

THE STUDY OF JÓZSEF RAVASZ'S TALES IN THE MIRROR OF PRIMARY SOCIALISATION

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Abstract

The present study deals with József Ravasz's tales; I studied the tales using the method of content analysis. The analysed corpus is presented in the introduction of the study, and the analysis of the tales is discussed in the subsequent sections. The analysis focused on the following five aspects: types of the functions of primary socialisation; attitudes towards school; ethnic identity; religion; and interactions inside and outside the family as presented in the tales.

Socialisation and attitudes towards school, among those listed above, were the main pillars of the analysis. I consider the analysis of the Roma/Gypsy literature, more specifically the analysis of Roma tales, necessary, as tales can draw primary pupils' attention to the differences and similarities between different cultures, as well as to diversity. It is important for infants to develop social skills that enable them to more readily understand the differences between the majority society and minority groups, to improve tolerance of others and to learn to have respect for each other's traditions. Roma literary tales (like Roma folk tales) refer to the Roma people's history, wanderings, ancient homeland, traditions, folk customs, superstitions, and Roma music that is another important element of the Roma culture. Several studies have been carried out on Roma folk tales (Olga Nagy, József Vekerdi, Péter Bálint, Veronika Görög, etc.), however Roma literary tales are less widely known. That is why I decided upon the analysis of literary tales, and secondly because the scarcity of specialised literature on Roma literary tales surprised me. I believe that these tales are valuable literary works, and tale-readers can immerse themselves in Roma culture. Roma tales offer an insight into Roma culture; the tales would help the Roma people come to appreciate their own culture and would contribute to the cultural enrichment of non-Roma people.

Keywords: Roma, Gypsy, tale, socialisation, identity

1. INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present study constitutes a part of my dissertation research 'The Role of Roma Tales in Primary Education'. This study is therefore a part of the documents of the research project that aims at drawing up a methodological proposal aiming to integrate Roma pupils for schools that use Hungarian as language of instruction. Practical results are expected in three fields: lessons, leisure activities, and school ceremonies. The groups of subjects which cover minorities in Slovakia and multicultural education, and into which Roma tales can be integrated, will be dealt with. The present study focuses on a smaller part of the area of study; József Ravasz's tales were studied using content analysis. There are numerous references in these tales to the Roma people's culture (such as Roma language, Romani law, and caravans), intra-family relations, crafts, ancient homeland (India), a violin (as an important symbol), and the transfer of knowledge on life-skill and experience of life. The research was inspired by a work of Teréz Jenei [1]. Teréz Jenei has been studying the role of Roma folk tales in social learning.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

The research focused on the analysis of József Ravasz's short tales in two books entitled Szívházikó (The House in the Heart) and Mesegaléria (Tales Gallery); the functions of primary socialisation, attitudes towards school, ethnic identity, religion, and interactions inside and outside the family were

studied in the tales, using the method of content analysis. Content analysis as traditionally defined is the study of meanings contained in the messages. I took Klaus Krippendorff's definition as the basis of the analysis; I also attempted to reveal the hidden meanings of the texts in the content analysis. Therefore, I decoded references to the listed five categories in the tales [2].

József Ravasz is a many-sided and significant figure in the world of science and art; he is a poet, a writer, an editor, a romologist, a sociologist, and a university professor, and he is of Roma ethnic origin. He graduated from high school in Dunajská Streda, Slovakia, and obtained his diploma in social sciences from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. He launched a short-lived journal, the *Déli Hírlap* (Southern News) in 1991. He has been a member of the Group of Advisors for the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities since 2002, and the head of the Institute of Romology Studies in Dunajská Streda since 2004. The tales in the above-mentioned Roma-Slovak-Hungarian trilingual books were analysed [3].

3. RESULTS

3.1. Socialisation Functions of the Family as Presented in the Tales

The functions of primary socialisation as presented in the tales are discussed in this section, but first it is necessary to clarify the concept 'primary socialisation', more specifically the concepts 'family socialisation' and 'language socialisation'. The concept of primary socialisation is clarified according to the findings of Anthony Giddens and Tamás Kozma. The agent of primary socialisation is the family, as a child learns appropriate attitudes, values, and actions in this micro-environment. Family is considered the most primordial institution and a primary agent of socialisation [4]. According to Giddens, although the main agency of socialisation in modern societies is the nuclear family, the most recent research suggests that the concept of nuclear family covers the whole family in a symbolic sense [5]. Family socialisation has a long-term and multi-faceted impact on children, as it not only secures biological and personality development, but also is an agent for behaviour and role patterns. According to the traditional concept, family is a two-parent unit; the roles of the father and the mother are clearly delineated, as fathers have an instrumental role and mothers have an expressive role [6]. Family structure is moving beyond the traditional model (e.g. single parents), and the allocation of roles between parents has also improved in traditional family formations.

3.1.1. The Concepts of Family Socialisation and Language Socialisation

The study from Judit Torgyik Nyelvi szocializáció és oktatás (Language Socialisation and Education) indicates the importance of language socialisation, as it is an essential part of family socialisation that forms a basic part of the socialisation process. Language is the most essential cultural tool for the social inclusion of a person. The process of language socialisation (like socialisation itself in a broader sense) is not only limited to the family, but also takes place in various and multiple settings [7]. József Choli Daróczi expounds his views on Roma families in his study *Szocializációs sajátosságok és a beilleszkedés nehézségei* (The Particularities of Socialisation and Difficulties in Integration), namely that the socialisation of a Roma child takes place in the family, i.e. a Roma child also becomes a segment of the value and symbol system that children acquire over their life course. Stimuli coming from the family are primary solely during early childhood, and later the factors of the majority culture also have a central influence [8].

3.1.2. Interactions inside the Family: The Role of Father and Mother

Family constitutes a core element in the tales of the analysed corpus. The Roma family model emerging from Ravasz's tales can be described as follows: The plot of the tales takes place in sparsely populated regions, and the characters are settled Roma people living in a Roma camp at the end of a village. The characters in desperate situations are yearning for their homeland, the idyllic Gypsy Country, which results, inter alia, in the seeking of their way in life. The motifs of wandering and persecution fulfil a double role in the tales: a tale is set in the time of wandering or the settled Roma have to hit the road again for reasons beyond their control. Roma families from the tales can be characterised as follows: They face very difficult living conditions, generally have many children, live

in deep poverty and long for the love of people. The motif of being humiliated by the majority also appears in many tales; Roma people are a marginalised group. The characters of the tales are humiliated, hopeless, and socially excluded.

Father figures in the tales are mostly positive; fathers love their children and take care of them. Greatest examples of the expression of love and attention provided by fathers are the acts of bread-winning and self-sacrificing father types. An example of exactly that is the story of the father who “went wandering in desperate search of money or for provisions for his twelve sons” [9]. The tale *The Secret of the Violin* is a good example of the love between father and son; in this tale, the son puts it bluntly: “My good father, I love you so much.” The father replies: “I love you too, my dear son.” The father trusts his son enough to tell him a great secret that he has to protect throughout his life. The son is so moved by his father’s trust in him that he cannot even speak [10].

A positive father figure also appears in the tale *The Conductors of the Forest*. The tale narrates the story of Dzsakar who, after discovering they lost their way, fears for his family, and thoughts follow each other rapidly through his head in the middle of the night: “Where to take his family? Where to find a place to peacefully live? How can they live without their belongings they’re used to having and without the things that were only theirs until now? There is no other river anywhere in the world that runs like the one in their homeland.” The golden tree gives them shelter in its own forest, and the father can hardly believe what he is seeing: “His bright-eyed children sat around the golden tree. His beautiful wife couldn’t wait to put her arms around Dzsakar” [10]. Unconditional affection for children is accurately reflected in the tale *The Magpie and the Gypsy Man’s Eye*. The tale tells the adventures of a father who starts on his long wandering to make a little money or collect food for his twelve hungry children. He is even willing to give one of his eyes to the magpie in exchange of a heap of gold. Later, he not only outwits the magpie, but also gets the heap of gold [9].

Positive mother figures show up in the tales in which a mother appears. In the tale *Runaway*, Lulugyi, amongst the children who intend to run away, bursts into tears and says to one of her friends: “Khamoro! My heart bleeds. If my mother finds out I went missing, it will kill her” [9]. There is an example of maternal love in the tale *Rajo’s Meeting with Phabol, the Butterfly*; it is near to sunset when Rajo wonders if he does not head home immediately, his mother will look all over for him and will “lead him a merry dance” [9].

3.1.3. Interactions outside the Family: Helping, Respect, Confidence, Mistrust, and Compassion

An important motif in the tales is the element of helping others; families, as well as families in a strict sense, and micro-communities are always willing to help others. The motif of helping features in the tale *The Gypsy Violinist and Tóbiás, the Cricket*: The cricket can barely believe that the poor Gypsy man lets him in his house and harbours him, even though the man himself is also very poor, while the peasants in the village ignore him. The cricket in gratitude shares his violin with the Gypsy man [9]. In the tale *Rajo’s Meeting with Phabol, the Butterfly*, the butterfly counsels Rajo to help the needy, “as the Gypsies never needed assistance during their centuries-long humiliation as they need it now” [9].

Mutual respect and trust are reflected at the end of the tale *The Gypsy Violinist and Tóbiás, the Cricket*. The Gypsy man gives Tóbiás, the cricket, shelter and then Tóbiás wonders “how such a big heart that the Gypsies have could fit in a body. The people noticed the following summer that the meadow became more variegated and more birds were revelling in the forest. The people could hear the sound of music in the vicinity, and if anybody stopped there even for a moment, he walked back among his people with peace and joy” [9]. The motif of trust features in the tale *The Castle Built of the Gypsies’ Despair*: The Gypsy girl opens up to the prying ant and shares with him the story about who she really is and what the castle in which she lives is made of [9].

The motifs of mutual trust and distrust can be found in the tale *The Judge, the Fox, and the Gypsy Man*. The people in the village Pasó do not trust each other enough to give each other their real name. The last hope of the village’s judge is a Gypsy man in unfortunate circumstances, he thus turns to the man for help. The Gypsy man solves the judge’s problem (with the help of the fox). The judge keeps his promise and rewards the Gypsy man who is given great honour and is called the Gypsy judge [9]. The motifs of mistrust and fear of strangers appear in the tale *The Gypsy Violinist and Tóbiás, the*

Cricket. When the cricket taps on the window, the Gypsies cower in the corner out of fear; “*What else could the poor unfortunate souls do?*” the narrator calls out [9].

Social exclusion is reflected in the dialogue between the cricket and the Gypsy violinist; the cricket complains that people do not like him because he does nothing but plays the violin the whole summer, which does not provide a secure livelihood. The Gypsy violinist adds that that is likely to be the case because people maintain that “*he who does not work so not eat*” [9]. Another example of social exclusion can be found in the tale *Rajo’s Meeting with Phabol, the Butterfly*; the butterfly is talking about “*the nest of the haughty*”, an undesired category of people who are very confident, think they are the smartest of all in the world and despise other people. “*We need to beware of people like that, as these unerudite people can make life miserable for us,*” says the butterfly [9]. Being despised is a similar motif in the analysed tales. According to Margaréta, the reason for the disdain of the majority society for the Gypsies is statelessness: “*only those who have no home are wandering. And he that has no home does not have a homeland*” [9]. A picture similarly to the previous one emerges from the tale *The Houses in Kálo and Margaréta’s Hearts*, as Margaréta sadly takes note of the fate of the Gypsies, and she thinks, after listening to the majority, that they themselves have chosen the nomadic lifestyle, but in fact the exact opposite is the case. Kálo does not ask for anything from the flower in return for saving its life, as it gives him the greatest gifts of all: “*being near to your voice and name is my reward. I like that you do not give me orders but ask me questions. I’ve always longed for this kind of abundance. For people’s love and honest words*” [9]. In the tale *The Simplest Story*, Ganga’s dream is about fear of strangers, their mockery and contempt. The protagonist of the tale once dreams that a nation declared war on the Gypsies in his father’s time, but as they had never started a war, they were frightened and went wandering rather than fighting. They reached Persia, they really liked this marvellous world of diversity. The Council of Elders met without delay. A crow interrupted the deliberation; the crow considered the Gypsies’ wandering superfluous, as he deemed it impossible that the Gypsy people would find a new homeland [10].

3.2. School, Knowledge, and Thirst for Knowledge

This section deals with the motifs of school, knowledge, education, and learning. Knowledge and learning feature as a tool for empowerment in the analysed corpus, and there is no example of negative attitude towards learning in the tales. The characters in the tales are smart, and, in most cases, this virtue helps them thrive. School as an institution appears only in two tales. Both knowledge and erudition are important motifs in almost all tales; based on the moral of the tales, these two things are the most important to those who want to serve the people.

The role of education, learning and school as presented in the tales is discussed in the following subsection.

3.2.1. School, Knowledge, Education, and Learning as a Tool for Empowerment

Opportunities to acquire knowledge feature in many tales. Community education is drafted in the tale *The Simplest Story*; Ganga, the old Gypsy woman who was born in a Roma camp, has been completely committed to the education of the community since she was young, however it is not revealed how she acquired knowledge [9].

The problem of illiteracy is mentioned in the tale *The Judge, the Fox, and the Gypsy Man*; the Gypsy man who lacks knowledge wishes to have more time to outwit the greedy. The Gypsy man figures out (with the help of the fox) that each wooden sign should indicate its wearer’s name without indicating his/her nationality. As he has superior knowledge than that of the judge, even the people in the next village fear him and call him the Gypsy judge. Written communication represents the solution to the problem in the tale [9].

Akardó, the protagonist of the tale *The Secret of the Violin*, is a decent boy who never shows off his strength but instead seeks to acquire the knowledge he lacks. The father warns his son not to betray his people, which, in any event, would not be possible, as the son has acquired all knowledge and has been given all the support [9].

The character named Ganga in the tale *The Simplest Story* falls into a deep sleep and dreams about the country of the Gypsies. She steps across a threshold and enters a huge classroom, where people learn to interpret their dreams [10].

The chosen one and the role of a prophet feature in the tale in which the golden birds collect the Gypsies' sorrow, and one of the birds chooses two resourceful, smart and brave people to pass it on to mankind. "All people need to know about the Gypsies' hard struggle. We need two people like you and Adzsana who can perform the task. You possess the knowledge that enable you to reveal the secret to the world; the secret which will make people know about the repression of nations and explain the reasons for it to men and women of good will," a golden bird tells the two characters of the tale *The Ten Commandments of the Gypsies* [10].

Learning the Gypsy language and school as an institution feature in the tale *Dream*. A little girl dreams that people speak only one language, and that language is the Gypsy language; although she is very bitter, she begins learning Gypsy. "She woke up in the morning, grew aware what she was dreaming about, took her satchel and was motivated by her thirst for knowledge on the interpretation of dreams after that" [9].

School as an institution and learning as a tool for empowerment also appear in the tale *Runaway*. The two friends, a boy and a girl, want to run off to the Lord of the Earth, because they seek an answer to their question why their people are not considered equal to other mortals. Yet they do not run away, instead come up with a 'smarter' idea. In order to ensure that the Lord of the Earth will visit them one day, first they have to attend school and learn drawing, singing, and arithmetic. They learn what they want, the Lord of the Earth thus visits the Gypsies, but only those who are proficient in the realm of letters can sense his presence. "Since then, lots and lots of Gypsy children have benefited from it" [9].

Longing for school is the central theme in the tale *Rajo's Meeting with Phabol, the Butterfly*. Rajo who lives in a Gypsy camp at the end of a village is a prodigy, but he does not advertise his talent. He lives modestly and has chosen loneliness. His choice is painful for him, as he longs to go to school and to make friends with the village children. Negative attitude towards the majority does not appear in the tales. Rajo recites a poem composed by him for the silence in the field:

"If I were a blade of grass,
I would be hued in ever green,
I would make the air balmy,
I would sneak in through a window,
I would swish and sway over sweet dreams [...]" [9].

The butterfly speaks to the boy in a human voice and is talking about erudition. According to the butterfly, erudition is one of the most important human values, as erudition enables people to mete out justice, to explain whys and to make a distinction between right and wrong, because if he wants to serve his people well one day, "knowledge will become an indispensable weapon in your hand. That's why my advice to you is to acquire knowledge and to help those in need," the butterfly says to Phabol [9].

3.3. Piety and Religion in the Analysed Tales

After leaving India, Roma groups lived a while in Persia, and then in Armenia in the 7th and 8th centuries and adopted Christianity. Certain groups of them converted to Islam, and others remained Christians in their subsequent wanderings [1]. The majority society still has an important role to play in the Roma's religious affiliation. The Roma generally do not attend church regularly, and the reason for this, according to Liégeios, is the rejection of the majority society. Despite that, the Roma are people of great faith in their way, pray to and honour God [11].

This sub-section deals with how piety is presented in the analysed corpus. The characters of József Ravasz's tales do not go to church, instead they pray to the Creator. In the tale *The Castle Built of the Gypsies' Despair*, the Gypsies trust in the good God for help at the time of their persecution. "The

Gypsies have been praying to the Creator for centuries. They have always believed that their sufferings spring from the same source. But now I know that this is all false” [10].

A reference to piety comes from the mouth of the crow in the tale *The Simplest Story*; the crow encourages the Gypsies, because he overheard that “*the Creator will entrust to the Gypsy people a great task. And if your people accomplish this task, the world will talk of the nation that is one of a kind*” [8]. In the tale *The Conductors of the Forest*, Dzsakar, after breaking away from the caravan and wandering off toward an unknown land, believes that the Creator has given him a wonderful gift, namely the opportunity to observe a world that “*the Gypsies have never glimpsed in*” [10]. “*Thank the good Lord! – exclaimed Adzsana, delighted, the Gypsies have a good ear for music,*” we read in the tale *The Ten Commandments of the Gypsies* [10]. In the tale *The Houses in Kálo and Margaréta’s Hearts*, Kálo asks God to bestow His blessing on Margaréta, and then he begins praying to the Creator this way: “*My God, if there were any way I could change things, it would fill me with great happiness*” [9].

3.4. Ethnic Identity in the Tales

Roma identity has already been studied from several approaches (Gábor Bencsik, János Ladányi, Iván Szelényi, Martin Šuvada, Katalin R. Forray, etc.), and there is a finding common in the studies, namely that there is no general agreement among the Roma about the content of their own identity as opposed to the prejudice structure of the majority society. The Roma’s self-determination is largely influenced by the fact that, regardless of whatever (ethnic) nationality they declared to be, they are ‘just’ Gypsies in the eyes of the majority society due to their social stigma [1]. Some examples of the representation of the Gypsies’ ethnic identity are given in this sub-section.

3.4.1. Figures of the Cunning, Thieving, Lying and Astute Gypsies

The figure of the cunning Gypsy appears in the tale *The Magpie and the Gypsy Man’s Eye*; the Gypsy man promises the magpie one of his eyes if the magpie shows up with a heap of gold in the Gypsy camp, in exchange of his eye. But the Gypsy man “*thought better of it*”, and then continues: “*I could give you my eye, but it’s totally functionless without me. As it shines only if it dwells in me.*” The magpie believes the Gypsy man and flies off, forgetting the heap of gold in the Gypsy camp [9]. In the tale *Dream*, a little girl believes that the Gypsy language is the language of thieves [9]. The figure of the lying, fraudulent, rifler Gypsy appears in the tale *The Judge, the Fox and the Gypsy Man*: The people in the village, when being called in by the judge for questioning, always change their name to evade justice. The figure of the astute Gypsy is also portrayed in this tale: He thinks the judge wants to imprison him, and begins defending himself: “*I never lied about anything, I am an innocent victim of circumstance*” [9].

3.4.2. Prejudiced Thinking

The prejudiced attitude of the majority society emerges from the tale *The Houses in Kálo and Margaréta’s Hearts*: Margaréta says to the boy that “*I hearkened unto the words of the majority. I was persuaded the Gypsies are like this and that*” [9].

3.4.3. Gypsy Self-Awareness

An example of the Gypsies’ social and cultural self-awareness is the story of the tale *The Houses in Kálo and Margaréta’s Hearts*. There is also a reference to their skin colour in the tale. Kálo, after saving the flower, wants to move on; he does not know where to go, he just knows he has to go: the conviction that he has to wander and run from people like a hunted animal guides him. Margaréta wants to know his name, and the boy replies in surprise that people just call them Gypsies, and they only call the others by their name in their home region. Then he adds that his name is Kálo and in their language káli means black, so his name suits him [9].

The Gypsy language symbolises infinite freedom in the tale *Dream*. “*When I talk as if a bird’s wing was swishing in my mouth. My thoughts are swift as a bird. This is the language of infinite freedom*” [9].

The part of the tale *The Gypsy Violinist and Tóbiás, the Cricket* where the Gypsy man comforts the cricket refers not only to comparison with the majority society, but also to the Gypsy identity: “*I’m not good at anything, not at mowing or ploughing, except at playing music. I understand the human heart. If someone wants to cry, I make him cry. If someone wants to rejoice, I delight him. I, a Gypsy man*” [9].

The motifs of the ant that symbolises the Gypsies’ despair and the castle can be found in the tale *The Castle Built of the Gypsies’ Despair*: The Gypsy girl who appears to be a fairy tells the ant the story of the castle that was built by her father of bricks of the Gypsies’ despair, as the Gypsies’ comfort was hope during the persecutions. Her father was wandering, together with his family, until he convinced people that they can throw away despair just like a shabby coat. The father assured his daughter that the key to the secret would one day appear, and then the bricks of despair would materialise. The castle turns into a tiny, lively town, and the ant turns into a handsome Gypsy man [9].

A Gypsy camp at the end of a village also suggests separation from the majority. One of the tales narrates the adventures of two children living in such a camp. They want to talk with the Lord of the Earth, because they seek an answer to their question why the Gypsies are not considered equal to other people [9].

The motifs of ancient homeland and secret appear in the tale *The Secret of the Violin*. The tale tells the story of the Bradzsi family who, after leaving their homeland, is still wandering. The Gypsies are deliberately silent regarding any matter in order to protect their family from evil people. The father tells Akardó a secret that he also has to maintain until he himself starts a family according to their own law, and then he can only let his smartest son in on the secret. The violin — *godí* — is a tool for maintaining the secret of the Gypsies, as outstanding Gypsy violinists developed a system of chords during the persecutions to communicate with each other without using words, so this musical instrument is also a bearer of the Gypsies’ history. The father gives his son the bow, the key to the secret, with the condition that he ought never to betray his people. “*Violin is the Gypsy musicians’ most prized possession; the strings of a violin are tuned to its owner’s heart [...]*” [9]. The exodus from their ancient homeland, India, also appears in the tale *The Conductors of the Forest*. One night, a wagon detaches itself from the caravan, the family gets lost, and then a golden tree gives them shelter in its own forest. The Gypsy family becomes the conductors of the forest and gives life to the forest where people go to revive [10].

In the tale *The Ten Commandments of the Gypsies*, Adzsana refers to the fate of suffering Gypsies: “*the life of my endlessly suffering nation is turned into a song, their lives weigh heavily on them, they fear their culture and know their national history, and yet [...]*.” In the same tale, snow symbolises the Gypsy people’s hope and despair: “*Sometimes when the sun came out shyly from behind the thick pillowy clouds, and it looked at the Gypsy camp for a few moments with its eyes sending out golden light, it seemed that this blinding white purity gave the Gypsy people strength and hope again. As the Gypsy camp covered in snow always looked like a white graveyard. Yet the Gypsies were not sad, as they considered the white snow-cover as a mirror of their heart. Winter has meant purification to the Gypsy camp*” [10].

4. DISCUSSION

I sought to determine whether each of the above-mentioned functions are present in literary tales written by an author, and in what way these functions are presented. I applied the method of qualitative content analysis for analysing the tales, and then I illustrated the functions of primary socialisation, attitudes towards school, religion, ethnic identity, and interactions inside and outside the family with examples from the tales.

In the first section, I analysed primary socialisation as presented in the tales of the two books. Generally speaking, the traditional family model has been passed down from generation to generation in Gypsy families, and Gypsy boys and girls are raised differently, the members of the two sexes are thus not treated on an equal footing. However, there is no confirmative example of that in the analysed

tales. Fathers and mothers are positive figures in the tales, and examples of the instrumental role of the father can be found in the tales *The Conductors of the Forest* and *The Magpie and the Gypsy Man's Eye*. I did not find any reference to a negative parental figure or marital infidelity, i.e. the tales do not provide negative examples. I believe the main reasons are that the author provides the reader with an idealised picture of Roma families to counterbalance humiliations inflicted on the Roma people, on the one hand, and the purpose set and stated by the author himself of creating characters who embody virtues and goodness, on the other hand. In the world of the tales, family members appreciate each other; not only the members of the nuclear family, but also the members of a 'cumpania' show respect for the others, especially for the elderly.

Interactions outside the family are discussed in the following sub-section. In general, Roma people have great sympathy for the poor, people in need of assistance and the socially excluded. They also respect 'outliers' in spite of their mistrust towards and fear of strangers. The reason may be that they are also socially excluded, so they feel empathy for others in similar situation. In the analysed tales, significant difference cannot be discerned in intra-family contacts compared to extra-family contacts.

The second section focuses on the motifs of school, knowledge, education, and learning. The importance of knowledge and learning that carry a positive connotation is reflected in almost all tales. In most cases, acquired knowledge helps the protagonist bring his/her purpose to completion, and then the protagonist becomes strongly committed to the education of his/her own community and will perform the role of a prophet in the community. The protagonists of the tales are adroit and smart, their knowledge makes them the chosen ones. They win using their wiles and knowledge, and not their physical strength; they all want to set an excellent example to others and to raise the prestige of school and knowledge. A school as an institution only appears in two tales, however there is only a reference to longing for school, and not a reference to school, in the second tale. The emphasis is on knowledge and erudition in the analysed tales, because someone who wants to serve his/her people needs to be educated and erudite.

The third sub-section deals with the role of religion in the tales. The Christian religion plays the following role in the characters' lives; they pray to God, but they are not active in the practice of their faith. Christian rites relating to baptism, wedding or death are not present in the tales. The characters of the tales pray to the Creator several times to ask for His help, since they believe in God. No example of negative attitudes towards religion can be found in the analysed tales.

References to ethnic identity are discussed in the fourth section. The figures of the lying, thieving and cunning Gypsies show up in three tales. The prejudiced attitudes of the majority society are presented in the tale *The Houses in Kálo and Margaréta's Hearts*. The tale narrates the story of Margaréta who shares the view of the majority society about the Roma people. The Roma's social and cultural self-awareness is an important element in almost all tales, and a reference is also made to their skin colour in one of the tales. The emphasis is placed on ethnic identity and knowledge as a tool for empowerment, while religion and interactions inside and outside the family have only a secondary function in the tales.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the motif of fictiveness does not dominate in the analysed tales, but rather the reflection on reality is to be highlighted. The characters from the tales are not typical characters endowed with supernatural powers, they are like an 'everyman hero'. The stories present common, everyday situations, feature simple daily-life scenarios, but the tales are woven around fabled adventures.

Roma people represent the second largest ethnic minority in Slovakia; it is difficult to estimate their exact number due to fact that the Roma people often refuse to declare themselves as Roma owing to their ingrained inferiority and discrimination against them. It is worth noting that while 105,738 people declared themselves as Roma on the basis of the data of the population census 2011, this number increased four-fold on the basis of the surveys 'The Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia' conducted in 2013; the number of the Roma living in Slovakia was estimated at 402,840 people in that

year [12]. Not assimilation, but rather integration would be the right step and direction to take towards the Roma people's successful social inclusion. The Roma people, like any other community, should themselves modernise their own traditions [13]. We, the members of the majority society, can only support their endeavour. Prejudice persists against the Roma, as there is a conflict between the minority and majority, and resolving the conflict would contribute to the dispelling of prejudices. I believe that the inclusion of the Roma minority's culture in the curriculum of primary schools that use Hungarian as language of instruction would be very important, as there are schools which are attended solely or mostly by Hungarian-speaking Roma pupils (e.g. in the village of Šarovce). Another aspect not to be underestimated is that the Roma people declaring themselves as Hungarians greatly contribute to the continued existence of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. I therefore consider it important to launch a process in primary schools, which enables Roma pupils to discover their own values and allows the pupils belonging to the Hungarian minority to get to know the Roma culture. It could be another step forward on the road to a more successful dialogue between cultures.

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