


SLOVENE WOMEN FAIRY TALE AUTHORS		Comparative Literature Keywords: female storytellers, Luiza Pesjak, Tina Wajtawa, Svetlana Makarovič.
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Abstract
<p>The contribution presents female storytellers in different periods and social systems. The focus is on three exceptional individuals. The first is Luiza Pesjak, whose work is characterized by literary multilingualism. Then, in the post-World War 2 period, the less well-known but important storyteller from Resia, Tina Wajtawa, whose work is also characterized by literary multilingualism, as well as Indo-European motifs. But the most representative contemporary female storyteller is Svetlana Makarovič, who is known not only for literary intertextuality, but also eclecticism, for she has drawn upon numerous languages, literatures and cultures.</p>

In this article, we have classified the artists according to the sociopolitical periods of the Slovene nation which also had a strong influence on cultural and literary creation. The first period (1848–1918) was a period of national awakening and cultural awareness from the March Revolution of 1848 to the unification of Slovenes with other South Slavic nations into a common state after the First World War. The most characteristic author of this period was Luiza Pesjak (*Stara pravljica v novejši obleki [Old Fairy Tale in a New Dress]*, 1872). This was followed by a period between the two world wars (1918–1941). This period was visibly marked by the artists Ljudmila Prunk and Marica Gregorič (*Pravljice [Fairy Tales]*, 1913); their fairy tales came to life among readers and only became established after the First World War. The third period (1945–1991) completes the inclusion of Slovenes in the Republic of Yugoslavia until Slovenia’s independence. This period is characterized by the flourishing of fairy tales in Slovenia. This development was visibly encouraged and co-created by author, translator and Editor Kristina Brenk. Important fairy tale book collections (*Čebelica [The Bee]*, *Zlata ptica [The Golden Bird]* and *Velike slikanice [The Great Picture Books]*) were also created during this period. After 1960, the storyteller Tina Wajtawa (also Tina Vajtova, Valentina Pielich) worked as a narrator in Solbica in Resia. Especially after 1970, the representative contemporary Slovenian storyteller and outstanding versatile artist Svetlana Makarovič began to publish works for children, and she also published later, in the fourth period. The fourth period (1991–) covers publications during the time of independent Slovenia until today. In the period 2004–2020, it was significantly co-created by the artist Anja Štefan, who writes songs for children, but also edits Resian and other fairy tales and creates original short modern fairy tales for younger children.

First period (1848–1918)

Luiza Pesjak (1828–1898)

Luiza Pesjak wrote plays, poems and prose, she was also a translator, mostly from German, but her work for youth and fairy tales will have to be explored in more detail. Her fairy tales are characterized by an authorial approach, romanticization (emotions), fairy-tale and Christianized motifs (*Jezus in vrana [Jesus and the Crow]*, 1897), and literary multilingualism.

Luiza Pesjak published original adaptations or authorized variants of folk tales. According to the sources found so far, her first fairy tale was *Zvonček (The Little Bell)* (Pesjak 1864). The fairy tale is etiological and is related to the fairy tale or legend about Mary's shirt, i.e., it explains why the snow is white. It is interesting that a similar motif can be found later, in the fairy tales of Kristina Brenk *Ivje (The Frost)* (Vrhovec 1937) and Svetlana Makarovič's *Balada o Sneguročki (The Ballad of the Snow Maiden)* (2014).

In 1872, Luiza Pesjak published *Staro pravljico v noveji obliki (The Old Fairy Tale in a New Form)*, which is a folk tale about a stepmother and a stepdaughter or about an evil stepmother and a good stepdaughter (ATU¹480, *The kind and the unkind girls*). She added descriptions of nature and emotions and dialogues. Then she gradually moves from folk tales (Gorenjska and Grimm's fairy tales) to authorial fairy tales. These were original adaptations of English, Czech, Danish, French, Italian, German and other texts, especially fairy tales, and she also wrote in German.

Luiza Pesjak knew Grimm's fairy tales and wrote the fairy tale *Gospa Pehta (Mrs. Pehta)*, a variant of the German fairy tale Frau Holle. Her second fairy tale *Sirota (The Orphan, 1875)* is a variant of Grimm's fairy tale *The Star Money* (ATU 779, *Die Sterntaler*).

The best are her relatively early translations of H. C. Andersen's original fairy tales *Picture Book without Pictures*, published in German in Leipzig in April 1847 under the title *Bilderbuch ohne Bilder*, and in December of the same year in Danish (*Billedbog uden Billeder*). Andersen introduced oriental motifs into fairy tales that appear intertextually (e.g., the flying carpet / trunk motif), but move away from folk tales. Luiza Pesjak translated five of the thirty-three fairy tales and Srečko Kosovel two, but the translation remained in manuscript (Blažić 2018: 73–79). It was found in 1923 (Kosovel, Komel 2019).

¹ ATU is the international designation and acronym of the surnames of the three folklorists, Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson and Hans-Jörg Uther, who published an internationally classified index of fairytale types (Uther 2004, 2011).

Ernestina Jelovšek (1842–1917)

We should certainly mention the unexplored opus of Ernestina Jelovšek (Blažić, Zimmermann 2020: 20–33). According to the sources found so far, Ernestina Jelovšek, daughter of Ana Jelovšek and France Prešeren, wrote *Spomini na Prešerna* (*The Memoirs of Prešeren*) – initially in German (1875 and 1876), later rewritten and reworked, and published in 1903 in abbreviated form, translated by Janko Kessler. They consist of a preface, an introduction, and ten chapters. *Spomini na očeta* (*The Memories of My Father*) are understandably quite subjective and a little embellishing. In writing, she drew on her own memories and on her mother’s storytelling, so they have literary-historical value, and under the influence of *mladoslovinci* she also emphasized the importance of the Slovene language and culture. Ernestina Jelovšek was literary multilingual.

It is less known that Ernestina Jelovšek also wrote five literary sketches, two of which were published in the *Ljubljanski zvon* magazine (*Dan v Vrbi* [*A Day at Vrba*], 1902; *V samotni uri* [*At a Lonely Hour*], 1900), and three remained in manuscript (two of these are in German). In 1986, they were published by Janez Mušič in his book *Sila spomina, Dr. France Prešeren v spominih svojih sodobnikov* (*The Power of Memory: Dr. France Prešeren in the Memories of His Contemporaries*). The first sketch, entitled *Bilo je* (*Once was*, 1903), is written in Slovene, the second and the third are written in German and are not dated – these are *Nezakonska mati* (*The Unwed Mother*) and *V temačnih urah* (*In the Dark Hours*) which is divided into three parts: *Sočutje* (*The Compassion*), *Slavec* (*The Nightingale*) and *Ujetislavec* (*The Captured Nightingale*). In them she literaryizes memories of her father, but she also uses motif-thematic elements of her own literary creativity, even the fairy-tale motif of a nightingale. Based on the literary analysis of Max Lüthi (Lüthi 2011), it is obvious that the text *Slavec* contains a motif of a personified animal or bird. The nightingale motif is known in literary history as the ‘literary bird’ because it speaks, so it has magical abilities. The text is short, fairy-tale, and at the same time one-dimensional (nobody wonders when a celebrity speaks) and two-dimensional (the literary character is amazed in the real world when a fairy-tale character speaks). Similarly, in H. C. Andersen’s fairy tale *The Nightingale* (1843), in which the nightingale flies to the window of the terminally ill Chinese Emperor and heals him. Ernestina Jelovšek narrates:

I don’t know how long I listened to the nightingale’s song as a creature stepped before my mental eye, bright as the light of the sun, wonderful as the reflection of the sky, magical as the glow of spring.” “It said to me in the voice of a nightingale:² ‘I am love! I am pure, eternal, mighty and deep, inexhaustible in sacrifice, great in renunciation.’” (Mušič 1986: 260)

² Underlined by M. M. Blažić and K. Bedenk

Ernestina Jelovšek begins ‘in medias res’: “Listen to how beautifully the nightingale sings!” (Mušič 1986: 259), and then continues ab ovo: “She was one of those fairytale-beautiful nights” (ibid: 259). She uses stylistic words typical of a fairy tale: pearl, magical, wonderful, kingdom, fairy tale, nightingale, nightingale song, etc. Even in the fairy-tale thinking about the captured nightingale, which is a metaphor for the poet or Prešeren, she thinks about her father and mother in the language of fairytale symbols, e.g. (gentle) flower, shoemaker, light of life, flower, bird under the sky, sunbeam, thorny path, gold, etc.

Second period (1918–1941)

Ljudmila Prunk (1878–1947) and Marica Gregorič (1874–1954) / Anica Žemlja (1875–1922)

According to the sources found so far, the first collection of *Pravljice (Fairy Tales)* at the Society of St. Mohor in Klagenfurt in 1913 was published by Ljudmila Prunk (also Utva, Ksaverija) and Marica Gregorič (Marica Gregorič-Stepančič, also Mira, Vanda), and according to other sources by Anica Žemlja, who used the pseudonym Mira Mokriška³. Mira Mokriška also added subtitles to fairy tales, e.g., floral, forest, autumn, national, spring, bird, winter and animal fairy tales. These fairy tales, which relate to Andersen’s model of fairy tale, contain detailed descriptions of nature and many romantic elements. Ljudmila Prunk translated ten of Andersen’s fairy tales (*The Fool, Ingrida, The Princess and the Pea, The Firefly, The Flying Trunk, Marko and His Companion, Nicholas and Little Nicholas, The Emperor’s New Dress, The Paradise, The Swineherd*) and, like Luiza Pesjak, intertextually linked to them.

Fairy tales were related to the model of folk tales, but they supplemented it with authorship, e.g., they added the emotions and inner lives of literary characters, most often single women and/or widows. Thus, at the transference level, they portrayed the emotional and social world, the economic crisis, poverty, and social distress, some emphasizing Christianized elements. This is not only a characteristic of storytellers, but a difficult social situation is also reflected in fairy tales when there is no husband/father. After the Second World War, Kristina Brenk continued to include emotional and social elements in fairy tales.

Belo-modra knjižnica (White and Blue Library, 1927–1941)

Katja Mihurko Poniž in her contribution *Knjige slovenskih pisateljic pri založbi Belo-modra knjižnica (Books of Slovene Writers at the White and Blue Library Publishing House, 2004)* presents the activities of the women’s publishing house in 1927–1941 and the publication of books by Slovene writers, including youth writers Ljuba Prenner and Marijana Kokalj Željeznov, and poets Vida Jeraj,

³ Information on authorship and pseudonyms is available at <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi215416/>, https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anica_Žemlja and <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-2K4DKHAM>.

Zofka Kveder et al. We should also mention Marja Boršnik, the first Slovene literary historian to study youth literature, who devoted herself to study the works of Slovene writers and poets and edited selected works by Vida Jeraj and Zofka Kveder. (Blažič 2021: 267–270).

Fairy Tale Hours (1931)

In the period between the two world wars, they began to organize the first fairy tale lessons for children, such as *Slovenska pisateljica pripoveduje (Slovenian Woman Writer Narrates)*, and fairy tale lessons in the blue lounge of the Union Hotel. The announcement of the event is illustrated by the following records: Fairy tale narrators themselves guarantee that young people will truly receive the pearls of our or the world's fairy tale literature. The reciters will be mostly our artists or writers.⁴ On Thursday, on the birthday of His Majesty King Alexander, Maša Slavec, member of the drama society, will take the youth to the fantastic land of fairy tales.⁵ The first fairytale evening was 17 December 1931. The founder was Minka Krofta with a group of intellectuals who narrated fairy tales. The model of storytelling in the “ladies’ room” was related to the model of salon storytelling of *Romanesque précieuses (préciosité)* and Germanic *coffee circles (Kaffeezirkel)*.

Slovenian woman writer narrates (1932)

Telovadno-kulturno društvo Atena (The Athena Gymnastics and Cultural Society) from Ljubljana organized storytelling evenings in the hall of the Chamber of Labor, with the participation of writers from the White-Blue Library publishing house: Dora Gruden, Marija Jezernik, Manica Koman, Marijana Kokalj Željznov, Marija Grošelj and Ruža Lucija Petelin. The first such evening was on 12 May 1932. The very naming of the event shows a synthesis of the first (writer) and second (narrator) model of fairy tales. This was the time when the works of women storytellers were published, such as Ljudmila Prunk and Marica Gregorič Stepančič (*Pravljice [Fairy Tales]*, 1913), Manica Komac (*Narodne pravljice in legende [Folk Tales and Legends]*, 1923), Elza Lešnik (*Šumi, šumi Drava [The Drava River Murmurs, Murmurs]*, 1925), Marija Wirgler Jezernik (*Tri pravljice [Three Fairy Tales]*, 1927), Kristina Brenk, née Vrhovec (*Deklica iz vresja [The Girl From the Heath]*, 1932/33; *Ivje [The Frost]*, 1936/37), Lea Fatur (*Razne povesti [Various Tales]*, 1912; *Pravljice in pripovedke [Fairy Tales and Stories]*, 1941), Angela Golobič (*Zvonček sreče [The Bell of Luck]*, 1941), Manica Koman (*Narodne pravljice in legend [Folk tales and Legends]*, 1923; *Teta s cekarjem [The Aunt with a Basket]*, 1938), Marjana Grasselli Prosenc with the pseudonym Anka Nikolič (*Pravljice o Gralu [Fairy Tales of the Grail]*, 1927), Sonja Sever (*Čevljarček Palček in druge pravljice [The Shoemaker Dwarf and Other Fairy*

⁴ Zgodovinski arhiv Ljubljana. Arhivsko gradivo II. državna realna gimnazija v Ljubljani, no. 1823. In Ljubljana, on 16. 12.1931.

⁵ Zgodovinski arhiv Ljubljana. Arhivsko gradivo II. državna realna gimnazija v Ljubljani, no. 398. In Ljubljana, on 12. 5.1932.

Tales], 1938), and Ilka Vašte (*Pravljice [Fairy Tales]*, 1921). In the period from 1918 to 1941,⁶ the first literary-historical contributions on fairy tales also appeared. The first article was written by Marja Boršnik (*Pravljice [Fairy Tales]*, 1932), and then by Zlata Pirnat Cognard with the detailed *Bibliografija del slovenskih pisateljic do konca 1935 (Bibliography of the Works of Slovene Women Writers Until the End of 1935, 1935)* with special emphasis on fairy tales (Blažič 2016: 108–120). An in-depth study entitled *Pravljica. Primerjalna studija (A Fairy Tale: A Comparative Study)* was also written by Eda Stadler (1939).

Third period 1945–1991

The post-World War II period brought relief, and children's libraries began to be set up all over Europe,⁷ to organize fairy tale lessons (Šircelj, Kobe, Gerlovič 1972) and to award international prizes (IBBY H. C. Andersen, 1956–). In the period 1918–1941, the emphasis was on book education, in the period 1945–1991 on library education, and then in the period 1991–2004 on literature, which after 2004 became a predominantly commercial activity.

Tina Wajtawa (1900–1984)

The ethnologist and ethnographer Milko Matičetov, who discovered the excellent Resian storyteller and narrator Tina Wajtawa in the 1960s, aroused interest in storytelling, especially in Resia. With her fairy tales, which have preserved depth and breadth in comparison with Slovene ones, or multi-meaning and crossover character, she connects to the model of a folk tale and at the same time distances herself from it. Her fairy tales are complex, referring to Indo-European and ancient blind motifs (e.g., the motif of a bowing tree), which she has innovatively renewed, and of course also contain Germanic, Romanesque, Resian, and authorial elements. Milko Matičetov collected and recorded more than 400 fairy tales by Tina Wajtawa, some of which he published in the well-known collection *Zverinice iz Rezije (The Beasties from Resia, 1973, 2005)*. Fairy tales have a personified animal fairy-tale literary character, and a reprint of the 2010 collection also has ATU type index numbers added.

Fourth period (1991–)

The modern storyteller Svetlana Makarovič falls in the period after 1991 and to this day. Among her representative works we should mention at least the bilingual anthology of *Svetlanine pravljice (Svetlana's Fairy tales, 2008)*, with illustrations by Alenka Sottler, the anthology of fairy tales *Zlata mačja preja (Golden Cat Yarn, 2014)*, and the anthology of her selected 277 poems entitled *Pesmi muce potovke (The Poems of the Travelling Cat, 2019)*,

⁶ The authors of the article are preparing a monograph *Slovenske pravljicarke, 1918–1941 (Slovene Fairy Tale Writers, 1918–1941)*, which will deal in detail with all the aforementioned fairy tale writers in this period and is expected to be published in 2022.

⁷ More about the concept of establishing libraries for children (Internationale Jugendbibliothek, 1949) at <https://www.ijb.de/home>.

edited by Žiga Kosec. This period is also visibly co-created by the artist Anja Štefan, who writes poems and authorial short modern fairy tales for children and edits Resian and other fairy tales.

Svetlana Makarovič (1939–)

Svetlana Makarovič is a very productive author who started publishing for children and youth after 1970, but to this day she remains at the very top among artists. As a creator in the broadest sense of the word, she is a playwright, actress, illustrator, poet, chanson singer, storyteller, translator, director, and at the same time the most translated Slovenian author. Based on the criteria for canonical texts by Bettina Kümmerling

Meibauer (2004), we can say that Svetlana Makarovič's fairy tales belong to the field of modern classics, as they are characterized by innovation, multi-meaning and crossover character. Her works for youth are characterized by the invention of new fairy-tale characters, new names, words and semantic connections, directness in storytelling, humor, irony, latent humor, sparkling poetic inserts and a soothing unfolding after a tense narrative. Her inexhaustible imagination is expressed in extremely juicy language, and the experience of beauty comes from serenity and childish optimism. She creates short modern fairy tales with animal characters and also the so-called ballad fairy tales based on mythical tradition (*Katalena, The Red Apple, Sneguročka*, etc.).

Anja Štefan (1969–)

Contemporary creator – storyteller and narrator – Anja Štefan began her career with magazine publications in magazines *Ciciban* (since 1994), *Cicido* (since 1998) and also in the cross-border magazine *Galeb* (since 1994) and others. Her work is characterized by storytelling and writing of fairy tales, folk and authorial, and adaptations of folk tales, including Resian ones, written by Milko Matičetov. Among her most famous fairy tales are *Melje, melje mlinček* (*The Mill Grinds, Grinds*, 1999), *Lonček na pike* (*A Pot on Dots*, 2008) and *Drobtine iz Mišje doline* (*The Crumbs from the Mouse Valley*, 2017). Anja Štefan is also the initiator of the storytelling festival *Pravljice danes* (*Fairy Tales Today*) – the event was initially intended primarily for children, but later spread to adult listeners.

Conclusion

The focus is on three exceptional individuals. The first is Luiza Pesjak, whose work is characterised by literary multilingualism. Then in the post-World War 2 period, the less well-known but important storyteller from Resia, Tina Wajtawa, whose work is also characterised by literary multilingualism, as well as Indo-European motifs. But the most representative contemporary female storyteller is Svetlana Makarovič, who is known not only for literary intertextuality, but also eclecticism, for she has drawn upon numerous languages, literatures and cultures.

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