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Food and Consumption as a Means of Dehumanization in Three Slovene Dramas

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol

Introduction

If in past ages people feared hunger; today they fear of gluttony. "The attraction of excess that we cannot resist and that thousands of years of the history of hunger have impressed on our bodies and souls, has now, when bounty is usual, begun to trouble us" (Montanari 1998: 223). Since scarcity of food was typical for past ages, people imagined the corporeal ideal to be expansive, for that was a way to demonstrate wealth and surfeit.

Today the situation is different. At least in the developed world there is ample food, and the food processing industry has become a part of the consumer sector, which constantly suggests to the individual what is new and must be tried to attain complete satisfaction. Thus food has become a concept connected with health, attractiveness, self-awareness, and success, as well as with self-discipline and control. Society and culture have accordingly reassessed corporeal ideals, which are in every age a deviation from the average, so that today they can be achieved only by those who can shape their undisciplined bodies, susceptible to pleasure and sin, in consonance with the norms of slenderness. There reigns continual dissatisfaction and tension between the real and desired body. This is most often linked with societal and cultural norms of upbringing, which isolate all that is different, and it is precisely deviation from the norm that leads to stigmatization (Južnič 1998: 28). Contemporary mass media communications thus force the individual towards dissatisfaction, because a dissatisfied individual is the basis of a capitalist market economy, and food is a part of the consumer society.

Food is necessary for human existence, providing the body energy for normal activities, but in every society and culture it has in addition to functions of satisfying a primary human necessity numerous other roles and meanings. Stane Južnič (1998: 207) divides food consumption into the following categories: sustenance of life on the biological level, pleasure on the hedonistic level, satisfaction of emotional needs, symbolic meaning tied to a culture and especially its religious rituals, and finally food's magical power to ward off spirits, a power frequently connected with its medicinal power as well. These categories are easily identifiable in literature. In analyzing three Slovene dramas we will point out that food has or can have on the one hand interpersonal, intimate connotations, and on the other socio-political connotations.

Food, and especially its scent and taste, but its color and form, preparation, and presentation as well, elicits many (usually pleasant) feelings in a person and excites various memories (recall Proust's famous madeleines, Cankar's cup of coffee, or the status of beef roast in Slovene realists' works). Eating is an important part of making friends and a key element in rituals, in particular holiday rituals (e.g., Christmas, Easter, and birthdays). That is why scholars in different disciplines find the basic principle in food relations to be the acceptance of moderation, of right measure, and avoidance of excess. This idea is familiar since the time of the ancient Greeks and the Bible. It received systematic formulation in the fourth century C.E. in the typology of seven sins (i.e., anger, sloth, lust, gluttony, greed, envy, and pride), which Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century proclaimed the seven deadly sins, and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century balanced against cardinal virtues (Frank 2001: 95–105). The seven deadly sins remain today a productive point of departure for numerous arts forms and philosophical reflection. Recent studies include those by Valerie Allen (2010: 1150–72), who compares David Fincher's 1995 cult film *Seven* with Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and by Lisa Frank (2001: 95–105), who explores the concept of the seven deadly sins from their inception to allusions in the Simpsons television show. In Slovenia, the most well known research project is director Bojan Jablanovec's "Via negativa," the aim of which is to locate all seven deadly sins in the theater.[1] The sins derive from human immoderation, usually the results of unresolved internal conflicts. A deadly sin is to be understood as the mode of behavior of a person who begins systematically to search for an escape from his or her internal oppression in actions that destroy interpersonal solidarity and painfully affect others (Ihan 2000: 214). The Slovene poet and physician Alojz Ihan emphasizes that such behaviors exist today as well, only they receive clinical names, such as neurosis, dependency, emotional crisis, and personal setbacks. Thus we can understand gluttony as a kind of disorder, an infatuation with food characterized by a loss of balance between reason and emotion influencing behavior (Ihan 2000: 216, 241). For this reason it is possible to manipulate with food, since it sometimes functions as a reward or punishment, it is a means of love, bribery, compulsion, subjugation, control, and comfort. Despite the abundance of food, for many the current age is a time of

[1] For example, seven actors explore attitudes towards gluttony in a play in which food is a key prop and also a symbol and metaphor. In one appearance an actor mixes crumbled chips, ketchup, and cola in a repulsive concoction and thrusts his head into it, showing junk food; an actor plasters his face with prosciutto so that he appears to have been skinned; an actress cleans fish in an unusual ritual, using different kinds of food that excite the audience's senses of smell and taste, something rarely done in the theater, but which opens new possibilities for audience identification and communication in theatrical media (Puncer: 2004: 104).

sacrificing for reasons of health and appearance, not to mention for religious reasons (e.g., Christian Lent), which in the Christian tradition is understood as a means of cleansing and conquering corporeal needs, and political purposes, as seen in hunger strikes, the ultimate way for a person to draw attention to his or her dissatisfaction with a given social situation.[2]

We can find examples of all such uses of food in Slovene literature but will focus on literary works in which food and consumption receive extreme treatment. We will analyze three representative dramatic texts from three different periods: the expressionistic *Dogodek v mestu Gogi* (1930) by Slavko Grum, the modernist *Ljudožerci* (1972) by Gregor Strniša, and the contemporary *Žrelo* (2007) by Žanina Mirčevska. The word consumption 'žretje' binds all three texts, two of which contain the word in their titles. We will see in these texts how their authors use the motif of food/eating/consumption to proclaim their critical views—in the first play in the personal, intimate sphere of human relations infatuation with another, where food has a manipulative function; in the other two plays in the sphere of society and its values, among which gluttony is featured, gluttony that grows into consumption of another. Each of the following sections takes its title from the dramatic text under consideration.

"You – you – haven't been eating anything! You're not eating, are you? You're deliberately fasting yourself to death!"

Slavko Grum's *Dogodek v mestu Gogi* (published in 1930 and staged in 1931)[3] is a grotesque drama built from a mosaic of stories, slices

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2 The British director Steve McQueen illustrated the hunger strike and starvation of one's own body as the ultimate means of political protest in his 2008 film *Hunger*, set in the Maze prison in Northern Ireland in 1981. The protagonist is ready to sacrifice himself and to make his point—to draw attention to the terrible prison conditions and to have the political status of republican prisoners recognized.

3 Slavko Grum (1901–49) studied medicine in Vienna, where he became familiar with the metropolis's atmosphere and learned about modern psychoanalysis (Freud). There he frequented the theater. He worked in Ljubljana hospitals and was a general practitioner in Zagorje. Grum wrote many expressionist sketches, a one-act entitled *Upornik*, and two plays with symbolic dramatic techniques, *Trudni zastori* and *Pierrot in Pierrette*. His main work is *Dogodek v mestu Gogi*. The work was not received very enthusiastically when it appeared, but today it has a reputation as a key work of Slovene drama that remains relevant thematically, technically, and in terms of scenic possibilities. The text represents the qualitative peak of Expressionism in Slovene drama and signals a shift to avant-garde poetics (Kralj 1999: 17). The fragmenting technique carried out on a single stage is characteristic of the drama. The staged grotesqueness introduces the universal theme of intimate human problems and

from the life of the residents of Goga, who are, significantly, persons with neurotic or hysterical symptoms. During the course of the action their life traumas are revealed. They are spent and psychologically deformed as a result of yearning for love, isolation, repressed erotic desires, and sexual complexes or revulsion at physical love and sexual impotence. On the other hand, their conditions themselves oppress the characters and turn them into caricatures. The town is decrepit, constricting, and lifeless. They can change nothing; they are like puppets or zombies. For these reasons everyone is awaiting an event that would change the atmosphere and release the pent up energy and somehow save them. The character Hana's story has been the focus of literary critics (Zadravec 1968: 443, Kralj 1999: 18), marked as it is by her rape at a young age and psychological dependence on the rapist, followed by her return and the possibility of rescue, which, however, turns out to be a phantom. I would like to concentrate on a story that at first glance is in the background but which exhibits some of the most terrifying forms of violent human relations, the relationship between the characters Afra and the Quiet Woman.

The relationship between Afra and the Quiet Woman is marked by their having loved the same man. The Quiet Woman abandoned her son after he was born, and Afra found and saved from freezing to death, but he was left a hunchback. The Quiet Woman had to promise Afra that she would never leave and as a punishment she would have to live without her son, otherwise Afra would tell him the reason for his hunched back. Thus Afra develops a constant control over the Quiet Woman that has lasted thirty-two years. Afra is a person who inside is pitiable in the extreme because of her realization that no one has ever loved her. And so she turns her unresolved internal conflict into madness and revenge manifested in the form of painful infatuation with control of another's life. When she thinks that the Quiet Woman might escape her by starving herself to death, Afra decides to stop her. A part of the scene adumbrates the starvation—"a grotesquely large clock on the wall, which has stopped ticking"

> AFRA: /…/ *(Afra has found a crust of bread somewhere and now runs over to the old woman and stuffs it in her mouth.)* Eat! Eat!
> THE QUIET WOMAN *(swallowing submissively; when she finishes, she sweetly takes Afra by the hand)*: Afra, Afra, can you relly never forget?
> AFRA: Forget? How can I forget that you took from me the only man who ever loved me! Do you know what it means to live when nobody loves you, when you have absolutely

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pathological confusion that the claustrophobic setting only exaggerates. Goga thus became an emblem of (Slovene) provincial complexes.

> nothing to be happy about? A person has to have something, anything, if only a little thing, but to be like that, to have nothing … No, no, I'll never forget.
> THE QUIET WOMAN: Before God I beg you – let me tell Teobald who I am, let me be a mother to him! Don't tell him, I'm to blame for his back. In return, I'll give him to you, I'll let you have the dead man; I'll renounce him for all time – but please let me caress my son! (Grum 2007: 59–60).[4]

Manipulation by food is evident on two levels. It seems to the Quiet Woman that refusing food is the last possibility of ending her psychological and emotional torture. Starvation is a form of flight into death but is not understood as suicide. On the other hand, Afra uses food as a means of keeping her alive, so she forces food upon her, shoving it into her mouth. The Quiet Woman cannot die because Afra needs her alive to make sense of her own life. Afra directly faults her for her own defeat in life, the fact that no one loved her: "AFRA *(runs over to the wall clock and noisily winds it up)*: All the more reason then for you to live; all the more reason then for me not to let you go! Ha-ha! Tomorrow I'll bring you food myself – I'll stand right here next to you to make sure you eat every bite – ha-ha ! – that will be a feast!" (Grum 2007: 60). By extremely economical means, Grum shows an ultimate kind of psychological and emotional torture that the lack of love and need for another and for intimacy can cause. As the clock keeps ticking, we understand that the torture continues, the captivity is extended, and everything remains unresolved and without end.

"About a boy who ate another boy."

Gregor Strniša[5] writes in *Ljudožerci* (Cannibals; 1988: 199; published in 1972 and staged in 1977) that

> Fear is a devilish chain, / courage God's sharp sword, / that breaks all bonds. / Courage to hope in poverty. / Courage to remain hungry. / Courage to resist force. / Courage to stand on your two feet. / You stand at the Devil's rich table: / courage to reject the enticing gifts / and not to sell your immortal soul / to the power of that world.

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4 The quotations are from Nikolai Jeffs and Rowley Grau's (2007) translation of *Dogodek v mestu Gogi*.

5 Gregor Strniša (1930–87) studied English and German and then began a writing career. He wrote poetry (collections *Mozaiki*, *Odisej, Zvezde*, *Želod*, *Škarje*, *Oko*, and *Jajce*), literature for young people, and song lyrics. He wrote four dramas: *Samorog* (1976), *Žabe ali Prilika o ubogem in bogatem Lazarju* (1969), *Ljudožerci* (1972), and *Driada* (1976). In 1986 he received the Prešeren Prize for his life's works.

Ljudožerci is set at the end of WW II in the church of Sveti križ, where a group of refugees has taken shelter: the cook Falac, butcher Pajot, his wife Matilda, and their three daughters, Marta, Marija, and Majdalenka. The church prior offers them safety. At the same time the text outgrows this frame and becomes a picture of a grotesque world ruled by evil. Evil is not only external, not just a result of the war, but it resides in every person, for, as the quote above indicates, a person lacks the courage to reject the devil's gifts, and belongs all to much to that world. The drama is about cannibals, those who for nutritional and other reasons enjoy human flesh. At the same time cannibalism seems to Strniša to be a focal point around which to form his thoughts about moral values, civilization's norms, and his attitudes towards society and power. Cannibalism thus becomes a metaphor for mutual devouring and destruction.

Pajot the butcher and Falac the cook, who are introduced in the stage directions as two terrifying clowns, organize a butcher shop in the church crypt and then a tavern. Since there is meat no longer available in the lean war years, the two sell human meat. The other members of the family are involved in the business, too; for example, the daughters get the attention of boys and when they bring them home, the master butchers chop and grind them up, stuff them, and turn them into steaks and other meat products. Strniša binds the terrible scenes with gallows humor, sarcasm, and word play. Thus Magdalenka says to her beau: "I'll eat you up, I like you so much!" (Strniša: 1988: 195). The verb eat up or devour 'požreti' is meant literally, as is the line, "I like to kiss a boy, / if I know that he will never have another" (197). When the boy's mother comes to the church and asks for some meat, Pajot hands it to her, saying, "Madam mother—the meat is yours" (202). And when the daughter Marta asks where her mother is, Pajot replies, "You have your mom: / inside your belly" (259). The master butchers' victims are not only randomly chosen. Slaughtering starts within the group. Anyone who suspects something, objects, or does not want to take part is killed, just like the mother and her daughters. Falac and Pajot accompany their supper with the words "We are supping on our girl. /…/ I get the heart, / I loved her" (284). In the end Pajot kills his comrade Falac as a potential traitor.

Cannibalism, enjoying the meat of one's own, of humans, is in the European consciousness understand as act of primitive peoples on distant islands or the stuff of folktale myths. There are also examples in European history of cannibalism to satisfy the desire to extend youth and beauty. Strniša formulates an answer to the question of whether cannibalism in twentieth-century Europe, even in extreme wartime conditions when survival is utmost, is a sign of the disintegration of civilization with its values and morals on multiple, complex, and unresolved levels.

In the foreword to *Ljudožerci*, Strniša wrote that "on the other hand I do not wish to justify these two terrible clowns by their profession or by their now clumsy, now overly fine sensitivities, or by the harsh war time: like each of us, they freely choose and act. In this world, a person, even in the worst of times, independently decides for good or evil (1988: 181). Strniša illustrates this conviction in many places in the text, most obviously in the story of "The boy who ate another boy" (act 2, scene 6). It is a tale of two boys who were shot and thrown into a pit with other corpses. Only they were alive, just slightly wounded. Out of hunger and thirst, the first decides to eat the flesh from a corpse, while the conscience of the second will not let him do this. He instead sucks the juice from moss and eats fungi. The first regains his strength, crawls out of the pit, and the enemy catches and hangs him. The second survives and returns to the world from the pit "only to tell people, / how a boy ate a boy, / because there is a deep pit in this world" (Strniša 1988: 242). The external motivation for the poem[6] were actual events—the execution of Home Guards in Kočevski Rog, about which the writer Jože Snoj told Strniša, and about which there was much whispering. Strniša revealed them in "story about a man who was miraculously saved from the abyss because in the midst of all the immeasurable inhumanity he remained a man" (Snoj 1993: 167). However, in the drama the morality and conscience of the characters does not save from violent death and does not promise survival. Because of this our decisions depend upon the moral laws in our own selves.

Another kind of cannibalism is broadly connected with image of a society that is at the same time full of beautiful words about humanism, which is centered on people, and shot through with materialism and spiritually empty. Strniša in his foreword compares the social climber and cannibal:

> Is there really any difference between that enlightened climber in his shiny limousine and the ignorant cannibal in the gloomy bush? … Like them, our butcher, his youngest daughter, and our cook want a better life too much and they are unconcerned about how they remove the obstacles to that goal, and because Pajot is not as advanced as they, he kills with his bare hands, not with gloves. (1988: 197)

Or in Taras Kermauner's words: "The moral order of highly civilized human societies and cultures consists of the fact that killing and devouring others is legislated, regulated, and fixed in law in a system instead of being

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[6] Strniša also included poetry in his dramatic texts. These are poetry insets, which usually function as commentaries, illustrations of events, indicators of atmosphere, pace setters, and so forth. The poems from his dramatic works were collected and published in a special book entitled *Rebrnik* (1976).

privately-barbaricly-freely wild as with Pajot-like anarchists" (2002: 39). Both comments clearly exhibit the view that between the successful, socially admired climber and the barbaric cannibal the difference is in manner or means only. The one puts on gloves, the other uses his bare hands; the one is backed by the legal order, the other established it himself. There is no moral difference. Is it then a worse crime to oppress one's neighbor than to kill him? The Major in the drama says, "This clean, kind new era: / knows how to kill—but it is fearful to eat it!" (Strniša 1988: 277).

For Strniša, humanism, one of the leading slogans of the then totalitarian regime, which speaks of humans' high degree of spiritual development, is a lie, for culture and society insist on various kinds of destruction and devouring. "If people are not the absolute value, they can be eaten, just like all other utilitarian means" (Kermauner 2002: 39). Strniša spiritedly illustrates this for us in word play in the conversation between the Major and Tenente:

> That nobly built Renaissance, / that humanism of our time: / man [kills] man— / that's Pajot! / man [gives to] man— / gives Pajot! / man by man— / serves Pajot! / We've declined it perfectly. / Humanism and the butcher match. / They cannot without each other. / They grow from one another. (Strniša 1988: 277)

On Victory Day, about which we learn little, Pajot is decorated for his actions, for every power and every political system needs executioners. His new work in the new system will be killing people's thoughts, ideas, and souls instead of people themselves. Victory is "proud power that sucks everything up and remakes everything to its advantage and pleasure" (Poniž 2001: 296). Pajot puts it this way: "Soon I will be eating others again. / In another way. I will eat the sparks. / Until now I have slaughtered and eaten people. / Now I will put people's candles out. / A light burns in every head" (Strniša 1988: 297).

Ljudožerci is the dramatic work in which Strniša most expressively contrasts the bizarre, sarcastic, and horrible with the poetic and philosophic, meat with stars. The drama's esthetic composition is circumscribed by the number 3 (three settings, three acts, the first of which covers three days, the second three evenings, and the third three nights). Strniša reveals a grotesque picture of a world ruled by mutual consumption of the most varied forms: "What is, eats. It eats to be. / The law of hunger rules the world" (Strniša 1988: 265). Yet there is also the conviction that there exists something more, which is beyond humans.

"To eat or not to eat"

Žanina Mirčevska's *Žrelo* (published in 2007, staged in 2009)[7] is a direct descendant and continuation of *Ljudožerci*. Recalling *Ljudožerci*, the text of the play is about the lack of courage in people, about the need to be poor, to remain hungry, to resist violence. The characters have long ago sold their immortal souls and are deeply implicated in the power of this world: they stand before the devil's rich table and hungrily grab all of his enticing gifts. Unlike in *Ljudožerci*, they are no longer interested in what is good and what is bad, but in what hole the world's riches are hidden, where the recipes of happiness, wealth, beauty, and success are concealed. Taras Kermauner made an observation about *Ljudožerci* that is fully realized in *Žrelo*: "Humans as killers and consumers are essential to the semiotic market society of every increasing simulative and intellectual capital; even if it is hidden beneath plain virtual signs, the very fact that it trades on (a quite open) market necessarily leads to trading with in other people, in everything that is, other people included. If the postmodern person is turned into a sign, the other person, who trades in signs—and that is the only way to communicate in the postmodern liberal society—is at once a cannibal, for he trades and enjoys everything outside himself. Since everyone does this, everyone gains mutual enjoyment. Promiscuity as radical sexual enjoyment must structurally change into pancannibalism" (Kermauner 2002: 39). *Žrelo* continues the story in *Ljudožerci* but in a new world, the world of capitalist logic and the media spectacle. People are a part of advertising and logotypes since the world of consumption has become the only possible world, beyond which there is nothing.

Mirčevska makes the main character in *Žrelo* an everyman, a continual sinner who deals with various sins, of which gluttony is the main one. The author indicates his sin with the choice of his name, "the one who ate his own name," which is graphically represented in the text with ellipses. We recognize the main character as he gathers mushrooms in a forest of mythic proportions and meets a woman, his mother, and it turns out that he is her lost son. He acquires her possessions and is able to give himself up to various pleasures. In the following scenes he also meets his lawyer, gardener, guard, laundry woman, doctor, a beauty, a girl, and also a chicken, a horse, and a bear (twelve characters in all). They are a part of the family estate and bearers of certain archetypal characteristics as well. Their

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[7] Žanina Mirčevska was born in 1967 in Skopje, where she graduated from the Theatrical Academy before continuing her studies in Ljubljana. She is known in the theatrical world as a dramaturge, an author of scholarly studies on drama, and author of different kinds of plays, among the best known of which are *Odstiranje*, *Na deževni strani*, *Žrelo*, *Proces*, *Konec Atlasa* (for which she received the Grum Prize in 2009), and *Luknja*.

conversations turn around the central need for food because the chief characteristic of the individual is gluttony, constant hunger that cannot be sated by the most different kinds of food.

Žrelo tells of the acquisitiveness, greed, and insatiability that material goods represent to contemporary humans. Thus the title *Žrelo* itself in the context of the dramatic text is a synonym for global ingesting. The text is littered with a great variety of goods and contemporary signs of wealth—Lindt chocolate, Président oil, tanning beds, exclusive rooms in Dubaj, Rotschild Bordeaux, huge billboards for low-fat margarine, and Barbie doll costumes. Slogans are cited (e.g., you have to get this from someone if you want them; I think, therefore I have, therefore I eat) and ads (e.g., for low-fat margarine that spreads well). Hamlet's existential question has become a question about food. The main idea of the text in the broad sense is expressed by the repetition of the verbs desire 'želeti', enrich 'obogateti', have 'imeti', possess 'posedovati', buy 'kupiti', and take 'vzeti', which constantly remind the reader or viewer of his or her position of a consumer in the society. Precisely by its unrelenting enumeration of contemporary goods and imprisonment in capitalist logic the text moves from a distant, mythic story to the reader or viewer's here and now (Pezdirc Bartol 2009: 22). In spite of all the material wealth and vast quantity of the most varied food, the main character continues to experience hunger, and so he searches for "a recipe that will fill him, with which he will never be hungry again." Thus hunger in the play becomes a general feature of civilization, an epidemic in humankind, which in different circumstances a has more or less common understanding, as the guard Tine says:

> Everyone has his own hunger, sir. And people aren't just, sir. Hunger for money is called enterprise. Hunger for success is called ambition. Hunger for sex is passion. Hunger for power is strength. Hunger for alcohol is alcoholism. I'm not ashamed of my hunger and I know that everyone has one. The only difference is some are less, others more hungry. Some say openly that they're hungry, others hide it. Why hide hunger. A person isn't hungry because it's fun, and that's that. (Mirčevska 2007: 1145–1146)

Hunger seems more and more like a compensation for something else, something that would calm a person's existential surface. Here also appears the truth of the protagonist's existence, which he expresses as: "My mouth has become the entrance to the abyss of my inner darkness" (Mirčevska 2007: 1149). In the end he meets the gluttonous bear, who offers him refuge and the warmth of his fur and sings him a lullaby. But the end sounds ironic, because the bear's name is Haribo and Haribo, too, is hungry.[8]

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[8] Haribo is a brand name of a sweet gummy bears that come in different colors.

We can read the text of the drama as a kind of parabola: the fictional stories serve as a frame in which we recognize our here and now and uncover contemporary human sins. These sins are transformed into stories, similes, often strewn with fairytale and fantastic elements in which (everyday) people's dark layers come to light and are expressed in violence, cruelty, and sadism. If by way of explanation we refer to the general features of Patrice Pavis's parabola, then we can conclude that Žanina Mirčevska's similes are not just common transformations of a simple message, because a parabola must always "preserve a certain autonomy and opaqueness if it is to preserve its proper meaning; it is never entirely translatable into some lesson: it gives itself over to the play of different meanings and the reflections of theatricality" (Pavis 1997: 520).

The essential meaning is immoderation, whether in food, material goods, desires, or violence—even in going to the extreme there is no satisfaction, so the path leads to different kinds of crimes, such as murder, incest, pedophilia, cannibalism, sadism, and sodomy, which show that all hunger "is but the desire for human flesh, for consuming another or everything human. And since everything in life comes at the expense of something else (Freud's classic truth), this desire is in the end actually to devour one's self" (Lukan 2009: 9).

Žanina Mirčevska explores unconventional dramatic forms and through writing scripts reflects on the condition of today's world, replete with material wealth, but seemingly evermore illusory or deceptive. Her texts exhibit an engaged stance towards the world and call for reflection in society. The logic of consumerism, which entices with the promise of ever new and tastier and healthier foods, extends individual satisfaction into infinity. The insatiable individual becomes its essence. "Is there any greater crime in this society than a person wanting nothing? In the holy scriptures of capitalism, this is the one mortal sin" (Fon 2009: 47).

Conclusion

We have reviewed three works of Slovene drama in which food obtains symbolic expansiveness and turns into eating of the other or mutual consumption. The authors of the dramas thus can offer a critical view of certain fundamental questions of human existence. In *Dogodek v mestu Gogi*, Slavko Grum shows the possibility of human destruction in the extreme—that is, starvation and its opposite, forced feeding. Manipulation by means of food takes place on the intimate level of the unresolved conflict between two women. Gregor Strniša's *Ljudožerci* on the one hand poses the question of human values and morality in the extreme conditions of war but on the other hand problematizes the very concept of humanism, which rests

on different forms of mutual destruction and consumption. Therefore Strniša presents cannibalism as the focal point around which he organizes his thinking about the norms of civilization, society's attitude towards power, and the consumption of the other. Žanina Mirčevska reflects in *Žrelo* the condition of contemporary society, for which unbridled consumption that no food can satisfy is important. Today's capitalist logic of the consumer society creates continuing insatiableness. Thus, the motif of food in all three examples attains the symbolic meaning of dehumanization.

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POVZETEK

HRANA IN ŽRETJE KOT OBLIKA RAZČLOVEČENJA V TREH SLOVENSKIH DRAMAH

Hrana ima poleg funkcije zadovoljevanja primarnih človekovih potreb v vsaki družbi in kulturi tudi številne druge pomene: gladovna stavka je znak političnega protesta, post očiščenja, tolaženje s hrano je znak čustvene stiske … Če je bil za pretekla obdobja značilen človekov strah pred lakoto, je za sodobnega strah pred požrešnostjo. Motiv hrane je prisoten v številnih oblikah umetnosti, v prispevku pa natančneje analiziram različne pomene hrane/hranjenja/žretja v treh slovenskih dramskih besedilih. Slavko Grum v Dogodku v mestu Gogi (1930) prikaže skrajno možnost človekovega izničenja, to je stradanje, in njen nasprotni pol, to je posiljevanje s hrano – manipulacija s hrano poteka na intimni ravni nerešenega konfliktnega odnosa dveh žensk. Gregor Strniša v Ljudožercih (1972) po eni strani izpostavi vprašanja človekovih vrednot in morale v kriznih vojnih razmerah ter po drugi strani problematizira sam pojem humanizma, ki pristaja na razne oblike medsebojnega uničevanja in žretja. Žanina Mirčevska v Žrelu (2007) reflektira stanje sodobne družbe, za katero je značilna nenehna požrešnost, ki je ne more zadovoljiti nobena hrana, saj nenasitnost neprestano ustvarja današnja kapitalistična logika potrošniškega sveta. V vseh treh dramskih besedilih dobi hrana simbolne razsežnosti in prerašča v medsebojno žretje in použitje drugega, dramskim piscem pa omogoča kritičen premislek nekaterih temeljnih vprašanj človekovega bivanja.