

ETHNOLINGUISTIC TABLEAUX

FROM THE FOLKTALES OF THE ARBËRESHE ORAL TRADITION

SIDELINE RELATIONSHIPS, GENDER SYMBOLS, AND TABOOS

This ethnolinguistic contribution is taken from the introductory essay—revised for this occasion by the author—contained in the book *Përrallza arbëreshe – One Hundred and Two Fairy Tales from the Oral Folk Tradition of Thirty-Nine Albanian-Speaking Villages in Six Regions of Italy*, 2024, Rezna Editions, Tetovë, North Macedonia, edited by Mario Bellizzi; for a more in-depth exploration of the subject, please consult the book.

In the *Preface*, regarding the ethnolinguistic analysis presented here, it is helpful to agree with the reader on the following definitions of *gender* and *sex*.

Gender refers to feminine and masculine characteristics that do not depend on biological functions but are shaped by traditions, cultural customs, and popular or religious beliefs that society deems appropriate for them. The term *sex* on the other hand, implies a set of purely biological characteristics that distinguish men from women. In other words, sex is biologically determined by nature, while *gender* is a social construct of culture and historical context. The characteristics of femininity and masculinity are therefore not universal or fixed but differ according to varying cultural traditions that change over time within the same society. Relationships between men and women (father and daughter, husband and wife, brother and sister, etc.) are marked by specific meanings that differ from those of male-male and female-female relationships. Culture, in addition to assigning different roles, also establishes an order and a hierarchy that are often unequal—between a stronger and a weaker individual, which does not depend on the circumstances or the character and personal qualities of the individuals involved.

Gender (derived from the Latin *genus*, related to *generare*) is the set of elements with common characteristics whose meaning varies in the **social sciences** and in **identity**; in **linguistics** and **grammar**; in the **arts** and **media**; so, in **biology** and **taxonomy**.

ABSTRACT I

This tableau examines how certain everyday objects sexualize the bodies of their users and mark their gender, drawing inspiration from an Arbëresh and Turkmen folktale featuring woodcutter brothers. Specifically, the objects in question—the loom (tezgjahu), the bridal diadem (keza), and the rifle (pushka)—define gender while simultaneously characterizing social spaces: the feminine domestic realm of the hearth (vatra)—a site of weaving, waiting, and the transmission of relational and pedagogical knowledge—and the masculine outdoor realm of the countryside and forest, associated with hunting and danger. Drawing on the work of G. Durand and U. Galimberti, the analysis demonstrates how the folktale divides the world into two distinct sensory and spatial realms. The brothers' departure from home constitutes a rite of passage that disrupts the initial cosmic equilibrium, in which the home serves as the center of the world.

Keywords: *Arbëreshë folktale, Turkmen folktale, gendered objects, loom, keza, rifle, sexualization of space, Durand, Galimberti, rite of passage*

TABLEAU I

LOOM, KEZA AND RIFLE

OBJECTS THAT SEXUALIZE BODIES BY INDICATING GENDER

THE ARBËRESHË AND TURKMEN WOODCUTTER BROTHERS WHO LEAVE HOME

A new member joining the family unit represents a threat that has long been downplayed, and to be perfectly honest, these fratricidal wars play out as a power struggle among equals in which a form of lateral violence is exercised that Western society fails to adequately recognize. Until the 1950s, analysts focused on the parent-child axis—and particularly the mother-son relationship—while sibling relationships, both between brothers and between brothers and sisters, were left in the shadows. It took half a century and the feminist theoretical perspective of J. Mitchell (2019) to take stock of the complex history of lateral relationships, including the social recognition of siblinghood and the importance of biological parenthood. In short, that theoretical perspective was based on the following cornerstones:

a) lateral relationships, b) a critique of the vertical model, and c) a multidisciplinary approach.

In other words: a return to the sibling bond as a crucial factor in the formation of the psyche and human relationships; the integration of the classic parent-child axis with the horizontal axis of peers; and the synthesis of psychoanalytic theory, clinical cases, and literary, mythological, and neuropsychiatric references.

Internalized social relationships are important elements of the psyche, including those between parents and children—and are also influenced by sibling relationships, which require a new interpretive paradigm (not only in psychoanalysis) that does not overlook horizontal and vertical interactions. We must highlight the issue of gender and its variables and reflect deeply on the unconscious psychological dynamics among siblings, given the significant transformations in family structures resulting from cultural, economic, and social changes in the Western world since the late nineteenth century. The arrival of another family member—recognized as a brother or sister, similar

to oneself—generates feelings of rivalry and hatred and gives rise to a web of alliances, both conscious and unconscious, as well as resentment toward the mother; it triggers a struggle to secure the parents' exclusive love and leads to depressive consequences stemming from the loss of supremacy. This new subject influences the imago—the internal representational schema through which objects or figures, such as a brother or sister, are depicted—and shapes group relationships, defenses, identifications, personality formation, etc., without excluding the Oedipal dynamics that continually intersect while retaining their own specific characteristics. To trace the development of the theoretical process that led to the formulation of the fraternal complex in question, we must begin with the following key points:

the mythological legacies of the figures of Antigone, Eteocles, and Polynices—sons and brothers of Oedipus—characterized by conflict stemming from opposing psychic forces related to ambivalent feelings of love and hate toward their parents;

the Electra complex, the female counterpart to the Oedipus complex;

S. Freud, in his clinical case studies *Little Hans* (1908) and *The Wolf Man* (1914), began to outline the effects that the birth of a sibling and the sibling relationship have on a child's psyche;

A. Adler (1993), one of the few psychoanalysts, investigated the psychological consequences of the birth of a sibling and its effects on character formation;

Melanie Klein (1932; 1957) addressed envy in sibling relationships;

according to J. Lacan (1938), a brother or sister, as representative of the Other, has been defined as fundamental to the emergence of the Ego.

The arrival of a brother or sister marks the traumatic transition from the *One to the Two* (the symbiotic dyad with the mother), which entails a series of relational consequences, such as the only child's loss of the position of absolute object of desire and maternal care; the perception of the newborn as a pestilent *intruder* occupying the subject's living space, which gives rise to the root of hatred toward the sibling in order to defend one's wounded narcissism and sense of uniqueness. The encounter with the other—both intruder and rival—is a foundational moment in the mirror experience, through which the ego finds itself at a crossroads: to deny and destroy the Other in order to regain fusion with the maternal object, or to tolerate the obstacle to the fulfillment of its own desires and accept the Other's existence.

The French psychoanalyst René Kaës (2009; 2010) published two works of great significance in the field of psychoanalysis of intersubjective and group bonds;

in the first, he outlined the structure: analysis of the dynamic and cost-effective of the bond between brothers and sisters; an examination of the intrapsychic level based on clinical therapy; and a study of the organizing effects of intersubjective bonds within the family;

While in the second: he explored the unconscious pacts and contracts that underpin and bind groups, couples, and families; and defined the role of these alliances in the construction and defense of shared psychic space.

In summary, he analyzed the ambivalence, rivalry, and narcissistic love toward another brother or sister—which urge us not to reduce sibling bonds to feelings of hatred, rivalry, and struggle to obtain the parents' exclusive love, with the interplay of narcissism, psychic bisexuality, and sexual splitting. This broad overview of theoretical studies—which have developed over time within the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis—was deemed necessary and useful for better highlighting the

complexity of horizontal sibling relationships (sister-sister and brother-brother), as narrated in certain fairy tales from the Italian Albanian oral tradition. In fact, in various Albanian-speaking communities, stories were told of a large family consisting of seven or twelve brothers, who hoped that their mother, while pregnant, would give birth to a girl after a series of boys. The same theme appears in the book of traditional tales from various Muslim-majority countries, edited by E. Luisari (2001), specifically in the fairy tale *Ak-Pamyku* (*White-as-Cotton*) from distant Turkmenistan, where the arrival of a little sister was so eagerly awaited and desired by seven brothers, with the same intensity experienced in the *Arbëreshë* communities of Lungro *The Brothers Who Wanted a Sister* (*Vullezirit ç'dojin nj'motir*), of Vaccarizzo Albanese *The Enchanted Ring* (*Unaza e fatartur*) in Calabria, and in Molise in the fairy tale *The Seven Brothers* (*Shtatë vuazërit*) of Ururi. The setting for these stories is families dominated by the presence of boys and the absence of a little sister. Faced with their mother's umpteenth pregnancy, the sons' band together to make it clear that they will leave the family home unless their wish for a little sister is granted.

It is well known that if a story is rooted in a specific place, it becomes a local legend; whereas, if it has no fixed roots and drifts aimlessly—like an aquatic plant with severed roots—it transforms into an abstract fairy tale that, by putting down roots again, becomes a local legend once more. Our fairy tale reflects the simplest structure, says M. L. von Franz (2009), and working on it means facing *a sort of skeleton from which the muscles and skin have been stripped away*, leaving only the universal and essential elements of human life patterns. To summarize the meaning of the psychic **skeleton**, we must reduce it to three characteristics:

pure form, since fairy tales strip human experience of all transient cultural or personal details; *abstract models* that reveal the archetypes of the collective unconscious in their simplest and most direct geometry; and *indestructible nature*, in the sense that bones and the skeleton represent the eternal and unchanging core that withstands the test of time, just like deep psychological structures.

Considering these characteristics, the spread of fairy tales is facilitated by certain essential factors, as they transcend cultural and racial differences, and their language seems to be the international language of all humanity, of all ages and civilizations. Returning to our folktale, the woodcutter brothers, every evening upon returning from the woods, hoped to see the agreed-upon sign displayed on the balcony announcing the joyous event of the birth of a sister; for the *Arbëreshë*, this was a *keza*—a bridal headdress—or the shuttle of a loom, while for the Turkmen it was a cloth doll—in any case, always objects associated with the feminine world. Due to some misunderstanding or intrigue, one evening on the balcony, what appeared to them was a hat or a rifle—for the *Arbëreshë*—and a bow with arrows—for the Turkmen. They left home, just as they had sworn to do, barring subsequent and extraordinary events that will unfold as the plot develops. The symbols displayed outside the dwelling—markers of the male/female dichotomy, visible to the community—signaled the presence of new social roles; it can be said that they were the first principle of order around which primitive cultures organized themselves, cultures that did not recognize forms of joint labor between men and women, and thus certain spaces that could not be occupied simultaneously by both genders. In this regard, the philosopher U. Galimberti (2017) points out the spatial and cultural dichotomy between: the forest (the masculine space), identified with the activities of hunting and exploration, considered the realm of the outside, the unknown, and the trial—that is, the setting in which the male individual faces risk, danger, and adventure, as opposed to the camp (a feminine space), situated at the opposite pole from the wild, which represents the refuge—in Albanian, the hearth: *vatra* the space of care and family gathering, of the oral transmission of intangible culture, and the hub of settled life where the man returns to rest after experiencing danger. The contrast between the rifle and the loom—assigned from childhood onward to boys and girls, respectively—is evidence of just how deeply the first form

of discrimination, the first mark inscribed on the body's sex, has permeated the cultural landscape. The reciprocal prohibitions—women are forbidden to touch the rifle and men the loom—have caused sexuality to permeate these objects, which, having lost their neutrality (from the Latin *nec uter*, “neither one nor the other”), became symbols that evoked the need not to transgress the social order governing the life of the group. Later, images of spinning wheels and distaffs would reappear, in which the spinning wheels are always depicted as masculine and the distaffs as feminine, and linked in folklore to sexuality (G. Durand, 1960). The brothers' strong sense of disappointment toward the new arrival in the family underscores that in the history of psychoanalysis, as in all social sciences, it would have been difficult—until not long ago—to find an explanation for that specific event or, conversely, for the emotion surrounding the birth of a little sister. The bond among the siblings in our fairy tales who leave the family unit constitutes the “magical siblinghood”—a united and strong group, often fueled by the parents' narcissistic projections onto their children. The origins of the desire to have a brother or sister are manifold and ambivalent; for example: no longer feeling like the exclusive object of parental investment, which may now be directed toward others; having an alter ego, a double, a companion; and finally, fulfilling the Oedipal fantasy of having a child with one of the parents. Becoming a brother or sister—that is, also a child—means forming the parental couple, which entails the Oedipal frustration of recognizing that within it there exists a bond and a sexual activity from which brothers and sisters are excluded and, at the same time, that it is precisely this couple that brings them into being, creating a new oppositional group within itself. The idea of a psychological interpretation of fairy tales—beginning with the works of B. Bettelheim (1978) and extending to those of Marie-Luise von Franz (2009)—is becoming increasingly widespread and successful, with the awareness that the field of study is littered with mysteries experienced by human beings, who attempt, as best they can, to communicate them by scrutinizing every image, its context, and the connections between images to deduce the specific meaning and internal logic of a fairy tale.

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ABSTRACT II

This tableau studies the linguistic taboo at the birth of a female in the Lungro fairy tale Vëllezërit ç'donin një motër (A.Y. 1966-67). While the birth of a boy is openly celebrated as U lè një pushkë! (A rifle was born!), the birth of a girl is expressed with the enigmatic periphrasis u lè një' thua j e thashë (was born 'a say and said'), a sort of shamanic semantic condensation based on paronomasia. The analysis connects this linguistic fossil to the andric/metandric gender classification of Corbett/Dixon and Lakoff and to the concept of word=son in Eliade, Durand and the Theology of Memphis. Neutral periphrasis is a shadow zone that avoids directly naming the daughter due to the burden of dowry and family honor.

Keywords: *linguistic taboo, female birth, periphrasis, andric/metandric, gender classification, word=son, dowry, honor, Lungro, Corbett, Eliade.*

TABLEAU II

THE ENIGMA AND THE NEWBORN METANDRICA: A WORD SPAT

As the Treccani Encyclopedia states: “*Tabu*” is a Polynesian word (“sacred, forbidden”), often—but incorrectly—pronounced “tabù,” which originally referred to a ritual prohibition concerning objects or people considered sacred; the term later acquired a broader meaning, referring—even in common usage—to the various spheres of human experience subject to prohibitions, that is, to the prohibition of use. A linguistic taboo consists of the prohibition against uttering words related to referents subject to taboo (i.e., tabooed). In fact, it happens that people, animals, plants, objects, behaviors, actions, and even ideas become, within a certain group and at a certain historical moment, so heavily imbued with cultural and emotional connotations that their sacredness, danger, or unpleasantness is transferred to their respective designations: these must therefore be avoided in speech or replaced by less explicit alternatives. (...) The semantic spheres most affected by linguistic taboo are those of magic and religion, illness and death, sexuality and bodily functions, and the person (physical and moral aspects); (...).

To circumvent the taboo, the *Encyclopedia* continues, the speaker may omit the name of the tabooed object, perhaps alluding to it with a pause or a gesture (G. R. Cardona, 1976) or employ various lexical strategies that operate on the signified or the signifier, replacing the term that designates the tabooed concept with euphemisms or other expressions that refer to it indirectly. In short, in *Arbrisht*, some linguistic taboos include: *the black, the derelict, the poor fellow*, (regarding the deceased), and *the cursed, the wayless, that of the precipices ...* (regarding the devil). The most common of these lexical strategies involves using words or circumlocutions with positive or neutral connotations to mitigate the negative emotional charge carried by the forbidden term, which is perceived as offensive, obscene, crude, or otherwise unpleasant. Alongside the unfulfilled desire for motherhood—which, in fairy tales, led women to wish for a plant instead of a daughter (in a tale from Spezzano Albanese, a small chickpea named *Small chickpea (Qiqërelja)*; in the Frascineto tale involving metamorphosis, *The Snake Girl (Vashza gjalper)* the girl turned into a snake in the sunlight; in Civita, in the tale *The*

crab, the mother even accepted the birth of a crab in place of her lost son, as did the mother in S. Benedetto Ullano in the tale *The fable of the crab* (*Rrëmanxa e gërthjes*); in Castoregio, in *The small comb* (*Krëhërthi*), the woman prayed to the Virgin Mary to have a child even in the form of a bird; etc.). Faced with their mother's umpteenth pregnancy, her sons' band together to make an ultimatum: either see their wish for a little sister fulfilled or leave the family home. In the fairy tale *The Brothers Who Wanted a sister* (*Vullezrit ç'donjin nj' motir*) from Lungro, published by M. T. Cortese (A.A. 1966–67), the researcher captures the narrator's voice on tape during a pause in the storytelling, in which she specifies a detail regarding the sex of the unborn *Arbëreshë* child. It is worth recalling here that J. Derrida's (1967) most famous phrase is *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, in English: *there is no outside-text*, meaning that we never have immediate or pure access to reality; all our knowledge is already mediated by signs, contexts, languages, and interpretations, and reality is always imbued with references and traces. In our case, it is a matter of a genuine linguistic prohibition expressed through metaphor or enigma, periphrasis, or riddle—which, to use C. Lévi-Strauss's words, served as a true training ground for the analogical thinking of the peasant world:

u lè nj' thuaj e thash (a “you say and I said” was born),

It is composed of the intransitive verb *u lè* (“to be born”), conjugated in the indicative mood, recent past tense, third person singular, with the auxiliary verb “to be”—which in Albanian does not convey gender information—and the verb forms of the verb “to say” (in Albanian, *thòm*) “*nj' thuaj e thash*”, in the present indicative and remote past, which constitute the subject. The latter could represent a linguistic space—a gray area, neutral, uncertain, and not clearly definable—a sign of incompleteness. Moreover, the birth of a girl into the family entailed, during her future life, not only the burden of the dowry but also potential rumors about her moral conduct that could have tarnished the reputation of the entire family. In some areas of Albania, according to linguist Emil Lefe, the event was by no means a joyous one; indeed, at the birth of a girl, *qajnë edhe trarët e shtëpisë* (even the beams of the house wept)! Conversely, among the *Arbëreshë* of Piana degli Albanesi in Sicily (G. Schirò, 1997), the birth of a boy was unequivocally celebrated with the proud exclamation: *U lè një pushkë* (A ‘rifle’ has been born), and in Albania, when the male line was broken, people used the expression of regret: *the rifle has been left on the nail* (*u mbeti pushka në gozhdë*), meaning the household was left without males. One possible interpretation of the *Arbëreshë* linguistic taboo in Lungro is that proposed by M. Eliade (1949) regarding the combination of verbs considered a sort of secret language, comparable to the double meanings used by shamans—that is, a magic formula which, according to the studies of anthropologist R. H. Lowie (1917; 1920), could represent a semantic and ontological condensation in which wordplay (or paronomasia) is used, as was practiced in Egypt. Among the inferences that can be made is the idea that the structure of mythical thought is independent of the morphological categories of language. Symbolism could be either visual or phonetic and establish an isomorphism between the two spheres. According to G. Durand (1960):

The intellectualization of symbols and the slow transformation of semantics into semiology closely follow the path of evolutionary phylogeny, which identifies two sensory atlases in the human species: the visual and the audio-phonetic;

however, he added the possibility that:

alongside this isomorphism, we must note a possible anastomosis between language and sexuality; indeed, the verb is often assimilated to the symbolism of the son.

The French anthropologist places the Word (the creative word, the Logos) within the diurnal realm of the imagination, associating it with the archetype of divine filiation, since it represents the direct, visible, and active emanation of a supreme deity (often paternal or solar).

The assimilation of the Word to the symbolism of the Son is not an isolated phenomenon across historical eras and geographical regions; in fact, it appears quite frequently in various cultures—one need only consider the following notable examples:

Christianity and the Johannine Tradition

the opening lines of the Gospel according to John: “*In the beginning was the Word (Logos)... and the Word became flesh*”; the doctrine of the Trinity: Jesus Christ is explicitly identified as the Word of God and the Only-Begotten Son; generation: the Son is not created, but “begotten” by the Father through an intellectual and spiritual act, in which the Word is the Word spoken by the Father that takes human form in the world.

The Theology of Memphis in Ancient Egypt

Many centuries before Christianity, the ancient Egyptians had already developed a similar concept in the theology of the god Ptah, the supreme deity who creates the universe by conceiving things in his heart (the mind) and uttering them with his tongue (the Word); the gods Horus (traditionally the royal son) and Thoth (the god of writing and speech) are described in this cosmogonic myth as emanations from Ptah’s heart and tongue. The divine Word is personified in the divine daughters who carry out their father’s command. (Faenza, B. 2021)

Vedic Thought and Hinduism

In the Indian Vedic tradition, the sacred word is a generative cosmic force associated with divine descent; *Vāc* (the Word) is personified by a female deity, often described as the consort of the creator (*Prajāpati*) but also as his first emanation/daughter; the cosmic god *Vāc*, through the act of sacrifice, generates the world. (Mark, J. J. 2020)

Neoplatonism and Hellenistic Philosophy

The Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria sought to unite the biblical tradition with Greek Platonism; he defined the Logos—God’s ordering Word—as the firstborn Son of God—*protogonos*—and for the Neoplatonists, the Word/Logos is the first emanation of the One, who acts as son and intermediary between the unknowable heavenly Father and the material world.

[(Reale, G., 2002; 2014); Long, A. A., 1985]

The Mesoamerican Tradition

In Aztec and Toltec mythology, creation and human civilization arise through the sacrifice and the word of the divine twins, sons of the supreme primordial deity Ometeotl. The life-giving breath of Quetzalcoatl (the Feathered Serpent) represents the civilizing Logos, the inventor of books, the calendar, and the spoken word; while, as the Son emanating from the primordial duality, he descends into the underworld to gather the bones of past generations, infusing them with life through his own blood and word, embodying the Word of the Father who orders and populates the world. (Domenici, D. 2002)

In all these cultures, the mental structure identified by Durand remains constant: the Father is the transcendent, silent source, while the Word/Son is the immanent, visible, and speaking force that brings that initial light to fulfillment in time and space.

To close the circle, we need only ask ourselves to which gender the Word—the immanent force—belongs, since in the descriptive linguistics of certain peoples, the classification of gender systems differs from our masculine/feminine/neuter system and is replaced by another, binary division, where the andric gender (possession of a copulatory organ) is used solely for human males, and the metandric gender for everything else: from meta- = “beyond” + andric, from the Greek *anēr*, *andros* = “man,” lit.: “non-masculine” or “beyond the masculine.”

Among the extensive bibliography on the neuter in Indo-European languages—which corresponds to the primitive division between animate and inanimate genders—we recommend, among others, M. J. Bréal (1897) and L. Adam (1882; 1883).

The term “metandric” was formalized by 20th-century linguistic typologists, such as Greville G. Corbett (1991), who examined non-masculine vs. masculine systems, and R. M. W. Dixon (1972), who studied the nominal class systems of the Australian Aboriginal language Dyirbal, which included four nominal classes each associated with a corresponding semantic domain:

I—men, animate objects; II—women, water, fire, violence; III—edible fruits and vegetables; IV – miscellaneous (this is a residual class: it includes all nouns that do not fall into the first three categories).

As bizarre or random as this grouping may seem, it follows certain cognitive rules—quite plausible ones—identified by linguist George Lakoff (1987):

mythological associations (if an element is linked to a myth, it changes class; for example, birds belong to the class of women because the myth considers them to be female spirits);

important properties (fire and sharp objects are associated with the class of women because of the concept of “danger” or due to functional connections—women use fire for cooking);

the domain of experience (elements are grouped based on how humans interact with them, not solely on their biological nature).

In conclusion, it can be said that the linguistic phenomenon in question describes the transition from semantic gender systems (based on natural characteristics such as animate/inanimate) to more complex systems, where the male/female distinction develops at a later stage.

The case of the *Arbëreshë* folktale from Lungro about the brothers who wanted a sister—namely, *nj' thuaj e thashë*—could constitute an ancient linguistic fossil that deserves further study along the winding path of the evolution and classification of genders.

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ABSTRACT III

This tableau analyzes the father-daughter incest motif in Arbëreshë variants of Donkey Skin (Perrault, Basile, Straparola, Grimm). The father promises to remarry only the woman who fits his dead wife's ring: the ring fits only his daughter. To escape, the daughter asks for impossible gifts: dress of sun, moon, stars, shoes made of sea with fish inside, carriage entirely of gold. According to Propp, these golden objects are signs of the beyond. The analysis connects the woman clothed with the sun to the Apocalypse of John (Ch. XII) and to De Rada's rhapsody, where the mother gives her daughter light, rainbow and sea as dowry. The father is helped by the Devil, the daughter by the Madonna, in a gender polarization between malefic force and female protection.

Keywords: *father-daughter incest, Donkey Skin, Arbëreshë variants, ring motif, dress of sun moon stars, Propp, otherworld, Woman clothed with the sun, Apocalypse 12, De Rada, cosmic dowry, Devil and Madonna, gender polarization.*

TABLEAU III

THE INCEST OF THE CHILD BRIDE DRESSED IN SKY

The most famous fairy tale featuring the threat of incest between father and daughter is *Dognipelo*, collected in the 19th century by the Brothers Grimm (2015), although the theme was anticipated by Perrault around the end of the 1600s in the fairy tale *Donkey Skin*, which in turn was inspired by the fairy tales of two Italian authors: Giambattista Basile (*The Bear*, circa 1634) and Giovanni Francesco Straparola (*Doralice*, circa 1500). In the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale, a king promises his dying wife that, should he remarry, he would do so only with a woman as beautiful as she was, with the same golden hair, and so on. For the father, remaining faithful to his dead wife meant having to marry the only woman who resembled her—that is, the daughter who could take her place. The fairy tale prompts reflection on a structural aspect of incest: the creation of a timeless moment, much like the mother-daughter dyad—that is, the unique and special bond that forms between them from birth. This relationship forms a small, closed world rich in interaction, where the newborn's first communications, physical contact, and emotional growth take place. In the *Arbëreshë* variants, it is

the ring of the deceased wife that the daughter wears—by chance—and which fits her perfectly, as in Plataci's tale *The Deer Maiden* (*Vashza kacamita*), or a silver tooth in *The Beauty with the Golden Tooth* (*E bukura me dhëmbin ari*) by Macchia Albanese—which represent the successful completion of the trial stipulated in the mother's last will and testament for the selection of the new bride!

In Perrault's *The Donkey's Skin*, the panicked young girl tried to delay the wedding by asking her father—her future husband—for three dresses: one as golden as the sun, one as silvery as the moon, and one as bright as the stars, as well as a cloak made from the skins of all the animals and birds in the kingdom. Similarly, in the folktale from the village of Greci, known as *Katundi* in Arbrisht, in the province of Avellino—*The Servant Girl and the King's Son* (*Servja e i biri rregjit*), the girl asked her father for a dress sewn from donkey hide—perhaps to make herself unrecognizable and repulsive, or because, by wrapping herself in it, she could symbolize the transformation and the search for protection of her own femininity through the innocence of the animal world, or denounce the bestial act from which she had escaped. The question that arises is: in *Arbëreshë* fairy tales, who speaks to the frightened daughter, comforting her and promising decisive protection? Her advisors/protectors are female figures such as her deceased mother, her maternal grandmother, a fairy, or the Virgin Mary; whereas a disturbing character—the father's assistant, whom the narrator omits to name, as in *The Girl with the Sun and the Moon on Her Skirt* (*Vajza me diellin e hënzen te coha*) from Eianina (a hamlet of Frascineto), is the Devil, whose mere mention is said to summon his presence. It is he who manages to make the gifts requested by the recalcitrant bride appear: the golden objects and animals, even the sun and the moon as embellishments on a skirt, thereby allowing the father to pass the incredible trials demanded by his daughter. Propp specifies that the peculiarity of these objects—which are always golden in color or rare—is a sign of their belonging to the realm of the afterlife, and that the protagonist must have stayed in the realm of the sun, in the other world, or in hell.

Some parallels in the fairy tale's plot can be found in the story *The Ring of Polycrates, King of Egypt*; Freud (1919), in a footnote, notes that the king—horrified by his unsettling guest Polycrates—withdraws because his desires were being fulfilled and every concern was overcome by a complacent fate! Fairy tales, as Propp teaches, are accounts of a rite of passage: the trials of the uninitiated, grave dangers or apparent deaths, and rebirth into the perfect state of adulthood. As is always the case, at the time the subject of incest was taboo and shameful, so the Grimm version of *Allerleirauh* (*Dognipelo*), classified as a fairy tale involving *unnatural love*, was published without any comment. The structure of the fairy tale contains elements of which, today, the psychopathological analysis of incest highlights several components: the violence of perversion, veiled by a narcissistic idealization of the object, and the use of forms of pseudo-protection and tenderness.

Conversely, in addition to paternal pedophilia, there may be the presence of the devil and/or an evil force, as in Italian-Albanian fairy tales, the girl's display of power through her desire to see unusual requests fulfilled—which can also be interpreted as delaying tactics for impossible trials—and a fleeting unconscious or conscious seduction (as in the version by folklorist J. F. Campbell, 1860). By interpreting a series of clues—whether through serendipity, accidental knowledge, or heuristics—regarding the requests for wedding attire, one notices that they lead to the *Old Testament*, specifically the *Book of Revelation* (Ehrman, B. D., 2023).

Then a great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and was crying out in the pain and agony of childbirth. Then another sign appeared in the sky: a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on his head seven diadems; his tail swept down a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them to the earth. The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, intending to devour the newborn child. She gave birth to a son, destined to rule all nations with an iron scepter,

and the child was immediately taken up to God and to his throne. The woman, however, fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a refuge for her so that she might be nourished there for 1,260 days.

Regarding this enigmatic figure, the ecclesial assembly and the works of theologian U. Vanni (1982) concluded that the woman clothed with the sun was none other than the woman—the people of God (...)—in order to avoid any heavy anthropomorphism, and that her attire concealed an interpretation: the moon governs the passage of time and, in this context, foreshadows its transcendence and thus eternity, (...) the crown of twelve stars on her head expresses the final victory and evokes, collectively and as a whole, the entire people of God, etc. Although more modestly, in the Italo-Albanian folktales about paternal incest, it can be said that the wedding gifts requested by the girl appear even more astonishing than those in the *Book of Revelation*: in addition to the dress adorned with the sun, the sky, the stars, and the moon, there are also a pair of shoes featuring the sea and fish, a golden gown, and a horse-drawn chariot—all made of gold.

The presence of these latter gifts recalls the golden apples that grew in the garden of the gods, guarded by the Hesperides and the dragon Ladon, and stolen by Heracles in one of his 12 labors.

Propp (1977) writes that:

The desire to possess rare gold objects stems from the fact that gold is the heritage of the righteous alone, and in the Book of Revelation, the realm of the dead is described in minute detail as a golden city; gold objects are items that have lost their magical function as things originating from the other world and ensuring longevity and immortality.

There is no reason to see in *Arbëreshë* folktales a gradual transformation of the girl into a celestial, superhuman entity, precisely because of those gifts, and the father becoming a hostage to the whirlwind of a satanic force that compels the narrator to treat the name of that presence as taboo.

The same climax can be found in Italo-Albanian folk literature, particularly in the famous 19th-century *Rhapsody XXVIII* collected by Jeronim De Rada, where a mother informs her future son-in-law of the list of dowry items her daughter will receive:

(...) as a dowry for my daughter,
I will give light as a peplo,
the rainbow as a belt,
the star of the sky as a brooch to pin to her chest,
the morning sun as a diadem,
and the sea as her outer garment.

*i jap u s'ime bilë për cilonë driten
rrethin e qiellit për brezë
spingullat t'i vë ndë gji ijit marr qiellsit
diellin e menates për kezë
për cohë detin*

Again, in a fairy tale by Castrorregio, *The King and a Flower*, a gallant dragon compelled a father to give him his youngest daughter in marriage, and as a token of his kindness, he presented her envious future sisters-in-law with a crown made of the sun's rays and a skirt adorned with the moon and stars—gifts characteristic of a diabolical scheme that later turned into lead and a sack of manure. In *The Deer Maiden* by Plataci, the customary oath made to a dying mother compels the daughter to

marry her father; when she refuses, he curses her to become a doe and, as if that were not enough, to remain so for the rest of her life if, after three years and three days, no one opens the door for her at midnight.

Moving beyond the oral tradition of fairy tales, in the literary works of the Albanian-language manuscript and printed tradition, we encounter Papas Giorgio Nicolò Brancato, an Arbëresh from Piana degli Albanesi who, by paraphrasing in Arbrisht the song *Canzoncine sopra il stellario dell'Immacolata Concezione* from the first half of the 18th century, reaffirms the ancient Albanian devotion to *the Immaculate Conception*, which predated their arrival in 15th-century Sicily, the “insular Italy.” In some pages of the *Canzoncine* we read:

*O e bërza pā mëkat
të vesh dielli prë stoli
hëna nën këmb të rrī
iljzit për kurorë gjat
O e bërza pā mëkat*

(O Conceived without sin,
clothed in the sun,
The moon lies at your feet,
and you wear a high crown of stars,
O Conceived without sin)

Thus, in verses 9–10 of the *Cuneus Prophetarum de Christo Salvatore mundi* from 1685 (by Bogdani P., translated from Latin into Albanian), we encounter the same symbolic constellation:

*Me Dielli veshun,
e mbathunë më Hanë
Me yj kryetë rreth
ngjeshunë kunorë*

Clothed in the Sun
and shod with the Moon
With stars, in a circle upon her head,
She wears a crown

In the folktale *The Girl and the Virgin Mary* from Campomarino, in the province of Campobasso, a variation is introduced in the series of gifts that the daughter asks her father for to escape an incestuous marriage. In addition to the dress made of the sun and the moon, the Madonna suggested that the girl ask her father for a copy (a double, perhaps a GOLEM, a statue) identical to herself, to effect an exchange in the sacrifice. To perform an act of substitution through the play of equivalences also means to create a doubling, a subordinate repetition through which the sacrificer or the sacrificed becomes master and free of past or future time. In conclusion, we can affirm that the prototypes of the incest fairy tale can already be glimpsed in the myths of Oedipus and Electra, although in our cases we are dealing with an entirely different strand.

Since fairy tales reflect the strongly patriarchal values of the society that created them, paternal authority is rarely called into question in them; in fact, wicked stepmothers and mothers-in-law are condemned to death without hesitation, while there is no punishment for the cruel or perverse father—not even when he violates one of the most terrible social taboos, such as incest. In the realm of fantasy and wonder, the dynamics and drama of family bonds are transposed—on a symbolic and allegorical level—through the staging of dangerous adventures featuring heroic and supernatural characters. It is precisely through this symbolic and metaphorical dimension that the tales allude to the taboos surrounding incest and the rivalry between parent and child of the same sex.

As G. Calame-Griaule (2001) wrote:

*The tale conveys a message that speaks deeply to the human soul and addresses questions that human societies generally pose at an unconscious level. It is likely there that we must seek justification for the persistence of the tale's themes across the most diverse civilizations; everyone feels united by the issues raised by the tales, which constitute the **les noyaux résistants** (the resistant nuclei) found throughout the world. Dynamics within the family unit, the issue of incest, generational conflict, the individual's relationship with the social group, and relationships between men and women—all these eternal and universal problems that societies strive to resolve through institutions and norms find a symbolic mode of expression within the realm of fairy tales.*

The realm of fairy tales, more so than that of fables, highlights all issues related to human life.

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ABSTRACT IV

This tableau starts from denied motherhood and the birth of theriomorphic children (serpent, crab, hedgehog) in Arbëreshë tales as exorcism of sterility. It explores the Illyrian-Albanian cult of the serpent (totem of Cadmus and Harmonia, Illyrios) and of the Sun (festival of March 14th, oath për atë diell që vranë e kthyen). The core is the Siculo-Arbëreshë tale E bija e Diellit: a girl segregated in a windowless tower is impregnated by a sunbeam entering through a hole opened with a bone. The motif of the phallic solar disc with sperm-rays is analyzed through Jung (Burghölzli patient case), Porphyry and Mithraic liturgy. The delusion of solar impregnation becomes a worldview and rebirth, studied by Jasper,s as in the case of the folklorist Cristina Gentile Mandalà of Piana.

Keywords: *denied motherhood, theriomorphic children, serpent crab hedgehog, exorcism of sterility, serpent cult, Cadmus Harmonia Illyrios, sun cult, March 14th, E bija e Diellit, windowless tower, solar impregnation, Jung Burghölzli patient, Porphyry Mithraic liturgy, Gentile Mandalà, Piana degli Albanesi, Jaspers, worldview*

TABLEAU IV

THE THERIOMORPHIC CHILDREN AND THE JUNG'S SUN THAT IMPREGNATES WOMEN

ILLYRIAN CULT OF SUN AND SERPENT

It is well known that in a primordial state of cosmic equilibrium, there are no differences among the realms, genera, and species; myth erases everything, and even the concreteness of the visible world and the evanescence of the invisible become indistinguishable (Ong, W. J., 1986); in short, in that situation an intense harmony among the elements of the realms is established through an anthropomorphization of nature, in which they are endowed with distinctly human characteristics such as language, feelings, and emotions. In myths, the present world appears to have originated from the end of that state of cosmic equilibrium (Cambi, F. et al., 2010). It is likely against this paradigmatic backdrop that the theme of denied motherhood arises in numerous fairy tales originating from places and countries far apart from one another, narrated with the same words but imbued by the storyteller with a pathos that transforms them into *writing aloud*, as R. Barthes (1973) puts it; this is not the

theatrical enactment of emotions, but the exact point where language meets the skin and body of the narrator, so that, the flesh of the text—the spoken words—is not limited to conveying a logical meaning, but is imbued with the physicality, timbre, and texture of the narrator's voice, which transforms oral discourse into a veritable sonic literary architecture, becoming an inner construction that resonates directly within the listener's innermost being.

Certainly, the creative inhibition of men and women—elusive and scandalous in agricultural societies permeated by the vitality of nature—did not allow for empty cycles or gaps; one can imagine that the failure to procreate was experienced as a curse to be overcome at all costs, as it was a status without validity within the social and organizational order of the economy. In the realm of fantasy, the desire for motherhood can lead to the conception of beings in any form, with the strangest appearances—even animal-like ones—which, for a period of life, will be accepted in their diversity to ward off death and affirm the unstoppable flow of generations.

In *The small comb* (*Krëhëthi*) by Castroregio, a woman asked the Virgin Mary for a child, even if it took the form of a bird; in *The crab* (*Gërthëla*) by Civita, supposed infertility leads to the desire for a child with the appearance of a crab, which fortunately transformed into a child at night; similarly, in *The Story of the Crab* (*Rrëmanxa e gërthjes*) by San Benedetto Ullano, a crab-child was born who encountered six fairies in a chestnut grove, cradling themselves atop a ray of sunlight. In *The Snake Who Married the King's Daughter* (*Gjaipuri që martoi të bijen e rregjit*) by Pallagorio, a queen who could not have children agreed—just to have one—that at the age of 20 he would become a snake and that he would then gouge out his father's eyes. It is worth noting that snake worship was widespread among various peoples, including the Illyrians and, through ethnic continuity, among the Albanians; the marriage between the woman and the serpent in Albanian folklore finds parallels in the legend reported by Plutarch and other ancient authors, according to which Alexander the Great was the son of Olympias (born in Epirus, a region steeped in Illyrian elements) and a serpent (G. Rader, 1931). A remnant of prehistoric times regarding the connection between the snake and female fertility can be found in a magical rite recorded in the village of Orman near Skopje in Macedonia (Stipčević A., 1976). The snake was the protector of the hearth; the chthonic animal par excellence linked to ancestor worship and to the magical-religious complex surrounding the fertility of the earth and of women.

One need only recall the mythological legend of the Phoenician Cadmus and his wife Harmonia, who, having come among the Illyrians and died in their homeland, continued to live in the form of reptiles. Their son Illyrios, the eponymous hero of the Illyrian lineage, took the form of a serpent and, as such, can be considered the totem of the Illyrians. Another cult practiced by the ancient inhabitants of the Albanian region, the Illyrians, was the cult of the Sun, whose festivals took place during the changing of the seasons, coinciding with the solstices and equinoxes. For the Illyrian tribes, March 14—the beginning of spring—was the day dedicated to the Sun, a deity represented by the deer, an animal symbolically offered as a sacrifice. The link between the sun and the serpent can be found in the Frascineto folktale *The Snake Girl* (*Vashza gjalper*), in which a girl sought in marriage by the king's son is forced to live in shadow and darkness because sunlight transforms her into a serpent (this theme will be explored further in other sections in relation to the medieval Melusines). Jung points out that according to ancient (probably Chaldean) conceptions, the sun's path was represented as a serpent bearing the zodiacal signs on its back (like the Deus leontocephalus of the Mithraic mysteries). Evidence of sun worship can be found both in Albanian phraseology—in the oath that conceals a cosmological micro-narrative which reads: *për atë diell që vran e kthejll* (*by that sun they killed and buried*), as well as in the story of Demeter, mother of the sun, from the Italo-Albanian folkloric

tradition, whose exploits are celebrated in the writings of M. Bagaglio (1968), of particular interest is a quotation, dating from 1568, attributed to Enea Silvio Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II:

He found a people who worshipped the sun and venerated, with a singular form of worship, an iron hammer of extraordinary size. And when the priests were questioned about their worship, they replied that once, for many months, the sun had not been seen, for a most powerful king had taken it captive and imprisoned it in a heavily fortified tower; but the signs of the Zodiac had come to the sun's aid and, having shattered the tower with the great hammer, had freed it and restored it to mankind; thus, the instrument by which mortals had regained the light was truly worthy of veneration.

Piccolomini himself, drawing on information from Jerome of Prague (**Praga** 1378 about - Costanza 1416), writes:

That tower is the one that appears in Armenia as a city of bronze, in the Indian Rigveda as a rocky fortress, and which everywhere has served to hide light and water; the hammer is the thunderbolt of Perkunas, the hammer of Thor among the Germans, and the lightning bolt among the Hindus.

The folklorist A. Bellusci (2000), commenting on an *Arbëreshë* song by San Costantino Albanese, observes that the sun—imprisoned in a cave by the goddess Demeter (mother of the month of October) so that it would no longer emit light and heat—alludes to Persephone—abducted by Hades—who constitutes one of the central elements of the Eleusinian Mysteries (see M. Bellizzi, 2006)—a mythological motif of the *Mithraic liturgy*, which will be discussed later.

The ethnologist M. Tirtja (1978) documented a burial rite for the *Mother of the Sun*, *nënë sè diellit*, held in May in conjunction with the *Rushajë*—that is, on *Sunday of the Roses* (*diella and trandafilave*). On that occasion, after the communal meal, a small clay doll called *nëna e diellit*—the Mother of the Sun—was placed on a tile; the group then went outside the village and buried her in silence and with great sorrow, as if it were a funeral ceremony. In Montenegro, there is a small cave called *kulari*, into which infertile women would descend accompanied by a 9- or 10-year-old boy, who would circle the cave three times while the woman recited the following three times: *O kular, më jep një djalë* (Oh *kular*, give me a son), would leave an object or a piece of clothing, and then walk away. This practice is linked to the cult of fertility and the mythical rite of Priapus, dedicated to the sun as a generative deity. Another cave was in Kruja, Albania, where the ceremony of the cult of Shën Spirgjone took place, dating back to 1773, according to an inscription. One entered through an arched opening and reached a cavity containing a hole through which one could see the sunset. All the elements mentioned so far, according to Propp's theory, attest to the historical substance underlying many fairy tales, when viewed over the long term. In a landscape shaped by popular creativity, one can appreciate extraordinary syncretic results, as in the case of the Sicilian-*Arbëreshe* fairy tale *The Daughter of the Sun* (*E bija e Diellit*). In it, an old woman foretold to the king that his daughter would become pregnant before her wedding and before she turned twenty; consequently, he had a windowless tower built in a deserted place and locked his daughter inside. The theme of women's confinement also appears in the fairy tale *The Little Bird*, in which a prince met a young woman, kidnapped her, and confined her in the castle for a long time, promising to marry her. He then left, and upon his return, found her greatly appreciated and unrecognizable, so he sent her away. Returning to *The Daughter of the Sun*, the captive woman used the bone of an ox's leg (the mythical hammer?) to chisel a hole in the wall, through which the warm rays of the sun entered, impregnating her and causing her to conceive a baby girl whom her mother, in order to free her, hurled out into the void, where the child fell onto a field of flowers. The idea that the sun disk is endowed with a phallus whose rays, stirred by the wind, impregnate a woman is a common theme in the vast body of Jungian literature. In the pages where the psychic contents of schizophrenia are treated not only as

personal/biographical but also as archetypal elements, one can read about the paradigmatic case of the famous schizophrenic patient at the *Burgholzli clinic* in Switzerland (Corsa R., 2003).

He revealed his delusional-hallucinatory visions to Jung: as he shook his head, he saw a phallus hanging from the sun moving in sync, its oscillations stirring up the wind. To offer an explanation, Jung decided not to draw on Freud's sexual theory—namely, Oedipal jealousy toward a paternal penis that was boundless and infinitely generative—but instead found in that delusion an analogy with a mythological motif from the Mithraic liturgy found in an *Oxyrhynchus papyrus*, a two-thousand-year-old Persian religious text describing rituals designed to induce visions, corresponding exactly to what he had observed his paranoid patient doing. Porphyry (*De antro nympharum*) states that, according to Mithraic doctrine, winds are destined for souls emerging from rebirth, because, having absorbed the breath of the wind (πνεύμα), they possess an essence analogous to it, and that the spirit's fertilizing breath comes from the sun, probably from the *solar aulòs*. In the Greek-Byzantine rite as well, during the actual baptism, the priest, after incensing the baptismal font (*kolymvithra*), blesses the water with the sign of the cross and at the same time “blows” over it. In the vision of Zosimus of Panopolis, those who are reborn become πνεύμα, the breath of wind, and Dieterich A. von (1903) reports the invocation to the Sun God who stirs up the wind through a phallic flute hanging from his disk. In esotericism, C. G. Jung (1997) drew fundamental elements from Chinese alchemy, whose psychological dynamics are expressed through the metaphor of the circulation of light, while from Hindu mythology he learned that the solar disk encompasses within itself all individual souls and serves as a metaphor for the becoming of the Selbst—the totality of the phenomena of consciousness and the unconscious. The young woman's desire for motherhood and her father's violent rejection may have triggered the pain and delirium of the woman locked in the tower; if all this had taken place at a specific time and place, that delirium—like all deliria, according to Jung—would certainly have been nothing more than the manifestation of a recovery of the ego, a unique *Weltanschauung* through which the schizophrenic seeks to accept themselves. Regarding the folktale from Piana degli Albanesi, collected and transcribed by the novelist Cristina Gentile Mandalà (1856–1919), the following thought by K. Jaspers (reprinted 1999) applies:

Just as a pearl is born from a flaw in a shell, schizophrenia can give rise to incomparable works. And just as we do not think of the shell's illness when admiring its pearl, so too, when faced with the vital force of a work, we do not think of the schizophrenia that may have been the condition of its creation.

According to the reflections of Marie-Louise von Franz (1983), the liberation of the feminine and of women is driven by a profound impulse from the unconscious—one with deep roots—and constitutes the fulfillment of a “destiny” fraught with pitfalls and dangers, for which fairy tales are the litmus test:

The current evolution is probably the sum of millions of individual reactions that have occurred, in particular, during the last three or four centuries. The bitterness felt by countless women at having been rejected or insufficiently appreciated has produced the collective movement of women's emancipation at the beginning of the last century. What then exploded on the surface was the result of numerous individual experiences, long developed underground. It is precisely these underground currents that are reflected in fairy tales.

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