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A TRADITIONAL VALUE PORTRAIT OF AN INDIVIDUAL PROMOTED
IN SERBIAN FOLK TALES AND FABLES

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<p>Literature is a very powerful educational tool shaping ideas, behaviour and values of children. In spite of the fact that folk tales and fables were not originally created as genres for children, nowadays they are viewed by parents and teachers as suitable for young readers and are even included in school programs. However, only few people realise that at different stages folk tales and fables influence all spheres of children's development: social, cognitive, personal and, most importantly, moral. They are indirectly transmitting knowledge of the society and world construction together with social norms and values. This research aims at uncovering the hidden values and social norms that Serbian folk tales and fables promote. The choice of exactly Serbian folk tales and fables was purposeful since there is almost no research in English dedicated to Serbian folk literature and its influence on children.</p> <p>To achieve the aims of the research, there was a thematic content analysis of a collection of Serbian folk tales and fables done. The texts of all the folk tales and fables included in a book were coded and categorised. The use of content analysis made it possible to describe the importance of certain topics. The book itself called <i>Српске народне бајке и приче (Serbian folk tales and fables)</i> was composed in 2013 by Matijevich and contains 53 stories and a dictionary. I intentionally take the whole book because adults who read folk tales to children are more likely to buy a book and read all the stories from it than to select stories themselves.</p> <p>Social learning theory and modelling theory, used as a foundation of the research, claim that people learn from each other by adopting particular behaviour. Heroes of folk tales possess all the characteristics needed to be models for such imitation: competence, prestige and power, stereotypical gender behaviour, relevance to the child's social context and familiarity. In such a way, children learn values and social norms presented in folk tales and fables by identifying themselves with heroes. Based on this fact, the values and attitudes of Serbian society could be uncovered by analysing the folk tales and fables in terms of personal traits of characters that are shown as positive or negative, cases of rewards and punishments, types of behaviour and social norms viewed as normal and traditional.</p> <p>Based on the data, I provide a value portrait of an individual that is promoted by Serbian folk tales and fables. The underlying idea of the analysis is that Serbian society is presented as traditional in terms of attitudes and gender roles. There is an obvious hierarchy, in which men are more important than women. However, some women and men possess characteristics not common for their gender, for instance, some heroines are smart and independent and some heroes may cry. In addition to that, Orthodox Christianity values influence all the aspects of life and actions of people by providing them with God's commandments to follow. People's behavior goes in line with nine out of ten commandments. The one proclaiming equality among people does not work since in Serbian society there is a clear hierarchy, which requires addressing and treating others according to their status.</p> <p>The issues of validity and reliability were taken into consideration on all the stages of the research. Since the way I, as a researcher, can interpret the results is subjective and may differ from other people's, I consulted my Serbian colleagues who helped me with translation in terms of what meanings they see in particular text units and if it is at variance with my views.</p> <p>Overall, the study opens up the educational potential of Serbian folk tales and fables and is useful for parents and adults working with children. I suggest my own ways of using folk tales and fables in working with children and describe the experience that other teachers had in using folk tales in classrooms to preserve traditional worldviews in children or question the status quo. Finally, researchers interested in the field may find quite many topics offered for further research as a possible continuation of this study.</p>			
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1. INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Folk tales and fables came to us from ancient times, even before the introduction of writing. Originally, they belonged to oral tradition and have been written down much later (Cullinan & Person, 2001, pp. 291-292). Nowadays, almost all nations are aware of their oldest literature traditions represented mostly by legends and myths, or fables and folk tales like in this case.

For this research, I have chosen Serbian folk tales and fables for several reasons. First, they are written in Serbian language, which means they can be understood by not only Serbian people, but also by Croatians, Bosnians, Slovenians and Macedonians due to similarity of the language and tradition (Milanovich, 1942, pp. 6-7). Based on this fact, one can assume that there would be a lot of similarities in the nature of such literature and its influence on children on the whole territory of former Yugoslavia.

Second, the observed wideness of choice of Serbian national folk tales and fables editions in Serbian bookshops tells us that they are quite popular among the population, which makes their influence on children wide-spread. They are mostly read to preschool, elementary and even primary school children. Many parents view folk tales and fables as appropriate literature for their children because of their educational potential, pen pictures and the belief that if something has been read throughout generations it must be good.

In Serbian schools, folk poems, tales and fables are also introduced to children within Serbian language subject. On average, there are 144 - 180 classes per year, among them 20-50 classes are dedicated to folk tales. They are studied in every grade starting with the first year of elementary school and finishing with the eighth grade of primary school. At least 15 folk tales from the book are included in a list of recommended literature for Serbian language school subject. (Klett, 2012) However, teachers are flexible in choosing tales and their number.

Third, the researches done before do not cover or only partially cover the chosen topic, and remarkably few researches in English are dedicated to Serbian literature. For instance, I have managed to find only one research which is both dedicated to Serbian folk tales and written in English, published in 1942 (Milanovich, 1942). My thesis is aimed to negligibly fill this gap and make the English-speaking world acquainted with Serbian literature.

Finally, I am personally interested in this topic because of the possibility to implement the results of this research in my daily work as a teacher. Since I plan to build my professional career in Serbia, I can use Serbian folk tales as one of the educational tools in my daily work. I will also learn more about literature of the country in which I am interested.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first one contains research questions, explains the importance of the study and defines the subjects of this research, which are Serbian folk tales and fables. The second chapter introduces the researches done before in the field and explains the choice of social learning theory and modeling theory as the basis of the research. Methodology and the choice of thematic content analysis as the main method are explained in the third chapter. The fourth chapter gives a detailed description of the analysed book and the flow of analysis. In the fifth chapter, I open up the obtained data using samples from the text and do the pre-analysis. In the sixth chapter, I analyse the data and present the value portrait of an individual promoted in Serbian folk tales and fables. The final chapter addresses the issues of validity and reliability, theoretical and practical implementation of the research and its place in the field.

1.1. Research questions and importance of the research

The topic of this research is “A traditional value portrait of an individual promoted in Serbian folk tales and fables”. The book this study is based on is called *Српске народне бајке и приче* (*Serbian folk tales and fables*), compiled by Matijevich and printed by a Serbian publishing house “Пчелица” in 2013 (Matijevich, 2013). In order to meet the aims of the research, thematic content analysis of all the stories from the book is done.

The research task of this study is to understand what set of values is promoted in a collection of Serbian folk tales and fables.

In order to complete the task, the following research questions are formed:

1. What character traits do Serbian folk tales and fables approve and disapprove?
2. What social norms are promoted and criticised in Serbian folk tales and fables?
3. What is the educational potential of Serbian folk tales and fables in teaching children values and morals?

The current research is important for both educational and philological sciences and adults working with children. Folk tales and fables reveal society's values and attitudes meaning one can see not only the way society operates but also how it would like to be perceived operating (Butts, 1992, p. xii; Cooper, 2013, 4). In such a way, my analysis demonstrates the impact literature makes on formation of children's personality and hidden values transmitted through the language and composition of Serbian folk tales and fables.

In addition, any literature including folk tales is a mean of social control: society transfers prevailing ideas, morals, dominant role models and legitimate aspirations through texts (Richards, 1992, p. 1). However, the issue can also be looked at from a different angle. Learning about the status quo makes an individual "culturally competent", helps him to adapt and integrate, prepares for living in a society where there are certain people, structures and rules he should obey in order to avoid troubles (Lauwers, 2013, p. 37). Folk literature also transmits the most important nation's cultural values (Reiss, 1996, p.9). It introduces the traditions and the history of a people, provides a basis from which people can understand the moral challenges of the present (Reiss, 1996, p.16). In such a way, folk literature may have a great impact on formation of national identity and worldview.

This means that tales are a powerful educational tool shaping the values, behavioural and role models of children (Kelley, 2008, p. 32; Cooper, 2013, p. 3) in a way that neither children nor parents (in the majority of cases) are aware of. Lauwers (2013, p. 38) emphasizes the importance a family and surrounding play in the formation of a child and the process of perceiving the messages sent to him by different sources including folk literature. Adults' assistance influences what conclusion a child eventually would make (Bourke, 2008, p. 311). However, majority of adults remain blind to the role of folk tales and continue viewing them as primarily a mean of entertainment forgetting about their educational function (Amali, 2014, p. 91). My research shows what messages folk tales send to the reader and the possible influence on a child one can expect after reading Serbian folk tales.

1.2. Defining folktales and fables

It is clear that folk tales and fables are the central concepts of this research. Thus, an important question is what is a folk tale and what is a fable? Further, I present different

kinds of definitions related to research subjects. There are many definitions of folk tales and fables though the majority of them are quite similar.

Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1996, p. 161) in her article *Fairy tales and folk tales* differentiates folk tales from fairy tales. She states that the term “folk tale” includes many sub-genres like aetiologies, animal tales, nonsense tales, jests, never-ending tales and burlesques. Nicole S. Reiss (1996, p. 5) suggests that action in fairy tales takes place in a fictional world where everything supernatural is taken for granted while folk tales offer more realistic setting, however, not completely without supernatural and magical elements. In such a way, folk tales are viewed as any form of a story told orally in the past, especially by country dwellers.

Bascom states that folk tales are “prose narratives which are regarded as fiction. They are not considered as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened, and they are not taken seriously”. Folk tales usually depict adventures of a human or personified animal, they are placeless and timeless. Stories contain common narrative motifs and common themes. Settings, characterisation and plot may also have similar features. Bascom names cumulative tales, magic and wonder tales, pourquoi tales, humorous tales, realistic tales and beast tales as sub-genres of folk tales. (Bascom cited in Norton, 1991, p. 227)

As for fables, their origin is believed to be dated back to ancient Greece where Aesop was viewed as the first person creating fables (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 292). According to R. T. Lenaghan (cited in Norton, 1991, p. 257), all fables share same basic characteristics: 1. They are fiction since they never happened, 2. Their aim is to entertain, 3. They are poetic, 4. They teach morals and have animals as heroes. Fables are short and have only few characters, usually two or three. Almost always personification takes place as animals can speak and behave like human beings. Actions are simple, straight-forward and have only one climax. The main characteristic is that every fable is teaching some moral lesson (Norton, 1991, p. 257).

Another definition is given in the book *Through the eyes of a child : An introduction to children's literature*: fables are brief tales in which animal characters that talk and act like humans indicate a moral lesson or satirise human conduct (Norton, 1991, p. 229). Here one can see an additional to the previous definition characteristic: some fables are teaching moral lessons through laughing at particular undesirable behaviour.

It is clearly seen that the definitions mentioned above use different words to describe the notions of folk tales and fables but their content and typical characteristics are agreed upon. As a researcher, I accept all these definitions since each of them is entitled to existence.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this very chapter, I explain my ontological and epistemological starting points. To fulfill this task, I look at the previous research done in the field and decide upon the theories that can best support my own study. Further, I analyse the suitability of folk tales and fables for children and, finally, examine what possible contribution they make to children's development.

2.1. Previous researches in the field

As I already mentioned in the introduction, little research is dedicated to Serbian folk literature. For instance, I was able to find only one research in English published in the field (Milanovich, 1942). It is a translation of 7 Serbian folk tales, thus this publication does not provide any theoretical or practical implication to the research field.

As for the accessibility of texts of Serbian folk tales in English, it is limited. If we search for "Serbian tales", for example, on the goodreads webpage (goodreads, 2016), among 18 results displayed there are references to only 6 collections of folk tales and several collections of hero tales and legends. There is no information available about their presence in libraries. However, they can be purchased in online shops.

Unfortunately, I do not possess information how widely the topic of the influence of Serbian folk literature on children is covered in studies conducted by Serbian researchers. Even if there are some works dedicated to this matter, still they are of local importance due to the language they are written in. If we look at other countries, there is plenty of research written in English in addition to local languages dedicated to the influence on the formation of children's set of values and behavioural models of Russian, Eastern Asian, Central and North European folk tales, fables, myths and legends. It is clear that Serbian literature is overlooked.

Fortunately, there are books showing the importance of folk literature as a whole in children's formation and the ways in which it is implemented. In my research, I mostly reference to these sources and to the works of educators using folk tales in their teaching practice. In addition to this, folk tales of different nations have some universal characteristics (Reiss, 1996, p. 25), which makes it possible for me to address also the researches dedicated to the folk tales of other countries.

2.2. Social learning theory and modeling theory as the basis of the research

In my thesis, I mainly address the theory originally created not to explain the relation between literature and children's personality, but to represent mutual influence of people. Despite of this fact, it can be applied to the relation under examination as well. This is social learning theory.

Social learning theory deals with the ways people learn values and behaviour from each other. The concept was primarily developed by an outstanding psychologist Albert Bandura. Social learning theory has its roots in behaviourism and cognitive theory. (Wardle, 2003, p. 385) As for the cognitive predecessor of the theory, Wardle (2003, p. 62) presents some aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that can help us understand the ways literature may influence children, to be precise, his ideas of cross-cultural variations (i.e. the idea that higher-order mental processes of representatives of different cultures differ because each culture has its own set of unique tools, words, expectation, and activities which form them) and central place of the language in personal development (i.e. the idea that language plays the main role in developing higher-order thought processes and structuring thought. Since language is culturally based, individual mental structures become culturally defined).

However, a person learns not from observing the behaviour of any member of the society but of authoritative ones. They can be accepted as outstanding by the whole society, its group or a particular person. There are certain mechanisms of learning from others which will be presented below. The main concepts of social learning theory are summarised by Ormrod (cited in Wardle, 2003, pp. 288-289):

1. People learn by observing the behaviour of others and the results of this behaviour.
2. Learning can occur without a change of behaviour.
3. The consequences of the behaviour affect how well it is learned.
4. Cognition plays a big role in social learning. Cognition - thinking about the activity - is a vocal component.

By "others" whom children observe and whose behaviour they imitate one can understand not only real people surrounding children in daily life (parents, teachers and other meaningful adults), but also heroes of folk tales and fables they are reading. In this case,

the mechanisms of influence are the same. Children observe how heroes act and what punishment or reward they get for their behaviour. It is not necessary one sees the influence made by a book on a child immediately, but he or she may draw some conclusions and address the behaviour described in a book in a particular situation in future life. Also, when a child starts to imitate bad or good behaviour of some literature character, his surrounding in face of parents or teachers may positively (through praising) or negatively (through punishment) react on it which results in a child continuing or abandoning this very way of behaving. Finally, a child chooses to imitate a particular behaviour after some thinking taking place - most likely he likes the consequences (such as a reward) following the behaviour.

There is a special term for those “observed others” mentioned above. The characters whom children copy or whose aspects of behaviour they imitate are called models. The way they influence children’s behaviour is described in a modelling theory, which is a part of social learning theory. (Wardle, 2003, p. 386)

According to Wardle (2003, p. 386), models can be either live (a real person in child’s surrounding) or symbolic (a person or character on film, TV or, like in this case, in the book). They can be teaching children both good and bad behaviour. To become a model, a character or person should comprise the following characteristics: competence, prestige and power, stereotypical gender behaviour, relevance to the child’s social context, familiarity (Ormrod cited in Wardle, 2003, p. 387). Human bodies make association with the models possible with the help of recently discovered mirror neurons in human brains allowing people to engage with fictional characters (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 8).

Heroes of folk tales and fables have powerful influence on children to be classified as models. Heroes usually possess outstanding ability that makes them very powerful and successful in what they do. As good behaviour is likely to be rewarded, this kind of stories can be viewed as a manual to achieve a particular type of reward. Coming from old times, folk tales and fables usually maintain stereotypical, traditional gender roles which makes it easier for children to associate themselves with the characters of different gender. In the same time, in folk tales both male and female characters fight with obstacles so both boys and girls are able to find a hero to identify themselves with. Finally, if a story read by a child is part of literature heritage of his own country traditions, rituals, characters and action flow are familiar to a child (Cullingford, 1998, p. 11). This helps him to feel “at home” and easier acquire the lessons taught.

As one may notice, gender issues are quite often addressed when analysing folk tales and fables since they were created long ago and most likely transmit the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. However, I do not focus only on gender issues since my aim is to provide a more or less full value portrait of an individual promoted in Serbian folk tales.

2.3. Characteristics of folk tales and fables making them suitable for young readers

The previous chapter proves that modelling is a normal occurrence. As a result, a logical question arises, that is why children see characters from folk tales and fables as models. What exactly appeals to them? There is a wide range of ideas explaining this phenomenon.

Some researchers argue that children prefer stories where the main characters are children of their age or children-like characters having feelings and preoccupations typical for them (Tucker, 1981, p. 18). However, elementary school children also see meaningful adults surrounding them as authority and models. They want to be like their mother or father, teacher or older siblings. In such a way, children are also open to imitating behaviour of adult persons, including adults from books. Magic happening around heroes makes being like them even more desirable.

In different situations, children tend to choose different story characters to identify themselves with. They can feel less skillful and powerful compared with adults so they would imagine themselves being like strong characters from books who can cope with any practical or moral dilemma. Other times, they find it calming to see a weak character in a story to whom they may feel similarity (the youngest son, the least clever and so on) overcoming difficulties and finally succeeding (Tucker, 1981, p. 79). Heroes of folk tales can learn to survive in any circumstances and even manage to succeed which provides children with psychologically reassuring (Butts, 1992, p.73).

Typically, children welcome fables and folk tales. Well-known Swiss psychologists and philosopher Jean Piaget explained the appeal of children books to their reading audience; however, his ideas can also be applied to folk tales and fables as being classified nowadays as literature for children. In his opinion, such stories offer a simplified version of reality, which contributes to easier understanding of how the world is built by children. However, Piaget adds that children do not always read stories for mental stimulation, in many cases the purpose is mainly entertaining when it matters only how interesting the

plot is. (Piaget cited in Tucker, 1981, p. 4) It is also a question if folk tales attract children or folk tales are introduced to them so early that they inevitably learn to like and perceive them (Cullingford, 1998, p. 3).

Almost all folk tales share similar features: strong beginning is followed by fast-developing action leading to familiar to children climaxes and satisfactory endings, every child can find a character to identify himself with (Rupiper & Zeece, 2005, p. 377). The structure is often the same: a hero goes on a journey, has some adventures on the way, and finally makes a successful homecoming (Butts, 1992, p. 74). Folktales have a perfect balance of probable and extraordinary: they should combine the two so that children do not get bored but in the same time believe in the things happening (Butts, 1992, p. 70). Jung reveals that folk tales are suitable for primary schools because of their imaginative appeal and simple lessons (Jung cited in Lee, 2011, p. 403). All these characteristics make folk tales so attractive to young readers (Norton, 1991, p. 271). Their simplicity also makes them appropriate for small children.

Talking about the language, some researchers argue that children prefer so-called simple style with a lot of direct speech, short descriptions, less complex vocabulary and the main focus on the action (Tucker, 1981, p. 13). Reassurance brought by recognition of the familiar (patterns, for example) while reading is especially important for young readers (Butts, 1992, p. 74). Folktales and fables are good examples of this writing style. Moreover, their length rarely overcome 4-5 pages and the number of characters is limited to only few. In addition, there are a lot of literary devices used to catch and keep children's attention like thoroughly described by Butts (1992, p. 73) repetition of similar patterns (for example, number 3 is most frequent: there were 3 brothers, 3 wishes, 3 objects), including repetition of the same phrases (and there he went,... and there he went,...), unexpected turn of events, allegories (when, for example, Fate is depicted as a king in a human form), personification (animals are able to speak and behave like humans), fantastic elements and many other.

In a book *Through the eyes of a child* three main characteristics for choosing books best suited for children are presented (Norton, 1991, pp. 104-105). Folktales and fables match all three criteria: 1. Accessibility. Editions of folk tales and fables can be found in any bookshop, library, ordered through Internet, many of them are in free access on numerous webpages. 2. Readability. The language of fables and folk tales is quite simple, not many descriptions and complex sentences are used. Sometimes they may include old-style

words but in this case, they are either familiar to children or a book contains a dictionary.

3. Interest. Children's interest in folk tales is proved by their popularity among children and even adults throughout centuries. The great demand for folk tales can be also explained by a fact that they satisfy some of the human and psychological needs (Butts, 1992, p. 74; Rupiper & Zeece, 2005, p. 379-380).

2.4. Contribution of folk tales and fables to different spheres of children's development

Folk tales and fables are an important part of children's literature, they possess entertaining and educational value. However, can one say that they really influence children's moral development? If the answer is positive, how does it happen? To answer these questions one should first have a look at how a child develops and at what stages folk literature can make a contribution.

Assuming that folk tales and fables are transmitting the knowledge of the society and world construction, moral values and social norms (West-Burnham, 2009, p. 119), I will look more attentively at how they fit in the process of children's development, in what ways they can contribute to it. It is logical to say that children come through numerous developmental stages, each of which has its own peculiarities and demands reading different books. Vygotsky introduces such a concept as "zone of proximal development" which means the distance between what a child can do independently in some area (or skill) and what he can achieve in the same area if provided with expert guidance (Berk & Winsler cited in Wardle, 2003, pp. 278-279). The idea is that for a child to constantly move forward in his development, he should be set problems, which are located in his zone of proximal development - a little bit more difficult than a problem a child knows how to solve.

Throughout childhood, folk tales help at different times with social, moral, cognitive and personal development. For instance, 4-5 years old children know approximately twenty-five hundred words and enjoy retelling stories with more complex plots, for example folk tales (Norton, 1991, p. 4), in this way folk literature facilitates cognitive and language development. At the age of 3 or 4 children begin to become aware of their cultural heritage, so folk tales are the easiest way to get acquainted with it and to form proud attitudes towards neighbourhood and nationality (Norton, 1991, p. 18). Inglis (cited in

Watkins, 1996, p. 38) argues that experience and 'narrative tradition', which we are part of, are two main components that form our historically changing identity, and from the point of view of this very identity we interpret the world.

Needless to argue that folk tales and fables with all their magic and unexpected turns in plot influence a lot the development of imagination in children. Hazel Rochman (cited in Norton, 1991, p. 2) advises to provide children with stories set in many locations and times to form in them an understanding of diversity. If a child lives in one setting and reads only about events happening there he will miss a lot and will be in danger of becoming a narrow-minded person. Folktales send a child back to the past, far away countries and his own neighbourhood, get him acquainted with folk wisdom, traditions, customs of his nation.

Finally, one of the most important influences of folk tales on children's development is in a sphere of morality and values, the very topic analysed in this research. Folk tales are usually the first literature that introduces moral values and notions of 'good' and 'bad' to a child, in addition, they are one of the oldest tools for teaching morals in the world (Spagnoli cited in Lee, 2011, p. 403). Young readers are not prepared yet to deal with complicated literature where values are questioned or overlap. First of all, they should get a stable ground on which additional moral principles will be built (Cullingford, 1998, p. 12). Folktales and fables were transmitted from generation to generation, which means main national values have been concentrated in them, their longevity adds to trust parents show for such stories being the tools teaching morality (Tucker, 1981, p. 192). Moreover, before the folk tales and fables have been written down, they have been travelling from mouth to mouth for centuries which resulted in a final version of folk tales having only details of great importance and being "the final boiling down of a story", which proved its popularity and effectiveness with many generations of listeners (Tucker, 1981, p. 71). Of course, in past times folk tales were not suitable for children and did not intend having them as the main audience. However, innovations in printing and increased possibilities for learning to read created such literature for children (Butts, 1992, p. x) and made folk tales appropriate for fitting into this category (Zipes, 1983, p. 3).

Moral development is impossible without experiencing different emotions. Bruno Bettelheim (cited in Butts, 1992, p. 73) suggests that children learn to master their fears and disappointments and even gain feelings of self-worth and self-hood through folk tales. Joan Glazer (cited in Norton, 1991, p. 18) enumerates four ways in which literature

contributes to the emotional growth of children: 1. It shows that feelings children may experience are natural and others can feel the same way, 2. It explains the nature of the feelings and helps children to name them, 3. Actions of various characters are examples of how one can deal with particular feelings and emotions, 4. Literature shows that a person experiences many emotions and often they can come into conflict. Moreover, literature gives children a chance to project their own emotions onto fictional characters and, in such a way, to test situations they may never or at some point encounter in real life (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 2). As any other literature, folk tales and fables also maintain all these functions.

Based on the theoretical notions discussed above, it is possible to claim that folk tales and fables exercise a great influence on the formation of a value set in children's minds. They are a powerful educational tool and the mechanisms of its functioning should be studied in order to make adults working with children aware of the impact reading of such stories has.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the current chapter, I focus more on a methodology of the research. I start with introducing new trends in qualitative research that are relevant in this study. Further, I offer justification of my choice of content analysis as the main method.

3.1. New trends in narrative analysis embodied in the research

In this research, I use qualitative data analysis. It helps to organise, account for and explain the existing data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting themes, patterns, regularities and categories (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 537). It is necessary to point out that qualitative data is always multi-layered and complex and, whereas there is a particular method (content analysis in this case) used for processing the data, analysis cannot be limited to only this very method and trends within it. Other methods and approaches inevitably influence data analysis.

There are some new trends in narrative analysis that find their way into this very research. The first one has to do with semiotics, a study field dealing with signs and their use. This field contributes to narrative analysis by providing it with numerous tools for conducting text analysis (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p. 530). In my case, implementation of this trend can be seen through the encountered mechanisms and devices used to promote and undermine particular values.

Another trend is in the focus of narrative analysis on narratives as practice within social interaction, which means investigating stories as they operate within society (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011, p. 530). Serbian folk tales and fables and Serbian society are closely interrelated. Folk tales mirror the people's values, social norms and attitudes (Cullingford, 1998, p. 10), they are created by people and show how they see and understand the world. In view of this, a lot of folktales deal with human aspirations like the desire to win a prize or defeat the enemy common for all people (Tucker, 1981, p.92). On the other hand, folk tales themselves influence the upbringing of new generations, shape their values, and preserve culture (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 4). For instance, Tucker (1981, p. 92) states that folk tales often illustrate world visions, including the place of an individual within it, which reflect cultural norms of a nation, for example, in Western society wealth, comfortable living and finding an ideal partner are shown as important in life. Amali (2014, p. 89) emphasises that tales as an educational tool prepare children to develop and

operate according to societal dictates meeting its expectations. This fact together with popularity of folk literature for reading to children makes studying folk tales extremely important. My research takes into account both trends mentioned above.

3.2. The choice of the method

This research is done with the use of content analysis as the most appropriate for achieving the aims decided upon. In this case, discourse analysis could be also used for information processing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 245). However, the nature of the results would be different from what I intend to get (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 344). Below, I will discuss further the field of content analysis and evaluate its appropriateness for the research.

Content analysis is a method that, through a set of procedures operating directly on text, makes valid inferences from text, including senders of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message (Weber, 1990, pp. 9-10). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* defines content analysis as the intellectual process of categorising qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes (Given, 2008, p. 120), as in my case.

As stated in *Research methods in Education*, content analysis takes texts, reduces them into summery form though the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory; it uses systematic, replicable, observable and rule-governed forms of analysis in a theory-dependent system for the application of those categories (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 564). In practice, it can be transferred into a general scheme of analysis containing the following stages:

1. generating natural units of meaning;
2. classifying, categorising and ordering these units of meaning;
3. structuring narratives to describe the contents;
4. interpreting the data (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 555).

Creswell suggests (2011, p. 279) that content analysis is sometimes viewed as a way to employ both qualitative research (in data collection) and quantitate research (in data analysis). Still the nature of content analysis is predominantly qualitative and addresses

quantitative aspects if only by describing a relative frequency and importance of certain topics and evaluating bias, prejudice or propaganda in print materials (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, pp. 101-102), which is the function that finds its way into my book analysis.

Content analysis focuses on language and linguistic features gaining meaning in context, this method is systematic and verifiable, as the rules for analysis are transparent, explicit and public (Mayring, 2004, pp. 267-269). The data is of textual nature and, in my case, the text is not dynamic even throughout time, which means verification through re-analysis and replication is possible (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 563). Moreover, since stories under study existed over a long period of time, culture indicators generated from them constitute reliable data (Namenwirth & Weber cited in Weber, 1990, p. 10).

To decide methodology, one should first understand what the purpose of the research is because it directly influences the choice of methods. For example, if a researcher chooses content analysis, he proceeds through a systematic series of analysis including categorisation until theory emerges that could explain a phenomenon the researcher is interested in or which can be used for predictive purposes (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 539). In addition, the number of data sets definitely influences the choice of a method.

One of the difficulties of qualitative research is a huge amount of data that needs to be analysed. In my case, it is 161 pages of text. Miles and Huberman (cited in Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 539) advise researchers to start pre-analysis on the earliest stage of data collection and proceed with it all the way through. In this sense, content analysis is a method helping to reduce the amount of data through categorising and, in the same time, with no harm done to the quality (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 559). When translating the book I already know what aspects of its content I am interested in. Being aware of it, I create a table and every time I encounter some part of a text related to my research, I put it in a table under the category it can belong to like family relations, gender stereotypes, religious beliefs and so on. In such a way, I narrow the data for future focus and analysis.

In this research, several categories started to form already during the translation, prior to the analysis. However, during data collection process I made some unexpected findings, which resulted in additional categories being put on a list. The categorisation of data is

supported by coding, meaning the ascription of a category label or tag to a piece of data, that is either decided in advance or in response to the data that has been collected (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 559). A coding frame, a scheme that lays out key concepts and their definitions, can be developed over time during the coding and analysis of the data (Given, 2008, p. 85). In this research, I code manually which means I did not have to decide a coding frame beforehand, so it is rather data-driven.

In such a way, content analysis is the most suitable method for data processing because of several reasons. First, content analysis looks at the meaning linguistic features acquire in context. Second, a researcher can describe a relative frequency and importance of certain topics to evaluate bias, prejudice or propaganda not resorting to methods of quantitative analysis. Finally, content analysis is useful when processing a big amount of data, providing a researcher with tools (such as coding and categorisation) for narrowing it down not reducing the quality of the research.

4. RESEARCH PROCESS AND ITS DESCRIPTION

In this chapter, I introduce the book from which the stories for analysis are taken. The ethics are also touched upon here. The chapter continues with the detailed description of the steps of the analysis and concludes with introducing the tactics used for generating meaning from data.

4.1. Description of the book analysed in the study

I am looking for the answers to the research questions stated in the introduction analysing the book *Српске народне бајке и приче (Serbian folk tales and fables)* compiled by Bojan Matijevich and printed by a Serbian publishing house “Пчелица” in 2013. The pressrun is 1000 copies. The book contains 53 tales (Matijevich, 2013, pp. 5-161) and a dictionary (Matijevich, 2013, pp. 162-165). The language of the book is Serbian; though it is available only in this language, quite many of the tales included in it have been translated to Russian and English.

These are the names of the stories that Matijevich included in a book: Тамни вилајет (Dark vilajet), Усуд (Fate), Немушти језик (The mute language), Змија младожења (The groom snake), Међедовић (Medgedovich), Дјевојка бржа од коња (The girl faster than a horse), Пепељуга (Cinderella), Златна јабука и девет пауница (A golden apple and nine peacock-hens), Чардак ни на небу ни на земљи (The attic between heaven and earth), Чудотворни прстен (The miraculous ring), Баш-Челик (Bash-Chelik), Аждаја и царев син (The dragon and the prince), Ала (The dragon), Златоруни ован (The ram with golden fleece), Гвозден човјек (The iron man), Биберче (Biberche), У цара Тројана козје уши (King Trojan has goat’s ears), Цар Дукљан (King Dukljan), Ђаво и његов шегрт (The Devil and his apprentice), Ђавоља маштанија и божја сила (The Devil’s imagination and God’s force), Зашто у људи није табан раван? (Why are not people’s feet flat?), Зла жена (The evil wife), Жена врага преварила (The woman who outwitted the Devil), Дјевојка цара надмудрила (The girl who outsmarted the king), Ветар и Сунце (Wind and Sun), Голуб и пчела (The pigeon and the bee), Међед, свиња и лисица (The bear, the pig and the fox), Медвјед и лисица (The bear and the fox), Лисица се осветила вуку (The fox who took revenge upon the wolf), Старо лијино лукавство (The old fox’s trickery), Јарац живодерац (A long-lived goat), Ловачке лажи (Hunters’ lies), Лаж за опкладу (A lie on a bet), Крепао котло (The dead cauldron), Еро

с онога свијета (A mountaineer from the Heaven), Еро и кадија (A mountaineer and an effendi), Еро и Турчин (A mountaineer and a Turk), Ера у цркви (Era in the church), Ере поје врбу (Era ate the willow tree), Калуђер и Ера (The friar and Era), Насрадин-хоџа (Nasradin-hodzha), Свијету се не може угодити (One cannot please all), Седам прUTOва (The seven canes), Очина заклетва (The sons' oath to their dying father), Правда и кривда (Verity and falsity), Све, све, али занат (Nothing but the skill), Свети Сава и ђаво (Saint Sava and the Devil), Свети Сава одузима козе од ђавола (Saint Sava took a goat from the Devil), Свети Сава и вук (Saint Sava and the wolf), Свети Сава, отац и син (Saint Sava, the father and the son), Свети Сава и ђаци (Saint Sava and the boys), Свети Сава и сељак без среће (Saint Sava and an unlucky villager), Најбоље задужбине (The best endowment). Some of these stories are fables though the majority of them are folk tales.

I intentionally take the whole book and only stories included in it because adults who read folk tales to children are more likely to buy a book and read all the stories from it than to select stories themselves. I analyse every story from the book mentioned above looking for indexes pointing at behaviour and values approved or disapproved in each story. After that, I structure and summarise the results obtained and draw a conclusion, which means presenting the value portrait of an individual promoted in Serbian folk tales and fables.

The results of my research help to understand the life lessons inwardly transferred to children that help to form their value set and behaviour. This information is useful for teachers, parents, and everybody who is included in the formal and non-formal educational processes. These people will become aware of the influence they make on children when reading Serbian folk tales to them. In addition to that, being aware of the influence folk tales make, one can use this knowledge when assessing other literature's impact on children or on himself.

Ethics are taken into consideration in all the phases of research. The book is in Serbian, published and distributed in Serbia, currently available in bookshops. This means stories included in the book and the book itself are up to date and continue to influence children's development. This research can be repeated any time since folk tales are not dynamic, except of minor differences in word choice their text stays the same throughout centuries. I do required translation for this research from Serbian to English. I have my Serbian colleagues to make sure I provide accurate translation.

4.2. The detailed flow of the analysis

The research is of a qualitative nature and I use content analysis since I am dealing with a text and have a clear view of what parts of this text should be taken for analysis. Content analysis suits the goals of my research best as I aim on obtaining information about the tools of influence in a particular sphere of the particular book.

Data analysis is made according to the steps designed for the studies using thematic content analysis as the main method, however, I renamed the last step to suit the analysis I do in my research. The process includes 11 stages (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 564-569):

1. **Defining the research questions to be addressed.** In this research, I analyse values (including social norms and personal characteristics) presented in the collection of Serbian folk tales and fables using content analysis as the method.
2. **Defining the population from which units of text are to be sampled.** The population of my research is all the folk tales and fables (53 in total) included in the book *Српске народне бајке и приче (Serbian folk tales and fables)*.
3. **Defining the sample to be included.** The entire text of the book is being processed; units for further analysis are chosen thematically (Weber, 1990, p. 43). According to Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 307), I use a so-called information-oriented selection since I have certain expectation about information content of the stories.
4. **Defining the context of the generation of the document.** The material is taken from a recently (year 2013) published collection of folk tales and fables compiled by Bojan Matijevich. Stories under study existed over long period of time in the same form with only minor changes in language and details. All these make culture indicators generated from them constitute reliable data (Namenwirth & Weber cited in Weber, 1990, p. 10).
5. **Defining the units of analysis.** The analysis includes different units like sentences, phrases and even paragraphs. It is not essential for my research to decide on a particular size of the unit since what matters for me is its relation to at least one of the generated categories or themes. Therefore, any unit, no matter size, is analysed if it is of research interest.

6. Deciding the codes to be used in the analysis. In this step, I follow Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, pp. 177-178) who advise first to read and reread the data, noting some patterns and contradictions, and after that to come up with the codes. However, due to the big amount of data and time limit, I follow this procedure in relation to every separated story I read, not to the whole book.

7. Constructing the categories for analysis. Some of the categories used were generated prior to data collection based on the research questions and the other are data-driven. It is not essential for me to have mutually exclusive categories since the phenomena under study is complex and overlapping of categories is natural. All units of texts within one category share similar connotations (Weber, 1990, p. 12), for example in a category “religious beliefs” they all have to do with religion. Categories are quite broad (for example, family) but sometimes have sub-categories (for example, the category “family values” has subcategories “family relationships” and “gender roles in a family”).

8. Conducting the coding and categorising of the data. For this stage, I create a table with categories, some of them having sub-categories. Under sub-categories, there is a list of coded text units with the number of page it is taken from. Since the coding is done manually, it is inefficient to transfer original text units in a table as well. In such a way, I do pre-analysis while reading the folk tales in order to decide if the text has units of research interests, how to code them and in what category or categories to place. This is an example of how the table looks like:

category	sub-category	content	pages
Family	Gender roles in a family	1. A wife stands against her husband	14, 68, 71, 72, 86, 103, 104, 106
		2. Everybody is happy when male baby is born	19, 89
		3. A woman is given to a man to marry	21, 51, 52, 59, 76, 91, 104, 143, 147
		4. A woman is smart and independent	24, 25, 27, 107, 108

		5. A father proposes a daughter to a rich stranger	31
		6. A wife is stupid and naive	46, 130
		7. A man cries because of despair	80, 87, 101, 108, 109

9. Conducting the data analysis. After I finish coding and categorising the data, I count the frequency of each code in the text and in each category. This kind of summery measures represents the intensity of concern with each category in the text under study (Weber, 1990, p. 39). In other words, if a category has a lot of codes or few codes but constantly repeating in the text, I can make a conclusion that this category is of great importance and I should look deeper for the relations I can find within it.

10. Summarising. On this stage, I make inferences and further discuss the value set promoted in Serbian folk tales and fables, and the mechanisms of its transmission.

11. Drawing the conclusions. After summarising the findings I make conclusions, posit explanations of the significance of my findings and the possibilities for their implementation in practice.

While processing the data in different times I use some of the 12 tactics for generating meaning from data introduced by Miles and Huberman (cited in Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, pp. 427-428), in particular, counting frequencies of occurrence of different ideas, actions, topics, noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility (using informed intuition to reach conclusions), clustering (devison of meaning sets into categories), submitting particular into the general to clarify key concepts, noting relations between variables, building a logical chain of evidence and making conceptual coherence.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter introduces the findings of the conducted content analysis. To make the flow of the analysis more transparent and to clarify the conclusions, I include quotations from the text that I base my statements on. I would like to start by introducing the categories with the help of which the material was structured.

By the time the analysis of folk tales and fables was completed there were 8 categories established: family (including such subcategories as gender roles in a family and family relationships), rewards (including the information of the reason for a reward and what a hero was rewarded with), punishments (including the reasons for punishment and its nature), good personal traits, bad personal traits (the content of these two categories usually overlaps with those of punishment and reward), working life, beliefs (including religious beliefs, rituals, traditions and even superstitions), and, finally, knowledge of the past (this includes facts from the history, for example placing action in a particular historical period, reference to old methods of agriculture and animal husbandry, archaisms).

As one can notice, these categories describe almost all aspects of people's life. It is also clear that all the aspects mentioned above directly relate to the values people have. Due to this fact, I can summarise the findings into the sound value portrait of an individual.

My findings are organised in the following way: in the first part, I present the characteristics and ways of behaving commonly found in males and females and the interrelations of these two groups, then I overview the social norms and characteristics common for both females and males and, finally, have a look at the society's values from a slightly different angle.

5.1. Characteristics of female and male characters approved and disapproved in the stories

This chapter contains three sub-chapters. The first one focuses its attention on the description of male characters including the place of success in men's lives and their generalised images that can be generated from the text. The second sub-chapter describes female characters and images they embody, and the last one looks at the relations between the groups of female and male characters.

5.1.1. The description of male characters

In the folk tales and fables under study, the majority of the heroes are men so let me start with them. Stories give a detailed description of the characteristics men should have and the ways they are supposed to behave.

In almost half of the folk tales, men are depicted as masculine in both their actions and qualities. A man fights with different types of dragons and snakes, other unnaturally strong or magical characters, always defeats them in the end, goes on a long journey on foot all alone usually with almost bare hands, displays courage and decisiveness.

Men and success

A notion of success underlines all the actions of male characters. It also has its own definition. According to many folk tales, a man is expected to do the following things to be treated as successful: to start earning money or build wealth in another way (get it as a reward from a king, for example), get a house and get married.

The need to work is expressed in the following statements: *“What craft does a prince know? /.../ If he knows no craft I will not give him my daughter to marry”, “As they could not feed themselves in another way, he [the king] hired out to a farmer to look after his cattle”, “Mother, I feel ashamed to ask since I am, thank God, a grown-up already; let me sell our little garden and buy a horse so that I can feed us by selling firewood and we will not have to ask anybody for help anymore”, “You see, it is like this: the one who knows at least one skill lives better than a common villager”*. There are two main ideas underlining these extracts. First, a man has to work if his family is in need, and it does not matter what the job is as long as it helps to survive (like in a case with the king who went to work on a farm because he and his family got into a country where nobody knew them and they did not know the way back to their kingdom). The second idea is the dignity of labour. Hardworking people are respected and often granted for their efforts. It is a shame to do nothing (*“Hey, fool, why don’t you work your field, why does it just lie around?”*).

There are also a lot of fragments of the text directly pointing at what is important for a man to do in his life: *“Son, this is your wealth, God gave it to you. Use it to build a house, get married and live with that”, “When he [a snake] turned twenty-two he started speaking and told his parents: Now I want you to get me married”, “If God gave me this [wealth] why don’t I get married, why stay alone?”, “A villager got rich. He could afford*

building a house, getting married, buying cattle and land, nobody lived better than him in the village". In such a way, the important actions to take are getting wealth, building a house and getting married.

These events can go in different order and have a different pre-story: a wife can be chosen because of different reasons or given as a reward, sometimes she is of the same social status, sometimes higher (mainly kings' daughters), a house can be given as a reward or built by a man himself. We will have a closer look at these aspects later.

Some statements reveal the existence of a particular age when a man is expected to get married: *"When his sons grew up till the age appropriate for getting married, he ordered them to climb a tower and shoot an arrow from there: where an arrow will land from there they should bring a bride"*, *"She was looking at other children of the same age growing up so big that they could get married while hers still stayed the size of a pepper seed"*, *"When he [a snake] turned twenty-two he started speaking and told his parents: Now I want you to get me married"*. So once a young man becomes an adult he should immediately take action to get a house, wife and wealth.

Images of men presented in folk tales

There could be several generalised images of men found in a text. All of them are presented with relatively the same frequency and exclusively positive connotation. The only exclusion is villains which are mainly presented by male but not human characters (or partially human) like, for example, wolves, giants or dragons.

"A man - physically strong person"

The first image can be phrased as "a man - physically strong person". As was stated above, it is common for men to fight and go for long journeys on foot (*"After he came back home he took a bag, put bread inside, took a stick in hand and went into the world looking for luck"*, *"But the prince did not want to listen to anybody, took money for his journey, saddled up and went into the world to search for Bash-Chelik"*, *"The Bear advised him to cut the branches and make a staff, put a bag on it and carry it on a shoulder. A child listened to his father and went in such a manner around the world"*, *"He got ready and went with a servant into the world"*, *"So he decided to go into the world to search for an occupation"*, *"Then he came home, dressed up: put on a shepherd's clothes, took a crook, made himself look like a shepherd and went into the world. Going like this from village to village, from town to town, finally, he came in a different kingdom"*, *"There was once*

a villager with no luck so he went into the world to search for it”, “They took enough money and went around the world to do good deeds”). Their stamina is emphasised. In addition to this, men’s strength is usually exaggerated (“A child wrapped hands around the tree and pulled it out”, “When a dragon came out they came to grips and fought whole summer day till noon”, “Medgedovich again hit with a flail in a different spot, Brko pointed there with a finger: Here, something bit me again”, “Medgedovich sat on a spade, a man took a swing and thrown him across the water”).

“A man – hero”

The second image is “a man - hero”. Obviously, I analyse tales so the main character of a story is supposed to be outstanding in some way. Heroism of a man takes different shapes, it can be seen through defeat of an enemy (“Then Brko came and asked where Medgedovich was, he answered that he passed here a long time ago and only God knows where he is. That is how Brko returned defeated”, “A snake flew to bits”, “When he was about to strike for the third time his sister pointed at his belly and he stroke him there; the moment he did it the snake died on the spot”, “He pulled out a knife, stroke the dragon and cut off its head, then he cut off its ears and put them in a pocket”, “He jumped up, pulled out a knife, waited for a dragon to attack and cut both heads off, then he cut off its ears and put them in a pocket”, “The youngest brother had heroic heart: he did not wake his brothers up but met a dragon, stroked it three times and cut all three heads off. Then he immediately cut off the ears and put them in a pocket”, “Then a prince pulled out a sabre, hit the giant’s neck and cut his head off”, “Ripped a fox apart, took out heart and put it in fire; when heart turned to ashes, he took out a bird and threw it into fire. When a bird burned Bash-Chelik died”, “When a sparrow [one of shapes a dragon took] told everything, a prince strangled him”, “A villager shot from a gun, a bird [one of shapes a dragon took] rolled down the tree onto the ground. A villager finished it off”). To emphasise the heroism, the enemy is presented as either a magical creature or a bigger and stronger man.

Another ways to demonstrate heroism are through refusal to give up when facing difficulties (“When we come to my father’s chambers he will offer you everything you wish: silver, gold and precious stones; do not take anything but ask for a mute language. He will resist for long but will finally give it to you”, “That is how a child resigned himself and stayed in a cave. After a while he again started asking to go into the world”, “Nobody wanted to chase a girl anymore except of the prince”, “He decided to look for his

peacock-hen and not to come back until he finds her”, *“But a prince did not want to listen to anybody, took money for his journey, saddled up and went into the world to search for Bash-Chelik”*, *“But a prince did not listen to an advice and next morning when the sun rose he went on searching for Bash-Chelik”*, *“But, as nothing could persuade son from it, finally father agreed to let him go”*, *“I will go and I will not come back until I find her”*, *“A villager was not satisfied with the answer and went father”*), helping others (*“When he saw him almost naked and with bare feet, he immediately gave him shoes and money”*, *“- I am dying from thirst, give me a cup of water! The prince took a cup, dipped it into a cask”*, *“When you find yourself in great need /.../ I will immediately come with my army to help you”*), self-sacrifice (*“The two youngest brothers told the older one to kill his horse but he refused, the middle brother refused as well, then the youngest brother killed his horse and made a rope out of its skin”*) and masterful use of gumption.

An interesting message transmitted through folk tales concerns crying. Although the main character is heroic and strong, it happens and it is natural for him to cry, to be in despair or scared (*“When a man heard it he started crying and swearing that he cannot do it, that it is impossible”*, *“Then a poor man went to his wife crying”*, *“A poor man returned to his cave crying and told his daughter everything”*, *“When Saint Archangel came to God with the sun but, being injured, he cried: How will I live like this?”*, *“A prince got scared and started begging him forgiveness”*).

“A man – professional”

The third image of men in Serbian folk tales is “a man - professional”. When introducing a male character usually there is an indication of his professions or occupation. A profession is central in describing a male individual.

In many stories, the main hero is a prince or sometimes a king. Though he does not have a profession as such (*“How can a king’s son know a craft? Why does he need it? People learn crafts to feed themselves but a prince has land and towns”*), he is well-versed in weapons and horse-riding, which means he knows how to fight and hunt (*“He saddles up and crosses the river”*, *“He fell asleep sitting on a horse”*, *“They got ready, saddled up and galloped away”*, *“In the evening he saddled up and went to the fields”*, *“He gave a horse to each of them and what is needed for a journey”*, *“He made a rope out of the skin, one end tied up to an arrow and released it from a bow so that it would get in the attic”*, *“He took a flail, made a swing and hit the snake’s head”*, *“He struck a dragon*

three times and cut all three heads off, then he immediately cut off the ears and put them in a pocket”, *“Then the prince pulled out a sabre, hit the giant’s neck and cut his head off”*, *“He took money for a journey, saddled up and left”*, *“The oldest son went hunting”*, *“When a dragon came out they came to grips and fought the whole summer day till noon”*, *“The youngest son released an arrow from a bow”*, *“One day he was hunting”*, *“He winged an arrow at him”*, *“Early in the morning a king’s son went to hunt”*).

Among ordinary people, the most frequent profession is a farmer (*“Let me sell our little garden and buy a horse so that I can feed us by selling firewood and we will not have to ask anybody for help anymore”*, *“There was once a really poor man who had a field on the river bank but did not work on it for years”*, *“Planted grape vine”*, *“He stayed overnight at some rich landowner”*). In addition to that, old ways of farming are mentioned in a text (*“He came across a field where a man was harnessing oxen into a plough”*, *“Saw a man standing on mould, he had a bag with seeds around his neck. One handful he was sowing, another one eating”*, *“Father sent his son to a mill but told him not to grind flour on the mill where Choso is”*, *“Turkish couple was digging corn”*, *“He came to a field where hundreds of ploughs were put in a line”*).

Being a herdsman is equally popular. The main types of cattle raised are sheep, horses, cows and bulls. Animal husbandry is a type of work either a villager (*“And God gave good cattle”*, *“Ask on our behalf why our cattle is good but we get nothing from it”*, *“One person had a shepherd who served him fairly for years”*, *“He had his own flock master and people who took care of his cows, horses and pigs”*, *“He took sheep to a shepherd”*, *“King sent two horsemen to look after him”*, *“They were really poor and did not have anything except of one goat”*, *“As they could not feed themselves in another way, he [the king] hired out to a farmer to look after his cattle”*) or a mountaineer does (*“A mountaineer was looking after cows of a Turkish nobleman”*, *“A mountaineer was going with horses carrying goods”*).

A lot of story characters perform different kinds of crafts from forging to hunting (*“He went to a blacksmith and asked him to make a flail”*, *“Once there was a hunter”*, *“He was always calling a barber to shave him”*, *“Two hunters met”*, *“A group of hunters surrounded a fox”*, *“One ordinary villager thought about tricking a merchant who always did bad things to him”*, *“One merchant was travelling”*, *“She was teaching him how to beg”*, *“Once we went to Dubrovnik to get salt”*, *“King called all the healers”*, *“He went*

to the market where they were weaving baskets”, “I will collect firewood and feed us by selling it”). It goes without saying that they are masters in what they do.

Several characters in stories represent the church. They are mendicant friars (*“After long time, going through some forest he found a mendicant friar”*), priests (*“Saint Sava told a priest from his followers to do as shepherds wanted”*), monks and people related to religion but with no official status (*“He followed the advice of a monk and the elders”, “A monk was travelling and met a mountaineer on his way”, “All monasteries are full with pilgrims, mendicant friars and black monks”*; Saints can be also included in this category).

A big amount of people in the stories are providing different services, for instance servants (*“She sent her servant to ask a woman if she wants to sell her things”, “He got ready and went with his servant into the world”, “In king’s palace there was one slave”, “King tortured and killed many servants but all for nothing”, “Finally, a king called a woman-slave”, “He did not want to go so servants brought him to the king”, “By this time servants from the king’s chambers arrived”, “He ordered servants to catch her and bring to him”, “The menials were happy”, “A servant immediately turned into a sparrow”, “He went with servants from town to the lake”*), warriors and guards (*“Who came with his army to the end of the world”, “He became the head of guards”*), public officers (*“A judge was embarrassed, he confessed that he unjustly condemned a merchant”, “A merchant called a villager in the court”, “Father and mother, and other noblemen started persuading him from this idea”, “Saint Sava was also a teacher”, “The councillor told a king”*).

There is a layer of characters whose occupation is not stated, they are referred to as “villagers” and “persons” (*“This is not true, - villagers told him”, “One man was travelling with his wife and saw a field with recently cut grass”, “One man had a wife whom he doubted a lot”, “A traveller folded his coat tighter about himself”, “One ordinary villager thought about tricking a merchant who always did bad things to him”, “One person was going from town back home on a donkey”, “Wedding guests climbed to the hayloft”*) though at least villagers will most likely fall into the most popular professions mentioned above (farmers, herdsmen and craftsmen).

The next two categories deal with the man’s interrelation with a family, that is “a man - father” and “a man - lover or husband”. These images often overlap since a married man

almost always is also a father. For a married man not to have a child is as unnatural as for any man to stay single.

“A man - father”

As for fatherhood, in the text there are both references of men simply having children (*“My father is the king of snakes”, “Then he left that kingdom and its queen and returned back with his wife and child”, “A bear caught her and pulled her into a cave; after the night with him the woman got pregnant and gave birth to a male baby”, “After some time the father of that girl married a widow”, “There was once a king who had three sons”, “There was once a king who had three sons and one daughter”, “When the king realised his daughter disappeared”, “One king who had three sons and three daughters”, “Then the king gave him his daughter to marry”, “One king who had three sons”, “After the king saw a shepherd coming back home he immediately called for his daughter and told her everything”, “Don’t do this, son! Your father died because of this gun, you want the same destiny?”, “King’s daughter did not want to marry him so she immediately wrote to her father”, “There was a king and he had three sons”, “On arrival, king saw his son dead”, “There was a man who had only one son”, “Then that king sent a letter to his neighbour and begged him to send a healer who had cured his daughter to cure his daughter as well”, “One poor man was living in a cave and did not have anything except of one daughter”, “There was an old couple who had two sons and two daughters-in-law”, “Father sent his son to the mill”, “One person was going from town back home on a donkey and his son, ten-fifteen years old, was foregoing on foot”, “Father had seven sons”, “Your brother has a daughter”, “There was once an old man who had three sons and one daughter”, “One king had two sons”, “A king was travelling with his wife and daughter on a boat”, “King’s son noticed their daughter /.../ and told his parents that he does not want to marry any girl except this one”, “Father and son came to him”*) and their role as fathers which is described next.

Being a father, a man has some duties. For example, he decides the appropriateness of a partner for his child (*“On his deathbed, he called his sons and daughters and ordered his sons to marry their sisters off to the first ones who will ask for it”, “The king made a big celebration and married them”, “Then the king gave his daughter to him to marry”, “When his sons were old enough to be married, he ordered them to climb a tower and shoot an arrow from there: where it lands, from that place they should bring a bride”, “On his deathbed, the old man called all his three sons and ordered them to marry off*

their sister to the first man who asks, no matter who he is”, “If he does not know any craft I will not give him my daughter”). Even in case with ordering sons to marry off their sisters to the first person coming, those grooms appear to be kings and women are very happy with them in the end. It is common for a king to give his daughter as a reward to a man for some good deeds, help or bravery.

For a man, his daughters and sons have equal value, he races to rescue all of them no matter their gender (*“I will give you anything you want for saving my child”, “When the king realised that his daughter disappeared, he started looking and asking for her, but nobody could find her, as if the ground had swallowed her. Then the king promised great wealth to the person who will find her”, “The king started bewailing his son”).*

A man always worries about his children and tries to keep them away from troubles (*“A bear started persuading him from it, telling him he is still small and weak, and in the world angry beasts lived called people and they will kill him”, “Father started persuading him from it telling him to forget her, that they will find him another girl in a kingdom, any he wants”, “There was a king who had three sons and a daughter whom he kept in a cage and guarded her around the clock”, “Father sent his child to the mill but told not to grind flour if Choso is somewhere nearby”) though if children take a stand the father will let them do as they please (“Father was persuading him from it saying for long time that even knowing a skill does not free from worries and hard work and how does he dare to leave his father alone! But when the son stuck to his guns he let him go”). Although a father knows better, in rare cases he can learn from his children as well (“One poor man lived in a cave and had nothing except for a daughter who was very wise, she went everywhere looking for someone to propose to her, meanwhile teaching her father how to beg and speak intelligently”).*

Overall, a man always cares about his children’s physical and emotional wellbeing (*“A bear was bringing him any food he could find and fed him just like his mother did before”, “The Bear advised him to cut the branches and make a staff, put a bag on it and carry it on a shoulder. A child listened to his father and went in such a manner around the world”, “Do not be afraid, my daughter”, “When they reached land he did not dare to say he is a king, they did not have money with them and having no skills they could not feed themselves in any another way, so the king hired out to a farmer to look after his cattle”). However, fathers do not love blindly and they can turn away from their children for serious wrongdoings (“When the king heard it he got angry with his older sons and drove*

them out of the house”, *“Look at me, you will not see me again until you wear off iron shoes and iron staff searching for me, a child that lies under your heart will not be born until I put my hand around you”*), in rare cases men prefer to support new wives rather than their children from the previous marriage (like in the stories “Пепељуга” (“Cinderella”) and “Гвозден Човјек” (“The iron man”)).

“A man - lover or husband”

The last category, “a man - lover or husband”, represents two scenarios: a man in search of a wife and a married man. Both situations have quite stable patterns. Let me start with a man in search of love.

There are two ways to get a wife: to get her as a reward for some deeds and to look for her intentionally. Usually, a wife is supposed to be of the same social class (*“How can he, the king’s son, marry a cattle-raiser’s daughter when there are other kings’ daughters”*), *“Then the princess got on her horse and they [prince and princess] went to her kingdom where they ruled ever since”*, *“He called his daughter and gave her to him [a prince], immediately they were married”*) though exceptions happen mainly due to girl’s beauty or outstanding characteristics if she is less noble (*“-Who will marry off a girl to a snake, which girl will want to marry a snake? - E, told a snake, do not look for a girl from royal or noble family, look for the one who will come to the kingdom to live”*, *“Under the trough there was the same girl that he saw in a church and she was in the same dress she was in the third day, just without a shoe on her right foot”*, *“And this is how the king’s son and the girl got home safe, she was baptised and married to a prince”*, *“Then he asked if she wanted to be his wife, it can be this way or none”*) or achievements of a man if he is less noble than his wife (*“She wrote to her father about everything and said she wants to marry the guy, and father replied that people should accept this guy as a king, and if they will not he will lift part of the city in the air. People immediately accepted him”*, *“In such a way, the king understood who was right and married his daughter to Biberche”*).

There are quite many cases when a man searches for a girl. It may be a girl he knows (*“He was looking at a girl who brought food, how full bodied, healthy and beautiful she was, he liked her”*, *“Peacock-hens never returned to the apple tree and because of that a prince was sad and cried. In the end he decided to go into the work to search for his peacock-hen and not to come back without her”*, *“He chose the third girl”*, *“Your*

majesty, I like your daughter as much as she likes me, give your blessing so that we can be together”, “*Then he asked if she wants to be his wife, it can be this way or none*”, “*The prince saw his daughter who was very beautiful and at the age appropriate for getting married and told his parents that he will not marry anybody except of the cattle-raiser’s daughter from this and that village*”, “*A prince went around the kingdom with that shoe searching for her*”) or a girl he wants to have but has never met before (“*I order you to bring me kingdom’s most beautiful girl*”, “*When his sons were old enough to be married, he ordered them to climb a tower and shoot an arrow from there: where it lands, from that place they should bring a bride*”, “*When he was walking through the snow his nose started bleeding, when he saw how beautiful red blood looks on white snow he thought: It would be great to marry a girl who is as white as snow and has cheeks as red as blood!*”). It emphasises the fact that a woman is viewed as not having personality or its unimportance since any girl with particular characteristics would suit a man.

When a man gets a wife as a reward, it is always a king’s daughter (“*Then the king married him to his daughter*”, “*He [king] called his daughter and gave her to him, immediately they were married*”, “*In such a way, a king understood who was right and married his daughter to Biberche*”, “*The king brightened up and gave him half of the kingdom and his daughter to marry*”). A man is entitled to such an honor because he did one of the following things: lived a just life, sacrificed himself, took risk or, finally, saved the king’s daughter.

Married men are also the characters of the stories. A husband is the head of the family; often he uses his power in a bad way: he can hit his wife (“*He started hitting her with a whip*”, “*And a man hit his wife*”), even leave her to die (“*[Wife] fell into the hole. /.../ And he went his way not even looking in the hole. /.../ I will go to take her out if she is still alive*”) or break up with her (“*I do not want you to be my wife anymore, go away from my house where you want*”). A husband is concerned with the wife’s faithfulness and may check it (“*When her husband came back and saw that the Devil is in the bottle he understood his wife was faithful. Since then they lived without quarrels*”). However, not all husbands are depicted this way. Some men listen to their wives (“*At first, the husband tried to talk his wife out of it but in the end, when his wife did not want to obey, he agreed as well*”, “*The queen, when back home, immediate went to a king: One of us should leave - me or him. When a king saw he had no other way, he called his youngest son*”), work together with them (“*Turkish couple was digging corn*”) and are concerned

with giving a fine account of themselves in front of their wives (in a story “Епо с онога свијета” (A mountaineer from the Heaven) a husband lied instead of admitting to his wife that he had been tricked).

To summarise my findings, all men from Serbian folk tales are presented as highly masculine characters. There is a strict direction for building one man’s life: at a particular age he has to have wealth, a house and a wife.

I have identified several images of men presented in stories. The first one is “a man - physically strong person” in which the strength of male characters is often exaggerated. The second one is “a man - hero”, men’s heroism is displayed through defeating an enemy, not giving up when meeting with difficulties, helping others, being masterful in the use of gumption and, finally, self-sacrifice. Though a man is physically strong and heroic, it is natural for him to feel desperate and even cry from time to time. The third image, “a man - professional”, includes people having quite traditional for the Serbians occupations. In addition, a big amount of folk tales is dedicated to royal families. The fourth image, “a man - father”, presents a man as a person loving and caring about his children, both sons and daughters, though fairly judging and acting when children misbehave. The last image is “a man - lover or husband”. A lover is seeking a wife sometimes even not knowing a girl he searches for. Also, a wife can be acquired as a reward for particular deeds; in this case, it is always a king’s daughter. Husbands in Serbian folk tales are very imperative towards their wives and sometimes even cruel, though loving families are also encountered.

These are the ways men are represented in Serbian folk tales. As one can notice, their images are quite stereotypical and support the values of a mainly traditional society. Now it is time for me to have a look at the other half of characters, women. I try to follow the same pattern in describing them so that it is easier to compare these two groups of characters.

5.1.2. The description of female characters

Based on the content of the stories, all female characters can be divided into two main categories: passive and active. Passive female characters are women who are presented in the stories but do not act on their own - they may be married off by a family, stolen or searched for by men. Active characters are women with a stated point of view, displaying

their thoughts and acting according to their intentions. They have enough courage and abilities to change their lives. However, I must note that in Serbian folk tales passive female characters are encountered more often. Below, I will show with data samples the construction of these two categories of female characters.

Personality of female characters

Traits of character are very important when describing women. The most frequent are stubbornness, stupidity or naivety, curiosity and also independence, which is opposite to the first three. Let me go deeper in the analysis of these personal qualities.

Stubbornness is viewed as a negative characteristic of a woman that leads to her being beaten or dealing with other unpleasant consequences of such behaviour (*“But more he scolds, more she insists on telling her why he laughed”, “Choose, if he does not leave I will”, “So a man was arguing that it was mowed and a woman that it was cut, /.../ the woman stood in his way, lifted two fingers in front of his eyes and pretended cutting with scissors, screaming: Cut! Cut! Cut!”*, *“A step mother put pressure on her husband”, “That damn woman came to me and little by little for several days in a row was killing me with her evil”*). However, in some cases, women are stubborn in order to achieve a particular goal and that is why they always get what they wanted in the end (*“Wife starts interrogating him again”, “A woman started sweet-talking him /.../ Then she started hugging and kissing a fire place /.../ then she started kissing a tree”*).

The naivety and stupidity of women is displayed in situations where they are easily tricked (in a folk tale “Еро с онога свијета” (“A mountaineer from the Heaven”) a woman believes a mountaineer that he is coming from the Heaven and is a neighbour of her Muja who died few months before, in the end she gives him money to hand over; *“Put me in a bottle, bring home and leave it there, forbid your wife to open a bottle. In the morning while you are away your wife will come to see what is inside the bottle, will open it and I will get out. When back home, you will see that I am not inside. Then you will be able to argue with her using it as a reproach”*) and through proverbs (*“It is an old saying: women have long hair but little brain”*).

Women are also curious which causes them some troubles (*“She was about to open a bottle but again - afraid of her husband - withdrew her hand, but then woman curiosity took over and she opened the bottle”, “It was not enough for a wife, she was bugging her*

husband to tell her why he had laughed /.../ But more he scolds, more she insists on telling her why he laughed”).

Though often women are presented as feeble-minded, not less often their independence and gumption are displayed. Female characters frequently show their intellect when helping men or trying to get together with them (*“I will never believe that you could have been in the bottle until I see you getting inside with my own eyes. /.../ The Devil got into the bottle and the woman closed it fast so that he stays inside”, “One poor man lived in a cave and had nothing except of a daughter who was very wise: she went everywhere looking for someone to propose to her, meanwhile teaching her father how to beg and speak intelligently”, “Everything will be as you wish, I am only asking you to write with your own hand that if you ever get angry with me and want to send me away I would be allowed to take from your chambers anything that I like the most. /.../ She carried a king in her cave”, “Suddenly, a girl appeared in front of him and asked: - Why do you cry, brother? And he answered her angrily: - Go away if you cannot help, and went further but a girl stuck to him and begged him to tell her the matter: - Maybe I can help you”, “She told him: Do not be afraid of anything, go to that well where I was found, lean over it and call: ‘Brother-in-law, brother-in-law!’. He will come and ask what you want and you tell him everything your father asked for”, “If this is true, I tell you that he is my ex-man, take women’s clothing and bring them to the guards’ quarters, wait for him to change clothes and bring him to me”).*

In addition, women can also be presented smart and independent when they try to harm or trick somebody (*“She made a call around the world that on this and that day in this and that place there would be a race and a young man who wins will get her. /.../ He caught her and put on his horse, when they reached the land they went home across a mountain but when they were on top he turned around and saw there was no girl with him”, “He did not want to listen about woman proposing her daughter to him as a wife. /.../ The woman bribed his servant, gave him bellows that are used to waken fire and told him: You see these bellows, when you will come to the lake use them to blow secretly to his neck so that he falls asleep and will not be able to talk to peacock-hens”, “Near this and that mountain there is a woman who has twelve horses in stables and one cannot say which one is more beautiful”). Usually, the women who are shown as evil are old or at least mature and have some magical abilities. If a girl is young, most likely she does not cherish an idea of harming anybody.*

Images of women presented in folk tales

When reading folk tales and fables several images of women can be distinguished. As in case with men, they say a lot about the place of women in the society and what is expected from them. Some of the images are really popular and are commonly used while others are relatively rare. I describe these images in importance descending order starting from the most frequent.

“A woman - object of love”

First, a girl in Serbian folk tales is an “object of love”. For this very reason appearance is very important component of female characters (*“He was looking at a girl who brought food, how full bodied, healthy and beautiful she was, he liked her”, “Which was the most beautiful among them”, “Here is my daughter, a beautiful girl”, “When the prince entered a room his glance immediately fell on a girl, she was very beautiful”, “It would be great to marry a girl who is as white as snow and has cheeks as red as blood!”, “Eight of them landed on an apple tree and the ninth one on his bed, when she touched a bed she turned into a girl, the most beautiful one can find in the kingdom”, “A frog turned into a beautiful girl who had no equal in beauty in the whole kingdom”, “And then she turns into a girl that there is none below the sky”, “A prince saw a girl in his lands who was very beautiful”, “There was a girl who was not born from mother and father but was created by a fairy, taken out of snow right from the bottomless pit towards the sun on the Elijah’s Day, wind gave her life, dew fed her, forest dressed her with its leaves, meadow put jewellery on her. She was whiter than snow, rosier than roses, shinier than the sun, there had been no girl like that born in the world and there would not be”, “Step-mother immediately started to hate her step-daughter especially because she was much more beautiful than her own daughter”, “In a church everybody, both women and men, was amazed by her beauty and a dress”, “I order to bring me king’s most beautiful daughter”, “When a week passed, the princess went to a church with her sisters-in-law; when she went out from the church all people started looking at her beauty; nobody looked at the queen”). It is possible to say that beauty can outweigh some imperfections a girl may have in her family, status, skills or religion.*

Being an object of love, girls rarely show initiative in building up the relationship or reuniting with their lover (*“She was pregnant for three years and finally she decided to search for her husband”, “She made a call around the world that on this and that day in*

this and that place there would be a race and a young man who wins will get her”, “Tell your lord that tomorrow you can still wait for us here but after that we will never come back here”, “If this is true, I tell you that he is my ex-man, take women’s clothing and bring them to the guards’ quarters, wait for him to change clothes and bring him to me”, “She did not want to know him even so she wrote to her father about everything and said she wants to marry the guy”, “He asked if she wants to marry him if he gets rid of the dragon. She says: I want to but you cannot save me”, “Thank God that my mother is not home /.../ Let’s run!””, “- I brought you here myself. King asked her: - Why did you do it to me? Did not I tell you that you are not my wife anymore? She answers him pointing at the paper: - This is true, your majesty, you told me that, but look what is written in this paper: it says that when leaving I can take with me anything I like the most from your chambers”). However, when they do, females always achieve their aim. Interestingly, in one story only either female or male character is the one who fights circumstances and achieves success.

“A woman - wife”

The second image is “a woman - wife”. As I have already mentioned in the description of the image “a man - lover or husband”, women often have no say in the choice of a spouse since their fathers or brothers decide the marriage. When king’s daughters are being married off, usually they go with half or the whole kingdom which turns them in the eyes of their future husbands into a mean of acquiring wealth (“*Then a king give him his daughter to marry and made him the most important person in the kingdom after the king*”, “*That is how the guy married the king’s daughter and became a king*”, “*King gives him great reward and his daughter to marry*”). In this case, their personality does not matter and is not emphasised.

As for family life, wives are subordinate to men and can be treated cruelly. A woman can even be afraid of her husband (“*Being afraid of her husband, she withdrew her hand*”). However, wives often stand on hind legs and one sees them quarrelling with their husbands (“*So a man was arguing that it was mowed and a woman that it was cut, /.../ the woman stood in his way, lifted two fingers in front of his eyes and pretended cutting with scissors, screaming: Cut! Cut! Cut!*”, “*Choose, if he does not leave I will*”, “*That damn woman came to me and little by little for several days in a row was killing me with her evil*”, “*A step mother put pressure on her husband*”, “*One man had a wife whom he doubted a lot, this was the cause of them constantly quarrelling*”).

“A woman - mother”

Another frequently encountered image is “a woman - mother”. Like in case with men, there are occurrences when simply a fact of having children is stated (*“You carry only a master when I carry a mistress, a child inside her and a colt inside me”, “She got pregnant”, “Momentarily she started giving birth and bore him a male baby”, “After spending a night with him a woman got pregnant and bore a male baby”, “In the evening, when she came back home she saw that her mother turned into a cow”, “Here is my daughter, a beautiful girl”, “There was once a widow with one little son”, “When her son became strong enough he asked his mother for a gun”, “Married a widow who brought her daughter with her”, “God gave her what she asked for and she bore a male baby of the size of a pepper seed”, “Mother, father and all noblemen saw her off to the lake”, “I think a horse was that woman’s son”, “They ran away looking back to see if her mother was chasing them”, “In a village another woman gave birth”, “There was once an old couple and they had two sons and two daughters-in-law”, “One king with his wife and daughter was boating across the sea”*). It is uncommon and unnatural for a woman not to have children. Those females who do not have them for some reason feel flawed.

In addition to that, mothers care about the well-being of their children, save and help them in various ways (*“Mother-in-law was very happy to hear that and told her daughter-in-law: Well, if it is true I will teach you how to make him stay in an appearance you see him at night”, “When a cow that was her mother saw a girl crying she asked her what was the matter and she told her everything that happened. Then the cow comforted her telling not to worry about that”, “Poor widow could not work because she was cripple so she was living on begging and was taking care of a child”, “He asked his mother for a gun to go hunting but mother did not want to give it to him: No way, son! Your father died because of this gun, do you want the same thing happen to you?”, “Go, son, search for that girl again, maybe with God’s help she will save you”, “Son, how are you living with that cattle? /.../ For God’s sake, son, I will teach you. Tonight steal her skin and throw it to a window, I will carefully take it from there and put in fire to burn”, “- Now we exchange sons, and forgive the father, he is simple-minded. Then the woman returned the prince his eyes, blew and when he came back to life gave him to the king and he gave her the horse. I think the horse was that woman’s son”, “He went to queen’s chambers and told her that he is a healer as well and he has a plant which will help to get the evil*

out of her daughter. The queen, like any mother, immediately jumped up and showed him the way to the girl's room"). However, sometimes mothers may be strict with their children and even punish them (*"When the mother saw him without a horse and especially after he confessed wolves had eaten it she started cursing him and yelling at him, then she beat him up like a mule caught near cabbage. She did not give him dinner, did not allow sleeping in a room"*).

It is always women, not men, who ask God to give family a child if there is none (*"There was one queen who could not have a child and she constantly begged God to give her a child. One evening, begging like that she sighed and said: God, give me a child even if it is to be a snake!"*, *"There was an infertile woman who begged God to give her a baby, even if it is to be of the size of a pepper seed"*). Therewith, they do not care how their children look like and love them no matter what. Only once in a text I encountered a situation when a mother left her child (*"When a baby grew up a little, a woman secretly escaped from the cave and ran away back home"*, *"She did not care that she gave birth to such a small child"*).

"A woman - worker"

In rare occasions, women are mentioned to do some work. However, it is usually not something they can earn living by. The main work exercised by all women is cooking and taking care of the house (*"Prepare wine and rakija and everything needed, bring it to shepherds"*, *"She found her near the stove making fire with her bare hands"*, *"Looking at the girl who brought food"*, *"If you do not pick up all millet and cook lunch before we come back from church I will kill you"*, *"In the evening a woman puts two big tables in the middle of the house and starts bringing food. On one table she puts a bucket of steamed milk, brings spoons and everybody sits down there /.../. On the other table she puts four buckets of milk"*, *"But the wife did not want to open it anymore, she just continued with her work"*, *"She put water on fire to boil a bean"*, *"One day, an old man asked the youngest daughter-in-law to bring a goat to the forest to cut grass there and feed him so that he does not die from hunger"*, *"A Turkish couple was digging corn"*), which includes domestic chores, working in the field or garden and taking care of the cattle and other animals.

Some female characters have special skills which are still traditionally viewed as possessed by women, for example, herborising (*"Women of one village went to look for*

wild madder”), practicing magic (“*She took out one hair from her head and threw it, immediately a huge mountain grew up on that spot*”, “*A cow was taking wool into her mouth chewing it, and a girl was taking a thread out of the cow’s ear and rolling it into a ball*”, “*She ran to her mother’s tomb and again found an open chest and two white doves sitting on its lid, doves told her to dress up, go to the church and not to worry about household chores*”, “*The woman bribed his servant, gave him bellows that are used to waken fire and told him: You see these bellows, when you come to the lake use them to blow secretly on his neck so that he falls asleep and will not be able to talk to peacock-hens*”, “*Near that mountain there is a woman who has twelve horses in stables and one cannot say which one is the most beautiful. She also has a horse in a stable which looks sick but it only looks this way, actually this horse is the best; it is my horse’s brother and the one who gets it can even go to the sky*”, “*A frog turned into a beautiful girl who had no equal in beauty in the whole kingdom*”, “*Woman was crying and getting his eyes out with her hair*”, “*He brought him to an old woman to teach and returned back to the world*”, “*Then a woman gave him a walnut saying: keep this walnut it will serve you*”, “*My mother is not home, she went to pick up plants for putting a spell on young people*”) and handcrafts (“*Girls were spanning sitting near cows*”, “*If today you will not span and roll wool into a ball do not come home because I will kill you*”, “*Then she brought her brother to a room where a girl was sitting with a golden hoop in her hands embroidering with a golden thread. From that room they went to another one where a girl was spanning a golden thread. Finally, she showed him one more room where the third girl was stringing beads*”). The first two skills, herborising and practicing magic, refer to traditionally viewing particularly women as witching.

In summary, women in Serbian folk tales usually stay in the background. With few exceptions they have no saying in both their parents’ family and the one of their own, they also do not have any serious occupation or standing in a society. There is a mismatch in the images of single (obedient, shy, a lot of attention is payed to the appearance) and married women (stubborn, stupid and quarrelsome). The role of any woman is seen primarily in being a mother and a wife.

5.1.3. Relations between male and female characters

After I have looked separately at the characteristics of female and male characters, let me find out the ways in which these two groups come in contact. Overall, in folk tales and

fables under study a reader meets 160 male and 69 female characters. Among main characters, 82 are men and only 22 are women. The main idea here is obvious existence of the hierarchy in which men are more important than women, so-called “hierarchical dualism” between masculinity and femininity (Trousdale & McMillan, 2003, p. 3).

As I already mentioned above, men often show their superiority through various actions like beating a wife, marrying off daughters or sisters, using harsh words speaking to or about women (“*Oh, crazy woman*”, “*He started shouting at her to be quiet*”, “*Damn woman comes to me*”, “*some damn old woman*”, “*I was at chicken’s place, whore!*”).

When a family gets rich or poor, among people it is said that “he got rich or poor” (“*A villager /.../ got married, bought cattle and land, nobody lived better than him in a village*”) since the man is the head of the family and its well-being depends exclusively on his decisions and talents.

When a male baby is born, everybody is happy (“*Woman got pregnant and bore a male baby*”, “*Gave birth to a male baby of the size of a pepper seed*”, “*She gave birth to a very beautiful male baby with golden hair*”). If a child was long hoped-for it will definitely be a boy since, in contrast to girls, one can expect from them great deeds and contribution to family’s welfare.

Inferiority of women is emphasised through their images described above, obedience (“*Wife is a woman, she needs to obey her husband*”, “*When he told that she came and kissed him in his forehead, eye and cheek*”, “*A girl did not dare to speak up, he said he would kill her*”, “*My husband is a snake, I will hide you from him because he said he will kill my brothers if he sees them; I will feed him first*”) and being afraid of their man. There are even language units (“*Oh, dragon, oh, dragon! Come out now for a combat if you are not a woman!*”, “*It is an old saying: women have long hair but little brain*”) which belittle women by carrying an assumption that they are the weaker sex.

It is viewed natural in stories when a man marries again (“*I saw him, he is in another kingdom now, there he got married*”, “*Mother turned into a cow /.../ After some time the father of that girl married a widow*”, “*Leave her there! /.../ then a king will give you his daughter and you will marry her*”) if something happens to his previous wife even if she is alive and can be saved. In case a man searches for his wife, he can be offered to abandon her and marry another girl instead (“*I will find you another girl*”, “*Father and mother, and other noblemen started persuading him from this idea saying it would be a shame;*

how can he, king's son, marry the cattle-raiser's daughter when there are other kings' daughters").

Certainly, there are occurrences of men and women being equal. It usually happens in the time of showing tenderness to the lover (*"- Who brought me here? /.../ it says that when leaving I can take with me anything I like the most from your chambers. After the king heard it he kissed her and returned with her to the chambers", "They were hugging and kissing till after midnight"*), quarrels (*"One man had a wife whom he doubted a lot, this was the cause of them constantly quarrelling", "So a man was arguing that it was mowed and a woman that it was cut"*) and working in the field (*"Turkish couple was digging corn"*).

5.2. Common for both genders ways of behaving promoted in stories

Putting aside gender-related characteristics of people in Serbian folk tales and fables, there are ways of behaviour required from or exercised by everybody. One can also call them social norms and I look at them within the spheres of family relationships, work and beliefs. In addition to that, personal traits that are viewed in people's characters as bad and good will be also presented. I make a conclusion that the particular type of behaviour or personal trait is desirable if many characters possess it and/or it is rewarded (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 4).

Commonly accepted aspects of family relationships

The aspect of life widely regulated by social norms is family relationships. There are several concrete Do's and Don'ts presented in folk tales. The core idea is in the overriding priority of a family over everything.

In the previous chapter, I have already described the relationships between men and women in a family which can be summarised in two main components: women obeying men, which means men decide their future, and men taking care of women no matter what. Basically, in the frame of strongly patriarchal society women are still loved and cared for except that having little power.

Second important family relationship is between young and old generations, mainly parents and children. I must note that a child is seen as a life gift no matter if a family is poor or rich, a baby is the most important treasure a family may have (*"There was one*

queen who could not have a child and she constantly begged God to give her a child. One evening, begging like that she sighed and said: God, give me a child even if it is to be a snake!", "There was an infertile woman who begged God to give her a baby, even if it is to be of the size of a pepper seed", "There was once a widow with one little son. She did not have anything except of a small house and a field. Poor widow could not work because she was cripple so she was living on begging and was taking care of a child").

Parents should be unconditionally respected by their children (*"It happens because you do not respect your father and mother; do not throw them food behind the stove to eat but put them at the table, give them the first glass of rakija and the first glass of wine"*, "By custom, he kisses mother's hand", "- Son, why did not you tell your mother? I would not beat you up then. - I am telling you now, so just tell me if we made up", "By the name of God, we do not dare doing that, he is our father after all", "Father is higher than son because he is the first and son is the second, he is older and son is younger. That is why you need to respect, value and listen to him while he is alive if you want your children to respect and value you in the same way"), children should not forget their mothers and fathers (*"Just give me a permission to go to my mother to share happy news with her and bring her here. The king let him, he brought his mother and the king organised a big celebration and married them"*, "Then Biberche went to his mother to show her that he is big now"). In addition to that, children are expected to obey their parents' will (*"Sons obeyed their father"*, "That is why you need to respect, value and listen to him", "Child listened to his father", "Youngest son insisted to give her away remembering the oath given to their dying father", "If you do not give her away I will; do not you know what our father told to do?", "I will give her away if you do not; did you forget what father charged us to do when he was dying?", also all the cases when daughters marry men which their fathers chose).

In turn, parents have to care about their children's wellbeing, which is done in different ways. Parents may want to keep children home or to keep them away from troubles in other ways (*"Father started persuading him from it telling him to forget her, that they will find him another girl in a kingdom, any he wants"*, "Do not do this, son! Your father died because of this gun, you want the same destiny?", "When a cow that was her mother saw a girl crying she asked her what was the matter and she told her everything that happened. Then the cow comforted her telling not to worry about that", "A bear started persuading him from it, telling him he is still small and weak and in the world angry

beasts lived called people and they will kill him”, “Father sent his child to the mill but told not to grind flour if Choso is somewhere nearby”, “There was a king who had three sons and a daughter whom he kept in a cage and guarded her around the clock”, “Father was persuading him from it saying for long time that even knowing a skill does not free from worries and hard work and how does he dare to leave his father alone!”).

Parents also worry a lot and agree to do anything in the situations where their children may die (*“He went to queen’s chambers and told her that he is a healer as well and he has a plant which will help to get the evil out of her daughter. The queen, like any mother, immediately jumped up and showed him the way to the girl’s room”, “On arrival, the king saw his son dead and a woman above him was crying and getting his eyes out with her hair. - Now we exchange sons, and forgive the father, he is simple-minded. Then the woman returned the prince his eyes, blew and when he came back to life gave him to the king and he gave her the horse. I think the horse was that woman’s son”*).

Another important connection is between siblings. I have already found out that brothers are expected to look after their sisters and marry them off if father is dead. In addition to that, relationships between brothers and sisters are very warm and they are always happy to see each other (*“He looked and recognised his older sister: they spread hands, kissed”, “Sister was very happy to see her brother”, “After that they were feasting for several days”, “When he saw his brother he started complaining and crying: How have you been all this time?”, “Welcome, my brother-in-law!”*) and help when one of them is in trouble (*“My husband is a snake, I will hide you from him because he said he will kill my brothers if he sees them; I will feed him first and if he says he will not hurt you I will say that you came”, “Brothers came fast to their father, told him what happened and said they would be happy to go searching their sister”, “What did we do, we do not know where and to whom we married off our sisters! /.../ Let’s search for our sisters”, “When he saw his brother being barefooted and almost naked he immediately gave him shoes and money”, “- Brother, give me Milica. I do not have anybody, you see? Brother tells him: - Fine, brother, here is Milica”*). Brothers and sisters are always punished for being envious to each other (*“- I am your brother’s luck. Then he calmed down and asked her: - And where is my luck then?”, “Brothers nursed a grudge against him because they could not save apples and their brother did it every night”*).

Family members should also worry and take care about dead relatives, not to forget them (*“There was one mountaineer coming here from the Heaven, he said that our Muja has*

difficulties with money; he has no money to buy tobacco and to pay for a coffee when being with his friends; I gave him money from your bag so that he hands it to him”).

Overall, relatives always help each other (*“When you find yourself in great need and find Bash-Chelik, burn my feather and I will immediately come with my forces to help you”, “The king of snakes came with his snake warriors, the falcon king with his falcon warriors, the eagle king with his eagle warriors, they had a huge battle with Bash-Chelik, a lot of blood was shed but Bash-Chelik again took the woman and escaped”).* There are even cases of revenge for hurting one of them (*“- Now we exchange sons, and forgive the father, he is simple-minded. Then the woman returned the prince his eyes, blew and when he came back to life gave him to the king and he gave her the horse. I think the horse was that woman’s son”, “I am tricking you for long already, that is because you killed my foal”).*

Therewith, there is a story “Седам прутова” (“The seven canes”) which describes the need for family members to keep together, be united and always help each other (*“This is, children, what you should learn. If you will not keep together like that sheaf of seven canes even a child will be able to break you”).* This is a secret of a close-knit prosperous family.

Working sphere and regulations within it

Sphere of work is also highly regulated by social norms. No work is shameful. The interesting thing, however, is that the salary one receives from work is almost never mentioned, so the fact of working itself is meaningful and valuable. Being lazy or not working is strongly disapproved by the public (*“Hey, fool, why don’t you work your field, why does it just lies around?”*).

In contrast, hard work is deeply respected in Serbian folk tales (*“The endowment which one made himself by working hard and experiencing deprivation is more valuable than the endowment made by money”, “He ploughed up the ground, planted grape vine and in three years there were so many grapes that they could not vintage all”).* Every person should be skillful in something (*“What craft does a prince know? /.../ If he knows no craft I will not give him my daughter to marry”, “You see, it is like this: the one who knows at least one skill lives better than a common villager”).*

Both a master and a worker are expected to behave fairly and be honest with each other (*“When the shepherd heard it he went to his master and told him everything, the master*

brought a wagon, they dug out a door to a basement and returned home. That master was a fair man, he gave all discovered wealth to his shepherd and told him: - Son, this is your wealth, God gave it to you. Use it to build a house, get married and live with that”, “You will not do any harm to my master”). Trying to despoil one’s workers is deplored (in a story “Еро и кадија” (“A mountaineer and an effendi”) an effendi persuades a mountaineer not to go to the court after he hears that his cow hurt a mountaineer’s cow, but when he finds out that actually his cow was hurt he wants to consult a code of laws). To be successful, a worker should be smart, for example, to know what and when he should not say (“*Trojan asked him what he noticed in his appearance and he answered that he saw nothing. A king gave him twelve ducats and told to come every time he needed a shaver*”).

Beliefs as a necessary part of society’s everyday life

Beliefs play an important role in all the aspects of people’s lives. They may concern religion, supernatural forces or the worldview. I start with the religious beliefs because they are predominant in Serbian folk tales.

The only religion presented in Serbian folk tales is Orthodox Christianity, which is logical since the majority of the Serbians always were and still are orthodox Christians (U.S. Department of State, 2011). The religion is displayed through mentioning Saints (“*God sent Saint Archangel to see how to take the sun away from the Devil*”, “*Saint Sava was going over the mountain*”, 7 stories have Saint Sava as the main hero), churchmen (“*Healers, priests and monks came from all over the kingdom*”, “*Saint Sava told a priest from his followers to do as shepherds wanted*”, “*All monasteries are full with pilgrims, mendicant friars and black monks*”, “*He followed the advice of the monk and the elders*”, “*The monk was travelling and met a mountaineer on his way*”), religious holidays (“*When it was St. Elijah day*”) and references to Bible and God's commandments (“*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son*”, “*Honor thy father and thy mother*”, “*Do you know the fourth commandment?*”, “*When God created the world*”, “*Kings took water [From Jordan river] and sprayed the wounds /.../ wounds skinned over*”, “*She took living water, poured it and put a head on its place, he came back to life*”).

Religious rituals are often mentioned, such as baptism (“*I am a baptised soul*”, “*And this is how the king’s son and the girl got home safe, she was baptised and married to the prince*”, “*They brought him to Saint Sava so that he baptises him*”, “*They asked me to*

be a god mother”), crossing (“*And crossed himself*”, “*Then he started crossing him*”, “*They crossed themselves and started eating*” “*Cross yourself!*”), religious marriage (the word “венчати” is used which means “to marry in church”: “*After being engaged, they brought her and married them*”, “*After few days they were married*”, “*They were married according to the church’s canons*”, “*The king organised a big celebration and they were married*”, “*Right from there they went to the church where they were married*”, “*Married them and made a huge celebration*”, “*In such a way, the king understood who was right and married his daughter to Biberche*”, “*She was baptised and married to a prince*”), going to church (“*A mountaineer went into a church*”, “*After that they went to church*”, “*Right from there they went to the church where they were married*”, “*When he stepped in a church*”) and praying (“*Priests, monks and bishops were reciting an office*”, “*First of all, the monk recited an office for him to stop killing*”, “*There was an infertile woman who begged God to give her a baby, even if it is to be of the size of a pepper seed*”, “*She constantly begged God to give her a child. One evening begging like that she sighed*”).

There are some beliefs concerned with religion. For example, some events or phenomena are explained as decided upon by God (“*He called God to help, a lightning from the sky stroke girl’s mother and the ground opened beneath her*”, “*So God ordered that all people have a hollow like a little valley on their both feet. Ever since it was like that*”, “*If God will ever bring me there again*”, “*God made her smart and our family poor*”).

Having its roots in the religion, there is also a belief in existence of the Devil (“*It was the Devil*”, “*When devils separated from God and went to the earth they also took the sun with them, the devil’s king was caring it on his spear*”, “*Saint Sava was going over a mountain and met the Devil on his way*”, “*He started persuading the Devil to make a bet*”, “*Instead of his wife, the Devil grabbed a rope*”, “*He immediate catches the Devil*”) and heaven (“*- Where are you coming from? - I am going right from the Heaven*”). In addition to that, people try to live according to God's commandments (“*I do not want anybody to pass my house and still be hungry. If God granted me, why don’t I share with the poor?*”, “*We worked so God rewarded us. We know that our richness will pass away. /.../ we want to make some good endowments now*”, “*He ordered his mother not to let anybody leave the house still being in need: to feed the hungry ones, give shoes to bare-footed and to dress the naked. - If God granted us, - he said, - let the poor people live on it as well*”).

Almost in every tale one or several times the characters mention God in their speech (*“God witness, you are my brother”, “God knows what it is”, “In God’s name”, “For God’s sake, do you hate to live if you came back again?”, “For the love of God, what name do you go by?”, “You will loose the God willing life”, “For Christ’s sake, stop crying”, “We cannot do it standing before the God”, “God help us”, “If God did not help me nobody can help me”, “May God give, she will save you again”, “Pray the Lord, man”, “For God’s sake, son, how are you?”, “Give thanks to God that my mother is not home”, “Holy Christ, woman!”, “All power to your elbow (literally ‘let God help you’), “People live according to God’s will”, “Why should you mention God”, “God and God’s faith, I cannot go there even if it costs me my life”, “We worked so God rewarded us”*) they even can curse somebody by the name of God (*“God grant, nobody will take out my knife except for myself”*). It is expected from people to be religious, actually, it is often assumed they are. This shows the full integration of religion into people’s everyday life.

Heroes of Serbian tales, though being quite religious people, believe in the supernatural powers. They view possible the existence of witches (*“How can I farm that field if it is witches’ place? Evil creatures and fairies are gathering there”*), fairies (*“Build me a castle out of fairies’ teeth”, “Fairies will come to drink water”*), curses (*“Your father died because of this gun, you want the same destiny?”, “Look at me, you will not see me again until you wear off iron shoes and iron staff searching for me, a child that lies under your heart will not be born until I put my hand around you”*), follow prophetic dreams (*“Her son came and said that he needs to go to a place shown to him in a dream; so he left and his mother stayed crying”*) and believe that the wisdom tooth actually indicates a wise person or animal (*“Since I have two extra teeth in my head you will not do any harm to my master. /.../ In the morning a master ordered to beat up all dogs except for the old one”*).

As was mentioned before, it is important for a Serbian person to be successful in life. Both male and female characters should achieve success, though of a different nature. Such an approach to building one’s life results in having numerous beliefs about the things that may help to achieve a desired aim.

First, there is fate and it decides how one’s life will go (*“- Oh, Fate! Oh, Fate! Today this and that amount of souls was born, give them what you want. Then Fate gets up, opens a chest with money and starts throwing ducats around the room saying: - How much you got now, that is how much you will get all your life”, “You were born in a poor night so*

you will forever be poor”). However, an unlucky person can share his household with a lucky one to get his life fixed (*“Your brother has a daughter, Milica; she is lucky like her father. When you come back home, take her to live with you. About everything that you will gain during the year tell everybody that it is hers. /.../ He lived happily with Milica”*).

On the other hand, there is an opposite belief that the balance of one’s fortune rests with a person himself (*“When he came back home he brought piece, work, respect, good health, quietness, beauty, happy life, modesty and purity. After that everything became better. /.../ Who could think, who could know that my luck was inside me, in my head and hands?”*). The only thing needed is an effort (*“He ploughed up the ground, planted grape vine and in three years there were so many grapes that they could not vintage all”*).

The next advice given to those who want to be successful concerns the issue of power. Power is not measured by size, at least in most cases, but by one’s self-esteem and what he can do (*“A goat says: - I am a goat, I was slaughtered but not slaughtered till the end, salted but not salted through, fried but not fried till the end, my teeth are like pikes, I will split you with my bite like a thread. A hedgehog answers him: - I am a hedgehog, I am the king of the whole village, I will roll in a ball and stab you in ass. And the goat ran away”*). Being smart is more important and can lead to better results than being strong (*“You cannot always use force to win, send your wife to ask Bash-Chelik where his bravery is”*). On that premise, one can say that knowledge is power (*“I will go into the world to acquire knowledge. You see, it is like this: the one who knows at least one skill lives better than a common villager”*, *“What craft does a prince know? /.../ If he knows no craft I will not give him my daughter to marry”*, *“If I knew this skill I would not look for a cattle now”*).

Being a nice person can also help to achieve success (*“ - You see, - said Sun to furious Northern Wind, - you can achieve much more by being gentle and kind than fierce”*), especially taking into account that all good and bad deeds tend to come back (in a story “Голуб и пчела” (“The pigeon and the bee”), the pigeon saved a drowning bee and the bee helped the pigeon to escape from a hunter afterwards; in addition to that, in all stories heroes who behaved bad were punished).

There are also common beliefs that people in the tales possess. The notion of truth is important to them. Truth is always better than a lie (a story “Правда и кривда” (“Verity and falsity”) tells about two brothers; one of them tried to prove that truth is always better

and the other one tried to prove that telling a lie is better than telling the truth; in the end, the second brother died and the first one got half of a kingdom and married a king's daughter). Moreover, truth is impossible to hide, sooner or later it will come out (*"Then King Trojan saw that nothing can be hidden on earth, he overturned a death sentence of the barber and let any barber shave him"*, *"- A bee will fall on a cap of the boy who stole honey. When boys were eating one of them (the one who stole honey) was constantly watching for a bee not to fall on his cap, which is how he was caught"*). Another common believe or, one can say, folk wisdom can be put in words as 'opinions (or tastes) differ', which means there are as many opinions as there are people, so one should not pay attention what others think or say (*"Any man who wants to please the whole world is crazier than this donkey. I will do with my donkey what I want according to only my will; and people may say what they want"*).

Personal traits approved and disapproved in folk tales and fables

Since Serbian folk tales and fables aim at teaching how people should and should not behave, what is good and what is not, good and bad personal characteristics can be easily distinguished. I base my conclusions about their nature on the fact that a hero was punished or rewarded for possessing one or few of them.

Let me start with good personal traits. It is very important for a person to be nice to other people. All the characters no matter status are hospitable. If a person comes to one's home an owner asks about the purpose of his travel, often offers food and a place to sleep (*"When he saw his brother being barefooted and almost naked he immediately gave him shoes and money. After that they were feasting for several days and then the brother went back home"*, *"He told him to sit next to him and started asking where he is from and where he is going. He told him how once he was a master and how he became poor and that now he is searching for Fate to ask why he is poor"*, *"When he approached ploughmen he asked if they had anything for him to eat. They told him to wait a little to share their meal, what they will eat he will eat too"*, *"He ordered his mother not to let anybody leave a house being in need: to feed the hungry ones, give shoes to bare-footed and who is naked should be dressed"*, *"They sat down to table together with a poor man and offered him to share their meal"*, *"They came to a village, they were made welcome and given food"*, *"She told she would sing even better if they let them in a house and then to a hayloft. Wedding guests let them in"*, *"You are my brother-in-law; now we will celebrate and welcome our guest. They sat down to table and started eating"*).

Helping others is also a part of Serbian character (*“When he saw his brother being barefooted and almost naked he immediately gave him shoes and money”, “He told her where he is going. The water carried him across itself”, “She found her near the stove making fire with her bare hands. Immediately after she saw it she ripped a piece of textile off her clothes and put it around her hands”, “- Brother, I am begging you, I am dying from thirst, give me a cup of water! The prince took a cup of water and poured it in a barrel”, “I beg you to free me from this trap! Whenever you will need me just take my single hair and rub it a little. He took her hair and freed her”, “When you find yourself in great need and find Bash-Chelik, burn my feather and I will immediately come with my forces to help you”, “Then that king sent a letter to his neighbour and begged him to send a healer who had cured his daughter to cure his daughter as well, he would give him anything he wants for doing that”, “He took a leaf from a tree and threw it to the bee”, “The bee stabbed him, a hunter waved his hand and the pigeon managed to fly away”). Often people or animals return the favor. For a big help like saving one’s child or saving from death the one whom a hero has helped is expected to reward him (*“The king and the queen hugged the man like a son, brought him to sacristy to change clothes and married him with their daughter, the king gave him half of the kingdom”, “The king brightened up and gave him half of the kingdom and his daughter to marry”, “- Did you kill the giant and save my daughter from death? – I did it, your majesty. - said the youngest prince. Then the king gave him his daughter to marry and made him the most important person in the kingdom after himself”).**

Among people, there is quite a clear hierarchy. It can be visible through the ways people address each other (*“I am, upright king”, “I want, holy crown!”, “Your Honor, I obey”, “Noble effendi, your cow stabbed my cow”, “Your Majesty!” “What do you want from it, sir?”, “Your Grace! We are rich and we have enough of everything”, “- God help you, notable woman! - God help you too, slave!”*). Even if they are of the same class they try to be polite with each other (*“Hello, near saint”. “Oh you, God’s person”, “Welcome, my brother-in-law!”, “Suddenly a girl appeared in from of him and asked: - Why do you cry, brother?”*). Politeness is a necessary quality everybody should possess.

It is very valuable for a person to keep his word even if a lot of time has passed or there would be no consequences if a person does not keep it (*“Give me the one I want as we agreed before”, “- I would like to ask you to do something but plight your faith that you will tell nobody about it. - My faith is like a stone, feel free to say”, “Sons gave a word*

that they will marry off their sisters to the first ones who will ask for them. /.../ - I will give her away if you do not; did you forget what father charged us to do when he was dying?”, “The king accepted him and promised to give a ring to him”, “- But look what is written in this paper: it says that when leaving I can take with me anything I like the most from your chambers. When the king saw it he kissed her and they returned to the chambers”).

Being smart is equally important and can often save one’s life (*“When he was carried by the water to the other shore he started running and when he was far enough he turned around and shouted: - Oh, water! Oh, water! You do not have storks because you never drowned a person”, “He did not have anything to set a fire with and he did not want to wake his brothers up, so he went to the desert to look for something to set a fire with but he could not see a thing. Finally, he climbed the tree and looked around from its top”, “The prince was eating with them as well, but when they were not looking he would throw meat behind him”, “- Could some of you show me how to put it over? /.../ When he was in the right position the king’s son pulled out a sabre, hit the giant’s neck and cut his head off”, “When the dragon comes, ask him where his strength is and kiss the place where he says his strength is as if you admire this spot and are very happy that he told you where it is located”, “- My wife got out from the hall and is looking for me, but she is also looking for you! /.../ the Devil jumped out of king’s daughter and ran across a blue sea and he was never noticed among people again”, “Saint Sava takes a sip, another one and another one and crosses himself and the Devil runs away /.../ Since then he never appeared where the pope was”, “The Devil fast kills a baby goat and starts making bagpipes while saint Sava cuts a reed and makes a fife in no time and starts playing it”). However, people who are not smart are not despised, only laughed at.*

Less important but still praiseworthy qualities are thriftiness (*“- Those who will take stones will regret it, and those who will not take them will regret as well. /.../ Some people thought: - Let me take one stone”, “She took out all three pieces of cheese from a bag and ran away with them. When she successfully escaped she ate two pieces and hid the third one in her bosom and went further”), self-sacrifice (“The two youngest brothers told the older one to kill his horse but he refused, the middle brother refused as well, then the youngest brother killed his horse and made a rope out of its skin”), honesty (“Oh, damn, I forgot to pay for diner! If I was close I would come back, but anyway if God will ever bring me there again I will pay him the price and the interest”), being purposeful*

(*“- I will go. Isn't it the way? /.../ - I go and only afterwards I can come back. /.../ The woman started cursing and persuading him from it saying the same things as the two previous women but he did not want to hear anything”*), unmercenary (*“- Whose wheat is it? He said further regretting it: - Mine. In the same moment wheat fell down and started burning, when he saw it he ran after the person: - Wait, brother, it is not mine but Milica's, my niece's. Immediately wheat stopped burning and since then he lived happily with Milica”*) and careful (*“A foal understood that the voice is not fox's thin voice and did not open a door”*).

As for bad personal traits, they are logically the opposites of the ones listed above. So the main negative characteristics are laziness (*“- Those who will take stones will regret it, and those who will not take them will regret as well. Some of them thought: - Why carry a stone if I will regret it anyway?”*, *“There was once a really poor man who had a field on the river bank but did not work on it for years”*) and envy (*“- I am your brother's luck. /.../ - And where is my luck?”*, *“Step-mother immediately started to hate her step-daughter especially because she was much more beautiful than her own daughter”*, *“Brothers nursed a grudge against him because they could not save apples and their brother did it every night”*, *“When his brothers saw that he managed to find and save their sister they cut the rope so that he could not get down, found a shepherd in a field, dressed him up and brought to the father as if he was their youngest brother”*).

Less frequently encountered characteristics but still viewed as negative are curiosity which often overlaps with disobedience (*“- You can go to any basement except of the twelfth one, never open it! /.../ and finally opened the twelfth basement as well”*, *“- But never open the ninth room /.../ and he opened that room as well”*, *“- Stay away from that hole. /.../ they came closer and closer looking down in the hole until one of the girls, who was the most beautiful, dropped a spindle in the hole”*, *“Then woman curiosity took over and she opened the bottle”*), unfairness to others (*“Bear split the wheat /.../ and he gave nothing to the fox”*, *“He showed that he was the youngest prince, not that shepherd, and that his bothers were envious and left him in the attic where he found his sister and killed the snake”*), stupidity which can be close to naivety (*“It is pointless to have such a big head if you have no brain”*, *“She opened the wolf's mouth and nose and all the water poured out and flew to the first floor where wedding guests were. Wedding guests ran to the hayloft, the fox jumped from it and escaped and the wolf got beaten”*, *“Hey, Turk! Look, even your bulls have brains and a mountaineer does not! However, he rode you*

twice”), and finally underestimating others (“*One hunter was about to wash her fur when the fox suddenly jumped up and disappeared in a forest. Hunters did not have a chance to fire even one bullet*”, “*- We know for sure that she cannot outrun any of us on foot /.../ There was nobody seen chasing the girl anymore*”).

In this chapter, I had a look at the ways of being and behaving expected from people in Serbian society. First, I distinguished three categories that are highly regulated by social norms, that is family relationships, working life and beliefs. Family relationships are overall of a patriarchal nature with men having a dominant position. Within family parents-children relationships are built on care and respect and siblings are expected to express love and care towards each other. Everyone is supposed to work hard and both workers and masters should be fair with each other. As for beliefs, characters of folk tales are very religious which does not prevent them from being superstitious as well. Heroes also have beliefs expressing their worldviews (sometimes contradictory), for example, their life is predestined and, in the same time, depends on their own efforts, power can be achieved by gaining knowledge, all bad and good deeds come back.

Second, I made a list of personal characteristics that are viewed in Serbian folk tales and fables as either bad or good. Such characteristics as hospitality, helpfulness, following the hierarchy, politeness and keeping a word fit into the group of good personal traits. Bad characteristics are laziness, envy, curiosity, underestimating others, unfairness and stupidity.

5.3. Additional values of Serbian society

In the previous chapters, I have already described quite many things to different extents valuable to Serbian people. It can be family wellbeing, honor, labour, love, wealth and so on. However, this is only one way to look at it and now I want to look at the values the society has from a different angle.

Tales point to attitudes and effects of behaviour by demonstrating that bad behaviour is always punished and good deeds are rewarded (Amali, 2014, p. 92). I analyse the cases of rewarding or punishing heroes to see what values are indirectly presented in Serbian folk tales and fables. I base my conclusions on what is given to a person for doing good deeds and taken away from him for misbehaving. Since a person can be punished or

rewarded with these things, they must be very important for a hero and the society at large.

Let me start with the rewards. More often heroes of Serbian folk tales and fables are granted with money, power and a wife (*“Son, this is your wealth, God gave it to you. Use it to build a house, get married and live with that”*, *“He brought her to his chambers and married her”*, *“Then the iron man proclaims his brother-in-law a king”*, *“He happily got home with the king’s daughter”*, *“In such a way, the king understood who was right and married his daughter to Biberche”*, *“And they were ruling the kingdom for the rest of their lives”*, *“King gave him a lot of money”*, *“Then the king gave him his daughter to marry and made him the most important person in the kingdom after the king”*, *“The king gave him great reward and his daughter to marry”*). It logically evolves from my previous observations since men are usually main actors and they are rewarded with things they see meaningful for being seen as successful: wealth, power and a wife. Less often story characters are granted life, happiness, a job or simply achieve success (*“Let him be happy and his brothers unhappy”*, *“Ruled and lived happily”*, *“Since then he lived happily with Milica”*, *“Since then they lived in harmony”*, *“Ordered to kill all dogs except for an old one”*, *“Trojan asked him what he noticed in his appearance and he answered that he saw nothing. A king gave him twelve ducats and told him to come every time he needed a shaver”*). These life components are less but, as can be seen now, still very important for Serbian people to have.

As for punishments, heroes are mainly punished by losing wealth, life or getting relatives or themselves in trouble (*“In such a way, he became poor and did not even have shoes”*, *“He became poor as he was before”*, *“He hit his head and he died on the spot”*, *“King’s head was cut off”*, *“The king immediately died”*, *“Mother, father and all noblemen saw her off to the lake /.../ where she stayed alone waiting for the dragon”*, *“In the evening, when she came back home she saw that her mother turned into a cow”*). They are less frequently punished by hunger, losing everything they had, exclusion from their family or simply by giving no reward (*“Ask why are my people always hungry”*, *“Those who did not carry stone started to regret that they did not and those who did regretted they did not carry more”*, *“When the king heard it he got angry with the older sons and drove them out of the house”*). Here one sees not only the importance of money and one’s well-being but also of stability and the strength of family relations.

In such a way, Serbian society possesses such additional values as family and individual well-being about health, happiness and economy, stability and the even tenor of life, a possibility to work and live.

6. DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I provide the analysis of the findings presented in the previous chapters. I start with analysing the role of folk tales in formation of morals and values in children based on the researches done before and my own findings. Further, I present a composite value portrait of an individual including its gender-related and common aspects.

6.1. Serbian folk tales and fables as an educational tool

Upon completion of the analysis, it has become clear that this research proves the widespread idea of folk literature being a powerful educational tool. In this sub-chapter, I will come back to the researches dedicated to this topic done before and look how Serbian folk tales and fables analysed in this study may contribute to the formation of morals and values in children based on my findings.

I base my research on the modeling theory meaning heroes of folk tales being models whose behaviour children are likely to imitate. Ormrod (cited in Wardle, 2003, p. 387) names five characteristics a model should possess in order to be influential: competence, prestige and power, stereotypical gender behaviour, relevance to the child's social context and familiarity. Heroes of analysed stories meet these requirements. Competence is one of the main qualities which is displayed in folk tales in three ways. First, heroes are skillful in one's profession, whether it be hunting, agriculture, crafts, embroidering, raising children or running household. Second, heroes use gumption and life experience in finding creative ways to overcome difficulties and achieve success. Finally, heroes know how to function in a society, meaning they know how to communicate with other people, where to seek help, how to avoid getting in trouble and what to do in order to meet society's expectations.

Prestige and power are possessed by heroes (in case they are from royal and noble families, church men or, within a family context, in case a hero is male) or achieved in the end of their adventures (a man or woman marries a prince or a princess together with it getting royal power and property, in some cases a man replaces a king). My findings show that images of men and women are highly stereotypical as regards their occupation, status, appearance, life flow and rights, which is all the main components of one's life. Familiarity and relevance to child's social context is exercised through placing the action in Serbian society with its traditions, habits and beliefs, references to history and religion,

use of culturally specific words including archaisms. Thus, there is no doubt that heroes of folk tales can be viewed by children as models.

The main question is, however, in what ways may folk tales influence children and if this influence is positive or negative. It seems that folk tales do more good than harm, however, it can be only first impression. Further, I will discuss this issue in more details. Let me start with what Serbian folk tales can help children with and continue with the negative influence they can make.

Moral development is impossible without experiencing different emotions (Butts, 1992, p. 73). Children only start learning how to manage their feelings so, as Bettelheim (cited in Rupiper & Zeece, 2005, p. 379) suggests, folk tales can be helpful in this process guiding how to master fears and disappointments and even gain feelings of self-worth and self-hood. It can be done through identification of a child with a hero (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 2) in two ways. There are heroes in folk tales who are confident, decisive and brave. Children can see that such characters successfully deal with difficulties and are always rewarded, which in turn motivates them to copy the behaviour of these heroes and, as a result, forms self-confidence. Another way is in self-identification with weak characters (Tucker, 1981, p. 79) who are less skillful, unlucky or oppressed by others. Seeing how such heroes cope with problems, achieve success and become confident forms an understanding of a possibility of such transformation not only in fictional but also in real life.

Looking at the behaviour of heroes, children also notice moral dilemmas that they face. Folk tales show not only the choice that a hero makes, but also the process of decision-making including feelings, doubts and advantages and disadvantages he or she sees. In such a way, in addition to learning what is the right thing to do in a particular situation, children acquire the algorithm of decision-making.

Another positive influence of folk tales on children is in transmitting social norms. As can be seen in the findings of this research, folk tales define the gender roles, hierarchy of the society and professions one may think of. In such a way, folk tales describe the status quo and preserve it by forming in children the acceptance of it as traditional and normal (West-Burnham, 2009, p. 119). It is helpful for children because being aware of how the society operates they can successfully integrate in it: they know what behaviour is expected from them, how to build their life, how to achieve general recognition and

what to expect from others. However, folk tales do not describe all the spheres in which boys and girls will be functioning when they grow up.

Finally, folk tales are a tool for teaching values and morals (Reiss, 1996, p. 9). My findings extensively describe in what ways Serbian folk tales and fables show children what is good and bad. They also use indirect ways of teaching values through notions of rewards and punishments. The basic principle of all folk tales is that good deeds are always rewarded and bad deeds are always punished (Nikolajeva, 2012, p. 4; Amali, 2014, p. 92; Rupiper & Zeece, 2005, p. 377). I think, such a method is even more efficient since children think it was them who figured out what is good to do, nobody told them so there is better chance they remember the lesson.

All the above-mentioned ideas proved by my finding show how important folk tales are for children's development. However, I cannot ignore negative influence folk tales may exercise. Interestingly, it concerns the same spheres.

In spite of the fact that folk tales help children to cope with their fears and manage emotions, they still are a simple genre (Butts, 1992, p. 74), meaning that actions in stories are simplified. For example, a weak character goes through an adventure, achieves success and becomes strong. In real life such a serious transformation may take much more time and effort so a child who identifies himself with a hero and fails once may feel unsure about taking another try.

In transmitting social norms to a child, especially if they are of traditional nature, there is a problem of limitation. Status quo limits some members of the society in their freedom to choose profession, lifestyle and so on. It is especially clearly seen in the case of women in Serbian folk tales: they are presented as weaker, less talented and having fewer rights than men. It also limits men if they want to get traditionally female profession or, for example, do not want to build a career.

Finally, in teaching values and morals folk tales may achieve opposite results. For some reason, a child may feel more sympathy with a negative character. He can also see it more attractive to achieve things one desires as villains do since it is much easier and one does not have to overcome numerous obstacles.

As can be seen, folk tales have potential for both helping and harming children. Parents and teachers possess the determining influence on the nature of contribution of folk tales to child's development. Lauwers (2013, p. 38) supports this idea stating that family

influences the formation of a child and adults can and should direct a child while reading folk literature in order for him to get the right messages and make the right conclusions. For being able to direct a child's development correctly, adults must be aware what messages folk tales send.

6.2. The value portrait of an individual promoted in Serbian folk tales and fables

As stated by the social learning and modelling theories, children tend to copy the behaviour of successful story characters and avoid the ways in which negative characters act (Cooper, 2013, p. 8). The fact of a hero being punished or rewarded also influences the choice of behaviour children find attractive (Rupiper & Zeece, 2005, p. 377).

In the previous chapters, I presented gender-related and common ways of being and behaving approved and disapproved in Serbian folk tales and fables, the types of rewards and punishments used. Based on the ways children interact with folk literature, I can assume that they will try to adopt approved qualities and models of behaviour and avoid doing what is viewed as bad in stories. Such an assumption is possible because it is not the aim of this research to check if children really will react to stories in such a way. My purpose is to find out what message stories transmit to children, not what message children actually receive.

In such a way, based on the previous chapters, I can generate the following value portrait of an individual that stories try to make children adopt. Since boys and girls are likely to associate themselves with a particular gender I first present aspects of value portrait different for boys and girls and proceed with common aspects.

6.2.1. Male-oriented aspects of the value portrait

Serbian folk tales instill in boys a strong feeling of responsibility for numerous things. They are supposed to keep in mind that every action they make leads to consequences important for the whole family and their surroundings. From folk tales boys learn how they should behave and what responsibilities they have starting from childhood and during their whole life.

It is clearly stated that a man is the head of the family, which limits his freedom in many ways. He should put his family's needs first. As soon as possible, a man should start

working and take all the work that is offered to him if it helps to feed the family no matter his professional interests.

Getting married is a thing everybody does and it cannot be avoided. A man should maintain a status of the family by marrying a girl of the same social class or higher. Only her having some outstanding characteristics replacing a high position in a society can justify marrying a lower-class woman.

As a husband, a man carries bigger weight in a family than his wife, he is the one to make the final decision though he may or may not consult or listen to his wife. It is up to the husband to create a collaborative and equal relationship with his wife. It is also natural for a man to get married for the second time if something happened to his wife.

Once a man gets married and starts working, he should take care of providing future generations. As a father, he should love and take care of his children's emotional and physical wellbeing. He is not expected to help with practical matters of growing children; rather he deals with the most important decisions concerning children's life like marrying them off, deciding their future or saving them from serious danger. Although all children are equally important for a father, greater deeds are expected from boys. They are viewed as capable of achieving more than their parents while girls have a definitive future awaiting them.

When a man gets old, he is expected to be cared for by his children and help younger people by giving advice and sharing wisdom. Until the very death, a man worries about his family's wellbeing.

From an early age, boys may feel the weight of big expectations on them since all male characters of folk tales, even weak and young ones, show themselves as heroes. In such a way, men should not only live a decent life but also somehow demonstrate heroism. Folktales help them by providing the ways in which they can realise their potential: helping others, refusing to give up when facing difficulties, self-sacrifice or showing smartness and gumption. In addition to that, it is emphasised that men should be physically strong and, with the absence of dragons or giants in real life, boys are left with the possibility to show their strength through protecting their family, helping parents or siblings, saving weaker ones like animals, younger siblings or old people from troubles.

6.2.2. Female-oriented aspects of the value portrait

As I already stated before, not much is expected from women in Serbian folk tales so girls do not feel a lot of pressure put on them, rather from time to time they may feel limited and not taken seriously. It can be referred as a “glass ceiling” – an assumption and an organization of a society in such a way that women are seen as less capable than men, especially in working sphere (Cooper, 2013, p. 2). Like men, from Serbian folk tales and fables women get guidance for living their life.

Girls are expected to follow the flow of life not demonstrating any outstanding achievements. However, they are not prevented from being active, independent and trying to become outstanding.

As nothing serious is expected from women, their purpose is to successfully settle in life (meaning getting married and having children) and to avoid any kind of troubles they tend to get into due to their natural curiosity and naivety. Power is also viewed as contradictory to the idea of being a female (Bronwyn cited in Trousdale & McMillan, 2003, p. 15).

For a girl it is of great importance to be beautiful and learn how to run a house. It is not natural for a woman to show initiative in finding a man or building relationship with him, her role is in passive waiting for the one who will value her talents and character. In order to get married, a man attracted by a woman needs to be approved by her family.

As a wife, a woman is subordinate to a man no matter if she willingly obeys his decisions or quarrels with him. A woman is not expected to work though she may know some crafts like embroidery or spinning. A man is the only one who directly gets money for his work, a woman may grow vegetables and fruits, herborize but mainly she simply takes care of the house and children. The ethic of caring described by Gilligan (1982, p. 159) interfuses women’s life - they usually act considering first of all the needs of others, not their own.

Being a mother, a woman takes care of children every day but does not have much power over them, the father is the main authority. Women worry about their children’s wellbeing, try to keep them away from troubles. It is abnormal for a woman not to have children and they may feel flawed because of it.

From Serbian folk tales girls get an idea of waiting for their life to change. They do not need to take initiative since men do it and, at some point, a time will come when they will

meet the one, get children and live happily ever after (Trousdale & McMillan, 2003, p. 12).

However, some folk tales present estimable female characters who are smart, independent and are in control of their own life. It leaves girls to choose (I suppose, the choice will depend on their personal characteristics) what type of a woman they want to be and what position, active or passive, they take in living their lives. However, no matter what way they choose, things women traditionally find important in life are the same.

6.2.3. Aspects of the value portrait common for both genders

As I mentioned earlier, religion is fully integrated in the everyday life of Serbian people. Milanovich (1942, p. 101) mentions that the Serbians are very religious and religious elements manifests in folk tales. Lauwers, whose recent research is based on narratives of Serbian young people, states that the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church is growing (Lauwers, 2013, p. 39) and it is old-fashioned to be an atheist nowadays and modern to follow all the religious rituals and go to church (Lauwers, 2013, p. 41). Actually, based on my results, religion is the main tool of shaping Serbian worldview and, therefore, a set of values. Let me explain these statements.

The way people behave should always be in accordance with Christian ideology. First of all, it is natural for people to be religious (to be Orthodox Christians) and perform respective rituals like praying, going to church, celebrating religious holidays and following God's commandments. It corresponds to the very first God's commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Orthodox Church in America, 2016). However, for Serbian people it is natural (though controversial to being religious) to believe in superstitions and supernatural powers. I suppose, it is something that survived from the pagan times.

Second, in any situation family and its interests are a priority of every person. It does not only provide primary socialization, but is often the only domain of social life that stays stable (Lauwers, 2013, p. 39). Children are always welcomed and cared for no matter if a family is rich or poor, siblings help and love each other, if an honor of one member of a family is assaulted, the honor of the whole family is assaulted, dead relatives are remembered and thought of. In addition to that, it is clearly stated that young people should respect and listen to the older ones, which is a direct reference to the fifth

commandment: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Orthodox Church in America, 2016).

Third, hard working is one of the best qualities one may have. It does not matter if one is a man working to feed his family, a woman working in the house to make it clean and cozy or a child trying hard to learn something. As it is put in the fourth commandment, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God” (Orthodox Church in America, 2016). Laziness of any kind is highly disapproved.

Everybody should aim at achieving success in life. It should be kept in mind that only part of it depends on the destiny. Firmness, patience and putting efforts can change anybody’s life for the better even if destiny meant him to be unlucky.

Knowledge is seen as power. It is more useful than strength, which can appeal to children since due to the age they are not physically strong and do not resemble heroes of folk tales in this quality. A smart person can emerge the victor in any situation.

The issue of truth has a central value for Serbian people. It is always better than a lie and impossible to hide. One should be honest with friends, family, lover, master, co-workers, God and himself. The seventh commandment says “You shall not commit adultery” and the ninth one follows “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Orthodox Church in America, 2016).

Serbian people are also expected to follow three other commandments of God demanding not to steal, kill and covet anything other people possess (Orthodox Church in America, 2016). The only mismatch between the Orthodox ideology and the way Serbian people are expected to behave concerns the second commandment which proclaims equality by saying that one “shall not make for himself a graven image /.../ shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Orthodox Church in America, 2016). In Serbian society, there is a clear hierarchy and it is of great importance what level of it a person belongs to. It influences possibilities and rights he has, quality of life. All people are expected to support this hierarchy by addressing others politely according to their status.

As for common Christian values, they are fully integrated in a Serbian society’s lifestyle. People should be kind, hospitable, ready to help and grateful for help they receive, polite, obedient and modest.

Values of Christian ideology are easy to be grasped by children from folk tales and fables since children are most likely already acquainted with them through the religion the majority of Serbian people practise. Getting the same information from two different sources definitely adds reliability to the view that doing things this way is right.

This is the value portrait of an individual that is created in Serbian folk tales and fables under study. The analysis shows that folk tales maintain the traditional lifestyle and respective values. However, it is clearly seen that this worldview is very specific and reflects history, mentality and religion of Serbian nation.

Now, when it is known what message Serbian folk tales and fables transmit to children adults can choose how to get children acquainted with this type of folk literature or decide if it is a right thing to do (Kelley, 2008, p. 40). They should also keep in mind that folk tales are enriching for children's development since they teach morals, societal traditions, and discipline and inspire mental alertness (Amali, 2014, p. 96). It is important that adults are aware of the consequences their actions and decisions may lead to.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In the final part, I draw the conclusions. I start with addressing the issues of reliability and validity. Then I evaluate the research and analysis done and present the ways teachers use folk tales in schools as well as making my own suggestions about practical implementation of this study. I conclude by offering topics for further research.

7.1. The issues of reliability and validity

As for the reliability of this research, I translated the folk tales and fables into English and sometimes Russian, as I am more fluent in these languages. When I faced some difficulties understanding particular parts of the text I asked my Serbian colleagues to explain it to me. Due to these actions, the accuracy of the translation should be as reliable as possible.

I used analytical coding for the pieces of data under categories because I deal with values and they are indirectly described in a text, which requires me as a researcher to uncover them (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011, p. 561). Analytical coding helps me to put the examples of such values in a table not in their original form (metaphors, models etc.) but already its essence (the message hidden behind its shape). Later on, I looked at data obtained and codes attached to it few more times to get rid of repeating codes and find out cases of overlapping of categories to address them in the analysis.

I did not use computerised coders because I deal with very complex, abstract and highly analytical phenomena of values. I believe that only human brain or a very expensive software can do such an advanced coding. I could not use usual coding programs because values are the matters hidden in the text so it is impossible to identify them by a machine.

When coding is done by a human mistakes may occur. To minimise risks, I made sure to reread the text three times (the first time - when coding, the second time - after coding is finished and the third time - after the analysis is done) to make sure that the coding is done correctly and none of the important text units is missed.

The research can be called diachronically reliable (Kirk & Miller, 1987, p. 42) since the book analysed is accessible any time and stories within it barely change over time. This means the research can be repeated any time with the use of the same or different methods.

Validity will always be an issue since all measurements are to some degree suspect, the research cannot be one hundred percent valid (Kirk & Miller, 1987, p. 21). I tried to maintain the validity of this research all the way through, though my level of understanding and experience definitely influenced the results obtained (Cullingford, 1998, p. 1). However, me being already acquainted with Serbian lifestyle, history, language and traditions made it possible to uncover things that are not evident. My previous knowledge and experience contributed more to the research than they hindered the objectivity. Since the way I, as a researcher, can interpret the results is subjective (no matter how objective I try to be) and may differ from other people's, I consulted my Serbian colleagues who help me with translation in terms of what meanings they see in particular text units and if it is at variance with my views.

7.2. The final remarks

The current content analysis completed in order to find out the values transmitted by Serbian folk tales and fables to children contributes a lot to the fields of philology and education. This is one of few researches in English dedicated to Serbian literature and the only one studying the influence of Serbian folk tales and fables on children.

I found answers to all the research questions set in the beginning of the study. Obtained information made it possible to generate a detailed value portrait promoted by the stories under study. Social learning and modelling theories provided me with the mechanisms making children copy a particular behaviour from books. This knowledge made it possible for me to understand what text units are likely to catch children's attention and make particular actions attractive to them.

As for the results obtained, some of them were predictable since it is widely known that Serbian society is still quite traditional. However, a lot of nuances of the worldview and strong integration of Christian religion that I discovered surprised me. The conducted content analysis enriched the international research fields of education, philology and also children's literature. This research is useful for anybody who is interested in literature, education or Serbian culture.

I can say that this research can find a wide not only theoretical, but also practical implementation. Teachers and parents can use it to control the content of the value set they form in children, to learn using folktales as discussion starters about particular topics

adults find important (Kelley, 2008, p. 40) and to adopt the mechanisms used in Serbian folk tales and fables to attract children's interest to different literature. Let me offer some ways of practically implementing the research and thus folk tales and fables.

In school lessons of Serbian language, folk tales can be used not only as a substantive subject of study but also as a basis for studying archaisms, text structure and figures of speech, discussing gender roles, traditions, moral dilemmas which heroes face and values. Folk tales can be also referenced to during lessons of History in lower grades when introducing old Serbian methods of agriculture and animal husbandry, Drama Education and Creative Writing.

Teachers of many other countries have already come to appreciate educational potential of folk tales and share experiences of using them in achieving various aims in classrooms. In traditional societies, folk tales can be used as a mean of transferring traditions and culture to a new generation, purposefully maintaining status quo. Lee (2011, p. 403) writes about Korean case: the stories of this country kept society together for centuries by codifying and reinforcing the way people have thought, believed, felt and behaved. Lee (2011, p. 404) stresses that for children not to lose interest in reading folk tales they should be engaged in the process of critical thinking with the help of various techniques, for example, creating sequels, discussion with justification, cause-and-effect analysis activity and reasoning with sequencing (Lee, 2011, pp. 406-407).

In contrast to a Korean educator, Bourke is using folk tales to teach first graders to critically examine and interpret the stories, forming critical literacy, in order for them to be able to question status quo. Reading and talking about such a familiar thing as tales, children learn to discover hidden messages, cases of privilege and oppression (Bourke, 2008, p. 304). In order to do this, children put themselves in the characters' shoes (Bourke, 2008, p. 306) and, in such a way, come to feel sympathy and empathy. Folk tales are the best literature for first graders to learn thinking critically due to its simplicity in terms of structure, number of characters, actions and level of complexity in characters' reasoning.

Folk tales can also be used in the work of psychologists, not only in classrooms. Children may fear different things: darkness, monsters, some animals and so on. Tales provide positive role models who face their fears or dangers and successfully overcome them, which makes children believe that their own fears can be defeated too (Rupiper & Zeece,

2005, p. 379). Psychologists or even parents themselves can discuss the stories with children stressing particular parts of them in order to help a child naturally overcome his fears.

As I told before, this study is one of the first in its field so a lot of further research can be done. The most obvious one could be a study of children's perception of Serbian folk tales and fables. Now, when it is known what message they send to children it is logical to examine what message children actually receive. Is the value portrait really formed? If yes, does it coincide with the one described above? In addition, one can see how children of different age are influenced by the same stories.

It can be argued that when children get acquainted with folk tales and fables their level of understanding is not very deep and they may not receive the messages transmitted through stories (Cullingford, 1998, p. 14) and therefore an above described value set will not be formed. Further research is needed in order to justify or falsify this proposition.

In my research, I focused on textual and thematic mechanisms of transmitting values to children. Further research can look at the linguistic means of transferring messages in Serbian folk tales. It would also greatly contribute to this study if a similar analysis were done about the influence on children of different types of Serbian folk literature like myths, legends, poems and songs.

There are only few studies dedicated to Serbian literature and its influence on children, especially written in English, which means that there is almost limitless amount of topics one can find for further research. Which is more important, there is a demand for it.

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