

The Wise Fool in the Slovak Oral and Literary Tradition

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The article discusses the wise fool cycle in Slovakia, which includes tricksters not in the sense of a mythical character, but rather as a wise-fool hero a cunning trickster as well as hero that is often underestimated. In the narrative tradition of Slovakia there are several heroes known in the rural environment as well as wise fool heroes in the urban environment. At the narration level a hero ceases to be a real man and becomes an aesthetic projection of his community needs. He becomes a code, expressing the details of human experience in a sensitive way, different from proclaimed requirements, thus projecting a more universal and true statement.

The wise fool cycle in Slovakia includes tricksters, but not in the sense of a mythical character with supernatural features, or as the Jungian archetype, but rather as a wise-fool hero and mainly a prankster and a cunning trickster, bird-brains as well as heroes that are often underappreciated and underestimated, though still preserving their pride, social status and social recognition. In the narrative tradition of Slovakia there are several heroes known in the rural environment as well as wise fool heroes in the urban environment.

In principle, the cycles of wise fool heroes can develop in two ways:

1) the cycle grows from a certain generally wide-spread local type of fool who has characteristic features (often according to his socio-professional ranking). By cumulative additions to the anonymous stories of the persons around him, a new narrative type develops (e.g., the “Nácko” wise fool hero from the original mining town of Banská Štiavnica).

1a) a self-standing chapter is Slovak Eulenspiegel, Geľo Sebechlebský from Sebechleby, around whom several typical wicked trickster stories have been gathered. Sebechleby is in the rural environment.

2) the cycle centres on a really existing person who in the social, local or professional environment of his group, can gain such an influence that he gradually brings broader popularity in the tradition area and/or at the same time the stories of other anonymous heroes are focused on him (e.g. Žigo from Banská Bystrica or Paulovič-Rintintin from Martin). There were specific often tragic-comical heroes but generally accepted persons also in the urban environment, e.g. Schöne Náci in Bratislava.

2a) there is an exceptional example of a transitive type of the hero called Uncle Ragan from Brezová, who was developed as a result of an amalgamation of a real person with a literary hero from the novel by Elo Šándor, the Slovak writer, at the beginning of the 20th century.

According to Bergson, a central hero of the humorist cycle comes in a certain sense of social gesture. At the narration level, a hero ceases to be a real man and becomes an aesthetic projection of his community's needs. He becomes a code, expressing the details of human experience in a sensitive way, different from proclaimed requirements, thus projecting a more universal and true statement.

In the urban environment, a wise fool can change according to particular historical situations, from group influence up to the entire city influence. Such a person is usually in contrast to tragic and comic destiny. He harmonizes conflicts and social relations in everyday life by carrying on his shoulders the subjective problems of his community. He is in favour of equilibrium to overcome social and ethnic contradictions and connects historical periods. He rekindles the inner harmony of the community, thus bringing about different hierarchical attitudes and evaluating criteria in the minds of people by breaking the norms of social behaviour, and making fun out of officers and politicians. He plays a particularly important role in the process of establishing a local group at the higher level of an urban unit (e.g. in the awareness of social identity).

Seemingly harmless wise fools, by expressing the real, generally accepted views, become the "speakers" of the group especially in the urban environment. These heroes are, in a way, the regulators of community needs, gaining its positive evaluation and approval, even though they might not always be positive personalities.

The character of *Nácko* from *Bánska Štiavnica* or nearby *Hondruš*, where he used to be employed as a good-hearted, simple-minded and cheerful miner, portrays in his personality merry parts of the life and work of all generations of miners from the *Bánska Štiavnica* ore territory. *Nácko* belongs to the cultural heritage of this region. *Náco*, *Nácko* is in fact *Ignác*. Although this was not a concrete person, many miners who with their humour, wit, cheerful nature and the dialect typical of *Štiavnica* managed to lighten the tension and difficult situations stemming from hard mining work in the underground and the uneasy life in the hilly country of *Štiavnica*, were called after his person, too. He is in fact a typologized character whom the respondent S. Šakovský describes as follows: "*That was such a character representing miners that both rich and poor people could become him. If something was not to be said openly in public, it was said in a joke by Nácko. That means people were telling the truth through jokes which did not hurt that much.*" (2006, in *Bánska Štiavnica*; thereafter as B.Š.) Another respondent J. Petrík states: "*Nácko is a typical person of Štiavnica and also Hondruš, it is the suburb of Štiavnica. Well, Nácko belonged to us, but in fact a typical Nácko did not exist; he is a created person. He contained inside himself all the life moments and jokes or even serious things turned into jokes. I like it when one speaks in the Štiavnica dialect and that is why it should be revived, as it is the uniqueness of this region and if it is not used, it will die out.*" (B.Š. 2006).

In the 1950s, the secondary grammar school professor J. Vašáry began to collect stories about *Nácko*, which he was later also interpreting and thus establishing the tradition that has its followers even nowadays. J. Vašáry collected the stories from the *Štiavnica* region with *Nácko* as the main and dominant character. In 1977, M. Lichner and team published the book "*Nácko's jokes and mischievousness*" (Ropa, *Bánska Bystrica*, 1977, p. 151). Later, the group of three collectors J. Maruniak–J. Kozak–V. Bóhm prepared the collection "*Náco's jokes*" (1985, p. 80). M. Vraňák published an individual book of narrations and stories – not only about *Nácko* – called "*Worries and Happy Stories*" (Aprint, ZH,

2004, p. 152). In the 1930s and 1940s, many cheerful stories were published in the Slovak and Guardsman dailies. Recently, Doc. Jozef Šteffek has published the book *“Thank God even for such a small salary...”* containing the notes of his grand-grand father, who died when he was 100 years old. Jozef Oswald, born on 23 June 1956, represents the current and hyperactive Nácko. As respondents and the web page ‘banskastivanica.sk’ state, Jozef Oswald-Nácko is a very busy man as he is often invited to all social happenings in the area. As he says: *“It is my big hobby. I usually perform it in the winter. To tell you the truth, I like speaking with miners the most and with students the least. Nácko tells either very long or very brief jokes that are either discreet or many times also very vulgar, but people have to forgive him as he can not speak differently... To be honest, I do not know how I got the role of this Nácko because neither have I ever been a theatre actor, nor am I a gifted singer. In fact, I do not know any tunes. When I was a student at the mining school in Štiavnica, I started to collect a number of stories and jokes about miners and at that time, Mr. Vašáry used to be our great narrator of jokes about Nácko. This sir could speak in perfect Štiavnica’s dialect. This is what I miss now. As he was also a Slovak language teacher, he knew those regional expressions and terms and he wrote a dictionary on them. In that period I did not think I would play the role of that Nácko. Then, Vašáry left for Bratislava where he then died in 1973. Mrs. Droppová, professor and ethnographer then lecturing in Bratislava said to me: “Jožo, it would be a pity if it somehow dies out, you should take that role somehow.” Even nowadays I am not an expert at speaking and I mostly put the stories together. Then in 1976, thirty years ago I became Nácko, but I must say that I had played this role already in 1957 because I wanted to get home from military service. There was this pre-election campaign when I told one politician: “Listen, I will myself prepare one performance with Nácko – a folk narrator and miner.” He said: “Yes, yes.” However, I wanted to get home through having the miner’s uniform. Then, this man arranged some holiday for me but for me there was no way I could back off. So willy-nilly, I had to play the role of Nácko. I was so good at it that the Ministry of the Interior, I was then at military service protecting the borders, helped me participate in the state competition in Prague where I got quite a good placing.”* (B.Š. 2006)

As we can see from Nácko’s current representative’s talks, he himself contains something prankish and tricky, typical of wise fool heroes and “civil” tricksters. J. Ozvald is also co-author with L. Lackovič of the collection of stories and anecdotes called *“Náckoviny”*.

Establishing the new tradition, the festival called *“Nácko` s Štiavnica”*, taking place for the second year on April 20th, 2006 in the Miner’s House on the Radničné square, shows the strong Nácko tradition in Banská Štiavnica and surrounding areas.

The following is the programme:

1. Nácko, his life, work and message to the future generations – pilot lecture – 2. part, His stay in Banská Štiavnica.
2. Nácko’s jokes and events interpreted by Nácko alias Jožo Oswald.
3. An extract from the book *“Thank God for even such a small salary...”*
4. Mary Teresa visiting Banská Štiavnica
5. Competition tour of Nácko’s jokes and events in Štiavnica dialect
6. Quiz on the knowledge of expressions from Štiavnica
7. Competition evaluation
8. Social gathering

The web page contains the space for commentary, and this is the citation from April 23, 2006 at 11.19 am: “Nowadays, it is becoming more and more precious to hear one’s laughter in this era of hard times. I cordially thank everyone responsible for this filled with laughter happening. I am looking forward to its continuation. Good luck to Náco!!”

As Jozef Osvald revealed in one interview, he has been training his nine-year old grandson for Náco’s career and believes “the seed will take roots.” Another strong demonstration of an effort to preserve the local tradition is the endeavour of the local authorities to erect a statue of Nácko in the centre of Banská Štiavnica, thus copying the model in Bratislava, which has its statues of Schone-Náci and Čumil.

The following is the text illustration on talks about Nácko:

How Náco swindled his wife

“Náco came home tipsy. To make sure Léna did not know when he got home, he silently took off his clothes and jumped into bed. And then, as if on purpose, the clock struck one o’clock. In the morning when they woke up Léna tells Náco:

“Náco, when did you actually get home?”

“Well as always, around 10 o’clock,” he says.

“Are you sure? The clock was just striking one o’clock.”

“Well, you silly woman, can you tell me how that clock should have struck that zero?”

Three day old rolls

Léna went to the town and ordered Náco to prepare everything for frying the meat. Náco got down to work and started to grind rolls to make breadcrumbs. As he is grinding, all of a sudden, Hanzo comes in. He goes out in front of the house and sees breadcrumbs reaching up to his ankles. Then he goes into the hall and sees breadcrumbs reaching up to his knees. He opens the kitchen door, and there he sees breadcrumbs reaching up to his waist. He says:

“For God’s sake, Náco what are you doing?”

“Well, look,” Náco replies calmly. “I am supposed to prepare all for meat frying. So I took a cookery book and there it was literally written to grind three days old rolls.”

The Slovak version of *Eulenspiegel* is the character of the trickster **Gelo Sebechlebský**. Gelo, the hero of many anecdotes, got his surname Sebechlebský according to the town where he used to live allegedly for the longest period of time, and by the use of his sufficiently distinct behaviour influenced the narrative tradition of the entire region.

The mention about him dates to 1780 in the *Geographie des Konigsreichs Ungarn I.* (Pressburg 1780, p. 235) by K. G. Windisch. “Gelo’s farces” are present in J. Chrastinov’s calendar from the 18th century based on J. Mišianik: “*Insights into older Slovak literature*”, (Bratislava 1974, p. 257). Bohuslav Tablic in his work “*Slovak poets I*” (Uherská Skalica, 1803, p. 5–15) describes Gelo as “a bloke from the pupil’s environment” although he knows nothing about his origin and birth place. Ján Čaplovič, by contrast, provides several concrete data about Gelo much earlier origins. “*Born in the 17th century in the free town of Krupina, Gelo was intensively attending schools in Zvolen and Banská Bystrica. He was*

always very witty and cheerful, always making fun out of everything, cracking funny jokes and playing thousands of pranks. He soon abandoned the narrow frame of his joking and travelled through some foreign countries, visiting academies and knights' courts. Once, he pretended to be a soldier, another time he played the role of a student, doctor, advocate, fencer or juggler. Later, he acted like that also at home, and then he used to live as a jester at count Kohäry's court in the Hontianska county. In 1712, we became ill and died in Banská Bystrica." (Čaplovič 1975: 208) These are undoubtedly valuable pieces of information, however, his real name remains for both Čaplovič and Chrastinov unknown. Thus one could get the impression that he is a fabricated character. Nevertheless, in 1912 Jozef Hollý in his allegedly best comedy *Gelo Sebechlebský* at the end of the show added: "*Gelo Sebechlebský is an historical character. He was a student in Banská Bystrica and thanks to his numerous tricks and pranks became famous. He came from a poor yeoman's family in Sebechleby, he was everywhere just like doctor Faust ...*"

When it comes to the question of his origin a unified opinion does not exist. V. Gašpariková – typologically and, on the basis of talks, his character and also older literature, – places him in the *Eulenspiegel* type. K. G. Windisch in the cited work in 1780, as well as J. Csaplovics in *Gemälde von Ungarn* (1829), regard him as a Slovak *Eulenspiegel* (1300–1350). Already in the 16th century the name *Eulenspiegel* has penetrated in Slovakia thanks to the books of folk reading and calendars (Liba 1970: 347, 353). Many foreign publications –, for example, G. Henssen, S. Neumann with R. Wossidlo but also international catalogues, Arne-Thompson's, Hungarian authors A. Kovács, L. Maróti, Polish resourcer J. Krzyzanowski (1963, *Dictionary of the Polish Folklore*, Warsaw 1965), as well as other Czech versions and variants – present it as a kind of narrative interpretation. Other interesting variants of Gelo's stories can be seen in the collection "*Gelo's tricks*" by I. B. Zoch dating back to approximately the 1850s. F. V. Peřinka, another Czech collector, depicts Gelo's stories and motifs in the book *Merry pilgrimage around Slovakia* (Prague, 1934).

In 1954, the theatre from Zvolen presented in Sebechleby the play by Jozef Hollý, and in 1978 the inhabitants of Sebechleby personally performed the role of Gelo that undoubtedly strongly influenced the lifetime of narrations about the theme of this prankster in the local and broader repertoire. The across-the-board awareness about this character and his mischievousness was, in Slovakia, not so significantly influenced by the opera "*Prankster Gelo*" by Tibor Andrašovan from 1958, but instead by two films. The first film *Gelo Sebechlebský* had its premiere on 24 December 1963, and since then it has been played many times. However, in 1981, the Slovak television transmitted a new version with the younger generation of Slovak actors, in which Dušan Jamrich played the main role. Karol Machata, an excellent Slovak theatre player, – who died some time ago, – performed the main role of Gelo.

The Slovak television transmits these films through Slovakia on Channel 2, usually on Sunday afternoons. As they are watched not only by the oldest, older, but also the youngest generation as well as the pupils, this may appear to provide an opportunity to sustain the tradition of not so much a wise fool hero but the tradition of the trickster, prankster or cunning joker even in the oral narrative tradition. Secondary school and university students have different hobbies and orientations, as they seem to watch more American films. This is what the situation looks like after 17 years of political change of the regime in Slovakia. The Slovak television as a state-owned institution is returning to

the Slovak “classic”. Talks on how Geľo used to clean women’s fur coats using a grinder (AaTh/ATU 1349 J), a number of stories about a bull that was pulled up to the tower to graze on the grass (AaTh/ATU 12 10), and many other internationally known themes are wide-spread narrations. People from Sebechleby are – thanks to Geľo’s trickeries – called Geľovania or Geľoši. In Slovakia, one can use a mild invective such as “You Geľo” or “He is such a Geľo”, which in fact means a rogue, trickster and prankster – someone who makes up silly things and often takes people for a ride.

A penny in the pocket

One woman was selling eggs at the market. Geľo comes to her and says:

“I would like to buy one egg.”

“Sure, why not.”

Geľo then took his egg and went behind the corner of the building. There he opened the egg and came back to that woman.

“Woman, are these eggs from your hens?”

“Yes, sure” she replied.

“And are they fresh?”

“Of course they are fresh.”

“Well, my lady those eggs are not good for me.”

“How come?” asked the woman surprised.

“Well, I can not boil them because as you can see each egg will have a penny inside just like in this opened one. Well, anyway, it does not matter, sell me all your eggs.”

The woman was infuriated and said: “I am not going to sell you a single egg, I am off home.” She wrapped up all her eggs into a little canvas and set off for Žibritov. Geľo was giggling. The woman, as she got behind the corner, beat all her eggs but found nothing inside. Then Geľo stopped the old woman and said: “Go behind the corner, there will be very cheap scrambled egg for you.” And they were wondering what had happened to so many eggs.

Another type of wise fool is clearly unbounded. The character of **uncle Ragan** from Brezova pod Bradlom was created as a merging of the real person with the author’s invention of a made-up hero from the three volume series of stories called Uncle Ragan from Brezova (1927, 1929 and 1931, in selection 1953 and 1971) by the Slovak writer Elo Šándor. The Slovak literary science places his production into the second wave of realism and it has the character of the so-called popular literature. Critics of those times appreciate *Uncle Ragan* as a contribution to Slovak humorist literature, and his cultural-historical but mainly ethnographic value. They appreciate the reflection of “healthy folk philosophy”, the author’s ability to reproduce folk speech. However, in the frame of the author’s invention and artistic level, this literature is “on the periphery”, which ethnographers do not regard as a problem as this kind of literature reflects the way of life, relationships and one-region cultural background of the society. Šándor’s work brought into Slovak literature something completely new. From the folkloristic point of view, it is a hybrid genre. On one hand it appears to be a literally fixed form of the folklore theme that the author took directly from oral tradition conforming to oral tradition regularities. On the other hand, there is a prevailing sense of the folklore picture that with its interpretation gives it a meaning different from the one it used to have in the theme or environment of its estab-

ishment, however still under the dictate of folklore regularities. Elo Šándor was born in 1896 in Vrbove which used to be the market centre of the Podbanská region. He knew the nature of the local people very well and the countrymen helped him collect rich material for his production. Besides the stories already circulating in the oral tradition, he himself had an opportunity to observe the rising of tradition in concrete cases, and often was its initiator as his publishing of stories helped the theme penetrate into the local repertoire. His work preserves the synchronic cut of an active repertoire and enables us to compare the dynamics of current tradition development. In those times, the majority of humorous interpretations were focusing on the character of Martin Lacka, and as it was in the case of Nácko, the main character was grafting onto himself narrative interpretations concerning also other characters, thus creating a concentrated type of a hero. However, Elo Šándor accelerated this natural process of folklore tradition, unified it through the creation of Uncle Ragan's characters, and except for his own invented episodes, attributed to him almost all episodes already known from the oral interpretation. This region is famous for its humour (as shown and proved in the following: our own folklore research, in literature that I was elaborating e.g. the work of E. Podjavorinská – female writer, the collection work by J. L. Holuby, E. V. Rizner, but also contemporary folklorists such as J. Michálek and Z. Vanovičová etc.). The Fabricated, lying or so-called impossible stories known from folk fairytales, competitions for the biggest lies, through the frequency of wanderers' fabrications, Munchausen's stories or satire literature by Rabelais or Swift, and in Slovakia in the so-called "boasting memoir's narration", are not rare in this region. The traces of this boasting can be found in the Uncle Ragan hero. Fabrications and lies are not always strange to him. Known are, for example, his fabrications about American and German factories and products, the prestigious quality of products from Brezova or his visit to the president etc.. This can be considered the beginning of the process when the main hero is becoming a legend by using the means that ascribe exceptional actions, deeds or behaviour to him. As Z. Vanovičová states: "Elo Šándor applied one more way of work with material typical of folklore processes i.e. the creation of the image of an hero sequencing the episodes and his deeds. Critics regarded it as "non-integrity". (Vanovičová 1976: 103). When their selection takes place, oral interpretation follows the context and situation in the course of narration. The author conformed their flow and selection to his intention which he based on the hero's chronological life stories." (Vanovičová 1976: 103).

His work, after its publishing, was received with curiosity mainly among people from Brezova, who were asking the author who the real person hidden in the character of Uncle Ragan was, as the author really gave a true picture of the type and mentality connected with this region. The tradition accepting the literal hero confirms the author's creative approach accounting for the tradition's approaches. The author utilised the Ich Form, *Ich Erzählung*, and through his referring to an alleged auditorium simulated the natural narrative situation. Šándor used to apply this approach in his other books – in stories from Eastern Slovakia where he was for political reasons resettled. (Profantová 1993: 84).

When comparing folklore texts and their literal processing one can encounter differences in these three levels:

- a. in up-to-dateness of the repertoire composition
- b. in interpretation (picture and understating) of the hero
- c. in the style (selection and understanding of means of expressions)

In the repertoire composition, the currentness and time are connected with emotionality marked with the sign of the theme loyalty important for the lifespan in the oral tradition of the theme. In the literal processing, when the author emphasizes the plot in the specific time period that looks trustworthy, he deliberately updates the material. The literal elaboration chronologically introduces episodes from the hero's life. Emotionality is present also in the immoderate emphasizing of locality. Thus, the author makes up to his reader. The repertoire through the selection of episodes more or less leads to a subjective look at the hero by his stylization into almost exclusively a positive character. Šándor's repertoire, to the exclusion of reality, truth and understanding of the hero, leads to attractiveness. The folklore interpretation depicts *a common hero* as a member of the society who neither avoids negative sides nor his humiliation. To the contrary, the author's image of the hero leads to making the *hero a legend*, emphasising for example his exceptionality. This is suitable mostly for the youngest generation, who are influenced by the book version of Uncle Ragan and mainly by the film version that had its premiere on December 24, in 1976 with Jozef Króner – an excellent Slovak actor, honoured by many state awards, who had already died – as the main film character. Since its premiere, the film has been shown 14 times. As a series film full of humour and “folksiness”, it became unusually popular in the period of socialism, and Uncle Ragan became part of every household in Brezova pod Bradlom and elsewhere. However, in the film version the main hero has more real characteristics, being resented mostly as a prankster and clever fellow. Here, as well as in the book, more dialects and fewer archaisms – the means of expression for expressivity, markedness and the colour of expression prevail. The film version is, thanks to its language but also visual effect, more convincing and suggestive as well as closer to the folk variants of stories than their literalized author's version, although the author's talent sharply revealed in terms of the expression level and ethnic symptoms of the texts can not be disputed.

The following story shows differences between the author's and the folklore text:

Folklore variant:

Once upon a time uncle Ragan set out to the market in Senica. He had baskets which he put down on the ground and started to sell. There was a notary walking his dog that peed on his baskets. Uncle grabbed a frozen chunk and threw it at the dog. The notary says: “Why did you throw that chunk at my dog?” – “Well, because I did not have a stone!” he replied.

(S. Janči, born in 1891, Brezová, 1969).

The Author's elaborated text:

Once upon a time in the winter, uncle Ragan was selling the lining in Svätý Jur. It was such a cold day that one could not stay at one place without moving. To get warm, uncle Ragan started to jump near his basket and around his laid down lining. He was blowing into his hands trying to warm them up as much as possible, but the cold did not seem to ease up, though uncle Ragan swore at it now and then.

“Well, well” – it was heard in the market. “That is uncle Ragan's ‘blessing’.”

When a purchase came, Ragan stopped jumping and swearing for a while and when the customer left, he continued. Some gentleman with a little dog passed by his “shop.” “Bloody dog (...). Dear people, imagine (...) the dog comes to the uncle's lining, sniffs it from both

sides, lift its right leg and (...).” Well, you can figure out what the dog did then. Uncle was not really used to similar town manners. He quickly started to look for a stone nearby to punish the impolite dog but could not find one. What to do? Uncle helped himself. He kicked his boot into the frozen piece of mud, broke off a large piece and threw it at the dog hitting its nose. The dog was whining so much that people started to look back to find out what was going on. The dog’s master also saw it. He had nothing better to do than return to uncle and reckon with him for his dog’s physical insult. Here came the old geezer and told uncle sharply:

“Why did you throw that frozen piece of mud at my dog?” – “Well, because I did not have a stone at hand, ” replied uncle sharply.

And the case was totally sorted out.”

(E. Šándor, *Uncle Ragan from Brezova III.*, 1931, p.77 ff.)

Conclusion

I have used the three examples in order to present the vivid existence of Slovak wise fool heroes in the oral tradition and in literalized form. However, I do not touch on the analyses of film elaborations in detail. All I can state is that they strongly influenced the existence of the so-called heroes and narrations about them in the oral prosaic tradition in Slovakia. I will pause at the wise fool hero term. A. C. Zijderfeld’s statement present in his work *Reality in a Looking-Glass* (London 1982) says: “The fool is of course not a hero, on the contrary he is the mirror image of a hero.” Nevertheless, I feel that this term can be in our material regarded as the key character of the narration, or in the third case of the literary work or film version. And what about the wise fool? Contrary to Joseph Campbell (Campbell 2000, 344 pp), I do not think about heroic features. The Wise fools’ heroism is in fact grounded in their cunningness and prankishness, or in their charm and wit used to solve any plot or a collision situation. This is the character that appears in the centre of a fabricated creation, and in the epic but also dramatic genres actively participates in its development. He is, thanks to his social commonness and ordinariness, also an anti-hero. Depending on the situation, the Slovak characters such as Nácko, Geľo Sebechlebský and uncle Ragan are both wise and foolish. They are wise because they can profit from their foolishness by turning serious things into a joke and thus profiting through humour from the situation. Hidden or transparent realism (irrespective of boasting narrations) of analysed narrations is closely connected with the historic situation of Slovak society. For example: the stories about Geľo from the past centuries can be compared with the current material, i.e. the narrations about Nácko in Billa etc. are either updated old or completely new stories: as J. Osvald, the current representative of Nácko states – he often makes them up. This realism is demonstrated toward his own environment. The social determinism of these narrations is their significant principle. This shows that the author through folklore interpretations – but also in E. Šándor’s productions of literalized folklore, – does not remain only on the plot surface. When describing phenomena, he looks for the atmosphere in them, casual connection, relations, inner tension, and their social and psychologist peculiarity and distinctiveness. Qualifying the author’s contribution, I can state that a certain part of his features and mainly short anecdotes are literally reproduced (this is the case in terms of the books on Nácko by Vašáry) even in the original dialect. Other stories represent authors’ retelling (as was stated in the illustration) where Elo Šándor himself often becomes this type of a story teller:

- a. as the primary participant of the story
- b. as its passive witness
- c. as an analyst who comments on the situation.

Authenticity, realism, documentation and at the same time demonstration (in Elo Šándor's case) of the author's and in – parallel folk style are presented not only through the theme and composition but also thanks to the language of narrations, i.e. lexical means. E. Šándor applies the combination of the spoken and literary language. Zuza Zguriška, his humorist fellow, writes: "The comic makes sense only when it is placed into the society where it belongs... This humour was created among people of the same class, spiritual and cognitive level and the same social way of thinking." (Zguriška, 1980: 337).

In the case of all three wise fool heroes and discussions about them, the regional foundation is emphasised. Elo Šándor adds to it also the author's social involvement and consequently points out the democratic and social essence of humour. He writes: "Humour is always a kind of defence and attack on destiny; discontent gives rise to more giggling (...). A gentleman sometimes does not want entertainment; the folks can amuse themselves. A gentleman sometimes tells anecdotes and the folks carry them out actively (...). Anyway, folk humour will always step into literature." (Šándor, 1943: 212).

In conclusion, I would like to note that humorous prose either of the folk or literal character is directed by these three perspectives:

1. verism (verification, truth) of anecdote-humorous individualities of life.
2. comical reactions to approaches by selected "figures" (wise-fool heroes)
3. grotesque empiricism of controversial sides of social life, even though the artistic value languishes at the expense of documentary production, which makes the stories and characters more convincing. I am finishing this work by making the wish: may Slovaks have more and more Geľos, Ragans and Náckos. Not only do they reflect the society but they also amuse us because we know that "humour is the spice of life!"

Literature

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Múdry hlupák v slovenskej ústnej a literárnej tradícii

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Múdry hlupák, vo svetovom folklóre pomenovaný ako *wise fool* (hrdina), na Slovensku nadväzuje na tradíciu „tricksterov“ – podvodníkov a figliarov, ale aj často hrdinov zaznávaných a podceňovaných, ktorí si však dokážu zachovať hrdosť a zabezpečiť spoločenské postavenie a sociálne ocenenie. Na Slovensku sú v naratívnej tradícii známi hrdinovia v rurálnom prostredí a *wise fool* – „múdri hlupáci“ pôsobiaci v mestskom prostredí.

Humoristický hrdina folklórnych cyklov sa môže vyvíjať dvoma spôsobmi:

a) vyrastá z určitého všeobecnejšie rozšíreného lokálneho typu, ktorý má charakteristické vlastnosti dané často socioprofesioným zaradením. Kumulovaním príbehov anonymných postáv sa folklórnymi mechanizmami vyabstrahuje okolo neho folklórny typ, ktorý však ako reálna osoba neexistoval (napr. Nácko – *wise fool*/hrdina z pôvodne baníckeho mestečka Banská Štiavnica).

b) Ide o reálne existujúcu postavu, ktorá v prostredí svojej skupiny, či už sociálnej, lokálnej alebo profesionálnej nadobudne takú autoritu, že si postupne folklórnym podaním získava širšiu popularitu, a rovnako sa na ňu môžu kumulovať príhody iných anonymných postáv (napr. postava Žigo z Banskej Bystrice, Paulovič-Rintintin z Martina). Skôr výnimočným príkladom prechodného typu je postava sváka Ragana z Brezovej, ktorá vznikla spojením skutočnej postavy s literárnym humoristickým hrdinom z románu slovenského spisovateľa zo začiatku 20. storočia Ela Šándora. Samostatnou kapitolou je slovenský Eulenspiegel Geľo Sebechlebský zo Sebechlieb, okolo ktorého sa kumulovali mnohé typické „trickterovské“ historiky. Sebechleby sú rurálne prostredie. Mesto ako také, malo svoje špecifické trickterovské ako aj tragikomické, a všeobecne akceptované postavičky, napr. bratislavský Schone Náci.

Typickým mestským tricksterom na Slovensku bol Žigo z mesta Banská Bystrica. Dôkazom významu jeho osobnosti, v porovnaní životopisu je pretrvanie historiek v lokálnej orálnej tradícii dodnes.

Ako centrálna postava humoristického cyklu sa stal v istom slova zmysle „sociálnym gestom“, podľa Bergsona.

V cykle rozprávání postava prestáva byť obrazom reálneho človeka, stáva sa už estetickou projekciou potrieb spoločnosti. Stáva sa kódom, ktorým sa na rozdiel od proklamovaných požiadaviek etických hodnôt, vyjadruje citlivým mechanizmom intuitívneho spoznávania, cez podstatné detaily zážitkového sveta človeka, a získava sa tým univerzálnejšia a pravdivejšia výpoveď. Uskutočňuje sa to napr. prostriedkami kontrastu, fyzickým handicapom, alebo ošumelým zjavom a bohatstvom, zdánian naivty ale reálnou duchaplnosťou až prefikanosťou, vlastnou skromnosťou ale gavalierstvom voči iným.

V prostredí diferencovanej štruktúry najmä mestského prostredia, sa môže autorita humoristického múdreho-hlupáka, hrdinu meniť podľa konkrétnej historickej situácie, v rozsahu úzko skupinového pôsobenia, až po celomestské. Takáto postava humoristického cyklu býva kontrastom svojho tragického osudu a komického subjektu, vyvažuje konflikty v bežnom každodennom živote, akoby to, čo sama v sebe prekonáva ako subjektívny problém, prenášala na problém spoločnosti; tým harmonizuje vzťahy, podporuje rovnováhu pri prekonávaní sociálnych a etnických rozporov, kontinuuje historické obdobia. Má katarznú funkciu a oživuje vnútornú harmóniu spoločnosti. Porúšovaním napr. noriem

sociálne správania, zosmiešňovaním úradníkov, politických činiteľov a pod., umožňuje vo vedomí ľudí spoločenstva upevňovať inú hierarchiu a iné postoje a hodnotiace kritériá. Zohráva úlohu najmä v procese konštituovania sa lokálnej skupiny na vyššej úrovni, na úrovni mestského celku (napr. v uvedomení si spolupatričnosti).

Práve v mestskom prostredí, zdanlivo neškodní, stávajú sa takéto múdri hlupáci (wise fool), hrdinovia „hovorcami“ skupiny, práve vyjadrovaním reálnych názorov. Toto bolo veľmi aktuálne v dnešnej Slovenskej republike, práve v minulom komunistickom režime. Ale v podstate na mikroúrovni sa tak dialo aj v minulosti v rurálnom prostredí. Istým, nepriamym spôsobom sú takéto postavičky regulátormi potrieb spoločenstva, a tým získavajú jeho pozitívne hodnotenie a súhlas, hoci oni sami nemusia byť vždy jednoznačne pozitívnymi osobnosťami s kladnými charakterovo volovými vlastnosťami. Často sú ľstivi a mazaní, prefikani. Napriek kritickému postoju okolia, sa im niektoré vlastnosti ospravedlňujú.

Samostatnou kapitolou je slovenský Eulenspiegel už spomínaný Geľo, ktorý dostal prímene Sebechlebský, lebo v Sebechleboch strávil najviac času zo svojho života, a tam je známy už zo zápisov z 18. storočia. Ustna tradícia o jeho výstrelkoch bola zbásnená Jánom Chrastinom a neskôr Bohuslavom Tablicom v 18. storočí. Vďaka tomu je dnes možné porovnávať motívy aj s materiálom zo súčasných terénnych výskumov. Postava Geľu bola zdramatizovaná, a dokonca v roku 1968 významný slovenský hudobný majster Tibor Andrašovan, napísal operu *Figliar Geľo*, pričom predlohou libreta bol práve text divadelnej hry Jana Hollého z 19. storočia. Pochopiteľne, že v 60. rokoch bol Geľo aj sfilmovaný ako vďačný námet a vznikol mnohokrát reprízovaný divácky veľmi úspešný televízny film *Geľo Sebechlebský*, ktorý opäť revitalizoval orálnu tradíciu, a slovenský Eulenspiegel sa rozšíril po celom Slovensku, síce ako prefikáný figliar, ale o to viac bližší slovenskej mentalite. Preto sa domnievam, že práve niektoré črty, ako antropologická konštanta, hoci nie vždy pro-sociálne, robia práve z takýchto postáv, obľúbených hrdinov dňa, resp. hrdinov nadčasových.