

A Survey of Slovenian Women Fairy Tale Writers

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Abstract: In her article "A Survey of Slovenian Women Fairy Tale Writers" Milena Mileva Blažič begins with an introduction to the Slovenian fairy tale writing tradition dating back nearly 150 years. While male authors published collections of tales, women writers published only individual fairy tales and owing to their biographies giving birth to children and caring for their families gained less, if any, recognition in literary history. Blažič's overview of Slovenian women writers of fairy tales and scholarship about the genre includes the related genre of youth literature. Blažič's survey is placed in the context of West European fairy tale writing and she presents the literary history of women's fairy tale writing in Slovenian from the nineteenth- to the twenty-first century.

Milena Mileva BLAŽIČ

A Survey of Slovenian Women Fairy Tale Writers

Fairy tales is a genre of literature that — although for a long time neglected in scholarship — takes today an increasingly important position in both scholarship and on the landscape of publishing (see, e.g., O'Sullivan; Zipes, "Why Fantasy" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1392>>). In the article at hand, I present a description of Slovenian women fairy tale writers in the context of fairy tales in West European literature (about fairy tale writing in south-east Europe in general, see Blažič <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1714>>; see also Blažič, *Branja mladinske*). In Europe, the practice of collecting folklore was most intense in the nineteenth century even if its beginnings date back to the sixteenth century: the most renowned of the many collectors of adult fairy tales were Giovanni Francesco Straparola with his *La piacevoli notti* and Giambattista Basile with *Il pentamerone*. The first collection of children's fairy tales *Les Contes de ma mere l'oise* was published in 1697 by Charles Perrault under the name of his son Pierre Perrault. It was followed by *Contes de fees* by Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy in 1697 and later *Les Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode* in 1698.

Literary salons of French aristocratic circles in the seventeenth century cultivated the writing of fairy tales and most were written by women. For example, in 1697 baroness Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy published *Contes de fées* and one year later *Les Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode*. In 1698 Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de la Force published *Persinette* in the collection *Les Contes des Contes. Les Contes de Fées*. Henriette Julie de Castelnau Murat also published her works as a member of the said circle and her most famous work is *Anguilette* (a variant of the French legend *Mélusine*) where she used the motive of an animal bride and groom which was a popular motive. In 1718 Marie Jeanne L'Héritier published *Les Caprices du destin, ou Recueil d'histoires singulières et amusantes*. Gabrielle Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve published *La Belle et la bête* in the collection *La Jeune americaine et les contes marins* in 1749 and a variant from 1756 which was written by prince Jean-Marie de Beaumont has also become famous, as well as the more recent and shorter variant of *The Beauty and the Beast* in the collection *Magasin des enfants ou dialogues entre une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses élèves*. In the nineteenth century — when the exploration and publication of fairy tales exploded, the most famous collection of children's fairy tales was Jacob Grimm's and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* followed by *Danske Folkesagn* by Just Mathias Thiele and *Sizilianische Märchen* by Laura Gonzenbach, *Narodnyye ruskiye skazki* (Russian Fairy Tales) by Alexander Nikolayevich Afanasyev, *Norske folkeeventyr* by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, the *Coloured Fairy Books* by Andrew Lang, and *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliani* by Giuseppe Pitre. Nanette Levêque collected about fifty fairy tales and interesting is that she was one of the few authors with of rural origin and she was illiterate and she sung and told fairy tales in the Occitan dialect. In English in the nineteenth century a famous collection is Marian Roalfe Cox's *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-five Variants, Catskin and Cap O'rushes* published in 1893 in which Cox collected 345 variants of the motif of Cinderella and in German in 1870 Laura Gonzenbach published *Sizilianische Märchen* (translated to English in 2004 by Jack Zipes in *Beautiful Angiola: The Lost Sicilian Folk and Fairy Tales of Laura Gonzenbach*).

While the West European writing of fairy tales and children's literature has more recently been explored in scholarship (see, e.g., O'Sullivan), less known are fairy tales published by women in so-called minor languages and in the following I survey women writers who collected and/or wrote and published fairy tales in such languages with focus on Slovenian women authors. In Czech Božena Nemcova published *Slovenske pohadky a povesti* (Slovak Fairy Tales and Legends) in 1857, Bohumila Klimšová published *Kniha bachorek* (1881) (A Book of Stories), *Z raje* (1889) (From Eden), *Veršovane pohadky* (1890) (Fairy Tales in Verse), *Puvodni bajky česke* (1891) (Original Czech Fairy Tales), and *V riši kouzel* (1900) (In the Kingdom of Fairy Tales). Another Czech woman fairy tale writer was Eliška Pechova Krasnohorska who published *Pohadka o vetru* (1877) (A Tale about the Wind), *Tri pohadky* (1885) (Three Fairy Tales), *Z pohadky do pohadky* (1892) (Children's Fairy Tales), *Pohadky zimniho večera* (1892) (Fairy Tales for a Good Night), *Kraljevič Častiboj* (1895) (Prince Častiboj). An interesting collection of Indian fairy tales is *Wide Awake Stories: A Collection of Tales Told by Little Children ... in the Panjab and Kashmir* published by Flora Annie Webster Steel in 1884. The Hungarian

author baroness Emma Orczy de Orcz published *Old Hungarian Tales* in 1895 in English. The Polish fairy tale writer Maria Stanislava Konopnicka published a series of children's books and a collection of fairy tales including *Jagode* (1903) (Strawberries) and Ivana Brlić Mažuranić was a Croatian fairy tale writer who was also a Nobel Prize nominee several times in the 1930s: she published collections including *Čudovite dogodivščine vajecca Hlapiča* (1913) (Wonderful Adventures of the Apprentice Hlapič), *Pripovedke iz davnine* (1916) (The Fairy Tales from Ancient Times) and *Basni in bajke* (1943) (Fables and Myths). Her works have been translated into many languages and staged as puppet shows until today. Rachel Harriette Busk was a British woman fairy tale writer who collected Italian (*The Folk-Lore of Rome, Collected by Word of Mouth from the People* 1874, *The Folksongs of Italy* 1887), Mongolian (*Sagas from the Far East* 1873), Spanish (*Patranas, or Spanish Stories, Legendary and Traditional* 1970), and Tyrolean fairy tales (*Household Tales from the Land of Hofer, or Popular Myths of Tirol* 1871, *The Valleys of Tirol: Their Traditions and Customs, and How to Visit Them* 1874). In Slovenian women authors started to collect and/or write folk tales in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century: Josipina Turnograjska, Pavlina Pajk, Luiza Pesjak, Marica Nadlišek Bartol, Manica Koman, Lea Fatur, Vida Jeraj, Marica Gregorič Stepančič, Elza Lešnik, Sonja Sever, and Ljudmila Prunk (see, e.g., Šelih). After 1950 Kristina Brenk was the leading woman fairy tale writer, whereas the most prominent fairy tale writer in present times is Anja Štefan. In Slovenian the European fairy tale tradition was most pronouncedly transformed by Svetlana Makarovič in her work *Svetlanine pravljice* (2008) (Svetlana's Fairytales). Further notable authors are Marija Cvetek and Irena Cerar, Alenka Goljevšček, Marija Stanonik, Monika Kropelj, Martina Piko Rustija, and Mirjam Mencej.

Fairy tale writing in Slovenian is best contextualized with youth literature and this literary genre has taken off in the nineteenth century first via the establishment of the secular children's newspaper in 1848-50 entitled *Vedež: časopis za mladost sploh pa tudi za odrašene proste ljudi* (*Vedež: Newspaper for Youth and Adults Alike*) and via the literary magazine *Vrtec: časopis s podobami za slovensko mladost* (*Kindergarten: Newspaper with Images for Slovenian Youth*) 1871-1945. An important development was also the establishment of the Slovenian Women's Association in 1903 and the founding, in 1900, of the youth magazine *Zvonček: List s podobami za slovensko mladino* (*Little Bell: Magazine with Images for Slovenian Youth*). Further, in 1880 Fran Levstik (pseudonym M. I.) published a series of children's poems in the *Vrtec* under the title *Otročje igre v pesencah* (*Children's Games in Poems*) and in 1899 a cycle of children's poems entitled *Jutro* (*Morning*) was included in the collection of poems for adult readers entitled *Čaša opojnosti (Cup of Ecstasy)* by Oton Župančič. In the nineteenth century, particular in the second half, writing for children was considered marginal and therefore many authors used pseudonyms, first names, initials, or remained anonymous. Karol Glazer, in *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva. Stritarjeva doba, 1870-1895* (*The History of Slovenian Literature: The Age of Stritar from 1870 to 1895*) — unlike in his first three volumes — added a special section entitled "Youth Writings" under the heading of "Pedagogy" and he included the authors Brezovnik, Dimnik, Freuensfeld, Funtek, Gangl, Hubad, Koprivnik, Kosi, Leban, Jan, Matejev, Markič, Miklavčič, Nedeljko, Pijelik, Tomšič, and Vakaj. Glazer divided literature into poetry, drama, and storytelling and listed eight women authors in the table of contents among a large number of authors (about 200), namely Marica Strnad, Pavlina Pajk (poetry), Pavlina Pajk and Luiza Pesjak (drama), Marica Nadlišek, Pavlina Pajk and Luiza Pesjak (storytelling) and Janja Miklavčič, Ljudmila Skvarča, and Alojzija Oblak and Klara R. Oblak.

According to current research, Josipina Turnograjska was the earliest Slovenian woman fairy tale writer who wrote in this genre in the context of West European fairy tale writing. Turnograjska published "Rožmanova Lenčica" ("Rožman's Lenčica") in the newspaper *Zora* (Dawn) in 1853. In his 1921 preface to Ivan Lah's *Josipina Turnograjska. Njeno življenje in delo* (Josipina Turnograjska: Her Life and Work) Josip Stritar wrote a song dedicated to Turnograjska and the book contains nine works by Turnograjska including "Rožmanova Lenčica" and Turnograjska's discussion of the heroine based on the motif of Joan of Arc. Further women writers of note in the nineteenth century include Luiza Pesjak who published in *Vrtec* in 1875 a Slovenianized variant of the Grimm brothers' "Little Red Riding Hood" (1812) under the title "Rudeča kapica" ("Red Hood") and an unsigned illustration of the encounter of the little girl with the wolf. While the translation is true to the original, it also had many differences, for example Pesjak's added an allusion to smell that is not found in any of the other

variants: "Grandmother's voice was a little weird and there was a strange smell in the room, like in a menagerie" (19). *Slovenske večernice za pouk in kratek čas* (Slovenian Evening Stories for Education and Entertainment) written by Pavlina Pajk and published by the Klagenfurt-based Družba sv. Mohorja press in 1889 contains prose and poems, as well as a special column dedicated to fairy tales including six texts (*Živa voda* (Live Water), *Solnčni kamen* (Sun Stone), *Sveti vir* (The Holy Source), *Pogreznjeni grad* (The Broken Castle), *Zdravilno jabolko* (The Healing Apple), and *Morska roža* (The Sea Flower)).

In the twentieth century the work by women on fairy tales continued and Albina (Alba) Hintner published Slovenian fairy tales in German in the *Laibacher Schulzeitung* in 1901. For reasons I explain above, Hintner used different pseudonyms such as Gradijanova, Kraševka, Ksenija, Marica, Mihajlova, Mira, Rodoljubka, Primorka, Škedenjka, Vanda, Tržačanka, Zagorka, etc. In 1910 Marica Gregorčič Stepančič together with Ljudmila Prunk Utva published with Mira Šega a collection entitled *Pravljice za mladino* (Fairy Tales for Youth) and Utva also adapted *Andersen's Fairy Tales* (1923) in a fairy tale picture book entitled *Krtek Buc* (Buc, the Little Mole). Lea Fatur published in 1912 a collection of tales entitled *Razne povesti* (Various Tales) she co-authored with F.S. Tratnik, J. Kostanjevec, and Peter Bohinjec. Fatur started publishing in the *Dom in svet* (The Home and the World), a literary magazine in 1905 and in the children's magazines including *Vrtec* and *Angelček* (The Little Angel) in 1927. In 1913 Ljudmila Prunk Utva (1878–1947) published in co-authorship with Mira Šega the collection *Pravljice za mladino* (Fairy Tales for Youth) and also adapted the collection of *Andersen's Fairy Tales* (1923) and a fairy tale picture book entitled *Krtek Buc* (Buc, the Little Mole). Ilka Vašte in 1921 the illustrated *Pravljice* (Fairy Tales). Unfortunately, Vašte's illustrated *Nove pravljice* (New Fairy Tales) remain as a manuscript, although in 1954–55 some of the text was published in the Triest literary magazine *Galeb* (Seagull).

Manica Koman published *Narodne pravljice in legende* (Folk Fairy Tales and Legends) in 1923 and *Teta s cekarjem. Zvezek izvornih pravljic* (An Aunt With a Basket: A Booklet of Original Fairy Tales) in 1938. In her collections, Koman treated texts well known in Slovenian culture in a fairy tale manner and she discussed the motif of a water sprite that had already been dealt with by Janez Vajkard Valvasor, Mirko Rupel, Bogomil Gerlanc, and Elko Justin in their 1978 *Slava vojvodine Kranjske* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola). Koman also rewrote the Slovenian fairy tale "O liliji in vrtnici" ("About the Lily and the Rose") about the metamorphosis of a loving couple into flowers because of their unequal social standing. Further, Koman drew from a folk tale where the third son, the fool, is a protagonist who wins at the end, thus a text that is more in the West European fairy tale tradition of a "happy end." Between 1925 and 1938 the above referred to Lešnik published a collection of sketches depicting the historical times in Maribor, as well as fairy tales and tales from the region around Maribor and elsewhere entitled *Šumi, šumi Drava* (Roar, Roar, Drava River) and consisting of twenty-six texts in three chapters: 1) sketches from the historical times of Maribor; 2) fairy tales and tales from the region around Maribor; and 3) fairy tales and tales from elsewhere. Lešnik dedicated the collection of historical sketches and folk fairy tales and tales to children attending the Maribor Primary School and those from the surrounding areas. The function of a typical magic helper (a fairy or a sprite) and characteristic magical instruments is performed by Christianized creatures (a fairy is replaced by the Mother of God and the magical power is conferred through faith, e.g., St. Areh). Lešnik implies paganism and mentions explicitly Islam (e.g., Constantinople, sultan, the Turks) and Christianity (the church, the pope, priests, etc.). And Marija Jezernik (pseudonym of Marija Wirgler) was a youth writer and teacher who included fairy tales in her teaching and published *Zajček Bežek, zajček Skok* (Scapy Bunny, Hoppy Bunny) in 1925, *Tri pravljice* (Three Fairy Tales) in 1927, *Medved Godrnjavček* (Grumpy the Bear) in 1929, *Princesa Iza* (Princess Iza) in 1930, and *Beli bratec* (White Little Brother) in 1938.

The evolution of fairy tale in Slovenian youth literature including the gradual acceptance of women authors were propelled by activities including the establishment of the Slovensko žensko društvo (Slovenian Women's Association) in 1903 and the publication Minka Govekar's "Slovenke in slovensko slovstvo" ("Slovenian Women and Slovenian Literature") in 1923 in which Govekar discussed the work of Fani Hausmann, Josipina Turnograjska, Ernestina Jelovšek, Kristina Šuler, Ljudmila Poljanec, Elizabeta Kremžar, Ana Fabjan, Manica Koman, Ilka Vašte, Luiza Pesjak, Pavlina Pajk, Marica Nadlišek Bartol, Zofka Kveder, Vida Jeraj, Lea Fatur, and Marija Kmet. Youth literature has been marginalized

until the late nineteenth century and this can be observed also in newspapers or magazines publishing literature as I already mentioned. For example, Adult literature marginalised youth literature in the second half of the 19th century, whereas youth works and/or male and female authors were only mentioned fragmentally between 1848 and 1918 in the newspapers: *Ljubljanski zvon: mesečna revija za leposlovje* (1848-1918) (english name), *književnost in kritiko* (1881-1941) (The Ljubljana Bell), *Dom in svet: zabavi in pouku* (1888-1944) (The Home and the World), and *Pedagoški letopis* (1918-1941) (Pedagogical Chronicle) there were only occasional publications of fairy tales by either women or men. It is only with the twentieth century that youth literature started to gain recognition. Boris Orel published several articles in 1932 and 1934 in *Dom in svet* and *Literarni pregled: Pravljica v stiski* (Literary Overview: The Fairy Tale in Distress) and he discusses two types of fairy tales, namely literary and film types. Further, Orel's work is located in the context of European youth literature including the work of Erich Kästner, Karel Čapek, and Richard Hughes and compares the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers, Andersen, Hughes, and the 1933 film version of Robinson Crusoe (filmed in Ljubljana).

In 1926 Fran Erjavec, Fran, Pavel Flerè, Ivana Kobilca, and Roza Sternen published *Starejše pesnice in pisateljice. Izbrani spisi za mladino* (Older Women Poets and Writers: Selected Writings for Youth) in which they discuss the work of Fani Hausmann, Josipina Turnograjska, Luiza Pesjak, and Pavlina Pajk. It is interesting that the book — which consisted of two parts: the first about literary history and the women authors within and the second containing primary texts — were illustrated Ivana Kobilica and Roza Klein Sterner. A further development towards the recognition of fairy tales as an important genre was the founding of the Založba belo-modra knjižnica publishing house in 1927 by the sport and culture society TKD: Telovadno kulturno društvo (Sport and Cultural Association). The Society also established a Fairy Tale Section and in 1931 started organising story hours in the "ladies' parlour" in a hotel. The initiator was Minka Krofta and a group of women intellectuals who narrated fairy tales to a young audience. The Society also organized storytelling evenings in the Chamber of Business in Ljubljana with women authors including Dora Gruden, Marija Jezernik, Manica Koman, Marijana Kokalj Željeznov, Marija Grošelj, and Ruža Lucija Petelin, all members of the circle of the Založba belo-modre knjižnice publishing house.

After World War II, an important turning point was the publication of a series of fairy tales entitled *Zlata ptica* (Golden Bird) in 1956 which started to be published by Mladinska knjiga as the first in a series of collections of the world's most beautiful fairy tales. The said collection was named after the Slovenian folk tale "Golden Bird" and the illustrations of Ančka Gošnik Godec became its hallmark. In 1968 Marjana Kobe published her article "Delo z mladim bralcem" ("Working with a Young Reader"), followed by the 1972 co-authored — with Alenka Gerlovič — monograph *Ura pravljic* (Fairy Tale Hour) where bibliopedagogical activities with children are discussed and because of this *Ura pravljic* became a standard in nearly all general and school libraries in Slovenia and helped promote the tradition of storytelling. Founded in 1948, Pionirska knjižnica (Pioneers' Library) was also instrumental to promote storytelling, as well as exhibitions of books of fairy tales and youth literature in general. As I indicate above, unfortunately it has been a standard to not refer to or accord status to women writers and this is the case in the two volumes of *Pregled slovenskega mladinskega slovstva* (1950, 1955) (Overview of Slovenian Youth Literature) in which Kazimir Mohar deals with male authors only and overlooks women authors. The situation has begun to improve when in 1980 Zlata Pirnat Cognard published her extensive monograph *Pregled mladinskih književnosti jugoslovanskih narodov 1945-1968* (Overview of Youth Literature of the Yugoslav Nations, 1945-1968) where she discusses literature in terms of literary genre (poetry, fairy tale, tales, short and long prose, youth literature, etc.). Borut Stražar published *Književnost za otroke* (Literature for Children) in 1981 and in this book there are a good number of women authors' works discussed. One of the chapters — "The Fairy Tale and the Modern Fantasy Story — Stražar defines the fairy tale and its origin, presents the difference between the magical and realist fairy tale, as well as the ethical message of the fairy tale and the motives for the emergence of an artificial fairy tale. Stražar paid special attention to Andersen and other authors of artificial fairy tales, including Jella Lepman. In the chapter on the modern fantasy story, Stražar discusses Ela Peroci and her short modern fairy tale *Moj dežnik je lahko* (1955) (My Umbrella Can Become a Balloon). Importantly, he discusses the work of women fairy tale writers including Kristina Brenk, Polonca Kovač, Mira Mihelič, Peroci, etc. Importantly, Kobe published in 1987 *Pogledi na*

mladinsko književnost (Views of Youth Literature) and owing to this work youth literature became a university course in the 1980s and the institutionalization of youth literature intensified in the 1990s. For example, Gregor Kocijan published eleven editions of *Slovensko slovstvo skozi stoletja* (1992-2001) (Slovenian Literature Throughout the Centuries) in which women authors' work including youth literature and the fairy tale are discussed. In 1998 a group of women fairy tale writers including Anja Štefan organized the Pripovedovalski maraton (Fairy Tale Marathon) which in 2004 was renamed to Pripovedovalski festival (Fairy Tales Today Storytelling Festival). Also, Kobe continued to publish seminal work, for example her *Vedež in začetki mladinskega slovstva na Slovenskem* (Vedež and the Beginnings of Youth Literature in Slovenian Lands) in 2004. Last but not least, a sign that women's fairy tale writing and that of youth literature has arrived — in addition to a good number of scholarly works — in 2012 the fifteenth storytelling festival was held which has evolved into different forms and spread across different institutions and the festival cooperates with the Kinodvor cinema theater where they create programmes jointly with *Ciciban: Revija za šolske otroke* (1945-) (Ciciban: Magazine for School Children) literary magazines and *Cicido: Revija za predšolske otroke* (1998-) (Cicido: Magazine for Preschool Children), the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, the "Cankarjev dom" cultural and congress centre, and Radio Študent.

Note: the above article is a revised and translated excerpt from Milena Mileva Blažič, *Branja mladinske književnosti* (Readings of Youth Literature). Ph.D. diss. Ljubljana: U of Ljubljana, 2011. Copyright release to the author.

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