

The Constraint of Women in Russian Folklore

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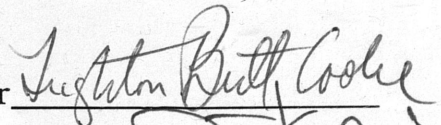
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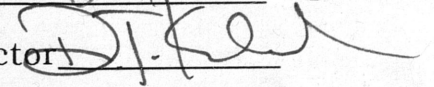
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Maxims from Russian folklore:

"Supporting my father is paying a debt; feeding my son is lending money; feeding my daughter is throwing it out of the window" (Afanas'ev 30).

"The first evil is a bad neighbor; the second evil is a bad wife; and the third evil is a bad mind."

"And now tell me, which of these evils is the worst?"

"From a bad neighbor I can go away; from a bad wife I can also go away if she agrees to stay with the children; but from one's own bad mind one cannot go away, it is always with one" (208).

The Constraint of Women in Russian Folklore

"A chicken is not a bird; a woman is not a human being." Russian proverb

Women lack freedom. They lack the freedom to be their individual selves, since society and tradition dictate their obligation and obedience first to their parents, and then to their husbands. Women have no long-standing personal identity to which they can cling in order to be who they want to be, since first they carry the name of their father in the form of a patronymic and then take the name of their husband when they marry, both of which are symbolic customs in patriarchal societies. In a patriarchal society such as Russia, patronymics, which are derivations from the first name of the father and not the mother, take the place of a middle name for both females and males. Thus, besides being identified with just the last name of the father, children must also carry the first name of the father. In addition, many common Russian first names for women are those of virtues: Vera (Truth or Faith), Nadezda or Nadia (Hope), and Liubov (Love) are examples. Others are those of saints, i.e., recognized "good" women.

The purpose of this study is to create a better understanding of the treatment of women in Russian folklore. Its importance is to portray this literature as the perpetuation of some vices of culture, such as sexism, in society. Its impact will be shown in the consciousness of stereotypes and societal norms which are reflected in and passed on through the medium of fairy tales. The study of the constraint of women in Russian folklore will investigate the

undeniable, and indeed, insidious elements maintained from the past in what otherwise may be the harmless exterior of these folk tales.

Folklore has only recently been acknowledged by scholars as a type of substantial literature suitable for academic study. Up until the mid-eighteenth century the genre of folklore had not been advanced as an academic discipline, until the brothers Grimm published the anthology Grimm's Fairy Tales. The investigation of Jacob Grimm in relating the collected tales to the origin of myths thus commenced the science of folklore. Since this occasion, folklore has been written down, compiled, and studied on an international scale. Today there are written anthologies of folk tales of many different countries, racial groups, and cultures.

What may appear at first to be classified as children's literature of a soporific nature, folklore has qualities which go beyond the exterior qualities of entertainment for children, the stimulation of the imagination, or the inducement of sleep from these so-called bed-time stories. Folklore, with its derivation from the long lasting oral tradition of storytelling, is a vehicle of culture. The past is related through this informative medium, since stories were told and retold to generation after generation. Actually, folklore may be a type of micro-history, in that it is specific to one group of people, with an emphasis on social and popular aspects. It is impossible to set even an approximate date for the initiation of these tales. Yet it is enough to know that the tales which remain are the most significant. Bards and troubadours and *skaziteli* (Russian storytellers) would not continue to recount stories which were uninteresting to their public. The public

demanded and still demand tales to which they can relate, and they remember those which they care to remember.

Another quality of folklore concerns its didactic nature. Although fairy tales now are generally associated with those who have not yet "outgrown" fantasy, these tales in the context that created them were not intended just for children, neither did children alone listen to the oral narratives. Russian folklore was told to all levels of society, with no regard for age or vocation or class. Thus, the plots are of interest to all. In pre-modern, especially pre-Christian, Russia there was no distinction between adult and children's literature, since there was no written secular literature at that time. This literature was also told to all classes of society, from peasants to members of the tsar's court, for the *skaziteli* did not entertain one class alone. These are all-encompassing tales, intended to teach men and women in the proper pursuits of life, according to the traditional values and precepts of the society.

The tales were also believed to be true by the listeners, since legends and myths are included in the folklore as well. Of course the verity of the tales is dependent on the belief system. But the folklore relates back to a pre-Christian, pagan society, a time in which superstitions and magic were not improbable. A good comparison can be expressed using Greek mythology, for the Greeks believed in their gods and goddesses.

A study of the folklore of a specific nation is important because it embraces the mindset of an entire people. Russia in particular is essentially a landlocked country whose boundaries protected its people well from outside attack. The size of its empire occupied an

enormous area, united by the use of one commonly spoken language. The origins of Russia date back to the tribe or people known as the Rus', from which the Russians derive their name today. Therefore, Russian folklore is the essence of a people who inhabited the landmass from the Baltic Sea on the north to the Black Sea on the south.

A constructive means of presenting the issue of women is the use of the primary text Russian Fairy Tales by the ethnographer Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev. This comprehensive volume of one hundred and seventy-eight tales is unprecedented and unparalleled due to the quantity and diversity of the material. This project examines the genre of *skazki* (folk tales), a genre which has endured orally for centuries, perhaps thousands of years, and in the written form since the eighteenth century.

One insidious element apparent in Russian *skazki* is the differential treatment of women (or sexism). Webster's dictionary defines the existence of sexism as "prejudice or discrimination based on sex, especially discrimination against women," and discrimination is defined as the "act, practice, or an instance of differentiating categorically rather than individually." Therefore, women as a group are distinguished and categorized by divulged and disguised differences.

The burning question to be asked, then, is why does the differential treatment of women exist? In other words, what is the root cause of their constraint? First of all, the possibility of finding an origin to the battle of the sexes is elusive because the subject matter is one which has not been specifically documented throughout human history. However, a good place to look for it would be in the

traditional literature of an entire nation. This study emphasizes the use of the genre of folklore pertaining to a whole society in understanding a broad issue such as sexism, and not merely of literature in the form of a single poem, novel, or play concerning authored characters.

Men in general, and usually women, protect and control their wives and daughters. The expression of power and domination is a means of control, yet it is not the cause of constraint. A patriarchal society such as Russia motivates male domination, since patriarchy is in itself the constraint of women. Religion may also facilitate constraint in that it is a justification for the hierarchy of a god at the apex, then man beneath the divine essence, and finally woman at the bottom. The belief system for the Russians centuries ago was most surely pagan, so pagan times should be distinguished from the arrival of Christianity in 988. However, neither power nor domination are the reasons for the basic, underlying principle of sexism, but are mechanisms thereof.

If power and male dominance are merely methods of control, then what is the prior reason for such action? Men, specifically fathers, husbands, and brothers, constrain and control their daughters, wives, and sisters for honor's sake. Functioning as protectors of the honor of their women, men reinforce their own honor. Thus, the fear of a man is the fear of being dishonored, for once a woman's honor has been tarnished, there is no way of regaining it. The possible illicit behavior of a woman is what is controlled, so that her reputation stays intact. The ultimate form of dishonor is the perceived loss of sexual purity, making sexual control the most

operative and effective constraint by men of women. Consequently, men and women control other women for reproduction's sake.

Yet men still control the sex lives of women, and not women those of men. A man first has to make sure that his intended wife is a good breeder, and then he must continue to constrain that wife to make certain that the children are his. The crucial question to Daly and Wilson is not "Who mates with whom?" but "Who fertilizes whom?" or in other words, "Who is the real father?" (83) Parental certainty is of primary emphasis to men and not to women, for women know their own children. Thus, men must be assured of their relationship to their own progeny in order to protect their investments.

The differential treatment of women in Russian folklore is perceptible in all types of women in these tales. Women are classified as wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, stepmothers, queens, grandmothers, aunts, godmothers, witches, daughters-in-law, granddaughters, stepdaughters, widows, and stepsisters. Through these classifications, women are stereotyped, cast as in roles common to the perceived norm, with no regard for individuality. They are "flat" characters, coming from the same assembly-line mold which contributes to their discrimination. The majority of women in these tales are in the transitional stage either before marriage or before they have children, meaning that they are either old daughters or young wives. Thus, the importance of such women lies in their value as reproductive resources. "Sex defines women for many" (Bassein 9).

The transitional stage, according to Beth Ann Bassein, is the limited, yet most discussed, time period in a woman's life leading up to submersion (3). Her state of submersion lies within the confines of

a house with duties to her children, husband, and home, generally in that order in Russian society. However, women do not exist as individuals after marriage, and merely subsist until death in their lives of complete regularity. One female is not distinguishable from the next beginning with her role as mother. Thus, women become more invisible in the area between submersion and extinction, or death, in accordance to what tradition dictates as standard behavior for women.

The variables used in the description of women for this study are as follows: age, name, kin, class, character, beauty, wisdom, and mistreatment. In all of these categories a woman is either hot or cold, meaning, for example, young or old, given a name or not, of the upper or lower class, bad or good, beautiful or ugly, and wise or foolish, all of which are dichotomies common to the genre of folklore. All women mentioned in the texts are not depicted in every instance in explicit or straightforward terms in each category of variables. For example, not every woman was described as beautiful or ugly in the context of every tale because the texts did not see fit to mention every single variable in the descriptions of every woman. Consequently, when a variable is unmentioned or left out of a tale, the silence is not counted against the female. The variable is merely omitted from the study of that particular female, or counted as an implication so that the element is eventually categorized. Also, women mentioned or introduced on a single occasion with no continuance of plot structure involving them in a tale are ignored.

Constraint is expressed through these seemingly inconsequential variables chosen for this project. The fact that the physical aspects of women such as age and beauty are just as important

or even more important than those of class and wisdom constrains women to their physical forms. The description of men is not so confining in the physical aspect. Although some men are described as handsome in the tales, their importance is more akin to their ability to provide for and support a family. Thus, men are judged by a different set of variables, such as qualities likely to assure income.

Out of a total number of about three hundred {304} females in the *skazki*, there are three times the amount of young women {176} in comparison with the old {50}. From this disparity, it is clear that stories told of the young predominate over those of the old, making young women the dominant group from which come the three major categories: daughters {50}, daughters becoming wives {72}, and wives {54}. Young females in Russian folklore, generally called maidens and princesses "stately of form and agile of mind" (Afanas'ev 99)*, are the most interesting to listeners and readers due to their future roles as wives and bearers of children. The old are not of considerable interest because their roles no longer deal with reproduction. The lives of old women are conveyed as too similar and likewise boring in contrast with the lives of young, beautiful, and available women. Old women are mothers, grandmothers, widows, or stepmothers. The expected stereotypical images relayed concerning these four labels are given a few exceptions in the folklore, yet are of lesser importance since the majority of tales are not of the old.

A disproportionate number of Russian women are not given names {226} in contrast to those identified with a name {48}.

* The quotations from the Afanas'ev collection are strictly from the tales. None are the opinions of Afanas'ev himself.

Therefore, more than two-thirds of the women in the *skazki* can be seen as case studies in comparison with specific characters. This faceless aspect to folklore expresses an overall view of Russian society, and lends credence to folklore as a micro-history. The designation of anonymity to women sustains their constraint, for they are again lumped into a group with no outstanding characteristics. Names generally avail themselves to one of the other variables as well; for example, three tales are entitled "Vasilisa the Beautiful," "Elena the Wise," and "Vasilisa, the Priest's Daughter." Actually, there are only a total of nine tales in the entire anthology with the name of a woman in the title.

In consideration of the kin variable, young women in Russian folklore are described in relation to another human, male or female notwithstanding. If they are not, then they are unstable and risky subjects, in that their behavior is questionable, and their reputation apt to cause suspicion. Women are most likely described in relation to a father or husband, as females are not allowed or trusted to take care of themselves individually. Those who do are usually witches or sorcerers. More importantly, identification with a male also protects the female from slander to her reputation, and not just from actual physical danger. What is said is more likely to cause deeper impressions upon the mind of the listener, for others may base their conclusions on assumptions rather than on the knowledge of the actual behavior of a female. In the tale "The Golden Slipper," a king's son becomes interested in a beautiful maiden, yet he wants to know of her background, or whose daughter she is (Afanas'ev 45). In other words, the prince must first find out her heritage and closest male

relative, her father in this case, before pursuing the relationship. As another example, in "Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Gray Wolf," one of Prince Ivan's brothers asks a princess her name and that of her father even though the kingdom in which she lives is her own (622). Women need a patriarchal figure to whom they are related in order to be guaranteed a strong base of support for future involvement in relationships, or else they will end up unmarried and without children. Thus, the tales concerning daughters, wives, and daughters becoming wives, are constraining at first glance through the labels which identify the women as someone else's daughter or wife, that someone being a father or husband.

Young women also belong in disproportionate numbers to the upper class {116/176} than to the lower class {15/176}, in spite of lower classes historically dominating in size. This disparity is not in accordance with the fact that these tales were told to all classes of Russian society without reservation. However, these well-to-do ladies are of more importance than peasant girls due to the fact that kings have more daughters in these tales than do peasants. The women of the upper class also have more value in appearance. First of all, a third {102} of the total number of women in this study {304} are pretty. And, as expected, almost all those women classified as pretty are young {98/102=96%}. Not one old woman is described as beautiful. Clearly appearance is keenly tied to reproduction, which attributes to a higher status in society as well, for 77% of the young, beautiful women are of the upper class. Since the upper class can be reached either by birth or by marriage, this is another constraining element, for both paths deal with the wealth of men.

As a consensus, the young, beautiful, and upper class women benefit the most from the advantages of society. In addition, all these factors are assimilated with goodness. More such young women are good {97/176=55%} than bad {50/176=28%}; more women of the upper class are good {77/131=59%} than bad {28/131=21%}; and more beautiful women are good {63/102=62%} than bad {16/102=16%}. Thus, women are valued as reproductive resources in accordance with qualities of goodness, youth, beauty, and wealth. Such a number of increasing constraints placed upon women are nonexistent for men. So far the variables of youth, class, beauty, kin, and name are less consequential in the descriptions of men. A wife in the tale "The Duck with Golden Eggs" states with reference to a man she is about to marry, "Whether he is good or bad, he is my fate" (Afanas'ev 544).

The variable of wisdom is an additional form of constraint. The irony concerning men is that if men are stated to be foolish in these folk tales, they still are clever enough to outwit older, wiser brothers. In the case of women, however, there is no irony involved. If a woman is foolish, she does not change and cannot prove that she is not so. In the tale of one Elena the Wise, there is a confrontation between a male and a female in determining who is wiser. The male in this case is a soldier who ponders the question, "Am I not a fool?" at the beginning of the text (Afanas'ev 545). However, this questionably intelligent soldier outwits her, and she marries him with the statement, "I am cunning, but you are more cunning than I" (549). This tale is a sad commentary on the wisdom of women, since Elena the Wise might be the example of the most intelligent woman in Russia, and yet is

outwitted by a foolish man. Women do not become wiser with age in the data collected, for there are about as many old, wise women as young, wise women {36% and 33% respectively} in these folk tales. An old woman in "Ivan the Cow's Son" does claim to go against the grain from her words addressing a young man, "I am old, I know everything" (235). But the data and figures suggest otherwise.

The mistreatment of women is a method of constraint. Men and other women mentally and physically mistreat their daughters and wives in order to suppress and subjugate them to their "place." Women lack the freedom to move about in traditional patriarchal societies. Confined to "woman's work" inside the home while the men go off to earn a living, women are not allowed the same liberties granted to men. Women are relegated to accomplish tasks of domesticity because, if nothing else, her traditional role in society is to concern herself with the home. But a woman is not automatically qualified to accomplish domestic chores solely on the basis of her sex. It may be assumed, however, that these tales are lessons to teach young women in the one proper pursuit of life, namely domesticity. In fact, "The Feather of Finist, the Bright Falcon" compares the marriageable youngest daughter in this tale "concerned only with household tasks" with her elder sisters' fondness of "frills and furbelows" (Afanas'ev 580). The implication of domesticity as the correct and only path for women results in her marriage at the end. The tale of Frolka Stay-At-Home is distinctive also because a man remains at home instead of out in search of adventures in the world (300). In contrast, a woman would never be derogatorily labeled if she desired to stay at home.

Physical violence is the most graphic representation of the mistreatment of women in Russian folklore. The men utilize their greater physical power to constrain their women in order for them to conform to the patriarchal tradition. There is only one tale, titled "Barter," of a man belabored by his wife as a result of his addiction to trading goods (Afanas'ev 340). The rest of the tales concerning physical pain are afflicted upon women solely by men. In general, 51% of the young women are mistreated, with not much discrepancy in the amount of bad women mistreated {54/104=52%} and the good who are mistreated {63/140=45%}. Therefore, there is no safe path for women to tread. Women are mistreated in spite of their goodness.

When daughters in Russian *skazki* are mistreated, it is inevitably through the action of a parent: a father, mother, or stepmother. More than half are mistreated {26/50=52%}, with only slightly more daughters being bad {22/50} than good {18/50}. The bad daughters are the ones constrained by their biological parents. In "The Miraculous Pipe," an envious daughter murders her brother for picking more berries than she, so her father drives her out of the house in his rage (Afanas'ev 425-427). In "Baba Yaga and the Brave Youth" three daughters separately attempt to roast a youth for dinner according to the plan of their mother Baba Yaga (76-79). Yet the daughters must obey the evil wishes of their mother without questioning her command, and they die by fire through the cunning of the youth in the end.

The good daughters are generally stepdaughters who are mistreated by their wicked stepmothers. There is only one mention of a stepfather in the entire collection of folk tales, and even he is not

labeled as such. Instead, he is called a widowed peasant and an old man. There are six stories in the *skazki* of conflicts between stepmothers and stepdaughters, all having the same basic plot. This tendency to repeat a finite number of plots is a characteristic of folklore. The plot pits an envious stepmother against a stepdaughter, with variations on this theme in each tale. Perhaps both females are competing for the affections of the male. The six tales are entitled "The Grumbling Old Woman," "Jack Frost," "Baba Yaga," "Burenushka the Little Red Cow," "Daughter and Stepdaughter," and another "Baba Yaga." The most violent tale of the stepmother motif is the second "Baba Yaga" which ends with a father shooting the stepmother because she beat her stepdaughter and "pondered how she might destroy her" (Afanas'ev 363). A remark from the tale "Jack Frost" is the acknowledgment of mistreatment to the stepdaughter: ". . .the stepdaughter was as good as gold; in the proper hands she *would* (italics mine) have been like cheese in butter" (366). And finally, in "Daughter and Stepdaughter," a stepmother grows so envious of her stepdaughter that "from grief and spite she died the next day" (279). There is poetic justice at the end of the fairy tales only in association with the wicked, for the evil characters generally receive the punishment they deserve.

On the other hand, there is not always poetic justice concerning the good. There are several tales concerning constrained daughters which do not conform to the distinctions of biological/non-biological parent and good/bad daughter, yet the following examples are similar to the previous tales in that all of these daughters do not get married at the conclusion of the story. "The Golden Slipper" is the tale of a

good younger daughter disliked by her own biological mother (Afanas'ev 44). The obvious cruelty inflicted upon the daughter is made even worse because the tale does not explain why the mother dislikes her daughter. Its significance is that even good daughters are not safe from mistreatment by their own mothers. "Vasilisa, the Priest's Daughter" relates that she "wore man's clothes, rode horseback, was a good shot with the rifle, and did everything in a quite unmaidenly way. . . [she] was very fond of vodka, and this, as is well known, is entirely unbecoming to a maiden" (131). Although Vasilisa is clever and very pretty, she does not get married at the end of the tale from her nonconformist behavior. "The Lazy Maiden" recounts the life of a young woman who amuses herself with chatter and gossip. Due to this obvious unmaiden-like quality, she is seized by the wind which leaves behind only her braid at the end (425). The last daughter tale of importance is "Nikita the Tanner." The daughter of a tsar is taken to wife by a dragon, who "did not devour her, because she was a beauty," and as implied due to this incident, the princess does not marry at the end (310). All of these last few examples show that women who do not conform to the norm are punished or left all alone in their misery. These stories are intended to instill the greatest fear in the hearts of women, which is the combined fear of neither getting married nor bearing children.

The constraint of daughters becoming wives in Russian *skazki* contributes to their mistreatment by men. The daughters in all of these tales are affected by at least one male. In fact, every tale concerning a female must contain a male character as well, whereas tales of men do not always include women. The highest percentage of

mistreated women comes from this category of daughters becoming wives {44/72=61%}. There is a greater disparity as well in the percentages of daughters becoming wives who are good {55/72=76%} and those who are bad {9/72=12%}. This is clearly a case of poetic justice gone awry.

The examples of independent women who become wives are all five not defined in relation to a father, yet all have some other special quality made manifest in their names. In "The Frog Princess," the princess is of independent thought and deed, since she almost marries someone besides the hero because the hero takes a long time to find her "beyond the thrice ninth land, in the thrice tenth kingdom" (Afanas'ev 122). Although the three tales of "The Maiden Tsar," "Maria Morevna," and "The Wise Wife" are named after the main female characters, they are tales depicting the adventures of their future husbands rather than the actions of the females themselves. And in "Danilo the Luckless," a Swan Maiden "teaches" her husband by flying away, leaving him forever (261). These tales of independent daughters becoming wives are even more valuable, in that there are so few tales written about such strong characters.

Fathers, being responsible for their daughters, often give away their daughters as chattel in spoken contracts. These people have only to marry off their daughters to make life complete, and it is inevitable for the father to control the fate of his daughters. In the tale "The Crystal Mountain," the king cries out to the prince at the end, "Be my son-in-law!" in order to set the marriage contract (Afanas'ev 484). In "The Speedy Messenger," the king promises his daughter in marriage, half of his kingdom as a dowry, and the other half after his

death to whoever travels to the palace to retrieve a sword and mace (126). The daughter is, comparatively, worth the same amount as the material possession of land and estate. As a last example, a warrior in "Ivan the Simpleton" demands the king's daughter in marriage as a result of combat, so the king receives him hospitably and gives him his daughter in marriage (144). Women are possessions of the father, given as gifts to the most adventurous male who happens along in the tale.

Tales are told also of daughters becoming wives who rebel and go against the will of their fathers when a husband has been picked for them. The daughters are not allowed freedom of personal choice in the selection of their mate. Oddly enough, the future husbands, not the fathers, take the punishment of the intended bride into their own hands as a result of disobedience to the father. In "The Magic Shirt," the daughter does not accept her father's decision in marrying her to a common soldier, so she intrigues with a neighboring prince. The daughter and her lover are put to death at the end of the tale by the soldier (Afnas'ev 110-3). In the tale "Horns," a laborer is not the choice of the daughter for a husband, and from her unwillingness, she is belabored "so severely with iron rods [by the laborer] that he was sure that she would remember it for a long time" (294). In "Ivan the Cow's Son" the daughter tells her father twice that she does not want to marry a prince picked out for her by her father. Her punishment is chastisement with iron, copper, and pewter rods, the first two of which break on her during the beating (248-249). Marriage is a contract not of man and woman, but of husband and father.

The last major category of women in Russian *skazki* are wives. Rarely is the term husband used in the context of these tales. Stories are told of wives who are disobedient to their husbands, and the form of constraint used is most likely some violent physical action. There is again an evident disparity in the amount of women mistreated. Many more wives are classified as bad {27/54=50%} than good {9/54=17%} in this category, and yet less than half are mistreated {24/54=44%}.

Wives in three tales have lovers. Yet no tales are written of men who have lovers. In the first tale of the anthology, "The Wondrous Wonder, the Marvelous Marvel," a merchant's wife claims to have all that she wants and enough of everything, and yet clearly she is lacking in something if she has a lover. The husband finds out about her extramarital affair through magic, and soundly thrashes his wife as well as her lover (Afanas'ev 17). In "The Precious Hide" another wife of a merchant has a lover, and the ending of the tale brings on the tarring and feathering of the lover by the husband (157-158). In "The Duck with Golden Eggs," a wife falls in love with another man, and from this love she is about to sacrifice her own two sons. Thus, this mother is "wicked" and left alone for the rest of her days (544). From these three examples it is clear that women are constrained in terms of reproduction because they are the ones who are fooling around. However, the disconcerting fact that no tales are told of men who have affairs is constraining to women in and of itself.

The majority of tales concerning wives, however, are lessons to other women not to disobey their husbands or to get involved in anything else besides motherly duties and household chores. In "Two Ivans, Soldier's Sons," a husband gives this command to his wife before

he leaves for duty as a soldier: "Mind you, wife, live decently, do not become the laughing-stock of respectable people. Do not ruin our house, but manage it wisely and await my return" (Afanas'ev 463). In "The Bad Wife," the wife "made life impossible for her husband and disobeyed him in everything," so she ends up at the bottom of a pit for the rest of her life (56-57). In "Two Out of the Sack," a wife is thrashed because she "constantly abused her husband; not a day passed on which she did not beat him with a broomstick or oven fork; he had no peace with her at all!" (321) The end of this tale has two men thrashing the wife while they admonish her, "Don't thrash your husband! Don't thrash your husband!" (324) And in "The Goldfish," an old wife "became full of spite, abused her husband from dawn to dark, and did not give him a minute's rest" (529).

The punishment for disobedient wives is of the most violent physical nature, as compared to the mistreatment of the other categories of women. In "The Mayoress," an ambitious woman is elected mayoress, yet this wife "was a bad one. . .she drank wine with the peasants, and took bribes." The husband wants to teach her a lesson, so after being lashed with a whip, she no longer wants to be mayoress and thereafter "obeyed her husband" (Afanas'ev 141). In "The Taming of the Shrew," a man ties and harnesses a "capricious" priest's daughter to a sledge. She ends up a "most obedient wife" (161-162). In "The Indiscreet Wife," a wife is indiscreet in telling another of a hidden treasure, so the husband plays a trick on her and she is laid down and lashed as her punishment (226-227). In "The Footless Champion and the Handless Champion," a beautiful, proud princess is seized by her braid and dragged around until she "repented

and solemnly promised to obey her husband in everything" (269-273). In "The Stubborn Wife," a wife is almost drowned by her husband because she disagrees with his opinion (280). In "The Armless Maiden," the husband ties his wife to a mare and lets it run in an open field until only her braid remains. The rest of the maiden is strewn on the field (294-299). And in the last example of such graphic descriptions of wives, this tale is entitled "How a Husband Weaned His Wife from Fairy Tales." The wife loves fairy tales "above all else," so her husband cures her by thrashing her, "so that she began to hate stories and from that time on forswore listening to them" (308).

Happiness is constraint. The ending of every fairy tale is the continuation of normal life with no obvious change in the status quo. Despite all the instances of punishment in all its forms, the status quo is maintained and society is stabilized. This is what is meant by living "happily ever after." In the tale "The Milk of Wild Beasts," a maiden is belabored and told, "Respect your husband, respect your husband!" Only after this order, "they began to live happily and to prosper" (Afanas'ev 307). Thus, happiness is achieved from the submissiveness of women. The subject of the tales is generally an attempt of women to broaden their own personal perspectives, and yet they are hindered by societal norms time and time again.

The prolongation of the traditional roles of both sexes in society is the extension of the lack of mental and physical liberties of expression for women. Women have not been allowed the ability to express themselves on an individual basis, and are thus clumped together into one all-encompassing group. The differential treatment

of women is apparent in Russian folklore as well as in Russian society as a whole, attesting to the pervasive existence of this discrimination.

The purpose of this thesis is not to change the world dramatically. This is not a call for women to rise up, or to change the history books, or to change language through the extermination of the gender of nouns. This is merely a study to present facts and to raise the consciousness of the portrayal of women in the folklore of a patriarchal society. It is pointless to condemn the past and cynical to be pessimistic about the future, so in considering and integrating this issue in the present, perhaps the future will be rid of the constraining traditional roles both sexes play.

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