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**Character Protoypes in Traditional English
and Slovak Fairy Tales**

(Diplomová práce)

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(Anglická filologie)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to compare prototypical characters of English and Slovak folk fairy tales. The thesis also includes definitions of the folk tales and the fairy tales and the history of folk tales gathering in England and Slovakia. There is a comparison of English and Slovak main characters such as young brave heroes, young women and siblings. Following chapters deal with parents in folk fairy tales and with various representatives of evil in Slovak and English tales, such as giants, dragons, devils, stepmothers and evil wizards. Finally, wise old men, women, fairies and fairy godmothers are depicted. There is an assumption that this comparison leads to a discovery that English and Slovak fairy tales are similar. The uncovered distinctions are emphasised and possible explanations offered.

Key words

Folk tale, fairy tale, myth, England, Slovakia, character, hero, protagonist, comparison

Anotace

Cílem diplomové práce je porovnání typických postav v anglických a slovenských lidových a současně kouzelných pohádek. Práce také zahrnuje definice lidových pohádek a kouzelných pohádek a historii jejich sbírání na územích Anglie a Slovenska. V práci se porovnávají hlavní postavy jako mladý udatný hrdina, mladá dívka a sourozenci. Následující kapitoly se zabývají rodiči jako pohádkovými postavami, také představiteli zla, jako jsou obři, draci, ďábli, macechy a zlověstní černokněžníci a také vílami, kouzelnými kmotrami, moudrými stařečky a stařenami. Předpokládá se, že porovnání postav povede k zjištění, že anglické a slovenské pohádky jsou podobné. Důraz je kladen na zjištěné rozdíly a na snahu jejich vysvětlení.

Klíčová slova

Lidová pohádka, kouzelná pohádka, mýtus, Anglie, Slovensko, postava, hrdina, protagonista, porovnání.

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1 Introduction

In this diploma thesis, we are to compare and analyze pivotal characters of Slovak and English fairy tales. We understand the pivotal characters as not only protagonists but also characters in supporting roles who significantly intervene in the plot of the fairy tale.

We decided to reduce the stock of English and Slovak fairy tales used for this thesis and we concentrated strictly on fairy folk tales. The fairy folk tales are texts which fulfil the criteria of both fairy and folk tales. The criteria and the definitions of the fairy tales and the folk tales are summarized in the second chapter of this work.

Our selection of the folk literature was motivated by the attractiveness of the folk tales; their connections with primaveral myths.

“Some fairy and folk stories evolved out of myths; others were incorporated into them.”¹ In the majority of cultures, there is no clear border line separating myth from folk or fairy tale; all these together form the literature of preliterate societies. In Nordic languages we may find only one word for both of them: “saga”. In German, the word “Sage” has retained for myths and the fairy stories are called “Märchen”. It is unsuitable that both the English and French languages use the term which emphasizes the role of fairies in them, because in most, no fairies appear at all. Myths and fairy tales attain a definite form only in cases when they are committed to writing and then, they are no longer subject to continuous change. Before the tales were written down, they were either condensed or vastly elaborated in the retelling over the centuries. Thus, some stories merged with others. All became modified by what the teller of the tales considered of greatest interest to his listeners, by what his concerns of the moment or the specific problems of his era were. Both forms demonstrate the cumulative experience of a society as men wished to recall past wisdom and experiences for themselves and transmit it to future generations.² Indeed, myths are justified to be regarded as a basic constituent of human culture.

We have chosen this topic as we consider the folk tales and the fairy tales inexhaustible sources of new knowledge and observations. The folk tales and the fairy tales have limitless attributes which enable us to learn about ancient societies.

¹ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment; The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Random House, 2010), 26.

² Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 25-26.

In addition, we all were influenced by the folk tales and the fairy tales in our childhood and it must have left some consequences on us and the present-day society. Thanks to comparison of the English and the Slovak branch of the folk fairy tales, we may come to conclusions which could give us a few explanations about the diversity of these two nations.

Not exclusively the pivotal characters, but the whole fairy tales and folk tales have already been a subject of study of numerous folklorists, linguists and psychoanalysts. Within the framework of Slovak folk tales, the most complex and probably the most sophisticated collection of Slovak folk literature was listed by a Czech linguist Jiří Polívka in his four volumes of the *Register of Slovak Folk Tales* (1923 - 1931).

The most influential folk tales collectors and famous figures in the study of Slovak folk tales were priests Pavol Dobšinský and Samuel Reuss. All the analyses and comparisons in this work are based on reading of their folk tales.

Folk and fairy tales from mythological point of view were examined by Miroslav Pius, a contemporary Slovak folklorist, in his recent book *Od mýtov k rozprávkam (From Myths to Folk tales)*, published in 2012.

In England, the fundamental contribution to study of folk tales and fairy tales was done by The Folklore Society, established in 1878, and its members. The society exists up to this day. Its Presidents and folklorists grouped here lead an extensive research on folklore and folk literature. These scholars are also the most significant figures in the history of English folk tales collecting. This history is further described in the third chapter of this thesis.

Analyses of folk and fairy tales and their collecting was a subject of study of Edwin Sidney Hartland, once a President of The Folklore Society. Hartland is one of the most elite experts in the field of folk tales in England. His notable works are *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* (1890), which is an extensive collection of folk tales, and a scientific work *The Science of Fairy tales: An Enquiry into the Fairy Mythology* (1891).

A classification of the folk tales which is still used and appreciated by contemporary folklorists, is introduced in *The Types of the Folk tale* (1961), written by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson.

Apart from Slovak and English scientists, an eminent research from the formalist's point of view was done by Vladimir Jakovlevič Propp, a Russian scholar.

His *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928) is still appreciated as one of the most detailed study in this field. We are to use his work as a guide book for this thesis. Propp describes a “two-fold quality of a tale: its amazing multiformity, picturesqueness, and color, and on the other hand, its no less striking uniformity, its repetition.”³ On the base of this uniformity, he was able to find repeating patterns in the fairy tales and managed to find a common structures in them.

Sir James George Frazer dealt with folk tales as an anthropologist. His most famous study of myths and folklore is *The Golden Bough* (1890). Frazer stated that all human societies have evolved through similar stages of magical and religious belief.

European folk tales and European mythology were also the interests of a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. His work was a response to the Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. Jung developed theories of archetypes which folk tales consist of. Jung considered the archetypes instinctive patterns which have a universal character and are expressed in narratives, symbols, behaviour, character types in literature and images.

A controversial study of fairy tales from the point of view of a children psychologist is *The Uses of Enchantment; The meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976) by Bruno Bettelheim, an American with Austrian origins. Bettelheim was interested in the impact of the fairy tales on children and their behaviour. His works are usually reputable and cited by eminent scholars, although several academics consider him a charlatan, as an American professor Jack David Zipes.

Our base for comparison of the characters of English and Slovak folk fairy tales includes approximately fifty English tales from Joseph Jacob’s *English Fairy Tales* (1882), *More English Fairy Tales* (1894) and from Hartland’s *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* (1890). In addition, we have read approximately sixty Slovak folk tales from the three volumes of *Slovenské rozprávky (Slovak Folk tales)* by Pavol Dobšinský published in 1994, 1995 and 1996 and also the folk tales from Dobšinský’s former edition od *Slovenské rozprávky (Slovak Folk tales)* which was published in 1961 and a few folk tales by Samuel Czambel, chosen from his collections.

³ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (Bloomington: The American Folklore Society and Indiana University, 1928), 8, accessed October 15, 2012, <http://homes.di.unimi.it/~alberti/Mm10/doc/propp.pdf>.

Our assumption is that Slovak and English folk fairy tales have a large common canon of fairy tale motifs, symbols and types of characters. We even presuppose that we may find very similar folk fairy tales in both countries and we may encounter equivalents of English folk tales in Slovak sources or vice versa. Both lands are in Europe and therefore no striking and exotic curiosities should be found. Thus, we expect relatively few distinctions between the Slovak and English fairy folk tales we have read.

In the second chapter, we are to define the key words folk tale and fairy tale. Then we are to summarize the history of Slovak folk tales collecting and the history of folk tales collecting in England in the third chapter. After all, we are to choose pivotal characters of the folk fairy tales and discover their common features and uncover their distinctions.

2 Theoretical background of Folk Tales and Fairy Tales

Folk tales

The term “folk tale” can be explained broadly or narrowly. In the broad sense, the term applies to all prose narratives which follow traditional storylines, which are or were told in oral form. In this case, the term embraces a multitude of genres such as nonsense tales, jests, burlesques, never-ending tales,⁴ fairy tales, legends of all types, memorates, fables, tall tales, and humorous anecdotes. The original author is unknown. The current version can be rarely shaped by an individual, but the tellers are unaware of this fact, e.g. in “The Three Bears”. The narrow definition of the folk tale is restricted to the avowedly fictional narratives in the list above, excluding memorates and legends, since these declare to be true.⁵ “The line, however, between belief and unbelief is vague and varies from culture to culture and even from person to person, and even in the most sophisticated societies legends of strange things from the past or present continue being told and are usually believed.”⁶ In this case, Arthurian legends serve as an example. Arthur’s existence has never been proved, but the stories about him are called legends.

This term “folk-tale” suggests an intimate relationship with the folk. Therefore, nineteenth-century scholars defined all of these minor genres as belonging peculiarly to unlettered inhabitants.⁷ The folk tale differs from legends or traditions; the oral fictional tale enables the storyteller absolute freedom as long as he stays within the limits of local taboos and as he tells tales that please his listeners. A folk tale can travel with great ease from one storyteller to another. A particular story can pass language boundaries without difficulty, as the story is characterized by its basic pattern and by narrative motifs rather than by its verbal form. Recently, thanks to increasing human mobility, many tales, especially of Eurasian origin, have disregarded even these culture boundaries. The tales were brought to other continents

⁴ Peter Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996), 161.

⁵ Simpson, Jacqueline and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 132.

⁶ “folk literature,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed December, 11, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/212142/folk-literature>.

⁷ Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia*, 162.

with new settlers.⁸ After all, as stated by Bettelheim, folk tales may be considered a major division of expressive culture.⁹ Through the changes and differences in folk tales, we can observe the traditions and peculiarities of a given society.

Fairy tales

Fairy tales are a term used for a group of narratives which are centred on magical tests, quests, and transformations. The fairy tales are defined by their plots, which follow standard basic patterns.¹⁰ A typical fairy tale is generally a brief narrative in simple language. It details a reversal of fortune, with a rags-to-riches plot which often culminates in a wedding at the end. Various magical creatures regularly assist earthly heroes and heroines achieve their goal. The entire story is usually shaped to demonstrate a moral point.¹¹ Many scholars tended to classify the fairy tales, but often very unsuccessfully. These insufficient classifications were also introduced in Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* and Propp also gave reasons for their inappropriateness. As an example, one of those avowed classifications of fairy tales was describes in *The Types of the Folk tale*, written by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson in 1961; the functions of a fairy tale are to be oral entertainment for adult as well as children readers.¹² Aarne's and Thompson's classification is used up to this day.

The term "fairy tale" only appeared in the 18th century, after a translation of the French *Contes des Fées* which is a title of a book published in 1698 and written by Madame d'Aulnois. The French "contes" really did often include fairies. The fact is that this term for English tales is not accurate enough, since the majority of the stories contain no fairies, though magic abounds. Hence, some scholars prefer the terms "magic tales" or "wonder tales",¹³ but the term "fairy tales" is the most popular.

The word "fairy tales", as we use it nowadays, was firstly known as a German term Märchen. The term Märchen was used for fairy tales collected and written by

⁸ "folk literature," Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁹ J.L. Fisher, "The Sociopsychological Analysis of Folk tales," *Current Anthropology* 4/3 (1963): 236, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2739608>.

¹⁰ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 117.

¹¹ Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia*, 13.

¹² Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 117.

¹³ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 117.

the Grimm Brothers. The word Märchen has its origin in the old German word “Mär”, which meant “story” or “tale”. The term Märchen came to existence as the diminutive of the word “Mär”. Thus, Märchen is translated as a “little story”. The term “wonder tale” or Märchen refers to the genre over fairy tale. The term Märchen also embraces tall tales. The plot involves protagonists who kill villains, succeed to kingdoms and marry a beautiful young lady or princess at the end.¹⁴ The Märchen begin with typical formulae, e.g. “once upon a time”. The situations are familiar to the listeners; i.e. European Märchen reflect social conditions of peasants and simple workmen, such as smiths, tailors, or millers.¹⁵ The motifs and characters in every Märchen are very simple; princes, ogres, poor and starving children, giants, dragons, evil stepmothers, magicians, warlocks, false heroes, cunning men or women, fairy godmothers, magical helpers, princesses, youngest sons, glass mountains, orders, prohibitions and their breaking. All of them represent an archetype.

Literary and oral fairy tales mutually exchanged their plots, motifs, and elements and also with the tales coming from foreign lands.¹⁶ In the 18th century, there were some attempts of folklorists to find and recover the “pure” folk tales which were not distorted by literary versions. Yet while oral fairy tales existed for thousands of years before their literary versions, there is no pure folk tale, and each literary fairy tale draws on folk traditions.¹⁷ Therefore, it is impossible to trace forms of transmission of a fairy tale.

There are two theories of origins which tried to explain the common features in fairy tales which are spread over continents. The first one claims that a single point of origin could generate any given fairy tale, which then spread over the centuries. The second theory is that the fairy tales stem from common human experience and therefore they can appear separately in many different origins.¹⁸ After all, there definitely is a canon of all fairy tales. The fact is visible after realizing the repetition of the same characters and motifs in fairy tales of various lands.

¹⁴ Stith Thompson, *The Folk tale* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 8.

¹⁵ "Märchen," Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed December, 11, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/364221/Marchen>.

¹⁶ Jack D. Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm* (Norton & Company, 2000), 12.

¹⁷ Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, 846.

¹⁸ Catherine Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale*, 77-78.

Fairy tales take on the peculiarities of their location. The manifestations of these peculiarities are reflected on choice of motifs and the description of character. The narration style they are told in also shows some local specificities.

Original versions of the fairy tales were altered also for their moral message for children. Fairy tales were supposed to be read to children, too. Therefore, many fairy tale collectors and writers decided to delete taboos; sexual references, incest or cannibalism. Bruno Bettelheim, a Freudian psychologist, regarded the cruelty and savageness of older fairy tales as indicative of psychological conflicts. In his work *The Uses of Enchantment; The meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, he criticized this expurgation, because it allegedly weakened their usefulness to both children and adults as a way of symbolical resolving of issues.

3 Folk Tales Collecting and Its History in Slovakia and England

3.1 The collecting of Slovak Folk Tales

The Beginnings of Slovak folk tales recorded are interconnected with Slovak national renaissance and Štúr's national awareness and cultural movement group. Some of their most eminent points of interest were a Slovak language revival (after years of violent Magyarization of Slovaks), language codification and Slovak literature revival; its exploration, disclosure of old Slovak literature and production of new literature which would support cultural enlightenment.

Almost all folk tale collectors were members of the Štúr's group. Because they treated folk tales as representation of the Slovak nation, they felt a need to adjust and improve these “raw” tales in local dialects.

The first initiative in collecting and recording Slovak folk tales was made by a protestant priest Samuel Reuss (1778 - 1852). His scope of interest was in Slavonic history. His works are recorded in *Codex Revúcky* which is considered to be the oldest manuscript collection of Slovak folk tales. Pavol Dobšinský participated in the third part of the collection.¹⁹ Reuss's printed works were later published in a few editions of Slovak legends edited by Ján Francisci (1822 - 1905), well-known under a pseudonym Ján Rimavský. Another folk prose was recorded in *Codex Tisovský* and *Codex diversorum*. Materials from both these codices were supposed to be printed under the name of *Slovak National Folk Tales (Slovenskije prstonárodnje rozprávky)* but finally, the books were not published.

Samuel Reuss also involved his three sons Gustáv, Ľudovít, and Adolf in collecting the folk tales and they initiated several Bratislava students into even further searching and collecting. Hence there were a lot of manuscript collections full of folk songs, sayings and tales called *Funster (Zábavník)*. Samuel Reuss, under his leadership during his life, managed an extensive folk tales search. He and his son

¹⁹ We will deal with Pavol Dobšinský also in the following paragraphs as he is a pivotal figure in Slovak folk tales collecting tradition.

Ľudovít also cooperated with the Czech writer Božena Němcová and they even shared some of their materials.

Božena Němcová (1820 - 1862), although being Czech, is counted among to the first Slovak folk tales collectors, too. She published *Slovak Folk Tales and Legends (Slovenské pohádky a pověsti)* in 1857 - 1858. This book was sold also in France, Italy and Germany.

After Samuel Reuss's death, Ľudovít Reuss continued his father's research of folk literature. All the significant collectors of that era were meeting in Samuel Reuss's house; Ján Francisci – Rimavský, August Horislav Škultéty, Pavol Dobšinský, Peter Kellner – Hostinský, Štefan Marko Daxner and many others.

The first official printed anthology of Slovak folk tales *Slovak Legends (Slovenskje povesti)* was published by Ján Francisci – Rimavský in 1845. In this work he also argues that these folk tales are mythological and full of precious heritage of old Slovaks. The work was called “legends” because at that time, this expression was used also for folk tales.

The most famous collector of Slovak folk tales mentioned above, a protestant priest Pavol Dobšinský (1828 - 1885), considered folk tales to be a source of mentality and wisdom of old Slavs, their understanding of the world, nature, natural powers and phenomena. He emphasized the creativity of a folk narrator, manifesting the thinking of the narrator. Dobšinský also took care of the purity and richness of Slovak language in his folk tales in the framework of national renaissance.

Pavol Dobšinský with August Horislav Škultéty (1819 - 1892) published the first set of *Slovak Legends (Slovenské povesti)*. The second set of *Slovak National Legends (Prostonárodnie slovenské povesti)*, was published only by Dobšinský after almost twenty years. Between 1880 and 1883. Dobšinský considered Slovak folk tales the most archaic and therefore most valuable among other Slavonic folk tales.

In 1863, Pavol Dobšinský was a member of a committee of Matica slovenská²⁰ and he urged collectors to publish their materials. Dobšinský set a methodology of folk tales collecting and considered aesthetic and ethic features as more important than mythological elements. As a talented writer he manipulated folk tales and aimed to raise their artistic and aesthetic value.

²⁰ a Slovak culture organisation existing up to this day, founded in 1863 in Martin, Slovakia

After an extensive search in 1880, Dobšinský created *Slovak National Customs, Superstitions and plays (Prostonárodné obyčaje, povery a hry slovenské)* which contained many Slovak proverbs, sayings, riddles and folk customs.

Dobšinský's folk tales collection is so reputable and popular that it was printed in many editions and (these tales) are also read by present-day readers.

The Slovak Museum Association (Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť), established in 1893 took another important step in folk tales gathering. This organisation focused on folklore and folk artefacts. At those times, Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť was led by Andrej Kmeť, Štefan Mišík, Karol Anton Medvecký, Jozef Ľudovít Holuby who were all priests, scholars and folk tales collectors. Each one of them collected tales from his native region.

The most active of them was Štefan Mišík (1843 - 1919) who brought tales from eastern Slovakia. On the basis of his research, he published a set of 49 folk tales *Slovak Legends from Spišský Hnilec (Slovenské povesti zo Spišského Hnilca)* in 1907 and again in 1911. Mišík appended additional information to each folk tale; the name, age, level of education and social status of the narrator, whether the narrator is a native or an immigrant, whether he had heard or read that folk tale.

The region of central Slovakia was researched by another priest František Šujanský (1823 - 1907). Although he was interested mainly in folk proverbs, sayings, weather sayings and riddles, he collected some folk tales, anecdotes and humorous tales, too. Šujanský insisted on didactic and educational effect of tales, therefore he changed some motives and supplemented the tales with virtuous endings.

Samuel Czambel (1856 - 1909) together with Pavol Dobšinský were the collectors with the biggest number of recorded stories. Czambel studied folk tales also from the linguistic point of view as he was a student of Slavonic languages. At times of Magyarization, folk prose was the best source of authentic Slovak language. He published 122 tales from eastern Slovakia as an enclosure to his linguistic work in 1904. The majority of Czambel's folk tales is recorded in *Register of Slovak Folk Tales (Súpis slovenských rozprávok)* by Jiří Polívka (further described below). Czambel's linguistic preferences meant that he did not adapt his tales, contrary to the rest of the Štúrs group. He considered folk tales to be a language document and wrote them following the oral tradition. Thus, Czambel collected the first authentic verbal material from Slovakia. These tales are used as examples of various local

dialects and Czambel also gives us information about the name, age, education and literacy of the original narrator.

The most complex and probably the most sophisticated collection of Slovak folk tales was gathered by Jiří Polívka (1858 - 1933), a Czech linguist and Slavacist. *Register of Slovak Folk Tales* consists of four volumes written from 1923 to 1931. These volumes are a stock of not only Slovak folk tales but also the whole folk prose from the beginning of the 19th century to the First World War. The author also deals with the history of folk tales collecting and with the most eminent collectors. Polívka classifies tales into groups of tall tales with supernatural elements, tales inspired by daily life, novel tales, humorous tales and anecdotal tales.

Jiří Polívka's student, another Slavacist Frank Wollman (1888 – 1969) was leading a large collection of folk prose from 1928 to 1947. During these years he worked at the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University in Bratislava and the mission was undertaken by his students. After Wollman's departure from Slovakia, his activities continued, headed by his former students. One of his most active students with the biggest contribution was Mária Kosová – Kolečányi (1918 - 1985). Apart from her own collecting missions, she wrote notes to Wollman's folk tales. The result of the whole Wollman's action was a set of 2200 texts but they were printed much later, during years 1993 – 2004.

Slovak folk prose in Slavonic and European context is a subject explored by Slovak folklorist Viera Gašparíková (1928). Her goal was to compare folklore of historically, culturally and territorially similar countries.

Gašparíková published a bilingual Slovak – English catalogue of all Frank Wollman's texts *Catalogue of Slovak Folk Prose (Katalóg slovenskej ľudovej prózy)* in years 1991 and 1992. Later, Gašparíková together with Božena Filová put together Wollman's collection of folk tales *Slovak Folk Tales (Slovenské ľudové rozprávky)*. This work consists of three volumes published in 1993, 2001 and 2004. She also added a dictionary to the texts and modified these tales.

A literary historian and ethnographer Andrej Melicherčík (1917 - 1966) also did a research of Slovak and Ukrainian folk tales. He was interested in Pavol Dobšinský and in 1959 he published *Pavol Dobšinský. Life and Work. (Pavol Dobšinský. Portrét života a diela)*. Melicherčík also participated in creating *Slovak Folk Tales* – a set of Wollman's folk tales.

A folklorist and specialist especially in folk dances, customs and children folklore Kliment Ondrejka (1929) wrote a collection of tales from Sliač and Liptov region *Narrations from Slatín (Rozprávania spod Slatína)* in 1972. He also created a set of tales *Uncle Vajda's Narrations (Čo rozprával sváko Vajda)* in conjunction with Milan Leščák. The book was published in 2000.

A folklorist Milan Leščák (1940), wrote *Folklore and Folklore Studies. About Folk Literature (Folklór a folkloristika. O ľudovej slovesnosti)* in 1982 where he describes a genre and kinds of a tale. This publication was written together with a famous Czech folklorist Oldřich Sirovátka (1925 - 1992). In Sirovátka's work, he investigated relations and interactions between oral tradition and literature and showed that literature is the base of folklore itself.

Leščák was particularly interested in Pavol Dobšinský. In cooperation with Viliam Marčok, he wrote an essay *Dobšinský Today (Dobšinský dnes)* in 1977. In 1986, Leščák wrote another paper about Pavol Dobšinský *Cultural-historical significance of Pavol Dobšinský's Work (Kultúrnohistorický význam diela Pavla Dobšinského)*.

Another folklorist, already mentioned above, Viliam Marčok (1935) studied jointly with Milan Leščák Dobšinský's folk tales. Marčok explained the impact of Dobšinský's tales on later Slovak literature. The topic of folk tales was analysed in his book *About Folk Prose (O ľudovej próze)*, written in 1978.

Gabriela Kiliánová (1951), an ethnologist and historian also contributed to Slovak folk tales collecting. She is an author of *Narrations by Alojz from Riečnica (Rozprávania Alojza z Riečnice)*, printed in 1984.

Some of the contemporary Slovak researchers dealing with folk tales are Martina Bocánová who wrote two studies about this topic or Hana Hlôšková who written *Príspevky k dejinám folkloristiky na Slovensku (Reports on the history of Slovak Folklore)*. Another present-day researcher is Jana Pácalová who deals with tales in the times of romanticism. A recent and myth-oriented study *Od mýtov k rozprávkam (From Myths to Folk tales)*, published in 2012, was written by Miroslav Pius.

Analyses and studies of Slovak folk tales of this thesis are based on the folk tales collected by Pavol Dobšinský and Samuel Czambel.

3.2 English folk tales collecting

While Slovak folk tale collecting history involves relatively small group of folklore enthusiasts who joined the cultural awareness movement and their work and benefits can be easily summarized in several pages, the English history of folk tales gathering is more difficult to be described consistently.

The first boom of English folk tale collecting began during the Victorian era. The tales had a tendency to be explicitly moralistic and their goal was to teach children moral values. Naturally, some collectors wrote also many folk tales who just celebrated the imagination of storytelling. The majority of tales recorded in Britain were found in Wales or Scotland among Gypsy storytellers. The typical English narrative genres were the jocular anecdote and the horrific anecdote, e.g. “Mr Fox” and the local legend.²¹ During the Victorian era, also the first folk tales books for children with illustrations were published.

In the 19th century, “the bourgeois public gradually accommodated and instrumentalized fantastic art production to compensate for some of the ill effects industrial regulation and rationalization brought on by the rise of capitalism. The resistance at first to the fairy tale during the Enlightenment stemmed from the tales’ implicit and explicit critique of utilitarianism. The emphasis on play, alternative forms of living, pursuing dreams and daydreams, experimentation, striving for the golden age - this stuff of which fairy tales were (and are) made challenged the rationalistic purpose and regimentation of life to produce for profit and expansion of capitalist industry. Therefore, the bourgeois establishment had to make it seem that the fairy tales were immoral, trivial, useless and harmful.”²² After this “dark age” of folk tales, England began to preserve folk tales and support their collecting and printing again.

The authors of *A dictionary of English Folklore*, Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, after their extensive research in English folklore traditions, summed up that there has always been greater stress on Scottish, Welsh, and Irish folklore traditions as those are considered richer, more ancient and more worth preserving than those

²¹ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 117.

²² Jack D. Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 16-17.

traditions of England.²³ “There appears to be no precedent for taking ‘England’ as the basis for a book covering all folklore genres, although there have been books on, for instance, English calendar customs or dances. Folklorists have either studied a specific county, or have drawn material from all over the British Isles.”²⁴ Simpson and Roud also claim that the Englishmen have never used folklore to assert their patriotic identity, whereas Scotland, Ireland, and Wales proudly celebrate their traditions.²⁵ We may consider their arguments justifiable, as I verified it during my search for some complex theoretical works about English folk tales and their history, which was unexpectedly difficult.

In spite of the lack of folklorists studying exclusively English folk tales, there is still a large stock of collection of folk tales. English folklorists and their research are led by The Folklore Society (written as The Folk-Lore Society till 1968) since 1878, when the institution was founded. It needs to be underlined that it was the first society devoted to this subject in the world. Their goal was to preserve and publish various popular traditions, legendary ballads, local proverbial, sayings, superstitions and old Customs (British and foreign) and all subjects connected to them. Subsequently, English Folk Dance Society, the Folk-Song Society, and the Society for Folk Life Studies were established. The Folklore Society published books and journals and gained eminent popularity. After the society’s recession and existential problems during at the beginning of the 20th century, its activities were renewed again. Professional academics and scholars turned more to the study of folk literature from an anthropological and sociological point of view. Much higher standards were stated for contributors which shifted the society to highly respected academic rank.

Voluminous collections of English folk tales are also gathered in the seven volumes of extracts of printed folklore published by The Folklore Society, but these volumes did not exhaust the folk tales and legends in the counties chosen in the volumes.²⁶ There is a wealth of folk tale material also in Sabine Baring-Gould’s two volumes of regional books. Baring-Gould (1834 - 1924) is famous for his extremely extensive production of books. His approximately 200 books are more notable for their quantity than their quality nowadays, but Baring-Gould’s publications were

²³ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 5.

²⁴ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 5.

²⁵ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 5-6.

²⁶ Warren E. Roberts, Richard M. Dorson and Herbert Halpert, “The Folk tale: A Symposium,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 70/275 (1957): 59, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/536501>.

markedly popular at those times. Another rich folk tale material is in Mary Elizabeth Wright's *Rustic Speech and Folk-Lore*. Her chief sources were regional books and English dialect collections, and especially the publications by the English Dialect Society.

One of the most famous members of The Folklore Society was Joseph Jacobs (1854 - 1915), a Jewish scholar of Australian origin. His collections of folk tales *English Fairy Tales*, written in 1890, and then revised in 1898, and *More English Fairy Tales* published in 1894 are one of the most popular English fairy tale collections. At time of their publishing, the opinions on his work were controversial, because Jacobs, inspired by the Grimm Brothers, made folk tales more accessible to children and revised, rewrote and polished his collected materials. His approach to the text “has been viewed by folklorists as vulgar popularizing and by literary critics as poor, slangy writing. Jacobs's deliberate crossing of the boundaries between folklore and children's literature has been attacked by purists in both camps.”²⁷ Jacobs was praised at least for deleting taboo passages from texts; he minimized sex, avoided incest and did all necessary censorship suitable for children.²⁸ We used Jacobs's fairy tales as one of the main sources of English primary literature for this diploma thesis, as we are not interested in primary “raw” materials.

The Grimms' increase of textual liberties influenced also another scholar Andrew Lang (1844 - 1912). In his collections of folk tales Blue Fairy Book (1889) and Red Fairy Book (1890), he also applied the idea “that folk tales designed for the public must be narratives of fanciful adventure, replete with young heroes and dread ogres, witches and princesses, talking animals and magic objects.”²⁹ Lang was interested especially in myths and believed that “the study of language was the primary key to the understanding of myths”.³⁰ He also studied supernatural elements on a scientific level, which was not appreciated.

Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), a famous Scottish anthropologist who claimed that all human societies have evolved through similar stages of magical and religious belief. He came to this conclusion by studying ancient mythologies, beliefs

²⁷ Carole G. Silver, “English Fairy Tales and More English Fairy Tales,” *Marvels & Tales* 18.1 (2004): 105, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA122027834&v=2.1&u=palacky&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w>.

²⁸ Silver, “English Fairy Tales,” 105.

²⁹ Roberts, Dorson and Halpert, “The Folk tale: A Symposium,” 53.

³⁰ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 208.

and rituals of tribal societies in Africa, Australia and America and compared them with recent folk customs. His most notable work *The Golden Bough*, firstly published in 1890, is considered as the most emotionally persuasive study of myth and folklore.³¹ Frazer is a representative of a non-historical and cross-cultural approach which is rejected nowadays. In spite of this fact, Frazer's work was very influential on his contemporaries.

Edwin Sidney Hartland (1848–1927), a President of Folklore Society from 1899 to 1901, was one of the biggest experts in the field of folk tales in England. His notable works are *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* (1890), which is an extensive collection of folk tales, and *The Science of Fairy tales: An Enquiry into the Fairy Mythology* (1891), served also as a source for this diploma thesis. Hartland studied folk tales from ethnological point of view; he was interested in myths, legends, primitive societies and religions in the framework of English folk literature.

We are to enumerate some more famous folklore collectors. A member of The Folklore Society, Sidney Oldall Addy (1848–1933) searched mainly the area of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. "In retrospect, Addy was ahead of his time in the quality of his fieldwork, combining careful observation with interviews and an ethnographic approach."³² He wrote famous publications *Notes & Queries* and *Folk-Lore*.

Katharine Mary Briggs (1898–1980) was an author of children's fiction, but later, she became interested in folklore, too. She made an admirable contribution to fairy lore and folk narratives. Her most outstanding work is *A Dictionary of Fairies* (1976), *The Vanishing People* (1978) and *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*. This dictionary's aim was to prove the unsubstantiated claim that Britain has no folk tales. The only defect of the work is the author's limitation to folk sources in English language, because she could not speak Celtic languages. The dictionary consists of four large volumes; the first was published in 1970. The first two gather all known fairy tales, animal fables, jocular tales, novella and nursery tales within her remit. The other two volumes contain a selection of local and historic legends illustrating typical topics of English traditions.³³ She also published a set of folk tales *Folk tales of England* (1965). Briggs belonged to The Folklore society and became its President in 1967.

³¹ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 135.

³² Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 2.

³³ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 33-34.

Other important famous folklorists who contributed to collecting of English folk tales are Theo Brown, John Brand, John Aubrey, Charlotte Sophia Burne or Clodd Edward. Those scholars are not to be described in detail. As the English folk tales collecting history is richer than the history of Slovak folk tales, we were forced to pick only the pivotal figures and facts to introduce the topic to the readers of this thesis.

Native English fairy tales must once have been abundant. Unfortunately, at the very period when someone might have thought of gathering them and transferring them from oral forms to printed forms, a flood of foreign fairy tales appeared in England. Firstly, the French fairy tales of Charles Perrault in 1697, Madame d'Aulnois in 1698, and Madame de Beaumont in 1756. Secondly, the German fairy tales by the Grimm Brothers in 1812 and after all, the Danish ones written by Hans Christian Andersen from 1835 to 1872. Selection from those foreign fairy tales were translated quickly and printed cheaply. As a result, fairy tales such as "Cinderella", "Bluebeard", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Puss in Boots", "Beauty and the Beast", "The Frog Prince", "Red Riding Hood", "Snow White", "Rumpelstiltskin", "Rapunzel", "The Tinder Box", and "The Little Mermaid" were totally absorbed into English culture. The same effect was acquired also by the *Arabian Nights*.³⁴ All these German tales penetrated also to Slovak culture.

³⁴ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 117.

4 Features of Characters in Slovak and English folk tales

4.1 Protagonists

“A tale usually begins with some sort of initial situation. The members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero (e.g., a soldier) is simply introduced by the mention of his name or indication of his status.”³⁵ We are to analyze male heroes, female heroes and siblings as main characters separately. In literature in general, heroes need not to be exclusively positive characters but it is a rule in fairy tales. Even if the figure does not seem positive at the beginning (a case of lazy and fool antihero Jack), he always becomes so at the end.

As defined by Propp, “the hero of a fairy tale is that character who either directly suffers from the action of the villain in the complication (the one who senses some kind of need), or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or need of another person. In the course of the action the hero is the person who is gifted with a magical agent (or a magical helper), who makes use of it or is served by it.”³⁶ Attributes and actions of a typical fairy tale hero are very similar in both English and Slovak and make a stereotype; the stereotype we are used to since our first fairy tales read during childhood.

Before our analysis of various kinds of main characters, we will mention some common features of all fairy folk tale heroes.

In folk tales, readers usually assume protagonists’ beauty, as a result of a stereotype that the good ones are always the beautiful ones and the ugly ones are the villains. The beautiful characters are the ones who win and are awarded. Brave kings, princes, princesses and other humble and virtuous girls definitely belong to this group. The vision of good-looking even penetrated into film adaptations of famous folk tales. Illustrations in the folk tales books follow the same fashion. Publications of tales for children are very often supplemented with illustrations depicting male heroes only as handsome figures. The ideal of beauty in tales is often intensified; the heroes and heroines have silver or gold hair or even a gold star on their forehead. In spite of all these facts, the look of main characters, mostly males, is not always described straightforwardly. The text lacks any definite statements about the

³⁵ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 12.

³⁶ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 31.

protagonist's look. A transparent description is more frequent in tales with women as protagonists.

We often encounter a hero who becomes even prettier after achieving success than before. The same transformation happens often after revival of the protagonist.³⁷ The process of becoming more beautiful represents a specific rebirth; the look of the hero differs from his previous existence. He never returns back to his previous status, he shifts to greater perfection.³⁸ He also becomes more self-confident.

Main character's beauty has various functions. For instance, the beauty of a poor young boy or a girl may compensate his or her low-born origin and therefore be a justification to marry a prince or a princess.³⁹ The charm of the hero is an inevitable part of his achievement of happiness.⁴⁰ Another function of protagonist's loveliness can be a compensation of a hero's stupidity.

The protagonists do not have to necessarily represent themselves directly as beautiful in the tales. The hero often lives a double life and denies his or her presence. The double life may acquire many forms; the most frequent one is a change of clothes, e.g. pretending to be a beggar, as in "The Mouse Cloak" ("Myšacia bundička") or "Cap-o-rushes". The camouflage automatically presupposes that the hero will not be recognized,⁴¹ which always become true.

4.1.1 Young and Brave Heroes as Male Protagonists of Folk Tales

Most of Slovak and English folk tales are based on a strong, young hero willing to do his best to accomplish his missions and fulfil his tasks. This positive character usually bears the main moral lesson of the story.

The protagonist usually goes forth to seek his fortune or to find his future wife or to rescue his sister or a princess or relieve a country of a giant's plundering. This man is determined to do anything to gain his lady, to protect the weak ones and to punish villains. He does not need to be especially bright, but finally, he always

³⁷ Anna Veliká, "Hrdina evropské lidové pohádky. Analýza textů z českých zemí, Slovenska, Německa a Rakouska s hlavní postavou Jan/Honza/Hans," (PhD diss., Masaryk University in Brno, 2011), 169.

³⁸ Veliká. "Hrdina evropské lidové pohádky," 170.

³⁹ Max Lüthi. *Das Volksmärchen als Dichtung. Ästhetik und Anthropologie*, (Düsseldorf, Köln: Diederichs Verlag, 1975), 12.

⁴⁰ Lüthi, "Das Volksmärchen als Dichtung," 21.

⁴¹ Veliká. "Hrdina evropské lidové pohádky," 167.

makes smart decisions. He never goes against his parents' will and obeys them. Slovak folk heroes succeed when they are honest, humble and smart, when they save the weaker ones and fight with a representative of evil. English main characters are stubborn, resolute and willing to do anything to win and get fame. They sometimes even kill innocent victims.

Tasks which Slovak and English heroes need to complete are not always of a serious matter. The heroes' fighting and taking risks do not need to have any educational results full of moral values as when rescuing a lady in despair or punishing evil. In some folk tales, stout young men only fulfil obligations and tasks invented by a whimsical princess or their father, merely to deserve her and prove their suitability for this young lady, e.g. in "The Snake, the Cat and the Dog" ("Had, mačička a psík") The determined hero achieves anything required and competes for his wife-to-be even despite of her vanity and capriciousness.

According to Propp, there are six possibilities how the hero can end up. "A bride and a kingdom are awarded at once, or the hero receives half the kingdom at first, and the whole kingdom upon the death of the parents. Sometimes the hero simply marries without obtaining a throne, since his bride is not a princess. Sometimes, on the contrary, only accession to the throne is mentioned. If a new act of villainy interrupts a tale shortly before a wedding, then the first move ends with a betrothal, or a promise of marriage. In contrast to the preceding case, a married hero loses his wife; the marriage is resumed as the result of a quest (designation for a resumed marriage). The hero sometimes receives a monetary reward or some other form of compensation in place of the princess' hand."⁴²

Although the handsomeness of heroes is predicted, the look of these main characters is only rarely described straightforwardly. A clear description of beauty does not exist. The only exceptions are a few Slovak and English folk tales where heroes have gold or silver hair or a gold star on their forehead, as in e.g. "The Proud Lady" ("Hrdá panička").

There are two main groups of male heroes; brave, hard-working men who must fight to deserve their happy ending and then the second group, mostly prevalent in Slovak literature; a lazy and simple country boy who succeeds only by accident. We will closely describe these two groups in the following chapters.

⁴² Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 42.

Prototype of a Brave and Smart Hero

The protagonist can be a prince, king, wealthy gentleman or also a poor village boy; a shepherd, an orphan, motherless or fatherless. The character is described as an honourable man with virtuous goals and represents chivalrous behaviour. After reading a hundred of tales, we may state that princes and kings are much more frequent in Slovak folk tales than in English ones. In following paragraphs, we are to analyze firstly royal figures and secondly prototypes of poor boys.

The Princes and kings are usually young and determined to find a future wife or save their sister (kidnapped by a giant or dragon or wicked king) or they are challenged by their fathers to go forth and seek their fortune. Even if their task is to save their sisters or to wander from place to place, they always end up married to a princess in the end.

The majority of stout heroes in English folk tales are poor peasants or simple country boys. In addition, they are often simultaneously orphans in Slovak tales. Despite of their low-born origin, they have the same virtuous qualities as kings and princes. Among both English and Slovak folk tales we can often find a story about a poor village boy or shepherd who goes forth to seek his fortune (analogously to any princes or kings), but with motives which are often associated with poverty. Struggling to survive, the protagonist's parents send their son to earn some money or bring something to eat. This pattern of story is common in both countries – e.g. English “Jack and the Beanstalk” or Slovak “The Snake, the Cat and the Dog”. There is a digression from the frame of poor young hero, too. In some cases, these heroes leaving their homes because of starvation are breadwinners; they are married, and fathers of many children, e.g. the Slovak folk tale “Goldilocks” (“Zlatovláska”). Although heroes in this exception do not get married in the end, other ordinary low-born youngsters marry a princess or a noblewoman.

Personal qualities of English folk heroes are influenced by medieval romances where a knight serves as a role model. In some folk tales this trend reflects directly: a hero, usually a poor one, after all his successes and winnings, becomes one of Knights of the Round Table, e.g. in “Jack the Giant Killer” or “The History of Tom Thumb”. Knights of the Round Table belong to legends which are not our subject of study but they are necessary to be dealt with; they became so popular that they penetrated even into folk tales and appear in supporting roles. The significant

contrast between English and Slovak fairy is that Slovak texts do not contain any knightly figures at all. Equivalents do not exist, too. To sum up, Slovak fairy tales miss any characters which are common for more folk tales.

When analysing kings and knights in folk literature, it needs to be mentioned that there is a king who appears simultaneously in many English folk tales – famous king Arthur. Slovak folk tales do not contain any shared character like this legendary figure. King Arthur usually appears in the same stories where folk heroes becomes knights; i.e. – one of the Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table.

Even though Arthur belongs to a canon of legends, we are to deal with him in following paragraphs as he has an impact on folk literature. In English legends, King Arthur appears as a British king who allegedly led the defence of Britain against Saxon incomers at the beginning of the 6th century. His existence is debatable. Even a story of Arthur is not consistent; the legend varies from text to text. In diverse tales by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Arthur is a warrior fighting against supernatural enemies or other villains and the one who established an empire over Britain, Norway, Gaul, Ireland and Iceland. These data served as a base for subsequent tales. Arthurian legends involve other legendary figures or objects which are also present in many folk tales, e.g. Arthur’s wife Guinevere, the wizard Merlin or the sword Excalibur. In later texts by the French author Chrétien de Troyes, there are a few more; Knights of the Round Table, one of the knights - Sir Lancelot or the Holy Grail.

The character of Arthur is a model of all medieval romances and Arthur bears all qualities of a hero. His strength, bravery, loyalty to God and virtuousness are a pattern for later folk heroes. “Arthur’s main folkloric presence is in the continued British belief – or at least the continued articulation of the story – that, like many culture heroes, Arthur is not dead but only sleeping until the hour of his country’s need. In this element of his mythology, Arthur is in the company of numerous other sleeping folk heroes.”⁴³

The most striking difference between Slovak and English male protagonist is their attitude to the given task. A typical Slovak hero achieves his goals by obeying his parents, sharing food with wayfarers, helping the weak ones, helping animals, having mercy on the vulnerable and defending the innocent. An ordinary English hero is much tougher and bolder by contrast. Englishmen are more stubborn and

⁴³ Graham Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes* (Santa Barbara CA: ABC-Clio, 2001), 13.

resolute to accomplish their mission and kill the innocent if necessary. They fight for themselves and do not have pity on anybody.

Jack as an Antihero

We are to move to the second group of male main characters widely spread in Slovak folk literature: antiheroes. They are lazy, fool, naive and after all – lucky young men.

This character is very often called Janko, Janík or Janíčko in Slovak tales and Jack in English tales, e.g. “The Bold Jack” (“Smelý Janko”) or “Jack and the Beanstalk”. The name itself suits Jack’s nature. The meaning of the name has its origins in Hebrew name Yochanan which is a compound consisting of Yo which means Yahweh and Chanan which can be translated as gracious. Thus, Yochanan/Jack means *God is gracious*.⁴⁴ Thanks to God’s grace Jack finally finds his fortune even when he does not do his best.

Jack is usually the only child who is sent by his mother to seek his fortune or find a wife. He often misinterprets directions he was given and causes humorous situations. Jack is always a warm-hearted character, he gladly shares his food with the others and therefore he deserves a reward at the end: a wife or riches. He achieves it thanks to supernatural powers; Jack often meets a helper who gives him advice or donates him some magic objects or Jack deserves this object.⁴⁵

This Jack is often depicted as a handsome man which helps to compensate his foolishness. The handsomeness is often a reason why a princess fell in love with him and his status of a fool is annulled.⁴⁶

Both in Slovak and English folk tales, there is one more kind of an imperfect hero. These Jacks are smart, but devious, too, and it is difficult to decide if they are antiheroes. They often lie, steal or revenge, e.g. Jack from “Jack Peas” (“Janko Hraško”) defrauds a tradesman and Jack from “Jack and the Beanstalk” becomes wealthy after stealing the gold from a giant.

⁴⁴ Robert Altman, *Osud podle jména. O nomenologii a jménech. Nomenologické obrazy nejčastějších českých jmen od A po Z* (Brno: Centa 2005), 402.

⁴⁵ Veliká, “Hrdina evropské lidové pohádky,” 133.

⁴⁶ Veliká, “Hrdina evropské lidové pohádky,” 170.

4.1.2 Women as Protagonists

When an English or Slovak folk tale is not based on a strong, young male hero or a group of two or three siblings, then the protagonist is always a young innocent woman, an example of virtuousness, purity and sometimes even naivety.

The English and Slovak female heroines, unlike English and Slovak male heroes, are usually directly described as beautiful. Their extraordinary attractive appearance is also the pivotal reason why these girls are chosen by a prince or a nobleman to become their wives. The beauty is often intensified; the heroines have golden hair or gold star on their forehead, e.g. in “The Golden Hair” (“Goldilocks”).

On one hand, this young heroine can be born in a royal or a rich family. In this case the princess or lady leaves home (a castle) because of a disagreement between this lady and her father. In Slovak folk tales, English folk tales and also according to Propp, the reason is banishment or escape. The princess is banished by her father after she offended him – always unintentionally. In this pattern of a story, the heroine finds a new temporary home in exile, after overcoming several difficulties she finds a prince or a nobleman and becomes his wife. The recently married couple visits the girl’s father who regrets his mistakes. The Slovak tale “Salt More Precious than Gold” (“Soľ nad zlato”) and an almost identical English story “Cap-o-rushes” are the most famous example of banished daughters. The consequences of the escape are almost identical, but the heroine leaves her home as a result of her own resolution and she runs away in secrecy. The reason can be the refusal to marry her own father, as in “The Mouse Cloak” (“Myšacia bundička”). In this version, the girl marries a prince and then visits the afflicted father. Slovak folk tales fairly follow these two patterns but in English folk literature we may find variations; the motive of leaving home is preserved, but the lady goes to explore a mysterious mansion, as in “Mr Fox”.

On the other hand, the main female characters are often poor and modest girls. This model of folk tale is strikingly more frequent in the Slovak folk tales. The heroine is usually exploited; by her step-mother in “The Three Pigeons” (“Tri holúbky”) or by a witch who employs the heroine as a servant in “The Golden Hair” (“Zlatovláska”). These female characters are not banished and do not run away from home, they usually live with a person who harms her, accomplish various missions and are chosen and saved by a prince or a rich gentleman.

An exception in this pattern is a female antihero; a naive and passive young girl who does not achieve anything but finally gets married to a gentleman and lives happily ever after. Examples can be found in a Slovak tale “The Gold Spinner” (“Zlatá priadka”) and an almost identical English tale “Tom Tit Tot”. As a result of a deceitful lie of the girl’s mother, the heroine gets into trouble, but the problem solves itself and she undeservedly ends up with a wealthy husband. Despite of this exception, the whole moral message of such heroines is very transparent; good, humble, obedient and virtuous young virgins always end up as happy women married to admirable men.

4.1.3 Siblings as Main Characters

Two or three siblings as main figures are repeatedly appearing in a repertory of English and Slovak folk tales. We classify all siblings as protagonists only when all of them are important and have an impact on a plot of a story. If only one of the siblings perform actions and the others are passive, then we consider this folk tale as a tale with a single hero or heroine and therefore these main characters are not analysed in different subchapters.

Siblings, similarly as single heroes, leave their homes because of some need or necessity. Frequent reasons are leaving the house because of starvation or saving a sibling. Clichéd endings contain the victory of the youngest who successfully fulfils tasks and also save or even revive other siblings and arrange marriages of each one of the siblings.

In case of two characters, a brother and a sister, their task is to help and try to save each other. The siblings are often forsaken by their parents or by their father and a step-mother who cannot manage to feed them, e.g. “The Deer” (“Jelenček”). The brother and the sister are small abandoned children but thanks to mutual support they survive, grow and find their fortune. “The Rose-tree” is a very similar English story but in spite of mutual help, the sister is killed by her step-mother. This absence of happy ending is often present in English folk tales and very rare in Slovak texts. In the stories with the combination of a brother and a sister, we often encounter a story where the brother goes forth to save his kidnapped sister which is in fact the most

frequent motive in case of siblings. The young hero successfully rescues his sister and brings her home.

Stories of two brothers have a relatively fixed structure in both Slovak and English tales. Brothers love each other and cooperate together. Both brothers go forth to seek their fortune separately but they still have information about the second brother. E.g. in “The Red Ettin”, the older one gives a knife to his brother, asking him to look at the blade every day. If the knife is clean, the sibling is well. If the knife gets rusty, there is something wrong. Analogously in the Slovak folk tale, e.g. “The Cursed Mountain” (“Zakliata hora”), the brothers engraved their names into a linden tree. If one of the brothers pulls out the knife and sees the blood running from the tree, the other one is alive. If there is running water, the brother is in danger. In both these stories, the older brother is in danger and the younger one saves him or revives him if necessary.

Folk tales about two sisters are relatively rare in both Slovak and English literature. Contrary to the positive relationships between brother and sister or between two brothers, folk tales with two sisters as protagonists are based on mutual envy or hatred. It is difficult to encounter a Slovak folk tale about two related sisters, therefore we are to use an example from England; “Binnorie”. This tragic tale “Binnorie” is about two princesses. The younger sister is courted by a young gentleman and the older one is jealous and decides to get rid of her sister and drowns her.

We are to mention a case of two step sisters, even though they do not belong to this category. In Slovak two-sister tales, we often have a story about a good, beautiful and virtuous girl and her ugly and deceitful step-sister where the rivalry between them is natural or intensified by their mother/step-mother, as in “The three pigeons” (“Tri holúbky”) or “About Twelve Months” (“O dvanástich mesiačikoch”). But we must consider that this kind of a tale does not represent our category of two sisters as main characters because the step-sister appears in the plot only marginally. The step-sister is mostly introduced at the beginning of the story, then mentioned few times in the climax and finally punished for her attempts to harm her sister.

Whether we talk about Slovak or English literature, the most prevalent sibling model is consisting of three brothers. The three brothers, having mutual respect and love, have the same goals and qualities as single male heroes in folk tales. The composition is fixed; the oldest brother goes forth to seek his fortune, as in “The

Biggest Slacker in the World” (“Popolvár najväčší na svete”) or to rescue somebody, as in “Childe Rowland”. He does not succeed. The second brother leaves home to accomplish the initial task and to save his older brother, too, but he also fails. Finally, the youngest and always the wittiest brother achieves the goal and saves or revives his older brothers. If the tale ends up with a marriage, then there are always three weddings. The youngest finds a wife not only for himself, but also for his less fortunate brothers.

To make our list of possible siblings constructions, we are to mention also the model of three sisters, although it does not meet our criteria for the classification of siblings as main characters. Three sisters occur in a fixed composition, regardless of Slovak or English sources. The two older sisters are almost passive and the youngest is the one who leads the story line. Older sisters are usually introduced at the beginning and then only create a stimulus for the youngest to leave home and undertake a journey. If the sisters are positive characters, the youngest finds husbands for them, if they are villainous, they are punished. Thus, under these circumstances, the youngest can be considered a single heroine.

4.2 Parents as Folk Tale Characters

It is impossible to find a folk tale without any parents mentioned at the beginning. The main character (male, female or siblings) are never the first characters introduced in a story. First of all, the hero's social background and family are presented. In some cases, parents create the frame of the story; the hero leaves his home and family and at the end, after finishing his task, there is a reunion with the hero's parents. The protagonist returns home again to his family or terminates a conflict with his or her father or restore his family after some members were kidnapped or invites his parents to his wedding. In English folk tales, parents are often described only at the beginning and no reunion occurs. Existence of parents is omitted only in those rare cases when the hero is a married man and therefore only his wife and children are presented as his family.

Protagonists often willingly go forth to seek their fortune on their own, but parents are much more often the stimulus for their children. Poor parents usually send their children to earn some money or to bring some food for the starving family.

Kings ask their sons to find a princess to marry or to save a lady in despair or find his kidnapped daughter. Parents often donate their children a magic object which will help them later. Sometimes, the heroes are given some advice and English parents often teach their children a moral lesson before their arrival; e.g. a mother asks her son whether he wants one half of a cake and her blessing or the whole cake and her curse, as in "Jack and His Golden Snuff-box".

Family patterns in folk tales are full of stereotypes. We are to make a list of all these basic constructions in the following paragraphs.

A royal family is the most popular phenomenon in fairy tales. Slovak and English folk tales follow the same rule; only the father/king is eminent and operates in the plot. If the queen is mentioned, too, she is usually only a silent figure. The king is the person who activates the hero's action; he sends him away with good intentions (e.g. to find a future wife) or he gives him a task (e.g. to save a sister kidnapped by a giant) or he banishes him because of king's caprice and pride (e.g. after daughter's refusal to marry her own father). If the king's daughter is in danger, he never rescues her on his own but he always entrusts his son with the task to do it.

It is impossible to encounter a story with a queen who is the only parent and who initiates her child's mission both in Slovak or English tales.

Low-born families usually send their children to go forth and occupy themselves or bring home anything to eat or to find a wife. The situation of poor families is often so hopeless that parents leave their children because they are not able to feed them any longer. These fathers give tasks whereas mothers give their children some food and a blessing.

The most frequent model of poor family in Slovak folk literature consists of a widow and her son. Combination of a widow and her daughter is very rare, e.g. in "Tom Tit Tot". The poor mother usually lives in poverty with her son. The first option in this case is that this son goes forth to earn some money to survive. The second possibility involves the stories about stupid Jack; the mother urges her lazy, spoiled and foolish son to action.

Widowers are also present in folk tales, but they always marry for the second time and this new wife, the stepmother of the hero, initiates the conflict. After the marriage, the father becomes a passive figure who obeys his new wife and loses any control over his child's destiny. It is a rule that this widower always has a daughter

who suffers from her new stepmother's existence. Combinations of stepmothers and their stepsons do not exist.

Stepmothers are a broad issue in folk tales, but they are always a source of evil in the story and therefore this topic will be analysed in the framework of evil creatures in fairy tales.

The last typical constellation of a folk tale family is a married couple (regardless of royal or peasant origin) who cannot have a child and longs for one, e.g. Slovak folk tale „Hadogašpar“ („Hadogašpar“) or English „The History of Tom Thumb“.

4.3 Representatives of Evil

A source of evil is necessary in every traditional folk tale. As explained by Propp, “a new personage, who can be termed the villain, enters the tale. His role is to disturb the peace of a happy family, to cause some form of misfortune, damage, or harm. The villain(s) may be a dragon, a devil, bandits, a witch, or a stepmother, etc.”⁴⁷

Villains use various methods how to harm the protagonist; steal his magic or precious objects, kill him, eat him, threaten a person who the protagonist want to save or threatens the whole country. The villain often finds victim intentionally and initiate the conflict himself, e.g. he brings a tricky offer. “A special form of deceitful proposal and its corresponding acceptance is represented by the deceitful agreement. (“Give away that which you do not know you have in your house.”) Assent in these instances is compelled, the villain taking advantage of some difficult situation in which his victim is caught: a scattered flock, extreme poverty, etc.”⁴⁸ The villain is not always evident; he often acts in disguise and pretends good will. “A hostile creature attempts to destroy the hero. A witch tries to place the hero in an oven. A witch attempts to behead heroes during the night. A host attempts to feed his guests to rats at night. A magician tries to destroy the hero by leaving him alone on a mountain.”⁴⁹ There is a lot of means of doing harm to the protagonist but the protagonist always defeats the villain and the good always wins. The representative

⁴⁷ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 14.

⁴⁸ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 16.

⁴⁹ Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 25.

of evil is always punished, banished but mostly killed. The hero defeats him thanks to his enormous power or bravery or smartness or using a magic object he has obtained before.

We are to explore all typical villains in Slovak and English folk literature sources.

4.3.1 Giants and Dragons

In spite of the fact that dragons and giants have completely different attributes, we are to deal with them simultaneously, as their function in English and Slovak folk tales is the same. Giants are typical for England and dragons are mostly prevalent in Slovak literature. Slovak stories often contain a giant, too, but Slovak giant can also perform as a positive character; this giant is a genie who satisfies all hero's desires.

Giants and dragons represent the most powerful enemy in folk tales. The protagonist becomes a hero thanks to ability to defeat this monster. He usually manages it on his own, but sometimes magic objects, magic helpers or any companions are used, too.

Enemies in folk tales acquire many forms, but sometimes the villain represents the Devil himself. "The Devil is sometimes a powerfully evil tempter and destroyer, sometimes a stupid enemy whose plans fail through his own clumsiness, or because he is outwitted by ordinary humans."⁵⁰ Strong and unbeatable Devil performs in folk tales with moral message, whereas stupid Devil who is tricked or loses a wager is present in comic tales.⁵¹

Devils are equally present in both Slovak and English sources. Their nomenclature may vary; we encounter Devil, Lucifer and Beelzebub in English texts and Devil or Lucifer in Slovak tales.

Based on the story about Adam and Eve, devils are often depicted as snakes. Snakes are often identified with serpents, which are a sort of dragons. References to dragons were indicated already in Bible. According to the Scriptures, a dragon

⁵⁰ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 94.

⁵¹ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 94.

symbolizes the Devil (Revelations, chapter 12). Fiery serpents were mentioned also in Exodus.⁵²

“The dragon, for example, in something of its characteristic serpent or crocodile form, is of great importance in China as well as in Europe and is represented in both places as a guardian of great treasure.”⁵³ Dragons in Slovakia always kidnap and capture princesses and keep them as their treasure, e.g. in “The Biggest Slacker in the World” (“Popolvár najväčší na svete”), or they want to eat the princess, e.g. in “The Cursed Mountain” (“Zakliata hora”), or these dragons cruelly plunder the whole country, e.g. in “The Proud Lady” (“Hrdá panička”). The hero, always a male character, kills him by cutting off all his heads. Dragons usually have three, six, nine or twelve heads. Most common situation in a Slovak fairy tale is a battle with three dragons. The hero encounters three dragons and they gradually have three, six and nine heads or six, nine and twelve.

Giants in English texts have similar functions; they kidnap somebody, e.g. a king’s son in “Nix Nought Nothing” or they threaten innocent inhabitants, e.g. as in “Jack the Giant-killer”. The giant can also try to eat the protagonist and in this case, the plot of the story is almost always the same. The giant lives with his wife or his mother who take care of him. This woman has mercy on the hero and let him sleep over at the giant’s house or she gives him some food. But the giant always comes home and says his typical phrase “Fee, fi, fo, fum. I smell the blood of an Englishman.” and finds the hidden protagonist. This cliché structure of folk tale with a man-eating giant occurs also in a few Slovak fairy tales, e.g. “The Three Lemons” (“Tri citróny”). But the giants are usually stupid in their nature and the hero easily conquers him. “The non-human giant has steadily declined through the centuries from a monster to a figure of fun.”⁵⁴ First known giants Grendel and his mother in *Beowulf* were bloodthirsty beasts. Later, in medieval romances, it has become mere routine for a knight to slay a giant. In local legends and folk tales, giant’s plans were generally foiled by their own clumsiness and stupidity and they never managed to kill the protagonist.⁵⁵

In the framework of giants and their Slovak equivalents – dragons, folklorists are not in agreement with each other and they offer various explanations of giant’s

⁵² Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 97.

⁵³ "folk literature," Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁵⁴ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 144.

⁵⁵ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 144.

mythological value. “Various attempts at probing the significance of this mythical race have yielded various conclusions: that giants symbolise meteorological phenomena, that they are the powers of untamed wilderness, an older dynasty of gods, demons of nature, swallows of corpses, agents of death or the dead themselves.”⁵⁶

As an exception, giants or dragons who kidnap young ladies are sometimes substituted with a vicious king, e.g. The Wind King in “The Wind King” (“*Veterný kráľ*”) or the King of Elfland in “*Childe Rowland*”. This sort of a king has the same features as a giant or a dragon, the only exception is that he does not look like a beast.

4.3.2 Stepmothers

Stepmothers are phenomena which is thoroughly identical in English and Slovak folk tales. Tales with a stepmothers’ performance are always those with a young innocent girl as a protagonist.

English and Slovak fairy stepmothers marry a widower who has a young and beautiful daughter. The stepmother often brings her own child to the marriage, usually a daughter, who on the contrary, is ugly and stupid. As a rule, the stepmother hates the new daughter and envies her her beauty and youth as e.g. in “The Rose-tree”. She sets a task impossible to fulfil which becomes a trap for the young girl, as in “About Twelve Months” (“*O dvanástich mesiačikoch*”). The father is just a silent figure who does not interfere in the stepmother’s decisions; “The Three Pigeons” (“*Tri holúbky*”). After the stepmother finds out that her stepdaughter managed the task, got married to a prince and became rich, the stepmother sends her ugly daughter to take the same journey, but she always fails, as in “Bless you, Bench” (“*Pamodaj šťastia, lavička*”). Commonly, the stepmothers and stepdaughters are punished, as in “About Twelve Months” (“*O dvanástich mesiačikoch*”), but in few cases, the tale ends as a ballad and the girl is killed, e.g. in “The Rose-tree” where the stepmother killed the girl, stewed her heart and liver and served it as a supper to her husband.

⁵⁶ Lotte Motz, “Giants in Folklore and Mythology: A New Approach,” *Folklore* 93/1 (1982): 70, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1260141>.

The topic of stepmothers and the myth of the evil stepmother were analyzed by Marianne Dainton, a professor dealing with family relations. This myth has a strong and inveterate legacy and the existence of evil stepmother was found in virtually every part of the world. The evil stepmother became a global phenomenon and penetrated all genres of fiction, too. Nevertheless, her presence is particularly prevalent in fairy tales.⁵⁷ Dainton, in her work *The Myths and Misconceptions of the Stepmother Identity: Descriptions and Prescriptions for Identity Management*, came to conclusion that “fairy tales suggest that stepmothers are the equivalent of wild animals and supernatural beings - entities that children have very little chance of facing in real life.”⁵⁸ She bases her opinion on the fact that a child tends to identify the evil stepmother with other representatives of evil in folk tales; bears, wolves, giants, ogres and witches.

It seems that myths show no signs of losing their strength. Dainton shows, based on results of many researchers, that „the role of stepmother elicited more negative connotations than any other family“⁵⁹. Allegedly, these myths also negatively affect the experiences of stepmothers and both clinical and empirical evidence reveals that stepmothers identify the wicked stepmother myth as directly contributing to the stress they experience in adapting to the stepmother role.⁶⁰ The evil stepmother cliché is actually very common in our society. The fact that this cliché had its origins in primeval myths, only supports the signification of folk tales and their research.

4.3.3 Mermaids

Mermaids as a source of evil are markedly much more typical for England than for Slovakia, although Slavonic folklore contains some water spirits.

Mermaids in the framework of Slavonic and English folklore and their comparison were studied by a Polish Wladislaw Somerville Lach-Szyrma. His work

⁵⁷ Marianne Dainton, “The Myths and Misconceptions of the Stepmother Identity: Descriptions and Prescriptions for Identity Management,” *Family Relations* 42/1 (1993): 93, accessed December 11, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/584928>.

⁵⁸ Dainton, “The Myths and Misconceptions of the Stepmother Identity, 93.

⁵⁹ Dainton, “The Myths and Misconceptions of the Stepmother Identity, 94.

⁶⁰ Dainton, “The Myths and Misconceptions of the Stepmother Identity, 94.

is based on a research on the relations of the Slavonians to the other Indo-European nations and on Cornish folklore and its language.

Stories about mermaids arose naturally as the wild mermaid legends which were narrated during fireside evenings of the Cornish fishing-folk of days of yore, about the half-fish, half-women, who were at times seen combing their hair on the rocks. They used to lure people to death, or, if they were pleased, bestow fairy gifts on those who approached them. The idea of the waste and unprofitableness of the ocean is a thought as old as Homer, and peasant minds have been wont to fill the void by dreams of sea or ocean dwellers, crystal palaces, rulers of the waters as man is of the land.⁶¹

In English folklore, the seadwellers were probably originally tailless. The concept of the fishtailed mermaid (and merman), long established in Mediterranean lands, developed from the classical siren. The Mediterranean idea of mermaids influenced English folk tales early in the Middle Ages. The mermaid was considered a natural if freakish creature, not a supernatural being. She lulled sailors to sleep by her singing and then drowned them or ate them, as usually depicted by classical writers. At those times, she made an excellent moral symbol for preachers, who used her as a personification of the fatal attractions of wealth, sex, drink, etc.⁶² The Cornish folklore contained also the characters of mermen, but it is difficult to encounter such folk tale. One of the English tales about mermaids is “The Golden Mermaid.”

There is no direct equivalent in Slovak folk literature which definitely reflects the absence of a sea or an ocean. The Celts were always maritime people and the Slavonians accustomed to great lakes and to rivers, larger in some cases than any in British Isles. However, Slovaks and also Slavonians in general have various lake or river spirits, or rather personages,⁶³ e.g. the Slovak folk take “The Three Cursed Earls” (“Tri zakliate kniežatá”).

The lakes in Slavonic folklore have often very picturesque and weird properties, surrounded by huge primeval forests. They look as if they have never

⁶¹ W. S. Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” *The Folk-Lore Record* 4 (1881): 63, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1252413>.

⁶² Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 234.

⁶³ Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” 62.

been crossed by man.⁶⁴ “The waste of the mysterious lake was as suggestive to the Slavonic peasant as the waste of the ocean to the Celtic fishermen. It was perhaps more so, for the fishermen lived by the harvest of the deep, and in fine weather could traverse almost every creek of his rocky shore; the peasant as a landsman rarely pushed out in a boat on the wide expanses of his mysterious lakes. So the unknown lake had even a better claim to its Undines⁶⁵ than the fairly-known sea to its mermaids.”⁶⁶ But generally, English mermaids are relatively unknown to Slovak readers.

4.4 Fairies, Wizards and Other Magical Creatures

An inseparable part of each fairy tale is at least one character bearing magical abilities. This character can also be a protagonist who usually acquires these extraordinary abilities during the story or obtains a magical object. However, in most of Slovak and English fairy folk tales, there is a magical creature functioning as the main enemy or as a supporting character influencing the hero’s destiny both in a positive and negative way.

What all these magical spirits have in common is that they practise witchcraft. In majority of contexts, “‘witchcraft’ means using magic to harm humans, farm animals, or property. Fear of it permeates folklore of all periods.”⁶⁷

Magical spirits appear in folk tales under various names in folklore; wizards and witches, magicians, sorcerers, wise men and wise women, magi, warlocks, dervishes,⁶⁸ prophets, fairies, fairy godmothers, etc. Their denomination does not show the spirit’s positive or negative status. They practice shape-shifting or transmogrification, they are able to predict the future, to transport characters large distances, to cast various spells and charms, to speak with animals or to command animals.⁶⁹ Their ability to turn themselves, or others, into different forms has many

⁶⁴ Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” 62-63.

⁶⁵ Undine is a water nymph from mythology appearing in European folklore.

⁶⁶ Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” 63.

⁶⁷ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 395.

⁶⁸ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 166.

⁶⁹ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 166.

applications in fairy tales, e.g. disguise, invisibility, escape, the attainment of power and various tricks.⁷⁰

4.4.1 Villainous Magical Creatures

Magic spirits with negative status are widely spread both in Slovak and English folk tales. Warlocks, malicious wizards, witches and deceitful gnomes are characters which try to harm the protagonist, but finally, they are always defeated.

In the framework of wizards and witches, this is one of the relatively few areas of folk tradition in which witches approach wizards in number.⁷¹ Old and ugly magic villainesses are markedly prevalent in Slovak folk literature. The example is not necessary, because they are present in almost every Slovak folk tale. Male magician appear less frequently than female, e.g. in “The Shepherd and the Serpent” (“Bača a šarkan”).

Magical spirits can also look like gnomes; we encounter little weird creatures with beards in folk tales such as “Tom Tit Tot” or in its Slovak equivalent “Martinko Klingáč” (“Martinko Klingáč”) or in another Slovak tale “Laktibrada” (“Laktibrada”). They are mostly popular in Slovak texts and they are described as tricky and devious manikin.

Just as legendary king Arthur and Knights of the Round Table penetrated English folklore, famous warlock Merlin achieved the same. Once again, this phenomenon is typical for England and there is no similar figure in Slovak folk literature who appears in more than one folk tale.

Merlin is a magician and prophet whose “presence in Celtic legend, literature, and popular culture is due to his pivotal roles in the Arthurian romances, which are themselves the products of an extensive intertwining of myth, tradition, and literary refinement.”⁷²

Merlin performs e.g. in “The History of Tom Thumb” where he helps a childless couple bear a child or in “Childe Rowland” where he helps in the quest to rescue Burd Ellen from the fairyland. “This figure, either male or female, often

⁷⁰ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 166.

⁷¹ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 166.

⁷² Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 173.

occupies and ambiguous space between good and evil, helping or hindering in sometimes whimsical ways and also often displaying many of the characteristics of the trickster.”⁷³

Merlin’s origin is in *History of the Kings of Britain* written by scholar Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 1130s. In this work, the author gave the Arthurian stories the shape which later became a base for other writers. Here, Merlin is introduced as a prophet and wizard. From around 1200, local traditions were mingled with French treatments of Merlin and other aspects of Arthurian. This meant another eminent influence on the romances in Britain. Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*, written in 1485, presented the defining shape of the English-language versions of romances, which establish Merlin in his most familiar modern role.⁷⁴

4.4.2 Wise men and women, fairies and fairy godmothers

As mentioned before, magicians are not exclusively negative characters who harm the protagonist. In fairy tales, we encounter wise or cunning men and women, good prophets, fairy godmothers and fairies. Each one of these kind-hearted helpers has some specific features in Slovak and English texts.

The fairy godmother “is now a stock figure in popular imagination”⁷⁵ and she is present in many modern fairy tales, thanks to her popularity in “Cinderella” and “Sleeping beauty”. However, we rarely encounter the figure of godmother in old folk tales. The godmother always declares the hero’s destiny and helps him to reach his goals. Godmother performs in English folk tale “The History of Tom Thumb” only marginally, but she has much more eminent role in e.g. a very famous Slovak folk tale “Plavčík a Vratko” (“Swimmer and Vratko”).

Although fairies are commonly known as basic characters in fairy tales, their presence in folk tales is unusual. After the analysis of pivotal characters in Slovak and English folk fairy tales, we are to underline the founded distinctions, summarize the common features and try to find reasons of these discoveries.

⁷³ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 174.

⁷⁴ Seal, *Encyclopedia of Folk Heroes*, 173-174.

⁷⁵ Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, 116.

We assumed that Slovak and English folk tales will contain many identical features, characters, motives and structures. An existence of Slovak equivalents of English tales (or vice versa) was another assumption. All these premises were legitimate and were confirmed.

This mutual affinity is observable also between English folk tales and other Slavonic folk tales. Lach-Szyrma, already mentioned in this thesis because of his essay on Slavonic folklore, described three modes in which it is possible to account for the resemblance between Slavonic and British folklore. Firstly, there may be the traditions of prehistoric times, when the Celtic and the Slavonic tribes lived as neighbours. Secondly, in some cases, folk tales may be mere instances of human minds, which under similar circumstances, conceive similar ideas. The third fact is that English and Slovak folk tales may have both sprung from an Eastern source; they were imported in Slavonian lands overland by the Turks and Armenians (who were numerous in the Carpathian regions), and then were brought to England by sailors.⁷⁶ Thus, we can declare that there probably exists a common canon for English and Slovak folk tales. There is a large scale of similarities and equivalents between Slovak and English folk fairy tales.

We are to mention some distinct features of English and Slovak folk fairy tales henceforward. After all, there must be differences, as we compare folk literature of quite diverse nations. As stated by an American Professor publishing and lecturing on the subject of fairy tales, their evolution, and their social and politic role in civilizing processes, Jack David Zipes, “the tales are reflections of the social order in a given historical epoch, and, as such, they symbolize the aspirations, needs, dreams and wishes of common people in a tribe, community, or society, either affirming the dominant social values and norms or revealing the necessity to change them.”⁷⁷ Experiences of both societies are unequal as a result of unequal life conditions, environment, historic development and other natural influences.

Oldřich Sirovátka, a Czech ethnograph, claims in his *Srovnávací studie o české lidové slovesnosti (Comparative Studies about Czech Folklore)*, published in 1996, that the fairy tales are prevalent in Slovakia and a stupid hero is very rare. Allegedly, there is a tendency of decreasing occurrence of humorous tales westwards. On the

⁷⁶ Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” 70.

⁷⁷ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 7.

contrary, the realistic and rational aspect of folk tales increases eastwards.⁷⁸ Indeed, during reading Slovak and English folk tale, we encountered markedly bigger amount of jocular tales or tales with humorous features in the English stock. Slovak folk tales are much more serious, the genre of fairy tale is the most prevalent one. English humorous tales make fun of stupid people, usually of peasant origin. Slovak folk literature is concentrated on heroic achievement on kings and princes.

An explanation of the higher rate of fairy tales full of magic in the Slovak tales is offered by Zipes; the original folk tales were altered during each historical epoch and by each community according to the community's needs as they were handed down over the centuries. By the time the fairy tales were recorded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as literary texts, they consisted of many medieval motifs but the whole tales essentially reflected late feudal system. The folk tales and fairy tales collected by the Grimm Brothers can be used as an example here. Exploitation, hunger and injustice familiar to the lower classes in pre-capitalist societies are the initial ontological situations in the tales.⁷⁹ "And the magic of the tales can be equated to the wish-fulfilment and utopian projections of the people, i.e., of the folk, who preserved and cultivated these tales."⁸⁰ If we take some of the folk tales collected by the Grimm Brothers, e.g. "Rapunzel", "Rumpelstiltskin", "The Bremen Town Musicians", "Snow White", "Mother Holle", and "The Seven Ravens", we can see that each narrative begins with a seemingly hopeless situation. However, the narrative perspective is always sympathetic to the exploited protagonists of the tale. In relation to the objectively hopeless situation of the folk-tale audiences, we can observe the passivity of the hero. These classes of folk had practically no opportunity to resist the increasing exploitation because of their isolation in their work, geographically spread out, and because of their standing as mere individuals in opposition to their lords and exploiters.⁸¹ "Thus they could only conceive a utopian image of a better life for themselves."⁸² Zipes's explanation seems logical; there is a natural tendency of an unsatisfied person to dream about better life, about becoming rich or successful. He also hopes that one day, his dreams will come true. Analogously to this fact, Slovak ancestors dreamt about escaping the

⁷⁸ Oldřich Sirovátka, *Srovnávací studie o české lidové slovesnosti* (Brno: Akademie věd ČR, 1996), 175 – 176.

⁷⁹ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 8.

⁸⁰ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 8.

⁸¹ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 9.

⁸² Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 9.

poverty and therefore they inclined to the stories patterns about a poor boy Jack who goes forth to seek his fortune and who finally becomes a king and marries a princess, because these stories embodied their dreams and hopes.

One of the most striking differences between Slovak and English folk fairy tale characters lies within the main male characters. On one hand, a typical English male hero of folk fairy tales is a young poor peasant who fearlessly fights against representatives of evil, mostly giants. The hero is a tough man who is not interested primarily in becoming a king or in a marriage with a princess, but he is keen on defeating his foes and became a famous hero. The hero often ends up as a knight; a member of Knights of the Round Table, as in “Jack the Giant-killer“. Even if the protagonist dies at the end, the tale never miss its optimistic ending; the most important is the fact that the protagonist died as a hero or a knight. English hero never hesitates to even kill innocent people to reach his goal, as in “Childe Rowland” or “Nix Nought Nothing”. On the other hand, in Slovak folk fairy tales, we often encounter a poor and simple young man who is not exceptionally smart, but in the end, he becomes a king and marries a princess as a reward for his achievement, as in “The Biggest Slacker in the World” (“Popolvár najväčší na svete”). This achievement is always incidental; the protagonist is lucky and he obtains a magic helper as a reward for being modest and decent. The Slovak hero, although being stupid and lazy, shares his food with an old wise man.

Is there a significance of this discovery? How do these different male protagonists affect children when reading these stories? Bettelheim claims that “no child believes that one day he will become ruler over a kingdom other than the realm of his own life. The fairy story assures him that someday this kingdom can be this, but not without struggle.”⁸³ This suggestion fits to the English folk tales; a child understands that everybody can become a hero and achieve his goals if he is strong, brave and tries hard. But is Bettelheim’s opinion valid also for a Slovak child? The Slovak tales teach us different values; they give hope to everybody that anyone can succeed in his life if he is lucky. If we are kind, modest, obedient, we may be appreciated and gain happiness.

⁸³ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 128.

. Moreover, there is a complete lack of their existence in the stock of Slovak folk literature. As this fairy can be a young or old woman, too, fairies are often interchangeable with old wise woman, as in “The Red Ettin”.

Wise men and women are spread mostly in Slovak folk literature. Folk tales containing old women or wise herbalists, e.g. “Salt More Precious Than Gold” (“Soľ nad zlato”), are less frequent than tales with old whitebeards, e.g. “Baláž” (“Baláž”). All of them willingly offer unselfish free advice. Usually, they live a modest life in distant and lonely places. In Slovak tales, the protagonist very often meets an old man who asks him for some food. The hero shares his modest supplies with him, which manifests his honourable manners, and the old man donates him a magic object or gives him some precious advice.

Prophets may appear also with a positive status in folk tales. The prophet is introduced as a wise old man who “knew all the languages under the sun, and who was acquainted with all the mysteries of creation”⁸⁴, as in English folk tale “The Master and His Pupil”. The prophet as a helper is present in Slovak texts, too, e.g. in “The Shell Castle” (“Škrupinový zámok”).

The wise old man is known as a Jungian archetype. “The old man thus represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help.”⁸⁵ In stories, the wise old man functions as a guide or a mentor. The hero is guided by the wise old man, who reveals to the hero the nature of the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a part of the unconscious mind which is shared by a society, people, or all humankind. It is the product of ancestral experience and contains such concepts as science, religion, and morality. Generally, the wise man is often killed at the end which enables the hero to develop on his own.

⁸⁴ Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (London: Adela Publishing, 2009), 74.

⁸⁵ Carl Jung, *Four archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster* (London: Routledge, 2003), 118.

5 Conclusion

After the analysis of pivotal characters in Slovak and English folk fairy tales, we are to underline the founded distinctions, summarize the common features and try to find reasons of these discoveries.

We assumed that Slovak and English folk tales will contain many identical features, characters, motives and structures. An existence of Slovak equivalents of English tales (or vice versa) was another assumption. All these premises were legitimate and were confirmed.

This mutual affinity is observable also between English folk tales and other Slavonic folk tales. Lach-Szyrma, already mentioned in this thesis because of his essay on Slavonic folklore, described three modes in which it is possible to account for the resemblance between Slavonic and British folklore. Firstly, there may be the traditions of prehistoric times, when the Celtic and the Slavonic tribes lived as neighbours. Secondly, in some cases, folk tales may be mere instances of human minds, which under similar circumstances, conceive similar ideas. The third fact is that English and Slovak folk tales may have both sprung from an Eastern source; they were imported in Slavonian lands overland by the Turks and Armenians (who were numerous in the Carpathian regions), and then were brought to England by sailors.⁸⁶ Thus, we can declare that there probably exists a common canon for English and Slovak folk tales. There is a large scale of similarities and equivalents between Slovak and English folk fairy tales.

We are to mention some distinct features of English and Slovak folk fairy tales henceforward. After all, there must be differences, as we compare folk literature of quite diverse nations. As stated by an American Professor publishing and lecturing on the subject of fairy tales, their evolution, and their social and politic role in civilizing processes, Jack David Zipes, “the tales are reflections of the social order in a given historical epoch, and, as such, they symbolize the aspirations, needs, dreams and wishes of common people in a tribe, community, or society, either affirming the dominant social values and norms or revealing the necessity to change them.”⁸⁷ Experiences of both societies are unequal as a result of unequal life conditions, environment, historic development and other natural influences.

⁸⁶ Lach-Szyrma, “Slavonic Folk-Lore,” 70.

⁸⁷ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 7.

Oldřich Sirovátka, a Czech ethnograph, claims in his *Srovnávací studie o české lidové slovesnosti* (*Comparative Studies about Czech Folklore*), published in 1996, that the fairy tales are prevalent in Slovakia and a stupid hero is very rare. Allegedly, there is a tendency of decreasing occurrence of humorous tales westwards. On the contrary, the realistic and rational aspect of folk tales increases eastwards.⁸⁸ Indeed, during reading Slovak and English folk tale, we encountered markedly bigger amount of jocular tales or tales with humorous features in the English stock. Slovak folk tales are much more serious, the genre of fairy tale is the most prevalent one. English humorous tales make fun of stupid people, usually of peasant origin. Slovak folk literature is concentrated on heroic achievement on kings and princes.

An explanation of the higher rate of fairy tales full of magic in the Slovak tales is offered by Zipes; the original folk tales were altered during each historical epoch and by each community according to the community's needs as they were handed down over the centuries. By the time the fairy tales were recorded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as literary texts, they consisted of many medieval motifs but the whole tales essentially reflected late feudal system. The folk tales and fairy tales collected by the Grimm Brothers can be used as an example here. Exploitation, hunger and injustice familiar to the lower classes in pre-capitalist societies are the initial ontological situations in the tales.⁸⁹ "And the magic of the tales can be equated to the wish-fulfilment and utopian projections of the people, i.e., of the folk, who preserved and cultivated these tales."⁹⁰ If we take some of the folk tales collected by the Grimm Brothers, e.g. "Rapunzel", "Rumpelstiltskin", "The Bremen Town Musicians", "Snow White", "Mother Holle", and "The Seven Ravens", we can see that each narrative begins with a seemingly hopeless situation. However, the narrative perspective is always sympathetic to the exploited protagonists of the tale. In relation to the objectively hopeless situation of the folk-tale audiences, we can observe the passivity of the hero. These classes of folk had practically no opportunity to resist the increasing exploitation because of their isolation in their work, geographically spread out, and because of their standing as mere individuals in opposition to their lords and exploiters.⁹¹ "Thus they could only

⁸⁸ Sirovátka, *Srovnávací studie o české lidové slovesnosti*, 175-176.

⁸⁹ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 8.

⁹⁰ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 8.

⁹¹ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 9.

conceive a utopian image of a better life for themselves.”⁹² Zipes’s explanation seems logical; there is a natural tendency of an unsatisfied person to dream about better life, about becoming rich or successful. He also hopes that one day, his dreams will come true. Analogously to this fact, Slovak ancestors dreamt about escaping the poverty and therefore they inclined to the stories patterns about a poor boy Jack who goes forth to seek his fortune and who finally becomes a king and marries a princess, because these stories embodied they dreams and hopes.

One of the most striking differences between Slovak and English folk fairy tale characters lies within the main male characters. On one hand, a typical English male hero of folk fairy tales is a young poor peasant who fearlessly fights against representatives of evil, mostly giants. The hero is a tough man who is not interested primary in becoming a king or in a marriage with a princess, but he is keen on defeating his foes and became a famous hero. The hero often ends up as a knight; a member of Knights of the Round Table, as in “Jack the Giant-killer“. Even if the protagonist dies at the end, the tale never miss its optimistic ending; the most important is the fact that the protagonist died as a hero or a knight. English hero never hesitates to even kill innocent people to reach his goal, as in “Childe Rowland” or “Nix Nought Nothing”. On the other hand, in Slovak folk fairy tales, we often encounter a poor and simple young man who is not exceptionally smart, but in the end, he becomes a king and marries a princess as a reward for his achievement, as in “The Biggest Slacker in the World” (“Popolvár najväčší na svete”). This achievement is always incidental; the protagonist is lucky and he obtains a magic helper as a reward for being modest and decent. The Slovak hero, although being stupid and lazy, shares his food with an old wise man.

Is there a significance of this discovery? How do these different male protagonists affect children when reading these stories? Bettelheim claims that “no child believes that one day he will become ruler over a kingdom other than the realm of his own life. The fairy story assures him that someday this kingdom can be this, but not without struggle.”⁹³ This suggestion fits to the English folk tales; a child understands that everybody can become a hero and achieve his goals if he is strong, brave and tries hard. But is Bettelheim’s opinion valid also for a Slovak child? The Slovak tales teach us different values; they give hope to everybody that anyone can

⁹² Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 9.

⁹³ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 128.

succeed in his life if he is lucky. If we are kind, modest, obedient, we may be appreciated and gain happiness.

The mermaids did not have to be chosen for this thesis, as they are relatively rare in the folk fairy tales. We did it intentionally because it is another striking difference between Slovak and English tales. But naturally, this distinction is obvious because of the geographical settings of both lands.

Primarily, we considered giants and dragons in English and Slovak tales as mutual equivalents. When the dragon or the giant appears in the fairy tale, it always personalizes the biggest evil. But we came to conclusion that giants embody the human evil, whereas the dragon, being an animal, represents the evil nature. After this discovery, the giants and dragons are not equal phenomena and therefore unsuitable for comparison.

Our premises stated in the introduction were approved. Even though we found and describes several minor differences in the fourth chapter and several major ones in the conclusion, there is still the visible common canon of folk tale motifs, symbols and characters.

6 Resumé

Cílem diplomové práce je porovnání typických hrdinů anglických a slovenských pohádek. Porovnávané pohádky musí plnit kritéria lidových a kouzelných pohádek zároveň.

Vybrala jsem si téma pohádek pro jejich původ v mýtech a z toho pramenících zajímavých poznatků. Některé pohádky se vyvinuly z mýtů, některé do nich byly vnořeny. Mýty ale každopádně dodávají lidovým pohádkám rozměr, který nám umožňuje porozumět, jak chápali svět naši předchůdci.

Vycházím z předpokladu, že anglické a slovenské pohádky jsou ve své podstatě téměř totožné. Očekávám nalezení ekvivalentů anglických pohádek mezi slovenskými pohádkami nebo naopak. Také ale dozajista nalezneme rozdílné rysy, díky tomu, že obě Země překonaly rozdílný historický vývoj a leží v jiném přírodním prostředí.

Téma pohádek bylo zkoumané už mnohými lingvisty, folkloristikou a akademiky. Teorie pohádek již byla oborem studia také z formalistické stránky. Cílem této studie *Morfologie pohádky* od Vladimira Jakovleviče Proppa bylo podrobně rozebrat pohádku a najít její kostru. Proppova práce má dodnes velký úspěch a je významným průvodcem mnohými dalšími studii pohádek.

Významná klasifikace pohádek, která je dodnes používána, je klasifikace finských vědců Antti Aarneho and Stitha Thompsona.

Vlnu zájmu o anglický folklor spustilo založení Folklorní společnosti v roce 1878. Společnost zastřešovala a dodnes zastřešuje nejvýznamnější britské folkloristy, kteří sbírají a vedou výzkum lidové slovesnosti. Přínosem jejich práce bylo i sesbírání anglických lidových pohádek.

Na Slovensku je jen malý počet folkloristů zabývajících se lidovými pohádkami. Zato v osmnáctém a devatenáctém století byl řízen relativně rozsáhlý sběr lidové tvorby. Z počátku bylo sběratelství iniciováno stoupenci štúrovské generace a postupně se shromažďování pohádek dostalo i na akademickou půdu.

V této práci se také zabýváme definicemi lidových a kouzelných pohádek a poukazujeme na jejich ne docela přesné ohraničení a jednoznačnost.

V jádru této práce se nejprve věnujeme opisu a porovnání anglických a slovenských mužských protagonistů. Mužské hlavní postavy se všechny prokazují svými schopnostmi a opouští svůj dům za účelem splnění úkolu. Jejich cesta je v závěru úspěšně ukončena a mladého muže čeká odměna v podobě královského trůnu nebo svatby s princeznou. Poukazujeme na rozdíl mezi udatnými a odhodlanými mužskými hrdiny a prostými Honzy, kteří přijdou ke štěstí náhodou. Popisujeme také postavu slavného krále Artuše, který nevystupuje jen v legendách, ale také v lidových anglických pohádkách. Slovenská lidová literatura postrádá jakékoli postavy, které by se vyskytovaly ve více pohádkách současně.

Rozebíráme i ženské hlavní postavy, které jsou ale v anglických a slovenských pohádkách téměř identické.

Postupně se věnujeme také kombinacím sourozenců, kteří účinkují jako hlavní postavy. Rozlišujeme kombinace dvou bratrů, dvou sester, bratra a sestry, třech bratrů a třech sester. Kombinace dvou sester sice existuje, ale nejedná se o sestry ve funkci hlavních postav, protože tato kombinace běžně zahrnuje dvě nevlastní sestry, z kterých jedna je relativně pasivní.

V další části této práce rozebíráme typické modely rodičů v lidových pohádkách. Opisujeme královské rodiče, chudé rodiče, rodiče toužící po dítěti, ale také ovdovělé matky, které v kombinaci s jejich syny tvoří základ pro mnoho slovenských pohádek. Obvyklý je také případ ovdovělého otce, který se znovu ožení. Jde o pohádky s hlavní ženskou postavou, která trpí kvůli své nové matce – maceše.

Jakožto pohádkové příběhy se většinou zakládají na boji hrdiny se zlem, je důležité zmínit se o nositelích zla v pohádkách, nebo o škůdcích, jak je nazývá Propp. Proto analyzujeme také obry, kteří jsou populární v anglických lidových pohádkách, draky ve slovenských pohádkách, mořské panny typické pro Anglii a macechy, které jsou rozšířené stejně tak v anglických jako v slovenských pohádkách.

Kouzelné pohádky se označují jako kouzelné na základě jejich kouzelných postav. Budeme se věnovat vílám, kouzelným kmotrům, moudrým starcům,

stařenám, zákeřným černokněžníkům, prapodivným čarodějům, jako je například věštec a kouzelník Merlin, který opět přesahuje do legend i lidových pohádek.

V závěru se pokusíme vysvětlit dva nejrozšířenější rozdíly, na které jsme narazili. Nabízíme vysvětlení uznávaných vědců, s kterými se snadno ztotožňujeme.

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8 Appendices

1 CD

Folktales > European folktales > English folktales > English fairy tales at World of Tales - Stories for children from around the world! A New(ish) Layout World of Tales has a fresh new look! I hope you like it! I will be clearing bugs in the next days. If you see something you don't like, please let me know. Home ± Folktales ± European folktales. English Fairy Tales. Notes: Contains 43 English folktales. Traditional Folk Tale. The origin of the fairy-tale, its importance for the child's development. The specific character of the British fairy-tale. The problems of classifying folk tales. The morphology of the fairy-tale. Tasks: Be ready to comment on W.H. Auden's words about the importance of the fairy-tales. Read the fairy-tale "The Black Bull of Norway". Be ready with the analysis of the functions of its characters. Literature