



# LOVELACE'S "JACK AND HIS MASTERS"

FOLK 211 – Atlantic Canadian Folklore

2011-03-28



# WHAT DID *YOU* THINK?

... and how do Janna and Ryan wish to proceed?



# Some points

- This is one of the trickiest articles we've read, because
  - it assumes a great familiarity with Märchen scholarship, and
  - it is based on a particularly difficult work, Halpert and Widdowson's *Folktales of Newfoundland*
- But, all in all, it's fairly awesome



# His point

- As transcultural as many Märchen are, they are nevertheless told within historical contexts, between people often with a shared history (ethnicity, provenance, etc.), shared worldview, and shared common concerns
- What tales are told – selected from a repertoire to be told – will often be determined by this history, worldview, and concerns



# Drawing on Bengt Holbek

- The number of people who specialized in telling tales was limited
- Nearly all who told and listened to fairy tales were of the lower strata of traditional communities
- Fairy tales were told by and for adults
- Male and female repertoires differed (male had male-centered; female evenly split): accounted for by differing performance contexts
- Fairy tales were regarded as fictions, expressly separated formulaically from truth
- Storytellers identified themselves with the protagonists of the tales

# Also Holbek

- Folktales are aspirational narratives of someone from a lower social strata breaking from that strata
  - An unlikely hero(ine) demonstrating characteristics that are rewarded by a shift from dependent to independent (child to adult), from poor to rich (class), and from single to married
- Holbek drew on Vladimir Propp



# Propp

- Suggests a morphology for the folktale
- All folktales share a common structure, with common dramatis persona performing similar actions that enable the hero's progress
- See Lovelace's "Structural analysis" on 152



By the way:

## “Tale type” and “AT Numbers”

- We’ve spoken of type and version before
  - version=the specific performance
  - type=the set of expectations brought to a specific performance, the abstract item upon which a performance is based, the structure of all performances, etc.
- Tale type index: Antii Aarne and Stith Thompson’s (AT) classification system for tale



# Tale Occasions

- Storytelling occurs in specific contexts (like Bauman, like Tallman, like Tye)
- In Newfoundland, these Märchen were told by older men to younger men
- Not what Lovelace says (written too early), but what perhaps can be construed: these narratives aid in the construction of Newfoundland masculinity
- *"How to Be"*

# Jack's characteristics

- Guarding knowledge
  - Keeping skills personal so as to demand respect / work
- Being useful
  - Indifference to personal pain, emphasis on being “sturdily, practically useful”
- Deceiving words
  - Riddles and metaphors betray the duplicitous nature of verbal arrangements
- Not flinching
  - Never admit hardness or unpleasantness of task; never admit pleasure of the pleasant

# More points

- English peasant antecedents
  - The fostering out of children
  - High mortality → orphans
  - Indentured servitude of young men/boys
  - Narratives of success/survival in work situations
- Surprised by farming
  - Retention of English narratives? or
  - Symbolic representation of duplicitous employer (world of work) in contrast to nurturing older men (world of home)
- “Worker’s literature”



# Go away now

- For next class, McDavid's "Fiddle Burning Priest"