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**SAM WELLER AND FALSTAFF:  
CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE  
OF CHARACTER TRAITS**

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Sam Weller a Falstaff jsou literární kritikou často považováni za nejtypičtější komické postavy v britské literatuře. Z tohoto důvodu autorka předloží komparativní analýzu jejich podobností a rozdílností. Při práci využije i poznatků z archetypální kritiky (např. Northrop Frye: Anatomie kritiky) k tomu, aby vystopovala a charakterizovala společné a rozdílné rysy daných postav, a to zejména po stránce jejich funkce v příběhu, způsobu a míry ovlivňování děje, typologie, povahových a jiných vlastností. Autorka v úvodu stručně představí vývoj komických postav v britské literatuře, včetně jejich provázanosti s komedií a satirou. Hlavní částí bude analýza postav dle různých kritérií. V závěru autorka své rozbory výstižně shrne.

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I, Marie Trundová, declare that the present bachelor paper and the work presented in it are my own.

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Date: March 28, 2008

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PATRI ET AMICIS EIUS

## **Abstract**

Samuel Weller from *The Pickwick Papers* and Falstaff appearing in several Shakespeare's plays are generally considered the most typical comic characters of English literature. Therefore this paper includes an analysis and comparison of Sam and Falstaff's characters with the main focus on their common features.

To provide background for the character study, the theoretical part includes a brief outline of the history of comedy and satire in English literature. It also introduces the critical approach which is further used for the character analysis. In the following chapters, characters are considered from several points of view. First, their personal qualities are analysed, further, their relations to other characters within the stories are considered and the concluding chapter includes the specification of their main functions in the narrations and the influence they have on the plot development.

## **Key Words**

Sam Weller; Falstaff; literary characters; comedy; *The Pickwick Papers*; Henry IV

## **Anotace**

Samuel Weller z Dickensova díla *Kronika Pickwickova klubu* a Falstaff, který se objevuje v několika Shakespearových hrách, bývají považováni za nejtypičtější komické postavy anglické literatury. Z tohoto důvodu se následující práce zabývá analýzou a srovnáním těchto dvou postav, přičemž hlavní důraz je kladen na jejich společné rysy.

Pro nastínění problému obsahuje teoretická část práce stručný přehled vývoje satiry a komedie v dějinách anglické literatury. V této části je také představen kritický přístup, který je dále uplatněn při rozboru a popisu daných postav. Následující kapitoly analyzují postavy Sama a Falstaffa z několika hledisek. Nejprve jsou popsány jejich povahové vlastnosti, dále jejich vztahy k ostatním postavám daných děl a závěrečná kapitola se zabývá hlavní funkcí, kterou jejich postavy v příbězích plní a také do jaké míry a jakým způsobem Sam a Falstaff ovlivňují děj.

## **Klíčová slova**

Sam Weller; Falstaff; literární postavy; komedie; *Kronika Pickwickova klubu*; Král Jindřich IV.



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## Introduction

English literature occupies a prominent place in Western culture because its authors gave rise to a number of outstanding works of all genres. Besides significant tragedies and other works which belong to the sphere of “serious genres”, there is also a long tradition of comic literature. English people have a unique sense of humour, which infiltrates the literature as well. According to Ünal Aytür, its typical feature is their fondness of absurdity. He describes it as “saying absurd things as if one were entirely serious” (2003, p. 36). The best example to illustrate English satirical humour is Swift’s *Modest Proposal* with claims such as: “a young, healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled” (1733, p. 109).

Searching through English literature for the most representative humorous characters, it is hardly possible to find greater bearers of the English wit than Shakespeare’s Sir John Falstaff and Samuel Weller from Dickens’s first work - *The Pickwick Papers* (1836). Aytür states in his essay “Humour and Satire in English Literature” that “Falstaff towers above all the rest as a creation. He is the personification of comedy.” And further in the text, he depicts Sam Weller as one of Dickens’s comic characters which “can be rivalled only by Shakespeare” (2005, pp. 37 - 38). The claim that Sam Weller and Falstaff are the most typical comic characters of English literature thus initiated the work on this paper, whose principal aim is to analyse these two characters with the main focus on their common features.

Falstaff appears in several Shakespeare’s plays, but for the purpose of this paper, only his role in *Henry IV* is considered as relevant. Falstaff is a corpulent old knight, whose main interest is to make his life as enjoyable as possible. He is a close friend of prince Henry, who at the end of the play becomes king Henry V. These two companions together with a group of other young men, spend most of their time drinking at the Boar’s Head Tavern in London or obtaining money by illegal means.

The other character, Sam Weller, is a sensible and faithful servant of Mr Pickwick, the main character of Dickens’s first work *The Pickwick Papers*. The expression “Dickens’s first work” is used on purpose here with the aim to avoid the

word “novel” as *The Pickwick Papers* was published in monthly instalments in The Times from April 1836. This mode of publication influenced the level of continuity in the whole work and according to some critics (e.g. John Forster or writer G. K. Chesterton as they are mentioned in James R. Kincaid’s article “The Education of Mr. Pickwick”, 1969, p. 127) it is disputable, whether it should be referred to as a novel. The introduction of a young cockney Sam in the tenth chapter of the work increased both the popularity of the whole story and the magazine profit. It also established Dickens’s reputation as an excellent writer for, as Philip Gibbs says, he “poured his genius into Sam Weller” (1932, p. 9).

The critical approach to the character analysis in this paper rests on Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism and on Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The first chapter provides a brief account of the theoretical viewpoints used in further analytical parts of this paper. It also includes an outline of the development of comic genre in the history of English literature to provide a background and to illustrate the claim that comedy and satire have a long tradition in England.

The critical approach presented in the first chapter is then applied in chapter number two, which includes an introduction of the characters in the form of an investigation and comparison of Sam and Falstaff’s personal qualities. Their dominating character traits are used for specifying which type or types particular character belongs to and subsequently the less significant aspects of their personalities are mentioned to illustrate the full complexity of their characters.

As no literary character can be analysed in isolation, the third chapter describes relationships between the characters under focus and the other ones in the stories mentioned. The major part of this chapter then analyses the relation within the core pairs formed by Sam and Mr Pickwick in *The Pickwick Papers* and by Falstaff and prince Henry (or Hal as he is often called by Falstaff) in *Henry IV*.

In the last chapter the paper is concluded by a consideration of the characters’ function in the story. Its aim is to decide whether Sam and Falstaff appear in the works only with the purpose to bring humour and entertain the audience or whether their function is more complex. The specification of their roles is based primarily on the extent of influence they exert over other characters and over the plot development.

# 1. Development of Comic Genres in English Literature and Critical Approach to Analysis of Comic Characters

The development of literature and popularity of individual genres always depends on several factors. Besides others, it is influenced by political situation in the country, cultural trends as well as by the economic climate in a particular period. Similarly, the history of English comedy and satire includes periods of both great development and relative decline.

To retrace the history of humour in English literature, it is necessary to begin with Geoffrey Chaucer, whose *Canterbury Tales* brought the first light of secular humour to the serious atmosphere of mostly religious Middle English literature. On the other hand, the era of Renaissance was very favourable to the development of literature which dealt with issues of this world in both humorous and serious way. Thanks to this, Shakespeare's brilliant comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* or *Much Ado About Nothing* were written. Another milestone in English literature was reached in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the Golden Age of English satire represented by two significant satirists: Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. From the work of Jonathan Swift *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travels* are considered to be the best satirical works. Alexander Pope was, in S. H. Monk and L. Lipking's words "a master [...] of witty urban satire", whose ironic poems (e.g. *The Dunciad* or *An Essay on Man*) wittily criticised the vices of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English society (1993, p. 2212). The following Victorian period is described by Anthony Burgess as "the age of conventional morality" (1974, p. 181). Life and all its aspects were approached too seriously and with too much dignity to leave much room for humour and laughter. However, at the same time, Victorian society became the subject of witty satire of outstanding writers such as Dickens or Thackeray. As usual a time of strict manners ended in liberalisation and the aim of early 20<sup>th</sup> century trends to get rid of Victorian conservatism brought a revival of the humorous genre in English literature as well. Although the two World Wars brought a heavy blow to the optimism and enthusiasm, budding at the beginning of the century, it did not extinguish English comic and satirical wit which appeared especially in the works of Noel Coward, W. S. Maugham or Terence Rattigan.

For investigation of literature and analysis of literary characters, several approaches can be applied. The study in this paper is based on archetypal criticism and character typology, both of which are described by Northrop Frye in his work *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

Archetypal criticism is based on work with symbols which have their origin in classical myths. These symbols and concepts (archetypes) are identified in analysed literary works. The grounds for archetypal criticism were laid at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century by C. G. Jung; for literary criticism, however, Frye's work is of greater significance (Dobson, 2005).

In his essay *Archetypal Criticism* (1957 but all the following information is taken from the 1973 reprint of these essays), Frye sets four basic categories of genres, and specifies the most typical archetypes for each of them. Frye's division of literary works is based on two fundamental movements of narrative, which he defined. There is a cyclical movement controlled by the order of nature and also a dialectical movement within this circle: tragic (downward) and comic (upward). This scheme served him as a framework for specifying four categories of genres (romance, tragedy, comedy and satire / irony), which are determined by their position within the natural circle and by the dialectical movement they take. Further, Frye associates the categories to the four seasons: comedy to spring, romance to summer, tragedy to autumn and satire to winter.

As this paper focuses on the description of two comic characters, its approach is mostly inspired by Frye's analysis of comic genres. Frye states that the typical dialectical movement within the narration of a comedy goes upwards. The author demonstrates this by describing a plot which forms the basis of many comedies: "What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will" (Frye, 1973, p. 163).

Frye describes this as "a movement from one kind of society to another" (Frye, 1973, p. 163). At the beginning, the world in the comedy is controlled by characters obstructing the young hero's happiness. During the narration, however, a change occurs, which puts the youngster in a prominent place, removes the original

society and replaces it with a new one developing around the young pair. Frye also mentions a festive ritual, which then forms the climax of a comedy (weddings are most typical). Frye further describes this simple pattern in more detail and mentions the mythical symbols usually included in comedies. For the purpose of this paper, however, his analysis of comic characters is most important.

As major comic characters, Frye mentions those with their origin in the classical comedy, as they are defined in Aristotle's *Poetics* and in the *Tractatus*: the *alazon* (impostor), the *eiron* (self-deprecator), the *bomolochoi* (buffoon) and the *agroikos* (churl). The *alazons* often play an important role in the society blocking the young man's access to the woman of his heart – the *senex iratus* (heavy father). However, concerning Sam Weller and above all Falstaff, the other subgroup of *alazons*, the *miles gloriosus* (boastful soldier), is of much more importance. As Frye remarks, the *miles gloriosus* "is a man of words rather than deeds", which is an excellent description for Falstaff (Frye, 1973, p. 172). A typical example is an incident, which happens after a road robbery committed by Falstaff and his friends. They are attacked and robbed of their loot by the prince and Poins in disguise, who decided to play this practical joke on them. Falstaff is the first one to take a cowardly flight but later when he describes what happened, he boasts of his hard fight against a huge band of muggers (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 3 and 5). According to Frye, the *miles gloriosus* has no significant contribution to the main plot but his main function is to entertain the audience. He is included in the story (and often also takes part in the final festive ritual) as some kind of parasite because "he is trying to put on a good show" and "helps to put the play over" (Frye, 1973, p. 165). Although this makes the boastful character quite popular with the audience, there is a general feeling that he should not escape from the truth and reality. In consequence, the adventures of a *miles gloriosus* often end in his being ridiculed and beaten.

The position of the *alazon* is very often opposed by the *eiron*. A number of humorous scenes are based on *alazon's* boasting and *eiron's* making sarcastic remarks. There is a wide range of *eiron* figures: it can be either a vice plotting against the main hero (e.g. *dolorosus servus* - a tricky slave) or a played down figure accompanying the hero in his triumph (often called *muta persona*). Another *eiron* type is a character, who is introduced at the beginning of a play and does not appear

before its very end. Although not physically present, this character controls the development of the play which usually ends in revealing the real identity of this individual. The reason for such a plan is usually that the person wants to watch the other characters' behaviour during the fable absence.

Frye describes the role of the *bomolochoi* as very similar to that of *miles gloriosus*: "to increase the mood of festivity rather than to contribute to the plot" (Frye, 1973, p. 175). Buffoons can be represented either as professionals (clowns, pages, singers) incorporated to the story or they can be ordinary characters whose comicality lies in some form of eccentricity. It can be the way of speech (e. g. consistent use of certain phrases or foreign accent) or the character's passion for something (e. g. good food, healthy life style) or any other "established comic habit" (Frye, 1973, p. 175).

The last comic type to be described in this introduction is the *agroikos*. As the name indicates the *agroikos* is usually represented by a simple, rustic man bringing humour to the comedy by his confrontation with the urban environment. However, Frye includes in this group also other types. One of them is the straight man playing a supportive role for another character or characters, and further Frye includes what he calls "the refuser of festivity", who is ready to resist all joy and entertainment either for his snobbish ways or melancholic character (Frye, 1973, p. 176).

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that similarly to real people, most literary characters can not be classified as pure types (e.g. a pure *alazon*). More often, a character bears qualities taken from more types and a critic's task is to investigate their combination and classify the features to make a truthful description of a character.

## 2. Personal Characteristics of Samuel Weller and Falstaff

The method of character typology briefly described in the previous chapter will be further used for the analysis of Sam and Falstaff's character traits. Their common features and differences will be considered from several points of view, namely: their use of language, view of life and finally their social status will be discussed.

As mentioned in Chapter One, no literary character can be classified into one category only. In the same way, both Sam and Falstaff must be considered as a combination of more types one of which forms a major part of their character while the features of the others are less significant. The only classification which most critics can wholly agree upon is that Sam and Falstaff are comic characters, but further classification is more complicated and not unified.

The majority of critics (e.g. Northrop Frye, J. D. Wilson or Harold C. Goddard) state about Falstaff's personality, that it takes most of the *miles gloriosus* character, which also corresponds with the opinion expressed by the author of this paper. The fact that Falstaff really is a soldier is not, of course, a necessary condition for being classified as a *miles gloriosus*, but it makes him fit the classification even better. As described below, Falstaff's main weapon is language rather than physical power, which is the main typical feature of the *miles gloriosus*, as Frye specifies it (1973, p. 172). Falstaff's boasting about his brave fight after the road robbery, mentioned in the previous chapter, is a rather innocent incident in comparison with his claims after the battle of Shrewsbury. Here Falstaff pretends being killed by the Earl of Douglas, one of the rebels standing against king Henry IV. However, this is not the main imposture. While playing dead, Falstaff witnesses a fight between prince Henry and Henry Percy surnamed Hotspur, who is finally killed by the prince. Falstaff later presents a story that after prince's leaving the spot, Hotspur recovered and Falstaff had to fight hard to kill him (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 5, Scene 4, ll. 59 – 156). Thank to this claim, Falstaff gains prestige and a reputation as a hero, which helps him to avoid another clash when he encounters Sir John Coleville, who surrenders to Falstaff without any fight (*Henry IV*, Part 2, Act 4, Scene 3, ll. 1 – 23).



Thus Falstaff makes a name for himself as a brave soldier for nothing, which perfectly corresponds with the *miles gloriosus* characteristic.

As Frye specifies it, the function of this character type within a story is to entertain the audience with fictional heroic stories (1973, p. 165). Falstaff's character, on the other hand, is more complex, as McLeish states in his *Guide to Shakespeare's Characters* (1985, p. 87). He plays an important role in the development of prince Henry's personality and also his rejection at the end of the play has a deeper sense than it might seem without further study. This is, however, a topic more connected to Falstaff's relationships with the other characters and to his function in the story, which are both dealt with in a greater detail in Chapter Three and Four.

To illustrate that a character does not have to be a soldier to bear the main features of a *miles gloriosus*, Sam Weller needs to be analysed now. Even though he is generally less mischievous than Falstaff, Sam can not be described as a naive plain-hearted fool either.

Although Sam, being less corpulent than Falstaff, goes nearer deeds than his counterpart, he is a master of wit too, his strength lies in language, which he uses with ease and grace of a poet. Sam is a treasure house of sayings and stories from old London, both usually with his authorship and a low level of credibility. This together with his skilful use of language lays solid foundations for the *miles gloriosus* classification.

More *miles gloriosus* or more precisely *alazon* features can be seen in Sam's behaviour on many other occasions during his faithful service for Mr Pickwick. Sam is sent to search for a person or to spy on somebody for several times, so he has to adjust his manners to this purpose. However, he does not have to change his attitude much because his first involvement in Mr Pickwick's adventures takes place even before Sam's official employment and it is quite voluntary. When Mr Pickwick comes to the White Hart to meet the famous impostor Jingle with the intention to prevent his marriage, Sam's eye is "applied on the outside of the keyhole during the whole interview" of Jingle, Mr Pickwick and his friends (Dickens, 1993, p. 128). However, this is not the last encounter with Jingle during which Mr Pickwick is accompanied by Sam, who on another occasion, for example, spies on Jingle's servant Job Trotter under the name of "Mr Walker" or gets among Trotter's friends to

have his revenge (Dickens, 1993, pp. 328 - 335). In Chapters XXXVII – XXXIX, Sam is entrusted with two similar tasks following closely one after another. First he has to trace Mr Pickwick’s runaway friend Winkle and bring him back on any account. Having found Winkle and reported back to Mr Pickwick, his next task is to find Miss Allen for Mr Winkle, who is madly in love with her. All these tasks, of course, cannot be done without more or less serious tricks and cheats.

However, the *alazon* or *miles gloriosus* is not the only characteristic Sam should be classified with. His lower-class manners and his language are often the source for comic situations, in which Sam encounters people who have or pretend to have a higher social status or better education (e.g. lawyers and court clerks or John Smauker, one of “a select company of the Bath footmen”) (Dickens, 1993, p. 484). Therefore, it is obvious that Sam also bears some features of the *agroikos* or the *churl*. Moreover, Sam’s witty remarks uttered in the presence of his master remind us of a jester’s role at a nobleman’s court. Thus Sam sometimes functions as the *bomolochoi* or *buffoon*, whose function and characteristic partially overlaps with the role of the *miles gloriosus*, which makes this classification rather disputable. Both the *agroikos* and the *bomolochoi* are described in the first chapter in more detail.

In conclusion can be said that the basis of Sam’s character consists in the *miles gloriosus* type, but he also bears some other features of the *alazon* group as well as features of the *agroikos* type.

As it was already said, the strength of each *miles gloriosus* lies in their use of language, which is also the most striking common feature of Sam and Falstaff. They are both extremely witty characters, which is obvious from their first appearance in the story.

In *Henry IV*, Shakespeare uses the opening dialogue between Falstaff and prince Henry to introduce the characters:

*Fal.* Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?

*Prince.* Thou art so fat-witted, with drinking of old sack and unbuttoning thee after supper and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack and minutes capons, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day. (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 1, scene 2, ll. 1 - 9)

Prince's answer to Falstaff's inquiry about time is in fact a description of Falstaff's debauched character, which at the same time introduces the prince as a good match to Falstaff's eloquence (the relationship of the prince and Falstaff is dealt with in Chapter Three in more detail). However Falstaff is quick in his counterattack:

...let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty. Let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; and let men say we be men of good government, being governed, as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal. (*Henry IV* Part 1 : Act 1, scene 2, ll. 20 - 26)

This speech is a good example of both Falstaff's inclination to depreciate everything and his ability to turn each situation into his advantage by the use of language. Also Maurice Morgann, an eighteenth-century English writer and critic, considers "a high degree of wit and humour, accompanied with great natural vigour and alacrity of mind" to be the dominant qualities of Falstaff's character (Morgann, 1992, p. 80). According to this critic, such qualities offer the bearer enough comfort and it is therefore unnecessary for the person to develop any other virtues. This opinion proves true in the robbery scene already mentioned in Chapter One: although Falstaff is beaten, he is able to describe his loss as a moral victory. He defends his flight as an act of respect to the prince by which Falstaff merely avoided the murder of the heir to the throne of England (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 3 – 4). Falstaff says about himself that he is "as valiant as Hercules", but that his instinct saved him from using his physical power against the prince because "the lion will not touch the true prince" (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 4. ll. 256 - 257).

Also Sam Weller uses language as one of his main weapons to "fight his way" through the world. As with Falstaff, Sam's first appearance in the story allows the reader to enjoy his humorous and skilful play with language. In Chapter X of *The Pickwick Papers*, Sam is introduced as a boots at the White Hart – one of old London inns:

A loud ringing of the bells was followed by the appearance of a smart chambermaid in the upper sleeping gallery, who [...] called over the balustrades – "Sam!" "Hallo," replied the man with the white hat. "Number twenty-two wants his boots." "Ask number twenty-two, whether he'll have 'em now, or wait till he gets 'em," was the reply. (Dickens, 1993, pp.119 – 120)

This excerpt makes it obvious that although a servant's life in Victorian England is stereotypically not considered as a particularly easy and happy one, Sam is able to make the best of it. However as a lower class person, he has to use his wit with extreme caution, to get him out of trouble and not *vice versa*. Sam can be very often found skating on thin ice but fortunately, he is always able to handle the situation and achieve a victory. A valuable example of such a successful struggle is Sam's performance at the court, where he is brought to bear witness in the *Bardell versus Pickwick* case. The opposite party calls him, as Mr Pickwick's servant, with the intention to confuse him and use his testimony against his master, Mr Pickwick. This is generally a good strategy but not if Mr Weller is involved:

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz, folding his arms emphatically, and turning half-round to the jury, as if in mute assurance that he would bother the witness yet: "do you mean to tell me, Mr Weller, that you saw nothing of this fainting on the part of the plaintiff [Mr. Pickwick's landlady Mrs. Bardell] in the arms of the defendant [Mr Pickwick], which you have heard described by the witnesses?"

"Certainly not," replied Sam. "I was in the passage till they called me up, and then the old lady was not there."

"Now, attend, Mr Weller," said Serjeant Buzfuz, dipping a large pen into the inkstand before him, for the purpose of frightening Sam with a show of taking down his answer. "You were in the passage, and yet saw nothing of what was going forward. Have you a pair of eyes, Mr Weller?"

"Yes, I have a pair of eyes," replied Sam, "and that's just it. If they wos a pair o' patent double million magnifyin' gas microscopes of hextra power, p'raps I might be able to see through a flight o' stairs and a deal door; but bein' only eyes, you see, my wision's limited."

At this answer, which was delivered without the slightest appearance of irritation, and with the most complete simplicity and equanimity of manner, the spectators tittered, the little judge smiled, and Serjant Buzfuz looked particularly foolish. (Dickens, 1993, p. 454)

In connection with Sam's language habits, there are some more features worth mentioning. In his essay "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths", Northrop Frye mentions repetition as one of prerequisites of comicality (1990, p. 168). This principle can be seen in the so called Wellerism – Sam's remarks which follow the same pattern. They always consist of a phrase, exclamation or sentence followed by a specification of who said it and in what situation: "...vich I call addin' insult to injury, as the parrot said ven they not only took him from his native land, but made him talk English langwidge afterwards" (Dickens, 1993, p. 462). What makes readers laugh is not only the repetition of the same pattern in Sam's remarks, but more likely the inconsistency between the situation in which Sam uses the first part of his remark

and the situation in which it was said according to Sam's comment as it is obvious from the following extract:

“Does the person want me, Sam?” inquired Mr Pickwick. “He wants you particklar; and no none else'll do, as the Devil's private secretary said ven he fetched away Doctor Faustus,” replied Mr Weller. (Dickens, 1993, p. 187)

Another Sam's language habit being the tool of comedy is his dialect. Use of cockney is very often perceived as a comical feature, as well as all other deviations from standard language (e. g. speech defects). Although this style of humour can be perceived as rather mischievous in the contemporary era of political correctness, comic characters with a foreign accent or a speech impediment are still very popular. However, concerning Sam, the main comic feature is not his cockney itself but the way he combines it with his style of speech aspiring to imitate the higher classes. In combination with his negligent and easy manner, his language makes an ideal combination for humour based on contrasts.

Next common feature of Sam and Falstaff is their philosophy of life. They both take life as a game and do not let anything disconcert them. Their attitude to life and people around them is generally optimistic (yet far from naive) and they never lose their sense of humour.

To characterize Falstaff's lifestyle, it would be appropriate to use Horace's “seize the day”, as Falstaff's main aim in his life is to have as much fun as possible, now and here, for as little effort as possible. Morgann observes that to acquire certain amount of esteem and gain access to all pleasures of such a position, Falstaff had to make some concessions. He became a soldier, which seems to contradict with his constitution as it is described in *Henry IV*, but at the same time it implies that he has not always been “a gross fat man” (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 4, l. 483) (Morgann, 1993, p. 80). At the same time Falstaff's corpulence indicates that he really knows how to “seize the day” and enjoy life: in eating, drinking and merriment with prostitutes. However, in this context, it might be better to change the motto to “seize the night”, for Falstaff himself admits that he “works” mainly at night (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 1, Scene 1, ll. 10 - 26).

Concerning food and drinking, Falstaff definitely meets his match in Sam Weller, but not only in this respect. Like Falstaff, Sam is a materialist to the core because he knows very well what life in poverty means. And although his employment as Mr Pickwick's servant is no distinguished career, it is, according to Sam's words, a "change of air, plenty to see and little to do", which suits him perfectly and any time it becomes less agreeable, he is able to make it enjoyable again by his unfailing sense of humour (Dickens, 1993, p. 154). Besides good humour Sam finds recreation in pubs, in meeting friends and other friendly people (in his optimistic view, almost all people suit this description) and especially in drinking, which closely resembles Falstaff's habits. Despite Sam's all-day engagement, he is able to find some spare time to enjoy a pint of beer, a friendly talk and even to fall in love (a more detailed description of Sam's relationships with other characters can be found in Chapter Three).

The last Sam and Falstaff's common feature to be mentioned in this chapter is their social status. According to Aristotle, unlike a tragic hero, a typical comic character is never of upper class origin (Aristotle, 1917, pp. 20 - 23). The same can be said about Sam and Falstaff, who both gain access to the higher circles through their masters - Mr Pickwick and prince Henry, but they never reach such a high position. This is an important quality for comic characters to remain comic and not to bring a tragic atmosphere to the story if they fall. If a fat, boastful knight is ridiculed by his friend prince, the audience always finds it funny, no matter how popular the ridiculed character is. Similarly Sam can take part in many humorous incidents without regard to his role in them. Even as a victim he does not lose his comicality, which gives the author a great freedom in developing the character.

### 3. Relationships with other Characters

Literary characters, like other objects of criticism, can not be analysed in isolation. Both Sam Weller and Falstaff accompany other characters, situated on a higher social level (Mr Pickwick and prince Henry). Moreover, they both have a group of friends as well as enemies.

John Dover Wilson, a distinguished scholar of Renaissance drama, says that “it is impossible [...] to make sense of Falstaff’s character, to say nothing of Prince Hal’s” (1943, p. 4). and according to an English translator of ancient drama Kenneth McLeish, one of Shakespeare’s aims in *Henry IV*, is to depict the process of education of an English prince and his change from a young rebel into a distinguished ruler Henry V (1985, p. 87). From this point of view, Falstaff and the prince form the central character pair: Falstaff is prince’s guide and teacher in worldly matters; he adopts a fatherly role to the young and inexperienced prince with the aim to make him as crafty as himself. In *Henry IV* can be seen that the pupil has nearly surpassed his teacher. Most of their conversation usually turns into a battle of wits in which neither of them can be the winner. Falstaff is called “sanguine coward” a “horseback-breaker” a “huge hill of flesh” but he is able to react immediately and deliver a swift counterstroke when he describes the prince as a “starveling”, “an elf-skin” or a “tailor’s yard” (*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 2, Scene 4, ll. 230 – 236).

Falstaff also becomes the victim of several prince’s tricks. The road robbery, in which the prince and Poin in disguise rob the rest of their loot, was already mentioned several times. In *Henry IV part 2* the prince, again accompanied by Poin, decides to disguise as a tapster and attend Falstaff at dinner at the Boar’s Head Tavern to “see Falstaff bestow himself [...] in his true colours”. (Act 2, Scene 2, ll. 167 – 168) Although the prince catches Falstaff speaking ill of him, Falstaff does not surrender and declares that he “dispersed him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him”, by which he only acted as a true friend of his and prince’s father should be grateful to Falstaff for it (Act 2, Scene 4, ll. 305 – 308). These incidents not only illustrate what kind of friendship is between Falstaff and the

prince, but they are another proof of Falstaff's playful manners and the dominance of humour in everything he does.

Although Falstaff and prince's coexistence is full of banter and tricks, it is obvious that their relation is based on a long-standing friendship and many adventures which they have experienced together. What is even more striking is prince's final rejection of Falstaff and his friends as a part of his conversion and refusal of his former life. Wilson describes this as an inevitable result of prince's change and assumes that the audience must feel the same (1943, p. 22). No matter how inevitable this action is (it would be difficult to have a virtuous ruler without breaking his former bad habits), McLeish's description of it being "as much a hammer-blow to us as it is to Falstaff" seems to be much closer to the opinion of an ordinary viewer (1985, p. 87). Closely before this act Falstaff, together with his friends and perhaps with the audience too, expects that he will gain a prominent position at the court being prince's closest friend. Falstaff is an optimist by nature and as all things in his life have gone accordingly to his expectations till the very moment, as his wit has always helped him to get away with everything, he sees no reason why it should not continue the same way. This is the reason why he, at first, does not believe that the prince means it seriously and says that it is "but a colour" (*Henry IV*, Part 2, Act V, Scene 5, l. 86).

A similar relationship as between Falstaff and prince Henry can be seen between Sam Weller and his master, Mr Pickwick. Edwin Charles claims that "Sam Weller dominates Pickwick as the Prince of Denmark dominates Hamlet" (1932, p. 24). Although under the expression "Pickwick" Charles does not mean the character himself but the whole book, it is applicable to both. Sam represents a sensible and faithful servant, who watches and sometimes also steers his master's steps without the latter's realising it. Despite his youth, Sam acts as Pickwick's guide and sometimes even as a rescue whenever Mr Pickwick's adventures turn wrong.

Sam had to enter the world of adults very early in life but having fought his way through successfully, he gained a lot of valuable experience and developed his social intelligence to a high level. In this respect he surpasses the kind-hearted and rather naive Mr Pickwick considerably. However, instead of taking advantage of this



kind of superiority and misusing Pickwick's confidence, Sam becomes his protector against such a treatment and his advisor in many important matters. (All the following examples are taken from Wordsworth edition of *The Pickwick Papers*, 1993; the Roman numerals in brackets indicate chapters, in which each incident is described.) His very first service is again provided even before Mr Pickwick hires him, when Sam stops Pickwick from chasing Jingle to the street (X). Another good example of Sam's care is his accompanying Mr Pickwick to the solicitors' office, where Sam immediately notices that the clerks make fun of his master and takes appropriate steps (XX). The greatest evidence of his loyalty, however, is to be found towards the end of their adventures as they are described in the book. Mr Pickwick does not want to pay the damages to Mrs Bardell, who has won her case and therefore he is put in prison for debtors. Although Mr Pickwick refuses Sam's offer to accompany him as his servant in the prison, Sam finds a way to get to his master. He arranges to be imprisoned for a fictional debt himself to stay in prison as long as his master does and protect him there as well (XL-XLVII). The last time when Sam's loyalty contradicts Mr Pickwick's unselfish plans is when he decides to arrange for Sam's wedding with his true love Mary (LVI). Sam, although very grateful for Mr Pickwick's offer, opposes his master plainly: "what 'ud become of you vithout me? It can't be done, sir, it can't be done" (Dickens, 1993, p.732). In this simple way, Sam in fact expresses the same idea, which we tried to describe by this long paragraph.

In more serious situations (at least from Mr Pickwick's point of view), Sam changes from a protector to a kind of saviour or vindicator. Any time Mr Pickwick gets into trouble, Sam appears to help him out of it, however, the later he appears the more humour the reader can enjoy. Sam comes to rescue Mr Pickwick from a cupboard in a ladies boarding school (XVI), Sam finds him in a pound where he was put in a wheelbarrow as a drunk and sleeping trespasser (XIX), Sam helps him to find the way back to his hotel room when Pickwick gets lost in the middle of the night (XXII) and Sam is also the first to hurry to Pickwick's aid when ice breaks under him during skating (XXX). Dickens describes many other situations in which Mr Pickwick would be really lost without his faithful Sam but for the purpose of this paper, those mentioned above serve as sufficient examples to illustrate this aspect of their relationship.

The sequence of events depicted in the book also illustrates a very interesting process during which Sam's attitude to his master undergoes a gradual change. On their first meeting at the White Hart, Mr Pickwick asks Sam for information about the travellers staying there at the moment. A detailed answer is provided but it has to be paid for (Dickens, 1993, pp.124 – 126). Two chapters later, Mr Pickwick decides to hire Sam, whose first reaction to this offer is an abrupt inquiry uttered in a manner of an experienced tradesman: "Wages?" [...] "Clothes?" [...] "Work?" [...] "Take the bill down." (Dickens, 1993, p.153) As Mr Pickwick's servant, however, Sam gradually gets to know his master and to understand him best of all people. Sam grows very fond of Pickwick so that in one of the closing chapters, when Mr Pickwick offers that he would arrange and pay for Sam's wedding with his girlfriend Mary, Sam refuses because it would mean leaving the elderly Mr Pickwick on his own. Instead of taking advantage of the situation, Sam decides for "the spiritual reward of faithful service to his master" (Phillip Rogers, 1972, p. 24). This act of loyalty and unselfishness is an impressive illustration of their relationship development, which Dickens himself describes as "a steady and reciprocal attachment which nothing but death will terminate" (Dickens, 1993, p. 743).

From all that has been said in this chapter, it is obvious that although both Sam and Falstaff are officially on a lower social level than their "masters", they surpass their superiors in other aspects such as wit, life experience or social intelligence (especially Sam). This makes them the central characters of many scenes and lets them even dominate their partner characters in some parts of the story, without gaining the same social status as Pickwick or the prince. Having been rejected by the prince at the end of *Henry IV*, Falstaff falls even lower than his position was when he was accompanying the prince in his adventures and Sam has absolutely no aspirations to gain a social status at the same level of his master although his abilities make it possible.

To a certain extent, both pairs are also based on contrast. Literature professors Susan Gillman and Robert Patten see its origin in the picaresque tradition, which very often involved the idea of doublets. Gillman and Patten mention these concepts: "knight and squire, innocence and worldliness, youth and age, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza", all of which can be applied to both pairs: Falstaff and the prince as

well as to Sam and Mr Pickwick, although not always in the same order (1985, p. 442). The contrast can be seen not only in their mental qualities but also in their physical appearance. As the tall Don Quixote contrasts with his small companion Sancho Panza, similarly an old, robust and experienced knight Falstaff is the opposite to the young, tiny, inexperienced prince and a young, nimble and canny servant Sam contrasts with his old, rheumatic and unworldly master.

Besides considering Sam and Falstaff's position within the core character pair, their relationships to other characters should be investigated too. Thanks to their friendly and optimistic attitude to the world around them, neither Sam nor Falstaff see much difficulty in forming relationships.

Falstaff is surrounded by a group of prince's young companions and although he is much older than them, the only thing in which he differs is his physical appearance. As Morgann observes, Falstaff "never quits [...] one single levity or vice of youth, or loses any of that cheerfulness [sic] of mind, which had enabled him to pass thro' this course with ease to himself and delight to others" (1992, p. 80).

The last expression also depicts one of the reasons why Falstaff is accepted in a company of young men despite his age. Not only has he the same interests as they do (drinking, female company, etc.), but he is also a good and cheerful companion for all their parties and other activities. His wit and humour entertain not only the audience but they are also perceived as a source of amusement for the other characters. And paradoxically, it is his obesity and clumsiness which help him bring even more humour to the group of youths. His physical constitution often becomes the object of both verbal and practical jokes to amusement of the whole company and with not much harm to Falstaff, whose skilful manners enable him to take advantage of every insult.

The group of Sam's friends is larger than that of Falstaff's, which is caused mainly by the differences between the genres. Unlike drama, a novel enables the author to include more characters without confusing the reader. Sam's circle of friends also undergoes many changes during the narration, as to accompany Mr Pickwick on his travels means meeting a lot of new people and establishing new acquaintances. This life style suits Sam perfectly. As was mentioned above, he is very

adaptable and sociable, which makes the group of his friends and acquaintances grow larger very quickly. In every place Sam comes to, he is able to “become mighty popular” in a very short time (Dickens, 1993, p. 360). As with Falstaff, the key to Sam’s success is his cheerful and friendly approach not only to life itself, but also to the people he meets on his way.

Despite their friendly nature, both Sam and Falstaff have also a group of enemies. The most important representatives of this group are Job Trotter for Sam and the Lord Chief-Justice for Falstaff. Trotter is a servant to an impostor Alfred Jingle and often acts as an accomplice to his master’s trickery. Thus there are in fact two pairs of enemies encountering on two different levels: Mr Pickwick tries to stop Jingle from tricking other victims and similarly, Sam works against Trotter. Sam and Pickwick represent good and justice while Trotter and Jingle stand against them at the side of evil and crime. However, the fate of Jingle’s prospective victims is not as important for Sam as it is for Mr Pickwick. According to the description of Sam as a faithful servant, his primary concern is to protect his master’s interests and dignity. At the same time, defeating Trotter is the matter of Sam’s own honour. As one of the few, Trotter has once managed to trick Sam, which brought Mr Pickwick into an awkward situation, when he was discovered in a garden of a girl boarding school in the middle of the night (Dickens, 1993, pp. 211 – 217). Naturally, Sam is full of malice towards his rival and seeks opportunity for revenge. The way the two enemy pairs deal with each other also reflects their social status. Despite Mr Pickwick’s strong indignation, he does not sink to fighting Jingle physically, while Sam grasps Trotter without hesitation and drags him to see their masters and face the consequences of his deeds. Subsequently, Sam is very disappointed when his master forbids him to have his full revenge and “polish that ‘ere Job off in the front garden” and “kick him out o’ the gate” (Dickens, 1993, p. 335). Sam prefers to use his fists when dealing with his enemies in other cases as well, but he is always sensible enough to adjust his manners to concrete situations (e.g. encountering Job Trotter versus settling the matter at the office of solicitors Dodson and Fogg) (Dickens, 1993, pp. 255 – 256). Although these incidents and people involved in them can be described in more detail, for the purpose of this paper it has been decided to focus on

the main character from this group and demonstrate Sam's approach to these matters on this case only.

In the fight against his enemy, Sam takes the side of justice. On the other hand Falstaff as a thief and impostor has justice (represented by the Lord Chief-Justice) as his main enemy. Falstaff encounters either the Lord Chief-Justice or his men several times, but unlike justice, luck is always on his side so that he is able to avoid any punishment and enjoy his carefree life again. In these situations, Falstaff profits from his friendship with the prince, who can vouch for him or promise to make him face the consequences if the charge is proved. Similarly, the current situation in England, although threatening for the kingdom, is very convenient for Falstaff because his military duties help him avoid justice again. Moreover he is able to make a profit from bribes during recruitment for the king's army and he also builds a reputation for his courage (the incident at the battle at Shrewsbury is described in Chapter Two). So Falstaff's approach to life, also described in the previous chapter, proves effective once more. He escapes punishment, by which he "beats" his worst enemy and, at the same time, benefits from the situation with unparalleled elegance. All this is managed with minimum effort, which again fully corresponds with Falstaff's character. However, the reason for the Lord Chief-Justice being Falstaff's worst enemy is not only that he represents justice and therefore pursues Falstaff and his companions. He also represents the "other party", the right course which a virtuous nobleman and the heir to the throne of England should take, as it is mentioned several times in Wilson's work *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (1943). The Lord Chief-Justice is thus a great rival to Falstaff in their contest for the prince and his future. Unfortunately for Falstaff and fortunately for the kingdom, it is this crucial phase when Falstaff's luck finally runs out and the prince abandons him. This issue, however, is more closely connected with Falstaff's role and function in the story and therefore it is dealt with in the following chapter in further detail.

## 4. Function in the Story

After an introduction of Sam and Falstaff's personalities and description of their position among the other characters in the story, which was dealt with in the previous chapters, the aim of this concluding part is to find the answer to a principal question - why Sam and Falstaff actually appear in the works and what their main functions in the narrations are.

As both Sam and Falstaff are comic characters their basic function, as it is specified by Northrop Frye, is to entertain the reader or viewer (Frye, 1973, p. 165). In *Henry IV* the scenes featured by Falstaff lighten up the dim atmosphere of the civil war and other serious topics of the history play. Even on the battlefield, Falstaff does not abandon his canny and witty manners and pretends to be dead, which not only saves his life and paradoxically helps him to gain more prestige, but it also gives rise to several humorous passages. One of them is Falstaff's answer to a farewell from prince Henry, who thinks that Falstaff is really dead:

*[after killing Henry Percy] He [prince Henry] spieth Falstaff  
on the ground*

[...]

Embowell'd will I see thee by and by:  
till then in blood by noble Percy lie.

*[ Exit*

*Fal. [rising up] Embowelled! if thou embowel me to-day, I'll give you leave to  
powder me and eat me tomorrow.*

*(Henry IV, Part 1, Act 5, Scene 4, ll. 102 – 113)*

However, as Wilson points out, Shakespeare includes these humorous scenes in the history play with such a skilful tact that they by no means belittle or ridicule the events of the main plot or change the serious play into a comedy (1943, p. 99).

Similarly to Falstaff, introduction of Sam in *The Pickwick Papers* brings a new dimension to the work and more space for developing humorous incidents. Only Sam's presence is enough to cheer the readers up: his appearance, language, manners - all brings humour to the story and to the events he is involved in. Moreover, there are many humorous incidents of which he is the main initiator or an involuntary

cause. If there were not for Falstaff there would be no witty remarks and comments uttered on various occasions throughout the whole story; there would be no one to take the rheumatic Mr Pickwick to the wood in a wheelbarrow to join his friends for a hunt; no disturbance would be caused during Mr Pickwick's transport to the local magistrate office in Ipswich; there would be no scenes of Mr Pickwick attended by a manservant in the Fleet Prison for debtors and many other comic incidents would not be included in *The Pickwick Papers* (Dickens, 1993, chapters 19, 24 – 25 and 42).

Concerning the function of comic characters, Frye further mentions that the presence of the *miles gloriosus* (whose character traits both Sam and Falstaff bear) in a play makes it more interesting and attractive to the audience and therefore not all authors follow a traditional rule that a braggart must be mocked and defeated when the truth about his boasting is discovered: "...why should a professional dramatist, [...], want to harry a character who is putting on a good show – *his* show at that?" (1973, p. 163) Therefore the *miles gloriosus* usually takes a position of a kind of "parasite", who is included in the play more for the purpose of entertainment than for any significant contribution to the story development (Frye, 1973, p. 164).

Although Sam and Falstaff are comic characters and bear some typical features of the *miles gloriosus*, it is not the only role they take. Besides entertaining the reader, they have other functions in the narration, which are mostly connected with Sam's relation to Mr Pickwick and Falstaff's friendship with prince Henry.

Before investigation further Falstaff's functions in the story, it is necessary to specify the purpose of the whole play. Wilson together with other critics sees the origin of the history play in medieval morality and mystery plays, which predominately dealt with the topic of human salvation. Therefore, the history play as their descendant has an educational purpose to introduce the "meaning of history" as a distinguished American critic Harold E. Toliver describes it (1992, p. 138). In this context, the change of prince Henry's character in *Henry IV* is of key importance and consequently all events and characters which participate in this change or have any influence on it are very important too. The prince has to make a significant decision: whether he should continue with his old habits and maintain his friendship with Falstaff and the others or whether he should change both his personality and the circle

of his acquaintances. In description of Falstaff's role in the process of prince's choice, Wilson refers back to the morality play and compares Falstaff to *Riot*, who in these traditional plays lures *Youth* away from the right path (1943, p. 18). Naturally, *Riot*, the *Tempter* or any other representative of the evil must fall at the end so that *Youth* (usually represented by a young man – an heir to his father's property and status) can take the way to success (1943, p. 18). Here a clear parallel can be seen between the morality play and the events of *Henry IV* – the young heir to the throne of England instead of preparation for his role as a king spends his time drinking at the Boar's Head Tavern with his low-class friends. This makes, according to Wilson, the rejection of Falstaff inevitable and natural which would also correspond with the attitude of those who perceive Falstaff simply as a negative character.

However, critics such as Morgann or A. C. Bradley, do not think that it was Shakespeare's aim, to represent Falstaff as a villain (1992, pp. 97 and 79). Although all Falstaff's qualities can not be described as good ones, he is perceived by many as a predominately positive character. Morgann even says that his mind is "free of malice or any evil principle", which might be a too strong statement, but as was already stated, one of Falstaff's main functions within the play is to bring humour and entertain the audience. In other words, he should arouse positive emotions and not aversion, anger or hate as villains do (Morgann, 1992, pp. 80-81, 83). As A. C. Bradley observes, Falstaff makes the other people adopt his point of view and become as easygoing as he is, at least for the while he appears on the stage (1992, pp. 102 - 103). Therefore H. E. Toliver and other critics consider Falstaff more a victim of prince's career than the evil cause of his potential failure as a ruler (1992, pp. 138 and 140-142). On the contrary, A. C. Bradley argues that the prince uses his relationship to Falstaff and the others for making as bad reputation as possible so that his change into an ideal son and a just ruler is even more striking:

I know you all and, will awhile uphold  
The unyoked humour of your idleness:  
[...]  
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;  
Redeeming time when men think least I will.  
(*Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 1, Scene 2, ll. 182 – 183 and 203 – 204)



In connection with this passage, Bradley points out that during his Eastcheap adventures, the prince was “a very strong and independent young man, deliberately amusing himself among men over whom he had just as much ascendancy as he chose to exert” (1992, p. 98). Such a description of the prince clearly contradicts with the theory of a naive youngster tricked by an old and experienced tempter.

These differences between critics’ opinions show that neither Falstaff nor the prince or any other person in this Shakespeare’s play are easily and definable characters with a simple function (e.g. a perfect hero, an absolute villain etc.). All of them have both good and bad qualities, strong and weak points: Henry led a life of a drunk and thief before his change into a virtuous prince, his father, a just ruler, in fact seized the crown illegally and expresses his regret about this act (Henry IV, Part 2, Act 4, Scene 5, ll. 184 -187). In this context, Falstaff and his controversial character is just another part of the mosaic and it is up to the viewers to form their opinion of him and of the other characters as well. Prince’s public rejection of Falstaff thus can be seen either as a betrayal of an old friend or as the victory of *Youth* over *Riot*. In this way, Shakespeare invites not only the critics but everyone from the audience to participate on formation of the play, as Bradley remarks: “[Shakespeare] shows the facts and leaves the judgement to them [critics]” (1992, p. 99).

In comparison with Falstaff, the positive function of Sam Weller’s character in *The Pickwick Papers* is less disputable. He is usually described as a faithful servant who, in Philip Rogers’s words, is highly “concerned for Pickwick’s welfare” (1972, p. 31). Also one of Sam’s major functions in the narration is connected to his relation with Mr Pickwick, which was described in Chapter Three in more detail. As Mr Pickwick’s servant, he plays an important role in many of his master’s adventures. Sam is of great assistance during the pursuit of Jingle and his companion; on their first meeting (Chapter X), Sam informs Mr Pickwick and his friends, in which room Jingle stays at the White Hart, further he accompanies Mr Pickwick when he wants to follow Jingle to Bury St Edmunds and discovers Jingle’s further plans by inquiring his “servant” Trotter (Dickens, 1993, pp. 201 – 218). In Ipswich Sam again discovers Jingle’s presence in the town, which subsequently helps his master to avoid confrontation with the local magistrate and the magistrate’s family is spared

humiliation, which they would suffer if Jingle married their daughter (Dickens, 1993, pp. 318 – 336). In connection with the *Bardell versus Pickwick* case, Sam is at Mr Pickwick's side from the very beginning till its conclusion in the form of Pickwick's imprisonment. Thanks to Sam's wit and easy manners he is able to do a great service to his master not only as a witness during the trial (a more detailed description of Sam's testimony at the court is to be found in Chapter Two), but he defends Mr Pickwick's interests during the whole procedure. A good example of Sam's support is a scene in which Sam is sent to terminate the lease of Mr Pickwick's apartment in Mrs Bardell's house and to pay the last rent. He skilfully balances the conversation with the representative of the other party in their case, who accompanied by her devoted friends, plays a poor victim of Mr Pickwick's fictional breakage of a marriage promise (Dickens, 1993, pp. 338 – 340). After a toast to the case and a brief discussion among the ladies that Mrs Bardell's lawyers Dodson and Fogg surely will succeed in the case and that "the plaintiff must get it", Sam's answer is as follows:

"Vell," said Sam, [...], "All I can say is, that I wish you *may* get it." "Thank'ee, Mr Weller," said Mrs Bardell fervently. "And of them Dodson and Fogs, [...]" continued Mr Weller, "as well as for the other kind and gen'rous people o' the same purfession, as sets people by their ears, free gratis for nothin', and sets their clerks to work to find out little disputes among their neighbours and acquaintances as vants settlin' by means o' law-suits – all I can say o' them is, that I vish they had the revard I'd give 'em." "Ah, I wish they had the reward that every kind and generous heart would be inclined to bestow upon them!" said the gratified Mrs Bardell. "Amen to that," replied Sam, "and a fat and happy livin' they'd get out of it! Wish you good-night, ladies."  
(Dickens, 1993, pp. 341 – 342)

By this brilliant speech, Sam managed to express his opinion on the matter without saying anything which Mrs Bardell might use against him later and at the same time he stayed loyal to his master.

Dickens describes a large number of other incidents in which Sam plays an important role, but the extent of this paper makes it not possible to mention all of Mr Pickwick's adventures and as some of them were already introduced in the previous chapters, instead of providing further examples, the focus will be now put on Sam's role in forming Mr Pickwick's personality. Besides performing his duties, which he is paid for, and accompanying Mr Pickwick on his travels, Sam provides support to him in the form of advice and guidance in his confrontation with the real world. Sam's experience and common sense prevents Mr Pickwick from falling victim either to

various tricks played on his person or to his own naivety in situations which objectively are harmless but in which Mr Pickwick's inexperience can cause serious problems. On such occasions, Mr Pickwick does not escape Sam's remarks such as "bless your innocence, sir" or "bless your innocent eyebrows" (Dickens, 1993, pp. 203 and 397). However, these are always uttered with the air of a strong devotion and sincere love to his master.

In his article "The Education of Mr. Pickwick", James R. Kincaid, a professor of English at The Ohio State University, observes that, during the narration, Mr Pickwick's character undergoes a considerable change (1969, p. 129). (This opinion has been also expressed by other critics, who are mentioned below.) Further, Kincaid specifies Sam's role in this change as a role of a teacher, who finds it necessary to assist at Mr Pickwick's "education". Kincaid compares Pickwick to King Lear and says that:

...like the old King, Mr. Pickwick has his Fool, Sam Weller, likewise a tutor who subverts his position to educate the master whose defects he sees and fears and who is nonetheless attached to him by love. (1969, p. 129)

According to Kincaid, the process of Mr Pickwick's education consists in confronting him with the real world and the cruel society, both of which he describes as "dehumanizing" (1969, p. 128). In this confrontation, Sam plays a crucial role. As professor H. N. Maclean observes: "The benevolence and naive faith of Pickwick are steadied and supported by the common sense and courage of Sam." (1953, p. 203). Sam's task is to control the confrontation so that it does not destroy his master but makes him a stronger and better person. Robert L. Patten describe Sam as Mr Pickwick's „guide through the mazes [...] of the world“ (1967, p. 356).

Kincaid sees the main reason for the education in problems, which Mr Pickwick's naivety and ignorance causes not only to him but also to the people around him (1969, p. 135). As an example Kincaid mentions Mr Pickwick's misunderstanding with Mrs Bardell, when he wants to discuss with her hiring a manservant. Mrs Bardell interprets his words as a proposal and when the true nature of Mr Pickwick's intentions comes out, she is extremely disappointed and decides to sue him for breaking a marriage promise (various details of the case *Pickwick versus Bardell* were already mentioned) (Dickens, 1993, pp. 148 – 152). However, Kincaid

does not see the main problem of Mr Pickwick in his naivety itself but in his selfish refusal to adjust his ways to the world around him, which causes harm to the others.

Kincaid also observes that without Sam's sensible guidance, the confrontation of his good-hearted master with the cruel world could make Mr Pickwick heartless too (1969, p. 137). Here Kincaid mentions Jingle, who, according to him, is more a victim of the corrupt society than a thoroughly vicious character. Jingle's better side is revealed during his stay in the Fleet Prison, where he meets Mr Pickwick, who decides to provide for him, as Jingle's means are run out of (Dickens, 1993, pp. 594-597). Both Jingle and his companion Job Trotter have to undergo a certain kind of formation as well but much more severe and painful than Mr Pickwick has to experience and also with a little different effect than Pickwick. Jingle does not have to discover the reality, he is very well acquainted with it, perhaps too well. As Jingle has been confronted and refused by the society he decided to use its own weapons against it (e.g. the importance of wealth and social status to gain esteem among people) and subsequently Jingle fights to secure his place in the world. Kincaid also compares Jingle to Sam, who is also discontented with the social organisation as it is and its treatment of lower situated individuals. However, Sam manages to form an attitude to the world, which enables him to survive in the hostile environment without any need to cause damage to other people (1969, p. 131 - 132).

Sam fortunately manages to help his master take the right path so that Mr Pickwick can emerge from this process triumphantly as a man who, in Kincaid's words, knows that "he must accept an imperfect world in order to be perfect in it" (1969, p. 134).

## Conclusion

Based on the claim that Sam Weller and Falstaff represent the most typical comic characters of English literature, the analysis and comparison of these two characters, which is included in this paper, specifies their common features as well as qualities in which they differ.

For investigation of Sam and Falstaff's personal qualities, character typology is used. This approach is based on Aristotle and Northrop Frye's critical works, in which these basic comic characters are distinguished: the *alazon* (impostor), the *eironeia* (self-deprecator), the *bomolochos* (buffoon) and the *agroikos* (churl). The *Alazon* type further includes a character subcategory of the *miles gloriosus*, which is usually called the "military braggart" or the "boastful soldier" in English (Frye, 1973, p. 172). This type is based on a character from Plautus's play "who has killed an elephant with his fist and seven thousand men in one day's fighting" (Frye, 1973, p. 165).

Although Sam and Falstaff bear features of more than just one of these character types, according to their major character traits, most critics (e.g. Northrop Frye, J. D. Wilson or Harold C. Goddard) classify them into the category of the *miles gloriosus*. The main reason for such a classification is one of Sam and Falstaff's basic common features – their witty language. Both of them have to rely on language as on the key to their success; Falstaff because of his corpulent and clumsy figure and Sam because of his servant position in the society. In their works, both Dickens and Shakespeare describe many occasions on which language helped their characters out of difficulties (e.g. Falstaff's answer to prince's accusation that he does nothing but drinks, eats and visits brothels or Sam's testimony at Mr Pickwick's trial, which are both described in Chapter Two) (*Henry IV* Part 1, Act 1, Scene 2, ll. 20 - 26) (Dickens, 1993, p. 454).

As their next common feature, their attitude to life should be mentioned. Both Sam and Falstaff know very well how to enjoy life despite all difficulties they have to face; both of them like good food and drink, they enjoy parties or any other festive events. They also share an outstandingly optimistic view of life - neither of them ever

runs out of humour and if they do, the situation they have got into must be really serious and insoluble.

The last common feature of the characters themselves to be mentioned is their social status. Neither Sam nor Falstaff is of upper class origin, which is, according to Aristotle, one of the typical features of comic characters. This quality also distinguishes them from tragic heroes, whose high status within the society makes their fall even more tragic.

Concerning Sam and Falstaff's relations to other characters, they both form a central pair with a more important character of the story – Sam is hired by Mr Pickwick as his manservant and Falstaff is the closest friend of prince Henry.

Although the relationship between Sam and Mr Pickwick begins on an official level, during the period described in the book, their formal master-servant relationship changes into a lifelong friendship. Sam learns to understand Mr Pickwick's character and habits very quickly and becomes his sensible and faithful servant, who watches and sometimes also steers his master's steps. Sam accompanies Mr Pickwick on a large number of his trips, he takes part in most of Mr Pickwick's adventures and often helps his master out difficulties. During the travels, Sam as Mr Pickwick's representative manages both to make a lot of friends as well as encounter several strong enemies. Thanks to Sam's optimistic nature and friendly manners, the servants of every place Mr Pickwick comes to, take an immediate liking to his Sam because he is a cheerful and pleasant companion. On the other hand, those who stand against Mr Pickwick or his friends, meet a strong enemy in Sam. The main representative of this group is an impostor Alfred Jingle and his companion Job Trotter, who introduces himself as Jingle's servant. For this reason, Mr Pickwick tries to stop Jingle from carrying out his mischievous plans while Sam deals with Trotter at the "servants' front line".

Similarly to Sam, who cares for his master, Falstaff accepts a fatherly role in his relationship to prince Henry and he is prince's guide and an example to follow in the early period of prince's life. Together with a group of prince's young friends, they enjoy both days and nights with prostitutes at the Boar's Head Tavern in London, where they eat and drink and do not care for the country's welfare much. Although

Falstaff is much older than these young men, his mind and interests are just the same as theirs and therefore they do not mind his company at all. On the contrary, they like his jokes and comments alluding to various prince's qualities or former adventures. It is thus obvious that Falstaff is popular for the same reasons as Sam Weller – he is a friendly and hilarious companion.

Any time the friends run out of money, they have no problem to rob a group of travellers. This, however, often makes them face the law, which is represented by the Lord Chief-Justice, Falstaff's greatest enemy. Here a difference between Sam and Falstaff can be seen – Sam, who represents the side of good and justice, fights immoral Trotter and Jingle, while Falstaff as an old rogue stands against the law and order represented by the Lord Chief-Justice. The reason for their hostility is not only Falstaff's breaking the law and a danger of being punished for it but it is prince's favour which concerns Falstaff most. He feels a strong enemy in the Chief-Justice, who represents the life which a prince and heir to the throne should lead and Falstaff therefore fears that Henry will abandon his old habits and join the “opposite party”.

The relation of Sam with Mr Pickwick and Falstaff with prince Henry is also closely connected to their function in the story. Besides bringing more space for developing humorous scenes, Sam and Falstaff's major function lies in the influence which they have on their partner characters.

According to Wilson, Falstaff's acts as a tempter, who detracts the young prince from the duties he has as the heir to the throne of England. For this reason, Wilson describes prince's rejection of Falstaff at the end of the play as a victory of virtue over vice (1943, pp. 21-22). However Bradley together with other critics does not think that Shakespeare wanted to present Falstaff as a thoroughly vicious character and the rejection, although it is inevitable, is perceived by Bradley as an act by which Falstaff becomes a victim of prince's rise to power (1992, p.98). Bradley's friendly attitude to Falstaff thus corresponds with the opinion of those many who took liking to this character and to whom the author of this paper belongs as well.

Sam on the other hand is a less controversial character and so is his function in the story. *The Pickwick Papers* is usually perceived as a demonstration of a clash between innocence and experience, between naivety and the malicious cruelty of the

real world. This view is expressed for example by J. R. Kincaid (1969), P. Rogers (1972), or H. N. Maclean (1953). The naivety and innocence is represented by the Pickwickians and above all by Mr Pickwick himself, who during his adventures encounters various situations by which he learns to understand the true nature of the world. Sam's role in this process, which Kincaid calls "Pickwick's education", is that of a protector and tutor, who prevents his master's confrontation with the reality from being too sudden because it could not only hurt him but it would completely destroy his good nature and make him an ignorant and cruel egoist (Kincaid, 1969, pp. 128-131). Therefore Sam's main function in the story does not lie only in protection of Mr Pickwick from mistreatment but more importantly, Sam acts as a guide through the perplexities of life, through which he has been able to get successfully and helps his master to do the same.

As a result of the character analysis of Sam Weller and Falstaff can be stated that although these characters were created in different literary periods, styles and genres, they bear a large number of common features. Both of them are comic characters with the major personality traits of the *miles gloriosus* type, they are both unusually witty and have a highly optimistic view of life, which makes them good friends and cheerful companions. Both Sam and Falstaff form a central pair with a character who has a higher social status and a more prominent role in the story (Sam's master Mr Pickwick and prince Henry, Falstaff's close friend). Despite their lower status, there are many situations in which Sam and Falstaff act as superior to their "masters". Finally, Sam and Falstaff's major function in the narration is connected to their relationship with Mr Pickwick and the prince as well. Both of them exert a considerable amount of influence over their partner characters and play an important role in the process of their change, which at the same time, forms the central motif of both *The Pickwick Papers* and *Henry IV*.



## Résumé

Sam Weller a Falstaff jsou významné komické postavy z anglické beletrie. Postava Samuela Wellera je známá z Dickensova prvního významného díla *Kronika Pickwickova klubu*, kde prostý, upřímný Sam vystupuje jako osobní sluha hlavního hrdiny pana Pickwicka. Jeho prostota a upřímnost však nemá nic společného s naivitou, právě naopak, přes svůj mladý věk se Sam velmi často projevuje jako mnohem zkušenější a životem protřelejší postava než jeho pán.

Sir John Falstaff se objevuje v několika Shakespearových hrách, avšak analýza jeho postavy obsažená v této práci se zakládá na Falstaffově roli v historické hře *Král Jindřich IV.* Starší, obtloustlý rytíř Falstaff je dlouholetým přítelem prince Jindřicha, kterému říká přátelsky Jindro a spolu s ním a ještě několika mladíky tráví čas v pitkách a radovánkách v krčmě U Kančí hlavy v Eastcheapu (tyto i všechny ostatní výrazy týkající se Shakespearovy hry jsou převzaty z překladu J. V. Sládka a A. Klášterského, 1964).

Kritický přístup uplatněný v této práci je založen na typologii postav, kterou ve své práci *Anatomie kritiky* podrobně popsal významný kanadský literární kritik Northrop Frye. Jeho typologie je založena na antické teorii dramatu, která rozlišuje tyto základní typy komických postav: šejdířský *alazon*, sebe podceňující *iron*, *bomolochoi* (šásek či šprýmař) a *agroikos* (neotesanec). V postavě alazona Frye ještě rozlišuje další typy, mezi které také patří *miles gloriosus* neboli „chlubivý voják“, jehož kořeny sahají do dob římského dramatu.

Typologie postav a především typ *miles gloriosus* hraje důležitou roli v popisu charakteristických rysů Sama a Falstaffa, protože většina kritiků považuje postavu chlubivého vojáka za základ jejich charakteru. Oba z nich totiž uplatňují jazyk jako svou nejmocnější zbraň, což přesně odpovídá Fryeově popisu chlubivého vojáka, jehož síla podle něj spočívá spíše ve slovech než v činech (1973, s. 172).

Díky své schopnosti umně nakládat s jazykem je Falstaff schopen pomoci si z každé nesnáze a ještě ji obrátit ve svůj prospěch. Svůj podvodný um uplatňuje zejména v situacích, kdy se od něj očekává, že dostojí své hodnosti rytíře a bude bojovat.

Také Sam vděčí svému pohotovému jazyku za nejednu pomoc ve svízelné situaci. Jako dobrý příklad poslouží jeho svědectví u soudu, kam ho pozvali zástupci druhé strany aby ho donutili svědčit proti jeho pánovi, ovšem bezvýsledně (Dickens, 1993, s. 454 - 455).

Dalším společným rysem těchto postav je jejich přístup k životu a všemu, co jim přináší. Oba jsou věčnými optimisty se schopností najít si na všem alespoň něco pozitivního. Humor je pro ně lékem na všechno a případy, kdy jim tento lék dojde jsou opravdu ojedinělé a vždy jde o velmi vážnou situaci. Kromě humoru mají oba ve velké oblibě dobré jídlo a pití, což je spolu s jejich přátelskou a veselou povahou dělá ideálními společníky.

Dále je třeba povšimnout si podobnosti ve společenském postavení obou postav. Sam i Falstaff pochází z nižších vrstev, což je podle Aristotelovy literární teorie jedním ze základních předpokladů komických postav narozdíl od tragických hrdinů, kteří ve společnosti většinou zaujímají prominentní postavení, což na konci příběhu ještě umocňuje jejich pád.

V souvislosti s jejich vztahy k ostatním postavám je nejdůležitější jejich přátelství k osobám, se kterými tvoří ústřední dvojici. V případě Sama je to pan Pickwick a u Falstaffa princ Jindřich. Zajímavým jevem je, že oficiálně stojí Sam i Falstaff níže na společenském žebříčku níže než postavy, kterým dělají společnost, ale v mnohých ohledech svoje „pány“ předčí a naopak stojí nad nimi.

Samova zkušenost a zdravý rozum jsou jeho pánovi nadmíru užitečné. Naivita a pana Pickwicka by ho velmi často mohla přivést do nepříjemné situace, a proto ho Sam musí chránit před těmito následky. V případech, kdy Sam nestačí nemilé události zabránit, přichází a jako zachránce z ní pana Pickwicka vysvobozuje. Přestože tím k panu Pickwickovi vlastně zaujímá nadřazené postavení, nikdy neopustí svůj přístup sluhy a dává dobrý pozor aby svým chováním Pickwickovi pomohl, ale nepoškodil jeho postavení a nedal příliš najevo svou svrchovanost.

Přátelství Falstaffa a prince Jindřicha je velmi specifické a má mnoho společných rysů se vztahem, který je mezi Samem a jeho pánem. V dobách princova bujarého mládí a nezkušenosti se ho Falstaff otcovsky ujal, aby ho zasvětil do tajů nespoutaného života a svým příkladem mu ukázal, jak je možné zručně a s minimální

námahou se vypořádat se vším a všemi, kteří by mu chtěli bránit užívat si života plnými doušky. Falstaff, podobně jako Sam, zaujímá svým způsobem nadřazenou roli k princovi, ale nikdy nedosáhne stejného postavení jako jeho pán.

Z přátelství ústřední dvojice také vyplývají další vztahy – přátelské i nepřátelské. To že Sam doprovází pana Pickwicka na jeho cestách, ho přivádí do styku s mnoha novými lidmi, se kterými se díky své vstřícné postavě velmi rychle spřátelí. Jeho vtip a veselý charakter mu pomáhá stát se dobrým a žádaným společníkem. Přátelé pana Pickwicka jsou i Samovi přátelé, kdo však stojí proti Pickwickovi, nachází v Samovi silného nepřítele. Největší nepřátelství k němu chová Job Trotter, sluha, nebo spíše komplic, sňatkového podvodníka Alfreda Jingle. Přestože Jingle není skutečným gentlemanem s postavením a majetkem na úrovni pana Pickwicka, to že se za něco takového vydává stačí k utvoření svou nepřátelských front. Na jedné z nich vystupuje Pickwick s úmyslem zmařit Jingleovy nekalé úmysly a na druhé stojí se stejným záměrem Sam proti Jobovi.

Stejně jako Sam je Falstaff díky své veselé povaze dobrým společníkem každému, kdo se chce bavit. Z tohoto důvodu je i přes svůj pokročilý věk oblíbený mezi mladými přáteli prince Jindřicha. Falstaffovo srdce totiž zůstává i pod vrstvami tuku stále mladé a má stejné zájmy jako jeho přátelé: pití, ženy a veselí. Avšak tyto zvyky něco stojí a Falstaff není vždy při penězích. V takových případech přijde skupině vhod okrást skupinu pocestných, aby si za uloupené peníze mohli dál nerušeně užívat. Tady ovšem vyvstává problém. Zákon totiž postihuje všechny bez rozdílu, tedy i přátele princovy. Tím pádem se stává zákon v čele s Lordem nevyšším sudím hlavním Falstaffovým nepřítelem. V tom se Falstaffovo postavení liší od Samova, který s panem Pickwickem stojí na straně spravedlnosti proti Jingleovým podvodům. Falstaff se naproti tomu snaží spravedlnosti uniknout. Příčinou jeho nepřátelství s nejvyšším sudím však není jen střet se zákonem, ale je to i otázka princovi přízně. Nejvyšší sudí, jako blízký spolupracovník současného krále, totiž reprezentuje cestu kterou by se měl následník trůnu správně ubírat. Falstaff si je toho velmi dobře vědom a obává se, princ pod tímto vlivem opustí svůj starý životní styl. Jeho obavy se nakonec stanou skutečností.

Se vztahem ústřední dvojice je také spjata důležitá funkce kterou Sam a Falstaff v příbězích zastávají. Kromě toho, že jako komické postavy se uplatňují

v mnoha humorných scénách a mají tedy čtenáře nebo diváka bavit, sehrávají i důležitou roli při formaci a změně, kterou prochází pan Pickwick a princ Jindřich.

James R. Kincaid spolu s dalšími kritiky zastává názor, že ke hlavní změně u pana Pickwicka dochází tím, že se postupně vzdá svého naivního a do sebe uzavřeného přístupu ke světu. Kincaid označuje tento proces jako „vzdělávání“, během kterého Sam vystupuje jako učitel (1969, s. 131). Sam tedy nejenom chrání pana Pickwicka před důsledky jeho vlastní naivity, on ho zbaví rovnou příčiny těchto nesnází. Pro Pickwickovo „vzdělání“ je podle Kincaida nutné, aby byl seznámen s tím, jaký svět skutečně je a mohl tak přehodnotit svoje představy o něm a o přístupu, jaký k němu má zaujmout (1969, s. 127). Kincaid si dále uvědomuje, že Samova pomoc je nezbytná i z toho důvodu, že kdyby byl pan Pickwick konfrontován s realitou příliš rychle a bez správného vedení, mohl by svoje postoje přehodnotit tak, že by se stal stejně krutým a bezohledným jako je svět sám (1969, s. 137).

Ve hře *Král Jindřich IV.* hraje Falstaff, podobně jako Sam v Dickensově příběhu, také důležitou roli při proměně, kterou si prochází princ Jindřich. Ten se v průběhu hry změní z lehkomyšlného, divokého mladíka v ušlechtilého prince hodného následnictví trůnu. Podle J. Dovera Wilsona, profesora anglické renesanční literatury, zastává Falstaff ve svém vztahu k princovi roli svůdce, který mladíka odvádí od jeho pravého poslání (1943, s. 22). Tento názor na Falstaffovu funkci v příběhu však není jediný a vzhledem k tomu, že většina kritiků (např. Maurice Morgann, A. C. Bradley nebo H. E. Toliver) naopak považuje Falstaffa za kladnou postavu, kloní se ke stejnému názoru i autor této práce. Přestože se kritici shodují na tom, že princova proměna je pro jeho nástupnictví nutná, většina z nich nevidí Falstaffův úděl v ní jako spravedlivý, když ho princ na konci hry odbude slovy: „Já tebe neznám, starče“ (Král Jindřich IV., díl 2., jednání 5., scéna 5., verš 20.). A. C. Bradley navíc upozorňuje na princovu vypočítavost s níž využil svou dřívější neblahou pověst i přátelství s Falstaffem k tomu, aby po proměně ještě více vynikla jeho nová osobnost. Všechny tyto argumenty staví Falstaffa spíše do role obětního beránka než zlomyslného nepřítele království.

Ze srovnání společných a rozdílných rysů Sama Wellera a Falstaffa tedy vyplývá, že přes zdánlivou rozdílnost mají obě postavy mnoho společného. Oba jsou

komickými postavami s hlavními rysy typu *miles gloriosus* (chlubivý voják), mají výborné vyjadřovací schopnosti a pohotový jazyk a také sdílí podobnou zálibu v humoru, čímž se stávají oblíbenými a veselými společníky. Dále oba tvoří ústřední dvojici s postavami, které mají oficiálně vyšší společenské postavení, ale v mnoha ohledech je Sam i Falstaff převyšují. Posledním z nejdůležitějších společných rysů obou postav je jejich zásadní funkce v příběhu, která v obou případech souvisí s proměnou kterou prochází jejich přátelé pan Pickwick a princ Jindřich. Tím také Sam a Falstaff výrazně zasahují do děje, protože zmíněný proces proměny tvoří ústřední motiv obou děl.

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