

# Introduction to the Analysis of Gender in the ATU 514 Fairy Tale Type on Examples from the Balkans

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*Не то чудо из чудес,  
что мужик упал с небес,  
а то чудо из чудес,  
как туда он влез.<sup>1</sup>*  
(Folksong from Russia)

*Not surprisingly, from the aspect of feminist and queer critique, the fairy tale turns out to be a non-moralising yet strongly standardised embodiment of the social and cultural morals themselves. This type of fairy tale acts in favour of the ideological conception that the marriage of man and woman is rightful only because of their sex, but not because they have won each other, i.e. the prize, in the course of the fairy tale's events. Even more so, the heroine becomes deprived of any agency over her sex and sexuality. We are led to believe that the fairy tale acts restitutively as it resolves the relationship between the protagonist and the princess on two levels: first by sacrificing the protagonist's sex in favour of "promotion" to the male sex, by which it morally justifies the next move: the re-establishment of the structural male-female couple, thus – another "blessing in disguise" – eliminating the lesbian relationship that was produced this way, to finally remake it into a normative fairy tale as well as a social ideal. Rather than looking for an interpretative key to change the sex fairy-tale type, we approach it genealogically to explain and analyse gender construction from essentialisation, naturalisation and gender performativness.*

**Keywords:** fairy tale type ATU 514; gender change; post-structural analysis; queer, feminism; philosophy of gender

When researching fairy tales, it is far from typical to examine them as a possible theme for philosophical analysis. However, if we consider that fairy tales are teeming with miracles and wonders that nobody marvels at, a philosopher might, followed by the perpetual philosophical drive to wonder – *to thaumázein* – be just the one to do precisely so, to marvel about the marvel, to wonder about the wonder.

<sup>1</sup> R. Jakobson, *O ruskim bajkama* (1944), in: *Lingvistika i poetika*, Nolit, Beograd, 1966. Transl: It is not a mere wonder among wonders/ That *mužik* fell off the heavens./ But it is real wonder among wonders/ How he got up there.

The analysis of the marvellous material in this paper is close to a paraphrasing of Foucault's depiction of the "statement" as "exposed invisibility – invisible exposure" (Foucault 2001: 119), in which statements are elementary units of discursive formations, and of knowledge in general. The knowledge that is created this way considers the event on the surface, and is intuitively termed "archaeology". Whatever there is in the fairy tale or about it, is there, on the surface, exposed but hidden: not simply in the course of narration, not in its functions, in actants, nor in its structure. One needs to blow away the dust gathered on the fairy tale to be able to see what there is to be seen. So, what is narrated when a fairy tale is narrated?

The usage of enchantment infuses fairy tales with a potential that is essentially utopian, meaning that it opens a chance for the possible within the impossible. As the present analysis will show, the ATU 514 type has a negative potential by fixing the possible as the only possible and, by this, marking the impossible as impossible, the invisible as invisible/non-existent. Contradiction that is created this way encompasses a total departure from reality that a fairy tale needs to support its hero/ine, and it obstructs the realistic possibility that seems to offer itself within the narrative course: to maintain woman as ruler of the kingdom and woman as a spouse to another woman.

Various comparative and interdisciplinary interruptions and dynamics of this fairy tale type will bring the analysis closer to questions central to the feminist philosophy of gender: what is gender? How is gender constructed? What is the relation between gender and a subject's agency? And the question posed in the intersection of both: how is gender theorised from gender change? And, how do we interpret the cultural or civilisational meaning of this fairy-tale type in the background of the contemporary theory of gender as performative?

To make this or other possible tasks more accessible, also for other scholars, I enclose the fairy-tale sample and extensive findings of the type in the end. I do not deploy an analysis based on different examples of respective miraculous gender transformations, because this sequence takes functionally the same place in the structure and bears essentially the same ideological motivation even if we can trace some differences in all of the variants. Therefore, the parameters of the analysis that I initially put in question here are: where the transformation function is positioned within the fairy tale's composition? What is the effect of the miraculous on the formal syntax? What is the relation between other functional elements, for example the relation of the heroine towards the magical helper, towards the tsarina, and other actants? Thus, we can focus on the crucial task of determining what the motivation is to perform the gender transformation of the heroine in the first place.

Due to the complexity of such research, this analysis presents introductory features, the first stages of critical gender analysis of the type, and also preliminary sketches stemming from such analysis that is built upon insights based on "Foucauldian" and "Butlerian" post-structuralist queer feminist theory.

In the course of fairy-tale research, from atomistic schools to contemporary ones in which the fairy tale is perceived as a narrative element among other cultural phenomena, to the post-structural school, in which statements are gripped in the vicinity of the event, the research of Propp has probably made such an important contribution to study of fairy tales, but even more so to structuralism itself, that some authors speak of "the birth of structuralism from the analysis of the fairy tales" (Olshansky 2008, on-

line source).<sup>2</sup> What is certain is that his pioneering formalistic method that developed upon syntagmatic analysis was highly influential and helpful in the subsequent developments in fairy tale studies. Among many of his influences, the work of Lévi-Strauss in mythology and anthropology, also in polemics with Propp's form in comparison to his structure, have been most fruitful.

Propp's syntagmatic analysis of the fairy tale in his morphological work from 1928 is an example of its kind *par excellence*. The structure of the formal organisation of a folklore text is depicted and described as a chronological succession of linear sequences in the text. While the other type of structural analysis of the folklore is centred around patterns that rely on a priori binary oppositions (of which the male/female or man/woman is central), "This pattern is not the same as the sequential structure at all. Rather the elements are taken out of the 'given' order and are regrouped in one or more analytic schema. Patterns or organization in this second type of structural analysis might be termed 'paradigmatic'" (Dundes 1968: xii). The dispute between Propp and Lévi-Strauss in the 1960s was inevitable.

Apart from structural anthropology, the work of narratologists (Bremond, Greimas, Genette) and semiologists (Hjelmslev, Barthes, Todorov) must also be mentioned. Since then, fairy-tale research has been proliferated in varied and heterogeneous disciplines or approaches, many of them interdisciplinary. At this point, I would like to pause in the development of the research at Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, as it represents the foundations in the direction of the research that I am initiating in this paper, when applying post-structuralist critical gender analysis to the fairy tale.<sup>3</sup>

### I. The basic composition of the folktale type ATU 514

At the end of the 1990s, in one of Belgrade's libraries, I found a formalistic-structuralistic study of a fairy tale and, while reading through it, came across a fairy tale mentioned in that work that captured my attention and became an obsession for the years to come. It was entitled *Father and his Daughters* (Filipović Radulaški 1997: 35–36) and was gathered in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hercegovina. Classified in Aarne-Thompson-Uther's *Type Index*, as folktale type ATU 514 "Change of sex"/"Geschlechtswechsel", it has its variants around Europe, the Middle East and South Asia (Lanclos 1996: 70), yet remains a relatively unknown or even marginalised fairy tale motif. My analysis is limited to European examples, and predominantly materials from the Balkan region.

The ATU 514 type is a motif series that starts with the heroine's cross-dressing, disclosure of deceit, and final transformation into a male. Motif D11 plays a central role in the miraculous gender change of a woman into a man. It is executed in a chain-like sequence: a girl disguises herself as a man and departs (K 1837); the girl, disguised as a man, acquires a prize for accomplishing the task, i.e. she gets married to a princess (K 1322): the heroine miraculously changes into a man (D11). In all examples of this fairy-tale type, the miraculous change is executed after the female protagonist earns

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.utoronto.ca/tsq/25/Olshansky25.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> In some other articles and in my MA thesis I attempted to apply other approaches, such as formalist and structuralist. A more complete list of literature can be found in those respective writings, see: references Pan 2012.

the princess (tsarina, merchant's daughter, etc.) by resolving a difficult task, or it is the princess herself who "mistakenly" desires the protagonist (Uther 2004). All acquired samples of the ATU 514 type include all those three motifs and follow the usual pattern:

### **Girl cross-dresses (puts on a disguise) and departs from home**

At this initial point, cross-dressing offers two possible hypotheses for the interpretation of the motif for the heroine's departure, consequently, also for a general cultural interpretation of the tale as a whole. The first interpretation constructs the gender of the heroine already at the time of her birth:

"Hey, tsarina if you deliver me a girl again, be assured that you will no longer live" (*A Girl Dressed Up As a Young Man*, Nanevski 1983).

Thus, the heroine's sex is hidden by clothing, name, and education from her birth (also in Ovidius Naso's *Iphis and Ianthe*). Those tales could be interpreted as originating in the initiation of a boy in ancient societies (Wrocławski 1993; Lanclos 1996).

According to the second hypothetical interpretation, the heroine cross-dresses when she reaches the age of a young woman, and departs for various reasons, most often as a soldier to protect her father's honour, but also for some unexplained reasons, e.g. to be able to travel at all, because of some quarrel with her father, etc.:

"Vse bom moral prodati, da bom plačal kralju, ker nimam sina, da bi bil vojak!« je tarnal oče. Najmlajša hči ga je slišala in mu dejala: "Oče, nič ne bodite žalostni, bom pa jaz šla k vojakom." In re se obleče in gre na štelengo. Seveda, tisti-krat še niso tako gledali kakor danes, a se jim je vseeno čudno zdelo, kako mora biti kakšen vojak tako lep."

"I will have to sell all my property to pay back to the king. If only I had a son to make him become the king's soldier", the father was crying. The youngest of his daughters heard him and said, "Father, don't be sad, I will become a soldier." And so it happened, she goes and sets out for enlistment. At those times, they were not looking at things the same way as we do today, but nevertheless they found it weird that a soldier can be so pretty."

(*About the Pretty Soldier, or I have Nothing*, Černigoj 1988)

Or, as in this example, where a reason for departure or some kind of initial lack is not specified:

"Soon after her two older sisters attempted to go around the world unsuccessfully (as their father would always be able to return them by use of magic) the youngest tells her father, "Daddy, make me a man's robe, give me a horse and weapons. I would like to go around the world." Her father tried everything to dissuade her from this plan but in vain, she still insisted. Finally, the father gives her a suit, a horse and weapons, she puts it on and departs" (*A Girl Who Became a Man*, Sarajlija 1886).

### Tests and trials

Usually testing will encompass the common tripartite *Difficult Task*, during which the heroine obtains and receives a magical agent i.e., helper/donor for performing a good deed. It can be also some other trial, but they are all in the function of Propp's *Difficult Task*. This intermediate part will be consistently comprised of multiple gender check-ups i.e., gender tests as well.

“As she was going, the night fell. She reached an inn in a small village where the son of the owner was working. When she was making her bed, he noticed her breasts and told to his father, ‘Listen father, the one who overnights with us, is not a man but a woman.’ ‘What do you mean, a woman, don’t be ridiculous, can’t you see he’s a kind of merchant? But ok, we can check.’ ‘There’s no doubt father, I have checked it myself. He has breasts just like a woman.’ ‘All right, all right, we shall check it. We have a garden full of different flowers. Bring him in there. If he’s a man he’ll walk over all the flowers. But if he’s a woman, he won’t be able to resist them and will pick up at least one.’ That’s exactly what the son did. But as the girl stepped into the garden in her boots, she just trampled on the flowers and wouldn’t pick a single flower” (*A Girl Who Became a Man*, Sarajlija 1886).

It is common in fairy tales that a tsarina (queen) requests a trial for a hero with whom she is to be married. Usually, this comprises demands to accomplish some task over the course of a night, related to building, harvesting etc., that are meant to display power stemming from the progression of initiation rites and, of course, of the hero/ine’s ability to reign and rule the kingdom. In regard to the tests and trials, it is interesting to note that the magic helper’s skills precisely fit the task placed for the hero/ine. For example, a hero/ine who is facing the impossible task of taking a boiling bath will have a horse who will help by blowing his cold breath, and this way the task will be fulfilled. Steadiness and boundless solidarity in helping their heroes is a functional constant. In the type ATU 514, a magic helper contributes in fulfilling all three difficult tasks but is powerless against the curse (or other magic change) that is awaiting the heroine. These are relevant for the cases when the heroine is not seeking gender transformation herself but it strikes her without warning. This might be interpreted as an exception from a functional rule rather than its violation, but only if we can assess the curse as a punishment that is, in effect, a reward, as we will show later on. It is usually the heroine alone who acquires the magical change, although with some animals (the duck, or “el Oricuerno” as in the Hispanic fairy tale) or mysterious divine intervention (as in *Iphis and Ianthe*).

From the magical helper, let us turn our attention to the tsarina and her role in these difficult tests, to see how she becomes positioned in this situation. The most usual way<sup>4</sup> is that the heroine performs a difficult task with the assistance of her magical

<sup>4</sup> In the variant in which the gender curse is a medium for gender transformation, gender-play often takes place before the final act. It is abundant with stereotyping that announces the heroine’s predestination for a role of a hero, hence man. The tsarina falls in love with a hero at first sight: “Already from the window Ileana Simziana has noticed a newcomer and her heart started to beat stronger as soon as she set her eyes on ‘him’. She had no idea what could possibly upset her so but her heart truly was joyfully excited by the sheer thought that she might be facing her rescuer” (From the Romanian fairy-tale: Ileana Simziana). More on such and similar gender plays in Bošković Stulli 1969.

helper and unknowingly wins the princess' hand. At the moment of winning another woman's hand, the fairy tale wraps a structural-narrative loop around three marital nights. During those nights, the tsarina finds out, or the princess tells her that she is a woman, and the heroine is sent on to the typical tripartite, impossible-to-solve trial, where she always succeeds, assisted by her magical agent(s):

“In the morning, the tsar's daughter wakes up and tells her father, ‘Kill your son-in-law. For he is not a man but a girl like me.’ But the tsar doesn't believe her, so he tells to his daughter, ‘I will have him executed but not before I meet my knights.’ The tsar meets his knights and tells them: ‘Do you know that I have married off my daughter?’ ‘No, we haven't heard about it.’ ‘Well, I have done so,’ says the tsar, ‘but now I need to kill one of them. They can't live together. Definitely, I will kill my son-in-law.’” (*Father and His Daughters*, Čajkanović 1929).

Or, as in the following fairy tales, with even more passion and bitterness of a heterosexual bride outwitted:

“How did I sleep, father? He's a woman and so am I. She laid on one side, and I laid on the other.” [...] “Daughter, how was your night? How did you spend the night with my son-in-law, a hero?” “What kind of a hero are you talking about, father? She's a woman! It would be better for me not to have any husband than to have such.” (*A Girl Dressed Up As a Young Man*, Nanevski 1983).

“Please daddy, kill my husband as he definitely has earned it.” (*Father and His Daughters*, Čajkanović 1929).

It is also possible that the heroine does not reveal herself but rather refuses to perform her “marital duties”:

“The tsar immediately holds a wedding and marries his daughter to the girl. But on the first wedding night, the girl stabs a knife between the two of them, saying, ‘If you come near me, I'll stab you.’ The tsarina complains to her mother the next morning, and she goes and tells this to the tsar. The tsar became very worried as he didn't know what to do...” (*A Girl Who Became a Man*, Sarajlija 1886)

The heroine may be sent away to fulfil the Difficult Task even prior to the wedding. In such a (rarer) case, this function is clearly in the position to correct, or to use a more neutral Proppian term: to transform the heroine's gender:

“The tsar has heard that the Arab is dead and he sent out the herald to announce: the one who killed the Arab should approach the tsar as he will receive a great reward. She went to the tsar in her men's clothes and told him that she killed an Arab. The tsar became very happy and gave him, believing that she was a man, his daughter to marry. Dammit! The wedding was supposed to take place in two or three days. The hero pretended to be ill and went to a fortune-teller and told her what a misfortune struck him. The fortune-teller said, ‘This is great evil and it can happen that you lose

your head because of it. You should do the following...” (A Woman Became a Man, Stanojević 1911)

At the wedding ceremony, the story could end in complete accordance with canon, as the heroine did prove herself as a rightful, therefore true hero who won a prize; in type ATU 514, this is a princess. However, it does not happen this way, as the disguised, the cross-dressed heroine is still not Right, though she is certainly not a false hero – in Meletinski’s sense of the word (Meletinski 1969/2005: 218).

In the case of a groom’s unsuitability, the fairy tale will establish particular dynamics through the involvement of antagonistic forces (tsar, king, father) to be rid of the hero/ine. Such threats actually open up the possibility for the hero/ine to finally prove her/himself and rightfully take over the throne. In the ATU 514 type, where the heroine, dressed-up (passing) as a man, successfully accomplishes all the tasks, i.e. defeating her antagonists, the fairy tale introduces an overall conclusion by simultaneously solving the heroine’s unsuitability.

### **Solution / Victory**

In this part of the story, it is crucial to establish a chance for a magic gender transformation, for the heroine to be able to return and consummate her marriage with the princess. Those chances are, if not sought by the heroine herself, set by the reactions of the heroine’s antagonists when she is revealed to be a woman. It happens similarly even if she sets out without assistance to solve her gender trouble herself (as presented in the previous quote of the east Serbian tale “A Woman Became a Man”). In the absence of a “natural resolution” to this entanglement, the fairy tale introduces a *deus ex machina* and tightens the rope of the previously mentioned loop. On the way back from the third mission of the tripartite difficult task, she becomes struck by a curse, formulated more or less according to the following utterance:

“If you are a man, become a woman; and if you are a woman, become a man!”

Here are some variants of this incredible magical moment of transformation that define the type ATU 514:

“At that moment the dragon curses the girl, ‘By the god of mine, if you are a man, become a woman; and if you are a woman, become a man!’” (A Girl Who Became a Man, Sarajlija 1886).

“When the hermit heard that someone had stolen the holy water stoup and from afar he noticed a horseman riding away, he raised his arms towards the sky, kneeled down and uttered a curse: ‘Lord, dear God, make the lawless one who dared to steal the holy water stoup into a woman if he’s a man, and into a man if he is a woman!’ The hermit’s curse came through at the same moment, and the tsar’s daughter became the most handsome young man. He was so handsome that the whole world appeared graceful when one would look at him” (Ileana Simziana, 1974).



“If you are a man, become a hag; if you are a hag, become a man!” (*Če si moški, bodi baba, če si baba, bodi moški!*) (*The Girl Soldier*, Hadalin 1994).

“The one who did that to me should drop his what-is-it, and if not, she should have it!” (*Tisti, ki mi je to naredil, če ima, naj bo ob ono, če nima, naj ga ima!*) (*About the Pretty Soldier Or I Have Nothing*, Černigoj 1988).

This signifies the canonical happy ending, the regular and consummated wedding and accession to the throne. The solution has to bring a combination of some other functions, for example, one of *transfiguration*, by which the hero is given a new appearance: if the hero was not whole, he is made whole, handsome or dressed in new garments. After this, the hero is also recognised and vindicated, recurring trials are suspended for good:

“The princess noticed the tsar’s son-in-law coming back and he said to tsar, ‘There’s your son-in-law coming and he is carrying the crown from the giants’ tsar.’ Then they met him and the tsar placed him next to himself and the son-in-law started telling him how he managed to get the crown. After a girl became a man, she returns to the castle where he – finally a he – is welcomed with all honours. Early next morning, the tsarina tells her father, ‘Don’t kill my husband, Father, nor send him anywhere to die’” (*Father And His Daughters*, Čajkanović 1929).

“When she reached the tsar’s castle, she could hardly believe her eyes, so much about her has changed. On the way back, she felt that she isn’t the one she used to be and that she was consumed by the sensation of a different strength and valour than she had had before. But she didn’t know how those changes happened” (Ileana Simziana 1974).

“Daddy, your son-in-law is a hero above all heroes” (*Girl Dressed Up As a Young Man*, Nanevski 1983).

In the resolution, one might expect also some punishment of the villain but in ATU 514 type, this is not the case. The only moment of revenge can be found in *Ileana Simziana* where she decides to avenge the tsar for threatening her arduously gained hero/ine:

“Seeing that even that wish had been fulfilled, Ileana Simziana decided to seek vengeance upon the tsar for sending her handsome young man to complete difficult tasks that threatened his life. After all, the tsar could go and fetch the stoup himself. It would be easier for him than for any of the others as everyone must submit to the tsar” (Ileana Simziana 1974).

The occurrence of not avenging and not punishing the antagonists can be considered logical only as far as we base it on the presumption that the curse does not harm or does not have any negative impact on the heroine. Even more so, in the restitutive sense, the curse is simultaneously a punishment and a reward, a so-called



“blessing in disguise”. “The motif of a curse indicates an unusual, also uncharacteristic feature for a fairy tale, where the expected effect of the curse to harm, results in rather the opposite for the hero/ine; as such, it is in the function of a magical gift, and likewise has to remain unchanged, not dismissed (*nicht wieder aufgehoben werden*)” (*Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 1985: 170–171). To understand gender transformation in the context of a narrative proceeding as a gift, we need to assume at least one of the following two premises: that the heroine has either desired a gender change, meaning that she is a transgendered hero, or that the change from a woman into a man represents an uplift that simultaneously presents a shift to a more normative social sexual position, as well. If so, the latter allows us to comprehend the blessing in disguise as an overt, undisguised exposition of a normative gender/kinship binding for exactly both features, it is important also to say the “privilege”: the uplift into a man, and a shift into a heterosexual relation.

## II. What gets changed when gender is changed in a fairy-tale?

*Though all of the world's cleverness were concentrated here, though Daedalus were to return on waxen wings, what use would it be? Surely even his cunning arts could not make a boy out of a girl?*

(Ovidius Naso: *Methamorphoses* IX: Iphis and Ianthe, Chant 714–763)

This provisionally set organisation of common features in all ATU 514 type variants can encompass those with the same motif of other literary genres, like epic poems, romances, biographies of saints, legends, and tales. The frequency of this motive in the Balkans (Kerkez, *Delija devojka* 2006) proves that women's bravery was one of the motifs that people were most interested in. In Slovene tradition, the motif of the girl monk is best known (Matičetoč 1953: 292–299). The main difference from other genres is that the fairy tale depicts a miraculous gender change while other genres tend to stay more focused on the moralistic “domestication” of the heroine. More precisely, other genres solve the problem of a potentially transgressive heroine by omitting her “fairy-tale” heroic bravery and placing her in a normative gender role, first by returning her home, setting aside her male robes, and finally, by marrying her to a man.

Apart from being cursed, which is the most common method, there are other methods of gender change. All these different ways are rooted in some existing beliefs, imaginations, persuasions, rites, superstitions or mythical representations about the alchemic change of essence, in this case the essence of gender. Potentially, there could be numerous examples of those methods but, in fact, only few are in use:

“She entered the third room. There she found the *hajduks* sleeping. As soon as she noticed the duck, it started to shriek so loud that the whole cave was shaking. The girl grabbed the duck, cut her heart out, ate it and suddenly became a man. As a man, she returned to the tsar's daughter and lived happily ever after with her.” (*A Woman Became a Man*, Stanojević 1911).

My claim is that gender transformation is not simply a fantastic or fabricated motif that would exist due to being intrigued by unusual sexuality, or due to rare gender expressions in the social reality, and that would simply proliferate in human

imagination. In this way, one could interpret the motif either along the theme of “the reflection of the reality in the fairy tale” (and research it in the social sciences, i.e. ethnology, anthropology, sociology, folkloristics), or the theme of the inter-relationship of the fairy tale and reality where the fairy tale affects reality (and research it in post-structuralist linguistics, for example, within the theory of performativity). To connect both, as structuralism did and post-structuralism brought further, I assess the gender change to be a completely structurally bound motif but, likewise, of utmost importance for understanding social constructions of gender and sexuality. In this sense it is paradigmatic. Furthermore, we can follow Butler and claim that “the body is not a ‘mute facticity’, i.e. a fact of nature, but like gender it is produced by discourses” (Butler 1990: 129), and trace it in our fairy-tale type. In following Butler, I am also suggesting that there is no body prior to cultural inscription, which leads us to argue that “sex as well as gender can be performatively reinscribed in ways that accentuate its factitiousness (i.e. its constructedness) rather than its facticity (i.e. the fact of its existence)” (Salih 2002: 55). If so, gender should be explained as heavily ideological, i.e. discursive regulations that are at work in this fairy-tale type or other cultural artefacts. Therefore, I will attempt to elaborate on it in the third part of the paper, aiming to argue about the fairy-taleness of reality and about the reality of the fairy tale.

#### **True or false hero/ine**

Taking into consideration Lüthi’s analysis of fairy-tale heroes and heroines, one has plenty of reasons to simply abstract the notion of a transgendered hero/ine as unjustified or even unjustifiable one. Within the economy of the structure of lack/removal of lack, we can conclude the following:

The heroine is doubled within herself. She is both the false and the true hero at the same time, “a hero that gives no hope”, which is very much like the hero who uproots the oaks and similar (Meletinski 1969/2005: 218); and/or

The heroine’s initial condition is negative. This condition becomes positivised by the end when she becomes a man.

After executing various lines of analysis on fairy-tale material within the same motif, I noticed a slight difference in the usage of the definition of the motif itself. What German language marks as *geschlechtwechsel*, English refers to by two synonymous expressions: *change of sex/gender*, and *sex/gender shift*. If we take sex and gender as overlapping in this context, as Butler has proved in many points (Salih 2002: 55), in order to argue that sex is always already gender, the notions of “change” and “shift” have meaningful differences that can be used and employed in feminist, deconstructive (but not limited to deconstructive only) understandings of gender. Moreover, “re-inscriptions”, or re-citations as Butler calls them in *Bodies That Matter*, constitute the subject’s agency within the law, in other words, the possibilities of subverting the law against itself” (ibid.). The subject’s agency has an important role here, as it signifies opportunities for subverting the law against itself if the law is, as Butler claimed in her analysis of *Antigone*, to be a “sedimented ideality of the norm” (Butler 2000: 20–21).

To get there, it is reasonable to start with the insight that the symbolic locus, i.e. the place of a heroine in ATU 514 type is unambiguous: in fairy tales that end up in weddings, the heroine is a figure that occupies both functional positions, as for the

trials and also in fulfilling the *Difficult Tasks*, while fairy tales can have both of those narrative lines or just one, as Lévi-Strauss was claiming after Propp (1960: 231–234). What follows from such an analysis is that gender is utterly contingent, changeable within a rigid frame, while simultaneously its contingency produces a very rigid plug-in for gender identity. Therefore, the heroine who acts like a man will finally become a man. Radically, this means that gender is nothing but acting (Butler in Salih 2004: 129), specifically performative acting. However, as fairy tales go, if we see it changeable once, one might assume that it is nothing but ever changeable.

When it comes to normative gender/sexual/kinship binding, the heroine acts out what Antigone uttered already: “Yes, I confess: I will not deny my deed”, when confronted with the normative rule of law. The law, like gender, thus, becomes itself through performative utterance: “This is the law!” as Butler found out in *Antigone’s Claim* (Butler 2009: 39, Bahovec 2009: 123). This bears important consequence for the difference between symbolic and social law: “[N]ot only is the symbolic itself a sedimentation of social practices but that radical alterations in kinship demand a rearticulation of a structuralist presupposition of psychoanalysis and, hence, of contemporary gender and sexual theory” (Butler, 19). If the symbolic can “influence” the social in return, this also gives a certain possibility for agency, potentially even freedom, to the established subjectivities. The symbolic, based on loci in the topological structure, should not or, better, cannot overlap with the social norm. Therefore, it is important that we contrast our previous feminist, i.e. ideologically weighted, interpretation of this motif (as we did), to another provisional assumption: if our heroine, much like Antigone, is paradigmatic in going against the laws regarding allowed sexual relations, then she stands on the turning point where we can interpret this as a setting where we are made to believe, as Butler was made to believe by Lévi Strauss, that the prohibitions of incest and homosexuality are both embedded in the foundations of establishing heterosexuality. They are placed on the side of culture, on the side of ideal normative law, precisely as expelled, prohibited, as the natural residue in the culture itself.

One of the sub-hypotheses of my study is that the figure of the narrative lesbian serves the function of a structural gambit (like in chess where the gambit is an attack strategy in which at the very beginning a pawn is sacrificed while in the context of structural analysis, the gambit represents a kind of a “sacrifice” in which incest and homosexuality are prohibited and placed on the side of nature for the sake of establishing heterosexuality as being on the side of normative culture). By such means, I use the insights of the value of a “structure” compared to “form” (in the sense of Propp’s formalism) to analyse kinship structures and their construction of gender/sexuality within societies. This is mainly founded in Lévi-Strauss’ arguments and feminist critiques by Héritier (2001), Butler (2000), Bahovec (2009) on the qualification of (gender/sexual) positions within the structure.

As opposed to her theoretical forebears, Hegel and Lacan, Butler herself sees social or societal changes as those that affect the symbolic structure, or the symbolic order itself, which is considered inherently contingent in this concern. Thus, the agency of an often mute heroine is in her power to act out of necessity to constitute the order she is said to be restrained from. As Butler claims for Antigone, this is an opportunity to read this necessity as that of the contingency of sexual or kinship relation itself. The bottom line is that we cannot insist on unchangeable reasons for the kinship or like-

wise for the sexual relations within the symbolic. Once changeable, there is no reason for it to be the basis for a causal relationship with the social (or more radically: with reality as we know it).

The curse and/or the gift was sent to symbolically terminate the old hero as a heroine, and to stop the repetitive structure of the trials. Though, through the use of gift enabled with the logic of gender positions, the heroine does “survive” in reality, or more precisely, “the heroine survives the reality”. She escapes the structure of a ring that traps all the heroines of the ATU 514 type, and as far as she does “escape” reality, she does so by creating it. Let me affirm this by highlighting the structural position of the curse, as well.

In the ATU 514 type, the position of the curse is the same one as the *water of life/ živa voda* takes in other fairy tales. The water of life revives the dead and cures the ill, and brings the final magical transformation. To the sick, the dead or the ones captured in animal skin, it brings disenchantment, freeing them from their condition. Unlike the curse, the water of life is intended for the sphere of action of the hero/ine. Paradoxically, it is by the cut that the fairy tale pulls together its structure into one, seemingly unified, closed down ring. What the curse attempted to seal is an opposition of two ends: “the sexual relation of two women – definite death assured”, or “heterosexual relationship – definite life assured”. To pull together two oppositional ends, the structure has to take on non-explicated double transformative logics: the one of identity-overlapping and its contradictory but simultaneous/con-spatial (so to say, homolocutional) possibility of locus shift. The miraculous is used as, or better, becomes a universal heteronormative structural imperative against the (anti)meritocracy of a fairy tale: if a woman desires another woman or wins her because of her position in the course of events, either her “essence” will have to change or her structural topos will have to shift. Does the heroine need to become “someone” else to merit the princess, her prize? The expression “shift” is thus used in the sense of “shifting the topos within the structure” of a fairy tale and/or reality while the expression “change” is rather used to depict a metamorphosis of the “essence” of sex. In the ATU type 514, both happen. The fairy tales in which heroines change into men push us to debunk the structuralist myth of a transcendent, normative symbolic system of kinship and gender positions, in which the concrete person is an overdetermined by-product of a static, pre-given order. It also gives us an opportunity to debunk the overlapping of cultural expectations with a natural order. If so, the woman who performs everything as a man, does not become a man but becomes, i.e. is constructed as, a woman. This way one can conceive a subject, i.e. a heroine that is an agent of her gender position, inasmuch as it is a reiteration of her gender performance.

### III. To wield the sword

*If the gods wanted to spare me they should have spared me, but if they wanted to destroy me, they might at least have given me a natural, and normal, misfortune. Mares do not burn with love for mares, or heifers for heifers: the ram inflames the ewe: its hind follows the stag. So, birds mate, and among all animals, not one female is attacked by lust for a female. I wish I were not one!*

(Ovidius Naso, *Methamorphoses* IX: Chant 728–735)

If we wield the queer sword, the change of sex in fairy tales of the ATU 514 type is, by way of alternation, placed in the “heteromatrix structure” (Butler 1990) of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich 1980). The protagonist’s relationship with another female is presupposed by the narrator and the audience as “the relationship of non-relationship” (Butler 2001), whose occurrence is foreseen in the very concept of the fairy tale and, most importantly, it also forecasts the seemingly incidental event of miraculous resolution.

It is possible to show that by following the logical mistake: *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, we reach the core of queer feminist insights about gender being performatively produced as an effect rather than cause of discursive practice. In most cases, the latter takes place through the functional mechanism of a “blessing in disguise”, shaped by and as the performative illocution: “If you are a man, become a woman; and if you are a woman, become a man!” In retrospect, this allows us to see the sex perceived as an essential yet changeable factor of the protagonist’s self. Furthermore, all enactments of the structural norm, as we see them also as gender performances, necessarily introduce a margin of deviation into this same norm, i.e. not exactly the same enactment of the performative gender re-enactment takes place every time gender gets constructed.

Similarly to fairy tales of the type ATU 514, many films (e.g. *The Florida Enchantment*, 1914 and *Viola di Mare*, 2009) fabulate the cultural excess into which the naturalisation and essentialisation of sex becomes entangled when constructing any gender or any gender identities. So, however, does the structure of the positions of sexual alliances that is based on those binary (re)constructions. The analysis of the figure of the “woman hermaphrodite” and the figure of the “female groom” (Donaghue 1993) help us to further indicate that the gender and the sexual normativity of depicted heroes is based on a contradictory ambivalence of either anatomic (i.e. biological) or symbolic (i.e. social, the sphere of laws and norm) form. Apart from normative embodiment, these paradigmatic figures direct us to further possibilities for theorising bodily subjectivities against the normativity of either the symbolic or the social order. It then follows for us to assess a turn in the point of departure: how do specific ways of thinking, speaking and acting, produce the subject?

What to reason out of these conclusions? What are the immediate social readings of it if we insist that they do bear and bring the interchanges in the symbolic and social order?

The topic of kinship and kinning represents one of the potential focal points in queer feminist analysis of the magical gender change motif in fairy tales or other cultural fictional materials, such as novels, film, etc. The other focal point, and it would be complementary to my analysis, is based on the theory of performativity. Both form a strong argument in broadening the conceptual “shift of sex/gender change” motif type as a discursive strategy that is of immense importance in understanding some contemporary social phenomena like, for example, medically assisted sex surgeries, but also for the development and the epistemological foundations of women’s studies, feminism and feminist queer theory.

Critics might exclaim, “But fairytales are not true, and we all know it!”, or “In real life, things work differently!” It was Röhrich who claimed that fairy tales, despite being completely fictional narrations, do maintain a certain experiential reality (Röhrich 1979/1991: 27). Compared to legends, fairy tales seem to be more realistic in

trying to maintain rationality. By doing so, they are more confrontational to a ratio that is in a way its “inner truth”.<sup>5</sup>

### To wonder about the wonder

If so, is it then absolutely true that when we enter a fairy tale we find ourselves facing nothing but the wonder? The marvellous is such a wonderful power that no fairy tale doubts it or mocks it. It is not likely that the unlikely will not happen. At the same time, it is never very likely that what is likely to happen will happen. Therefore, it is the least likely, i.e. the unlikely, the unbelievable, the marvel that finally most certainly occurs. This specificity and the power of the wonder in relation to the self-evidence of the reality which is ruled by necessity, *anánke* and broadly, also *moira*, and chance (or luck), *týche*. By this characteristic, the fairy tale probably became most distinct as a genre, too. In its reality the marvellous, fairy creatures also find their place. However, the fairy tale is not marvellous because of them, it is rather that they became marvellous when they find domicile in the fairy tale, away from the non-fairy social reality.

For chance, it is essential to be contingent, meaning, to occur where the least necessity or the most unnecessary, i.e. pure accident takes place. It is exactly the other way round in the fairy tale: the more it is necessary, the more it seems accidental. It is possible to recognize chance in the fairy tale because it is very important in determining the consequent courses and repercussions, as far as it is an automatised cause of events and actions in the fairy tale, i.e. *automaton*. It is due to chance as such or due to such necessary chances that all the *týche* within the fairy tale preponderates into fatal certainty and luck. When the effect of the marvellous in the fairy tale unfolds, we are not marvelling at it, we are not even surprised, as it is the whole course of events, all the accompanying factors that are foreshadowing it.

Seifert (1996: 23–25) claims after Propp that every fairy tale has a necessary narrative element: lack, deficiency that is a predicament for the upcoming occurrence of the wonder agent. Analogical expectations on the side of the audience are also structured, and the hero/ine’s action fulfils those expectations. Apart from the marvellous assumption that no explanation is possible (as with Todorov’s depiction of the marvellous in contrast to the fantastic’s hesitation between the “natural” and the “supernatural”), “the marvellous also reproduces and reaffirms familiar social structures and values” (Seifert 1996: 23). There is only a “lucky”, “by chance” collision and accordance between hero/ine’s and audience’s expectations, while actually what seems to be placed in front of the heroine as the path, as her quest, her search, it is always already an effect of re-naturalised normative expectations, i.e. prohibitions and requests. The reproduction of familiar realities and the revealing of its constructedness is guiding the narration towards the reduction of the oppositional positions or elements on the one hand, and towards their maintenance, or their reassertion, on the other. “Aspects of reality among others, notions of sexuality and gender in the fairy tale are deliberately bracketed from the constraints of the ordinary and of the everyday. Yet, the fairy tale’s own seemingly distinct world acts to define what its readers conceive as ‘normal’ and ‘real’” (Seifert 1996: 12). It is by emphasising the supernatural and its unreality that

<sup>5</sup> Apart from Röhrich’s work, there is rich scholarship on socio-historical aspects of interrelation between fairy-tale and reality: Rudolf Schenda 1970, Jack Zipes 1979, Ruth B. Bottigheimer 1986.



the audience grasps what stereotypically is a certain, solid reality and what is not. By opposing the dominant cultural understanding of reality and even by undermining it, a fairy tale imparts this stability. In this way, “on the one hand, the marvellous is an estrangement of empirically defined reality since it is either an exaggeration of the real or an assertion of the impossible” (Seifert, 23), while apart from this “revolt”, the marvellous does a complete accommodation: “the movement from disequilibrium to equilibrium, so basic to narrative structure, is in fact a movement from a situation of disruption in the social order to a situation in which this order or its equivalent is (re) affirmed” (Seifert, 13). Allowing the revolt or what we have also termed excess, to pass itself off as conformity then, reducing the negativity or conflictedness established by it, finally returns to conformity and piety, a total accommodation of the social order (cf. Robert in Seifert, 13).

With the effect of such a moral, social and ontological likelihood, the marvellous in the fairy tale is ideological, i.e. it resists the order about which it gives the impression that it has never ruled over it, anyway, then transgresses this order, to finally condition and predetermine it. In this ideological feature, one can also trace the fairy tale’s subversive and utopian but mostly emancipatory potential.

#### IV. Conclusion

If fairy tales use a total departure from commonly perceived reality (for example: sex change), it is only to disable and even prohibit the unacceptable relationship. Furthermore, I claim that by this departure from reality, by this by-pass, reality actually is produced. To do so, it first has to enable the possibility that emerges almost spontaneously within the course of the narrative: to grant a woman the reign of a kingdom, a woman as a master of another woman just the same as a man/husband would be. Within the framework of identity, the essentialist dealing with gender represents a fairy-tale substance that allows for the existence of an essence of gender while simultaneously allowing for its performance as changeable. In the course of “overdetermining determinants”, this last instance is also a performative category, meaning that it is constituted within a language, or within the discursive powers of the fairy tale. Feminism has convincingly proved the dangers of essentialism on many occasions; this way, the female body is placed either in relation to representation or in relation to the “history of women” (Russo in Malabou 2011). This is taken into consideration in my analysis, therefore the body and the gendered self of a heroine are not only constituted and represented, but are themselves the agents, i.e. the creators of their sexual and gender reality by the means of repetition, i.e. continuous repetitive prohibition from the reiterated curse. In this sense, gender follows the definition of performativity meaning that it produces what it names (Butler 1993). By these means, we can demonstrate a conceptual break with the identity framework where hero and femininity coincide: the heroine of the type ATU 514 is, therefore, neither woman nor man.



## Appendix

### Женцко стануло мушко / A Woman Became a Man<sup>6</sup>

There was a man who had three daughters. All of them were fit to marry, but he definitely had no intention to marry them off. The daughters told their father to give them away in marriage but he didn't want to do that. Thus, they decided to run away. First, the oldest daughter ran away. When he noticed that, he jumped on a horse and soon caught up with her. She suddenly transformed into a snake, and he killed the snake. Then the second daughter ran away, but the father caught up with her too, and when she turned into a snake, he killed her just the same. There was only the youngest daughter left. She was the real hero. She ran, and the father soon ran after her. When they were nearing a big river the father nearly caught up with her, and she turned herself into a bridge. He walked over the bridge with the horse and as soon as they reached the middle of it, the bridge collapsed and he drowned. At that moment she changed back into what she was before and set out for the world.

After a couple of days, she met three hanged persons who were still alive. They asked her for a little water to quench their thirst: "If you do that, we will always be there to help you. Just keep a piece of hair from each of us, and when in trouble, burn a piece on fire, and our spirits will immediately come to help you." She gave them a drink, took a piece of hair from each of them and carried on.

Not a long time had passed when she met a dragon hero riding on a dragon horse. The hero told her to step aside, and she responded, "No, it is you who had better step aside." As she noticed that she couldn't beat him, she lit one hair and the spirit came immediately to help her and killed the dragon hero. She took his clothes and dressed as a hero, took his horse and all his equipment, and set out to another empire.

There she met another hero, the Arab, who had very big ears. The whole empire dreaded him. They engaged in a fight, they wrestled and wrestled, but neither could overturn the other. At that moment the Arab asked, "Where do you come from, which empire?" "I am coming from another empire," said the girl and told him about it all, how much she suffered and how she came to kill the dragon hero. But she didn't tell him that she was a woman. The Arab admired her for her power and said: "I fought him many times but I could never defeat him. Since we are both such strong heroes, let's become friends." She accepted it and they set off together and reached his town. The Arab went to his home and the girl went to an inn.

After a while the Arab came to our hero and they started living together. Once the girl hero asked, "Hey, where do you keep your power, my sworn friend?" "I will tell you, but only as to my sworn friend," said the Arab, "however, you must not reveal it to anyone, regardless of a threat. My power lies in my big ears. From one ear of mine the great fire blows and burning water flows that can destroy a quarter of this town. From the other ear first the hot wind blows and then the whole power leaves me and I am not anymore the one I am now." After this he laid down and fell asleep while the hero woke up around midnight and made a hole into one of the ears. Fire and burn-

<sup>6</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Ljubinko Radenković for helping me to find these bibliographical data. Published in: Српски дијалектолошки зборник, vol. II, Расправе и грађа, Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1911, pp 360–363 (see: Sources)

ing water destroyed and scalded a quarter of the town. When the Arab woke up, the girl told him: "Hey, my sworn friend, I dreamt that a jackdaw made a hole in your ear. Check it out if it is true!" The Arab grabbed his ear and indeed, there was a hole in it. Then he ordered all the jackdaws to come but since none of them had made the hole in his ear, everything remained as it was. The next night our hero made a hole in the Arab's other ear, and hot wind blew from it and blew half of the town. When dawn broke, the girl told him that she had done it, and that from then on he was going to be her slave. Then she pulled out her sword and chopped his head off. This is how she saved the empire from the Arab.

The tsar heard that the Arab was dead, and he sent out the herald to announce: the one who killed the Arab should approach the tsar because he would receive a great reward. She went to the tsar in her men's clothes and told him that she had killed the Arab. The tsar became very happy and gave him, believing she was a man, his daughter to marry. Dammit! The wedding was supposed to take place in two or three days. The hero pretended to be ill and went to a fortune teller and told her what a misfortune had struck him. The fortune teller said: "This is great evil and it can happen that you lose your head because of it. You should do the following: near the town there is a cave with all sorts of animals staying in there, arranged in three rooms. In the first one there are all sorts of wild carnivorous animals, like lions, bears, wolves, foxes and what not! If you kill them you will get to the second room, where there are snakes. If you kill those too, you will get to the third and last room where there are hajduks.<sup>7</sup> Among them you will find their chief as well. He has a wild duck on the top of his head. As long as they keep sleeping nothing can wake them up, unless they wake up on their own. If you catch them during their sleep, it won't be hard to capture the duck, cut its heart out and eat it. This way you will become a man."

The girl listened to her. She took her arms and headed towards the cave. She entered the first room, killed all the animals there but the lion, their king. She started to wrestle with him but she could not overturn him, so she remembered and lit a second hair that she got from the hanged person. Powers came to her immediately and she killed the lion. Then she entered the second room. The serpents immediately uncoiled and started to approach her with their heads raised. She grabbed her sword and cut them all but the serpents' king. He wrapped around her strongly and the moment he wanted to devour her, she remembered the third hair and lit it. Immediately, the spirit came and killed the serpents' king.

She entered the third room. There she found the *hajduks* sleeping. As soon as she noticed the duck, it started to squawk so loud that the whole cave was shaking. The girl grabbed the duck, cut her heart out, ate it and suddenly became a man. As a man, she returned to the tsar's daughter and they lived happily ever after.

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<sup>7</sup> Balkan term for outlaws.

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## Uvod v analizo spola junakinje pravljичnega tipa ATU 514 na primerih iz Balkana

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S stališča feministične in queerovske kritike pravljic nas ne preseneča, da se le-te zmeraj znova izkazujejo za nemoralizirajoče, pri čemer obenem predstavljajo utelešenje družbene in kulturne morale same. Tip pravljice ATU 514, v kateri se spol junakinje transformira, tj. spremeni oziroma zamenja v moškega, deluje v prid ideološke predstave, da je poroka moškega in ženske pravična zgolj zaradi njunega spola, ne pa, kakor je v pravljicah vtis, ker bi si eden drugega prislužila, zaslužila. Pravljica tipa ATU 514 nas navaja misliti, da deluje restitutivno, ko odnos junakinje in princese rešuje na dveh ravneh: najprej z žrtvovanjem junakinjinjinega spola na račun povišanja v moški spol, s katerim moralno utemeljuje sledečo potezo, ponastavi raven struktur-nega para moški – ženska, s čimer, po ključu „sreča v nesreči“, odstrani tudi lezbično razmerje, ki se v pravljичnem toku ponudi samo od sebe. Na takšen način razmerje odpravi in poustvari v normativno pravljичni, pa tudi družbeni ideal. V pravljici ne iščem interpretativnega ključa, s katerim bi jo razložila, temveč raje pristopam genealoško ter analiziram konstrukcijo spola iz esencijalizacije, naturalizacije ter performativnosti spola. S tem je odprta možnost teze o pravljичnosti realnega in o realnosti pravljичnega.