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Folktales and Romantic Novels

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RESUMO: As lendas são consideradas os romances do povo e, inversamente, os romances populares seriam as lendas dos leitores comuns. Partindo de estudos formais dos contos orais e de romances populares modernos e ampliando o campo para incluir o romance antigo, este ensaio examina precisamente a concordância e a divergência entre lenda e romance. O estudo mostra que os contos de fada e os romances populares compartilham de algumas características, bem como divergem de modo particular. Finalmente questiona se os dois estilos característicos – o tipológico e o sensato – são absolutos ou representam apenas tendências manifestadas por cada gênero.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Romance antigo, lenda, estilo narrativo, literatura popular, Xenofonte de Éfeso.

It has been said that folktales are the novels of the folk and, conversely, that popular romances are the folktales of ordinary readers. Indeed, folktales and popular literature do manifestly have much in common. Folktales are easy to listen to, and popular literature is easy to read.¹ In both genres the characters are stereotypical; the plots are formulaic; the setting is a kind of unreal real-world. Of the different kinds of folktale and of the different varieties of popular literature fairytales and popular romances are particularly similar. To what extent are fairytales and romantic novels really alike? And precisely how do they differ? Can their similarities and differences be instructive for a better understanding of each genre?

Several decades ago a German literary scholar, Dorothee Bayer, published an insightful study of popular romantic novels in terms of their content, composition, and style, in the course of which she compared German romances and *Märchen*, or folktales.² The romances in her study are the sort that Germans call trivial literature (*Trivialliteratur*), trash literature (*Schundliteratur*), and the like, and her sample consists of five romances published in Germany in the course of the twentieth century. By *Märchen*, or folktales, she means primarily the kind of folktales commonly known in English as fairytales.³ She makes reference not to particular fairytales but to the

general account of the form and style of folktales provided by the Swiss folklorist Max Lüthi in his book *Das europäische Volksmärchen*.⁴ Bayer argues that twentieth-century German popular romances and oral folktales have numerous similarities as well as crucial differences.

I wish to review here the most salient points in Bayer's comparison of the fairytale and the German popular romance, extending its scope to include also ancient romantic fiction as well as a concrete folktale from oral tradition. For the sake of simplicity I take a single ancient Greek romantic novel and a single modern Greek folktale. The romance is *Ephesiaka*, or *An Ephesian Tale*, by Xenophon of Ephesos, a short novel that dates approximately to the second century of our era, and the folktale is *Anthousa the Fair with Golden Hair*, which appears in a collection of folktales edited by the Greek folklorist Georgios Megas.⁵ I use a modern folktale text, because we have no texts of ancient folktales transcribed from oral tradition, only literary retellings of oral tales. But since the form of oral narratives appears to be constant across space and time, a modern text should do as well as an ancient one.

Xenophon's novel concerns the love and sufferings of the extraordinarily handsome Ephesian youth Habrokomes and the extraordinarily beautiful Ephesian maiden Anthia. The two met at a festival of Artemis, fell instantly in love, and were married. Shortly after their wedding they set out on a voyage, were captured by pirates, and became separated, after which they individually encountered and overcame many difficulties until finally they were reunited. They returned together to Ephesos, where they lived happily ever after.

Anthousa the Fair with Golden Hair, collected in eastern Thrace in 1890, can be summarized as follows. *Once upon a time there was an old woman who for many years wanted lentil soup. One day when she was at the river, the prince went there to water his horse, and when the horse saw the old woman's kettle, it reared and would not drink. The prince became enraged and kicked the kettle, whereupon the old woman cursed him, saying: "Just as I have yearned seven years for lentil soup, so may you yearn for Anthousa the fair with golden hair." As soon as the prince heard this he ran around to all the villages in search of Anthousa the fair with golden hair.*

After three months, he came to a village, asked whether Anthousa the fair with golden hair lived there, and was told that she did. When he got to her house, he saw that it had no stairs. How was he to go up? He saw a tree nearby and climbed up to look around. While he was in the tree, an ogress (drakaina) came, stood below the house, and called out: "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb." A lovely girl leaned out, let down her hair, and the ogress climbed up. A little while later her brother came and called out: "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb." When she heard this, she came to the window, let down her hair, and her brother climbed up. After they ate and drank, the mother and brother climbed down and left.

When the prince saw that they were gone, he climbed down from the tree, went to the house, and called "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb." When she heard this, she let down her hair, and the prince climbed up. He told her that he wanted to make her his wife, and she replied that she would take him for her husband. But for the moment she worried where she was to hide him, lest her mother chance to come, find him there, and eat him. She put him in a chest and mopped her house so that it would not smell of a human.

At nightfall her mother came and called: "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb." She let down her hair, and her mother climbed up. The ogress sniffed and said: "There's a smell of a human." But her daughter said: "You must have eaten one and the smell still clings to you."

The next morning, after her mother had gone, Anthousa let the prince out of the chest, and they discussed running away. Since everything in the house could speak, they bound up all the mouths of the objects in order that they should not reveal the lovers' plans. Then they left.

After they had gone, the old ogress came to the house and called: "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb." Again and again she called, but no one answered. When she saw that her daughter did not come out, she climbed the wall and called again: "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, where are you?" Since all the things in the house had their mouths bound, there was no answer, but the lovers had forgotten to bind the mouth of the mortar, so that it revealed that she had run away with the prince.

The ogress was furious. She kept a bear in her stable. She mounted it, set out, and caught up with them. When the girl saw the ogress, she took a fine-toothed comb from her hair and threw it down, and it turned into a hedge. After a while the bear managed to pass through the hedge, and the ogress caught up with them again. Then the girl took from her hair a coarse-toothed comb and threw it down, and it became a thicket of thorns. The bear eventually got through this also and caught up with them again. Then the girl threw down her handkerchief, which turned into a body of water. The ogress pleaded with her daughter to come back, but the girl would not do so. Her mother warned her of a problem she would encounter, and revealed to her how she should deal with it. It happened just as Anthousa's mother said, after which the prince took Anthousa the fair with golden hair to the palace, where there was a feast that lasted forty days and forty nights.

I turn to the principal points of similarity that Bayer identifies between German popular romances and fairytales as a genre, and test them against our modest sample of one ancient Greek romantic novel and one modern Greek folktale from oral tradition.

First, *"the fairytale is a love story with obstacles, and finds its conclusion in the final union of the pair."* It makes no difference whether, at the end of the tale, unwed protagonists are united in marriage or married protagonists are reunited. The crucial thing is the union of the lovers, not marriage as such. As it happens, our present sample exemplifies each option. The Greek folktale concludes with the marriage of the unnamed prince to Anthousa the fair, and Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* ends with the reunion of the married couple Habrokomes and Anthia. So the final union of the lovers is a characteristic conclusion of romantic tales, oral and literary, ancient and modern.

Second, *both fairytales and popular romances are governed by naïve morality.* Ultimately the good person triumphs, and the bad person fails. Although evil often gains the upper hand temporarily, everything comes out all right in the end, at least for the principal characters. Absolute justice is satisfied.

In our fairytale the protagonists Anthousa the fair and the prince triumph over adversity, which is incarnated principally in the person of Anthousa's mother, the cannibalistic ogress. The ogress smells the presence of a human in Anthousa's room, and later she pursues the fleeing couple; nevertheless, she neither discovers the hidden prince nor catches the fleeing lovers. In Xenophon's novel the virtue and persistence of the protagonists Anthia and Habrokomes are rewarded with success and eventual reunion, and their adversaries—persons who try to take advantage of them sexually, romantically, or economically—are frustrated or punished. For example, the barbarian maiden Manto falls uncontrollably in love with Habrokomes, who has been captured by her father's band of brigands. She offers him her love, but Habrokomes turns her down, choosing to remain faithful to his wife Anthia. In her rage Manto tells her father that Habrokomes tried to rape her. Although her father believes her and has Habrokomes flogged and imprisoned, he later learns the truth, releases Habrokomes with an apology, and rewards him. The virtuous Habrokomes eventually triumphs, and the deceitful Manto fails. In both the fairytale and the romance, then, conventional justice is satisfied.

Third, *improbable coincidence is characteristic of fairytales and romantic novels.* Folktales manifest a virtually complete economy of fit. As Max Lüthi nicely puts it: everything clicks.⁶ Precisely when a folktale hero needs particular information, a character possessing exactly this information appears. When the hero needs a magic object with particular properties, it becomes available. If the plot requires him to fall asleep or to wake up or to arrive somewhere at a particular time, it so happens. Thus in the Greek folktale the prince happens to be hidden in a nearby tree at the very moment when the ogress comes and utters the words "Anthousa the fair with golden hair, let down your hair for me to climb," so that precisely when he needs to gain access to Anthousa, he learns how to do so. Later, when the couple flees and the ogress pursues, Anthousa just happens to possess magic objects that can prevent the ogress from catching them.

Popular romantic fiction manifests a similarly improbable economy of fit. Coincidence in the form of chance encounters is particularly common in Xenophon's

story. When for example the brothel-owner sells Anthia as a slave, the man who purchases her turns out to be none other than her husband's dear friend Hippothoos, who thereupon helps her.

In sum, coincidence characterizes both the folktale and the romance, although economy of fit is complete in the folktale and somewhat looser in the romance.

Fourth, the folktale and the romance present their characters as simple types. The Greek fairytale features an enamored prince, a beautiful maiden, and an ogress. The hero and heroine are good; the ogress is evil.

Although the assorted characters favored in ancient romance are different, they are types nonetheless. *An Ephesian Tale* features a virtuous hero, a virtuous heroine, a faithful companion, loyal servants, greedy pirates, lustful barbarians, and so on. The protagonists and their allies are good; their adversaries are bad.

So fairytale and romance agree in favoring a relatively limited number of kinds of characters, who are presented as simple types.

Fifth, the protagonists have no occupation, or, if one is mentioned, they do not practice it. They belong to the royal family or to the aristocracy, or they are independently wealthy, or they have a business that somehow carries on without them. They have all the time in the world, unencumbered by the necessity of work.

In our folktale the hero is a prince, and the heroine Anthousa lives in her strange dwelling without apparent concern for life's necessities. In Xenophon's novel the protagonists Habrokomes and Anthia are members of prominent and presumably wealthy families in their native Ephesos.

Our sample agrees, then, in representing the protagonists as members of wealthy families or perhaps as quasi-supernatural beings who need not concern themselves with gainful employment.

Sixth, the protagonists of folktales and romances do not age. Whether the time that passes in the tale is brief or long, the characters are unaging. Like Odysseus and Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*, they appear to transcend time.

Since the tale of Anthousa the Fair takes place over the course of only a few months, normal aging is not a factor. In the case of Xenophon's novel the time span of the events is not obvious, but in any event the aging of the protagonists is ignored. Toward the end of the narrative they are represented as temporarily unrecognizable to their acquaintances, but this phenomenon arises because of the misery they have experienced, not their aging.

So the characters in our sample fairytale and romance do not age, although admittedly this feature is not really tested here, since the sample tales do not take place over a great span of time.

Seventh, episodic composition is characteristic of both oral tales and popular romances. Individual episodes have considerable independence from the rest of the narrative, one consequence being that minor characters in one episode may have no

ties to characters in other episodes. Characters appear and disappear from the tale according to the needs of the narration.⁷

The tale of Anthousa the fair begins with an old woman, whom the prince offends; she curses him and is not heard from again. The ogress pursues the fleeing lovers, fails to catch them, and simply drops out of the tale.

Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* is likewise composed episodically, amounting as it does to a sequence of more-or-less discrete adventures. The minor characters appear serially, coming into existence for a particular episode and presently being forgotten. For example, the lustful barbarian maiden Manto falls in love with Habrokomes, is rejected, falsely accuses him to her father, punishes Habrokomes's wife Anthia, and then disappears from the romance.

To sum up: fairytales and romances are alike in their episodic composition and overall romantic structure, in which lovers struggle past obstacles and are rewarded in the end with union. They are unaging and economically self-sufficient. The cast of characters is made up of simple types who inhabit a world of improbable coincidence and ideal justice.

In what ways do the genres of folktale and romantic novel typically differ?

First, the folktale names, whereas the romance describes. The technique of the folktale is to name a character, action, setting, or object, perhaps with the addition of an adjective, as in the folk ballad, whereas the romance prefers to accumulate descriptive details, painting a picture.

Thus in the Greek folktale the hero is simply "the prince." The heroine's name is the recurrent formula "Anthousa the fair with golden hair," whom the narrator otherwise describes simply as "a beautiful maiden." Her evil mother is an "old ogress." In contrast, the romance piles up detail upon detail. For example, Xenophon describes the beauty of his heroine as follows (1.2):

Anthia led the line of girls; she was the daughter of Megamedes and Euhippe, both of Ephesus. Anthia's beauty was an object of wonder, far surpassing the other girls'. She was fourteen; her beauty was burgeoning, still more enhanced by the adornment of her dress. Her hair was golden—a little of it plaited, but most hanging loose and blowing in the wind. Her eyes were quick; she had the bright glance of a young girl, and yet the austere look of a virgin.⁸

As in the representation of characters, so also in the representation of actions, settings, and objects, the oral tale simply names whereas the literary romance describes. For example, the Greek folktale mentions a stream, a village, a house, a tree, the palace, but Xenophon's novel often paints scenes. Here, for example, is a festive procession (1.2):

The local festival of Artemis was in progress, with its procession from the city to the temple nearly a mile away. All the local girls had to march in procession, richly dressed, as well as

all the young men of Habrokomes' age—he was around sixteen, already a member of the Ephebes, and took first place in the procession. There was a great crowd of Ephesians and visitors alike to see the festival, for it was the custom at this festival to find husbands for the girls and wives for the young men. So the procession filed past—first the sacred objects, the torches, the baskets, and the incense; then horses, dogs, and hunting equipment...some for war, most for peace. And each of the girls was dressed as if to receive a lover.⁹

In short, the folktale is content to label, whereas the romance paints pictures. Its paintings tend to the ideal, characterized as they are by generic description (“So the procession filed past—first the sacred objects, the torches, the baskets, and the incense; then horses, dogs, and hunting equipment”) and by hyperbole (Habrokomes and Anthia are so good-looking that they are taken for gods).

Next, characters in folktales rarely express their emotions, whereas characters in romances indulge endlessly in the expression of their feelings. Folktale characters are represented mostly as acting rather than as feeling; if a feeling is mentioned, it is merely named. When the ogress in the Greek fairytale discovers that her daughter has fled with a youth, she is described only as becoming “furious.” The prince himself is not allowed any emotion at all, such as fear of the ogress. In contrast, nothing is more common in romances than frequent and lengthy expressions of feelings and musings by the characters. Xenophon’s novel is replete with bursts of emotion expressed by the protagonists. When Habrokomes and Anthia are reunited (5.13):

They embraced each other and fell to the ground. A host of different emotions took hold of them at once—joy, grief, fear, memory of past events, and anxiety for the future.¹⁰

So the feelings, thoughts, and motives of folktale characters must for the most part be inferred from their actions, whereas the inner world of romance characters is revealed in narrative descriptions and soliloquies. A consequence of this fact is that folktale characters may appear calm, no matter how enormous their problems, whereas romance characters seem constantly to be overwhelmed by their difficulties.

Finally, the fulfillment of the protagonists' wishes is brought about differently in fairytales and romances. For all its magic the fairytale provides a stronger sense of consequentiality than does the romance.

The tale of Anthousa, like other fairytales, is short and its plot is tight. The prince and Anthousa face obstacles; they deal with them by means of wit and magic; they bring about their eventual happy union. The tale ends when we feel that it should. In contrast, Xenophon’s romantic novel is long—seven times as long as the oral tale of Anthousa—and its plot is loose, with many unrelated adventures and numerous dead-ends. The final reunion of Habrokomes and Anthia does not really follow consequentially from the efforts of the protagonists, who just happen to put in at the same island at the same time, when a series of chance recognitions unites them. Their reunion is brought

about, we feel, not by their own action but by that of the author, who has imposed an ending, for the point at which he chooses to end his novel is basically arbitrary.

It appears, then, that the main points of Bayer's comparison of modern German romances and fairytales can be extended usefully to ancient romantic novels and fairytales. Oral fairytales and popular romantic novels each serve to give expression to a basic romantic fantasy in the form of simple narratives, and to a large extent they do so in similar ways. Their principal differences seem to be that the folktale is short and relatively organic, whereas the romance teems with non-organic elements, notably with detailed, sometimes generic descriptions, as well as with episodes whose principal function is to draw out the tale for the pleasure of the reader; and folktale characters are flat, their inner worlds hidden from us, or rather they possess no inner worlds, whereas romance characters revel in sentiment, expressing their inner feelings and thoughts frequently and at length.

For Max Lüthi, upon whom most of the preceding account of folktale style ultimately rests, the folktale aspires to a particular narrative style. He derives his notion of this pure folktale style, which calls *the abstract style*, inductively from a comparison of numerous texts of oral tales. He acknowledges however that the style is rarely realized perfectly in any particular text. When however oral narrators depart from the purely abstract style, the result in his view is a false, non-genuine style of presentation.¹¹ The abstract style of folktale narration is therefore for Lüthi not only normative but also prescriptive, the way folktales should be narrated. For example, although detailed description and accounts of emotional states are generally foreign to folktales, sometimes a narrator embellishes along these lines, giving a physical description of a character or of an object or delving into the inner feelings of a character. Such deviations from the abstract style are found both in strictly oral texts and also in literary retellings of traditional oral folktales. The famed Arabic composition, *The Thousand and One Nights*, features lengthy passages of description; Charles Perrault sometimes embellished his tales, as when he called attention to the effects of the passage of time, contrary to the abstract style, in which ordinarily nothing ages; Wilhelm Grimm occasionally sentimentalized a text by introducing descriptions of emotional states that were not present in the original. Interestingly, when one of Grimm's sentimentalized folktales re-entered oral tradition, Grimm's embellishments dropped out of the folk renditions of his tale, a retransformation that Lüthi deems a process of self-correction by oral narrators, who intuitively brought the tale back to the genuine, traditional style.¹² Although Lüthi is unsure where the abstract style comes from, he argues that, contrary to the view of many folk-narrative scholars, it cannot be accounted for entirely and simply by the conditions of oral transmission but likely owes something to the distant authors of the tales.¹³

For Dorothee Bayer, too, the abstract manner of traditional folktale narration is genuine and true. The simple technique of naming characters and objects possesses a quality of universality, since it captures a thing wholly, whereas popular romances

with their descriptive detail, especially generic detail, lack credibility. Furthermore, the protagonists of folktales act consequentially, whereas the protagonists of romantic novels must be rescued by their authors, who liberate them by imposing an ending, an unrealistic solution that is neither genuine nor satisfying.¹⁴ So for Bayer the differences between fairytales and popular romantic novels are not merely differences, but the folktale narrators have it right and the romancers have it wrong, just as for Lüthi the abstract style of folktale narration is genuine and departures from it are false.

Many folk-narrative scholars however speak appreciatively of the art of oral raconteurs whose style of narration includes descriptive details and notices of emotional states. Folklorist Linda Dégh contrasts mere bearers of tradition with truly creative storytellers, distinguishing the individual styles of talented oral narrators from the traditional style of folktale narration.¹⁵ The tales of Dégh's star informant, Zsuzsanna Palkó, an illiterate peasant woman, teem with personal embellishments upon the basic action, including descriptions of physical settings and of emotional states.¹⁶ Dégh views the traditional style of folktales not prescriptively but as a base upon which the more talented and creative tellers elaborate. She praises the very departures from the abstract style that Lüthi condemns. Her view of folktale narrators is more-or-less analogous to that of Milman Parry and his student Albert Lord regarding singers of heroic song in the South Slavic tradition of oral poetry. Parry and Lord report that novice singers stay close to the action of the story, producing relatively lean songs, whereas mature and talented singers possess the skills necessary to embellish and ornament their narration appropriately and pleasingly. The songs of accomplished guslars are distinguished by their richness and fullness of description.¹⁷

Rather than our employing binary categories of abstract and non-abstract modes of narration, it is more useful to see a continuum of styles, as for example Henry Glassie proposes in the realm of material art, with purely abstract and conceptual expression at one end of a stylistic continuum and richly descriptive and sensual expression at the other end. Folk art tends toward the conceptual and the typological, whereas fine art emphasizes the sensate world, the material world. For Glassie, the typological nature of folk art is a consequence of its being essentially spiritual in nature, the artistic expression of persons residing in traditional communities in which religion is the ultimate authority.¹⁸ Lüthi agrees in seeing something of the spiritual in the abstract nature and timelessness of the folktale.¹⁹

So traditional folk arts, narrative as well as material, tend toward the typological, whereas popular and fine arts tend toward the sensate, but only tend toward. Traditional artists can embellish upon the abstract base in the direction of the sensate, just as literary authors and schooled painters can exploit the abstract style. The mistake is to insist that there are pure styles, or must be pure styles. The folktale is anchored in action, characteristically leaping from deed to deed, but can make excursions into the sensate. The popular romance is also anchored in action, but to action it always adds

sensuality in the form of extended accounts of the inner emotions of the principal characters and of the external appearances of characters and things.

NOTAS

¹ On popular literature in classical antiquity see Oronzo Pecere and Antonio Stramaglia, eds., *La Letteratura di Consumo nel Mondo Greco-Latino* (Cassino: Università degli Studi di Cassino, 1996), and William Hansen, ed., *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998). The present paper has benefited from a question raised by Professor Martin West during its original presentation at the XII Congresso da Federação Internacional das Associações de Estudos Clássicos (FIEC), Ouro Preto, Brazil, in August 2004.

² Dorothee Bayer, *Der triviale Familien- und Liebesroman im 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd edition (Tübingen: E.V. Tübingen Schloss, 1971), pp. 142-152.

³ I use the term "fairytale" here because of its familiarity as an emic category, although Anglophone folk-narrative scholars generally prefer "magic tale" (German *Zaubermärchen* or *Wundermärchen*) to refer to this subset of the folktale, for what typically distinguishes this kind of folktale from others is the presence, not of fairies, which rarely appear as characters in so-called fairytales, but of magic. Magic tales are classified as types 300 to 749 in Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography Based upon the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, FF Communications 284-286 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004).

⁴ Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*, translated by John D. Niles (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁵ "Antheusa the Fair with Golden Hair," in *Folktales of Greece*, edited by Georgios A. Megas, translated by Helen Colaclides (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 42-46.

⁶ Lüthi 1986:31.

⁷ On episodic composition in oral narrative and in orally inspired literature see further William Hansen, *Saxo Grammaticus and the Life of Hamlet: A Translation, History, and Commentary* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 48-52.

⁸ Xenophon of Ephesus, *An Ephesian Tale*, translated by Graham Anderson, in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, edited by B.P. Reardon (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), p. 129.

⁹ Anderson, p. 129.

¹⁰ Anderson, p. 168.

¹¹ Lüthi 1986:13-14, 19-20, 24-26, 39-40, 101-103.

¹² Lüthi 1986:110-111.

¹³ Lüthi 1986:100-101.

¹⁴ Bayer 1971:148, 150.

¹⁵ Linda Dégh, *Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*, translated by Emily M. Schossberger (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 165-186.

¹⁶ For an account of her repertory and style see Dégh 1969:187-234, and for full texts of representative narrations see Linda Dégh, *Hungarian Folktales: The Art of Zsuzsanna Palkó* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).

¹⁷ Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), pp. 86-88, 93; Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, edited by Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 453-454.

¹⁸ Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), pp. 128-129.

¹⁹ Lüthi 1986:104.

ABSTRACT: Folktales are said to be the novels of the folk and, conversely, popular romances are deemed to be the folktales of ordinary readers. Drawing upon formal studies of the oral folktale and of the modern popular romance and extending the scope to include the ancient romantic novel, this essay examines precisely how folktales and romantic novels agree and differ. It is shown that fairytales and popular romances do typically share a number of features as well as diverge in particular ways. Finally the question is raised whether the two characteristic styles - the typological and the sensate - are absolute or only tendencies manifested by each genre.

KEYWORDS: Ancient novel, folktale, narrative styl, popular literature, Xenophon of Ephesos
