

# CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AND OGRES IN FAIRY TALES

*Lecturer Delyana Dimitrova*

Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Department of Germanistics

[delyana\\_post@yahoo.com](mailto:delyana_post@yahoo.com)

Концептуална метафора и човекоядци във вълшебните приказки

старши преподавател Деляна Димитрова

Шуменски университет „Епископ Константин Преславски“, катедра „Германистика“

## **Abstract**

The paper analyses a number of fairy tales from distant cultures (a Bulgarian, Scottish, French and Somali tale) using the method of conceptual metaphor analysis. It is argued that the same underlying conceptual metaphors reveal the basic meaning of the tales and function as a plot structuring mechanism (see Ruiz 2008). On the other hand, the author also suggests that the different realizations of DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor in the tales from traditionally patriarchal European societies and in the presumably matriarchal precolonial Somali society reflect the different distribution of social and economic power between sexes in the respective cultures.

**Key words:** fairy tales, conceptual metaphor, ogres, gender stratification

## **1. Introduction**

Conceptual Theory of Metaphor highlighted the crucial role of cognitive metaphor in human conceptual system and language. Moreover, the authors of the theory hold that not only language but also the conceptual systems of cultures and religions are metaphorical in nature and the most fundamental values in a culture are coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in that culture (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 22; 40). Therefore, conceptual metaphor analysis is a useful tool in culture analysis. Also, if our conceptual system and understanding of the world are structured by metaphor, then the shared understanding on the basis of which anthropologists define the notion of culture is often a metaphorical understanding (Kövecses 2005: 2). And since some metaphors, especially the so-called primary metaphors, are universal, the human world cannot be divided into “bounded entity-like” cultures- because the universal metaphors represent an “overarching” or “underlying” layer of cultural experience (Kövecses 2005: xiv). Lakoff and Johnson emphasize the crucial role of metaphorical imagination in the interpersonal communication and mutual understanding between people who do not share the same culture, knowledge, values, etc. (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 231).

On the other hand, Marie-Louis von Franz, a renowned Jungian analyst of myths and fairy tales, assigns to fairy tales the same pivotal function in mutual understanding that

cognitive scientists ascribe to conceptual metaphor. She argues that “fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes” and are very important if one analyzes people “from the other end of the world” because they represent a “human bridge” to the representative of the other culture by depicting the “general human basis” (M. L. von Franz 1996: 1; 27). She backs up her arguments with an example of a missionary in the South Sea Islands who reported that the simplest way for him to contact those people was to tell them fairy tales (Ibid.).

In fact, there is common ground between the two theories- one of which pertains to Jungian psychology and the other to cognitive linguistics. Fairy tales are abundant in symbols. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud points out that the *symbolism* in dreams is not typical of dreams only but of *unconscious ideation* and is also to be found in *folklore, popular myths* and *legends* to a more complete extent than in *dreams* (Freud 1965: section VI.E, p. 386). And Freud’s notion of *symbolization* in dreams is the same mechanism that cognitive scientists refer to as *conceptual metaphor* (Lakoff 2001: para. 6).

However, though folk tales are not records of real events they still contain some traces of reality and of the epoch in which they are told. The most common characters of fairy tales- kings, queens, princes, princesses, soldiers, peasants, etc., reflect the social stratification of a feudal society and it is very easy to recognize that the social structures, institutions, and economic networks of many fairy tales are based on medieval or, at least, premodern models (Tatar 2003: 48-9). As Tatar argues in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, “there is much in every folktale that requires awareness of social realities, just as there is much that defies historical explanation” (Ibid.: 50). Some of the basic situations depicted in fairy tales reflect reality in premodern times. Poverty among the common people was notorious through the ages in premodern Europe. Perrault’s collection of fairy tales appears during the reign of Louis XIV, a period marked by defeats, a mounting debt and famines. These harsh economic conditions had respective impact on social life. Cases of parental child abandonment, infanticide and a high mortality rate for women in their childbearing years, resulting in a hostile stepmother in the household were not so uncommon among the poor (Ibid.: 49). Similarly, the hot semi-arid climate and lack of arable land in Somalia made for extremely difficult economic conditions across history and predisposed to trying situations in social life. The European and Somali tales analysed in this paper describe the aforementioned situations of poverty, child abandonment and a jealous stepmother in the household. The idea of economic and social power and its distribution (between sexes and among different strata of society) is essential to all of the tales analysed in this paper. The protagonists start from a position of powerlessness and poverty and after defeating a supernatural cannibal reach a position of wealth and power or open access to vital resources.

## **2. DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER and IMPORTANT IS BIG conceptual metaphors**

The present article examines the character of the supernatural cannibal creature in three European (a Scottish, French and Bulgarian) tales and a Somali folk tale of one and the same type (ATU 327B, *The Brothers and the Ogre*) using the methodology of conceptual metaphor analysis. The gender of the human eating supernatural creatures (“an ogre” and “a

male dragon” in the analysed European tales and “an ogress” in the analysed Somali tale) reflects the distribution of social power between sexes in European cultures (traditionally patriarchal) and in the presumably matriarchal precolonial Somali culture. The conceptual metaphor analysis of Somali lore in the present paper implies for a matriarchal rather than patriarchal precolonial Somalia. According to gender stratification theory, the distribution of social power between sexes is very closely correlated to economic power distribution (Collins et al. 1993: 189). This correlation chimes with the idea central to all of these tales- control over resources, i.e. economic power.

### 2.1. DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER

All of the stories analysed in this paper start with the notion of poverty and hunger and end with an accumulation of resources or open access to resources. One of the main points of the present article is that the mighty human eating supernatural creature (an ogre, ogress or a dragon) in the selected European and Somali tales stands for a position of abusive or objectionable social power<sup>1</sup> and is an example of DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER conceptual metaphor.

DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER is a special case of DESIRE IS HUNGER primary metaphor. The metaphor represents association between *physical needs* (**source** domain *hunger*) and *emotional needs* (**target** domain *desire for power*). *Desire* is associated with *hunger* because when we are *hungry*, we experience *desire* for *food*. This is a universal human experience and therefore implies universal conceptualization of *desire* in terms of *hunger*.

Examples from everyday language:

Bulgarian:

- (1) Гладен за власт (“hungry for power”)
- (2) Лакомия за високи постове (“gluttonous desire for power”)
- (3) Ония горе (властимащите, депутатите) не се наядоха (“The higher-ups have still not had enough”)

English:

- (1) Hunger for power (“глад за власт”)
- (2) to gobble up power (“лакомо завземам власт”)
- (3) devouring ambition (“настървена амбиция”)
- (4) a politician ravenous for power (“политик, лаком за власт”)

French:

- (1) faim du pouvoir („hunger for power”)

---

<sup>1</sup> In Breaking the Magic Spell Zipes offers a similar interpretation of the personage of the witch in Grimm’s Hansel and Gretel (a tale representing situations and plot similar to the tales analysed in this paper). According to Zipes, this is a story of hope and victory and the witch is a “parasite”, and “a representative of the entire feudal system or the greed and brutality of the aristocracy, responsible for the difficult conditions” (Zipes 2002:38)

- (2) ambition dévorante („devouring ambition”)
- (3) absorption-fusion (fin., „merger”)

Kövecses, a pioneer in the study of emotion concepts, subdivides EMOTIONAL DESIRE IS HUNGER (a case of the more general metaphor DESIRE IS HUNGER) into two versions: DESIRE FOR EMOTION IS HUNGER and DESIRE FOR EMOTIONAL ACTION IS HUNGER (Kövecses 2000: 78). Both reflect the following general mapping in the conceptual system:

hunger (for food) → desire (for emotion or action)

While in DESIRE FOR EMOTION IS HUNGER the desire consists of having the emotion and applies only to positive emotions (e.g. love and affection), in DESIRE FOR EMOTIONAL ACTION IS HUNGER there is some desire on the part of the subject of emotion to perform an action, where the action is “spurred” by or is a result of the emotion itself and this variant applies only to negative emotions (e.g. anger and lust) (Ibid.: 45). DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor is a case of DESIRE FOR EMOTIONAL ACTION IS HUNGER version. Thus we speak of “insatiable” hunger for power (and also insatiable greed, anger, lust, etc.) where the food corresponds to the action response (Ibid.: 79). According to Kövecses, this version where the emotion is “insatiable” usually forms a part of EMOTION IS A WILD ANIMAL metaphor where the animal’s responses may be motivated by the physiological force of hunger. The DESIRE FOR EMOTIONAL ACTION IS HUNGER version is structured by the following mappings, reflecting the instantiation of the generic-level force schema (Kövecses 2000: 79):

EMOTION IS A PHYSIOLOGICAL FORCE (version two)

Metaphorical Mapping	Agonist’s Force	Antagonist’s Force	Resultant Action
Source	<i>Wild animal</i> animal (without insatiable appe- tite) eats “just enough”	<i>Insatiable appetite (for food)</i> insatiable appetite makes animal keep eat- ing food	animal with insa- tiable appetite keeps eating
Target	<i>Emotional self</i>	<i>Insatiable emotional de-</i>	self with insa-

Emotion (without	<i>sire</i>	tiabile emotional
insatiable desire)	insatiable emotional	desire keeps act-
does not cause	desire causing self to	ing on emotion
self to keep acting	keep acting on emotion	
on emotion		

---

The personage of the famous Somali ogress Dhegheer, described with many physical and behavioral characteristics of a wild animal because of her cannibalistic habits, has quite in common with this representation of the self as an animal with insatiable appetite. The personages of the cannibal ogres in European tales also share some of the characteristics of wild beasts. Moreover, though some of the examples of cannibalism are related to lack of food, especially meat (mainly in Africa and Polynesia), once started, cannibalism became a cultural norm. It was a demonstration of power over the enemy (Harvey 2002: 136). The cannibal act was a way of showing to the rest of the tribe the position attained by valor (Ibid.: 142). This feature of cultural cannibalism is an outright relation of food with power. Hence, in this type of cultural cannibalism hunger corresponds to desire for power.

Likewise, in his study of metaphorical representations of consumption, Wilk examines extensions of DESIRE IS HUNGER general metaphor like SATISFYING DESIRE IS EATING, CONSUMING IS EATING, WEALTH IS FAT and USING IS EATING AND DIGESTING (Wilk 2004).

Linguistic and psycholinguistic research on the metaphor corroborates the correlation between hunger and desire in different languages.

Gibbs et al. (2004) conduct an empirical study examining the correlation between hunger/thirst and desire among American English and Brazilian Portuguese students. The results of the study show that linguistic expressions concerning hunger/thirst are employed by both American and Portuguese students to metaphorize desire:

Tenho fome de riqueza—Tenho sede de riquezas

(‘I hunger for wealth’—‘I thirst for wealth’)

Tenho fome de saber —Tenho sede de saber

(‘I hunger for knowledge’—‘I thirst for knowledge’)

Tenho fome de amor—Tenho sede de amor

(‘I hunger for love’—‘I thirst for love’)

Tenho fome de vingança—Tenho sede de vingança

(‘I hunger for revenge ’—‘ I thirst for revenge ’)

The authors argue that there are systematic correspondences between feeling *hunger* and different aspects of *desire*, and this refers to people of all cultures (Ibid.).

## 2.2. IMPORTANT IS BIG

IMPORTANT IS BIG is another metaphor that, as I argue in this paper, structures the personages of the ogre and the human eating dragon in the European fairy tales discussed here.

IMPORTANT IS BIG is a primary metaphor with subjective judgement *importance* as target domain and *size* as sensorimotor source domain. Lakoff and Johnson define the experiential basis of the metaphor in the following way: “as a child, finding that big things, e.g., parents, are important and can exert major forces on you and dominate your visual experience” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 50).

Examples from everyday language:

Bulgarian:

- (1) голям ден (“big day”)
- (2) голям човек (“a great man”)
- (3) голямо значение (“great significance”)
- (4) исполин в дадена област (“a giant in his/her field”)

English:

- (1) big day
- (2) big decision
- (3) huge breakthrough
- (4) Mr big

French:

- (1) grande nouvelle (“important news”)
- (2) grande besoin (“a great need”)
- (3) grosse question (“a big question”)
- (4) avoir grand air (“to have an important air”)
- (5) le gros d’une affaire (“the most important part of an affair”)

A number of psycholinguistic studies corroborate the existence of IMPORTANT IS BIG conceptual metaphor structure in the human mind.

Valenzuela & Soriano (2008) investigated IMPORTANT IS BIG metaphor and conducted a series of experiments in which subjects had to decide which one of two factors (e.g. “friendship” and “money”) is more important in their lives. These factors were abstract concepts and the answer to the task was a matter of personal choice, i.e. there was no “correct” answer. The font size of these abstract concepts was manipulated- some words were

smaller (12 pt. font) and some bigger (20 pt. font). The results showed that the reaction was faster when the word size was metaphor coherent. In another block of an analogous experiment the participants had to choose the less important life factor. Again, the reaction-time was metaphor coherent (Valenzuela & Soriano 2008, cited in Valenzuela 2009).

Likewise, in a similar experiment Schubert et al. (2009) investigated the relation between size and power regarding POWERFUL IS BIG metaphor. Results showed that the reaction was quicker and more accurate when the stimulus font size matched the metaphor (Schubert et al. 2009, cited in Valenzuela 2009).

In another experiment Valenzuela & Soriano (2008) used the Implicit Association Test (IAT) experimental paradigm where subjects had to form a novel-compound category structured by compatible or incompatible notions. In the case of IMPORTANT IS BIG metaphor, participants showed much greater swiftness and accuracy when they had to group together “important” words with “big” words (and “small” with “unimportant” words) than in the non-congruent cases (Valenzuela & Soriano 2008, cited in Valenzuela 2009).

Also, IMPORTANT IS BIG partially overlaps with POWER/CONTROL IS ABOVE, IMPORTANCE/STATUS IS HIGH and ACHIEVEMENT/SUCCESS IS HIGH conceptual metaphors- which employ the notion of size as a source for quality in general and height as a multivalent source for positive qualities in particular (Goatly 2007: 35). The symbolism of height as power is quite obvious in the penchant for tall buildings. Ever since biblical times building high has been interpreted as a power statement- in the story of the tower of Babel, God interpreted it as a threat to “His” own power (Ibid.: 37). Recent examples include the Chrysler Building and Empire State Building, symbols of US power and success, and the increasing trend towards tall buildings in the Middle and Far East (Ibid.). Another interesting example of the realization of the metaphor is the fact that in the 1988 federal election in Canada, the winner Brian Mulroney was judged to be taller after the election than before (Herman 1990, cited in Goatly 2007: 36). Also, there is a general positive correlation between physical height and salary (Goatly 2007: 36).

### **2.3. European tales analysis**

Little Thumbling<sup>2</sup> (French: Le Petit Poucet) a French fairy tale, Molly (or Mally) Whuppie<sup>3</sup>, a Scottish fairy tale, and The youngest brother outsmarts the monster<sup>4</sup> (Bulgarian: Малкият брат надхитря чудовището), a Bulgarian fairy tale, share a common general plot outline. According to Aarne-Thompson-Uther’s classification system the tales are a combination of ATU 327B, The Brothers and the Ogre (although in some rare cases as in Molly Whuppie it is a girl who defeats the ogre), and ATU 328, The Boy Steals the Ogre’s Treasure.

In the Bulgarian version the ogre is a human eating dragon, the dragon being a central and common, sometimes anthropomorphic, character in Bulgarian folklore tradition (СЪБКОВА 1992: 126).

---

<sup>2</sup> Perrault 1697/2010

<sup>3</sup> Jacobs 1890/2010

<sup>4</sup> Парпулова & Добрева 1982

In all of these European tales the lives of the protagonists are marked by difficult economic conditions. In the Bulgarian version there are nine orphan brothers who are left with only a ploughshare as inheritance from their parents. The seven brothers in Little Thumbling and the three youngest sisters in Molly Whuppie are left in the forest by their poor parents who could no longer provide food for the children. The tales later evolve as rags-to-riches stories.

In all versions the youngest sibling outsmarts the ogre/dragon who tries to kill and eat the brothers/sisters<sup>5</sup> and steals his treasure and precious possessions.

A central motif and a pivotal moment in the stories is how the youngest child who stays awake at night saves his/her siblings and tricks the ogre/dragon into killing his own children instead. In the Bulgarian tale the dragon puts golden apples on the nine brothers' heads when they go to bed in his house so he can discriminate between them and his own nine daughters at night and kill them. The youngest brother puts the golden apples on the heads of the dragon's daughters. For the same purpose, in Molly Whuppie the ogre puts straw ropes round the necks of the three sisters and gold chains round the necks of his own three daughters<sup>6</sup> (later exchanged by Molly Whuppie). In Little Thumbling the protagonist exchanges the hats on his brothers' heads for the gold crowns of the ogre's daughters. Molly Whuppie manages to steal the precious possessions of the giant for a king and the three sisters marry the king's sons. Little Thumbling steals the ogre's magic boots and all of his riches. The protagonist of the Bulgarian version seizes all of the dragon's and the king's treasure.

The two foremost and most salient characteristics of the personages of the ogre and the human eating dragon are their hugeness and insatiable appetite for human flesh. Other details in the tales indicate that they are in a position of social power and affluence. Therefore, these personages are structured by the metaphors DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER and IMPORTANT IS BIG.

The gold crowns and gold necklaces are clearly symbols of high social status, power and affluence, while straw ropes and hats (when compared to gold crowns) indicate low social class, lack of social power and resources.

On the other hand, the crowns, hats and necklaces are related to specific parts of the human body- head and neck. The straw rope round the neck is associated with submission to control. On the other hand, the head is related to the top orientation from which metaphors like CONTROL IS UP, HIGH STATUS IS UP and IMPORTANT IS UP originate: e.g. *head of the mountain*, *head of the department*, etc. (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2012). Therefore, the exchange of straw ropes for gold necklaces and hats for gold crowns implies for a shift of social control and power. Furthermore, the head is of special significance in the culture of war and cannibalism. Most of the remains of Ice Age Europe show considerable preoccupation with skulls in the early Neolithic and the later peoples, Celts and Vikings (as well as Aztecs, Thracians and Persians), had the same preference (Harvey 2002: 116). There are two reasons behind such practices- the head was representative of the deceased, and second, the head was a symbol of power (Ibid.). The displayed head was a sign of the victor's power over his enemies (Ibid.). Also, heads were used in magic rites and as amulets and the skulls of ancestors were venerated (Ibid.).

However, the golden apples put on the heads of the brothers in the Bulgarian tale have different symbolism. While the apple in Bulgarian folklore is usually symbolic of love,

---

<sup>5</sup> In Joseph Jacobs's Molly Whuppie the idea of cannibalism is not explicitly present, though implied in the giant's words "I smell the blood of some earthly one", the sharp sense of smell for human flesh being a typical characteristic of man-eating ogres. In other versions (Maol a Chliobain: Campbell 1890/2003, Hairy Rouchy: Kennedy 1870/2007 and Mutsmag: Chase 1948/2003) the giant is a man-eating ogre.

<sup>6</sup> In Maol a Chliobain there are knobs of amber versus horse hair; in Hairy Rouchy- gold, silver and diamond necklaces versus hair necklaces

birth and fertility, it may also be associated with the world of the dead<sup>7</sup> (Събкова 1992: 139-40). So, the apple here is a token for the ones chosen to be killed.

Another important feature of these folk tales is the juxtaposition of male and female characters. On the one hand, there are the male ogre and the male human eating dragon with their negative role of the evil adversary of the protagonist. It is an interesting fact that the semantics of the male dragon (zmey) in Bulgarian folklore is generally positive, in contrast to the negative characteristics of the female dragon (hala, lamyа) (Събкова 1992: 94, 96-8), while here he is assigned a negative role. Furthermore, in Bulgarian folklore only the male (and not the female) dragon has manifestations in the social and cosmic sphere<sup>8</sup> (Събкова 1992: 107). On the other, the ogre's wife in Molly Whuppie and Little Thumbling is described as merciful and kind- she feeds the children, shows concern and warns them of her cannibal husband. The wives of the ogres and the dragon are ascribed a secondary role and do not have the power to influence the course of events. They obey their husbands and do as they are told by them. The different roles and the negative versus positive characteristics of these male and female characters allude to social and economic power and its distribution between sexes in a patriarchal society- from the perspective of the common people.

In all of these European tales, as well as in the story about the ogress Dhegdheer from Somali lore analysed further in this article, there is the idea of retribution- the ones in a weaker position set to be destroyed and engorged turn the tables wittingly in their favour and destroy their enemy. This is a common motif in folk tales where the poor and powerless outwit a figure of social power and wealth, a realization of WITTY IS POWERFUL conceptual metaphor.

The personages of the ogre and the dragon are creations of the unconscious ideation typical of dreams, myths and folklore (despite the fact that Little Thumbling is not a folk tale) rather than a product of the rational mind. That is why their primitive character apparently contradicts with the notion of high social power which presupposes some refinement. In fact, the ogre and the dragon stand for oppression and brutality of social exploitation, which are downright primitive forces.

#### **2.4. Somali tale analysis**

In Berber and Somali folklore traditions the ogresses outnumber the ogres (Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales 2008: 703). This characteristic feature of Berber folklore may be explained by the matriarchal nature of Berber tribal groups, recorded by anthropologists, especially the nomadic Tuareg of the Sahara Desert (Encyclopedia of the Peoples in Africa and the Middle East, 2009: 119). Claims for the existence of matriarchy rest on three types of data: societies in which women make the major contribution to subsistence, societies in which descent is traced through women (i.e. matrilineal), and myths of ancient rule by women (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, EBSCO).

In Folktales from Somalia Hanghe accounts for the predominance of female characters in Somali lore with the matrilineal descent theory of earlier Somali history. He also points out that some clans in modern Somalia still bear the names of their ancestral mothers

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, the belief that Archangel Michael takes the soul of the deceased with an apple, or the custom of putting a bag of apples next to the deceased which s/he will give to his/her relatives who had passed away before

<sup>8</sup> He fights hails and pernicious female dragons, protects crops and flashes lightnings (Събкова 1992: 107)

and that many Somali males still bear their maternal names, rather than those of the fathers (Hanghe 1988: 131).

Similarly, Choi (1995) argues for a much more significant role of women in social and economic life in Somali past. She refers to several matrifocal customs in favour of a more female centered precolonial Somali society. One of them is the tradition related to woman's jewelry which represents the woman's assets. These assets are sold in times of draught and expanded at times of surplus and are usually passed on from mother through the woman's side (Choi 1995: 180). And since "any system of distribution and control over resources has an associated ideology about the worth of categories of persons" (Poewe 1981: 55, cited in Choi 1995: 182), this custom implies for significant social role of women in ancient Somali past. Other similar particularities of Somali culture are the kinship rights given through the mother's line among the Raxanweyn (a Somali clan), observed by Helander (Helander 1986a: 7, cited in Choi 1995: 182) and the funeral custom of reciting the mother's (not father's or grandfather's) name of the deceased<sup>9</sup> (Helander 1986b: 12, cited in Choi 1995: 182). Another contradiction to the "strict" patrilineality of Somali society emphasized by Choi is the fact that various clans have divisions that are started by women (Mansur 1992, cited in Choi 1995: 183). Though Choi does not necessarily argue for a matrilineal past in Somalia, she points out that there is evidence of some rather different kinship relations historically than the situation observed by Lewis in the 1940s and 50s and that it is impossible to rule out an earlier matrilineal past without more research (Choi 1995: 184).

Somali folklore is rich in stories about cannibalism and though they tell about male and female cannibals, the most famous one is "Dhegdheer", a female (Hanghe 1988: 112). Dhegdheer's hunger for human flesh stands for desire for power. Hence, her personage is structured by DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor. Most of the principal characters in Somali folktales are females and there is no male personage in Somali lore as famous as the two female heroines of the cannibal Dhegdheer (Ibid.: 131) and the tyrannical queen of Somalia, Arraweelo (during whose rule women were the dominant sex). Though tales about them are spread all over the Somali territories, Arraweelo and Dhegdheer feature mainly in many tales in one and the same region- north and north-eastern Somalia (Ibid.).

Somali folklore tells about how Arraweelo led women to revolt and overthrow the power of men (Ibid.: 131-42). According to the tales, she castrated all men and oppressed them (Ibid.). Despite the semi-biographical character of the tales about Arraweelo and the abundance of personal details about her in Somali lore the scholars of Somali history dismiss her as a historical figure (Choi 1995: 177). According to Choi, the lack of historical research on Arraweelo is the result of an unquestioning acceptance of I. M. Lewis's definition of Somali women (Ibid.: 177). The stories even indicate two villages in which Arraweelo used to move her court during the different seasons: Hawraartiro and Ceelaayo, both in north-eastern Somalia (Hanghe 1988: 132). It is reported that in the village of Ceelaayo there exists a stone-mound believed to be Arraweelo's tomb. Whenever Somali men pass by this stone mound

---

<sup>9</sup> The reason behind this practice, according to Somalis, is that when one enters heaven it is important that one is named correctly and only the mother's side is known for sure (Ibid.)

they throw stones onto it with a curse upon Arraweelo's name, while Somali women place green branches and fresh flowers in sign of respect (Ibid.: 132). It is also worth noting that oral traditions indicate that Arraweelo reigned in north-eastern Somalia, in the Nugaal and Sanaag provinces and many of the Dhegdheer adventure stories indicate that they also belong to this part of Somalia (Ibid.). What is more, one of the tales about Arraweelo's defeat and death inflicted by her grandson and resulting in a reimposition of male rule in Somalia very closely resembles the structuralist "gender stratification theory" explanation of gender norms with sexual division of labour (Ibid.: 137-141). Arraweelo's daughter manages to convince her mother not to kill her male child at first until "he learns how to sit on the ground", then until "he learns how to say 'mama'", until "he can walk", and, finally, until he is "*a useful person*" and able to *look after the livestock* and *protect Arraweelo from enemies* with a spear and a shield. This is the moment when Arraweelo realizes how "*very dangerous*" he is to her already (Ibid.: 137-39). As Collins et al. point out, "...across history, women's productive labor has been related to the most striking differences in gender inequality. Hunting and gathering economies in which women contribute high proportions of subsistence are among the most gender-egalitarian societies known; societies where herding and agrarian plow cultivation are carried out by men are at the extreme of male domination" (Collins et al. 1993: 189).

Though Arraweelo is described as tyrannical and oppressing men perhaps this negative image of her power is a later acquired layer of the folklore myth which reflects the negative image of female power from a patriarchal perspective and functions as a rationalization of male dominance. The negative image of female power intertwined with DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER conceptual metaphor and the demonization of the female in a patriarchal Somali culture may also be the reason why the most famous cannibal character in Somali folklore, Dhegdheer, is a female.

Alongside DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER METAPHOR, BAD IS STINKY primary metaphor also structures the personages of Dhegdheer and Arraweelo. BAD IS STINKY metaphor reflects the negative attitude towards the cannibal female and the female ruler or the negative attitude towards female power. Here the sensorimotor domain of *smell* is projected onto the subjective judgment of *evaluation* (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 50). The metaphor is based on the primary experience of being repelled by foul-smelling objects (ibid.) and functions, for example, in the figurative meaning of the verb "stink" in English, denoting something (or someone) highly offensive or abhorrent, of extremely bad repute or of extremely low or bad quality ("This movie/idea/performance/*stinks*."; "Their behavior *stinks*."; "His name *stinks*"), or, in the idiomatic expression "smell fishy" (i.e. seem suspicious). [Bulgarian *вмирисан/миризливи*: of extremely low or bad quality; spoiled; *намирисвам*: seem suspicious; French *puer au nez*: to disgust; *puant m.*: a vile person]. According to the tales, there was a bad smell emitted from Dhegdheer's unwashed body (Hanghe 1988: 116) and one could be choked by the stinking odour given off by the corpulent queen Arraweelo (Ibid. 134). Arraweelo is described as very fat and heavy because of her voracious appetite- she drank the milk of her thousand-head of milch-camels (Ibid.). According to the stories, the excessive fat was the reason for the bad smell of her body.

Dhegdheer is also described as “fat” and with “enormous body-weight” (Ibid. 113). Therefore, in the personages of Dhegdheer and Arraweelo BAD IS STINKY primary metaphor is intertwined with DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor and its extension WEALTHY IS FAT metaphor.

Another particularity in the stories about Dhegdheer, related to DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor and evoking parallels with the personage of Arraweelo, is that in the territory of Dhegdheer there were water resources and rich pasture during the dry seasons, when these amenities are most needed by the nomads, and nobody ever dared to utilize them (Ibid. 114). Also, according to Somali lore, the terrible cannibal woman Dhegdheer and the tyrannical queen Arraweelo oppressing men gave birth only to daughters and no sons and only the mother’s name (Haramaanyo) of Arraweelo was known (Ibid.: 112-42), particularities which tempt to make associations with the matrilineal descent theory of Somali past.

Gender stereotypes are also reflected in the development of the personages. Before Dhegdheer turns to cannibalism (i.e. before she develops an appetite for power), she is described as “a beautiful young lady, patient and obedient to her parents”, “sociable and popular with the youngsters of her age, boys and girls alike”, “a charming young woman”, and also as a “slim, shapely girl” (Ibid.: 112). It is interesting though that she is described as a “team-leader” as well (Ibid.). After she “lost the taste for taking clean, human food” she turns into a cannibal woman of “terrifying ugliness” (Ibid.: 116) with “enormous body weight” and the physical characteristics of a wild animal<sup>10</sup> (Ibid.: 113). Similarly, before becoming the extremely fat and bad smelling tyrannical queen, Arraweelo is described as “pretty” (and also “clever”) (Ibid.: 133). Arraweelo’s daughter is put in contrast with her mother and described as “a beautiful girl” and “a kind-hearted person” who “did not like her mother ill-treating and oppressing people” but was “very much afraid of her” and also participated in the plan to kill and overthrow her rule (Ibid.: 137-141). The same contrast between mother and daughter applies to Dhegdheer. Dhegdheer is killed by two girls with the help of Dhegdheer’s daughter. She would tie her daughter so as not to escape like her elder sisters who were now “happily married” (Ibid.: 127). Dhegdheer’s daughters hated her mother for her cannibalistic habits which “made her a wild animal” and they took only “clean, human food” (Ibid.).

Hanghe’s Tale 5 of The Adventure tales of Dhegdheer: Atirana-Kunuge (Catircaana-Kunuuge) (Ibid.: 125-130), is a story that has many parallels with the European tales discussed above and may be classified as tale type ATU 327 B: The Brothers and the Ogre. This is another rare example of the tale type, like Molly Whuppie, where a girl defeats the terrifying cannibal. In contrast to European tales, here the ogre is replaced by an ogress (like most stories about cannibals in Somali folklore).

The story shares the general plot outline of the European tales discussed above. Two sisters, left in the forest by their poor father, go to the huts of Dhegdheer and, with the help of her daughter, execute a crafty plan and kill the ogress. After Dhegdheer’s death, the people

---

<sup>10</sup> Fangs of a wolf, claws of an eagle and a long, asinine ear (Hanghe 1988: 113)

returned to their land and the water-wells they had abandoned for fear of the cannibal woman. Each of the three brave girls married, gave birth to three sons and lived happily ever after.

Additionally, the tale shares other interesting similarities with some European fairy tales.

The role of the stepmother who, according to the tale, was jealous of the girls' good looks and did not want to share with them the milk from the goat and ewe the family had resembles the role of the stepmother in Hansel and Gretel (ATU 327A, The children and the witch) and the envious stepmother in Snow White. In Hansel and Gretel the children outsmart and kill the cannibal witch who tries to eat them, just like in Atirana-Kunuge. In Snow White the notion of cannibalism is present, too- the jealous stepmother asks the hunter to bring her the lungs and liver of Snow White and she cooks and eats what she believes to be her lungs and liver (Grimm 1983: 184). This is an example of DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor, since the evil queen perceives her feminine beauty as an instrument for power and that is why she tries to consume, i.e. to overpower Snow White<sup>11</sup>. Another parallel with European tales of ATU 327 type is the fact that Dhegdheer's daughter warns the two girls of the cannibalistic habits of her mother, feeds them and hides them- a particularity resembling the role of the ogre's wife in Little Thumbling, Molly Whuppie and Jack and the beanstalk. Likewise, Dhegdheer shares the famous sense of smell for human flesh, characteristic of European ogres (Hanghe 1988: 129).

The tale begins like Little Thumbling and Molly Whuppie- the children are left in the forest by their father (convinced to do so by their jealous stepmother) because there was not enough food for the family. In the Bulgarian version (as well as in Mutsmag, the Appalachian version of Molly Whuppie) poverty is also the reason that prompts the brothers to start their journey "in search of their fortune". All tales end with the accumulation of resources (French, Scottish and Bulgarian version) or open access to resources (Somali tale). In Atirana-Kunuge people regain access to the rich pasture and water-wells in Dhegdheer's territory. Therefore, the idea about control over resources is central to all of these tales.

According to the tale, Dhegdheer had power over valuable resources, had only daughters and they only knew the name of their mother and did not know who their father was: "My mother is called Dhegdheer, I have no father and never saw him..." (Ibid.: 127). Furthermore, she tied her daughter to a pillar or round her waist in order not to let her escape and be "happily married" like her elder sisters did (Ibid.). These elements in the story allude to Dhegdheer's (i.e. *female*) power and authoritative character as well as to matrilineal descent theory. In contrast, after the three girls kill Dhegdheer, the people reestablished their power over valuable water resources in the cannibal's territory, "the rains came pouring, the animals regenerated themselves and the people were happy again"; the three girls married and gave birth only to boys- each of them had three sons, and "lived happily ever after" (Ibid.:

---

<sup>11</sup> Similar example of DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor is Perrault's Sleeping beauty. The prince keeps in secret from his cannibal mother that he has a wife and two children for fear that she might eat them. The prince brings his wife and children to the palace no sooner than his father dies and he becomes the king, i.e. when he has more power than his mother, the old queen.

130). The ending describes Dhegdheer's death as the beginning of an auspicious new cycle of life where reestablishment of power over nature resources (which previously belonged to a fearful cannibal *female*), nature regeneration and the birth of *male* children solely imply not only for the seasonal cycle of rainfall variability but perhaps also for a shift from a matriarchal to a new social system- patriarchy. This shift is perceived as good and natural because it is associated with nature regeneration and happiness. Likewise, the words with which the three girls proclaimed the death of the dreadful cannibal woman: "Dhegdheer is no more, return you all, return to the land, return *in peace!*" once again evoke parallels between the characters of Dhegdheer and Arraweelo (Ibid.: 130).

### 3. Conclusion

In this article I have shown how the same underlying conceptual metaphors may reveal the basic meaning of a number of fairy tales and function as a plot structuring mechanism (see Ruiz 2008), regardless of whether the tales are from distant cultures or not. On the other hand, the different realizations of DESIRE FOR POWER IS HUNGER metaphor in the tales from traditionally patriarchal European societies and in the presumably matriarchal precolonial Somali society, reflect the different distribution of social and economic power between sexes in the respective cultures.

#### References:

- Campbell, John. (1890) 2003. Popular Tales of the West Highlands. Vol. I. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/pt1/index.htm>
- Chase, Richard. (1948) 2003. Grandfather Tales: American-English Folk Tales. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Google Book
- Choi, Christine Ahmed. 1995. Finely etched chattel: The invention of a Somali woman, in A. J. Ahmed (ed.) The invention of Somalia, Lawrenceville, N. J. 1995 157-89
- Collins, Randall, Janet S. Chafetz, Rae L. Blumberg, Scott Coltrane, Jonathan H. Turner. 1993. Toward an Integrated Theory of Gender Stratification. In: Sociological Perspectives, Vol. 36, No. 3.(Autumn 1993), pp. 185-216)
- Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Freud, Sigmund. 1965. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. Std.Edn. New York: Avon Books, cited in George Lakoff (2001): "Metaphor and Psychoanalysis: How Metaphor Structures Dreams: The Theory of Conceptual Metaphor Applied to Dream Analysis" In: *PSYART: A Hyperlink Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts*
- Gibbs Jr., Raymond W., Paula Lenz Costa Lima and Edson Francoso. 2004. "Metaphor is Grounded in Embodied Experience" [Electronic version]. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 36. 1189-1210.
- Goatly, Andrew. 2007. *Washing the Brain — Metaphor and Hidden Ideology*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Google Book
- Grimm, J. 1983. *Grimm's Tales for Young and Old*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Anchor Books.
- Haase, Donald, ed. 2008. *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*. Westport, Connecticut. London: Greenwood Press.
- Hanghe, Ahmed. (1988) 2003. *Folktales from Somalia*. Uppsala/Göteborg: Somali Academy of Sciences and Arts in cooperation with Scandinavian Institute of African Studies
- Harvey, Patrick. 2002. *The Tokens of Esteem: An Essay in Ritual Inhumanity*. iUniverse.Google Book

- Helander, B. 1986a. The Social Dynamics of Southern Somali Agro-pastoralism: A Regional Approach. In: P. Conze and T. Labahn, eds., *Somalia: Agriculture in the Winds of Change* (Saarbrücken-Schafbrücke: Epi Verlag, 1986), p. 7
- Helander, B. 1986b. Death and the End of Society: Official Ideology and Ritual Communication in the Somali Funeral. In: *Working Papers in African Studies*, 26 (1986): 12
- Herman, Peter. 1990. "Pessimistic Rumination and Electoral Defeat : A Shorter but Wider View", *Psychological Inquiry*, vol.1 n°1, 1990, pp.64-65
- Ibarretxe-Antuñano, Iraide. 2012. "The importance of unveiling conceptual metaphors in a minority language". In: Idström, Anna and Elisabeth Piirainen (eds.), *Endangered Metaphors* . 2012. vi, 376 pp. (pp. 253–274)
- Jacobs, Joseph. (1890) 2005. *English Fairy Tales*. Gutenberg Project
- Kennedy, Patrick. (1870) 2007. *The fireside stories of Ireland*. Internet Archive  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/firesidestories00kennrich/firesidestories00kennrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/firesidestories00kennrich/firesidestories00kennrich_djvu.txt)
- Kövecses, Zoltán. 2000. *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Google Book.
- Kövecses, Zoltán. 2005. *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*: Cambridge University Press. Google Book.
- Lakoff, George. 2001. "Metaphor and Psychoanalysis: How Metaphor Structures Dreams: The Theory of Conceptual Metaphor Applied to Dream Analysis" In: *PSYART: A Hyperlink Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts*. Retrieved November 1, 2010 from [http://www.psyartjournal.com/article/show/lakoffmetaphor\\_and\\_psychoanalysis\\_how\\_metaphor](http://www.psyartjournal.com/article/show/lakoffmetaphor_and_psychoanalysis_how_metaphor)
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mansur, Dr. Abdallah. 1992. Rome
- Perrault, Charles. (1697) 2010. *Les contes de fées*. eBooksLib.com
- Poewe, Karla. 1981. *Matrilineal Ideology: male-female dynamics in Luapala, Zambia*, London: Academic Press for the International African Institute, 149 pp.
- Ruiz, Javier Herrero. 2007. "Conceptual metaphors in fairy tales. The cases of: Acquiescence is Swallowing, Intelligence is Light, a Child is Hope of Renewal, Darkness is a Cover and Powerful is Witty" [Electronic version]. In: *Interlingüística*. ISSN 1134-8941, No 17. 475-482
- Schubert, T. W., Waldzus, S., & Giessner, S. R. 2009. Control over the association of power and size. *Social Cognition*, 27, 1-19.
- Stokes, Jamie, ed. 2009. *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East*, Facts On File Inc., Infobase Publishing.
- Tatar, Maria. 2003. *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Google Book
- Valenzuela, J. & Soriano, C. 2008. "Is "friendship" more important than "money". A psycholinguistic exploration of the IMPORTANT IS BIG metaphor". VI AELCO Conference, Castellón
- Valenzuela, Javier. 2009. What empirical work can tell us about Primary Metaphors. *Quaderns de Filologia. Estudis lingüístics XIV*: 235-249
- Von Franz, Marie-Louise. 1996. *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*. Boston/London: Shambhala
- Wilk, Richard. *Morals and Metaphors: The Meaning of Consumption*. 2004. In *Elusive Consumption*, edited by Karin Ekström and Helene Brembeck. Berg Publishers. Pp. 11-26.
- Zipes, Jack. 2002. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Парпулова, Любомира и Доротея Добрева. 1982. *Българска народна поезия и проза*. Том 6. *Народни приказки*. София: Български писател
- Събкова, Милена. 1992. *Змеят в българския фолклор*. София: Издателство на Българската академия на науките