

FEAR OF MAGICALLY INDUCED LOVE IN ESTONIAN TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY BELIEF NARRATIVES

Preliminary communication

Submitted: 21. 2. 2022.

Accepted: 11. 4. 2022.

DOI: 10.15176/vol59no104

UDK 398.3(474.2)

133.4(474.2)

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The loss of control over one's mind, body and behavior is one of the most common psychological fears that is often also expressed in belief narratives. The aim of this article is to comparatively analyse beliefs and narratives of magically-induced love in Estonian older tradition and contemporary folklore in order to find out to what extent the emphases and explanation models related to allowed and forbidden types of such magic intrusion have changed, and which elements are universal in both sources. There are several hundred archival texts about feelings and opinions related to magically-induced love in Estonian older folklore collections, but the topic is also still vital in contemporary folklore, being well visible in women's internet forums and media narrations, and the ability to impose love magic or protect someone against it are often listed among the skills of modern healers and spiritual practitioners. The aim is to exemplify the important role of belief folklore in formulating and interpreting fears and desires related to feelings, and associated behavior over time in its interplay with societal changes.

Keywords: magic, love, belief narratives, contemporary belief

FOCUS AND MATERIAL

In the Estonian Folklore Archives, there are several hundred belief narrative texts about love magic, and around one hundred texts about Old Hag experiences related to love issues, mainly from the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (this material was descriptively analysed in the Hiemäe 2015, in Estonian). However, the topic is also surprisingly vital in modern society. In Estonian bookstores, translated and original handbooks of love remedies stand out, in the media (newspapers, magazines) one can find sensationalist stories about conflicts and love triangles based on love magic

as well as instructions from persons who identify themselves as psychics or shamans on how to win a partner and maintain love by magical means. Thus, methods of magically inducing love that were considered a hidden practice in the past and spread mainly via oral transmission (Hiemäe 2015) have become highly visible in the recent dozen or so years through multiple information channels, leading to the spread of knowledge about magical beliefs and ways of influencing other people. Such an interest seems partly triggered by the concept of eternal and powerful romantic love as a hegemonic imaginary referent in the contemporary culture, fueled by popular mass media and love industry (movies, novels, songs, material goods, etc.). They have constructed a subliminal imperative to model one's own emotional life on this utopic standard (cf. Illouz 1998; Enguix and Roca 2015: 12), on the backdrop of "the frailty of human bonds" (Bauman 2003) which is reflected, among other things, in the high divorce rate in Western countries. Thus, paradoxically, the contemporary quest for "true love" leads some people to the consumerist use of love magic, or at least to discussing the options offered by this method on various internet platforms. However, it needs to be clarified that not all people who become familiar with the concept of love magic through the media or belief narratives necessarily actively use such methods to regulate their emotional lives; nevertheless, the liveliness of the debate shows that the interest in the subject continues.

Despite this interest, relatively few studies compare traditional and modern folklore about magically induced love or explicitly focus on modern material (some examples are Seebach 2013; Balatonyi 2015; Babič 2016). There are some detailed historical overviews of how the concept of love was seen and how it changed over time (e.g. Golopentia 1998; Luhmann 1998; Gay 1999) as well as about love magic related to a specific cultural area or period (e.g. Rosenblatt 1971; Toporkov 2009; Menaldi 2022). Such research gives ground to conclude that typical practices and ritual structures (e.g., ritual manipulation of hair and bodily fluids, using plants, charms and love talismans based on analogous or contrastive magic) elsewhere in Europe were similar to those described in the older Estonian material, although such beliefs could be realized in various ways. However, available data about the modern material related to magically-induced love are too scarce to draw comprehensive parallels with other cultures, leaving it for future research.

The aim of this article is to offer a comparative analysis of Estonian texts on love-related magic. More specifically, we will look into the change in the emphases, interpretation and explanation models related to allowed and forbidden types of magical intrusion described in a sample of folklore texts, fears reflected in them, as well as elements which remain topical over time. The modern material is represented by some 400 related online forum posts, a number of reflections in women's magazines, personal discussions and interviews from the past dozen or so years. Several examples in this article have been taken from internet forum discussions because internet forum material provides access to authentic and unfiltered spontaneous discussions and views that may not be expressed in a similar way in face-to-face interviews or on people's personal social media walls. However, in a few cases fake posts also occur which ridicule the entire topic, indicating

that there is a pluralism of parallel thought models. Although all the quoted forum posts come from public internet forums visible to everyone, and posts were generally submitted anonymously (or under usernames that do not allow personal identification), they were not written with the expectation that they would be used as research material, which is why I replaced the usernames in the cited examples by codes (e.g., user1, user2).

CHANGES IN CONTENT AND FUNCTIONS: SURVIVAL VERSUS PLEASURE

Paul Rosenblatt compared the use of love magic in 23 societies, concluding that it acted primarily as an indirect means of communication between men and women. According to Rosenblatt (1971: 482), the knowledge that their desired partner was under the influence of love magic helped the interested party to feel more confident when approaching him or her and helped them to show sympathy more openly. This may, indeed, be an important aspect of love magic but it is not the only one, and it should be noted that the sociocultural and even economic context of love magic beliefs has also changed over time, which becomes even clearer when various cultural settings are considered (cf. Enguix and Roca 2015: 2; Balatonyi 2015: 99).

Until the early 1900s in Estonia – like in several other countries (e.g., in Iceland; see Magnúsdóttir 2021: 99) – the agricultural peasant farm was the main nucleus of both social organization and cultural production, and to a large extent a self-sufficient economic unit. Thus, pre-20th century Estonian peasant life demanded a lot of physical work, and it was difficult to cope socially and economically while living alone (especially as a woman) or with a problematic partner (due to the risk of poverty, health risks caused by partner violence, economic risks caused by partner alcoholism, etc.). The wish to have a good marriage to safeguard the stability of farm life and thus one's survival could be one of the triggers that led to attempts of love magic or at least narratives where such desires were enacted. Additionally, in the 19th century and earlier, the active role of women was rather limited in some life spheres, for example when choosing a husband, and magic or “sorcery”, as it was more often called in folklore texts, could be used as one way of establishing agency (cf. Toporkov 2009; Stark-Arola 1998: 45, 280).

Various forms of love magic are described in traditional belief narratives, but it is usually the “others” who are depicted as practicing forbidden and secret love magic, and the descriptions are largely given from the viewpoint of victims and bystanders, but never by these “others”. This could be partly explained by the methodology of collecting folklore – collectors were mainly men of a higher social status (for more about collecting folklore and folklore collectors in Estonia, see Kikas 2014) and the respondents were not eager to disclose to them secret magical activities that they or their family members were involved in. However, general attitudes towards such magic as forbidden in Estonian society at the time seem to have been more important.

Although warm and respectful feelings were generally valued in Estonian premodern society, emotions which were too powerful were considered potentially dangerous and counterproductive, and were thus feared; for regulating these, magic was again perceived as an option (e.g., in case of sudden outbursts of passion, love magic could be suspected, and counter-magic used to regain mental balance; for a similar conclusion see Ruff 2003: 205; Rosenblatt 1971: 482–483). In contrast, in the 21st century trends of hedonism and desire for powerful emotions (mainly romantic love and passion) have emerged and are, in addition to other contributing factors (e.g., economic, neoliberal and consumeristic processes in society), being continually reinforced by the mass media, with love magic being often viewed as a justified option to ensure such emotions by creating access to a desired partnership. Although the distinction between accepted and forbidden forms of love magic still exists, the scope of allowed forms has widened, and main discussions in the media and in forum posts are outspokenly egocentric – about how to use love magic effectively to fulfill the magic user's love aims. Few discussions take place from the perspective of victims who have fallen prey to love magic (e.g., in a newspaper interview with a woman who claimed that a lover had taken away her husband with the help of love magic, Roomets 2013; also, in a specific subtype of narratives about erotic nightmares). Nevertheless, although love magic was generally romanticised in the contemporary sources which were reviewed for this article, the fear of becoming a victim of love magic is still evident in discussions, and warnings related to certain rituals classified as black magic abound. Despite living in an era of equal rights, the interest towards love magic still occurs mainly among women, with the information spreading through women's magazines; female sources of information are cited in the discussions (with rare exceptions), and internet forum conversations about the topic also take place among women. However, economic reasons are not mentioned as a topic in contemporary discussions on magically induced love.

With globalized and rapid circulation of information, new exotic elements (such as tantra, voodoo, love and beauty magic from ancient Egyptian queens or Celtic druids) have quite expectedly been merged into relevant rituals and tips, but elements from local traditional folklore can also be found (cf. Dawson 2016: 121). At the same time, materials used in love magic have become clearly more aesthetic and luxurious; menstrual blood, hair and sweat known from the older tradition have been replaced with semiprecious stones, exotic perfume oils and scented candles in rituals. There are also changes observable in the timing. In older folklore, most love magic attempts found their conclusion with the wedding, but in the modern context, where partner relationships are shorter and less stable, magic methods for securing ongoing love are perceived as constantly necessary. Whereas in earlier folklore certain types of love magic had a cyclical character, being performed in relation to particular calendar times (like St John's Eve, St Andrew's Day, Michaelmas), the present activity seems to be based on a year-round need, and such a need is also met by a year-round offer of respective services from spiritual practitioners.

In the following section, the main modern narrative and motif types are described and analyzed in more detail.

THE MAIN MODERN NARRATIVE AND MOTIF TYPES

The three types below were selected for analysis because of they are clearly repeated in forums and in media texts (magazines, newspapers). Therefore, they seem to represent predominant narrative scripts and motifs in the analyzed folklore. A fourth type, which combines nightmare experiences and love magic, is discussed separately because the descriptions and interpretations related to this specific focus occurred only in forum narration but not in the media. However, it still formed a narrative nucleus which reflected fears as well as ideals related to love and beliefs associated with such magic.

TYPE 1. MAGIC AS A PERSONAL NEED

As already mentioned, magic prominently appears in anonymous internet forum posts, with posters asking for practical tips to perform love magic and thus quickly solve a problem in their love life. Women ask advice about how to magically induce love in a desired man (as in example 1) or in a partner who has left them. All such forum threads also contain opposing and warning statements which consider such magic unjust, dangerous, or just useless. The posts are additionally reinforced by references to esoteric figures or teachings, and sometimes even links to such sources are provided (e.g., youtube.com in example 1), indicating the trajectories of the spread of such folkloric knowledge. Despite differing views being expressed, there are always aspects in the forum discussions that a greater or smaller number of posters agree on. Thus, even heated discussions have, at least to some extent, a homogenising effect on interpretations, and reflect views that are generally accepted by the existing tradition related to the topic. For reasons of space, the examples below present only the most characteristic excerpts, and do not contain complete discussions.

EXAMPLE 1:

User1: I would so much want a simple magic trick that I could use to catch a man just once:)) maybe someone has it

User2: Does anybody have positive experiences with love magic?

User3: yes, it totally works, but you also need time

User4: it is clear that it doesn't work. If you are interested, look at YouTube what magicians think about this magic. In any case, it is a very ugly thing. These things can even end with death.

User3: time is needed for things to work. Especially these quick things do harm. (women's web portal naistekas.delfi.ee, October 2008–2013)

Example 2 again contains arguments that love magic is dangerous or just does not work, but nevertheless one of the forum users soon positions herself as a magic expert who

knows how to use love magic, and several other users express their wish to use her services. Later in the course of the forum thread, one more user claims to be a magic expert and shares her contact e-mail. Several longer personal experience stories of success or failure with love magic are also shared in both forum threads. It is noteworthy that the discussions can last over several years (from 2008 to 2013 in example 1 and from 2008 to 2015 in example 2). It can be assumed that persons who get interested in the topic, use a search engine to obtain the information and thus come to the discussion in this thread, supplementing it from their point of view, and bringing about a series of new reactions from other users as well. At the same time, such a dynamic development shows that the topic is continuously vital in society. By the (current) end of the discussion in example 2, one forum user provides newspaper links from 2015, proving that one of the women who had positioned herself earlier as a magic practitioner was sentenced to a criminal penalty by the court – the user expresses her opinion that this was proof that dealing with such magic will bring bad luck to the magic practitioner in the end.

EXAMPLE 2:

User1: Please help! Maybe someone can suggest a person who is capable of love magic. I want to get my husband back from the hands of a mistress. How long can my children suffer? Allegedly in Russia, there are real magicians but how to reach them

User2: That's the last thing you could do. No one can be forced to love another person. No one can be held back by force. Throw that thought away. It's dangerous for you.

User3: You're about as criminal as those who put these eye drops into other people's drinks, no matter what the purpose is. In any case, it is an abuse of another person. Have you ever heard of free will? – that's the main thing in a relationship.

After some more derogatory posts from other users, a person joins discussion offering her love magic services:

User4: I can help you, provided you are younger than me (even only 1 minute) and also you have to be absolutely sure that you want this man for the rest of your life. After the magic is completed he will not be able to get rid of you any longer and will stick to you even when you don't want it any longer.

User5 (to user4): Could you help me too with a similar problem?
(women's web portal naistekas.delfi.ee, January 2008–2015)

However, promises made by user4 in example 2 are rather exceptional, as most newer and older belief narratives describe the bonds that are created with the help of love magic as lasting only for a very limited period – a number of texts stress the logic that such love fades quickly after the wedding, like in the following text from the end of the 19th century: “Love is strong only until after the wedding, afterwards love disappears and the man starts feeling great disdain for his wife and only an unhappy life will follow!” (H II 19, 555/6 (4) < Tõstamaa, 1889). Similarly, the criterion that the help-seeker must be younger than the help-provider is uncommon in this context, although this principle occurs in some contemporary spiritual teachings.

TYPE 2. MAGIC BETWEEN A DANGEROUS AND A ROMANTIC TOOL

The media material and forum posts clearly show that those rituals related to magically induced love which are perceived as publicly acceptable have become more visible and more popular in comparison to older folklore. For example, love amulets that should grant eternal love or a lasting and happy romantic partnership are widely available in esoteric or souvenir shops, and several respondents said that they had such an amulet and hoped or believed that it would be effective. A shop describes, among other things, a product called “a voodoo doll for couples” as “a funny present for couples who have fallen in love, also suitable for a bachelor party or a bridal shower”¹; depicting it as a harmless joke rather than a magic manipulation with consequences.

Nevertheless, certain ambivalence can be still observed in media representations. Related media texts frame the topic of love magic by hinting to its danger, creating an atmosphere and rhetoric of secrecy and forbiddenness but then creating contrast by continuing to disclose love magic rituals. For example, an article in a women’s magazine is framed with the following introductory sentences: “Several clairvoyants warned that the principle of voluntariness must be strictly observed in magic. You are not allowed to attract someone by magically inducing love in him or her or, or even worse, making someone leave another person with the help of magic. A very quick and just punishment will follow”. Later in the article a popular Estonian clairvoyant, Marilyn Kerro, is interviewed, and she advises caution with voodoo-dolls that are used in love magic and repeatedly stresses that “magic is no game”, but still gives detailed instructions on how to make such a doll using red candles, semiprecious stones, a blouse that a woman has worn and a red thread. Additionally, the clairvoyant comments: “This ritual is safe and useful only if you do not have a specific partner. In this case, you will attract into your life a person who has been determined to you by destiny”. The article ends with the concluding frame: “This is indeed simple!” (women’s magazine *Naisteleht*, 2017),² which resembles formulas that have become standard in consumer advertisements of housekeeping equipment or other everyday goods.

Compared to older folklore material, differences also occur in relation to substances used – contemporary love magic rituals have clearly got an elitist character. Although instructions often mention the “ancient wisdom of our forefathers” as the origin of the magic ritual, most components (e.g., semiprecious stones, exotic luxury oils and incenses) suggest approaches and ingredients that were not available to the common folk of the previous centuries, but are now widely available, being generally described in women’s magazines as substances to pamper one’s body and mind with and to recognize one’s

¹ <https://mytech.ee/kingiidee/voodoo-nukk-paaridele-armu-m%C3%A4ngud-vallatud-m%C3%A4ngud?sort=p.price&order=ASC&limit=50> (accessed 17 February 2022).

² <https://naisteleht-digi.ohtuleht.ee/914714/armumaagia-alus-enesearmastus> (accessed 17 February 2022).

self-worth, thus serving in this context as a commodified shortcut that is available to everyone in obtaining access to the desired feelings.

EXAMPLE 1:

In an 2019 interview, a well-known Estonian clairvoyant and shaman, Anu Pahka, gave detailed instructions for three “simple and functional” love magic rituals “that you can use to help bring this powerful feeling into your life” in *Alkeemia*, a popular web magazine on esoteric topics – one ritual is based on reading a specific charm on natural running water, drinking such water from two glasses and pouring the rest into one glass; the second ritual consists of reading a specific charm to a small cowbell or campana that makes sounds in the wind, so that this sound would carry love to the magic user’s home, and the third ritual is based on taking a luxury bath as follows:

When you prepare for a romantic encounter, take this bath before you go: 2 drops of sandal wood oil, 2 drops of jasmine oil, 1 drop of neroli oil, 1 drop of ylang-ylang oil. If you want the encounter to be particularly spicy, add a drop of cardamom oil.³

As already mentioned, substances that are perceived as unaesthetic or unclean (e.g., bodily fluids or hair) according to the current standards but were commonly described in pre- or early 20th century belief narratives on magically-induced love, almost never occur in modern media texts, although there are a few cases where they are still mentioned in forum posts. For comparison, below are two folklore texts from the first half of the 20th century:

EXAMPLE 3 AND 4:

Witches knew various ways for putting a man behind a woman. The most common of them was with a hair cake. A cake was made and armpit hair or hair from some other impolite place was put into the batter. The cake-eater would start loving and following the owner of the hair ardently, be it a man or a woman. (E 58786 (4) < Tartu-Maarja, 1921–1926)

In Putla there was an old lady who brought back my husband who went to another woman. This old lady took a hair [from the head] of this woman and wound it around a stick. Then she went to a pile of my husband’s excrements and pushed the stick into this pile three times, at the same time reading three words every time, always the same words. I laughed and didn’t believe it, but my husband indeed came back to me after three months to the day. He told me that the fact he went to the other woman was the result of magic. The woman had given him a glass of vodka, it was such a pinkish drink. From this time on, there was no help, he was just forced to go. (RKM II 24, 453/4 (43) < Püha, 1948)

³ <https://alkeemia.delfi.ee/artikkel/85144353/samaan-anu-pahka-kolm-armumaagia-rituaali> (accessed 17 February 2022).

TYPE 3. MAGIC AS PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIPULATION

In this group, the discourse of danger already mentioned in the other two types is also present. However, here people who are interested in using love magic themselves are not mentioned, rather the focus is on interpreting problematic family relationships of other people.

The first post in example 1 proposes a theory whereby love magic is the reason for many contemporary relationship problems and divorces. The moral of the discussion is similar to traditional folklore texts – magic can work temporarily, but the target of magic will be unhappy, and the magic user will also be punished sooner or later. However, later in the discussion harmful dynamics of family relationships are only compared to the impact of magical manipulation, and are, in contrast, viewed from a psychological viewpoint. It is quite natural that people – puzzled by the paradox of how seemingly lovely and harmonious families suddenly get divorced or come into conflict because of love affairs outside the family – seek an explanation for this in forum discussions, but it is noteworthy that psychological and magic interpretations come so close to each other. It seems that in the example the intuitive logic is quite similar to the one in older folklore texts (see, for instance, example 4 in the previous section).

EXAMPLE 1:

The forum thread initiated by User1 is entitled *Love magic*.

User1: It's indeed a silly title but I suspect that it [i.e., love magic] has been used with many men. I was thinking that there are so many witches and psychics, people visit them a lot. And at the same time, the number of divorces is very huge in Estonia. Can it be that love magic is the reason – that people use this service quite a lot. I see that among people whom I know there are so many men who leave their wonderful family and don't want to hear anything from their children any longer, or pay alimony. Normal family fathers who are nice themselves, whose wives are nice and children also – they change totally. Maybe it is indeed true that they are somehow manipulated by some black magician. It just doesn't seem realistic that a nice person would turn at some point in their life into someone who doesn't care about his children, not to mention his wife.

User2: My logic says that manipulation can only take place if the manipulator is similar to the one being manipulated. Intimidation affects those who are afraid, and so on. To my mind, decorating and beautifying oneself is also a means of influencing the other person. In fact, a person is not in reality what she looks like in a party hall. Are there any women who would not use magic – to beautify and adorn themselves? Later without make-up, a woman is completely different and that is where the disappointment steps in. And then people say that this was done by magic. But if you deceive another person by consciously changing your appearance, isn't that also magic?

User3: I don't believe that it is massively used but I personally know several such cases through women I'm befriended with. These men themselves never realized what was

actually going on with them.

User4: Love magic works. It is possible to attract someone for a short time and make him fall in love with you. But manipulating the other person will never end well for yourself, you will experience such bad kicks of destiny that you will lose the will to try magic for your whole life. And you will also lose this desired person once he gets away from the spell.

User5: Does anyone really think that a man can go to another woman ONLY because of love magic? 😊 This is a very strange attitude. Do you all really have such tamed husbands who lower their eyes when they see a strange woman?

(family forum foorum.perekool.ee, July 2019)

In some cases, argumentation that introduces “scientific reasoning” comes to similar conclusions. In the women’s magazine *Buduuar*, Raul Hunt who defines himself as a voodoo-witch, talks about the best time for love magic, referring to scientific findings in biology and psychology and the functioning of hormones and concludes: “It’s actually simple. If a woman wants to seduce a desired man, she should perform all the activity during the ovulation period.”⁴ Such reasoning seems particularly characteristic of the post-secular belief milieu that can easily combine elements from science, biomedicine, and mysticism, and where witches can rely on scientific argumentation and people who define themselves explicitly as rational still use motifs and vocabulary from belief folklore to interpret various life situations (cf. Hiemäe 2020: 224).

THE SPECIFIC ANGLE: COMBINING OLD HAG/NIGHTMARE EXPERIENCES AND LOVE MAGIC

As shown above, expressions and functions of and attitudes towards love magic have changed in several aspects over time. Still, interestingly, one restricted narrative type exhibits close similarities with the older material – and that is connecting love magic with nightmare experiences which contain erotic components. Again, modern mass media (e.g., horror movies, books and other writings about energy vampirism, demon attacks) have influenced the particulars in the contemporary horror tradition (cf. Dixon 2010: 172) but there are still significant common points with older nightmare folklore (i.e., pre-1900s and early 20th century legends and belief narratives depicting attacks of the nightmare/Old Hag). Old Hag or nightmare experiences in general are still a rather widespread problem in Estonia (and elsewhere), often discussed in internet forums and, to a lesser extent, interpersonally (cf. Hiemäe 2018); but in this paper we are specifically interested in love-related material. In Estonian older folklore, specific plots (100 texts from Estonian Folklore Archives were used as a sample) occur that explain the occurrence of a nightmare as a result of erotic passion, jealousy or unanswered love that makes a person visit another

⁴ <https://buduuar.tv3.ee/lahedat-lugemist/maag-raul-hunt-paljastas-millal-on-oige-aeg-armumaagia-tegemiseks> (accessed 17 February 2022).

person in the night in the form of a nightmare. The same plots repeat in approximately the same number of modern forum texts and comments. However, the connection between the nightmare and love magic did not occur in media texts (magazines, newspapers), probably because it did not fit into the preferred narrative scripts and motifs of these sources. The following is a rare example which combines both, a love magic ritual and the magic user's erotic nightmare experience.

EXAMPLE 1:

Under the heading “Love magic SOS!!” a female forum user describes how strange phenomena started after she used a blood ritual for love magic. The text excerpt below shows her awareness of having dealt with forbidden magic, whereby expressions like “problem” and “very strange” and descriptions of sensations as “completely real” hint to confusion and fear. Her account contains references to phenomena from different traditions and periods, like “incubus”, “demon”, “energy sucking”, “blood rituals”, hope for a magician's help), showing how, in the age of information diversity, elements from different cultures become easily combined:

User1: The problem is that after the ritual, strange things started to happen. At first, I saw a demon-like being in a dream who pulled me towards him, I was connected to him by a thick chain and this pulling was completely real, I clearly felt it through sleep in my stomach area, later I suspected that he was an Incubus, I think that's what they're called? Or something like that, which comes at night during sleep to take energy, I have erotic dreams that I can really feel through sleep, etc., but the thing is very strange: If I did this ritual with blood, would it be possible to reverse it somehow, could a magician help me get rid of that?

User2: I know this story. It is especially crazy when several women do the same to one man. Anything you do against someone else's will and using magic to influence others are severely punished. Family and children are not an argument for doing magic on someone. I know several women who have done the same and all their lives have ended as a living hell. Why do witches share these rituals so easily, even though they know the consequences, and they even don't warn about the so-called side effects.

Later another user offers magic help to user1 but suggests to her to first try to get help from the same magician who helped her to make the initial blood ritual. User1 responds that she actually does not want the impact of the ritual to end because it seems to be moving in the desired direction, but just wants to get rid of the erotic nightmare demon. (women's forum naistekas.delfi.ee, August 2017)

In the example above the nightly visitor was described as a demon-like being, but in most cases such erotic experiences are explained as supernatural attacks from a lover or former partner and the context is still unanswered love. However, it is characteristic of this type of narratives – old as well as modern – that they are told from the perspective of the victim. It is also typical that such personal experience narratives contain very bodily erotic components (touching, hugging, feelings of arousal) but are always loaded with fear

which is mainly caused by helplessness and an inability to control what is happening to one's own body. In several accounts there are specific tactile descriptions, for example, in an account from the beginning of the 20th century, a masculine nightmare kisses a woman named Ann while she is sleeping, his lips as soft as a hare's nose. Another older description is of a man who was being held down by a female erotic nightmare, but then managed to get physical control and began to press and massage the nightmare himself. The nightmare started to wriggle until she could run away, then she shortly laughed out loud at the door, but did not come back again later.⁵

Modern memorates contain partly archetypal and partly media-influenced masculinity symbols more often than old ones: male figures who appear as erotic nightmares are relatively frequently described as “dark figures”, “dark-haired”, “strong” or as “having tattoos”. It should be noted that the black man is well known in older folklore as a representative of the demonic realm (e.g., the plague, the devil as a black man) and in contemporary legends this stereotypic figure continues to appear as a personification of malice and danger (Valk 2001; Hiimäe 2016: 54). Tattoos, however, are a clearly modern symbol of masculinity although having tattoos is also increasingly popular among women. Modern narrators also discuss the timing of such visits, claiming that they happen mostly to women and when the woman is alone and/or her current partner is not at home. Yet, older folklore texts do not point to such a clear logic of timing.

Example 2 is an excerpt from a forum discussion between women, and in it the nightmare is again described as a “dark figure” and interpreted by other users – partly with humor – as a real man or Donald Trump (probably due to the association with the dark mantle that Trump often wears, but maybe also be related to his masculine reputation), but also as a former partner. User4 even offers a distinction between a completely magical appearance of a former partner and a real nightmare, which is unknown in older folklore.

EXAMPLE 2:

User1 entitled her forum thread as *A nightmare or what?* and gives a description of her experience:

User1: I slept peacefully. I was on my back, totally sweating and like a bit in cramps, and I opened my eyes like after anesthesia. In the room, there was a dark figure of a man. I closed my eyes slowly and opened them again. He was still standing in the room. I closed my eyes and fell asleep. I was not afraid as long as I wanted to go to sleep again the next evening. Who could it be? A nightmare, a ghost?

User2: Couldn't it be a real man?

User3: Was this man not Donald Trump?

User4: If he stood at the foot of the bed, it was a man from an earlier, unfinished love affair. And if you were not afraid... – if you had felt fear, it would have been a nightmare. (women's forum naistekas.delfi.ee, April 2017)

⁵ Archival manuscript text in ERA II 28, 407 (11) < Viru-Nigula, 1930, Estonian Folklore Archives.

Thus, contemporary interpretative elements are in interaction with heterogenous modern information channels, but the desire to protect oneself against the threat of losing control and to explain one's anomalous experiences has remained largely the same over time.

CONCLUSION

The wish to obtain an ideal or desired partner and fix an unsatisfactory relationship seems universal, and if common sense does not help, solutions are sought through (narrated) magic, even in the seemingly modern and secularized world. In contemporary love magic narratives, fear occurs only in a limited amount of material – it is not there in outspokenly egocentric forum narratives and media instructions of magically inducing love in another person, but it is always there in narratives from the victim's viewpoint, as is the case in erotic nightmare experiences which are perceived as physically as well as mentally intense.

The number of people who actually use love magic or try to visit the targets of their desire as nightmares is likely to be rather low, but as narratives about magic intrusion are still circulating, they are potentially usable – if not in the physical world, then as a thought experiment (for example, as an interpretation model for unexplainable experiences or as a narrative revenge to overcome helplessness and anger related to a potential or former partner) – and offer explanatory tools for certain situations and feelings. In comparison to older folklore, the aspect of economic survival has lost importance in contemporary love magic; the sociocultural imperative of experiencing powerful romantic feelings has strongly emerged instead, prompting some people to consider egocentric love magic in an instrumental way to reach this ideal. One of the triggers for such discussions in internet forums and interpersonally seems to be the need to express fears, desires and other emotions, culminating in a wish to solve complicated relationship problems with a single short ritual, or at least finding some simple interpretation for them. Spontaneous discussions are partly inspired and shaped by media representations of ideal love and love magic which appear alongside danger and secrecy, but are nevertheless promoted in the form of rituals that are characterized as simple and romantic, promising quick results and thus being comparable to obtaining material goods in the consumer society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The article was written within the framework of the research project “Narrative and belief aspects of folklore studies” (EKM 8-2/20/3), it was also supported by the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies, TK 145 (through the European Regional Development Foundation) and EKKD65 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research).

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H = Jakob Hurt's folklore manuscript collection in Estonian Folklore Archives

RKM = Estonian Literary Museum's folklore manuscript collection in Estonian Folklore Archives

STRAH OD LJUBAVNE MAGIJE U ESTONSKIM TRADICIJSKIM I SUVREMENIM PREDAJAMA

Gubitak kontrole nad vlastitim umom, tijelom i ponašanjem jedan je od najčešćih strahova koji se obično izražavaju i u predajama. U ovom se radu na temelju komparativne analize vjerovanja i predaja o ljubavnoj magiji u starijoj estonskoj tradiciji i u suvremenom folkloru pokušava utvrditi u kojoj je mjeri došlo do promjena u ključnim elementima i modelima objašnjenja vezanih uz dopuštene i zabranjene vrste magije kojom se nameće ljubav, a koji su elementi prisutni i u starijim i u suvremenim izvorima. U estonskim zbirkama starijeg folkloru nekoliko je stotina arhivskih tekstova koji govore o mišljenjima i stavovima o ljubavnoj magiji, a ta je tema aktualna i u suvremenom folkloru, što je jasno iz njezine pojave na ženskim internetskim forumima i u pričama iz medija, a sposobnost prisile pomoću ljubavne magije ili zaštite protiv nje često se navode među vještinama suvremenih iscjelitelja i duhovnih praktičara. Cilj je rada ukazati na važnost predaja u iskazivanju i interpretaciji strahova i želja vezanih uz osjećaje, kao i u promjenama obrazaca ponašanja uslijed protoka vremena i društvenih promjena.

Ključne riječi: magija, ljubav, predaja, suvremena vjerovanja