

# HUMANISTICKE STUDIJE



7 | 2020

UNIVERZITET  
DONJA GORICA

# ČASOPIS HUMANISTICKE STUDIJE

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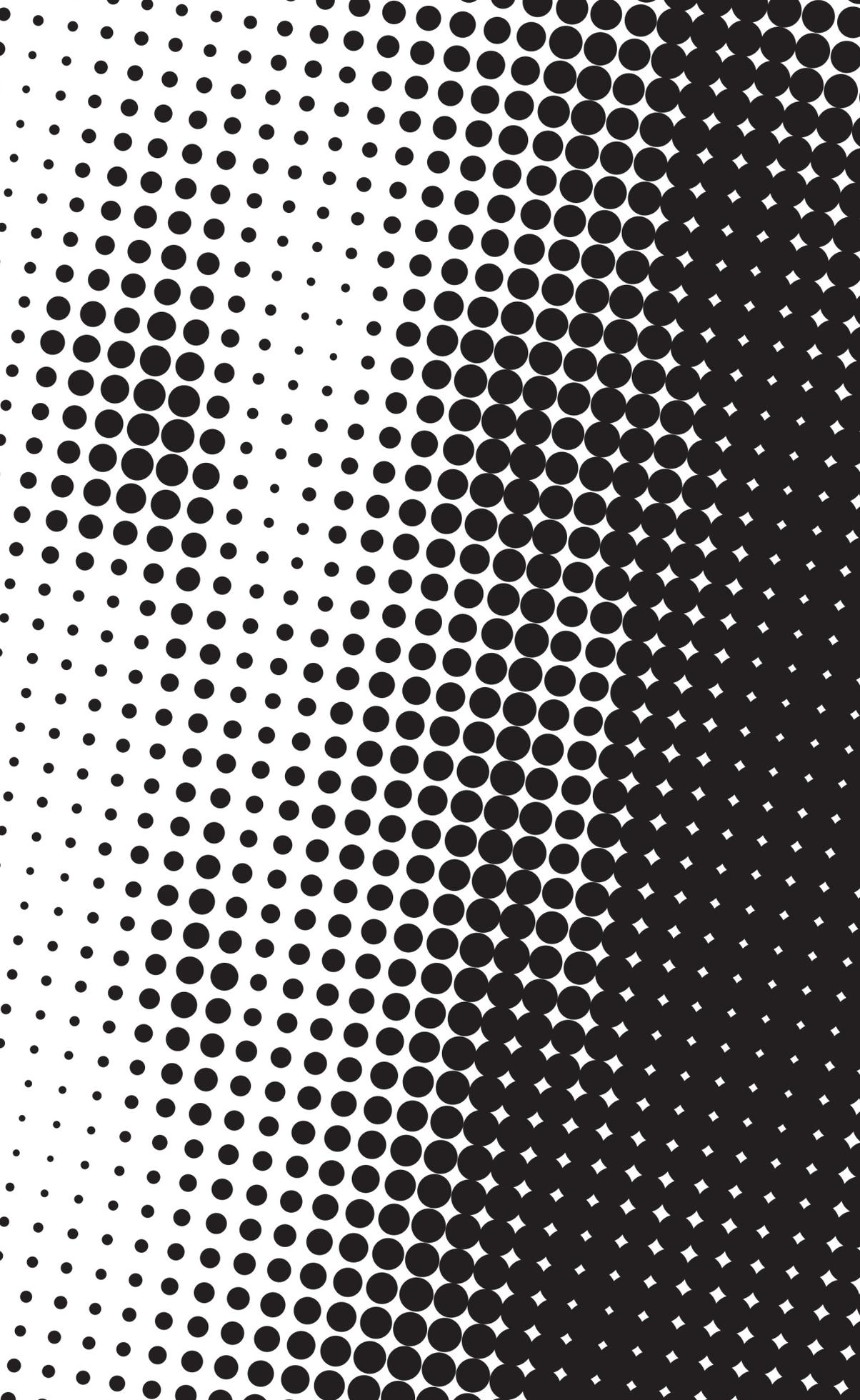
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## Folk Tales and Fairy Tales as Transmitters of Cultural Values *Acculturation Process Through Bedtime Reading*

The article studies the reflection of cultural values in folk tales and fairy tales. Based on the analysis of 20 original Slovak folk tales collected and slightly adapted by Pavol Dobšínský, we compared the values discovered in the texts with a set of values ascribed to the Slovak culture by two external (non-members of the culture) authors. Their insight and evaluation of the most important cultural values were considered as more objective than any local source due to the emotional load associated with any cultural matters. The article presents the variety of protagonists, both heroes and villains whose behaviour clearly exemplifies the appreciated behaviour patterns driven by values in contrast with the most detested ones. Those positive and negative messages help the mind of children to discover the unspoken standards of their culture as part of the acculturation process. Our results show that though the folk tales were created a long time ago they still carry relevant ideas worth transmitting to further generations.

*Key terms:* cultural values, folk/fairy tales, acculturation, cultural heroes

### *Introduction*

Cultural values are considered the foundation of any culture. They are the deeply hidden core which influences all other aspects and components of cultures. They are invisible, hidden even from the people who adhere to them and can be identified only through their impact on the behaviour patterns established in any particular culture and especially by confrontation with a different set of values professed by other cultural communities.

Our attempt to make a connection between cultural values that dominate our current lives with folk and fairy tales that have been created throughout a long historical period could seem at first sight irrelevant and outdated. However, if we consider the context of their creation, dissemination, and adaptations we may discover their role in the process of acculturation in any cultural community. The folk tales have served as a treasure trove of values for a particular cultural

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community and thus helped their transmission to further generations. They can serve the same purpose even nowadays with children of various age, as fairy and folk tales still remain the most popular literary genre among the youngsters.

The paper aims to study the role of folk and fairy tales in the process of both acculturation and enculturation and provide arguments for fostering the preservation of this intangible cultural treasure. To prove their role in the acculturation of children, we will analyse several Slovak folk tales to show how the Slovak cultural values permeate the stories and innocuously streamline the young mind towards the culturally accepted models of behaviour based on their values and discourage the ones that are considered unacceptable within the cultural community.

### *A brief history of tales*

Originally, the stories, nowadays labelled as fairy tales did not exist as a separate literary genre. Those tales were part of the oral tradition of various cultural communities since times immemorial, and no division by age existed. The stories were told and retold to audiences of a wide age range. Myths, legends, fables, riddles, tales, music, and poetry have been considered sources of shared history, experience, and wisdom.

The tales with their complex and extraordinary plots fuelled the fantasy of the people, they encouraged them to act and fostered the ambitions to change the world to match the needs of people and at the same time, to change people to become more fit for the world. As Zipes stated: *'Therefore, the focus of the fairy tales, whether oral, or later written, has always been on finding ways, magical instruments, or powerful people and animals that will enable the protagonists to transform themselves along with their environment, making it more suitable for living in peace and contentment.'* (2012).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of the term fairy tale as a result of the transformation from oral to written tradition in literature. Closely connected with the outburst of national movements in Europe and search for a potential national identity, groups of educated enthusiasts began to look for shared foundations on which new nations could be formed. The attempts of codification of a standard language which would replace/connect numerous local and regional dialects led to efforts to collect material for publication in the new standardised language. The common language could support the idea of a shared heritage. The tales originally passed down in oral form were recorded and the first collections published. Two German brothers, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm became the most influential collectors and interpreters of various German folk tales. Their collection of *Children's and Household Tales* first published in 1812

was so influential that many European collectors followed their example (Grimm, 2001).

The Slovak national movement found its collector in the person of Pavol Dobšinský (1828–1885) whose work is still considered the most influential one in Slovakia. He managed to find and note down a large number of folk tales publishing 90 of them after partial adaptation for the young audience under the title *Prostonárodné slovenské povesti* (Slovak national fables) (1880 — 1883) (Dobšinský, 2008). Based on the folk tales appearing in his collection we can study and identify some of the most important Slovak values fostered by the tales.

### *Typical features of folk and fairy tales*

The tales which are intended nowadays for children are characterised by a number of features that occur frequently in many of them. There are the typical opening and closing phrases which serve as signposts for the reader/listener to signalize that the story is a tale and is intended for children mostly. We can provide several examples:

- ‘Once upon a time...’ and ‘They lived happily ever after’ (English)
- ‘Kde bolo tam nebolo...’ and ‘A žili šťastne až kým nepomreli’ (Slovak)
- ‘Hol volt, hol nem volt...’ ‘És élték boldogan amíg meg nem haltak’ (Hungarian)
- ‘Bio jednom jedan...’ and ‘I živjeli su sretno do kraja života’ (Croat)
- ‘Bio jednom jedan...’ and ‘Živeše dugo i sretno/srećno’ (Serbian)

All folk and fairy tales have their heroes, heroines and villains. The positive character has a problem to solve, very often by leaving home to prove him/herself. The negative characters are there to antagonise the hero and try to defeat him/her. In many tales, magic is present which either helps the hero to make the impossible viable or it is used against him to destroy him. The stories often feature talking objects and animals helping the success of the quest. The tasks that the protagonists need to fulfil are extreme and often include the defeat of various monsters. The story invariably ends with the victory of the good and defeat of the evil who is punished (Teachers network, 2010).

In the original, oral forms of the tales, the punishments were quite extreme, the villain had to die in various terrible ways. This was caused by several reasons; the times in which those stories were created the life was harder in comparison with the modern era, death as a penalty was frequently used for a relatively wide range of acts and therefore the audience expected exemplary punishment. In addition, the stories were not aimed at children therefore no soft approach was needed. Only later, the collectors of those tales considered it more appropriate to „modernize“ the content and adapt it to the general

view that the mind of children is pure and innocent therefore they should not be exposed to such cruelty. The villains are then usually evicted, left alone, or have to serve the hero.

### *Description of typical Slovak heroes*

The role of the protagonists is crucial for the identification of core values in the stories. The acts of the heroes are driven by their values while the villains' behaviour reflects the opposite of the values. So, even the negative protagonists can supply clues about the values imbedded in the plot.

Before listing the most frequent types of heroes we can mention a common characteristic of them. Based on the general European tradition, and possibly going back to the ancient Greek concept of „kalokagathia“ a hero in a folktale must be beautiful/handsome while the villain is usually ugly. The physical beauty as a reflection of inner qualities helps the children to recognize immediately who represents the good and who the evil. This characteristic can be graded through the story when the hero/ine turns even more beautiful after succeeding in their task as part of their reward. The transformation often happens after the revival of the protagonist. The process of becoming more beautiful represents a specific rebirth; the look of the hero differs from his previous existence. He/she never returns to their previous status, shifts to greater perfection. The change is also accompanied by increased self-confidence which they usually lack at the beginning (Hrivikova, 2016).

### *Male protagonists — heroes*

We can divide the main protagonists of Slovak folk tales basically into male, female and pair or multiple heroes. The pairs are usually siblings who share the same fate and try to help each other faithfully. They are frequent in Slovak tales reflecting the high position of the family in the value ranking of the Slovak culture. But in the majority of tales, it is a sole hero or heroine who has to solve a difficult situation and fight the villain. In Slovak tales the male hero can be:

- a poor village boy
- an orphan (either motherless or fatherless)
- a shepherd
- a prince or a king

The hero has to face a complication which can be cruel treatment at home, poverty, a need to find a bride, to fulfil the tasks assigned by some relatives of his future bride, save his village/country from a monster, or simply test his abilities on a journey. Each type of task and the methods applied to fulfil them throw light on the motivations

and values that stand behind their acts. For example, the task of saving one's relative usually appears frequently in a culture where the family is a highly prized value. This is proven in the tale by overcoming many difficulties and often readily sacrificing the hero's own life to succeed. Of course, the hero is revived again and lives then happily ever after. On the other hand, tasks connected with freeing the country from a monster or witchcraft point at the value of patriotism and/or collectivism as the hero sacrifices everything to help the suffering people. The noble quest is equally distributed whether the heroes are rich or of humble origin. Though in many Slovak folktales physical power plays an important role, it is the wit and cleverness that are most praised as the best way of solving difficult problems. A typical aspect for the Slovak folklore is also the celebration of an unassuming hero — an „underdog“ who is modest, has a deep respect for elderly people and follows obediently the advice of his parents or other well-wishers (Dobšinský, 2005). A typical Slovak hero achieves his goals by obeying his parents, sharing food with wayfarers, helping the weak ones, saving animals, having mercy on the vulnerable and defending the innocent.

### *Female protagonists –heroines*

In contrast with the strong hero, the heroines of the Slovak folk tales tend to be young innocent women, examples of virtuousness, purity and sometimes even naivety. They are always described as exceptionally beautiful and their beauty is often the source of their difficulties (envy, jealousy, lust) but also the reason why an attractive man (a king, a rich man) falls in love with them. In many tales, they have to leave their home as a consequence of banishment caused by a disagreement with their relatives. While in exile, they find their love and happily return home to their remorseful parent. This structure is typical for tales where the heroine is of noble origin.

Another type of heroine is a poor girl mostly an orphan who suffers under exploitation from her stepmother who hates her for her beauty often contrasted with her own ugly daughter. Such type of heroine is very frequent in Slovak folktales. These heroines are not banished and do not run away from home. They usually live with a person who harms them, accomplish various difficult or even dangerous missions and are eventually chosen and saved by a prince or a rich gentleman. The moral message of such heroines is transparent; good, humble, obedient, and virtuous young virgins always end up as happy women married to admirable men. The values of modesty, hierarchy, obedience, and forbearance are promoted. The plot reflects the ideal of a Christian woman — the Virgin Mary and the perception of the different roles men and women should fulfil in the Slovak culture.

## *Variety of villains*

We need to stress the importance of contrast as the basis of comparison between the good and the evil represented by the hero and the villain. The role of the villain is very important in a folk tale as he represents the culturally detested behaviour patterns, and his defeat reflects the desire of a cultural community to achieve an ideal state of affairs. As in the case of the heroes, the villains are manifold, male, and female, with or without magic, human or other. Their common feature and aim of their existence are to harm, defeat and destroy the hero. The hero and the villain must have a shared desire (a person, a treasure, or a whole kingdom...) and this becomes the source of their conflict. The fight often seems to be unfair as the villain is often physically strong or has some extra powers but the hero/ine eventually overcomes all the difficulties and prevails.

The most powerful and very frequent type of a villain in Slovak folklore is a dragon. Its interpretation can be twofold; it represents either the power of nature that the ancestors in pagan times had to cope with or alternatively, consistent with the later Christian tradition it can be the representation of the devil. Both interpretations bring important insight into the formative process of cultural development. The hero, in Slovak folktales, fights and defeats a dragon (or even a succession of three dragons with a growing number of heads) and saves the princess and the whole kingdom. It is a symbolic fight and victory over the nature that the ancestors subconsciously craved for. Later, also the Christian yearning for redemption and defeat of the „powers of darkness“ can be revealed in those tales.

Another typical villain in Slovak folk tales is an old woman, either a cruel, heartless stepmother or a true witch. The first kind usually plots against a heroine while the second one pursues mostly a male protagonist. She needs magic to be an equal opponent to a brave man while a stepmother does not need it to terrorise her patient victim. There, the reflection of high power-distance and the masculine character typical for the Slovak culture can be noticed. The wretched stepdaughter invariably respects her tormentor, never protests, and naturally accepts her lot. The role of the villain serves to contrast the benign and mild character of the heroine. In contrast, if the protagonist is a male hero, he immediately takes up a fight against injustice, behaves as a brave ‘true man’. The villain in both cases represents the worst and most deplored attributes — hatred, jealousy, cruelty, deceit, and malice.

## *Cultural values of Slovakia*

It is very difficult for an insider to draw up a list of national values because the degree of objectivity may be questionable. Therefore, we decided to use two non-Slovak sources as the point of departure.

An outsider can derive the values based on an objective study of their manifestation in various aspects of the culture and especially in the behaviour patterns of the population. (Hall, 1990).

The first list of values we used was published by R.D. Lewis in his book *When cultures collide* (2010). In his work, he tried to find historical or other evidence about a variety of cultures and their impact on leadership, business activities and communication styles. Lewis appreciated the importance of cultural values and their influence on all aspects of cultures including rules, norms, or behaviour patterns. He listed the following values as typical for the Slovak culture (Lewis, 2010, p. 298):

- Extended families
- Respect for education
- Love of music and sport
- Defence of Slovak nation and culture
- Rather religious (marriage, baptism, funerals)
- Lack of self-confidence
- Closeness to nature
- Attachment to folklore, folk art
- Epicureanism
- Attachment to popular traditions
- Sense of historical victimization

We could dispute some of the items on the list, such as lack of self-confidence, or sense of historical victimisation as not being values at all, but Lewis considers them typical and important for the Slovak culture.

The second source of Slovak values provided by a non-Slovak author comes from N. Leaptrott, the author of *Rules of the game: Global business protocol* (1996). Leaptrott stressed especially the importance of the peasant roots of the Slovak nation as an important aspect of Slovak cultural identity. Her list includes the following items (Leaptrott, 1996, p.319):

- Hard work
- Generosity
- Honesty
- Modesty
- Respect for age
- Respect for education
- National pride
- Family

Leaptrott, similarly to Lewis, considered the values of culture the bottom line of any action taken, as the values influence the perception of people, their way of thinking and their behaviour making them strive to act in compliance with them (Leaptrott, 1996). Values are perceived as the ideal state of affairs; they exist at their back of the mind and people measure others according to them.

If we compare the two lists, we find that several of their items match perfectly or are quite close to each other (family, respect for

education, patriotism) while some appear only on one list or the other. But even those do not contradict one another; they seem to add additional brushstrokes to the vivid picture of the most prized values.

Based on those two lists we made first, an informal probe among some Slovak adults to find out whether they agreed with those values being the crucial ones in Slovakia. Combining the two lists we presented them with sixteen items to consider. The results were surprising. Our expectations of accepting most of the proposed values were met in some cases without hesitation (family, national pride, modesty, religiosity, attachment to folklore, traditions, hard work) while others were debated most regretfully as slowly disappearing among the young people but acknowledged as extremely important for the older generation and still recognized by the younger ones (respect for age, honesty, generosity). Interestingly, *epicureanism*, *lack of self-confidence* or *sense of historical victimization* were several times refused as wrong. This suggests that discussing one's own culture may be both rational and emotional (Kačmárová, 2012).

People tend to see their own culture under the influence of ethnocentrism differently from outsiders and it is more difficult for them to think in general terms about their cultural community than take into consideration their own personal preferences. The most often refused item was *respect for education*, which after further discussions was revealed as an issue of interpretation. It was mostly agreed that people behave more respectfully towards individuals with titles and it is generally expected to use them everywhere except in the closest family and friend circles, but respondents concluded that this did not reflect true respect for knowledge and education but could seem so to mislead outsiders.

### *Values discovered in selected Slovak folk tales*

Our paper cannot assess the full set of folk tales as that would go far beyond its scope, but we can use a sample of tales to discover the most important and quite frequent topics and the associated values and then compare them to the previously mentioned lists. We used the first twenty folk tales published in the first volume of Dobšinský's collection (Dobšinský, 2008). The folk tales were published in Slovak language, so we translated the titles into English (in brackets). Here is the list of tales:

1. The enchanted forest (Zakliata hora)
2. Longbeard (Laktibrada)
3. A maid conceived of dew, born of nine mothers (Panna z rosy počatá z deviatich matiek zrodená)
4. Matthew the great king and Uliana the great queen (Matej veľký kráľ a Uliana veľká kráľovná)
5. Raduz and Ludmila (Radúz a Ludmila)
6. Mouse skin (Myšacia bundička)

7. Caspersnake (Hadogašpar)
8. Twelve brothers and the thirteenth sister (Dvanásti bratia a trinásta sestra)
9. Three trees (Tri stromy)
10. After a golden apple (Za zlatým jablčkom)
11. A golden horseshoe, a golden feather, a golden hair (Zlatá podkova, zlaté pero, zlatý vlas)
12. Evil brothers (Zlí bratia)
13. Three feathers of a dragon (Tri perá z draka)
14. The ill king (Chorý kráľ)
15. Goldenhair (Zlatovláska)
16. The prince who searched for a young maiden (O kráľovičovi, čo si mladú hľadal)
17. Sorcerer (Černokňazník)
18. Mahuliena the golden maiden (Mahuliena zlatá panna)
19. Werewolf (Vlkolak)
20. Golden-haired Twins (Zlatovlasé dvojčatá)

While reading the tales, we tried to find out whether any of the abovementioned values could be identified in the stories. The results were summarised in the form of a table.

*Table 1: Identified values (by Lewis & Leaptrott) in the listed folktales (author's work)*

Values/Tales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Family	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Education				x					x								x			x
Faith					x									x				x		x
Low self-confidence									x						x					
Nature	x						x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x					
Victimisation		x		x							x	x			x				x	x
Hard work	x	x			x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x					
Generosity	x											x	x	x					x	x
Honesty	x			x			x						x		x				x	
Modesty		x					x	x	x		x				x	x			x	x
Respect for age		x	x		x		x							x	x	x				x

As visible at first sight, the most often represented value in the tales was the importance of *family* and various relationships within it. The relation between parents and children is mostly depicted as caring and full of love and sacrifice, though in some cases the children forget about their parents as soon as their situation improves. But as the tales prove, a true hero always returns to share his/her happiness and wealth with them and looks after them in their old age. A special case is made for a stepparent (mostly a stepmother with a daughter) who is usually cruel and heartless. She is often punished as the hero's or the heroine's main adversary (Longbeard). In some tales, even siblings may turn against each other, but always with the clear message

that this is considered most evil and the end of the story brings strict punishment to the offenders (Matthew the great king and Uliana the great queen, Evil brothers). One of the folktales touched even the issue of incest as a strict taboo when a king wanted to marry his own daughter and she had to trick him to escape (Mouse skin). The king repented his sins though and was forgiven for the sake of the family reunion. The moral of all the analysed stories is that the family is the most important refuge in people's lives; you can find love, help, and support in its circle repaying it with equal care.

The second most-often appearing value in the selected stories is *hard work* and *modesty*. Unobtrusively, the stories point out that those who work hard get rewarded while the lazy ones get nothing or worse, they are eventually punished (Longbeard, The enchanted forest). The protagonists of the tales are usually industrious, hardworking young men or girls even princes or princesses who do what is needed and do not shy away from physical exertions.

The other, frequently described value is *modesty*. The hero is mostly an unassuming young man or woman who knows his/her place and always chooses the outwardly least attractive options (ugliest hoarse, cheapest gift, most difficult road...) but is invariably rewarded with the best of best (Twelve brothers and the thirteenth sister). The protagonist never boasts, even hides his achievements, and is revealed as a hero by others. On the other hand, those who are boastful and conceited are usually defeated, humbled, and punished (A golden horseshoe, a golden feather, a golden hair).

The next two most frequent values found in the tales were the *love for nature* and *respect for age*. The close relationship with *nature* is stressed by detailed descriptions of the environment and a significant role of the nature in the stories. In some stories, there are animals helping the hero or heroine to reach their goals (The enchanted forest), changes of nature are closely connected with the activities of the protagonists (e.g., enchanted forests leading people towards their destiny), and sometimes even the heroes change into animals or plants for various reasons (Raduz and Ludmila, Caspersnake). The stories seem to point out the power of the nature and the necessity of people to treat it with love and great respect.

The *respect for age* is demonstrated primarily by the repeated appearance of knowledgeable old men or women who after being greeted nicely and politely offer excellent advice or direct help to the protagonists (A maid conceived of dew, born of nine mothers). Those who do not treat the old and feeble ones with due care and respect are usually punished, defeated, or even die.

The feeling of *being a victim* that is according to Lewis a typical characteristic of the Slovaks is reflected in the folk tales in the form of mistreatment of the helpless and weak. The powerful kings, wicked stepmothers or heartless overlords treat the poor people badly and without any consideration. It takes many wrongdoings and outright cruelty to make the hero or heroine attempt to escape but

hardly ever take revenge (Matthew the great king and Uliana the great queen, Longbeard). They are satisfied with being able to escape and become free and happy. Forgiveness goes hand in hand with noble-mindedness.

Interestingly, the notion of *honesty* shows certain degrees or shades in the tales; it is not an outright choice between two extremes, honesty — dishonesty. The Slovak folktales show a tendency of dual perception of honesty depending on one's company. The hero is very honest and keeps his promises towards those he believes to be good people but accepts and uses tricks and falsehood towards adversaries. They may lie or cheat if that means victory over an evil opponent. Unfortunately, such an attitude sends sometimes an ambivalent message to children and therefore does not seem to be so much seconded.

The value of *generosity* was mentioned six times (e.g., The Enchanted forest, Evil brothers). It is described as a noble-minded gesture but with the caution that wrongly placed generosity can lead to doom. The message carried by the stories was that it is right to be generous but only with those you can trust because „ingratitude is the world's reward“.

The next two values — *respect for education* and *religiosity* — appeared each only 4 times in the twenty stories. Interestingly, according to the collector, the topic of education probably appeared in the tales as a rather late change and possibly older variations existed simultaneously. Education was mentioned as commendable, improving the lives of the young men but potentially leading to speculations, greediness, and even outright injustice just to cover up the evil character (Matthew the great king and Uliana the great queen). In the times when the majority of the folk tales were created, the stories were focused on poor illiterate farming people for whom education was not an option. They learned from their parents and through experience rather than at school. But if the hero turned into a king, it was natural that he needed to learn how to become a good king and usually, the wisest men of the kingdom taught him.

*Religiosity* was not addressed directly in the tales, but it is perceivable at the background. Mostly, it was presented in the form of greetings usual at those times involving a kind of blessing (God bless you with happiness) or a church, a chapel or a cross appearing in the story providing safety or hiding (Raduz and Ludmila). It seems that religion was taken for granted, a fixed aspect of everyday life and therefore not necessary to be stressed in the tales.

The last item on the value list is the low self-esteem or self-confidence of the Slovak people. It could be traced in only two tales (Three trees and Goldenhair). In both cases, the hero trusts the opinion of others more than his own and therefore considers himself inadequate. He does not dare at the beginning, to stand up against the villains (a witch or his own evil brothers) even if it brings suffering to others (Goldenhair) and only after completing a difficult quest, he finally presents himself as a true hero (Three brothers). The increase of

self-confidence is the result of both advancements in life (from pauper to king) and his achievements.

We assume that there is again a difference in the interpretation of the concept. The two chosen authors of the value lists are both from English-speaking, individualistic cultures where children are purposefully brought up to be very self-confident and to show it to the world. The Slovak culture on the other hand treats the presentation of self-confidence as boastful and strongly discourages it. Instead, it teaches modesty as shown in the stories. So, we can conclude that lack of self-confidence and modesty is in the case of the Slovak culture two names of the same concept approached with a different (negative or positive) attitude.

Eventually, if we consider those values that were not represented in any of the tales, we can note that some of them can be logically explained. *Attachment to folklore* is self-evident, as the tales are part of the mentioned folklore. By the same token, love for *popular traditions* comes from the previous attachment because the traditions are usually rooted in folklore and religion (Easter, Morena). *Patriotism* or national pride started to develop much later than the folk tales were created and therefore could not find their way into the stories but instead they served as a means of communicating similar experience and heritage among people speaking various dialects of the same language group. *Epicureanism*, enlisted by Lewis sounds strange and false to Slovaks, as their historical experience is closely connected with peasantry (poverty, lack of food). On the other side, it is generally accepted that good food and drink is an inseparable part of celebrations. Therefore, a foreigner getting insight into households through invitation may consider the Slovaks as hedonists misunderstanding their hospitality for epicureanism.

Enjoyment of sports and music does not appear in the chosen sample as well. These activities belong mostly to leisure time and therefore cannot feature in stories where difficult times and various hardships are described. Again, based on the historical experience, folk music was an important part of life but mostly during festivities and special occasions. Folk music is still quite popular nowadays; there are many folk groups, festivals and other events that keep folk music and other folk traditions alive.

Sports are a modern form of entertainment and therefore cannot turn up in traditional stories. Based on the discussions with the respondents mentioned previously in the article we came to the conclusion that most of them did not believe that item was typical or especially important in Slovak culture.

## *Conclusion*

The importance of cultural values cannot be underestimated in the life and functioning of any cultural community. The values representing the deepest beliefs and persuasions of people control and

form our thoughts and actions. Values are the foundation of the acculturation process from an early age. As we acquire them simultaneously with our mother tongue, they stand above any dispute and are perceived and taken for granted and 'natural'.

Folk tales and their more recent variations fairy tales are excellent instruments for the dissemination of cultural values. Their plots, heroes/heroines, and villains clearly teach the audience or readers right from wrong. The actions of the positive protagonists are the manifestation of the best beliefs of the culture while the deeds of the villains present all that is condemned. All the protagonists represent a significant sample of the various characters a child may meet, and he/she may learn how to interpret their behaviour through their colourful adventures.

In our paper, we addressed the topic of Slovak cultural values as seen by non-Slovak researchers and their possible appearance in selected Slovak folktales. As part of the Slovak folklore, the tales represent a typical example of oral tradition with all its changes and developments due to incorrect transmission or purposeful adaptations to fit the circumstances. Only the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about the written collections of folk tales, in Slovakia represented preeminently by Dobšinský whose collection of stories served as a source for our considerations. Based on two lists of values published by Lewis and Leaptrott respectively, we first discussed the listed values with Slovak nationals to find out their opinions and then compared the values with 20 stories collected by Dobšinský. We identified several of the suggested values in the stories and explained their meaning for the cultural community.

To summarise our findings, most of the values that Lewis and Leaptrott ascribed to the Slovak culture as core ones were found in the selected Slovak folktales proving their validity and at the same time, we arrived at the conclusion that folktales are indeed valuable not only as historical texts but also as relevant tools for perpetual cultural transmission.

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NARODNE PRIČE I BAJKE KAO PRENOSIOCI  
KULTURNIH VRIJEDNOSTI

Ovaj članak proučava odraz kulturnih vrijednosti u narodnim pričama i bajkama. Na osnovu analize dvadeset izvornih slovačkih narodnih priča koje je sakupio i blago prilagodio Pavol Dobšinský, upoređene su vrijednosti otkrivene u tekstovima sa nizom vrijednosti koje su slovačkoj kulturi pripisala dva inostrana autora. Njihov uvid i ocjena najvažnijih kulturnih vrijednosti su smatrani objektivnijim od bilo kakvog lokalnog izvora, usljed emocionalnog tereta povezanog sa bilo kojim kulturnim pitanjima. Članak predstavlja raznovrsne protagoniste, i heroje i zlikovce, čije ponašanje jasno ilustruje poželjne obrasce ponašanja, rukovođene vrijednostima, nasuprot onih nepoželjnih. Te pozitivne i negativne poruke, kao dio procesa akulturacije, pomažu dječjem umu da otkrije neizgovorene standarde svoje kulture. Ovi rezultati pokazuju da, iako su narodne priče kreirane davno, one još uvijek nose relevantne ideje koje vrijedi prenijeti narednim generacijama.

*Ključne riječi:* kulturne vrijednosti, narodne priče, narodne bajke, akulturacija, kulturni heroji