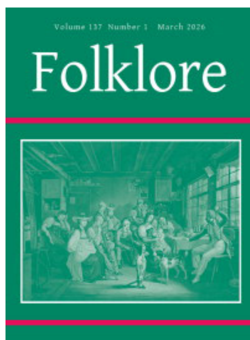

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The Soldier's Tale: Part 1

David Hopkin

Abstract

I explore the role of soldiers as storytellers, and their influence on the development of the European fairy tale tradition. Camps and barracks functioned as 'involuntary communities' where oral narratives flourished, challenging the assumption that the fairy tale was a female genre. Drawing on the Grimms, Hungarian collections, and French nineteenth-century sociographic literature, the study reconstructs the 'barracks tale' as a distinct narrative form marked by call-and-response formulae, rhythmic patterns, and coarse humour. Fairy-tale protagonists reveal the soldier as both victim and trickster. Through analysis of key tale-types, I show how soldiers were vectors of fairy tale diffusion through multilingual European armies. Their tales, although often violent and misogynistic, reflect the lived realities of rank-and-file life—discipline, hardship, alienation, and some measure of comradeship—translated into the language of fantasy. Common soldiers used storytelling to assert a distinct military identity, and their own agency within otherwise authoritarian institutions.

Introduction: Male 'Involuntary Communities' and the Fairy Tale Tradition

One purpose of my address last year was to argue that folklorists should avoid ethnic or geographic titles when they describe genres of oral folk narrative—such as 'English folktales' or 'Breton legends' or 'Scottish ballads' (Hopkin 2025). Such labels imply a congruence between lore, people, and territory which is, usually, hard to sustain. Rather, I argued that there are other social solidarities that shape oral traditions. Specifically, I emphasized the communities built around particular occupations which nurture their own traditions, both formal and informal. I attempted to justify this claim in last year's address on the sailor's tale, and I will continue by looking at soldiers' storytelling.

Another, although less explicit, purpose was to draw attention to male homosocial communities as centres of storytelling practice and oral traditions. Here I tackle that issue more directly. In the nineteenth century, it was widely accepted that the fairy tale was a female genre. This characterization operated more at the level of image

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than evidenced argument: it was axiomatic for middle-class male folklorists that women were the imparters of the mother tongue; they were at the heart of the household, holding it together through their narrative lore. This was how, in most cases, these folklorists themselves had first encountered oral traditions. Hence the archetypal storyteller was a 'Mother Goose' figure, an older female family member or a female household servant (Blécourt 2010; Hopkin 2018).

However, by the middle years of the twentieth century, a new consensus had emerged among continental, and in particular German, folklorists that this image was erroneous, and that fairy tale telling was largely a male art (Holbek 1987, 54–57; Köhler-Zülch 1997, 200). It was precisely women's domestic role, tied to the home and the village, that prevented them from becoming storytellers. It was men's mobility, as migrant labourers, journeymen, pedlars, and, of course, soldiers, that enabled them to acquire their repertoire because, as the Finnish folklorist Juha Pentikäinen put it, 'Most tales were learned and further transmitted in work situations, usually those that were of seasonal nature and taking place outside the village proper' (Pentikäinen 1978, 265). Linda Dégh, working on Hungary, concurred:

> Storytelling, especially the telling of magic tales, is a certain pleasure for men working far from their village homes … At workingmen's hostels and in the provisionary barracks accommodating farmhands, herdsmen, fishermen, lumbermen, construction laborers, or itinerant artisans, plenty of opportunity arise [*sic*] for a skilful storyteller, who in the course of his variegated activities has moved about to many places and seen many things, to find an interested audience for his stories. (Dégh 1965, xxxiii)

Military barracks might be considered the epitome of such male-only migrant work camps or 'involuntary communities' that brought together individuals from different backgrounds and with different traditions, and forced them to socialize, because there were no alternative sources of entertainment.

Of course, women were also on the move in earlier historical periods, and indeed there were many women in and around army camps. One of the earliest collections of tales recorded from a named informant was made in 1804 by a schoolboy in Groningen from the storytelling of a seamstress Katharina Alberts, known as Trijntje Soldaats because she had followed her German soldier-husband through twenty years of military service, an experience that had left its mark on her narratives (Huizenga-Onnekes, Rombouts, and Dieters 2003). Since the 1970s, two generations of (mostly) women folklorists and literary scholars have done much to nuance and correct male pretensions to the fairy tale; they have also recovered alternative traditions and identified women's voices in fairy tale production. However, revisionism can become its own orthodoxy and, if anything, the consensus now follows Karen Rowe in considering 'the true art of the fairy tale … [as] semiotically a female art' (Rowe 1986, 71). One of the logics at work in this reversal is that storytelling is deemed a weapon of the weak, and so in patriarchal societies it was practised by women to make sense of their experiences of oppression, to build supportive communities, and to resist dominant narratives. In this feminist re-interpretation, the fairy tale 'becomes a coded text in which the female voice, despite the attempt by men to control it, not only continues to speak, but speaks a secret, subversive language' (Haase 2000, 29).

Soldiers, of course, also operated in a hierarchical and disciplined society, with limited opportunities to exercise their own agency. They too might have reasons to adopt the coded language of fairy tales to disguise their desires and intentions. Yet as the personification of a robust masculinity, as the henchmen of powerholders, and as wielders of violence, it is harder to interpret soldiers' storytelling through the lens of empowerment and healing. Soldiers' tales are characterized by an amorality and brutality that shocked collectors in the nineteenth century and can continue to shock now. They often avoid happy endings, or call into question what counts as a happy ending. The effect can be disquieting.

When I was preparing my 2024 address on the sailor's tale, I could draw on many recent studies of the practice. Some of this attention came from historians looking for sites of workers' resistance to the processes of globalization; some came from literary scholars, because the sailor's yarn had a major influence on the development of Anglo-American literature. The storytelling tradition of European soldiers has attracted much less interest.[1] This neglect strikes me as odd, as soldiers were narrators of wonder tales—fairy tales—the acme of the oral tradition's cultural achievement some might say. I also argue that soldiers' storytelling had a significant impact on European literature. Perhaps the disquieting aspects of soldiers' storytelling have deflected scholars away from the topic.

Yet the soldier's tale has not passed completely unnoticed. From the moment that folklore collectors attempted, or claim to have attempted, to represent an oral tradition, soldiers appear among their narrators. We associate this shift away from literary pretensions with the Grimms, but the soldier's role as storyteller had already been established by their eighteenth-century predecessor, Johann Musäus, who published five volumes of *Volksmährchen der Deutschen* between 1782 and 1787. According to his nephew, the playwright August von Kotzebue, Musäus's wife came home one day to find her husband sitting in a fug of tobacco fumes, 'next to an old soldier who held his short pipe between his teeth, bravely puffing away, and telling him tales' (Musäus 1791, 15).[2]

Although the Grimms themselves promoted a 'Mother Goose' figure as their ideal narrator—personified by Dorothea Viehmann, the so called *Märchenfrau*, whose portrait adorns the second, 1815 volume, of the first edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*KHM*)—soldiers also featured among their informants. We know the name of one of them, Johann Friedrich Krause, a retired sergeant in the Hessian dragoons. In 1811 he supplied a few tales that appeared in the first edition of the *KHM*, in return for some old clothes (Fink 1991). Krause remained in contact with the Grimms for the remainder of his life, sending them stories collected in his home village (Schindehütte 1985, 1992). Other soldiers' tales were sent to the brothers by their friend August von Haxthausen while he was serving with the Bremen-Verden Hussars (Hesselmann 1992, 30). Soldiers, Haxthausen wrote to Jacob Grimm, told such tales while on watch duty (Grimm and Hinrichs 1881, 238). We will return to both Krause and Haxthausen, but in later editions of the *KHM* the Grimms tended to edit out or otherwise tone down soldiers' contributions: soldiers' tales were not suitable for the children of the bourgeoisie, their target audience.

The example set by the Grimms prompted not an avalanche but 'ripples' of collecting activity across Europe (Gunnell 2022). One of the first to respond was the Hungarian György Gaal, librarian to the Hungarian noble family of Esterházy. (It is possible, although not certain, that Gaal was in direct contact with Jacob Grimm, who was part of the Hessian delegation to the Vienna Congress in 1814–15, and used the opportunity to campaign for the collection of oral traditions.) A sample of Gaal's collection of Hungarian folktales was published in German translation in 1822, but most remained—and some still remain—in manuscript. While Gaal tried, unsuccessfully, to discover a storyteller in the mould of the Grimms' Frau Viehmann, the bulk of his collection was recorded from Hungarian soldiers garrisoned in Vienna, possibly from soldiers in the 12th Palatinate Hussars and the 37th Infantry 'Máriássy' Regiment—there is some confusion over the precise units. Often the soldiers wrote down the tales themselves (Ortutay 1972; Domokos 2005, 2020). Soldier narrators also featured prominently in the next collection of Hungarian folktales to make it into print, assembled by János Majláth (1825, 279). The Grimms welcomed these publications but also criticized their style, as they had that of Musäus, as too discursive and replete with what they described as 'artificial irony', which did not accord with their conception of the authentic folk character. However, both characteristics are fully present in the manuscript material collected from soldiers by Gaal, and so might be said to be characteristic of soldiers' storytelling (Ortutay 1972; Gulyás 2022).

Back in Germany, the Grimms' most fervent—one might say fanatic—follower was Johann Wilhelm Wolf. In the 1840s, Wolf attempted to collect folktales in the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, the next German micro-state along from the Grimms' own Hesse-Cassel. And following the Grimms' rather vague guide to collecting practice, he first went hunting in rural areas. Yet he found the villages of the Bergstrasse region disappointing in terms of oral traditions. Then, 'Suddenly, a new, much closer and infinitely richer source opened up before us'. Through the offices of his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Wilhelm von Ploennies of the ducal army, he learned that

> we were surrounded by thousands of storytellers whom we had never considered. Wilhelm … had the soldiers march out one by one and say and sing what they knew …. Some of these narratives were brought fresh by our brave soldiers from their homeland, but some had been passed down in the army since time immemorial, having been told around the campfires of earlier campaigns. (Wolf 1851, v–vii)

We will return to both Gaal's hussars and Ploennies's troops.

Soldiers featured in many other collections made over the following century, perhaps particularly those made in central and eastern Europe, but they are not hard to find in western and southern Europe either. Whereas the folklorists mentioned so far were primarily interested in the texts, over time collectors became more attentive to the contexts of storytelling, and the sites in which oral traditions were preserved. They also focused more on the informants themselves, noting how storytellers expressively reshaped traditional material to reflect their own personalities and their own experiences, all the time in dialogue with their audiences. And again, the barracks tradition helped inform this transition. Just as an

example, here is the schoolteacher and folklorist of the Austrian-Hungarian borderlands, Samuel Graf, explaining how one of his informants, the gamekeeper Samuel Ofenbeck, had assembled his store of tales. His father

> also had a great gift for storytelling. He boasted that during his years of service as a soldier, his comrades often filled the room to the last spot and listened in rapt silence when he told stories in the barracks, and that the officers often let him come to the canteen to hear 'funny', that is, erotic stories from him, and in return, they would give him cigars or even money. (Graf 1914, 20)

However, and with the exception of Hungary, the prominence of soldiers as storytellers has not led to much sustained scrutiny. Russian folklorists have come closest, sometimes, as in the case of Lev Pushkarev (1995), drawing on their own military service. Russian historians too have recognized the potential value of army folklore for understanding soldiers' worldviews (Volodina and Podrezov 2021). Yury Sokolov, in his Soviet-era survey of Russian folklore, commented that 'The soldier's tale (and it almost always proves at the same time to be a tale about a soldier) not only developed its own imagery and types, but it also has, in its vocabulary, as well as in its style and rhythm, its own "soldier-tale" poetics' (Sokolov 1950, 491). And a similar point was made by Vladimir Propp, lecturing on the Russian folktale in the 1960s: 'We must distinguish the soldier's tale as a special kind of folktale … There is no doubt that it existed widely there [in the barracks] and in specific forms, with its own repertoire and special stylistic traits' (Propp 2012, 309).

It is this repertoire, and these stylistic traits, that I want to recover in this address. However, my aim is not just to identify the barracks tale with its characteristic imagery and rhythms, but to explore how soldiers' stories related to, and made sense of, soldiers' lives—at least for the period between, say, the Thirty Years War and the First World War. These tales gave a voice to common soldiers, enabling them to assert their own understanding of the events they had lived through, as well as their values, and their antipathies. For the historian, reliant on state sources which replicate an official view of the army's role in society and the character of its personnel, this is invaluable. The fact that these are fairy tales, a genre defined by its use of wonder and magic, should not mislead us: these tales speak directly to soldiers' experiences. And, as we will discover, even the most fantastic elements were not completely alien to soldiers' lives.

The Rise of Sociographic Literature and the French Barracks Storytelling Tradition

It might be possible to explore this tradition in the Russian or Austro-Hungarian Empires, but the fullest descriptions of barracks-room storytelling come from France. Even before the French Revolution, soldiers' tales had begun to attract literary attention, in the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*. This 224-volume monthly collection mostly assembled abridgements and translations of earlier literary works. Uniquely, the September 1784 volume contains a story taken not from print but, so the anonymous author claimed, from the overheard oral performance of a soldier at an inn (Martin 1985, 204). It is the 'Tale of La Ramée', but as the soldier-storyteller explains, La Ramée has more than one tale: 'There are tales of La Ramée as a child, of

La Ramée the soldier, of La Ramée the deserter, of La Ramée the smuggler, of La Ramée the Prince of Adventures …' And he added that 'It's been told for at least 100 years, and everyone tells it in their own style. Some make it last three days; and others, three weeks.' His editor further explained that the tale 'is very old. It relieves soldiers' boredom in barracks and prisons' (Anon. 1784, 103–105).

La Ramée was already a familiar name in French popular culture by the 1780s, having appeared on the French stage for more than a century. He made a brief appearance in Molière's *Don Juan* staged in 1665, although his public character as an old soldier was not established there (Molière 1683). The earliest example I have found of a theatrical old soldier named La Ramée is in Raymond Poisson's *Les Faux Moscovites*, first performed in 1668 and referencing Pyotr Potemkin's visit to Louis XIV that same year. La Ramée and his comrades, Sans-Soucy, Jolicoeur, and La Montagne, disguise themselves as a Russian embassy in order to defraud a landlord and carry off his daughter (Poisson 1669; Irvine 2004). Thereafter, he was a regular character in Parisian comedies. We even know what he looked like, thanks to his appearance on a playing card in 1674 (Depaulis and Préaud 2016, 20).

La Ramée was an archetype but one based on real persons. In the Old Regime French army, recruits were given a new name when they joined a regiment—a '*nom-de-guerre*'—which marked their separation from their civilian life. The custom was well established in the seventeenth century when noms-de-guerre were considered a military particularism expressive of soldiers' vaunting boastfulness. The name was not chosen by the recruit but given either by his comrades or his officer, so that joining the army was akin to being baptized anew. However, noms-de-guerre highlighted very different values to Christian names, stressing the soldier's physical attributes, his womanizing, his drunkenness, and his prodigality. Common examples include Sans-Souci (Devil-May-Care), Jolicoeur (Open Hearted), Tranche-Montagne (Mountain Splitter), alongside La Ramée. All of these were genuine noms-de-guerre but they were also used as the names of military characters on the stage, and they likewise feature as the soldier-heroes in folktales. Unlike other professions which had similar rites of entry, the soldier's new name was recognized by the authorities: it was included in regimental muster-lists after 1716 (Corvisier 1964, 1: 848–61). Thus, we know that many regiments in the eighteenth century could boast at least one La Ramée in their ranks (Corvisier 1968, 1: illustration 4). Officially, noms-de-guerre were abandoned during the Revolution, which disapproved of such marks of distinction between soldier and citizen. In practice, they were used as nicknames well into the nineteenth century. Veterans often retained their new names after they left the army, emphasizing their acquired, military identity (Richard 1963, 357). In French North America, many continue to be used as family surnames, and consequently as place names, such as Laramie in Wyoming (Malvaux 2020).

The meanings of some noms-de-guerre might be self-evident, but not La Ramée. Military slang may elucidate. *Une rame* is an oar, and by extension *avoir la rame* or *ramée*—to have rowed—means, in slang, knackered. And by extension again it means how one feels when one's exhausted, like you do not care anymore. And so 'ne pas foutre une ramée' means, in military slang, 'I'm not going to lift a finger'. It might

seem paradoxical that the same term means both to be exhausted but also to do nothing, but I do not think it is. La Ramée is the name given to an old soldier, someone who has seen it all, done it all, who no longer gives a damn. This characteristic has a strange impact on fairy tales where the happy ending is usually supplied by a wedding between the hero and princess, but La Ramée is often too worn down to make a satisfactory marriage partner (Hopkin 2000).

Although La Ramée was familiar as a character on the stage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the next specific reference to him as a character in oral tradition comes from the memoirs of the revolutionary soldier Médard Bonnart (1775–1843). In 1798, the then Corporal Bonnart and his comrades were lying in their hospital beds in Strasbourg: 'We passed our time reading, talking, and listening every evening to orators among the sentries, who told us all about the loves of La Ramée' (Bonnart 1828, 1: 346–47). Bonnart's was among the first autobiographies by a common soldier to be printed in France, but this was the start of an explosion of ordinary soldiers' memoir writing and publishing, reflecting on their experiences of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (Greig 2021). And in these memoirs, both storytelling and La Ramée appear regularly. For instance, Lieutenant Elzéar Blaze (1788–1848) recalled that, as the French army marched through Bavaria in 1809, a '*lustig*' 'told the interminable story of La Ramée who, after receiving his discharge and returning home, marched back two hundred leagues in order to claim a ration of bread owed him by the sergeant-major'. He continued, 'soldiers put down all stories about old troopers to La Ramée's account; he is the personification of the French soldier' (Blaze 1837, 1: 100).

The practice would survive the Napoleonic wars, and we find plenty of mentions of La Ramée in military memoirs from later in the century. The Breton soldier and storyteller, Jean-Marie Déguignet (1834–1905), while hoping for promotion after his service in the Crimean War, noted that 'Often, one had to wait years, and the tale of the famous Laramée, who remained a lance-corporal for thirty years, was often related to aspirants' (Déguignet 2001, 216). His contemporary Marcel de Baillehache (1846–1906), a lancer in the Imperial Guard, recorded that in his barracks there were 'excellent storytellers, full of originality … While narrating they shouted the famous *cric* to which the audience had to respond *crac*, while those who had fallen asleep were subject to a fine. These stories, mostly coarse and banal, generally turned on the adventures of sergeant La Ramée, invited during one of his marches to dine with the Queen of England' (Baillehache 1894, 56). Desiré Louis, a prisoner of war after the French surrender of Metz to the Prussians in 1870, recalled that 'tales compensated us [for the boredom of camp life]. Those of La Ramée or others helped us endure long hours of insomnia. As in France, our dormitory tales always began with that famous introduction known to all soldiers, "Cric! … Crac! … Clog! … Spoon in pot! … Legging strap! … etc. Forward! [M]arch!" And off went the storyteller' (Louis 1898, 78–79).

These are but passing references: more useful are the accounts of military storytelling that appeared in what Christiane Schwab has termed 'sociographic literature', a genre which includes journalism, sketches, travelogues, and even novels,

but united by their concern for social observation and documenting social difference (Schwab 2020). This kind of literature flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially in France where it had its own generic label: 'les physiologies' (Sieburth 1985). Barracks and army camps were preferred locations for such social investigations, because the army was considered a world apart from mainstream society: it had its own customs, traditions, code of honour, its own language even. Several such works were written by soldiers—their privileged access allowed them to describe the tribal customs of the military. Often, their works were presented as a new recruit's itinerary from greenhorn (*blanc-bec*, *jean-jean*, *bleu* … French army slang has a multiplicity of terms for novice soldiers) to seasoned trooper, starting with his initiation into this new world, and showing how he became acculturated to military life. One of the military customs explored by these social investigators was barracks storytelling, and the stories themselves became a way to map soldiers' different culture, one might say their different mentality, setting them apart from their civilian counterparts. This was happening in the 1830s and 1840s, a whole generation before folklorists started recording oral folktales in rural France.

Sociographic literature, of course, also has its genre traditions. Storytelling became a regular topos in accounts of military life in part because the authors of later works were familiar with earlier examples and used these as guides in their own writing. So there is always the danger that, rather than serving as reflections of social practice, such texts merely reflect other texts. However, there may have been an opposite effect: as the numbers of French recruits grew over the century, some young men prepared for their experience of the army through literature, and so joined expecting both to hear and tell tales. In an autobiographical novel by Paul Bonnetain (1858–96), as his hero approaches the moment, in 1876, when he was likely to be conscripted, he started to read up on military life, including a barracks tale that appeared in a newspaper supplement. Later in the Toulon barracks, when called on by his new comrades to offer a 'shave'—military slang for a tale—he started to narrate this same story (Bonnetain 1888, 96–102). It is possible to identify Bonnetain's precise source: 'Le Sabre enchanté du Sergeant Va-de-bon-cœur', a version of ATU 1358 C 'Trickster Discovers Adultery; food goes to husband instead of lover', which was regularly reprinted throughout the last third of the nineteenth century, including in the Sunday supplement of *Le Figaro* on 6 August 1876 (Ponson du Terrail 1868). We will meet the soldier as trickster again, but my point here is, firstly, to stress the ubiquity of soldiers' storytelling in sociographic literature, and, secondly, to suggest how this might have created a feedback loop with social practice.

The first detailed example of such storytelling is provided in *La Caserne: moeurs militaires*, co-written by a journalist, Léon Vidal (1797–1873), and an infantry officer, J. Delmart (probably a pseudonym), intended as a warts-and-all exploration of army life. It includes a long account of storytelling in the Saint-Raphael barracks in Bordeaux in the late 1820s. After lights out, the soldiers invite a recognized storyteller, Piquenot, to keep them amused with the tale of 'John of the Bear' (ATU 301 'The Three Stolen Princesses') even though they have heard it thirty times before. The storyteller uses a variant of the standard barracks introduction which we

have already heard. This 'Cric!' 'Crac!' call and response is renewed several times during the narration; if his audience does not supply the correct answer, the storyteller will not continue. In other words, this type of storytelling is collective, the whole company is involved in both choosing and responding to the tale. At the end of Piquenot's first tale the soldiers are still awake, so the storyteller continues with a second tale, a version of ATU 1641 'Doctor Know-All'. At its conclusion, only one new recruit is still listening, and still hoping to hear the tale of La Ramée, but that has to be put off for another evening (Vidal and Delmart 1833, 141–68).

This is the standard context for soldiers' storytelling—in barracks, camp, hospital, guardroom, or prison: after the order 'lights out'—the invitation to the storyteller, who might expect a little reward—the 'Cric!' 'Crac!' to establish the audience's ongoing participation. A similar practice had already been observed in Hungarian barracks in the eighteenth century, although there the call and response terms were 'Bone' and 'Meat' or 'Bone' and 'Tile' (Ortutay 1972, 309).

I have prepared a list of these French accounts of military storytelling and, where relevant, the tale-types that form part of the entertainment. It is unlikely to be exhaustive, and I have left out some of the more obviously fictional treatments, but I hope it might be useful for future scholars of soldiers' storytelling. Some of these visits to the barracks err more towards the caricatural rather than the sociographic, and in time this trend would give birth to an entire genre of literature dedicated to military comedy, written in a distinctive barracks dialect, of which the leading exponent was Charles Leroy (Roynette 2013). However, humour was always present, because this was a putative characteristic of the soldiers' social and moral world: one should not take oneself too seriously. It was this same ironic tone that the Grimms objected to in Gaal's Hungarian tales.

- J. Delmart and Léon Vidal, *La Caserne: moeurs militaires* (1833) = ATU 301 and ATU 1641
- Nestor Roquelan, 'Compiègne', in *La Revue de Paris* (1834)
- Hector Tournilhon, 'Contes du chambrée', in *Petite Mosaïque, ou nouvelles bluettes en prose et en vers* (1839)
- Émile de La Bédollière, 'L'armée', in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1842) = ATU 330 plus ATU 475
- Charles Jacque, 'L'Histoire de La Ramée', in *Musée ou magasin comique de Philipon* (1842) = ATU 330 plus ATU 475
- Léo Lespès, 'Les Oubliettes du château de Blois', in *Histoires à faire peur* (1846) = ATU 922. Lespès, sometimes under the pseudonym 'Timothée Trimm', produced several accounts of soldiers' storytelling
- Jules Noriac, *Le Grain de Sable* (novel, 1861) = ATU 330
- Émile Gaboriau, *Le 13e hussards: types, profils, esquisses et croquis militaires* (1861)
- Auguste Lecomte, *Le Chemin de l'épaulette* (1861)
- Charles Dubois de Gennes, *Le Troupier tel qu'il est à cheval* (1862) = ATU 550
- Baron Frédéric de Reiffenberg, *La Vie de garnison* (1863)
- Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail, 'Le Sabre enchanté du Sergent Va-de-bon-Coeur', *La Presse illustrée* (1868) = ATU 1358C
- Hyacinthe Marius, 'Le Marchi La Ramée: Conte militaire', *Le Gaulois* (1881)
- Paul Bonnetain, *Charlot s'amuse* (novel, 1883)

- Paul Bonnetain, *Le nommé Perreux* (novel, 1888)
- Charles Leroy, 'Histoire de la Ramée', *Le Mirliton* (1888)
- Clément Rochel, 'L'Herbe enchantée', *Le Courrier de Saône-et-Loire* (1914) = ATU 313
- Paul Delarue, 'Le Géant à la barbe d'or', in *Contes du Nivernais et du Morvan* (1953) = ATU 328. Delarue heard this tale in Nevers barracks in 1912, during his national service. He went on to be France's leading scholar of fairy tales.

One of the most famous products of this sociographic turn in French literature was the multi-volume *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*: 'the French painted by themselves'. The fifth volume of this collection, which appeared in 1842, was almost entirely dedicated to the army, and once again it included storytelling (La Bédollière 1842, 49–54). This section was probably supplied by Charles Jacque (1813–94), an artist who had himself served in the army in the 1830s, and who provided illustrations for the work. The tale he told concerned, predictably, La Ramée. Later that year Jacque rewrote it at greater length, playing up the comedic elements, for another journal, which he also illustrated: his depiction of La Ramée is supposed to be a self-portrait, but Jacque, echoing Blaze, described the tale itself as 'a soldier's self-portrait' (Jacque 1842).

It opens with a traditional formula, similar to that employed by Piquenot in the Saint Raphaël barracks. The hero, La Ramée, hopes to be made corporal. He had served one term of eight years with no promotion, but his captain persuaded him to sign on for another eight years, and then the same again: this is the story that Déguignet referred to as a cautionary tale for would-be non-commissioned officers. Halfway through his third tour, La Ramée complains about the food: his captain puts him in prison. He then complains to his colonel that the captain is stealing the soldiers' food and clothing allowance: the colonel puts him in prison. At the end of his twenty-fourth year of service he requests to stay on to complete thirty years so that he can draw his pension, but instead he is dismissed. He goes to draw his pay but when all the deductions are made, he leaves with just two centimes and a munition loaf. Having walked twenty-six and a half leagues, he realizes he has been cheated of a bread ration and plans to march back: this is the story mentioned by Blaze in his memoirs. But on the road he meets a beggar who asks for charity, and La Ramée shares his loaf. The beggar turns out to be Saint Matthew, who grants the soldier the ability to wish whatever he wants into his haversack. A little further on and another stranger offers him a job—to keep his cauldrons piping hot. After a while La Ramée becomes curious about the contents of these pots, and he lifts a lid. Inside are his colonel, captain, sergeant, corporal, and captain's wife, all the people who made his life a misery and who, having been carried off by a cholera epidemic, have been condemned to the fires of Hell, for of course the stranger is the Devil. La Ramée decides this job is not for him: he wishes the Devil into his haversack and takes him to a forge where four blacksmiths beat him with hammers for two hours, after which the Devil runs off. La Ramée goes through the world, wishing whatever takes his fancy into his haversack—cake, wine, boots, women—until he dies. He marches up to Heaven but after all this loose living Saint Peter will not permit him entry. So he chucks his haversack through the gate and wishes himself inside. And that is how La Ramée gets to Paradise.

Although retold for laughs, this text contains two recognizable traditional tale types: ATU 330 'The Smith and the Devil' and ATU 475 'The Man as Heater of Hell's Kettle'. Both tale-types were widely associated with soldier heroes, and not only in France. Although classified as wonder tales, neither requires the normal happy ending of a marriage between the hero and a heroine. This tale illustrates many of the characteristics of barracks tales both in its stylistic features and its celebration of soldierly qualities, at least as seen from the ranks. Jacque's La Ramée is the archetype of the long-service soldier who has broken with his civilian life: his mother is dead, his former girlfriend is married, he has no home or family. He is, necessarily, a wanderer. He is also a grumbler—*grognard* in French, which also serves as a synonym for an old soldier—but mostly this grumbling is a means to support the hardships of military life. Generally, he takes life as it comes, the good and the bad, and is willing to share and share alike. He is quick-witted: his years of experience enable him to get the better of both the Devil and Saint Peter. Such cunning is a common feature of tales associated with old soldiers, including ATU 922 'The King and the Abbot' and ATU 1358 C 'Trickster Discovers Adultery', which featured in the list of barracks stories earlier. But the dominant feature of the tale is La Ramée's conflicts with his officers and NCOs, which take up more space than the rest of the plot development put together. This mutinous attitude was also considered a characteristic of the French soldier, and sometimes in a positive sense. When, in 1908, members of the CGT union were tried for fomenting rebellion in the 17th Infantry Regiment, which had been sent to Narbonne to repress a demonstration by winegrowers, the defence lawyer argued that the soldiers' refusal to follow orders was simply conforming to French military tradition, embodied in the figure of La Ramée. The defendants were acquitted (Bonzon 1911, 141).

Soldier-Tale Poetics: Language, Length, Formulae, Rhythm

We can use these French 'physiologies' to explore what Sokolov termed 'soldier-tale poetics'. For instance, barracks tales were expressed in their own idiom. By idiom I do not just refer to military vocabulary—ranks, rations, punishments, and so on—but distinct speech patterns. The editor of the first 'Conte de la Ramée' tried to imitate this dialect in print: 'Si ben donc, Messieurs, que j'va vous conter le Conte de la Ramée. Il y a ben cent ans qu'on le raconte et qu'chacun le r'tourne à sa guise' (Anon. 1784, 103). The swallowed vowels—'ben' for 'bien', 'j'va' for 'je vais'—and moveable consonants demonstrate that this discourse is related to the *langue d'oïl* dialects of north-eastern France, not coincidentally the location of most French garrisons. This barracks dialect was also larded with German loanwords: hence the word 'lustig' used by Lieutenant Blaze to describe a soldier-storyteller (Blaze 1834, 1: 100). Again, because French garrisons—and therefore recruiting grounds—were principally located in the Franco-German borderlands, German speakers, whether French nationals or mercenaries, were over-represented in the French army. In German, 'lustig' means 'merry', or 'lustful'. The Grimms' *KHM* contains a tale about an old soldier named 'Bruder Lustig' which closely resembles Jacque's 'Conte de la Ramée'.

The two veterans have other connections: in the seventeenth-century playing cards mentioned earlier, while the French sergeant is labelled 'La Ramée', his German counterpart is labelled 'Loustic' (Depaulis and Préaud 2016, 21). According to the French cavalry officer Baron de Reiffenberg, it was the regiment's 'loustics' or jokers who were its acknowledged storytellers (Reiffenberg 1863, 143–63).

Soldiers' language was also distinctly salty. Learning to swear was part of the process of acculturation by which young men became old troopers. The cavalry officer Auguste Lecomte, who wrote a sociographic study of a conscript's transformation, linked this to storytelling. Barracks fairy tales, he claimed, had little in common with those heard in childhood, told by a grandmother or a maidservant. Soldiers' tales have

> a raw character and exhibit such freedom of manners that a delicate ear cannot, without blushing, give them an audience; the storyteller seeks, through a multitude of crude gags and double-entendres, to capture the imagination of his audience, and he almost always includes excessively salacious descriptions of his characters' love lives. (Lecomte 1861, 20)

Barracks tales, according to another officer, 'were linguistic orgies, an excess of adventures. There were scenes of battles and epics of lovemaking, full of breathtaking twists, incredible details, unexpected endings, where idioms were confused and everything was jumbled together' (Reiffenberg 1863, 159). In all this profusion and dissipation, the timely and appropriate use of obscenities was a key feature of the soldier-storyteller's art (Tournilhon 1839, 63–64). This is one reason why so many of accounts of barracks storytelling remain unfinished: they were too rude to record.

Another reason is their length. According to the contributor to the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, 'Some make the Tale of La Ramée last three days, and others three weeks' (Anon. 1784, 103), or as Blaze put it, the story was 'interminable' (Blaze 1837, 1: 100). Barracks narrators were expected to spin the tale out until everyone had fallen asleep; their tales were digressive and verbose, with many tangents and extensions. From the Grimms onwards, this element of 'soldier-tale poetics' has not proved popular with folklorists, obliged to make handwritten notes. Hence, by-and-large, these extended stories never got written down. However, there is an intriguing example in the Flemish collection of Amaat Joos, recorded from a Belgian soldier who had heard it during his military service. It is a version of ATU 303 'The Twins'. Normally, in this tale-type, just one twin frees his enchanted brother. However, this barracks version was spun out over multiple nights by the simple expedient of having nine pairs of twins, all of whom end up prisoners of an evil fairy, until the very last twin frees them all. It fills almost 150 pages of print (Joos 1892, 3–150).

One means to extend the story was through formulae, another important element of barracks storytelling, particularly, but not only, in the introduction and conclusion. When, in one sociographic account, a corporal narrator launched straight into 'Once upon a time', the rest of the dormitory shouted him down: 'The prologue! … Start with the prologue!' (Tournilhon 1839, 68). Barracks fairy-tale formulae were simultaneously ornate and crude:

> March! March today, march the next day, by dint of marching you go a long way; if you don't fall under a wheel, you'll not get covered in mud; if you take a tumble in a stream you won't need a

> brush for your coat; whoever doesn't drop his stick won't need to bend to pick it up; I encountered these truths in a famous book; if one has a good, plump turkey between the embers [French slang for legs], one has no fear of spoiling one's spurs … Now friends, with whip in hand, I'm going at a good pace … I cross wooden combs, boxwood combs, horn combs; may the five hundred one-eyed devils with their enormous forks prick the big eyes of those who sleep. As for me, I'm not sleeping … *Criiic!* (Dubois de Gennes 1862, 79)

They were also very long: this is only part of a preamble that had already taken up more than a page of text. One would suspect the author of exaggeration if similar formulae, or elements from them, did not also occur in tales recorded from oral tradition (Sautman 1990).

One feature of these long introductions and digressions is that they allowed the storyteller to comment on their characters, or on the history of their tale. We can see that in the very first tale of La Ramée to be written down, in which the hero was compared to other famous warriors such as Achilles, Alexander, Caesar, and Roland, most of whom were supposed to have been soldiers in French regiments, with the exception of Caesar who was a dog (Anon. 1784, 105–107: 'César' was, and remains, a popular name for dogs in France). Some storytellers insisted that their narrative was confirmed in literature or by history, and many introduced historical references. Thus, in a barracks version of ATU 550 'Search for the Golden Bird', we are told that this is the tale's 169,000th outing, and its hero, La Ramée, currently in the service of Charlemagne and lent by him to King Arthur, was already a soldier at the time of King David, Julius Caesar made him a corporal at the battle of Thermopylae, where together they defeated Alexander the Great, who was the son of the King of Spain (Dubois de Gennes 1862, 85). Another storyteller placed Thermopylae in the Peninsular War (Marius 1881, 1), while a third related the famous tale of the English knight Don Quixote at the siege of Troy, which took place in the French province of Champagne—a play on the name of the French city Troyes (Joly and Douay [1878]).

Evidently, these tales were not reliable guides to history, or geography, or literature: the concurrent claims to venerability and veracity undermined each other, but of course that was all part of the joke. They signalled that the story was meant as an entertainment, a lie: hence they employ the shaving metaphor, because in the French army one got sent to Plumepatte, the mythical barber of the Zouaves, to tell unlikely stories, in the same way that British sailors were instructed to 'tell it to the marines' (Esnault 1954). And yet these references also make a serious point about military culture: soldiering never changes, it has been the same ever 'since the world drank wine and smoked tobacco', as Dubois de Gennes put it (Dubois de Gennes 1862, 85). I will return to this emphasis on continuity.

All of these formulaic prologues used a marching rhythm; this element of soldier-tale poetics seems to have left a strong impression on listeners. Dozens of soldiers' memoirs quote the line 'March today, march the next day,/If you keep on marching you'll go a long way'. When Louis Gabriel Montigny evoked his journey from Venice to Moscow in 1811, he applied the established formula 'Marche aujourd'hui, marche demain' (Montigny 1833, 123). 'As La Ramée says, if you keep on marching you'll go a long way', recalled General du Barail in his memoirs, about his journey from Martinique to Mexico in 1862 (Barail 1895, 2: 335). With this marching tempo, the storyteller passed into a land of

Cockaigne where 'roasted swallows fell out of the sky straight into the mouths of the cunning' (Rochel 1914), a 'World Turned Upside Down' where there were 'villages without houses, forests without trees, rivers without water', and a never-never land '1,700 leagues the other side of the East, where it takes four men and a corporal on fatigues to raise up that lazy rascal the sun with their poles' (Tournilhon 1839, 67). The formula removed the audience from the mundane world of the barracks, and opened a space of imagination and verbal creativity.

This marching rhythm is one of the most recognizable elements of soldier-tale poetics. We hear it in the opening to what must be the most famous Soldier's Tale today, Stravinsky's 1918 ballet *L'Histoire du soldat*. The librettist, Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, took his inspiration from a tale recorded by Alexandr Afanas'ev, 'A Fugitive Soldier and the Devil' (Afanas'ev 2014, 1: 367–70), but despite this Russian influence he also alluded to the famous formula in his opening lines: 'A marché, a beaucoup marché,/s'impatiente d'arriver/parce qu'il a beaucoup marché' (Ramuz 1918, 2). If we listen for this rhythm, we can use it to trace the influence of soldiers' storytelling on the fairy tale repertoire across Europe.

The Barracks Repertoire and Soldiers as Vectors of Fairy Tale Diffusion

We hear this same rhythm, for example, in the opening to Hans Christian Andersen's *The Tinderbox*: 'A soldier came marching down the road, Left, Right, Left, Right' (Andersen 1835, 1). *The Tinderbox* was not quite Andersen's first published work, but it was the first in the fairy tale genre that made his reputation. His tale of a discharged soldier's acquisition of a magical tinderbox, and his use of it to gain riches and power, remains one of his most popular. However, contemporary Danish reviewers were shocked by its 'moral indifference' and equally dismayed by its disorderly style, characteristic of oral speech (Bredsdorff 1975, 123–24). Modern critics remain disconcerted: according to Maria Tatar, its soldier hero is 'Brutal, greedy and impetuous, he is not much of a role model for children listening to the story' (Tatar 2007, 157). The soldier kills the old woman who directed him to wealth; later he uses three magical dogs summoned by the tinderbox to carry a princess to his room at night. When the king sentences him to death for this act of *lèse-majesté* he orders the same dogs to kill the king, queen, and counsellors. He becomes king himself and marries the princess. She has no say in these proceedings, which is not uncommon for female characters in soldiers' tales. At least Andersen allowed her to express a view on the outcome, whereas in Stravinsky's and Ramuz's *L'Histoire du soldat*, while the male parts are spoken, the princess only gets to silently dance hers.

Andersen did not say explicitly where he learnt this tale, only that it was the kind of entertainment that accompanied workers' gatherings in his native Odense, in the hop gardens in the summer or spinning-rooms in the winter. However, elsewhere he recalled that his father employed this marching rhythm when telling his stories. His father, a shoemaker, had been a volunteer in the Danish army deployed in Holstein in 1813, and it seems this experience had an effect on his storytelling repertoire, which he passed on to his son (Holbek 1990).

The Tinderbox is a version of ATU 562 'The Spirit in the Blue Light'. Its plot, which contrasts spectacular underground treasure-chambers with an everyday object that nonetheless confers enormous power, is clearly related to that of 'Aladdin' (ATU 561), albeit transferred to a European setting. This tale-type's first appearance in print was in the Grimms' second volume of the *KHM* under the heading 'The Blue Light'. In this 1815 iteration, a soldier is dismissed by a king after many years of service, and hopelessly wanders through the country; a story appropriate to the times. He finds work with an old woman, who sends him to fetch a blue light from the bottom of her well. She tries to trick him into passing her the light before he is safely back on ground, and when he refuses, she drops him into the depths. To console himself the soldier lights his pipe with the blue light, at which point a magical servant, a little black man, appears. The soldier orders him to beat the witch to death, then to provide him with gold. The soldier returns to the city, puts up at the best inn, and orders his servant to bring him the princess: 'The king sent me away and let me starve because I could no longer serve him well. Now … She will have to wait on me and do what I command'. These nightly visits continue while the king and the court attempt to trace the culprit, but finally the soldier is caught without his magic light. Through the prison bars, he asks one of his old comrades to fetch his bundle from the inn. On the way to the scaffold he asks for one last favour, to smoke his pipe—smoking was a recognized military vice. The little black man appears and the soldier orders him to 'Beat everyone here to death and tear the king into three pieces'. The king begs for mercy, the soldier takes the kingdom and the princess for his wife (Grimm and Grimm 2014, 383–86).

The Grimms' source for this story was Haxthausen, who heard it from a Mecklenburg soldier with whom he was serving on the Holstein frontier in 1813 (Uther 2021, 249). The soldier was killed near Sehested in December that year. Fighting in the Danish army on the other side was Hans Andersen senior (Andersen 2005, 371–72).

The second appearance of ATU 562 in print was in 1822 in Gaal's Hungarian tales. It is the very first tale in the collection and again, the hero is a soldier of dubious morality returning from the wars. The magical helper in this iteration is a bronze king—in a revolutionary moment, the soldier contemplates decapitating him before he learns how useful he might be. He does, however, kill his own sovereign whose daughter he has ordered to be brought to his room in the inn every night, and assumes his place. 'Then', in an echo of Napoleonic imperial policy, 'all the neighbouring kings and princes became his satellites and dependents' (Gaal 1822, 1–24).

After Andersen, versions proliferated and it is harder to keep track of their order of publication. However, I think the fourth iteration appeared in a collection made in Saxony's borderlands by Friedmund von Arnim, the son of the Grimms' close friends Achim von Arnim and Bettina Brentano. Although recognizably the same plot, the discrepancies and inconsistencies suggest that it derived, as the author claimed, not from a printed source but from oral storytelling. Although Arnim provided few details about his narrators, there are signs that this text had also passed through a barracks. While the hero is not described as a soldier, he uses military language (for

if French military dialect used German terms, German military dialect borrowed from the French): he looks for a 'nachtquartier', he asks where he can 'logiren' and eat a 'portion'. At the end, when his magical giant has disposed of the executioner, the king, and all the 'high-ups', the hero asks the attendant soldiers whether they will swear allegiance to him, which they do without compunction (Arnim 1844, 1: 129–36).

My belief is that tale-type ATU 562 'The Tinderbox' was a soldier-storyteller's adaptation of the Aladdin story, which first appeared in Antoine Galland's French translation of the *1001 Nights* in 1710.[3] The 'oriental' tale had become well known across Europe by the end of the eighteenth century, and was available in various popular genres such as chapbooks and plays. Armies were also vectors of literacy, and NCOs in particular, who provide most of the identifiable barracks storytellers, needed to be literate. Déguignet, whom we met earlier waiting for promotion, initially joined the army in the hope of receiving an education, and although unimpressed by the quality of instruction, he did learn to read and write in French in the army (Déguignet 2001, 159). So soldiers would have access to popular print, and this helped shape their repertoire, a point Mariann Domokos has also made about Gaal's soldier-storytellers (Domokos 2020).

It also seems plausible that this Europeanized and militarized version was spread across the continent by soldier-storytellers. They shared it within the multilingual institutions which were the armies of the Napoleonic Wars, and those who heard it took it home to their villages when they were discharged at the end of the wars. Just as veterans retained their moustaches and pipes as markers of their status as experienced men of the world, so they maintained the storytelling techniques learnt in the army. The ability to narrate in turn enhanced their reputation in their home villages. Unsurprisingly then, the very first version of this tale-type to be recorded in France opens 'Once upon a time there was an old soldier, called La Ramée, who was always drunk and chewing tobacco from morning till night' (Cosquin 1886, 2: 1–6). Type ATU 562 provides evidence for the role of soldiers in the creation and maintenance of the European fairy tale tradition.

I use ATU 562 as an example, but it is not the only tale-type to be strongly associated with soldiers, and perhaps if the genealogy of others was pursued in the same manner, we might find that they also had a home in the barracks, and it was from there that they spread to the wider population. The *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* lists several types that might be considered part of a distinctive soldiers' repertoire (Göttisch 2007). These include:

- ATU 306 'The Danced-out Shoes'
- ATU 307 'The Princess in the Coffin'
- ATU 330 'The Smith and the Devil'
- ATU 361 'Bear-Skin'
- ATU 475 'The Man as Heater of Hell's Kettle'
- ATU 562 'The Tinderbox'
- ATU 785 'Lamb's Heart'
- ATU 812 'The Devil's Riddle'
- ATU 952 'The King and the Soldier'

I would add the following:

- ATU 401A 'The Soldiers in the Enchanted Castle'
- ATU 569 'The Knapsack, the Hat, and the Horn'
- ATU 590 'The Prince and the Armbands'
- ATU 612 'The Three Snake Leaves'

Fairy tale specialists will notice how many of these plots revolve around negative, or at least highly contested, relations with women. The Lithuanian folklorist Jūratė Šlekonytė suggests we might also include ATU 318 'The Faithless Wife' and ATU 301D 'The Princess's Ring' (Šlekonytė 2020). In addition, there are widely encountered variants of other tales—such as ATU 328 'The Boy Steals the Ogre's Treasure', ATU 1082 A 'Singing Contest', ATU 1168 'Various Ways of Exorcising Devils', and ATU 1548 'Stone Soup'—that bear the marks of barracks narration.

However, my purpose in cataloguing versions of ATU 562 was not just to map how soldiers became vehicles of folktale diffusion; rather, it was to understand why soldiers told stories, and the influence such narratives had on soldiers' own cultural formation. Because if ATU 562 can be taken as a guide to soldiers' system of values, it offers a chilling insight into their mentalities, not least in its overt hostility to women. The soldier kills, without need or remorse, the old woman who first directs him towards the treasure; he then abuses the princess, bringing her to his bedroom at night against her will. Barracks storytelling, it seems, actively promoted misogyny and sexual violence as ideal characteristics. However, the fairy-tale soldier's violence extends beyond this one target: any figure of authority is also threatened. The soldier hero kills, or threatens to kill, his king, and often his entire court and the upper echelons of the army too. There is no sense of loyalty to his sovereign, or to the nation, or even to the army as an institution. As the discharged and penniless soldier often complains, none of these have shown any loyalty to him. His only allegiance, and even this is frequently half-hearted and easily suppressed, is to his fellow-soldiers. As he approaches the scaffold, it is one of his comrades who brings him his pack with his magic tinderbox (or magic pipe), which enables him to turn the tables on his executioners.

The value of fantasy is that it allows us to perceive what soldiers might be thinking, even if there were severe limitations on what they could do in practice. The 'unreal' elements of the tale are, therefore, historically meaningful. However, the tale starts out in a more realistic environment, the hand-to-mouth experiences of a discharged soldier let loose in the world. These realist elements of the story are also historically informative, because they show us what mattered to soldiers. In many versions, such as Gaal's and Arnim's, the hero's interactions with various innkeepers, the quality of the linen, the food, the wine, take up more space than all the hero's dealings with the king and his daughter. The cost and quality of food, bedding, and drink preoccupied common soldiers of all nations, to judge by their surviving letters, and the tales echo the tenor of these discussions (Forrest 2002, 133–60).

However, it is also possible that even the most fantastic elements, such as the ability to magically transport desirable women, was not completely remote from

soldier's experiences. In the 1820s, the German novelist and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe helped publish two memoirs by German soldiers who, during the Napoleonic period, started out in French service but who, through capture or desertion, then transferred to the British Army as volunteers in the King's German Legion: such circulations illustrate how easily stories might have spread within military institutions. One of these memoirs recorded a trick played by an old soldier, a lustig one might say, on a younger recruit, while the regiment was garrisoned in Palermo. Trumpeter Vater comes across a young soldier mooning about and asks what ails him. The young soldier declares he is in love, but does not know how to take possession of the young woman concerned.

> 'Oh! If it is nothing more than that, I shall be able to serve you.' Upon this he began to tell him a story of the same kind, which he said had happened to himself, in which he had been assisted by an old soldier, who had likewise taught him the art of compelling any girl to appear with whom a person was enamoured. (Anon. 1826, 321–24)

In fact, the trumpeter is setting up the young soldier for a practical joke, but the joke echoes, in real life, the events of ATU 562. Incidentally, perhaps, elements of the King's German Legion served alongside Haxthausen, and opposite Hans Andersen, in Holstein in 1813.

Cric!

In the second half of this lecture, I will pursue the connections between the world-view of common soldiers and the fantasies they spun in barracks and camps, as well as the connections between soldiers' experiences and soldiers' tales. I will also explore how the attempts to represent soldiers' storytelling in print influenced the development of European literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, as romanticism gave way to realism.

Notes

[1] One person who has written about soldiers' storytelling is me. In this address, I gather and elaborate on previous research published in Hopkin (2000, 2002, 2004, 2019). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the folktale scholars Mariann Domokos and Jūratė Šlekonytė for their insights into soldiers' storytelling in, respectively, Hungary and Lithuania.

[2] Translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[3] Some mystery surrounds the origins of the tale 'Aladdin'. The story appears in no early Arabic or Persian manuscript of *The 1001 Nights*. Galland recorded it, alongside several other stories, from a Maronite visitor from Aleppo to Paris, Hannā Diyāb. In his autobiography Diyāb confirms that 'I told [Galland] some stories that I knew', implying that he felt they belonged with the *Nights*, but he does not clarify where he read or learnt them, so it is always possible that he had 'orientalized' a story that he had heard, perhaps from a soldier or sailor on his journey to Europe (Bottigheimer 2014).

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