on moralizing about vices and virtues. With the inventory of objects, phenomena and personalities of the Communist era, the fable attempts to interpret their meaning in the cultural memory from today's perspective. In order to preserve the memory of an important time in human history and to illustrate the real, original *grey* everyday reality of socialism, it was necessary to resort to a multitude of picturesque details, anecdotes, historical facts and personal testimonies.

Since all the narrators are animals, the well-known alienation effect has been achieved. This method not only enables the interpretation of some Communist phenomena from a different point of view, but it also reverses usual fable conventions (according to which we distinguish between the literal and the figurative subject of narration). In Drakulić's collection, animals directly talk about the people and their relationships or interpret social events. Every animal does that in accordance with their main characteristics that are usually consistent with the general understanding, e.g. cat's wit or parrot's love of gossip. But animals often display unusual and exotic traits, so, for example, the pig is an intellectual, and the bear a traumatized victim of abuse. S. Drakulić writes about the past regime, so she does not need to allegorize people and relationships. One does not judge the human heroes of a fable by subsequent reasoning and reading *between the lines*, because their characteristics

are explicitly stated. Human characteristics are compared with those of animals, and in the process of characterization we notice anthropomorphizing of animals/narrators and animalization of human characters/society. The procedure of a reversed mimesis is also notable. The reality becomes similar to the content of the fable because it describes how the state and the status of some animals, such as dogs or bears, were or are similar to the state and status of people before and after the fall of the regime.

The variations of the fable are also determined by the analysis of its relationship with other (non-)fictional genre forms: an essay, a fairy tale, a legend, a myth, a joke, an anecdote, an example, an interview, a diary, a letter, a/an (auto)biography, a textbook, a cookbook, a tourist guide, or a scientific debate. That contributed to the enrichment of all mentioned genres and to the resemantization of the fable as a basic genre and all other encompassed by it. Later, it also led to irony and satire of the (post)communist everyday life, ideologically unengaged re-evaluation of the meaning of key historic events and the lifestyle of communist dictators. Postmodern experimentation with narration, characters, genres and didacticism has allowed the author to simultaneously describe, narrate and analytically approach the most important phenomena of the Communist period. All these variations of the contemporary fable undoubtedly point to its differentiation within the paradigm of a classic Aesopian fable. Accordingly, contemporary postmodern fable, subject to the challenges of the modern society, imposes itself as an independent literary form within a comprehensive literary system.

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