

## **OLD STORIES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES – A COLLECTING EXPERIENCE IN THE ORAVA VILLAGE IN SIBERIA**

*Risto Jürv*

Far away from Estonia, in Siberia Estonian emigrants have been living for more than a century. The Czar had promised free land to the people and in the wake of that knowledge people settled in the faraway land.

If up to the final decade of the 19th century the Estonian settlers of Siberia were mostly those banished from their homeland and their descendants – all in all 1.600–1.700 people, then a hundred years ago a voluntary emigration to the fertile fields of black soil was undertaken by many. It was advanced by the railway connexion between European Russia and Omsk that had been opened in 1894. Thus the number of Estonians who resettled in Western Siberia nearly doubled itself in ten years (Kulu 1997: 90–102). Usually, the settlers started villages of their own.

By now, about 30 of the Estonian settlements have remained from that time. To collect the folklore of Estonian expatriates, The Estonian Folklore Archives have arranged nine expeditions during the past ten years. In the spring of 1998 (the 8th expedition) Anu Korb and Mari Sarv from the Estonian Folklore Archives and the present author from the University of Tartu departed for Siberia.

I have to admit that having collected folklore in different regions of Estonia I expected the folklore of the faraway Siberia to be extremely original and was hoping to meet “something authentic” over there. If folklore specialists from the Western world like to hunt for folk tradition among representatives of exotic cultures, the interests of Estonian folklore collectors lie in the folklore of the older type that survives in the borderlands of Estonia even these days. Naturally, the collecting trips at home had moulded our expectations and the hopes placed on the Siberian expedition were comparatively high. The relative similarity of the material “gleaned” from the distant journey to that collected in Estonia even seemed to be something of a disappointment at the beginning. There were



Map 1. Estonia and Novosibirski oblast. The map is based on:  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map\\_collection/cia99/Russia\\_sm99.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/cia99/Russia_sm99.jpg)

several reasons for this “non-specificity” – in three villages we visited first, the Estonian population was limited to a couple or five households; originally, these villages had not been Estonian, but Estonians had settled there later. Tradition, however, is bound to disappear more quickly when there is not enough foothold.

On May 8, we arrived at the Orava village that is situated not far from the Western border of the Novosibirsk oblast. The people who had settled in the then Tomskij government in the 19th century had mostly come from the Orava parish (Nigol 1918: 46). The new settlement is said to have got its name after the Orava parish in Southern Estonia (#0194-05). All in all there are approximately 50 Estonians living there today. The communication between people is close nowadays, among other things, the old women of the village have kept alive the Estonian song tradition and their 5-member “song group” sang several songs to us. Nevertheless, it came as a real surprise that after the songs were finished we met such a hoard of stories during our two last collecting days, May 11 and May 12 1998, the like of which I had not experienced earlier, neither during expeditions at home nor in the course of this particular trip. Naturally, the fifteen fairy tales we collected is not an immense number, but considering the time of collecting – the final years of the 20th century – the amount was rather surprising. The present paper attempts to give a brief survey of the stories told,

first and foremost concentrating on fairy tales.\* As later revisions of the collected material showed that all the stories were told in cooperation between several storytellers, I shall also try to analyse narrating situations with several participants.

## 1. FAIRY TALES TODAY

We know the life of fairy tale in contemporary European culture. Usually, people can reproduce orally some twenty stories by the Brothers Grimm or Perrault (and in case of smaller nations some by a couple of local popular authors may be added – in case of Estonia stories by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, Juhan Kunder and Matthias Johann Eisen, for example). Often, the stories have disappeared even from the memory of the informants from whom other “ancient” folklore could be collected.

Understandably, the folklore archives do not contain all the full treasure of stories that were still alive a century ago. Richard Viidalepp, the Estonian researcher of tellers of folk tales, has noted with pity (1938: 831) that our earlier collectors have preferred recording folk songs to lengthy stories. (However, it has to be admitted that this was the most felicitous thing to do, considering the resulting archive storage of material much more specific to the nation.) Today’s collectors, though, have not much choice, as a rule we have to limit ourselves to a motley patchwork of details of belief and customs, occasionally a legend or contemporary legend will crop up, or a handful of chronicles or everyday stories can be found.

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\* The outlines of the article were shaped at the Martinmas seminar on narrating and customs, arranged by the Folk belief and narratives research group of the Institute of the Estonian Language in Tartu, Nov. 9, 1998. The recordings from the expedition used in the text are stored in the sound and video recordings collection at the Estonian Folklore Archives; in case of the sound samples, the CD collection of the EFA has been referred to, # number of CD, number of the recording; the original transcriptions of the sample texts have been presented in dialect, which the translation does not attempt to imitate. The comparison of the fairy tales discussed in the article with the archival material collected from Estonia has been carried out with the help of the texts recorded electronically, financed by grant No 3894 (Estonian Fairy Tales) of the Estonian Science Foundation.

You may hope to hear more than a couple of “real” fairy tales only in the South-Eastern part of the country, in Setumaa. Nowadays even in these areas such tales are not likely to be told to one’s peers any more.

Our three-member expedition team had already recorded many a song from the old women of the Orava village, when, on May 11, two of us – Mari Sarv with a minidisk-recorder and Risto Järv in the capacity of a cameraman – went to visit Berta Kalamiis (born 1922), a member of the song group, to collect other folklore, in particular folk belief. Soon, also Berta Hank (born 1918) joined in the conversation. As a background story to the belief in the devil she presented the internationally known (cf Simonsuuri 1961 E 201, E 211) legend of card-players who are joined by a stranger at Christmas time. Soon the horse hoofs of the man reveal him to be the devil (“*vanapakan*”) (#0195-25).

What followed confirmed to us again that part of the belief information we were after was more than mere registration; rather, some of it had reached a contrary phase – that of control and even ridicule. Thus the informants did not believe the idea (obviously introduced by their parents) that at midnight you could meet the devil in the bathhouse. Berta Kalamiis had made a respective experiment herself – and needless to add, it had given a negative result.

The devil had not been thought to be doing anything in particular in the bathhouse by the parents of the storytellers – “What is he doing? He is doing nothing – they just say that the devil is in the bathhouse.” (“*Mis ta tege? Ta ei tee midagi – prosto üteldäs, et vanapagan on sannan*” – #0195-27). The warning had been used to make the children wash themselves early. This became obvious in the commentary of the other informant Berta Hank that soon grew into a fairy tale told by Berta Kalamiis who had inserted a correction:

*BH: They also frightened us this way... that every Saturday you had to come back from the bathhouse by twelve o'clock. Those who stayed in the bathhouse... It's an old story... Let me see, I shall tell it all, I'll say how this ... Ah, there were those two orphans...*

*BK: No, not two.*



*Berta Kalamis telling the story "Mother's Daughter and Stepdaughter" (AT 480\*D), May 11, 1998. Video by Risto Järvi.*

*BH: No, there was one.*

*BK: One who was rich and another who was poor*

*BH: Yes, well, yes, so it was.*

*BK: Well... everybody had already gone away from the bathhouse, but this poor girl she never had the time, so she went last, last of all, and there she was in the bathhouse up to twelve o'clock while she washed. And she heard the sound of bells approaching. And then the devil came along, the devil came up with his son... so as to marry him to her.*

*BH: Go on, go on. This is the way it goes, you'll tell it, won't you?*

*BK: Well, then the devil entered the bathhouse and said:*

*– Jump, my son, leap, my son, you'll get a wife like a rose blossom.*

*And so the son went off to fetch the stuff for her*

*– What do you need first of all?*

*– I need a undershirt and I need a petticoat.*

*– Jump, my son, leap my son, you'll get a wife like a roseblossom.*

*So he went and fetched the things and she put them on.*

*– What else do you need now?*

– *Now I need a dress.*

– *Jump, my son, leap, my son, you'll get a wife like roseblossom.*

*Again, the son went off to fetch the dress... And so up to twelve o'clock she ... let the son toil away and when the first cock crowed, the devils fled off. And the daughter went home, she was dressed like a doll, in all those fine clothes. And then, on another Saturday, the stepmother sent her own daughter to the bathhouse as well. Well, and sent her to the bathhouse. But you see, she did not understand the trick of it. She said everything in one go, all of what she needed.*

*BH: Yes.*

*BK: He fetched everything, the devil's son fetched her those clothes and put them on her, and she fought them [the devils] off:*

– *I'm not coming... I'm not coming.*

*And they cut her head off and left it on the windowsill. And in the morning, the mother came to see her, said:*

– *She has so much stuff she cannot carry it home.*

*Went to see her and saw her standing at the window and laughed. But she had had her head cut off and left on the windowsill. So that was what the devils did ... to rich mother's daughter.*  
(#0195-28)

Different typologies have determined the position of the plot among the genres of folk tale. In the catalogue of Antti Aarne we find the plot in the category of religious legends (Aa S 31). Warren E. Roberts (1958: 148) has assumed these tales belong to subtype “The Ogre kept at Bay” and are a combination “between Type 480 in some form and elements drawn from some Sage”. Nikolai Andreev places it under the type of “Mother’s Daughter and Stepdaughter” – 480\*D as a fairy tale: The stepdaughter who has been sent to the wood (bathhouse etc) meets a forest spirit (devil etc) and, getting different things from him one by one, she spends time until the cock crows, while the mother’s own daughter perishes (Andreev 1929: 37). The same type number has been used by Heda Jason (1975: 16) in her catalogue of Jewish oral tales – “Persecuted Stepdaughter”. A comparative list of East Slavonic plots (Barag *et al* 1979) presents it as a type of fairy tale, however, here it bears the number 480C\* – “Mother’s daughter and stepdaughter”. In the Aarne-Thompson catalogue the story has been left without a type number and Diether Röth, in his recent typological comparisons of fairy

tales of the European nations has considered it to be close to type AT 431 (The House in the Wood) (Röth 1998:90).

Estonian researchers have classified the plot as fairy tale. For instance, Ülo Valk in his study *Manifestations of the Devil in Estonian Folk Religion* notes that, although the plot of the story is religious, its development leaves a “very fairy-tale like impression” (Valk 1998:16). Thus, in the present paper I have stuck to the typological division 480\*D. On the basis of the Setu material it has also been stated that subtypes of type AT 480 can actually be regarded as separate types that are connected by similar characters and structure (Salve & Sarv 1987: 176–177).

This type of story is especially popular in all Baltic countries, though it is also known in the tradition of most Slavonic peoples (see Kerbelytė 1996: 1400). All in all, the plot is represented by almost a hundred versions at the Estonian Folklore Archives (EVM: 442). The texts registered at the EFA as type AT 480\* D actually remind more of fairy tales than legends in all aspects. The location where the events take place remains unspecified, and if the orphan has a name, it is a traditional one. Only one text, recorded in the Jüri parish (1888), mentions a particular bathhouse where the events were said to have happened.<sup>1</sup> Yet some versions defined as type 480\*D were closer to legend. For instance, a plot recorded in the Torma parish in 1890 represents a mere one-episode narrative in which the head of an orphan who has gone to the bathhouse late on a Saturday night has been torn off and is found.<sup>2</sup> Also, a very short one-part text has been recorded in the Saarde parish in 1897.<sup>3</sup>

The song-like refrain remembered by the storytellers of Orava has parallels already in the earliest recordings of the Folklore Archives, e.g. from the Kuusalu region (1876)<sup>4</sup> and from the Laiuse parish (1879).<sup>5</sup> The story has also been very popular in Võrumaa and Setumaa, and may have reached the Siberian Orava as a part of oral tradition. Later, it has become extremely well known via the collection of rewritten folk tales by Kunder titled *Estonian Fairy Tales*, in which the verse part is worded somewhat differently, “Run, my son, reach, my son, move your legs for your own sake” (“*Jookse poega, jõua poega, heida jalga enese pärast...*”). (Kunder 1885: 44).

Viewing the story told by Berta Hank against the background of Estonian archive texts it is no wonder that the storyteller finished

it with the image of the “laughing” head. Many archival recordings do not end with a fairy tale picture of the orphan’s happy life in the future, but with a bloodcurdling vision – finding of the head of the rich daughter of the farm.

## 2. UNSUCCESSFUL NARRATING SITUATIONS

Considering the classical opposition of the legend and the fairy tale on the level of believing, it can be supposed that the narrator’s attitude towards the fairy tales that are (still) told today has changed less than the attitude towards traditional legends. The fairy tale has already traditionally been regarded as fiction, thus the contemporary presentation should not cause resistance in the narrator due to the increased rationality of contemporary times, à la *it makes no sense to talk about that, this is not true, they just believed it.*

When Berta Hank started a new story that sounded more realistic, the presentation turned out to be considerably less successful than that of the previous one.

*BH: Tell us also about how the... Those old stories... You know,... the orphan and... Again how... she promised... And she wanted the father of the orphan to marry her.*

*BK: But I don’t know this one.*

*BH: You cannot...*

*BK: Don’t know this one.*

*RJ: Go on, you tell that one!*

*BH: Well... there was this widow and she had a daughter. And then... there was a man, also widowed, he, and he had a daughter. Two daughters and... Well... Then she, that woman [said]: ...*

*– Let your father marry me of course ...*

*So the daughter [said]:*

*– Whatever I do ... I cannot, although you order me to.*

*– Oh, I will take so much care of you and... will love you, I will let... your mouth... be washed with milk. So much...*

*BK: The mouth of the orphan, yes?*

*BH: ... yes.*

*– I’ll love you so much and... just let your father marry me.*

*The father said to her:*



Berta Hank telling the story “The Black and the White Bride” (AT 403B), May 11, 1998. Video by Risto Järvi.

– Pour water into my boots and... hang them on the wall. If the water does not run out, I shall marry, if it does, I shall not marry.

Well, they were hung on the wall filled with water. And, the water did not run out. Well the man then married her and... and she did not like his girl... didn't have any pity on her at all, and gave her so much work to do that... And beat her and... So what do you do now? And then there was this black yarn... woollen yarn, black yarn, and she told her to go to the lake:

– You shall wash this yarn until the yarn becomes white.

She went and washed and washed, washed and washed... well, there is no way the yarn can become white. How can that black wool possibly turn...

BK: ... black yarn possibly turn white!

BH: ... it won't... And then the lords of the manor... lords or what they were... rich, they drove by:

– So what are you doing here?

– As you can see, I am washing the yarn. I was told to wash it white, but I cannot to do it.

– Come and get into [the carriage].

*She got into the carriage and that... gentleman then made her the wife of his son. Well, she was very beautiful, she was. No, you see I cannot tell how that... how that yellow apple jumped out of her mouth and. I cannot, you see...*

*BK: I do not know, I don't.*

*BH: Well you know... I skipped some bits there, I do not know any more.*

*BK: Can't remember any more, if you haven't been telling it, can't remember. Everything's slipped from my mind.*

*BH: Well and then... she fell pregnant... But that stepmother she went around and fretted, and wanted to know what had become of her, what she was doing and ... what had become of the orphan... with all that yarn. And then... so she learnt where she was.*

*But now she was about to give birth to the child. And she, she bore the child... but she had already had managed to get in there, that woman,... that... near the sick one... to bear the child, she... as soon as the child was born she laid her own daughter beside it and carried the other woman away. And then the gentlemen came, wanted to talk to her [his wife], but she [the step-mother] wouldn't let them, you see... how this... somewhere I skipped something, you know she must have the toad jumping out of her mouth... but that one has the golden apple...*

*BK: ... The orphan.*

*BH: The orphan. You see, that's already been left out. I cannot remember any more. Well, and then, that mother, she did not let them speak to her...*

*– Do not speak, do not speak, she is very ill, she is very ill.*

*So you see, I cannot tell any more, how she was... who got to know about it, but those gentlemen they got to know about it and... and then the [step-]mother was killed together with her daughter and... I cannot tell it you see... As soon as she started speaking, the toad jumped out... so that man understood that it was...*

*BK: ... it wasn't her.*

*BH: Yes. I cannot tell any more.*

*(#0195-29)*

The retained elements of the plot are characteristic of subtype AT 403B, one of the best known published versions of which is the

fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm “The Three Little Men in the Forest” (KHM 13). It is also of interest that the task of carrying water in a sieve appears in two 480\*D texts recorded in the Jüri parish; in both of them the task is given to the devil by the orphan in order to win time. One of them is the already mentioned fairy tale from 1888 (see note 1), the other derives from 1890.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, the excellent performer of songs did not succeed in presenting the tale. The main reason for the loss of the text’s meaning obviously was a deviation from the logical development of the story as concerns the fairy tale element (the dropping of the apple from the mouth). When Berta Hank discovered the omission of a turn in the plot, she got caught up in repetitions and did not succeed in getting the story right again. As the co-teller did not know the tale, the repeated questions asked from her gave no results either. The concrete golden apple that is made to fall from the orphan’s mouth differs from the 29 texts of type AT 403B at the Estonian Folklore Archives – usually, it is a piece of gold (c.f. the monograph on the Estonian versions of type 403B – Laurimaa 1999: 145–154).

A story, the beginning of which closely resembles the previous fairy tales was told by Berta Kalamii. It was about an orphan who went to the bathhouse to wash late at night on a Saturday and the hope advised her to enter its one ear and come back from the other. Thus the orphan got a golden horse, a golden carriage (later, a sleigh) and golden harness. On the following Saturday, the mother sent her own daughter to the bathhouse as well; she, however, was rewarded with tarred clothes and a tarred horse (#0195-32).

### **3. THE NARRATING SITUATION OF OLD STORIES**

In answer to the respective question the women introduced the narrating situation of such old stories. *Well, we started to tell old stories when we all came together in the evening. One told one story, another the next one.* The stories were told when people came to sit-togethers, worked, knitted and span, sat up till late at night, it was both young men and girls that gathered together (#0196-02). Taking into account when the informants were young, such storytelling must have occurred as late as in the 1930s. Apparently they

lasted until the ethnic repressions in Russia in 1936-39 (cf. e. g. Kulu 1997: 126–128), that changed the national customs.

Also, it became clear that the term from our everyday speech signifying fairy tale (*muinasjutt*) and the one used by the informants from Orava, meaning an old story (*vana-aolitseq jutuu*) seemed synonymous to them; however, it is only the latter that has been in wide usage. The term was firmly related to imaginary events:

*BH: Was it for real. Of course it wasn't, that...*

*BK: ... fairy tale, of course...*

*BH: ... fairy tale, they told them... Oh, when those old stories were told...!*

(#0195-25)

Unfortunately we could not make certain if the term “old story” signified just imaginary tales, fairy tales, or also tales that were believed, legends. It can be assumed that in recent times it also includes legends, that are not believed (any more), and thus it is mostly texts as fiction that are considered to be “old stories”.

In our interrogations we experienced several times that traditional folklore genres are felt to have different successors today. Thus Berta Hank told a “fairy-tale” about an orphan called Lina-Maie that they honestly admitted to have derived from a book (#0196-01). As a foreshadowing we may mention that the other two informants from Orava whom we questioned about fairy tales – Minna Danilson and Anna Visnapuu – both intimated that today fairy tales can be found in books.

An even more eloquent example of the change in the concept of fairy tale was provided by the conversation with Berta Kalamiiis. When we asked for stories about wild animals, she began to narrate:

*BK: So, there lived in the forest... one... she ... she was called... anyway, she was a woman, well, she was called Baba-Yaga. But there are very many Russian-language words in it, that have been told in Russian. They said that she was Baba-Yaga. Well, I do not know if she was Baba-Yaga or wasn't or... who she was, but she had a daughter.*

(#0197-02)

Unfortunately the promising beginning did not lead to a result comparable to the earlier stories, this story tended to deviate from the main storyline of the fairy tale. After some colourful events it became clear:

*RJ But where did you here that story?*

*BK: Well, I heard it...*

*BH: Maybe it was... a story in a book?*

*BK: This is cinema. I saw the cinema, that was it. And so it really was, all of it... it is no fairy tale, but some real thing, it is.*

A direct comparison between a contemporary film seen at the cinema or on TV and an ancient fairy tale had already been made by the informants when we first started the part of interrogation concerning fairy tales: these days you watch television, but then there were old stories (#0195-24).

#### **4. A COLLECTION OF TALES FROM DIFFERENT REALMS**

Next, Berta Hank told us the story of the fox's house and the hare's house – the former built a house of ice, the other a house of peat. When the ice melted, the fox escaped into the hare's house and it was only by the frightful crowing of the cock that helped the rightful owner back to the house. Like other tales told to us in Siberia, this contamination of AT 43 and AT 126 has been fairly popular in Estonia (Kippar 1986: 60).

When Liide (Aliide) Kalamiis (b. 1938), the third woman who had sang to us on the day before, arrived, we were egged on by the previous success and continued to ask for other stories “with the devil in them”. At that, the storytellers again started to tell “tales of the stupid ogre”. Berta Kalamiis told us a well-known story about how Ants and the devil sowed bread on one year and beetroots on another, and divided the crops so that Ants profited by it (AT 1030, “The Crop Division”) (#0196-05).

As we had a certain overview of the stories that had previously been collected from the Siberian Estonians, we tried to extract stories collected in other regions from the Orava storytellers. The sto-

rytellers did not know the joke in which the pope's dogs called *Porgand* (Carrot) and *Piet* (Beetroot) get cooked (AT 1685) that is presented in the selection of texts titled "Estonian Settlements" (EA1: 81–83). However, everybody started discussing a story that they all seemed to know extremely well – The Axe Soup (Type AT 1548; The Soup Stone). Everybody said a couple of concise words, in the end the whole story was presented very briefly. When we then tried to "turn back", we could also listen to the beginning, but heard no clear presentation of the whole.

Apparently, this kind of difficulty has been experienced by many, e.g. Mall Hiimäe (1978: 126) observes in connexion with the legends from the Kodavere region: if the listeners know everything, the presentation of the plot is skipped and only hints are made in that direction.

## **5. RICH BROTHER AND POOR BROTHER WITHOUT A HAPPY ENDING**

Soon we met the story type AT 613 *The Two Travellers (Truth and Falsehood)* that was told by Liide Kalamiiis.

*RJ: Aren't there any stories of two brothers... any fai... olden-time stories that... how there were two brothers that went to the wide world together or... Don't you know that one?*

*LK: One that was rich and the other poor, or what?  
(laughter)*

*MS: ... Well, go on.*

*LK: What is there to tell about... One, he was the rich brother, the other was the poor brother.*

*And the poor brother had many children and of course they... He was poor, and went to the rich brother to beg that he give him... some flour, to feed the children with something... So... the rich brother said:*

*– Let me take your ...eye out, then you'll get a pood of flour.*

*So... the poor brother thought that even with one eye you can see everything at once, so I shall let him to take that eye out. He then gave him a pood of flour, he went home with the pood of flour...*

*BK: ... with one eye*



*Liide Kalamüis telling the story “Truth and Falsehood” (AT 613), May 11, 1998.  
Video by Risto Järv.*

*LK: ... well, with one eye... so how long could they make this porridge and eat it? And... and again, then, he went to the rich brother... to beg for food...*

*BK: Oh*

*LK: The rich brother said:*

*– So, let me put out your eye again.*

*He then ... that the last eye also was to be taken out, that how can...*

*BK: ... can I go...*

*BH: ... I cannot even go home!*

*LK: Well, I cannot even go home. But the poor brother...*

*BH: Did you heat the house today?*

*BK: Yes, I did... it is so cold outside and you have to heat the house*

*LK: ... the poor brother then thought that what do I do, that I already let an eye to be taken out for the children’s sake, to get the ... so this time let the wife have an eye taken out, with one, with one eye we can maybe... speak.*

*BK: ... cope.*

*LK: we can cope, then. He went off home to explain it. But the wife, she was cleverer, she said so:*

*– Whether you die a week earlier or a week later, be sure to die with two eyes still there... So why should I suffer two pains, what for? To have my eye taken out... and eat flour; when death will come whatever.*

*BK: And the need will come again.*

*LK: So! Well the wife was a bit brighter than the husband. The husband let the rich brother take out his eye. So there.*

*RJ: But who told you the story or was it in a book?*

*LK: They told them... earlier, the grandmothers... to the children this way...*

*RJ: Your grandmother then, or what?*

*LK: Yes, sure.*

(#0196-09)

It is noticeable that the most characteristic feature of fairy tale, a happy ending, is missing in this case. The recording confirms the opinion expressed in Lutz Röhrich's "Folktales and Reality", according to which fairy tales without happy endings are often fragmentary or mutilated (1991: 43). The story has remarkable differences in comparison with the internationally best-known version of the same story type *The Two Travellers* (KHM 107) by the Brothers Grimm, in which washing the eyes with dew as the raven has instructed restores the eyesight.

The story as told by Liide Kalamiis sooner reminds of a joke than of a fairy tale. Although the literal transcription of the text does not sound very comical, the facial expression of the narrator during the telling of the tale, as well as her intonation hint towards ridiculing – the dominant emphasis shifted to the description of the association of a wise wife and a stupid husband. Considering the gender of the story teller (or her grandmother) it was not an extraordinary accentuation at all.

In the work mentioned above, Röhrich has noted that if the magical world loses its hold, narratives associated with fun – jokes and anecdotes and tales of lying – “flourish/es/ and mix/es/ almost every other genres of folk narrative (1991: 52). Obviously, ours is not a case of conscious joke-telling, rather we can suppose that the story teller forgot the actual plot and had to use the unexpected ending in order to cope with the situation.

The story of two brothers was familiar to the other informants as well, this is shown by the numerous continuations of the story by Berta Kalamiiis. As we can see, the latter has interrupted the flow of the narrative ever so often, correcting the story by Liide Kalamiiis. The story teller for her part has picked up the first “prompts” (“with one eye”, “I cannot go home”) without hesitation: she also agrees with the last comment “should there be need again”. In the collecting situations, the person present who knew the story was no competitor to the story teller, but rather an unnoticed colleague-corrector to her. This must have been caused by the wish of the Orava people to forward the stories as exactly as possible. In the meanwhile the attention of the correctors wandered, as proved by the insertion in which the landlady is asked about heating the house.

The ending of the story is worth attention because of the answer to the question as to who had originally told the story. The informant is not quite certain and her answer that the tellers had been her grandmother lacks conviction. Rather, it seems that she is hesitating herself. At the same time her answer to the enquiry whether she really has not read the story in a book need not be honest (this, of course can happen unintentionally). For instance Satu Apo, in her discussion of Finnish fairy tales, maintains that no narrator passing on literary tales has acknowledged that these derive from books. On the contrary, five narrators of literary tales stated that they had heard the stories “either locally or from their fathers as children” (Apo 1995: 44).

Obviously, this is no solution to the problem of how the tale has spread to Siberia. Still, it is fairly likely that also this story has been brought along by the emigrants. Many recordings of type AT 613 stored at the Folklore Archives derive from the 1890s. All in all, there are more than 90 versions of the type of tale in Estonia (EVM: 445).

## **6. AN INTERRUPTION: A VIVID ANIMAL TALE**

Entertaining the guests is an integral part of the hospitality of the Siberian Estonians. Liide Kalamiiis and a fourth village woman who had been listening to us for a while had left the company, when, after a half-day questioning, we were asked to join the locals at

table laid by the housewife. The conversation between the two collectors and the two village women had become most informal by the time: a drop or two we had taken together had triggered an active conversation, in the course of which Berta Kalamiis suddenly started to retell the well-known cycle of fox tales (The Theft of Fish + The Tail-Fisher + Carrying the Sham-Sick Trickster: AT 1+2+4).

It is a contamination very well known in the Setu region in Estonia and, naturally, it has often been published as well (Kippar 1986: 35 ff). By the end of the story it became clear that it had stood in a book. For a supporter of the text-centred method of analysis this would rule out any discussion of the tale whatsoever; at the same time it has to be admitted that the presentation of the tale was the most eloquent one among those heard at Orava. Already the narrating situation was worth attention. If, in the previous cases, the one who knew the story best had the right to tell it, in this case there seemed to have arisen a competition as to who would narrate it. Under much freer conditions than previously they both obviously felt compelled to present the tale they knew. The one who remained in a secondary position compared with the woman who had started the tale did try to tell it on her own on several occasions, but as the yarn had already begun to unroll, she had to step back and confined herself to the role of the corrector again. The storyteller, however, had forgotten quite a few details and, when prompted, accepted these without a moment's hesitation and continued her story.

After the treat we had to leave the household – our aim had been to speak to the all Estonians in village and during the remaining day and a half we wanted to visit several more families. Milla Danilson (born 1907) whom we saw on the same day told us a lengthy folktale in addition to other folklore, calling it “*Priidu and Kadri*”. However, according to all characteristics it must have been a retelling of a long novel.

## 7. THE SAME STORIES PRESENTED BY OTHER STORY TELLERS

On the following day we visited another household. Our hostess was Olga Kruus with her son Eduard Ober (born 1956) and his wife. As Olga Kruus (b. 1933) was a little younger than the women we had met at the previous house. She had not been able to attend the sit-togethers of the village youth of the old times: “we were sent away to another room...”. Thus it seemed initially that there was no great hope to be entertained about collecting fairytales from her, and so we questioned her mainly about beliefs.

The son Eduard Ober was helpful in specifying information. When we asked Olga Kruus about riddles, he suddenly remembered that his mother had told him a tale with riddles in it when he was a child. After some hesitation Olga Kruus told us a fluent contamination of the riddle tales “The Clever Peasant Girl” (AT 875) and “The King and the Peasant’s Son” (AT 921) with a girl who gives the suitors four tasks as the main character.

We went on to ask more questions about stories of the devil, and soon Olga Kruus recalled a story of a devil disguised as a woman who was caught by a young man. In the church the woman-shaped goblin sees the devil writing the priest’s sermon on a horse hide and laughs at this. Later she manages to remove the rowan-wooden plug from the hole in the wall and become a devil again (# 0200-15). The story had been told by her mother and is a well known legend in Estonia. Researchers have classified the story as a legend (Aarne S 59, Simonsuuri-Jauhiainen motif Q 251), but it reminds also of fairy-tales.

When asked about other old-time stories Olga Kruus presented us with the plot AT 613, already familiar from the previous house.

*RJ: ... Aren't there any stories about two brothers, for instance?... Or about an orphan and... and the rich one. So that one is poor, the other is rich.*

*OK: A poor brother and a rich brother or what?*

*RJ: Yes...*

*OK: Well, you probably know it yourself.*

*RJ: No, I just know the title, I do not know the story.*

*OK: So that the poor brother and the rich brother... Well, there were this poor brother and rich brother... The poor brother went to the rich brother to beg for bread... But the rich brother he told him...*

*– I shall give you... sure... a pood... a pood of bread... if you let me take out your eye.*

*Well, he was poor, but, he let him take his eye out. Then, when the pood was finished... and again he went to the brother. But the brother, the brother he said:*

*– I shall give you another pood if you let me take an eye, the other eye out, too.*

*Well... what could the brother do? The brother let him take out the other eye as well. But now he was blind... with no eyes. That pood was finished off as well. And there was some oak-tree. Well, he went to the oak-tree. He went to the oak-tree, but the devil came there to the oak-tree and told him this*

*– That which is there... early in the morning, you see, the... dew it is called, on the grass, that you have to wash your eyes with it and you will see again.*

*Well, he then took a cup and went there, under the oak-tree... and collected that water from the grass and washed the eyes and saw again and the devil brought him very many things. And he became rich... But then the rich brother saw it:*

*– Where did you get it?*

*And he then explained how it came about:*

*– And so I got it. Under the oak-tree I was and under the oak-tree... to me... I was told that and that.*

*And so he went, too, let me see:*

*– I am going, too.*

*He went to the oak-tree as well. But then the devil came... and gave him nothing at all, nothing at all... and tore everything... to pieces...:*

*– You are rich yourself and took the eye of your poor brother and now you want even more wealth.*

*And so he did not get rich at all. It was taken from him... he was torn to pieces there, knocked off and... then that poor brother. The poor brother, he could see again and, and became rich and...*

*RJ: But was, was it in a book or something?*



*Olga Kruus telling the story “The Rich Brother and Poor Brother” (AT 613), May 12, 1998. Video by Risto Järv.*

*OK: Well, I do not know if in a book, but... the old people told such an olden-time story. Was it a book... Well, it must have been in a book... No-one could rattle it off by heart.  
(#0200-16)*

The consent of the story teller “It must have been in a book”, does not sound like a convinced answer, but rather as a solution the narrator has sought to the problem posed; thus, it is not clear if the story could possibly have been borrowed from a book.

It is of interest that also this story features the devil as one of the characters; in this case he has the same role as in “ordinary” AT 480\*D plot. In the versions of AT 613 recorded in Estonia, devils may advise the blind, but they do it unwittingly and they definitely do not fetch any treasures to the main character nor sit in judgement in the end; usually this part fulfilled by birds. However, it is traditional in Estonia not to contrast two travellers who have undertaken a journey – the “right one” and the “wrong one”, but (close) relatives – two brothers.

From Olga Kruus we got no answer to the question if women have told different tales than men. At any rate she could not remember any heroic fairy tales. When asked about, e.g., The Dragon Slayer,

the only thing the informant could remember was that the dragon in the story had had three heads. However, the informant knew jokes about a stingy farmer and a farmhand – AT 1560 “Make-Believe Eating; Make-Believe Work” and AT 1567A “Stingy Inn-keeper Cured of Serving Weak Beer”.

## 8. COURTING IN THE BATHHOUSE. CASE 2.

As already mentioned, the son Eduard Ober constantly helped her mother when she was being interrogated; he tried to remind her the tales. It was the son who remembered that you had to wash in the bathhouse before twelve o'clock, when the role of the devil was discussed. After some show of ignorance and repetitive reminders by her son, Olga Kruus recalled the story he had heard the day before:

*MS: Aren't there any stories about someone who is out very late?*

*OK: No, there aren't, no one goes about late here.*

*EO: Don't you know if there have been any old stories of this kind?*

*OK: No, no I don't.*

*MS: Where an orphan is behind with her work and then...*

*OK: An orphan, an orphan... I don't know how it went, that the orphan... that she went to the bathhouse. Went to the bathhouse, late. And then it was a mouse from under the platform who told her that, that of course she had nothing to get married in, she was poor.*

[Here the video recording starts]

*RJ: Let me see, when did that... When did that orphan go the bathhouse?*

*OK: Well, she went, she went after twelve o'clock, so that the devils were in the bathhouse... that mouse, it told her:*

*– Tell them what you haven't got, when the boy, the boy comes here to wed you, a dress and, say them one by one. So that was it, she started to tell the boy what she had not got, one by one:*

*– I have no dress to wear to marry you.*

*And the boy he went leaping home and fetched the dress, and then she said:*

*– I have no petticoat.*



*Eduard Ober listening and correcting the story “Mother's Daughter and Stepdaughter” (AT 480\*D), May 12, 1998. Video by Risto Järv.*

*And she kept saying things one after another, that she had no shoes, no stockings, kept saying things one after another until the clock struck twelve... the cock started to crow...*

*EO: The morning came, the cock crowed.*

*OK: ... well, morning, and the cock crowed. And so there was no longer any boy who had come to marry her. And so the orphan, she became rich... many clothes and, all one by one. And then the farm owner he had to send his own daughter to the bathhouse as well. And then the farm owner sent his own daughter to the bathhouse. And then it said...*

*EO: the mouse under the platform.*

*OK: ... the mouse under the platform said:*

*– Say them one by one, one by one...*

*That if you say one by one, then you see...*

*EO: the time passes*

*OK: ... the time passes and you can...*

*EO: ... in the morning*

*OK: But she said*

*EO: ... see the cock crow*

*OK: but she said all the things she had not got all at once, so that the boy went off and fetched everything all at once and as soon*

*as the cock crowed, the devil came and took that, that rich girl away from the bathhouse.*

*MS: So the devil got her.*

*OK: The devil got her because before twelve o'clock...*

*EO: No... before five o'clock when the cock crowed...*

*OK: Well, before five o'clock until*

*EO: from twelve up to five... that devil was busy in that bathhouse*

*OK: And you see, she said everything at once...*

*EO: But the poor girl, she said one by one and it was five o'clock and the cock crowed and the devil disappeared. And she became rich, got all the beautiful clothes and everything.*

(#0201-06)

The notion that the crowing of the cock will drive away the demonic creature appears internationally in texts about belief (Hwb 1987: 1335). As we can see, Olga Kruus and Eduard Ober had conflicting opinions as to the crowing time of the cock which were repeated. The motive that the cock crows three times, and for the first time it happens in an early hour of the night, is often repeated in folklore (cf Hiiemäe 1999: 18–19). As the “early” when you were supposed to go and wash yourself has obviously meant “before it became dark”, it is natural to link this time with midnight – as the previous tellers of the same story had done. The specification of the exact time is rare in the texts stored at the Estonian archives, but in principle it has occurred, e.g., in the story recorded in Kose parish in 1888.<sup>7</sup> Eduard Ober, who rather assumed that the cock would crow at dawn, tried to correct Olga Kruus’s version according to his own convictions. Although the narrator at first followed the commentator’s remark, her repetition seemed to be “automatic”. When reaching the same episode the following time, the story-teller again proceeded from the “ready-made” phrase, saying “... *before twelve o'clock*”. Thus it seems that, although the teller of the tale may repeat someone’s corrections, it does not necessarily mean that these have been accepted as a result of reconsideration. Sooner, the prompts of the co-narrator are incorporated into the story with no objections and the tale is continued.

In this respect an interesting comparison can be drawn with Margaret A. Mills’s presentation on truth in folk tales at the Folklore Fellows’ Summer School 1999. Mills (1999: 5) gives an exam-

ple in which a storyteller who a moment earlier had stated one thing when narrating a story, quickly concurred with a contrary comment from a listener. Mills states that the position of the narrator can change, depending on the opinion of the listener; however, it seems that actually it can be assumed that (some) storytellers apparently agree with the listener, but actually continue the story, retaining their own opinions.

We had to leave this house quite soon as well, as we wished to call on Anna Visnapuu (born 1912). Unfortunately, she could recall but one story (AT 1643) that she told to us, and she kindly offered us the book of Italian fairy tales in which the story was contained. However, our crop of stories from Orava was rich even without the addition and on the following day we could start the journey home, happy and satisfied.

## **9. COMMON FEATURES IN THE FOLKTALE TRADITION FROM ORAVA**

If the common features in the tale tradition from Orava are to be described, it has to be said that even the fact that we were told so many was a common characteristic. Four collections of sample texts have been compiled on the basis of the material deriving from the Estonian Folklore Archives' expeditions to Siberia. Presumably, these attempt to give a more-or-less representative survey of everything collected. We can notice, however, that in comparison with the number of jokes and everyday stories, the folk-tales are in a sad minority – as can be expected, considering the contemporary period. The author of the collections Anu Korb, our best specialist in the folklore of the Estonian settlements in Siberia has asserted that it is the belief story that is predominant in the repertoire (Korb 1998: 316). At Orava we heard considerably more folk tales than there were pure belief stories and it can be supposed that this was not caused by the influence of the interrogators on the choice of the repertoire on the part of the informants, i.e. the interrogators' primary interest in a certain field. Obviously, it again confirmed the experience that in different regions, different kinds of repertoire are in the foreground (cf. Korb 1998: 315)\*. Several stories had a

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\* The participants in the following EFA expedition to Siberia received confirmation to the observation, when visiting (*continued on the next page*)

religious background and the devil was a character who appeared in quite a few of them. Still, the marvellous tales had lost something of their 'marvel' and the rest of the cast of characters was fairly realistic. Upon our repeated questions about other stories that also had been told, the informants summarized in a couple of words the characters and action in a typical fairy tale plot.

*BK: You see, in all of them... in all of them stories it is so that there is this poor girl and that rich one and... all the stories went like that. (#0195-32)*

However, when we asked if they could remember any stories with a princess as the main character, the admission was that they did not. Liide Kalamiis explained it in the following way:

*LK: In our time there were no king's daughters and thus we do not know... But in the old times... (#0196-12).*

I would like to draw attention to the uniform structure of the fairy tales collected at Orava. In case of types AT 480\*D as well as AT 613, the first hero, encountering the magic realm, acts in the right way, whereas the other is wrong. In the division of fairy tale plots into four by Heda Jason (Jason 1977: 38ff), types AT 480 and AT 613 represent the Reward-and-Punishment Fairy Tale.

Naturally, this kind of contrasting parallelism in fairy tales is universal to a degree. Also the animal tales told to us, as well as the tales of the stupid ogre type, remind of such a type in their structure: the stupid one cannot act the way the clever one can. In the jokes about the farmer and the farmhand, the succession of events was reversed: the farmer chooses a strategy and the farmhand shows, by applying similar methods, that a result contrary to what is wished for may be achieved.

Heda Jason has called the structure characteristic of the reward-and-punishment tale as additive structure that differs from the structure of the one-stage heroic fairy tale (Jason 1988: 136). Actually, a specific case of the same opposition can be observed also in

*(continued from the previous page)* the former Estonian settlement at Nikolaevka, situated 60 km from Orava, a village from which some of our narrators originally came. The people of Nikolaevka were also great storytellers; they did not prefer belief stories either, but favoured everyday tales (Anu Korb, personal communication, 1999).

heroic fairy tales. For instance, in “The Dragon Slayer” the example of correct behaviour – the killing of the dragon by the hero – is followed by a sample of wrong behaviour – an aspiration to the honour resulting from the slaying by the false hero. For a long time, “The Dragon Slayer “ pays no attention to the main character after the fulfilment of his primary task. It is the false hero who becomes the centre of attention, it is only by showing that he acts in a wrong way that the meaning of the fairy tale becomes clear (see Järv 1999: 66–67). Differently from heroic fairy tales, the fairy tales or reward-and-punishment tales collected by us describe the actions of both “parties” to an equal extent – in case of the plot of type 480\*D both the correctness of the “slow, but steady” mode of action of the orphan and the greedy – and incorrect – behaviour of the daughter of the farm are described thoroughly.

Fairy tales attach importance to becoming rich. In the fairy tales narrated by Olga Kruus the change in the social status of the main character received a notable emphasis, the fact of becoming rich was repeated by the story teller more times than the laconic fairy tale style would require. All plots of the stories that the people of Orava remembered and that occasionally tended to be hard to believe expressed an important practical problem – how to become/remain economically provided for.

The Estonian peasants headed for the faraway Siberia in search of better agricultural conditions. Soon they were hit by the reforms of the renewing Russia of the 1920s-30s that declared the hitherto hard-working peasants enemies of the people. Of the fairy tales that have been retained in the memories as late as at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is first and foremost the structure that remains – the relatively schematic plot of contrasting “good” and “evil”; other episodes have become lost. The final aim of the tellers of marvellous tales was not the traditional fairy tale marriage with the king’s son or daughter, but rather a revenge on the wrong things, reminiscent of a sacred legend; the belief that if you act right, you will get a rich reward, and if you do wrong, you will be punished. Or, as a storyteller from Estonia said to end the story of the “Truth and Falsehood” in 1939, *Then, indeed, the truth rises and the lie sinks.*

Translated by Ene-Reet Soovik  
Sample texts edited by Jonathan Roper

## Comments

- <sup>1</sup> H II 33, 762/6 (2) < Jüri < Suchum-Kalé - J. Pihlakas  
<sup>2</sup> H II 27, 833/4, 843 (1) < Torma - H. Mann  
<sup>3</sup> E 31828/9 (2) < Saarde - M. Saul  
<sup>4</sup> EKS 4°4, 203/6 (3) < Kuusalu - J. Ponamar  
<sup>5</sup> EKS 8° 2, 755/7 < Laiuse - M. Kolluk  
<sup>6</sup> E 40213/6 (3) < Jüri - J. Pihlakas  
<sup>7</sup> H II 16, 230/8 (5) < Kose - A. G. Eriksohn  
<sup>8</sup> ERA II 77, 346/54 (13) < Nissi - R. Põldmäe < Jaagup Jäämann.

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