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## FAIRY TALES – TELLERS, TELLINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### PREFACE TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The current special issue of JEF is dedicated to the study of fairy tales. In addition to their keen scholarly interest in the folk narrative genre that is defined as the fairy tale, the authors of this issue delivered oral presentations at the international conference entitled *Family Relationships in Fairy Tales*, held on October 19–20, 2012, in Hajdúböszörmény, Hungary. This conference was organised by the Department of Literature, Communication and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Debrecen's Faculty of Child and Adult Education, led by professor Péter Bálint, whom we would like to thank for his invitation addressed to Estonian scholars of fairy tales. Although the conference focused on family relations it does not serve as a common theme for the articles in the current issue as most of the authors did not develop their conference papers, preferring to submit other studies of fairy tales to the journal.

The articles in this issue represent different approaches in folk narrative scholarship, concentrating mainly on Hungarian and Estonian examples. Gábor Biczó addresses fairy tales through the narrator and his repertoire by analysing the relationship between the biography of the Gypsy storyteller Lajos Ámi and the motifs of his folk tales. Zoltán Bódis focuses on the process of telling fairy tales and claims that the act of telling can be regarded as a specific mode of communication. Mairi Kaasik, Kärri Toomeos-Orglaan and Merili Metsvahi discuss particular themes in fairy tales, focusing closely on certain tale types. Kaasik studies the type cluster covering a mortal's visits to the Other World, Toomeos-Orglaan focus her research on the *Cinderella* (ATU 510A) and *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* (ATU 530) tale types, and Metsvahi dedicates her article to the tale type of *The Woman as Wolf* (AT 409).

Merili Metsvahi  
Editor of the Special Issue



# A STORYTELLER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF HIMSELF

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## ABSTRACT

Lajos Ámi (1886–1963) was one of the most talented Gypsy storytellers in Hungary whose repertoire includes more than 250 tales. In his stories, Ámi applied a lot of autobiographical elements (also in fairy tales) and so the question arises, what does the term autobiographical mean in the context of folk tales? The question is unfolded in relation to both the role of the storyteller him/herself and to storytellers operating as public intellectuals in their local communities. The distinction, and also the relationship between these roles, are significant and have implications to what is revealed autobiographically, on what grounds and in what way. This article outlines the analysis of autobiographical motifs and their roles in Ámi's interpretation and presentation of himself in his storytelling.

KEYWORDS: folk tale • storytelling • autobiography • Gypsy folklore

## INTRODUCTION

Sándor Erdész was a famous Hungarian ethnographer who collected Lajos Ámi's tales in the early 1960s. In his opinion there is an easily observable fact in Ámi – the gypsy story-teller's – tales, which is the usage of autobiographical elements (Erdész 1968: 10–20). Max Lüthi, as one of the most significant experts in fairy tales, suggested an approach to interpreting the hero that sees him as a man who wants to realise himself in his own story. This basically psychological approach is established through the everyday comprehension of modern personality. Manhood has to be proven by overcoming the difficulties that have arisen in the inner world of the man. "To be a king is an image for complete self-realisation; the crown and royal robe which play such a great role in the fairy tale make visible splendor and brilliance of the great perfection achieved inwardly" (Lüthi 1976: 139).

Lüthi agrees with other ethnographers that there is a causal interdependence between the plot of tale and the storyteller's sociocultural reality (Lüthi 1962: 84–88). Of course we should not forget Lüthi's Jungian theoretical background which determines his interpretative horizon. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the issue of autobiographical elements in folk tales is a special aspect of reflected sociocultural reality. The storyteller's story is rooted in his/her social environment. By interpreting his/her own biography, the storyteller elaborates his/her concepts on the community and gives an authentic evaluation of the socio-cultural reality (Dégh 1972: 59).

A number of recent studies deal with the status of autobiographical motifs in folk tales. Nevertheless the approaches to the topic are extremely different and most of them involve completely incongruent aspects. For instance David Hopkin (2004) draws attention to the fairy tale panels in the autobiographical memoirs written by French veterans of the early 19th century. According to Hopkin the fairy tales offered schemes for interpreting sociocultural otherness as well as the understanding of the self in a war situation. In this approach the conception of the fairy tale contains adequate chance of a very personal self-assertion that is aligned with the expectations of the story-teller's community.

Another interesting approach is taken by Elisabeth Wanning Harries in her frequently quoted recent essay titled "The Mirror Broken: Women's Autobiography and Fairy Tales" (2004). One of her inspiring ideas is to talk about the ways contemporary female writers reflect on the function of fairy tales in their childhood and about how this latent factor is mirrored in their autobiographical confessions.

All of the mentioned approaches deal genuinely with the autobiographical elements of tales; nevertheless I suggest a further approach concerning the topic of Ámi's tales. Specifically, we should bear in mind that there is a conceptual parallelism between his autobiographical self-evaluation and the socio-cultural domain of his tales that can be investigated on the level of text.<sup>1</sup> In other words, in Ámi's text a finely integrated conception of his life-story can be observed that is an interpretation of the socio-cultural framework as well. In my opinion, due to these characteristics, the contemporary post-critical reading technique of anthropological texts elaborated by Johannes Fabian might serve as an adequate interpretative approach to Ámi's art of storytelling.

Fabian is a leading figure as well as an outstanding theorist of contemporary socio-cultural anthropology. In the last two decades his interests focused on the critical revision of basic theoretical and methodological concepts of anthropology. In Fabian's analysis we can observe the functional concept of the Other and otherness as an impulsive force of contemporary critical anthropology.<sup>2</sup>

In his recently published book *Ethnography as Commentary*, Johannes Fabian (2008) examined the issue of relevant writing and reading strategy in anthropology from a theoretical point of view. According to his reasoning, the commentary can be an alternative and genuine form of writing-strategy and interpretation in anthropology to ethnographical monographs, because a commentary is not overburdened by the expectations of disciplinary tradition (Fabian 2008: 9–31). I am not interested in a detailed presentation of Fabian's general concept and function of commentary. But his theory of commentary provides a quite novel way to grasp the topic of autobiographical constituents in Ámi's tales.

Fabian starts his book with an autobiographical 'tale' dating from the 1970s and presents a very impressive reinterpretation of his memories. In 1974 he was a guest lecturer in Congo. As a young scholar he rented a house in Lumumbashi city located in the northern part of this huge country. During Mobutu's dictatorship lack of food and other goods were frequent at the end of the dry season. Consequently burglary and theft were widespread in the region so Fabian and the other foreigners were frightened. He had already been acquainted with a native healer and sorcerer who offered him a protection ritual against theft and other crimes. In *Ethnography as Commentary*, Fabian reconstructs his meeting with Kahenga Mukonkwa Michael, who was operating as a

practitioner and who became the person and subject matter of Fabian's anthropological understanding. According to Fabian, Kahenga was a representative figure of sociocultural otherness. Fabian in his text also examined his own expectations and observations shaping his interpretation. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of Fabian's encounter with Kahenga raises more questions in relation to the reading of the anthropological sense of the Other (Fabian 2008: 46–54).

Fabian's description of Kahenga's visit consists of a series of images evoking the mood, atmosphere and spectacle of a late tropical afternoon. Reading the text (autobiographical 'tale') we can see the anthropologist in the role of an observer visualising an event from a long time ago with the help of images preserved in his mind. From the storyteller's viewpoint both, Kahenga and Fabian are strangers to each other.

On the one hand the white anthropologist in his light tropical clothes waiting for the sorcerer's performance remains. He is a rational Western man who is sceptical about the factual usefulness of the rite of "closing the house", but he trusts Kahenga's fame and hopes that the ritual will indirectly keep away potential offenders. On the other side there is the semi-nude black specialist performing absolutely incomprehensible acts in Fabian's garden. He dug out eight shallow holes and placed objects he had brought along in each. Finally – in Fabian's words – Kahenga "made a third round, now crouching over each hole and covering it with dirt which he seemed to move with his buttocks" (Fabian 2008: 24).

In Fabian's understanding, the insoluble social and cultural distance between the two men in that moment of the "closing the house" rite seemed to be self-explanatory. However, Kahenga as the representative of socio-cultural otherness has further important analytical function in relation to the understanding of the situation. His figure throws new light upon the anthropological sense of the sociocultural Other. While Fabian examined his own reflections on the evoked images of memory he had to recognise in himself the manifestation of the Other. Let me cite Fabian briefly:

[...] my wife and I stood there facing Kahenga, still not knowing what to do. He quickly bent down, touched the ground, and then used his thumb to rub some dirt on our foreheads. [...] He could not know that what he had just done to me triggered deep memories of Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, when we went to church to receive the sign of the cross in ash on our foreheads from a priest muttering *memento quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris* (remember that you are dust and you shall to return to dust). Though the two rites had little or nothing in common as far as content, or intent, was concerned [...] for me they merged as bodily experiences. Kahenga had pulled me back into a realm I had left behind long ago. (Fabian 2008: 23)

Apart from giving further details of Fabian's analysis concerning his meeting with the native healer in Congo, the multi-faceted critical anthropological sense of the sociocultural Other is clear in this quote. Fabian suggests an extension of its meaning that involves three aspects.

First, the Other who appertains to a world beyond ours and who represents the classic subject matter of anthropology in itself (as Kahenga, the healer does in the above example). Second, the 'Other in the Self' who reflects our own otherness involving also our own world (I mean the anthropologist's culture) as an inseparable part of anthropo-

logical comprehension (as the memory of Ash Wednesday does in the example above). Finally, with this point we may turn to the constructive role of memory that creates a number of contesting readings of otherness. This third layer or dimension of complexity involves the interpreter (I mean his institutions, academic background, personal motives, scientific intentions and so on) who has to take himself (herself) as an object of understanding: in this context the interpreter is the reflexive subject of his (or her) interpretation in that very role.

In my opinion Fabian's reading strategy of his own autobiographical story and the related theoretical as well as methodological consequences can be applied efficiently in the analyses of Ámi's tales. If we read his related texts as ethnographic source material for an autobiography, in which the storyteller identifies himself with a representative of socio-cultural otherness, the adaptation of Fabian's conception might be beneficial. First, the autobiographical motifs in Ámi's tales are used to describe the Other, which means that the figure of the storyteller used as a representation of the self appears as the subject of interpretation both for the storyteller and for the reader. Second, the 'Other in the Self' refers to Ámi's comprehension of his own culture and history as an integrated aspect of his autobiographical narrative.

Ámi's biographical references are inbuilt into the deeper polyphonic structure of the stories. Even though this thought might be quite banal for the reader who knows Ámi's oeuvre a bit better, still we should strive to comprehend the causes and characteristics of his story-telling strategy. Moreover, the investigation of biographical aspects in Ámi's tales is going to help us to understand the ethics of folk tales as well. Firstly, I circumscribe the general features of the autobiographical elements in Ámi's folk tales. Secondly, based on a classical fairy tale titled *The King Little Michael* (*Király Kis Miklós* AT 300, AT 301A and its variants), I investigate the relation between the autobiographical self in the tale and the concept of self-ethics in Ámi's storytelling.

According to the classification of storytellers, Ámi was not one who insisted on the very same texts or structure in his telling. In other words, the order of motifs and episodes were not determined strictly in his tales and they did not compose a kind of closed text.

Approaching the problematic of usage the autobiographical elements in Ámi's tales we shall conclude that, because of the lack of systematic usage of them, they might seem contingent fragments at first. We can regard this feature of his storytelling as an instrument applied in order to deconstruct the structure of a classical tale type. If we analyse these stories a bit more deeply we realise that the autobiographical motifs are important constituents. Thus does a challenging recognition arise: we start to wonder how a storytelling community works, how it accepts tales that include details of the teller's very personal life.

In the following I would like to examine the significance of autobiographical constituents in folk tales in relation to the unavoidable task of reinterpreting the figure of the storyteller and generally the storytelling in Ámi's case. In other words, in my hypothesis the storyteller is always more than just a specialised entertainer of his community. He is also a consequent mediator and critic of the general scale of values and norms that has been expressed (partially) by the autobiographical evaluation of the self. The usage of autobiographical elements and examples helps him to act out the role of interpreter, which is also a community expectation towards him.

Ámi paraphrases the love story of his youth in the tale titled “The Boar has Been Eating Corn for Seven Years”, which is a variation of *The Man Marries the Princess* (AT 850–AT 869). There is a king whose cornfield was robbed by boars every night and neither his soldiers nor other young people were able to protect it. Everyone who took the risk but failed had been beheaded. The last one in the queue was an “intemperate vagabond Gipsy lad” (Ámi 1968: 458) who was able to save the corn and won the princess’ hand. In the quixotic story the Gipsy’s helpmate was a bewitched frog that was also a princess and, when the protagonist gave her a slice of bread, she was released from the curse. In Ámi’s text the situation is given in detail:

The lad roasted his bacon on the fire. While he was roasting it, he saw the frog eating the bread. The frog suddenly turned into a wonderful woman so beautiful it was easier to look at the sun, than in her eyes. She was seven times more beautiful than the sun itself. Then he said:

– Oh my God! Why should I seek the king’s daughter? She is not as beautiful as this woman is. (Ámi 1968: 459)

The princess, called Gisela, released from the curse, promised to marry the Gipsy lad as a sign of her gratitude toward the boy.

In this scene one can identify a number of parallels reminding us of Ámi’s life story. In the year 1900, when he was only fourteen, he started to work as an assistant to an Italian stock boss in a brickyard in Szatmárnémeti (recently Satu Mare, Romania). Ámi referred to his boss as Vince Bunkó (Hick), his first master in teaching tales. He learned around one hundred stories from Vince Bunkó. In addition to this, he became acquainted with his boss’s beautiful daughter, called Gisela, in the brickyard. In his recorded biography sixty years later Ámi referred to the girl as the owner of the most wonderful name of the world. Nevertheless Ámi’s career had ended suddenly in Szatmárnémeti. He summarised the case as follows: “I made a ‘mistake’ with the boss’s daughter” (Erdész 1968: 14). After the affair he thought that it was better to escape from the brickyard, but the name Gisela was mentioned and embedded in his stories, always referring to a woman of great beauty.

The autobiographic motif, i.e. the fact that the princess is released of her curse and the daughter of his former boss have the very same name, is further detailed later on in the story, together with other biographical facts. As an example we shall take the scene in which the protagonist raises some scepticism in relation to the question whether he can be accepted or not by his bride’s family as a husband. The Gipsy lad gave voice to his own sceptical attitudes as follows:

– I wonder if we shall meet some trouble with that. I must confess, for I don’t want to be secretive about it, that I am a Gipsy lad.

– You were tiny like a piece of a millet-grain in your mother’s womb when I had already known that you are a Gipsy. But I don’t want to pay attention to that. It does not matter to me whether you are Gipsy or Hungarian, Jewish or Slovakian. You are always a creation of God. I love you! What can the problem be then? (Ámi 1968: 460–461)

We know from Ámi's biographer Sándor Erdész that this polemic touches the most intimate points in the storyteller's life. Specifically, both his relationship with his Gipsy community and his personal ethnic identity were extremely ambiguous. Ámi frequently emphasised not only in his biography but also in the autobiographical motifs of his tales the experiences of ethnic discrimination in his life. Thanks to his excellent story-telling abilities he was able to counteract the depressing situations and, what is more, he could steal a march on his social environment. In the army, in his village and also in his work communities he was successful with his stories: in other words, Ámi recognised story-telling as a method to gain acceptance for his social network.

Furthermore, when reading Ámi's text it becomes clear that the autobiographical self-narrative presents the protagonist as the storyteller's subject matter as part of the storyteller's comprehension of the self. The Gipsy lad represents Ámi in his youth and from the viewpoint of the storytelling he sees himself as somebody Other. The princess' standpoint sheds light on the unavoidable challenge of interpretation concerning the significance of sociocultural (ethnic) otherness in Ámi's life. Let's bear in mind that she says: "You are always a creation of God. I love you! What can the problem be then?" The storyteller's reflexive sentence is an autobiographical allusion that refers to his recent (i.e. the early 1960s) socio-cultural status in his local community.

The conscious usage of his abilities in order to climb the social ladder can be observed when he becomes an applied professional storyteller in the village pub (in Szamosszeg) after World War II. There he earned enough money to build a pretty nice house in a part of the village where only Hungarians lived. His wish to be integrated or, conversely, his wish to emerge from the Gipsy community resulted in a privileged personal position somewhere on the edges of the majority and minority communities.

If we turn back to Gisela's reasoning cited above, i.e. one's ethnic origin does not matter when it is about affection, the situation reminds us of Ámi's early affair with the daughter of his Italian boss. Ámi ranked himself socially lower in status than his lover. Nevertheless, the tale titled "The Boar has Been Eating Corn for Seven Years" is worthy of further analysis since the story contains more allusions in relation to the significance of autobiographical motifs in Ámi's storytelling.

Gisela and the Gipsy lad went home together and the princess introduced her groom to her father (the Black Prince) and her mother. But just before the happy ending a sudden tragedy cast a shadow over the young couple's hopes. Gisela's mother died in tragic circumstances and the marriage had to be postponed. Furthermore, during the mourning Gisela was kidnapped, therefore her groom had to go on a journey to rescue her. This new challenging task required more resolve than the previous occasion, on which he had released Gisela from the curse. During his journey the groom met another bewitched frog that also had to be released.

You should pick me up in your hand, then roll me from one hand to the other for fifteen minutes and meanwhile you have to kiss me fifteen times. Then I will turn into a beautiful woman just like your bride. (Ámi 1968: 466)

This second bewitched princess drew attention to the risk of the test as well. The Gipsy lad should not sicken or hate her during the process because if he does he will die. In order to reduce the risk the protagonist had recourse to fraud.

Wait a second, I have some wine and in order to avoid being sickened I will drink just a bit before we start (ibid.).

After drinking two glasses of wine he gave her not fifteen but twenty-five kisses. The miracle had happened; there stood a girl who was more beautiful than his bride. Her beauty was beyond words.

Both you and my bride are extremely beautiful. I see now that perhaps you are even more beautiful because the Sun delays only for an hour awing her beauty but for yours it stops for at least two hours. (Ibid.)

At this point the Gipsy lad is ready to change his bride for the second woman but she is steady enough to reject his offer. From Ámi's biography we know that in terms of affinity for women he and his protagonist share a similar characteristic. In 1961 Ámi was honoured as a master of folk arts. This acknowledgement brought him fame but also changed his self-estimation somewhat. He was persuaded of his own greatness and talked to his wife about his wish to get a divorce and marry an eighteen-year-old woman. This behaviour exasperated Ámi's wife and contributed to the aggravation of her neurosis (Ámi 1968: 19).

The autobiographical reference of this quote can also be understood on the basis of Fabian's critical reading method of ethnographic narratives. Ámi's hesitation about the new marriage is a latent personal longing that is an incorporated motif in his tale as well as a biographical fact. The storyteller's reality is interwoven with the reality of the tale where the Gipsy lad (protagonist) is ready to yield to temptation, to change his bride.

Summarising the three biographical motifs in Ámi's tale "The Boar has Been Eating Corn for Seven Years": we have Gisela's figure, the protagonist's ethnic status and finally the significance of women's beauty. Nevertheless all of these parallelisms between Ámi and his protagonist do not mean that they are the same. From the storyteller's point of view the figure of the Gipsy lad is not a direct paraphrase of himself. I would rather conclude that in relation to the autobiographical motifs in Ámi's tales the usages of his personal examples serve as tools to elaborate the turning points of the stories as well as the understanding the 'Other in the Self'. In other words, Ámi's tale is more than a biographical story and the allusions draw our attention to the very fundamental questions regarding the functions of a storyteller in his storytelling community.

To confront this challenge and to spell out some of the epistemological conditions of such an enterprise our interpretation might be based on Ámi's tale no. 36 "The Old King's One Eye Is Always Crying But the Other Is Always Laughing" (Ámi 1968: 446). The story can be divided into two clearly distinguishable parts. In fact, the first unit is an interesting version of the type *The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife* (AT 400), although the closing phase of the tale might be surprising. When the king's youngest son released the fairy princess a wedding reception was announced. The king wanted to hire the most talented Best Man in the World and so he telegraphed every respectable candidate. Among others the storyteller got a telegraph and decided to travel to the court. From this point on the story is told in first person with Ámi talking to the audience on behalf of himself. In other words, Ámi picks up the role of Best Man and starts to tell an anecdote concerning himself as the hero of his tale: "I've received the telegraph and I've read in it that the crying king's son is going to be married soon and he needs a Best Man and an assistant" (Ámi 1968: 455).

The storyteller talks about his former acquaintance with the king, with whom he served in the army. Ámi sends his assistant to buy salt and spices for the wedding feast, but the assistant is negligent and gets drunk in a pub. Ámi presents himself in the protagonist's role as a master of organisation overcoming all the difficulties with great success. Nevertheless, by analysing the closing episode the change of style in story telling appears as a conceptual break in the story. Ámi uses bad language to emphasise the humorous turns.<sup>3</sup> This characteristic is not exceptional in his art of storytelling although in this case, where he identifies himself with the protagonist, the feature acquires an extra meaning. Ámi's undisguised personality in the figure of Best Man is presented as comprehension of the self in the Other.

THE KING LITTLE MICHAEL (KIRÁLY KIS MIKLÓS) AND ITS  
VARIANT AS TOLD BY ÁMI

It is characteristic of classic fairy tales that moral goodness triumphs through the protagonist's conquest of evil. On the surface *The King Little Michael* is a story that falls into this category. However, after deeper analysis we can also grasp the more essential dilemma of ethical issues in the tale.

Supposedly, this type of tales goes back to the old Greek love stories (*fabula milesia*) and survived in the European oral tradition for many centuries (Tarnóc 1967: 298). According to Márton Tarnóc the Hungarian folk tradition knows two versions.<sup>4</sup> In the first the king doesn't let his three daughters marry unidentifiable suitors who are actually dragons. The dragons take vengeance on the people and steal the sun, the moon and the stars. Humankind is left in total darkness, but one servant in the court undertakes the responsibility to win back the light, i.e. in its metaphoric sense of life. He takes the road and after a long journey he destroys the dragons. At a certain point the story reaches a weird turn that reveals the protagonist's unexpected features. During the battle the King Little Michael cuts off all the dragons' heads but one. At this point the beast starts to pray for its life.

Please King Little Michael, let me live and I will give you back the stars.

– Where they are? asked he.

– You can find them under the saddle.

King Little Michael took them out and cut off the last dragon-head.

(Ortutay 1960: 224)

The protagonist remains unforgiving with his two other enemies as well. The question arises: why? Why did he not give the defeated dragons a chance? The protagonist has already fulfilled his task of getting back the light – the sun, moon and stars –, and the original status of the world has been re-established. In addition to this, according to basic human morality, forgiveness is an expected behaviour. So the question remains: what is the ethical background to his act and what does the decision to kill a defenceless enemy mean from the protagonist's and the storyteller's point of view? We shall note that the execution of dragons and its ethical consequences are not evident in all variants. We have to take those variants into account in which the protagonist, after defeating the terrible enemy, looks for another solution instead of executing the last dragon. What values and norms determine the protagonist's decision to forgive or not?

In addition, in Ámi's oeuvre there are two variants of *The King Little Michael*. Let us take a look at Ámi's solution in his versions and their ethical consequences in relation to Ámi's personal moral worldview as it is expressed through the autobiographical elements within his stories.

Ámi's outstanding art of storytelling involves the total reshaping of classic fairy tales too. One variant of *The King Little Michael* is reshaped under the title "The Dragon King Has Stolen the King's Three Daughters". In this story the protagonist is a drunkard who is introduced by Ámi as follows:

He was a thief all his life because he didn't like to work. He said: How nice it would be to regain those three princesses! I would have enough to drink then. In that case I can spend all of the King's money drinking then I would be quite old or dead. (Ámi 1968: 178)

Ámi's protagonist does not remind us of a classical hero of fairy tales. All he is focused on is getting something to drink. This character is not a novelty according to Ámi, but in this tale he is extremely accurate when elaborating drinking as a crucial characteristic of the hero. It is well known from Erdész's biography that Ámi used to tell tales in local pubs in exchange for as much drink as he wanted. We can observe the storyteller's intention in a dialogue between the protagonist and his helpmate, the tiny red mouse:

Can you hear me? I know about your longing for a woman only because she has a lot of money for you are a drunkard and you just want to drink. (Ámi 1968: 178)

There is an even more significant scene related to the drinking. The first dragon asks the protagonist about his taste in drink and he answers in a very sophisticated way:

I drink wine, and also ardent spirits, and beer and everything unless you put venom in it (ibid.).

Even though Ámi liked to use jokes in his tales in order to entertain his audience he kept the basic structure of the fairy tale. The protagonist takes the risks by venturing into the counter-world of his home and in this way the storyteller upholds the concept of the world's rescuer. Although the protagonist seems to be motivated only by the hope of drinking, by defeating the dragons he also re-establishes the world order. His steadiness is demonstrated by Ámi in the character of one of the most brutal figures of Hungarian folk tales. As we are going to see, the morality of Ámi's protagonist is not understandable within the framework of Christian ethics.

After the killing of the first dragon he minces the dead body. In this case, we can perhaps accept the process when it is interpreted by the storyteller as a prevention of the dragon's resurrection. But in the case of the second dragon that tried to outwit our hero we see that it was killed unmerciful by the drunkard.

Well I'm going to end your life! You wanted to take away my powers by using your magic! No more Mr nice guy here! I start the grinding at your legs, I put you into the grinder and start at your legs. I'll work up to your waist so you could still cry! I won't start at your head so you can pass away quickly! Let's go Zopkó – for this was the young lady's name – find your grinder and bring it to me! Zopkó ran to the cellar and brought up the grinder. They put the dragon's leg into it. Zopkó was grinding while the drunkard pushed the dragon into the grinder. The last cry of

the dragon was heard when the grinder reached its waist. And so it was minced. They found an iron box, put the dragon in it and burnt the beast. (Ámi 1968: 186)

Mincing something alive is such a brutal act that it can shed light on the question why most of the tales recorded from Ámi are not for children. Many interpreters believe that these brutal stories, and the cruelty in them, are undeniable proof of the amorality of the tales as a genre. The depiction of rudeness and cruelty in tales is always striking and applies not only to the case of Ámi. Nevertheless, our storyteller, who took part in two wars, could utilise and stylise his experiences as well as the related reading in the tales. From this viewpoint the crusher is a symbol that is suitable for annihilation the enemies. Apart from this reasoning, at this point we have to accept the very basic ethical dilemma of the tale. The dragon personifies evil, i.e. it is an entity that belongs to another world and the acts against it cannot be evaluated on the basis of human ethics. Specifically, we should understand that the protagonist's ferocious and at first slightly insane act testifies a conscious standpoint: in order to re-establish a 'good' world the hero has to be bad.

Ámi's version of *The King Little Michael* is a story that offers a special insight into understanding the multiple functions of the autobiographical elements in his storytelling. In the figure of the hero, Ámi casts himself as the authentic representative of applied ethics. King Little Michael personifies the man who has survived war and fulfilled his destiny. Ámi's storytelling, the moment of reshaping the protagonist, makes it clear in the momentary act of storytelling that the tale is a framework and a medium for the individual (for the self) to manifest itself in the Other.

## CONCLUSIONS

While acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of classical research on autobiographical motifs in folk tales, we note that Johannes Fabian's research findings in the interpretation of ethnographic narratives can also be used with benefit in the further analysis of the topic. Reading and writing start with the storyteller's self-reflexive analysis. This is an avoidable part of comprehension and a must for grasping the self in the narrated Other. Fabian's conceptual turn regarding the reinterpretation of the disciplinary status of ethnography might be understood as a methodological novelty. The significance of autobiographical motifs in Ámi's tales can be interpreted as analyses of self in the Other. This eminent conception of the Other is a key element in Ámi's tales. He functions in the tale as an alienated I (ego) and the values, beliefs, norms, news and interpretations are introduced into community discourse (i.e. the story telling community) by this autobiographically stylised storyteller. In other words, interest in the autobiographical motifs of folk tales helps us to understand the storyteller's individual personality as well as his interpretation of his community.

## NOTES

1 The interpretation of the significance of Ámi's tale for social science research can be read in detail in Biczó 2011 and 2012.

2 An extensive critical anthropological interpretation of sociocultural otherness is available in Johannes Fabian's book *Memory against Culture* (2007: 17–29).

3 The Best Man's late-comer tipsy assistant feels thirst but he can't find any water because all the rivers have dried up.

But the people, the wedding guests pissed and pooped in the same place, and there was a shit creek.

– Go my little assistant and drink there because there isn't any water except of that creek.

He went and drunk a little. But his head was dizzy, because he got drunk in the pub and he fell into the shit creek. He was suffocating, what should I do? I say to the neighbour's son:

– Shit a hook and suck it sharp-edged in order to pull him out of there. (Ámi 1968: 457)

4 Firstly it is mentioned in Péter Bornemisza's *Ördögi kísértetek* ('Evil ghosts', 1578) in the chapter "On Hearing". As far as that can be investigated, the name "King's heir" is known since 1287. As János Baronyai Decsi points out the love affair of one of the sons of the King family is "responsible" for creating the story Little King Michael. Since the second half of the 16th century the name became the signifier of a certain type of tale, namely the *fabula milesia* (Tarnóc 1967: 296–300).

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# STORYTELLING: PERFORMANCE, PRESENTATIONS AND SACRAL COMMUNICATION

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## ABSTRACT

Various schools of tale research manifested the relationship of tales to the sacred based on their ideological preconceptions: the relationship between tales and the sacred is refused or accepted. In this article tales are investigated not from the perspective of the possible sacral referent(s) but rather it looks at them as a kind of communicational subsystem that is part of human culture. The focus is on revealing the specific features of sacral communication in the communication system of tales. Sacral communication is a special form of communication in which the elements of the communication model are transformed. The goal of sacral communication is exactly this kind of identity creation. This may be oriented towards creating a personal or a communal self-identity. Among its characteristics we may find the special type of language forms in which the predominance of linguistic elements pushes the sense conveying possibilities more into the background than usual, and those linguistic forms that restructure consciousness become emphasised. In this communication the tale telling is transformed by a language use characteristic of sacral communication (rhythm, repetition and rhetorical forms). Various examples explain that traditional tale telling creates a complex effect related to the visual, auditory, and kinetic senses: a modification and transformation of the self-understanding and self-identity that connect the world of tale telling to sacral communication.

KEYWORDS: traditional tale telling • sacral communication • tale as a language event • hermeneutics • phenomenology

## APPROACHING THE CONCEPT OF THE SACRED

Various schools of tale research manifested the relationship of tales to the sacred based on their ideological preconceptions. There are two versions to be noted: one set of interpretations refused the relationship between tales and the sacred in general, the other however accepted it. Those researchers and schools that represent the main stream of scientific investigation either negate the possible relationship between tales and the sacred or they only accept an eliminated relationship since their position is already determined by the belief that the phenomena of the sacred come/come to existence as a product of diverse psychological and social motifs:

Most of these thinkers have taken up the implicitly theological position of trying to explain, or explain away, religious phenomena as the product of psychological or sociological causes of the most diverse and even conflicting types, denying to them any preterhuman origin (Turner 1987 [1969]: 4).

The sacral form of consciousness is not attributed to a general feature of the human mind but is regarded as a historical phenomenon, not as something that characterizes the reality of human consciousness but as a 'less developed' state of it. This later state of consciousness historically speaking progressively gives way to a new form of consciousness characterised by rationality, sound thinking, and insight. From this perspective the relationship between tales and the sacred may be interpreted as part of the historically developing human consciousness. Tales preserve traces of sacral phenomena and mythological-religious fragments. Tales are partly the result of the decay of sacral forms of consciousness and where the sacral form of consciousness is no longer capable of creating or sustaining the unified and constant mythological-religious worldview, the role of imagination becomes more and more important, fictionalisation begins and tales begin to form themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The other possible approach to the relationship between tales and the sacred is based on the thesis that the sacred is a feature of human consciousness and that therefore tales are connected to these forms of human consciousness naturally. Tales do not compile and include mythological-religious elements inorganically or fragmentarily due to the demolishing forces inherent in historical processes but can be understood as a more general phenomenon of the sacral form of consciousness. These approaches – usually outside of mainstream research – interpret the world of tales in connection to the various domains of the sacred. Archetypal symbols,<sup>2</sup> astral mysticism, astrosophical mythemes,<sup>3</sup> texts of initiation rites<sup>4</sup> or complete religious systems (Láma Csöpel, Kovács 2002) are inbuilt in the texts of tales.

Anthropological research, however, would not investigate tales from the perspective of the possible sacral referent(s) but rather it looks at them as a kind of communicational subsystem that is part of human culture, understood as a network of communication systems. From this perspective the emphasis is not on pointing out to what particular religions or sacral phenomena the tales are related, but on revealing the specific features of sacral communication in the communication system of tales.

The system of thoughts and actions of sacral phenomena is a well regulated common practice in life in which "a community shapes itself for itself" and expresses itself for itself (Lovász 2002: 15). The appearance of the sacred in human relations is therefore a specific form of communication, a possible means for social and personal self-understanding, and for *autonoesis*.

## TALES AND COMMUNICATION

Researchers who work on tales – as well as on questions of the sacred – would like to grasp the referents in tales, so they inevitably draw diverse conclusions and receive different results. Perhaps the most important question is whether it is possible to tackle tales before interpreting them on the level of the referent, and if so then what would

this mean in connection with the act of interpretation. If this is possible then tales could be interpreted not as a kind of object but as a certain type of process. Tales might have a philosophical, ethnological, psychological, cosmic, or anthropological field of signification (even if they contradict each other), although this is not what determines the ontological status of tales. If we think of tales as a peculiar form of communication then as part of communication in general they may carry instances of these fields of signification since in this case the aim of tales is not generating these meanings but setting up the communication process.

In Hungarian ethnology it was Irén Lovász (2002) who introduced the term of sacral communication into scholarly discourse.<sup>5</sup> The fact that she has not interpreted the sacral as an external entity but as a possibility inherent in the process of communication in several fields – as well as in the domain of tales – made the reconsideration of the relationship to the sacral possible. Regarding the sacral, interpretations of tales investigated the objectified traces of some kind of sacral – manifested in motif analysis only or in the mystic interpretation of tales. Approaching the question from the aspect of sacral communications it seems that the concept of the sacred in tales has to be reframed. Accordingly not only did those tales that preserved ancient religious or mythic elements – either as a remainder of ancient tradition or by borrowing other elements representing a different world view – count as sacred, but also those in which we may find characteristically sacral communicational practice. Sacral communication is a special form of communication in which the elements of the communication model are transformed. In sacral communication the symmetric and variable relationship between the speaker and the listener is replaced by a rather asymmetric unity in which the speaker is seemingly the active party, the listener is passive or is not present in the scene of communication, not having an identical position with the speaker (for instance in the case of a prayer where the person praying talks to God, whose response arrives in an unexpected way and at an unexpected time).

Setting up the channel of communication differs in that the usual formulaic speech units become significant at other times and acquire meaning in themselves (see, for instance, the introductory or closing parts of a prayer). Whereas from the perspective of the code in everyday communication the goal is to convey information as precisely as possible, in sacral communication the impact or effect is derived from the act of changing the code system and from the act of reinterpreting the old codes. This is made possible by a special use of the codes. Examples are the anagram, disguising the name or the so-called *lingua sacra*, a special language use. Naturally the message also appears differently in sacral communication since apart from the direct message functions (praising God, prayer or request) a peculiar element is always present whose main goal is to call for the creation of self-identity. The goal of sacral communication is exactly this kind of identity creation. This may be oriented towards creating a personal or towards creating a communal self-identity. Due to successful sacral communication the speaker/sender will acquire a new self-identity of higher quality, which entails the organisation and transformation of his/her previous existential situation. Among its characteristics we may find the special type of language forms where the predominance of linguistic elements pushes the sense conveying possibilities more to the background than is usual, with those linguistic forms that restructure consciousness becoming emphasised: repetition, elimination, the narrowing of vocabulary, focused rhythm, full musical effects.

Contextual, non-verbal communicational elements closely belong to sacral communication. Those sensual experiences that relate to vision, taste, smell, touch, which together may contribute to the event and become more focused, emphasised and separated from everyday routines for the participants and become a real possibility for transforming and recreating a person's identity and reality.

Do tales, especially folk tales, have features that may be paralleled to this phenomenon? Some scholarly books by ethnographers strictly exclude any similar preconception since for them tales cannot be given roles other than their entertainment function, or at the most, moral teaching function, the rest is relegated to the domain of fantasy. These approaches mainly justify this exclusion by interpreting the sacred in the narrow sense of referring to some kind of religious, mythic form of consciousness. The same is true – albeit inversely – for those interpretations that approach tales from an almost religious devotion when reading a kind of ancient faith from the content of tales and creating a syncretic surrogate religion by using new elements, often borrowed from other religions. I think that interpreting the concept of the sacred from this point of view oversimplifies the question, neglecting and eliminating a few important aspects that relate to the order of spreading the tradition, to historical features of tales.

We have to address the problem of discourses on tales. Perhaps all of them divert attention; or more precisely and more carefully put, would they not delay the realisation of the essential if not the most essential feature of tales? Specifically, tales are basically and unquestionably linguistic phenomena, inseparably connected to language. It is important to clarify that tales do not need to be investigated as a linguistic phenomenon, we are not speaking of the vocabulary, grammar or style of tales when we interpret them as a *language event* using a key concept of New Hermeneutics:<sup>6</sup> language and reality are intertwined inseparably, language creates reality. The existential mode of tales, their self revealing act therefore happens in language, by language; one existential mode, self revealing possibility of language is the tale, paraphrasing the famous sentence by Gadamer (1989: 470): *Being – in tales – that can be understood is language.*

Before continuing this train of thought, we need to face the problem that we usually read tale texts, unless we are fortunate tale researchers who meet good tale-tellers in person. Moreover tales, due to various preconceptions, are read in a rewritten stylised form. The situation is especially challenging since those rewriting the more original oral texts usually enforce a system of aesthetic expectations that is alien to them. Styling was born from the concept of written culture in which individually formed 'whole works' were produced, whereas tales include the characteristic feature of the time prior to these written works fitting into the canon (they also exceed them) according to which all works are fragmentary and become whole in something else by being completed by something else.

The textual existence of tales may be conceived as a system of relationships of an intertextual kind since tale texts travel through a route of transmitting tradition, so we should rather speak of tale labyrinths instead of individual tales. Tale texts therefore may never be regarded as finished works either on the temporal or on the spatial plane. Starting from folk tales, travelling from tale teller to tale teller, they become texts, textures in which the elements can be infinitely and freely varied in a peculiar way (and they remain so) and identical motives<sup>7</sup> diversely intertwined will create new text vari-

ations. Written tales that have an author transform and recode those elements that are offered by folk tales, connecting them to the writer's stock of style and linguistic signs (see Boldizsár 2003: 16–18).<sup>8</sup>

As a communication process tales are not merely the means of conveying some kind of message. Communication is basically a type of exchange process (just as in other cultural subsystems we speak of exchange processes: in trade it is the goods, in media it is information, in science it is knowledge, etc.), however tales transgress the act of pure exchange without excluding its possibility. This may be obvious in relation to the 'modernisation' of tales. Technical achievements, historical events of recent times are present as message elements (Biczó 2003: 146), although the overloading of actualities leads exactly to the disappearance of the features of tales: in the best cases instead of tales only life stories remain (Keszeg 2011: 165). Tales therefore accomplish a certain type of communication, where the existence of communication itself – not language understood as a means – and existence revealing itself in language becomes graspable.

#### TALES AND SACRAL COMMUNICATION

If we approach the problem of the language of tales from the point of view of myths, the problem of the language of mythic texts is tackled – albeit in my opinion not with the necessary emphasis – in many instances of myth research. The case of Sir George Gray reported by Carl Kerényi (1988: 357–358) – who as the Governor-in-Chief of the British colony in New Zealand first learned the Maori language and then Maori mythology in order to be able to have a better contact with locals – highlights the fact that mythic stories do not function as language referents but as a peculiar language functioning within a language, themselves generating a network of referents. Doubled language not only had an ornamental-metaphoric role but was part of real communication.

Another passage needs to be quoted. A chapter in János Láng's *Myth and Tale* reports several stories in which referential relations do not form in the usual way (Láng 1979: 513).<sup>9</sup> Texts are generated by a polysemantic word, most often a 'declination' of the hero's name. This may be paralleled to the already mentioned anagram research conducted by Ferdinand de Saussure (Starobinski 1980; Tokarev 1988: 199–200) in which he points out the fact that numerous antique literary (partly mythic) texts consist of the anagrammatic disguising and transcribing of the name of a god.

The performer-centred research school of Gyula Ortutay and Linda Dégh (for example, Ortutay 1981; Dégh 1993) provides essential information on the process of authentic tale telling. Moreover, the findings of Dávid Kara Somfai (2003: 189) give inspiration to rethink the process since during his Inner Asian fieldwork he met forms of epic tradition that make the world of tale telling more comprehensible.

A characteristic example is reported by Bruno Bettelheim: In India a peculiar healing technique was observed in which the patient visiting the doctor receives a tale 'on receipt', that is, the telling of the tale leads to healing:

[...] in traditional Hindu medicine a fairy tale giving form to his particular problem was offered to a physically disoriented person, for his meditation. It was expected that through contemplating the story the disturbed person would be led to visualize

both the nature of the impasse in living from which he suffered, and the possibility of its resolution. From what a particular tale implied about man's despair, hopes, and methods of overcoming tribulations, the patient could discover not only a way out of his distress, but also a way to find himself, as the hero of the story did. (Bettelheim 2010: 25)

According to ethnographic literature, the Indian tale collection *Panchatantra* was compiled for a similar therapeutic reason (Deppermann 2003: 34). In connection to the Indian tradition it is important to point out the concept of tales as a factor that forms the psyche, a force that is capable of mobilising physical or psychological possibilities that are not present elsewhere, or at least not in this form. Bettelheim analyses tales following this tradition as a projective escort to psychological development that present existential problems in powerful images so they become sizeable at various – conscious, preconscious or unconscious – levels therefore facilitating the understanding, self-understanding of the psyche and the creation of its self-identity. Modern psychological tale instrumentalisation follows the steps of this tradition when therapeutic functions are complemented by cognitive-diagnostic or prognostic elements (Deppermann 2003: 34–35).

The Estonian tale telling tradition also preserved the attitude of contributing sacral-magic significance to the act of tale telling itself. Richard Viidalepp reports on the Setu tradition that tale telling only took place in the darkest period of the year, before Christmas time and in the evenings. Tale telling was connected to taboos: if there was a recently born animal at the house tale telling might have exercised a damaging influence on the new-born animals. (Viidalepp, 2004; see also Metsvahi 2013)

There are objective, preserved elements found in the process of bequeathing tale telling when investigating the effect of tales. In “The Golden-haired Twins” (ATU 707), or in another version of the same tale “Two Pieces of Nuts” (Bódis 2003: 137),<sup>10</sup> the story of the children sent to death by their fathers provides the main plot; on the other hand, as Péter Bálint (2012: 104–105) elaborated on in one of his studies, due to its mirroring technique – a tale in a tale – the tale retells the same story. In the Baranya (in southwest Hungary) version of this tale (Kovács 1988: 123–126) the tale telling is transformed within the tale and a language use characteristic to sacral communication (rhythm, repetition, rhetorical forms) appears as well as a kind of accompanying ritual. The twins, revealing their lives, place “two pieces of hazelnut each” in front of their royal father, who had renounced and attempted to destroy them before using a hoax. The hazelnuts clacking on the table make the king slowly realise his fatal mistake and he restores the original status quo: his children regain their royal dignity. In the tale, this strange ritual becomes significant because they read the hazelnuts, that is, they count them, as if stringing their true story onto the line of hazelnuts. This action resembles the use of the rosary in the Catholic tradition – a line of beads following each other in a certain order corresponding to the order of prayers –, determining the language forms as well, through which this action has its effect: it calms down and opens up the consciousness of the one praying towards a transcendental, higher truth (Rauhe, Schnack 2002).<sup>11</sup> At this point the tale definitely connects features of sacral communication to tale telling.

The performer-centred research school, even though not as a main aspect, describes or refers to the circumstances of tale telling. Data gathered from this research may be grouped according to the criterion of whether it affects the tale teller or the listeners.

Among the motifs related to the person of the tale teller the role of visuality is prominent. Many authors point out the visual accompanying elements of tale telling. Francis Lee Utley (1974: 23) recognises “the community generating cooperation between the tale teller and his/her audience” in visual signs, while Ágnes Kovács emphasised the scenery of tale telling: the tale teller makes visible, acts out almost all elements of the tale (Kovács 1987: 240–244), identifies those elements the audience knows well, and triggers the creation of a kind of inner film (Kovács 1974: 25). Another researcher from the same school, Magda Szapu, later discovered the significance of the accompanying visual elements in the process of bequeathing tales. Apart from certain cases, becoming a tale teller gains a feature of initiation, since for years the youth only listened to older tale tellers, learning their movements. After a while, the tale teller tests the ‘students’, he omits parts, or transforms them, so the learners have to pay attention closely and point out the mistakes intentionally committed by the tale teller. At the end of this process the new tale teller has the opportunity to replace the older tale teller at major occasions. (Szapu 1985: 17–18)

The Gypsy tale telling tradition is noteworthy for tale telling is an essential part of vigils even today – according to ethnographic data this was a characteristic function of Hungarian tale tellers, especially in Transylvania. What role might tale telling have had at vigils? For example, according to the Hungarian Ethnographic Encyclopaedia László Márton’s<sup>12</sup> *Book of the Dead* consisted of two parts:

[...] he wrote 64 songs for the vigil for the dead of various ages, sexes and deceased in various states of health, in the second part he collected diverse prose texts. This reveals the fact that apart from tales different types of entertaining stories based on their own experiences, moral teachings as well as anecdotes were performed. (Ortutay 1977–1982)

Although ethnographic scholarship attributes entertainment functions to tales told during a vigil (either as an inorganic addendum or to prevent the people at the vigil from sleeping), based on other data, it is possible to presume that the tales in the above mentioned collection were significant in ways other than entertainment. If they were to entertain only and to pass time then it may seem as if these tales were told just for the sake of those present at the vigil. However if we look at tales of the vigil from the point of view of sacral communication we notice the following data: in the case of a dead adult person, only men were allowed to tell tales, while in case of a dead child women told fairy tales (*ibid.*). These two pieces of data, which might seem insignificant at first, refer to the fact that tales were not only addressed to those present but to the dead person as well. Consequently, tales were not only told to fulfil an entertainment function. As obvious parallels we may mention various Books of the Dead, especially the so-called Bardos from Tibet, since these texts were similarly recited next to the corpse for three days. Therefore in this case the act of tale telling directly reaches out to the domain of sacral communication.

Another essential aspect is reported by Ágnes Kovács (1974: 25). Creating the space for tale telling was a very important part of the event. At the arrival of dusk and darkness the light from candles or a fire made the venue a special place for those present. By this, the sacred space of tales and the profane space of the outside world became separated. This lightness/darkness dichotomy underlined the role of communication

elements that are not so emphasised and important in ordinary communication. Gestures become exaggerated, the volume is more dynamic, the tone is more differentiated. Tale telling turns into a kind of declamation, this type of tale telling is again a feature of sacral communication. (Lalèyè 2003: 313)<sup>13</sup>

Apart from the visual and auditory elements, attention needs to be paid to the fact that in forming subconscious structures and the later transformation of these structures, activities related to movement and touch have a special role. Almost all tale collectors report that the event of tale telling took place in the *fonó* (spinning barn) while threshing the corn, when the hands had a specific function. At first sight these circumstances have little significance, although they become important if we are aware of the fact that a major territory of human perception is touch. All activities carried out by hand help to achieve the state of concentration, absorption, and a meditative state of mind. As Costandi's illustration of the sensory and motor functions shows (see Costandi 2008), if we form the body according to the number of sensory and motor nerve endings, then among all parts of the human body the hands have the most nerves. Small objects in the hand (a piece of corn, a feather, a thread) generate intense stimulation that helps the audience's state of mind to receive those elements better, as well as reaching that point beyond everyday communicational processes.

#### A N E X A M P L E

In conclusion it is possible to say that during traditional tale telling the tale teller and the audience, due to a complex effect related to visual, auditory, and kinetic senses experienced a modification and transformation of their own self-understanding and self-identity, which both undoubtedly connect the world of tale telling to sacral communication. In this sense we may definitely separate the concept of the sacred from the previous concept of the sacred as a cognitive phenomenon. The sacred is a special form of communication that concerns the whole personality, influences it and brings about a kind of state of consciousness, which is the goal of all sacred ritual activity. This change in the state of consciousness may completely reshape the identity of the tale teller, the listener and even the entire community. Max Lüthi, an excellent researcher of German folk tales, considered the interpretation of epic texts as having a merely entertaining function as unsatisfactory.

'Exclusive entertainment' – for a long time this was the final thesis of folk tale research – draw conclusions of the proper recognition according to which folk tales, as opposed to myths, are a mere, aimless form of poetry. However, real poetry always strives for more than being pure entertainment. (Lüthi 1960: 76)<sup>14</sup>

Lüthi, most likely in the spirit of Walter Benjamin, treats the entertaining function as secondary and develops his folk tale interpretation according to aspects of reception and human needs. This is how he formulates one of the most important theses of his research: "All elements of our reality, even the least significant, most episodic ones, are striving to become language" (Lüthi 1960: 77).<sup>15</sup>

Therefore folk tales are linguistic phenomena which make it possible for the participants of the tale telling act – i.e. the tale teller and listener, sometimes the reader – to

face the key moment of identity formation through the text of the tale: on the one hand they become part of a linguistic tradition, on the other hand their self-interpretation (being the totality of their understanding of themselves and the world) becomes open to being reshaped. This possibility may be paralleled to those data that are the outcomes of research on shamanistic activities: shamanistic trance achieved by the proper technique – ritual body posture, special activity and/or reciting a text –, affects the participants of the shamanistic ritual, although on the other hand these techniques when ‘cited’, repeated outside their original context, exercise a similar influence as well.<sup>16</sup> This means that the given linguistic pattern together with the elements of traditional tale telling is capable of exercising various effects due to the altered state of consciousness; these effects may be spiritual-psychological processes – creating individual and community identity – or even by physical healing (Somfai 2003: 192–194).<sup>17</sup>

Traditional tale telling may not only be researched using methods of existing traditions, although tales themselves contain references to the possibilities of sacred communication in tale telling. Those tales that use a special self-mirroring structure may engender new aspects since these tales make tale telling itself the subject of tales. How tales allow themselves to be interpreted is clear; as too are the roles and functions that are attributed to the subject or theme of tale telling within the act of tale telling. An excellent example for this phenomenon is provided by Péter Bálint, the head of the phenomenological tale research school, when he writes:

[...] within the fictional space of the tale the *tale telling* itself functions as a life story that reminds and contributes to the sanity and sobriety of those who listen, [...] despite its incompleteness, obeying the conventions of true speech, reveals precisely these elements. [...] Tale telling sensibly presents itself and creates the illusion that the tale was a speech about truth. The ‘tale’ woven into the texture of the fictional space of narration seems to be a kind of knowledge either possessed by a person who knows the fate of the hero and confronts his blindness with the help of a mirror-tale, or possessed by the hero himself who, during his adventures, had personally experienced and at the same time intended to reject the state of being cursed or being part of a ritualistic murder. The knowledge gained or received from the various narrative forms helps to create and formulate narrative identity by retelling and interpreting the narration. (Bálint 2010: 104)

The creation of narrative identity is presented in the tale of “The Cursed Prince Who Was a Hedgehog” (Csenki 1974: 16–24), a tale close to tale type ATU 441.

– Brother-in-law, aren’t you bored? Because I really know how to tell stories!  
 – Well tell me a story then! – says Rudolf.  
 – Once upon a time – she says – there was a little hedgehog. The little hedgehog got married. He left his wife when she was pregnant. He came here and here he got married again. His first wife was called Ludinca. And well, listen carefully brother-in-law! Here is your wife, she has already spent two nights in a bed with you, and then she suddenly says: “Rudolf, my husband, put your arms around me, so that I can give birth, because I know I can’t even move!” But when you get home, eat, but don’t drink coffee, because my sister, that bitch has drugged it. (Csenki 1974: 22–23)

Basing our conclusion on the text we may state the following: the tale is a real story, it is even the only story based on reality, the life story of a cursed prince while all other texts in the tale prove to be false. Until the prince realises the truth of this story, he thinks of it as a forgettable text, however when the revealed truth becomes verified it gains a performative force and turns the course of events towards a happy, fulfilled ending. This is how it becomes the locus of experiencing presence, a presentation: i.e. in the tale the possibility of sacred communication opens up.

We may find an even more conspicuous example in the Hungarian folk tale using the self-mirroring technique of telling a tale within the tale. This tale is a variant of tale type ATU 707 and its title is "Two Pieces of Nuts".

Once in the king's garden three girls were hoeing. They were hoeing in the garden as a service to the king. And the king was walking by the garden, the girls were chatting and the king started to listen.

One girl said:

– If the prince married me I would bake such a huge piece of bread that it would be enough to feed an entire group of soldiers.

The other one said:

– If the prince married me I would weave such an enormous sheet that it would be enough for the entire group of soldiers.

Then the third one said:

– If the prince married me I would give birth to a child who would have the moon on his chest and a star on his forehead.

So the king married her.

And the king had nothing else but a cook and she had a daughter she wanted the king to marry.

So when the king married one of the three girls, the cook and her daughter were sent away. The king, his wife and her mother moved into the house.

So when they were married the prince – who had already become king – was recruited. He had to leave to go to war. And his wife became pregnant at home.

The king was away when the child was born; and it really happened so, just as the wife said. When she gave birth to the little girl, a letter was sent to the young king that happened just as the wife predicted.

And then the woman, who was the cook before, became angry with him for not marrying her daughter. When the postman walked by they – the cook becoming an innkeeper living at the edge of the village – always called him in and made him drink a lot of spirit so that he would read the letters written to the king.

Then they read the young queen's letter and they added as if the queen had written it:

– What shall we do with your wife; she gave birth to two puppies?

And the king replied that the puppies must be locked up in a barrel and allowed to flow down the river; he ordered his wife to be locked up.

And then soon enough the king returned home and he took the old cook and her daughter back into his household. And then he married the daughter of his cook.

Well, big wedding festivities followed again.

Then a man displayed two big bowls of nuts when all that people came together, who would be able to count them, say a different word for each and every piece.

The two small children landed at the forester. Well, they did not have children. And when they took the barrel out of the river, opened it, and saw two little children inside. They were very happy to have two little children.

These two little children also went to the wedding; they were seven years old by that time.

As the man asked who could count the nuts nobody dared to be courageous. These two children were there and they came forward to count the nuts.

Well, then the lords, even the king himself said:

– No, you are not able to count them.

But they continued:

– Well, now you are allowed to count<sup>18</sup> the nuts, if you can.

And then they began to count them; always two pieces had to be picked out.

And then they began:

Two pieces of nuts  
Once three girls hoed in the king's garden  
Two pieces of nuts,  
And these three girls told a tale,  
And the king listened,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
And he listened,  
Two pieces of nuts.  
One said,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
If the king married me,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
I would bake such a loaf of bread,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
That would feed all the soldiers,  
Two pieces of nuts.  
The other one said:  
Two pieces of nuts,  
If the king married me,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
I would weave a big sheet,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
That would be good for all the soldiers.  
Two pieces of nuts,  
The third one said:  
Two pieces of nuts,  
If the king married me,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
I would bear children,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
Moon on the chest,

Two pieces of nuts,  
Star on the forehead  
Two pieces of nuts.

And then the lords were staring and the king as well did not know how these two children would know about this. Then the children said:

If you do not believe it,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
Well, here is the sign,  
Two pieces of nuts,  
Look at them.

And they opened up their shirts, pushed their hats back and the moon and the star were there.

Then the king became very happy, his wife was immediately released from prison. He was very happy about the children, too. Again great wedding festivities followed, great joy followed. He had the cook and her daughter executed and the king and his family lived happily ever after until they departed with death.

This is the end and the turning point. Whoever can, will tell it again. (Banó 1988: 123–126)<sup>19</sup>

In this text the two sibling princes are chased away from their homes only to return some time later. Apart from having golden hair they have special sign decorating their bodies, the star on their foreheads and the moon on their chests. When their father is celebrating his wedding with the daughter of his cook – who was plotting to have the two princes ‘lost’ – they reappear in the crowd as unknown guests. In the wedding crowd a bag of nuts turns up and a call for a test is announced: who is able to count them? This is where we readers or listeners enter the story. The two children take the pieces of nuts out of the bag in twos; therefore through a peculiar movement and the monotone sounds of the nuts knocking on the table a ritual choreography is presented. At the same time the tale textually asserts its subject matter since its prose text becomes a rhythmic and almost poetically shaped text in which the repeated lines of the refrain “Two pieces of nuts” are hardly significant for their informational content but more for the role they play in establishing the rhythm. This repetitive technique is the characteristic feature of the language use in sacred communication since the linguistic elements that are separated from their meanings by rhythm and repetition are transformed and bring about a change in the state of consciousness, which is a precondition of shamanistic journeys and trances.<sup>20</sup> I would conclude that this phenomenon in the tale text appears not as a trace of ancient religious rites but it is a special communicational possibility in the act of tale telling.

After the two princes told their stories as a rhyming, rhythmic and poetically formed text they reach the present moment unexpectedly. However, they do not tell the story in further details (their father recognises them, therefore their mother is saved and the wicked woman is punished); tale telling leaves its character of tale telling and passing on information in order to show a peculiar way of using language. According to Peter Szondi, as opposed to lexical-discursive language use, meta-discursive language use occurs when “language does not speak about something but ‘speaks’ itself. It speaks about things and about language through its very manner of speaking.” (Szondi 1978: 321–344) When the princes telling the tale reaches the point of the present, they exclaim:

“Here is the sign!” In this communicational situation language is no longer discursive, instead of representing it appears to have a presenting force since they have become signs due to their own beings, their story and their story telling. The turn in language use makes it possible for their royal father to recognise them, therefore allowing family unity to be restored. As a symbol of the integration of consciousness, the past can be rewritten, i.e. a kind of mental healing helps the king to leave behind his previous unconscious, ignorant state of mind. According to the text he “was very happy” to see his wife and children arriving to a kind of recognition that changed his heart and restored his lost identity.

The end of the tale however inserts another turn: it does not end with the usual formula of “and they lived happily ever after” or “whoever has doubts, make sure of it himself”. In this tale two lines close the story, similar to the rhythmic, rhyming formulas used by the two princes when telling their tales. “This is the end and the turning point. Whoever can, will tell it again.”<sup>21</sup> So at the end the tale teller refers to a turning point according to which at the end of the tale it will be clear and decided whether the tale teller succeeded in appropriating this voice, whether he is able to invoke the linguistic force that brought about this change in the state of consciousness within the tale. This is the true turning point in the tale, where tale telling inside and outside of the tale is connected. This may offer the possibility for the listener to be able to tell the tale himself as well. During active-alert hypnotic states and shamanistic rituals a narrowing of consciousness takes place, euphoria and pain releasing effects due to a dissociative state of consciousness appear but at the same time through the phenomenon of social biofeedback participants in the ritual also “often experience alternated states of consciousness”<sup>22</sup> leading to the event of healing. Just as the two princes opened their father’s eyes by their tale generating joy and happiness, giving him a new sense of identity, similarly the tale teller opens the eyes of the listener and changes his/her identity both in psychological and in spiritual terms, thus fulfilling the basic intention of sacred communication: taking one closer to oneself.

Translated by Gabriella Ágnes Nagy

#### NOTES

1 Cf. the myth and tale interpretation of Carl Kerényi and Yelazar Meletinsky. Kerényi compares the Vogul mythic text with a folk tale:

With the Vogul mythologem we approach very closely to a familiar type of fairy-tale, that of “Strong Hans”. But a comparison with this particular tale shows how much less impressive and significant the fairy-tale is. What meaning it has comes solely from the grotesquely exaggerated feats of an exceptionally strong farmer’s boy and the absurd situations that result. The difference lies not in the environment or in the social atmosphere (though the atmosphere of the Vogul myths is most regal), but in what we may call the dramatic structure of the mythologem. Such a structure is entirely lacking in this type of fairy-tale. (Jung, Kerényi 1969: 45–46)

2 Cf. Jung’s theory on the ancient images in tales and myths (Jung 1954: 3–48).

3 In the Hungarian tradition of tale interpretation, this school may be linked to Marcell Jankovics and Gábor Pap. This line of research labels itself *astrosophical* instead of astrological because

adherents interpret archaic astronomy as a complete worldview and not just as a precursor of a New Age approach.

4 Cf. the analysis of Mircea Eliade, Lajos Szántai, and Norman J. Girardot, whose writings emphasise the initiation character of tales.

5 International forerunners were Stanley Tambiah (1968) and Gideon Goosen (1976).

6 New Hermeneutics has evolved on the basis of Rudolf Bultman's hermeneutics, which has existential foundations. Its main representatives are Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, who formulated the linguistic nature of human existence: Any text is a kind of language event (*Sprachereignis*), carrying some meaning other than the original but has a constantly renewing significance in the act of reading. (McKnight 1998: 60–61)

7 Here I apply the concept of motif in the Proppian sense as an invariable element of the tale.

8 According to the taxonomy offered by Boldizsár, modern written tales transform folk tale elements (creating a peculiar combination of the motif resource, in addition to which they like to transform and rationalise miraculous elements), or recode them (the fixed sign relation of tales are re-written into occasional sign relations).

9 See his book on the story formation process of the name *vomba* in a tale of Australian aborigines. In this tale we find a special way to create a story: the word *vomba* has several meanings. These meanings function as basic motifs of the story and the action is based on these motifs.

10 In a former study of mine I have pointed out the legitimacy of linking sacral communication to these tale texts (Bódis 2003).

11 The so-called repetitive meditation technique following the practice of the rosary prayer became a good method in therapeutic practice.

12 Born in Andrásfalva (Măneuți, Romania) and died in Hungary, in 1949.

13 In connection to the research on *Homo religiosus* Issiaka-Prospér Lalèyè explains that the ritualisation of words – that is, their elevation to sacral communication – means their 'rhythmisation', a rhythmisation different from the ordinary, and their vocalisation.

14 Translated from German original: "*Ausschließlich Unterhaltung*" war lange Zeit die Antwort der Märchenforschung. Sie entsprang der richtigen Erkenntnis, dass das Märchen, im Gegensatz zur Sage, reine, tendenzlose Dichtung ist. Aber echte Dichtung will mehr als Unterhaltung.

15 German original runs as follows: *Alle Wirklichkeit, auch die unscheinbare, nebensächliche, drängt danach, Sprache zu werden.*

16 Under controlled circumstances and repeated many times Felicitas Goodman devised a peculiar body posture ritual based on archaic depictions and sculptures with the help of which participants could experience trance like states corresponding entirely to shamanistic experiences (see Goodman 2006).

17 Dávid Kara Somfai mentions in his article the fact that in those shamanistic traditions that he researched, healing shamans as well as tale telling shamans can be found. They are considered by the community as initiated shamans with healing power in the same way as those traditional shamans who specifically perform healing practices.

18 In Hungarian the word *olvas, megolvas* has the meaning 'to read' and 'to count'.

19 Tale teller: Mária Takács, wife of István Rajna, 32 years old, from Jágónak (Hungary), 1938.

20 In altered states of consciousness related to shamanistic rituals, stronger activity, rhythmic sounds (drums, rattling) create the possibility to step over a threshold of consciousness; in addition to which the latest outcomes in hypnosis research – the active-alert hypnotic induction – show the connection between movements and sounds leading to altered states of consciousness (see Bányai 2006).

21 In Hungarian: *Itt a vége, düleje. Aki tudja, mesélje.*

22 Bányai (2006: 108–109) compares dynamic hypnosis, active-alert hypnotic induction and shamanistic rituals.

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# A MORTAL VISITS THE OTHER WORLD – THE RELATIVITY OF TIME IN ESTONIAN FAIRY TALES

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## ABSTRACT

This article\* analyses Estonian fairy tales with regard to perceiving supernatural lapses of time, focusing on the tale type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World*, which includes tale types ATU 470, 470A, 471, and 471A. In these tales the mortal finding himself in the world of the dead, heaven or fairyland experiences the accelerated passage of time. Returning to the mundane temporal reality and learning the truth the hero generally dies. The difference in time perception has been caused by the hero's movement in space and between spaces. Three vertical spheres can be detected: 1) the upper world (heaven, paradise); 2) the human world; 3) the netherworld (the world of the dead, hell). Usually, the events of a particular tale take place only in the human world, and either in the upper or the netherworld. The relativity of the passing of time on earth and in the other world makes the tales 'behave' in a peculiar manner as regards genre, bringing to prominence features of representation of time typical of legends or religious tales. Although the tales contain several features that make them close to legends (a concrete place and personal names, the topic of death, dystopic endings, characters belonging to the reality of legends, etc.), based on Estonian material they can be regarded as part of fairy tales.

KEYWORDS: a mortal in the netherworld • relativity of time • Estonian fairy tales • the tale type cluster • genre borders

## INTRODUCTION

Tales of living people visiting the other world have been told all over the world. In the Sumerian epic the king Gilgamesh sends his friend and servant Enkidu to the other world to fetch magic items that had been dropped there; Enkidu breaks several prohibitions and has to stay in the other world (tablet XII; *Gilgamesh* 2001: 129–143). The Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the story of Odysseus' visit to Hades are also widely known.

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There are tale types among fairy tales<sup>1</sup> in which the category of time is a more important factor in shaping the plot of the tale than in case of the other tales. One such tale type cluster<sup>2</sup> consists of stories about mortals finding themselves in the world of the dead and/or heaven. In the international tale type catalogue (ATU) these form a group of tale types with plots that resemble one another and also share the feature of time passing differently in the world of the living and in the other world. The cluster includes the following tale types known in the Estonian folktale tradition:

- *Friends in Life and Death* (ATU 470) – 29 versions in the Estonian Folklore Archives;
- *The Offended Skull (Don Juan)* (ATU 470A) – 18 versions;
- *The Bridge to the Otherworld* (ATU 471) – 1 version;
- *The Monk and the Bird* (ATU 471A) – 9 versions.

In addition, types not occurring in Estonia whose content suit the same type cluster, are: *The Land Where No One Dies* (ATU 470B) and Latvian local types: *The Long Absence* (AM \*471B), *The Maidservant and the Toad* (AM \*471B\*), *The End of the World* (AM \*472\*). The following motifs according to Stith Thompson's *Motif-index of Folk-literature* (1989) belong under the present survey: Translation to the otherworld without dying (F 2), No time, no birth, no death in the otherworld (F 172), The supernatural lapse of time in fairyland (F 377), Descent to the lower world of the dead (F 81).

In these tale types humans leave the space where they live to find themselves in heaven or in the world beyond the grave. While the heroes believe they are spending but some hours or days in the other world, it appears on their return home that whole centuries have passed. Upon learning the truth about the time on earth they die immediately.

German folklorist Lutz Röhrich has denominated this group of tales rapture legends (*Entrückungssagen*), the purpose of which is to indicate the timelessness of the otherworld – paradise, hell, the land of the gods, fairies, elves, trolls or the extra-human world in general (Röhrich 1962: 275).

The theme of the supernatural speed of time is also manifested in the *Relativity of Time* (ATU 681) tale type,<sup>3</sup> where the king experiences a dream in which he is under the influence of drugs or has his head under water, causing a short moment to feel like eternity. As compared with other folktales, in this tale type its literary versions vastly outnumber the oral ones. (Ting 1981: 208) However, in Estonia this particular tale type does not appear.

The theme occurs in the ancient Indian *Vishnú Purána* (4th century), in which king Raiwata imagined the ages that elapsed during their performance to be but as a moment during the singing of heavenly beings' quisters (*gandharvas*) in God's presence (*Vishnú Purána* 1840: 355).

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE TALE TYPE CLUSTER

Subsequently expanded description or summaries of the Estonian tale types are given, followed by motifs and examples characteristic of the Estonian folktale tradition. This information is supplemented by some international studies of corresponding tale types with written sources.

Two friends (or brothers) promise they will each be a guest at the other's wedding. However, one of them dies and on his wedding day the other goes to his grave to invite him to the wedding celebration. The dead man does come and invites the bridegroom to visit him in return. In the other world the bridegroom listens to three wonderful pieces of music (in some versions he drinks three cups of tea or three small glasses of vodka with the dead man; in some cases they play three games of cards). On returning, the bridegroom discovers that his home has changed to the point of being unrecognizable and that strangers are living there. The man seeks out the priest to find out what has happened. From church records he learns that three hundred years ago a bridegroom disappeared from his wedding. Having learned how much time has passed in this world, the man turns old in a moment and dies; often, he crumbles into dust on the spot so that nothing remains of him. In several versions the man receives the Holy Communion from the priest before he dies.<sup>5</sup>

The oldest recorded text comes from a manuscript found in Germany and dated as coming from the 12th century (Eberhard, Bishop of Bamberg is quoted as the source).

A pious young nobleman is on his way to his own wedding. Close to the church he meets a venerable stranger dressed in white who invites him to his wedding. The next day, a horse arrives to fetch the bridegroom. On his way he sees flowery fields, full of singing birds, past three dwellings where people are making merry. When he arrives, he meets the man who invited him and many people dressed in white who have crowns on their heads. There is no night or day in this place. When the bridegroom returns, the guard at the gate does not recognize him; there is a convent instead of the castle where he used to live. Three hundred years have passed as though they were an hour. People from near and far come to listen to his wondrous tale. The man tells them that he was allowed to return to bring consolation to many. When the man is given a taste of the mortals' bread, he dies. (Christiansen 1959: 189–190)

The German scholar Günther Petschel has published a lengthy monographic article in which he highlights the motifs characteristic of the type, as well as a detailed plot structure together with different versions of the episodes from ca. 25 European nations (Petschel 1971: 113–122). He identifies four main forms within the type:

- a) The first main form is divided as follows: 1) A visit to the other side (the man remains in a single defined place when visiting the deceased friend); 2) A trip to the other world (the protagonist goes through different places, sees several revelatory visions);
- b) Concentrates on the visit of the dead person to the living (the Baltic-Russian ecotype);
- c) Visit at Christmas;
- d) Different combinations. (Ibid.: 123–126)

In Estonian archive versions, the most common central figures of the narrative are either two friends or two brothers, one of whom dies. Very often a dead friend attends the marriage of his living friend, or else the groom, goes to his friend's grave before his marriage ceremony and ends up in the other world. Estonian versions do not generally include heavenly wedding parties; in most cases there is just a party with wonderful

music and heavenly songs by angels or birds. In one version from the Seto region, a bride and a bridegroom go to their parents' graves together and end up in the other world. They drink some vodka and when they return, 300 years have passed.<sup>6</sup> In another version a mourning widower goes to the grave of his longed-for wife. His wife arrives with angels who play three pieces of music. When he arrives home it turns out that instead of two hours he has been away for 300 years.<sup>7</sup> The majority of visits to the other world last either 300 years or three human generations, however other time periods occur in some versions: 200, 500 or 1000 years, as well as 33 or 80 years.

#### The Offended Skull (Don Juan) (ATU 470A, 18 versions)<sup>8</sup>

A man is digging a grave in the churchyard or is walking there. He kicks a skull lying on the ground with his foot and, half in jest, invites it to visit him, usually on Christmas Eve. At the time mentioned a stranger indeed appears at the door. Trying to contain his fear, the man acts as the host to the visitor who invites him to be his guest in return. The man goes for a visit and thinks that he is there (in the other world) for three days (hours), or else listens to three songs of unearthly beauty. Upon returning home he discovers that several centuries have passed. Having learned this, the man crumbles into dust.<sup>9</sup>

One of the characteristic features differentiating between tale types ATU 470 and ATU 470A is the fact that in the story of the dead skull it is a complete stranger who invites the main character to visit him in the other world, while in type ATU 470 it is a dead friend or relative who issues the invitation. Whereas in case of ATU 470 the main event of the tale tends to be the wedding, *The Offended Skull* is rather more connected with Christmas.<sup>10</sup>

In the Estonian tradition, Christmas has been closely related to veneration of dead ancestors. The spirits of the dead were expected to visit their former homes; abundant tables were laid for them and saunas were heated.

In the case of ATU 470 the main character is generally a bridegroom, while in type ATU 470A he is simply a man, often a gravedigger. A bridegroom does occur in some versions of *The Offended Skull*, but is not characteristic of the type.

The ATU 470A tale type is exceptional in the overall context of the Estonian fairy tale tradition, with a large number of narratives coming from western Estonia and the Estonian islands.

In some cases types ATU 470 and ATU 470A become combined with tales that had previously merged with the religious tale *A Man Invites God to His House* (ATU 751A\*) in which a character from the other side has taken on the guise of a beggar looking for a place to stay for the night.

#### The Monk and the Bird (ATU 471A, 9 versions)<sup>11</sup>

The main character – a priest, a monk, or an ordinary young man – lingers listening to wonderful birdsong. The man thinks he has heard it for but a moment, but when he returns home it appears that three hundred years have passed.<sup>12</sup>

In the Estonian versions, the average visit to the other world lasts for 300 years, in exceptional cases also 100 or 30 years. In one version a clergyman listened to spirits playing the organ at night and slept for seven human generations. When he woke, the church was in ruins; he went to shop to buy some bread, but it turned out that his currency was not valid anymore. When “he understood that one of the spirits had put him to sleep, the man fell down, just his bones left”.<sup>13</sup>

Lutz Röhrich (1962: 124–145; 274–280) has published the literary versions of the tale type from the Middle Ages in their original languages with thorough comments. The plot is known first and foremost as a mediaeval *exemplum* (IE 3378 – *Monk Felix*), in which the monk listened to the song of a bird for 300 (100, 200) years. When he returned to the monastery to sing mass, the monks no longer recognised him.

The oldest written version of this tale type was recorded in Old French in the early 12th century and comes from Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris. In the German area the legend plot from monk Felix was written down in poem form, in Thuring in the second half of the 13th century. In the Protestant space the legend secularized and the character of the monk was replaced with that of a citizen (*bourgeois*). (Röhrich 1962: 124–130, 277, 279)

Röhrich was convinced that the motif of singing birds is of Celtic origin and that this narrative came to the continent from Ireland in the 12th century (*ibid.*: 277). Alan Bruford suggests that this simple story of a man spending years listening to the song of a bird may be one of those cases where it is impossible to be sure whether the ultimate source of Christian variants is in Asian Buddhism or in Celtic paganism. The fact that it is a bird rather than an angel that sings to the monk suggests that it is a pre-Christian source. (Bruford 1994–1995: 7)

The defining feature of tale type ATU 471A is that the hero of the tale (usually a monk or another male character related to the church) does not knowingly end up in the other world, but hears the marvellous singing of birds or angels in the forest – at the boundary of the home world. The heavenly song appears as a revelation to the listener. When he recovers from this, centuries will have passed. The character is generally not led by anyone to the heavenly kingdom or the realm of the dead, but remains (in his own opinion) physically in the same world of earthly beings which, however, has acquired qualities typical of a supernatural world. Obviously the forest here is to be seen as another or different world – the forest is a place that is opposed to the domestic circle of humans (Paulson 1971: 57–78).

#### The Bridge to Otherworld (ATU 471)<sup>14</sup>

A single tale of this tale type has been written down, with the following plot from Viljandi parish in south Estonia:

One after another, three brothers meet an old man in the woods who offers employment to them – they are to herd a sick horse and follow it everywhere. The elder brothers are careless and lay down on the seaside to sleep, while the horse goes across the sea to eat alone; when they come back on the following day it appears that they have been away for a full year. The youngest brother, in contrast, goes

across the sea together with the horse (it appears that he goes to the other world). There he sees wondrous things that the horse explains to him: thin sheep in a lush pasture are people who have been living in riches in the earthly world but go hungry in the other world despite the bounty surrounding them, while fat sheep pasturing in a desert are people who, having starved in the earthly world, gain a rich reward in the other world. The youngest brother falls asleep there (in the other world) and wakes up as an old man: it turns out that five thousand years have gone by. The horse, which actually turns out to be a young man under a magic spell, says that he must remain in the other world. After begging for a long time the magic horse promises to take the man home on the condition that he is not to step on the earth. The man however transgresses and crumbles into dust.<sup>15</sup>

In this tale the elder brothers think that they have been drowsing by the sea for a single night yet a whole year has gone by. The youngest brother falls asleep in the fairy tale world across the sea where his sleep lasts more than five thousand times longer than that of his brothers. Such shifts in time and space could probably be explained by (partial) opposition and (partial) intertwining of Self and Other, 'the world of humans' and 'the other world'. The elder brothers are closer to their home, somewhere on the boundary between the home world and the fairyland world while the youngest brother has already reached a strange world beyond the sea. Perhaps the different progression of time here expresses the understanding that the time of the so-called other world enters the human world edgewise, where its influence, however, is weak, accumulating 'on the other side' of this world that can be reached by crossing the sea, the big water (i.e., eternity).

### *Other Tale Types*

The plots of the type cluster described above are linked with *The Stone of the Snake* (ATU 672D; 34 archival versions from Estonia)<sup>16</sup> type in which the main character also sleeps for a prolonged period of time. In the international tale type catalogue this tale, whose plot rather reminds us of a legend, has been classified as a fairy tale.

In autumn, a man goes into the woods where he sees snakes licking a stone or a plant. The man follows the snakes' example and goes to the snake cave with them, where he falls asleep to hibernate together with the snakes. (On occasion, the man does not go to the snake cave to hibernate after having licked the stone or a blade of grass, but falls asleep under a bush or a boat.) When he wakes up in the spring, he returns home and, thinking that he has been away for a night only, demands "yesterday's cabbage soup" from his wife. In some versions of the tale the wife has already thought the man to be dead and has remarried.

Often holidays from the folk calendar that are related to snakes, for example St. Matthew's Days (*madisepäev*) both in spring and autumn (February 24, September 21),<sup>17</sup> St. Gertrude's Day (*käädripäev*, March 17),<sup>18</sup> Michaelmas (*mihklipäev*, September 29),<sup>19</sup> Exaltation of the Holy Cross (*viissenjapäev*, September 14),<sup>20</sup> occur in this tale type.<sup>21</sup> Notes about adders overwintering in a heap coiled together has supported the belief widespread among different peoples of a Snake King reigning over its subjects or a

snake with a crest, the eating of whose crest would give a person the ability to speak all languages (Hiimäe 2006: 338).

It is characteristic of the type that the protagonist sleeps throughout the whole winter. A sleep that is extraordinarily long for a human also occurs in the religious tale *The Seven Sleepers* (ATU 766), a tale that brings together different plots in which a person is hit by an extraordinarily long sleep from which he or she is awakened for an important event, for instance, twelve children sleep for 300 years, wake up on the day Jesus is born and become his disciples. In this tale type time has stopped for the sleepers, when they wake up they have aged hardly or not at all. A similar legend has also given its name to The Seven Sleepers Day (*seitsmemagajapäev*, June 27).<sup>22</sup>

Some parallels can be drawn with the particular theme of the sleeping warrior legend – a person finds a passage into a cave or mountain and there sees sleeping warriors, knights, monks, soldiers or a king with his escort. When he returns, he realises that a year has passed in the meanwhile. Sometime just entering a cave is enough for a person to sleep for three hundred years. (Mencej 2012: 33)

#### MOVING IN TIME AND SPACE

In the type cluster under consideration the position of the spaces in relation to one another and also the direction of the characters' movement are significant. The difference in time perception has been caused by the hero's movement in space and between spaces – going through the garden gate, moving up or down the stairs or the like.

Heda Jason (1977: 204–211) has described different dimensions of time in folklore. She distinguishes between three main categories of time: human time, mythic time and fabulous time. The later can be divided into four sub-categories: miraculous time, eschatological time, demonic time, and marvellous time. If in the world of the fairy tale a single, marvellous time reigns, the tale type cluster observed involves relative time shifts or transitions from human time into numinous time. Miraculous time may expand or contract in relation to human time, which has a regular flow (*ibid.*: 210–211). Human time and numinous time differ in their quality and in how they are passing. While a man visiting his dead friend thinks he is away for three hours (or listening to three tunes played on an instrument), actually 300 years have passed on earth – thus, it can be said that numinous time (in the world of the dead) has contracted in relation to human time. Marvellous time passes so slowly that for mortals it may seem to last an eternity; this is indicated by the titles of such stories stored in the Estonian Archives as “Eternal Time” and “In the Cold Grave Forever”.

Three vertical spheres can be detected in tales of the type cluster under consideration:

1. The upper world (heaven, also paradise);
2. The earth – the world of the humans;
3. The netherworld (the world of the dead, also hell).

Usually, the events of a particular tale take place in only two of the three spheres: 1) in the world of the humans, and 2) either in the upper or the netherworld.

Going to the world beyond the grave is usually depicted as going down a staircase or a hole,<sup>23</sup> going up the stairs leads one to heavenly paradise,<sup>24</sup> although at times the

vertical direction is not mentioned at all – a bridegroom goes to the grave of his friend and all of a sudden finds himself in the world of the dead.

Heda Jason points out that the human world and the fairy tale world can lie on a horizontal or a vertical axis. On the horizontal axis the human world is separated from the fairy tale world by a vast empty space. Crossing this distance takes the hero a lot of time, or he uses miraculous means like a flying carpet or magic boots. Jason also notes that crossing such enormous distances constitutes compression of time and space of a kind. On the vertical axis the fairy tale world lies either above or below the human world and can be reached either by climbing a tall tree or going into a deep well. On the vertical axis the distance between the two worlds is small, yet crossing it is dangerous. (Jason 1977: 199–200)

Mirjam Mencej has also analysed the motif of the supernatural passage of time and attempted to determine whether the type of space is crucial for a change in the perception of time. According to Mencej the places of supernatural passage of time are caverns, hills, mountains, graves, forest, water, mills and gardens. All of them are believed to represent a borderline and the liminal space between this world and the other. In the horizontal conceptualization of the world, the forest and water represent a liminal space that divides the inhabited world from the chaotic, dangerous world beyond; according to the vertical structure of space, caves and graves are the places where the earthly abode of humans and the subterranean abode of the dead meet. (Mencej 2012: 36–45)

Generally speaking in the tale types of the type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* an ordinary person, a bridegroom at the time of his wedding, reaches the other world led by a dead person. In some Estonian archival versions the character does not undertake a long trip to the world of the dead, but the meeting of the living and the dead takes place in a graveyard, on the friend's grave: usually the dead person comes out of the grave and listens to angels singing<sup>25</sup> or drinks tea together with the protagonist.<sup>26</sup>

In an original tale about two brothers from Tarvastu,<sup>27</sup> the proud and boasting rich brother does not find himself in the other world and the main character – a quiet and humble younger brother – is not dead.

After their father's death the poor friend finds himself a place to live in the wide world and starts a holy life there. His life was so holy in this lonely place that often one could hear the voice of an angel singing in the chamber. The elder brother is about to get married and goes to invite the younger brother to the wedding; when enters the brother's room he hears the most sweet voice of an angel singing, which right away scares him and makes him listen as if he were a piece of wood. Upon returning home the rich brother discovers that there is a big and splendid palace instead of his house and strangers are living there and that he has been away for three hundred years. Having learned this he crumbles into dust and nothing remains of him.

Although in this tale the world of the living is not contrasted with the world of the dead, the pair of oppositions, profane *versus* sacred, can be found in the chronotope. The events take place in the mundane human world: in the profane world the younger brother finds himself a place to live and turns it sacred with his holy way of living, as the result of which the time and space surrounding him acquire the quality of the

sacred, the supernatural or the otherworldly. Among the binary oppositions on which culture is based that were introduced into theoretical usage by the French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss there is the pairing of temporal and atemporal (timeless). Lauri Vahtre who has studied the popular calendar and chronology of Estonians has also called the atemporal or extra-temporal region “a parallel time”. As an example of parallel time, Vahtre gives the period that Estonians call the Time of Souls.<sup>28</sup> To the question of where souls were at other times, Vahtre answers that they did not live “before”, “now” or “after”, but rather in that parallel time. (Vahtre 2000: 11–12) In the example given above the younger brother in a sense finds himself in a parallel time that does not function before, now or after.

#### GENRE BOUNDARIES IN THE TYPE CLUSTER

A different passing of time is an inherent characteristic that all the tale types observed above (ATU 470, 470A, 471, 471A) have in common. In the international catalogue of tale types the plots of the type cluster described above have been classified as fairy tales, yet several characteristics can be found in them that are much more typical of religious legends, legend-like fairy tales, legends and exempla.

The fairy tale motif described by Stith Thompson as M 252 corresponds to the *Friends in Life and Death* tale type – both have a similar sequence of motifs: an agreement between two friends, a dead person’s visit, a living person’s return visit (Petschel 1971: 124–125). The type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* can have several parallels in religious legends. The Finnish catalogue of belief legends by Simonsuuri and Jauhainen (1998) the tale plots *Friends in Life and Death* and *The Offended Skull* have been classified as religious legends – tale type ATU 470 (in which a dead and a living person are guests at each other’s weddings) thus corresponds to the identical legend type C 1171. The same plot also has similarities with legends C 1176 (in which a living person falls under the influence of a dead person or the devil, is away from home for hundreds of years and crumbles into dust upon returning) and C 500 (friends make an agreement that the one to die first will return to earth to bring news about his life in the beyond). The *Offended Skull* tale type corresponds to legend type C 1166 in the classification of Finnish religious legends. What is somewhat different in another related type version (C 1161) is the punishment of the main character: on his return visit to the dead, the man loses a finger as punishment for being disrespectful towards the skull.

On the basis of the Estonian archival versions, the following lists the characteristic features that are common to the types in the type cluster observed.

#### *The Occurrence of Real Place Names*

For instance, in a tale from Põltsamaa parish, the events described take place in the village of Sulustvere and the folklore collector has added a lengthy introductory paragraph that describes places related to the plot, such as *Kitse küngas* (Goat Hill) and *Kabeli väratu põllud* (fields of the Chapel Gate) in meticulous detail.<sup>29</sup> In addition, tales that start with sentences such as: “In Tõstamaa close to the tavern a couple of people

was living”,<sup>30</sup> “Once upon a time in Estonia”,<sup>31</sup> “Once upon a time a young man went for a walk on the castle hill at Otepää”,<sup>32</sup> “Someone hit a skull with his foot on Haljala churchyard”,<sup>33</sup> etc., belong to this group.

### *Personal Names*

The type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* also contains personal names. Two tales about characters called Ants and Mats and Jüri and Mats have been recorded by the same collector.<sup>34</sup> Characters in a third tale are called Mats and Hans.<sup>35</sup> As regards the personal names Mats, Ants, Jüts and Hans show that if a brother in a tale is called Mats he is bound to be the person who dies. Perhaps the fact that personified Death has been called Mulla-Madis (Madis (Matthew) of the Earth) in Estonia has been of influence here.

A tale less resembling the others is one in which a man called Norsil Villem (Villem of Norsil) has two sons: Kõrdi Teno (Teno of Porridge) who is tall and able-bodied, and Silgu Samel (Samel of Herring) who is frail and sickly and dies fairly soon.<sup>36</sup> These names are considerably more personalised, yet leave a comic impression (at least to today’s readers); these are probably nicknames and not real names. The comical element is being used in a context typical of fairy tales and legend-like tales.

Although personal names – both proper names (Ivan, Ants, Peeter) as well as descriptive names (Snow White, Cinderella) often occur in fairy tales (Järv 2005: 453–454), they first and foremost occur in legends. Risto Järv has studied the personal names occurring in the fairy tale corpus and remarks, in case of tale type ATU 650A, that “similarly to names rather being found in legends, where they are used to underscore credibility, a number of texts belonging to this tale type are reminiscent of legends, being described with a ‘verisimilitude’ nearly typical of fairy tales” (Järv 2005: 551). Järv explains that the use of names is not the main criterion in classifying texts as legends, yet “in the case many personal names are used in the versions of a certain tale type in addition to the presence of other characteristics of legends, the type could rather be classified as a legend” (ibid.: 552).

### *The Topic of Death and the Other World*

In the type cluster observed, elements relating to death and the other side hold a central place. The topic carries a religious load in itself: it is not entertainment value and joy gained from flights of imagination that are foregrounded in these tales; rather, the tale has to support and prove the beliefs occurring in the reality of folklore that becomes a part of the reality of the religious legend.

## *Dystopic Endings*

Fairy tales usually have happy endings – the hero marries and/or gains a large fortune. The plots of the type cluster observed as a rule end with the death of the hero of the tale, thus unhappily. An (unhappy) ending that is in contrast with fairy tales and impossible in them is one of the characteristics typical of legends. Nevertheless, in the case of such types, tales can be found in the Estonian corpus of fairy tales whose plot evolves differently: the bridegroom who has returned home survives.<sup>37</sup> In these tales, the bridegroom puts a bit of bread from the wedding table into his pocket when going to visit the deceased friend; when he returns home after a long time (80, 70 or 33 years) he does believe that he has been away for so long for even the bread in his pocket is still fresh.

Here is the bit of bread that I put into my pocket when I went off to Mats's wedding. If seventy years have passed it should be nothing but earth and dust. But it is as fresh and tasty as it was then.<sup>38</sup>

The man finds an old woman in the house who moves around supporting herself on a stick and claims to be his bride. The man offers the bread to the woman who eats it and becomes young as a result. "When the crone had eaten of the mouthful of bread, she started to crackle and her back turned straight."<sup>39</sup> Despite a generation passing, the bride and groom become young again, host a new wedding celebration and live a happy life together. As the narrator says in the end: they may be living even now.<sup>40</sup>

## *A Communion Host*

In the plot with a happy ending the bread has magic power. Throughout ages, bread has been the main food for peasants and held an important symbolic and ritual significance long ago (as it does even now). In addition to this, bread has an important place in magic: let us remember the host that was used as a means of magic.

The type cluster discussed here includes a number of tales in which the bridegroom, who has returned from the realm of the dead, receives a communion host from the priest upon his return and dies or even crumbles into dust after that.

## *Characters*

In the type cluster *The Mortal's Visit to the Other World*, the dead friend belongs to the other side while the friend who is getting married represents the human world. A living person (a friend of the deceased) finds himself in the other world, he is a stranger there, he has no influence on the chronotope, he 'falls victim' to the strange and unknown other world. Jason claims that marvellous beings only exist in the fairy tale world of marvels: the hero meets them outside the world of humans and when he returns home, the marvellous beings disappear, while the supernatural characters of legends can also freely move in the human world (Jason 177: 147–151). Thus it can be claimed that the characters of the type cluster, first and foremost the dead person, rather belong to the

reality (chronotope) of legend where supernatural (demonic, mythological) characters are able to move unhindered in the human world and time (ibid.: 196, 207–209).

In Finnish folkloristics the tales described above have been classified as belief legends. The occurrence of concrete place names and personal names, the topic of death, an unhappy ending and characters usually belonging to the reality of legends allow the plots of the type cluster to be classified as belief legends or religious folktales. The international type catalogue has remained true to previous tradition and preserved the place of the tale types under fairy tales. In addition, the team of the Estonian folktale project<sup>41</sup> decided to leave the four tale types belonging to the type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* in the type register of Estonian fairy tales (Järv et al. 2009) despite the reasons listed above, as plots characteristic of the types have been predominantly developed more lengthily, resulting in fictional tales consisting of several episodes the religious background of which has today receded.

## NOTES

1 In this article I use the term ‘fairy tale’ instead of terms ‘tale of magic’ and ‘wonder tale’, see Uther 2004: 6.

2 I use the term ‘tale type cluster’ as the set of tale types with similar topic and plot. For instance, *The Magic Ring* (ATU 560), *Aladdin* (ATU 561) and *The Spirit in the Blue Light* (ATU 562), the versions of which often mix and merge in ways that make it difficult to tell them apart as types, form a separate type cluster. Another example of a type cluster could be the body of tale plots connected with snakes and the Snake King: *The Man Who Understands Animal Languages* (ATU 670), *The Serpent’s Crown* (ATU 672), *The Stone of the Snake* (ATU 672D), *Expelling Snakes* (ATU 672B\*), *Testimony of the Serpent* (ATU 672C\*), *The White Serpent’s Flesh* (ATU 673) and the Latvian type *The Snake Gives Money* (AM 672E\*).

3 For a monographic article about the tale type AT 681, see Ting 1981.

4 See Järv et al. 2009: 574–575, 613. For an encyclopaedic survey about international tale type ATU 470, see Petschel 1987.

5 The published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 470 are available in English: “The Heavenly Wedding” (Päär, Türipu 2005: 11–13); in German: “Die Ewigkeit” (Loorits 2004 [1959]: No. 107); and in Estonian: Järv et al. 2009: Nos. 143–144; Peebo, Peegel 1989: No. 80.

6 ERA II 194, 299 (1) < Setomaa, Vilo commune, Pööni village – Ello Kirss < Ode Lumõjärv (1938).

7 H II 19, 49/7 (17) < Tõstamaa parish – Mihkel Kampmann (1889).

8 See Järv et al. 2009: 575, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 470A, see Petschel 1981.

9 For the published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 470A, see Järv et al. 2009: Nos. 145–146.

10 Connection with Christmas occurs in six Estonian versions.

11 See Järv et al. 2009: 576, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 471A, see Wagner 1999.

12 The published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 471A are available in German: “Die Erzählung von einem Mönch, dem ein Vöglein sang” (Loorits 2004 [1959]: No. 108); the same version in Estonian: Peebo, Peegel 1989: No. 192. For another Estonian archive version, see Järv et al. 2009: No. 148.

13 ERA II 62, 387/9 (18) < Keila parish – Rudolf Pöldmäe < Mai Köölen, 70 years old (1933).

14 See Järv et al. 2009: 575–576, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 471, see Petschel 1979.

15 E 22538/47 < Viljandi parish – H. Pöder (1896). Cf. Järv et al. 2009: No. 147, with the tale type *The Land Where No One Dies* (ATU 470B) in which the young man who has gone to visit the Land of Immortality is forbidden to step on earth; he goes out to help a man whose carriage, which is full of worn-out shoes, has been overturned in a ditch. The coachman, however, turns out to be Death who takes his life then and there. See also Petschel 1996: 760–763.

16 This tale type has been excluded from among Finnish folktales due to its resemblance to a legend. In the catalogue of Lauri Simonsuuri and Marjatta Jauhianen (1998) it corresponds to legend type R 31; K 10 has a rather similar plot as well. The same plot has also been recorded as an exemplum: IE 3818 (A peasant falls into a hole where there are snakes and a giant dragon; in order to get food, he licks a magic stone; the man flees, clutching the tail of the dragon).

17 About St. Matthew's Days in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 50–55, 184.

18 About St. Gertrude's Day in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 76.

19 About Michaelmas in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 185–190.

20 About *viissenjapäev* in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 183–184.

21 About the occurrences of folk calendar holidays in Estonian fairy tales, see Kaasik 2008: 51–54.

22 About Seven Sleepers Day in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 148.

23 H II 26, 706/8 (7) < Suure-Jaani parish – Ernst-Heinrich Saabas (1889); E 11898/900 (1) < Tõstamaa parish, Pootsi commune – Otto Schantz (1894); E 11527 (4) < Tõstamaa parish, Pootsi commune – Juhan Hirdt (1894).

24 H II 39, 742/6 (699) < Koeru parish – H. A. Schults (1892).

25 H II 19, 46/7 (17) < Tõstamaa parish – Mihkel Kampmann (1889); H II 55, 194/5 (4) < Helme parish – Matt Tomp (1896).

26 S 20639/42 (18) < Setomaa, Vilo commune, Mitkovitsi-Sagorje village < Vilo commune, Saptja village – Viktor Ruusamägi < Anastasia Paloots (1930); ARS 1, 860 (1) < Tartu town – Olga Sermet (1927).

27 E 36255/60 < Tarvastu parish, Vooru commune – August Anderson (1897).

28 The Time of Souls in the Estonian folk calendar was traditionally the autumn-winter period between Michaelmas and Christmas (see Hiimäe 1998: 197–204).

29 E 4271/4 < Põltsamaa parish – Martin Luu (1892).

30 AES, MT 184, 14/5 < Tõstamaa parish and commune, Väräti village – E. Pöldre < Andrei Kangur, 86 years old (1936).

31 RKM II 288, 488/91 < Russia, Caucasia, Krasnodar krai, Adler rayon; Vesjoloje village < Sulevi village – Johannes Olev (1971); and RKM II 288, 491/4 (the same correspondent). It is worth mentioning that the tale has been recorded in a settlement of emigrants far from Estonia.

32 E 43675/9 (46) < Riga town < Rõngu parish, Aakre village – H. Lell < Peeter Virks (1902).

33 ERA II 153, 23 (11) < Haljala parish – Hermann Länts (1937).

34 ERA II 152, 60/5 (9) < Haljala parish, Aaspere commune, Võipere village < Väike-Maarja parish, Porkuni commune – Julius Aleksander Reepärg < Jaan Muruväli (Mahkvei) (1937), published in Järv et al. 2009: No. 144; H II 38, 116/7 (5) < Haljala parish – J. A. Reepärg < Juhannes Oru, a young boy who had heard these from his grandfather (1892).

35 E 4271/4 < Põltsamaa parish – Martin Luu (1892).

36 H II 36, 485/6 (7) < Vaivara parish – J. Männik (1893).

37 E 34801 (15) < Jüri parish, Kurma commune – Jaan Saalverk (1897); H III 5, 646/50 (1) < Tori parish – Tõnis Tilk (1889); ERA II 152, 60/5 (9) < Haljala parish, Aaspere commune, Võipere village < Väike-Maarja parish, Porkuni commune – J. A. Reepärg < Jaan Muruväli (Mahkvei) (1937); H II 38, 116/7 (5) < Haljala parish – J. A. Reepärg < Juhannes Oru (1892).

38 ERA II 152, 60/5.

39 H II 38, 116/7.

40 ERA II 152, 60/5.

41 About the Estonian folktale project, see Järv et al. 2009: 583–586.

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# GENDER STEREOTYPES IN *CINDERELLA* (ATU 510A) AND *THE PRINCESS ON THE* *GLASS MOUNTAIN* (ATU 530)

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## ABSTRACT

One of the best-known role-based stereotypes in European fairy tales is that of an active male and a passive female. Awareness of such a stereotype is connected with the feminist approach that criticises the domination of the male point of view in fairy tales and the depiction of women from the position of men. The article focuses on analysing if and how the stereotype is realised in the context of two fairy tale types – *Cinderella* (ATU 510A) and *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* (ATU 530). According to Bengt Holbek, fairy tales as symbolic texts are closely connected to the real world as they refer to the latter through fantastic phenomena and events. Holbek is interested in the meaning of magical elements in the living tradition: according to him the world of fairy tales does not reflect the real world directly, but reveals the storytellers' and their audiences' ideas of what the latter should be like. What emerges as an important question is whose vision is transmitted by such fairy tale interpretations; whether researchers are able to interpret the meanings the tales might have had for the storytellers, or whether it is just the viewpoint of the researcher that is reflected.

KEYWORDS: fairy tale • interpretation • gender stereotypes • active male • passive female

## INTRODUCTION

In order to observe gender-role-related stereotypes in fairy tales and discuss their manifestations in tales with male and female protagonists I wished to find tale types that would be representative of the masculine and the feminine tale types and at the same time would resemble each other to a degree.<sup>1</sup> When reading versions of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* (ATU 530) I discovered approximately a dozen texts in which, similarly to the tale of *Cinderella* (ATU 510A), elder brothers throw peas into ashes and tell the youngest brother to pick these out and make a soup. Similarly to *Cinderella* a grey

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old man arrives to help the hero in these versions. The tales start in the main character's home, there is a helper who assists the hero in carrying out a difficult task, and in the end the protagonist can be identified by a sign (a lost slipper, a ring broken in half). In both tales the main character initially has a socially low status (being poor, young) that will change after marrying a prince or a princess.

Proceeding from the interpretation theory offered by the Danish folklorist Bengt Holbek we can see that both types fit the framework of so-called symbolic fairy tales that are characterised by such features as a wedding or the reunion of a couple at the end of the story and marvellous plot elements in the events leading to this culmination. According to Holbek, a fairy tale as a symbolic text is closely connected with the real world. Symbolic fairy tales refer to the real world through fantastic phenomena, events and objects. Holbek is not concerned with discovering an original meaning, but is rather interested in the meaning of marvellous elements for those living within the tradition. Thus, the world depicted in fairy tales does not reflect the real world directly, but rather represents the storytellers' and their audiences' idea as to what the latter should be like. (Holbek 1987: 404–406)

The symbolic elements of fairy tales convey emotional impressions of beings, phenomena and events in the real world, organized in the form of fictional narrative sequences which allow the narrator to speak of the problems, hopes and ideals of the community (ibid.: 435).

Becoming of age, looking for a partner and starting a family belong to the reality of the storytellers' and their audiences' lives. Thus, it can be supposed that both in the real world as well as in the world of fairy tales certain fixed ideas apply to men and women as regards the behaviour and attitudes deemed appropriate for them.

Such an approach is certainly simplified and I do not by any means think that the main aim in the storytellers' lives used to be finding the right partner and starting a family, yet the observed tale types allow of an analysis from this aspect. Thus we can presume that certain norms or expectations regarding the behaviour appropriate for men and women have been transferred from the real world of the storytellers into the world of fairy tales. According to the Finnish researcher Aili Nenola oral tradition reflects the views on gender roles of its time; therefore, it could be considered a part of a symbolic system based on the dominant gender roles and gender relations (Nenola 1990: 12). A gender stereotype suggests what a man or a woman should be like and this makes it possible to control the behaviour of the people close to one (Nenola 1986: 100–102).

One of the best-known role-based stereotype or clichés is that of an active male and a passive female (Moser-Rath 1987: 113). The hero is generally characterised by his activity, which is expressed in taking risks, being brave, fearless and adventurous. Being clever, witty, knowledgeable, cunning and skilful are also essential characteristics. Friendliness, helpfulness, fidelity, loyalty and honesty are valued independently of gender, as these features are considered to be common to all humanity. (Roth 1999: 147–149)

The heroine is usually pictured as more helpless, more passive and more tied to the family. The woman's morality is the central feature in fairy tales. By employing opposites (for example, daughter of the family versus stepdaughter), a picture is given of what is required from women in general, what kind of woman is good or bad, and

what kind of behaviour is appropriate for women. Obedience, humility, friendliness, helpfulness and, for practical reasons, the ability to manage with housework, are characteristics expected from a good woman. (Apo 1990: 24–27)

Feminist researchers connect the role model of a passive and helpless heroine to masculine views deriving from patriarchal social order (Apo 1986: 198–209; Horn 1990: 732–733). Gender studies emerged in the 1970s and soon reached the field of folkloristics. Donald Haase has written a survey article on the history of feminist treatments of fairy tales; according to him, gender-focused research does not only entail studying the contents of fairy tales, but also their canonisation and institutionalisation. The question of the domination of the male point of view in the genre of the fairy tale has given ground for alternative interpretations of fairy tales and helped to identify the female voice in fairy tales. (Haase 2004: 2)

Gender studies differentiates between the concepts of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, with the former denoting biological and the latter the socially constructed characteristics (Rubin 1975: 165; Bottigheimer 2004: 38). Gender that is based on social relations is connected to a dichotomy and hierarchy in which the relations between the genders are organised proceeding from the aspect of power (Liljeström 2003: 114).

Feminist studies point out that women in fairy tales appear as overly passive, fairly helpless beings unable to control their own lives, while men are characterised as strong, active and dominant (Haase 2004; Farish Kuykendal, Sturm 2007: 39). For example, the passivity of the heroine comes across as extreme in the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* (ATU 410) in which the heroine falls into a lethargic sleep. This helplessness is magnified by loss of speech in the tale type *The Maiden Who Seeks her Brother* (ATU 451) or by the heroine having her hands cut off in the tale type *The Maiden without Hands* (ATU 706).

As a reason for the domination of the male point of view, the major role of men both in collecting as well as editing of fairy tales has been suggested, as this has had a considerable influence on the development and canonisation of the fairy tale as a genre.

Thus, for example, Ruth B. Bottigheimer has pointed out the role of men in the editing history of publications of fairy tales, which has influenced both the written tradition (how the tales have been told) as well as the repertoire (what the stories are about). She focuses on the principles of the Brothers Grimm in editing, which, besides the taste of the bourgeoisie of their time, represent the masculine viewpoint in the fairy tale genre (Bottigheimer 1993: 268).<sup>2</sup>

As regards Aarne-Thompson’s tale type index, Torborg Lundell claims that the indexed tale types are dominated by stories with male heroes who play an active role, while women are usually represented as passive, even in cases in which they are protagonists (Lundell 1986: 162).<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly there are also fairy tales that set contrasting examples and in which the heroine plays an active part: for example, in tale type *The Shift of Sex* (ATU 514) a girl goes off to wander in the wide world. Still, it is remarkable that she does not do this as a woman, but engages in cross-dressing and takes on the role of a man. The realistic tale *The Forsaken Fiancée: Service as Menial* (ATU 884) has a similar plot. We can notice an attitude that tells us what kind of behaviour is considered to be appropriate for a man or a woman in a traditional society, and according to this a woman should not move alone outside the home. If she ventures out of women’s ordinary sphere of activity, i.e. the domestic sphere, she has to take on a man’s role for she would set herself in danger when appearing as a woman.

The *Rescue by the Sister* (ATU 311) and *Maiden-Killer (Bluebeard)* (ATU 312) tale types depict a heroine who can be considered active to a certain extent, but who is first and foremost clever. These are but a few examples of the heroine's active role as such in fairy tales to show that these still offer heterogeneous material that makes various interpretations possible.

#### CINDERELLA (ATU 510A) AND THE PRINCESS ON THE GLASS MOUNTAIN (ATU 530): CONTENT AND CONTEXT

Both *Cinderella* (ATU 510A) as well as *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* (ATU 530) are among the most popular fairy tales in Estonia: there are 112 versions of *Cinderella* and 165 versions of *The Glass Mountain* in the Estonian Folklore Archives.

The plot of the Estonian versions of *Cinderella* is the following:<sup>4</sup>

On a Sunday, Cinderella's stepmother (or the devil) goes to church (or to a party) with her daughters and gives Cinderella the task of picking beans out from the ashes in order to make soup. Only after the job is done is she allowed to go to church. On subsequent occasions she has to pick peas, then lentils or groats from the ashes. The orphan weeps, and suddenly an old man appears who helps her to carry out the task. In addition to this, the old man gives her a wand that provides the orphan with magnificent clothes and a carriage to go to church (or the party) when she taps it against a stone. However, she has to leave before the others (or, in case of attending a party, before midnight or cock-crow). The king's son notices Cinderella, who flees from the church. On the third Sunday he smears tar on the church's doorstep, and Cinderella's slipper gets stuck as she hurries away. The prince starts to look for the owner of the slipper. The stepmother first offers him her own daughters; when the slipper does not fit them, she cuts off their toes or heels. Finally, the prince finds the right girl and marries her.

The versions of the Estonian *Cinderella* mainly follow the international plot, while to some extent distinctive, probably more archaic versions come from Setumaa (an Orthodox region in south-eastern Estonia): in these stories the devil turns Cinderella's mother into a sheep who will be slaughtered and eaten afterwards. Cinderella buries her mother's bones and later on will visit the grave to look for help. The Setu versions also contain the motif of the devil telling the girls to compete to find who is the fastest at washing and drying her hair before the party. In order to get her daughters ready before the orphan, the devil cuts off their heads, dries them in the stove and then sticks them back on with cow dung.

The plot of the Estonian versions of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* is as follows:

On his deathbed, a father asks his sons that each keep watch on his grave for a night after his death. The two elder brothers send the youngest (i.e. most foolish) one to keep watch in their place. The father gives his youngest boy three horses coloured copper, silver and gold, as well as matching clothes. The king of the country promises his daughter to the man who is able to ride to the top of a glass mountain. The two elder brothers ride away to try the task, leaving the youngest behind. The youngest brother attempts to ride the three horses he has received to the mountain

top. On his third try he succeeds in doing this on the golden horse and receives a ring (or an apple, a golden egg or a mark on his forehead) from the king's daughter. The hero hides the princess's ring from the others. The king keeps looking for the suitor who managed to complete the task, finds the youngest brother thanks to the ring and the brother marries the king's daughter.

Both tale types involve pejorative nicknames that hint at the protagonist's low status. Similarly to the name Aschenputtel, familiar from the German tradition, the heroine's name in Estonian tales is derived from ashes (Tuhkatriinu). The male hero's name Turak-Tuhkapsusja is also associated with ashes.<sup>5</sup>

The literary background of *Cinderella* has to a degree influenced the Estonian archival versions. In these, reflections from translations of fairy tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm can be detected, while the version of *Cinderella* by the Estonian author Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald ("*Tuhka-Triinu*", first published in 1866) that was also created drawing on German and French models has had the greatest influence. At the same time it does not become quite clear on the basis of archival texts if *Cinderella* reached Estonia only via literature or whether there was a merging of the literary and oral traditions. The existing versions show the existence of a strong tradition that is partly influenced by the literary versions.

Only a few versions of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* have appeared in print. Despite the earliest printed version having appeared as early as 1876 (Sohberg 1876), the influence of this, as well as other editions, on the oral tradition has not been significant.

The earliest recording of *Cinderella* dates from around the beginning of the 19th century. The Baltic German pastor Arnold Friedrich Johann Knüppfer transcribed it from the notes of pastor Christian Jacob Glanström. The exact date of the transcription is not known, but as Glanström died in 1825, the tale must have been recorded earlier.

The earliest version of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* was also recorded relatively early, around the 1830s. Active collecting of folklore in Estonia started at the end of the 1880s, before which texts of folkloric content were collected only sporadically. The texts known from the early 19th century were generally recorded by Baltic German intellectuals whose aim was to acquire additional and illustrative material to study Estonian and to develop the grammar of the language; thus, the folklore texts recorded at the time were originally language samples. (Toomeos-Orglaan 2005: 152–153)

Most versions of *Cinderella* and *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* were recorded in the years 1888–1899 and 1924–1939. It is in these years that major folklore collecting campaigns took place.

As collecting folklore first and foremost focused on rural regions, archival texts represent the lore known in villages. Those collecting were usually educated people – schoolmasters, students – but also pupils and other activists inspired by the work of collecting; there were also professional folklorists among the later (i.e. 20th century) collectors. As regards the storytellers, usually there is no information given about their background; only on some few occasions is the occupation of the storyteller (mistress of a farm, gardener, artisan, cowherd, etc.) given. Nevertheless, the place data usually allow us to presume that the storytellers belong to a village community.

Several scholars have studied whether the gender of the main character was of decisive significance in the selection of the tales. Different researchers have reached fairly

similar conclusions: men prefer to tell (as well as to collect and to publish) tales with male heroes, while female storytellers have no fixed preferences and stories with both heroes and heroines are represented in their repertoires (Holbek 1987: 168; Järv 2001: 37–39; Ragan 2009: 234–237).

The same tendency becomes apparent in the given tale types (see Table 1). The tale of *Cinderella* was mainly told by female storytellers (69), while the proportion of men was relatively low (13). In case of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* we also have predominantly female storytellers (60), but there are considerably more male storytellers (43) in comparison with *Cinderella*. Thus, it might be claimed that in the case of these tale types men preferred tales with male heroes, while the repertoire of woman storytellers has been less influenced by the main character’s gender.

Table 1. Gender division of storytellers and folk tale collectors.

	ATU 510A (112 versions)	ATU 530 (165 versions)
Male storytellers	13	43
Female storytellers	69	60
Male collectors	75	97
Female collectors	24	35
Anonymous storytellers	25	40
Anonymous collectors	7	11

The data concern the storytellers and collectors whose gender is known; in quite a few versions data about the storyteller are missing or insufficient (in addition to the surname only the initial of the first name is known).

The proportion of anonymous storytellers is higher among the material recorded in the 19th century. Recording the data about storytellers started only after Jakob Hurt, the initiator of the collecting campaign, made a request regarding this in his reports; before that, the person of the storyteller had not been considered important (Viidalepp 1959: 276; Järv 2001: 32). According to Risto Järv, the gender division of the tellers of fairy tales shows that in the 19th century male storytellers were predominant, whereas in the 20th century female storytellers were more numerous. At the same time Järv draws attention to the number of anonymous storytellers during the early period of collecting and makes the tentative suggestion that it might include female storytellers whose data may have been left unrecorded because of the low social status of women. (Ibid.: 35) What is considerably more likely, however, is that in the 19th century the recorder was also the storyteller, sending in the lore that he or she knew.

In case of both tale types the collectors were predominantly male, there were considerably fewer female collectors. The greater proportion of men as collectors apparently derives from their social position because in the 19th century men played a more active role in social life, while women were occupied with domestic housekeeping. The number of female collectors increases only in the 20th century, when the social position of women changes and they get the opportunity to study at university (collectors often were people of education).

INTERPRETING THE STEREOTYPES OF 'ACTIVE MALE'  
AND 'PASSIVE FEMALE'

In order to see if and how gender-role-related stereotypes are realised in the tale types studied, I have divided the plots into three putative situations: (1) a starting situation in which the domestic circumstances of the main characters and their relations with their families becomes clear; (2) a meeting with the helper in the course of which the main character obtains marvellous objects that help him complete a future task successfully; (3) completing the task and meeting the future spouse, culminating with their wedding.

*The Main Character's Domestic Circumstances and Relations with His/Her Family*

As is common in fairy tales, the hero's home and family are described in the starting situations of both tale types. It is here that the protagonist's social status is revealed (whether it is that of king's son or daughter, son of a poor man, or that of orphan, etc.). In these two tale types the protagonist usually has a low status. The heroine in *Cinderella* is an orphan or the stepdaughter of a widow. She can also be a maid at a landlady's, a witch's, or the devil's house. The malicious stepmother speaks to the orphan as if she was a servant and treats her and her own children with a glaring difference. The heroine is humiliated in every way. She is obliged to do the dirtiest and hardest domestic chores from morning to night; she is given poor food, her clothes are torn and tattered and her freedom to move around is limited (for example, she is not even allowed to go to church). The reason why the stepmother hates her and deprives her of motherly love could be the fact that Cinderella approaches the ideal and matches the prototype of a good woman, as it were – she is hard-working, helpful and friendly.

An example from the Estonian Folklore Archives:

She [Cinderella] had to wear rags that had been darned together, patch on patch. Be it Sundays or week-day, she was always wearing the same clothes for she had no better. However, the kind creator had made her wonderfully clever, beautiful and quick. Although her face was sad and pale because of the worry and wear of her labour, the girl was even prettier and lovelier than otherwise. Her stepsister would put on fine clothes and try to make herself outwardly attractive. On the inside, however, she was robust and rude, her face was not as pretty either as that of Cinderella, and no one really loved her, except those who were like her.<sup>6</sup>

The internal values of the heroine ensure her success in the future, and the orphan certainly has better marriage prospects in comparison with her lazy and inept stepsister.

In *Cinderella*, the opposition of the heroine and her stepsisters is not stressed as vividly as in some other tale types, for example, *The Black and the White Bride* (ATU 403, former AT 403B) or *The Kind and the Unkind Girls* (ATU 480). The contrasting behaviour of the heroine and the stepsister in similar situations is pointed out by the tales' repetitive structure – the heroine is always helpful and kind to everyone she meets on her way; the stepsister is always rude and reckless.

The antithesis of Cinderella is, however, her stepmother. Although the stepsister is paired up with the stepmother, she usually remains in the latter's shadow. From the

point of view of the story, the stepsister's role remains secondary, one might even say that she is an invisible character.

While the family of the heroine in *Cinderella* consists of strangers (a stepmother; the orphan as a servant to the devil), the hero in *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* lives at home among his closest relatives. The social position of the family is not specified directly, but we can assume that we are dealing with a lower status family. The storytellers do not always point out whether the events take place in a poor or a rich man's house, but in all versions without exception an opposition between brothers takes place. The two elder brothers are called wise and the youngest one foolish. Foolishness (ignorance) in fairy tales is not necessarily negative, it is rather immaturity that serves as the starting point for the younger brother's development (maturation) into a hero (Roth 1999: 149). In the context of this particular tale type this would mean that the two elder brothers are already adults, while the youngest is still immature. Stupidity (or foolishness) has also been associated with the hero's tactics – being regarded as inferior, the hero is secure from the rivalry of his brothers who might kill him fearing the competition (Horn 1993a: 807).

An interesting observation is made by Carolyn G. Heilbrun who says that the third brother's empathy, kindness and helpfulness can be interpreted as traces of feminine values, whereas the two older brothers carry masculine ones (Heilbrun 1979: 147).

The Finnish researcher Satu Apo notes that the family relations of the heroes get much less attention than those of the heroines. If a man can sometimes be pictured as estranged from his family (being a soldier or a beggar), the heroine is always defined by family relations. (Apo 1986: 201) In this case, the protagonists of both tale types are connected with their families. However, the relations of the heroine with those surrounding her are much more critical compared with the relations between the brothers. One of the main enemies of a woman in fairy tales is another envious woman (Apo 1986: 203; Horn 1993a: 804), which is especially apparent in the fairy tale *The Snow White* (ATU 709) in which the stepmother attempts to kill the heroine, for the latter is more beautiful than herself.

In case of *Cinderella* the conflict about a potential partner is already present at the beginning of the story; in the other, masculine tale type the enmity arises only when the competition for a partner becomes actual. At the beginning, when the hero is still immature, there is no competition between the brothers, for the youngest one is not taken seriously.

The main opposition that is manifested in the situation is the conflict between a youngster and an adult, which Holbek calls the generational split (Holbek 1987: 435). Irrespective of their gender, both protagonists are passive in the starting situation. The heroine takes orders and the hero lazes idly on top of the stove. Passivity can be interpreted here as being young and tied to one's family – in the parental home the hero or heroine tends to be subjugated, has no right to make decisions and is dependent upon the parents.

### *Obtaining the Attributes*

The second situation I am observing more closely is connected with the appearance of the helper and obtaining of marvellous objects.

In *Cinderella* the stepmother goes to church or to a party given by the king's son with her daughter(s), while Cinderella is left behind. She is given a rather peculiar task – to pick out the beans (peas, lentils, groats) from the ashes and prepare soup – which is obviously impossible. However, a grey old man appears to the weeping heroine and helps her complete the task; in addition to this, he gives the girl the most wonderful clothes. In some versions help arrives when the orphan visits her mother's grave. Here we can draw a parallel, or at least find a similarity, with *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* in which the hero's dead father helps his son. The way of receiving help in which the protagonist weeps at home or prays at her mother's grave has been called spontaneous (Apo 1986: 199).

The helper gives the orphan beautiful clothes so that she can go to church or to the party. Several fairytale researchers have expressed the opinion that on the one hand the marvellous gift reflects the heroine's internal values – she is helpful, friendly, docile, hard-working – and pretty clothes are a reward for her so-called correct behaviour. On the other hand, however, beautiful clothes are the means by which the heroine is turned into an attractive and desirable partner. (Apo 1986: 112; Moser-Rath 1987: 111; Horn 1993a: 804) Clothes have also been interpreted as a symbol showing that the protagonist's ugly and torn clothes had signified her immaturity (Horn 1993b: 1436–1437).

In this case, the fine clothes given to the orphan can be seen as a sign of her approaching maturity. Holbek suggests that the marvellous gifts received from the helper symbolise the protagonist's hidden internal values, calling the expression of internal characteristics through such attributes externalisation (Holbek 1987: 442).

In *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* the father gives his sons a task – usually it involves keeping watch on his grave. Only the youngest brother of the three is willing or able to fulfil the father's wish. The opportunity to become the owner of marvellous attributes is given to all three sons, but only the youngest one, who is considered to be foolish, seizes the opportunity. Katalin Horn supposes that the hero behaves instinctively when fulfilling his father's wish, yet the behaviour turns out to be prudent considering the forthcoming challenge – conquering the glass mountain (Horn 1993a: 807).

The marvellous attributes (i.e. horses) are generally given by the father. In those versions in which the motif of keeping watch on the father's grave is absent, the giver turns out to be a grey old man, as is also the case in *Cinderella*. However, here the episode of giving gifts takes place in the home and not outside it. The elder brothers leave in order to carry out the task given by the king (riding up the glass mountain). They leave the youngest brother at home to make soup, and for this purpose throw beans, peas or lentils into the ashes. A grey old man appears to help the hero – he gives him horses and fine clothes. Similarly to the heroine in the tale of *Cinderella* the hero gets the attributes while remaining passive.

In principle there are two ways to receive an attribute: by completing a certain task, or else spontaneously, which may sometimes be accompanied by a peculiar domestic chore. How justified is differentiating between peculiar domestic chores and a particular task in analysing the plot events? On both occasions the protagonists' hidden val-

ues become apparent, but in case of a particular task they manage to complete it on their own and this, indeed, is the precondition for receiving help. Peculiar domestic chores, however, require that the protagonist receive help. Here too it is the internal values of the protagonist that are the precondition for receiving help, although they are not directly put in active practice in completing the task. The existence of the values becomes apparent from the fact of the forthcoming help.

The feminine tale-type is exclusively related to the situation of gaining the helping attribute spontaneously. In case of the masculine tale-type, there is usually a concrete task involved, yet spontaneous obtaining of an attribute can occur as well. Thus, certain gender role stereotypes may become apparent in the situation of giving gifts: the hero's internal values are usually revealed through active engagement, while the heroine's values tend to appear as her nature (being good, kind and helpful).

### *The Hero's/Heroine's Meeting with the Future Partner*

Cinderella attends church (goes to a party) three Sundays running. A king's son (rich suitor) notices the girl in fine clothes and decides to marry her. The heroine has a passive role in arousing his interest: she is simply on display. If we are to proceed from the dictum that the woman's sphere of activity is contained in the formula *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*, we can say that Cinderella need not even exit her usual domestic circuit, as her trajectory of movement is contained in the axis between the kitchen and church. The only risk she runs is being recognised by her stepmother.<sup>7</sup>

In comparison with the heroine, the hero acts much more actively after having obtained the marvellous attribute. He rides up the glass mountain and thus carries out the task given by the king. In *Cinderella* it is the king's son who selects his spouse; the orphan catches her eye because of her beauty. To proceed from Holbek's theory, her looks (fine clothes) are markers of her real nature and values and the king's son selects her by (subconsciously) understanding these signs.

The heroine's beauty is one of the main means of arousing the interest in a potential partner. For the hero, it is the completion of the task that comes first, his fine looks remain secondary (Moser-Rath 1987: 111). A fine outfit is not enough to symbolise the hero's superiority in comparison with other suitors. For this purpose, he has to complete an assignment that seems virtually impossible and in which he is the only one to succeed, and this only due to his marvellous horses. In addition, here the properties of the attribute can be interpreted as a reflection of the hero's nature – not everyone can be the owner of such horses, he must be stronger, braver, and more skilful than the others.

As a sign of conquering the glass mountain and completing the task, the king's daughter gives the hero a ring.<sup>8</sup> The story of *Cinderella* also contains the motif of a token – the heroine will be later identified by the slipper she has lost.<sup>9</sup>

In both fairy tale types the protagonists prefer to remain anonymous. Often the hero wears a bandage around his head or finger in order to hide the sign used as evidence. It is possible that the hero is hiding himself because if his meeting with the potential partner and the successful completion of the tasks were to become known, his relatives might kill him. As long as his participation in fulfilling the task is not known, he is protected from the wrath of his relatives/competitors.

Yet why should a hero who has already proved his superiority both as regards his skills and values, still be afraid of the opponents' aggression? At this point, Satu Apo's explanation can be recalled, according to which it is the case of a longer process during which an adolescent hero makes a transition to the world of adults, or an initiation period. When the hero has reached the age of marrying, he has to leave the home and prove that he is able to manage in the grown-up world, i.e. that he can acquire a spouse, take care of the family and manage any problems that need solving. (Apo 1986: 184–186) As this is still the case of the hero's transition to the grown-up world – he has not been fully accepted as yet – he is vulnerable during the process and more easily harmed.

According to Holbek, the hero here is a poor adult who has reverted to the status of an adolescent and is not accepted on the level of wealth (oppositions of adult–adolescent and poor–rich).

Linda Dégh points to a dual identity that appears both in the case of Cinderella as well as the youngest brother: on the one hand, they are low-status people “covered in ashes”, on the other hand, one is a beauty clothed in finery, and the other the brave conqueror of the glass mountain. Dégh considers such hiding and transformation of the looks a part of the learning process. Changing the attire to attend church or conquer the glass mountain allows an opportunity to become stronger, cleverer and more beautiful, and serves as a sign of the protagonists' maturation. (Dégh 1994: 94)

If we try to observe the situations proceeding from gender role stereotypes, it seems that there are certain correspondences with the behaviour patterns considered typical of men and women. The hero engages in active behaviour, he completes a task, while the heroine just happens to be on display. We might certainly ask how active the hero is if he just lets himself be carried by a horse, and how passive the heroine is as she goes somewhere and puts herself in a risky situation (there is the possibility of being recognised) – a change in the situation also accompanies the heroine's behaviour. The concepts of activity and passivity can certainly be interpreted in several ways; they do not present a rigid, unchanging value or property. This is best manifested in case of the male character who is passive in the situation at the tale's beginning, but becomes active after acquiring the marvellous attributes and solves a difficult task successfully. It is through his activeness that the hero proves his worth. The change is less marked in the heroine: in principle, going to church might be interpreted as activeness, but she is still acting only in the sphere that is considered suitable for women (home and church) and does not undertake anything except being on display and looking beautiful. It is this passivity characteristic of descriptions of women in fairy tales that has been criticised in feminist discussions.

According to Linda Dégh, it is the necessity of stabilising one's position in the parental home or of reaching a higher position in a new home, i.e. acquiring the role of a wife and a mother, that makes the heroine act and leave the home (Dégh 1994: 93). Feminist criticism sees this as a limitation of the career of a woman that can be realised only by being a good wife and mother; the basis for such criticism is the change in women's social status during the 20th century, which no longer corresponds to the values depicted in stories recorded in the 19th century.

## WHOSE VOICE LEADS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF A FAIRY TALE?

When interpreting the marvellous features of fairy tales it is important to ask whose point of view is represented by such an interpretation.

Holbek distinguishes between eight different groups who participate in creating, spreading and interpreting fairy tales: 1) creators of the tales or primary storytellers; 2) further tellers; 3) storytellers whose tales have been recorded and archived; 4) audiences; 5) collectors; 6) editors; 7) readers or "secondary audiences"; 8) interpreters (Holbek 1987: 191).

Undoubtedly it is not possible to ascertain the interpretations of all participants (for example, primary storyteller, intermediate tellers, audiences). Archived texts make it possible to see how a tale has been interpreted by a particular teller and the recorder. Holbek believes that his source (the Danish collector of fairy tales Evald Tang Kristensen) recorded the tales as closely to the original as possible and that the collector's participation in the recordings was minimal (Holbek 1987: 193).

However, it seems to me that the contributions of the storyteller and the collector need not be clearly distinguishable, and that in giving the storyteller 'a voice' one should certainly consider the recorder. Sound recordings certainly make it possible to observe the storyteller's phrasing more closely, yet the collector still has a decisive influence on what is being said and which material is archived.<sup>10</sup>

In order to get a full picture it makes sense to discuss the aspects that are connected with the tale's textual history and pay attention to how, for whom and with what purpose one or other tale has been published and by which lexical means the publisher has influenced the depiction of the characters (Haase 2004: 13).

Holbek singles out as receivers the audiences participating in a traditional storytelling situation, as well as readers of the tale's written versions. As regards interpretation, he considers the audience and their reception to be more important than that of the reader. In a traditional storytelling situation both the storyteller and the audience/receiver belong to the same community and thus the audience is very likely to interpret the tale similarly to the storyteller. The written version need no longer be a pure performance, as it were, but may be influenced by the publisher's aims and promote their interpretations. Thus, in Holbek's opinion readers play no important role in interpreting fairy tales (Holbek 1987: 192–193). At this point, my opinion differs from his, for if we proceed from reception theory both the performer as well as any receiver have an equally significant role in interpretation.

Interpreters include not only the storytellers and their audiences/readers, but also the researchers who attempt to understand the world or the community in which the tales have been recorded with the help of the tales.

In Holbek's estimation the researcher should strive for an interpretation that ought to be as objective as possible, yet at the same time he concedes that this is a most difficult task (Holbek 1987: 193). Or rather, it is downright impossible. Even if we are familiar with the socio-cultural background against which the tales have been collected and recorded, we still cannot enter the storyteller's skin, as it were, and thus we should certainly be aware of the fact that in giving meanings to fairy tale elements and motifs it is first and foremost the researcher's voice that becomes audible. Irrespective of the

aims the researchers set themselves, they are necessarily influenced by various ideologies that dominate the studying of culture at the moment, and the same can be claimed about feminist treatments of fairy tales.

The setting up of problems that criticise the domination of the male point of view and leave woman in the male shadow could occur only after the emergence of feminist approaches and trends in research. Such an approach is very clearly representative of the researcher's position; the evaluation is given from the researcher's socio-cultural standpoint. However, we cannot really claim that women would feel themselves to be oppressed in the 19th century when the collecting of folk tales was launched.

Isabel Cardigos has asked in connection with the masculine and feminine voices in fairy tales: "Do they express the same or different worldviews? If the worldview is the same, whose voice is dominant? [...] Does the female narrator express a female worldview?" (Cardigos 1996: 46) In the case of the given material it is possible to look for differences that occur in the choice of the storytellers' and collectors' repertoire, proceeding from their gender. As was seen above, male storytellers prefer to tell the tale of the glass mountain, which has a male protagonist, while no preferences related to the protagonist's gender emerge in case of female storytellers. Thus we may suppose that the values important for male storytellers are first and foremost manifested in the tale of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain* with its male protagonist. Here, the man is depicted as an active agent, as the woman remains a prize who is left in the background in the tale and does not interfere with the plot in any way. At the same time, concentrating of the activity of the male character and leaving the woman in the shadow need not mean that the story as a whole would show the general attitude towards the social positions of men and women. Obviously, the aim of the tale is not to denigrate women, but rather to present an adventure-laden plot; in addition, a tale with a male protagonist allows the male storyteller to identify with the hero.

In the case of female storytellers we may ask why women do not prefer tales with female protagonists, but rather tell both types of tales relatively equally. Scholars studying folk tales have explained this as men telling tales mostly outside the home and to male audiences, while women tell stories at home where audiences included both men and women (Holbek 1987: 405–406). Archival material has not been recorded in traditional storytelling situations; nevertheless, a similar tendency can be noticed here.

Proceeding from the premise that the collected material has been recorded in patriarchal village communities, one could ask if the tale types only reflect the male point of view or whether they also reflect the values of the female storytellers. To repeat Isabel Cardigos's question: are the worldviews that are represented in the tales different or similar?

On the basis of the archive material it can be said that no significant differences can be detected between the worldviews of male and female storytellers. Irrespective of the gender of the storyteller, Cinderella is still a poor orphan who is suffering from persecution by her stepmother and gets beautiful clothes she can wear to church thanks to the grey old man; the male hero still proves his value by keeping watch on his father's grave and rides a fine horse up the glass mountain. If there are differences, these rather arise from the individual styles of the narrators: male characters do not make male heroes finer, braver or more active than female narrators, and, vice versa, women do not underscore Cinderella's hard-working attitude and kindness more than male narrators,

nor do they express their critical attitude towards the lower position of women. These emphases emerge in scholars' treatments but not in archival material itself.

When observing role stereotypes in these tale types more closely I reached the conclusion that the interpretations I have offered (while relying on various authorities) are first and foremost connected to the values of the culture and society in which I live. Thus I find it necessary to emphasise that in the present analysis it is primarily my own voice as a researcher that is heard, and not the voices of storytellers or collectors of long ago.

From our contemporary viewpoint passivity is considered a negative quality: being active means progress, evolution, modernisation, flexibility, etc., while passivity has connotations of stagnation, conservatism, rigidity, inability to change, etc. Yet is it necessary to make such re-evaluations? Society has changed since the 19th century, and the ideals and reality of modern fairytale audiences, including researchers, are likely to differ from those of the storytellers; however, we do not know how exactly. Actually, it cannot be claimed with absolute certainty that the gender stereotypes manifested in fairy tales represent the reality of everyday life or just the values and ideals of the storytelling community, or else the values and ideas of someone else: either the collectors, the publishers or the researchers.

## NOTES

1 The tale type is defined as masculine or feminine on the basis of the protagonist's gender, see Holbek 1987: 161.

2 To counterbalance male-centred study of fairy tale publications, Shawn Jarvis has been studying works by female collectors and editors published at the same time as those by the Brothers Grimm or other male editors, yet which still remain outside the reception of canonised editions of fairy tales; see Jarvis 1993: 102–126.

3 In case of the tale type catalogue it is important to bear in mind the story of its genesis and the sources used by Antti Aarne in compiling the catalogue.

4 The short descriptions are based on the summaries of the tale types included in Järv et al., forthcoming.

5 The hero's name in this tale type often consists of two parts. The first part, *turak*, is a Russian loan (< *дурак*) and means 'stupid', 'foolish'; the second part, *tuhkapusja*, means sitting in the hearth and farting, and meaning also 'lazy', 'stupid' by association.

6 H I 1, 279/84 (4) < Ambla parish, Põriki commune, Apliku farm – Joosep Freimann (1889). Still, comparative descriptions that contain evaluations of the characters' natures can be met but rarely in archival texts. Juxtaposing the orphan and the stepmother's own daughter can be seen in the tale type *The Substituted Bride* (ATU 403C) in which the stepmother dresses her own daughter in clean clothes and fine jewellery for the suitor's visit, while the orphan gets ugly clothes (and later the other way round), but the suitor nevertheless chooses the right girl.

7 The main character also remains in the domestic circle in the fairy tale *One-Eye, Two-Eyes, Three-Eyes* (ATU 511). At the same time, there are numerous fairy tales in which the heroine is still forced to leave the homestead – enter the forest (for example, *The Black and the White Bride* (earlier AT 403B), *The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers* (ATU 451)) or the other world (*The Kind and the Unkind Girls* (ATU 480), *Our Lady's Child* (ATU 710)). In these, the heroine is considerably more active than in *Cinderella*.

8 Identifying the real hero with the help of the ring can also be met in other tale types, for example, *The Dragon Slayer* (ATU 300) and *The Man Who Flew like a Bird and Swam like a Fish* (ATU 665).

9 The slipper has also been seen as a symbol of female sexuality, see Cardigos 1999: 219–228.  
10 Publishers make up another of these influences, see, for example, Marzolph 2008: 75 and Uther 2008: 129–147.

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Manuscript collections at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:  
H – Folklore collection of Jakob Hurt (1860–1906).

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# THE WOMAN AS WOLF (AT 409): SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF A VERY ESTONIAN FOLK TALE

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## ABSTRACT

The article\* analyses tale type *The Woman as Wolf*, which is one of the most popular folk tales in the Estonian Folklore Archives and is represented there both in the form of a fairy tale and in the form of a legend. The vast majority of the versions of *The Woman as Wolf* were written down in the first part of the 20th century within Estonia and where recorded from Estonians. The article introduces the content of the tale, the origin of the first records from the early 19th century, and the dissemination area of the tale, which remains outside Western Europe: apart from the Estonian versions there are Sami, Karelian, Vepsian, Livonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian versions. While in almost all the Estonian versions the main protagonist is transformed into a wolf, in most of the versions written down in other areas and ethnic groups, another animal or bird replaces the wolf. The author is of the opinion that the Finnic area is central to the distribution of the folk tale *The Woman as Wolf*. The animal the woman is transformed into in the plot would not have been a wolf in earlier times. The article provides an explanation why the wolf is predominant in Estonian written sources. For that purpose the ways in which the wolf and werewolf were perceived in earlier Estonian folk belief are introduced. At the end of the article interpretation of the folk tale is provided. The author states that the plot and some of the motifs found in this folk tale reflect the difficulties women had in submitting to the norms and values of patriarchal order within their society.

KEYWORDS: fairy tale • legend • wolf • werewolf • women • Finnic folklore

## INTRODUCTION

This article addresses one of the most popular plots in the Estonian Folklore Archives: the folk tale *The Woman as Wolf*,<sup>1</sup> known both in the form of fairy tale and legend. 182 versions have been defined as fairy tales (Järv et al. 2009: 561), and the number of leg-

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ends resorting to the same plot is about 70 (Metsvahi 1998: 12). Among all Estonian wonder tales – which in manuscripts amount to almost 6000 in the Estonian Folklore Archives – this plot comes fifth in its variety of versions.<sup>2</sup> The total number of legends in the Estonian Folklore Archives is not known, but it is certain that among Estonian werewolf legends,<sup>3</sup> *The Woman as Wolf* story line is second in popularity. Adding up *The Woman as Wolf* tales classified as fairy tales and those categorized as legends, we arrive at the total of about 250 texts. Thus, the number of versions of this folk tale recorded in Estonia notably exceeds the number of versions collected in other regions.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the epithet ‘very Estonian’ is based not just on the great number of recordings but also on the tale’s content, to which I will refer later.

I will have a twofold approach to *The Woman as Wolf* tale – sometimes regarding the legend versions and the fairy tale versions together, and at some instances making a distinction between them. The distinction will be made because in folklore studies it is an established tradition dating back to the brothers Grimm and the first decades of the 19th century to consider fairy tale and legend as two different folk tale genres. The brothers Grimm started the tradition of publishing separate collections of legends and fairy tales, as well as the custom of conceiving fairy tales and legends as two separate genres fulfilling different functions. The post-brothers-Grimm scholarly paradigm has either contrasted fairy tales to legends,<sup>5</sup> or regarded them quite separately from each other. If fairy-tale scholars emphasise the universal nature of the fairy tale, reflecting an individual’s psychology rather than specific socio-historical realities, scholars focusing on legends pay much more attention to the socio-historical context of the genre and other society- and culture-specific subjects.

The differences in approach are naturally also due to the characteristics of the genres. A fairy tale, with its unindividualised or typical characters (a king, a hunter; see Lüthi 1996: 28) addresses the problems of an individual rather than those of a group (Röhrich 1964: 229). A legend, on the other hand, addresses an extraordinary situation encountered by an individualised member of the community, but is still relevant to every member of that community (Röhrich 1973: 23). Often, the common ground uniting members of a community is belief. If fairy tale is a fictional genre with no claims on truth, the teller of a legend has at his or her disposal a whole armoury of rhetorical tools to add credence to the story (see Oring 2012: 107–108). In this light, Elliott Oring’s statement that the legend genre is closely related to the news genre cultivated in the media rather than fairy tale or myth, becomes quite understandable (ibid.: 94). Narrators of fairy tales, on the other hand, are not confined to the rhetoric of truth that is vital for the legend teller, and this enables them to add more fanciful details to the story of their own accord (Röhrich 1964: 10). In addition, fairy-tale narrators may to some extent be resorting to their own experience, although not consciously as is common when telling a legend (ibid.: 227).

At the end of this article I will try to answer the question how one and the same plot can be present as both a legend and a fairy tale.

I will now present a brief summary of contents of the fairy tale versions of *The Woman as Wolf* (AT 409), as well as a description taking into account a majority of the existing versions.

A stepmother changes her married stepdaughter into a wolf and replaces her with her own (biological) daughter. The stepdaughter's baby, left behind in her new home, is crying constantly because there is no milk in the breasts of the false mother. The nanny takes the baby to a stone at the edge of the forest and calls the baby's real mother out of the forest. A wolf comes from the forest, leaves her wolf skin on the stone and suckles the baby in human form. Her husband learns about this. A wise man tells him to heat the stone so that the wolf skin would get burnt when the werewolf again comes to suckle the baby, leaving the skin on the stone. The man acts accordingly and regains his wife. The stepmother's daughter is either executed or changes into a magpie. (Cf. ATU 409)

In shorter versions, there are no stepmothers or stepdaughters, just a woman, sometimes a queen, and the man is just a man or a young man, sometimes a king, a prince or a Tsarevich. In shorter stories, the woman is changed into a wolf by the mother-in-law, sister-in-law, an "old hag", a witch, *vanapagan* (the Old Heathen), *kurivaim* (the Evil One), or another girl who wanted to marry the same man but was not chosen; the woman may even turn into a werewolf or go to the forest of her own accord. In longer texts, the spell-caster may, in addition to the above, be the stepmother, the girl's father, the devil in the form of a village man or a poor woman, the man's former or previous girlfriend, the mother of an abandoned girlfriend, a *sortsimoor* (a sorcerer's hag), *vanapagan*, *vanatont* (the Old Ghost), *vanatikõ* (the Old Evil One), a witch who has designs on the same man for her own daughter, a witch acting on someone's orders, *kurivaim*, the wife of *vanapagan* or *vanapatt* (the Old Sin), *vanapagan's* daughter, the young man's mother, a neighbour's wife, *vanapagan's* wife, a hag from hell, a *soend* (werewolf), or a forest spirit, etc. The woman is usually changed into a wolf (more rarely a lynx or a doe) by throwing a wolf's (in some texts a lynx's or doe's) hide at her. The action often follows the course of the stepmother visiting her stepdaughter, who is either busy kneading bread dough or combing out lice from her husband's hair. The stepmother asks her to step outside, look at her or cast a look over her left shoulder. At the moment when the orphan girl does that, a wolf's hide or a *tõrvanahk* (a Setu word for an animal hide that is black and shiny) is thrown at her. In most cases, the woman turns into a wolf and runs into the forest at once, in some rare cases there is a lake instead of a forest, in which case when the hide has been cast at the woman, she is thrown into a lake. In some versions, before fleeing into the forest the woman has time to tell someone to bring the baby to the forest edge so she can nurse her. The stepmother or *vanatont* replaces the woman turned into a wolf with her own daughter, who carries on the activity that the real wife has had to break off. She does not manage the dough-kneading or lice-combing very well, or, in some cases, her hands are cold. The man may ask about this and the false wife will find some excuse – saying, for example, that her hands got cold while she was outdoors.

In most versions the man is alerted by the fact that the child's behaviour has changed – the baby is restless and crying all the time. The versions, in which the man notices that the wife's appearance and behaviour have changed, are less common. In a few versions someone explains the wife's behaviour to the man as post-natal faintness. The man does not understand why the woman, while breastfeeding, has her face to the wall, or covers the baby's head with her clothing. In several versions, the false mother has equipped herself with breasts made of birch bark or tow wrapped around copper wire or nails. Sometimes, the false mother takes the baby to the edge of the forest, where the werewolf comes to nurse it. But it is mostly the nanny (more seldom a shepherd or a nurse) who has the role of taking the child to the forest edge. She goes walking with the child towards the forest (either of her own accord or at the bidding of the woman turned into a wolf, made before escaping to the forest or during a brief secret return home) and when they come home, the child is quiet. The man notices this and asks the nanny where they have been. If the nanny keeps the truth from him, he goes to a wise man, a witch (a hag) or a *paaba* (another word for a wise old woman), and is told that the woman he now has at home is not his real wife. If he has discovered this by himself, by secretly watching the false wife or the nanny, he visits the wise man to ask how he could get his wolf-wife back. He then goes with the nanny or by himself (in some versions it is a third person, for example, a woman from the village) to the forest edge next time (in rare versions he goes to some other place or knocks against a grey stone) and heats up the stone where the werewolf usually puts her skin. Then the man sees his wife coming from the forest in the shape of a wolf, casting off her wolf skin onto the stone, and starting to nurse the baby already in human shape. In some versions the wife asks about the burnt smell and is told a lie that village people are singeing pigs. In many versions, the woman tries to grab her skin, but it is either entirely burnt or there is just a tiny piece left. There are quite a lot of versions in which the wife is not quite all right after having regained her human shape: for example, she longs to return to the forest, even without her wolf skin. In some versions, the husband captures her halfway into the forest. In several versions the wife starts weeping and moaning and there is still something wrong with her: she falls ill, she doesn't want to return home, or cannot speak, and in some cases the husband has to do something to bring the wife back to human shape. There are also versions in which the wife, before becoming human again, turns into various animals (among Ludza Estonians) or objects: a straw, a log, a bean tendril, manure, a knife or a spindle. In some versions, the husband brings the wife back home in the shape of a log or a spindle, and it is at home she regains her human shape.

The ways of disposing of the false wife vary extensively. In some versions, the stepmother and her daughter are just driven away, while in others they are first given a beating. The motif of the husband having to dig a hole at the threshold of the house or the sauna, and either light a fire in it or fill it with something hot (for example, boiling water, manure), is quite widespread. Often the stepmother's daughter is tricked to fall into a barrel or a hole filled with boiling water, where she perishes, leaving behind just some part of her body (for example, a little finger) that turns into a magpie. In some texts, this is given as a reason why the magpie is 'of the devil' or why there is a magpie twittering 'like a witch's maid' on the fence of every farm. In addition, the motif of tricking the stepmother and her daughter to go into the sauna, which is then burnt down, has spread to some extent, probably owing to Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's fairy tale "Rõugutaja tütar" (Rõugutaja's daughter) (Kreutzwald 1996 [1866]: 233–237).

Several records of this fairy tale type date back to an unusually early period when considered in the Estonian context – the first quarter of the 19th century. One of the earliest written records in Estonian of *The Woman as Wolf* (or more exactly, ATU 403C + AT 409) plot comes from Arnold Friedrich Johann Knüpffer (EKÜ, f 232a 1, 360–365 [279]) and is included in Part I of the anthology of Estonian wonder tales under the title “Ennemuistsed rõõgutajad” (The Rõõgutajas of Ancient Times) (Järv et al. 2009: 348–351). As Knüpffer titled his collection of wonder tales – including the tale type under scrutiny here – *Lieder, Märchen und Abschriften aus Glanström’s Sammlung* (Songs, Fairy Tales, and Transcripts from Glanström’s Collection), it is possible that Knüpffer received the tales from Christian Jacob Glanström (1752–1825), the pastor of Järva-Jaani. Glanström’s records have only survived in Knüpffer’s transcripts. A transcript of the same tale, written in the hand of Alexander Heinrich Neus, bears a note that an Estonian had explained the meaning of the word *Rõõgutajad* (sg. *Rõõgutaja*) to Knüpffer by calling them half-devils: “they were just apprentices, not full devils yet” (ÕES, SK 220 [Mappe IX], 2). Neus translated the story into German and published it in the Tartu weekly *Das Inland* in 1846 (pp. 1146–1148). It was one of the first fairy tales published in *Das Inland*. (Toomeos-Orglaan 2005: 153–154)

As well as the translation of the Glanström-Knüpffer version, there are two other German translations of this tale type. They are similar to each other, but different from the one named above: one in the collection of the Learned Estonian Society (ÕES, SK 220, 5–12) and one in the collection of the Literary Society of Estonia (EKÜ, f 232d, 55–59); the latter two have great similarity in wording and content, but are still not identical.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is clear that the tale has two recordings from different sources, made in the first quarter of the 19th century. In addition to the transcript of Glanström (or Knüpffer), there is also a transcript made by an unknown person at the request of Christian Hieronymus Justus von Schlegel (1757–1842). Neus, who seems to have been acquainted with both versions, refers in his introduction to the fairy tales in the collection of the Learned Estonian Society to Schlegel’s written legacy, which he has at his disposal (ÕES, SK 220 [Mappe IX], 1; Toomeos-Orglaan 2005: 161). If the Glanström-Knüpffer tale ends with the beating and drowning of the Rõõgutaja’s daughter (Järv et al. 2009: 351), the version obtained through Schlegel – generally longer and more intricate than the former – ends with the burning of the witch’s daughter (there is a witch instead of a Rõõgutaja in Schlegel’s version) in a heated hole in the ground. Only the hands and feet are left of the witch’s daughter, and those turn into mice and crows (EKÜ f 232d, 59).

If Glanström and Knüpffer were both engaged in editing the Estonian-language Bible and collected stories probably for their own use, and in order to improve their knowledge of the language, Schlegel’s travelogue *Reisen in mehrere russische Gouvernements in den Jahren 178\*, 1801, 1807 und 1815* (Travels in Several Provinces of Russia in the Years of 178\*, 1801, 1807 and 1815) shows his appreciation of fairy tales as part of folklore already before the publication of the brothers’ Grimm collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Laugaste 1963: 319). This was probably due to the fact that during his secondary school years in Weimar, Schlegel had also been taught by Johann Karl August Musäus, a well-known publisher of German fairy tales, who had the custom of asking old storytellers to visit him and tell their stories (Musäus 1791: 15; Laugaste 1963:

319; Viires 2001: 88). Schlegel's longest stay in Estonia occurred in 1780–1782, when he worked as a tutor. In fact, it was his interest in Estonian peasant folk, propelled by the ideas of the Enlightenment as well as Romanticism, and his Baltic German wife and her relations in Estonia rather than actual geographical presence that connected Schlegel to Estonia in his lifetime. In 1783, Schlegel married Helene Eleanore, daughter of the Dean Johann Christoph Paucker who had died in 1776, after which the girl was brought up by A. H. Lücke, the pastor of Ambla (Viires 2001: 89). Schlegel is known to have received Estonian folk songs both from his brother-in-law Heinrich Johann Paucker (1759–1819) and the latter's son Heinrich Wilhelm Christoph Paucker (1797–1833), who were both pastors at Simuna, as well as ethnographic and folklore material from a manor lord in Läänemaa (Viires 2001: 94). The assumption that Schlegel received the transcript of the fairy tale under scrutiny during a month-long visit to Simuna in 1807 seems the most probable. At the same time the possibility that he received it at another time and in a different way cannot be excluded.

#### COMBINATIONS AND TEXT EXAMPLES OF *THE WOMAN AS WOLF*

In Estonia, the tale type *The Woman as Wolf* is most often (73 versions) merged with ATU 403C (*The Exchanged Bride*; Järv et al. 2009: 559).<sup>7</sup> About half of the plots occur independently (Salve, Sarv 1987: 78–79, 83–84; Hiimäe 1999: 53; Järv et al. 2009: 366), and a major part of those versions of *The Woman as Wolf* can be classified as legends. The combined type ATU 403C + AT 409 may in its turn also merge with such types as ATU 510A (*Cinderella*), ATU 511 (*One-Eye, Two-Eyes, Three-Eyes*) or AT 511A (*The Little Red Ox*). There have been some rare mergers with types ATU 510A, ATU 510 and ATU 511 without merging with ATU 403C, and some rare combinations with other tale types: some of the editions of ATU 480 (*The Kind and the Unkind Girls*),<sup>8</sup> AT 451A (*Sister of Nine Brothers*),<sup>9</sup> ATU 700 (*Thumbling*), ATU 720 (*Orphan as Cuckoo*, an Estonian version of the *The Juniper Tree*). In some cases, combinations with other werewolf legend types may occur.

The following example text represents the most popular tale type combination of *The Woman as Wolf*, namely ATU 403C + AT 409, which might even be considered as a separate tale type owing to its integrity and frequent occurrence. The version was recorded in Väike-Maarja in 1910.

There was once a mother with two daughters. One of them was her own daughter, she was ugly, and the other was her stepdaughter, she was beautiful. On Thursday evening, a suitor arrived with his entourage. The mother placed her own daughter on top of the oven and gave her bread and butter to eat, and told the stepdaughter to go and stir the mash for the pigs. She asked the suitor, which daughter he wanted. The suitor answered he wanted the one who was stirring pig mash. But the mother wanted to get her own daughter married and therefore told the suitor's entourage to come back another Thursday. Then, she put the stepdaughter on top of the oven and told her own daughter to stir the mash for pigs. But this time, the suitors chose the one eating bread and butter on top of the oven. The mother apologised and asked them to come a third time. Now again, she told her own daughter to sit on top of the oven eating bread and butter, and the stepdaughter to stir the

mash for the pigs. Once again, the suitor chose the stepdaughter. Therefore, the suit was agreed and the stepdaughter was to get married.

When the wedding party arrived back from the church, the mother took the stepdaughter's clothes and put them on her own daughter, and shut in the stepdaughter under a vat. The wedding party started off towards the groom's home. Under way, they heard a voice calling:

Bridegroom, stop your sledge,  
You took a stranger, left your wife!

But the bride reassured the groom that this was nothing:

Those're my beads jingling,  
My pins rattling,  
My brooches banging,  
My silver singing.

The wedding party continued for a long time, and again there was a voice calling:

Bridegroom, stop your sledge,  
You took a stranger, left your wife!

On a bridge, they stopped and the groom saw his wife, naked, running after them. The rooster had jumped up to crow on the edge of the vat, the vat had tipped over and the wife had escaped. Now the wedding garments were taken from the false wife and put on the wedded wife. The false wife was left behind under the bridge.

In a year's time, the mother was on her way to see the daughter's new baby, and had a pot of porridge hanging from a spurtle on her shoulder to take some porridge to her granddaughter. On her way, she reached the bridge and went underneath to pluck some (chervil) straws, saying:

Picking straws, plucking straws,  
For my granddaughter to play with!

The chervil answered:

Don't you pluck, mother dear,  
Your own daughter's navel string!

So the mother took her daughter along and they went together to where the stepdaughter was living with her husband. The nanny was outdoors and the child was already playing. Knowing the child's mother to be indoors, the mother entered the house, tore off the young wife's clothes and put them on her own daughter, then she cast a wolf's hide on the young wife, so that she ran into the forest and became a werewolf; her own daughter stayed behind as the child's mother. Every time she started nursing the baby, she turned her face towards the wall; the baby couldn't suckle and was screaming all the time. There was no other way, the husband went to the wise man and told him about his trouble: every time his wife nurses the baby, she turns herself towards the wall, and the baby is screaming. The wise man understood and said:

Let the nanny take the baby and go to the big boulder in the field on Thursday night, and sing:

Come home, baby's mother,  
Come suckle the child,  
Give the little one some milk,  
From her we get just birch bark  
And copper wires to gnaw on!

The husband thanked the wise man and went home. On Thursday night, the nanny took the baby to the big boulder in the field, and sang as the wise man had told him. After that, the wolf came out of the forest, threw her wolf skin on the boulder and suckled the baby. When she was done, she put on the skin and went back to the forest again. On another Thursday night, the nanny went to the field again and sang:

Come home, baby's mother,  
Come suckle the child,  
Give the little one some milk,  
From her we get just birch bark  
And copper wires to gnaw on!

And again the werewolf came out of the forest and suckled the baby. When leaving, she said:

– I will come once more, but after that I will not be able to come, I have to run with the big pack.

On the third Thursday night, the nanny sang the same song. The wolf suckled the baby and said:

– This is the last time, I cannot come any more, but what is it that smells burnt here?

– They are singeing pigs in the village – the nanny answered.

The wolf turned to go, and took the wolf skin from the stone, but it was quite burnt and didn't fit her any longer. The woman had to stay naked and wanted to run into the forest, but the husband caught her and took her home. Now, the man had two wives. What to do about it? He heated the sauna oven very hot. He dug a big hole in front of the ladder and put a pot of boiling water there, which he covered with a white sheet.

He told the women that the one who got to the sweating bench first would remain his wife. Then he told his real wife quietly:

– Don't you run too fast!

The unwedded wife wanted to be first on the sweating bench and rushed to the ladder. There she tumbled into the cauldron of boiling water. After a while, a magpie flew out of the cauldron. The woman had turned into a magpie. This is how magpie came into being.<sup>10</sup>

For comparison, I will provide two legend versions recorded in Hageri and Rõuge parishes:

At Oru, near Tõnuhansu farm there is a big stone. There was a woman who was a werewolf. She came to the stone, walked three times around the stone and said:

Sniff, snuff, see my nose,  
Swish, swoosh, watch my tail,  
Click, I prick my ears!  
And then there was a wolf.

That woman was a nursing mother. She took off her wolf skin, threw it on a stone and suckled her baby. Her husband didn't like that. The wise man of the village told him:

– Take a load of brushwood and heat up the stone!

The man did as he had been told. Soon his wife came from the forest, threw her wolf skin on the stone and started to nurse the baby. Suddenly she smelt burning. Sniffed and said:

– Bad, bad, burning smell, old hag's singeing smell!

The nanny answered:

– That's nothing. A pig was slaughtered at Tõnuhansu, they are singeing the hairs now.

The woman raised herself to go, but the skin was burnt. So she could no longer become a wolf.<sup>11</sup>

There was a woman who was a werewolf. She only came home to nurse her child. One day she said that she would come one last time the next day and then join the other werewolves. She had had the habit of coming at a certain hour to a big stone in the pasture, where she threw off her wolf skin to suckle the baby a little way from the stone; the baby always had to be taken to her there. Someone told her husband that he should heat up the stone. Before it was time for her to come, the husband took some brushwood to the stone and heated it up. Then he hid the cinders. The woman threw the skin on the stone again and started to nurse the baby. The stone was boiling hot and the skin got burnt, so the woman asked:

– What smells burnt here?

The husband answered:

– I don't know what's burning in the village.

The woman continued to nurse the baby. The skin shrank, and got quite burnt. When the woman went to put the skin on, there were just burnt bits left. Thus, she could no longer become a werewolf, and stayed at home.<sup>12</sup>

#### WHEN WERE SUCH FOLK TALES TOLD?

Rudolf Schenda, scholar of folklore and literature, has asserted, proceeding mainly from German, Swiss, French, and British sources, that the telling of fairy tales was extremely rare among the lower classes. When people gathered, they mainly discussed village rumours and tales of their own experiences, illness and misfortunes and other everyday topics. Fairy tales, as a rule, were not told and even the telling of legends was rare. In Schenda's opinion, the fairy tale and legend publications give a totally false impression of the peasant lore of a century and more ago (Schenda 1993: 265–273). Later scholars repeat the same opinion (for example, Beyer 2011). Willem de Blécourt claims explicitly that lower-class people did not tell each other fairy tales. In his opinion, fairy tales

found their way to the people via nineteenth-century literature, but were not even then popular among lower classes and only reached the folklore collectors owing to their insistence that their informants recollect some fairy tales, which had actually reached the informant via literature (de Blécourt 2012: 8). Willem de Blécourt's ideas resemble Ruth B. Bottigheimer's hypothesis that a fairy tale did not exist before the publication of Straparola's book *Le piacevoli notti* (Bottigheimer 2002: 5–6).

The information known about Estonian fairy tales and tale telling would enable an Estonian folklore scholar to enhance the discussion about the ways of the spreading of fairy tales in several respects. The first versions of *The Woman as Wolf* collected among the peasants in the first quarter of the 19th century provide no basis to assume that fairy tales reached the people via the upper classes. Germans or Swedes have no stories with the same plot, although the Karelians and Samis do, as I shall indicate in the next subchapter. Also the fact that we have numerous notices about fairy-tale telling occasions in earlier times (Viidalepp 2004 [1965]), corroborates the thesis that fairy tales unquestionably formed a part of peasant lore. Thus, we can read in the memoirs of Jakob Hurt that when he attended Põlva Parish School in the middle of the 19th century, it was a custom in the school dormitory to tell folk tales every night before going to sleep.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the following quote indicates that the telling of a genre that is called *jutus* (a Setu word for fairy tales and other fictional folk tale genres) was not unusual in Setu village communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: *Is käu-õs meil latse kooli – õs. Käve küla peale kokku – jutusit jutuste, mõistatusi mõista.* (Our children didn't go to school then. They came together from all the village, told tales, set riddles.)<sup>14</sup> In the course of my own fieldwork I have also been told that in early 20th century, children gathered around certain elderly people to listen to tales. Ksenia Määrsepp (1911–2004), interviewed by myself and Risto Järv, still remembered in the 21st century several fairy tales she had heard as a child in her native village of Kuurakeste, when she and other village children visited a neighbourhood farm and an old man called Vassil from the neighbouring village, whose daughter had married into that farm, had come to call on her (Metsvahi 2007: 16).

It is known that fairy tales have also been told in Estonian territory for ritual purposes. In Setumaa, for instance, the most popular time to tell fairy tales was between Christmas and Epiphany. Then tales were told both in the family circle and on visits to the neighbours. In addition to fairy tales, riddles were made. When the first new calves and kids were born in the cowshed, telling was no longer allowed. According to Richard Viidalepp, this ban is based on an ancient taboo that people dared not break, fearing serious damage to the cattle (Viidalepp 2004 [1965]: 52). When on her way to collect folklore in 1938, Ello Kirss was warned by her father, an inhabitant of Setumaa, that it was not a very good idea to collect folklore in summer:

In summertime no one will bother about tales and songs, because the Setus have their own time for such things – the winter meat-time (the time after Christmas [no meat was to be eaten for 6 weeks before Christmas] until the Butter Week [Russian Maslenitsa, the week of Shrove Tuesday and the beginning of Lent] which ends 8 weeks before Easter) (Remmel 1997: 163).

According to Viidalepp, the custom of telling tales after the *talsipühade paast* (winter fasting) was parallel to the custom on the north coast to have a twilight hour during

*jäguaeg*, a period lasting from the beginning of November to St. Martin's Day. At that time tales were also told and riddles made. About *jäguaeg* in Kuusalu parish, the folklore collector Gustav Vilberg wrote:

Also in older times, and at some places even nowadays, curious *jäguhtud* (*jägu*-evenings) have been held from 1 November, All Hallows' Day, up to St. Martin's Day. On these evenings no work was done, but families visited each other, telling old-time tales and making riddles. Those skilled in posing and guessing riddles were held in great respect. (Remmel 1997: 54)

In the rest of Estonia, this period was called the Time of Souls. During that period, dead family members were commemorated and visits were made to relatives and neighbours (Viidalepp 2004 [1965]: 50).

Thus in the Estonian context it cannot be stated that fairy tales were never told a hundred years ago or earlier. The telling of fairy tales could not have had a very marginal role, if there was a custom to resort to that genre in specific situations, especially if the telling of that genre had ritual significance (see also Bódis 2013). It must be admitted – as with several aspects of the study concerning the folk tale we are addressing – that applying the visions of Western scholars must be done proceeding from the Estonian cultural and historical perspective. The idea that the interpretation frameworks of Western Europe should not be applied automatically is also supported by the fact that the diffusion area of the tale type *The Woman as Wolf* remains outside the confines of Western Europe.

#### CIRCULATION OF *THE WOMAN AS WOLF* TALE OUTSIDE ESTONIA

As I have earlier presented a brief account of the circulation of *The Woman as Wolf* outside Estonia (Metsvahi 2010; 2011), I will now provide a more detailed description of the fairy tale versions recorded from the Sami, Karelian and Vepsian people; the existence of those versions was either unknown or relatively unfamiliar to me when writing the above articles, but they are comparatively close to the Estonian versions of the tale. In addition, I will give a brief introduction to the tales of other peoples.

There is a fairy tale known all over Lapland, classified under type AT 409, which has been called the *Tale of the Golden Merganser*. The first printed versions of this tale were published more than a hundred years ago, and in earlier times it was a popular folk tale. (Aikio, Aikio 1982: unnumbered pages) In 1932, the tale was recorded by Paavo Ravila, who published it in the following year with a Finnish translation. The tale was told by Nils Mathiesen Mienna, an informant above middle age, speaking the northern Sami language, in the village of Goadát (Sami) or Sandnes (Norwegian) on the Varanger Peninsula. The AT 409 plot here is not combined with any others, and starts with a prince marrying the princess of Nävešan-land. Already in the second sentence, it is announced that the Hättešan-hag would come and change the young woman into a golden merganser, and make her jump into the water. About the name Hättešan, Ravila writes that in addition to a vicious hag, it means a type of black worm. (Ravila 1931: 186) This clarification helps to explain why the woman, when back in human shape at the end of the

story, refuses to come indoors: she smells the terrible smell of the worm in the room,<sup>15</sup> which can be banished first when a lock of hair from the daughter of the Hättesän-hag is discovered attached to the door post. Breastfeeding is not mentioned in the story, and even the child is only mentioned once in the plot – saying that the mother, transformed into a bird, comes to see the child every night. When the mother comes out of the water to see the child, she hides her plumage under a stone.<sup>16</sup> The husband realises that he has a false wife when the Hättesän-hag's daughter feels the soft bed to be very hard, while the bed full of lumps of wood and balls of wire feels soft to her.

Thus the Hättesän folk and humans – while living in the same time and side by side – are opposite by nature. The same opposition exists in Setu fairy tales between humans or christened people and (*vana*)*pagans* ([old]heathens) or (*vana*)*halvad* ([old] evil ones), among whom even the Rõõgutaja may be counted. These are tales of which the narrators themselves have said that they are not real fairy tales (*jutus*), but rather true stories from very ancient times. For instance, Veera Tubli in Podmotsa village in Järvesuu parish remarked in 1937, before starting the telling of *The Woman as Wolf* tale (more specifically, the combination of types ATU 510A, ATU 403C and AT 409): *vanast näet ellevä na halva inemeisiga poolõst* (you see, in the old times, the evil ones lived among people) (Metsvahi 2007: 798).<sup>17</sup> There are also other parallels between the Sami and the Estonian tales, namely, some of the Lapp versions of AT 409 contain an etiological ending: the prince pushes the witch's daughter onto a flaming stake, and she burns up and her ashes turn into serpents, spiders, snakes, frogs and flies (Aikio, Aikio 1982).

A relatively large number of stories containing the AT 409 story line have been recorded from Karelia. The plot seldom occurs separately, it is generally merged with tale type ATU 510A or ATU 511. The combination type most common in Estonia – ATU 403C + AT 409 – is very rare in Karelia. When *The Woman as Wolf* has been combined with ATU 403C, a third type (either ATU 510A, or ATU 511) has in most cases also merged with them (Pentikäinen 1978: 291). The young woman's adversary in the Karelian stories is Syöjätär, or the witch Jaagibiha, who turns the woman into a (female) reindeer in the north Karelian versions (Konkka 1963: 74–75; Rausmaa 1972: 197), or a goose or a swan in the south Karelian versions (Konkka 1963: 506). In one version, the witch tries to curse the young woman in many different ways, and when she does not succeed, the maid turns into a reindeer of her own accord and flees from Jaagibiha (Chistov 1958: 26–31). Compared to the Sami stories, the Karelian tales lay more emphasis on the small baby left behind at home, who in some stories is a daughter (Konkka 1963: 127–132) and in some versions a son (Chistov 1958: 26–31). As in many Estonian versions, there are songs included: in most cases the shepherd calls the child's mother home with a song (Konkka 1963: 130–132). It is characteristic that the mother, having arrived and shed her animal skin or bird plumage, says that the next day she is coming for the last time, and must thereafter stay in the forest/water, sometimes because her flock is leaving for another territory (when in fact, already on the next day the critical moment – her retransformation into human shape – is going to occur). This is similar in several Estonian, Russian, Belarusian, Vepsian, and Livonian versions. In addition, the wolf turns into several other animals and objects – a bear, a snake and a spindle – before regaining human shape in a similar way to several Estonian and Lapp versions. The transformed woman struggles and tries to tear her wolf, bear- and snakeskin. Only the spindle rests quietly in the husband's lap so he can take it home. (Chistov 1958: 26–31) The methods

for punishing the witch and her daughter are also very similar to the Estonian versions: they are burned either in a sauna or a heated hole, tricked into a hole to die or torn to pieces by stallions (they are tied behind the stallions who then drag them across a field).

The Vepsian versions of AT 409 are close to the Karelian stories. The young couple's baby in this story is a girl. The difference from the Karelian and Lapp tales is in the result of the transformation: Jaagibaaba turns the young woman into a swan and lets her fly away. As in the Estonian and many Karelian tales, the woman recovers her human shape irrevocably when her skin or feathers are burned. (Salve 1993: 6)

The Ingrian tales are but few and they probably bear an Estonian impact. An evil stepmother turns a young woman into a wolf. Finally, the stepmother's daughter is destroyed by tricking her to step down from the sweat bench in the sauna, and into a tub full of hot tar. (Rausmaa 1988: 141–145)

In Russian folklore AT 409 is not a popular plot, and very seldom occurs separately; it is generally combined with type ATU 511 or type ATU 450 (*Little Brother and Little Sister*). In total, 19 Russian, Belarusian or Ukrainian versions of this tale have been published in print. (Bagar et al. 1979: 130) Most often, the young woman in Russian stories is turned into a lynx, but in other versions also into a fox, a goat or a deer; in the Belarusian and Ukrainian stories also into a fish or a duck (Vedernikova 1980: 253, 258). In Vedernikova's opinion, changing into a bird or a fish in most Belarus stories and in all Ukrainian stories is an impact of the fairy tale *Little Brother and Little Sister*, or connected to the vicinity of bodies of water in certain regions (Vedernikova 1980: 259). Several Russian tales have been recorded from regions in the vicinity of non-Slavic territories, where AT 409 is popular. Even the male protagonist's name Stroj is common to several Karelian versions and one of the Russian versions known to me (Bazanov, Alekseyeva 1964: 85–87). In other respects too the tale is similar to the Karelian fairy tale versions. At the end, when the man burns the animal skin, the woman turns into a snake, a frog, and finally – just before turning back into a woman – a spindle. If the gender of the young couple's baby is named, it is male.

In Lithuania, this tale type is not widespread. Nor does it ever merge with tale type ATU 403C. As the Lithuanian word denoting a wolf is masculine, the young woman in Lithuanian tales is never turned into a wolf, but generally into a roe deer or a lynx. The motif of burning the animal skin never occurs in Lithuanian tales, the animal is just caught and brought home or into the sauna where she regains her human shape.<sup>18</sup>

Latvian lore is the only one besides Estonian in which the woman in tale type AT 409 is turned into a wolf. Versions that can with certainty be classified under this tale type are twice as numerous as those in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives – about 25, and yet this is about 10 times less than occurrences of the same plot in Estonian folklore collections. In Latvian folklore, the combination of AT 409 with tale types ATU 511, ATU 510A and ATU 403C is the most common. There is even a version combining all four plots.

One of the notable differences between AT 409 in the folklore of the Northern Peoples (Sami, Karelian, Vepsian) and Latvian folklore is the greater emphasis on the description of the initial situation in the Latvian versions. For example, in a story recorded near Daugavpils, the situation is the following: an orphan gets married, but her husband does not want the bride's stepmother to come and live at his home. The husband's father dies and there is lack of working hands in the household. The young woman's stepmother then moves in with them. (Šmits 1925–1937a) In another version, also recorded near

Daugavpils, there is a grandmother with a little boy who has no father and no mother. When the grandmother dies, the boy needs someone to help him with the household. He marries. For a long time, the couple has no children. (Šmits 1925–1937b)

In the detailed descriptions of the family situation, the Latvian versions are close to Russian versions of the tale. For example, one of the Russian versions starts as follows: Once upon a time, there was a beautiful daughter. While her father had not remarried, they had a nice and quiet life. But when the father took a new wife, she appeared to be a witch. The witch told the father that he should throw his daughter out. The father then sent off his daughter to marry a good man. Soon a son was born to the young couple. And, still, the stepmother could not leave the young woman alone. (Afanasyev 1982: 213)

Livonian folk tales also describe the starting situation. For example, one of the Livonian stories – admittedly not a folk tale, but a literary version – starts in this way: Once upon a time there was a king, who had two sweethearts, one of whom he married, but the other bore a grudge against him for her whole life. (Löwis of Menar 1922: 279)

In Latvian and Livonian folklore, the ways of transforming into a wolf are different from those characteristic to Estonian lore: for example, the stepmother hits the young woman on the head with a ladle or on the forehead with a spoon, and says a certain magic spell. In the Livonian version, the abandoned bride first turns herself into a werewolf, learning from a Gipsy woman how this is to be done: you have to crawl nine times through a passage under tree roots. Later, when she becomes a servant at the queen's house, she will use the wolf skin obtained this way to make a wolf of the queen. (Löwis of Menar 1922: 279) In the Latvian werewolf legends, the common method of transformation is crawling under the roots of a tree (Metsvahi 1998).

#### LOOKING FOR A FRAMEWORK OF INTERPRETATION

*The Woman as Wolf* is not a typical wonder tale. It cannot be subjected to the fairy tale function scheme of Vladimir Propp (2003 [1968]). Nor do most of the theories of well-known fairy tale scholar Bengt Holbek seem to be relevant to this fairy tale. According to Holbek, the structure of a wonder tale is based on the oppositions young–adult and low–high, and the main subject is the protagonist's fate: a young man (more rarely a maiden) of low status becomes an independent adult of high status. In this process, love for a member of the opposite sex plays a significant role and the fairy tale culminates with a happy wedding, which the narrator in fact has had in mind from the beginning, although only reaching it at the end of the story. (Holbek 1987: 410–411) Fairy tales addressed by Bottigheimer (2002), on which she based her hypothesis, have a similar structure.

What about stories that belong to the tale type combination ATU 403C + AT 409? The first half of the tale describes a young girl brought up as a stepchild. When the suitor or suitors arrive(s), the stepmother (human, or half supernatural) preferring her own daughter to the stepdaughter, tries to hinder him. Her repeated attempts to deceive the suitors fail, and the stepdaughter is taken away as a bride. The stepmother does not give up, and immediately before (or after) the wedding she succeeds in exchanging the stepdaughter for her own daughter. The stepmother locks up the stepdaughter, but the

latter manages to escape and sit beside the groom in the wedding procession. The first part of the story has a happy ending. And, although in most versions it is not obvious that the stepdaughter has left a lower social level for a higher one, we can agree with Holbek's basic thesis, confirming that even this fairy tale tells us about becoming adult and independent, leaving the childhood home and creating a new nuclear family.

Although the marriage is proposed by the husband's relatives or the husband himself, the more active part and the protagonist still seems to be the maiden or the woman, when considering the plot as a whole. Still, we should consider Holbek's opinion that many fairy tales were relevant for both men and women. Expressing this opinion, Holbek has criticised several earlier fairy tale scholars, who considered the fairy tale to be a story with a single hero and denied the possibility that in this genre masculine and feminine visions might be intertwined. (Holbek 1987: 434)

The other half of the fairy tale – the main story line under consideration in this article – tells about the progress of the young couple after the birth of their first child. The couple's peaceful existence is interrupted by the stepmother, who changes the woman or the wife into a wolf. The wife's closest tie to her home is the child, so that even as a wolf, she sometimes comes to the boundary between the forest and civilisation to feed the child. Finally, following the advice of the wise man, the husband succeeds in regaining his wife.

It is my opinion that neither structuralist nor psychoanalytical fairy tale theories are helpful in the interpretation of this part. The approach connecting the plot to a specific historical and cultural context seems more fruitful. Paradoxically, Holbek (*ibid.*: 390) emphasises the importance of a cultural context, but in his own attempts of analysis, he uses ideas derived from psychoanalysis, notwithstanding that the latter are not universally applicable. Sigmund Freud's theories grew out of his own patriarchal socio-cultural context, and were shaped by his fear of facing the dark, a suppressed side of the Austrian society of his time. Furthermore, Freud abandoned his theory that sexual abuse in childhood was one of the main causes for the psychological problems of adulthood at an early stage of his research career. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, who brought to light Freud's early correspondence and dared to claim that adult sexual violence towards children constituted a grave problem in the Western society of Freud's time, was discharged from the post of Director of Freud Archives for 'undermining' psychoanalytical theory, and later changed the subject of his studies (see Masson 1984: xv–xxiii). If Freud had not replaced childhood experiences in his theory with childhood fantasies, neither Holbek nor a countless host of other humanities scholars would have been able to write about the Oedipal complex being manifest in culture in various ways. However, thanks to the fact that folklore owes its life to the inherent opportunity of expressing thoughts and feelings about subjects that were thought improper or too immodest for explicit discussion, the psychoanalytical approach is quite appropriate for analysing several motifs and plots found in the folklore of the peoples of Western Europe (cf. also Vaz da Silva 2007).

Yet Western Europe is not the whole world. Non-Indo-European peoples – especially those who have lived in less patriarchal circumstances, or whose patriarchal history has been relatively short – do not have as many stories that can be readily subjected to Freudian analysis. For instance, in Estonian folklore there are almost no stories about father-daughter incest. As the diffusion area of the tale under scrutiny in this article

remains outside the Western European cultural space, we should look for possibilities of elucidating its contents outside the framework of Freudian theories.

#### POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS OF *THE WOMAN AS WOLF*

As I wrote in the introduction, a scholar of folklore interpreting a folk tale is first wont to ask whether the tale under question belongs to the fictional fairy-tale genre or appears to present a true story. With folk tales, the most universal formula for distinguishing the one from the other is to ask whether the tale is based on truth or fantasy (see Bascom 1984: 8–10). It is clear that for narratives in many cultures, this is a very important distinction, but is it still universally relevant for the analysis of each and every folk tale in all cultures alike?

As a rule, representatives of oral cultures do not reflect upon or analyse the tales they tell, but generally tell these tales to affect the listeners (for example, Hendricks 1990). The criterion of truth is not as important to them as it is to an individual who has grown up in a literary culture. If the truth criterion had been primary, then my Setu informant Ksenia Mürsepp would not have given answers open to so many different interpretations when asked about the truth value and genre of the stories she told. For instance, to the question asked by a scholar of folklore about a tale falling into the category of a fairy tale: “Is this a *jutus* [fairy tale]?” Ksenia answered: *Ma ei tiä<sup>q</sup>, kas jutus vai... No timä vöidsö jutus olla<sup>q</sup>, a vöidsö... Kui üteldä<sup>q</sup>? Midägi oll’ vöipolla olnu<sup>q</sup>, a muidogi mitte nii.* (I don’t know, a fairy tale or... this might have been a fairy tale, but might... how to put it? There may have been something like this, but of course not quite in that way.)<sup>19</sup> During another visit, she answered a question about the truth-value of the fairy tale she had just told: *No kuigi vöipolla om olnugi midägi, a kyik öks tegelikult nii saa-s olla<sup>q</sup>* (Well, there may have been something, one way or another, but everything could not have happened this way).<sup>20</sup> The fictional status is especially doubtful with the Setu *jutusõq* that have an etiological ending: if the story tells about how something came into being, it is difficult to imagine that it has no connection at all to the real world.

Zuni (native American) informants, questioned by Denis Tedlock, gave answers very similar to Ksenia’s when asked about the truth-value of fictional stories. According to Tedlock (1983: 159–160, 164–165), they answered, when asked about the *telapnaawe*, folk tales told after nightfall, that in their opinion, the tales contained some part of the truth, and often linked the truth to the etiological ending. Yelezar Meletinsky’s remark, that in Inuit and Chukchi folklore it is almost impossible to differentiate between an epic and a fairy tale, also supports the opinion that for non-European peoples, the genre boundaries run differently from those of Western European peoples (Meletinsky 1958: 41).

The factor that makes it compelling to retell and listen to a story again and again, and keeps up the suspense during the telling, has been described as constant tension between reality and fiction (Tedlock 1983: 177). Yet it may be said that suspense during the telling was maintained because the story related to important topics in the world that the narrator and the listeners inhabited. As to *The Woman as Wolf*, it is probably less relevant to brood on whether it was received as fantasy or a tale somewhat related to reality, the main thing was that in the opinion of the contemporary audience, it was worth hearing and retelling because it did not leave the listeners untouched, but was topical for their own lives.

If we wish to find out which parts of the *The Woman as Wolf* were most significant for the audience of a certain period, we first have to place the telling environment into a certain timeframe. We know for certain, that the story was told in Estonia in the early 19th century. From the circulation area we can deduce that the folk tale belongs to an earlier stratification than the greater part of fairy tale types spread in Estonia. The latter statement is corroborated by the fact that the fairy tale includes songs, and fairy tales with songs belong to an earlier Finnic-Baltic stratification (Salve, Sarv 1987: 23; Salve 2006: 351). But this tale is not just a Finnic folk tale; we have to keep in mind that the same plot is spread among the Sami.

When reading Sami fairy tales, it sometimes seems as if the gender roles were reversed. Girls and women kill each other, and in the *Cinderella* tale the protagonist is a male Cinder-Boy, who wears very fine garments at a leaping-contest (Ravila 1931: 12, 178–185). These are the traces of a matrilineal society, which are often preserved in folk tales and customs much longer than in everyday norms of behaviour. Several motifs of tale *The Woman as Wolf* date back to those times, when the transfer from a matrilineal to a patrilineal social order had been completed,<sup>21</sup> although people's mentality had not fully adjusted to the change. The attempts of female characters to be in control of their own life seem to be one of the leitmotifs of *The Woman as Wolf*.

Patrilineal and patrilocal societies are patriarchal. In such societies, the woman is subjugated to the man and the man is the one who chooses the woman, makes a suit and takes the wife to his home after marriage. Nevertheless, in Estonian and Karelian customs and folk tales, we can notice several traits dating back to the period of matrilineal social order, and women are presented in a more active role than is customary in a patriarchal society. For example, in a tale recorded in Karelia *The Sister's Flight* (ATU 313E\*), the plot begins with the brother telling her sister that she must go and find him a wife (Rausmaa 1972: 98–99). One of the Estonian versions of *The Woman as Wolf* begins with a sentence: *Ilusal suvisel päeval oli küsinud poeg ema käest, et kas ta lubab võtta temal naist, aga ema ei nõustund selle üle* (One fine summer day, a son asked his mother whether she would allow him to marry, but the mother did not agree to that).<sup>22</sup> In a patriarchal society with large or extended families, it is normally the father or some other male relative who decides marriage issues, and not the mother or the sister.

In southern Karelia, and even in the regions now belonging to Finland, recordings have been made of an old custom preceding the suitor's visit called *tuppikosinta* (the sheath suit). On a certain Sunday – usually at Michaelmas, the last holiday of the summer period –, the girls went and stood in front or in the vicinity of a church, or in the church vestibule, bringing with them their advocate or chaperone – an older female relative – and carrying on their belts an empty sheath intended specifically for this purpose. The advocate called out that the girl had come 'for a sheath', and the young man who wished to have that girl came and put his knife into her sheath. If some young man did not have a knife with him, he could put his finger into her sheath or step on the girl's foot. If the girl was not interested in the man, she could ease the knife out of the sheath or throw it at the boy's feet. When the boy then visited the girl's home in a week's time, and saw the knife hanging on the back wall with the family's own cutlery, this was meant as an encouragement for him to come and ask for the girl's hand in marriage. If the knife had been attached to the door post, it would have been pointless to cherish any further hopes about this particular girl. (Sarmela 1994: 66)

The plot of ATU 403C + AT 409 starts with the episode of a marriage suit. The stepmother knows that it is the suitors and the girl in question who make the decision. Therefore, she first resorts to cunning: she tries to confuse the suitors and substitute her own daughter for the stepdaughter. When the cunning before the wedding fails, she takes to more violent tricks during the wedding feast and locks the girl in somewhere. When that does not work as intended, she tries an even more powerful agency (witchcraft) – again, at this time when the young wife is in a state of passage. Several texts mention that she is still in confinement: this means that she has recently given birth. It is always her first child.

In a traditional Estonian wedding, the rites of passage culminated with capping: from the moment when a cap was tied on the bride's head by a *kaasanaine* (elder female relative, representative of the bride's family at the wedding), her status changed: she became a *noorik* (young wife) (Tedre 1999: 58). She became a woman as late as after the birth of her first child. The change of status after childbirth was just as important, or more important than going through the wedding ritual. Unmarried girls who had a child were still capped in the 18th and 19th century (by their mother or another woman in the mother's presence), although the custom was officially forbidden in 1792. The practice continued despite the ban and the demands of the church were met with a compromise: the headdress of an unmarried woman was changed to look slightly different from that of a wedded wife. (Hupel 1795: 564) The pastor August Wilhelm Hupel, who lived in Estonia from 1757 to his death in 1819, and thoroughly described Estonian customs and traditions, wrote at the end of the 18th century that women wanted to 'get under the cap', to escape the status of an old maid, and that there were even unmarried women who wanted to have a child (Hupel 1777: 137).

In most of the fairy tale versions of the Finnic peoples in which the sex of the baby is mentioned, it is female. In Baltic and Eastern Slavic fairy tales, where the child's sex is mentioned, it is a boy. Already the fact of a daughter being born may refer to traces of the matrilineal society in this tale type. Even centuries after the transfer to a patriarchal social order, some traces of girls having been preferred to boys still remained. For instance, the Votes, a neighbouring Finnic people whose language is very closely related to Estonian, had a custom in the 18th century that having given birth to a son, the young wife continued to wear a certain type of headdress (a so-called *päästäs*-cap) worn by young wives, whereas the birth of a girl entitled her to the 'white caps' that she was then to wear for the rest of her life (Õpik 1970: 152).

Until now, the plot of *The Woman as Wolf* has been explained in the framework of a conflict between women: the stepmother desperately wants to marry off her daughter and wishes ill to her stepdaughter, who is not her flesh and blood. Yet, after the woman has been turned into a wolf, other topics enter the story. The woman, who has newly undergone a change of status and is still on the boundary line or very close to the boundary line between the two statuses and therefore very vulnerable and prone to be subjected to witchcraft, has been turned into a wolf against her will and has found herself among a pack of wolves in the forest. Because of the spell cast on her, she cannot become human and return home.<sup>23</sup> She needs someone to break the spell and her husband fits into that role. The husband does what is in his power, but the wife does not cooperate much. She is suspicious and tries to grab her wolf skin even when it has almost burned up. In many versions, the wife also tries to run back into the forest, although

she no longer has a wolf skin. In several versions, the husband has to go to a lot more trouble to get the wife back to normal: in some cases he has to handle the regained spindle, log or wife in a certain manner. There is a Karelian version, quite characteristic and helpful in explaining the Estonian versions, in which the wife, desperate because her animal skin has burned up, announces to the husband: "I will not live with you! I would rather run on the pebbles of the beach than be caught by Syöjätär again. I will not come back!" (Konkka 1963: 104)

The first half of the tale tells about a woman of an elder generation who feels unable to succumb to the patriarchal social order, who cannot accept a stepchild who is not of her own blood, and the other half tells about a young woman who cannot make herself subservient. She is glad to leave her stepmother's home for the house of the parents-in-law, but finds there that her life after becoming a young wife and a mother is by no means easier. In Setu bridal laments and several Estonian *regilaul* songs, the young wife's complaints about her hard life at the husband's home, where she has to live by the rules of her parents-in-law, and longs back to the time when she was with her own parents, are a very common motif. In this story, apart from the law laid down by the parents-in-law (which is not mentioned directly), the fact that old social relations have not been broken off becomes relevant – the stepmother still wishes her stepdaughter ill. Therefore, the burning of the skin cannot be unambiguously interpreted as the freeing or liberation of the wife. What we see at the end of *The Woman as Wolf* is not the turning frequent in Western wonder tales, where love breaks a terrible curse impending upon the protagonists and delivers them into the happy world of a young married couple in love with each other (Röhrich 1999: 211), but rather a transformation from animal to human form, which still retains some mental associations of the animist-totemist kind.

In psychoanalytical interpretation, this kind of liberation also means letting go of the negative ties with the (step)mother (ibid.: 216). In the context of interpreting AT 409, the burning of the animal skin does not mean liberation from the stepmother. It is when living with the pack of wolves that the young wife is free of her stepmother, and real freedom is finally gained first when the stepmother has been destroyed.

#### THE WOLF AND WEREWOLF IN ESTONIAN FOLKLORE

Why, then, is it life as a wolf that seems tempting to a young woman at some point in her life? And why is the woman not turned into a wolf in the AT 409 tales of any other Finnic peoples? Knowledge of the folk belief of this region will be helpful in finding the explanation. Estonian and Latvian folk belief and tradition have been influenced by European literati, none of whom, when writing about the Eastern Baltic regions during the period from the mid-16th century to the late 17th century, failed to mention the local peoples' ability to turn themselves into wolves and bears (Donecker 2010; Donecker 2012: 300–303). Judges and men of letters connected the fantasy of turning into a wolf with the werewolf idea that was earlier known to them from literature.<sup>24</sup> Owing to the witch trials, where questions about becoming a (were)wolf were asked and answered, the image of transformation into an animal/bird (probably also into a wolf, although I dare not assert this with absolute certainty), whose deeper origins may lie in totemism, and which by that time was probably falling into oblivion, gained new intensity.

Thus we may assume that Germans and other Western men of letters facilitated the survival of ancient beliefs among Estonians. The idea of the survival of totemistic beliefs and images arises when considering that in a region where the nature of folk tradition is quite similar to that of Estonian folklore, namely in the Karelian regions, the traces of such imagery were distinguishable well into the 20th century. Notably, in 1925, an allegedly true story was published from the Karelian village of Voronye Pole in the Olonets province. The story began with the villagers' annoyance over a bear persistently attacking the village cattle. One of the old men suggested that they should offer a girl as a bride to the master of bears, so as to pacify him. The girl was dressed as a bride and sent to the woods. She put up a fight, but was tied to a tree by force and left in the forest. Luckily, she managed to free herself and run to the neighbouring village. When the police interviewed the old men, the latter said that this was an old custom they had from olden times. To pacify the bears a girl must be given as a bride. (Oinas 1999)

No human sacrifices to wolves are known from Estonia. There is, though, a notice from Hiiumaa, saying that offerings were made to pagan/heathen gods to counteract the damage done by wolves. From the 19th and 20th centuries there is information from mainland Estonia that offerings must be brought to the wolf (leaving him 'his share'), so that he would not kill the cattle. Several different records confirm that the wolf was called when sending out the cattle for the first time in spring, and offered part of a slaughtered sheep; it was believed that the wolf must eat a dog every year, etc. When the wolf was fleeing with his catch, he was not to be interrupted, and the animals killed by the wolf were not to be touched. Wolf's fangs were worn as a talisman to banish evil, and girls of marrying age were slapped with a wolf tail; it was believed that a human hand injured by a wolf had healing powers. (Rootsi 2008) The particular significance attributed to the wolf was also manifest in more than a hundred euphemisms used to denote the animal. The wolf was never to be named on an alien territory (Russwurm 1855: 200). The wolf merited at least as much reverence as the forest itself. Just like the forest spirits, the wolf – who has also been considered one of the manifestations of the forest spirit – could punish or hurt people who did not behave properly in the forest (Paulson 1997: 54).<sup>25</sup>

The earliest records of the belief that a human being could turn into a wolf of her/his own accord date back to 1550. It was Sebastian Münster who wrote about the werewolf belief of the Livonians, which the Livonians had allegedly admitted in court (Metsvahi, forthcoming a). The belief that a human being can turn into wolf was widespread not only among the peasants, but also among the local Germans. For example, Christian Kortholt has described an incident that befell one of his German acquaintances in a Courland inn in 1637. The German travelling in Courland visited an inn in Dubeln with some local Germans. There were some Latvian peasants sitting at a nearby table, and one of them came over to the Germans' table and said, with a friendly face, raising his tankard for a toast: "To you, sir, as it is to me." The traveller understood no Latvian, but still tried to reply something in the same spirit. The local Germans jumped up and told him to keep silent. They beat the Latvian peasant up and threw him out of the inn. When the German traveller, with astonishment, asked why they had treated that friendly man in such a manner, they answered that if the traveller had blessed the peasant's drink, the latter would have been bound to turn into a werewolf that night. (Donecker 2012: 305) Johann Kanold, on the other hand, gives an account of the impression of another

anonymous traveller in Courland in 1719: “[...] many peasants liked to boast that they were werewolves, knowing that such tall tales would strike other villagers with terror and wonder” (ibid.: 311).

The Latvian word for werewolf, used then and even today, is *vilkatis* (*vilkats*, *vilka-cis*). The word is included in the annex of Georg Mancelius’ first Latvian dictionary (in the form *Willkatz*)<sup>26</sup> in 1638,<sup>27</sup> and can also be found in farm names of the 17th century (von Bruinik 1924: 194). On the other hand, the word *libahunt*, used in literary Estonian in the 20th century, denoted not a human wolf but rather something different as late as in mid-19th century.<sup>28</sup> In his dictionary, which was published in print in 1869, Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann described a common superstition that the wolf’s ninth cub is a *libahunt* – an especially ravenous beast with a narrow muzzle who attacks animals from behind, tearing out their entrails (Wiedemann 1973 [1869]: 493). The Estonian Folklore Archives also has several hundred records of a similar *libe-* or *libahunt*, who is described as being smaller than an ordinary wolf, with a narrow muzzle and tiny ears, and is said to attack by entering their prey from behind and tearing out their entrails (Hiimäe 2007: 352–354). Mall Hiimäe believes that such tales could be recollections of the wolverine (*Gulo gulo*),<sup>29</sup> a species more numerous in Estonia in those times. As people’s notions of zoology were not very advanced a couple of centuries ago, it should not be surprising if the wolf was confused with some other forest predator. The Estonian Swedes, for instance, borrowed the Finnic word *lipa* from the Estonian language (the Estonian forms are *libe* and *liba*, meaning slippery and false), and used it to denote the lynx instead (Metsmägi et al. 2012: 238).

## CONCLUSIONS

The traces of animism and probably even totemism in the folk culture, as well as stories spread among the Western literati about the local inhabitants’ custom of turning into wolves from time to time, the impact of the witch trials, the great distance between the upper and lower classes of the society, and the serfs’ hard living conditions with the constant threat of starvation<sup>30</sup> created a favourable basis for the widespread circulation of werewolf stories in the Estonian territory. Against this background, it is not surprising that the folk tale *The Woman as Wolf*, featuring other animals or birds in the lore of other Finnic peoples, in Estonia casts the protagonist as a wolf. Christianity presented the wolf in negative light, but for the Estonian peasantry it took time to fully recognise this point of view. In the image of the wolf, negative and positive characteristics were entwined in a truly unique manner. Being turned into a wolf was a punishment that the victim still could turn to her advantage to some extent. This is a way to explain the motif – admittedly not present in all the versions of folk tale AT 409 – of the young woman banished into the woods in the shape of a wolf almost starting to enjoy her life there. As briefly mentioned above, the wolf was also associated with fertility. Whether relating to the growth of crops, or the multiplying of animals or humans, fertility is always seen as a positive value. It is the fruit of the woman’s womb, the offspring of the family that first brings the wolf-woman back home. As no principal difference was seen between human and animal procreation, ideas about human congress with animals also formed part of the oral tradition.<sup>31</sup> From Estonia’s largest island Saaremaa, for exam-

ple, several legends have been recorded in which a woman gives birth to wolf cubs, or becomes a werewolf and mates with wolves in the woods.<sup>32</sup>

Considering that pre-marital sexual relations have been common in Estonia throughout the ages (in late 19th and early 20th century they were probably no longer so widespread, but still occurred in certain regions of Estonia),<sup>33</sup> it is no wonder that a flight from the conjugal duties of a wife could be imagined as sexual freedom. The Finnish folklorist Laura Stark has found in her study of incantations that the forest was regarded as the only place where defiance of social norms was possible (Stark 1999: 107, 109). Just like the forest, a wild animal represented freedom from social constraints. The attempts of the church to subject the peasantry totally to the norms of a patriarchal social order were partly successful, but on the other hand, created a counter-reaction. The part of the fairy tale that talks about the wife getting used to life in the wild and being reluctant to return home may be seen as such a reaction. The transformations at the end of the Karelian versions, when the husband wants to bring his recovered wife back home, are characteristic: the woman who has been turned into a reindeer or a bird, changes into a bear, a wolf, a snake and a spindle in the process of regaining her human shape, and it is first in the form of the spindle that the transformations stop and/or the husband manages to carry the wife home.<sup>34</sup> Are the wolf, the bear and the snake as symbols of (longing for) premarital sexual freedom here contrasted to the spindle as the characteristic attribute of a housewife, referring to her perpetual indoor chores? Even if the contrast looks too marked, it seems certain that the mental associations created by the telling of and listening to that part of the tale retained their actuality after the abolishment of slavery in the first decades of the 19th century, and after the middle of the 19th century, when the Estonian peasantry was no longer haunted by ever-impending famine and starvation.<sup>35</sup> Owing to the survival of those mental associations, the same plot also lived on as a legend, which was presumably still especially popular among women in the 20th century.<sup>36</sup> It is apparent that the earlier mental associations of the wolf did not fade irreversibly from the minds of the people, but found their covertly way into the werewolf legends still in circulation in the 20th century.

Translated by Aet Varik

## NOTES

1 The English tale type name *The Girl as Wolf* (ATU 409) is misleading, as the tale is about a young woman or wife, not a girl. Instead of *The Woman as Werewolf* I prefer to call the tale type *The Woman as Wolf*, as in this type of folk tales, the word 'wolf' is much more common than 'werewolf'. While analysing this tale type I prefer to refer to the AT catalogue and not the newer ATU catalogue, as the latter contains a number of misleading references to tales that in fact do not represent the same plot at all. With regard to the other tale types, I usually refer to the ATU catalogue; only when the tale description in the AT type catalogue is clearly more precise do I refer to the older catalogue.

2 Information received from Mairi Kaasik April 21, 2010.

3 In the Estonian Folklore Archives there are about 1400 werewolf texts that cannot be classified as fairy tales; about a half of those could be categorised under legend types.

4 In addition, the Finnish folklore scholar Pirkko-Liisa Rausmaa wrote in her comments to AT 409, that this tale type was extremely widespread in Estonia; see Rausmaa 1988: 483.

5 See, for example, Röhrich 1964.

6 In both, the versed parts are included not just in German translation but also in the original Estonian, both of which are fully identical.

7 One possible summary of this combined tale type is provided by Toomeos-Orglaan 2005: 160. For examples, see Kunder 1885: 152–155; Viidalepp 1967: 160–164, 165–167; Salve, Sarv 1987: 79–81, 81–83; Peebo, Peegel 1989: 168–170; Järv et al. 2009: 359–36, 362–365.

8 For tale type titles, I use those established in Estonian folklore studies; see Järv 2005: 223–224.

9 See Kunder 1885: 71–81 (ATU 451A + ATU 511 + ATU 403C + AT 409).

10 EKnS 43, 19/23 (1) < Väike-Maarja parish – Osvald Miller < Mari Essenson, about 50 years old (1910).

11 ERA II 20, 93/4 (9) < Hageri parish, Hageri commune, Adila village, Kloostri farm < Kose parish, Tuhala commune, Oru village – Rudolf Põldmäe < Ants Mesikäpp, 62 years old (1929).

12 ERA II 126, 330 (58) < Rõuge parish, Laitsna-Rogosi commune, Pundi village – Amanda Raadla < Peeter Kapp, born in 1853 (1936).

13 “Mountains of fairy tales and folk tales heaped upon one another”; see Mälk 1963: 50.

14 RKM II 44, 30 (4) < Setu, Meremäe commune, Navige village < Vastseliina parish, Obinita rural council – S. Lätt < Anna Järv, 75 years old (1956); see Viidalepp 2004 [1965]: 40.

15 Väino Klaus has translated the name of the worm as a beetle worm; see Klaus 1995: 25.

16 In several Estonian werewolf legends, as well as in witch trial transcripts, it is said that while in human shape, the werewolf hides her/his wolf skin under a stone.

17 See ERA II 174, 641/54 (25).

18 For more details on the Lithuanian versions, see Metsvahi 2010: 618.

19 ERA, MD 108 (31).

20 ERA, MD 106 (10).

21 About the matrilineal social order in Estonia during the first millennium AD, see Mägi 2009 and Metsvahi, forthcoming b.

22 ERA II 244, 332/4 (7) < Rõuge parish, Viitina village – A. Reiljan, pupil of the 6th class < E. Reiljan, 40 years old (1939).

23 In Estonian werewolf legends it is common that people who have turned into wolves of their own accord can also resume their human shape; while a person turned into wolf by someone else cannot regain his/her humanity without help. This rule is not valid for werewolves only, but more generally for people on whom a spell has been cast; see Röhrich 1999: 212.

24 Apart from the authors of classical or late antiquity, demonologists also mentioned werewolves. I will here refer to a single excerpt from demonological literature that is interesting for the gender difference it establishes regarding transformation into animals with the help of witchcraft. Eberhard David Hauber writes that by means of witchcraft, it is possible to assume the shape of different animals, thus women transform into cats, or sometimes hares, and men into wolves; see Hauber 1738–1744: 309–311.

25 The cult of the wolf among Estonians has been mentioned already in the 19th century. It was Kreutzwald who claimed that in earlier times, the Estonians had an attitude to the wolf that is comparable to the cult of the bear among the Finno-Ugrian peoples in Siberia (see Kreutzwald, Neus 1854: 119). Reverence for the wolf is obvious even in the fact that several literati and men of the Enlightenment admonished the people not to hold the wolf in too high esteem. For instance, Carl Körber, the pastor of Vändra, wrote in a book intended for the peasants in the mid-19th century, that wolves were evil and there was no need to respect them, instead, they should be killed, as had been done in Britain where there were no wolves left (see Körber 1850: 39–40).

26 The Latvian word for wolf is *vilks*.

27 Here I wish to thank Sandis Laime, as this information was included in his e-mail from October 30, 2013.

28 The human wolf used to be denoted by the Estonian word *soend*; in witch trial transcripts, the words *nõiahunt* (witch wolf) and *hunt* (wolf) are the most common.

29 The wolverine has a special significance in several cultures, for example, native Americans, the Inuits, the Samis, and the Mongols (Hiiemäe 2007: 358). For the Dolgans' beliefs about the wolverine, see Grachova 1995: 77.

30 I mention the threat of starvation as that had a certain impact on the spreading of werewolf stories: in legends, a frequent reason for turning into a wolf is the opportunity to get fresh meat.

31 For the use of the word *libahunt* to denote a lecherous woman, see Vähi 2008: 135.

32 An example of such a tale:

One man had a wife who used to turn into a wolf, kill animals and bring home meat. Once, their home was very cold, and the man said: "This room is so cold, also the child is cold here." The wife answered: "The child who is indoors is all right! But what are those children to do who are hiding in the straw behind the house!" The man went out to see and found wolf cubs in the straw. He took them and struck them dead against the fence. On Saturday evening, his wife heated the sauna and the man went into the sauna. He was sitting on the sweat bench and whipping himself with birch branches, when a wolf pushed open the sauna door and made a rush at him. The man's only recourse was to grab the poker from the corner and push it down the wolf's throat. The wolf leapt out of the sauna. After that, the woman's throat was sore for a long time. The woman went to punish the man for having struck the wolf cubs dead against the fence, for those were her other children. (ERA II 157, 398/9 (2) < Mustjala parish – Amanda Raadla < Aadu Väärt, born in 1865 [1937].)

For comparison, here is a transcript of a Lapp folk tale from 1750:

There was a girl who was treated badly by her brothers. She went to the forest, married the bear and gave birth to a son. Finally, feeling that his life was coming to end, the bear asked that the girl's brother would kill him. (Oinas 1999: 214)

33 Hupel (1777: 136–138) wrote that among Estonians, it was not considered strange when a girl was found sleeping in a boy's arms in the morning. Estonians themselves said that this is an old custom of theirs. Pregnancy did not dishearten them and they quickly married the child's father or another man or stayed and lived with their parents together with the child. If a young person had never had sexual intercourse, this was considered weird. Hupel added that after the wedding, the young people who had behaved with such immodesty, became faithful spouses.

34 In some Estonian versions it is the spindle that can be brought home.

35 See Seppel 2008.

36 About Ann Pilberg, a self-assured woman who went to court to seek justice for herself, and told in 1933 with great evocative power her version of the tale *The Woman as Wolf*, see Metsvahi 2000.

## SOURCES

Audio collections at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:

ERA, MD – Digital sound recordings on MiniDiscs (2003–).

Manuscript collections at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:

EKnS – Folklore collection of the Estonian Literature Society (1872–1924).

EKÜ – Folklore collection of the Literary Society of Estonia (Ehstländische Literarische Gesellschaft) (ca. 1800–1890).

ERA – Folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (1927–1944).

ÕES – Folklore collection of the Learned Estonian Society (Gelehrte Estnische Gesellschaft) (ca. 1800–1936).

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## NOTES AND REVIEWS

### DRINKING AND DRIVING IS SO MUCH FUN

Arctic Workshop at the University of Tartu in Estonia May 31 – June 1, 2013

*Drinking and Driving Is So Much Fun* is an unusual title for an anthropological workshop. It has just the right provocation to induce serious reflections on something that anthropologists usually reserve for the famous ‘corridor talk’ during conferences, when they discuss ambivalent fieldwork experiences difficult to integrate into the success stories of anthropological research.

The drunken native is such a powerful stereotype in the Russian North, serving mainly disrespect and marginalisation, that it is quite a risky endeavour for outsiders to discuss drinking in Siberia. The theme is such a blind spot in the anthropology of Siberia that it is high time that we skipped the superficial and stereotypical images and developed some deeper understanding of the manifold aspects of native life linked to alcohol.

The presentations of the workshop took up the task of challenging these stereotypes by careful ethnographic description and analysis, and also by understanding the powerful role stereotypes play in public discourse. Art Leete traced them back to antiquity, where the northern barbarian neighbours of the Greeks were believed to be heavy drinkers of undiluted wine. He followed this image of drinking northerners through Montesquieu up to the ethnographic literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Explanations for this north-south distinction in drinking changed over time but were always linked to some kind of ‘nature’ of the North or northerners. Today the most popular and widespread of these ‘natural’ reasons for the deviant drinking habits of northern people was taken up by Aimar Ventsel. His presentation shed light on the belief that the lack of an enzyme or gene

dooms the indigenous peoples of Siberia to suffer from serious alcohol problems. He was not the only one during the workshop who made the important point that stereotypes are not only used to marginalise indigenous groups. They also serve the arguments of ethnic movements that criticise alcohol by declaring it to be foreign to their groups and an instrument of colonial domination. Genes that influence the ability to metabolise alcohol were also mentioned in the keynote speech of Jaanus Harro. He revealed that in certain populations in Asia the percentage of people with a genetically determined lack of particular enzymes is higher than in Europe. This slows down the metabolising of alcohol and causes these people to feel the effects of alcohol more strongly. Substances that block the same enzymes are used in therapies for alcohol addiction in order to cause an aversion effect.

Anna Stammer Gossman investigated the role of stereotypes in national self-stylisation. She used the term “alcoholity” to describe how self-image, and also state regulation, determine different conventions linked to alcohol consumption in nation states. One of the main anthropological insights into the human consumption of alcohol is that even the most uncontrolled and deviant drunken behaviour is framed by expectations and conventions in the respective social environment. The “alcoholities” of nations like Russia or Finland set the reference points from which the drinking habits of minority groups are judged.

Most of the research presented centred either on the Khanty and Nenets of Western Siberia and the northern Russian tundra,

or on cases from the Republic of Sakha/Yakutia. Ina Schröder, Karina Lukin, Kirill Istomin, Laur Vallikivi and Stephan Dudeck described drinking cultures from the Republic of Sakha/Yakutia. It became obvious that practices emanating from excessive or almost self-destructive drinking (described by Schröder, Lukin, Istomin and Dudeck) to the temperance of women (described by Dudeck) or protestant converts (described by Vallikivi), structure the internal distinctions of gender-, age-, and local groups as well as the differences between heavy drinkers and mainstream society. They determine even settlement geography and the movements of the nomadic reindeer herders, as Kirill Istomin exemplified. Drunkenness enables dangerous contacts with the dead and is a source of humour, as Ina Schröder reported. It produces persistent negative images that seriously influenced ethnographic fieldwork in the case of Karina Lukin. Stephan Dudeck focussed on the impact of transgressive behaviour that aims at the joint loss of face.

For Yakutia Tatiana Argunova-Low and Yuri Zhegusov used sociological and anthropological methods to describe ethnic differences in drinking and how concepts of agency and responsibility for alcohol related problems are influenced by the dominant therapy of alcoholism in the Russian Federation, called "coding". Norman Prell and Eleanor Peers described very different social contexts in which alcohol and the absence of alcohol play an important role. Norman Prell discussed communities of migrant workers on a construction site and Russian settlers on the road from Yakutsk to Magadan. Eleanor Peers focussed on the role of drinking in the main Sakha ritual, the Yhyakh festival, and how the nationalist revival promoted an alcohol ban during the festival.

Only Laura Siragusa presented an exclusion of these two regional foci with her talk about the Veps minority of the Russian

North. Drinking problems are often considered to be the result of assimilation processes. Laura Siragusa's future research will test this hypothesis by exploring the link of language and alcohol in a broader sense, going beyond the focus on language shift and the negative consequences of heavy drinking.

Joachim Otto Habeck's presentation touched again on an overarching but often neglected theme connected with drinking practices – the hangover. Like Jaanus Harro he provided important insights from medical research that provide the background for a better understanding of the rich folklore and popular practices relating to how to evaluate and treat a hangover. The hangover is probably also connected to a very specific drinking pattern called *zapoï* in Russian. The periodic and episodic drinking formerly associated with the medical concept of dipsomania was mentioned several times as a common and even accepted drinking phenomenon. Another current theme was the link between feelings of guilt, inferiority, and shame associated with drinking and also appearing with the hangover. Shame as a guardian of behavioural borders linked to social reputation and respect is often involved in drinking that transgresses these borders. The phrase "Do you respect me?" as a means to force others to keep on drinking is well known to all (male) researchers in Russia. It prevents the invited person to induce a shameful situation of unequal drunkenness. I observed this pressure to join excessive drinking mainly among young males who suffer from feeling of status insecurity that arises while consuming alcohol. Shame serves also to keep information about drinking practices and the practices themselves hidden inside narrow social groups. In this way shame helps to maintain the boundaries of drinking groups as collectives of complicity and enables the ritual inclusion of outsiders in these collectives by drinking.

Does alcohol as a potent drink have agency itself? And if so what kind of agency? This was another important question raised during the discussion. Alcohol obviously has the ability to influence the possibilities and responsibilities of human action significantly. My impression is that the allocation of power to alcohol itself only obscures the agency of social relationships that are at work when people engage in drinking. I would consider alcohol only a catalyst for these relationships which reinforce their power or deprive other social relationships of their agency. In the same way in which agency attributed to money hides the power of economic relationships that define the monetary system, social relationships are hiding behind the agency of alcohol or the treatment of alcoholism. It will be the future task of anthropological research in Siberia to investigate the correlation of alcohol and agency more deeply.

The discussion revealed many other themes that were not, or only superficially, touched on in the papers and deserve to be discussed in detail in a future workshop. Such peculiar places for drinking parties as the Russian sweat bath *banya* as well as the summerhouse *datcha* were not discussed. Characteristic drinking traditions like the practice of *otmyvat'* (wash) achievements and acquisitions and the episodic *zapoï* were touched only briefly in the discussion. The eminent influence of the drinking habits of settlers and migrant workers, which is so influential for local drinking cultures in Siberia, was only touched on in Norman Prell's paper. Aimar Ventsel briefly discussed the present changes in gendered drinking practices, the on-going switch from vodka to beer, and the diversification process in drinking habits. Tatiana Argunova-Low pointed out the methodological difficulties that research and writing about alcohol constitute for anthropologists working in Siberia. Stereotypes about marginalised social groups and the morally charged

discourse about alcohol make it difficult to write about drinking. The physical and social effects of alcohol and personal security make it difficult to engage in the participant observation of drinking.

There is a lot to do in the research on drinking in Siberia and I hope that the ambivalence of fun and hangover and the moral taboos will not prevent anthropologists from focusing on this topic. The workshop in Tartu was a wonderful opportunity to get an impression of how huge and unexplored is the field of alcohol studies in Siberia. The anthropology of drinking in Siberia was taken out of its 'corridor talk' niche in Tartu, which was also the perfect place to discuss very personal experiences of Siberian fieldwork with good friends under the influence of the one or more glasses of vodka or alcohol free beverages in the evenings. As the majority of participants I am very much looking for a follow up to *Drinking and Driving Is So Much Fun!*

Stephan Dudeck

## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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