

Mariana Čechová
Simona Klimková

Intercultural Connections in Archetypal Stories Concerning the Protagonist's Predestination

The thematologically oriented research presented in this paper is rooted in the newly established literary field of 'arch-textual thematology'¹. Its subject (although not its concept and methodology) overlaps with several scientific disciplines in addition to literary science and aesthetics – folklore studies, cultural anthropology and existential semiotics. Within the framework of this particular definition, it is primarily focused on typological grasping of fundamental thematic segments (algorithms², motifs, characters, etc.) in arch-narratives, such as myths, magic fairy tales, epics, fables or legends. These are perceived, with a particular regard to their existential impact, as expressions of archetypal experience of wisdom.

The paper focuses on a thematological analysis of an existential problem situation defined by Václav Tille as "protected by fate". The analysis will be based on the classic folk tale *Plavčík a Vratko, čo osúšajú slzy sveta*³ (*Vratko and the Ferryman Dry All the Tears of the World*). The study presented intends to contribute, from a comparative-intertextual perspective, to a typologically systemizing interconnection of such a specified form of iconization of the abovementioned problem situation and the arch-narratives⁴ of various

¹ It is developed by the Department of Semiotic Studies at the Institute of Literary and Art Communication, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia (M. Čechová, L. Plesník).

² Thematic algorithm is defined by two substantial moments: 1. *succession, sequence, order* of points/partial segments on an imaginary timeline; 2. *repetition, iteration*. An algorithm presents an *organized, structured syntagma* (referring to the term plot), a *simplified syntagma* (referring to the term model), an *organized structure* (referring to the terms scheme and pattern). An algorithm is identified and characterized by an *invariant* (unchanging, stable, constant) texture (cf. Čechová et al. 2016).

³ In Dobšinský 1996: 291-302.

⁴ The terminological neologism arch-narrative is defined as a story or a text that has a fundamental meaning in terms of the development of a specific culture (its subsystem, area, etc.), it contributes to a creation of a specific style and is based on a certain ideological archetype (Horálek 1979: 20). At the same time, it seeks to articulate, in a fundamental way, a certain sense of life (in the sense of Heidegger's attunement), the concept of the Lifeworld and one's presence in it (*Dasein*), as well as to illustrate the basic existential strategies that seem to be the most meaningful in such a conceived world. The concept of an arch-narrative/arch-text combines the semanteme of develop-

civilizational and cultural provenance; it seeks to prove its universality which evidently transcends the dissemination radius of this material⁵ (the question of other ‘mechanisms’ related to its creation / formulation in various areas is not going to be addressed here since it transcends the scope of our conceptual and methodological ‘poetics’; this fact, however, provides an implicit evidence of the vast existential potential of the narrative concerning the type “protected by fate”).

1. *Folk Tale Type Prophecy*

According to Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) international classification, the folk tale *Vratko and the Ferryman Dry All the Tears of the World* belongs to two related folk tale types, which are registered under the indices ATU930 *The Prophecy* and ATU461 *Three Hairs of the Devil*. The relation between these two folk tale types has been discussed by the Finnish scholar Antti Aarne in his work *Der reiche Mann und sein Schwiegersohn* (1916) and by the Czech folklorist Václav Tille in his study *Chráněněc osudu* (1918).

The folk tale type *Prophecy* refers to the first episode about the ferryman and Vratko. Its narrative frame is as follows:

- I. Prophecy – it is foretold that a youth is to become the king’s son-in-law.
- II. Sale and abandonment – a) the king buys the boy from his parents; b) he abandons the boy in a box on a river; c) the boy is saved by a miller who takes him in.
- III. Uriah’s letter – a) the king finds the boy and sends him to the queen with a letter in which he asks her to execute the boy; b) while on his way, he is stopped by the god-mother who swaps the letters and gives him one which asks the queen to marry her daughter to the boy.

In our opinion, the title of the last sequence (“Uriah’s letter”) has been inspired by the biblical story of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sm 10-11) whom King David wanted dead so that he could marry his wife. David entrusts Uriah with a letter to the commander to send him to the front line of the battle. As a result, Uriah dies in the battle and King David marries his wife.

The biblical story of Uriah and the folk tale about the Ferryman are interconnected via the motif of a murderous letter. A high-ranking person entrusts his (inferior) rival with a message that sends him to a place of his own death.

Karel Horálek refers to European medieval legends in relation to the central motif of the “death letter” that is unknowingly delivered by the carrier of the letter. In these legends, the “Uriah’s letter” sequence is used as a separate narrative material. The French

mental *primordiality* (in this sense, it refers to an ‘arch-story’ or ‘proto-text’) and/or the semanteme of (stylistic, paradigmatic, epistemological, typological) *distinctiveness* (Čechová 2017: 278).

⁵ The exact definition of the term ‘material’ can be found in Čechová *et al.* 2016: 164.

folklorist Emmanuel Cosquin related the story of a person protected by fate to the medieval legend of St. Elizabeth of Portugal. It recounts the story of a God-fearing Queen whom a certain page helped to give out her alms. As another young page became jealous of his companion, he informed the king that the queen and the young man have an inappropriate relationship. The king sent the presumed offender to a lime-burner with a letter stating that he should be thrown into the furnace. The young man, however, stopped for Mass. In the meantime, the king sent the wicked page to the lime-burner who then met his fate intended for the innocent young man⁶. The Czech folklorist Václav Tille suggests to name the abovementioned sequence “the message to the lime-burner” (Tille 1918: 370).

Thus, the hero of the medieval legend, in contrast to the Old Testament Uriah, survives the malicious machinations. The Czech fairy tale *Chráněnc osudu (Protected by Fate)*⁷ has a similar conclusion – the king finally reconciles himself to the predetermined fate of the young man and accepts him as his son-in-law.

While working on *Der reiche Mann und sein Schwiegersohn* (1916), the Finnish researcher Antti Aarne was probably inspired by the commentary on the Grimms' fairy tale *Der Teufel mit den drei goldenen Haaren (Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm, 1913)*⁸ by Johann Bolt and Jiří Polívka and the monograph by Josef Schick *Corpus Hamleticum* (1912), which analyses the original inspiration of Shakespeare's Hamlet - the Irish legend of Amleth. The legend is recorded in *Gesta Danorum* by the medieval Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus (12th century)⁹. Grammaticus' story of Amleth is interconnected with the type “protected by fate” via the double motif of a murderous letter. The first time, Amleth exchanges the letter in which his uncle sends him to death, himself; the second time, it is exchanged by the queen who wants to marry Amleth.

⁶ In Cosquin 1912 and Horálek 1979.

⁷ In Dvořák 2001.

⁸ Bolte and Polívka grouped and commented upon a total of about one hundred texts about persons protected by fate (especially variants of the Grimms, other German texts and Flemish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Icelandic, Spanish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Czech, Polish, Russian, Turkish and other variants) (Bolte, Polívka 1913).

⁹ The story of Amleth also appeared in the Norwegian-Icelandic area, in the collection of ancient Nordic mythological songs *Edda* by Snorri Sturluson, to which stanzas of the Icelandic skald Snæbjörn (around 1000, i.e. two centuries prior to Grammaticus' chronicle) were attached. The existence of the Amleth-type folk tale in Iceland is testified by the *Folk tale of Briám*, recorded in 1707. It is a folk tale, not related to Saxo's version, about a poor boy who kills the king for murdering his father and brothers and becomes the king himself (Kadečková 1996). According to Schick, Shakespeare was not inspired precisely by this text, but by the dissemination of the mentioned legend, which was recorded by the French author Francois de Beleforest in his *Histoires tragiques* (1567) in the 16th century.

In accordance with Cosquin and Shick, Aarne believes that the type “protected by fate” has its origins in Chinese and Indian literature. He refers to a Chinese Buddhist story of the 3rd century, featuring the hero Bodhisattva (*Tripitaka*)¹⁰ himself, and an Indian Buddhist narrative of the 5th century, featuring the protagonist Ghosaka¹¹. In both narratives, a prophecy suggests that an abandoned infant is to become an heir of a rich person. The rich person takes in the child, but when his own son is born, he tries to kill the orphan. However, all machinations are thwarted. The abandoned child is either fed by sheep (Bodhisattva) or protected by a bull (Ghosaka). The rich person leaves the child on the road to be trampled by the animals, but they save the child as it is protected by fate, etc. Another act against the boy is presented by the treacherous “message to the lime-burner”. In the end, however, it is the very son of the rich man who is killed. Thus, the prophecy from the beginning of the story is fulfilled.

However, Tille refers to an older text with a similar topic. According to Greek sources, in the first decade of the 1st century the Roman historian Pompeius Trogus wrote a historical work called *Historiae Philippicae*, from which only a Latin synopsis was preserved. It was recorded in the 2nd or 3rd century by the historian Junianus Justinus (Justin) in his work *Historiarum Philippicarum libri XLIV*. It contains references to king Gargoris, who does not want Habis, his daughter’s illegitimate child, to become his successor so he attempts to kill him. The story coincides with the abovementioned Buddhist narratives in the motif of machinations and the power of fate: the king leaves the new-born child in the woods, but animals save him by feeding him; later, the ruler leaves him on a road, but the passing cattle does not hurt him; finally, he throws the infant to ravenous dogs and sows, but they do not hurt him either. Therefore, Tille assumes that this material originates in ancient Greece.

The narrative algorithm of “the one protected by fate” corresponds to several so-called royal legends of Cyrus, Romulus and Remus. These include European medieval pseudo-historical tales about the Byzantine Emperor Constantine the Great from the 13th century, about the Spanish king Florindo from the 16th century, and about the forester’s son who is pursued by Hannibal (Old Czech text *Gesta Romanorum* from the 14th and 15th centuries).

In the Christian legends of Egypt and Abyssinia, “protection of fate” is personified by Archangel Michael. Unlike in the mentioned Indian texts, these legends contain the motif of a new-born child being thrown into the sea and its almost miraculous rescue: the sea wave ushers it to the shore.

Thus, the folk tale type *Prophecy* draws on motifs and narrative algorithms that have been chiselled in different cultures for centuries. This is evidenced also by the paradigmatic and syntagmatic parallels of the mentioned narratives about the protection of the fate that we have identified in their comparison (see TABLE 1).

¹⁰ Literally translates as “three baskets”, it is the name of Buddhist scriptures.

¹¹ The story of Ghosaka is part of the Buddhist collection of moral rules *Dhammapada*.

TABLE I. ATU 930 PROPHECY

	<i>Boddhisattva</i> (Chinese tradition)	<i>Ghosaka</i> (Indian tradition)	<i>Thalassion</i> (Arabic tradition)	<i>Constantine</i> (French tradition)	<i>Florindo</i> (Italian tradition)	<i>The One Protected by Fate</i> (Czech tradition)	<i>The Legend of St. Elizabeth of Portugal</i>
<i>The Prophecy (Blessing)</i>	Prophecy of a brahmin	A prophecy from the stars	A blessing from the sky	A sign from the stars	A prophecy from the stars	A prophecy from the sky	
<i>The Rival Gets the Child</i>	By adoption	By purchase	By purchase	By purchase	By purchase	By donation	
<i>First Machinations</i>	Throwing the child to a ditch, leaving it the woods, on the road	Throwing the child to a dump, a ditch, a grove of death...	Throwing the child to the sea	An order to kill the child	Leaving the child in the woods	An order to kill the child	
<i>The Saviour</i>	Animals	Animals	A shepherd	An abbot	A baron	An earl	
<i>Second Machinations</i>	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence	A letter containing a death sentence
<i>Thwarted Machinations</i>	Exchange for the rich man's son / exchange of the letter by the Brahmin's daughter	Exchange of the letter by the merchant's daughter	Exchange of the letter by St. Michael	Exchange of the letter by the king's daughter	Exchange of the letter by the king's daughter	Exchange of the letter by the knight	Exchange for the informer
<i>The Fulfilment of Prophecy</i>	Wedding / the poor man becomes rich	Wedding / the poor man becomes the buyer	Wedding / the poor man becomes rich	Wedding / the poor man becomes king	Wedding / the poor man becomes king	Wedding / the poor man becomes the king	

2. *Folk Tale Type Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard*

While in Oriental narratives of the type “protected by fate” the sequence of the “message to the lime-burner” appears relatively frequently (in spite of all the machinations, another character associated, to some extent, with the machinations dies instead of the innocent protagonist), European folk tales of this type, including the Slovak version of *Vratko and the Ferryman*, are characterized by a significant substitution of this sequence with a narrative segment in which the hero is sent to a demonic creature or another supernatural being, for example, to get her three hairs or feathers. This is a fairy-tale type 461 *Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard*. The narrative line is as follows:

- I. Introduction – a) prophecy that a youth is to become the king's son-in-law; b) vain attempts to prevent his marriage with the princess
- II. Quest for Devil's hair – a) the hero is sent on a quest to hell to bring three hairs from the devil's beard or b) to find out who is the strongest, the most skilful man on earth
- III. Questions – on his way, various questions are given to the youth: a) why does a tree that he passes by not blossom, b) when will be the ferryman who takes the boy across the river set free, c) how can a sick prince (princess) be cured, d) why did the well run dry, e) where is the lost princess, f) how can a girl who does not have any suitors get married, g) why do the living die.
- IV. Success in the quest – a) The devil's mother helps the youth; b) the boy turns into an ant and hides in the skirt of the devil's mother; c) after seeing his mother the devil smells flesh, but the boy is not found; d) with the help of the devil's mother the boy learns the answers to the following questions: (d₁) there is some gold or a snake hidden under the tree that needs to be removed, (d₂) the ferryman must place the oar in the hands of another man and he will be free from his duties, (d₃) the princess can be healed by returning the holy water she stole from the church; (d₄) the well is going to be restored when an animal or stone is removed from it; e) the boy gets three hairs from the devil's beard (i.e. his three golden hairs).
- V. Reward – on his way home, the youth answers the given questions and receives the reward (gold, gems, animals).
- VI. The King as the ferryman – a) the envious king tries to imitate the heroic acts of the young man; b) the ferryman puts the oar in his hand, and the king must assume his role.

Clearly, ATU type 461 is an extended narrative of ATU type 930. The exposition of the narrative is presented by the tale about a hero protected by fate (ATU930). In the next part, the hero sets out on a journey into an unknown country to a dangerous – underworld or heavenly – being (in addition to the devil, it can be represented, for example, by the personified Sun called *Vratko*, the Old Man Know-All, the Dragon, a big bird or the prophetess *Sibyl*) and brings it three golden hairs.

The following is a selection of European variants of ATU 461:

- the German variant *Der Teufel mit den drei goldenen Federn* (Brothers Grimm, 1812);
- the Serbian variant *Usud* (V.S. Karadžić, 1833);
- the Slovak variant *Cesta k slunci* (J. Rimavski, 1845);
- the Czech variant *Vyslany k slunci* (J. Malý, 1845);
- the Czech variant *Tři zlaté perá* (B. Němcová, 1846);
- the Czech (Moravian) variant *O chovanci královském* (B.M. Kulda, 1854);
- the Russian variant *Marko bogatyj a Vasilij bezščastnyj* (A.N. Afanasjev, 1855);
- the Slovak variant *Cesta k slunci a k měsíci* (B. Němcová, 1857);
- the German (Leipzig) variant *Die Reise zur Sonne* (J. Wenzig, 1857);
- the Slovak variant *Tri perá z draka, alebo hľadanie zlého a dobrého* (A. H. Škultéty, P. Dobšinský, 1858) – see also *Zlatá podkova, zlaté pero, zlatý vlas*;
- the Czech variant *Tri zlaté vlasy Deda Vševeda* (K. J. Erben, 1860).

In Slovak tradition, ATU 461 is represented by the narrative *O chudobnom chlapcovi a o dedovi Vševiadovi* which is divided into other variants¹²:

A VARIANTS¹³:

Group I – Journey to the Sun.

Group II – Journey to an overseas dragon (Satan):

Kristus so sv. Petrom jako mentor (Codex revúcky C, 57-58; Polívka III, 6-8);

Barcély, čo slzy osúšal (Dobšinský; Polívka III, 8-11);

Rozprávka o jednom chudobnom Jankovi (Polívka III, 11-18);

Tri perá z draka (Zábavník prešovský no. 15-17);

Tri perá z draka ako hľadanie zlého a dobrého (Škultéty – Dobšinský, 125-135);

Plavčík a Vratko, čo osúšajú slzy sveta (Dobšinský; Polívka III, 19);

B VARIANTS¹⁴:

Plavčík;

O troch perách z nochtivtáka.

¹² See the anthology *Slovenské ľudové rozprávky* (Gašparíková 2002-2004).

¹³ A variants present the basic variants of the fairy tale, which are usually registered in Polívka 1923.

¹⁴ B variants represent parallels to the basic A variants.

We have found out that variants of the folk tale type 461 demonstrate the following stable narrative algorithms (TABLE 2):

TABLE 2. ATU 461 THE HAIRS OF THE DEVIL

	<i>The Devil with Three Golden Hairs</i> (German tradition)	<i>Old Man Know-All</i> (Czech tradition)	<i>Vratko and the Ferryman Dry All the Tears of the World</i> (Slovak tradition)	<i>Christ and St. Peter as a Mentor</i> (Slovak tradition)
<i>Prophecy</i>	Fairy Godmothers – wedding with the king's daughter	Fairy Godmother – wedding with the king's daughter	Godmother – wedding with the king's daughter	Christ – wedding with the king's daughter
<i>Journey to a Dangerous Being</i>	The devil	The Old Man Know-All	Vratko	The dragon
<i>Success / Reward</i>	Three golden hairs, answered questions, wealth	Three golden hairs, answered questions, wealth	Three golden hairs, answered questions, wealth	Three golden feathers, answered questions, wealth
<i>The Fulfilment of Prophecy</i>	The king becomes the ferryman / the poor man becomes the king	The king becomes the ferryman / the poor man becomes the king	The poor man becomes the king	The king becomes the ferryman / the poor man becomes the king

At the typological level, there are several 'pre-images' of the ATU461 type. Viera Gašparíková, for example, sees the second part of the ATU461 narrative ("the journey to a supernatural being") as "a secondary product of the narrative about the journey to God, which leads the hero to a reward or answers to his questions" (Gašparíková 2002: 676).

The narrative about the dangerous journey to God or the underworld has a very old tradition. The Assyrian Izdubar legends (Jeremias 1891: 14-44) or tales about Gilgamesh (presumably from the 3rd millennium BC), whose fragments have been preserved on 6th-century BC Assyrian tablets, represent some of the oldest narratives concerning the journey to the underworld: Gilgamesh travels to the land of the dead to seek his forefather and gain immortality. He passes through the darkness to a palace of a beautiful girl. Here, he learns of the pitfalls that lie ahead. He finds a ferryman who takes him to the land of the blissful. There he meets his forefather who tells him the secret of a rejuvenating and reviving plant.

The idea of a land (some inhabited territory) 'on the other side' – over the sea – has always represented a transpersonal metaphysical notion. The semiotic projection of water, which divides the world into two cosmologically binary principles (terrestrial / supernatural, profane / sacred, human / divine) features prominently in many cultural narratives.

One of the most fundamental narrative motives of old magic tales is the passage (crossing) of the hero through the so called *horos* (Lat. *ōra*, Gr. *ōrio* – ‘limit, boundary’)¹⁵, *limen*¹⁶ (‘threshold’) separating his safe and familiar (micro)space from a territory full of mysterious and threatening forces (distant lands, sea and underground depths, worlds above the clouds, on top of mountains or in mysterious forests). When crossing the border, the protagonist enters a mysterious land of ambiguous forms (a zone of extraordinary phenomena that are predominantly represented by supernatural / deified beings modified into polymorphic personified forms) to obtain something what is otherwise inaccessible to ordinary mortals (a divine or diabolical source of power in the form of golden hairs, revitalizing water, a rejuvenating herb, etc.).

Whether in *Plavčík a Vratko, čo osušajú slzy sveta* (‘*Vratko and the Ferryman Dry All the Tears of the World*’) or *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, water embodies a magical border of the otherworldly land. Both arch-narratives feature the character of a ferryman who guards the threshold (J. Campell). In folk tales, heroes frequently need to travel across the known world to its borders and then be transported to the unknown in order to achieve their coveted goals. Thus, the ferryman functions as a mediator between these worlds, the world of the living and that of the dead, or between the world on ‘this’ shore and the world on ‘that’ shore; ‘that’ shore significantly exceeds or denies the limits and possibilities of the world (the principles of the ‘fictional grammar’) from which the protagonist originates.

The name of the Slovak protagonist *Plavčík* (chosen according to the principle of *nomen omen*) is derived from the word *plávať* (‘to swim’), which metaphorically embodies the significant skill of the bearer of the name – the ability to ‘swim’ through life with the blessing of the fate. At the same time, in the primal meaning of the lexeme *plavčík*, the protagonist represents a real fairy-tale hero – a rescuer of others, who gets the golden hair and “dries the tears of the world” as well as revives the (fictional) universe of the narrative.

In the tale about *Plavčík*, water influences the life of the hero as well as the lives of other human beings several times: 1) after his birth, he is transported to the safety of the mill house via water; 2) later, water transports him to the supernatural world and back; 3) thanks to *Vratko*, people regain access to water as a source of existence (returning water to the well, reviving the dried tree of life).

As a miraculous and life-giving agent, water connects the human element with the supernatural/divine, favourably interfering with the fate of many mythological fairy-tale heroes: e.g. in the conclusion of the German fairy tale of Grimm brothers, *Hansel and*

¹⁵ Other meanings: ‘edge, shore, coast, seaside, belt, area, region, landscape’ (Špaňár, Hrabovský 1987: 411).

¹⁶ *Limen* – 1. ‘threshold’, 2. ‘entrance, door’, 3. ‘boundary, limit’, 4. ‘dwelling’, 5. ‘beginning’. Derived expressions: *postlimium* (Lat. *pos-limium* / meaning ‘beyond the threshold’) / – 1. ‘return to the homeland and return of privileges to a person who has voluntarily or forcibly resigned to a foreign country’, 2. ‘borderline’; *sublimis* (Lat. *sub-limen* – 1. ‘raise on high’, 2. ‘elevated’, 3. ‘noble, famous’, 4. ‘ideal’)(Špaňár, Hrabovský 1987: 348, 459, 577).

Gretel, water transports the children from the dark woods of the witch to the ‘other shore’; in another tale of the Grimm brothers, *Iron John*, magical water from a sacred well of a mysterious forest creature gives the hero an extraordinary appearance, golden hair, which reveals his true royal identity; in the Russian fairy tale *The Maiden King*, the merchant Ivan meets his future wife at sea.

3. *Other Arch-Narratives*

In addition, there are other arch-narratives corresponding with the key motives of the type “protected by fate”:

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

The motif of the massacre of the innocents is also found in the New Testament story of King Herod, who is visited by three wise men from the East informing him about the birth of a new king. Herod issues an order to kill all new-born boys to get rid of his opponent. However, the fate of the new King is predestined by God.

THE RESCUE OF A CHILD

The motif of the “rescue of a child” is also present in the legend of Sargon of Akkad or in the Old Testament narrative about baby Moses, whose mother set him adrift in a basket. The child is saved by Pharaoh’s daughter, and the boy’s sister suggests to her taking her mother (the boy’s real mother) as a nurse. A similar motif of the mother/nurse appears in the Slovak fairy tale by B. Němcová ‘*Christ and St. Peter as a mentor*’ (*Kristus so sv. Petrom jako mentor*).

THE MOTIF OF THE HEAVENLY SIGN

In this fairy tale, Christ fulfils the role of the prophet and the godfather. When the farmer’s wife goes into labour, Christ asks Peter to observe the sky and delay birth until an auspicious sign appears. Christ then prophesies that the boy will become a king. In the morning, both Christ and Peter are invited to become the child’s godfathers (here, we are probably dealing with a post-text that follows the New Testament story of the three wise men from the East, to whom a star announces the birth of Jesus). An analogous motif is also found in the old French story about Emperor Constantine.

The mythological motif of “God’s child”, whose fate is foretold by heavenly beings, goes beyond the motivic paradigm of the folk tale type 461. This child has two parents: 1) earthly ones, whether biological or step-parents (a miller, lumberjack, farmer, merchant, etc.); and 2) divine ones (embodied by the godparents - godmother, Christ, etc.). The child, therefore, seems to belong to both worlds – human and divine. His mission is to bring the ‘divine principle’ into the earthly existence, and thus change it fundamentally.

THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY

The prophecy suggests that the fate of the child predestined by ‘the powers of the higher world’ will prevail against the will of earthly mortals. Paradoxically, their strenuous efforts will make the fulfilment of the prophecy possible.

4. *Conclusions*

In conclusion, the invariant semanteme of both folk tale types (ATU930 *Prophecy* and ATU461 *Three Hairs of the Devil*) is embodied by the effort of an earthly monarch to kill a child that is supposed to become his successor.

The Slovak fairy tale *Plavčík a Vratko, čo osušajú slzy sveta* (*Vratko and the Ferryman Dry All the Tears of the World*) and the abovementioned arch-narratives demonstrate the following narrative homology:

exile of the child → testing / suffering → ‘the outcast’ becomes the king

The child chosen by fate undergoes a strenuous journey marked by mercilessness and demanding obstacles, in order to revive this world as destined by a sovereign superior power.

Thus, we are dealing with an archetypal image of an existential problem situation that has been created/passed on transcontinentally across different cultures through millennia – though it is not known where and how in terms of the genetic line, where and how in terms of the typological line, and where and how in any other way. According to Tille, it is an expression of a worldview which underlines the vanity of human efforts against the will of mysterious forces superior to the earthly world (Tille 1918: 3690).

We conclude with a question whether we are not dealing with a manifestation, iconized in the narrative, of the vanish point of the desire for transcendence of a suffering-filled existence in this world, which gives a greater sense to the given hardship, and represents the basis of at least those culture-forming narratives that have sacral potency – if it is not the very belief in election, then at least, an assumption of an otherworldly or a ‘different’ form of protection or favour¹⁷.

¹⁷ The study is part of the research project *APVV-17-0026 Tematologická interpretácia, analýza a systemizácia arcinaratívov ako semiotických modelov životného sveta a existenciálnych stratégií* (Thematological interpretation, analysis and systematization of arch-narratives as semiotic models of the life world and existential strategies).

Bibliography

- Aarne, Thompson 1961: A. Aarne, S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, Helsinki 1961.
- Bolte, Polívka 1913: J. Bolte, G. Polívka, *Der Teufel mit den drei goldenen Haaren*, in: Id., *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Leipzig 1913, pp. 276-292.
- Cosquin 1912: E. Cosquin, *La Légende du page de sainte Elisabeth de Portugal et les nouveaux documents orientaux*, Paris 1912, pp. 320-326.
- Čechová et al. 2016: M. Čechová, L. Plesník, Z. Rédey, P. Žiak, E. Pariláková, M. Malíčková, M. Boszorád, P. Zlat, *Osnovné tematické algoritmy v slovesnom umení (s intersemiotickými interdisciplinárnymi presahmi)*, Nitra 2016, pp. 7-8.
- Čechová 2017: M. Čechová, *Arcinaratív / arcitext – Tematický algoritmus – Arcitextuálna tematólogia*, "Litikon", II, 2017, I, p. 278.
- Dobšinský 1996: P. Dobšinský, *Slovenské národné povesti*, Bratislava 1996.
- Dvořák 2001: K. Dvořák, *Nejstarší české pohádky*, Praha 2001, pp. 123-129.
- Gašparíková 2002-2004: V. Gašparíková (red.), *Slovenské ľudové rozprávky*, I-III, Bratislava 2002-2004.
- Horálek 1979: K. Horálek, *Folklor a světová literatura*, Praha 1979, p. 130.
- Jeremias 1891: A. Jeremias, *Izdubar-Nimrod. Eine altbabylonische Heldensag*, Leipzig 1891, pp. 14-44.
- Kadečková 1996: H. Kadečková, *Příběh Amleta, prince jutského, jak jej ve své dánské kronice napsal Saxo Grammaticus*, in: Id., *Cesty pověsti o Amletovi*, Praha 1996, pp. 4-23.
- Polívka 1923: J. Polívka, *Súpis slovenských rozprávok*, I-V, Martin 1923-1931.
- Špaňár, Hrabovský 1987: J. Špaňár, J. Hrabovský, *Latinsko-slovenský a slovensko-latinský slovník*, Bratislava 1987.
- Thompson 1946: S. Thompson, *Folktale*, New York 1946, pp. 39-141.
- Tille 1918: V. Tille, *Chráněnc osudu*, "Národopisný věstník československý", 1918, 2, pp. 369-417.
- Tille 1919: V. Tille, *Doplňky. Chráněnc osudu*, "Národopisný věstník československý", 1919, 13, pp. 76-78.
- Uther 2004: H.-J. Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, Helsinki 2004.

Abstract

Mariana Čechová, Simona Klimková

Intercultural Connections in Archetypal Stories Concerning the Protagonist's Predestination

The paper seeks to provide a thematological analysis of folk tale types 461 and 930 (“protected by fate”) and to identify their thematic and motivic intersections of intercultural validity in terms of existential semiotics within the comparative frame of European and Asian literary traditions. The invariant semanteme of all mentioned myths, fairy tales or legends resides in the unsuccessful endeavour of a high-ranking, powerful man to kill a person predestined to become his successor. In many cases, the storyline of this thousand year-old motif also includes well-known biblical motifs, such as, massacre of the innocents, a heavenly sign and fulfilment of the prophecy.

Keywords

Folk Tale Type “Protected by Fate”; Narrative Algorithm; Transcultural Parallels.