

**FOLKTALES, DREAMS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS:  
PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE***Lenka Vidršperková***Abstract**

Through folktales and dreams, our unconscious can be manifested, which is why they attract the attention of psychoanalytic authors. The aim of this text is to comprehensively present one of the possible ways of folktales and dreams interpretation. The article presents dreams and folktales to readers primarily from the psychoanalytic point of view. Based on several theories and research, it is shown that fairy tales and dreams coincide in many areas, and some psychoanalysts, such as Géza Róheim, even think about their possible relationship, which is critically discussed in the article. The possibilities of folktales interpretation and simultaneously the possibilities of a relationship between folktales and dreams are shown in the folktale *Princess with a Golden Star on her Forehead*. It turns out that the folktale is viewed either as a depiction of the Oedipus complex or as an example of a psyché of a victim of actual abuse. However, a detailed analysis shows that the folktale does not deal exactly with any of these topics. We thus encounter the topic of a shift from an incestuous relationship to an exogamous relationship and with the topic of the departure of a child or a young adult from the primary family, which is one of the important developmental moments. Through this analysis, we get to the basic themes of the folktale, which were subsequently searched for in dreams. This is a theme of leaving the primary family, incest, then marriage, royalty, and disguise and revelation, which is also evident in the folktale. At the same time, an interpretation of the folktale is presented using the theory of G. Róheim, where the folktale is viewed as an individual dream of a teenage girl.

**Keywords:** psychoanalysis, folktale, dream, interpretation

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*Received: 16. 8. 2023*

*Approved: 12. 5. 2024*

*Published online: 30. 6. 2024*

## Introduction

Folktales and dreams fascinate almost all of us. The importance of folktales and dreams increased significantly with psychoanalysis and its founder Sigmund Freud, who was one of the first to look at dreams and folktales from the scientific point of view. Through psychoanalysis and other related psychological disciplines, this article shows how we can think about folktales, dreams and their connection and how they can affect us.

This article is based on PhD research. The aim is to map the current findings regarding the psychoanalytic interpretation of folktales and the possible similarities between them and dreams, and to find out, how specific themes are displayed in folktales and dreams. Do the same themes appear in the same way in folktales and in dreams as well? And if so, can we allow ourselves to talk about the relatedness of dreams and folktales?

In this article, a summary of the basic findings of the research will be offered to the readers. First, dreams and folktales will be shortly introduced from the psychoanalytic point of view (it is important to note, that the main material for this article will be folktales, not dreams because folktales have generally received less attention in the psychoanalytic literature, therefore they will now be presented in greater detail than dreams). Furthermore, possible connection between folktales and dreams will be presented in this article.

## Theoretical bases

In 1899 (or 1900), the *Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud was published, and it brought innovative ideas about dreams and their meaning. According to Freud (2005), the source of a dream is usually an unconscious and forbidden wish (a taboo). The taboo often has its source in early childhood (for example the Oedipal complex). This significant experience is manifested in dreams through some other unimportant experience, often from the previous day. Condensation and displacement are some of the most important mechanisms of dream-work (omissions, changes or rearrangements of the dream material), the transfer of ideas to visual images being another important mechanism (Freud, 2005). Dream symbolism is no less important - unconscious symbols occur in dreams and according to Freud (2005), they are often connected with psychosexual development. If we want to understand and interpret a dream, we need to understand these mechanisms first, so that we could find the hidden meaning.

While there are lots of authors (psychologists, psychoanalysts etc.) who try to interpret dreams, far fewer of them deal with folktales or myths. Freud himself was rather peripheral to folktales and myths, although he sometimes used mythology to interpret dreams.

In folktales, the main characters behave in a predictable, template-like manner, and very similar stories can be found all over the world (this is also why we can classify folktales - the most famous is the Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index, ATU). Of course, many theories arose as to why folktales of different nationalities are so similar. The first of them is the migration theory - fairy tales are passed on orally, which leads to their spread among different cultures. Other authors, on the other hand, assume that similar folktales in different cultures were created independently of each other, and that the universality of the human psyche is behind their similarity (C.G. Jung is one of the supporters of this theory). Another theory was formulated by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. They assume that folktales are adaptations of original Indo-European myths and thus did not arise independently (Čeňková, 2006).

Thanks to the monotony of folktale characters and their actions, the Russian linguist Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp was able to accurately describe the structures of the so-called fairy tale or wonder tale – this is a folktale in which supernatural motifs appear and it takes place in an indeterminate place and in an indeterminate time (Propp, 2008; Otčenášek, 2019). V. J. Propp proved that all wonder tales have the same structure (31 functions, in Propp's terminology) - although different elements occur in each wonder tale, they always occur in the same order. In a wonder tale, there is always a villain, a hero and a helper or/and a donor, sometimes there is also a false hero (Propp, 2008).

It was Claude Lévi-Strauss, who criticized Propp's theory. However, Lévi-Strauss was more concerned with myths than folktales. He found myths strange and wondered why they appeared all over the world despite this "strangeness" (Lévi-Strauss, 1993). According to Lévi-Strauss (1993, 2006), myths contain a hidden meaning - a myth cannot be read chronologically, but it is necessary to trace clusters of meanings, so-called "mythemes", which appear in different places in the story. We can gain insight into the meaning of the myth by finding these mythemes and connecting them.

From the psychoanalytical point of view, S. Freud, and C. G. Jung as well, paid some attention to folktales (and myths) – they both assumed that hidden meanings and symbols can also be found in folktales. However, there were two of their successors, who made folktales famous in deep psychology – the Austrian Freudian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim and his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (published in 1976), and the Swiss psychologist and a colleague of Carl Gustav Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz who published a book called *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* in 1986.

While M. L. von Franz (1998) believed that fairy tales are the best possible expression of the human psyche and that we can find archetypal characters in them, B. Bettelheim (2000) looked for hidden meaning and symbolism in folktales, which he interpreted through psychosexual development (in accordance with the Freud's theory). For example, the well-known folktale *Snow White* helps a child to cope with the period of Oedipal conflict through the central motif of an evil stepmother who seeks the life of her stepdaughter (the girl can experience negative feelings towards her mother through the folktale). Furthermore, the folktale even includes a latency stage (Snow White in a glass coffin sleeping = "the sleep of the latency") and the beginning of normal genital sexuality after the latency stage (Snow White waking up and marrying the prince) (Bettelheim, 2000).

According to the psychoanalysts cited above, we can find the manifestation of the unconscious in both folktales and dreams. But that is not the only reason why both dreams and folktales are examined in this article. Some of psychoanalysts believe that these are not isolated phenomena, but that they are truly related. The Hungarian psychoanalyst Géza Róheim is a representative of this approach. He is probably the first who attempted to transfer the knowledge of Freud's psychoanalysis to a culture other than the Euro-American culture - with Freud's blessing, he began to verify the principles of psychoanalysis directly in the field in 1928 (for example in Djibouti, Australia or New Guinea). He obtained a large amount of material, especially folklore texts, rituals and dreams. He is often referred to as a pioneer of psychoanalytic anthropology and folklore: "No other analyst was initially trained in folklore and anthropology; well other folklorist or anthropologist at that time underwent analysis and then tried to test psychoanalytic concepts in the field." (Dundes in Róheim, 1992).

According to Róheim (1992), folktales and myths originated as the narration of an individual dream, which was told by the dreamer and passed on through other oral narrations, thus reaching an ever-widening circle of listeners, who may have enriched the original dream with experience from their dreams. Culture specific meanings were then added to the dream, and that's how a folktale was born.

Róheim was followed up by E. K. Schwartz, who determined the similarities between folktales and dreams. Among other things, folktales as well as dreams contain manifest and latent content, illogical elements, symbolism, conflict theme (contrast) and they express wishes. They also have common mechanisms, e.g. condensation and displacement, therefore the dream work (Coulacoglou, n. d.). However, according to Schwartz, these similarities may not be caused by the direct creation of folktales from dreams, but they can be caused by the simple fact that both folktales and dreams are products of the human mind.

Gananath Obeyesekere (1981) brings a slightly different perspective. In his book *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*, he describes the mutual relationships between dreams and mythology. A dream is based on mythology; it provides dreams with specific content. At the same time, however, dreams contribute to the strengthening of a myth - by dreaming about important mythological themes, we confirm the truth of the myth. It is likely that not only mythology but also folklore works on this basis.

At the end of this section, it is appropriate to mention that folktales and dreams also contain numerous differences. For example, B. Bettelheim (2000) claims that a folktale and a dream respond to typically human problems but each of them does it differently. While a good ending to a folktale offers relief, a dream often ends badly, without a solution. However, according to Ravit Raufman (2007), a folktale and a dream complement each other, and a folktale offers the dreamer a good ending or a different perspective on the situation he is dealing with. Furthermore, according to Bettelheim (2000), dreams are unconscious, while folktales are a conscious transformation of unconscious contents; dreams are individual, while folktales are collective (Bettelheim rejects that folktales could be based on a dream). Starý and Hrdlička (2008) see another difference – in dreams, the symbol comes directly from the inside, while folktales offer a symbol from the outside (although the unconscious is expected to intervene). It can also be said that a dream is always private and contains subjectively important topics, in a folktale we can find topics that are important in general. In summary, there are many similarities and differences between folktales and dreams, and this list is only illustrative. However, it is important to keep in mind that although folktales and dreams are similar in many ways, the list of their differences is quite comprehensive.

### **Source material and methods**

One particular folktale was chosen to examine the relationship between folktales and dreams – *The Princess with a Golden Star on Her Forehead* by Božena Němcová. The reason for this choice is the explicit presence of the father's incestuous wish, so the folktale seems to be Oedipal, and so it can be observed how the Oedipus complex is depicted in this folktale. This is a very brief plot of the folktale:

*The queen dies while giving birth to a daughter and the king promises his wife on her deathbed that he will only marry a one who looks like her. After many years and a long futile search, the father decides to marry his teenage daughter Lada. The horrified girl will agree to the marriage if*

*the king sews her three beautiful dresses. The king fulfils this and the girl is visited in a dream by her dead mother who advises her to run away. Lada takes a cloak made of mouse fur, covers her face with a veil, takes a beautiful dress with her and leaves the kingdom. After some time she finds a town with a royal castle. She hides the dress and asks for a job at the castle. So the ugly and dirty girl starts working secretly in the royal kitchen. When a ball is held in the castle, the cook agrees that Lada can go to see the ball. She washes herself and puts her beautiful dress on. No one at the castle recognizes her as the ugly cook's assistant. Lada dances the night away with Prince Hostivít. After the ball, she puts on the mouse fur again. For the next two evenings, Lada comes to the ball like this. At the third, last ball, she gives Hostivít her ring and he gives her his. Hostivít then becomes sick with love. So, Lada brings healing spices to the prince and throws the ring she received from him into the cup. When Hostivít finds out, he calls the cook's assistant, who brought him the cup. However, Lada denies that she put the ring in the cup. Hostivít follows Lada to the spa. Hidden there, he watches Lada take off her mouse fur and wash herself, realizing that she is indeed his beloved. Lada and Hostivít get engaged and since the dead queen and Lada's mother visited her husband and Lada's father and chastised him for his forbidden love, he happily blesses the young couple. (Němcová, 1985 – loosely retold).*

This folktale was put into the ATU Folktale and Folk Motif Indexes – the central motif of this type of folktale is a father who wants to marry his daughter and it is the ATU 510B type of folktale (University of Missouri Libraries, 2022).

Furthermore, the most famous versions of this folktale from around the world were searched. The ATU 510B folktale is spread all over the world - a very complete overview is presented by professor D. L. Ashliman (retired from the University of Pittsburgh) on his website (Ashliman, 2021). *Donkey's Skin* by Charles Perrault, or *All-Kinds-of-Fur* by the Brothers Grimm are probably the most famous versions of this folktale type. However, we can find the folktale all over the world, among others also in Russia, Syria, Greece or even Lithuania. Probably the oldest surviving version of this tale is the Indian Jataka tale *How a Pious Greengrocer Tested his Daughter's Virtue*, which dates to the 4th century BC (Francis & Thomas, 1916): *A greengrocer pretends passion for his daughter and tries to seduce her in the forest. However, the daughter refuses and thus passes the father's test. The father then takes the girl back home, gives her in marriage to a young man, and dies* (Ashliman, 2021). This short version describes very simply the essence of the version of the ATU 510B - the father wants to marry his daughter, who refuses, and ends up marrying a young prince instead of the father.

Subsequently, the interpretation of the folktale itself was approached. First, already existing interpretations of the folktale and typical themes of the folktale were searched in psychoanalytical literature. There are two basic lines of understanding the meaning of the folktale in the available literature.

The first of them is typically psychoanalytical and it views the folktale as a display of the Oedipus complex, where the girl projects her incestuous wishes onto her father (see Bettelheim, 2000). The folktale shows us that it may not be easy to resist incestuous desires. The folktale seems to confirm the theory observed by Freud that the successful overcoming of the Oedipal conflict (and infantile incestuous desires) and the move towards exogamous sexuality in development, is a crucial milestone in psychosexual development. In this case, the folktale would show us a completely natural development. Bruno Bettelheim (2000) did not analyse this



folktale directly, but he perceives being smeared with ash (or dirtiness in general) as a consequence of guilt for oedipal desires. In accordance with psychoanalytic theory, it is also considered whether the folktale is about the incestuous desire of the father, or whether it is about the desire of the girl herself through the mechanism of projection (this would make the folktale at least partially wish-fulfilling).

The second (and stronger) line of interpretations perceives the folktale as a real abuse – according to Raufman, Ashliman and Röhr, the folktale shows the psyche of an abused woman and the difficulties she experiences in relation to her body and in establishing a new relationship (see Ashliman, 1997; Raufman, 2014; Röhr, 2014). Perhaps the most developed theory of Ravit Raufman will now be presented in more detail for all of these lines of interpretation.

Jungian psychologist Marion Woodman (2020) offers a different view of the folktale. In "Leaving the Father's House," Woodman discusses this folktale as a powerful metaphor for psychological growth and transformation and as an allegory for the challenges women face in patriarchal societies. She interprets the princess covering herself with animal fur as a symbolic act of self-protection and preservation of her inner essence. In contrast, the symbol of beautiful dresses in the tale represents societal expectations and external appearances - these dresses are often associated with femininity and social status. The contrast between the fur coat and the beautiful dresses highlights the dichotomy between authenticity and conformity, self-preservation and societal expectations (Woodman, 2020).

The Israeli psychoanalytic author Ravit Raufman contradicts the fact that the folktale would point to a natural development. Raufman and Haya Milo (2014) examined the ATU 510B\* *Girl in the Chest*, for which it is specific that after an incestuous proposal the girl does not run away, but she hides in some piece of wooden furniture. The authors perceive the folktale as a story that shows the true feelings of an incest victim. They compared the folktale to Internet blogs, in which victims of incest anonymously confide the feelings they experienced while being abused by their fathers. In this comparison, the authors found a number of similarities, for example, the absence of a mother, which is real in the folktale, during the abuse, it is more about the mother's inability to help her daughter. The wooden chest (and animal fur in the ATU 510B) could refer to an attempt to hide femininity, expressing a disturbed perception of a girl's own body. The complicated establishment of a relationship with the prince would show how difficult it is for incest victims to establish a new relationship (Raufman and Milo 2014).

Subsequently, the first fundamental method for approximating the meaning of the folktale was used – the structural interpretation using the myth theory of C. Lévi-Strauss. In accordance with this theory, pairs of opposites that appear in the folktale and which are related to its meaning were searched for. Subsequently, the fairy tale was broken down into individual sentences, sections (mythemes). These sentences were subsequently classified into bunches or clusters of mythemes according to their meaning. This defined the structural interpretation of the folktale and the first possible meaning of the folktale, which will be discussed in the "Results" section.

As another fundamental method of interpretation, concept maps were used, as M. Kučera recommended for interpretation of folktales (Kučera, 2023). In this way, the main themes of the folktale were found and there was a significant approach to the final interpretation.

Now we get to the central point of the research, which is the examination of the relationship between dreams and folktales. In research and dreams obtained from the DreamBank database, the

basic themes of the folktale were searched, and their representation in folktales and dreams was monitored. These basic themes are abuse and incest, the subject of the oedipal complex. The content themes of the folktale, such as wedding, disguise and revelation, and kingdom and royal family, were searched for in the dreams, obtained by entering these (and content-related) keywords into selected relevant dream sets from the DreamBank database. Through this procedure, a total of fourteen dreams were obtained. They contain relevant themes with regard to the important themes of the folktale *The Princess with a Golden Star on Her Head*.

Based on all the information obtained, a summary conceptual map of the fairy tale and the final interpretation of the folktale in two lines were subsequently presented, as well as consideration of the relationship between folktales and dreams.

## Results

Using the methods mentioned above, the essential development moments of this folktale were found: not succumbing to incest and establishing a love relationship with a peer, instead of the father, i.e. a shift to an exogamous relationship, and at the same time a generational shift in the choice of a partner. We can observe the conflict of incest-exogamy in the folktale using the Lévi-Strauss theory. According to him, the most fundamental conflict of myths is nature-culture, from which the incest-exogamy conflict arises (Segal, 2017). Although it is not a myth, *The Princess with a Golden Star on Her Forehead* describes the incest-exogamy conflict very well. In addition, we can also see other pairs of opposites in the folktale, such as heaven-earth (and also above-below), beauty-absence of beauty/ugliness, seeing-not seeing, camouflaging-revealing oneself. These contrasts indicate to us that the folktale is not only about the transition to an exogamous relationship but also shows us the complexity of establishing it.

By depicting nature, which is wild, but also modified, and cultivated (especially the sewing of clothes that are compared to nature – dresses look like the night sky, sun, moon etc. in the folktale), the folktale shows a deviation from nature, or rather talks about the necessity of suppressing some impulses in favour of culture and society. This level of interpretation contains culturally important themes. But the folktale also contains an ontogenetic meaning - we can say a subjective meaning – the development of the girl.

As it was said above, in the literature we can find two levels of interpretation of the folktale on the ontogenetic level - real abuse versus the oedipal complex. However, it turns out that the folktale probably does not exactly deal with any of these topics. If we assume that important themes appear in both folktales and dreams, we expect similar depictions of these themes.

Despite this, the theme of abuse appears in dreams quite differently. The folktale is simpler and more superficial than the deep trauma of abuse victims. Also, the emotional quality of the folktale is quite different from dreams that depict the subject of abuse. The dreams of abuse victims tend to be significantly emotional, with negative emotions, references to experienced trauma or even direct flashbacks (for more information see Duval & Zadra, 2010 or Barrett, 2001). In contrast, the folktale has a playful impression - in some versions of it, the girl even mocks her father for his incestuous desires.

The folktale could show an oedipal complex, but this explanation also seems too simple given the complexity of the folktale. Thus, the folktale depicts the psychosexual development

of a young girl who moves from a relationship with her father to a relationship with a peer. The gradual alternation of beauty and ugliness may point to the girl's sexual maturation, specifically to the menstrual cycle, but also to female sexuality and fertility in general, which is represented in the fairy tale by the dimensions of beauty and ugliness. At the same time, this cycling and the strange approach to the prince and then moving away points to the girl's desire for sexuality and at the same time her fear of it. Beauty in the folktale is direct and charming, which can be seen by the prince, and it means a cultured and socially desirable sexuality. However, ugliness in the folktale points to the same thing, to sexuality, but now socially uncultivated, instinctive – in accordance with Freud's theory, dressing in animal skin refers to female genital organs (Freud, 2005).

Considering all this information, it is possible that the folktale can be interpreted in accordance with the theory of folktales by G. Róheim (1992), which was mentioned above. According to this theory, the folktale could be the dream of a girl, probably a teenager. The initial situation of the girl, a kind of daily leftover, could be related to the current anger towards her parents, probably more towards her father - the mother dies already at the beginning of the folktale, which could express the girl's attitude that she no longer needs her mother, but at the same time she remains in the folktale as a helper. The father is rejected more prominently - the girl wants her father to care for her, but only for the reason that she can reject him, which she does in the folktale. In this way, she can take revenge on her father in the fairy tale dream, perhaps for the fact that he still thinks of her as a little girl. In the fairy tale, she proves that one day she will be as beautiful as her mother, her father will desire her, but she will reject him at the same time, starting a relationship with a handsome prince and leaving the family she no longer needs. The oedipal complex is therefore probably present in the folktale rather as its renewal in puberty.

This could be one of the possible connections between dreams and folktales. Indeed, some folktales such as this one have a distinctly dreamlike quality. On the contrary, a lot of dreams have a very folktale-like feel, as is the case, for example, this specific dream of Barb Sanders:

*"A beautiful woman is married to a powerful man. But she is in love with a Cary Grant kind of guy who is her husband's business right-hand man. She throws caution to the winds and is a bit indiscreet in showing her intense attraction to him. He takes her on a flying lesson and the husband (a king of business?) is very jealous. He suspects. Her trusty older woman advisor (secretary?) warns her to be careful. She is devoured by her attraction to Cary. Cary is equally devoted to her. They go off to a house. The king has spies and they are lurking around. Now there is a baby as well. The spies, and soldiers, are searching for the baby. The wife realizes she's in danger and so is the baby. She must flee. The older woman takes the baby and hides it. The older woman now deflects the soldiers from the wife so the wife can escape. She takes them to the wife's room and chats as she moves clothes around. There are baby bottles and things around that she tries to hide before they see them. The wife has escaped. She is riding a horse, and the crowd is surrounding her. Her hair is long, thick and blonde. She is about to be taken away. But the helper woman has another horse ready for her and she slips off the one and onto the other, the side saddle is covered with a horse blanket. She chooses to ride the "manly" way, astride. Now she rides away and hides in a village. She has changed her name to Maggie, her hair is short and red now. Now, she becomes intensely infatuated or attracted to a young man, a soldier of the village. It would be safer for her to remain*



*alone, but she can't seem to keep away from this "fatal attraction," the same mistake she made before. They sit together at a campfire.*" (DreamBank, undated)

A woman marries a powerful man, a king. At the same time, however, she is in love with Cary Grant, an American actor, who takes her to a flying lesson – Freud's association of flying with childish frolics (Freud, 2005), which can be linked to sexual excitement, and which would probably symbolize intercourse here. The king could be the father himself, but also her ex-husband or some other man she considers powerful. Like in the folktale, marriage to this man is at stake here, but the dreamer leaves for another man. The dream also features leaving the kingdom as well as a change in appearance, just like in the folktale. Of course, there is the possibility that the dreamer knows the folktale, which cannot be reliably verified.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to carry out a detailed analysis of the dream at this point, but it is obvious that at first glance it resembles the initial folktale. Just as folktales can be interpreted as dreams, in accordance with Róheim's theory, dreams can also be viewed as a specific kind of tales.

This was a specific example of a possible similarity between a folktale and a specific dream. Finally, some general similarities between dreams and folktales will be presented – the similarities were described on the basis of their comparison at a general level (not at the level of a single fairy tale as shown briefly above) (Vidršperková, 2017).

In both, folktales and dreams, we can find parents or grandparents as one of the most common and also the most important characters. Sometimes the parents are transformed - for example, a stepmother (or some other figure that resembles the mother) appears instead of the mother. This may be a result of censorship - the mother's presence is threatening, so she is transformed – for example, Snow White is chased by her stepmother, instead of her own mother (which was a change made by the Grimms themselves in the revised edition of their book of folktales). The same transformation also happens with the father (the frequent transformation of the father who wants to marry his own daughter into another character, which leads to the elimination of dangerous incest).

Another interesting and frequent element is the presence of animals in dreams and folktales. First of all, there are a numbers of folktales where animals directly play the main role (e.g. *Puss in Boots* or *The Three Little Pigs*). At the same time, however, animals appear in the role of a villain or helper (in Propp's terminology) as it is in notorious folktales of the Brothers Grimm: the bad wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* or helping doves in *Cinderella*. The presence of animals can also be mediated - for example, the representation of animals through a fur coat made from their skins in the ATU 510B folktale. Animals also often appear in dreams, especially in children's dreams – according to Foulkes they are more frequent than people (Foulkes in Kráčmarová and Plháková, 1999).

We can also notice that folktales are very gender-stereotyped. For this reason, they have also become the target of criticism from some feminists. For example, according to Josephine Donovan or Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, folktales (and their psychoanalytical interpretation as well) play their part in maintaining gender inequality in society (Donovan, 1976). We often meet an incompetent heroine who must be rescued by a strong prince. Even in the fairy tale *The Princess with a Golden Star on Her Forehead* mentioned here, we can observe a clear passivity of the main heroine (the same applies to *Snow White* or *Sleeping*

*Beauty*). But gender stereotypes appear in dreams as well. An explanation of this phenomenon is offered - since gender stereotypes still exist in our society, it cannot be expected that they will completely disappear in dreams and folktales.

Anxiety is another similarity that appears in both dreams and folktales. Anxiety in fairy tales is clearly visible - Little Red Riding Hood is threatened by an evil wolf, Hansel and Gretel were nearly killed by the witch, Bluebeard wants to murder his wife. As for dreams, ugly dreams prevail over nice dreams in children, according to studies (Kráčmarová, Plháková, 2012). Anxiety has its important place in folktales - it lets children know that in order to reach a happy ending, they must overcome obstacles and it shows that development cannot continue if anxiety is avoided. However, a dream usually does not have a happy ending, unless we consider waking up to be a happy ending to the dream. In this case, the true meaning of folktales could be shown - although a child deals with the same topics in a folktale as in a dream, folktales offer a good ending and can thus be a very important addition to a dream.

## Discussion

There are certainly many similarities between folktales and dreams, and we could find many more - the list given here is only illustrative, likewise, the complex interpretation is greatly shortened in the text (see more in Vídršperková, 2023). Of course, we could find a lot of differences as well - for example, the already mentioned ending of a dream, or also the fact that a dream is purely individual, while a folktale is a cultural product. So it is certainly important not to overestimate the similarities that folktales and dreams contain, and especially to be careful with determining the reason why folktales and dreams are similar. The question arises as to whether it matters at all how folktales and dreams are related. As Obeyesekere (1981) writes - it is very likely that their relationship is mutual and folktales and dreams influence each other.

It is possible that at first there was a shared theory (e.g. the theory of how children are born), which then gave rise to a dream, but also to a fairy tale or a myth. Then, apparently, it is not so important what came first, but that the myth survives in the minds of the members of a certain culture and is strengthened. In any case, if a dream was the originator of a fairy tale, it could be the reason for hallucinatory or simply dream-like motives we can find in the folktales - there are often nonsensical elements. The apparent senselessness (especially of original folktales, without major literary modifications) could be the result of a dream job.

An important limit in this type of research can of course be the influence of the researcher's personality on the interpretations, but also the influence of the culture - the interpretation is thus dependent on the culture. Unconsciously, dreams and other materials can also be selected to confirm the theory presented here - a significant risk in this research is especially the selection of dreams from the database. It can be influenced by the very choice of keywords which correspond to the main themes of the folktale. This procedure can lead to a distortion and a neglect of essential differences between folktales and dreams. This obvious risk can be avoided by being constantly aware of the danger, and also by questioning the given theories, which happened during the processing of this research.

There is another limitation of this research: The choice of psychoanalytical approach as the main thought approach for the interpretation of folktales and dreams. In this way, some important approaches investigating folktales and dreams are omitted - especially the analytical psychology of

C. G. Jung repeatedly mentioned in this article. Unfortunately, this is not unique in deep psychological interpretations, and the psychoanalytic and analytic-psychological approaches are often perceived as competing with each other and irreconcilable. At the same time taking one of the approaches can lead to more detailed and comprehensive results if they are based on one comprehensive theory. Although some important ideas of analytical psychology in connection with folktales and dreams are mentioned in the article, they are not elaborated more deeply. For example, the central idea that the folktale is a depiction of normal development is an idea typical of analytical psychology rather than psychoanalysis. However, a fundamental approach common to both, psychoanalysis and analytical psychology as well, is the perception of folktales and dreams as a symbolic expression rather than as a description of the real state – this approach is also emphasized in the research. The ideas of analytical psychology would certainly be an enrichment for the whole interpretation. However, it would be the subject of further and probably extensive research to include these ideas in the entire concept presented here.

## Conclusion

This article presents one of the many ways we can think about folktales and dreams. It is crucial that folktales and dreams not only bring us important developmental themes, but they can also offer us the possibility of solving some of our inner conflicts. Folktales or myths can give a theme to our dreams. If some subjectively important theme appears in them, then dreams can force us to think about themes that we perceive only unconsciously. This may be one of the reasons why folktales and dreams still attract our attention.

From the psychoanalytic point of view, it is therefore appropriate to pay more attention to folktales, to focus on their interpretation, but also research, and not to forget of their importance for child's psychosexual development.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the reviewers for their valuable comments and constructive criticism, which helped me to improve the quality of the final article.

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Vídršperková, L. (2024). Folktales, dreams and their connections: Psychoanalytic perspective. *E-psychologie*, 18(2), 64-73. <https://doi.org/10.29364/epsy.503>