

## Abstract

The main aim of this dissertation was to determine which of the characters of Polish and the East Slavic folk wondertale display features typical of demonic creatures and then to characterise them in detail based on records of beliefs and mythological (belief) narratives about them. Thanks to this, it became possible to ask the question about the scope of the transformation of the above-mentioned beings under the influence of the genealogical assumptions of fictional texts, with the particular emphasis on the modifications related to the functions performed. At the same time, an attempt was made to determine which of the features of these characters turned out to be the least susceptible to genre changes and were preserved in a wondertale.

The work consists of seven chapters. The first contains a detailed description of the current state of research on the typology of wondertale characters, research issues, the concept and structure of the dissertation, the source material used, and the methodology. The following chapters are devoted to individual categories of demonic beings appearing in the above narratives. A total of eighteen characters were taken into account, including:

- 1) souls of deceased ancestors (mother, father), penitents and the violently deceased (*strzyga* princess, ghost [*strzygoń*], hangman),
- 2) personifications of death, poverty, and misery,
- 3) people with supernatural abilities (witch/hag, sorcerer),
- 4) representatives of professions with demonic connotations (blacksmith, musician, shepherd, miller),
- 5) nature demons (water spirit, forest spirit [*leshy*], wind),
- 6) the Devil.

To achieve the basic objectives of the work, I used the following research questionnaire based on the criteria for describing demonic beings:

- 1) origin,
- 2) name or nickname,
- 3) external appearance and forms of physical metamorphosis,
- 4) attributes,
- 5) time and place of activity,



- 6) properties and skills,
- 7) typical activities and their recipients,
- 8) relationships with the environment, including other supernatural characters,
- 9) functions performed.

In the course of the analysis of fairy tale images of demonic characters, it was important to determine whether and to what extent the above elements of characteristics, treated by me as initial ones, turned out to be, firstly, significant and, secondly, reliable in the process of identifying them in a wondertale. The subject of my interest was also the varied degree of representation of those beings in the above narratives.

The condition for achieving the research aims was to excerpt a corpus of strictly fairy tale texts, i.e., narratives that meet the genre requirements of a wondertale and its heterogeneous forms, from the existing catalogues of Polish and the East Slavic folk prose. In the case of narratives with an ambiguous genealogical status, according to the concept by Jolanta Ługowska, the main criterion for separating them was the narrator's intention, i.e., the purpose of the tale. In addition, the theory of a wondertale by Vladimir Propp was used, particularly the typology of the functions performed by the characters and the model plot structure typical for the mentioned narratives.

As part of this work, I adopted a multi- and inter-disciplinary research approach, placing my considerations particularly in the area of folkloristics, literary studies, and cultural anthropology. However, I used auxiliary knowledge in the field of ethnolinguistics and the history of culture and religion, especially Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. In order to achieve the conceptual objectives of the dissertation, it was necessary to use primarily philological, textological, typological-comparative, anthropological-cultural, and ethnolinguistic methods.

The source material I used includes approximately 1,800 Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian wondertales, mythological narratives and descriptions of beliefs, the origins of which dates back to the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

Getting acquainted with a large corpus of ethnographic sources gave me the opportunity to observe the differences between Polish and the East Slavic wondertales marked with a common tale type number. As it turns out, these discrepancies occasionally concern the main plot of a wondertale but usually focus on individual episodes and the ways of combining them into contaminations. It should be added that in the mentioned narratives originating from both cultural circles, the phenomenon of optionality (mutual substitutability)



of some characters is visible, in particular the Devil, as well as the blacksmith, the sorcerer, the witch/hag, Baba Yaga, the water spirit, the forest spirit (*leshy*), and the wind.

Due to the presence of an almost complete set of demonic characters included in this thesis both in the Polish and the East Slavic wondertale, one can talk about the cultural universality of those creatures. However, the degree to which they are represented in the mentioned narratives varies greatly. The characters most typical of strictly wondertales are mainly deceased parents, the *strzyga* princess, the witch/hag and the blacksmith, while penitent souls and the hangman appear least often. On the other hand, in narratives officially classified as wondertales, but which do not actually meet their genre requirements, seem to feature the ghost (the *strzygoń*) and the miller most frequently.

As I have found, highly reliable criteria for identifying individual demonic characters in a wondertale include the functions assigned to them (usually antagonists, helpers, and donors) and the activities associated with them. It is worth adding that they often refer to mythological (belief) images of these beings and the positively or negatively connoted status given to them in traditional culture. However, descriptive elements that are mainly related to mythological narratives, such as the time and place of activity as well as appearance and origin, are usually of little use for the above-mentioned purposes. The name or nickname of the character is often very misleading for the listener or reader of a wondertale, too.

Moreover, the analysis carried out in this dissertation proved that the East Slavic index of folk fairy tales is characterised by a much greater genre purity of the tale types catalogued in it and their variants than is the case with the Polish classification.

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