

<p>IMAGE OF THE CHILD IN SLOVENIAN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE</p>		<p>Comparative Literature</p> <p>Keywords: child, Slovenian children’s literature, sunny childhood, cloudy childhood, idealisation, romanticism, image of the child.</p>
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Abstract

Period of childhood is supposed to be protected period. Adults are supposed to act for the benefit of the child, but reality shows us this is often not the case. Even the etymology of the word ‘child’ in Slovene (France Bezlaj, Marko Snoj) is showing the disparity in understanding of the word ‘child’ and of the real understanding of the child. On the basis of the etymological analyses of the word ‘child’ in the Bezlaj’s dictionary and in Snoj’s dictionary, we can say that the word appears the most often under the meaning of worker, farmhand, page, servant, slave, serf, and less as a boy, nipper, youngster, man, little boy. The absence of the mentioning of feminine child is self-explanatory.

The original meaning of the word ‘child’ is “the one who does not speak, who has no speech, who does not yet know or has no right to speak.” In a figurative sense, the child is a side shoot in millet, which clearly and actually shows the marginalization of the role of the child and childhood in society, as well as the field of children’s literature compared to adult literature. We see that there is a typical difference between a transparent conception of a child in the Christian sense (innocence, purity, and heavenliness) and the actual conception where the child is conceived mostly as a slave. This dichotomy is marked not only by the idealized conception of the child and childhood in comparison with the real one, but also by the duality that is present not only in Slovene, but also in other cultures. In the *Dictionary of the Slovene Literary Language*, the word child is a nickname for a boy or a girl in the first years of life; human offspring in relation to parents; he/she is a subject and a result, a fruit, which is a great advancement in the modern conception of the child. The last naming has been present in Slovene in written form since the 14th century and appears as a constant until the beginning of the 21st century.



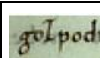


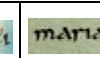




The image of a child in older, newer and modern Slovenian (children’s) literature in the millennial tradition shows that there is a dichotomy between the declarative idealized and the real, actual image of the child and childhood. On the one hand, childhood is portrayed as a time of innocence, purity and paradise – on the other hand, we have realistic images that correspond to the meaning of the word children in etymological dictionaries, in which the child is portrayed mostly as a worker, slave or metaphorically as a side shoot in millet. Literature in the time of older and newer Slovene (children’s) literature, in accordance with this notion of the child (as a lower, ignorant being), was a means of socialization or even instrumentalization (Anton Martin Slomšek). Fran Levstik and Josip Stritar indicate a new sensibility in the conception of the child and childhood, and it is very clearly expressed and qualitatively upgraded by Oton Župančič. The child and childhood, not only transparently but also actually, become worthy of special care and protection. The child – although he/she works, but not like in the 19th century, when he/she was only a small adult, whose main concern is survival and food – gets the right to play with Župančič.

The child becomes a subject, which is also expressed at the level of language and by means of expressing affection. Continuation in the quality conception of the child is upgraded by Srečko Kosovel, but a real boom came after the Second World War. In the period of contemporary Slovene (children’s) literature, the motif of food shortage turns into its contradiction – the child begins to overeat, perhaps due to the emotional emptiness at home. After World War II, the parents move from the village to the city, work longer hours, and the child lives in a block of flats. A child who warmed him-/herself behind a stove in a room in the 19th century gets a room in which he/she is alone, thus he/she becomes frightened. After 1950, we get a lot of new images of children in children’s literature, but after 1990 the roles change (adult children and childish adults), we witness the transition from the archetype through the stereotype to new stereotypes or a new image of a child who is no longer a side shoot in millet, but has a central part. These claims will be confirmed by presenting certain cases chronologically.

Image of a Child in Older Slovene (Children’s) Literature

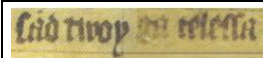

In the period of literacy in the Brižinski spomeniki (*Freising monuments or Freising manuscripts, 972-1032*) the word child is not mentioned independently, only indirectly through masculine nouns (brother, brothers, grandfather, son, sons).

Table 1. Freising manuscripts 1

									
brat (brother)	ded (grandfather)	gospod (mister)	oče (father)	sin (son)	sinovi (sons)	Marija (Mary)	Laurenz	Mihael (Michael)	Peter

In the *Klagenfurt manuscript* (1362-1390) the child is mentioned only as “the fruit of your body” and a male descendant (“the only son”).

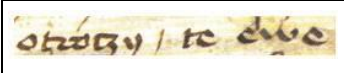
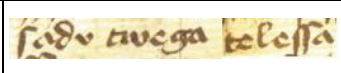
Table 2. Klagenfurt manuscript

	
sad tvojege telesa (the fruit of your body)	sin edini (the only son)

In the *Stična manuscript* (1428-1440) the word children is mentioned only in the phrase “*The children of Eve and the fruit of your body*”.

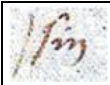
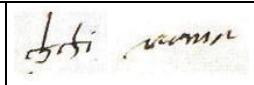

¹ <http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc/bs/html/bsTR.html#bsTR-slv.1.001> (accessed 13 July 2012).

Table 3. Stična manuscript

	
otroci Evini (the children of Eve)	sad tvojega telesa (the fruit of your body)

In the Cividale manuscript (1497) the child is mentioned as a male descendant or son, but the novelty here is that daughter is mentioned twice (daughter, daughter Menija). Mentions of proper names are interesting (Daniel, Juraj, Miklav, Simon, Stefan, etc.; Fuska, Joanna, Katarina, Menija, Sabina, etc.)

Table 4. Cividale manuscript

		
sin (son)	hči Menija (daughter Menija)	hči (daughter)

Qualitative progress in the conception of the child and childhood can be traced in older Slovene literature in the works by Primož Trubar. For the first time in Slovene history, the subtitle to *Abecedarij (Alphabet, 1550)* mentions not children but young Slovenes (“you young and simple Slovenes”), while later in the *Katekizem (Catechism, 1550)* Trubar speaks about “otrozje molitue” (“childish prayers”) and mentions children, e.g. Adam’s, God’s, pious. Secondly, there is a very advanced conception in the *Catechism (1575)*, where Trubar mentions toys made from remains after hulling corn and the gifting of children: “tim Otrokom na vezher pod nih skledice oli Baretice lizhkako Iegrazho polagaio, Inu te Otroke pregovore, tu je nim St. Niclaush dal” (“In the evening, they give these children toys made from remains after hulling corn under their dishes or caps, and they are telling them that these are the gifts given to them by St. Nicholas”). Progress in the conception of children is made in *Hišna postila (The House Postil, 1595)*, where it is mentioned that children, in addition to having “otrozje molitue,” play in the company of other children (“s drugimi Otruki okuli tekal inu Se ygral” [“they run around with other children and play”]). Third, we also find feelings for children in Trubar. Although children are “hudizhovi otroci” (“Devil’s children”), their parents mourn them (“ino otroke is serza shalovali” [“mourned their children from the bottom of their hearts”]). Trubar often mentions children, such as e.g., Israeli, dear, young, disobedient, his, orderly, legitimate, Devil’s, their own, their dear, your, etc. All the characteristics of the mentions of children point to an advanced conception of the child and childhood. *Šolski red stanovske šole v Ljubljani (The School Order of the School for Nobility in Ljubljana)* by Adam Bohorič and Nikodem Frischlin from 1575 and 1584 records the behavior of students at home:

“At home

When he returns home, the student should – if he is not restrained

by the work assigned to him by his parents – use all the time left from urgent homework by repetition and writing.

When eating

If so ordered, he should prepare the table as required by the property and customs of the parents. He should put a tablecloth over the table.

He should bring plates, spoons, glasses and other utensils.

Then he should pray at the table, in Latin, in German, or even in his native language.”

“If the parents so command, let him sit then at the table in his place; but if he must serve, let him stand at the table in the right posture, and let him constantly watch to see what is lacking, whether something needs to be offered, brought, taken away, that he may do so diligently. If he was sitting at a table, after eating, when he got permission, he should get up first and take his plate and spoon with a knife back to the place where the rest of the utensils should be placed.

However, if he has to serve, he should always stand at the table in such a posture as befits a noble student, and he should not leave unless his parents or their deputies allow him to do so or if they do not command him directly. When, finally, a hymn should be prayed after a meal, let him do so in the same order as before the meal. Then he should sing, if custom so requires, but not with great strain, so that the stomach digesting the food will not open up due to excessive activity in singing, which would impede digestion, and so as not to darken the brain with raw steam, excreted from the stomach by excessive exercise – this also hinders memory and other mental forces.”²

Pohlin’s image of a child in a family is typical; a child from birth to 2 years of age is called a child, and in middle childhood, from about 2 to 7 years of age, a boy (also called pubec [lad]) or a girl (cartana punčka [precious doll]). He mentions that the mother “te male otroke je k sebi k mizi vzela ter je obsedela, deslih so se načednu zaderžali toku, da smrad je vsem lušt jesti odvzel” (“took these small children to her table and remained sitting, although the children soiled themselves, so that the stench took away everyone’s appetite”).³ The children also worked, e.g. “kamenje so pustiliskus otroke po njivah pobirati, inu kaderso is nive nazajs praznem vozom šli, je vsak en kup kamenov, koker je njemu na roki bil, is sabo uzal. Na tako vižo je vas čedna inu suha postala” (“The children were always gathering stones in the fields, and when they went back from the fields with an empty wagon, each took a pile of stones with him. In such a way, the village became beautiful and dry.”)⁴ Pohlin advocated for equal treatment between siblings, saying “Ta faler, de enkrat starši enega izmed svojeh otrok več štimajo, koker tega drugega, pokasi te mlada serca do konca” (“The mistake parents do when they give more attention to one child than to the other utterly corrupts these young hearts.”)⁵

² Ahačič, Kozma (2008). Primož Trubar.doc: za domišljijško potovanje in domače branje (izbor odlomkov iz del Primoža Trubarja). Ljubljana: Rokus Klett, p. 9.

³ Pohlin, Marko (1789). Kmetam sa potrebu inu pomozh ili uka polne vesele, inu shalostne zgodbe te vasy Midlhajm: sa mlade, inu stare ludy. Dunaj: Christian Grosser, p. 149.

⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

The father dominated the family - the master, the master of the house, the lord of his home; like a king or a great lord who wants to have good subjects.⁶ Within the family, the children were cared for, but they had to be obedient. Pohlin mentions the image of a child with the nouns children and descendants (sin, pubec, hčer, punčka [son, lad, daughter, daughter]), also with the word dete [baby] (“detešna leta” or “detezhnen lejtah” [childhood years]).⁷

“This condition, to do everything better, and the hope that he will succeed in many things, make the gentleman in question remain in good spirit during his numerous errands, and he strives calmly to do something good. It’s a shame that all those good thoughts don’t come true!”⁸ It is clear from the above quote that Pohlin was an enlightened man, that he knew that people could be better. It is more than obvious that he was also realistic and realized that good thoughts are not enough and that only good deeds count. The enlightened deeds that connect good thoughts and good deeds also include his book or translation of the popular-educational *manual Kmetam sa potrebu inu pomozh ili uka polne vesele, inushalostne zgodbe te vasy Midlhajm: sa mlade, inu stare ludy* (To the Peasants for their Needs and Help or Merry and Sad Stories, Full of Teachings: For Young and Old People) from 1789.



Figure 3. Marko Pohlin: *Kmetam sa potrebu inu pomozh* (To the Peasants for their Needs and Help) from 1789

In the period of older Slovene (children’s) literature, child transitioned from the subtitle of (literary) texts (e.g., 1550 *Katekizem: Anu kratku podvučene, s katerim vsaki človek more v nebu pryti* [Catechism: Anu briefly underlined, with which every man can come in heaven]; 1550 *Abecedarij: ena knjiga iz katere se mladi in preprosti Slovenci morejo lahko v kratkem času brati naučiti* [Alphabet: one book from which young and simple Slovenes can in to learn to read in a short time]; 1575 *Katekizem z dvema izlagama: Ena pridiga od starosti te prave in krive vere, kerstovane, mašovane, čestčena tih svetnikov, od cerkovnih in domači božjisluzbi, iz Sv. pisma, starih kronik in učencem zbrana skupaj. Ta majhna agenda, otroške molitve, skozi Primoža*

⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

⁷ Ibid., p. 216.

⁸ Ibid., p. 401.

Trubarja [Catechism with two expositions: One sermon from the age of this true and false faith, baptized, serviced, worshipping the saints, from Church and domestic sacred service, from the Bible, old chronicles, and put together for pupils. These small agendas, children's prayers, through Primož Trubar]) and in the process of creating the modern concept of a child and childhood gradually became the addressee, e.g. 1566 S. Krelj, *Otročja biblija* (Children's Bible); 1580 A. Bohorič, *Otročja tabla* (Children's Board).

Image of the Child in More Recent Slovenian (Children's) Literature

Slovene children's literature was created in the middle of the 19th century, during the period of translation, mainly from German religious literature, e.g. Christoph von Schmidt (1768-1854), where the notion of literature was instrumentalized as an educational tool.

The first turning point in the conception of the child and childhood was the establishment of the secular magazine *Vedež: časopis za šolsko mladost* (1848-50), with the editor Ivan Navratil and the publisher Rozalija Eger.

Druga prelomnica je ustanovitev literarne revije urednika Ivana Tomšiča idr. The second turning point was the establishment of the literary magazine *Vrtec: časopis s podobami za slovensko mladost* (1871-1845), edited by Ivan Tomšič and others.

The third turning point was the first publication of Fran Levstik's original poems entitled *Otročje igre v pesencah* (Children's Games in Songs), published under the pseudonym M. I. since 1880.⁹

In the time of more recent Slovene (children's) literature, children's literature was a distinct means of socialization or even instrumentalization (A.M.Slomšek), while a new sensibility in the conception of the child and childhood that developed later was indicated by Levstik and Stritar, and very clearly expressed and qualitatively upgraded by Župančič. The child and childhood not only become transparent, but also actually deserved special care and protection. Although children still worked, it was not comparable to the 19th century, when a child was only a small adult whose main concern was survival and food. Children played on occasion, but they only got the right to play in the works of Župančič, thus becoming a subject, which is also expressed at the level of language and by means of expressing affection. Continuation in the quality conception of the child is also upgraded by Srečko Kosovel, and there was a real boom after the Second World War.

Sunny image of a child In the time of older, and especially newer Slovene literature, two concepts of the child were formed, which Maria Nikolajeva in her monograph *From Mythic to Linear* (2000) calls utopia, carnival and collapse, which in Slovene can be renamed idealized, romanticized and problematized image of a child.

⁹ Fran Levstik published the following poems in the magazine *Vrtec* in the period from 1880 to 1886: Črno kravo, molzo našo; Voli ženem vitore; Najdihojca, palček naš; Božič odpisuje Najdihojci; Dete jezdi na olei; Vrana poje: korenjak!; Kadar se otrok uči držati žlico; Ležaj, ninaj, tut ujnač; Pedenj-človek in leket-brada, kako sta se metala; Kolina; Kadar pridejo vojaki; Malo tacih mož; Gosli; Kadar otrok lovi luno in zvezde; Cvilimož; Psiček laje: hov, hov, hov!; Otrok sedi očetu na kolenu; Rimska cesta; Kako je v Korotani.

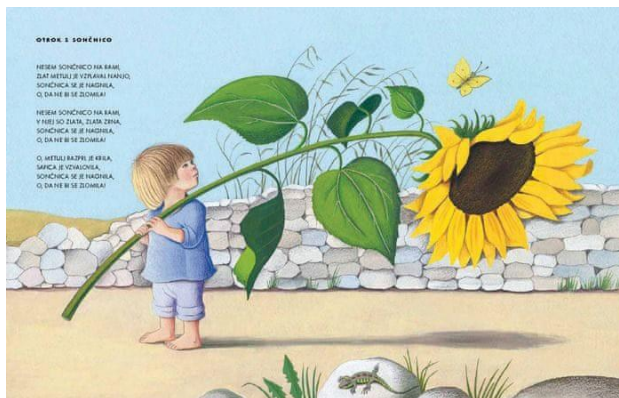


Figure 4. Otrok s sončnico (A Child With a Sunflower, 1983)

In the time of social realism between the two world wars, the image of a child in Srečko Kosovel's poems stands out, together with the central metaphor for a child – the sun.

Based on Jung's symbols for a child in the monograph *Four Archetypes*, it is one of the strongest symbols for a child and childhood – sun, gold, circle, blossom/flower, also expressed in the title *Otrok s sončnico* (*A Child with a Sunflower*) which became a metaphor of childhood in Slovenian children's literature.

Many of Kosovel's other poems bear the central symbol of childhood in the title (e.g., *Deček in sonce* [*The Boy and the Sun*], *Sonce ima krono* [*The Sun has a Crown*]).

Many Slovenian authors for children idealize the image of the child and childhood, which can also be called the 'sunny' concept. Among them, optimistic authors predominate, e.g. Oton Župančič, Srečko Kosovel, Tone Pavček, Anja Štefan.

Shadowy image of a child

The second group of authors includes those who, through the image of a child, problematize the irresponsible attitude of adults towards children, which could be metaphorically called the 'shadowy' image of a child. In the collection of short realistic stories *Med gorami* (*Among the Mountains*), especially in *Tržačan* (*Boy from Trieste*), Ivan Tavčar also presented a realistic image of a victimized child and carefree adults.

In a short realistic narrative prose, Tavčar depicts a typical childhood in the 19th century – the dying and death of an adopted child. Not only that, but also the cruel treatment and murder of children. Tavčar shows not only the cruel treatment of adoptive parents towards the adopted child, but also the neglect of their own child.

“Even when Matevž still loved the child, even then we felt very sorry for this child. And we said they were going to kill him. And he indeed killed him!”¹⁰

¹⁰ Tavčar, Ivan (1947). *Med gorami: slike iz Loškega pogorja*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, p. 68.

Between the two wars Fran Milčinski sensitively portrayed children without childhood, children who were guilty without actual guilt, in his collection *Ptički brez gnezda* (*Birds without a Nest*, 1917). It is also about the concept or archetypes of children, as presented by C.G. Jung in his book *Four Archetypes* (2003), namely: an orphan child, an innocent child, a divine child, and a wounded child. The image of an orphan and a wounded child are typical images for the shadowy image of childhood.

“Nanča and Jerajeva were standing at the top of the stairs, squeezed into a corner. Jerajeva asked, ‘Does father really think his son Anton is still alive?’”

“Sometimes. – But sometimes his completely well. He loved him too much. More than us girls. He did love us before, as long as mom lived. But she died when we were so tiny. Our stepmother didn’t like us; we were beaten more often than we were fed. Here on my forehead, there is still a scar when she hit me with a rake. I lay in a swoon for three days; the light was already held over me. Yes! And yet I light her candles on the day of the faithful souls.”¹¹

The realistic or shadowy image of a child was also presented by France Bevk in the short realistic story *Pestrna* (*The Babysitter*), in which he portrayed a five-year-old girl as a babysitter.

Image of a child in contemporary Slovene children’s literature

The sunny (idealization) and shadowy (problematization) image of childhood is characteristic of the modern classic Tone Pavček, who created in the time of modernism (1950-1980) and modernity (1980-2010).

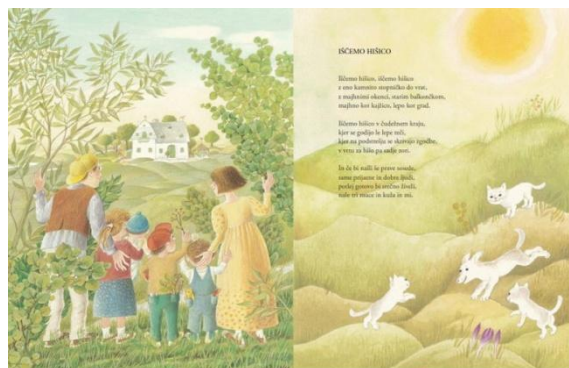


Figure 5. Anja Štefan: *Iščemo hišico* (*We are Searching for a Little House*), 2005

His *Majnice: fulaste pesmi* (*Songs of May: Songs for the Young*, 1995) became folk tunes, especially the song from the Drobčinica (*The Crumb*) cycle:

“You are in this world to watch the sun. You are in the world to follow the sun. You are in the world to be the sun yourself And to drive away shadows from the world.”¹²

In his sonnet *Kronanje* (*The Crowning*), Boris A. Novak presented the sunny image of a child and childhood: “A child builds the whole world out of living clay. For him, the door is not

¹¹ Milčinski, *Ptički brez gnezda*, http://sl.wikisource.org/wiki/Ptički_brez_gnezda (accessed 2 August 2012)

¹² Pavček, *Majnice: fulaste pesmi*, p.39.

just the birth of space – It is the birthplace itself; the child must Open it and become a prince of breadth.”¹³

Anja Štefan is a contemporary Slovenian youth author who intertextually connects to the tradition of sunny childhood through Oton Župančič, Srečko Kosovel, Tone Pavček, Boris A. Novak and others. The author expresses a positive attitude towards children, childhood, acceptance of children, which is expressed in the author’s poems, also in the poem *Iščemo hišico* (*We are searching for a Little House*).

The shadowy image of a child in the period of contemporary Slovenian children’s literature (1980–2010) is characteristic of the poet Saša Vegri (1934–2010) in the poem *Kdaj in zakaj* (*When and Why*).



Figure 6. Saša Vegri: Kaj se zgodi, če kdo ne spi (What Happens if Somebody is not Sleeping), 1993

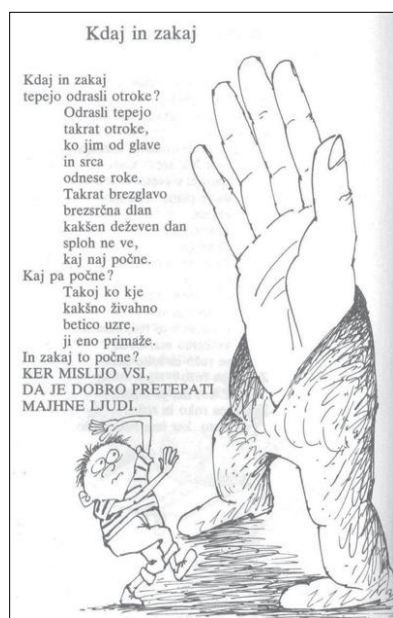


Figure 7. Svet iz besed 8 (The World Made of Words 8), 2003

¹³ Novak, Boris A. (1984). Kronanje. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, p.120.

1.1 Image of a Wounded and Subversive Child in *Svetlana's Fairy Tales*

Svetlana Makarovič (1939) was the most representative Slovene author for children and youth in the period from 1980 to 2010. She started publishing for young people after 1970, and wrote the majority of her works during the period of contemporary Slovene (children's) literature. Her short contemporary fairy tales for children and young people present problematic topics (illness, cannibalism, theft, drunkenness, politics, eating disorders, religion, suicide, death, sexuality, striptease, etc.). In the foreground is the main literary figure, most often an orphan (without parents) (*Nočna lučka* [*Night Light*]) in a violent family (*Netopir Kazimir* [*The Bat Kazimir*]), in a surrogate family (*Netopir Kazimir*), with nonparental parents (*Zajček gre na luno* [*The Little Rabbit goes to the Moon*]), etc.). It is important that the author or the narrator is always on the side of children who are guilt-free, curious, mischievous, erroneous, but kindhearted, socially and emotionally sensitive.

Interesting is a short modern fairy tale entitled *Netopir Kazimir* (*The Bat Kazimir*), featuring a curious bat in a primary or biological family in which he is physically and mentally abused, so he goes to a secondary or non-biological family of mice, where he continues to search for his identity. In the third phase, Bat Kazimir accepts an identity, transitioning from the initial phase where he was "neither a bird nor a mouse," to the final phase where "bats are mouse angels," based on an analogy with human angels in frescoes.

"He asked, for example, if a fly was still alive after you ate it, he asked how the moon felt if it was hidden by a cloud, and what it would be like if trees grew with their roots up and bats slept with their heads up – and such nonsense. However, he began to annoy everyone unbearably with the question of whether bats are winged mice or mouse birds."¹⁴

Undoubtedly, this is an author who has won a place in Slovene children's literature with a wounded, different child, a child with special needs, a talented individual (e.g., *Veveriček posebne sorte* [*The Little Squirrel of a Special Kind*]).

She applied the biblical parable of the left and the right hand to the political situation in the fairy tale *Desna in leva roka* (*The Right and the Left Hand*), where she treated the literal and metaphorical dialogue between the right and left hand with humorous distance:

"The right hand looked to the left and said, 'I'm waiting.' 'For what?' the left played ignorant. 'What do you think? That you cut yourself too, right? We're sisters. Cut yourself so that we will be the same.'"¹⁵

Svetlana Makarovič is known in the Slovenian public as extremely critical of the state, politics, religion and all ideologies, as illustrated in the following statements addressed to the young addressee: "She remembered that tomorrow is a holiday, she took the flag from the shelf and hung it through the attic window. It was already getting dark, so she didn't notice the small yellow stain that the cat had made there."¹⁶

¹⁴ Makarovič, Svetlana (2008a). *Svetlanine pravljice = Svetlana's Fairy Tales*. Dob pri Domžalah: Miš., p. 84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65

With the frequent use of children's curses, the author stylistically marks the child's subversive attitude towards the world, either positively or negatively (o, jebelacesta [Hell's bells!]; tristo praprotnih semen [300 fern seeds], tristo sapramišjih vragov [300 Sapramouse devils]; tristo darvinov [300 Darwins], etc.). Violence against children is a common theme in the texts of Svetlana Makarovič. It is shown in the beating of children or personified animals (e.g., *Netopir Kazimir*) and physical and psychological violence in general. The tale *O strašni lisički* (*Of the Terrible Fox*) presents the punishment of children with food, in *Vila Malina* (*The Raspberry Villa*) the author protests against hunting (hunters Cuzej and Guzej); she criticizes Darwin (*Kako se je opica spremenila* [*How the Monkey has Changed*]) and adults. As a sign of respect for children, the author stopped writing for adults with her latest poetry collection *Samost* (*Solitude*, 2008) and since then she writes only for children and youth. Her literary characters are characterized by loneliness and searching, which is also vividly presented on the cover illustrated by Alenka Sottler.



Figure 8. Svetlana Makarovič: *Svetlanine pravljice* (Svetlana's Fairy Tales), 2008

Special attention should be paid to the latest ballad fairy tales, with which the author creates a new fairy tale genre. Due to the tragic endings, her latest fairy tales are based on a mythical tradition (*Rdeče jabolko* [*Red Apple*], 2008; *Katalena*, 2009; *Saga o Hallgerd* [*The Saga of Hallgerd*], 2010; *Berto, zajec Langobardski* [*Berto, the Langobard Rabbit*], 2011; *Balada o Sneguročki* [*Ballad of the Snow Maiden*], 2012, etc.). In the last fairy tale, *Balada o Sneguročki*, which was performed on 8 March 2012 at the Mini Theater, the author presented a prose-poetic text which is an etiological or explanatory tale that intertextually connects and at the same time associatively distances itself from Grimm's *Snow White* (1812). The author articulated the motive of rape (by soldiers) and the main literary figure is the child who is born while the mother dies in childbirth. The text intertextually relates to the ancient motif and rape of Europe, Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, where the author subtly presented the image of an orphan, the archetype of a wounded child, a girl incapable of love. When she falls in love, snowdrops, also named 'sneguročke,' grow out of her in a mythical way.

1.2 Children's literature as self-censorship or a space of freedom

After the Second World War, children's literature emerged as self-censorship of adults, who projected and placed their critique of society in the world of young adults, e.g.:

L. Suhodolčan: *Narobe stvari v mestu Petpedi* (*Wrong Things in the City of Petpedi*, 1967), in which a traveling theater group, which is forbidden to sing, play and perform in the city, performs. M. Dekleva: *Magnetni deček* (*The Magnetic Boy*, 1985), in which we encounter a critique of the concept of directed education, in the parable of the "directed teacher," but instead of criticizing superiors, they criticized women. E. Flisar: *Alica v nori deželi: ekološka farsa* (*Alice in Crazyland: Ecological Farse*, 2008, 2010), which shows the dystopia and critique of the country in which they have a ministry for "curdled brain." The text is intended for young people but the context is directed to adult addressees.

The question arises as to why some authors do not treat a particular political topic in adult literature, but rather as children's or youth literature. A characteristic of self-censorship is that many authors dedicate the text to young readers and the context to adult readers. But is it also possible that children's literature is a space of freedom and hope that authors have lost in the field of adult literature?

1.3 Childish adults and adult children

Adult identity stories are a feature of postmodernism¹⁷ also in Slovenia,¹⁸ e.g. a short contemporary tale by Darinka Kobal, based on the personal story of the author which forms the narrative context of the text (factual information about an almost tragic event). Darinka Kobal's fairy tale *Radovedni medvedek – zgodba o medvedku, deklici in trenutku, ki je pravljico spremenil v resnično zgodbo* (*The Curious Bear – The Story of a Bear, a Girl and the Moment that Turned a Fairy Tale into a True Story*, 1998) has a misleading subtitle because the opposite is true, the author described the true story in the form of a short modern fairy tale. It is not a quality literary text, but a literalized traumatic experience. Based on numerous presentations of the picture book in kindergartens, the author expects children to understand the identity story; therefore the picture book in question is just another example of psychotherapeutic writing and underestimation of a child addressee.

1.4 Children's and Childish Literature

After 1980, and especially post-1990, there is a paradox that children's literature, which is otherwise an umbrella term for children's and youth literature, became adult psychotherapy, so it is possible to distinguish between children's and childish youth literature (e.g., Milica Šturm, *O deklici, ki ni mogla zaspati* [*About a Girl Who Could Not Fall Asleep*], 2006).

¹⁷ Ule, Mirjana (2000). *Sodobne identitete – V vrtincu diskurzov*. Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, pp. 257-260.

¹⁸ Internationally, the most promoted was the literary low-quality short modern fairy tale written by Madonna and entitled *English Flowers* (2003) which is an example of market success.

1.5 Identity Stories of Adults as Picture Books for Children

Slovenia has also joined the global trend in the postmodern period (since 1980) with the identity stories of adults or celebrities who during their careers feel the need to write their identity story for children. Slovenian public figures also contributed to this global trend¹⁹ (B. Obama, *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to my Daughters*, 2010; B. Dylan, *Man Gave Names to All the Animals*, 2010; Madonna, *The English Roses*, 2003, etc.), e.g. musician Tomaž Domicelj with *Basen o lenem komarčku* (*The Fable of the Lazy Mosquito*, 2010) and *Pravljica o pridni voluharci* (*The Fairy Tale of the Diligent Vole*, 2011).

1.6 Sensitization and Desensitization

Literature as a mirror of society, especially children's literature which is an umbrella term for children's (from birth to the age of 12) and youth (between the ages of 12 to 18), is on a declarative level the field of sensitization of children to literary and aesthetic experiences: "They accept artistic/literary texts by Slovenian and other authors thoughtfully and critically. They recognize reading as a pleasure, a pleasant experience, and an intellectual challenge. They enter into a dialogue with a literary text and a dialogue about a literary text. Reading gives them the opportunity to form a personal and national identity, to broaden their horizons and get to know their own culture and the culture of others in the European cultural space and beyond. By getting to know another culture and common cultural values, they build a tolerant attitude towards others and those who are different. In this way, they develop their social, cultural and intercultural capacity."²⁰

1.7 Systemic Violence against Children

As a clear example of systemic violence against children, I would mention three cases that are beyond literature and have also resonated strongly with the public. The first is from 2011, when the Subject Commission for Slovene at the National Education Institute Slovenia proposed two texts for the Cankar Award competition for 8th and 9th grades, which deal with problem topics. The first text is Andrej Predin's debut *Na zeleno vejo* (*To be in the Black*, 2007) and the second is a collection of six realistic short stories by Andrej Makuc, titled *Oči* (*Eyes*, 2001/2011). Both texts are more suitable for high school addressees or student population. The text of *Oči* is a sequence of six closed stories (*Pasje* [*Dog's*], *Konjske* [*Horse's*], *Mišje* [*Mouse's*], *Žabje* [*Frog's*], *Moje* [*My*], *Jočeve* [*Joc's*]), combined into a basic plot on the topic of animal torture. The text refers to the so-called affair of the high school students from Tržič who were tried in court some years ago (1999, 2000) for torturing cats. The text of *Oči* includes motif-thematic reminiscences of this event. The author's text deals with the motif of the torture of animals which has been discussed several times in both adult (Ivan Cankar) and children's literature (S. Makarovič) and is written

¹⁹ Bill Cosby, Kylie Minogue, Maria Shriver, Will Smith, John Travolta.

²⁰ Poznanovič, Mojca et. al. (2018). Učni načrt. Program osnovna šola. Slovenščina. (accessed 20 August 2018.), p.6.

from the point of view of sympathy for children and victims, i.e. animals, that do not deserve such cruel treatment. In the literary text *Oči*, the question of the narrator's perspective is open, as he does not show emotional empathy for the torture of animals, e.g. torturing and killing a pregnant female dog, subtly portrayed by S. Jesenjin in his poem, and which evokes compassion for all living things. The dominant motives in the text are death, horror of death, dead father, execution, murder, dying, etc. The four protagonists are selling the horse Pub, whom they killed in a horrible and cruel way, which is suggestively and nonempathically illustrated:

“The resentment that the four of them fueled with Puban has been somewhat forgotten. ‘I’ll have five kilos for goulash, I’ll tell you about the salami when they’re ready,’ I’ve old man said to her, who was already selling Puban when the latter was still alive. ‘What if everything is sold by then?’”²¹

“Kill it. It disgusts me.”²²

“The angry [mouse’s] hair clung to the now even smaller body which stood on its paws in a shiver. The tail dragged after it in a disgusting way”²³
as it began to stumble around the round corridor all weary.”²⁴

In the present text, the narrator expresses Sartrean disgust (the color of the wound, with disgust, immovable disgust, disgusting, with stud, her tail was disgustingly dragged, etc.) and insensitivity towards the living beings through the attitude of the four protagonists to the victims of torture, “... so therefore, with a thickened, artfully intertwined handle, he can accurately hit both eyes alternately. And he always strikes when the horse’s eyelid is wide open. And Puba is crying.”²⁵ Makuc’s four juvenile protagonists or antiheroes express disgust and absurdity on a verbal level, and on the level of actions (sadistic torture of animals) one can feel redundancy, emptiness, the search for meaning in bizarreness, sadism, shocking. It is a distinctly problem literature intended for adults, where antiheroes conceive of freedom as dehumanization. The text offers no resistance to the disgust and absurdity that leads to the deliberate killings of six innocent animals, nor does it offer a new morality or a new meaning in the world of the four minors that only dehumanization can give meaning to. It is a nihilistic world of enjoying the torture, dying and killing of animals. The protagonists are set up as superhumans who are allowed everything in the name of their perverted pleasure.

The narrator also has no distance toward the actions of young people who take it out on the weak, helpless and vulnerable, he does not rise above the situation, but rather insists on the absurd and the heroes, or better put antiheroes, do not retain their humanity, but their absence. They do not show empathy for the dying and do not respect the living, whether human or animal. In the

²¹ Makuc, Andrej (2011). *Oči*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva Založba, d.o.o., p.42

²² *Ibid.*, p.73. Underlined by M.M. Blažič.

²³ Underlined by M.M. Blažič

²⁴ Makuc, *Oči*, p.73

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.39

present collection of short horror stories, human dignity is confronted with point zero in a humanistic sense.²⁶

The Cankar Award Competition Commission expects young readers, aged 13 to 14, that the work on anti-heroes who sadistically torture and kill animals will arouse empathy *per negationem*, which is illogical to young readers who thus feel resistance to the way the topic is discussed based on reading the literary text, because the book is written from the point of view of a sadist. The language of the text is also an instrument of violence. How can reading this book be “a pleasure, a pleasant experience and an intellectual challenge,” which are the goals of the curriculum for Slovene.²⁷

Another example is the long-running public debate about the author (pointed out by Miran Hladnik in 1980²⁸), who was convicted in 2000 for sexual abuse of children, who was allowed to come to contact with children, and against whom, even during the updating of the national document – the *Curriculum for Slovene* (2005-2010) which became mandatory in 2011, numerous pre-trial and criminal proceedings related to the sexual inviolability of minors were conducted. This is the infamous case of Vitan Mal and the position of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports which gives legitimacy to pornographic literature with the participation of children and for children, enables and finances direct contacts of a convicted author with minor children (more than 500 literary workshops) and does not verify data with an impartial interdisciplinary commission or does not use the possibility of a protective measure and compliance with Article 56 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia which talks about the rights of children and proposing a legally convicted person for pedophilia.²⁹

The question arises as to whether the author, with texts for which he himself states that are written with the intention of “delighting pedophiles,” is suitable for reading by and direct contact with children in a national document and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport: “With my Ganymede, I wanted to please pedophiles, as well as all those who are willing to admit that in addition to goodness, evil also hides in ourselves. The protagonist of the story keepstelling himself that he feels a platonic love for boys; but when he is offered the opportunity to turn a dream into reality and tear off an unripe fruit with his own hand, he feels its sour taste. This does not bring him the satisfaction he had hoped for. He realizes that by intruding into the boy’s body he does not achieve complete union. Beauty will really only be his and eternal if he consumes the young victim. By murder, unfortunately, he destroys the beauty, that is, the meaning of his life.”³⁰ The third example is whether the texts and the author with the pseudonym Anej Sam with a modern concept called *Onežimo svet (Let’s Make the World Gentler)* are suitable for promotion and direct contacts with preschool and primary school children with the Eco-reading Badge project. These are not isolated cases, but they are three outstanding cases beyond

²⁶ Blažič, Milena Mileva (2011). Problematičen izbor knjig: Cankarjevo priznanje 2011/12. Vzgoja, issue 13, pp. 10-15, p.12.

²⁷ Poznanovič, Učni načrt, p.6

²⁸ Hladnik, Miran (1980). Mali junak za književnost za otroke (Mali veliki junak). Delo, 24.4.1980, p.14.

²⁹ Blažič, Milena Mileva (2012). Besedila s pornografsko udeležbo otrok in za otroke v učnih načrtih za slovenščino: študij primera Vitan Mal. Vzgoja, issue 14, pp. 28-31.

³⁰ Knabino, Ino (Mal, Vitan) (1994). Ganimed in drugi; Mortimer. Sodobnost, issue 42, p.668.

literature which occur due to shortcomings in the literary, school and social system and represent a blatant example of violation of children's rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other acts.

Discussion

Sensitization (nostalgic adults, infantilization of adults) and desensitization (child adultization) – in Slovenian children's literature there is a trend of writing nostalgic adults who publish their identity stories and the prevailing notion of utopia in short modern fairy tales in a picture book edition, e.g. Bina Štampe Žmavc in *Popravljalnica igrač (Toy Repair Shop, 1990)*, where growing up means dying and where adults are understood as “masters of creating problems.”

Conclusion

The image of a child in older, more recent and contemporary Slovene (children's) literature in the millennial tradition shows that there is a dichotomy between the declarative idealized image and the actual realistic image of the child and childhood. On the one hand, childhood is portrayed as a time of innocence, purity and paradise – on the other hand, we have realistic images that correspond to the meaning of the word children in etymological dictionaries, in which the child is portrayed mostly as a worker, slave or metaphorically as a side shoot in millet.

Literature in the time of older and more recent Slovene (children's) literature, in accordance with this notion of the child (as a lower, ignorant being), was used as a means of socialization or instrumentalization (Anton Martin Slomšek).

Fran Levstik and Josip Stritar indicate a new sensibility in the conception of the child and childhood which is very clearly expressed and qualitatively upgraded by Oton Župančič. The child and childhood become worthy of special care and protection, not only transparently, but also in reality. The child – although he/she works, but not like in the 19th century, when the child was only a small adult, whose main concern was survival and food – gets the right to play in the works of Župančič.

The child becomes a subject, which is also expressed at the level of language and by means of expressing affection. Continuation in the quality conception of the child is upgraded by Srečko Kosovel, and there was a real flowering after the Second World War.

In the period of contemporary Slovene (children's) literature, the motif of food shortage turns into its contradiction – the child begins to overeat, perhaps due to the emotional emptiness at home. After World War II, the parents move from the village to the city and work longer hours, while the child lives in an apartment block. A child who warmed himself behind a stove in a room in the 19th century gets a room all to his own, therefore he becomes frightened. After 1950, there were many new images of children in children's literature, but after 1990 the roles change (adult children and childish adults), we witness the transition from the archetype through the stereo- type to new stereotypes or new images of a child who is no longer a side shoot of millet, but a “baby universe.”

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