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### NARRATIONS ON DREAMS AND DREAM INTERPRETATIONS: RESPONDENT AND TEXT RELATIONS

The object of the work is narratives on dreams, dream interpretations, and beliefs on them. We seek to ascertain the way by which a respondent aims to convince his listeners of the reliability of the phenomena told, and to disclose his relation to the facts being presented. Comparative and interpretational methods have been applied.

Any narrative springs up as a result of a certain event. Having experienced an event, an individual often wants to share it with other members of the society. A particular wish is to share what a person is unable to explain himself or what seems to him especially meaningful.

People see dreams practically every night, though not all night visions are told. A vivid, memorable dream also becomes an experience that seems to be worth telling to others. We would like to note that here we deal in fact not with an individual speaker but with two or more members of a conversation where the interactive sharing of opinions takes place [8, 279]. During a dialogue, not only information and opinions but also values are being shared.

What is the aim of dream telling, and what is the relation of a dream narrator and things told by him? We shall try to search for the answers to these questions. We shall study a person's standpoint and values reflected in his narrations. We shall base our views on Sandra Stahl's attitude stating that stories about personal experience reflect man's approval of certain traditional statements and beliefs or their denial [6, 270].

We shall begin with a story about the death of a relative: "In a dream mother saw her golden tooth falling out, for making of which her aunt from America had given some gold. Mother understood immediately that her aunt had died. Some time later we received the news about aunt's death, which had occurred exactly on that day" (6/23).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data were gathered by the author in different places of Lithuania. The personal archive number is marked.

On hearing that narrative, a listener can make a conclusion that the narrator is a good judge of tradition as he insists on knowing that a tooth fallen out in a dream means the death of a relative. A listener may express his approval by appropriate remarks or telling a similar story. On the other hand, it may be assumed that with the help of such a story a respondent only wants to confide and share the incident which he has experienced (in this case – the death of a relative) or convey information about his dream fulfilled.

Let us analyze another narrative: "There was a healthy man. We walked with him, and we were carrying a yoke of slops. We reached a path, and he suddenly fell into a pit. I stayed on the path with that dirty water. I thought: what would come of it if I saw him like that. Next day, I learned from a neighbor about that man's death – he had fallen into a pit with water. *So my dream has been fulfilled*" (LTR 5093/53/).

The narration is told on behalf of the first person. In the end, it is emphasized that the incident happened to the narrator. Rather often the same person is a dreamer and a dream-teller. In other stories, we meet similar phrases: "*It came true*: These apples were from an apple-tree..." (LTR 6982/434/). In the narration about the dead sister who appeared in a dream and asked to pray for her, the veracity of the dream is emphasized: "*That is, I saw it in my dream*" (LTR 698/932/). As we can see, the dream-teller presents himself as a witness.

A similar aspiration to witness is also found in concise dream interpretations that are often remembered and told when somebody is telling his dream. While presenting dream interpretations, some people rely on their own experience. They say: "*If I see in a dream a pair of nice horses riding, then everything will be OK: earnings will be for sure*" (LTR 4858/208). "*When I dream of a Jude, then not very good earnings will come*" (LTR 4858/208); "*The grave, I dreamt it myself ...before wedding – some graves*" (LTR 5561/155). "*Mushrooms for me – if I gather mushrooms, and somewhere in the forest, then it means I will get money, in any way. I believe this*" (LTR 6982/528/). Thus, a respondent admits his belief in the prognostic function of dreams, as he has the ground of his personal experience. It may be implied that the respondent knows the meaning of a dream, he relies on his dream to have been confirmed, and he seeks to convince the listener in the truthfulness of the facts presented.

A part of mythological legends, the so-called memorates, are conveyed on behalf of the first person. Personal experience is also characteristic of memorates. In researchers' opinion, it is a very significant feature because it makes

an impression of a direct witnessing of extraordinary confrontation with the mythical world [7, 155].

Sometimes incidents and dream visions presented in the first-person narrations belong not to the narrator himself but to other people: "*Brother of a neighbor told me. I dreamt that I was walking in a very large room...*" (LTR 4232/361/); "*Mother said... I saw my dead Mom in a dream...*" (2/7c). However, most often dreams are retold on behalf of the third person. If a respondent has not seen the presented dream himself, then its true dreamer – the first narrator of the dream – is always remembered and named: mother, daughter, the brother of a husband (LTR 4232/361/; 4551/186/; 4045/240/).

In the memorates conveyed on behalf of the third person, the services of an older close relative are very often requested to compensate the truthfulness of a narration. According to folklore researchers, it shows that the narrator relies on the information of people who have authority with him; its truth is beyond any doubt [ibid., 155].

Nobody learns specially to repeat other people's narrations. On hearing about the experiences of their relatives, people memorize them and retell to others on appropriate occasions. According to Anniki Kaivola-Brehenhoj, in the process of memorization, memory, interests, and of course the personality of an individual play an important role. While retelling stories, people do not only repeat mechanically what they have heard but participate actively in recreating the text adding new details to it [4, 47]. Such narratives about the dreams fulfilled demonstrate the attitude of not only the author of a story but also that of a re-teller.

This can be seen reflected in the next narrative: "Father had a wish to die sooner. He saw an old woman in his dream who said that he would live 10 more years in spite of his wish to die. *Just so it happened*" (LTR 1316/66/). One may think the last phrase is added by the narrator himself. Similar phrases are used: "*That's it, and so the dream was fulfilled*" (2/7); "*Just so it happened, some time later her husband was shot through and has been bedridden for 37 years...*" (1/36); "*That's true, a young man died without being ill for at least a day*" (LTR 1531/315/). Why is it not enough for a dream-teller to mention only that a dream has been fulfilled? Why does he add certain words from himself? He obviously wants to convince listeners in the truthfulness of the fact told. It is important for him to convey his values and the hope that a listener will not only accept but maybe will adopt them.

Not always does a presenter strive to confirm the fact of dream fulfillment. Sometimes a dream itself is emphasized: "My daughter had a dream where her husband said he needed a new T-shirt. That was what he needed. Then you see – we buried him. And his T-shirt was smeared with blood in the bottom. That's why she dreamt it. *It's true*" (LTR 6982/526/).

To strengthen the effect of persuasion, time may be indicated within which a dream was fulfilled: "Before death a person most often sees dreams about his dead relatives. For example, a farm master was ill. In the morning, he said to his wife that he would die soon because he had seen his dead father in a dream. *Five days later he really died*" (LTR 2560/346/). "*Within several days people died for sure* in those villages and farms as she had dreamt" (LTR 4551/186/). "*Indeed, ten years passed* and that man died" (LTR 5035/352/). So a respondent adduces real, special details to a listener that should not allow him to doubt of the thoughts conveyed in a narrative.

While presenting the interpretations of dreams, some respondents keep silence about their experience: "Blood means new kinsfolk... – *they say*" (LTR 5561/154/); "*People say* if you dream about drunkards, then you will be slandered before long" (LTR 6057/208/); "Dreams come true under some moon, or maybe under new moon. Sometimes they come true. *They said so, my mother said*" (LTR 6982/740/).

Why does a respondent emphasize that he has heard certain things? An answer to this question can be found in other remarks: "Dreams *are said* sometimes not to be fulfilled under wane. *I had no personal experience, I only heard of that*" (LTR 5422/224/); "If you dream about a cemetery, it means peace. But *I am not sure, I only heard it from others*" (LTR 6055/46/). Thus, a respondent uses such a form as if he did not want to take responsibility for the truthfulness of the statements told. All responsibility for the interpretation is passed over to a certain individual (i.e., to mother) or society (to people who have said; from whom the fact has been heard) [9]. We should like to pay attention to the words of some respondent who, speaking about the fulfillment of dreams but having no personal experience, said: "dreams come true at night from Sunday into Monday – as people say. *But you don't write, I am not sure*" (2/10). We can see that the respondent relies only upon her own experience, and the information obtained from other people seems to her unreliable. The respondent does not want to be related with the fact told, and she even asks not to mention it at all.

Dream interpretations of another group have no references to personal experience. More often they sound very abstract: "if you dream of a hen with chickens, it means that a family will increase in number" (LTR 5732/469/); "if you see a big fish and some small ones, then illness will strengthen" (LTR 1176/188/); "a white horse in a dream means wealth; a black one means bad things; a bay horse is for luck and happiness" (LTR 5732/924/)... The use of such a form allows to think that a respondent is sure of the truthfulness of the statements told, though it is not clear if that was confirmed for him in reality. This thought of mine is proved by the following statements of the respondents: "When you dream that you are climbing a hill, this is for good in the case you see yourself having reached the top; but if you are descending in a dream, this is for bad. Something bad will happen. *It used to be so. And so it is*" (LTR 6982/983/). To see a priest in a dream is for bad – you can expect a lot of troubles. Not simply an unpleasant thing but a huge pile of troubles and worries. *That is for sure*" (LTR 5731/260/). A respondent tries to convince a listener by mentioning that such events have already happened. To tell the truth, it would be more convincing to have mentioned who exactly experienced an event. By the way, stories with a plot are obviously more convincing than statements [5].

It should be mentioned that there are narratives and statements in which a respondent says he knows tradition though he has not checked it on himself – has not experienced the phenomenon. "He died young; it was 4 months ago, I think. <...> That is, Juodvalkienė tells so. She says she wants to see a dream about him, but she cannot" (LTR 6982/742/). Another respondent also wants to dream about her little daughter who died at the age of three months. She sometimes intentionally looks at her baby's photo. But never has a dream (2/27). Such narrations substantiate the nature of a dream as of an individual phenomenon, not depending on human wish. Narratives also comfort listeners allowing them to see that they are not the only ones who cannot have desirable dream visions.

Some facts on dreams not fulfilled in real life are reflected in the following remarks: "I also had the same dream about teeth maybe half a year ago, the vision was very clear, but *nothing bad happened in my life*" [1]; "And what about teeth pulled out? I had several dreams about that – but *nothing has happened*... Though I know some people whose dreams came true... Maybe we bring incidents upon ourselves through a dream?" [2]. A respondent knows certain

meanings of dreams; moreover, he is aware of the realization of other people's dreams. But his dreams do not come true. A quite different situation can be observed in the following story: "Some time ago before a journey I saw a dream in which I had my hair cut, and my mother said that hair meant a trip. So according to this, I would not have gone anywhere because I had cut off my journey. But *I proved this was not true!* I did go where I wanted, nevertheless..." [3]. The meaning of a dream is known not to a dreamer himself but to his relative. A respondent is even glad to prove the latter that the dream has not come true. A dream-teller as if seeks to depreciate the values of his relative. On the basis of the person's viewpoint we may judge that he thinks the prognostic function of dreams does not work. This person has moved away from tradition.

However, the number of such narratives is not big. According to Ina Veselova, a possible reason for this is as follows: "the negative evaluation of both an event and interpretation seldom becomes a basis for a narration. More often, negation is possible as a remark in a conversation or a preliminary trial of a member of the conversation" [9]. It may be assumed that in the narratives mentioned, the narrator begins to doubt / or already doubts tradition, i.e. he knows / learns the specific meanings of dreams and the traditional attitude that the dead can appear in night visions, but he does not experience this personally. Such stories induce disbelief in dreams.

Thus, it turns out that the intercourse between a respondent and his oral text on dreams can be of several types:

- a narrator believes in tradition as he relies on personal experience or on that of a person close to him;
- a narrator doubts about tradition – he knows it, but he has no personal experience;
- a narrator does not believe (denies) tradition.

Having analyzed the examples presented, we can see that the main factors which serve as a ground for seeking to convince a listener in the truthfulness of the information conveyed are as follows:

- information asserting that it happened to a narrator himself;
- information stating that it happened to a relative of a narrator.

Sometimes two additional measures are used: a) it is attempted to convince a listener by using special phrases or words (thus, so it happened; that it was; that's true...); b) a listener is given information of how and within what time a dream came true.

Folk researchers often state that the reliability of a text can be proved by indicating the time, place, and participants of the event [9]. Comparing these conditions with the above-mentioned factors, it became clear that the place is not important at all for proving the reliability of narratives on dreams. Such narratives most often begin with the place where a dreamer sleeps. And it is quite unimportant in what place a dream comes true: the very fact of the dream realization is of real significance. The time of the event is important as far as it is mentioned in connection with the fulfillment. Thus, seeking to convince a listener, most important is rendering on behalf of the first person and mentioning of a familiar participant.

If a narrator has doubts / does not believe in tradition, he relies on his own experience.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the material presented allows us to state that narratives on dreams and dream interpretations often maintain belief in the prognostic function of dreams and supply information on specific dream meanings. They reflect value orientations of a narrator, which he seeks to convey to listeners: belief / disbelief in the significance of a dream or its prognostic function.

In case the members of a conversation have similar views on the question discussed, then social community becomes firmly established in a group. On the contrary, if their standpoints do not conform, then a social chill can be felt.

### **Abbreviation**

LTR – Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos instituto Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas (The Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore)

### **Literature**

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Asta Višinskaite

## **Stāstījumi par sapņiem un sapņu interpretācijas. Respondenta un teksta attiecības**

Kopsavilkums

Raksta uzmanības centrā – stāstījumi par sapņiem, sapņu interpretācijas un ar tiem saistītie ticējumi. Mēs cenšamies noskaidrot veidu, kādā respondents cenšas pārliecināt savus klausītājus par stāstījumā minēto parādību patiesīgu un atklāt savu saistību ar attiecīgajiem faktiem. Pētījumā ir izmantotas salīdzinošās un interpretatīvās metodes.

Rakstā secināts, ka galvenais faktors, kas kalpo par pamatojumu klausītāja pārliecināšanai par stāstījumā minētās informācijas patiesīgu, ir liecība, ka to ir piedzīvojis pats stāstītājs vai viņa radinieks. Analizētajos tekstos atspoguļojas arī stāstītāja vērtīborientācija: ticība/ neticība sapņiem un to prognostiskajai funkcijai.