

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD 2026

# Alenka Sottler

ILLUSTRATOR NOMINATION



SLOVENIAN SECTION OF IBBY

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## 1.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE CANDIDATE

**ALENKA SOTTLER** (born 1958) lives and works in Slovenia as a freelance illustrator and is a member of the NY Society of Illustrators. She was born in Ljubljana. Her father was a sculptor, a pupil of the prominent Croatian sculptor Antun Augustinčić, and her mother worked for Slovenia's leading newspaper and printing company, Delo. Alenka received her first informal training in drawing and sculpture in her father's studio.

Education: 1976–1981: studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, Slovenia. 1981–1983: postgraduate study in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, Slovenia. 2011: Awarded the title of Assistant Professor of Painting by the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Since 1988 she works as freelance painter/illustrator for the best Slovene and foreign publishers and magazines, including Mladinska knjiga, the largest and leading Slovene publisher. She has illustrated many books and produced many illustrations for children's magazines. An important part of her output is devoted to fairytales, both modern (Oscar Wilde, Svetlana Makarovič) and classic (Folk Tales from Around the World, Brothers Grimm). Her work is inventive, visually appealing and drawn with faultless confidence. She exhibits both at home and abroad and has received numerous prestigious national and international awards and recognitions for her work.





2.

A HIGH-RESOLUTION PORTRAIT  
PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CANDIDATE



Photo: Črt Poglajen

### 3.

#### A STATEMENT ON THE CANDIDATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

# ALENKA SOTTLER

Pavle Učakar,

former art editor at the publishing house Mladinska Knjiga

I have known Alenka Sottler for a very long time. We collaborated on various book projects over a period of almost forty years. At Mladinska Knjiga we published many successful picture books for children together. I feel honoured to have been able to follow her work and progress from her very beginnings to today. **Her development was unusual, with every book perfect from the first to the latest, only the style changed. Each one was carefully thought-out, from its concept and technique to building the scenes and characters of the protagonists. This minute attention to detail always led to exceptional book projects, which over the years never lost their artistic relevance. Quite the opposite, Alenka Sottler's opus is considered one of the most recognisable and original works in Slovene fine art in general.**

Alenka creates her paintings slowly. She spends much more time on each work than is usual in the illustration genre but her passionate energy never diminishes, in fact, the closer she gets to the end of a project, the more focused she is on it. When it is finished and prepared for printing, all her magnificent talent and knowledge shine through.

While working, she sometimes changes her concept and starts again until she is completely satisfied. **Her painting techniques are always innovative and explorational, artistic challenges par excellence.** They appear light and fun but are in fact executed in sophisticated

and extremely labour-intensive techniques. Each image contains thousands of fine lines that form patterns that are then compiled into modern 'collages'. When the picture is complete, its complicated inner structure becomes apparent. The artistic elements she uses, patterns of lines, dots, fingerprints, are flat in themselves but the end result are unusual, complex, three-dimensional spaces and objects, full of a mystic atmosphere. Static but rich and seething, her paintings are strong, clear and at the same time gentle.

The protagonists are depicted as if she were working for a puppet theatre. Every single one, whether person or bird, is drawn so that we experience it in a different way over and over again. They carry within them an evasive character, once we see a mechanical doll, another time a personality with incredible depth. A person who carries within them both joy or sorrow, deep contemplation or the restlessness of joy.

**The result of all these marvels of technique is a kind of aura of mysticism and mystery. An atmosphere of subtle tension creates synaesthetic effects that are essential to high-quality illustration. These effects on the one hand follow and deepen the story, on the other create a new, independent and unwritten narrative that goes beyond the text and broadens the space of interpretation. Into the space of magic. The entire complicated art technique is in fact in the service of this magic.** The illustrations shine with an astonishing intelligence and focus with many symbols, associations and metaphors. They are filled with an artistic elegance and a subtle, understated humour. Everything seems under control but completely authentic and full of emotion for every reader/viewer. Her images make a deep impression in the memory, whether illustrations for Cinderella, Bambi, tiny mischievous mice or in books for adult readers.

In her work Alenka Sottler is extraordinarily studious. The text itself is never enough for her artistic illustration. Everything is important, the time in which the text was created or the time it describes, the dynamics of the drama and the relationships between the protagonists. She is interested in historical, philosophical, literary and other implications in the text. All this is quietly part of her creative process and an attentive observer will pick up on it.

Alenka Sottler's illustrations are like sophisticated compositions of emotions and empathy, beauty and invention. She rejects texts that don't excite her. The story she is asked to portray must stir some restlessness in her. She needs to identify with it, otherwise she does not take on the work. **She needs to feel an emotional connection to the story, then she works on it until perfection, persistently and without compromise to herself and her work. Her art reflects this in the clearest way, becoming classic and at the same time very modern.**

**Alenka is present, attentive and meticulous at all stages of creating a book. This is how superior and timeless works of art are created, transcending the boundaries of illustration, becoming artworks in their own rights. This excellence is also echoed all over the world, evident from her numerous awards.** Among the most prestigious are the Golden Apple Prix at the 2007 Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava, she was nominated for the Hans Christian Anderson Award for Illustration in 2014, and in 2016 received the Gold Medal for Book Illustration from American Society of Illustrators in New York.

Our collaboration on numerous projects was always both a challenge and an inspiration, filled with mutual respect, navigating through the finest levels of creation for which I will always be grateful to her. I am proud of our cooperation.



#### 4.

QUOTES FROM ART DIRECTORS AND OTHERS (5)  
AND ONE APPRECIATIVE ARTICLE

# ALENKA SOTTLER

**CHARLES HIVELY,**  
Founder and Design Director, 3x3,  
The Magazine of Contemporary Illustration

I have the enviable responsibility of selecting artists to feature in our magazine and it's no easy task. We can only feature three illustrators in each of our three yearly issues, hence 3x3 being the name of our magazine. That's only nine total artists each year (again, 3x3). And fortunately for us there is a plethora of highly talented illustrators out there, so there's never any doubt we will have multiple opportunities to highlight the careers of contemporary illustrators. **Our criteria is highly specific, they must have a solid body of work that's consistent in its approach and the quality of the work has to be at the highest level. And we always look for the more unusual approaches in the field of illustration. Alenka Sottler embodies all that we look for in our features.** She's amazing! I could spend hours looking at just one drawing of hers, there's so much detail, so many, many marks that make up the whole. The scenes are classic, almost renaissance in their settings and figures, **each drawing is a marvel in itself**, but then putting them together for the article – which I had the utmost pleasure doing – they're pure joy to look at them on the page, the impact of each is stunning. No matter what style of mark-making Alenka uses, her heart and soul are evident, be it thumbprint mice or grapes on



a vine to overlaying text-based imagery, to her highly original black and white drawings with a thousand strokes, the beauty is extraordinary. We are so delighted to be able to share Alenka's work with our readers, and the world.

**PROF. JACK ZIPES,**  
Writer, artist, thinker, storyteller

**I have worked with many amazing illustrators during my very long life, but I have never worked with such a brilliant and creative artist like Alenka Sottler!** She is innovative, perceptive, and uncanny. I thank the god of serendipity (if there is such a god) that we have met and we have developed this book together with the same mutual ideas. Thanks for all your wonderful ideas and brilliant illustrations, Alenka!

**MARIA LINDENFELDAR,**  
Creative Director, Princeton University Press

I had the pleasure of working with Alenka on a new translation of the Original Bambi. **Her dedication to craft, deep thoughtfulness, modesty (even with great talent!), and sense of collaboration were extraordinary.** Somehow she captured how it may have felt to be hunted and alone in a forest—with large open eyes taking in the world. She strikes me as a very sensitive soul.

**OTAKAR BOŽEJOVSKÝ v. Rawennoff,**  
Former publisher of Bohem Press

I saw Alenka's illustrations for the first time at the Bologna Book Fair and immediately asked her for collaboration. She did a beautiful and internationally successful book for us of which I am still proud. **Her illustrations are very special, refined, with subtle colours making the book unique.** She is also a master of drawing which shows in her graphic art for example. Working with Alenka was, of course, very professional but above all very pleasant.

**ANDREJ ILC,**  
Head of Fiction Editorial at Mladinska knjiga

In my editorial career I have met many great artists, but one of the ones I have learnt the most from is certainly Alenka Sottler. Every collaboration with her is much more than just an agreement between client and artist. I always had the feeling that she put a lot of thought into the very decision of whether to accept a project at all, and when she finally did, even if it was “just” a book cover, she always thought about the whole first, and from that idea came the choice of technique and the almost self-evidently perfectionist execution of the project. I am grateful for several conversations with her, which not only contributed to a better execution of the projects, but also enriched me with important life lessons. Today more than ever, we need committed, thoughtful individuals who do not accept cynicism, atomisation, divisions and exclusions. **Art is the highest form of hope, which is why those few seekers are so precious who, like Alenka Sottler, do not accept the artificial dilemma between art or life and still believe that true artists do not deny life, but persistently explore and search for possible existential paths for each individual and for humanity as a whole.**



## **ALIX-ROSE COWIE** for 3x3 Magazine about Alenka Sottler

There was a stage in Slovenian illustrator Alenka Sottler's career where she had a decision to make: to adopt the developing digital processes of the day or to continue making by hand. She chose to forgo computers, not because she's a Luddite, but because after considering whether she wanted to spend so much of her life staring at a screen, the answer was a definitive "No". **"I decided to keep the traditional techniques and rather invent something new in that field."** True to her word, **she's been stretching the limits of paint on paper ever since**, through investigation, experimentation and a prodigious curiosity applied to a growing library of literature, poetry, children's books, and fairy tales.

Sottler studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana and began freelancing as a painter and illustrator for publishers and magazines in 1988 – the year she turned 30. A few years later, she remembers a turning point where she threw out almost everything she'd done, questioning who she really was as an artist. She had been rebelling against her family traditions but once she made the decision to embrace the good things imparted by her parents, she had a breakthrough. Sottler's father was a sculptor, and it was in his studio that she found her love for art as a child. Inspired by his legacy of form, she exchanged her flat illustration style – very popular at the time – for the illusion of depth, space and volume in her work. The illustration she was working on was for a book by Bina Štampe Žmavc about a king searching for time. When she shared her artwork of the hunting party – men on horses and a pack of eager dogs in the foreground against a forest of looming trees gradually disappearing from sight – the publisher confirmed that Sottler too had found what she was looking for. "I had to go back to my past to find myself," she says.

First thing every morning, Sottler goes for a long walk where she does her best thinking. She uses the time to prioritize what she'll start with when she gets back to her home studio in Ljubljana. Her astonishingly intricate works take daily commitment. Her vast scenes are methodically built from lines, dashes and crosshatches as fine as a hair (she often uses a trusty magnifying glass), repeated in places over and over to create the light or shadow that sculpts her forms. This

process of simple specks multiplying to eventually reveal a complex picture is intrinsic to the way Sottler thinks about creation. She was elated to discover the concept of evolutionary developmental biology (evo-devo), recognizing a validating metaphor for her process in the way nature builds complicated living organisms from a multitude of particles. In her studio, Sottler keeps a drawer full of surprising effects that have come about while trying alternative techniques: patterns made with a fine-toothed comb dragged through paint, painting with tempera onto woven cloth, drawing with ballpoint pens, or mark-making using rubber stamps. **“I’m not so much a designer as I am an inventor,” she says. “You have to do things differently, otherwise you’ll never get different results. If I do things the usual way, the outcome won’t be interesting.”**





Working in a small country like Slovenia, illustrators take on all sorts of briefs to make a living. But working on a variety of jobs has suited Sottler's personality and encouraged her to innovate with each new challenge. Sottler feels that one of the main focuses of illustration in Slovenia is to preserve the rare Slovenian language. "It's very important that these words have a beautiful environment that honors them," she says, "that they're decorated with pictures." An unusual technique of hers is to use the words themselves as a visual device. This came from the idea to make a whole book using all of the same elements: text and illustrations both built from letters. In the case of the illustrations, the words are repeatedly painted over, or stamped more in some places than others to achieve a spectrum of tonal values that form the image.

As for the content of her work, Sottler seeks analogies in the written text so that the images aren't directly illustrating what is being read, but rather making an additional comment on the words.

**She doesn't make any decisions until she's done thorough research; collecting supporting materials, or delving into the history of the book or the writer. She's been known to read a writer's oeuvre before illustrating one of their books in order to grasp their fundamental themes and interests.** When she's illustrating a story set in a particular era, she'll research the materials commonly used then. "Everything is interesting to me," she says. "It's a journey." For a recent project illustrating "The Original Bambi: The Story of a Life in the Forest", an English translation of Felix Salten's 1923 novel by Professor Jack Zipes, Sottler immersed herself in the Austrian Jewish writer's experience living in Vienna in the 1920s. She found some insight into the social scene through photographs taken by her grandfather during his studies in Vienna around the same time. Irrespective of whether her findings can be discerned in what she draws, understanding the context of the stories she's interpreting can be rich grounds for concrete ideas.

Sottler's experience working with writers is not always a case of making the artwork in response to the already-established text. Writers have also been influenced by her point of view. Inspired by

her illustration of one of his poems, renowned poet, essayist, and editor Niko Grafenauer worked together with Sottler on a book of poetry and art called “Prividi” (Visions). For this project, Sottler created the imagery first which Grafenauer accompanied with words. The exquisite but nightmarish scenes are existential musings on emotions like sorrow, pain and the human condition. Sottler used the human head as a recurring symbol to represent how our emotional experiences are perceived in the mind. The sculptural forms were inspired by the memory of a box in her father’s studio where he would chuck unfinished works that he deemed failures to be squelched back into lumps of clay to start over. There were often discarded heads in the box waiting to be re-formed.

Other works of Sottler’s require a lighter touch, both conceptually and literally. She’s found joy lately making children’s illustrations of motorcycle-riding, swinging, scampering mice from her fingerprints. The style is a welcome break from her more intensive and time-consuming work, while still adhering to her overarching practice of building an image from a single mark.

**“I want to show kids that you don’t need expensive tools to make art,” she says. “I want them to feel that they can do it too; and to see that simple is beautiful.” And that’s the basis of even Sottler’s most sophisticated scenes, however well camouflaged.**

Deconstructing art-making into its simplest elements uncovers unexpected ways to put things back together. **“If I don’t surprise myself in the process, what I’ve done is usually not very good.”**



## 5.

### LIST OF AWARDS AND OTHER DISTINCTIONS

- 1981 • Prešern Award for students, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 1993 • Hinko Smrekar Award at the 1st Slovenian Biennial of Illustration in Slovenia
- 1999 • Trojlistok Grand Prix of the Children's Jury at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2001 • Award of Excellence at the BEIJ01 – Biennial of European Illustration in Japan
- 2002 • First Prize for illustration at the 5th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration in Slovenia
- 2005 • Award of Excellence for being selected in the Emperor's New Illustrations, Bologna Book Fair, Italy
- 2005 • Certificate of Merit for being selected for the 47th Annual Exhibition at the SI New York, USA
- 2006 • Certificate of Merit for being selected for the 48th Annual Exhibition at the SI New York, USA
- 2006 • First Prize for illustration at the 6th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration in Slovenia
- 2006 • Award for the most beautiful book at the Slovenian Book Fair, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2007 • Levstik Award for Illustration, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2007 • Certificate of Merit for being selected for the 49th Annual Exhibition at the SI New York, USA
- 2007 • Golden Apple at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava 2007, Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2008 • International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Honour List, Denmark
- 2008 • Award of Excellence, Bologna Book Fair, Italy
- 2008 • Hinko Smrekar Award at the 8th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2010 • Hinko Smrekar Award at the 9th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2010 • Merit at the 3×3 Magazine International Professional Show, New York, USA

- 2010 • Grand Prix at the 3rd Croatian Biennial of Illustration, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2010 • The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award nomination, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2011 • Getting Inside The Outsider”, House of Illustration and The Folio Society’s Inaugural Book Illustration Competition finalist, London, UK
- 2011 • The White Ravens for the book The Emperor and the Rose, Internationale Jugendbibliothek München, Germany
- 2012 • Merit /3×3 Illustration ProShow No.9/ 3×3 The Magazine of Contemporary Illustration, New York, USA
- 2012 • Hans Christian Andersen Award nomination, Denmark
- 2013 • Prešern Fund Award, Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2014 • Hans Christian Andersen Award nomination, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2016 • Gold medal, Book Category, Illustrators 58 Annual Exhibition, Society of Illustrators, New York
- 2017 • Trend, Award for Visual Creativity, Ljubljana
- 2018 • The White Ravens for the book Tunes from Mousedale Dunes, Internationale Jugendbibliothek München, Germany
- 2021 • Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award nomination, Sweden
- 2021 • Levstik Lifetime Achievement Award, Slovenia





## 6.

### COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BY THE CANDIDATE

BECHLEROWA, Helena (1990)  
**O ŽABICAH V RDEČIH KAPICAH.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

VITEZ, Grigor (1990)  
**RISATI NI LAHKO.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

BOR, Matej (1991)  
**PALČKI – PIHALČKI.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

KRAKAR, Lojze (1991)  
**PRIŠEL JE LEV.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

SNOJ, Jože (1991)  
**JUTRO SVETA.**

Ljubljana: Mladika.

DEKLEVA, Milan (1992)  
**BUČKA NA BROADWAYU.**

Ljubljana: DZS.

DEKLEVA, Milan (1992)  
**TOTALKA ODŠTEKAN DAN.**

Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.

KRZEMIENIECKA, Lucyna (1992)  
**O STARKI ZIMI IN NJENIH POMOČNIKIH.**

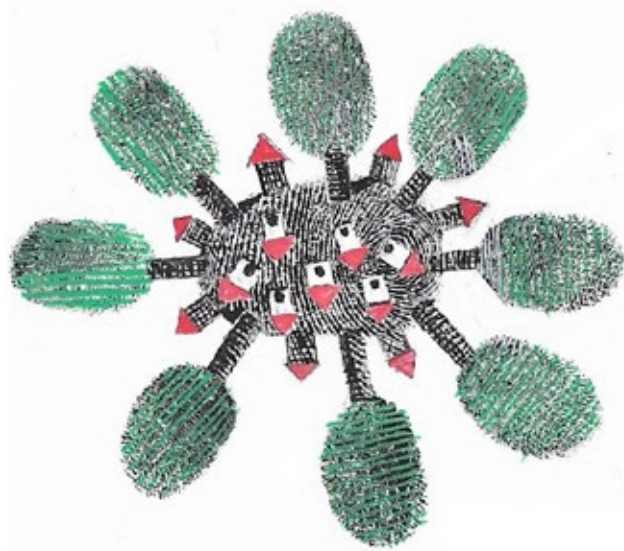
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

PRUNK, Ljudmila (1992)  
**KAJ JE VIDEL MIŽEK FIGA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

FOLK Tales (1993)  
**OREL Z DVEMA ŽENAMA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.



LOWRY, Lois (1993)  
**ANASTAZIJA KRUPNIK.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

SIMONOVIC, Ifigenija (1994)  
**POLJUB ZA PRINCESKO KVAKICO.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ŽUPANČIČ, Oton (1994)  
**MEHURČKI.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ŠTAMPE-ŽMAVC, Bina (1995)  
**URE KRALJA MINA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

SCHMIDT, M. G, Annie (1996)  
**MIJA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

NJATIN, Lela B. (1997)  
**VELIKANOVO SRCE.**

Ljubljana: Aleph.

GREGORIČ, Barbara (1998)  
**LENA LUNA.**

Ljubljana: Založba Mladika.

GRIFE, Maria (1998)  
**AGNES CECILIJA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ŠTEFAN, Anja (1998)  
**ČMRLJ IN PIŠČALKA.**

Ljubljana : Mladinska knjiga.

WILDE, Oscar (1999)  
**PRAVLJICE.**

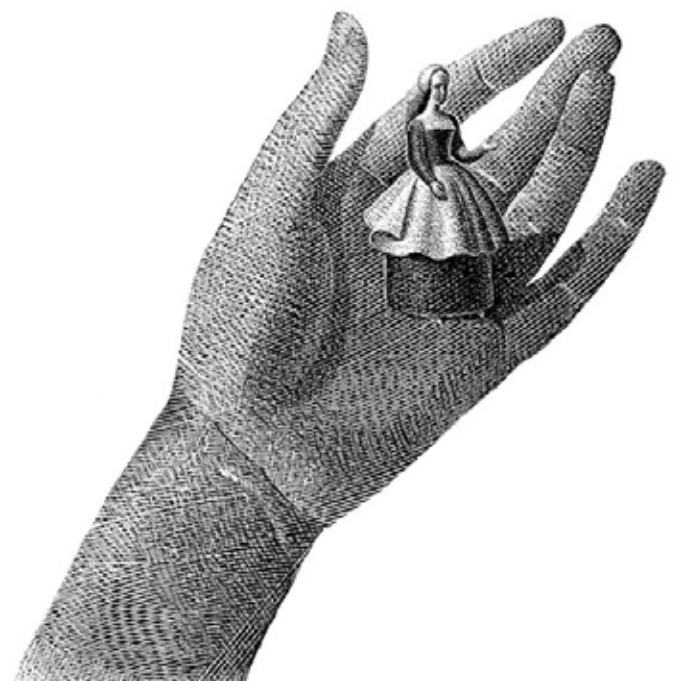
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

MAURER, Neža (2000)  
**VELIK SONČEN DAN.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga

MADO, Michio (2000)  
**ČUDEŽNI ŽEP.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.



REMŠKAR, Slavica (2001)  
**BAKRENI PRSTAN.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

KRAVOS, Marko (2004)  
**ŠKRAT ŠKRIP ŠKRAP NAGAJA RAD.**

Revija Galeb, Čedad: Zadruga Novi Matajur.

LINS, Bernhard (2004)  
**WILLI WUNSCHT SICH EINEN BRUDER.**

Zurich: Bohem Press.

ZUPAN, Dim (2004)  
**KO PRIDEJO ANGELČKI.**

Revija Galeb, Čedad: Zadruga Novi Matajur.

GRIMM, J & W. (2006)  
**PEPELKA.**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

**NAJLEPŠE PRAVLJICE (2006).**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

PETEK Levokov, Milan (2006)  
**KOSTANJEVO DREVO GRE V AFRIKO.**

Revija Galeb, Čedad: Zadruga Novi Matajur.

**SVETOVNE PRAVLJICE (2006).**

Ljubljana: Nova revija.

BRVAR, Andrej (2007)  
**TRI PESNITVE.**

Maribor: Litera.

MAKAROVIČ, Svetlana (2008)  
**SVETLANINE PRAVLJICE.**

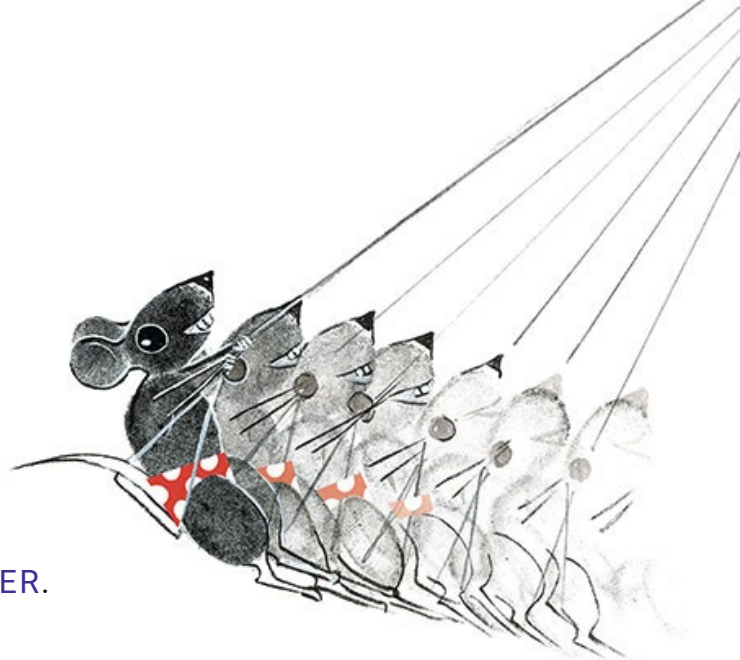
Dob: Miš.

DAL CIN, Luigi (2009)  
**ECHI D'OCEANO**, (Alenka Sottler together with ten illustrators),

Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore.

ŠTAMPE ŽMAVC, Bina (2009)  
**CESAR IN ROŽA.**

Dob: Miš.



NJATIN, Lela B. (2011)  
**ZAKAJ JE BABICA JEZNA.**  
Ljubljana: Center za slovensko književnost.

**ZIMA, ZIMA BELA: PRAVLJICE IN PESMICE ZA ZIMSKO-BOŽIČNI ČAS (2012).**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga

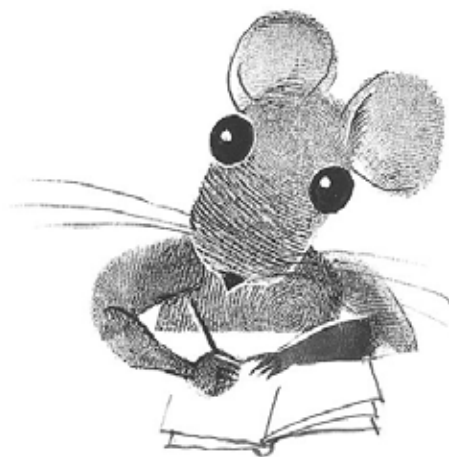
MAURER, Neža (2013)  
**VELIK SONČEN DAN: IZBRANE PESMI ZA OTROKE IN MLADINO.**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ŠTAMPE ŽMAVC, Bina (2013)  
**TRI PRAVLJICE.**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga

ŠTEFAN, Anja (2015):  
**SVET JE KAKOR RINGARAJA.**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ZLATA čebelica 2:  
**ŠE PETDESET NAJLEPŠIH (2016).**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

ŠTEFAN, Anja (2017)  
**DROBTINE IZ MIŠJE DOLINE.**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.



**TRALALA, HOPSASA, TU JE CICIDO DOMA (2018).**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

APPLEGATE, Katherine (2019)  
**DREVO ŽELJA.**  
Zagorje ob Savi: Ocean.

SALTEN, Felix (2022)  
**THE ORIGINAL BAMBI: LIFE IN THE FOREST,**  
Translated & Introduced by Jack Zipes, Princeton: Princeto University Press.

SALTEN, Felix (2023)  
**BAMBI: ŽIVLJENJSKA POT V GOZDU.**  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

**STO SLOVENSКИH LJUDSKIH:  
Z VRHUNSKIMI SLOVENSКИM ILUSTRACIJAMI (2023).**  
Jezero: Morfemplus.



## 7.

### LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS AND THEIR LANGUAGES

#### ENGLISH

MAKAROVIČ, Svetlana: *Svetlana's Fairytales, an anthology of fairytales of Svetlana Makarovič (Svetlanine pravljice)*.

Dob: Miš, 2008.

ŠTEFAN, Anja: *Bumblebee and the Flute (Čmrlj in piščalka)*.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2020.

ŠTEFAN, Anja: *Tunes from Mousedale Dunes (Drobtine iz mišje doline)*.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2020.

SALTEN, Felix: *The Original Bambi: the story of a life in the forest (Bambi: življenjska pot v gozdu)*.

Princeton University Press, Princeton. 2022.

#### CHINESE

ŠTAMPE ŽMAVC, Bina: *Guowang yu meigui (Cesar in roža)*.

Guangxi jiaoyu chubansh, Nanning, 2014.

GRIMM, Jacob: *(Pepelka)*.

Anhui Children's Publishing House 2014.

#### KOREAN

GRIMM, Jacob: *Grim hyeongje eui Sinderela (Pepelka)*.

Seoul: Joseonilbo saenghwal media, 2008.

#### GERMAN

LINS, Bernhard: *Willi wünscht sich einen Bruder*.

Bohem Press. Zurich, 2004.

ŠTEFAN, Anja: *Tanze, tanze, kleine Maus : Gedichte für Kinder und Mäuse (Drobtine iz mišje doline)*.

Moritz, Frankfurt am Main, 2023.

## ITALIAN

LINS, Bernhard: *Nicolo desidera un fratello.*

Bohem Press, Padova, 2004.

SALTEN, Felix: *The original Bambi. Storia di una vita nella foresta.*

Mondadori, Milano, 2024.

## SLOVAKIAN

NJATIN, Lela B.: *Obrovo srdce (Velikanovo srce).*

F. Raček, Klobouky u Brna, 1999.

## CROATIAN

NJATIN, Lela B.: *Divovo srce (Velikanovo srce).*

Meandar, Zagreb, 1997.

NJATIN, Lela B.: *Zašto se baka ljuti? (Zakaj je babica jezna).*

Zagreb, Meandar media, 2014.



## 8.

### TEN OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TITLES BY THE CANDIDATE

Bina Štampa Žmavc:

#### **URE KRALJA MINA (HOURS OF KING MIN).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1995

#### **SVETOVNE PRAVLJICE (WORLD FAIRYTALES).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Nova revija, Ljubljana, 2004

Lins Bernhard:

#### **WILLI WÜNSCHT SICH EINEN BRUDER (WILLY WANTS A BROTHER).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Bohem Press, Zurich, 2004

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm:

#### **PEPELKA (CINDERELLA).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2006

Andrej Brvar:

#### **TRI PESNITVE (THREE POEMS).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Litera, Maribor, 2007

Svetlana Makarovič:

#### **SVETLANINE PRAVLJICE (SVETLANA'S FAIRYTALES).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Miš, Dob, 2008

Lela B. Njatin:

#### **ZAKAJ JE BABICA JEZNA? (WHY IS GRANDMOTHER ANGRY?)**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Center za slovensko književnost, Ljubljana, 2011



Bina Štampe Žmavc:

**CESAR IN ROŽA (THE EMPEROR AND THE ROSE).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Miš, Dob, 2009

Anja Štefan:

**DROBTINE IZ MIŠJE DOLINE (TUNES FROM MOUSEDALE DUNES).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2017

Felix Salten:

**THE ORIGINAL BAMBI: THE STORY OF A LIFE IN THE FOREST.**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2022



9.

LIST OF FIVE BOOKS  
SUBMITTED TO THE JURY

Lins Bernhard:

WILLI WÜNSCHT SICH EINEN BRUDER (WILLY WANTS A BROTHER).

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Bohem Press, Zurich, 2004



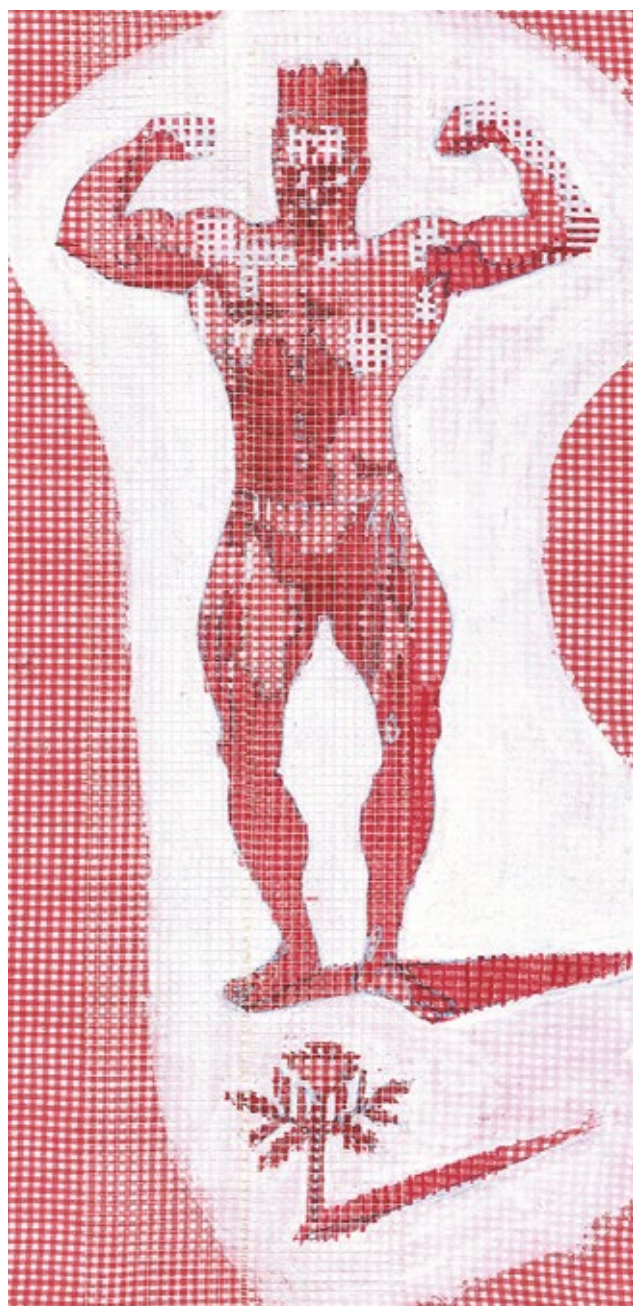


Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm:  
**PEPELKA (CINDERELLA).**  
Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.  
Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2006





Bina Štampe Žmavc:  
CESAR IN ROŽA (THE EMPEROR AND THE ROSE).  
Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.  
Miš, Dob, 2009



Anja Štefan:

**DROBTINE IZ MIŠJE DOLINE (TUNES FROM MOUSEDALE DUNES).**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2017



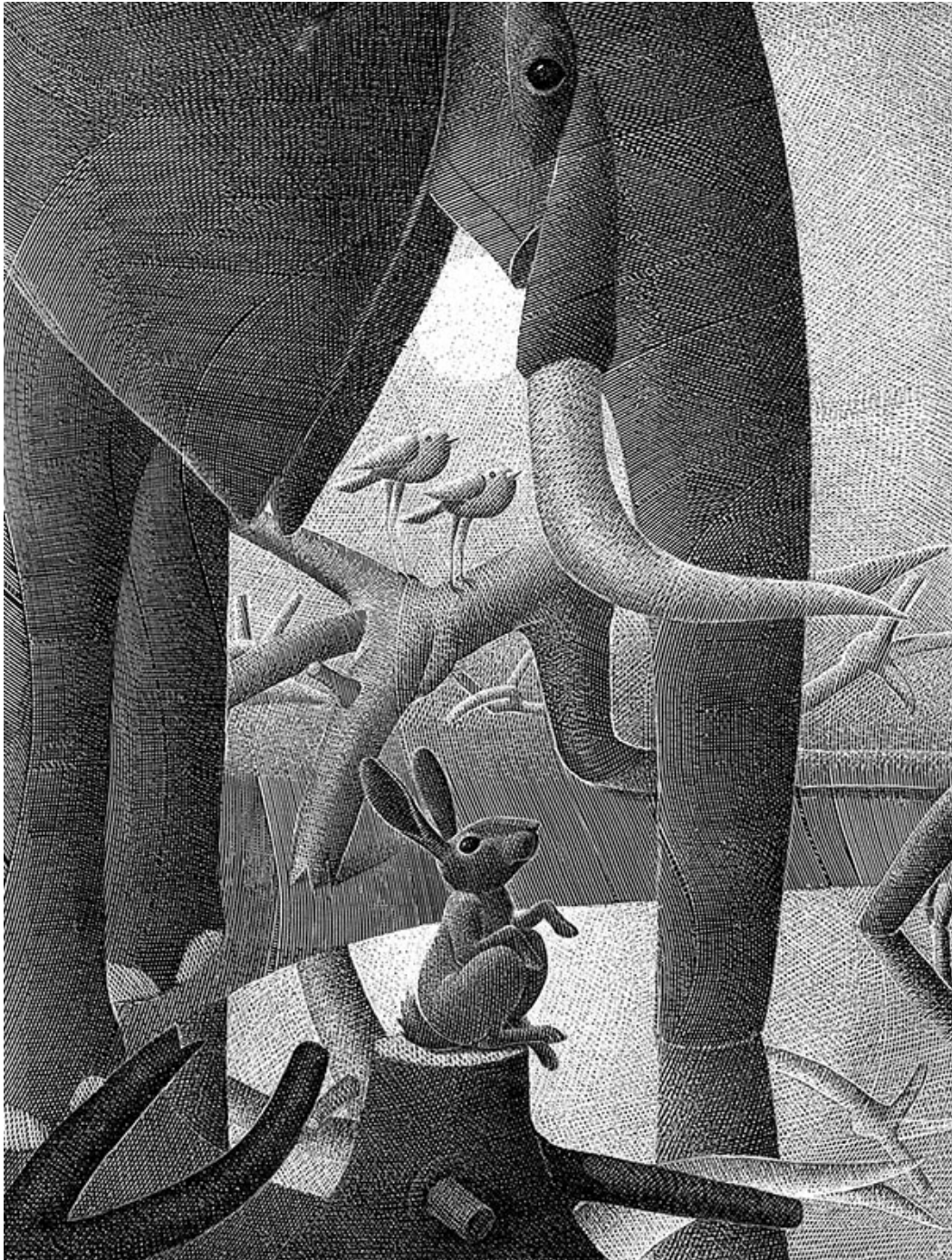


Felix Salten:

**THE ORIGINAL BAMBI: THE STORY OF A LIFE IN THE FOREST.**

Illustrated by Alenka Sottler.

Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2022



## 10.

### PUBLISHED REVIEWS OF THE BOOKS SUBMITTED TO THE JURY



Lins Bernhard:

Willi wünscht sich einen Bruder (*Willy Wants a Brother*)

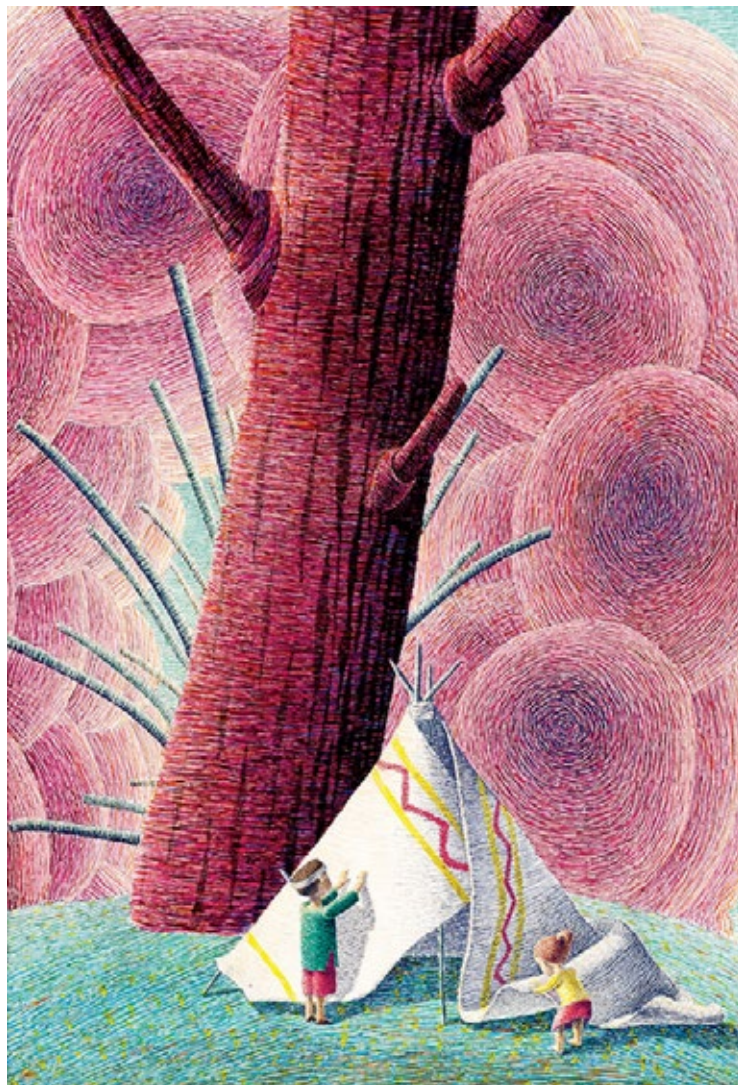
**Walter Fochesato:**

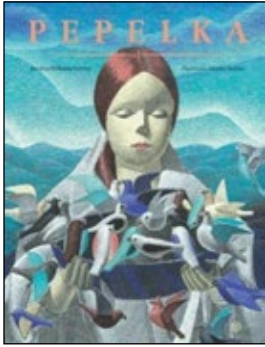
**Sacred Conversation, *Mensile Andersen*,  
numero 202, april 2004**

**I remain amazed, breath taken. I almost don't know what to say. I had not known of Alenka Sottler. Then there arrived this book, so pristine, intense, delicate, alluring, yet – at the same time – clear, precise, classical. Firmly grounded, but also – through the magic which is given to great illustrators – vibrant. This contrast is misused, but not worn out; I shall therefore return to it once more: the artist's illustrations, in their peaceful and harmonious gentleness, represent in a sense a first-rate gallery of art.** So many are the figurative references that Alenka Sottler, with absolute autonomy, has been able to assemble and recreate, to blend without contrasts. Indeed, the dense delineation, the virtuoso interplay of shades, the intense luminosity and interplay of volumes, do immediately make one think of pointillism. And there is no doubt that, when admiring the first illustration of the garden rich in games, or the brother and sister venturing downstream in the little rubber dinghy, one suddenly calls to mind Seurat's painting *La Grande Jatte*, even though his pointillisme has been replaced by Alenka Sottler with swift, patient strokes of color. Looking at the other illustrations, however, I cannot resist going back still further in time. I do, surely, exaggerate – yet perhaps it is worth doing so. The brother and sister are playing with a ball: a discreet, crystalline light filters through the tree-tops, their crown perfectly rounded. The trunk of one of



the trees – immense in the foreground – fills the spaces and defines the scene, together with two long lines of multicoloured clothes stretched out in the sunlight. Nicolo gets ready to shoot the ball, and his sister prepares herself to defend. All is motionless in the full light of midday, and I am reminded of the bell-like purity of paintings by Piero della Francesca or – even more so – of certain Sacred Conversation by Domenico Veneziano. **Indeed is there not – if we look carefully – something laically “sacred” in this mute “conversation”**, or in the others in which, day by day, there are constructed and depicted first the expectations of Nicolo and his disillusionments, and then – instead – the growth of a relation of love, of complicity in the game and, therefore, in life?



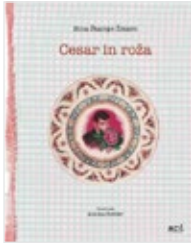


Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm:  
Pepelka (*Cinderella*)

**Note in the Handbook for Reading Quality  
Youth Literature (*Priročnik za branje  
kakovostnih mladinskih knjig*), 2007,  
Vojko Zadavec**

Polonca Kovač's translation differs in certain details from the Cinderella we were used to (especially the most widely used translation by Fran Albreht), bringing it closer to the original and anchoring it in the Slovene notion of a classical fairy tale.

**The illustration completely bypasses the established stereotype of Cinderella as a dual in which diligence, kindness and grace overcome greed, arrogance and deceit, creating a new story of pilgrimage. By focusing her artistic language on experimentally animating rigid objects (e.g. dolls, theatre curtains, columns) and including an oriental graphic atmosphere (e.g. chess board), the illustrator immerses herself into the fairy tale's distant past, placing Cinderella into a Gothic motif of the pilgrimage of the Magi as can also be seen in Gothic paintings in Slovenia. Here the protagonists are not separated into good and evil in order to stage a confrontation, instead they are all placed on a pilgrimage route of maturation in which each one plays their role leading up to the ultimate triumph of good. The illustrator follows this Gothic concept down to the last detail: her drawing imitates the sgraffito technique, the often-used method of decorating castle walls, the colours are royal (blue, red and gold), the artistic role of drapery and birds is exceptional. The grand procession concludes with the proclamation of the royal couple beneath three symbols: a key (initiation and access to secrets), a crown (dignity and honour) and the sun (life and eternity).**



Bina Štampe Žmavc:  
Cesar in roža  
(*The Emperor and the Rose*)

**Maša Ogrizek, Delo, 13.10.2010**

The attitude to the (literary) fairytale today is twofold: on the one hand, they have become – above all Grimm and Andersen – an integral part of the literary canon and, on the other, they are (have been) the subject of numerous anthropological, psychoanalytical, feminist and other analyses and artistic (re)interpretations. At least with adults, there is an inherently critical distance to the contemporary writing (and reading) of “classical” fairytales; some authors build this into the text itself through irony, while others try to negate it with a return to the original, popular form of fairytale.

Bina Štampe Žmavc takes as the starting point for the main body of stories in the collection of nine fairy tales, *Cesar in roža* (*The Emperor and the Rose*), the fairytale paradigm at the core of which are a prince and princess and their (lack of) love. The author often starts where the majority of these “real” fairy stories end: with “they lived happily ever after”; except that she replaces such an optimistic forecast with the disappointing (marital) reality: the princess abandoned for worldly lovers, bitter disappointment at men, painful suffering at the end of love... the author thus illustratively shows that the idealised image of love is normally a “fairytale” but, at the same time, perpetuates the illusion that a relationship of (heterosexual) love is the central goal, if not the aim of life (of women).

The main protagonists of the fairytales, all in turn princesses or queens, do nothing except fight for (lost) love. Each of them confined in their idle, everyday carefree castle garden, they carefully cultivate their external appearance, nurture selected feelings and surrender themselves to dreams. Even the choice of adjectives with which Bina Štampe Žmavc describes her “heroines” faithfully follows the patriarchal fairytale tradition of the Brothers Grimm – they are all

modest, delicate, charming, beautiful, gentle and patient. The relation between them is also symptomatic. Except for the old castle witch in one of the stories, there are no older women at all and since the princess is the only daughter of a king, no intergenerational flow of experience is possible. There is no alliance among the younger women, “ripe” for marriage, only merciless rivalry (for a man). So in one of the fairytales, an envious chambermaid steals the (mirror) image of her mistress but the prince royal detects the deceit in time and marries the “real” princess; in another story a girl gardener, in reality a witch, “casts a spell” on the prince so that he falls in love with her and abandons the princess, but she succeeds in getting him back by constant mourning; in a third, the prince abandons his princess because of a haughty goose girl but then his conscience pricks him in the form of a poetic sms message. This female antagonism also has a (conservative) social sub-text – sincere and faithful lovers are always aristocratic princesses and their scheming competitors evil social climbing “proletarians”.



Bina Štampe Žmavc uses a direct ironic (metaphysical) twist on the fairytale tradition only in *About the Frog and the Prince*, which is of course an allusion to *the Frog Prince* of the Brothers Grimm. The princess in this story chooses a frog from among numerous suitors, thinking that – in line with the famous fairytale – it will change into a charming prince. This doesn't happen, though; the ever more

demanding and conceited frog spends his nights playing cards and bowls with the other amphibious rabble and, on top of everything, becomes ever uglier, finally changing into a disgusting toad. Such a twist has within it a potential liberating charge but the author does not exploit this. Instead of the princess, with the recognition of the true “nature” of her husband, leaving him and beginning to live an actually independent life, she closes herself off from the world and resignedly bemoans her mistaken choice of suitor.

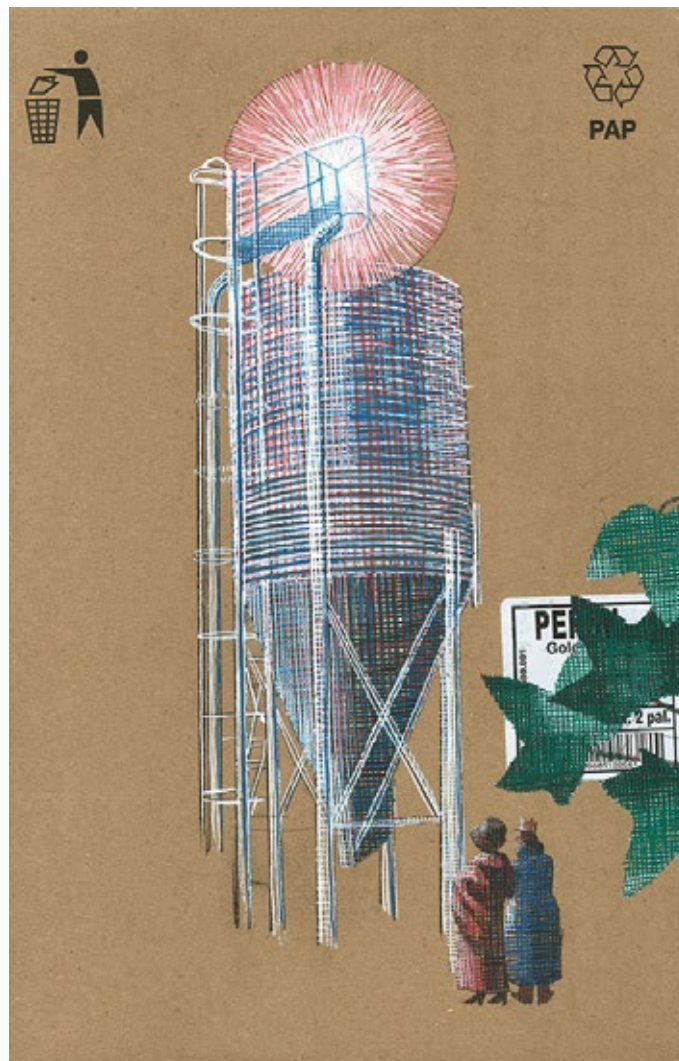
The most convincing fairytales in the entire collection are *About a Prince Made by Dreams* and *The Princess, the Lynx and Fear*. In them, too, the central motif is love though not its bitter, disappointed end but infatuated, impetuous beginning. On the formal level, the shift from fairytale to mythology corresponds with this contextual stress. In both stories, dreams have an important role – in the first fairytale the author imaginatively adds the role of a boat, in which spirits travel, and in the second, they are occupied by awakening female sexuality in the form of a bloodthirsty lynx. This is a transformation of the well-known mythological motif of *vagina dentata*; if the *vagina dentata* was originally feared by men, this time “wild” sexuality paralyses the princess herself – until it is tamed by the brave prince with the “discharged arrow”.

**In contrast to the writer, who remains within the gardens of “women” (today already finished flowering), the illustrator Alenka Sottler very originally and wittily plays with the typical “women’s” discourse. Even the technique of tempera on squared cloth is itself a happy allusion to Gobelin tapestry, to a formerly popular spare time activity. The illustrations also parody the ideology and aesthetics of advertisements and television serials: so, for example, the “snow white” garden immediately awakens a visual association with an advertisement for washing powder, the bottle with the witch’s potion can be seen as the packaging of a “miracle” cleaner, the apparent princes and princesses are reminiscent of the false glamour of actors in a television play. The excellent overall layout of the book has such suggestive power that it retroactively also influences the (ironic) perception of the text itself.**



On reading *The Emperor and the Rose* the question constantly occurs of for whom the collection of fairytales is actually intended. Despite the fact that the book received the Večernica Award 2009 – the award of the newspaper house Večer for the best original literary work for children and young people – it seems that, rather than addressing growing girls and boys, it is actually talking to their (disappointed in love) mothers. However, even for them – as Clarissa Pikola Estes showed convincingly in her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves* – there exists a more affirmative fairytale thread.

The book is thus worth reading mainly as a warning that we cannot be guided in life by such “fairytale” models.





Anja Štefan:  
Drobtine iz mišje doline  
(*Tunes from Mousedale Dunes*)

**Lara Paukovič: A Winning Combination,  
*Mladina* 39, 28.9.2018**

I first encountered Anja Štefan's work as a child when, for one of my earliest birthdays, I was given a copy of her collection *Over the Hill Into the Woods* (*Čez griček v gozdiček*) published in 1995 – at a time she was only starting out as a storyteller. The innovative book in the form of rebus stories (text combined with tiny pictures by Jelka Reichman), offers thirteen short stories featuring personified animals. It became a bestseller, was reprinted twice, and new generations of children still read it today. In the over twenty years since, Anja Štefan has grown into one of the most important names in children's and youth literature, and is also one of the few authors actively looking into folk narrative tradition. Her latest project, a picture book of poems for children *Tunes from Mousedale Dunes* (*Drobtine iz mišje doline*) which has just received the Večernica Award, is another story of success, co-created with two equally distinguished artists, illustrator Alenka Sottler and designer Sanja Janša.

It was actually Alenka who came up with the idea of mice, she had been developing the motif of mice as an independent illustration during a period when she did not have enough projects. Even as one of our most established illustrators and recipient of numerous international awards, she still has to face the difficulties of temporary nature of an illustrator's work, not having a constant flow of projects, months when it is not easy to get a commission. 'I drew the mice as an independent project, something I could offer to galleries and get an income from, so I didn't have to worry about surviving during periods when I didn't have enough work,' she explains. The drawings of mice proliferated and Alenka had the idea that Anja Štefan, whom she had previously collaborated with only one, might be someone who could interpret the images.

**When the collaboration was agreed, at the request of the editors who wished the mouse motif to be slightly modified, Alenka began**



to think about a different drawing technique. 'I tried to imagine what would attract children and decided on fingerprint painting, which I like because of the philosophy close to my heart that things should be kept simple, creativity stems from simplicity. Besides this, fingerprints are something children are close to. The first thing parents tell children off for is leaving their fingerprints everywhere!' Moreover, the illustrations created out of fingerprints also capture the contradiction that creates a poetic duality. 'Duality is essential to poetry,' Alenka is convinced. 'So you don't say everything directly, for example, this is an animal and this is an apple. What you say is, 'this looks like an apple' or 'this looks like a mouse.'

While creating the picture book, Alenka and Anja adapted to each other – some of the poems did not make it into the collection because, according to Alenka, the illustrations were too simple for them and at the same time a few illustrations stayed without a poem, but both were satisfied with the final product. **As was the jury for the Večernica Award, which normally does not take illustrations into consideration when making up their decision about the Award, but this time exceptionally also stressed the importance of the illustrations. In their award justification the jury noted that the heroes of the poems**

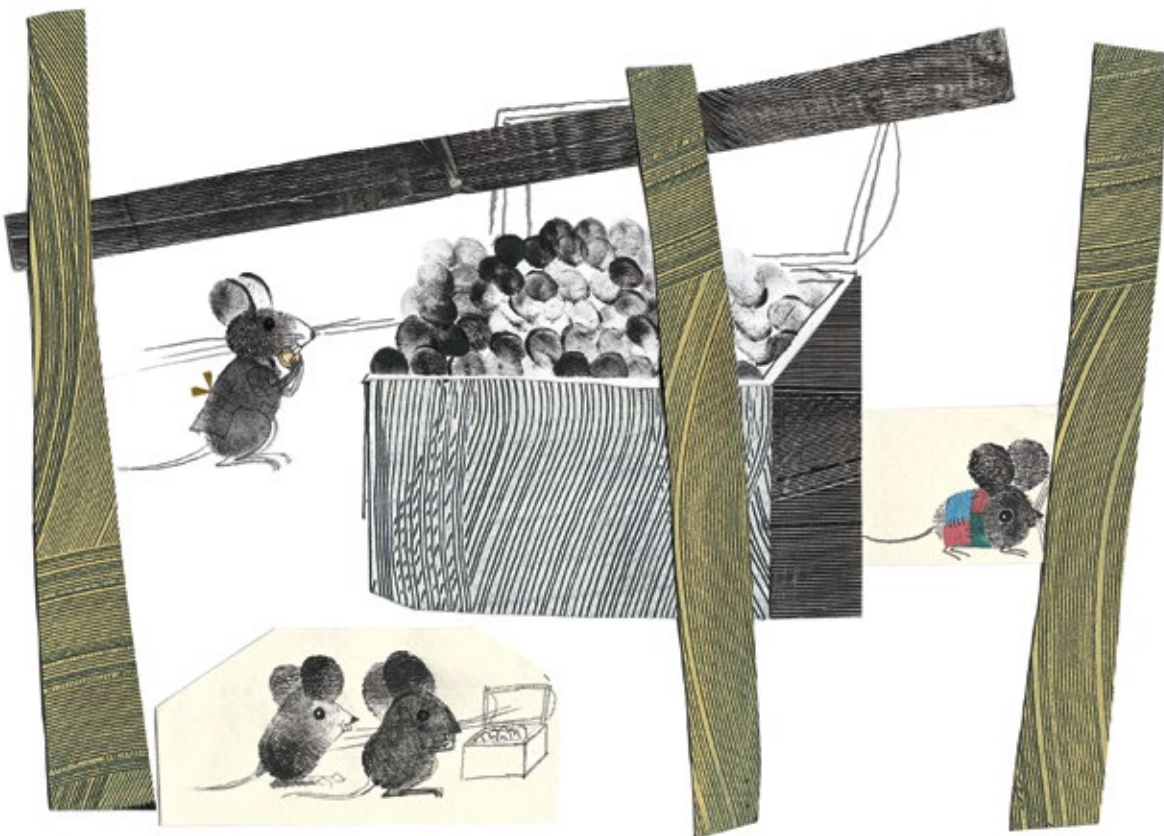
are ‘tiny but truly great in their creativity,’ and are beside the beauties of the world also aware of the less pleasant realities of our times, so the collection is especially pertinent and current. And indeed, the verses of the poem *This mouse, plump and peacock-proud* ‘all’s for her and no-one else: she’ll come to a sticky end,’ can also be seen as a criticism of capitalist greed, the poem, *Gather Pluck and Follow Me*, reflects the unfair state of the world but still offers a hope in a better tomorrow. This way poems are not only interesting to children but also their parents. ‘This has been recently almost a norm with me. Even in *A Swing for Everyone* the stories vary a lot, some are for very small children, playful and repetitive, others I wanted to also address adults. The same is true for *Tunes in Mousedale Dunes*,’ Anja Štefan explains, pointing out that really young children are not yet critical to the contents of what they read, so it is up to the adult to think about what they are offering children. ‘Of course it is also up to us, the creators, to put in the effort to create high quality contents, and up to those who bring these contents to the public.’ On her feeling for writing quality content for children, Anja comments the following, ‘I think I’m lucky in a number of ways.



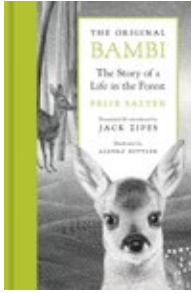


One is that I like simplicity of expression anyway, but at the same time I want words to say something and have meaning. The second is that I get to spend time among children a lot and know first-hand what they like and what they react to. The third is that I have for a long time been interested in the narrative and poetic traditions. And although I come across many things there that are not quite as polished, I still find examples of high quality traditions. Out of all of this, my own personal poetics have gradually emerged.'

Picture books remain a comfort in a frantic and technologically advanced world – time in them stops, but also the time devoted to picture books is time parents make for their children outside all their obligations, and the children at these moments give them all their attention. **And if they are created as carefully as *Tunes from Mousedale Dunes*, reading them is a truly special experience.**







Felix Salten:  
The Original Bambi: the Story of a Life in the Forest

**By Bill McKibben, *The New York Times*,  
Jan. 27, 2022**

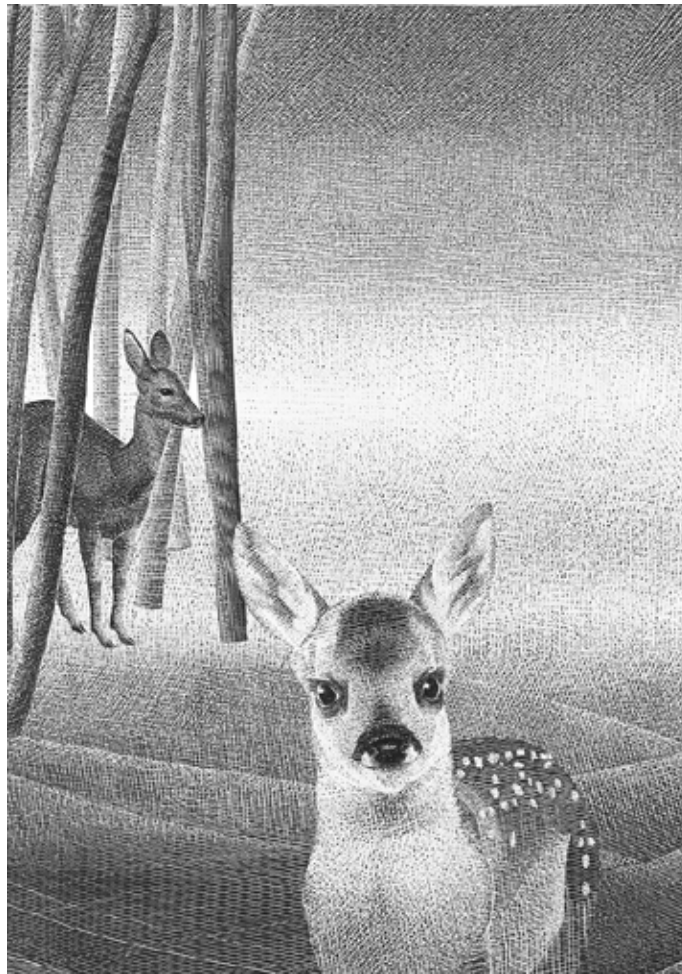
The concentration of literary firepower in fin de siècle Vienna has few counterparts in human history: This transitional movement headlined by Arthur Schnitzler, Karl Kraus and the Young Vienna group that gathered at the Café Griensteidl eventually birthed modernist (and difficult) classics such as Robert Musil’s “The Man Without Qualities.” It’s wonderfully ironic that the cultural production of this milieu that eventually reached the widest audience is a talking-animal story.

Felix Salten was born Siegmund Salzmann in Hungary, but his family soon moved to Vienna, where he changed his name (according to his very able translator Jack Zipes) in order to “unmark” himself as a Jew. He grew up on the edge of poverty, from which he made his escape by pursuing high art in its many forms: “He went to the theater, attended exhibits at museums and sought out places where he might meet people of culture and wealth. Young Salten became an ambitious and shrewd social climber. His greatest desire was to be recognized as a dignified Austrian, a man of culture.” In this he succeeded, becoming one of the city’s most important journalists, and also something of a hack (his other famous novel, “Josephine Mutzenbacher,” was a pornographic saga written anonymously to make money).

Salten published “Bambi” in 1923, and it was immediately a huge success, first in Austria and Germany and then, after an English translation (by, somewhat incredibly, Whittaker Chambers), in America, where it was a selection of the mighty Book of the Month Club and caught the attention of one Walt Disney. The rest is history — the American Film Institute recognized Walt’s version in 2008 as the third-best animated film of all time. It is thus firmly lodged in the boomer brain as a child’s tale, which is precisely why this new translation from Princeton University Press is so welcome. Because it turns out that “Bambi” is quite remarkable: a meditation

on powerlessness and survival told with great economy and sophistication.

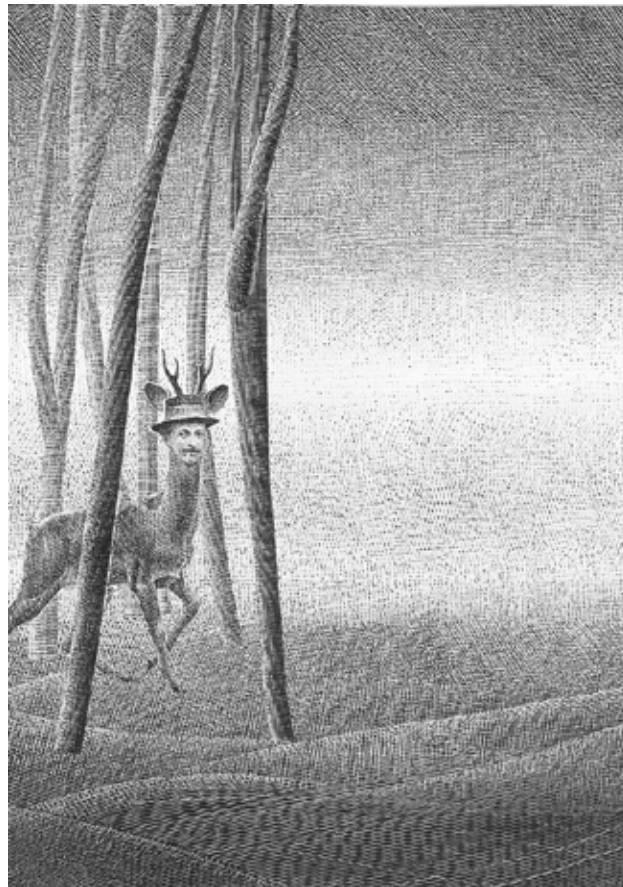
Bambi's birth launches the story; he is an utterly helpless and guileless fawn, living in a forest filled with adventures and joys, but also dangers, by far the worst of which is "He," the hunter who stalks the woods, and the imaginations of all who live within it. Salten is an excellent naturalist. He describes the way Bambi learns to listen and



smell, capturing the hyperalertness that is the birthright of prey: "He knew when a pheasant was running through the bushes; he could exactly discern the delicate patter that stopped and started again. He could also recognize the field mice by listening to the sound they made whenever they ran back and forth on the short paths." Anyone who has

watched a doe on the edge of a field freeze and then turn her ear in the direction of some faint noise will see how right Salten has got it.

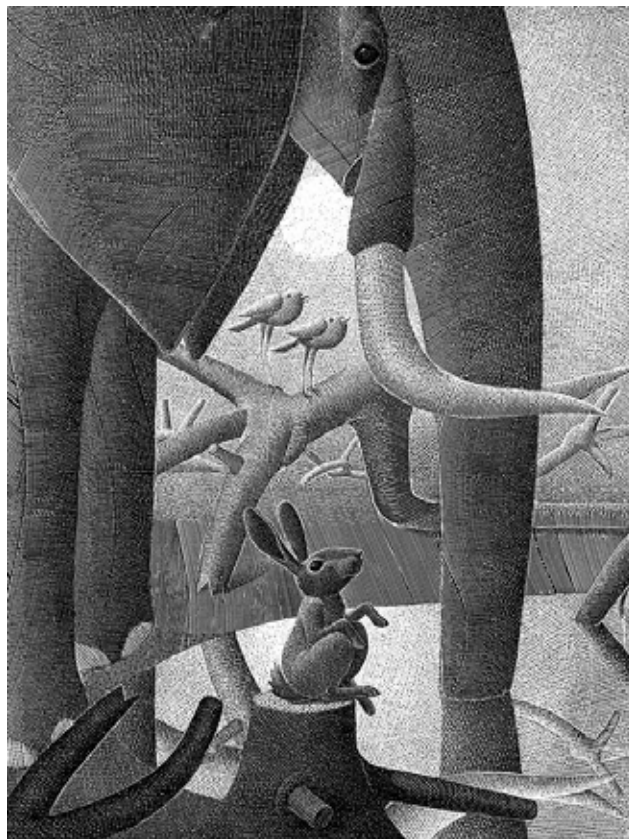
And anyone who has lived a life below the apex of his or her own society will recognize the coping mechanisms he describes. There's the hedgehog who rolls into a ball with his "barbs" sticking out, the hare (the progenitor of Thumper) who becomes everyone's friend and, drawn with chilling precision, the collaborator, Gobo (Bambi's cousin), proud to wear a collar and wrongly convinced it will protect him.



Bambi wanders the forest, learning its paths and inhabitants, and falls in love with Gobo's sister Faline. (His crush, his charmed happiness in her company and his eventual withdrawal are described with biological accuracy, and a good deal of humor; in fact, Salten's wit, usually expressed through sidekicks like the garrulous magpie, makes it clear why the story was a natural for Disney to adapt.) Eventually he grows into a great stag, a prince of the forest with a rack of antlers sufficient to intimidate

most competitors, though not, of course, the foe with a gun. Bambi's strategy for physical and psychological survival was passed down to him by "the old prince" (the mentor buck who may or may not be his father): "Of all his teachings, the most important one was you must learn to live alone, if you want to protect yourself, if you want to grasp the meaning of existence, if you want to attain wisdom."

It's a pretty brutal meditation on existence, serving as a kind of wild counterpart to Orwell's domesticated animals on the Farm. And it's easy to imagine how it came to the mind of a man who'd achieved



success but was nonetheless a Jew in a part of the global forest where that made survival a challenge. (Salten fled to Switzerland when the Nazis rose to power.) There are plenty of compensations along the way, though: the love of mother and mate, and the beauty of the place.

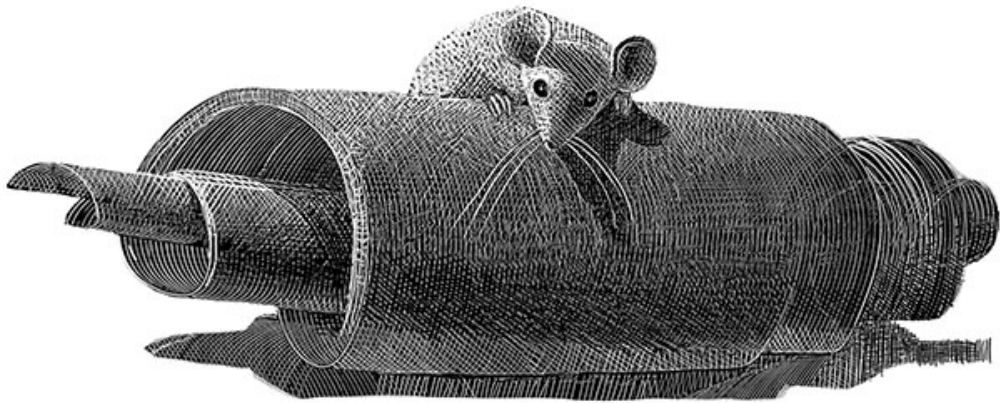
That beauty must have been a balm in the 1920s, when Salten was writing — a salve against the turbulence of interwar Europe,



with Bolshevism and fascism threatening all. Here's how Salten describes the forest of Bambi's early days: "Everything smelled everywhere of fresh leaves, blossoms, moist earth and green wood. When dawn broke, or when the sun went down, the entire forest resounded with a thousand voices, and from morning until evening the bees sang, the wasps hummed and the bumblebees buzzed through the fragrant and peaceful woods." These passages are actually harder for us to read now. It was just a few years ago that amateur entomologists in Central European nature reserves began to report a mass die-off of flying insects; in the course of a decade, the insect biomass has dropped by as much as two-thirds, a victim of ever more pesticides on surrounding fields and perhaps of an ever-warmer world. "We did not expect such a decline to be observed over only a decade," one researcher said.

It's true that the world has staggered on; we've figured out ways to survive, so far, the traumas that surrounded Salten. But he had the solace, at least, of seeing the natural world as a stable and static backdrop for the harsh dramas of the human world. A century later, we know that "He" is deep in the forest all the time.





[www.alenkasottler.com](http://www.alenkasottler.com)