

Maja Verdonik

## ANIMAL STORIES FOR CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The paper presents contemporary Croatian animal stories through anthropomorphic and realistic approaches of describing animals. Croatian stories are compared to those from other national literatures with the purpose to highlight the manners in which they contribute to the European and world children's literature in general.

Članek obravnava sodobne hrvaške živalske pravljice skozi antropomorfni in realistični pristop k opisovanju živali. Namen primerjave med pravljicami drugih nacionalnih književnosti in hrvaškimi pravljicami je osvetliti specifične značilnosti, s katerimi slednje bogatijo tako evropsko kot svetovno otroško književnost na splošno.

### 1 Introduction

The paper presents a selection of Croatian animal stories for children published throughout the history of Croatian children's literature. The first part of the paper explores animal stories according to how the majority of Croatian research on children's literature describes them – as a literary genre. Croatian scholars classify animal stories in two groups based on the writer's approach to describing animals. On the one hand, animals are described in an anthropomorphic way and, on the other hand, they are portrayed in a realistic way using some scientific detail. The second part of the paper discusses a number of Croatian animal stories ranging from the first ecological story *The Trout* (1909) to the animal story *Silence; We Are Shooting a Film on the Set! The Adventures of a Dog from the Recording of the Film The Lone Wolf* (2009), which evolves around a dog that plays the leading role in the popular Croatian children's movie *The Lone Wolf*. Whenever possible, Croatian stories and authors are compared to those from other national literatures, e.g., stories written by Hans Christian Andersen, Beatrix Potter, Rudyard Kipling, and Jack London. The purpose of the paper is to present a part of Croatian children's literature through animal stories and to highlight the manners in which they contribute to the European children's literature in general.

## 2 Approaches to the animal stories in Croatian Children's literary theory

Animals have been present in the life of humans since the earliest beginnings. It therefore comes as no surprise that they entered literature as far back as in the ancient times. We can find them in the *Bible*, e.g., in the chapters of the *Book of Genesis* that mention Noah's Arc, in Aesop's fables, traditional fairy tales, medieval bestiaries, fantasy stories, as well as in the contemporary stories, picture books etc. According to David Rudd:

the word 'animal' has its etymological roots in 'breath' and 'soul,' which link it to that which is 'animate,' and this is exactly the transformation that writers and illustrators so readily perform, making animals live in all manner of the anthropomorphic ways (Rudd 2009: 242).

Croatian theory of children's literature recognizes an extensive group of literary texts, which includes animal stories – the so-called literary animalistic. In children's literature specifically, the literary animalistic is defined by a number of authors in the following way.

Zvonimir Diklić, Dubravka Težak, and Ivo Zalar (1996: 219–243) bring to attention a term used for the literary type of novels and tales about animals: the literary animalistic but, at the same time, they highlight that the term, used here quite broadly, inevitably includes fantastical stories with animals, fables, plays, and even poetry. Therefore, they prefer the more common term – animal stories. At the same time, stories about animals make a diverse and complex marginal genre; they are literary works read exclusively by children, or read by children and adults, or just by adults, such as, e.g., George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. According to these authors, animal prose has not always been intended for children; it was the animals that inspired these authors. They found in them the most appropriate and favorite motifs, and since children love animals, they accepted this type of prose as their own reading material.

Ana Pintarić and Tanja Mihoković (2009: 81–94) also define the literary animalistic as a marginal genre, which includes literary texts about animals (novels, tales, fantasy stories, fables, poetry, theatrical plays, and picture books) and divide them in two groups: on the one hand, the animal and the human world interact and, on the other, the animal world is a reflection of human life. Pintarić and Mihoković list a number of writers and their literary works of the literary animalistic that belong to world children's literature, such as Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle book*, Felix Salten's *Bambi*, Jack London's *The White Fang*, and Hugh Lofting's *The Tale of Doctor Doolittle*. They mention the following writers as belonging to Croatian children's literature: Miroslav Hirtz, Vlatko Šarić, Maja Gluščević, Božidar Prosenjak, and Dunja Kalilić.

In their study *The Introduction to Children's Literature* (2015) Marijana Hamersak and Dubravka Zima discuss animal stories from the perspective of the relationship between children and animals through history, animals in literary history, fables as a form of animal stories, and allegory and ecology in animal stories.

Croatian research of children's literature categorizes animal stories in accordance with the writer's technique of presenting animals. They are mostly divided in two large groups: writings in which animals are represented in an anthropomorphic way and writings in which animals are represented in a realistic or naturalistic way.

Milan Crnković (1980: 174–186) believes that nature is present in all genres of children's literature, because the child is searching for the experience of nature. He divides the aforementioned categorization of stories and novels about animal and mentions four approaches in terms of the writers' portrayal of the animal world in literature:

1. Anthropomorphic depiction of animals, whereby the purpose is not to highlight the true characteristics of animals, but rather give them other purposes.
2. Giving animals human characteristics, such as speech, but these additional characteristics merely inform us, in a faster and easier way, about what the animal is feeling or doing.
3. A realistic description of animals based on observation and contemplation.
4. A combination of artistic and scientific descriptions of the animal world, whereby scientific data complement the experience of nature.

Crnković includes into the first group children's stories written by the English writer Beatrix Potter, then continues with classic stories in which animals are subordinate and less anthropomorphic, such as the wolf in *The Little Red Riding Hood* and other types of fantastical stories that have animals as the main characters, such as stories written by Hugh Lofting and Kenneth Grahame. He also mentions a very popular story *Maya the Bee*, written by the German author Waldemar Bonsels. According to Crnković, the vast majority of writers belong to the second group – they describe animals in their natural habitat. Here, animals are given human characteristics, but only as a translation of human language and the different behaviors through which animals communicate amongst themselves as it is the case in, e.g., Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. The American writer Jack London and his stories *Call of the Wild* and *The White Fang* belong to the third group and, in addition to him, Crnković mentions several Croatian writers who have also used the realistic technique in their writing: Josip Pavičić and Anđelka Martić. Crnković places the Danish writer Karl Ewald in the fourth group, given that he tried to provide the youngest readers with the knowledge of modern science, especially biology and chemistry, and all this in the form of a story. Similar works have been written in the fictional style of the highly popular Scottish-Canadian zoologist and author, Ernest Thompson Seton. Crnković also mentions the Croatian writer Vlatko Šarić, who drew inspiration from Seton in his literary works.

Crnković concludes that all these literary works, apart from those belonging to the first group, contribute to a better understanding of nature itself, i.e., they contribute to educational goals, which is not irrelevant for the evaluation of literary works with nature as their theme. The fundamental aspect, both in terms of the artistic realization and the goal which the experience of nature should achieve, is the perception of the world in which humans live.

Dubravka Težak (1991: 49–52) divides the literary techniques of animal depiction in two groups:

1. Anthropomorphic depiction, which provides animals with human characteristics, is the older and more preferred approach in writing stories (as well as fairy tales and fables). It provides animals with human characteristics, whereby they remain animals only in their appearance. They move inside their natural habitat but are given the ability of speech and sometimes this stands in a symbolic or allegoric relation to the human world. What matters in these stories is not the

- animal itself because its character has the same function which it would have if it were a human or a mythological or personified plant or object.
2. Naturalistic portrayal tends to provide a more faithful and realistic depiction of animals. Dubravka Težak notes that this is the more interesting means of depiction of the two approaches. It enables the naturalistic story to release itself from the fantastical and fabular elements, while the facts taken from zoology are interestingly structured into tales in which nature no longer serves only a static purpose of plot decor but actually participates in its actions. This kind of approach occurs more frequently as a result of an ever-growing urbanization and technocracy, which increases the hunger for genuine and wild nature. These kinds of stories remind us of hunter tales and provide a poetic description of nature and the perception of the manifestations within it with an emphasis on the animal world living inside it. Sometimes these stories seem to be infused with scientific facts, which grants them a spot in documentary literature. Often, hunters or foresters, due to their vocation, have deep knowledge of wild animal life and can sense the very breathing of nature itself. By taking inspiration for the tales from the inexhaustible treasuries of nature, they know how to incorporate zoological facts into the story in an interesting way, and in doing so, this does not become just a sum of scientific facts; it becomes a superstructure potent in meaning. Dubravka Težak mentions Josip Pavičić, who wrote in the period between the two World Wars, Miroslav Hirtz, a zoologist who wrote in the aftermath of World War II and paved the way for naturalistic tales, and Nikola Pulić, a contemporary author who writes stories about animals from his homeland.

### 3 Animal Stories from Croatian Children's Literature

In the following passages, selected Croatian animal stories from various periods of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century will be presented based on the writers' approaches to describing animals as discussed in available research and in relation to animal stories from other national literatures.

#### 3.1 *Animals described with the anthropomorphic characteristics*

First is the group of stories in which animals are given anthropomorphic characteristics and are behaving like humans.

The story *The Trout* (1909) written by the Croatian author, Jure Turić (1861–1944), represents the first anthropomorphic way of describing animals. Turić was a pedagogy teacher and a writer of novels and stories for children. As a teacher, he noticed the impact stories have on children and their educational potential. In 1909, seven years before Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić wrote the best Croatian collection of fairy tales *Tales of Long Ago* (1916), Turić published a collection of more than twenty fairytales titled *Stories*.

The fairytale *Trout* is one of the most beautiful stories from the aforementioned collection and the first Croatian children's ecological story. The influence of Hans Christian Andersen is noticeable in the choice of the theme, characters, emphasized

portrayal of nature through the poetic means of expression, and a non-stereotypical ending. In Turić's story, there is no classic conflict between good and evil; the storyline is based on a clash between two worlds. On the one hand, the intact world of the mountain spring and the woods, the harmony of the plant life and the animal world and, on the other hand, the world of humans represented through the urban environment or the image of a muddy, polluted river and neglected nature. The main characters are animals: the trout and the swallow, but like in Andersen's stories, children appear as extras. There are no fantastical characters or magical objects in the story. All the magic is derived from the anthropomorphic outline of the animals; the beauty of life in nature stands in stark contrast to the dullness of life in the city. The arrival of city children awakens in the trout the wish to move to the city even though until that moment she had lived harmoniously with the swallow in nature. The trout sees the city's night lights as if they were the moon and the stars, but with the arrival of the rising sun, all magic disappears. Now, children think that the trout is ugly and mention her to the fishermen. In her last moments, before she dies, the trout becomes aware of the death she deserves and in her last moments she thinks of the swallow's twitter, which become the last source of comfort. The trout and the swallow are represented in the anthropomorphic way, both in their own world and in the world of humans. In this context, they remind Crnković of Andersen's story *Daisy*, in which the destiny of the skylark and the daisy, which are snatched from their natural environment, is comparable to the destiny of Turić's trout. However, here, the trout leaves its habitat through her own volition because she is unhappy. The harsh punishment which the trout receives is the outcome of the moralistic story, which was very popular in the early beginnings of children's literature. For this reason, the ending is not sad after all because of the moral of the story – we should live where we belong (Crnković 1987: 132, 263–264; Težak 2008: 159–160, 205; Vrcić-Mataija 2004: 106–117).

One of the most beloved and esteemed Croatian children's writers was Sunčana Škrinjarić (1931–2004). In 1970, Škrinjarić published her collection of stories *Cactus Stories*, in which she included three fairy tales titled *Cactus Stories for Small Hedgehogs*. These are stories about hedgehogs that draw their fantastical foundation from the anthropomorphic depiction of animals. The step into the fantastical life, a world where hedgehogs behave as humans, is made with the first words of father hedgehog, who is telling a story to his son. The determining word for the subsequent development of the plot in the first sentence is "cactus-fairytale" – a fairytale about a spiked, prickly world. The story of the Cactus-emperor extends beyond the boundaries of an anthropomorphic story in which the masked depiction of human life is given an additional dimension of the atmosphere from the animal world. In the creation of the cactus-world and cactus-happenings, using the logic of a fantastical story, the starting point is the hedgehog's most distinctive feature: his spiky or prickly nature, so the hedgehog is being told a story of a spiky and prickly world. In an argument over who is spikier and who has the hardest pricks, the metaphorically sharp, mean language wins, taking upon itself all the sharpness of associations with the cactus-world, even exceeding it and bringing back into the anthropomorphic world, i.e., the human world, not the listener of the story – the small hedgehog – but the listener of the entire story – the child (Crnković 1987: 132, 263–264).

Ivanka Glogović Klarić (1939), English and Croatian language teacher, began writing stories for children at the beginning of the 1990s. She wrote collections of short stories for children, written in a local dialect: *The Little Blackbird* (1995), *The Little Fish* (2000), and *The Little Hedgehog* (2001). In her stories, the small anthropomorphic animals behave as children and experience their adventures in the manner in which children could identify with, as the animals in Beatrix Potter's stories behave, especially in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, or *The Tale of Tom the Kitten*. The small hedgehog gets to know other forest animals, falls in love with a small female hedgehog, and helps people by killing a snake. A small fish goes to school, which she gladly skips just like pupils sometimes do; she has a female teacher and friends who are also fishes, and gets her report card on a seaweed leaf and even watches Fish TV, while a small blackbird learns how to fly with his brothers and sisters and learns how to live independently.

In 1989, Božidar Prosenjak (1948), a contemporary Croatian author, journalist, and editor wrote a highly rated novel *The Wild Horse*. The novel is told from the first person point of view with the stallion as the main character and storyteller. Prosenjak chose a horse as the interpreter of the story's events given that it is one of the most intelligent animals serving man since the ancient times. The main character, the Wild Horse, has an allegoric function: he represents the existential problems tormenting the human race. In addition to the Wild Horse's tale, the novel discusses spiritual growth, how people should treat each other, and the ultimate harmony between heaven and earth. The Wild Horse is born in the wilderness that he loves and where he freely spends his childhood. The beginning of the horse's life is a safe and carefree haven because his mother takes care of everything. In the main part of the novel, the hero is torn between, on the one hand, his own wishes and the laws of wilderness and, on the other, horse (human) laws. As Karol Visinko notes, there is a conflict within the Wild Horse at the beginning of the novel, but as the plotline unfolds, the conflict slowly diminishes and eventually leads to a complete calming. In other words, the plot leads the Wild Horse to the understanding that there is someone who rules over everyone and everything. Only he knows what really happens in the world and the righteousness of the paths that we take, which are, more often than not, incomprehensible to others. On this path of life, the horse first comes across the laws of nature, then his father, which he loses shortly after, gets into conflict with the world, falls in love, and experiences disappointment. He also experiences casualties and humiliations, but he also struggles for justice and the survival of his herd and, finally, for his family as well. The Lord and the spirit of his father keep a watchful eye over him. Of course, the Wild Horse is mostly not aware of all this although he senses that there is someone who is watching over him and to whom he turns in times of helplessness (Visinko 2007: 5–8). We can find some connection between Božidar Prosenjak's novel and two other novels from European children's literature. In Anna Sewell's novel *Black Beauty*, the title character is also narrating his life story from his point of view. In both Prosenjak's *Wild Horse* and Sewell's *Black Beauty*, the beginning of the novel depicts the character's first years of life spent beside his mother as their happiest. The second example is Felix Salten's novel *Bambi* – a novel that addresses growing up and learning about life the hard way.

### 3.2 *Anthropomorphic and realistic manners of describing animals*

The second group of stories describes animals also in the anthropomorphic way, however, not entirely. Animals demonstrate some human characteristics – they usually speak a human language so as to explain animals' thoughts and feelings to the readers. In a way, these stories also belong to the stories from the third group because of the intertwined anthropomorphic and realistic manner of describing animals.

Višnja Stahuljak (1926–2011) is one of the most highly regarded Croatian children's writers. By profession, she was a music professor, which is the reason why music plays such an important role in some of her stories. She was also one of the co-founders of the Zagreb's Puppet Theatre (founded in 1948) for which she wrote a number of plays.<sup>1</sup> Her novel *Don from the Three-Borders Points* (1986) is a story about a dog, which begins with a document – the registry of the dog, Don, which contains all the important information of a real dog, such as his pedigree and the rewards he has won in dog competitions. All of this comes from the fact that the author was the owner of a dog, which later became the main character of her novel. The central stage of the novel is given to the emotions and thoughts of Collie Rough Don who tries to live according to the laws of his breed. The story is told through the eyes of Don, i.e., from the perspective of how he sees the world around him. Višnja Stahuljak translates his thoughts and feelings into human language when Don is communicating with other dogs in the story, but otherwise he has no anthropomorphic characteristics. He has one name in the dog's world, which was given to him by his mother – Clumsy – because of his clumsiness and another one in the human's world – Don – which was given to him due to his high pedigree. The anthropomorphic characteristics serve the purpose of passing messages to the reader about how the dog goes through his own experiences and events that take place in his life, the ways in which he behaves towards his owner, what he expects from him, and what he gets in return from him. In this context, *Don from the Three-Borders Points* is a novel about dogs but also about people. The dog defines his position in relation to his behavior towards the people because, at the end of the day, he depends on them for food and shelter. However, what is relevant here is that people should learn something from dogs as well. Stories about his mother are included as well, which Don, or Clumsy, remembers in various moments of his life. Such is the story of a female dog, which managed to rescue her newborns from a pack of wolves. Don recalls this story in times of discomfort; it was like solace to him when he was separated from his mother and was about to start a new life with his owners.

Another prominent contemporary Croatian writer, Maja Gluščević (1932), has written many stories about animals, the majority of which are about dogs. By profession, she was a screenwriter so she has also written screenplays for different Croatian films and TV series for children. Very often she transformed her screenplays into stories for children. In her stories, animals seldom talk. The author depicts them as reasonable and emotional beings, just as they are in the real world. This brings to mind Jack London's novels about dogs. They quite often experience many dangerous

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<sup>1</sup> [http://info.hazu.hr/hr/clanovi\\_akademije/osobne\\_stranice/visnja\\_stahuljak\\_chytil](http://info.hazu.hr/hr/clanovi_akademije/osobne_stranice/visnja_stahuljak_chytil) (accessed on: 26 April 2018)



adventures with their little friends and guardians, little girls and boys. Dubravka Zima wrote about Gluščević's two novels *The Escape in a Basket Case* and *John's Wolf*. According to Zima, the storyline of these two novels takes place during the Croatian Homeland War, at the very beginnings of the 1990s. The storytelling in the abovementioned novels evolves around experiences and perceptions of children and is almost completely identical to the classic pattern of a children's action novel with a group of children at its very center, with their need to play and swing into action. In this kind of narration, the war does not directly place the children in danger since they see it and go through it as if it were an adventure. This means that the author takes the narrative conventions of children's adventurous prose and, in most cases, recreates incredible, almost impossible situations in a stylized reality. The little heroes manage to escape their war-adventure and get out safe and sound, which in any other case, outside children's prose, would be rather impossible.

War-centered novels do not substantially differ from Maja Gluščević's favorite animalistic novels. Both her novels deal with the friendship between a child and an animal: a little boy Jerko and a donkey Greyfie, and a bit older boy John and his dog Wolf. Both boys attend elementary school but have to flee their villages to escape the war even if they do not want to. The six-year-old Jerko hides when the people of the village evacuate in a hurry. He does not want to leave his old grandmother behind, while John does not want to abandon his dog, which he tries to smuggle into the refugee camp. The friendship between these two boys and their animals is much stronger than grown-ups could even imagine. John runs away from the refugee camp a couple of times in order to find his dog Wolf, who, in fact, is not allowed to accompany him. Nevertheless, the dog still follows him from the distance and always manages, in one way or another, to find him. On the other hand, the donkey Greyfie saves Jerko. He hides in a basket case, which Greyfie carries on his back and barely manages to escape the village at almost the same moment when the enemy soldiers enter it. The two boys are on the run but manage to successfully escape the most dangerous situations unharmed. They manage to flee the enemy surroundings having barely avoided different close encounters with them. They also manage to find various getaways and safe paths amidst the raging battles and always manage to get unharmed to their destinations. Throughout it all, John is a significantly more active character and therefore his self-reliant, thoughtless, and dangerous swinging into action in the middle of the war zone truly represents an adventure. On the other hand, Jerko is only a six-year-old boy who cannot take care of himself but fortunately gets help from the donkey, Greyfie, and the fortunate web of circumstances. Without a doubt that from 1953, after the publishing of Anđelka Martić's *Spotty*, the novels *The Escape in a Basket Case* and *John's Wolf* address, once again, the friendship between children and animals in the context of war (Zima, 2001).

In 2009, Maja Gluščević published the novel *Silence; We Are Shooting a Film on the Set! The Adventures of a Dog from the Recording of the Film The Lone Wolf*. In terms of the genre, the novel is a mixture of an animal story and a documentary and it relates to the making of a film since the author wrote the script and was the screenwriter during the filming of the highly popular Croatian children's movie *The Lone Wolf*. It was filmed in 1972 and directed by her husband Obrad Gluščević. According to Miroslava Vučić, there are two storytellers in the novel: the screenwriter and the character from the movie title – the dog named Thunder. The screenwriter



narrates the tale on two levels that complement each other. On the one hand, the story is told from the first person narrative and it deals with the problems that occur during the making of the movie and, on the other hand, through diary notes about the making of the movie. These parts of the book are also printed in different letter fonts. There are no interruptions, even in the parts that are told by the dog, which are also the most interesting parts of this story. In Vučić's opinion, these are also the best-written pages of the Croatian animalistic novel meant for children and teenagers. Thunder is the ideal storyteller who, from his infantile dog's perspective, narrates the beginning stages of this movie story. The difference between the already recorded movie *The Lone Wolf* and the story about the conditions under which the movie had been made is the very topic of Thunder's narrative. Moreover, this is the reason why we may consider this novel as a sort of its own *Making of The Lone Wolf*. The end of the novel contains a Short Movie Lexicon that includes unfamiliar words and movie terminology that children can learn by reading this book (Vučić 2009: 129–143).

When discussing Višnja Stahuljak and Maja Gluščević's animal stories, especially the ones about dogs, we can compare them with Jack London's classic stories about dogs. *The Call of the Wild* evolves around the motif of kidnapping, dogs being related to wolves and legends about it, which we also encounter in Višnja Stahuljak's story *Don from Three-Borders Points*. The manner of describing animals, which is partly realistic, can be found in some parts of Maja Gluščević's stories such as *John's Wolf* and *Silence; we are shooting a Film on the Set!* Jack London's dogs also do not speak human language and the author describes their thoughts and feelings by using realistic technique of writing. In other words, he only supposes what the animal might be thinking, but he does so from the human perspective.

### 3.3 *Animals described with scientific details*

There is a thin line between the third and the fourth group of stories, as well as between the second and the third. Writers Josip Pavičić and Nikola Pulić wrote in a more picturesque way about nature and animals, but these animals are not described in the anthropomorphic way. Miroslav Hirtz, Vlatko Šarić, and Vladimir Jurčenko wrote about animals using scientific details. In the European and world literary tradition, similar stories have been written by the Danish author Carl Ewald and the Scottish-Canadian author Ernest Thompson-Seton. Carl Ewald, as the predecessor of nature stories, wanted to teach the children about nature through his stories. He discusses scientific facts in the form of a story so that children can easily acquire them. For this reason, his animals speak, which makes them partially anthropomorphized. Seton did not intend to teach through his stories but to incorporate his deepest experiences of nature into an artistic form by using only exact scientific facts. His stories made a big impact on the Croatian writer Vlatko Šarić, who translated some of Seton's books into Croatian language (Crnković 1980: 174–186). The conclusions about these authors and their stories are presented here through research carried out by Dubravka Težak, Hrvojka Mihanović-Salopek, and Karol Visinko.

Josip Pavičić (1895–1969) mostly released his books after the Second World War. His animal stories sometimes resemble hunters' notes, some of which are simple, like poetized geography lessons or lyrical notes and pictures. The most successful

stories were the ones in which the author attempted to reveal and disclose the less familiar world of nature to the reader in a naturalistic way. Most of Pavičić's stories are emphatically realistic and almost without any action. In fact, it could be stated that they seem more like precise information about the seen, experienced, and realized and that their strength lies more in the power of the document than in its artistic realization (Težak 1991: 49–52).

Nikola Pulić's (1926–2005) *The Valley of the Rabbits* (1976) is a collection of novels, true hunter's notes for children in which the main character is a boy named Jurica, who learns hunting skills from his grandfather but is also coming into grips with nature on his own. By doing so, the contrast between, on the one hand, Jurica's childlike gentleness towards the animals and the hunter's instinct and pride, on the other, becomes prominent as well as the rational thinking about animals, which his grandfather tries to instill in him. The man takes center stage in these novels, while animals remain only an object of his interest. We find out about the animals, such as the martens, rabbits, wolves, or bears as much as the boy's perspective permits it but we also get to know the author's homeland – the beautiful valley of the river Krka, whose waterfalls belong to the Krka National Park.

Miroslav Hirtz (1878–1944) was a naturalist and a scientist (zoologist, ornithologist, and herpetologist), editor of the magazine *Nature*, and a very gifted writer. Since he was also a hunter, he relieves his hunting experiences through his stories and very often asks Diana, the goddess of the hunt, for help. The collection of stories titled *Stories from nature* (1959) contains Hirtz's hunting confessions (not bragging) through which the author shares his lack of hunting success. He also speaks of the resourcefulness of the inhabitants of nature. In his stories, Hirtz focuses on the man and his relationship with the nature and the life in it, with an emphasis on the hunter's passion and the encounter with an animal that is difficult to catch. The stories are filled with detailed descriptions of the flora and fauna and their natural scientific characteristic, i.e., they offer a full atmosphere to the reader – every single segment of nature is described in its visual, acoustic, and olfactory way. In the story *Taken From The White Notebook*, from the collection of the *Novels from The Animal World: The Book of a Naturalist* (1927, 1991), the author narrates in the first person, describing the ravishing, idyllic views of nature that are in stark contrast with the naturalist point of view, such as the life-and-death fight between two forest inhabitants – the otter and the fox. The author takes the side of the weaker otter that in the end comes out of the fight as the winner. The story *Hunting the Roebuck* he depicts a hunter who got distracted while observing a roebuck, but as he was taking aim at it, a titmouse sat on his rifle and distracted him from shooting the roebuck. The hunter rejoices because, at the end of the day, he did not desecrate the majestic view of the roebuck with its blood (Težak 1991: 49–52).

Vlatko Šarić (1898–1985) was a forestry engineer by profession and from the very beginning of his creative endeavor till its end he wrote the same type of stories, which he brought to admirable levels. He gives prominence to animals that he describes in naturalistic terms based on observations and contemplations. He also gives them human names so that children can embrace them more easily while reading his novels. Šarić describes the relationships among animals and the complexity of nature, yet he does not burden his descriptions with detailed naturalistic and scientific data. Still, he uses real facts from zoology, which he incorporates into his own observations and skillfully weaves into the structure of the novel. He

thereby does not diminish the experience which we get from nature itself. This way he manages to create the atmosphere of documentary quality, which contributes to the persuasiveness of the story itself. Since nature offers interesting entanglements, the author's interventions are reduced to the bare minimum. Šarić's animals are not described in the anthropomorphic way, but they are still complex characters. His narration has a philosophical undertone: it makes the reader think about the relationship between the humans and the animals, which have a lot in common with the humans. In Šarić's stories, naturalistic scenes of animals fighting are very common and are described without any embellishment or sentimentality, in the very savageness of nature. Man, as such, appears rarely in these stories, but when he does, he brings nothing but confusion. In his stories, Šarić evokes in the reader a vast range of different moods, from humor in the story about the bear Mousy (*Miško* 1973, 2005) who visits the premises of construction workers, to tragic in the story *The Steel Trap*, which is about a female bear that cannot help her cub which gets trapped in a trap. In the story about the chamois buck Rogan (*Rogan*, 1985, 2005), the tone is more dramatic and lyric, based on various contradictions that can be found in nature in great abundance. In this story, the chased chamois buck finds salvation in the Triglav woods after a desperate escape through the mountains. Šarić's heroes are animals which distinguish themselves from the rest in various things; they are wild and powerful animals, which reflect the harshness of nature around them. In the same way, when he writes about domestic animals, he also chooses the most combative ones. Therefore, the story *The Indian Fighter* depicts a cockerel that was hatched from an egg brought from India and that belongs to the breed that was reared for fighting. As Hrvojka Mihanović-Salopek concludes, despite the fact that Šarić's book *Mousy* was written in the 1970s, when the nature's resources were not so dramatically depleted as they are in these days, the author sensed that each misbalance between the man and the world of plants and animals has long-term consequences and makes it more difficult for man to stay on Earth. This is the main reason why his books about animals represent the nature as man's elementary inevitability as well as his inexhaustible teacher about life itself (Mihanović-Salopek 2005: 159–161).

Vladimir Jurčenko (1930), a teacher and a biologist by profession, hunter and painter, wrote a collection of experienced and scientifically based animalistic stories, titled *Good Morning, Wolves* (1983). The setting of the stories is on the mountain Velebit, which is today "Northern Velebit" National Park. This is the landscape in which Jurčenko has lived and worked in, so he knows the landscape well. The writer describes the wild inhabitants of the mountain Velebit: the snakes, moles, rabbits, but also the household pets such as cats. By describing the animals in full detail, the Jurčenko was intent on encouraging his students and all the children to get to know, appreciate, and love the nature and her inhabitants (Visinko 2005: 195–196).

#### 4 Conclusion

The approaches in describing the animals connect Croatian animal stories presented in the paper with the all-inclusive corpus of texts of this genre of the European and world children's literature. Today's Croatian elementary school students get

to know the classic works of Croatian and world children's literature, thus stories about animals as well. The following titles both Croatian and of other national literatures, mentioned in the paper, are included (among many others) in the new National Curriculum of Teaching Subject Croatian Language (2018), precisely in the extended versions of the lists of proposed literary texts for reading: Hugh Lofting's *The Story of Dr. Doolittle*, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books*, Maja Gluščević's *The Escape in a Basket Case* or, alternatively, *Silence, we are shooting! A dog's adventures from filming Lone Wolf* and Božidar Prosenjak's *The Wilde Horse*. In addition, teachers can choose to expand the reading lists by offering students high-quality literary works – improving in such a way their interests both in nature and animals as well as in reading per se.

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## PRIPOVEDI O ŽIVALIH V SODOBNI HRVAŠKI MLADINSKI KNJIŽEVNOSTI

### Povzetek

Prispevek predstavlja sodobne hrvaške pripovedi o živalih glede na književnikov antropomorfni ali realistični pristop k opisovanju živali. Dela hrvaške mladinske književnosti so primerjana s pripovedmi o živalih drugih nacionalnih književnosti z namenom prikazati njihovo povezanost in pripadnost evropski ter na sploh svetovni mladinski književnosti.

V prvem delu prispevka so prikazani teoretični pristopi k pripovedim o živalih glede na ugotovitve hrvaških teoretikov mladinske književnosti. Gre za dve vrsti pristopa k opisovanju živali: v eno skupino sodijo besedila, ki živali opisujejo antropomorfno, v drugo pa besedila, v katerih so živali opisane realistično glede na znanstvena dejstva.

V drugem delu prispevka sledi glede na antropomorfni ali realistično-znanstveni pristop opisovanje živali izbor hrvaških pripovedi o živalih, objavljenih v 20. in 21. stoletju. Hrvaška dela in avtorje primerjamo z deli drugih nacionalnih evropskih in svetovnih književnosti, kot so to recimo dela Hansa Christiana Andersena, Beatrix Potter, Rudyarda Kiplinga, Jacka Londona in drugih.

Med pripovedmi, v katerih so živali predstavljene antropomorfno, so literarna dela: *Postrv* (org. *Pastrva*, 1909) Jureta Turića, ki je primerjana z Andersenovo pravljico *Marjetica*, zbirka pravljic Sunčane Škrinjaric *Pravljice o kaktusu za majhne ježe* (org. *Kaktus bajke za male ježeve*, 1970). Sledijo kratke zgodbe v čakavskem narečju Ivanke Glogović Klarić *Črni kos* (org. *Kosić*, 1995), *Ribica Menolica* (org. *Ribica Girica*, 2000) in *Ježek* (org. *Ježić*, 2001), ki jih primerjamo z zgodbami Beatrix Potter. V isto skupino sodi tudi roman Božidarja Prosenjaka *Divji konj* (org. *Divlji konj*, 1989), primerjan z romanom Anne Sewell *Črni lepoteč*.

V romanih Višnje Stahuljak *Don Tromejski* (org. *Don od Tromede*, 1986) in Maje Gluščević *Pobeg v košari* (org. *Bijeg u košari*, 1992), Ivin Vučko (1995) in *Tišina, snemamo! Dogodivščine nekega psa ob snemanju filma Volk samotar* (org. *Tišina, snima se! Avanture jednog psa sa snimanja filma Vuk samotnjak*, 2009) se prepletata antropomorfni in realistični pristop opisovanja živali.

Realistično in skladno z znanstvenimi dejstvi so živali opisane v pripovedih in romanih Josipa Pavičevića in Nikola Pulica, poljudnoznanstveno so o živalih pisali Miroslav Hirtz, Vlatko Šarić in Vladimir Jurčenko. Njihova dela vzporejamo z zgodbami danskega pisca Carla Ewalda in škotsko-kanadskega avtorja Ernesta Thompsona-Setona.

Učenci osnovnih šol na Hrvaškem se v okviru učnega predmeta hrvaščina seznanijo s klasičnimi deli hrvaške in svetovne mladinske književnosti in s tem tudi s pripovedmi o živalih. V novem *Nacionalnem kurikulumu učnega predmeta hrvaščina* Ministrstva za znanost in izobraževanje republike Hrvaške (org. *Nacionalnom kurikulumu nastavnoga predmeta Hrvatski jezik* Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja Republike Hrvatske, 2018) so v t. i. *Razširjenem seznamu predlaganih leposlovnih besedil za obravnavo* (org. *Proširenem popisu predloženih književnih tekstova za čitanje*) vključena naslednja dela: *Zgodba o doktorju Dolittlu: o nenavadnih prigodah njegovega življenja doma in presenetljivih pustolovščinah v tujih deželah* Hughja Loftinga, *Knjiga o džungli* Rudyarda Kiplinga, *Pobeg v košari* in (dodatno) *Tišina, snemamo! Dogodivščine nekega psa ob snemanju filma Volk samotar* Maje Gluščević ter *Divji konj* Božidarja Prosenjaka. Učitelji lahko dodatno razširijo sezname leposlovnih del za obravnavo po svoji presoji, tako da učencem ponudijo visoko kakovostna književna dela ter spodbujajo njihov interes za naravo in živali ter branje samo po sebi.