

ARTICLES**Transcarpathian Werewolf Stories: Gender Attitudes**

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Abstract

The article examines werewolf stories recorded by authors in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine and adjacent territories. We analyze most common plot types of such stories, and found that out of the two main types, one expresses female perspective (and is recorded exclusively from women), while the other, male perspective (and is recorded from speakers of both genders). We also examine stories of deviating or hybrid types to show how speakers' gender attitudes can lead to changes in the plot.

Introduction**Goals, materials used, fieldwork**

In this article we group werewolf stories from the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine and adjacent territories (1) into their main types, trace the provenance of these types, and examine their connections with the attitudes of storytellers to traditional gender roles and relations in these stories. (2) Then we analyze variants that combine motifs from different story types in relation to gender attitudes reflected in them.

We approach a folk text as a record of performance, co-created in every telling anew by the storyteller and the audience. The view of the text as recorded performance, and the ensuing respect for the speakers' exact manner of expression, is not always necessary for grouping of story types. However, it is pivotal for an analysis of the speakers' worldview and especially their moral values and attitudes, since a transcribed text can further be analyzed using discourse analysis to uncover underlying ideologies, beliefs, attitudes, and power relationships (see, e.g., Jossierand [2017], Boudovskaia [2019]).

The materials analyzed are primarily taken from our recordings in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine between 1987 and 2018, with the addition of our recordings from the adjacent districts of the Lviv regions of Ukraine as well as published folk texts from Transcarpathia and adjacent territories. Our own recordings were made in various villages in interviews with older people (women more often than men). We asked them about a number of beliefs and folk stories, including werewolf lore. While werewolf stories are not particularly well known in the Transcarpathian region (only few of our interlocutors, mostly the very

elderly, could tell werewolf stories), they provide a fruitful basis for an analysis of gender relations in this context.

Previous scholarship

There has been a great deal of scholarship on gender issues in canonical western European fairy tales beginning approximately with Lurie [1970] and Lieberman's [1972] debate. The main topics of this scholarship have been the images of women in tales, how editing practices of (male) collectors and editors shape these images, and the role of these images in children's gender socialization (e.g., Zipes [1983], Bottigheimer [1987]; see also the overview in Haase [2000]). Contemporary scholarship extends this research also into recent literary renditions of fairy tales (e.g., Levorato [2003]). There have also been multiple studies of non-European cultures dedicated to the issues of gender in traditional tales (e.g., Mills [1991], Gold [1995], Mathews [1992, 2005]).

Werewolf stories from various places, especially in Europe, have also been studied, often in connection with European werewolf trials (see Lecouteux [1992], de Blécourt [2007, 2009], most recently the work of Gordon, Tuszay, Pluskowski, Duni, and Voltmer in the comprehensive volume edited by de Blécourt [2015b]). Many researchers remark *passim* about the gender of characters and storytellers in a specific story type (e.g., de Blécourt's [2007: 35] noticing the "Werewolf Lover" story widespread in the Netherlands being told by women). However, there was no research on the connection between story types and gender attitudes of storytellers or how the gender aspect of these stories can "tell us more about forms of power and how people are caught up in them" [Abu-Lughod 1990: 42].

Traditional tales are especially appropriate for an examination of gender because, paradoxically, they can show a different, personal rather than traditional, views. In Transcarpathian life stories female speakers try to comply to the dominant model of gender wishing to present themselves as virtuous women worthy of social respect. However, in traditional tales, while referring to the dominant model, they can contest it without appearing too bold, hiding behind the story's traditional form [Boudovskaia 2019]. (3) Moreover, supernatural tales are especially revealing of their tellers' attitudes. Participating in a story-telling about supernatural beings is akin to telling of contemporary legends; in both cases, while talking about an unearthly event that has disrupted the fabric of everyday life, people, in a safe and entertaining environment, negotiate and prioritize their cultural values.

While Carpathian werewolf stories have been recorded since the end of the 19th century, (4) they have not been the subject of scholarship, especially from the point of view of gender. This article analyzes the Transcarpathian werewolf story types to show how these stories are used differently by the supporters and opponents of patriarchal worldview to promote their gendered values and attitudes. After summarizing traditional gender attitudes in Transcarpathia, we will briefly describe the werewolf story types we encountered, and then proceed to an analysis of the ways women and men tell these stories.

Transcarpathia: Brief historical and ethnographical background; traditional gender relations

We recorded werewolf stories from people born between 1913 and 1952. Since our first speaker was born, the Transcarpathian region has changed hands many times, from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy to Czechoslovakia in 1919, and then, after of a short period of independence, to Hungary in 1938-9, and to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1946; since 1991 it has remained part of Ukraine. Economically, this area was rural and poor [Magoesi 2015: 201-205]. The population mainly lives in a subsistence economy on small-size landholdings. The main economic unit was the house-property complex (*гасдівство*). The main family type was extended patrilineal and patrilocal family.

While is not our goal here to describe the Transcarpathian model of traditional marriage in detail, it will help to refer to it as we try to determine how it influences people's attitudes. (5)

Gender relations in the village were strongly patriarchal. The Transcarpathian area was a typical member of the patriarchal belt [Kandiyoti 1988, Quinn in print], the part of the Old World from Japan to Britain characterized by classical patriarchy. The main features listed by [Mukhopadhyay 2004: 469] as characterizing "patrifocal family structure and ideology" such as "the merging of individual goals and collective family welfare; [...] the centrality of sons versus daughters; gendered family responsibilities; regulation of female sexuality (to maintain the purity of the patriline) through arranged marriages and restricted male-female interactions; and female standards that emphasize "homely" traits (e.g., obedience and self-sacrifice) conducive to family harmony," all apply to the Transcarpathian area to a large extent. Mukhopadhyay is describing India—another part of the patriarchal belt.

The Soviet period in the Transcarpathian region did not bring much relief to women. At the beginning of the Soviet period, after forced collectivization, women's lives became even more difficult, since women had to work both at the collective farm and at home if the family was to keep their garden plot needed for survival. Men often avoided this double toll, taking an outside job (at a factory, as a forester, etc.) The 1980s are remembered as a time of relative prosperity, and the 1990s, as a time of renewed poverty. Throughout these periods gender relationships in the village did not change significantly. More recently, unemployment has driven many people abroad to seek extra income, for a season or longer. Men work as builders, women as caregivers or seasonal farm workers. That situation gives women more independence, but only outside the village; in the village, the traditional gender norms stay unchanged. Even now divorce in a village is considered a shame for a woman and practically never happens. An unmarried woman managing her own household will be cast as easy sexual prey. Her reputation, a main source of social capital in the village, will plummet in value. Married women willingly endure domestic violence and abuse from an alcoholic husband in order to retain the protective status of marriage.

Kandiyoti [1988: 275] points out that women often can find specific forms of resistance to limiting roles such as those experienced in these villages; moreover, “patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and renegotiation of the relations between genders.” Throughout our interactions with women in the Carpathian villages on various topics, we have always been interested in their view of their position and their attitudes to it: to what extent they agree to the role assigned to them by patriarchy, and whether, and if yes, how exactly they practice the struggle and renegotiation described by Kandiyoti. Folklore turns out to be a form of understanding one’s position, and possibly a form of resistance.

Stories of voluntary transformation

Story type: “Piece of Cloth”

This story type is very common in the Carpathian Mountains, where we only recorded it from women. A husband and wife go to the field to stack hay; the husband leaves; a wolf comes and attacks the wife; she chases it away; the husband returns; they eat together, and the wife notices yarns from her dress/apron between his teeth. The story may end at this point, or the husband may turn back into the wolf and run into the woods. He also might boast to his wife of his magical abilities, and demonstrate the transformation, during which the wife, willingly or not, turns him into a wolf and gets rid of him.

This story type has been attested to on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains (on the basis of Onyshchuk, Hnatiuk, Shukhevych), and in Lithuania [Vinogradova and Levkiewskaia 2010: 548]. To the east of the Carpathian territory, e.g. in Polissia, the story is practically unattested. Similar story types are known in Europe, in Scandinavia (Sweden and Norway: Kvideland and Sehmsdorf [1988: 76-78], and in Romania Beresford [2013: 116-117]. De Blécourt [2007: 28-9] states that, in Germany, this type, which he calls “The Werewolf Husband,” is one of main types; he found “about thirty-five German-language versions of this story, from the Rhineland in the west to East Prussia,” recorded in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are also a number of Dutch legends of this type, with the main difference being that the werewolf is a boyfriend, not a husband and after the incident the engagement is broken [De Blécourt 2007: 29]. These facts point to a western, possibly German, origin of the story.

Story type: ‘I Mauled a Sheep’

We only recorded this story type once, from a woman. It began like the “Piece of Cloth” type; a man and wife were haymaking; the man left and came back, picking his teeth. The wife asked why, and he told her he attacked and ate a sheep and that he is a man one week and a wolf the next. This story is similar to the German type described by de Blécourt [2007: 23] under the name “The Hungry

Farmhand,” where a peasant pretends to sleep and sees his worker turning into a wolf, killing and eating a foal. This is “one of the most popular werewolf legends in Germany,” recorded by the Grimm brothers [de Blécourt 2007: 23]. Interestingly, in the Transcarpathian story a gender aspect is present that is missing from the German story, where the people working are all men; the same is true of the Danish version [Simonsen 2015: 228-30]. A story of the similar type is known in Estonia [Metsvahi 2015: 217], but here both protagonists are female. This type also seems to have been a story that migrated from Europe. The recorded Carpathian version was likely influenced by the ‘Piece of Cloth’ type.

Stories of forcible transformation

Unlike stories about the voluntary transformation, with one main story-type “The Piece of Cloth,” stories about forcible transformation come in many varieties. The main element in them is that the main character (male) is turned into a wolf by a woman in his family (his wife or, less commonly, by his mother-in-law). We will address each subtype of the productive theme in turn.

Story type: “Transformation and Return”

This subtype of forcible transformation stories tells how a man was turned into a wolf and later became a man again; the character gives an account about his adventures as a wolf. An example of this subtype is a story collected more than 100 years ago, on the northern side of the Carpathian Mountains, in Kindrativ, in the contemporary Turka district of the L’viv region, quite close to the Transcarpathian border. The story was told by a village woman to her learned brother who wrote it down (or summarized) in 1881 and subsequently published it in 1895:

How a Mother-in-law Turned her Son-in-law into a Wolf

A certain woman turned her son-in-law into a wolf, I don’t know for how many years. On Christmas Eve he ran into the house, sat in the corner near the stove and stretched out a paw pierced by a stick. When they pulled out the stick, he became a person again. As a penance, the mother-in-law was dying for more than half a year. She asked the son-in-law to forgive her, but he says: “Wolves were eating [biting?] me a lot; as my life was [not] easy, so let your death [not] be easy.’ She could not die until the son-in-law forgave her.

People asked him about the cattle: which one a wolf can [=is entitled to] slaughter. And he said that a lamb or a calf that is supposed to be eaten by a wolf appears covered in blood. [Zubryc’kyj 1895]

A similar, but more detailed story of this type was recorded in Novoselycja in 1987 [Boudovskaia 2018: 11-15]. A wife turned her husband into a wolf while

he was looking for a Christmas tree in the woods; he tried to come home as a wolf on Christmas Eve; his children threw bread to him, but his former wife asked a neighbor to shoot him; the shot missed; and the wolf ran away. The woman lived for many years, but in her old age when she grew ill. She was suffering and could not die. Other women told her to confess to a priest; she confessed having turned her husband into a wolf; and the priest said she needed to return her husband home to receive an absolution. She asked her children to get their father's clothes from under a barrel and to bring them into the woods. In nine days, the husband came back as a man. He described how he was one of the wolves in a pack and that God showed them what cattle to take. Once, when God told them to take one lamb each from a certain shed, they disobeyed and slaughtered all the sheep, and God closed their mouths for an entire year, so that they could only eat grass and clay. The husband forgave the wife for turning him into a wolf and said that he used to beat her and that was wrong. The wife said that she was also wrong to have turned him into a wolf and wanted to return him but did not dare because she was afraid that he would start beating her again. Finally, after her husband forgave her, she could die peacefully.

The story type "Transformation and Return" also may have a European origin, namely, the migratory legend known in the written form from the 12th century as the story of Bisclavret in the *Lais of Marie de France* [Rotschild 1974]; see also the story of Sir Marrok in Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* of 1485 [Ransom 2014]. Bisclavret, a noble, used to turn into a wolf; he was transformed forever by his wife who hid his clothes; the wolf revealed himself to the king as a sentient creature; the king took the wolf to his castle; the wolf attacked his former wife and her new husband; he was restored to human form by giving him his old clothes; and the wife was punished. In the Carpathian tradition, the story has been modified and embellished with other material, e.g., with the elements typically encountered in stories about the Master of Wolves known throughout Europe [Mencej 2007]. The episode of a man (king) saving the wolf is absent. However, the pivotal points (a wife transforming her husband, the clothes necessary for the reverse transformation, and the wolf keeping his human mind) are the same.

Another version of this subtype recorded by Kira Sadoja from a female storyteller in Dragovo, Khust district, Transcarpathia, is not a legend or a fabulate like other stories, but a fairy tale (ATU 449 *The Tsar's Dog – Sidi Numan*). In the Dragovo version, a husband discovers that his young wife eats dead people at the cemetery at night. A rooster advises him to beat his wife; instead he asks her why she is eating dead people; and she transforms him first into a bird for a number of years, then into a dog. As a dog, the protagonist comes to his *kum* ("father of his godson"); the *kum's* son notices that the dog is unusually smart; the *kum* himself recognizes the protagonist and helps him to recover his human form and to turn his wife and her new husband into buffalos. It is not clear if this tale is traditional or comes from a book of tales.

Story subtype "A Man Helps a Wolf"

Another subtype of the forcible transformation is made up of variants we call “A Man Helps a Wolf.” In these stories, collected from both men and women, a man helps a wolf who is hungry/cold/wounded; long after that, the former wolf, who has turned back into a man, finds his benefactor, helps him in turn, and reveals to him that he was the wolf the man once helped. The role of a woman who turned the man into a wolf is often not mentioned. In the “Stick” variant, a wolf with a paw pierced by a stick approaches a man; the man pulls the stick out; the wolf bites and marks the man; and later, as a human, finds his benefactor by this mark. While we cannot be sure about the origin of the subtype “A Man Helps a Wolf”, “Stick” is possibly a motif of literary origin. In the Western European tradition, Saint Hieronymus (Jerome), and in the Orthodox tradition, Saint Gerasim, are known to have taken a splinter from a lion’s paw, after which a lion expresses its thankfulness; depictions of this event can be found in the paintings of the 14th-16th centuries by Sano di Pietro, Rogier van der Weyden, Niccolo Antonio Colantonio, and an engraving by Albrecht Dürer. The motif of removing of a stick from a wolf’s paw is known, though not very widespread, in Polissia as well [Vinogradova and Levkivskaia 2010: 502, 549].

Gender attitudes

As we have seen, there are two main types of werewolf stories in Transcarpathia. Stories of voluntary transformation, portraying the werewolf husband as an evil magician, present a woman’s perspective, allowing for criticism of male dominance. Not surprisingly, they have been recorded only from women. In contrast, stories of forcible transformation show an innocent man transformed into a wolf by an evil woman, usually his wife. There is seemingly no overt disagreement with the dominant patriarchal cultural model. These stories are told by both men and women. However, it is worth looking into how exactly women and men tell stories from both categories to express their individual perspectives on gender relations.

Stories of voluntary transformation

In the stories of voluntary transformation, the narrative might end at the moment of recognition or at the werewolf husband turns (or is turned) into a wolf and flees forever. If, at the moment of recognition, the wife finds herself married to an abuser whose dangerous abilities are magical and life-threatening, the narrator may describe how the woman is saved from the situation, whether due to circumstances or to her own efforts. The question remains whether exiting marriage in the second case is culturally acceptable. In Carpathian society, especially among the older generation, divorce is impossible, so that the abuser’s permanent transformation into a wolf seems to be one of few legitimate ways out of an abusive marriage. However, using magic against a person is a serious transgression. In the two stories from Novoselycja summarized above, both female narrators absolve their female characters. In one story, the husband turned

permanently into a wolf himself. In the second story, the wife utters the words ‘let you become a rock’ that her husband had told her not to say. She herself is not a magical person; the magic in words that she repeats belongs to her husband. Thus, according to cultural norms, she is innocent of evil magic.

In fact, the solution to the problem of being married to a werewolf does not need to be provided by the storyteller herself. In typical Carpathian storytelling sessions, there is usually a discussion after the end of the narrative when listeners negotiate the meaning of the story. Whenever we recorded a werewolf story within a storytelling session, the story always sparked a discussion about whether the wife character should continue to live with a dangerous shape-shifter and about her alternatives. We will examine two such discussions below.

Hypothetical ending 1: ‘What if she pierced him with a pitchfork?’

This version of “The Piece of Cloth” recorded in 2017 the village of Velykyj Bychkiv, Rakhiv district of Transcarpathia was narrated within a story-telling session by MB, a woman born in 1936 in Bychkiv; listeners and participants included MI, a woman born in 1948 in Bychkiv and MK, a woman born in 1931 elsewhere, but who lives in Bychkiv; the collector, Elena Boudovskaia, was present, but did not contribute to the conversation below. After MV finished her version (with the variant that it was a dog, not a wolf, who attacked the woman), the session turned into discussion. Below is the end of narration and the following discussion:

MV: ...and when he fell asleep, he started snoring, and she looks, and between his teeth there is... from her dress...

MK: A piece

MV: Yes, yarns. Because he only, as he grabbed [?], well... So tell me, what kind of dog was that?

MI: And what if she had pierced him with the pitchfork?

MV: But it was he who gave her the pitchfork

MI: Yes, he did - and what if she had killed him?

MV: Well, he gave her the pitchfork and said that she should protect herself, because, she says, maybe a wolf could come or a dog, yes

MK: We know in whose [family] it was

MV: He knew who...

MI: OK...

MV's story ends at the moment of recognition. MV finishes the narrative with "So tell me, what kind of dog was that?" followed by a pause, inviting the audience to discuss the story. A younger woman, MI, asks what would happen if the wife had killed her dog husband with the pitchfork. The storyteller explains that the husband himself gave his wife the pitchfork, meaning that the husband in his wisdom could not have done anything that might later harm him. But MI insists, asking whether the wife's self-defense intended by the husband could have gotten out of his control, since the wife has an ability to act independently? MV sternly repeats that the husband gave her the pitchfork himself, and the discussion ends.

Though the narrative itself does not offer any opportunities for the wife to end her marriage to a werewolf, a solution surfaces in the discussion. MI, both horrified and delighted by the possibility of such a gory turn of events, is reconstructing, in the hypothetical mode, the missing ending of the story where a non-magical wife can get rid of her shape-shifter husband. MI's question puts the situation into an unexpected light; it becomes clear that the victim of the attack has very nearly killed the attacker with the weapon he himself gave her. It suggests that a woman, even when not a bearer of magic, is a dangerous adversary, while a man, even if he can use magic, is not as omniscient as he believes himself to be.

Hypothetical ending 2: "I would never live with such husband"

This story, a rare subtype "I Mauled a Sheep," was told during a one-on-one session between the narrator, HK, born 1927 and Elena Boudovskaia, in Novoselycja in July 2018. The story initially had no ending. Yet after the narrator finished her story, she offered her opinion.

HK: ... And then he started telling his wife. Well. That 'I, it is destined that I...' or how was it... 'so that I must go there and bite and kill a sheep.' And he said to her: 'I – he said – I am half person half wolf, so that... like... one week a person and one week a wolf.' Yes. So... And... That I heard. And then I don't know how it... how it was then, after he said that to his wife, what she thought after that, and if she was... if she was afraid or not, I don't know that. Well. It was like this, yes. I have heard that. Well. Oh God. I would never, never in my life [laughing, words unclear]

B: what would you never do?

HK: Huh?

B: what did you say you would never do?

HK: I would never stay with this husband, I would be afraid, and I would [laughs] leave him forever (or: right then). How is it possible, to [live with such a husband that is] half person and half wolf.

HK ends the narrative after the husband's acknowledgement of being a werewolf and expects interpretations as a matter of course. For HK, just as for the women in Bychkiv, what prompts discussion is not the magical, but social and gendered factors, i.e., the subsequent actions of the wife. Since the folklorist is silent, HK has to do the discussion on her own. She offers her opinion hypothetically by saying "I don't know how it... how it was then, after he said that to his wife, what she thought after that, and if she was... if she was afraid or not, I don't know that." Then HK again hesitates, uses several hedges, evaluates the truth status of the story, claiming that she heard it. (6) After some more hedges, with laughter intended to soften the force of her opinion, she finally states that she would leave such husband, she would never again live with him. Leaving one's husband is a most radical measure in her culture, the closest analog to a taboo divorce, (7) but safety concerns justify this measure for her. Unlike the previous story, here the solution of the problem is not handed over to the character, but is acted out by the narrator who, out of compassion, identifies with her character so much as to become a proxy for her.

Thus, in voluntary transformation stories, the narrator presents the listeners with the problem of a woman who is married to a magical abuser. At the story's end, either the narrator or the audience try to provide solutions, ranging from the wolf's disappearance of his own accord to the wife's killing the wolf with a pitchfork or leaving her husband. In many of these solutions the female character is presented as active and resourceful, trying to get rid of her werewolf husband while avoiding violation of societal norms.

Stories of forcible transformation

While telling voluntary transformation stories, narrators align with their female characters; in stories of forcible transformation, such sympathy is almost never the case. The attitudes of storytellers range from indignation to indifference towards the woman. Below are some typical examples.

Woman as the vessel of evil

In the magic tale from Dragovo summarized above, the male protagonist and his *kum* are both positive characters. The main character lacks the abilities to do magic; his extraordinary abilities (he understands the language of animals) are not a sign of communication with evil forces. He is smart (he outwitted his wife to see if she really eats dead people) and not aggressive (when he discovered the truth, he decided to talk it out with instead of, as the rooster advised, beating her). He is honest and hard-working; even while in dog form, he herded sheep for people. His *kum* is also a positive person, who actively helps the main character. He is canny and was the first to discover that the main character's wife eats dead people. He also knows how to use the powers of the church-blessed *osyka* ("branches from a tree similar to aspen") to undo the spell cast on the main

character and to turn his wife and her new husband into draft animals. At the same time *kum* is not a bearer of supernatural powers, he just *knows*. *Люде колісь знали* 'in the olden times, people used to know,' says the speaker after mentioning the blessed *osyka*. Thereby, she characterizes the *kum* as a bearer of knowledge which has been sanctified both by its antiquity and by the tradition of its societal use. The *kum*'s son is also described as a positive character whose shrewdness compensates for his lack of experience, since he notices the dog's unusual intelligence. The *kum*'s wife, on the contrary, is described as a person who does not quite understand what is going on when she suggests that the dog is possessed by an unclean spirit. However, this suggestion demonstrates her suspicion towards unclean forces as well as her naiveté in dealing with them and shows how far she is from everything supernatural. Thus, the male characters (the main character, his *kum*, and the *kum*'s son) are smart, while the *kum*'s wife is stupid or naive, but vigilant. The main female character in the narrative, the protagonist's wife, is, on the contrary, shown as evil as well as beautiful, seductive, and active. (8) She eats dead people, tries to keep it secret, and when her secret is revealed, she turns her husband in various animals. While he is away, she marries for a second time. She combines lechery with magic that demands cannibalism and desecration of graves and harms ordinary people. Her evil acts are not in self-defense, but out of self-interest. In light of this behavior, the storyteller does not express any compassion to her. The transformation of the female character and her second husband into buffalos, animals intended for hard work in the field, seems to merit retribution. The fact that the entire village used them for plowing confirms that the group condemns her for her many inappropriate acts. It is noteworthy that her second husband, who is known only by the fact that she married him, has been punished together with her. His destiny confirms the idea that a woman is a vessel of evil only magnified by magic. When she pulls an unsuspecting man into her orbit, she causes his destruction as well. This tale expresses an androcentric, misogynic, patriarchal worldview, even though it was told by a woman.

Women as a threat to male status

The attitude of a male narrator to the story of forcible transformation can be even more radical than the subtext indicated by the story above. The following story, recorded in 2004 in Zavadka, (10) is quoted in full since the attitudes of the speakers are revealed throughout the text.

JV: Yes, people say something like that

KZ: What do they say? tell me, please

JV: Well, they say that sometime somewhere... the wife turned her husband into a wolf. This is not true... this is...

KZ: But tell me, what they said about it?

JV: Well... they told to people that... there was a wife and a husband, and she somehow hated her husband and... she turned him into a wolf

KZ: mhm

JV: This is not true.

KZ: Did they tell how she did it?

JV: No, no way.

KZ: Well, and what was after that?

JV: Nothing, he left and that's it, I haven't seen that.

KZ: mhm

JV: I haven't seen that.

KZ: And what did they say, did he remain a wolf, or what?

JV: No, no way. He left and... and who knows where he left.

KZ: mhm

JV: [uncl]

KZ: mhm

RI: But I think they said that somewhere in Selyshch... [uncl] when he went to the herd of sheep and jumped across a fence and broke that rope that she put on his neck and became a man again...

JV: It's not true, it's not true

RI: But I heard something like that

JV: It is not true, it is...

The main storyteller, an 82-year old man, JV, constantly denies all the facts of the story: that it occurred at all as well as its location in time and space. The only thing he acknowledges is that the wife turned her husband into a wolf and that she hated her husband. He presents the husband is an innocent victim, while the wife is a dangerous witch who transformed her husband out of unmotivated hatred. Remarkably, JV sets the narrated events into indefinitely remote time and place ("well, they say that sometime somewhere...") and says that people talk about that, but in reality, it was not true. Later he mentions twice that he himself

had not witnessed the event. He does not give any other details but repeats five times that the story is not true. Thus, he maximally distances himself from the events in terms of the time, the place, his personal knowledge, and the truth status of the story. Since JV was a talkative and knowledgeable person overall, such distancing produces an impression that this specific topic is especially unpleasant to him. It seems that, as a male in this society, JV does not like the idea that a woman could overpower a man, especially using supernatural means, so that he is denying both the truthfulness of the story and his familiarity with its details. On the contrary, the 24-year old RI 1) volunteers knowledge of the story; 2) puts the story into the context of local geography (*in Selyshch...*) lending it veracity; 3) provides details (that the wolf was running towards the herd of sheep, that it got caught on a fence and tore the rope that his wife had tied on his neck), and 4) though RI retells the story as something heard from people (“but I think they said that...”), after JV declares the story a lie, RI defends it (“but I heard something like that”), and it sounds as if he is referring to collective wisdom. Moreover, even his uncertainty (indicated by the word *epodi* (“maybe”)) disappears when he repeats his claim the second time. RI told the folklorist a number of detailed stories that he had learned from his illiterate mother. Possibly his interest in storytelling, his good knowledge of stories, or his great enthusiasm for assisting in the collection of folklore did not let him perceive these stories as dangerous or threatening to his prestige.

Downplaying the role of a woman in transforming her husband

The text below was recorded in Stuzhytsia, Velykyi Bereznyi district, Transcarpathia, in 1990. The village is next to the border with the L’viv region and close to the border with Poland. Participants: PK, a woman born in 1926 and KZ, the collector. In this variant, the storyteller focuses on the events after the wife turned the husband into a wolf, deflecting attention away from the woman who caused the transformation. When, at the end, the folklorist asks if it was the main character’s wife who transformed him, the storyteller expresses doubt about the truth of the story. The same possibly happens at the beginning of the story; confronted with the necessity to blame the wife for her husband’s transformation, the narrator begins explaining that it is a legend, a fairy tale, who knows what it is. She even uses the non-dialectal word *legenda* [legend] to make sure that her interlocutor understands this fact.

PK: ... Who knows, it it is... such legends or... or... and ... there is...
some ... wife that turned a husband into... turned [him] into... into...
into a wolf

KZ: mhm

PK: Well, and... and that wolf went as far as... as they say here, as they
used to say, there, to Poland, that is, to the other side of the border, and...

yes, yes ... the husband... he went, and he was very cold, and... and... and he came into a house and... and... next to the stove, because long ago it was sometimes that the smoke went to... to... to the house, the fire burned, and right here.... to the house, and everywhere here there was smoke. And he sat there in the corner and was warming himself, that wolf, and this man was cutting bread, and he cut a piece of bread for the wolf, gave it to eat, he didn't beat it, neither.... it was a wolf, but he didn't beat it. And then when he already was not a wolf, and that man, people lived very poorly here, no grain gave yield, and they had to go buy bread. And this man recognized him, and gave him some grain, and... gave him grain, and he was surprised, why, for what, to him... grain, and: 'I want to pay.' - 'No, - he says, - I don't want, do you remember when a wolf came to your house, and you not only did not beat me, you even gave me bread? It was I.' Well. Like that.

KZ: So, it is the woman/wife, the woman/wife who turned him into a wolf?

PK: Yes, yes, yes. But who knows if it is a fairy tale of some sort?
[laughs]

As we see from the text, the narrator does not feel at ease blaming the wife; she signals her nervousness with the laughter (11) after the second explanation. She downplays the transformative magic performed by the wife on her husband. However, unlike the previous narrator, this storyteller does not question, or feel bad about, the rest of the tale. She concentrates on the narrative about the man helping the wolf and the former wolf's gratitude to his helper. She focuses on the details indicating poverty: a chimneyless house and crop failure. The story becomes a morality tale about the importance of mutual help between poor but kind-hearted people, even though one of them happens to have been temporarily turned into a wolf. The evil role of a woman is only mentioned by the speaker when prompted, and even then, denied as a fact. By shifting the focus of the story, the female speaker distances herself from its male perspective describing a woman as an evil witch.

A similar attitude, prioritizing the story of a man helping a wolf and the subsequent encounter of the two male characters that downplays the role of the wife in the transformation transpires in a "Stick" variant told by MC, a man born in 1927 in Novoselycja, Mižhir'ja district, Transcarpathia, in 2012. The folklorist reminds the speaker of the story he had once told how the wife transformed her husband; the speaker confirms that he recognized the story, but does not mention this transformation in his narrative. He describes how a man was guarding his potatoes, when a wolf came with an injured paw that had been pierced by a stick. The wolf showed his paw to the man, who pulled out the stick. The wolf, in pain, bit off the man's finger. The man bandaged the wolf's paw, and the wolf left. Later, the former wolf, as a man, went to a certain village to pull brine (used instead of

salt), and asked to stay in someone's house for a night. His host was missing a finger, and when the guest and the host started talking about it, the guest said "I was that wolf that bit your finger off."

Like others, this narrator was interested in telling a beautiful, though improbable, story, and in expressing his attitude to its veracity. On the one hand, he traditionalizes the story (in Bauman's terms [1992]), putting it into the context of familiar stories told by respected people, including his parents ("*сяк я чув іс своїх батьків за...іс | друзьих* ["I heard that from my parents...[and] from others"]). On the other hand, he positions the narrative into the times long gone, and, after a hesitation, labels it as an untruth (*а | а тѣнѣрь тако́го | тако́го нис | небылиць такых* ["and... and now, there is nothing like that, no such untrue stories"]). This reflects the typical ambivalent attitude towards a truth status of a legend [Dégh and Vazsonyi 1976: 119]. The narrator seeks to impress the listener and to make her think how the world had changed since the time such things could happen. However, the point of the story is the meeting of the former wolf with his helper rather than the transformation or its agent.

That might be why both men and women tell forcible transformation stories. In the two previous stories, the narrators shift the focus of the story, concentrating on something other than a wife turning her husband into a wolf. This way, they avoid associating themselves with evil witches (women) or weak non-dominant husbands (men). In the first story from Zavadka, the male narrator was uncomfortable with the entire story; in the second story from Stuzhycja, the female narrator was uncomfortable with the role of the wife in the transformation. In the final story from Novoselycja, the narrator seemed comfortable with everything omitted the wife from the narration entirely.

Female perspective: magic, forgiveness, and the limits of self-defense

While these narrators deflect attention from the woman culprit, still other narrators tell the forcible transformation story from a female perspective. One such story was recorded in Novoselycja in 1987 from AP and was summarized above. In this story the woman is married to a man who beat her. She uses magic to turn him into a wolf. The use of magic against a non-magical opponent is a terrible offense, *великий грѣх* [a great sin] that even a priest cannot absolve. At the end of her life the woman faces the punishment prepared to those who used witchcraft, in that she cannot die until she reverses her magic. When she returns her husband home, they both acknowledge that they harmed each other, forgive each other, and then she dies peacefully. The narrator shows that, for these characters, wife-beating and her magical response, were commensurate. This attitude counters societal norms. Yet for the wife (and the storyteller) magic is a forbidden, but accessible and effective way to withstand abuse. The storyteller even finds a loophole in the natural law punishing the use of magic. Since the punishment happens at the very end of the guilty person's life (she cannot die), the woman turns her husband back into a person only before her death ensuring herself an entire life without abuse. This position of both the female character and

the female narrator is nearly revolutionary and definitely goes against the grain of cultural norms. It is noteworthy that in the story of the same type from Kindrativ, told by a woman, but collected by a man, the issue of female self-defense is not even raised; the magic attack of the woman on her son-in-law is presented as unmotivated.

Hybrid story: status quo maintained

Lastly, we will examine a hybrid story with the elements of voluntary and forced transformation types recorded in Novoselycja, Mižhir'ja district, Transcarpathia, in 2012 from M., a woman born in 1936, by Elena Boudovskaia. In this story, a husband and his wife go to the field to stack hay; the husband says he needs to cut a pole and goes to the woods; a wolf with an injured paw comes from the woods (note here elements of the 'Stick' subtype). It extends its paw to the woman to bandage, but she has no first-aid material. Then it gets angry, bites a piece out of the woman's skirt and leaves. Then the husband returns, the couple have a meal, and the wife notices threads from her skirt between her husband's teeth. Below is the end of our conversation concerning this story:

M:... and she saw that her... from her skirt, between his teeth, that piece of cloth, a red one. Then she realized that her husband was a man with two souls. Like this, there were people with two souls. Yes, it was like that.

B: Did she tell him that she had figured it out?

M: She didn't tell him anything, no, didn't tell him anything because she was afraid. Only that, maybe she told her mother or her father, or to someone, and, you know, it all spr... spread, how to say, as I tell you, and you tell someone else, and they tell someone else, and it went around like that. Yes, it was like that.

M's story begins as a 'Piece of Cloth' type, but the wolf-husband does not attack the wife for no reason. He, as a husband should, orders the wife to serve him and to bandage his injured paw. The woman does not, first, because she has nothing to bandage with and also because she did not recognize her husband. The husband becomes rightfully angry at his disobedient wife and punishes her by tearing a piece out of her skirt. Then the story type 'Piece of Cloth' continues.

M portrays the werewolf husband as less dangerous; he is not a wild beast attacking for no reason, but a husband who has the right to punish his wife for disobedience. The story also has no ending where the wife would be freed from danger. While the collector tries to elicit an ending, M does not provide one. The werewolf husband does not flee into the forest, but continues living with his wife, who is afraid even to mention that she knows who he is. For M, who, after the death of her husband, has been heading a large and rich patriarchal family for

many years (a living illustration of Kandiyoti's [1988] patriarchal bargain), the patriarchal rules are indispensable. The marriage is unbreakable, and the wife is a servant of her husband whoever he is. M has a reason to support the patriarchal worldview and she supports it wholeheartedly.

M's story hints that the wife can complain to her parents about her husband's behavior. However, they would have no power in his house. The fact that the whole village learned about the husband being a werewolf ("it all spread") can be an instrument of social control protecting the community from evil magic bearers. However, that fact will not restrict the werewolf's actions in his family, where his wife would be essentially without protection. M upholds male control in the family, and the community's control over its members, but the wife in her story remains powerless to protect herself. M's gender attitudes explain why she tells a story with elements from two different story types. M supports the principle of male supremacy and simply cannot tell the story type 'Piece of Cloth' in its classical subversive form, from the female perspective, where the man is an evil attacker and his wife an innocent victim. M's story seems to conform to this type, but stops short at the werewolf's wicked and unmotivated attack on the woman. The attack is depicted as a lawful punishment of a wife who failed to comply with his request. M's story also lacks an ending, narrated or suggested, of saving the wife from her husband; the wife remains at his side, afraid and silent.

Conclusion

In Carpathian werewolf stories, only men transform into a wolf in all story types: 1) voluntary transformation (a husband becomes a wolf and attacks his wife) and 2) forcible transformation (a wife turns her husband into a wolf). From the point of view of ethical values reflected in stories, narrators must balance two pivotal issues: male superiority, and the disapproval of magic used against simple people. As we have shown, their attitude toward these two issues is reflected in the narratives they choose to tell and how they construct them.

Narrators who share the patriarchal postulate of male superiority (or who do not want to subvert it) prefer to tell stories of forcible transformation where the man is not guilty of using magic ("Transformation and Return," "Stick", "A Man Helps a Wolf"). Those who doubt this postulate tell stories of voluntary transformation where the man is guilty of using magic against his wife ("A Piece of Cloth," with the ending (the woman getting rid of her husband) embedded in the narrative or transpiring in the subsequent discussion). This does not mean that a given narrator only tells one type of story in lockstep fashion. For example, in 1987, Anna Prynec' from Novoselycja told two stories from different types, both "A Piece of Cloth" and "Transformation and Return." However, she gave both stories a female perspective. The gender aspect of the storyteller's worldview can influence not only the choice of a story type, but also the ways s/he alters the story in the telling and even the decision to refuse to tell the story altogether.

Since forcible transformation stories coincide with the traditional Carpathian views about the bearers of magic and on gender, they turn out to be more

widespread. They have been recorded from both men and women and they display a broader range of genres (not only fabulates, but also one folk tale). In the renditions of forcible transformation stories by both men and women, the painful subject of the husband being transformed by his wife may be avoided or minimized. On the other hand, some female storytellers tell even forcible transformation stories from the female perspective. They offer a reason that made the wife use magic against her husband: domestic abuse. They can turn even a story of forcible transformation, originally built on the compassion towards the victim-husband and the disapproval of the aggressor-wife, into a story that makes listener think about ethical contradictions. It offers the opportunity for debate about whether it is good to use magic in self-defense from abuse and about the morality of such abuse itself. For other storytellers who share Carpathian rural values about gender, such stories offer no contradictions, and the evil nature of a woman who can attack a man without provocation is a well-known and indisputable fact.

It is only reasonable that people's views vary depending on their own gender and on the degree to which they are vested into patriarchal models of gender norms. It is also logical that their gender attitudes are reflected in the stories they tell. What we did not expect to find was that these attitudes actually defined the plot, the landscape of action, using Bruner's terms [Bruner 1986: 34], not only the landscape of conscience.

There is scholarship showing that narrators' attitudes may define at least the choice of main characters in folk stories; see, e.g., the findings in Thum [1993: 13], expanding on the earlier work of Rölleke [1988], on female characters in the Grimm fairy tales. Thum concludes that, for at least several of the Grimms' informants, gender, age, and social class (apparently via their gender attitudes) have influenced the plots in which female characters act. A man, former soldier, tells stories where only men play leading roles, while women are either "the booty or reward of an active ... male protagonist," or "play an actively and aggressively evil role as the antagonists of their lower-class husbands." "Young, educated and unmarried 'bourgeoise women' tell stories where female characters "are represented as undergoing trials and suffering in preparation for marriage" [Thum 1993: 13]. Yet in the tales told by a sixty-year old lower class woman, Dorothea Viehmann, if women are protagonists, they are mostly "able to survive against very great odds only through their deep inner strength, and through an ability to assert themselves despite the handicap of their gender, and despite numerous adversities" [Thum 1993: 15]. Women who are not active or smart are described in Viehmann's stories as "pitiable figures" and are eventually "propelled into madness" [Thum 1993: 15]. The influence of speakers' life experiences and gender views on the way they portray female characters is akin to what we found in our corpus of Carpathian werewolf stories. However, we were more concerned with plot elements than with character choices; and our findings show that the plots of Carpathian werewolf stories are also defined largely by gender attitudes of speakers.

We do not have a definitive answer to the question whether in the bigger picture the werewolf stories told from a female perspective play a meaningful role in subverting patriarchal values, or whether they should “be interpreted as part and parcel of the maintenance of systems of domination in that they provide spaces where subordinates may legitimately ‘let off steam’ and acquire a breathing space” [Kandiyoti 1998: 145]. After all, these stories “[do] not normally or necessarily lead to a renegotiation of conjugal or labour contracts but produce [...] relief within them,” as Kandiyoti [1998: 145] notes about certain other female activities in traditional societies. We can only conclude that, in telling these stories, many female speakers are not afraid to express views on gender that differ from the dominant patriarchal view. Carpathian werewolf stories definitely provide a space to debate the gender attitudes of their listeners, but we cannot assert that such discussions can cha(lle)nge the participants’ gender attitudes.

NOTES

1 In this article, we examine stories told by the Carpatho-Rusyn minority in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine together with stories told by Ukrainians in the L’viv region of Ukraine, although the Carpatho-Rusyn stories from the Transcarpathian region are the primary basis for our study.

2 Similar work investigating the reflection of gender values in folklore have been carried out on the material of other cultures (see especially Mathews [2005] as well as Raby [2007]). The Transcarpathian material has not yet been examined from this point of view.

3 It is known to be a case also in other branches of oral tradition; cf. Quinn [2005: 13] about Skinner’s Nepalese informants talking about painful sides of marriage with collectively composed songs of hardship, and Mathews’ Oaxacan interviewees, with the help of La Llorona morality tale.

4 Cf. Hnatiuk [1904: 175-7]; also see note 11.

5 I use the term ‘model’, or ‘cultural model’ in the sense of “local models of how the humanly created, natural, supernatural, interpersonal, and wider sociopolitical worlds work” [Strauss 2015: 391]; they are “understandings that are so generally accepted that they form the shared presuppositions underlying different opinions about a topic” [Strauss 2015: 391-392], though alternative models may exist as well [Quinn and Holland 1987: 4]. Models also serve as culturally accepted patterns for behavior since they have motives embedded into them; they “not only label and describe the world but also set forth goals ... and elicit or include desires” [Strauss 1992: 3; D’Andrade 1992].

6 Such attribution means that, on the one hand, the story is believable since it is part of tradition, but on the other hand, HK did not observe the events herself, which does not let her testify for the truthfulness of the story. This is a typical ambivalent stance of a good story-teller towards a legend - see above.

7 Though the divorce after a church marriage was strictly forbidden, in the old time in Transcarpathian villages, according to testimonies of our interlocutors,

there were cases when a wife could not live with her husband (for example, if he beat her more than was considered normal). In this case she could, without a divorce, return to her parents' house and live there. A similar practice existed up to World War I among the Rusyns of Yugoslavia, who came to Vojvodina from the Carpathian Mountains in the middle of the 18th c. [cf. Kostel'nik 2011: 123 ff.]

8 That often happens in traditional patriarchal fairy tales. Cf., for example, the observation of S. Ortner while analyzing the brother Grimm tales: "for the most part the only consistently active female characters in the tales are

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