

**SUBVERSIVE YOUTH LITERATURE
– A FAIRY TALE PLAY BY ALENKA
GERLOVIČ, JURČEK AND THE THREE
BANDITS (1944), IN CONTEXT**



Comparative Literature

Keywords: Alenka Gerlovič, World War II, fairy tale play, subversiveness, 1944.

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Abstract

The article deals with the fairy tale play by the painter Alenka Gerlovič (1919–2010) entitled *Jurček in trije razbojniki* (*Jurček and the Three Bandits*). The play was created during World War II and is an expression of the author's ethical attitude towards fascism and Nazism and the horrors of war. As the analysis shows, with this play Alenka Gerlovič became one of the world's youth writers who have commented on the war with their works. With *Jurček*, Alenka Gerlovič created an "imaginary screen" that enabled the audience to maintain a distance from atrocities in wartime conditions and at the same time be part of the anti-fascist struggle, also as a symbolic weapon and ethical act.

Definition and Discussion of the Problem

The purpose of the article is to discuss the fairy tale play by Alenka Gerlovič, titled *Jurček in trije razbojniki* (*Jurček and Three Bandits*), staged in 1944, published in 1950 and re-staged in 2015 at the Mini Theater.¹ Slovenian illustrator Alenka Gerlovič (1919–2010) enrolled in the painting department of the Academy of Arts in Zagreb, where she graduated in 1941. Between 1918 and 1941, painters mostly studied painting in Vienna, Munich, Prague and Zagreb, as the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts (then the Academy of Pictorial Arts) was founded only on 28 October 1945. Lojze Lavrič (1914–1954), a maker of fairy-tale puppets, also studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (1939–1941) and graduated in 1949 in Ljubljana. Nikolaj Pirnat (1903–1948), who drew drawings for fairy-tale puppets, also studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and became an academic sculptor (1925). From 1946 he taught drawing at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana. Pirnat illustrated the works of O. Župančič, *Ciciban* (1932),² F. Bevk, *Pastirci* (*Little Shepherds*, 1935), and Manica Koman, *Stric s košem* (*The Uncle with the Basket*, 1937) and *Teta s cekarjem* (*The Auntie with the Basket*, 1938).³ In 1950, Mladinska knjiga published the text of *Jurček and the Three Bandits* by Alenka Gerlovič in the *Lutkovni oder 1* (*Puppet Stage 1*) collection with the subtitle *Igra za marionete v štirih dejanjih* (*A Play for Marionettes in Four Acts*). The author wrote the following thoughts about the spirit of the time: "Never before nor after have I lived so without everything and yet so connected to everything, without worries, happy [...] No, they didn't like me in technique and yet it was perhaps the most beautiful time of my life. I have never lived so close to nature for months and months again. Never again have I so believed in the meaning of my being and work because I have never, ever felt so closely connected to some human community for a certain goal. [...] The people around me were mostly very young, uneducated, uncouth, even rude, but still willing to voluntarily risk their lives for something common, big."

¹ Gerlovič, Alenka. *Jurček in trije razbojniki*. Directed by Robert Wautl, 8 May 2015, Mini teater, Ljubljana.

² Župančič, Oton; Pirnat, Nikolaj (1932). *Ciciban*. www.dlib.si

³ Koman, Manica (1938). *Teta s cekarjem*. www.dlib.si

Jurček and the Three Bandits: A Play for Marionettes in Four Acts, 1944

In the first act, which takes place in a peasant's room and granary, The Three Bandits take away Jurček's father and mother and set fire to the house. In the second act, which takes place at the site of the fire, Janez, a domobranec, i.e., a member of the Home Guard, or “švabobranec” (“defender of the Huns”), wants to marry Franca, who refuses to do so because her suitor is imprisoning, robbing, killing Slovenes and burning down their houses. Because he is cowardly, he also threatens her with a weapon. The plot continues with Franca, Jurček and Pavliha. Franca also joined the partisans, invited by Pavliha, “the one who joined the partisans already in 1941” (14). In the third act, which takes place in a partisan camp, the characters are the commander or three partisans (commander Matjaž, partisans Jošt and Grega). Pavliha informs the commander that he will marry Franca who embraces Commander Matjaž, her brother. The scene ends with everyone joined in the partisan units, including Jurček, singing the song “Na juriš...”. In the fourth act, the venue is an internment camp, where Jurček's father and mother are held prisoners. Benito, Fric and Janez torment father and mother, telling them that they set fire to their house. Father and mother are comforted by the fact that “Jurček will grow into a man. He will get you, bandits!” (21). Jurček jumps on stage, i.e., into the camp, in the arms of his mother and father, and informs them that “our brigades” have arrived: “They came: Commander Matjaž, Pavliha, neighbor's Franca. The latter is now in the brigade as well. She and Pavliha got married. She's such a fighter! You should see her with a rifle! And of course me and the whole brigade. We broke into the camp. – Long live victory! (Jumps for joy.)” (Gerlovič 22).

The end of the fairy tale game is significant, as the Home Guard member Janez makes tries to and says: “It's both their fault, I'm just their toady. I'm not a bandit.” In the end, “The Three Bandits fall” (Gerlovič 23).

Text and Context

The text features twelve literary characters or three groups of three characters: the first includes the boy Jurček and his father and mother, then follow individualized collective antiheroes – The Three Bandits (Janez the Home Guard member, Benito the fascist and Fric the Nazi), three partisans (commander Matjaž, Jošt and Grega), then Pavliha and Franca and the animal Mula (the Mule). At the beginning, the father whistles a folk song, and at the end they sing it together. The first three characters therefore include the boy Jurček and his father and mother. In the introductory plot of the play, Jurček comes home late (his mother sent him to get yeast to knead bread) because he saw that three bandits had taken the father of the girl Marička away. Shortly afterwards, The Three Bandits (Benito, Fric, Janez) also visit Jurček, his father and mother in the peasant room and granary. It is symbolic that Benito and Fric lock themselves in the granary and eat and drink (sausages, potica cake, struklji and wine), but prevent (the Home Guard member) Janez from entering. Then Benito and Fric forcibly take away Jurček's parents and want to take away the boy Jurček as well, but the the Home Guard member Janez says: “Let's release the

rascal!” Benito and Janez set fire to the child’s house so that he will have nowhere to sleep. The second act moves from the peasant room to the burned down cottage.

The play is divided into four acts; the setting in the first act is a peasant room, featuring the characters of the father and the mother. In the second act, the setting is placed at the burned down cottage, the events take place in the evening, and the central characters are Franca and Janez. In the third act, the scene is a partisan camp and the central character is (the commander) Matjaž. In the fourth act, the events take places in internment camp, the central characters are the father and the mother, also Benito and Fric; in this part there is an unfolding and marriage (commander Matjaž and Franca).

The event time is described as follows: “Where have those times gone? I almost forgot what bread tastes like!”; “Oh, what times are these!”; "The Three Bandits have been roaming through the valley lately." The time of writing (1944) and the first staging (31 December 1944) of the fairy tale play was during World War II, followed by a book edition in 1950.

On New Year's Eve 1944, the “ensemble” of the first Slovene partisan puppet theater performed “*Jurček*” for the first time in front of a packed hall in Črmošnjice. A leaflet with a portrait of Pavliha invited to the performance, and printed invitations were also distributed. Needless to say, the enthusiasm was enormous. Two moments were decisive; firstly, few people have ever seen a puppet play, and secondly, the topic of the play was taken from the life of our people at the time, because everyone had dealt with the fascists, members of the Home Guard and Germans who sent Slovenes into slavery. The partisan mule, who was not allowed to show off on the "ordinary" stage, also contributed greatly to the success (Gerlovič 27).

Nikolaj Pirnat (1903–1948), an academic sculptor who graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and studied in Paris, was interned in Gonars during the Second World War. He also established himself as an illustrator who simultaneously criticized fascism and Nazism with his posters and drawings. As early as 1933, Pirnat published three poems in the *Ljubljanski zvon* magazine, on the topic of “*In vendar hočemo svobodnih cest*” (“*And yet we want free roads*”).⁴

At the end of the puppet play follows the final song “Golden freedom, freedom, freedom,⁵ golden freedom has come again.” (Gerlovič 12). In the fairy-tale play, literary characters often sing: “Father whistles a folk song”; Pavliha sings: “Hey, Brigades!”⁶(Gerlovič). Multilingualism emerges in the fairy-tale play as Fric uses German and Benito Italian words.

⁴ Pirnat, Nikolaj (1933). *Pesmi*. *Ljubljanski zvon*, year 53, no. 6.

⁵The use of the adjective gold (golden) in phrases is a characteristic of folk tales or European fairy tales and is called metallization (Luthi, Max. *Evropska pravljica: forma in oblika*. Sophia, 2012).

⁶ Bor, Matej. *Hej, brigade!* 1942.

The whole fairy-tale play contains elements of carnival⁷ (M. Bahtin), so there are also elements of folk culture celebrating (Benito sings *Giovinezza*, Fric sings *Siegend wollen wir marschieren in die neue Zeit*, Father whistles a folk song, Pavliha sings: “Hey, Brigades ...”) and also mocking (“Benito (cries): O, mamma mia, o mamma mia!”)

“Fritz: It was great, nicht wahr?”

“Fric: Kusch!”

“Fric: »Lüge!«”

“Fric: »Sehr gut!«”

“Fric: Siegend wollen wir marschieren in die neue Zeit.”⁸

“Fric: Verstanden?”

“Fric: Was?” (Gerlovič 7–23)

“Benito (kneels): Caro partigiano, I don’t want to die. Mamma mia! Pieta! Mercy!”

“Benito: What, sausage your? No yours! Capito?”

“Benito: Beat it, subito!”

“Benito: (He leaves with a loaf of bread, singing *Giovinezza*.)”

“Benito: Che wine! Ah, ah!”

“Benito: O mio bel amore, o cara miss...”

“Benito (cries): O, mamma mia, o mamma mia!”

“Benito: Partigiani!”

“Benito: Serves you right, banditi! Maledetti partigiani!” (Gerlovič 7–23)

At the end of the fairy-tale play, when Pavliha sings a song about “golden freedom”, we can find a connection with the hypothesis of Guntis Šmidchens, which he presented in his book *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution* (2014), namely, that the “singing revolution” and the “power of song” also appear in the fairy-tale play, as all three sing songs that give them power, in the context of 1944, with Benito and Fric singing their anthem, while just before the end Pavliha sings a song about “Golden Freedom”: “Pavliha: Quiet! In line! It would be a shame to waste three bullets for you. (Shoots. The Three Bandits fall. The choir sings behind the stage)” (Gerlovič 11).

The fairy tale play was staged again on 16 November 1983 at the Ljubljana Puppet Theater (hereinafter LGL), directed by Jelena Sitar and Igor Cvetko, and on 8 May 2015 at the Mini Theater, directed by Robert Waltl.

The end of A. Gerlovič’s text is also open. Did Pavliha, who is the bearer of the act, but also the elements of humor, end up with nonsense when he ‘shoots’, or does this mean that he shoots (once) and that A. Gerlovič uses the expressive meaning of the verb ‘to fall’, which can it

⁷ Javornik, Miha. “Dialog, dialogizacija in karnevalsko sprejemanje sveta.” *Jezik in slovstvo*, year 34, no. 7/8, 1989, pp. 179–182.

⁸ Underlined by M. M. Blažič. Germany. Reichsarbeitsdienst in Scheller, Thilo. *Singend Wollen Wir Marschieren: Liederbuch Des Reichsarbeitsdienstes*. 2. edition. Potsdam: L. Voggenreiter, 1937.

be understood literally and/or metaphorically, i.e., that the three systems (Home Guard collaborators, fascism, Nazism) fall: “The Three Bandits fall”?

Subversive youth literature

Jack Zipes, who has written several times on the subversive power of fairy tales (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 1983, 2006; *The Irresistible Fairy Tales*, 2012; *Workers' Tales*, 2018; *The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales*, 2020), states, among other things, that the most important cultural and social events can be found in fairy tales (Zipes, Fairy 1). In the introduction titled *The Twists and Turns of Radical Children's Literature* to the book by J.L. Mickenberg and P. Neila, *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children's Literature* (2008), Zipes mentions that all literature is ideological or political and that it is impossible to separate education and entertainment from politics. As an example, he cites the Bible and spellers and all books from the 16th century, e.g. anecdotes, biblical stories, legends, myths, (folk) songs, fairy tales that the child experiences and understands. Understanding is a complex process, says Zipes, understanding means self-understanding and affirmation of privileges (Mickenberg viii).

He cites various examples, the first from the Bible, *The Child Guide* (1667): “In Adam's fall / We sinned all.” As an extreme example, he cites a magazine that supported the abolitionist movement and liberation from slavery, *The Slave's Friend* (1836–1839). Zipes says that the political and social groups that began to develop in the late 19th century and especially in the 20th century, such as anarchism, human rights, feminism, communism, socialism, are the ones that create different works, which are also contradictory and different from the prevailing thinking. The book gives some examples from the speller, where the word fascist is mentioned under the letter F, and three persons or “The Three Bandits” are drawn: Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito (Mickenberg 19).

In A. Gerlovič's play, the character of the boy Jurček reflects intertextuality with the archetypal character of a boy / servant / apprentice (Dwarf), which can be linked to J. Zipes' article *Odysseus to Thom Thum and Other Cunning Heros* (2002). Zipes writes about the fairy-tale character of the Dwarf, who represents the character of a fool of lower (economic and social) origin or a small or young individual who is threatened by the archetype of a Giant, however the Giant is also the archetype of a stupid Giant who could be associated with the figure of The Three Bandits in the fairy-tale play by A. Gerlovič.

Zipes links the character of the Dwarf with the character of Odysseus and the character of the Giant with Polyphemus, who was stronger and bigger, but Odysseus defeated him and escaped from the cave. In the fairy-tale game, this can be the internment camp. The boy Jurček is also a “clever boy”: “You are a hero, Jurček!”, “He [Jurček] will get you, bandits!” (Gerlovič 8). Zipes explains that the fairy-tale character of the subordinate is helped by self-preservation instinct and reason.

The subordinate literary character learns self-control, is honest, brave, fair, which are the attributes of a fairy-tale hero (M. Luthi). Zipes finds elements of Protestant ethics and self-preservation in the fairy-tale character of the Dwarf. Thus, the hero Dwarf in Grimm's fairy tale proves to be consecrated in resolving the conflict, because he showed ingenuity, reason and diligence and is therefore worthy of happiness. A similarity can also be found with the character of Jurček in the fairy-tale play, in which there are almost no magical helpers, even though Jurček is the personification of a fairy tale hero (he helps others, solves problems, and completes the task).

Writers for Youth against Fascism and Nazism

There are a few writers in youth literature who have responded critically and/or satirically to the Second World War during the war itself, which proved invaluable. Among the most representative are Finnish-Swedish youth illustrator and writer Tove Jansson, Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren (cf. Surmatz), who worked at the post office in Stockholm as a censor during World War II, reading letters to and from Sweden. and deleted sentences mentioning Swedish collaboration with the Germans), then an illustrator with more than a thousand illustrations simultaneously criticizing fascism and Nazism, Dr. Seuss, real name Theodor Seuss Geisel, and Slovenian illustrator and writer Alenka Gerlovič. The authors for youth who with great sensitivity represented the image of a child, e.g. T. Jansson in a series of books about the Moomins and A. Lindgren who with her superb youth novels, e.g. *Pippi Longstocking*; *Mio, My Son*; *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, etc., motivated the creation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The ALMA (Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award), also called the "Little Nobel Prize", nominates authors, illustrators, storytellers and/or institutions to strengthen respect for children's rights in the spirit of Astrid Lindgren. She subtly and courageously expressed her critique of war, violence and Swedish collaboration with the Germans in her youth work, which speaks of the author's ethical stance as she was also threatened with death during the interwar and war years.

Tove Jansson (1914-2001), 1938-1945

Finnish-Swedish illustrator and writer Tove Jansson, author of a series of illustrated books about the Moomins, simultaneously published illustrations in the Finnish satirical magazine *Garm* (1923–1953) and criticized fascism and Nazism.

Astrid Lindgren (1907-2002), 1939-1945

In her *War Diaries, 1939-1945*, the writer Astrid Lindgren, who was employed at the post office during the war and censored letters sent from or to Sweden, gained insight into World War II. She knew the situation very well, mentioning Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, etc. It is no coincidence that in 1943, when she designed *Pippi Longstocking*, her most famous youth work, and in 1944, when it was published, in the chapter *Pippi Goes to the Circus* she named the director of the circus the "Mighty Adolf".

A. Surmatz states that A. Lindgren mentioned the international dimensions of the war not only in *Pippi Longstocking* but also in youth novels, she opposed Nazism, militarism, colonialism and authorities, e.g. circus, police, school, etc. She advocated ethics, pacifism (*The Brothers Lionheart; Mio, My Son; Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, etc.) and was against violence, especially in the 1978 article *Never Violence!*, upon receiving the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1904–1991), 1941–1943

The famous youth writer with the poetic name Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1904–1991) drew more than 400 political caricatures in 1941–1943, of which the digital collection includes 390 pictorial caricatures of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and other actors of the Second World War. The scanned collection is available online in the electronic form and provides valuable testimony to how youth writers responded critically to World War II in the midst of the whirlwind of war with cartoons (and short text), demonstrating the extraordinary civilizational courage. His poetry collections *Green Eggs and Ham*, 1960 (*Zelena jajca in krača*, 2018); *Cat in the Hat*, 1957 (*Muc Kapuc*, 2018); and *Fox and Socks*, 1965 (*Lisica Nogavica*, 2018) have been translated into Slovene.

Lojze Kovačič (1928–2004)

According to the data known so far, the first publications of Lojze Kovačič, also a youth classic, date from 1947. It is a short prose in two fragments, *Maruška* and *Zgodba iz našega mesteca* (*A Story from Our Town*). The fragment *Maruška* was published in November 1947 in the literary journal of the students of the Ivan Cankar dormitory *Mi mladi*. In December 1947, the same newspaper published an excerpt from the short story of the same name, *A Story from Our Town*. Text or the fragment is also interesting because it mentions Adolf Hitler with a “curt voice”: “Herman Heller, a retired member of armed police force, lived in our town. He inherited from his brother, who lived with us for many years and was supposedly a high official, a house and a park by the municipal road. The house was already old, built in Bavarian style, with a low wooden roof and green windows. The park was bordered by a high hedge road, and on the other hand it was open to a well-kept beech forest which is also Heller’s property.” The author goes on to describe Heller’s life and how his “wife’s death” did not affect him. On page six, he wrote, “The radio was buzzing. The speaker was Adolf Hitler of Monaco.⁹ A sharp voice rose in height and echoed through the empty morning streets. Then the animal howling and stamping of thousands of legs began” (Kovačič 13).

Alenka Gerlovič (1919–2010), 1944, 1950

Alenka Gerlovič, like conscientious world youth authors, became involved in the humanistic critique of fascism and Nazism at the time when the two ideologies still existed, which

⁹Underlined by M. M. Blažič. <https://www.lg-mb.si/f/docs/predstave/LOJZE-KOVACIC-mladinski-pisatelj-lekt..pdf>. [Accessed: 15. 9. 2021]

required special courage. To this critique she added the critique of domestic traitors or collaborators. Like relevant world youth writers, she chose to strive against fascism and Nazism for ethical reasons.

The puppet play *Jurček in trije razbojniki* (*Jurček and The Three Bandits*, 1950), which is the subject of the present article, differs slightly from the partisan puppet play staged in 1944, which also features a puppet Lili Marlen singing a song (this song was sung by the author, A. Gerlovič). Also, in the first version there is a mule, which is only mentioned in the text, and there is also a sailor who is not included in the newer text. The Partisan Puppet Theater also featured Pole Gymnast, Clown, Hitler, Three Bandits, Lili Marlen, Drunk Sailor, Pavliha and Mule.



The play *Jurček in razbojniki* (*Jurček and the Bandits*) in the Puppet Theater in the Franciscan Church in Ljubljana. Ljubljana, 28 June 1945. Photo by Milan Kranjc, kept by Museum of Recent History of Slovenia.



Puppets of the puppet show *Jurček in razbojniki* (*Jurček and the Bandits*). Črnomelj, 12 February 1945. Photo by Stane Viršek, kept by Museum of Recent History of Slovenia.



Puppets of the puppet show *Jurček in razbojniki* (*Jurček and the Bandits*). Črnomelj, 12 February 1945. Photo by Stane Viršek, kept by Museum of Recent History of Slovenia.

Critical Review of Relevant Literature

The Partisan Puppet Theater staged the puppet play *Jurček and the Three Bandits* on 31 December 1944 in Črmošnjice. On 16 November 1983¹⁰, the Ljubljana Puppet Theater premiered a reconstruction of the first play based on original sketches, so I present some positive responses (I. Gregorač, E. Majaron, M. Dekleva, S. Godnič) for the performance of the Partisan Puppet Theater.

In the theatre programme, Ignac Gregorač summed up the introduction to Alenka Gerlovič's 1979 book *Partizansko lutkovno gledališče* (*The Partisan Puppet Theater*): “[A] remarkable cultural and creative phenomenon in Yugoslavia, not to mention Europe” (Gregorač). He states that the puppets expressed criticism of the war and are an art motif against the “banality of evil” (H. Arendt, S. Žižek) or that in the literary context they represent the myth of *Orpheus and Eurydice* when Orpheus fights for the return of Eurydice from Hades by singing and playing the lyre. “[The] firm and strong faith of the Slovene nation that it will win in a fierce struggle for its life, for a free today, for its own and free tomorrow” (Gregorač).

Edi Majaron wrote in the same theater magazine: “In the graphic studio of Centralna tehnika in Črmošnjice, on the edge of the Kočevje forests, 16 puppets – marionettes were created by Lojze Lavric in 1943 and 1944. They performed for the first time on New Year's Eve in front of the local artillery brigade with a series of sketches based on the Sokoli tradition. As the

¹⁰ <https://www.mini-teater.si/si/articles/3105/jurcek-in-trije-razbojniki> [Accessed: 1. 11. 2021]

program was short, after the New Year the partisan puppeteers also prepared the play *Jurček in trije razbojniki* (*Jurček and The Three Bandits*), written and directed by Alenka Gerlovič, and the drafts for the stage set were her work also."

"Since then, partisan puppets have visited much of the world. First, they traveled around Bela krajina and Gorski Kotar, until the liberation in Vinica, then all over Slovenia, until they finally got a place of honor in the Museum of the National Liberation of Slovenia. But not permanently: several times the members of the Ljubljana Puppet Theater take them in front of the audience again, in 1981 even to distant China. They received a lot of attention everywhere."

In the article *Med spominom in sodobnostjo* (*Between Memory and Modernity*), published at the time of a new adaptation of the play *Jurček and The Three Bandits* in the Museum of the Revolution by Igor Cvetko and Jelena Sitar, Milan Dekleva affirmatively expressed his opinion about the game and the "revolutionary rebirth": The restoration of 'Jurček' is thus a renewal of the spiritual courage of a small nation who, in the center, at the epicenter of unreasonable rage, draft the 'Partisan Puppet Theater' and thus – along with all other signs of the irrevocable stage – announce a revolutionary rebirth of its cultural identity" (Dekleva).

During the re-enactment of *Jurček*, Stanka Godnič wrote that Ljubljana puppeteers had returned "to these starting points in order to celebrate a special event – the operation of the only partisan puppet theater during the Second World War. Its cradle was Črmošnjice on New Year's Eve 1944. [...] And the tonal recording of the singing of Alenka Gerlovič, who sang Lili Marlen" (Godnič).

The Mini Theater reconstructed and staged the play *Jurček and The Three Bandits* of the Partisan Puppet Theater from 31 December 1944. The puppets were made according to original puppets by L. Lavrič from 1944, and the scenography was based on original sketches by Alenka Gerlovič. The premiere at the Mini Theater took place on 8 May 2015.

Findings

The main literary characters are archetypal: the boy Jurček (the archetype of a fairy-tale hero with all the attributes) confronts the "dragon with twelve heads" (Luthi 3), when he confronts The Three Bandits in the fairy-tale play, not only as an astonished observer, but as an active participant. The fairy-tale Jurček manages to solve the task: "Where will I be at home now, Franca? ... If only my father knew! And mummy! - Our house! ... Just you wait, you bastards! You will pay dearly for this! You think I'm not a match to you because I'm small and alone in the world? You took my dad away, but I will get you as a grown man." (Gerlovič 13).

Gerlovič and some of the world's youth writers responded in their own way, explicitly or implicitly, to the Second World War, especially to the antagonists, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. The American youth writer Dr. Seuss knew the situation around the world and critically mentioned other non-European countries (Africa, Japan, China, etc.). Slovenian youth illustrator

and writer A. Gerlovič was part of the international context that connected ethics and literature, especially youth literature.

Alenka Gerlovič's play contains marriage and a happy ending (Pavliha and Franca). Next to the hero Jurček there are three anti-heroes – The Three Bandits. This very motif – a child as a hero and three bandits as anti-heroes – is similar and at the same time different from the modern fairy tale, which was also published in pictorial form, Tomi Ungerer's *The Three Robbers*, but without any resemblance *The Three Bandits*¹¹ by A. Gerlovič. In it, the main literary character is a girl who eventually turns three robbers into honest characters. In the play by A. Gerlovič, the ending is different – The Three Bandits (Hitler, Mussolini and the Home Guard member Janez) probably end tragically: "Pavliha: (Shoots. The Three Bandits fall.)" The end is implicitly comical: one shot, three bandits fall. The literary character of Pavliha namely also has an expressive meaning in Slovene literary history.

The puppet game is also multilingual. A. Gerlovič uses folk words (bajta /shack), cula (travel bundle), izba (room), kamra (den), kašča (granary), expressive expressions (grunt (estate), kapljica/vino (wine), paglavac (rascal), štemana, tolovaj (villain)), Italian ("O mio bel amore, o cara gospodičina"; "Sings Giovinezza"; "Caro partigiano, I don't want to die. Mamma mia! Pieta! Mercy!") and German ("Aufstehen und grüssen, verfluchte Hunde!"), humorous elements (bursting into laughter, choking on laughter, Pavliha as a humorous figure in puppet theater, laughing, joking, etc.) Many idioms and/or expressive expressions are used in the fairy-tale game (e.g., a brave man, to stand up to, God, to have in his stomach (The Three Bandits), holy moly (interjection), to fall from the moon, full measure, to consecrate, to whisper, the heart misses a beat, to pull someone's leg ("Are you pulling my leg?"), etc., with which the author vividly expresses folk wisdom and laughs at antiheroes.

The fairy tale *Jurček* and *The Three Bandits* is a space of freedom, the text is typical for children and the context is intended for adults (Seifert 45), for example:

- Benito burns down the house with matches, and home guard Janez "gives him matches". To characterize Benito, the author uses the terms "timid", "kneeling", "very timid" and thus stylistically illustrates his character.

- Franca (to Janez): "They say you're a toady to robbers, that you help them rob and kill. But when they share the spoils, they drive you away." (Gerlovič 12).

- Fric: Nazi, speaks with a burr, chief.

- Janez: toady, stutters, flattering, humble, cowardly, with a trembling voice, complaisant, rabbit, etc.

- The author describes *The Three Bandits* as bastards, bad, miserable, because they kill, plunder, burn, rob, scare, intimidate, and imprison (Slovenes).

¹¹Ungerer, Tomi. *Trije razbojniki*. Mladinska knjiga, 2010.

In the article *O slikarstvu Alenke Gerlovič (On Alenka Gerlovič's Painting)*, Miklavž Komelj writes the following on her engagement and ethics in the context of the anti-fascist struggle: “Alenka Gerlovič made her first public appearance as a painter during the Second World War with her partisan graphics, posters and scenography in the liberated territory of Bela krajina. Such a start of public activity was extremely engaging and particularly ethical: her partisan works are documents of her clear and uncompromising position in the context of the anti-fascist struggle, and at the same time, at the time of their creation – like all partisan art – they were a symbolic weapon in this struggle.” (985)

Based on the study of sources and literature and context, it can be seen that A. Gerlovič included herself in the context of the critique of fascism and Nazism with the fairy tale play *Jurček and The Three Bandits* (1944), which is the main subject of this article, also expressed by youth authors and/or illustrators such as T. Jansson, A. Lindgren, Dr. Seuss, L. Kovačič et al. Despite the fact that youth literature is on the fringes of the literary system of adult literature, it is at the same time a space of freedom. Precisely in the context of the Second World War, the fairy-tale play analyzed, which basically deals with good and evil, is an ethical act in time and against “Banality of Evil” (Žižek 62). In the end, we can paraphrase Žižek’s idea that the author and other authors in the context of the Second World War kept a distance from atrocities and knowledge about them with the puppet show or fairy-tale play and humor. Puppet stage and the fairy-tale play represent an “imaginary screen” (Žižek 62) which enabled the authors of the puppet play in war situations as subjects to maintain a distance from atrocities and at the same time be part of the anti-fascist struggle, also as a symbolic weapon and ethical act (Komelj 985).

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