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METHODOLOGY FOR INTERPRETATION OF SLOVENE CHILDREN LITERATURE

This article presents the most important theoretical studies on Slovene children's literature. Taking into account the diversity of issues concerning literary history, literary theory, reception-issues, and the didactics of literature, an overview of treatments of children's literature based on literary genres is most logical. There are many essays and commentaries on genres of poetry (e.g., by Niko Grafenauer, Igor Saksida, and Alenka Glazer). Narrative prose appears to be the most developed and diverse of the literary genres in this regard (e.g., Marjana Kobe, Igor Saksida, Metka Kordigel-Aberšek, Dragica Haramija, Milena Mileva Blažič), while children's drama is least discussed, including in book form (e.g., Igor Saksida, Vida Medved Udovič).

Key words : Slovene children's literature, historical development of children's literature, research methods in children's literature

1 Introduction

As stated in the theoretical study of children's literature *Pogledi na mladinsko književnost* (Views on children's literature), by Marjana KOBÉ (1987:7–26), Slovene and wider European children's literature gradually transitioned from a literary to pedagogic science only in the late 1950s. The author cites fundamental European and Slovene scholarly books on the theory, history, and reception of children's literature. She also notes the formation of specialized scholarly periodical publishing in this area, such as the journal *Otrok in knjiga* (Children and books), which since 1972 has been the main “journal for issues in children's literature, literary education, and book-related media,” and she also highlights different research directions and methods. The methodology for researching children's literature is determined not only by the reader and all the complexity of the genre's double addressee—quality children's literature is intended not only for young readers (children and youth), but for adult readers as well—although this in fact is the starting point that enables critical and interpretative reading, in addition to establishing the possibility of (children's) subjective, experiential reception of a text. As a rule, study of children's literature at the university undergraduate level encompasses all three aspects of research in the area: literary history, literary theory, and reception. It requires students and future literature teachers to sharpen criteria for recognizing quality children's literature in all three literary genres (i.e., poetry, narrative prose, and drama) and visual-verbal creations like picture books. Reading texts, studying literature, and independently interpreting children's literature enable students to grasp the potential for subjective,



yet well-founded and valid comprehension and assessment of texts. This core program of literary studies at the same time provides students a foundation in literary-didactic constructs of content and stylistic elements. Without exhaustive knowledge of classic and contemporary texts—short and seemingly simple, as well as extensive and hard to comprehend—it is impossible to expect future teachers and educators to manage the wide array of texts that appear under the label of children’s literature and often require critical qualitative assessment. Evaluation of children’s literature, mainly as ongoing release tracking, takes place at the Ljubljana City Library (Mestna knjižnica) is Pionirska Center za mladinsko književnost (Center for Children’s Literature), which publishes an annual “Priročnik za branje kakovostnih mladinskih knjig” (A handbook for reading quality children’s literature; e.g., *Algoritem arene*, 2012). Essays, basic information, and critiques in the field are covered in the journal *Otrok in knjiga*. The Slovene section of International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is responsible for promoting Slovene children’s literature worldwide (e.g., nominations for the Andersen Prize, nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Prize, participation in international conferences); The Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS is responsible for promoting quality leisure time reading for children and youth. In Slovenia, four prizes and two recognitions are awarded in the field of children’s literature: the Levstik Prize, the Večernica, Desetnica, the Kristina Brenkova Prize for best original Slovene picture book, the Moja najljubša knjiga (My Favorite book) recognition, and the Zlata hruška recognition.

2 Children’s literature and literary studies

When taking into account historical, systemic, receptive, and literary-didactic issues, a review of treatments by genre is most logical. That is because poetry differs from narrative prose and drama by the large number of essays and commentaries that derive from “adult” interpretations of children’s poems. Narrative prose is the most versatile and diverse of the literary genres (in terms of the criteria of content and text length and texts’ distinctive perspectives). In essays about drama for children, questions of textual interpretation are commonly related to the theory of theater or radio play and with research on staging potential.

3 A review of studies about Slovene children’s literature

3.1 Slovene children’s poetry

The history of Slovene children’s poetry is methodologically important, even though as a rule it is part of historical surveys of children’s literature, including all three genres, as a whole. Among older articles, it is worth mentioning the main historical and survey studies that were published in the journal *Otrok in knjiga*. Marjia Jamar Legat (1976) wrote about the beginning of Slovene children’s literature. Alenka Glazer (1979) outlined the development of children’s literature and devoted special attention to the qualitative features of older and contemporary children’s po-



etry, which are mainly expressed in linguistic play and an authentically childlike apprehension of the world. Zlata Kumer (1986) listed types of children's folk poetry with respect to style and content or text function (e.g., wordplay, nonsense dialogic poems, onomatopoeia, and farcical poems).

The predominant importance of this classification is the fact that both older (e.g., by O. Župančič) and contemporary (e.g., by B. A. Novak and A. Rozman Roza) children's poetry have similar stylistic and content patterns. Among book-length historical studies, a comprehensive history by Zlata Pirnat Cognard (1980) presents Slovene children's poetry in relation to the literatures of other nations. This survey covers mostly F. Levstik, O. Župančič, S. Kosovel, and N. Grafenauer's poetry (i.e., the collection *Pedenjped*). A detailed systemization of Slovene children's poetry is found in a section of *Slovenska književnost III* (Slovene literature III; I. SAKSIDA 2001), a literary history in which children's literature "is for the first time set within a scholarly relevant treatment of the whole of Slovene literature" (KOBE 2001: 90). Post-WW II Slovene children's poetry is divided into three groups with respect to its dominant content and stylistic characteristics: activist poetry, traditional poetry, and aesthetically innovative poetry. Typically, activist poetry is obtrusively educational and in places pedantically conforms to ideological tendentiousness and "exemplariness" of poetic characters. Conventional poetry is returning to the tradition of Župančič and Kosovel's poetry. Aesthetically innovative poetry originates from poets restoration of children's playful, amazed worldview. The innovative group of post-war poems has two distinct sub-groups: while the melding of earlier conventional and later more expressly nonsensical and fantastic poetic worlds is typical for the first post-war wave of children's poets (e.g., T. Pavček and K. Kovič), poetic language play in the real sense developed with modernist poetry, which appeared in children's poetry in mid-1970s and peaked in the 1980s.

Playfulness in modernist children's poetry is not only a fundamental theme in texts, but primarily a way of depicting an imaginary poetic reality, one marked by the poem's intentional and complete break from an explicit and obviously one-dimensional topic, violation of linguistic conventions (e.g., orthography and logic), and transitioning from poeticization of the human (child) into the world of sound and art, objects and concepts (mainly in poetry by D. Zajc, N. Grafenauer, M. Dekleva, and B. A. Novak). This historical survey also simultaneously questions "the end of modernism" and new intellectual and stylistic structures in post-modernist children's poetry. At least three possibilities are indicated (see SAKSIDA 2005: 146–51)—namely, restoring a (symbolic) sense of the mysteriousness of time and space, which are not subordinate to playful modernist childlike subjectivity, but define a person (e.g., B. Štampe Žmavc's "Nebeške kočije" [Heavenly carriages]); intertextual "dialogue" between a poem and an older textual source (e.g., Dekleva's "Alica v računalniku" [Alice inside the computer] and the farcical model in poems by A. Rozman Roza), or the return of realist topics (e.g., rebelliousness, love, everyday adventures) in poetry (e.g., poems by B. Gregorič and P. Svetina).

One of the most important and, in terms of scope and detail, most comprehensive works is without a doubt the historic and comparative study of older Slovene children's literature entitled *Vedež in začetki posvetnega mladinskega slovstva na Slov-*



enskem 1778–1850 (An oracle and the beginning of a secular children's literature in the Slovene territories 1778-1850) by Marjana Kobe. The author explores the beginnings of secular literature for children and links it to the acceptance of the German Reformation moralistic literature model "from the eighteenth century and later its Biedermeier, de-secularized version" (Kobe 2004: 238). She focuses on the content characteristics of literary, semi-literary, and realistic publications in the first Slovene children's magazine, *Vedež* (The oracle, 1848–50), connecting them with philanthropic educational doctrine. Using these characteristics, she derives some central features of the magazine—for example, variety of reading materials, secularization of writers (the prominence of teacher as author), texts' main functional and thematic categories (e.g., moral and religious education, practical lessons), and children characters as a reflection of the magazine's purpose. The chapter dedicated to the discussion of older children's poetry analyzes two main variants of children's poetry from the German Reformation—that is, the texts of C.F. Weisse and C.A. Overbeck—with respect to topic (children's goodness, obedience, friendship, clear conscious, diligence, mercy, and the contrasting transgressions), style (poem's "childlike tone"; Overbeck's poetry highlights a more playful and idyllic kind of textual reality), and the image of a child as protagonist (as a role model or a warning). Kobe illustrates the transition of both types of text into Slovene poetry based on an analysis of the oldest publications that preceded *Vedež*: the Weisse poetic variant appears in J. Debevec's primer ("*Nov popravleni plateltaf*" [New corrected plateltaf], 1794).

The Overbeck variant is found in translations by J. N. Primc ("*Nemško-slovenske branja*" [German-Slovene readings] 1813), Weisse's is more prominent in V. Stanič's book of poems ("*Pesme za kmete ino mlade ljudi*" [Poems for farmers and young people] 1822). Marjana Kobe's scholarly work is important not only because of the extraordinarily comprehensive data and extensive secondary literature, but because her findings confirm a typological and evaluative interpretation of children's poetry based in judgments about texts' literary quality as a function of how the author conveys the experience of childhood. Besides direct authorial dialog with the child (as inherent reader or "memory," the creative impulse) in both the older and later, contemporary poetry, a mien is noticeable that either tries to nurture the young reader (the text's moralistic function) or to idealize the world of childhood ("fawning" content and stylistic features, the frequent use of diminutives, and generally unpretentious discussion of childlike playfulness and natural joyfulness) (Borut Stražar 1972, SAKSIDA 1994: 83–122). In the light of contemporary literary and literary-didactic inquiries and dilemmas, the finding that already in the oldest children's books, "examples of poetic compositions for young readers [...] are combined with selections from poetry for adults" is very interesting (Kobe 2004: 70). This means that in older as well as in contemporary children's poetry with multivalent content, it is really not possible clearly to distinguish literature for young and adult readers. This should be by all means taken into account when planning literature education in primary schools.

The connection between youth and adult poetry is also demonstrated in essays that highlight the comprehensiveness of individual authors' poetic opuses. Among the older discussions of this kind is an interesting interpretation of Župančič's poem



“Kanglica” (A watering can), which begins by placing children’s poems within the collection *Čaša opojnosti* (A cup of potion), and then emphasizes the author’s “evaluation of poetry as a whole, where poems for ‘young adults’ (or ‘children’) are an integral part of poetry in general” (GLAZER 1976: 114). This methodological basis is evident in interpretations of entire opuses that target the reciprocal connections between and interlacing of children’s and adult poetry, and the image of the child in both subgroups in poetry by S. Kosovel, L. Novy, and N. Grafenauer (SAKSIDA 1994: 123–211), and by Pavček (SAKSIDA 2005: 34–52), or their genre and linguistic and stylistic cast—for example, in poems by K. Kovič and J. Snoj (SAKSIDA 2005: 53–91). These kinds of interpretative insights into poetry are not entirely literary historical; they also contain explanations of content and stylistic elements in (children’s) poetry, which makes them like some (although rare) children’s poetry research topics (e.g., Barbara Hanuš 1985), including linguistic innovation (e.g., Igor Saksida 2008).

A number of interpretative texts, at times difficult to sort out, evaluate the qualities and effects of poetic language. These are explicative essays and extended critical commentaries on poetry. Niko Grafenauer and Taras Kermauner are two important authors of essays about children’s poetry. Grafenauer’s (1975) essay, “*Igra v pesništvu za otroke*” (Play in poetry for children) is still one of the most significant contributions to the understanding of linguistic procedures in quality children’s poetry and in poetry in general. The author describes the development of children’s poetry from its beginnings, with Levstik, up to the present. He identifies (linguistic) play (or linguistic interpretation) as the determining factor in quality (aesthetically mature) poetry, which is the equal of literature for adults. This kind of poetry also enables a “grown up” experiential and interpretive experience, which Grafenauer (2010) demonstrated in an essay interpreting of S. Vegri’s poetry (about the connections between her children’s and adult poetry, and about poetic messaging today). Taras Kermavner considers children’s poetry in his interpretation of the anthology *Sončnica na rami* (A sunflower on the shoulder) and poetry collections by N. Grafenauer and J. Snoj. In the first essay, he critically evaluates the quality of children’s poetry in a way typical of his cotemporaneous writing about adult literature, showing the fundamental disjuncture between culture and nature by use of examples from children’s poetry—between rational (“Neolithic”) logic and primal childlike communication with the world. Poetry makes it possible to “escape from Neolithic logic, and hence from pedagogy, morality, ideology, rationalism, and violence of all kinds, but also from principals of class in society that are grounded in the production and exchange of goods, science, and systems” (KERMAUNER 1977: 23). This understanding, according to which poetry furnishes a different worldview, is especially noticeable in more contemporary thinking about myth in literature (and in poetry; SAKSIDA 2005: 125–33). It finds poetic expression foremost in post-modernistic poetry’s “mystery and wonder” (and in prose, in the authentic fairytale).

Literary critics of children’s poetry reveal the nature of poetic language in experiencing and textualizing reality for the adult reader. Still today, the most important among them are Denis Poniž’s complex critical texts, in which the author highlights the significance and qualities of some fundamental works by contemporary chil-



dren's authors. He isolates the fundamental stylistic moves in writing poetry (e.g., word transformation, unusual use of words, elements of examples), and ponders the role of the reader's imagination in "supplementing" nonsensical poetic patterns, the diversity of atmosphere, and the universal appeal of quality poetry. These kinds of essays and critiques are unique "reading models," since they reveal to readers new and deeper possibilities of comprehending children's poetry.

Similarly, commentaries that contain more than just bio- and bibliographical information about the author supply detailed interpretations of complex texts' themes to the competent reader. Of special note are such commentaries by Niko Grafenauer's "Roža mogota" (A potent flower), in a selection of Zajc's poems entitled *Ta roža je zate* (This flower is for you, 1981), and "Kraški pomol v slovenskem pesništvu za otroke" (A Karst pier in Slovene children's poetry) in a selection of Košuta's poetry entitled *Križada* (2006), as well as some contemporary commentators, such as Peter Svetina's "Zgovornost molka" (The garrulousness of silence) in Zajc's *Hiša sanja* (2004), and Igor Saksida's "Kamenčki v naročju besed in podob" (Stones in the lap of words and images) in Vergi's *Naročje kamenčkov* (A lap of stones, 2009).

A novelty in interpreting children's poetry is the literary-didactic approach to complete collections of poetry or selections of poems, such as on O. Župančič's *Mehurčki* (Bubbles 2009) and B. A. Novak's *Vserimje* (The Universe, 2012), which appeared in the popular series *Knjiga pred nosom* (Mladinska knjiga 2008–). In addition to the commentaries' information about the author, there are reading exercises for different levels and creative challenges for young readers, which are intended to motivate reading and by no means to be authoritative "reading assignments." In this manner, literary studies is best connected with the didactics of literature, or ways of developing or mentoring the reading abilities of young and adult readers.

3.2 Slovene Children's Prose

Historical views of children's prose are found in older volumes of the journal *Otrok in Knjiga*. Josip Ribičič (1981) which was published in the magazine *Popotnik* (1938–39), and Gustav Šilih (1983) which published in *Nova obzorja* (1959), highlight the artistic aspect as an important condition for quality children's literature. Ribičič reports on important authors of children's and adult literature before and immediately after WW I. Šilih studies children's literature by its age categories and introduces a genre-based standard for the suitability of literary works for young readers. Alenka Glazer (1979) lists the most important prose writers and their works according to a literary historical periodization principle. In her survey of children's literature, Zlata Pirnat-Cognard (1980) joins periodization and genre-type standards. She also takes into account a regional principle of authorial affiliation. She divides Slovene children's prose into two categories: fairytales, tales, and other shorter prose (her guiding concept is tale—e.g., the realistic and traditional tale, as by M. Mihelič, K. Brenk, E. Peroci, and B. Magajna); and children's tales and other, longer prose (e.g., by Tone Seliškar, Anton Ingolič, L. Suhadolčan, B. Jurca). In summarizing, the author finds that a great number of the works depict life during WW II and post-war



life and rebuilding of the country. She sees 1968 as the endpoint for this type of children's literature.

Muris Idrizovič (1984) studies children's literature in the republics of the former Yugoslavia. Within this territorial division, he treats Slovene prose writers by historical period, beginning with didacticism. He starts with A. M. Slomšek and J. Trdina (the appearance of folk literature), followed by prose writers recognized for developing belles lettres (Levstik, J. Ribičič, A. Cerkvjenjak, Seliškar, E. Peroci, I. Zorman, L. Suhadolčan, K. Kovič), and authors of the 1970s (S. Makarovič, S. Pregl). Jože Pogačnik (1984: 235–63) presents twenty selected works by authors of Slovene children's literature, more than half of whom are prose writers, in a section of a Serbian monograph entitled “*Slovenačka dečja književnost*” (Slovene children's literature), and in the chapter on “*Dječja književnost*” (Children's literature), co-authored with I. Cesar, in a Croatian monograph entitled *Slovenska književnost* (Slovene literature). The authors F. Milčinski, I. Cankar, J. Vandot, F. Bevk, P. Voranc, T. Seliškar, A. Ingolič, V. Winkler, L. Suhadolčan, L. Kovačič, F. Forstnerič, and S. Pregl are classified by literary historical principles. Pogačnik introduces their fundamental poetical characteristics and presents one prose work by each in detail.

Publications of the last twenty years on the works of selected authors are most often devoted to recognized artists. Most of them are in the journal *Otrok in knjiga* (e.g., by Marija Švajncer about Desa Muck and Lili Prap); some of them have been published as monographs. In *Peideset zlatnikov* (Fifty gold coins), Igor Saksida (1998) collects excerpts from fifty of the most significant Slovene authors and provides interpretations of selected works. In *Slovenska književnost III* (SAKSIDA 2001: 427–55), Saksida presents the most significant post-WW II writers (V. Zupan, V. Pečjak, M. Maté, B. Štampe Žmavc, J. Snoj, S. Makarovič, F. Rudolf, A. Goljevšček, P. Kovač, E. Peroci, L. Prap, L. Kovačič, A. Ingolič, L. Suhadolčan, I. Zorman, P. Zidar, S. Pregl, D. Muck, D. Zupan, F. Lainšček, T. Partljič, B. Novak). Milena Mileva Blažič presented tales by A. Štefan, I. Mlakar, and some other prose writers (E. Peroci, K. Kovič, V. Zupan, P. Kovač, and L. Kovačič) in light of theories of the picture book. In the monograph *Nagrajene pisave* (Prize winning works), Dragica Haramija (2012) presents about 450 children's prose works by twenty-seven post-independence (1991) prose writers (M. Dolenc, D. Dim, I. Karlovšek, N. Kodrič Filipič, M. Koren, P. Kovač, K. Kovič, F. Lainšček, S. Makarovič, N. Mav Hrovat, M. Moškrič, D. Muck, B. Novak, N. Omahen, M. Osojnik, A. Peklar, M. Pikalo, L. Prap, S. Pregl, A. Rozman Roza, P. Suhadolčan, P. Svetina, B. Štampe Žmavc, A. Štefan, I. Velikonja, J. Vidmar, D. Zupan).

Texts are also analyzed by literary type and genre. Marjana Kobe (2004) emphasizes the growth of the translated secular story repertoire from the beginning of Slovene literature, the diversity of prose types (e.g., folk and classical fairytale, tale, and realistic story with child protagonist), and notes the even larger share of secular writers as compared to poetry (about twenty-five authors, mostly teachers). Marjana Kobe (1987) makes an important contribution to the theory of children's prose genres in two long chapters about fantasy fiction and the three models of realistic prose genres (based on the main character and reader's ages), in which she establishes a genre and sub-genre standard for evaluating Slovene children's prose. Among real-



ist short prose texts, the most enduring are the sketch and the short narrative. The latter appears in different genres: historical, memoir, descriptive, travelogue, detective, socio-psychological, and love short story (Haramija 2006, 2007). The anthology *Bisernica* (Pearl mussel) (Kobe 1996) is remarkable for its range of genres, which includes not only realistic texts (even though S. Pregl's "Fantovske stvari" [Boy's matters], B. Magajna's "Maja in spominčice" [Maja and forget-me-nots], and I. Zorman's Rada bi bila velika [I want to be grown up] find their way in). The second model of realist prose as defined by Marjana Kobe (1987) is intended for the 9–12 age range. By genre definitions, this type would be classified as a tale (Hladnik 1991, Kos 2001: 158). As argued in studies by Dragica Harmija (2003, 2010), texts having the morphological characteristics of a novel are found in Slovene children's realist narrative prose as well. Marjana Kobe discusses the novel with caution under her third model of realist prose. Long prose texts with epic structure, which correspond to Kos's formal definition of the novel, and having to do with teenagers' lives, may be called children's realist novels. However, the protagonist in the children's novel has a rather defined profile—a teenager in a difficult, pubescent period. Literary space and time are quite precisely determinable; however, complexity of plot is tempered, since the young reader is mostly interested in a captivating story. The narrator, who is typically the protagonist and resembles the addressee, is most often a first-person voice speaking about his personal life. In terms of themes and motivation, the Slovene children's novel can be classified into five genres: historical, adventure, romance, socio-psychological, and blue jeans novel. Significant for the fairytale and fantasy prose type (fairytale fiction belongs to the super-genre of fantasy, which includes fairytale, fantasy, and science fiction texts) is the magical motivation for occurrences not possible in a realistic environment. This is very diverse short prose, or, as Jakob J. KENDA (2006: 6) observes: "It seems that in original folktales, authored folktales, and children's fantasy narratives, contemporary fantasy literature we actually have the development stages of the same literary phenomenon, where each stage has developed from its direct predecessor, which faded soon after its successor's appearance."

Among short fiction texts, the fairytale occupies a special position within children's literature. Therefore it is not surprising that this literary genre has been most often studied from theoretical point of view. Alenka Goljevšček (1991) discusses four value phases: a calling (a fairytale character is either chosen or ordained for a task), journey (travel is essential), parasitism (work is not a value), and millenarianism (faith in deliverance in the next world). She states that, "fairytale depict a clash between good and evil, where good always wins; that is precisely why they are fairytales—made up, unrealistic stories" (GOLJEVŠČEK 1991: 46). A clash between good and evil with the victory of good is the basis for all fairytales, no matter whether they are folk, classic, or contemporary. As a rule, all characters in a fairytale are anthropomorphic (animals, plants, objects). A fairytale does not have a well-defined space and time (illogical time leaps are actually common). Distances are not a barrier, since literary characters are simply relocated from one scene to another, or travel is by magic (a potion, flying horse). Based on the fairytales and tales Štrekelj's collected, Monika Kropčej (1995) demonstrated how reality is reflected in the portrayal of economic con-



ditions (e.g., farming, crafts, markets, food, homebuilding), social conditions (life, work, play, entertainment, customs, knowledge), and religion (prophecies, death and afterlife, witchcraft, Christian and cosmological elements). Milena Mileva Blažič applied S. Thompson's folklore theory to the collection *Slovenske pravljice* (Slovene fairytales, 2002 edition) and included Arne-Thompson-Uther's fairytale motif index. Janez Rotar (1976), Metka Kordigel (1991), and Darka Tancer Kajnih (199–95) also wrote about classic authored fairytales. Theoreticians have developed a model of the classic fairytale from the folk fairytale and its morphological characteristics. This pattern has been productive since Andersen.

Marjana Kobe (1999–2000) was the first to study the contemporary fairytale, linking its typology to the main literary characters (a child, an animal, a plant, a planet or a phenomenon, toys or objects come to life, characters from the folk tradition) and connecting fantasy narratives with contemporary fairytales. Igor Saksida (2001) preserves a division between short and longer literary genres. Of special interest is the category of realistic animal tales, which does not appear in other studies. In 2012, among the events under the aegis of Maribor as the European Cultural Capital, and marking the fortieth anniversary of the journal *Otrok in knjiga*, was a conference on fairytales. The contributions (including by Dragica Haramija, Marija Stanonik, and Monika Kroječ) are published in a special issue (no. 83) of the journal *Otrok in Knjiga*.

Fables (e.g., by S. Pregl and M. Košuta), short tales (e.g., by M. Dolenc and D. Muck), and myths (A. Goljevšček) are among fantasy genres that derive their fundamental structures from much older examples of these kinds of texts. When establishing the elements of fantasy narratives in the monograph *Pogledi na mladinsko književnost* (Views of children's literature), M. Kobe took into account previous foreign and domestic studies. M. Kordigel Aberšak built on her thesis in a didactic monograph, which is remarkable for the way it solves some theoretical literary problems. Besides two-dimensionality, she notes three other important elements of the fantasy story: "transitioning from the real to the magic level is possible to explain with causes that work in the real world; in the fantasy world, the laws of the child's desires govern; the narrative ends with a return to the real world. This return is explained with reasons valid in reality" (KORDIGEL ABERŠEK 2008: 416). Gregor Artnik (2010) presents a more detailed typology of fantasy narratives. He later develops (Artnik, 2012) seven thematic types of fantasy (ecological, dystopia, nonsense, gruesome/horror, satiric, fantasy-adventure, science fiction). The fantasy super genre contains three additional important literary types: science fiction, classic, and contemporary fantasy. In the literary lexicon *Znanstvena fantastika* (Science fiction), Metka KORDIGEL defines this literary type as follows: "According to the Polish theorist Stanislaw Lem, different literary types constitute literary worlds that differ from one another according to parts of or their entire value systems, and at the same time they also differ from our real world" (1994: 28). In the broadest sense, science fiction novels may be divided into utopian (positive fantasy) and anti-utopian (negative fantasy). Jakob J. Kenda (2009) introduces the term "classic fantasy," which covers texts with a direct connection to folktale and myth of no more than half a million characters and the term "contemporary" (or Tolkien) fantasy for texts of at least 1.5 million characters in

length. The foundation of fantasy is “a higher level of departure from mythical motivation and from folktale” (KENDA 2009: 368). An important differentiating characteristic between contemporary fantasy and other literary types is also the structure, which is taken from myth. Literary-didactic texts are published as commentaries (e.g., in the series *Knjiga pred nosom*). The most detailed didactical presentation of prose is the one by Metka Kordigal Aberšek (2008) in the monograph *Mladinska književna didaktika* (The didactics of children’s literature). In her collection of papers and essays, *Branja mladinske književnosti* (Readings of children’s literature), Milena Mileva Blažić (2011) provides syllabi for elementary and middle school, and writes about some authors who are not writers of children’s literature (e.g., the image of the child in Trubar, S. Gregorčič, and L. Kovačič).

3.3 Slovene children’s drama

Of the three genres, this subgenre of Slovene drama has been on the periphery, in general literary history as well as in scholarly studies devoted to children’s literature. The reasons for this status of Slovene children’s drama may be the more modest amount and quality of the oldest texts. Further, the connection between children’s theatrical texts and their staging cannot be overlooked: children’s drama is perceived as the textual basis for a play, and therefore becomes a part of the theater studies and a topic in theater education.

Children’s drama, its fundamental differentiating characteristics, and its history from the early stages to the beginning of the 1990s are presented in the monograph *Slovenska mladinska dramatika* (Slovene children’s drama, 1998), by Igor Saksida. The introductory chapters deal with questions of the structure of (children’s) drama texts and connections to theatrical artistic communication, as well as the possibility of dual reception, in reading and viewing, and, for children’s drama texts, by means of artistic expression through oral communication. On this basis it is possible to distinguish children’s dramatic texts from other dialogic forms—e.g., instructional conversation, game descriptions, dialogic prose or poetry texts, and stage recitations. The monograph contains a detailed classification of children’s drama with respect to the kind of staging (theater, puppet theater, radio, TV play, and film script), text length (e.g., longer, such as a multi-act play; and shorter types, such as an individual scene), dramatic characters (e.g., girls and boys), texts (also non-dramatic) with marked content (e.g., instructional, with a pedagogically authoritarian perspective, and idealized, where the child’s world become an idyll), perspective (comedy and tragedy), intertextuality (original texts and adaptations), and audience age (children’s and teenager’s plays). This survey of the internal, formal characteristics of dramas (e.g., characteristic motifs) is followed by a second chapter, on their history. Contrary to widespread earlier claims, it is shown that the translation (and staging) of Kotzebue’s work *Tinček Petelinček* (1802 or 1803) was not the first children’s play. The first children’s theater plays were published in the magazine *Vrtec* (Kindergarten, 1872). The way that the origins of children’s drama are bound up with children’s periodicals is significant for other Slovene and foreign children’s genres (KOBE 2004), and the



possibility of dual reception, by reading and viewing. The context of youth periodicals, as with other forms of Slovene and foreign literature, is also of significance. The central author of the first period is J. Stritar. The markedly educational nature of texts is very typical for this time. The second period is marked by the blossoming of children's drama (the main authors are J. Špicar, F. Bevk, J. Ribičič, and F. Milčinski), which peaks with P. Golia's plays. In the third period (from Golia to WW II), a decline in the quality of children's drama is noticeable. The fourth period is a time of activism and ideological plays. In the fifth period, similar to poetry and narrative prose, there is a return to the pre-war fairytale tradition. The last period is that of contemporary children's drama, which through fantastic textual worlds is becoming sensitive to the problems and socio-political topics of the modern world (e.g., violence, power of authority). *Slovenska književnost III* also contains a historical survey of post-WW II Slovene drama. A section on puppet, radio, and TV play is appended to the survey of contemporary Slovene drama. This, though spare discussion at least conveys an awareness of this important part of literature for children that is otherwise mostly the subject of other disciplines—e.g., the history of puppet theater in Slovenia (Verdel 1987), or the theory and history of the children's radio play (Sajko 2006). Despite the smaller number of fundamental research publications in comparison with poetry and narrative prose, children's drama still holds prospects for the contemporary didactics of literature (Medved Udovič 2000), including as a starting point for planning work on complete dramatic texts and their creative structures, dependent on non-linguistic forms of communication (e.g. F. Putnar, *Tri igre* [Three plays], 2010).

4 Conclusions

The dual recipient and interpretive reading on the history, theory, commentaries, and criticism of children's literature elucidate its gradual transformation from educational and instructional texts into literary expression as defined by the phenomenological concept of artistry as a "structural-organic unity of the cognitive, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of verbal art" (Kos 1996: 40). On the basis of the text defined in this way, it is possible to explain the connectedness of children's and adult texts of some of the most important authors. Genre stratification of children's literature is most evident in children's narrative prose. Theory posits a more or less consistent division between realist (sketch and short story, tale, novel) and fantasy prose genres (folk and classic fairytale, fantasy narration). Children's drama is the least studied literary genre, and interpretations of texts are often intertwined with explanations of staging options, or history and theatrical theory. The thematic and genre complexity of children's literature is influenced by its addressee or receiver, an "extremely variable, ambiguous, idiosyncratically changing category" (Kobe 1987:10), who's shifting and improvement in the process of the guided development of reading abilities is primarily dependent on the didactic interpretations of children's literature that are formed in conversation with a non-authoritative peer or adult interlocutor. The extent to which the interpretation of children's texts is interwoven with teaching reading or special didactic methods is also unclear. The interpretation of children's texts in



school may be also be informed by essays, criticism, and commentaries as (one of the possible) reading models and a way to “fuller” aesthetic literary experience (Grosman 1989 and 2004).

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