

“SHE WAS REALLY THE MAN SHE PRETENDED TO BE”: CHANGE OF SEX IN  
FOLK NARRATIVES

by

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A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty  
of  
George Mason University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Arts  
English

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George Mason University  
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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to those who might want to read about a change of sex that ends with a happily ever after.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Tamara Harvey and Samaine Lockwood, for their helpful and patient support, and especially my committee director Joy Fraser for her time, knowledge, and kindness. I am grateful to scholars Veronica Schanoes and Jeana Jorgensen for pointing me toward tales and for answering my questions about what it is to be a folklorist. I am indebted to Heidi Dahlsveen, a storyteller who keeps variants of “The Shift of Sex” alive through performance, and to folklorist Csenge Virág Zalka, who translated from Hungarian two variants of this tale that enriched my work on this thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“SHE WAS REALLY THE MAN SHE PRETENDED TO BE”: CHANGE OF SEX IN FOLK NARRATIVES**

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George Mason University, 2016

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Folktale Type ATU 514, “The Change of Sex,” is one that has been told and collected continuously for three thousand years. Variants appear across Europe and the Middle East, and in Asia and the Americas. In this tale type, the female protagonist cross-dresses as a man, and after a series of adventures, is physically transformed into a man, marries a princess, and lives happily ever after. This thesis brings together the largest collection of variants of ATU 514 to date. Analysis of these variants, informed by feminist, queer, and transgender theory, is based on cross-tale comparison and discussion of a pattern repeated in every variant: outside the primary narrative action, there is a secondary narrative in which characters in the tale express frustration at the limitations of sex, gender, and gender identity.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Section One: Overview**

This project is a comparative analysis of all known variants of ATU 514: “The Shift of Sex,” a less popular tale type that does not often appear in published collections, although it has been continuously told for about three thousand years. In this tale, a young woman leaves home dressed as a man either to escape a bad situation or to support her family. She is strong, brave, and clever, and enters the king’s service. The king adores his new soldier and is delighted when his daughter falls in love with her, believing her to be a man, and they are betrothed. Someone in the castle doubts her masculinity, and sends her on a series of impossible feats, hoping to kill her. She has the help of a magical horse or helper, who gets her through these tasks successfully. In the final task, she is pitted against a monster who curses her, believing her to be a man: “if you are a man, be now a woman; if you are a woman, be now a man.” The hero is thus transformed into a man and returns to his happy bride, and they live happily ever after.

My goal in this thesis is a thorough analysis of the many variants of the tale that have been collected over the last three thousand years across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas. Because this project is narrowly focused on one tale type, there is space to focus on the patterns that emerge in the collection when the variants are

Figure 1: The Hero Charges the Lion



Illustration by H.J. Ford. Taken from: Lang, Andrew, ed. *The Violet Fairy Book*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901.

studied alongside one another. Among these twenty-six variants, I have identified six distinct structures within the tale type. The size of this collection has also illuminated the importance in this tale type of the secondary narrative—the action that happens in the story outside of the primary narrative of the protagonist. Analysis of this secondary narrative reveals a conversation taking place within the tale type around the constraints of sex, gender, and gender identity.

This compilation is the largest comparison of variants of ATU 514 in folklore scholarship to date. Additionally, I include in my appendices two variants of ATU 514 translated into English for the first time, to my knowledge: a new English translation of a variant from the Ossetian *Nart Sagas*, and four Finnish tales from a 1927 English translation of Finnish folktales from the archives of the Finnish Literary Society of Helsinki, with permission from the University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center. I hope this collection and analysis will be of help to future scholars of ATU 514. Something that is not captured in this thesis is the strange beauty of the stories when read or performed; at the very least, I hope that this project draws attention to and increases readership of these beautifully transgressive tales.

## **Section Two: Review of the Literature**

### **Section 2a: Feminist Theory**

As long as feminist theory has existed, feminists have read and worked with folk texts. In the 1970s, feminist folkloristics began re-examining folk narratives and unearthing themes and representations of gender and of experiences of womanhood or

femininity. Feminist scholars take special interest in folk narratives as well as folk arts and female folk artists; they view these arts as vehicles for unspoken female voices and experiences and “[seeks] out commentaries on the women’s lives embedded” within these cultural texts (Greenhill “Folklore”). For example, quilt-making, herbal healing, cooking and baking, and the stories of communities and relationships that emerge through the study of these arts, reveal a fuller picture of women’s experiences during the periods in which they were created. Feminist folkloristics argues that folk art expresses a “multiplicity of meanings” (“Folklore”), and that the analysis of folk art, the unraveling of that meaning, is complex. A feminist approach to a folk work or text considers themes that the creator has intentionally placed within their text, themes that were subconsciously embedded within those works/texts, and themes that occur as hidden or coded messages.

In their 1987 article “The Feminist Voice: Strategies of Coding in Folklore and Literature,” Joan N. Radner and Susan S. Lanser create a typology of the patterns with which female and other dominated peoples embed their texts or works with “radical subtexts”. Storytellers, artists and authors work details of their lives and their own sentiment into their creations, intentionally or not. Radner and Lanser do not distinguish between the theoretical importance of conscious or unconscious subtext; both are expressions of a lived experience that might have been perceived as a threat by the dominant class, and are therefore important presences within a text. These subtexts are often occulted in the text because their nature is threatening: “women’s creations and performances often covertly express ideas and attitudes proscribed by the dominant

culture” (412). In their discussion, the dominant class addressed is men, but Radner and Lanser agree that the theory of coding is appropriate in reading the text of any marginalized or powerless person who does not have freedom of expression to discuss their own lived or felt experience. Experiences and truths that have historically been coded into narratives and works include sexual scenes or feelings, radical political positions, repressed or suppressed feelings of sadness, despair or anger, not to mention strengths such as intellect, pride, power and bravery. Coding necessitates multiple readings: an understanding of the surface story, and then, through decoding, consideration of subtext that has been disguised. In this project I will work to un-code ATU 514 and other folktales using Radner and Lanser’s methods.

## **Section 2b: Queer and Transgender Theory**

Queer theory is not just the study of writing by queer authors, but is also a shift in critical focus that allows sexuality and transgressive expressions of gender and gender roles to take up a central space in the theoretical analysis of any text. A queer reading of a cultural text, therefore, is any reading that takes into account an analysis of gender roles, gender, and sexuality in a way that does not prioritize heterosexual readings.

As queer theory established itself, discussions of gender variance and transgenderism were given more room within the larger scholarly conversation of gender and sexuality studies. *Gender variance* describes an experience of gender outside the two traditional gender categories of male and female, and *transgenderism* is the experience of gender identity that differs from assigned gender. The transgender community had begun

to establish itself during the 1980s, and in the 1990s queer and feminist journals began to publish special “transgender” or “transsexual” issues dedicated to theoretical approaches to the transgender experience. At this point, transgenderism was seen “as a ‘special issue’ rather than a wide-reaching scholarly undertaking” (Stryker and Aizura 1), but in the following decade transgender studies emerged as a field of study in its own right.

It is important to note, as the editors of the *Transgender Studies Reader* (TSR) emphasize in their introduction, that transgender studies is not an “emergent” topic, which is to say that it does not simply focus on the modern experience, and the concepts seminal to transgender studies are not new:

[Transgender studies has] explored a range of phenomena related to deep, pervasive, and historically significant changes in attitudes toward, and understandings of, what gender means and does in our sometimes chaotically (post)modernizing world...It seeks as well to reevaluate prior understandings of gender, sex, sexuality, embodiment, and identity in light of more recent transgender phenomena. (Stryker and Aizura 3)

Feminist and queer scholars have addressed gender variance as long as they have addressed themes of gender in texts. Transgender studies, therefore, is not a new scholarly field, but it was not until the 1990s, that the academy embraced the language and perspectives needed to recognize and discuss transgender bodies and lives, which then created space for transgender theory as a discipline.

Transgender theory broadens and complicates queer theory and its approaches to texts. Transgender studies challenges the gender binary, and advances a “fluid



definition” of gender, which means that gender is larger than “option A” and “option B” but is instead a spectrum (Stryker and Aizura 7). Transgender studies pioneer Susan Stryker writes:

Transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual) over the gender categories (like man and woman) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim. (212)

Traditional analytical approaches to texts are therefore disrupted by these shifts in perspective as literary scholars re-visit understood definitions of gender identity and sexuality.

Making use of transgender theory in literary analysis, especially when that analysis is cross-cultural and historical, requires care. While we cannot relegate transgenderism as an experience to the modern day, we also cannot apply our own definitions of gender identity to texts from cultures other than our own, nor even to texts from our own history. The editors of the TSR argue that the idea of transgenderism is premised on the existence of the gender binary—male and female—which requires a word designated to describe any aberration from that binary. Therefore, to presume that an individual outside of our own culture or time who deviates from our personal or cultural definition of what is male and what is female, is to impose the gender binary on that culture or era. Outside of our own culture or era, categories such as *male* and *female* may be more fluid, or differently defined, or there may be more than two options. To

impose the gender binary upon cultures other than our own, or even upon our own historical past, argue the editors of the TSR, is a form of conceptual colonization. It is inappropriate, they argue, to presuppose that all cultures and eras observe the same definitions of gender:

Demystifying and analyzing the ontological labor performed by *man*, *male*, *female*, and *woman*, and insisting on their historicity and cultural contingency, is part of transgender critique: those terms are no less constructed than *transgender* itself, and they circulate transnationally in discourse and analysis with no less risk of being conceptually colonizing. (Stryker and Aizura 9)

Definitions of gender worldwide are varied and complex, and transgender studies should be conscious of these differences, which may be more disparate than we would expect.

Each folk narrative is embedded, of course, in its own history and culture, and their related symbolisms and values. The texts studied in this thesis are from many cultural regions and eras and I will therefore proceed carefully in an effort to limit assumptions about gender identity.

## **Section 2c: Queer and Transgender Approaches to Folk Narratives**

There is a history of queer approaches to folklore; even in the early years of feminist theory, scholars had already begun the task of re-examining folk narratives and excavating the expressions of gender and sexuality therein, with an eye to non-traditional sexualities or expressions of gender. Queer themes in European folk narratives have been explored extensively; since the crystallization of queer theory as a discipline, however,

*Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms* (2014) is the first book-length collection of queer analytical approaches to these well-known folktales. In their introduction, editors Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill explain that they read the Grimms' tales making use of Radner's concept of coding, "reordering or restructuring in an attempt to reveal the narrative's latent content" (15). They read these folktales, in other words, between the lines: seeking out the subtext beneath the text, where there may be hidden or disguised experiences or feelings. Folktales are a rich source of cultural information, both explicit and implicit, because they do not shy from themes that are taboo, contentious, or provocative: "The fairy tale owes much of its longevity to contingencies and contradictions associated with desire and pleasure" (Turner and Greenhill 22). Sex, marriage, identity, family dynamics, wealth and transformation are all classic themes of folk narrative. Folktales are also, because they are fantastic, an ideal place to experiment with turning the world and its conventions on their head; a place to explore alternatives to an accepted reality. One of the alternatives that folktales explore, Turner and Greenhill argue, are alternative sexualities. Queer readings of folktales take notice of these episodes of world-flipping related to gender and sexuality, aware that a story in which up is down may be a signifier that the narrative radically re-imagines cultural structures.

The application of specifically transgender theory to folk narratives is very recent. *Transgressive Tales* is a strong beginning toward further transgender analysis of folklore. Turner and Greenhill, in their introduction, discuss their understanding of the term transgender: "*transgender* signals a disconnection between conventional gender identity (social, cultural, psychological) and canonical sex identity (biological, physiological)"

(Turner and Greenhill 5). In *Unsettling Assumptions: Tradition, Gender, Drag*, Pauline Greenhill and Emilie Anderson-Grégoire's chapter on ATU 514 is the most thorough example of a transgender reading of a folk narrative to date. They discuss variants of the tale from a variety of cultures, and take a feminist, queer, transgender approach, and I will address their argument later in this thesis.

### **Section Three: Methods**

This collection of English-language variants of ATU 514 consists of twenty-six tales (see Table 2). To establish a collection of all English-language variants of ATU 514, I began with Hans-Jörg Uther's *Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, better known as the ATU Index. The system used in the ATU index originates with Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne, who published the first tale type index in 1910. Stith Thompson translated and expanded this index in 1928 and the classification system became known as the Aarne-Thompson Index. Uther's updated collection (2004) is known as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) index. This system of classifying folktales is crucial to folkloristics: tale type indexes are "the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist's arsenal of aids for analysis" (Dundes 195). The system organizes folk narratives based on motif: that is, a narrative event in a tale. All tales with similar motifs are then categorized into a *tale type*. The ATU index lists all recognized tale types and their motifs. Within these tale types, an individual tale is called a *variant*. The index includes a list of all known variants of each tale type that have been collected throughout history, in all languages, and any other relevant information. The ATU index

titles ATU 514 “The Shift of Sex,” and defines it by only two motifs: “the woman in man’s clothing” (motif K1837), and “the demon’s curse” (motif D11). Uther notes that there is a great variety in the motifs in the different variants, including some that “lack the change of sex” (302). Uther’s caution is apt: there is such a wide variety in key motifs among the stories collected under this tale type that some hardly seem similar to one another. There are yet other variants, however, that appear thousands of years apart and yet are recognizably similar. For this project, my interest in this tale type is the change of sex. Those tales, therefore, that are designated as ATU 514 but that do not include a change of sex have been excluded from my analysis. Uther also notes that ATU 514 overlaps with tale type ATU 884, a similar tale that includes a cross-dressing woman, but does not conclude with a change of sex. Because of its close similarities with ATU 514, I will discuss variants of ATU 884 at length below.

In the earlier edition of Uther’s index, the Aarne-Thompson (AT) index, it is mentioned that “the sister becomes a soldier in place of her brother” and marries the princess, “driven away and rescued by her companions” and the change of sex takes place “in the ogress’ house,” concluding in a happy marriage (Aarne 83, 84). He notes variants in Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Sicilian (84). Analysis of ATU 514 is combined with tale type 513, “The Helpers,” a story about a hero who is the youngest of three brothers. His extraordinary companions help him complete impossible tasks, and he wins the princess’s hand (83). The summary of ATU 514 offered in Uther’s updated index lists a father with three daughters who want to go to war; the tricks the father sets for her; the gift of a magical object. Uther mentions that, in some versions, a mother

disguises her daughter as a man to appease her husband. The hero then dresses as a man and a princess falls in love with her. Uther specifically mentions that “The woman in man’s clothing refuses, or the marriage is unconsummated” (301). Impossible feats are set, and Uther mentions that in some cases these tests are tests of gender, not of strength (motifs I call “Tests of Masculinity”). The hero changes sex “through a demon’s curse or a saint’s help, seldom by accident” and, Uther concludes, “her parents are happy that finally they have a real son” (301). He notes that this tale frequently appears in combination with ATU 884, another cross-dressing tale discussed in a later chapter. He adds: “Great variety of motifs in different episodes. Some variants lack the change of sex. Some motifs appear in earlier Oriental tales, but literary versions of this type first appear in the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century” (302). The languages in which this tale type has been collected are listed in Table 1.

The ATU index is a starting point to research a specific folk tale type, but to compile a list of variants is not a simple task, even with the help of the index. First, of the list of variants, many or most have never been translated into English, and this is especially true of a less-popular tale like ATU 514. Second, the texts in which these variants appear are generally the “classic” texts, the oldest and most well-known—for example, the Grimms’ *Kinder und Hausmärchen*. Many of these texts first appeared in the late nineteenth century and have fallen out of print and have never been translated

into English. Third, of the texts that have been translated into English, the editors often omit stories altogether, especially if the content is seen as inappropriate. In the new collection the title may be changed, and the editor may not include any ATU tale type

**Table 1: Languages or Regions in which ATU 514 has been collected**

Abkhaz	Chilean	Indian	Ossetian
Adygea	Croatian	Iranian	Polish
Albanian	Dagestan	Irish	Portuguese
Armenian	Danish	Italian	Rumanian
Austrian	Finnish	Kara-Kalpak	Scottish
Bosnian	French-Canadian	Latvian	Serbian
Bulgarian	Georgian	Lithuanian	Spanish
Buryat	German	Macedonian	Turkish
Byelorussian	Greek	Malaysian	Walloon
Cape Verdian	Gypsy	Mongolian	West Indies
Central African	Hungarian	Norwegian	

**Uther, Hans-Jörg.** *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, Part I.* Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004.

information. This renders it close to impossible to identify variants in folktale collections, especially due to the large number of folktale collections that continue to be published every year. ATU 514, for example, includes many variants where the titles make the tale identifiable—“The Girl Who Changed into a Boy,” for example—but other tales are titled more mysteriously, such as “The Weeping Pomegranate and the Laughing Quince.”

The ATU index lists variants of ATU 514 in 43 languages: of these 43 I have identified twenty-six variants, in sixteen languages, most of which I identified through research independent of the ATU index. There are multiple regional tale-type indexes I made use of, for instance, Richard Dawkins' *Modern Greek Folktales*. Other tales were identified through perusal of collections of regional tales and searching for those that matched ATU 514. This process was slow and inexact, and so I searched library and online databases for *transgender*, *queer*, *change of sex*, along with *folktales*. Another source of variants was previous scholars of ATU 514 who list variants within their published works, several of whom, within their texts, translated variants into English. I was fortunate to find a Hungarian storyteller who generously translated for me two important variants of ATU 514: the Hungarian variant "The Girl Who Became a Man" and "Alimbeglanya" from the Ossetian *Nart Sagas*. "Alimbeglanya" appears in English for the first time in Appendix 1. I was also given permission by the University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center to reproduce several Finnish variants of ATU 514 that have never before been translated into English—these appear in Appendix 2. Some of the tales included in my project have been identified as ATU 514 by the collector, but others have never been categorized. I chose these variants for inclusion in this project based solely on the motif of change of sex.

A crucial piece of information to the folklorist is where, when, and how the narrative was collected. I am grateful to have this information in a few cases; for instance, the Greek tales collected by Richard Dawkins. For the vast majority of tales, however, I do not have this information: the variants appeared in collections with no



background information, when, where, and from whom they were collected, from what language they had been translated, or if there were exclusions or additions to the text. The lack of background information is problematic, and yet is not a new challenge in folkloristics. In this project I discuss gender, gender roles, and sexuality, all of which are issues intimately interwoven with cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices. Any discussion of these concepts merits a consideration of social and cultural context; this context, however, is mostly absent. When collection information is available, I will include it in my analysis and discussion. Generally lacking this contextual information, however, I have based my readings and analysis on what lies on the page before me in the texts themselves.

## CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

### Section 1: Popular Representations of Cross-Dressing

ATU 514 includes a transgressive act of cross-dressing, but cross-dressing has long been a central theme in popular narratives. In theater, the cultural tradition of exclusively male productions means that cross-dressing has been an important part of theater and performance. In ancient Greco-Roman theater, men played both male and female roles (Bollich 53), as well as in Indian, Chinese, and Japanese theater from the twelfth through thirteenth centuries. In Japanese *kabuki*, originating in the seventeenth century, men portrayed women on stage, including female prostitutes, which led to these performances being repeatedly stifled due to their erotic nature. *Kabuki* persisted, however, among adult male audiences. Medieval and Early Modern church performances in Europe often made use of male actors in female roles, and English Mummers' theater did as well (Bollich 58, 59). Shakespeare's female characters were generally played by male actors, but cross-dressing is also a theme in his plays, and at least six include a male actor dressed as a woman dressed as a man, to the thrill of his audiences: "Shakespeare capitalizes on his audience's interest in gender and its ambiguities" (61). Cross-dressing has never fallen out of favor: once women began taking to the stage more often, both male and female drag performances continued, although these shows were generally controversial and disparaged. The shows became

bawdy and more sexualized during the nineteenth century, and these drag shows continue to this day in the US and Europe (62-63). There are also a number of cross-dressing figures in popular legend, such as the French Joan of Arc, and the Chinese Mulan, who have captivated the popular imagination.

In Europe during the late sixteenth through the late seventeenth centuries, writers began to craft literary fairy tales, and in these tales cross-dressing is a frequent theme. Unlike oral narratives, these tales were written by individual authors and meant to be read from the page, rather than performed. Yet it is generally assumed that they are based upon popular folk narratives of the time. Jack Zipes writes that “the literary fairy tale has evolved from the stories of the oral tradition, piece by piece in a process of incremental adaptation, generation by generation in the different cultures of the people who cross-fertilized the oral tales and disseminated them” (xi). Literary fairy tales are a “special literary genre” that emerged in the sixteenth century (xii). Cross-dressing was a popular narrative device. Zipes writes: “the disguise of a young woman as man became a common motif in European literature by the nineteenth century and reflected the difficulties that women encountered when they sought to travel alone or wanted to lead independent lives. However, the disguise was always fraught with difficulties because it challenged traditional gender roles and identities” (159). Cross-dressing in these narratives, then, not only offers commentary upon the frustrating gender restrictions experienced by women, but also tests the boundaries of sex, gender and gender identity.

Two Italian examples are Giovanni Francesco Straparola’s “Costanza/Costanzo,” (1550) from *Facetious Nights*, and Giambattista Basile’s “The Three Crowns” from his

1634 *Pentamerone*. “Costanza/Costanzo” borrows heavily from the “Story of Grisandole” a tale from Arthurian legend in which Merlin reveals the gender of a cross-dressing, heroic woman. In “Costanza/Costanzo,” a king’s daughter is betrothed to a man below her station and so she leaves home dressed as a man and enters the service of a king. The queen falls in love with her, Costanza refuses her, and she sets Costanza/Costanzo on an impossible task. Ultimately it is revealed by a satyr that Costanza is a woman, and that the Queen’s maidens were actually men. The Queen and her servants are killed, and Costanza marries the king. In “The Three Crowns,” a princess leaves her father’s home and is caught by an ogress. She escapes with the help of an old woman, who dresses her as a man and gives her a magic ring. She enters into the king’s service, the queen falls in love with her, but the princess refuses to marry her. The queen sentences the princess to die, but the magic ring helps her escape, and the king, aware of his wife’s betrayal, kills his wife and marries the princess. This literary fairy tale is clearly very similar to the folktale; the violent ending, however, is one only seen in literary tales.

Madame d’Aulnoy’s “Belle-Belle or the Chevalier Fortuné,” (1689) is very similar to Straparola’s. In this story, every family is required to give a son for service in the king, and a poor father allows his daughters to dress as men. The first two fail, but the third, Belle-Belle, succeeds, because she is kind to a fairy, and is given the new name, Fortuné, a magical horse, and several magical items. Several of the women at the court fall in love with Fortuné, including the Queen, but all are rejected. The Queen sends Fortuné on impossible tasks, including killing a dragon, all of which she accomplishes.

The Queen, rebuked again, sentences her to death, but at the last moment Belle-Belle undresses and is saved, and marries the king. There are two very similar French tales: Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier's "Marmoisan, ou L'innocente Tromperie," (1695) and Henriette Julie de Murat's "The Savage," (1699). The theme of the youngest daughter is one that also appears in the oral narratives, the folktales I'll discuss later in this thesis.

Charles Perrault's "The Counterfeit Marquise," (1697) is a different tale but with similar themes. A pregnant mother who loses her husband to war decides to raise her male child as female so that he will never have to live and die as a soldier. He grows up beautiful, and many men fall in love with him. He rejects them all but eventually falls in love with a man; they have a complicated romance fraught with the anxiety of his identity but they ultimately marry, and he discovers on their wedding night that his husband is a woman cross-dressed as a man. This story is remarkable in that both characters decide to remain in their "disguises" after marrying, and live happily, and bear children. Victoria Flanagan argues that this tale "reject[s] the notion of either temporary or comical cross-dressing in favor of a progressive representation of gender deviance which accords more accurately with the contemporary concept of transgender" (56). In the other literary fairy tales, the transgressive acts of the protagonist seemingly end with the heterosexual marriage. The female, who is defiant and independent in her male guise returns to the costume of her "old self" and her transgressions are rendered a temporary adventure. In "The Counterfeit Marquise," however, the two cross-dressing lovers permanently choose the radical gender identities they are comfortable with, and live a happy life, content with each other's cross-dressing.

The relationship between the literary tales and the oral narratives I will discuss below is unknown. Stith Thompson posits that oral versions of ATU 514 stem *from* the literary fairy tales. He writes that ATU 514 is: “a story which was developed by literary writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which has been collected in a few countries from oral raconteurs” (55). It is unclear, as Greenhill points out, “whether he intended to suggest that its origins were literary...or simply that writers had worked with the idea” (Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire 71, note 8). In 1962, French folklorist Elisee Legros states that ATU 514 is a “quite altered” version of “Belle-Belle” (qtd. in Greenhill 58). This cannot be correct because there are variants of ATU 514 which pre-date “Belle-Belle” (see Table 2), and Uther makes no mention of the literary origins of ATU 514 in the ATU index.

Of the tens of thousands of extant folk narratives, there are many that may be read as transgressing categories of gender and sexuality, and I did not include all of them. For example, *Transgressive Tales* discusses transbiological transformations in folk narratives, in which a human is transformed into an animal or vice versa: “human-animal (and vice-versa) transformations also offer possibilities that implicate not only those relationships but also sex/gender dichotomies and misplaced, inexpressible, or otherwise wanton desires” (16-17). Transbiological transformations, then, represent a transformation from male to female or female to male. In an exchange between a princess and a frog, for example, even though the frog is secretly a prince, it is the princess who has the power because of her human form. These disguises give folktales a structure with which to address power dynamics, specifically gendered power relationships. For want of space, I

will not focus on these fascinating tales in this thesis, but instead upon those that contain a human to human change of sex. In addition, there are many cross-dressing folktales that I did not include in this project; in these tales, a male cross-dresses as a woman either for comic purposes or simply to accomplish a task, much like Huckleberry Finn cross-dressing to hide his identity. In these tales, cross-dressing is not generally a transgressive act, but rather is simply a plot device.

## **Section 2: Ballads**

In “Neither Man nor Maid” (1995), Pauline Greenhill analyzes eleven cross-dressing ballads collected in Newfoundland in the 1950s; they feature strong, adventurous women who live at sea by virtue of a male disguise, a vocation not traditionally permitted to their sex (160). They are independent, choosing their own lives and husbands (162), and successful, often excelling beyond their male counterparts; they transgress the boundaries of their sex and succeed at skills traditionally beyond their achievement. Greenhill argues that “those texts, like cross-dressing ballads, that place women in roles ordinarily inappropriate to their gender, and make them excel in them, strike to the heart of deeply based cultural assumptions about what makes a woman a woman or a man a man” (165). A woman succeeding at masculine tasks is not a singular hero: she stands as an *example* of the fluidity between genders, the tenuousness of the boundary between what is “male” and what is “female.” These ballads test the gender binary.

There are ballads that include male-to-female cross-dressing, yet they are different; when women dress as men, it is “liberatory,” but “the opposite—male dressing as female has somewhat different valences. Male cross-dressing...makes fun of and undermines the bodily characteristics that are thought to be female/feminine, and it shows men as better women than women” (Greenhill 165). In a literary or folk text, men dressed in women’s clothes may make a bawdy or jocular ballad; but female cross-dressing, on the other hand, may be part of a transgressive act.

### **Section 3: Cross-Dressing in Oral Folk Narratives**

There are three tale types very similar to ATU 514: ATU 884, 884B, and 884B\*. In these tale types, the protagonist cross-dresses but does not experience a change of sex. Many of them are nearly identical to ATU 514 up until the conclusion. These tales are available for radical interpretation, however; the reasons the protagonist cross-dresses are to experience freedoms that her own gender does not allow, and it is possible to read these tales as expressions of gender fluidity or gender fucking: “transgender moves may be obvious in tales like [ATU 514] where a girl literally transsexes into a boy...But arguably, gender fucking manifests whenever girls and women do work more associated with boys and men” (Greenhill and Turner 16). The protagonist is participating in action generally unavailable to her sex and thus these tale types push gender boundaries.

Tale type ATU 884, “The Forsaken Fiancée” is an example of the *temporary* cross-dressing that is by far the most predominant in European folktales—it tells of a character who disguises herself in the garb of another gender in order to accomplish some



particular goal. “Beausoleil” is a French variant of this tale type collected in Missouri containing humor at the expense of the male characters. In it, the youngest of three sons is an irresponsible and spoiled young man who tricks his way into marriage with a king’s daughter. Once he leaves home and loses his fortune, his wife dresses as a man to come to his aid, winning back his fortune with cleverness and daring. When she regains her husband’s fortune, she accosts his enemies, “dresse[s] them all in burlap sacks, with wooden shoes on their feet, and sen[ds] them in the street, kicking them in the rear” (Thomas 175). The protagonist is clever, brave and inventive, and it is through her agency that the chaos of the story is resolved. In this story, however, we *laugh* at the cross-dressing. The cruel words she tosses at the villains, once defeated, are all the more funny because we know that these men have been bested by a woman.

At the end of the story the couple head home and live out their days in peace, both restored to their proper positions and genders. In “Princess Plumpkins,” a Greek variant of ATU 884, a king with three sons antagonizes a rival by challenging his three daughters to complete impossible tasks. The elder daughters fail, but the youngest, Plumpkins, disguises herself as a boy and easily accomplishes the tasks. When she sees her competitor failing at his task—he is trying to empty a river with a teaspoon—she “laughed until she could laugh no more” (Megas 165). The jape is in good fun, however, and the couple are married after the tasks are completed and after they have repaired to their respective gender roles. There is no apparent reason for Plumpkins to cross-dress that is made clear in the story; her male disguise creates the joke that a boy has been beaten by a girl.

In this tale type, the cross-dressing characters identify with their birth sex, and happily return to it after their caper is complete. Adopting another gender is not a personal choice or an expression of identity; it is a means to an end. It is significant, however, that the vast majority of these cross-dressing tales involve a woman disguising herself as a man, a clear indication that the female gender desires the rights and privileges of another. The women in these stories are courageous and strong, but find that their success in the world cannot be accomplished as women. To dress as a man allows them the right to wander freely in the world, to fend off encroachers with threats or violence, or to bear arms and to defeat the enemies of their families. These tales may function as opportunities for female listeners or tellers to vicariously enjoy the freedom and power that the male gender is allowed. Moreover, they could serve as a fantasy of escaping the stifling bonds of the female gender, which in most cases ensured a life more domestic and less exciting than those of male family members. These tales describe a transgression of female gender roles.

There are other folktales that take cross-dressing one step further. In tale type 884B, “The Girl as Soldier,” a young woman dresses as a man in order to fight for her country or her family. In “Fanta-Ghirò the Beautiful,” a variant from Italo Calvino’s collection of Italian folktales, a king with three daughters and no sons needs someone to take command of his army because he is ill. The elder two daughters fail because of their femininity, but the third daughter is successful through cleverness and determination. Her enemy king suspects she is a woman anyway, and he and his son put her through a series of tests of her masculinity, which she passes easily. She is faced with a final test of

bathing naked. She obviously has no way of disguising her gender without her men's clothes, but in this tale she escapes the test by bathing quickly and slipping away before her enemy and his son can see. She runs away, leaving a note happily describing her deceit (Calvino 252). This note is similar in tone to the laughing reveals of ATU 884: the reader/listener applauds the heroine and laughs at the men being deceived. The protagonist returns home and happily reports to her dying father that she has won the war because the enemy king has abandoned the feud, and at that moment the other king's son arrives and proposes. They are married and live happily ever after. The Greek tale "Is it a Girl? Is it a Boy?" begins similarly to "Fanta-Ghirò." The youngest of nine daughters dresses as a man to support her father who is being mocked by his brother. She sets off on a series of impossible tasks, guided by magical protection in the form of "the blessing of her parents" (Dawkins 317). She is captured by a noblewoman and her son in the course of her adventures, who suspect that she is female. They put her through a series of tests of her masculinity, which she passes, then runs away and leaves a note, not humorous but tragic this time, in which she reveals her gender. Once the man finds the note he becomes sick with love for her, and eventually they are magically reunited and marry happily.

A queer reading of ATU 884B identifies a homosexual relationship between men. In each of these stories, the male character never expresses feelings for his "companion," as the hero is called in the story, while she is still dressed as a man, yet he does so the moment he is aware of her femaleness. This implies that there is already a love present, before her gender is revealed, which then suddenly becomes acceptable when he reads

her note. The audience of the story is never scandalized by this homosexual transgression, because we know all along that the couple is a man and a woman, but of course the man does not know. The subtext is the tension of sexual attraction between two men, which in this case can be acted upon because of the convenient discovery that his companion is a woman, and heteronormativity is restored. It is worth noting that these stories end well for the protagonist—she is brave and clever, and suffers no punishment because of her transgressive act of cross-dressing. Instead she is adored and rewarded with marriage at the conclusion of the narrative. The actions of the heroine of ATU 884B, therefore, are more than expressions of the desire to escape the constrained roles of gender that we saw in ATU 884. They express that the cross-dressing woman, the woman whose qualities transcend her gender, is heroic; gender fluidity is a strength.

ATU 884B\*, “Girl Dressed as a Man Deceives the King,” is a rare tale type with similarities to ATU 884B, but it omits the elements of marriage and war entirely, and it begins rather differently. In the Russian variant of ATU 884B\*, “Vasilisa the Priest’s Daughter,” the protagonist does not cross-dress for a utilitarian—and temporary—purpose, but enters the tale dressed as a man, without explanation or details. It begins “She wore man’s clothes, rode horseback, was a good shot with the rifle, and did everything in a quite unmaidenly way, so that only very few people knew that she was a girl” (Afanas’ev 131). In this variant, the protagonist dresses as a man for personal reasons, or reasons that are not due to an immediate need, unlike in ATU 514, where the protagonist dresses as a man in order to take part in activities restricted to men. In “Vasilisa,” a neighboring king wants to confirm that she is not a man, but a woman. He

puts her through a series of tests of masculinity, which she passes. At the conclusion of the story, she is challenged to bathe naked with him and his men, but instead runs away, leaving a note that reveals her clever deceit. The story ends happily, stating that Vasilisa “was a clever girl, and very pretty too” (133). This story, while simple, is remarkable in that it paints a picture of a woman who intends to dress and live as a man indefinitely. Our culture has many heroines who are cross-dressers, of whom Joan of Arc is only the most famous example. These figures, like Vasilisa, are admired and praised as heroes, not in spite of their radical transgressions but because of them, by men and women alike.

The 884 tale types challenge traditional gender roles—young women adopt the role of the dashing hero who is strong, independent, and clever when they dress in men’s clothes. By cross-dressing, these characters emphasize the performative nature of gender and therefore weaken the definitions of acceptable gendered behavior. At the conclusion of the 884 tales, however, the protagonist reveals and/or returns to her feminine clothing and female life. The transgression of gender roles, then, is temporary and is often undertaken solely in order to accomplish a specific task. Within the variants of ATU 514, however, the protagonist physically transforms from female to male and remains that way; this change of sex directly addresses both gender and gender identity.

### CHAPTER THREE: VARIANTS OF ATU 514<sup>1</sup>

There is a wide variance in the variants of ATU 514 upon which this analysis is based. This variance is not surprising since the oldest tale collected here dates to about 1,000 BCE, and the most recent to 1962. Variants have been collected from locations as distant from one another as Chile, Norway, and Russia. Most of the variants have been categorized as ATU 514, but for some there is no tale type information available in the texts in which they appear, or in the ATU indexes. For this project, I have collected any variants that include the motif of change of sex. In most tales the change of sex is from female to male, but there are exceptions. The male to female stories have a different structure, and are analyzed here separately. Cross-tale comparison reveals that the following three characteristics are included in every female-to-male variant of ATU 514: 1) dressing in male clothes, 2) change of sex from female to male, and 3) a happy ending. Aside from these, there are many significant motifs that occur in most, but not all of the variants. I have identified the following significant motifs: *origin story* (the reason the hero cross-dresses); *siblings* (the hero is the youngest of three children); *helper* (the hero

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<sup>1</sup> Tales of cross-dressing and change of sex challenge English pronouns. When describing an individual who experiences gender outside of the binary, there is no set rule, save for asking the individual what they prefer. The narrators of most of these stories stick with the female pronoun until the change of sex, when they begin to use the male pronoun; others adopt the male pronoun as soon as the protagonist is in drag, and still others opt for “he” in quotation marks. Use of either *he* or *she* in this thesis is tellingly complicated and confusing. While I’ve used these terms in previous chapters while discussing cross-dressing protagonists, I’ll avoid any use of gendered pronouns when referring to the main character, and opt for “the hero,” a conveniently gender-neutral term for our courageous protagonist.

has a magical or beneficent helper); *soldier/service* (the hero enters military service); *tests of masculinity* (the hero is tested for female or male habits or traits); *impossible feats* (the hero is sent to accomplish impossible feats); and the manner of the *change of sex*.

Since there is not space to discuss each variant of ATU 514, I have categorized them into six groups based on inclusion of the above motifs (see Table 2). For instance, all of the tales of the group *The Borrowed Sex* include a similar *change of sex* motif: they borrow the sex of a magical creature. I'll discuss each group separately, and provide a chart in each section which lists the motifs that these tales share in common.

**Table 2: ATU 514 Organized Into Groups Based on Significant Motifs**

Group	Title, Source	Language, Region	Date Collected
<b>The Borrowed Sex</b>	Sikhandin ( <i>Mahabharata</i> )	Sanskrit, India	800-900 BCE
	A Indian Princess Borrows a Jinni's Sex ( <i>A Thousand and One Nights</i> )	Arabic, Middle East	700-900
	The Princess and the Div who Changed Sexes ( <i>The Rose of Bakawali</i> )	Persian	12 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>The Mother's Deception</b>	Iphis and Ianthe ( <i>Metamorphoses</i> )	Greek	8
	The King with Nine Daughters	Albanian	1920s
	The Weeping Pomegranate and the Laughing Quince	Turkish	1946
	The Girl Who Changed into a Boy	Armenian	1913
<b>The Hero and the Princess</b>	Alimbeglanya ( <i>The Nart Sagas</i> )	Ossetian	1000 BCE
	The Girl Who Pretended to be a Boy	Romanian	1894
	The Princess Who Would be a Prince or Iliane of the Golden Tresses	Romanian	1870s
<b>The Youngest Daughter</b>	The Girl Who Became a Boy	Albanian	1881
	A Woman Became a Man	Serbian	1911
	The Girl Who Went to War	Greek/Turkish	1943
	The Courageous Daughter	Kabardian/North Caucasus	1919
<b>Magical Transformation</b>	Florinda	Chilean	1962
	Story of a Mule-Driver	Mexican	1917
	The Unicorn	Spanish	1947
	The Metamorphosis	Spanish	1924
	Untitled	Finnish	1880s
	The Princess Who Became a Man	Danish	1881
<b>Trickster Hero</b>	The Girl Who Became a Man	Hungarian	1935
	The Girl Who Served as a Soldier and Got Married With the King's Daughter	Norwegian	1843
	Woman as a Man	Finnish	1880s
	The King's Son-In-Law, a Woman, a Shooter, a Chain-Man, a Wood-Fell and a Blower	Finnish	1880s
	The Girl Who Went to War Instead of Her Brother	Finnish	1880s
	Satu (Tale)	Finnish	1880s



### **Variant Group 1: The Borrowed Sex**

These tales are grouped together because of the means by which the protagonists change sex. These are literary tales: “Sikhandin,” from the *Mahabharata*, recorded in Sanskrit around 800-400 BCE, “An Indian Princess Borrows a Jinni’s Sex” from *A Thousand and One Nights*, collected in Arabic around 700-900 AD, and “The Princess and the Div who Changed Sexes” from “The Rose of Bakawali,” a collection of Persian folktales and legend from the twelfth century (Clouston xxxv). Due to their age, the origins of these texts are unclear, but all three are voluminous collections of tales arranged around a frame story as stories-within-a-story. *A Thousand and One Nights* is understood to be a collection of folktales from Persian, Arabic, Mesopotamian, Indian, and Egyptian sources (Marzolph 55-6). The narratives within all three texts have been translated countless times over the centuries, and therefore to obtain definitive translation of the original stories is impossible. The tales I am including may, therefore, be different translations of the same tale but are different enough that discussion of all is informative for our purposes.

The story “Sikhandin” appears in Book 5, section 190 of the *Mahabharata*. It is complicated and lengthy, but the portion significant to this project is as follows: a woman is betrothed to a wicked man but she cannot get out of the marriage. She cannot kill him because she is a woman, so she desires to be transformed into a man. She lives as an ascetic in the wilderness for many years. Ultimately a deity grants that in her next life she will be born a woman, but will become a man before she dies. The protagonist dies

and is reborn; in the next life, her parents are aware of this destined change of sex and therefore dress Sikhandin in men's clothes, and arrange marriage with a woman. When

**Table 3: The Borrowed Sex Variant Group**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sikhandin</b>	<b>A Indian Princess Borrows a Jinni's Sex</b>	<b>The Princess and the Div who Changed Sexes</b>
<b>Region/Year Collected</b>	Sanskrit, India, 800-900 BCE	Arabic, Middle East, 700-900 AD	Persian, 12 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Origin Story</b>	Prophecy will turn into a man; parents raise as boy	Father wants a girl child; mother disguises hero	Prophecy will turn into a man; parents raise as boy
<b>Siblings</b>			
<b>Helper</b>			
<b>Soldier/Service</b>			
<b>Tests of Masculinity</b>			
<b>Impossible Feats</b>			
<b>Change of Sex</b>	Magical being swaps sexes but is cursed to stay female	Jinni swaps sexes but loses virginity so remains female	Giant Brahman swaps sexes but can't return it because someone falls in love with her

the new wife tells her family that she has actually been wed to a woman and her family threatens war on the hero's family, Sikhandin goes to the wilderness to commit suicide, but there meets a Yaksha, a nature-spirit. When he asks if he can help, Sikhandin beseeches him for a change of sex: "I would make a perfect man" (Rāya and Ganguli 368). The Yaksha agrees to trade his manhood for her womanhood temporarily, as long as they trade them back in the future. Sikhandin returns home as a man, and, "having

obtained manhood, enter[s] his city in great joy” (369) and is happily wed and impregnates his wife. The Yaksha, now female, commits an offense against another magical being due to her new gender: it is traditional, when this being visits, for a man to come out to greet him, but shameful for a woman to leave the house to greet him. The Yaksha stays indoors out of shame, but the magical being is offended that the Yaksha, whom he knew as male, does not come out to greet him. When the Yaksha is drawn out and discovered to be female, she has then shamed herself as a woman. The magical being curses her to remain female. When Sikhandin returns to swap his gender back, the Yaksha tells him that he can retain his gender, and he lives happily ever after with his wife and family.

“An Indian Princess Borrows a Jinni’s Sex,” from *A Thousand and One Nights*, appears around 1100 years later (Marzolph 55-57), is remarkably similar, but lacks the complex back-story. It is the 957<sup>th</sup> story told by Shahrazad: a woman gives birth to a girl child and, afraid that her husband will kill it because he wants a son, she disguises the child as a boy. She raises the child and eventually arranges marriage to a woman. The hero travels to the wedding, dismayed; on the journey the hero has to walk far into the forest to urinate, and there meets a Jinni, a supernatural being. The Jinni agrees to swap genders temporarily, if only they may swap back later. “By Allah’s Grace” (Mardrus and Mathers 409) the swap goes off without a hitch, and the hero weds his bride and they quickly have a child together. The hero excels at manhood: the narrator tells that when he comes back to the forest to “return the Jinni’s sex...during these nine agreeable months, [his sex] developed and improved in beauty” (409). There the hero finds the

Jinni is pregnant. The Jinni reports that she attempted to keep her womanhood “in its original state of white virginity” (410), but has damaged her borrowed gender: another Jinn fell in love with her and she with him. They had sex and “broke the precious seal of the packet which I had in care.” She concludes that “a female’s pleasure is more durable and more delicate than a male’s,” that she will keep her gender permanently to protect her child, and that the hero may remain male (410).<sup>2</sup> The entire story is summarized at the end as evidence of the great power of Allah to affect such radical changes (411).

A variant entitled “The Princess and the Div who Change Sexes,” nearly identical to the Sikhandin story, appears in *A Group of Eastern Romances*, compiled by W. A. Clouston in 1889. This text contains the collection of Persian folktales and legends “The Rose of Bakawali,” originally collected by Shaykh Izzat Ulláh in the twelfth century (Clouston xxxv). Clouston translates from the 1876 French translation of Garcin de Tassy. Clouston writes, of change of sex in these texts:

we very frequently read in Eastern tales of fountains the waters of which have the property of changing a man who drinks of them or bathes in them into a woman, and of transforming a monkey into a man, and *vice versa*. But this romance is, I think, singular in representing the hero, after having been changed into a young woman, as actually becoming a mother. (xxxvi)

The sex-changing protagonist is apparently a prominent theme in Middle Eastern popular narratives.

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<sup>2</sup> This exact moment occurs also in the Greek story of Tiresias from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, 8 AD, discussed later in this thesis.

These stories are fascinating, first, because of their age: two of them are close to the oldest versions of sex-change narratives we have. They also contain strong similarities to ATU 514, most notably that the change of sex which takes place is positive and desired, whether it is the fulfilment of a personal wish or a desire to avoid trouble; the tales end happily. When a tale that includes cross-dressing and gender transgression ends happily, this is narrative approval of these transgressive acts. There are other male to female change of sex stories that I will discuss later. In these tales, the protagonist abhors his change of sex; here, the hero desires it. These three ancient variants of *The Borrowed Sex* group vary from the skeleton story of ATU 514 above, but there are significant and notable similarities: the dressing in male drag, the problematic betrothal to a woman and the magical transformation from female to male. The unique elements of these oldest versions of ATU 514 are the origin story and the means of the change of sex episode. In the tales of the variant group *The Borrowed Sex*, it is the parents who decide she will dress in male drag, not the protagonist, and therefore the hero is not in control of the cross-dressing. The hero has control over the change of sex, however. In these tales the sex swap is a brokered arrangement instead of a curse. These variants are also unique in that the change of sex is not meant to be permanent, but becomes that way due to the hero's good care of the male sex and alignment with masculine traits, unlike the Jinni or Yaksha; narratively, the hero earns his sex through his appropriate masculine behavior.

Both the Yaksha and the Jinni, interestingly, once they are rendered female, violate the gendered expectations of their new sex. They are shamed or sullied so that they cannot return the femininity to the hero. The language in "An Indian Princess

Borrows a Jinni's Sex" is telling. The sexes that are swapped are described as if they were objects, separate from the bodies and selves of the hero and the magical creature. The hero holds onto the Jinni's manhood, and "develops and improves its beauty" through marriage, sex, and impregnation, and seeks to return it to the Jinni in a better state than it was received. The Jinni, on the other hand, "[breaks] the precious seal of the packet" through the very same acts of copulation and impregnation. These acts which strengthen manhood, permanently sully womanhood. The strength of manhood is reproduction, and the strength of womanhood is, confusingly, virginity. There is a reflection in these variants, then, on the definitions of gender and their associated roles. The Arabic tale begins because of the injustice of a father who wants a boy child so much that he will kill a child born female. The tale of Sikhandin begins because she is betrothed to a wicked man, but cannot get out of it because of marriage practices. The preference for male heirs, and the traditional patriarchal system itself, creates the need for transgressive cross-dressing to protect the lives of female children. In these tales, it is not only the cross-dressing which is transgressive, but rather the cross-dressing draws our attention to gender roles, and other instances in the tales of the pains of restricted roles. According to Norman Brown (1927), there are multiple variants of this female to male change of sex story in Eastern literature that are similar to of ATU 514 (10).

### **Variant Group 2: The Mother's Deception**

This variant group includes three oral narratives and one literary folktale: the literary tale “Iphis and Ianthe” is from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a text appearing in the first century AD. It is commonly understood that Ovid’s epic poem is a collection of

**Table 4: The Mother's Deception Variant Group**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Iphis and Ianthe</b>	<b>The King with Nine Daughters</b>	<b>The Weeping Pomegranate and the Laughing Quince</b>	<b>The Girl Who Changed into a Boy</b>
<b>Region/Year Collected</b>	Greece, 8 AD	Albanian, 1926-9	Turkey, 1946	Armenia, 1913
<b>Origin Story</b>	Father will kill a female child	Father wants boy child	Father will kill girl child; Nurse dresses hero as a boy	Mother dresses hero as a boy to play with neighbors
<b>Siblings</b>				
<b>Helper</b>	Isis	Horse of the Jinn breed	Colt; His 3 magical hairs	Magical horse
<b>Soldier/Service</b>			Yes	Yes
<b>Tests of Masculinity</b>				
<b>Impossible Feats</b>			Retrieve finest mirror in the world; A pomegranate and a quince	Rescue horse's brother; Retrieve taxes and Grandfather's rosary from a house of Devs
<b>Change of Sex</b>	Mother prays to Isis	Jinn Curses	Demon Curses	She-devil Curses

extant folktales rather than his individual creation, and so it is possible that this tale was drawn from folk sources, rather than the other way around. The remaining variants are oral narratives that are Turkish, Albanian, and Armenian, collected between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. The Albanian and Turkish stories are extremely similar, although collected from two different sources. Richard Dawkins mentions, in *Modern Greek Folktales*, that there is also a Thracian variant that is nearly identical to the Turkish version (301). These variants all begin similarly, with the mother's deception: the mother disguises a girl child as a boy because the father wants a son and, in some cases, has threatened to kill the daughter, mother, or the midwife. The Armenian variant is slightly less dramatic, in that it is the mother who is responsible for dressing her daughter up as a boy, but not on threat of death: she does so simply so that the child can play with the neighbors' children.

The Turkish, Albanian, and Armenian variants begin when the hero sets out as a man, and, with the aid of a magical horse, is successful and is either wed or betrothed to a princess. All versions feature a sub-plot in which the princess to whom the hero is betrothed is restricted by her father: in the Turkish and Albanian tales, her father will not let her marry the man she desires, who is a boy who can transform into a pigeon—he is instead betrothed to the hero. In the Armenian tale, the king gives her away to the hero as if she were property (Downing 83). The hero is required to complete a series of three impossible tasks, the last of which is a fight against a demon or she-devil, or in the Albanian version, the pigeon-boy. During this fight, the opponent casts upon the hero the change of sex curse: if you are a woman, be a man, and if you are a man, be a woman,



inadvertently giving the hero what he wants, so he can marry the princess. The hero then returns, as a man, to his bride/betrothed, and they live happily ever after. The Turkish and Armenian versions are unique in this thesis because, although the hero's cross-dressing can be read as an action defying gender categories, his eventual marriage to the princess ultimately deprives her of her agency over her marriage; therefore the gender roles that are broken by the hero are again reinforced by male control over the marriage partnership. These are the only two tales in this thesis with this ending, and I hesitate to call it a happy ending, as the princess is taken from her true love, the pigeon-boy.

The lovely tale "Iphis and Ianthe" appears in book IX, lines 666-713 of the *Metamorphoses*. The story begins like the oral narratives: a pregnant woman is told by her husband that if she does not give birth to a boy child, the child will be killed. The mother has a vision of Isis, who tells her to disobey her husband. When the child is born female, she dresses her as a boy and names her Iphis: "Iphis, a name that gave its mother joy: It meant no fraud— it could be a girl or boy" (Ovid 221). When Iphis is of age, she is betrothed to Ianthe and they are both very much in love with each other:

And so it was that both their simple hearts Love visited alike  
and both alike Were smitten— but their hopes how different...  
Poor Iphis loved a girl, girl loving girl,  
And knew her love was doomed and loved the more.  
Almost in tears, "What will become of me?"  
She said, "possessed by love unheard of, love  
So monstrous, so unique?"...

A female never fires a female's love.

Would I were not a girl!...

Could all the arts [Daedalus] learnt change me from girl

To boy? Ianthe, could he alter you? (222)

In these lines we are privy to the pained thoughts of the love-struck Iphis. The oral narrative versions of ATU 514 never or rarely allow the audience access to the protagonist's thoughts, and so it is difficult to understand why the hero agrees to marry a woman: is it desire, or simply fear? In this literary tale, however, Ovid has clarified for his audience what Iphis feels: she loves Ianthe, and wants to marry her, regardless of their sex. The story continues: Iphis' distraught mother prays again to Isis for help, on the eve of the wedding. As Iphis walks down the aisle, a transformation occurs. Her limbs grow stronger, her hair shorter, and "She who had been/A girl a moment past was now a boy" (224). Now a man, Iphis marries his beloved Ianthe, and the story ends happily for both groom and bride. "Iphis and Ianthe" is an illustration of the performativity of gender: the women love each other before the change of sex, but cannot marry because this is outside of accepted practice in their culture. Their love, however, transcends cultural tradition, and once the change of sex has taken place, they eagerly accept one another. Ianthe is not dismayed that her husband was once a woman: it was only their bodies that stood in the way of their love. Ovid's tale is a love story, whereas the oral narratives portray the marriage between the princess and the hero not as a romance but as the resolution of a conflict.

### **Variant Group 3: The Youngest Daughter**

This group of variants includes stories from Albania, Pontos (was Greece, is now Turkey), Kabardia (North Caucasus, now part of Russia) and Serbia. These tales have motifs in common with the tales in *The Mother's Deception* variant group, but differ in their origin stories. In these variants, the mother is either dead or not mentioned at all. A father has three daughters, and is in need of a son to fight for their country, to support their king, to prevent war, or, in the Kabardian story, merely because he wants to test their courage. His daughters decide to dress as boys to help him. The first two daughters fail in appropriately portraying their masculinity—for example, in the Albanian story, one daughter decides instead to get married—or because they fall into dangerous traps their father sets for them: he disguises himself as a wolf, a lion, and a dragon, and they return home out of fear. The youngest daughter, the hero, however, meets these challenges and goes off into the world as a man successfully. This motif of the victorious youngest child, both male and female, is extremely common in folktales across the world. The cross-dressed hero impresses everyone with charm and good looks, military skill and bravery, and defeat of powerful foes. The hero is married or betrothed to the king's daughter, and then is given a series of impossible tasks, the last of which is defeating either a hermit, den of snakes, a giant, or a buffalo. These creatures cast upon the hero the change of sex curse: “if you are a woman, be a man, if you are a man, be a woman.” The hero becomes a man, and he returns to his bride or marriage and they live happily ever after.

**Table 5: The Youngest Daughter Variant Group**

	<b>The Girl Who Became a Boy</b>	<b>The Girl Who Went to War</b>	<b>A Woman Became a Man</b>	<b>The Courageous Daughter</b>
<b>Region/ Year Collected</b>	Albanian, 1881	Pontos (Turkey/Greece), 1943	Serbian, 1911	Kabardian (N. Caucasus, Russian), 1919
<b>Origin Story</b>	King needs soldiers; no sons	Wants to fight for her country	Father didn't want them to marry; kills "dragon hero" and steals his clothes and horse	Father sends to test courage
<b>Siblings</b>	2 eldest marry	2 eldest fail	2 eldest tried to run away first	2 eldest fail
<b>Helper</b>	King's magical horse	Old colt; Colt's mother	Hairs of dead men; Fortune teller	Mother of serpents
<b>Soldier/ Service</b>	Yes	Yes		
<b>Tests of Masc.</b>				
<b>Imposs. Feats</b>	Kill 2 Kulshedra; Retrieve dangerous she-mare; Retrieve taxes from a church full of snakes	Retrieve: apple from Paradise; Taxes from house of savages; Fire from one-eyed giant; Remove neck-band from savage mare	Kills "dragon hero;" Saves empire from Arab	Pull 3 serpents from fire; Retrieve a box with 7 locks; Retrieve a buffalo ox and 7 buffalo cows
<b>Change of Sex</b>	Snakes curse	Giant curses	Catch chief of outlaws; kill duck on top of his head; eat duck's heart	Buffalo curses

There are some interesting details in these variants. For instance, in the Kabardian tale, "The Courageous Daughter," the daughters do not dress as men in order

to fill some need or support their families, but he insist they do so because “one day it occurred to him that he might test the courage of his daughters (Menzies 117). He disguises himself as a series of animals, and ambushes them individually. The two elder daughters fail, but the youngest “gave her assailant such a blow with her riding-whip that it cost him his little finger” (Menzies 117). In many variants of ATU 514, the daughter takes on the father’s power symbolically, for instance, by resurrecting his aged war horse, who becomes a magical helper. In this symbolic castration of the father via his finger, the hero is figuratively owning her own masculine power.

In these stories, as in most variants of ATU 514, the hero has to accomplish a series of impossible feats. These feats are remarkably different from tale to tale, and are generally assumed to be impossible: to collect an item or a holy relic from a mythical land, to capture something that was stolen from the king by a band of thieves, to collect a herd of pack animals, and generally the final feat is to defeat a fierce enemy. The hero’s magical helper or magical horse gives instructions on how to accomplish these tasks, usually through cleverness and trickery. In this tale, the princess is betrothed to someone she does not want to marry. Once the hero has accomplished the impossible feats, the princess, with the assistance of the magical horse, kills the man to whom she is betrothed, leaving her free to marry the man of her choosing: the hero. The tales never disclose the hero’s feelings, but the princess’s feelings are clear—she loves the hero. Here we have two daughters who are restricted by the bonds of gender: the hero who cannot serve the king as a woman, as well as the princess whose choice of marriage partner is entirely out

of her hands. Both characters challenge these constraints as they aggressively take charge of their lives.

The Albanian, Turkish and Serbian tales have overt sexual themes. In the tale from Pontos, “The Girl Who Went to War,” the hero weds the bride before the change of sex. During the wedding night, a sword is laid between them in bed and the hero instructs the bride not to cross the sword. After the change of sex “the sword at once disappeared between them” (Dawkins 311). Prior to the change of sex, the sword fills the symbolic role of the phallus in the marriage bed, and after the change of sex, the hero has his own phallus and so the symbolic phallus may disappear. In earlier acts in the tale the sword is also the agent of masculinity, for example it was used to fight the father when he was disguised as different animals. In the Albanian tale “The Girl Who Became a Boy,” the princess weds the hero before the change of sex. In the Albanian tale, the princess complains to her mother that they are not having sex, but after the change of sex, she happily tells her mother: “I spent a wonderful night” (Elsie 44). In most tales the marriage only takes place after the change of sex, but in these tales, it is before, and therefore the satisfying conclusion of the tales is not the wedding, but the successful heterosexual consummation of the marriage.

I include in this variant group a Serbian story, “A Woman Became a Man,” although it has differences remarkable enough to place it in its own category. This tale is translated into English for the first time by Maja Pan in her article on ATU 514. Like the rest of the stories in this variant group, the hero is the youngest of three daughters. In this

variant, however, the daughters attempt to leave home not to enter the king's service, but because their father does not want them to marry, and so they try to escape. The first two daughters are caught and killed by their father, but the third daughter escapes and then kills her father in turn. The story marks this act not as violent or wrong, but as heroic: "she was the real hero" (Pan 180). Here again the child is literally destroying the patriarch, the masculine power in her family, and symbolically taking it on herself through her own masculine success. The hero goes out into the world dressed as a man, and defeats and kills many enemies, through strength and cleverness.

One of the hero's achievements garners a reward from the tsar, and he gives the hero his daughter as a prize. Unlike the other tales in this variant group, there is no series of impossible feats, and the climax is strange: the hero is advised by a fortune teller to find the chief of the outlaws: "He has a wild duck on top of his head...if you catch [the chief] 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" (Pan 181). Once the hero has eaten the duck's heart, he is a man, and returns to his wife, and they live happily ever after. The hero in this variant is active in his change of sex. Generally, in ATU 514, the change of sex results from a curse against the hero from a magical or powerful entity, completely out of the hero's control or understanding; until the last minute the hero does not know that there will be a change of sex. In this tale, however, the change of sex comes to pass through deliberate and conscious action on the part of the hero, who seeks out the duck's heart and eats it knowing the results, demonstrating a conscious desire for the change of sex, an element missing in those variants wherein the change of sex is the result of a curse. This

also endows the hero with moral responsibility over these actions; the changes of sex in other stories generally come from a supernatural creature or a god, and are therefore impervious to moral judgement or consideration, but in this tale it is a human who decides to change their sex and therefore bear responsibility for the change of sex. The happy ending of this Serbian tale carries greater weight than the others because this version of the hero sought to change genders intentionally, and is still rewarded a bride and a happy ending, which is narrative approval of the hero's actions.

#### **Variant Group 4: Magical Transformation**

This group of variants is perhaps the most fascinating and mysterious of this entire collection. The tales in some ways vary wildly from one another, but have other distinct qualities in common. Four of these tales are Hispanic, from Spain, Chile, and Mexico, and two others are from Denmark and Finland. The origin story of this variant group is different from that of other groups: in *Magical Transformation*, the hero chooses to dress as a man for reasons that are personal. In three of the tales, the reason is to escape a violent or aggressive male character. In the Spanish variant "The Unicorn," the hero must dress as a man because the hero has killed two men out of revenge for killing her sweetheart (Lanclos 68). In the Chilean "Florinda" and the Danish "The Princess Who Became a Man," the hero leaves home to escape a father who unnaturally wants to marry his daughter (Pino-Saavedra 103; Kristensen 247). In the other three tales, the hero is not escaping, but instead leaves home dressed as a man to fulfill a personal desire: in the Oaxacan "Story of a Mule Driver," the hero wants to travel in the world with her



father, but he will not let her do so unless dressed as a man because she will be too vulnerable on the road as a woman (Lanclos 79); in the Asturian “The Metamorphosis,” the hero leaves home dressed as a man because she “got it into her head to become queen” (80), and in an untitled Finnish tale (Appendix 2, Tale 5), a woman chooses to disguise herself as a man and work as a laborer.

**Table 6: Magical Transformation Variant Group**

	<b>The Metamorphosis</b>	<b>Florinda</b>	<b>Story of a Mule-Driver</b>	<b>The Unicorn</b>	<b>The Princess Who Became a Man</b>	<b>Untitled</b>
<b>Region/Year Collected</b>	Asturias, 1924	Chile, 1962	Oaxaca, 1917	Spain, 1947	Denmark, 1881	Finland, 1880s
<b>Origin Story</b>	Wants to become queen	Father wants to marry hero	Wants to travel	Killed 2 men in revenge for murder of sweetheart	Father wants to marry hero	Woman is laborer
<b>Siblings</b>						
<b>Helper</b>		Crucifix		Oricuerno/ Unicorn	Old man	
<b>Soldier/Service</b>	Yes					Laborer
<b>Tests of Masc.</b>	High/Low Chairs	Shooting skills; Bathing	Bathing	Bathing; High/Low chairs; Who is first into bed	Bathing	
<b>Imposs. Feats</b>						
<b>Change of Sex</b>	Kills deer and affixes head to pelvis	Crucifix flies over the waters, changes sex	Trades sexes with a bull	Oricuerno makes sign of cross over pelvis	Chases deer; old man changes her sex in exchange for her first born son	Sacrifices first-born son; fox attaches new genitals

The protagonists of these tales are powerful and independent: the hero leaves home for safety (to avoid incest or prison), to experience freedom of movement (to travel), or to fill a social role (as a laborer, or as a queen). There is another independent woman in these tales who transgresses gender role expectations: the princess whom the hero marries. In each of the four Hispanic tales, it is the princess who instigates the marriage, believing, of course, that the hero is a man; these marriages are not arranged by a father. In the Danish and Finnish tales, the princess is not happy to be wed to a woman, but, remarkably, in both “Florinda” and “The Unicorn,” once they are married and the gender of the hero is discovered, the princess is not angry. In “The Unicorn,” she says, “Well, look, don't worry about it; we won't say anything and we'll carry on as if you were a man” (Lanclos 69), and they live together for many years. In “Florinda,” when the princess discovers her husband is female, ““All the better then,’ said the princess happily. ‘We'll live together like two doves in the world’” (Pino-Saavedra 105). The princess is happy to be married to a cross-dressing woman.

All of these tales except the Finnish include an additional episode that is not present in the previous variant groups: the tests of masculinity, shared with variant group *The Hero and the Princess*, which I will discuss later. These tests of masculinity are different from the episode of the impossible feats, which are difficult to accomplish and fantastic. These tests are basic activities that align with gender stereotypes. For instance, the hero is led through two rooms, one filled with weapons, and another with flowers, and whichever pique the hero's interest reveals his or her sex. Another test is the choice between high and low chairs: a woman will choose a low chair, and a man a high chair.

Always the third test in this series is the bathing test, in which the hero is requested to accompany a group of men bathing in a river or sea, where everyone can see once and for all if the hero is a man or a woman. This test is the climax of the story.

While the means by which the change of sex comes about is different in every story in this variant group, the tales do have major elements in common. The climax and change of sex in the Oaxacan “Story of a Mule Driver” is similar to those in variants of the group *The Mother’s Deception*, the oldest stories, in that the hero swaps genders with a bull, in this case as a result of a battle: the bull becomes a cow, and the hero becomes a man. There is an animal involved in the change of sex of all but one of the variants in this collection: a bull, two deer, a unicorn, and a fox. In the Spanish “The Unicorn,” the identity of titular magical helper is actually unclear. Donna Lanclos explains that “oricuerno” is not a known word in Spanish, although of course it is linguistically similar to “unicorn,” and the animal is described as “a creature with very large antlers” (Lanclos 69). The translator has chosen to call it *unicorn*. When the hero is facing the bathing test, “the creature, which was the oricuerno, made the sign of the cross over ‘his’ groin, and in a moment the maiden became a man” (70). In the Asturian “The Metamorphosis” and the Danish “The Princess Who Became a Man,” a deer is present during the change of sex. In “The Metamorphosis,” the hero has complete agency over the change of sex, without even any advice from a magical helper. Just before the bathing test, the hero leaves the sea and kills a doe: “she killed one, removed the head, hung it at her waist, and put herself into the sea. The head stuck itself to her flesh and when she left the sea, the maiden was no longer a maiden, but a man” (Lanclos 81). There is no explanation of

how or why the hero knows how to do this, or why or how it works, but it does. In the Danish “The Princess Who Became a Man,” the hero, when facing the bathing test, remembers the words of her magical helper, an old man, and chases a deer into the woods, and there finds the old man who performs the sex change (Kristensen 248). The untitled Finnish tale also finds the hero in the woods with an old man: the female laborer asks him to transform her from female to male. When he does so a fox runs up to the hero and attaches the new male genitals (Appendix 2, Tale 5).

While many of the variants in this collection include herd animals and animals with phallic antlers, in these variants the animal plays a direct role in the change of sex. The animal signifies or heralds a transfer of masculine power, perhaps especially through the phallic symbol of the antlers. The Chilean variant “Florinda” is unique in that the magical helper is not an animal, but a crucifix that the hero had loved and carried with her when she was a child. At the last moment, when Florinda is expected to bathe naked, “her crucifix came flying over the waters. With that, Florinda stood up in the river and found herself turned into a man” (Pino-Saavedra 107). Remarkably, the crucifix fills the role of the phallic symbol that we have seen elsewhere in the sword, and here in the antlers. Moreover, the crucifix represents the hero’s religious devotion—she would not part with it as a child: “When she was just a baby, her father bought her a crucifix and placed it in her cradle. She always looked at it, and when she was old enough for school, she even took it to class with her. The other students called her ‘the little fool of the crucifix’” (103). That the crucifix brings about the change of sex suggests that the shift is approved by God. In the change of sex scenes in all of the variants of this group, the

change is a magical and mysterious moment. It is not a curse, as it is in most of the tales collected in this thesis, and it is not a bargain, as in the variant group *The Borrowed Sex*. The change of sex is sought out, in some cases very directly, is bestowed upon the hero when it is most needed, and the change is a symbolic transaction

There is another mysterious transaction that follows the sex change in the Danish and Finnish variants of this group. In the untitled Finnish tale, the hero meets an old man in the woods who asks the hero to return with her firstborn child, cut into three pieces, and to lay him on a pile of fir-sprigs, in order to complete the change of sex; this the hero willingly does (Appendix 2, Tale 5). The hero sacrifices the child in order to obtain the male sex. In the Danish tale, a similar transaction takes place, but with a happier ending. In this unusual tale, the hero leaves home to escape an incestuous father. The father's dogs run after the escaping hero, and the hero cuts off first one breast and then another, to distract the dogs so that the hero can run to safety. In the woods the hero meets a kindly older man, who cares for the wounded hero and teaches masculine behavior. Eventually the hero is ready to become a man, and the old man performs the change, making the hero promise to bring his firstborn child back to him. When the hero returns later with his child, the old man orders the hero to watch him chopping the child into pieces (Kristensen 247-49). He asks the hero:

“Did that give you pain?”

“Yes.”

“It pained me just as much when I saw you that day in your mother's dress and your father desired to marry you.”

He brought the axe down and split the child from navel to neck.

“Did that give you pain?”

“Yes.”

“It pained me just as much when you needed to cut off your breasts and throw them to your father’s dogs.” (Kristensen 249)

The firstborn child is sacrificed in these variants, just as the horned animals are sacrificed in the other tales belonging to this variant group. In this story, unlike the Finnish variant, the child is then magically made whole by the old man. This nineteenth-century tale stunningly represents through a brutal image the grief this nurturing father figure feels over the abuse the hero has suffered at the hands of the incestuous birth father. Even more remarkably, it symbolically marks the emotional stages of transition from female to male that the hero moves through: the physical change through the loss of breasts, the social change through the training in masculine behavior, and finally the full ritualized shift from female to male through the appearance of the penis.

### **Variant Group 5: The Hero and the Princess**

This variant group is perhaps the most well-known of all the variants of ATU 514, because one variant appears in Andrew Lang’s 1901 *The Violet Fairy Book*, a volume of one of the most popular fairytale collections of all time. This group of variants also includes the oldest tale in this collection, “Alimbeglanya,” a tale from the Ossetian Nart Sagas, which date from around 1,000 BCE. Lang’s version is entitled “The Girl Who

Pretended to be a Boy,” and is an English translation of a tale from the 1894 Romanian *Sept Contes Roumains* (Seven Romanian Stories), edited by Jules Brun and Leo Bachelin. Brun and Bachelin took their tale from “The Princess Who Would be a Prince or Iliane of the Golden Tresses,” a tale originally collected by Petre Ispirescu in Bucharest between 1872 and 1886. I have used a 1917 English translation of the Ispirescu tale by Julia Collier Harris and Rea Ipcar. Although they come from the

**Table 7: The Hero and the Princess Variant Group**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Alimbeglanya</b>	<b>The Girl Who Pretended to be a Boy</b>	<b>The Princess Who Would be a Prince or Iliane of the Golden Tresses</b>
<b>Region/Year Collected</b>	Ossetian (Iranian people), 1,000 BCE	Romanian	Romanian 1872-86
<b>Origin Story</b>	Father dies; if no son hero will be enslaved	King needs men; no sons	King needs men; no sons
<b>Siblings</b>		2 Older Sisters Fail	2 Older Sisters Fail
<b>Helper</b>	Father's Horse; Gods	Father's Horse	Father's Horse
<b>Soldier/Service</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Tests of Masculinity</b>		Flowers on pillow; Choice of flowers or weapons	Flowers in hand; weapons
<b>Impossible Feats</b>	Capture beautiful girl from tower	Rescue Iliane; gather studs; kill genius; reclaim flask of holy water	Rescue Iliane; gather studs; kill genius; reclaim flask of holy water
<b>Change of Sex</b>	A God gives her apple, tells her to eat the seeds, not the pulp	Hermit prays	Hermit prays

same original tale, the translations are different enough from one another that they warrant separate attention. These long, complex tales not only include all of the episodes occurring in the preceding variant groups, but also include an additional episode unique to the tales in this variant group: the rescue of the princess. The Romanian tales combine the structure of the ATU 514 tale type and the classic romantic tale of Iliane and Fet-Fruners. As Harris and Ipcar explain in their introduction, Fet-Fruners, also Fet-Frumos or Făt-Frumos, is a classic masculine hero:

Fet-Frumos plays the role of the ‘Prince Charming’ of Occidental tales, and he is endowed with every physical charm...In a word, Fet-Frumos is handsome, brave, and cunning—without fear, but not always without reproach! Iliane is the ideal of feminine beauty and grace...she can belong to none other than Fet-Frumos and their marriage is the inevitable conclusion of all the stories in which they figure.  
(xii-xiii)

Our gender-bending hero, then, in these two Romanian tales, not only succeeds as a man, but fills the role of Prince Charming, the idealized masculine. However, the hero is never referred to as Fet-Fruners until dressed in male garb, and usually later in the story, after some impossible feats have been accomplished; apparently the hero has to earn this name as a title. The story begins like many of the others discussed here: the mother is unmentioned, and an aging and poor father is required to give a son in service to the emperor. His daughters want to go, but he sets up traps to demonstrate to them how challenging the task will be, and the two older daughters fail when they confront their



father in the form of a lion, a wolf, and a dragon. The youngest daughter, however, defeats the disguised father and leaves home with his magical horse. The hero gets into a conflict with some Genii, one of whom the hero, now referred to as Fet-Fruners, kills. In the service of the emperor, the hero in these stories, unlike the others, is not immediately betrothed. The mother of the Genii who was killed by Fet-Fruners arranges a series of tests of masculinity, as in the variants of group *Magical Transformation*. The hero passes these tests, and is then set on the task of rescuing the princess Iliane to bring her back to the emperor, who wants her for himself (Lang 320-34; Ispirescu 241-66).

Here begins a complicated episode of sailing to sea and stealing away the beautiful Iliane, who has been captured by a Genius who is set to marry her against her will. The language in the Lang variant is especially beautiful: when Fet-Fruners captures Iliane and brings her back to the emperor, she “rejoiced in her heart, though she pretended to weep and lament at being carried captive a second time” (336). She is received by the emperor, but is not happy to marry him: “this did not seem to please Iliane, whose face was sad as she walked about the palace or gardens, wondering how it was that, while other girls did as they like, she was always in the power of someone whom she hated” (Lang 338). Meanwhile, the emperor sends Fet-Fruners away from the palace on a series of impossible feats, all of which are accomplished with the help of the magical horse. Similar episodes of impossible feats appear in the tales of variant groups *The Youngest Daughter* and some of the tales in *The Mother’s Deception*. In the Romanian tales, the hero’s final task is to steal a vase of holy water from a hermit and, in the scuffle, the hermit prays that the hero be cursed: “if the thief was a man, he might

Figure 2: The Hero Rescues the Princess

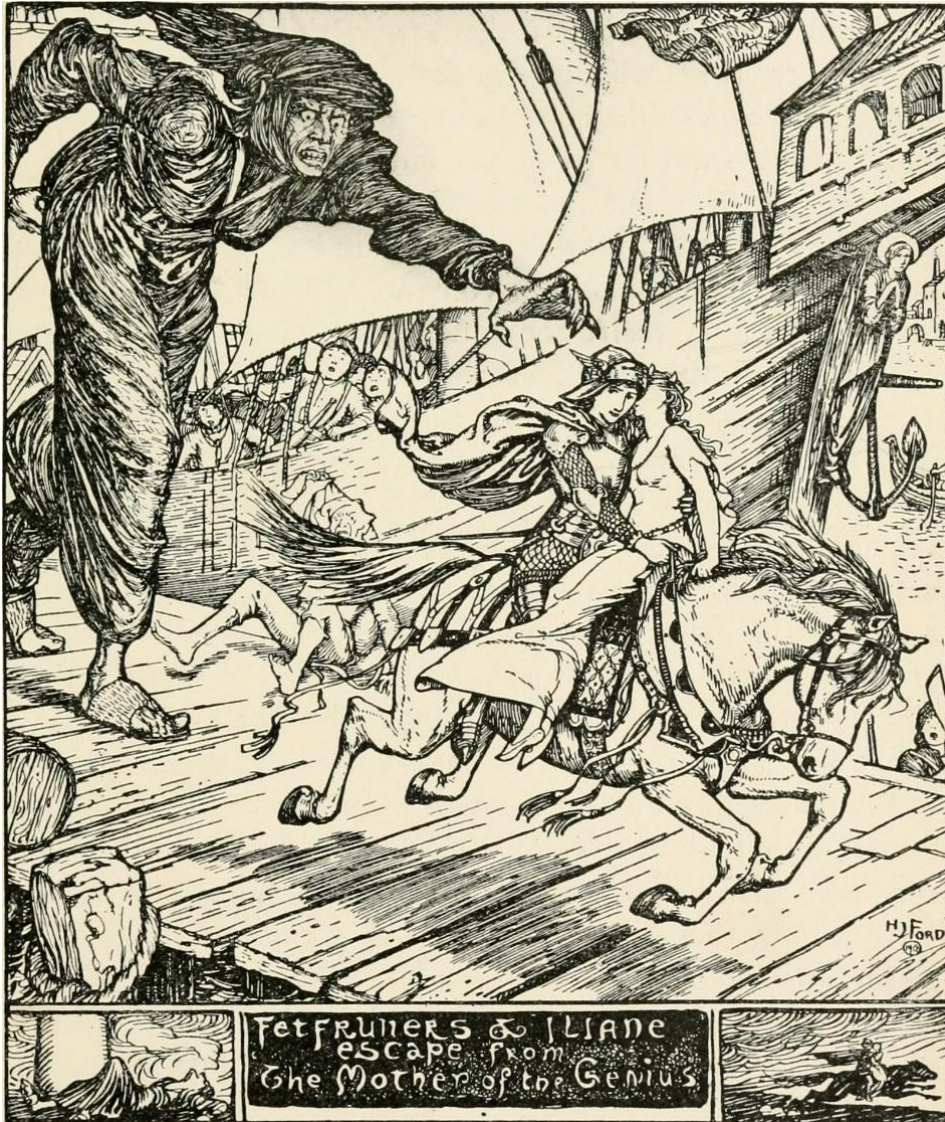


Illustration by H.J. Ford. Taken from: Lang, Andrew, ed. *The Violet Fairy Book*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901.

become a woman; if she was a woman, that she might become a man” (342). Fet-Fruners returns home, and Iliane, who is angry that the emperor has sent him on so many

dangerous quests, conspires with the magical horse to kill the emperor just before their wedding. She then approaches Fet-Fruners: “it is you who brought me and have saved my life...And you, and none other, shall be my husband.” Fet-Fruners is happy to wed Iliane, and they marry and live happily ever after.

There is a cryptic final line: Fet-Fruners, after the weddings, says, “know that in *our* house, it will be the cock who sings and not the hen!” (Lang 344); there is a similar concluding line in the Ispirescu variant (283). Research into common popular sayings shows a large number about cocks and hens, from nearly every part of the world, including Europe and Asia. For example, there is a French saying “a woman who talks like a man and a hen which crows like a cock are no good to anyone,” and a Bulgarian saying that “the house is unhappy wherein the hen crows” (Marvin 127, 128). Editor Dwight Edwards Marvin explains that these proverbs are “used in disapproval of women of masculine appearance or who are thought to be man-like in disposition and habit” (125). The concluding proverb, therefore, curiously reinstates the patriarchal structure in which the man has more power and expression in the domestic sphere than does the woman, in spite of the fact that the husband began his life female.

When these tales are considered as a group, it is evident that each contains within it reflection on the injustices of gender roles, particularly the gender restrictions on women’s behavior and mobility. In this fascinating story, not only do we see the bold and brave Fet-Fruners transgressing gender roles by working as a knight in service to the emperor, killing monsters and living as a man, but we also see the much more restricted

Iliane, who is not responsible for her own fate and is rather at the mercy of whoever has most recently abducted her, “always in the power of someone whom she hated.” She wants, like “other girls,” to do as she likes—which is of course exactly what the hero Fet-Fruners is able to do through male disguise and change of sex.

The third variant in this group, Alimbeglanya, is the oldest tale in this collection, and it is from the Ossetian Nart sagas, a long tradition of oral narratives. According to John Colarusso, these tales

closely resemble the myths of the pagan Norse...and Ancient Greece....Bards, male and female, render them through song, verse, and simple prose. Although the exploits of the characters have the magic and bravura of gods, only a few figures retain genuine deity status. In this sense they are once removed from the status of myth. (5)

The Nart sagas include gods as characters in the tales, yet in content and structure they are more like legends or folktales than myths. The Nart sagas are difficult to date because they were orally transmitted and were not recorded until the nineteenth century, but “they have been largely viewed as a relic of the old Iranian-speaking culture” (5), and there is evidence that portions of the sagas date to 1,000 BCE. The sagas originate in the North Caucasus region, which was populated by peoples speaking a variety of languages, including many in which variants of ATU 514 appear: Greek, Turkish, Kabardian, Abkhaz, and Russian. The Nart sagas are complex inter-woven stories that center on a

band of noble brothers (the Narts), born to the same mother. They bear links to many mythological and folkloric traditions, most notably the Arthurian cycles (Colarusso 4-7).

Although much older than the other variants in this group, “Alimbeglanya” is clearly of type ATU 514, containing the episodes in which the hero rides out in men’s clothes on the father’s horse, entering into service of the king, being sent on an impossible series of tasks, and, like the two Romanian tales in this variant group, the rescue of a beautiful princess who is imprisoned (see Table 7). In “Alimbeglanya” more than any other variant in this collection except for “Iphis and Ianthe,” gods figure as major characters in the story, and it is a god who ultimately creates the change of sex by encouraging the hero to eat the seeds of an apple, but not the pulp. The story begins as in other tales, the father, who was one of the Narts, has died, leaving his seven wives with no sons and one daughter. The king of that region has asked for a son to enter into his service, and if there is no son, then they must send a daughter as a slave. The daughter of the Nart, still in her cradle, asks her seven mothers—the seven wives of the deceased Nart—if her father left a horse, weapons, and a battle outfit. She tells them to bake a bread as large as she is, she eats it, and then:

she broke her cradle apart, stood, and brought forth the horse of her father from underground. She washed it with soap, bathed it, until it was shining like an egg. She jumped onto its back, rode to the sea, and bathed it once again in the water sparkling with sunlight; she flew over the sea like a wild duck, and returned to the village of the Narts. She put steel shoes on the horse, saddled it, and tightened the saddle straps with such force that the eyes of the horse bulged. (Appendix 1)

She puts on men's clothes, gets onto her father's horse, asks her mothers, "How do I look?" and sets out. This cocky and confident young woman stands apart from the protagonists of other variants, some of whom seem to be begrudgingly setting out into the world, out of obligation or desperation; Alimbeglanya seems delighted to set out, eager to impress, and determined to avoid a female life, if that means a life of slavery.

### **Variant Group 6: Trickster Hero**

This large, odd group of tales includes four tales that are Finnish, one that is Norwegian, and one that is Hungarian. They are grouped together because they share one unusual episode at the conclusion. The four Finnish tales are found in Appendix 2 of this thesis: "Woman as a Man," "The King's Son-in-Law, a Woman, a Shooter, a Chain-Man, a Wood-Fell and a Blower," "The Girl Who Went to War Instead of Her Brother," and "Satu" ("tale"). They are 1927 English translations of Finnish folktales from the archives of the Finnish Literary Society of Helsinki (Finnish Folktales), one of the world's largest collections of folklore. The majority of the tales were collected during 1881-1885 (Hautala and Vento 40). The Norwegian variant of 514, "The Girl Who Served as a Soldier and Got Married with the King's Daughter," was originally collected by famous Norwegian folklorist Peter Christen Asbjornsen in 1843. The Hungarian tale, "The Girl Who Became a Man," was originally collected in 1935 and compiled in *Magyar Népmesékis* (Hungarian Folktales) by Ortutay, Kovács, and Dégh. The tale is translated by Hungarian storyteller and folklorist Csenge Virág Zalka on her blog, who reports that there are at least five Hungarian variants of this tale type (Zalka).

The Finnish variants have an origin story unique to this collection: all begin with a brother and at least one sister, and the brother is supposed to go to war, but he does not want to, so the sister dresses as a man and goes to war instead. In these tales, the father is dead, or there is no father mentioned (Appendix 2, Tales 1, 3, 4). When the hero sets out from home dressed as a man, she is not carrying the masculine energy of her father, as in the other variants, but of her brother, even sometimes symbolically leaving home in his clothes. It's interesting to note that in most of these stories, the brother simply does not want to go to war, and there are no other extenuating circumstances. His desire to stay home is apparently reason enough for the sister to resign her own life and take over his.

In all of these variants, the hero does well in the army, and is instantly wedded to the king's daughter. When the son-in-law (the hero) displeases the princess because they cannot have heterosexual sex, the hero is sent on impossible tasks, to a distant land to collect money, a journey that they expect will kill the hero. The hero successfully completes the task, and this is where we encounter the strange, new episode of this variant group. The hero, often with companions, commits a taboo or a criminal act: in four variants of this group, the hero passes by a small house that is apparently empty, feels the urge to defecate, and does so somewhere inside the house—on the doorknob “The Girl Who Served as a Soldier and Got Married with the King's Daughter,” Friesl 107), on the table (“The Girl Who Went to War instead of her Brother,” Appendix 2, Tale 3), or on the floor (“Woman as a Man,” Appendix 2, Tale 1). When the owner of the house returns or emerges from hiding, and sees that their home has been soiled, they curse the person who did it and therefore the hero is transformed into a man.

**Table 8: Trickster Hero Variant Group**

	<b>The Girl Who Served as a Soldier and Got Married With the King's Daughter</b>	<b>Woman as a Man</b>	<b>The King's Son-In-Law, a Woman, a Shooter, a Chain-Man, a Wood-Fell and a Blower</b>	<b>The Girl Who Went to War Instead of Her Brother</b>	<b>Satu (Tale)</b>	<b>The Girl Who Became a Man</b>
<b>Region/ Year Collected</b>	Norwegian, 1843	Finnish, 1880s	Finnish, 1880s	Finnish, 1880s	Finnish, 1880s	Hungarian, 1935
<b>Origin Story</b>	Wants to serve as a soldier	Daughter takes brother's place as a soldier	Daughter takes brother's place as a soldier	Daughter takes brother's place as a soldier	Brother does not want to go to war; sister goes in his place	Father has to offer son or king will declare war on him
<b>Siblings</b>		Goes for brother	Goes for brother; elder sister will not	Goes for brother	Goes for brother	2 eldest afraid
<b>Helper</b>			Shooter, Chain-Man, Wood-Fell, Blower	Three devils	Sharp-Hearer, Water-Runner, Sharp-Shooter, Good-Blower	Iron-nosed witch; Magic horse
<b>Soldier/ Service</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Tests of Masc.</b>						
<b>Imposs. Feats</b>	Collect taxes in country far away	Sent as commander of army	Collect king's debt	Collect large sum	Sent abroad to change money	Talk to the sun; retrieve debt from king of Russia
<b>Change of Sex</b>	Couple curse with large penis as punishment	Wizard curses as punishment	Lapp curses as punishment	Old woman curses with large penis as punishment	Asks witch to make her a man for 500 marks	Hermit curses as punishment

In the Hungarian variant, the taboo act committed by the hero and companions is not defecation, but destruction of someone's home: "they found a beautiful house, the home



of a hermit. The hermit wasn't home. They broke into the house, burned his food and furniture, tore up his books. They left him with nothing. They returned to the ship and sailed on" (Zalka). In both cases, the hero defecating or destroying the home of an unknown person is a clear transgression of civil society and social rules of hospitality.

This change of sex curse is a shift from those in other variants: narratively, the reader generally wants the good characters to be rewarded, and the bad to be punished. The hero in these variants of ATU 514, however, is both good and bad: he is playing the role of the trickster. Already engaged in the taboo acts of cross-dressing as a man, and marrying a woman, the hero is now not only transgressing the rules of civil society, but defecating on tables and doorknobs—laughing in the face of accepted rules of decorum. In folklore, the trickster is:

one who engages in trickery, deceives, and violates the moral codes of the community. Oral and written tales associated with this pervasive figure are usually humorous...The entertainment value of trickster tales is predicated on not only the trickster's clever actions per se but also on the subversive nature of his trickery. (Fernandes 992)

The tales of this variant group are surely humorous. In addition to this act of indecorous defecation and scatological humor, there is an additional joke in the form of a twist to the change of sex curse: in two variants, when the curse is spoken, by a married couple in the Norwegian "The Girl Who Served as a Soldier," and by an old woman in the Finnish "The Girl Who Went to War Instead of her Brother," the curse is not that the hero will turn male, but that the hero will be cursed with a problematically large penis (Appendix

2, Tale 3). In the Norwegian tale, they curse the hero with a penis so large that it can hardly fit into any vagina (Friesl 107), and in the Finnish tale, the old woman curses: “If she were a girl, let her get a penis as a stallion has! If he was a boy, let him get genitals as a field-gate!” (Appendix 2, Tale 3). These absurd comparisons demonstrate a tale that was told to draw laughs.

This twist in the change of sex curse is also interesting in its implications: compared to the curses in the other variants, the punishment in these variants is not a change of sex but a very large/wide sexual organ: the curse, therefore, is not predicated on the value of one sex over the other, but is simply an expression of rage from a justifiably angry homeowner. There is one variant that I included in this variant group, the Finnish “Satu” (“Tale”) (Appendix 2, Tale 4), although its conclusion is very different. “Satu” is nearly identical to “The King’s Son-In-Law, a Woman, a Shooter, a Chain-Man, a Wood-Fell and a Blower” (see Table 8 for similarities) until the ending, in which there is no taboo act, as in other variants of this group, and there is no final battle, as in the remainder of variants in this collection—instead, the hero approaches a witch and asks her directly for a change of sex. This ending, although missing the taboo transgression, could also be read as humorous: “The prince said, ‘Will you do me a service?’ The [witch] said, ‘Why not, for pay!’ The prince said, ‘If you make me a man, I’ll give you a lot of money.’ The woman by magic changed him, and the prince gave her 500 marks” (Appendix 2, Tale 4). Out of all the changes of sex in all variants in this collection, this sex change sees the hero is most in control of the change. The hero asks for it, and it is a transaction rather than an accident, as in nearly every other variant.

The tales of this variant group are humorous adult tales because of their sexual and scatological nature, and the hero figure in these tales is a trickster: a figure who is bucking social norms and laughing about it. The trickster is entertaining and fun for audiences, but the trickster also creates chaos within accepted practices, drawing attention to injustices or inequalities.

Across the world, many of our folktales are humorous and/or sexual. Lewis C. Seifert, in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, writes, “Few themes are more central to folktales and fairy tales than sex and sexuality.” He goes on: “As a fundamental component of human existence, sexuality necessarily occupies a privileged place among folktale and fairy-tale themes” (Seifert 849). Although many of these bawdy tales are not included in collections because of their graphic content, they nevertheless exist in great quantity across the world, and the variants of this group are a good example. The sexual jokes, the scatological humor, and the role of the trickster all make for an entertaining and funny tale, but also a subversive one: as Fernandes argues, while most tricksters are male, *female* tricksters “transgress the boundaries between men’s and women’s spheres and enter public space.” She goes on to argue that these figures “represent women’s struggle for autonomy from men” (Fernandes 994). The trickster then is a liminal figure who creates within the tale, through cultural or social transgressions, room for consideration of those cultural and social norms. That the trickster tales, and these variants in particular, are humorous, allows the audience to consider gender roles and gender identity in a light-hearted way.

## Variant Group 7: Tiresias Tales

Six tales in this collection I have kept separate from the above categories because they are tales of men transforming into women, then back again into men. I have categorized them as “Tiresias Tales” because they follow, roughly, the story of the gender transformations experienced by Tiresias, the most famous sex-changing figure, though not the earliest. One Tiresias Tale appears in the *A Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of stories probably compiled around 800-900 AD, in Arabic. The collection is likely drawn from folk or popular sources, so some of the tales included may be much older (Marzolph 55-57). In the tale, “The Enchanted Spring,” from the Richard Burton’s famed edition of these tales, entitled, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, a protagonist is tricked into drinking from a magical spring, which turns him into a woman. He’s distraught: “behold, he straightway became a woman. As soon as he knew what had befallen him, he cried out and wept till he fainted away.” His minister prays: “Allah Almighty be thy refuge in thine affliction! How came this calamity upon thee and this great misfortune to betide thee, and we carrying thee with joy and gladness, that thou mightest go in to the King's daughter?” He is to be married, and sets out to change his gender back before his wedding. Fortunately, he finds another magical spring and becomes a man again, and is relieved (Burton). Unlike Tiresias, during this story, the protagonist is dismayed to have been transformed into a woman and is anxious to return to his original sex. In this brief story, the change is truly a curse. A transformation from a man to a woman is, after all, a drop in status and a loss of power and control over one’s

life. The protagonist's primary concern, however, is his upcoming wedding, which cannot take place if he is a woman.

According to Norman Brown, in his 1927 article "Change of Sex as a Hindu Story Motif," there are multiple variants of tales of permanent change of sex in Eastern literature. There are those variants in which a man transforms into a woman through bathing in enchanted waters, and the change from male to female is unexpected and unwelcome, but at the conclusion the protagonist opts to remain female, because she prefers it to being male. In others, a change of sex takes place through curse or blessing: in these tales a "divinity...at his pleasure convert[s] members of one sex to another" sometimes as punishment (male to female) or reward (female to male), but this narrative structure "is comparatively rare" (Brown 12-13). In these narratives the protagonist changes sex through bathing in a pool or walking in a forest that has been cursed/blessed by a divine figure. Yet others match the group of variants in this thesis *The Borrowed Sex*,

**Table 9: Tiresias Tales Variant Group**

Story Title	Col- lected	Language/ Region
"Tiresias," Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>	8	Ancient Greek
"The Enchanted Spring," <i>A Thousand and One Nights</i>	800- 900	Arabic/Middle Eastern
Story of the Abbot of Druimenaig, Who Was Changed into a Woman	1484- 87	Irish
The Man Who Became a Woman	1977	Irish
The Man Who Became a Woman, "The Man Who Had No Story"	1976	Scottish

where the sex is traded with a Yaksha. The timeline of the appearance of these Indian change of sex tales is complex. The oldest, Brown notes, can be dated roughly at 900 BCE, and there are variants in each of Brown's categories that are folk legends or tales, with collection dates as late as contemporary with this article's publication (1927), and some are literary interpretations of what may have originated as folktales. Brown notes that many of these tales have nearly identical retellings in Arabic texts such as *A Thousand and One Nights* (700-900 AD) and the *Book of Sindibad* (800-900 AD).

Tiresias is likely the most famous mythological figure experiencing a change of sex. Teiresias or Tiresias is a blind prophet whose earliest appearance is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The character of Tiresias has been picked up and adapted many times throughout literary history, most in Sophocles' Oedipus plays as well as Homer's *Odyssey*. In the short tale included in the *Metamorphoses*, Tiresias witnesses two snakes coupling, and when they attack him, he kills the female. He is immediately transformed into a woman and stays female for seven years (Ovid 60-61). Robert Graves states that Tiresias as a woman "became a celebrated harlot" (11). Graves does not reference his source on the sexual behavior of female Tiresias, but there is no mention of it in Ovid. Tiresias eventually again saw two snakes coupling, but this time he killed the male snake and in so doing "regained the shape he had at birth" (Ovid 61). In another story mentioned in Graves, Tiresias is punished by Aphrodite for a slight against her beauty: she turns him into an old woman (11).

The gender-swapping story of Tiresias has also been taken up by writers in the modern world—in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, and in T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*.

**Figure 3: Tiresias Strikes Two Snakes with a Stick, and is Transformed into a Woman**



Engraving by Johann Ulrich Kraus c. 1690. Taken from *Die Verwandlungen es Ovidii* (The Metamorphoses of Ovid).

Tiresias, as prophet and as both male and female at different times, is a liminal figure: he experiences both male and female; he lives the life of a mortal but, through his prophecy, has the vision of an immortal; he is, therefore, blind, and yet could “see.” There are five tales considered in this thesis that mirror the Tiresias story in significant ways. It is significant that Tiresias’ experience of switching genders is not ancillary to his role in

Greek myth or legend. In his article, Carp uses an older meaning of *bisexual*, an individual who experiences both sexes: “The notion of bisexuality is critical to the identity of Tiresias...furthermore, not only bisexuality but also more generally the principle of duality are found to be integral elements of seerhood in other mythologies, western as well as non-western” (275). Tiresias’ experience of gender endows him with compassion and balance: that Tiresias he has experienced both maleness and femaleness supports or creates his liminal nature, which allows him to participate in both sides of the dualities of both gender and mortality.

There is a similar tale that appears in Irish medieval literature, “The Abbot of Druimenaig,” of which four recordings exist in the literature, the earliest in 1484-1487 (Hillers 176). In this tale, an abbot falls asleep on top of a hill, and wakes up in the garb of a woman and God has transformed his body into a woman’s. She marries a man and has seven children in seven years—similar to Tiresias, who also remained female for seven years. Finally, the female Abbot of Druimenaig falls asleep on the same hill, and she returns to a man. He returns home to discover he has only been gone for one hour. This story is the only in this collection that has a negligibly negative ending: upon hearing his story, his wife and he decide to divide their children in half and part from each other. Gaelic scholar Barbara Hillers argues that this tale is not borrowed from the tale of Tiresias: “there is no reason to believe that the ‘Abbot’ was a literary borrowing from the Greek and Indian versions, and we must assume that the story reached Ireland through oral channels” (180).



There are many recorded variants of a Scottish folktale that follows a similar pattern as the Tiresias tale or the Abbot of Druimenaig more than the Arabic or Indian versions (Hillers 175-97). The first is a variant of “The Man Who had No Story,” which is actually a collection of tales: each story begins with a man who “has no story to tell” who then experiences a remarkable event in the course of the story, generally an uncomfortable one, and then, of course, when the story ends, he has a story to tell. In a variant collected in Scots Gaelic from Bessie Whyte in 1976, a man crosses a river in a boat, and, when his clothes get wet and muddy in the crossing, he is relieved to find some women’s clothes at the other shore. He puts on the clothes, is transformed into a woman, and then she meets a man and has several children. When she returns to the bank, years later, she puts on the old clothes, changes back into a man, and returns to the original characters from the story, who are there waiting for the rest of the story as if no time has passed (Hillers 181). There are apparently many variants that have been collected from Scottish storytellers. There are Irish variants, as well, in which a man sets off from Scotland to Ireland, and halfway there he turns into a woman. In Ireland she marries a man and has children with him, until one day she gets back in the same boat and is transformed back into a man. Returning home, it is as if no time has passed (181).

There is another frame story, similar to “The Man Who Had No Story to Tell,” called “Pay Me for My Story,” a tale in which a man is offered a pipe with tobacco and has to pay for it in some way. Many variants of this tale have been collected, some of which include change of sex in the body of the story. The “payment” sees the protagonist transformed into various animals: a horse, a cow, and crow, and finally a woman. In this

case, she “went off and stayed until she had three sons” (185). Hillers’ analysis of these tales is that:

it is clear that The Man Who Became a Woman [ATU 514] was not originally a part of The Man Who Had No Story; the latter’s open-ended frame attracted memorable anecdotes which were easily detachable. Presumably The Man Who Became a Woman was current as a separate narrative in Scotland and was then attached to the popular The Man Who Had No Story. (186)

The ATU index lists Scottish variants of ATU 514, and this variant is evidence that it was popular there during that time. Hillers concludes that “The Abbot of Druimenaig” borrowed its structure from the oral tradition, and thus the folk narratives of “The Man Who Became a Woman” predate the stories of the Abbot, which demonstrates that ATU 514 was popular in Scotland even into the fifteenth century (187).

The “Tiresias Tales” are different from the other ATU 514 narratives. Not only in the sex of the protagonist, but in structure. First, the protagonist is a man, and second, the male protagonist does not desire or need his change of sex. In ATU 514, the change of sex extricates the hero from a conflict and smooths over troubles. The change of sex from male to female in these Tiresias tales, however, is entirely out of their control, unexpected, and sudden, and it complicates the tales rather than resolves them. The protagonists have to begin rather new lives in their new bodies. The question of desire is significant in ATU 514—does the hero desire to live as a man? Is she a man, although she is assigned female? The question is never addressed in the oral variants of these tales—in fact, her desire and experience are noticeably omitted. In the tale, we observe

the emotional experience of her father, her fiancée, her father-in-law, and in some cases the final opponent. But in no tale do we discern the hero's emotional experience. It could be argued that the hero, as well, is forced into cross-dressing: in every single case the hero cross-dresses to escape some situation at home, generally one created by the father. In many cases he is oppressive in some way and in others he is simply lacking, either in sons, or in strength or youth. Because of the father's situation, the hero is forced to cross-dress to accomplish these tasks, not because of a personal desire.

The Tiresias Tales are much clearer in that regard—these men happen into these changes of sex, against their own will and desire. In Tiresias, and in the Scottish tales, the men are not troubled by their transformation into a woman. They simply begin to live a woman's life, including marriage to a man and bearing children. There is no lamentation to return to their male position, no desperate need to regain their old power—unlike in the tale from *A Thousand and One Nights*, in which the protagonist is desperate to return to his male sex. This could be due to the social status of these figures: the man from the Arabic tale is a prince, due to marry a princess, and the fate of both families rests on his ability to marry her. The Abbot of Druimenaig, however, is a man of God, who selflessly submits to God's will, and whose life and practice are not so tied to his gender or ability to reproduce. Tiresias is also a spiritual figure, not a father or husband with responsibilities. The protagonist in “The Man Who Had No Story to Tell” is portrayed as a bumbling simpleton with no real purpose or masculine power in any way. This lack of traditional masculinity leaves narrative space for this change of sex to take place without struggle or shame. All of this having been said, as happy or content as

these characters may have been after their change of sex, every one of the tales I have included in this variant group resolves only after the man has returned to his original sex, no matter how content he was as a woman, to his great relief.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF ATU 514**

### **Section 1: Brief or Regional Studies of ATU 514**

There has been recent focused interest in “The Shift of Sex”, ATU 514, which I will discuss in the next section. Prior to this recent interest, the tale type had not often been discussed by folklorists, in spite of its age and its geographical spread. The tale type, however, has come up in scholarly work, generally in specific, regional approaches: Norman Brown (1927) discusses Hindu variants and Barbara Hillers (1995) discusses Gaelic variants. Other scholars have mentioned ATU 514 in comparison to other tales or tale types: Margaret Mills (1985) mentions it briefly within a larger conversation on Afghan folktales featuring a temporary sex change, Christine Jones (2003) discusses it in comparison with literary fairy tales of similar structure, and Jessica Hooker (1990) discusses it alongside other tale types with “sword-bearing women”. These and a few other brief historical discussions of the tale type provide a history of scholarship in discussion of “The Shift of Sex.”

Norman Brown, in a 1927 article on change of sex in Hindu narratives, discusses ATU 514. His analysis of these folk and religious narratives is astute and interesting, especially considering its age: he argues that folktales like ATU 514, which include change of sex, directly draw from these Asian narratives, but that an attempt to identify the lineage is not possible. The narratives in which women transform into men, he

argues, are “mere wish fulfillment,” presumably because of the increase of social power and freedom that accompanies this change. He also connects ATU 514 to gender identity and sexuality contemporary to his time, noting “the frequent desire of members of one sex to belong to the other,” which may explain the history of change of sex narratives. Brown also addresses the “third sex” in some Asian cultures, describing eunuchs who “imitate women in dress, occupation, and in fact every way possible, and engage in perverted sexual practices” (22). He goes on to note the presence of “physiological phenomena...especially hermaphroditism” (24) as another explanation for gender fluidity in folk and religious literature. Brown writes with tolerance about these cultural practices, yet he describes them as “perverted”; this language reveals an ignorance and cultural bias which calls his analysis into question. Fortunately Brown does not dwell on sexuality, but focuses primarily on analysis of the texts. In fact, he concludes by writing that scholars ought not to “press too far” to identify what inspires the continuous popularity of these themes (24). Brown does not offer much interpretation of these Hindu narratives, but he does provide a helpful cross-tale analysis of a large number of variants, and also offers insight into how folklorists of the early part of the twentieth century may have read ATU 514 and other similar tale types as “perverted.”

In 1987, Danish folklorist Bengt Holbek mentions ATU 514 in his *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, an important work of folkloristics. Holbek’s conception of tales revolves around the tension between opposites in folk tale structure. One of these pairs of opposites is male and female, and Holbek discusses Danish folktales from within this structure, assuming that those stories with female protagonists are favored by female

storytellers and audiences, and those with male protagonists by male storytellers. As he presents charts delineating which tales are favored by which storytellers, in a parenthetical note he adds that “some tales must be disregarded” (618, footnote 119) and he offers ATU 514 as just such a tale. The reason for this disregard is that the protagonist of the tale is both male and female at different times in the narrative, therefore making it uncategorizable. When describing the movements of protagonists in folk narratives, Holbek judges ATU 514 to be anomalous: “the characters of fairy tales do not change sex (except in the curious case of AT 514 where a girl assumes the hero’s role)” (423). Crucial to Holbek’s classification system is the notion that there are masculine tales and feminine tales, and ATU 514 is anomalous in this system because, while the protagonist begins as a female, the tale carries all the identifiers of a masculine tale—the hero is a fairly standard masculine hero. Holbek’s classification system has since been disputed on this and other counts.<sup>3</sup>

Folklorist Jessica Hooker discusses ATU 514 in a 1990 article discussing “sword-bearing women.” ATU 514 is not the primary focus of her discussion, and she repeatedly refers to ATU 514 as “bizarre” because of its ending which she sees as unusual even in the generally bizarre genre of folk narratives. She compares three variants, the Armenian, Greek, and Romanian tales discussed in this thesis. She discusses the complex readings available of the cross-dressing, sex-changing hero of these variants:

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<sup>3</sup> Risto Jarv, in his 2005 article, disputes Bengt Holbek’s assumption that female audiences are more interested in stories with female characters, and male audiences more interested in those with male characters. Based on an analysis of the popularity of Estonian fairy tales, in the twentieth century there has been a shift, and stories with male heroes have become more popular with female audiences.

On the one hand, the heroines are vindicators of adventurous womanhood; they are models of valour and confidence and far outshine the male characters in the stories, seemingly proving that anything a man can do a woman can do better. However, in each case the girl loses her femininity completely by the end of the tale...The prevailing message is certainly that it is not acceptable for a women to step so fully into a man's shoes and that the privilege of acting like a man is not [to] be gained without sacrifice. (181)

Hooker's use of the word "sacrifice" is telling; she assumes that the change of sex is not desired. She concludes, about the independent heroines of ATU 514, that "their magical transformation at the end of each story is a reaction to the threat they pose to male dominance" and Hooker refers to the change of sex as a "punishment" (182), rather than as a narrative reward. Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire dispute Hooker's assumption: in ATU 514, they argue, "the protagonist welcomes her imposed transformation—that is, s/he desires transsexual embodiment" (68). Although we are not privy to the hero's thoughts in the story, we do know that the hero seeks out the change of sex, very actively in some cases, and is relieved when he has finally become a man. Centrally important to Hooker's article, however, is her ambivalent conclusion: ATU 514 and other tales with "sword-bearing" women "suggest that women are subordinate by social constraint rather than by nature, and in a backhanded way exhort them to the very deeds for which they receive punishment" (183). ATU 514, then, according to Hooker illuminates through the cross-dressing and the magical change of sex the performativity of gender, and the frustrating constraints of gender roles.



Barbara Hillers, in her 1995 article on Gaelic variants of ATU 514, argues that “The Man Who Became a Woman,” the Scottish variant of “The Man Who had No Story to Tell” which I have discussed earlier as one of the Tiresias Tales wherein a man transforms into a woman, and then back into a man, “is a narrative about someone who has committed...a breach of norms, and whose transgression can only be remedied by his being subjected to the ultimate transgression of a change of sex. There can be no doubt that the hero’s transformation is intended, and understood, as a punishment” (187). The same could certainly be said for all variants included in the Tiresias Tales—the change of sex is a punishment, because of the drop in power from male to female. It is also clear in these tales, as I have said, that the male protagonists are eager to return to their male bodies—just as eager as the hero of ATU 514 is to get to her male body. Hillers argues that “when a woman is turned into a man, it is a miracle; if a man, on the other hand, is turned into a woman, it is a disaster” (187). To be a male is to have power and that position is desire, and to be female is to be powerless, and is dreaded. ATU 514 could be interpreted, therefore, not as a tale of a woman who desires to be a man personally, but of a woman who desires the power and freedom that comes along with that sex; this could be further read as a statement of the desirability of the male sex over the female. Hillers argues that ATU 514 “endorses society’s preference of a boy over a girl; the change of sex is a divine favor or reward, elevating a girl to the status and function of a man” (178). According to this reading, ATU 514 is not a transgressive tale at all, but is in fact reinforcing the sexist superiority of the male sex over the female. Although she argues that this tale type endorses existing gender roles (188), she states that it questions those

gender roles as well: “the gender change motif is a particularly daring mental experiment [for the audience], enacting a role reversal in the rigid gender division of traditional Gaelic society”. She theorizes that the audience of this tale type was challenged by the sex transformations within the story. She goes on to say that “‘The Man Who Became a Woman’ is a complex statement about gender, a temporary role reversal of the imagination” (188). This folk tale, then, is a vehicle for important “mental experiments” and “temporary role reversals”; for audiences firmly attached to their gender and sex, this folk tale provides an opportunity to disengage from those aspects of their identity and to consider the social assumptions made around gender and identity.

Folklorist Christine Jones compares ATU 514 with the 1689 French literary fairy tale from Madame d’Aulnoy, “Belle-Belle or the Chevalier Fortuné” in 2003. This tale begins similarly to ATU 514, but concludes when a male and a female cross-dresser happily marry one another, continuing to dress as their chosen sex. Jones writes that the conclusion of “Belle-Belle” is “perhaps more realistic than ATU 514’s instantaneous magical change of sex.” Surely the conclusion to this narrative folk tale is within the grasp of the audience, whereas a miraculous sex-swap is not. She goes on: “d’Aulnoy’s narrative, and even more its traditional counterpart in ATU 514, expresses transgender imagination and transgender possibility quite explicitly throughout” (qtd. in Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire 63). In other words, the miraculous conclusion of ATU 514 limits the experiences of the characters within it to fantasy; Belle-Belle and her partner, however, have found a happily life for themselves with a very realistic solution. ATU

514, therefore, does not so much express “transgender possibility” as does the “Belle-Belle” literary fairy tale.

## **Section 2: Major Studies on ATU 514**

Queer scholar Maja Pan focuses her 2013 study of ATU 514 on variants from the Balkans, where it is wide-spread. I have discussed in this thesis a Serbian variant “A Woman Became a Man,” translated in her article. Pan summarizes the analytical quandary of ATU 514 that I address in this thesis: the protagonist is either 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...the uplift into a man, and a shift into a heterosexual relation” (Pan 173). Pan argues that ATU 514 may be an expression of the superiority of the male sex or of heterosexual union. The tension created by the homosexual relationship and the gender transgression, she argues, is resolved with the change of sex, which returns heteronormativity to the relationship. Pan goes further and states that, “if fairy tales use a total departure from commonly perceived reality (for example: change of sex), it is only to disable and even prohibit the unacceptable relationship” (179). As Jones argues above, the change of sex of ATU 514, because of its fantastic nature, puts the homosexual union and the success of the female hero, out of realistic grasp for the audience. She argues that ATU 514 “acts in favour of the ideological conception that the marriage of man and woman is rightful only because of their sex” and that “the heroine becomes deprived of any agency over her sex and sexuality” (Pan 165). Like Hooker, Pan describes the change of sex within the tale as a

“sacrifice” which eliminates a lesbian relationship. Her conclusions about this quandary are intriguing. Pan attempts to consider gender in this tale type at a distance from essentialism, which assumes that femaleness is a quality inherent in the female body. She writes, “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” (179). The hero in ATU 514 who successfully straddles gender boundaries within the narrative is an illustration of the performative nature of gender. Pan concludes, based on this unusual folktale character, that “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” (179). The hero fills the role, within the narrative, of both male and female.

Another interesting regional reading of ATU 514 comes from anthropologist Donna M. Lanclos, who analyzes tales collected from the Iberian Peninsula and from its colonies in South America. Based on her scholarship of masculinity in Hispanic cultures, she sees the female experience as playing no role in the tale; she argues that the Hispanic variants of ATU 514 “Florinda,” “The Unicorn,” “Story of a Mule Driver,” “The Princess Who Groans” and “The Metamorphosis,” are instead expressions of the male journey to manhood. Lanclos argues that ATU 514 is a tale for boys moving through the process of becoming a man. Her argument is built upon anthropological study of the cultures in which the tales were collected, and literary analysis of the tales themselves, observing the parallel journey that the hero takes from femininity to masculinity and that a boy takes from boyhood to manhood. She argues that the Hispanic versions “are symbolic accounts

of the journey a boy raised in a traditional Hispanic family must take on his way to manhood” (Lanclos 74). The young woman at the start of the tale is a pre-pubescent male who must don the armor of his sex, repeatedly demonstrate his masculinity, and finally be rewarded the symbol of his manhood—his penis—through battle before he can marry and become a man.

### **Section 3: Queer and Transgender Analysis**

The most thorough approach to ATU 514 to date is Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire’s chapter in *Unsettling Assumptions* (2015). They respond to Lanclos’ article, describing her as “transphobic,” in that her analysis of Hispanic variants of the tale type does not allow readings that challenge the gender binary. Her analysis is “apparently unable to conceive of the protagonist’s transsexual transformation as anything but a loss of womanhood” (Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire 69). ATU 514 does not appear to end in loss; in fact, it ends happily, in every single case—the hero and his wife are happy to marry and to have sex. His wife is delighted by his transformation, and is not concerned that he is not a “real man,” which, as Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire point out, is a problem for transmen in the present day. There are no complications after the change of sex is completed, and everyone seems to accept that gender is changeable; although born a woman she is a woman no longer. The hero has not lost anything, in fact, what is more significant is what he has gained: his very transgressive actions have not been punished, but rewarded, with a beautiful wife, a job under the king, and a happy life, which is a long way from where he began, as the youngest child in a common family, with no prospects.

Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire employ a transgender reading of this tale type, arguing that the tale can be interpreted as “a subtle exploration and undermining of sex and gender” (57). Again, no one in the story seems to be troubled that their hero was born female. They further suggest that ATU 514 has a “telling ambivalence about gender, sex, and sexuality that characterizes genderqueer” (57). The cross-dressing and sex-changing straddling of gender boundaries creates a narrative which questions ideas of gender and gender identity. Their argument is that ATU 514 and other gender-bending tales describe female masculinity; the change of sex of the protagonist represents an increase of power and expression. Cross-dressing narratives, with no change of sex motif, such as the ATU 884 tale types I discussed earlier, “circle around a male character *forced* by circumstances to dress in women’s clothes, or female characters *choosing* to cross-dress and take traditionally male work roles as soldiers, sailors, pirates, or highway robbers” (Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire 57). In these narratives, cross-dressing is not necessarily a matter of personal identity, but is necessary to have access to a male world. In ATU 514, however, the cross-dressing is usually a personal choice, the change of sex is desired, and in some cases, sought out.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSGRESSIVE THEMES**

### **Section 1: Secondary Narratives**

The analytical approaches to ATU 514 discussed above generally perform analysis upon one or several variants of this tale type. In this thesis, I perform analysis upon a large number of variants. The analysis, therefore, does not rest on motifs or episodes of individual tales, but on the patterns that many or all of the variants have in common. In this collection, the tales, as I have shown above, share in common their primary narrative structures. The central narrative of ATU 514 is a transgression of gender and gender identity—cross-dressing, and then change of sex. Outside of the central narrative, however, there are secondary narratives which approach gender and gender identity in a different way: they are expressions of the frustrating limitations of gender, and specifically of the female gender within a patriarchal culture. I have identified the secondary narratives in every tale, and organized them into groups. I will discuss the largest groups below.

### **Section 2: Oppressive Marriage Traditions and Expectations**

The sexist rules of marriage and a woman's lack of control over the choice of her own mate are continued themes in tale type ATU 514,. In many variants, once the protagonist has left home, a princess falls in love with the disguised hero. In the Hispanic

variants “Story of a Mule Driver,” “The Metamorphosis,” and “The Unicorn,” the princess is so smitten that she goes to great lengths to secure the marriage: she persuades her parents, or devises ways to bring them together. This strong-willed young woman is breaking a clear gendered tradition of men proposing marriage. In some cases, there are cues in the text that point to these non-traditional approaches. For instance, in “The Unicorn,” the princess is infatuated with “Carlos,” the name the hero has assumed, and wants to court him. Her father, however, tells her, “daughter, it is he who must declare his love for you. Women never speak first” and that she must wait for the hero to approach her (Lanclos 69). The line creates narrative irony: because the princess is *actually* infatuated with a woman, the rules that she must abide by in proposing marriage do not actually apply. The audience knows the identity of the hero, and is prompted by the narrative to consider the traditional practices around marriage proposal, and to question them: in this case of gender-bending, what is appropriate? Like the protagonist, who was so stifled by womanhood that cross-dressing was the surest way to leave home, the princess is also stifled under the rules imposed upon her sex. In ATU 514, however, the princess transgresses these rules. In five tales, including the Hispanic variants “Story of a Mule-Driver,” “The Metamorphosis,” “The Unicorn,” the Norwegian “The Girl who Served as a Soldier and Got Married with the King's Daughter,” and the Hungarian “The Girl Who Became a Man,” it is the princess who desires the hero and wants to arrange the marriage.

A very touching discussion of women’s agency in marriage choice comes from the Romanian tale, “The Girl Who Pretended to be a Boy.” In this tale, the princess



Iliane has been captured by a Genius. The emperor, who wants her for his bride, sends the hero to go and steal her back for himself. Iliane does not love the emperor, but hates him less than she does the Genius. This is a rather similar situation to that of many fairy-tale princesses, whose fate is determined by forces outside themselves. Iliane wonders why, “while other girls did as they liked, she was always in the power of someone she hated” (338). In ATU 514, the princess has a voice and has desires of her own, and the unfortunate series of thefts of her person—as if she were an object—are humanized as tragic for her, not simply heroic for her rescuers. The restrictions of marriage and the lack of agency women have over their betrothal are constantly referred to in variants of ATU 514.

### **Section 3: Freedom and Employment**

The vast majority of the variants in this collection begin because the king needs a soldier, and there is either no father or son in the family, or the son or father does not or cannot go to war—this is the most repeated secondary narrative present in this collection. A soldier is a valued and respected member of society, and it is a role any man can fill, whether rich or poor, yet no woman may serve, even if she wants to. On the other hand, being a soldier is a dangerous position, and it is understandable that some men (as in the brothers of the hero in all variants of the group *Trickster Hero*) would not be willing to risk their lives to fight for their king. In this case it is both the male and female sex who are restricted based on their bodies: men are expected to serve unless they are unable to,

and women are forbidden to serve, even when they are willing. There is evidence in the many variants in this collection of frustration around these rules.

A woman's freedom of employment is restricted in other ways in this tale type: in the untitled Finnish variant (Appendix 2, Tale 5), the protagonist must dress as a man in order to work as a laborer. In most of the Finnish variants, in a family without a father, a brother is supposed to go to war but does not want to; in one variant, he wants to stay home to care for his mother: "The father died, and so the boy was now his sister's and mother's support. The boy was of age to go into military service, but this would have been a great grief for the mother, for she was quite helpless now" (appendix 2 tale 1). Evident in this story are the restrictions of the male role in society as well as the female. The brother is required to leave the comforts of home and to risk his life in a king's war, and an older woman living alone is "quite helpless" and unable to care for herself without a son or husband to provide for and protect her. In the Oaxacan "Story of a Mule Driver," the protagonist must dress as a man just to travel freely with her father. A theme in many of these tales, then, is the basic lack of freedom of movement afforded to women in their work and in their lives.

#### **Section 4: The Princess and the Hero: A Homosexual Relationship**

ATU 514 includes what could be read as a homosexual relationship between the protagonist and the princess. In many variants, the marriage between the princess and the hero is not arranged: the princess falls in love with the hero, and seeks out marriage. The hero always goes along with the marriage without complaint or concern. The audience never gleans the hero's opinions on the matter of marriage to the princess. In two

variants, the princess becomes aware of the hero's identity, and is fine with it, even happy. In the Spanish tale "The Unicorn," the princess says, "well, look, don't worry about it" (Lanclos 69), and in "Florinda," the Chilean tale, the princess is delighted by the revelation: "All the better then! We'll live together like two doves in the world" (Pino-Saavedra 109). What all of the stories have in common, however, is that once the hero is transformed into a man, the princess is always very happy to receive him. Most texts go out of their way to add a few lines at the end displaying her joy or her sexual satisfaction: "next day she went full of joy" (Dawkins 311), "I spent a wonderful night" (Elsie 44), and the more visceral: "He almost tore her to pieces. But since then it was pleasure both day and night" (Friesl 107). These tales conclude with the princess satisfied sexually by the heterosexual consummation of their marriage.

Even in those stories wherein the princess is angry that she has married a woman, after they have sex, the princess is delighted. The hero has not changed in personality or character in any way; he is a man who began his life as a woman. All of the traits he held before are presumably still within him. The only difference is the physical presence of male genitals. The very large implication of this narrative moment, according to a queer reading, is that sex is not of spiritual or psychological consequence, it simply consists in physical characteristics. The princess fell in love with and married a woman, and is happy with that knowledge now that the hero has a penis. This radical union, finally, ends happily when the couple marries, or consummates their marriage, and this happy ending is a narrative reinforcement that the choices the hero and the princess made within the story are acceptable.

## Section 5: Guns vs. Flowers: Gender Stereotypes

Generally, as soon as the hero leaves home, there are challenges which test the hero's masculinity: killing or wounding a foe; hunting prey; military prowess. Once the hero meets the king, there is often a doubter in the story who believes the hero to be female, and in these tales there is an episode consisting of tests of masculinity, wherein the hero is tricked into a scenario designed to reveal sex. These tests come in different forms: in the group of variants *The Hero and the Princess*, early on in the story, the hero must pass through gardens of beautiful flowers and resist temptation to stop and admire them—a feminine habit. Later, the hero is tested when flowers are placed on the pillow: the flowers will wilt in the hand of a man, and stay fresh in the hand of a woman. In two tales from the variant group *Magical Transformation*, the tests of masculinity are of high chairs and low chairs—the hero is led into a room with both types of chairs, and the doubter watches to see which chairs are chosen: it is expected that a woman will sit in the low chair and a man in the high chair. “Florinda” includes a series of tests of masculinity: the hero is led through a garden containing men's flowers and women's flowers, and is watched to see which are appealing. The hero is also led into a room full of weapons; it is expected that a woman will not notice them, but a man would comment upon them.

These tests describe stereotypes of male and female gender roles. The test of the flowers vs. the weapons is a wonderful example of stereotypical gendered interests: it is considered so certainly a trait of women that they love flowers and of men that they love weapons that this seems a sure-fire test of sex. This stereotyping is easily overcome, of

course, since the hero knows the meaning of the tests, thanks to the magical helper. The presence of these tests of masculinity points to the frustrating oversimplification and stereotyping of male and female behavior.

## **Section 6: The Oppressive Father Figure: The Patriarch**

The largest pattern of sexism and the frustrating presence of the patriarchy in ATU 514 is the role of the father in these tales. In the Kabardian tale “The Courageous Daughter,” in addition to the tales of the entire variant group *The Hero and the Princess*, the father has become old and the family poor, and the daughters decide to seek fortune themselves, dressed as men, but the father discourages them. As one daughter after the other sets out from home, the reader discovers that the father is a magician. He “managed, unseen, to overtake his daughter, and throw a bridge of copper over a stream that she would have to cross. Then, changing himself into a wolf, he lay down under one of the arches, and waited” (Lang 322-23). When the daughter runs in fear back home, the father is waiting there, and tells her, “Did I not tell you, my child, that flies do not make honey?” (323). In other words, it is not in his daughters’ nature to be heroes, it is in their nature to be women. He reminds the daughters that the king wants a man in service, not a woman. The father goes on to disguise himself as a wolf, a lion, and a dragon for each daughter, to send them running back home in shame. In these tales we have brave daughters who set out *on their father’s behalf* at great personal risk, only to have that effort immediately thwarted by the father. The daughters attempt differentiation from the father and individuation in their own lives, but the father sabotages them. In the Serbian

“A Woman Became a Man,” from the variant group *The Youngest Daughter*, the reason that a young woman disguises herself as a man is because her father has forbidden any of his daughters to marry, and when they set out from home, he sets up these three tests for his daughters, *killing* the two eldest because they fail his “test” of courage.

From the variant group *The Borrowed Sex*, “An Indian Princess Borrows a Jinni’s Sex,” a husband has threatened his pregnant wife that if the child is a girl, he will kill it; it is the mother who decides the girl will be dressed as a boy, in order to save her life (Mardrus and Mathers 408). In the Persian “The Princess and the Div who Change Sexes” the father will kill the child and his wife if the child is born female (Clouston 279). In these tales it is so much more preferable to the father to have a male child than a female that he will kill his wife if she is unlucky enough to give birth to a girl. The tales of the variant group *The Mother’s Deception* have a similarly brutal father figure: in the Turkish tale “The Weeping Pomegranate and the Laughing Quince” and the Albanian “The King with Nine Daughters,” the father has threatened his pregnant wife that he will kill a female child, and in “The Weeping Pomegranate,” he will also kill his wife if she bears a girl.

Later in the story, the father displays additional sexism in his disdain for his assertive daughter: the hero has chosen to wed her, but the king warns the hero that “that girl is far too headstrong,” she is “a very willful girl” (Kent 139). In this case the daughter is considered headstrong because of her choice of mate: she is actually in love with another man, with whom she conspires to send the hero on impossible quests, hoping that the hero will be killed. But at the conclusion of the story, after the hero

succeeds, the princess and her beloved are resigned to the fact that the strongest suitor winning the bride as a prize: “listen to the sound that rings in our ears. Let us own the mastery of so clever and brave a prince. Until this hour you were mine, but now I must yield you to him” (Kent 142). The princess in this tale has been passed back and forth between her father and the hero, as an object rather than an individual with choice over her mate. There are therefore, in this tale, two oppressive fathers: the hero’s father, who will kill a female child, and the princess’s father, who disparages his daughter’s strength and weds her to someone against her wishes. Another example of this type of marriage arrangement appears in the Armenian tale “The Girl Who Changed into a Boy”—the king gives his daughter away as if she were, literally, an animal. The hero, when offered a wish from the king, have requested his magical horse Lulizar, and the king responds “Lulizar is worth my entire kingdom... If I give her to you, I might as well give you my daughter too! And so he did” (Downing 83). The father of the princess hands over his daughter as an after-thought, equating her with a valuable animal.

The tales from the variant group *Magical Transformation* include particularly striking examples of the oppressive male figure. In the Spanish tale “The Unicorn,” a young woman’s sweetheart is murdered by another man. In this case, it is not the violence of a father, but of another man which necessitates her revenge and eventual disguise in men’s clothing. In the Oaxacan tale “The Story of a Mule Driver,” the father is not cruel, but he is traveling and, although she wants to accompany him, he is protective: “I’m not taking you because you are a woman, and I don't want anything to happen to you while you are on the road,” and so he tells her to disguise herself as a man

(Lanclos 79). Here it is not the cruelty of the father which necessitates her disguise, but the cruelty of a world in which it is dangerous for a woman to travel alone because she is physically vulnerable, presumably to male violence. The freedom of this young woman to travel and explore the world is hampered by her sex.

The Chilean “Florinda” and the Danish “The Princess Who Became a Man” contain by far the most gruesome examples of the oppressive father. In these tales, the father, driven mad by his wife’s death, has decided to marry his own daughter. These variants overlap with the incest motif that appears in tale type ATU 510B, “Peau d’Asne,” whose well-known variants are the English “Cap o’ Rushes,” the Grimms’ “Allerleirauh,” or the French literary fairy tale, “Donkeyskin.” Uther notes that this incest motif has been “documented independently since the 12<sup>th</sup> century” (Uther 295). These tales all begin with a king who desires to marry his daughter, but thereafter are very different from ATU 514: the protagonist disguises herself as an animal, in a wooden case, or in an ugly skin, and runs away from her father and works as a servant in a neighboring castle. After a complex process of disguising and revealing herself, she ultimately marries a prince (Uther 295). Both ATU 514 and ATU 510B include themes of disguise. In tale type ATU 510B, of course, the disguise is temporary; the narrative concludes when the protagonist ultimately casts off her ugly disguise, confesses that she is a princess, and returns to the self she was before her father’s incestuous desire cast her out of her home. In ATU 514, the hero remains male. While the structure of these tale types is different, they share in common the oppressive father figure; the action of the stories occurs when the protagonists must hide their vulnerable female bodies. This



disguise gives the protagonist access to another world in which it is possible for her to achieve her goals.

## **Section 7: Category Crisis**

The major categories of secondary narrative in this collection are oppressive marriage practices, lack of freedom and employment, the homosexual relationship between the hero and the princess, the gender stereotypes against which the hero is tested, and the largest, which is the oppressive father figure. Over and above these categories is the assumption made explicit in nearly all of the variants that a female life is of less value than a male life, which is the reason that male drag is necessary for the hero. While these elements are not the primary narrative focus of the tale type, the fact that they recur in every variant indicates that they are a crucial part of the tale. To understand the function of these secondary narratives, I make use of feminist literary critic Marjorie Garber's notion of the category crisis:

The apparently spontaneous or unexpected or supplementary presence of a transvestite figure in a text...that does not seem, thematically, to be primarily concerned with gender difference or blurred gender indicates a category crisis elsewhere, an irresolvable conflict or epistemological crux that destabilizes comfortable binarity, and displaces the resulting discomfort onto a figure that already inhabits, indeed incarnates, the margin. (16)

The central action of ATU 514—the cross-dressing and especially the change of sex—carries the main narrative tension and is, moreover, fantastic. That this central action

includes cross-dressing and change of sex represents the dismantling of a significant category. Because sex and gender identity are being dismantled in the text, this urges the reader to look elsewhere for another crisis. Outside of the central action are “irresolvable conflicts” taking place in secondary narratives that are not fantastic but are very real. These real, seemingly irresolvable conflicts—marriage practices, stereotypes, heteronormativity, and patriarchal family structures—are personal, and a frank discussion of them would be tense; fortunately this tension is displaced in the story by the fantastical experiences of the hero. The primary narrative, then, distracts from the secondary—but using Garber’s notion of the category crisis, the primary narrative actually alerts the reader to the secondary narratives of a text.

While the notion of category crisis illuminates this relationship between primary and secondary narratives in the analysis of ATU 514, there are differences between how Garber makes use of category crisis in her analysis and how I use the concept in this thesis. Garber identifies category crises in texts that do not seem to be “primarily concerned with gender,” yet ATU 514 is centrally concerned with gender. Additionally, Garber makes use of the concept in analysis of an individual, literary text rather than a collection of folk texts. What I draw from her concept of category crisis, in my analysis of this tale type, is her identification of the significance of the marginal figure in a text whose body is a performance of another gender. In ATU 514, the hero both cross-dresses and changes sex, and therefore resists traditional sex or gender categorization. The hero in ATU 514 is marginal in the extreme. This marginal figure draws attention to the categories that are being dismantled by their presence. Garber argues that the category

crisis is “disrupting and calling attention to cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances” (16). In ATU 514 these dissonances are deeply-ingrained social structures: the patronizing de-individualizing gender stereotypes; the power of fathers over wives and children; the lack of agency and choice that women have over their marriages, and thus over their sexual and personal desires; the political and military systems that do not value feminine contributions, but commodify masculine skills, which leads to the inability of girls to contribute to the wealth and stability of their families; and finally, the sum of all these injustices, which creates a world wherein a boy child is treasured, and a girl child unwanted.

## **Section 8: Conclusion**

Past scholars have focused their readings of this tale type, understandably, on the primary narrative of the protagonist, and have discussed the function of this tale for audiences. Recent queer and feminist scholars have debated whether the hero of these tales is best read as a transgressive figure, or as an agent of heteronormativity. In this project, the work of compiling textual evidence of a large number of variants has illuminated a strong pattern of secondary narratives that warrant a different approach to analysis of this tale type. Reading ATU 514 with an eye to the secondary narratives, which are obscured in the reading of an individual variant, but evident within analysis of a large group, reveals textual evidence that suggests that these tales are embedded with frustrations at the restrictions of gender and gender identity, and that they may be a vehicle for expression of these frustrations.

That ATU 514 has been continuously told and collected for so long and across such a broad geographical area, is evidence that the narrative has been a compelling one across cultures; the presence of many modes of entry, indicated by the fact that it has been debated by scholars for over a century, indicates its complexity. The persistence of ATU 514 represents a continuing fascination, across cultures and time with sex, gender, and gender identity, and demonstrates that it is not a new idea to look at our sex and gender and their limitations critically and to ask ourselves, “is that all there is?” Because it captures this long-standing human fascination, ATU 514 is a transgressive tale that should continue to be the subject of scholarly attention and questioning so that we may deepen our understanding of the history of the human relationship with sex, gender, and gender identity.

## APPENDIX 1: VARIANT OF ATU 514 FROM THE OSSETIAN NART SAGA

### **Alimbeglanya** **The Daughter of Alimbeg, from the clan Alit(a)** From the *Ossetian Nart Saga*<sup>4</sup>

Alimbeg, from the clan Alita, had been a leader among the Narts all his life, and a chief in their raids. He helped the poor; if he met a poor man, he didn't pass him by, he helped lighten their misery.

It sometimes happened that someone's livestock would go missing; he would not sleep all night, he would find the thief, and return the stolen animal to its owner by morning. No one gave away a daughter in marriage without asking for Alimbeg's opinion, and there were no weddings without him. Furthermore, the Narts didn't even give a name to a newborn without asking for his opinion. There was only one thing he had no luck in: Even though he had seven wives, they didn't give him a [male] child, only the seventh gave him a daughter.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after the girl was born, Alimbeg got sick and died. After his death, the Narts couldn't find a new leader to head their council. In the following times, lacking a leader, the Narts began to decline. Then, three Nart boys decided: "Let's go to Acamaz, from the clan Acat! He has been wise among the wise all his life, but now he is old. Let's ask him how we should live from now on!" And they went to see old Acamaz.

"A good day to you, Acamaz!" they greeted him.

"May the Lord be kind as well to you who have come down to see me."

"Why do you speak so, Acamaz? We are here for your advice."

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<sup>4</sup> Translation from: Kovács, B. (Transl.) (2008) *A nap gyermekei: Jász-alán hősmondák* [Children of the Sun: Hero tales from the Iasz-Alans]. Budapest: Püski kiadó. Pp. 303-309.

Translation informed by: Fazekas, Zs. (Ed.) – Istvánovits, E. – Kulcsár, V. (Translts.) (2009) *Nartok: Kaukázusi hősmondák* [Narts: Caucasian hero sagas]. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó.

<sup>5</sup> In the Fazekas translation, he has 9 wives.

“What advice can I possibly give, now that I am so old?”

“We wanted to ask you: Once upon a time the Narts were good in every way. Tell us – why is it not so today?”

“You want to know what you need to do so that the Narts will become Narts once again?”

Acamaz asked “Do this: Go and summon all the Narts! When they are all together, elect a new leader! Choose from a clan that has given the best men to the Narts over the past three generations.”

The boys thanked Acamaz for his advice, and followed it. They sent a messenger to summon one person from each family to the meeting place of the Narts. Every family that did not send a man have to give one of their daughters as a slave.

The Narts gathered to discuss their affairs, and think about which man should lead the council. But there was no one at the meeting from Alimbeg’s house. All seven widows of Alimbeg’s house were sitting around the cradle of the little girl and weeping. “The Narts have never held a council without our husband! And now, that they have gathered, there is no one there from our family, and they even want to take our little sunshine from us!” thus spoke, crying, the wives of Alimbeg.

The girl in the cradle heard how distressed her family was, and she asked: “If your husband was such a famous Nart, he must have left a horse, weapons, and his battle outfit?”

“He did leave a horse, weapons, and everything needed in war” answered the wives.

“Where do you keep all that?” asked the girl. They told her, and then she turned to her mothers, saying: “Bake a bread as large as I am! Once I eat it, I can go to the meeting of the Narts.”

The women complied. The girl ate up the bread and said: “If the bread had been bigger, I would be stronger too.” And with that, she broke her cradle apart, stood, and brought forth the horse of her father from underground. She washed it with soap, bathed it, until it was shining like an egg. She jumped onto its back, rode to the sea, and bathed it once again in the water sparkling with sunlight; she flew over the sea like a wild duck, and returned to the village of the Narts. She put steel shoes on the horse, saddled it, and tightened the saddle straps with such force that the eyes of the horse bulged.

“And now” she told herself “I’ll put on men’s clothes. Is it possible that no one would recognize a girl in me?”

She brought out her father's outfit, cleaned it, and put it on as it fit. Then, as if it was a feather, she took down her father's heavy armor from the wall, put it on her shoulders, jumped up on the horse, and asked her mothers: "How do I look?"

The women praised her, told her she looked very good on the horse. Only Alit Alimbeg's famous horse thought sadly: "Woe is me. So far, the greatest Nart men have ridden me, and now a girl sits on my back!"

Alimbeg's daughter guessed the horse's thoughts, got angry, whipped him a couple of times, and prepared to jump the stone wall.

"What do you think now?" she asked.

"I like this" the horse said "Your father never let me jump the stone wall."

Alimbeg's daughter<sup>6</sup> rode into the square of games, where the meeting was going on. The youth, when they realized that no man came from Alimbeg's house, spoke thus: "We shall get a slave woman from that house."

But when Alimbeg's horse appeared on the square, and they saw the youth riding it, they were stunned: Was it a miracle by God? When was a boy born to Alimbeg's family? The councilor Alimbeg didn't leave a male heir! It had been known for a long time that, sadly, no one was born to that family...

One of the elders told the youth: "Find out who he is!"

They walked up to the young rider and asked: "Who are you and where did you come from? We can see the horse and the weapons belong to Alimbeg, the great councilor from the clan Alita. Who are you to him?"

"May your meeting be successful!" said Alimbeg's daughter "Yes, my horse and weapons used to belong to Alimbeg of clan Alita, and I am his son. Great Narts! May you all be always lucky, and may you know that my father – may his memory be blessed – left seven wives in his house. The seventh, the youngest, gave birth to me, and have me to clan Kambadat to be raised.

The Narts rejoiced when they heard this. The old Acamaz had told them to elect a leader from a clan that proved itself to be the greatest in three generations. They looked the figure of the rider over, watched his serene face, talked to the young heir of Alimbeg for a long time, probed the strength of his mind. They even tested him in the games of the

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<sup>6</sup> Gendered pronouns used at translator's discretion.

Narts. He was the first in everything, this unknown son of Alimbeg. Then some Narts said:

“If this great man is from our kind, he must be fit to be our leader. He is strong, brave, quick, and blessed with a bright mind.”

And those who had hostile intentions against the clan Alita, said:

“Very well, he is fit to be a messenger.”

“No” the others said “It is not fit for the son of Alimbeg of clan Alita to be a messenger.”

“Well then, let’s make him an ambassador! If he proves himself, we’ll make him our leader.”

The Narts deliberated for a long time, given the fame of the clan Alita they couldn’t make him a mere messenger or ambassador. They elected him as their leader. Then, they summoned the man who had been the first in the council, took the chain of his office from around his neck, called on the son of Alimbeg, and hung the chain around his neck. The daughter of Alimbeg then went home and said to her seven mothers: “I am lost, my dear mothers! Why did I put on man’s clothes? Why did they choose me as the leader? Not even most of the men could deal with such a responsibility, how am I, a girl, supposed to deal with it? If they find out who I am, my entire clan will be disgraced.”

But not long after the daughter of Alimbeg was elected as leader, the fortune of the Narts began to improve.

“You have to work!” declared Alimbeg’s daughter. The great storages of the Narts, like in the old days, filled up with resources. The little daughter of Alimbeg had a sharp mind. She united all the strength of the Narts against their enemies. The raven-black horses of the Narts flew into battle with impatient whinnies, their weapons shone like diamonds, and the villages of the Narts shone like rubies.

Just like her father, the little daughter of Alimbeg also could not suffer injustice. If in one of the settlements a sheep was stolen, like her father, she went to seek it even in the darkness of the night, and returned it to its owner. If she met an unfortunate soul, she always had kind words for them.

One day, however, wily Sirdon<sup>7</sup>—may he get into trouble!—went out to the nihas<sup>8</sup>, put his hat under his head, and lay down on his stomach. The youth immediately gathered

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<sup>7</sup> The Nart trickster

<sup>8</sup> The main meeting square



around him: “Get up Sirdon, we know there is something on your mind! Tell us what you are thinking.”

Sirdon did not even raise his head at the first two or three questions. The youth then said: “Let’s throw him into the river!” Then Sirdon turned face up, grabbed his stomach, and said in anger:

“What do you want from me, proud Narts? Shame on you, for being mean to me!”

“Why would we be mean to you?” asked the Narts, confused. “And why should we be ashamed? What do your words mean?”

“Well, if you want to know, this is what my words mean: You have sunk so low that you have elected a maiden as your leader!”

“Look, what this wily Sirdon came up with!” said the youth, confused “Are you angry, thinking our fortunes are bad?”

“You could be bathing in bird’s milk [sweet milk], you would still have a maiden for a leader! For shame!” and he turned to the Nart Soslan<sup>9</sup> who had been away getting healed: “While you were getting your hand healed, the son of Alimbeg from clan Alita was elected as the leader of our troops. It is possible, Soslan, that your troops are in a woman’s hand now.”

Soslan didn’t believe Sirdon’s words, but he too, as an experienced leader in the Nart army, just like the rest of the Narts, thought: “It would be a shame if the leader really was a woman!”

And the Narts started asking around to see if their leader was a man or a woman. They called their leader to the nihas and asked: “Please, our leader, get yourself a wife! We would like you to have a bright heir. It would be good for us.”

Alimbeg’s daughter told them: “Our affairs are not as good yet as they can be! Give me some more time! Even my father—may his memory be blessed—wanted me to not rush into marriage.”

“Our affairs are fine, you can leave them to some of the youth, and you should go and seek a bride!” said the Narts.

At this point, the daughter of Alimbeg had no way of declining. She promised the youth she would seek a wife. She told her horse: “Oh, my dear horse! I can’t live among the Narts anymore, I have to go far away, and kill myself. It is better to die than to perish in

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<sup>9</sup> One of the famous heroes.

shame here. If I die here and they find out I am a maiden, not only I will be shamed, but my entire clan!”

The valiant daughter of Alimbeg set out to seek a wife. As long as the road was straight, she followed it, and after that she cut through mud, reeds, and bushes. Finally she reached another road. A grey-bearded old man caught up to her on a grey horse.

“May your journey be fortunate!” she greeted him.

“And a lot of happiness to you, young man!”

“Where are you going, grandfather?”

“I am headed to the country between the Black Sea and the White Sea” he answered. “When I look at you, I am amazed. It seems to me your horse belongs to Alimbeg of clan Alita, and so do your weapons—they seem like Alimbeg’s weapons. Whose son are you and where are you going?”

“Your words are true, grandfather” she answered “The horse and the armor used to belong to Alimbeg of clan Alita. I am his son, and I recognize his sworn brother in you.”

The old man’s face lit up in happiness. He was Uastirji<sup>10</sup> from Heaven, an old friend of Alita Alimbeg. Uastirji said: “We swore friendship with your brother, we drank from the same cup. Where are you headed?” he asked.

“I am seeking a bride for myself.”

Uastirji thought about it and said: “Come with me to the seashore. There, in a copper tower, lives the brown-faced beauty, daughter of the rich Adil, let’s take a look at her!”

The daughter of Alimbeg agreed, and they set out for the copper tower on the seashore. They rode and rode. Another rider caught up to them on bay [brown] horse.

“May your journey be successful!” the new companion greeted them.

“May you also be successful, sworn brother of my father!” said the daughter of Alimbeg.

The new companion greeted Uastirji as a friend, and asked Alimbeg’s daughter: “Whose son are you?”

“Alimbeg’s, from clan Alita.” The girl answered.

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<sup>10</sup> Uastirji is the god of travelers.

“Are you really the son of my sword brother? We were both friends of your fathers – Uastirji and me, Uacilla<sup>11</sup>.”

The girl was happy for meeting two friends of her father’s.

Uastirji told Uacilla where they were going, and the three of them soon reached the copper tower on the seashore.

The copper tower had high walls, and like diamonds, cast wheels were turning in it, making it impossible to enter. On the highest floor of the tower lived the brown-faced beauty, Adil’s daughter. Her eyes were like sunlight, her smile could cure all illnesses, her long braids like raven’s wings, her eyebrows like the crescent moon.

The three riders held council: “It will be hard to kidnap the girl” said Uastirji “If we don’t help the son of our sworn brother, what would Alimbeg say?”

“You are right, Uastirji, we have to help him” said Uacilla “I shall slam earth and sky together, and make the copper tower shake. Adil’s daughter will get scared and look out the window – that is how I shall help the son of my friend.”

“And I” said Uastirji “will turn into an eagle, and as the maiden appears, I’ll grab her and pull her from the window. The rest is up to our valiant youth.”

As they approached the copper tower, Alimbeg’s daughter whipped her father’s horse a couple of times, flew like lightning through the spokes of the diamond-bright cast wheels, and found herself at the bottom of the copper tower. Then, Uacilla smashed earth and sky together, brought rain, ceaseless lightning and booming thunder. The copper tower shook, swayed from one side to the other, as if it was coming down. Adil’s daughter looked out the window to make sure people were not in danger. Uastirji was sitting on the edge of the tower in the form of an eagle; as the girl leaned out, he swept down, grabbed her with his talons, and flew down to the bottom of the tower. There the daughter of Alimbeg lay her in front of her in the saddle, whipped the horse, and jumped through the spokes of the diamond-bright wheels again.

“We have gotten a maiden, but the robber herself is a maiden” thought Uastirji who could see everything “We have to be careful in dealing with this, the young ones need some help.”

That evening, when they reached a lonely tree on the steppe, Uastirji said: “Rest here, and we will go on.” He pulled an apple from his pocket, handed it to the daughter of Alimbeg, and said: “Eat the seeds, and give the pulp to Adil’s daughter!”

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<sup>11</sup> Uacilla is the god of Lightning and Thunder.

The heavenly men went on, and the two maidens were left under the tree. Alimbeg's daughter ate the seeds, and in that moment she changed into a man. They spent the entire night under the tree, and early the next morning they set out to the Narts, the young man in the saddle and the girl in front of him.

As the son of Alimbeg from clan Alita, with his young wife, appeared at the end of the street, the Narts stared at them immediately.

"Look, the son of Alimbeg is bringing himself a bride!" they rejoiced.

The Narts greeted them happily, took them into their arms, and carried them to the house of Alita Alimbeg. As the youth passed Sirdon's house, they called in: "Oh, Sirdon you liar, you lied to us once again! What do you say?"

Sirdon ran out into the street and said: "Who, me? I wanted all along to find a way for her to turn into a man, if possible. And you suspect me of sinister intentions?"

What could the Narts say to that?

The great son of Alimbeg of clan Alita thus remained the leader of the Narts until his death, and her children with his beautiful wife, the daughter of Adil. The clan Alita remained a great clan among the Narts.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In the Fazekas translation it is clear at the meeting that the two sworn brothers know that Alimbeg's "son" is a girl—they are gods, after all.

## APPENDIX 2: FINNISH VARIANTS OF ATU 514<sup>13</sup>

### **Tale 1: Woman as a Man. Tale Type 514.b.1.**

Once there lived a married couple who had two children. The father died, and so the boy was now his sister's and mother's support. The boy was of age to go into military service, but this would have been a great grief for the mother, for she was quite helpless now. But the daughter had an idea: she proposed to go into service for her brother. They mutually agreed, so she went out in her brother's clothes.

When she came to the royal palace, the princess saw her and said she need not go into the army, but, instead, she would take her as a husband. When they lived together for some time, however, the princess became suspicious, for she never came to sleep beside her and did not have sexual intercourse with her.

After some time, war broke out against another king. The king sent her as commander of the army and she went. The war was successful—she won. When returning home, she went to an island. There she saw a little cottage and entered—but no

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<sup>13</sup> Finnish Folktales. Records, [Box 6, Folder 13], Special Collections Research Center, U of Chicago Library.

The content of these archives are copies of tales from the Finnish Literary Society of Helsinki with interlinear translation into English. This translation was completed as part of a project initiated by Professor Archer Taylor of the University of Chicago in 1927. Taylor's note on the collection:

The Finnish tales represent the largest single mass of traditional material in manuscript, except possibly the Estonian archives. Since these tales are international in their distribution no one national collection stands alone. Any study which concerns tales enjoying international currency profits from this Finnish material, and the preparation of such studies is substantially encouraged by our possession of it. ([Link](#))

The English translation in the archives is very basic, and is missing articles and connecting words. I have "translated" them into modern English as minimally as possible, to improve readability. For example, the English text of the second line of the story "Woman as a Man" reads: "Then man died a boy was now his sister's and mother's support" and I have written it as: "The father died, and so the boy was now his sister's and mother's support."

one was at home. She felt an urge [to defecate], but had not time to go. It turned out so badly that she made a very big heap on the floor. Then she left the cottage, and she travelled along, very pleased.

The cottage belonged to a wizard, and when he came in, he noticed the heap and got so angry that he intended to have revenge with the aid of his magic tricks to him who had made it. As he did not succeed, the man said angrily “He who had a hole, let him have a billet, if a billet, let him have a hole.”

Soon after that things became different at the royal palace, for the husband of the princess was now a proper man, and now he slept with his wife. Wisdom is always good.

**Tale 2: The King’s Son-In-Law, a Woman, a Shooter, a Chain-Man, a Wood-Fell and a Blower. Tale Type 514.b.2.**

In a kingdom, they began enlisting soldiers. In one home there were two daughters and one son. They drew lots and the boy had to go and be a soldier.

The elder daughter said, “It is wrong to let our only brother go.”

The other daughter said, “What would you do, as we’ve got only one?”

“One of us will go!” said the elder sister.

The younger sister “At least, I won’t go!”

“I will go,” said the elder sister. She put on her brother’s clothes and cut her hair and went. She was received well, as she was pretty and nice, and was taken in the king’s guard.

He often had to stand on duty on the king’s staircase. The king’s daughter saw him often and liked him very much for being so handsome. The daughter said to her father, “Won’t you advance that soldier, giving him a better position? He is so handsome, and pure man.”

“He has served so short a time yet,” said her father, but he soon advanced him to officer. He continued to stand guard on the staircase. The daughter, seeing that he was dressed in cleaner and prettier dress now, wished even more have him.

“Won’t you, father, advance him to lieutenant colonel? He is pure man. He has committed no crime.” Then, he came dressed in even better clothes. The daughter said, “He is so pure and handsome, and has committed no crime yet! Do advance him to major.” So her father advanced him.

The daughter began to wish to advance him to commander general. Her father said, “It’s impossible. He has served too short a time, and has not been in war yet.” The daughter insisted, and did not give her father any peace. The father said, “Perhaps you wish him as your husband!” “Yes, I do wish that,” she said.

The king arranged a feast and invited many merry gentlemen. The king began drinking to their health. Then came the groom’s turn. The king said, “I drink to your health, commander general, and my son-in-law!” He said, “Gracious Majesty, impossible, I am a peasant.” The king said, “It matters nothing, my daughter wants you.”

Then there was an engagement, and the wedding came soon after. He arranged it so that he was always on long voyages; nevertheless it came that he had to sleep by his wife. The daughter said, “Won’t we also play night-tricks?” He replied, “No, it won’t do. We are both alike!” The daughter was sad.

Her father noticed and asked her, “Why are you so sad? You have an agreeable husband.”

“He is agreeable, but that is of no use. He is just like myself!”

“This is a bad thing,” said the father. “What should we do with him? I know”, he said, “I’ll send him into a kingdom to collect my debt. In war I have won many thousand millions.” He said to his son-in-law, “Perhaps you would go fetch this for me? I have won many thousand millions in war”. He was quite willing. It was far that she had to leave horse and carriage behind, and go walking along riverbanks.

She saw a man sleeping. He held a cannon as a rifle, and aimed it out to sea. She asked him why he lie there aiming. He responded, “There is a seal ten miles out—I’m going to shoot it!” “Don’t shoot it—it will remain there. Come and follow me and you’ll get part of a big sum of money!” He rose up, put his cannon on his shoulder, and began to walk with her. A day came when they met a man who had big iron chains. When he

knocked them against each other, trees fell when that clang was heard. "Let them fell their own trees. Come and put your chains on your shoulder, you will get much from the king to whom we go!" He threw the chains on his shoulder and they went.

They came to an enormous meadow which they had to cross. In the middle came a man with wooden legs, who walked from East to West. As he passed, they glimpsed a book/letter in his hand. After a half hour, he came back, and the chain-man threw chains at him and caught him. He asked, "Where did you go and come back from so quickly?" He replied, "I took a highborn earl's book/letter to another earl." The king's son-in-law said, "Let them carry their own books/letters themselves. Come with me and you shall get part of the large amount I'll get!"

They all went along till they came to the shore of that town. There they found three windmills. Before them stood a man who pressed a thumb on one nostril, and blew with the other. When he did this the mills began whirling, and were nearly flying in the air. He told him, "Come with us! We are going to the king of this town. You shall get part of a lot of money!" And so he came, and they went.

Coming to a yard, she left the men before the window of the king. She went in herself and the king asked, "What kind of man are you and what do you want?" She said, "I've come to take a large sum of money." The king said, "No, my fellow, you've lost your life." The king rose up and looked out of the window and saw some extraordinary men in the yard! The king was frightened. The king said then, "Eighty miles from here are the keys of my kingdom. If you can fetch them in three hours, you'll get the money." She went and asked her companions if someone would fetch the keys. The king wrote a letter and she gave it to the wood-legged man. He left immediately, and jumped half of that large meadow.

They all waited. Nearly two hours had passed and he had not come back! She went to the mill-hill and told the man who saw a seal ten miles away, to look and see if he saw the wood-legged man. He looked and said he saw the wood-legged man lying in a meadow and sleeping, with a key-bundle in his hand and a mill-stone under his head. The son-in-law told him to load the cannon, and to shoot the millstone away. He loaded



the shot, and the wood-legged man woke up, and came jumping back. He put the keys on the table before the king, and there was still a half hour left yet. The king began to gather his money. All of the gold and silver in the kingdom was brought, even the king's silver spoons. Then they took the king's best warship, and left.

The chain-man was also a seer. He said, "I see the king gathering his army. His warships will come and take us all prisoners, and take all of our goods away. With my chains, I can stand against some of them, but who could stand against all of the troops?" The cannon-man said, "I can shoot very far, but who could shoot all of the troops?" The mill-blower said, "I can blow a head wind, but who can blow away all of the sea? The wood-legged man replied, "I shall surely carry my bones off, and shall not stay here!"

One day later, it happened just as he had told: many hundreds of ships arrived. The cannon-man began to shoot, the wood-legged man stepped from the edge of the ship and jumped in one pace to the shore, though it was many miles. The mill-blower began blowing from one nostril. The son-in-law said, "Blow from both!" and he blew that warship! It went against the bank in a thousand pieces.

Then [peace?] need not fear anything. They sailed toward home. On the way they saw a beautiful island, and anchored near shore. On this island grew all kinds of fruit trees you can imagine. There was a cottage in the middle of this island with no inhabitants. The king's son-in-law felt he needed to move his bowels. So he did so in the middle of the floor, and they sailed away.

The cottage was the home of a Lapp. The Lapp came home and saw the heap on the floor. "Who had done this!" he said. "If he is a man, let him become a woman, if he is a woman, become a man."

And so it happened that the son-in-law became a man. He sailed home to the king's shore. He went with the king's daughter, his wife, to sleep. In the morning, the daughter said to her father, "Everything is all right. My husband is a proper man."

The king was very glad to be getting so much gold and silver, and that they had been such heroes.

*Kertoi Johan Österholm, 75 vuotta vanha, Merikarvian pitäjästä Köörtilän kylästä.  
Kuullut Valamon luostarissa.<sup>14</sup>*

**Tale 3: The Girl Who Went to War Instead of Her Brother. Tale Type 514.f.3.**

A boy was very sad that he had to go into military service. His sister looked quite like him. She said, "I'll go for you." He said, "Don't be a fool, you are a woman and I am a man. How do you think you'll get along?" "Quite well," said she, "they shall not know whether I am woman or man."

She went to the town, where the king's daughter saw her. She was a pretty man indeed. The king's daughter said to her father, "Don't take that man to battlefield! Let him be here as a guard in this town." Then she asked to raise her in rank, and so she raised her little by little until she was a general. Then the princess began to speak of marriage, saying that she wished to marry her. The king did not object, and they were married.

When they slept together the first night, she felt that she was a girl just as she was. She got angry and told her father that he must be killed, as she has no more to give her than what she had herself! The king said she will not be killed. The king, however, had a large sum of money in a heathen country which he was having difficulty getting back. He said to his daughter, that she will be killed in that country, rather than do it ourselves.

She went to fetch the sum. They gave her a ship. Along came a devil who said, "Take me with you, you shall need me there." They went along a little and there came a second devil. He said, "Take me with you, you'll need me there." They went along, and then came a third devil, who said the same as the previous, "Take me, you'll need me there."

When they were near the town where the money was, there was a smoke so thick that the air darkened. But one of the devils blew the smoke away. When they came to

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<sup>14</sup> My rough translation: Kertoi Johan Osterhom, 75 years old, Merikarvian (municipality of Finland) parish Koortilan Village (city in Finland). Heard at Valaam Monastery (Orthodox Monastery in Russia).

town there was a bridge made of razor blades, and they had to go barefoot over it. The second devil said, “I’ll go ahead and break the blades, so that they will not hurt your feet.” She went over the bridge and came to an oven as hot as fire, in the middle of which was the money coffer. The third devil said, “I’ll take it from here.” She would not have done that herself! When they got the money coffer, they went away with the money.

They came to a cottage. No one was except an old woman, but she had hidden herself in the corner of the chimney, so as not to be seen. The girl said, “I’ll move my bowels on their table, as they are not home.” After they left, the woman said, “If she were a girl, let her get a penis as a stallion has! If he was a boy, let him get genitals as a field-gate!”

Then they arrived home with the money. The king was so pleased, and told them to heat the bath-house for him to bathe with his son-in-law. There the king saw that his son-in-law had a large penis! He scolded his daughter, saying, “You wished to kill a man who has a penis like I have never seen before! It is so large it is like that of a horse.”

Then they lived happily, and may be alive even now.

*Matti Leveinen, 69 v. Röntylässä, Järvikylä No 5, Joroisissa*<sup>15</sup>

#### **Tale 4: Satu (Tale). Tale Type 514.f.5.**

Once there was a boy who was bound to enter into military service. He did not want to go. He asked his sister to go in place of him. She dressed herself as a man, and went. The king’s daughter saw her and became fascinated with the young soldier, as he was extremely pretty. The daughter said to the king, “That young and handsome soldier ought to be raised in rank!” The king acceded, and the soldier became an officer. After some time, the girl again said that the officer ought to be raised in rank, and the king raised him into a prince, and the daughter took him as her husband.

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<sup>15</sup> This source is 69 years old, is from Ala Rontyla, a region in central Finland. The tale was collected in Järvikylä, a village in Southern Finland, of Joroinen, a southern Finnish municipality.

When she saw that her husband was a woman, she began to hate him and to try to kill him. Her husband was sent abroad to change money, but he was given a letter to carry which was actually an order to kill him.

When he left, he met Sharp-Hearer, who said, “Won’t you take me with you?” He took him. When they went along a little further, they met a Water-Runner who said, “Won’t you take me with you?” He took him. After a little while came a Sharp-Shooter who said, “Won’t you take me with you?” They took him. They went still further and then came a Good-Blower. When he blew with one nostril it made windmills go. He said, “Won’t you take me with you?” They took him.

They went abroad to where the money bank was, on an island. The prince said to the Water-Runner: “Fetch the keys to the bank from the island.” The Runner went but fell asleep on a stone. The Sharp-Sighted (?) said to the Sharp-Shooter: “Shoot at the Water-Runner that he should awake”. The Sharp-Shooter shot and the Water-Runner awoke, stole the keys, and brought them to the prince.

Then they came stealthily onto the island at night, stole some money from the bank, and went back home. The owners of the bank noticed that there had been thieves, and they pursued them. They reached them at sea and tried to kill the prince, but the Sharp-Blower blew so fast that they drowned in the billows.

When the prince had crossed the sea, he met a Witch. The prince said, “Will you do me a service?” The woman said, “Why not, for pay!” The prince said, “If you make me a man, I’ll give you a lot of money.” The woman by magic changed him, and the prince gave her 500 marks.

The prince returned to the royal palace a real man, and with a lot of money. The king’s daughter liked him again, as they were now a happy couple.

*Kertoi Wasa Lukanen, 14 v., Kuuli: Bodin Pedriltä*<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Kertoi Wasa Lukanen is a 14 year old source, and the tale was heard from/by Bodin Pedriltä

**Tale 5: Untitled. Tale Type 514 1.6.**

Once there was a merchant who had a woman as a laborer. She went to a house to marry. There the bath-house was heated for him<sup>17</sup>. She raised the water and bathed, and no one saw her private parts. Another day, she went to bathe, raised the water and bathed, and again they did not see anything.

Then, she went into a wood. There an old man was sitting on a pile of fir sprigs. She said, “Do you not know, old man, how to help me? I’ve got no man’s genitals!” He said, “Yes, I know. Your oldest son, bring him here to this pile of fir sprigs. Cut him into three pieces and bring him here.”

Then, a fox came running toward them and attached his new genitals.

The bath-house was heated, and he went to bathe. Then, everyone saw. When he had gotten a child, he brought him to the fir sprigs and cut him into three pieces, and looked. There he was. He was asked, “Where did you put the child?” and looked. “I threw him into the woods.”

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<sup>17</sup> The gendered words *him* and *her* are used interchangeably in most of these tales; it is unclear to which characters the narrator is referring.

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Psyche Z. Ready was classically educated at Shimer College, a Great Books school, and received a BA in Humanities in 2000. Her areas of study were creative writing and women's literature. She worked in Higher Education and Social Work for 14 years before beginning an MA program in English Literature at George Mason University in 2014. Her areas of concentration are Women's Literature, Folklore, Gender Studies, and Teaching Writing.