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PARENTAL WARNING IN THE “KALEVALA” РОДИТЕЛЬСКОЕ ПРЕДУПРЕЖДЕНИЕ В ЭПОСЕ «КАЛЕВАЛА»

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In this paper¹, I will discuss the textual practices of Elias Lönnrot in compiling his presentations of folk poetry. Regarding Lönnrot's objective to control interpretations of the readers and his aim to manipulate folk poem material, I will examine the explicit warnings in Aino and Kullervo poems of his master work, the New Kalevala (1849). The poems of Aino and Kullervo are mainly developed through Lönnrot's composition and there are neither poems nor characters identical to Aino and Kullervo as such in the folk poetry tradition. The Kullervo poems in the Kalevala have been regarded as concerned with certain tendencies; poems in which Lönnrot emphasized the destiny of a mistreated child and the role of parents as educators. The Aino poems describe a relationship between a daughter and her mother underlined by customs of marriage agreements. Both of these cycles of poems have been regarded as having a pedagogical tendency [1, 461, 492].

Both the Aino and Kullervo poems of the New Kalevala contain educational instructions

for parents. Wise Väinämöinen is attributed with words of warning after Kullervo has committed suicide. The words are targeted at all parents so that they will know how to raise and care for their children. In this passage, the negative piece of advice «do not bring up a child crookedly» is set in relation to the explanation that otherwise «a child won't come to craps things» [2, poem 36: 351–360.] In the Aino poems, after Aino's death, Aino's mother finally understands her own flawed reaction and attitude toward her daughter's grief and consequently articulates a warning to all mothers [2, poem 4: 439–446].

The song example behind the warnings goes back to the script of a lullaby from Lönnrot's first collecting journey in 1828 that he transcribed in Kerimäki, in Eastern Finland (2, 41). This was the example from a mother singing to her child, uncertain about her child's future: «Ei tiia emo tekiä / Eikä kantaja katala» [«Mother, maker, does not / nor the mean one who bore me»] [3, VI (1) 560]. In lullabies, the negative device and advice is usually combined with different wishes of the mother: the mother hopes that her child can support her in her old age or that her daughter will have a good man as a husband, or that a son will become successful. The advice in lullabies can also express desperate wishes, such as wishing for

¹ An earlier version of this paper has been previously published as an integrated part of the longer article “Do not, folk of the future, Bring up a child crookedly! Moral intervention and other textual practices by Elias Lönnrot” appearing in RMN Newsletter in 2013. The article is available in <http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN>.

the child's death, but they are always sung in a gentle way, emotionally and metaphorically.

When compiling the Kalevala, Lönnrot exploited the idea in the advice in the lullaby, but he set at a distance the close, intimate relationship between the mother and the child that characterizes lullabies. Instead of expressing worries and wishes of the lullabies, there is a direct, clinical (emotionless) lesson in both warnings of the Kalevala: Do not raise your children as I have done (the luller); this is what happens if (your) child is brought up crookedly. Lönnrot did not describe the mother as the one who is nursing and looking after children, but presented her as an educator and director of children who makes them become good citizens.

The warning in the Kullervo poem increases in value as it is pronounced by the great leader of the Kalevala, Väinämöinen. As pointed out by Lotte Tarkka [4, 121–123], the words attributed to Väinämöinen are representative of a traditional and collective authority, and this makes his negative expressions and warnings a collective norm. Lönnrot presented a moral lesson through «sturdy old Väinämöinen», whose distant words give a collective and authoritative frame for the advice.

In Lönnrot's version, the words of Väinämöinen are presented as an authoritative

maxim: he is speaking for everybody. In the context of the Kalevala, that refers to the whole nation. In contrast, the words associated with Aino are personified in her mother. Despite the articulation of the words directed to all the mothers: «Elkätte emot poloiset» [«Don't, luckless mothers»], the expression of the message in the first person and a general problem bound up with the particular mother who is speaking make this a personal issue. It implies that the warning of the mother has – without authoritative distance – a more serious consequence than in the case of Kullervo.

The parental warnings can be defined as a poetic strategy Lönnrot used in handling the cautionary messages of these poems. Moreover, these two warnings do not connote an equal importance of Väinämöinen and the two mothers concerned, not only in the context of the poems, but also at the level of the composition and in a wider perspective, in the society. Through the lines selected from folk songs, Lönnrot indicates an educative role of the mother. Despite their traditional language and expressions, the warnings and other negative expressions are more filtered through the ideals of the 19th century family – i. e. the importance of parent – child relationships and the pragmatic role of the mother – than through the ideals of the folk songs.

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