Book Reviews

Ravens and Humans in Iceland
Sigurður Ægisson: Hrafninn: þjóðin, sagan, þjóðtrúin. Bókaútgáfan Hólar, Reykjavík 2022. 424 pp. Ill.

Perhaps the most iconic of all bird species in the Northern Hemisphere is the raven. It is an impressive black bird that you cannot fail to notice if it is in your neighbourhood (nowadays we even have it in central Uppsala). You can hear it (the call is very distinctive) and you can see it. The raven has coexisted with humans for thousands of years, so we are closely linked in many ways. In Sweden this is evident not least from all the place names beginning with Ram- (Ramberget, Ramnäs, Ramsele, Ramstavik, etc.), deriving from the Old Swedish name of the bird. Among many indigenous peoples in the circumpolar region, the raven plays an important part in mythology and belief. Because it prefers to live on carrion, it follows hunters, but it also eats food waste where it is on offer. Sheep and reindeer herders regard the raven as a pest, as it is believed to kill newborn lambs and calves. In the Faroe Islands, a beak bounty used to be paid to anyone who killed a raven. Nor did the bird disdain to eat corpses from places of execution when they existed.

The raven is thus a bird that is loaded with symbolism and cultural history, of which there is much to tell. This is also shown by the ornithologically knowledgeable Icelandic clergyman and folklore researcher Sigurður Ægisson, who devotes his latest monograph to the raven. The result is a lengthy volume in large format. The cultural history of the raven in Iceland dates back to the arrival of humans in the 860s, when Flóki Vilgerðarson approached the country's shores. He was also known as Raven-Flóki (Hrafna-Flóki). Flóki was accompanied on the ship by three ravens, the last of which led Flóki to the shores of the island. With this mythical story as a starting point, Sigurður depicts in detail the significance of the raven in Icelandic culture. Apart from an introductory chapter on the biology of the raven in Iceland, most of the book is devoted to human relations (in a broad sense) to the raven, as manifested in various cultural expressions. The chapter with place names starting with *Hrafn-* comprises six pages set in three columns. That alone says something about the importance of the raven.

The raven occurs in proverbs, ballads, folk tales, and literary accounts of all kinds, as is richly exemplified in the book. It is also found in plant names (white cottongrass, *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*, for example, is called *hrafnafífa* in Icelandic) and animal names (the northern minke whale is called *hrafnreyður*). Olaus Magnus's *Carta Marina* from 1539 depicts a white raven on the north coast of Iceland, and a whole chapter is devoted to this rare variant of the raven. The Faroe Islands used to have a population of pied ravens, but they were shot into extinction due to demand from museums around the world.

This is a densely packed book in which the author generously shares his knowledge and his wide reading about the raven. Most of it is devoted to Ice-

landic conditions, and that goes a long way. The book is richly illustrated with maps and historical images of all kinds, as well as photographs taken by the author, who is obviously a skilled bird photographer. We may hope that the book will also be published in English, which would of course increase the audience outside Iceland. The author's books are usually translated for an international readership.

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Belief in an Animated World

Folktro. En besjälad värld. Kurt Almqvist & Lotta Gröning (eds.). Bokförlaget Stolpe. Axel och Margaret Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse för allmännyttiga ändamål, Stockholm 2021. 230 pp. Ill.

In format and design this is a coffee-table book, bound in dark blue cloth, aesthetically designed and richly illustrated with well-known works of art from different eras and in different styles, as well as professional photographs of antique objects and statues. Images often extend over an entire page or spread. The cover picture is a study for the painting "Dancing Fairies" from 1866 by the Swedish artist August Malmström, with dark trees against a sunset and barely visible fairies dancing in a cloud of mist that creeps along the ground. The image sets the theme of the book, as expressed in the title, which means "Folk Belief: An Animated World".

The thirteen articles represent different geographical areas, ranging from ancient India and Egypt, classical Greece and Rome, to the Nordic countries. Chronologically, the articles span from prehistory to the present, and some of them even into the future. The authors are established scholars in their fields – history of religion, Greek, archaeology, ethnology, church history, comparative literature, folkloristics, and Egyptology – and in some cases museum workers. The book is popular science in the normal sense of the term, but it has a scholarly approach with stringent language and meticulous documentation of the sources in endnotes. Most articles are traditionally structured and take the form of presentations, but they are nevertheless informative about their specific topics.

"Belief in a meaningful animated world, in higher beings that, for better or for worse, affect human life in a meaningful way, seems to occur in all times and cultures," states the editor Kurt Almqvist in the Introduction. This declaration thus rejects the German sociologist Max Weber's claim that the world has been "disenchanted" as a result of scientific progress and the decline of religion – *die Entzauberung der Welt*. This problematization, however, is not considered by all the authors, but it highlights the book's underlying idea of showing how the world has been peopled by supernatural beings in different forms at different times, all of which are united in the concept of "folk belief". This term, *folktro* in Swedish, is used in the book in a very broad sense, including everything from religion, belief in pagan gods, cult, ritual, myth, magic, folk beliefs about the water sprite (*näcken*) and the wood nymph (*skogsrået*), the Christmas mass of the dead, witches' journeys to the Brocken (*Blåkulla*), people spirited away into the mountain, and nature worship in the modern sense.

The church historian Joel Halldorf, in his contribution "On the Price of the Enlightenment and the Importance of Re-enchanting the World", takes up the critique of Weber's thesis. The world is not just data that can be collected and sorted into tables; there are more dimensions, he says. Existential questions such as harmony and a sense of spiritual communion with another human being or with nature, connections, patterns, and depth, cannot be captured by natural science with its methods, yet they are

obvious factors in human experience. Halldorf has no answer as to how the "re-enchantment" should take place, but he believes that the first step is to realize "that the modern notion of a contradiction between religion and science is just a notion, and not a given fact". Instead, we must see the material and spiritual as two dimensions of existence that do not compete, but are connected to each other – and we are then freer to explore the "fullness of existence".

The literary historian Lars Lönnroth's contribution, "The Wild Nature of the North: Animated but Deadly", proceeds from the widespread belief that the Norse peoples in the past loved wild nature and its mysterious inhabitants, such as the gods and other supernatural beings. He wonders how true this is. The conclusion that can be drawn from recorded folklore about how people in the past viewed nature is that wild nature was not appreciated, quite the opposite. Nature was something that had to be combated for the sake of humanity's material improvement and spiritual culture. The wilderness, especially the forest, was regarded as a dangerous place with malicious trolls and witches, seductive and lascivious wood nymphs, fairies, water sprites, and other evil beings that sought to harm people's lives, health, and virtue. This is an attitude that Lönnroth believes can already be seen in the creation story of the *Edda*. An animated nature as something romantic, beautiful, and worth loving, an idea that arose among aristocrats, artists, and intellectuals in the eighteenth century, is a delusion. Here I regret that no art historian was invited to participate in the book to shed light on these issues. The many works of art reproduced in the book to represent "folk belief" and the "animation" of nature could have been viewed from a new perspective, not just as illustrations.

The folklorist Camilla Asplund Ingemark, in her article "The Magic Mountain: Belief in the Forces of Nature", considers humans' complex relationship with nature from a slightly different angle than the previous authors. Ingemark presents what she calls a "counter-narrative" to the "narrative" of the scientific revolution and modernity. "We humans and nature – whether we like it or not" have coexisted in such a way that human life and the life of nature cannot really be separated. She then asks the question: What do nature and belief in the forces of nature do to people? What forces have we ascribed to nature and how have they affected us? The author cites examples based on the idea of people being spirited away into the mountain. The magic mountain is understood as a metaphor for the forces of nature, and it is through the actions of the animated nature that it happens. The supernatural beings who lure people into the magic mountain perform an act and thereby express agency. It is therefore important to approach nature and the creatures under its protection, including animals, with respect, and to have a relationship with them and negotiate with them through rites and offerings.

With the coming of modernity, this kind of thinking was abandoned and the forest was transformed into a place for sublime experiences of nature. Visitors to the forest began to look for views, panoramas, and aesthetic experiences. The effect of nature began to be more about how it influenced our individual mood and reflected our national temperament. Ingemark continues the line further into our own time – and into the future. Today we talk about the forces of nature in more sinister ways, such as climate change and natural disasters as revenge on humans for what they have done to nature. Nature is given all the power, and in the age of the Anthropocene mankind will no longer be able to control it. Fear of the inevitable climate catastrophe can be described as a modern form of belief in destiny, Ingemark concludes.

The last part of the book is written by David Thurfjell, historian of religion, "The Feeling of Animated Trees:

Animistic Experiences among Secular Swedes". The author asks why there are so many secularized Swedes today who see nature as animated. Why do they not experience nature in a way that is compatible with modern scientific knowledge? Thurfjell bases his observations on a Nordic research project in which he interviewed people experiencing nature. They describe their walks through the landscape as "opening up space in one's life" and "putting you in touch with the profound dimensions of life". They see their anxieties in perspective and they are struck by a sense of connection with Nature and the Universe. The informants repeatedly talk about a special feeling for trees, which are perceived as benevolent and caring, evoking a sense of security linked to childhood. To interpret this phenomenon analytically, Thurfjell "recycles" the anthropological concept of animism, once launched by Edward Tylor. The concept is given a partly new content. From having denoted primitive peoples' inability to understand the difference between humans and animals, it can now denote a positive reappraisal, as a kind of moral attitude to indigenous peoples' perception of reality. The term animism is used to describe the ability of these groups to see and respect the inherent value of non-human life forms. The animistic experiences of secular Swedes should thus be analysed not primarily as expressions of a specific worldview or outlook on life, but as subjective emotional experiences. Thurfjell's article on animated trees points forward towards a new way of animating the world and nature, which we can also increasingly see comprising animals and their rights and relationship to humans.

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Heritage and Religion in Christiansfeld

Crossroads of Heritage and Religion. Legacy and Sustainability of World Heritage Site Moravian Christiansfeld. Tine Damsholt, Marie Riegels Melchior, Christina Petterson & Tine Reeh (eds.). Berghahn, New York & Oxford 2022. 237 pp. Ill.

In recent years there has been a growing academic interest in the relationship between religion and heritage. This publication adds to this field in a very interesting way. In a cross-disciplinary study to which ethnologists, sociologists, church historians and theologians have contributed, new light is shed on a process whereby a living religious community succeeds in having their material and immaterial culture formally defined as world heritage.

In 1773 a group of Moravians (Danish: *Brødrevenner*) were allowed to establish a settlement in southern Jutland, and in just a few years they were able to build a church, a cemetery, residential buildings and workshops. This establishment was an amazing project, given the fact the many of the Moravians' activities since the 1740s had been formally banned in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway. The centre of the Moravian church was, however, in Saxony, where the founder, Count Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), had his estate. The relationship between Christiansfeld and Germany would become problematic in the 19th century, when political and military conflicts between Denmark and Prussia ended with the southern parts of Jutland becoming part of Prussia (1864) and later the German Empire (1870). Not until 1920, after a plebiscite, were parts of southern Jutland, including Christiansfeld, reunited with Denmark. This dramatic history must be kept in mind when studying Christiansfeld and the Moravian church in Denmark and its way to world heritage status.

The church historians Tine Reeh and Sigrid Nielsby Christiansen investigate

the historiography of the Danish Moravians and the "world view" of an eighteenth-century Moravian as expressed in a diary. Reeh convincingly shows how Danish historians have included the piety and culture of the Moravians in a larger narrative of "Danishness", thus omitting more subversive sources and reports. The ethnologist Tine Damsholt follows up on Christiansen's study of Moravian everyday life and ideals of human life, focusing on the memoirs and the Norwegian author Camilla Collett (1813–1895), who spent some years of her youth in Christiansfeld. The Moravian pastor Jill Voigt demonstrates how the *Lebenslauf* is still a vivid literary genre among the Moravians. The musicologist Peter Hauge investigates some elements of musical practice and interpretation among the Moravians, showing how simplicity and emotion were leading ideals. The sociologist Margit Warburg applies a more general theoretical perspective on how a new religion is founded and spread, comparing the Moravians with the Baha'i religion.

The anthropologist Rasmus Rask Poulsen and the ethnologist Marie Riegels Melchior come closer to the question of heritagization in their chapters on the vital processes of shaping and controlling the narratives about Christiansfeld and the cultural values that were used as arguments for the status of world heritage. The same complex of questions is addressed by the Moravian pastor Jørgen Bøytler, but from the perspective of an "insider".

The theologian Christina Petterson and the Germanist Katherine Faull focus on archival material related to the Danish Moravians, how it is organized and how it could be made digitally accessible.

In an introductory chapter, Reeh and Damsholt give a useful overview of the Moravians, their theology, lifestyle, and also of the implications of the Christiansfeld settlement as situated between the "Danish" and the "German". Emerging Danish nationalism in the nineteenth century and the many military and political conflicts between Prussia/Germany made leading members of the Christiansfeld community ambiguous and undecided with regard to their position. Perhaps the most exciting chapter is the one written by all four editors. They show how making a world heritage site of a living religious community and settlement has created several dilemmas and potential conflicts. To what degree should one focus on the tangible and material aspects of Christiansfeld, e.g. the buildings and the environment, and how deeply should the presentation and communication also include the immaterial, i.e. the religious, moral, and even political dimensions? In many ways, Christiansfeld has chosen to do both, but it might end up as a double-edged sword.

To sum up, this volume is an intriguing introduction to the many attempts to combine religion and heritage production in our part of the world. To concentrate on one such attempt – Christiansfeld – is very rewarding. Despite its ambitions of being a cross-disciplinary study, however, the individual chapters only communicate to a little degree with each other. Without the introductory and concluding chapters, this imbalance would have been more disturbing.

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Stories about Crises and Catastrophes, Past, Present and Future

Katastrophen, Fluten, Weltenbrände. Erzählungen von Krisen und Chancen vom Mittelalter bis heute. Susanne Dinkl, Michaela Fenske, Joachim Hamm & Felix Linzner (eds.). Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2023. 284 pp. Ill.

Various eras in the history of humankind have been haunted by recurrent crises

and, even worse, by catastrophes throwing the normal order of life off balance. In ethnological as well as historical scholarship, the so-called ”dark history” has recently come into focus. Thus, Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) arranged a digital seminar in the autumn of 2023 devoted to “Dark Histories”. I would like to refer to the book *Naturkatastrofer: En kulturhistorie*, written by the Norwegian cultural scientist Kyrre Kverndokk and published in 2015.

In the volume reviewed here, several German and one Austrian scholar focus on stories about the dark history in terms of floods, avalanches, the death of forests etc, from the Old Testament flood up to our present time with climate change, but also to future dystopias as described in literature. The concept of “crisis” is considered by the authors to be an order in common everyday social life under threat. Crises can go on over a longer period, while catastrophes generally are sudden events over a short time.

The scientists got together at an interdisciplinary conference on crises and catastrophes in the German city of Würzburg in 2021. The conference organizers called upon the presenters not to focus solely on negative stories about what happened, but also on issues as to how catastrophes have been able to produce stories about possibilities for a new future after what happened. The authors of the papers have heeded that request. The stories are perceived as a resource leading up to future changes.

In the first chapter, following the introduction, the philologist Dominic Bärsch examines the question of whether the biblical flood could possibly have had the potential to create something new when all that was old had disappeared. The author has looked into what Jewish, Hellenistic and early Christian authors have written. These authors related the tales about the biblical flood to the Christian baptism that points to the baptized individual’s life ahead. Comparisons also exist between the biblical flood and the Christian cross, denoting the spiritual salvation of the human race.

In the second chapter, the Germanist Christian Buhr considers the severe flooding on 16 January 1219 in the Friesland lowlands, now the Netherlands and parts of north-west Germany. The monk Emo, who lived in the afflicted area, has written in detail about this event in a chronicle. Due to a south-western gale, the water masses broke through the previously constructed barriers against the North Sea. According to Emo, the nature and the fury of God were punishing the Friesland people. The catastrophe is explained in terms of both natural philosophy and theology.

In the third chapter, the historian Steffen Petzold addresses the issue of written tales about the uprising against the Emperor Louis the Pious in the years 830 and 833. In written source material there are three different versions of the reign of Louis the Pious, 814–840. Historically, he is portrayed as a weak leader. In the 820s there were major agrarian problems because of the extreme weather that occurred. Livestock and humans were dying, and that in turn caused a political crisis in the 830s. The great French power created during the time of his father, Charlemagne, came to an end during the last years of Louis the Pious. According to German historians in the nineteenth century, this created new possibilities as both the French and the German nations now were able to develop, each on its own terms and no longer within a common great power. Other historians do not accept that Louis the Pious was a weak emperor. Being a devout Christian he proclaimed spiritual penance both at the time of the bad harvest in the 820s and during the riots in 830 and 833. To fight off the catastrophes, it was important that people worked on being good Christians thereby gaining peace with God.

In yet another chapter, the Germanist Joachim Hamm reviews a Latin publi-

cation *Querela Pacis* ("The Complaint of Peace") published by the well-known Christian humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam in 1517. The book bears the stamp of a struggle for peace in a war-torn Europe. The author lets the peace goddess Lady Peace be heard. He also uses the Greek concept *kairós,* that is, looking forward to a new order in a crisis that has led to a vacuum. Lady Peace is against current thinking about righteous wars. Human beings were created for peace. According to Erasmus, every war leads away from God. War is not compatible with the message of the New Testament. These aspirations for peace in the texts of Erasmus were also criticized by contemporary individuals at that time. The author perceives the texts as being tales. These texts have been influential in times of crises long after the passing of Erasmus, and have been translated into several languages.

In one chapter the historian Andreas Bähr highlights tales about the Thirty Years War in 1618–1648. Here we find stories about and interpretations of how celestial phenomena were believed to be able to affect life on earth. Such phenomena caused more harm than good. One example is a comet that was sighted in 1618. It was interpreted as a warning and was considered in a chronicle to be connected to the start of the war in 1618. A spiritual leader urged people to immediate penance and conversion. That the comet in 1618 could be observed for thirty days was commented on by writers following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

In one chapter the historian Anuschka Tischer analyses 34 published sermons for the dead that were delivered during the Thirty Years War. The funeral orations sermons were for deceased individuals from higher strata in society, primarily with a Protestant background. The ongoing war was consistently talked about even though not all deaths were war-related. This occupied the minds of those writing these sermons. In this chapter they are treated as personal statements, since the authors generally knew the deceased individuals well.

In another chapter the ethnologist Silke Göttsch-Elten uses books of maxims to highlight tales from serfs on manors in Schleswig-Holstein in the eighteenth century. The concept of crisis is used here to refer to when the serfs were accused in court of opposition by the lord of the manor who controlled them. They dared to criticize things despite risking sanctions. Statements recorded as first-person narratives give an idea of the self-image and self-confidence among the serfs. The tales about opposition are also an expression of collective action. They may have contributed to changes, as serfdom was abolished in 1805.

In one chapter the cultural scientist Sandro Ratt analyses various stories about an avalanche catastrophe in a mountain area in Austria in January 1954. Some 125 individuals were killed, which was one sixth of the entire population in that troubled area. Many buildings and whole forest areas were destroyed. In this situation it was essential to understand what had happened and plan ahead for new opportunities. One storytelling tradition, mentioned in newspapers, pointed to anomalies in the past. Another storytelling tradition wanted to return to the living conditions prevailing before the catastrophe. There was a clear focus on continuity. Previous safety precautions were sufficient and should be kept. The avalanche was considered an unpredictable one-time event. Nature does not follow the laws of natural science.

The physician and psychotherapist Malte Meesmann writes about how stories can create hope when treating an illness and thereby cause medical improvement in a crisis. The idea is that body and soul are one and that this has to be taken into consideration when treating patients.

The ethnologist and psychotherapist Bernd Rieken continues the discussion in the previous chapter and points out

the importance of giving consolation to patients suffering from mental anguish and depression. Ethnological interviews can serve as psychotherapy. I myself have experienced that on several occasions when doing interviews on emotional themes, for example about death or about conflicts related to the life of the person interviewed.

The ethnologist Laura Hoss devotes one chapter to the death of forests because of the current climate crisis. The order of nature is thrown off balance. The author of this article did some interviews in 2020 and 2021 with different actors involved in forest development. The stories consider what humans can do about the ongoing forest destruction in Germany. Many of the stories were pessimistic. The future was seen as unsure, but there were also some positive voices pointing to climate-tolerant trees as an example. Due to the climate crisis, bats, insects and some bird species experience improved survival possibilities in hollow and dead trees.

In a following chapter, the forest scientist Jörg Müller points to the fact that dead trees can offer something good. Insects and beetles do better in this kind of environment and do not run the risk of being eradicated.

In the next to last chapter Dieter Wrobel, whose subject is the teaching of literature, focuses on current youth literature in both Germany and England and its focus on stories about future dystopias. This also means criticism of the current society, which in this type of literature is seen in the rear-view mirror. Actions in the present day have dystopic consequences for the future. The literature concerns the current climate catastrophe and the destruction of nature that needs to be dealt with.

In the last chapter, the ethnologist Michaela Fenske has an interview with the director of the Arts Society in Frankfurt/Main, Franziska Nori, who is in charge of exhibitions. The issue is about how art exhibitions, in collaboration with natural scientists, can be viewed as stories about the current ecology crisis and offer new perspectives for the future – that is, pointing to the need for changes in lifestyle and a change of attitude towards nature in order for humanity to survive.

This volume gives a broad picture of various attitudes towards crises, in particular catastrophes with a long historical perspective. The interdisciplinary approach is important for highlighting both cultural and natural scientific perspectives when the authors in the book primarily discuss natural catastrophes. The book is an important contribution to the international research field of "dark history".

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The History of Death as an Idea
Dödens idéhistoria. Karin Dirke, Andreas Hellerstedt & Martin Wiklund (eds.). Appell Förlag, Stockholm 2022. 334 pp. Ill.

Impressive! Inspiring! Interesting! Whatever words I choose, this review will seem flat. This is a book that you must experience for yourself. As I see it, we have here a new classic in research on death; in my bookshelf it has its given place next to Louise Hagberg's *När döden gästar* (1937/2015) and Olav O. Aukrust's *Dødsrikets verdenshistorie: Menneskehetens forestillinger og kunskap om livet etter døden* (1985).

With the history of Western and Swedish ideas as a theoretical starting point and an established conceptual framework, nine articles written from different angles illustrate how people's conceptions of death have changed in time and space, from antiquity to the present day. The editors deserve high praise for their well-planned and well-structured preparatory work, including a number of overarching questions concerning

beliefs about life after death and how these have affected people's lives, fears, and hopes regarding their own death, the dead, and killing. The questions are intended to serve as a basis and inspiration for the authors, and also to connect the texts chronologically, but they also give the reader a broader interpretive perspective. During the course of the work the texts have also been discussed in various forums, at seminars and workshops. All this means that the result is a uniform and coherent collection of texts on the essence of death, the realm of the dead, and life after death, as reflected in literature, funeral sermons, theological writings, the poetry of Romanticism, spiritism, hunting and animal husbandry, anatomical science, Ingmar Bergman films, and the threat of nuclear accidents and nuclear war.

Basically, the volume deals with different perspectives on mankind's eternal struggle against death, attempts to alleviate anxiety about death, and to find answers to the question of the anatomy of death, in other words: what is death and why do we die? The book shows how little evolution has actually influenced our way of talking about and relating to death; we share the same fear of death as people in the Middle Ages, not because we are intimidated by authorities to live a life that guarantees a good death, but because, despite the fact that death is visible everywhere, we still prefer to conceal and forget it. The authors of the articles lucidly demonstrate where people in different times have found models by which to best ease their anxiety of death – and even to buy themselves more time on earth.

The book definitely adds interesting new dimensions to the question of death, how people talk about death and how one should relate to it. It is with a pleasing creativity that the authors shed light on the ancient theme of death. However, the art of dying certainly requires continued active discussion, given how radically and how quickly society has changed. Questions arise about how the escalating violence in everyday life, in our vicinity, in the world, in films, in books, in games, and in music affects our perception of death. Has the constant threat of violence and death numbed us and made indifferent about the future? Hopelessness and weariness of life are already visible as signs of increasing mental ill-health among young people. And how does symbolic death – in the form of unemployment, loneliness, vulnerability, and life-threatening illnesses – affect the way we relate to death?

I greatly appreciate the long historical perspective in the book, because the history of death is genuinely interesting. And the fact is that we need to understand our history in order to relate to our own time, and possibly also to understand it better. The introduction to the volume is by far the most interesting thing I have read in a long time. It creates a holistic view and gives us the perspective to understand the patterns and how they change in the world around us. The works cited, both recent and established classics on the subject, contribute to a deeper understanding of the individual articles and also provide hints for new reading experiences on the matter. Many of the interesting aspects that are highlighted, such as Judith Butler's article from 2004 on the grievable and the ungrievable, are highly topical in this time of war and disaster.

The conclusion ties it all together in an exemplary fashion. One could say that death is our invisible companion every day and in everything we do. Sometimes it follows us at a safe distance, sometimes it is menacingly present. Death is one phenomenon among many, and the more we learn about it, the less threatening it appears. It is also worth reading the conclusion before tackling the articles, as a way to broaden one's interpretative basis, as one is inspired to think and interpret *ars moriendi* in new ways from a contemporary point of view. In the conclusion, the reader is encouraged to look for similarities and differences in the way of thinking about death, instead

of framing death as "past" and "present"; the same concept has different meanings in different times in different societies. Some tendencies, however, are obvious: (1) death as homecoming and reunification versus death as total nothingness; (2) the death of an individual, where living in a certain way can influence one's time on earth, versus anonymous, collective, and indiscriminate death; and (3) the dead body versus the living soul. Death as a phenomenon is in many ways universal, while in the individual contact with death there are huge differences.

What further enhances the reading experience is the professionalism that permeates the whole book, from the layout, the choice of paper, and the illustrations, to the exemplary language. All this testifies to carefully considered and highly ambitious planning and follow-up. The book is a delight to the eye and the mind. One tiny annoying detail in the table of contents is that the symmetry is disturbed because of a missing dash in the subheading of chapter 3.

Andreas Hellerstedt's article, "Descended to the Dead: A Journey through the Premodern Afterlife", is not only an extremely interesting and instructive description of the anatomy of the realm of the dead in different times and cultures, but also gives an insight into the history of power and moral doctrine. The realm of the dead is a physical and highly hierarchical place, where power and evil rule, discrimination is exercised, and rewards and punishments are meted out on the basis of the rank and deeds of the dead person. But there is also a kind of justice in the varying degrees of punishment. *Gilgamesh*, the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, the *Edda*, *Phaedo*, *La Divina Commedia*, *Paradise Lost*, religions and philosophies have their various conceptions of the realm of the dead, and with the aid of these, people have navigated their way through the norms prevailing at different times. The guided tours of the underworld in different periods demonstrate with a lamentable clarity that we have learned nothing from our history; on the contrary, evil seems to be more attractive than good. Hell is still for many a physical place that exists every day in different forms in different micro and macro environments. There is a profound truth in John Milton's thesis that good and evil are states of mind and identities that exist within the individual, and that at any moment we choose which one brings the greatest benefit.

Erland Sellberg's article, "Breaking the Sting of Death: The View of Death in the Lutheran World", takes the reader to seventeenth-century Sweden and the Lutheran deathbed. The Reformation led to significant changes in both the rituals and the thinking around death and burial. The essential thing was no longer to secure the dead person's journey to and sojourn in the realm of the dead, but that the mourners could be comforted by the knowledge that death meant eternal life in God's grace for those who had complete faith in God's wisdom and love. Death itself was the same for all – with certain exceptions: only true believers earned their place in the kingdom of God, while the unbelievers were denied eternal life and even a place in the cemetery. Funeral ceremonies and sermons also varied depending on the rank and position of the dead in society. The funeral and the sermon made death visible and reminded people that death must not be suppressed – *memento mori* was the watchword of the time. Yet the question arises: If the believer does not actually die but ends up in heaven, for whom does the Last Judgement apply and what is the need for it?

Elisabeth Mansén's article "Drain your Glass, See Death Awaits You: On Death and the Afterlife in the Eighteenth Century" is a fascinating survey of how the Swedish culture of death changed in keeping with new currents of ideas and events in both Sweden and Europe. Through examples mainly taken from art, music, and poetry, but also politics, philosophy, and religion, she shows

how the view of death and the afterlife began to be perceived as the ultimate freedom, an escape from torment and misery. Death is viewed as democratic, although social status and economic resources still affected where and how a person was buried. A more individual cult of memory arose as a result of death becoming a private matter, while private grief also became more visible. Death was embellished in art, music, and literature. Regardless of whether this should be seen as a consequence or a cause of the altered view of life after death, the focus shifted from Old Testament judgement and punishment to New Testament grace and forgiveness. The new tenet was that the judgement on a person falls at the moment of death when one meets one's God, has one's sins forgiven, and comes home to a heavenly family.

In his article "Death in Swedish Romanticism: Liberation and the Path to a Truer Life", Roland Lysell shows through extracts from poems by Atterbom, Stagnelius, and Wallin how death changes character and becomes a friend. The poets' views are coloured by ideas about the good death releasing a person from the travails of mortality and serving as a path to a truer life and eternal bliss. Notions about death and grief, longing and hope for reunion, resurrection, and true joy show that death is perceived as something bright. Yet we also see clearly how the Christian Lutheran tradition permeates the poems, which is only natural: they are products of their time.

Inga Sanner's article, "Where Death Is, There We Are Too: Theory and Practice of Spiritists at the Turn of the Last Century", was an eye-opener for me. The history of spiritism is captivating, demonstrating a new way of trying to understand and obtain an answer to the question of what happens after life ends. The external attributes such as séances, mediums in trance, ectoplasm, and the presence of the dead reinforce the taint of superstition, but the article shows that spiritism is actually a doctrine that was a living part of its time and reflected the influence of many things, including Christianity, psychology, physics, astronomy, the evolution of society, moralism, but also wishful thinking. Spiritism offered hope for a prolongation of life, a new existence for the wiser, spiritual true self.

Karin Dirke's article, "Unmentionable Death: Animals Dying and Humans Killing", is about how the attitude to dead animals and the killing of animals, whether pets, useful animals, predatory beasts, or game animals, has changed and how the killing has been justified over a 200-year period in Sweden. At the same time, it is a history of the work of animal welfare associations to ensure a more humane and dignified death for animals. For pets, this meant a painless death at the vet's, with burials and gravestones, either in the garden or in animal cemeteries. The methods of slaughter must not cause unnecessary distress or pain to useful animals. Hunting had to be fair, giving the animal a chance to escape. In order to legitimize killing, rules were established for how and when hunting could be conducted and more accurate hunting weapons were developed.

In the article "The Valuable Corpse. On Knowledge, Desire, and Grievability in the Intellectual History of Anatomy", Annika Berg shows how the function of the dead body as an object of knowledge in different times and societies has changed, from being exhibited as curiosity and as a reminder of the transience of life, and as a way to make death comprehensible by touching the skeleton of one's dead child, to today's anatomical dissections for the purposes of medical education and forensic inquiry. Using "the dregs of society", body snatching, and even murder were ways to cope with the shortage of corpses in some countries. It is fascinating to read about how Sweden passed laws regulating whose dead body could be used as an object of instruction. Ethical principles gave way to practical needs. Today the reasons

cited as justification would lead to the downfall of individual decision-makers and whole governments.

Martin Wiklund discusses in the article "Fear of Death and Reconciliation in Life in the Twentieth Century: Ingmar Bergman and the Art of Dying" how the perception of death and life after death changed as a result of the senseless killing in the Second World War. Based on philosophy and with examples from Victor Sjöström's *The Phantom Carriage* (1921) and Ingmar Bergman's films *Eva* (1948), *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries* (1957), and *Cries and Whispers* (1973), he shows that the precept was no longer forgiveness of sins and a life in heaven, but a philosophy of life in which a person's actions create both a hell and a paradise on earth for themselves and other people. What is valuable in life is obtained through self-examination and reconciliation with oneself, one's life, and one's fellow human beings, and through an understanding of what is essential and meaningful. This is a thought-provoking article. What I have always wondered about is why "Death" is portrayed as a grim (and rather frightening) man in black. I would much prefer to see death as Helen Mirren's "Death" in David Frankel's film *Collateral Beauty* (2016).

We have come full circle. The first article describes man-made realms of the dead as places of punishment and penance, with permanent containment in heaven or hell. The last article also describes a man-made realm of the dead, the difference being that death itself is the permanent containment. Johan Fredrikzon's article, "Death by Radiation: How We Learned to Live with Radioactivity in the Body, in the Ground, and over Time", is a detailed and instructive, fascinating and at times frightening survey of the history of death by radiation, the possibilities and current and future threats of radioactive death, all created by man. Whereas a cosmic collision led to the death of the dinosaurs, it is now man who has started the process that will probably lead to, if not the end of the planet, then at least the destruction of humanity. The future for coming generations does not look so bright.

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Magic Users in Ostrobothnia

Karolina Kouvola: Cunning Folk As Other. Vernacular Beliefs about Magic Users in Premodern Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnian Rural Community. University of Helsinki, Helsinki 2023. 102 pp. Ill. Diss.

Karolina Kouvola's dissertation in history of religion and folklore studies deals with the premodern Finland-Swedish tradition of "cunning folk" and beliefs about people who were considered to be skilled in magic. The examples cited come from Ostrobothnia, a region that has generated a rich corpus of Swedish-language material on the subject.

Kouvola's main research question is: How were these "cunning" or "wise" (Swedish *kloka*) people othered in the Swedish-speaking villages of Ostrobothnia? This question is answered through four separate studies, three published as articles and the fourth still awaiting publication at the time of writing. These studies broaden our knowledge of the popular beliefs and worldview of premodern Ostrobothnian communities, meaning the time around the turn of the last century. Ostrobothnia then was profoundly influenced by revival movements that influenced the local communities where the magic users lived and worked. The othering of these individuals is investigated by studying beliefs and local sociocultural factors, important among which are socioeconomics and gender.

The concept of *othering* is used in the dissertation to designate a social act to distinguish a group or specific individ-

uals from the rest of society (p. 62). It is thus a way of using power-driven stereotypes to make a distinction between groups of people. These boundaries are drawn by people in an "in-group", a group that exists within the community and follows its tacitly agreed rules. It is the voices of these people that are heard, in this case in the source material, while those who were othered are those whom the first group considered to be outside the norm. Othering constitutes the central theoretical framework of the dissertation.

Kouvola's main aim is "to bring forward new and localised information about cultural models on magic and witchcraft by analysing various othering aspects and considering the use of magic in a local sociocultural environment. Individually, each of these aspects serve as an example of othering by categorising magic users based on the theory of limited good and its regulation, promoting the knowledge of one health authority over that of another, and othering a person considered deviant as a transgressor of social boundaries" (p. 16).

In addition, there are two secondary aims. One is to combine theoretical discussions in folkloristics with those in the history of religion, a discipline that answers questions about beliefs and places them in their proper historical contexts. As a scholar of religion Kouvola thus uses folklore source material and previous folkloristic research to broaden her understanding of popular beliefs.

The third aim is to link Finland-Swedish folklore to a scholarly discussion about magic users, both nationally and internationally. Kouvola seeks to highlight the Swedish-speaking tradition as the unique and important source of narratives about magic skills that it is.

The source material consists of records from the archives of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, collected in the decades around the turn of the last century. The material is extensive: Kouvola mentions 299 records of varying length and discusses the demarcations and problems that arise when the word *troll* occurs, referring both to people skilled in magic and to the supernatural beings that the word also denotes. The word *häxa* (witch) also causes definition problems because it is sometimes unclear whether it refers to a human being with magical knowledge or the kind of witch who was persecuted and burned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for making pacts with the devil and travelling to the Brocken. Both senses can be found in the source material.

Close reading, content analysis, and discourse analysis are used as methods in the separate studies. Close reading refers to a detailed reading of the material, placing the beliefs in a wider cultural context. Content analysis involves finding patterns and meanings rather than narrowly focusing on individual words. These methods require an intimate knowledge of the material, and it is obvious that Kouvola knows her material. Discourse analysis, which is used in the third article, is a fitting complement that gives results very similar to those obtained through close reading and content analysis. Kouvola believes that the talk about witchcraft and witches creates categories of people who were considered to be magic users, whose actions in turn generate talk about them.

In article I, "Travellers, Easter Witches and Cunning Folk: Regulators of Fortune and Misfortune in Ostrobothnian Folklore in Finland", Kouvola analyses 299 records of beliefs using Mary Douglas's formulation of the powers that control fortune and misfortune in a community based on the idea of the *limited good*. The concept means that if your neighbour is successful in, for example, animal husbandry, it is at the expense of you and your good luck. According to Douglas's power structure, danger and misfortune come from outside the boundaries of the community, but also from within the community. The source material reflects an awareness

of individuals who could harm others, and how one could protect oneself from them. Three categories of power emerge in the material: that used by people outside the community, that which is generally used within the community, and that which is used by the othered individuals inside the community.

The first group, often made up of foreign itinerants of various kinds, could cross the boundaries between "inside the community" and "outside the community" and were thus threatening because they could upset social structures. These people were feared but were often treated well when visiting homes because it was believed that they could cause harm if they were offended.

The second group consisted of so-called ordinary people who knew about the magical structures regulating fortune. They could perform daily rituals to protect themselves and their possessions, but they did so within the limits of the normal.

The third group consisted of the othered cunning folk. They represented magical knowledge in the community and possessed the ability to cross magical boundaries. Their knowledge was deeper than that of ordinary people and they intervened when normal household skills were not sufficient. This meant that these people could also be seen as a threat.

In article II, "Ambiguous Characters: Cunning Folk in the Swedish Ostrobothnian Belief Narratives", Kouvola focuses on the ambivalence and the motifs in 272 records about cunning folk. The material is divided into two categories: records about local magic users and named individuals, and records about cunning folk in general. The material displays collective models of thought regarding the stories told about magic users. The majority of the named cunning folk are men. When women are mentioned, they are often referred to as witches, and it is difficult to determine whether the word has negative connotations because it is often used as a synonym for "wise". As a rule, Kouvola says, witches are not described as being helpful or healing. Healing, in particular, stands out as the most important task performed by cunning folk. Another reason for visiting cunning folk was to get help in finding lost or stolen items.

Article III, "No 'Wise' Men or Women but Real Doctors! Stigmatizing Discourses on Magical Healing in Ostrobothnian Newspapers", examines public discourses on folk medicine in contemporary newspapers. With the introduction of public health care around the turn of the last century, the cunning folk and their magical healing were criticized. The material in the study consists of 54 newspaper texts that stigmatize folk medicine. By combining discourse analysis with Bruce G. Link's and Jo C. Phelan's model of how a person or group is stigmatized, Kouvola has investigated the process of stigmatization. She shows how it was inspired by enlightenment and religion, and she also points to power differences between urban and rural areas, between the medical and teaching professions, along with the clergy, and the often uneducated population in rural areas. The voices that are heard in newspapers argued that only "simple" people in the countryside went to "witches" because they believed that diseases were inflicted on them by evil powers. The newspaper texts represent a public discourse that puts its faith in the clergy and the medical profession rather than in concepts of magical healing.

Article IV, "'The Devil Was with Her' – Othered Social Identity of a Finland-Swedish Ostrobothnian Cunning Woman", like Article III, uses texts from newspapers but also archival records as source material. These focus on Lovisa Törndal (1835–1918) from Kimo in Oravais, and Kouvola conducts a case study of her social identity as an othered character, based on her reputation as being knowledgeable in magic. In the narrative about Törndal we see many of the recurrent motifs about cunning folk: she did not behave as expected of

women in general, and she was also said to transcend magical boundaries, for example by visiting graveyards to practise her magical vocation. Her transgressions led people to believe that she had entered into a pact with the devil, and her sociocultural peculiarities made her a publicly othered character. At the same time, her distinctiveness was a positive quality, for example when collectors of folk traditions visited her village and she attracted their interest; this can be interpreted as a confirmation of her knowledge. The study shows how stories of boundary transgressions and the violation of societal norms, while also carrying on a tradition, combine to label a person as a witch.

Kouvola elegantly problematizes the source material and its shortcomings, such as the fact that collectors of folk traditions around the turn of the last century rarely or never noted the contexts required to fully understand the role of traditions in society. She even argues that the context is not as lost as many scholars have hitherto believed, since her research method emphasizes the contextual knowledge available in the records. She treats her material with care and respect, for example by focusing in the study of Törndal on the narrated models and motifs that were attributed to witches, instead of on her personal characteristics, since Törndal's own voice is not preserved in the archives. Kouvola also demonstrates how the historical and spatial context is required to fully understand archival material.

Cunning Folk As Other is a well-written and thorough dissertation that sheds light on a hitherto overlooked part of the premodern Swedish-speaking folk culture in Finland. The four studies constitute an exhaustive whole on the subject of the othering of magic users, and they fill a large research gap in both folklore studies and history of religion.

Finally, I would also like to give Kouvola extra praise for her meticulousness and her ambition in tackling a material that is not only in Swedish, a language that Kouvola, as I understand it, knows but does not use in everyday life, but also in an archaic dialect of Swedish. I am familiar with the material in question, and even though I understand Ostrobothnian dialects, the language can be difficult to understand even for me. Kouvola has moreover translated the source material, with all its special terminology, into English. It is with great respect for her efforts that I read this dissertation.

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Landscapes of Pilgrimage in Norway
Hannah Kristine Bjørke Lunde: Pilgrimage Matters. Administrative and Semiotic Landscapes of Contemporary Pilgrimage Realisations in Norway. University of Oslo 2022. 380 pp. Ill. Diss.

Hannah Lunde defended her doctoral dissertation *Pilgrimage Matters: Administrative and Semiotic Landscapes of Contemporary Pilgrimage Realisations in Norway* at the University of Oslo in October 2022. The main aim of the dissertation is to investigate the administrative and semiotic processes involved in realizing pilgrimage landscapes in Norway. The study is centred on the two case studies of the Sunniva Route to the island of Selja and the St Olav Ways to Trondheim.

In the last few decades there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in pilgrimage worldwide. In the Western world, much attention has focused on the Camino de Santiago, which experienced immense popularity after being declared a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe as well as being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Notably, a large number of Camino pilgrims come from the Protestant parts of Europe, not least the Nordic countries. Moreover, pilgrimage routes have been

actively re-established in Scandinavia, the St Olav Ways and the Saint Birgitta Ways being among the most prominent. As was the case with the Camino de Santiago, cultural heritage has been a significant factor in the revival of pilgrimage routes in Scandinavia.

Parallel with the growing trend of practising pilgrimage, there has also been an increase in scholarly interest. Works such as Reader & Walter (1993) and Coleman & Eade (2004) opened up new perspectives on understanding and studying the complex phenomenon of pilgrimage in modern times. Importantly, these new theoretical and methodological directions placed a strong emphasis on movement and embodiment. Many recent studies have explicitly focused on the personal experiences of pilgrims. However, the present study highlights an aspect of pilgrimage that has been much less explored, namely, the perspective of administrating and realising the pilgrimage routes.

The empirical material of the study consists of two thorough case studies, the Sunniva Route to the island of Selja and the St Olav Ways to Trondheim, which are analysed in a comparative perspective. The ethnographic material consists of interviews, participant observations and, to some extent, autoethnography. In addition, Lunde has cooperated with the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History in creating a questionnaire, which is also utilized for the study. As the focus is on the administration and conceptualization of pilgrim routes, the ambitions and visions of stakeholders (such as "pilgrim bureaucrats" and "long-term pilgrims") take centre stage rather than the experiences of individual pilgrims. In theoretical terms, the perspectives of frame analysis and visual methodology are employed to examine the processes of anchoring pilgrimage as motif, practice and place. The author also makes use of the concepts "absent presences" and "adjacency" in analysing the flexibility and complexity of contemporary pilgrimage.

The outline of the book is clear and logical. The first chapter describes the purpose of the study and goes on to give a historical background to the phenomenon of pilgrimage as well as an overview of international pilgrimage studies. The second and third chapters, respectively, present the conceptual framework and the methodological approach. The more analytical part of the work commences with the fourth chapter "Pilgrimage timescapes", in which the author discusses how historical sources come to influence the pilgrim experience. The semiotic reading is one of the cornerstones of the dissertation and is developed further in the following chapters. Chapter five delves into the management and development of the St Olav Ways to Nidaros Cathedral, while chapter six deals with the project of the Coastal Pilgrimage Route and the Sunniva route to Selja. In chapter seven, the main findings of the previous chapters are exemplified and elaborated through fieldwork perspectives. A reflective conclusion completes the book.

In the introduction, the author states that an additional aim of investigating the administrative and semiotic landscapes is to demonstrate the value of visual methodology in exploring how landscapes are frames and mediated. This undertaking constitutes one of the many strengths of the dissertation as the author consistently and convincingly foregrounds how symbols and objects work as tools to frame pilgrimage routes and, consequently, also interpretations and experiences. Lunde's pairing of the "visibility" and the "visitability" of pilgrimage elegantly illuminates the processes of administrating and creating pilgrimage landscapes. In line with the emphasis on visual methodology, the text is amply illustrated. Importantly, the images work not merely as aesthetic features but as integral parts of the discussion.

A consequence of strongly foregrounding one perspective is that other aspects tend to recede into the back-

ground. Here, the focus on the visual somewhat clashes with the author's statement that pilgrimage is an embodied practice. Although the author pays attention to sounds, as well as tactile and olfactory aspects in her fieldwork, the senses beyond the visual are not discussed analytically. Another perhaps surprising omission, considering the comparative approach of the dissertation, is that not more is made of the gender aspect in comparing St Sunniva and St Olav. It also seems that more could have been made of de Certeau's concepts of strategies and tactics, which are applied to differing views on the landscape but not employed to open up the discussion on the interesting relationship between grassroots and administrative models in Norwegian pilgrimage. Still, these are all minor points in what is otherwise an ambitious and comprehensive work. Lunde's systematic situating of the empirical material in a larger framework is commendable: the author moves skilfully between micro and macro perspectives and pays attention to local, national and international aspirations and trends. The thoroughness of the present work also deserves mentioning. Lunde leaves no loose ends, and extensive explanations and side discussions are provided in ample footnotes. These are especially helpful for non-Norwegian readers who might not be familiar with certain points regarding e.g. Norwegian history, local administration and laws.

The overall impression is of a rich and insightful study that clearly demonstrates competence in employing various ethnographic methods, as well as the author's ability to analyse the empirical material through discerningly chosen theoretical and methodological approaches. Despite a large body of previous studies on pilgrimage, this impressive work constitutes a valuable contribution to the field.

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Female Legend Tellers

Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdottir: In Their Own Voices. A Reconstruction of the Legend Traditions of Icelandic Women in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. School of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics, University of Iceland, Reykjavik 2023. 301 pp. Ill. Diss.

With her dissertation Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdottir joins a contemporary tendency among folklorists to return to the archives, which they supposedly had abandoned during the late twentieth-century wave of performance studies. Today, in Iceland, the Ísmús database offers easy access to a large collection of digitalized tape-recorded interviews, open to be approached with new methods and new sets of research questions. Júlíana has applied gender-based methods of analysis to study women's legend traditions.

The purpose of the dissertation is stated as being "to explore how the legend traditions of women born in the late nineteenth century were both shaped by, and interacted with their gender and life experience, and the places and spaces they inhabited". However, the headline above the paragraph uses "aims" in the plural form, and in the summary in the "Conclusions" chapter the plural is repeated: "As stated at the start of this thesis, the purpose of this project was to gain insight into *a broad range of issues* (my italics) concerning the legend traditions of Icelandic women in the past." This "broad range" is further developed in four "key questions" at the beginning of the dissertation, also repeated in the concluding chapter. Not surprisingly, what is won by breadth is arguably lost in depth.

In a certain sense, the format of the dissertation can also be said to support a broader approach to the disadvantage of a deeper analysis. A quality difficult to avoid in summary theses is that, since the included articles were originally published separately, they, when pre-

sented together, may stand out as partly overlapping and partly insufficient. From this point of view, Júlíana's texts show richness in their historical and ethnographic descriptions of the traditional Icelandic society with its turf farms where the *kvöldvökur* in the *baðstofa* offered wonderful storytelling opportunities. Sadly, in a folklorist's opinion, however, a closer analysis of the legends *qua* narratives is one of the fields that are sparsely explored in the dissertation.

After Júlíana's initial statements that early male contributors to the folklore archives sometimes had a tendency to ignore or even distort female traditions, the reader might be surprised by her choice of a male collector to provide the source material for her dissertation. The decision to use the interviews of Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson is nevertheless convincingly justified by a description of his qualities as an interviewer. When working with his informants he was calm, attentive, curious, and friendly. He started every interview with an informal conversation about the narrator's biography, thus producing valuable background information. He had the ambition to record the entire repertoires of his informants and returned several times to his narrators, some of them contributing close to 70 separate legends. Indirectly, Júlíana's study constitutes a well-deserved homage to one excellent folklorist of the twentieth century.

In the title of the dissertation, the scope of the investigation is limited to legends. Júlíana's discussion of the legend genre rests on the works of Nordic scholars such as Lauri Honko, Brynjulf Alver, and Juha Päntikäinen, but also includes Elliot Oring's *Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth* from 2008. Appropriately, Júlíana gives an overview of the published Icelandic legend collections, which can be regarded as antecedents to the tape-recorded material she uses. For the analyses of individual narrators' repertoires Júlíana leans on the classical folklore studies, ranging from Mark Asadowski and Gyula Ortutay to Linda Dégh, Juha Pentikäinen, and Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. The author's knowledge of relevant theories appears to be solid up till 10 or 15 years ago, which is a competence level she shares with this reviewer.

To these mainly Nordic and European, mainly twentieth-century works are added newer computer-based methods developed by the North American folklorist Timothy R. Tangherlini, aimed at unveiling otherwise hidden patterns in large corpora of narratives.

Júlíana emphasizes (in somewhat oversimplified statements, to be honest) how performance enthusiasts from the 1960s onwards distanced themselves from archive material because of its supposed lack of contextual information. Her ambition to understand the role of the telling situations where the studied women heard and learnt legends, retold them to "authentic" audiences and to the collector naturally leads her to apply performance-inspired perspectives.

As far as I have been able to find out, the sound clips available at the Ísmús home page are at least partially transcribed. To be able to fully evaluate Júlíana's work it would have been useful to know whether she has used the Ísmús transcriptions as her primary source material or if she has made her own interpretations of the recordings, since we all know that transcription is an analytical act.

The application of Tangherlini's computerized methods required the creation of a database, where 350 content-based labels (partly congruent with Sagnagrunnur's keywords) were applied to the 2,235 legends which were collected from 200 women and 25 men. The computers easily produced graphs showing the gender, professions, and favourite motifs of the tellers down to the exact percentage numbers. The results achieved are indisputable since computers do not miscalculate. We are told that women were more geographically mobile and more socially diverse than expected. Consequently, women who

had moved had larger repertoires than those who had not. Women's legends had more female characters and they touched upon partly different themes than men's. Women told more ghost stories and more supernatural memories, especially concerning dead males and *huldufólk*.

Júlíana suggests as one plausible interpretation of these facts that legends about the supernatural can offer opportunities to talk indirectly about hidden personal concerns, values, and problems. Exact figures are never wrong as a basis for knowledge, but an outsider would have needed more generous guidance to fully understand why and how these pieces of information are useful.

It could have been informative to have been invited into the researcher's workshop to follow in detail the work with one single narrative. Which criteria were used to determine whether the label *huldufólk* should be attached to a certain legend or not? Was it enough that the word was mentioned, or should one or several of the *huldufólk* appear in "person" as active agents or as passive objects? How would a memory of a supposed supernatural encounter be valued as compared to an actual meeting? How did the story treat the appearance of the *huldufólk*, their actions, their roles in the narrative composition?

In the chapter "Three Women of Iceland and the Stories They Told", Júlíana fully reveals her skill as a researcher. Here, she has narrowed the otherwise somewhat broad perspective to follow three storytellers closely. One of them, Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, was interviewed by Hallfreður nine times between age 75 and 86. She knew 69 legends, she was a midwife, and in that role she had travelled several miles in roadless wilderness in unpredictable weather. We are told that midwives were common as characters in Icelandic legends (Midwife to the Fairies, ML 5070, being one favourite) as well as in real social situations in their capacity of storytellers. Being unusually mobile and thus meeting more people than most other women, they had good possibilities to pick up new narratives and adapt them to their repertoires.

Þorbjörg's biography was known from printed sources, Júlíana illustrates significant parts of it with appropriately chosen quotations from Hallfreður's interviews, her photograph is included, and a map shows her residential history and the settings of her stories. Júlíana shows how pessimistic notes in Þorbjörg's narratives can be linked to tragic personal happenings in her life, and that the strong emphasis on journeys can be regarded as a reflection of her own travel experiences.

In this chapter, Júlíana convincingly demonstrates her ability to collect relevant material from different sources, to compose a balanced presentation, and to fulfil a logically consistent discussion.

The dissertation *In Their Own Voices* by Júlíana Þóra Magnúsdottir follows naturally in the footsteps of earlier Icelandic legend studies. In terms of theory, it rests solidly on a basis of standard classics in Nordic and European folkloristics. By applying new analytical methods, an eclectic choice of sources and gender-oriented perspectives new knowledge is won out of traditional material. Worth mentioning is Júlíana's sensitive use of the tape-recorded interviews of one respected Nordic folklorist, Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson. The dissertation offers a substantial overview of several aspects of the narrative traditions among women representing the last generation of the Icelandic turf farm society.

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Saint Brigit as a Celtic Goddess
Séamas Ó Catháin: The Festival of Brigit. Celtic Goddess and Holy Woman. Phaeton Publishing, Dublin 2023. 274 pp. Ill.

The people of Ireland were given a new public holiday in 2023 to celebrate Imbolc/Saint Brigit's Day, the cross-quarter day that comes half-way between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. The old Gaelic festival of Imbolc on 1 February was given added significance when it was adopted, as long ago as the seventh century, as the feast day of one of the most important early Christian saints in Ireland, Brigit. To mark the new holiday, Phaeton has reissued a book on the subject by the distinguished Tyrone folklorist Séamas Ó Catháin. First published by DBA in 1995, *The Festival of Brigit: Celtic Goddess and Holy Woman* is now available again in a more attractive format.

Changes to the present edition include minor revisions of the language, a more readable typography, and corrections of some errors (although it would have been good to see the Icelandic letter *ð* replacing the mathematical symbol *∂* in names like Bøðvar). Additions include the author's five-page introduction to this second edition, with a useful account of how the vast material held by the Irish Folklore Commission was collected and how its classification system was inspired by visits to Lund and Uppsala in the 1930s.

Otherwise this is essentially the same book as the first edition, with the same strengths and weaknesses as detailed in the review by Clive Tolley in *Arv* 1998 (pp. 190–193), which may be warmly recommended.

There is much here that makes the book worth reading for anyone with an interest in Scandinavian and Sámi folklore. The author shows his familiarity with this material, drawing extensively on it for comparative purposes. Since the bear survived in these areas long after it became extinct in Ireland, this is where he searches for evidence of the bear-cult. Yet this is one example of the speculative character of Ó Catháin's comparisons, some of which are based on a rather slender foundation. The link between Brigit's festival and the bear-cult seems to be that the bear's emergence from hibernation in the spring marked a turning point in the year, and that Brigit's great-grandfather was named Art, which means "bear".

Other aspects of the cult of Brigit lead Ó Catháin, in his quest for ancient origins, or at least Eurasian parallels, to consider topics such as the bee-cult and the use of the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom. Transhumance is another important theme for the author, which he treats in an interesting analysis of the migratory legend (ML 8025) of the robbers who capture a girl from a summer pasture.

On the other hand, the reader is given surprisingly little detail about the actual celebration of the festival of Brigit in modern Ireland. Perhaps the author presumes that those who will read the book are well acquainted with this. For those who do not have this familiarity, a good start would be to read Kevin Danaher's survey of customs associated with Saint Brigit's Day in *The Year in Ireland* (1972, pp. 13–37).

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A New Edition of the Poetic Edda
Edward Pettit: The Poetic Edda. A Dual-Language Edition. Open Book Publishers, Cambridge 2023. xvi + 878 pp.

Edward Pettit has accomplished a major project: publishing the *Poetic Edda* with a parallel translation into English and an extensive commentary on each poem. His edition is a welcome contribution "intended mainly for beginning students of Old Norse, students of other medieval Germanic literatures, and interested academics in other fields" (p. 11). In addi-

tion to brief presentations of the individual poems, the edition considers textual criticism and provides extensive notes explaining and discussing particular translation problems, and much besides. There are often a couple of hundred notes for a single poem. Moreover, each poem is accompanied by a short bibliography with suggestions for further reading. As Pettit points out, it goes without saying that even more comments could have been included and more exhaustive bibliographies could have been compiled, but the book already runs to almost 900 pages!

In such a large work one can always find things to disagree with, and yet another reading could doubtless have yielded more points to comment on. One example appears in the very first sentence of the introduction where Pettit describes his book as an "edition of medieval Nordic poems" (p. 1). This is somewhat contradictory. In an envisaged oral culture during the Viking Age, one can imagine with a degree of certainty that there was a Nordic tradition of both content and form similar to what is found in the surviving Eddic poems, but in the later medieval material it is difficult to find any equivalents to the Icelandic poetry. There has of course been a long debate, partly fuelled by national sentiment, about whether Eddic poetry should be regarded as Norwegian or Icelandic, but most scholars would probably view this as a bygone stage in the study of the extant poems, which are found only in Icelandic manuscripts. I do not believe that it was Pettit's intention, with his definition of the poems as medieval and Nordic, to throw himself into this debate; it is probably more a question of slightly unclear wording, and a difference in what is meant by "medieval". In a footnote, he clarifies that he will henceforth refer to the language as *Old Norse* (p. 17). On the question of the date of the individual poems, he states at the outset:

"Also uncertain are the poems' original dates of composition, although these obviously must be at least as old as the earliest manuscripts in which the poems were written down. Many of the poems may well have existed, in one form or other, centuries earlier than the surviving thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts, having been composed during the Viking Age using oral techniques" (p. 2).

Pettit wisely chooses to adopt a cautious approach to the question of dating, to which there seems to be no definite answer. He mentions briefly that early poems composed in oral form must have changed over time before the final version was written down in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, he mentions that the poetry must surely also have been performed orally as well as being read aloud from the extant manuscripts.

A small error has managed to avoid detection even though the introduction must have been checked many times. In the Codex Regius manuscript (GKS 2365 4°) there is a missing gathering of eight leaves or sixteen pages, not – as Pettit writes – "sixteen leaves" (p. 1). This is, of course, a mistake that, once it has found its way into the text, can easily be overlooked during proofreading, but it is an unnecessary error that should have been corrected.

The introduction concludes with a selected list of works for further reading. Pettit has already pointed out that the bibliography could have been longer. And one can certainly agree with this, especially considering that it is almost entirely limited to studies in English and also has a heavy bias towards research on mythology and pre-Christian religion. To compensate for this, however, Pettit refers interested students (and scholars) to the large *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* (1997–2019), which offers more detailed comments (in German), a recommendation that I gladly endorse.

In the edition of the poems that follows, each poem is presented in a brief introduction with a synopsis and a short list of further reading. As in the

introduction, the bibliographies mostly consist of works in English, aimed at English-speaking readers. Since most researchers in the field nowadays write primarily in English, this should not be a major problem limiting the breadth of the research presented. However, there is a tendency to favour studies where the poems are used as sources for oral and pre-Christian tradition, while research that focuses more on the later transmission of manuscripts in a Christian context is not so well represented. Students approaching Eddic poetry may thus gain a rather one-sided impression of the questions that are relevant in today's research. This may also confirm the preconceived notions that are still common among new students, that the Eddic poems represent an ancient "pagan" culture rather than texts written down in, for example, a Benedictine monastery in northern Iceland. This can be particularly problematic when it comes to the mythological poems. One example may be cited from the introduction to *Vafþrúðnismál*, where Pettit comments on the use of the poem in the *Prose Edda* attributed to Snorri Sturluson: "As Snorri's considerable use of *Vm*. in his *Prose Edda* suggests, the poem has great value as a source of, and guide to, Norse mythology, from the Creation to Ragnarok and its aftermath, especially as it appears largely free of editorialization and Christianization" (p. 136). Here, Norse mythology is treated as a fixed and eternal entity that Snorri, his contemporaries, and we today can use as a guide. Pettit could have seriously questioned any preconceived idea of a pure, pre-Christian ("pagan") mythology. When, moreover, he says that the poem has escaped any interference from later editors and remained uninfluenced by Christianization, he makes it seem even better. But how can Pettit determine from a single text-witness whether any editorial interventions have been made in a hypothetical oral poem? And what is meant by the influence of Christianization? The manuscript containing *Vafþrúðnismál* was written in a Christian milieu, and the actual writing may even have been done in a Benedictine monastery and by a scribe with a solid Christian background. Although we all would be prepared to wager that there was an oral (and even pre-Christian) tradition on which these poems are based, it is clear that in the form in which they appear in the manuscripts they are the products of Christian scribes. This could definitely have been stated more clearly throughout the comments, bearing in mind that the book is intended for students who are just starting to study the field. A mitigating circumstance is that Pettit ends the introduction to the poem by mentioning "the diversity of Norse mythology" (p. 137).

This edition includes not only the poems contained in the Codex Regius but also poems found in other manuscripts, mainly from the fourteenth century. In addition, Pettit wisely includes two different versions of *Völuspá*: the one that opens the collection in the Codex Regius and a second version found in the manuscript Hauksbók (AM 544 4to) from the mid-fourteenth century. In his presentation of the latter, Pettit mentions the major differences between the two versions. He notes that these discrepancies "probably result from a combination of oral diffusion (which may have involved some recomposition), interpolation, scribal error and other transmissional damage" (p. 747). Yet nowhere does he substantiate this claim. For example, how could we determine whether there is "oral diffusion" between the two versions? And in what direction might this diffusion have gone? With only two surviving text-witnesses, we cannot establish with certainty which of the two versions is the older. And this means that any discussion of interpolations, scribal errors, etc., must rest on more or less uncertain assumptions. The last category that Pettit cites is therefore particularly interesting. Who can determine what can be considered "transmissional damage"? Any such category must be

based entirely on our expectations rather than on what can actually be observed in the two versions. Which version has suffered damage? How do we determine this? Pettit's assertion here seems to be largely grounded in the view that the version in the Codex Regius is oldest (the manuscript is the oldest, but that does not necessarily mean that the text-witness represents the oldest version) and that Hauksbók has a corrupt and inferior text. A little later in his discussion of this version, Pettit also states, without any real arguments, that it "is less comprehensible and on the whole less satisfying than R's" (p. 747). But this statement is based solely on Pettit's own expectations.

The poems are reproduced in a normalized form where the many abbreviations in the manuscripts are expanded without this being marked. Variant forms, when there is more than one text-witness, are cited in the apparatus, which also notes the relatively few corrections made by the editor. Sometimes it appears that Pettit nevertheless has a tendency to correct "errors" that do not actually occur in the manuscript. In the note to the third stanza of *Völuspá*, for example, he says that the word *ginnunga* has been corrected from *griNvnga*, but in the manuscript I can see nothing but *ginunga*. Here, however, Pettit is in good company with Finnur Jónsson, who makes the same reading in his facsimile edition from 1891 of what appears to be a stain on the parchment.

Pettit articulates his translation strategy explicitly: "My translations endeavour to reflect both the meaning and at least something of the poetic spirit of the Old Norse originals in simple, unarchaistic English verse. To try to convey meaning without spirit – even if these attributes *could* be dissociated – in verse form would be to do a disservice to the Old Norse poets and to modern readers unable to read the texts in the original language" (p. 13). It is clear that Pettit has carefully considered his strategy, of focusing on translating the meaning while trying to convey some of the feeling of the poems in modern English. This is a wise choice that seeks to provide readers of the translation with a good reading experience.

With his edition, Pettit has definitely made an important contribution to the education of new generations of international students who are interested in Eddic poetry and in Norse culture in general. I have drawn attention to a number of shortcomings in the presentation and have pointed out that the emphasis on English-language research literature imposes certain limitations. In addition, I sometimes get the impression that Pettit has primarily been interested in research on pre-Christian tradition and has made less effort to paint a picture of the manuscript context – the only context that we can actually study in the extant material. Despite these objections, it is still important to highlight the merits of this edition: that it provides a readable text for beginners in Old Norse literature, with a parallel English translation and a detailed commentary. This edition will surely soon find its place in university education.

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Recordings of Folk Music in Sweden

Märta Ramsten: Framför mikrofonen och bakom. En personlig återblick på Svenskt visarkivs verksamhet med inspelningar av folkliga musiktraditioner. Skrifter utgivna av Svenskt visarkiv 52. Gidlunds förlag, Möklinta 2022. Ill. 238 pp.

The folk song and music scholar Märta Ramsten has compiled a personal retrospect of her long-term field recording activities. Using a Nagra Kudelski tape recorder and a microphone, she has documented folk songs and music. She started in 1960 recording folk music

already as an employee at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation. During the late 1960s she got an assignment to make archive recordings for the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research in Stockholm. Singers and folk musicians from virtually all of Sweden sat in front of the microphone.

The book is published by Gidlunds as no. 52 in the series "Skrifter utgivna av Svenskt visarkiv". It consists of three main sections: collecting, researching, publishing; fieldwork; and reflections – review and future prospects.

Archive recordings started in 1968 as an assignment from the Cooperation Committee for Swedish folk music with a position at the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research that came into being under government supervision in 1970. Collections were made up until 1996 when Ramsten became head of the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research. Her personal memories are based on her comprehensive field and recording notes. She took pictures of the field locations that often were the homes of the informants and in some cases the environment around mountain farms. Initially the recordings had the function to save older traditions. Both singers and musicians were typically born in the 1880s and some in the 1890s. The musicians were mostly men. Kristina Vestin from the province of Ångermanland was one of few female accordion players.

In the early days, the violin was the most important musical instrument, but at the beginning of the twentieth century the accordion increasingly took over. Some of the older musicians only used the violin when recording, while others only played the accordion. Some informants used both the violin and one-row or two-row accordion. Some also played the harmonica. In many cases traditions from musicians and singers were passed down from one generation to the next.

In particular, Ramsten was interested in documenting "simple songs", such as herding songs, lullabies, polska tunes and satirical songs. They were previously rarely written down and collected. In mountain farm areas it was important to record various herding calls. An active mountain farm culture still remained in the 1970s in parts of the provinces of Jämtland, Härjedalen and the north-western parts of Dalarna. Navvy songs were performed by ex-navvies. Some informants had handwritten song books.

In the first part of the book (pp. 19–52) the author describes the way the recordings were carried out in practice. Travel was by train or rented car. The author was informed in advance with directions to places that were often secluded. It was often hard to find one's way on byways far from the main road. Local contact persons were important to help to find the way to singers and musicians. Networks and various forms of collaboration were developed. It was not always easy to get the particular informants to participate in performing a song or playing some music.

Ramsten wanted the recordings to be in the form of a conversation rather than an interview with a list of pre-arranged questions. She brought a checklist with important issues that ought to be raised during the conversations. An atmosphere of trust was important to establish before bringing out the tape recorder and microphone. In some cases informants were visited by the author on several occasions. In particular the blacksmith Martin Martinsson from Bohuslän and Thyra Karlsson from Jämtland are mentioned. CDs with a selection from their treasury of songs and music are published by the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research. They also performed in broadcast programmes. Ramsten states that "in the 1970s and 1980s Martinsson became like an icon for individuals in Sweden interested in folk music; an important source and role model for young ballad singers and music players interested in older local traditions. He became known as "the 'ballad singer' and 'tune singer from Orust'" (p. 122).

The second part of the book, "In the Field", is the most extensive (pp. 55–183), listing province by province where the recordings took place and who the informants were. The three provinces most famous for having a rich folk music tradition are Jämtland, Hälsingland and Dalarna. In Jämtland and Dalarna recordings were made on both sides of the Norwegian-Swedish border. A significant repertoire of local Norwegian-Swedish songs was discovered.

Interviews with selected informants were also conducted between 1968 and 1989 (pp. 167–183). The author wanted to tie the recorded music and songs to a personal context. She states: "I see the interviews as historic snapshots of the role and expression of the music in various local places" (p. 167). Martin Martinsson was recorded and interviewed on three occasions in 1968, 1978 and 1989. According to the author he was "a great storyteller and keenly aware of the context of the songs. He commented on most of the songs he recorded – sometimes spontaneously, sometimes following a question from me" (p. 169). Ramsten presents some transcribed quotations from interviews. The early recordings took place before the introduction of the *du*-reform, when people stopped using titles and surnames in the 1970s. It was not until the 1980s that the author started addressing the informants with their first names and the familiar pronoun *du*.

Based on the field notes, the author adds her experiences with the informants and their often old-fashioned living conditions. A description of a particular individual could go somewhat like this: "It was obvious that Emil Andersson was used to performing at parties in the Skepplanda area – he played with great joy and a dancing rhythm and also in an upbeat manner. A great old man!" (p. 134). "At recordings in Dalsland in 1968, I felt as if time had stopped. I entered environments where nothing seemed to have changed in the last 70–80 years. This was also reflected in the repertoires of the singers and the musicians" (p. 120). On a visit to the province of Värmland in 1968, the author writes about her experiences of the nature surrounding the informants: "I can still picture the beautiful open landscapes in Köla and Koppom and the places with large red homes. An experience bonus at work" (p. 110).

The third part of the book (pp. 187–206) consists of the author's own reflections on the many years of fieldwork. In connection with the recordings there were also excursions arranged together with students from the departments of music in Stockholm, Uppsala and Gothenburg. The students were supposed to encounter the folk music in the field and do their own recordings and interviews. This was done, for example, in conjunction with folk musician meetings in various parts of Sweden but also in mountain farm places. This field method has been very successful. I remember myself how inspirational it was for the ethnology students from Lund to meet one of Ramsten's key informants, Martin Martinsson. This happened on an excursion to Bohuslän in 1974.

This book is well written and represents a piece of fieldwork history. It is highly relevant to research on archives that is now of growing international interest because of the Working Group on Archives, established in 2013 as part of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF). The material collected by Ramsten is filed under access numbers at the *Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research* and can be accessed for research on music ethnology. The book ends with a comprehensive list of individuals where all the informants can be found.

The issue of fieldwork methods in cultural studies has lately attracted more interest. This makes Ramsten's book welcome from that point of view as well.

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A New Edition of Tirén's Sámi Music

Karl Tirén: Den samiska folkmusiken. Utgiven av Gunnar Ternhag. Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien, Kungl. Skytteanska Samfundet, Svenskt Visarkiv/ Musikverket 2023. 336 pp. Ill.

In the early 1910s, the station master and culture personality Karl Tirén travelled in Sápmi to document Sámi music culture, first by writing down tunes with the aid of his violin, and from 1913 using a phonograph. He made fair copies and arranged his collection of about 550 items, which he revised in 1939–42 for an edition to which he penned a lengthy introduction, which was published by Nordiska Museet under the title *Die lappische Volksmusik* as no. 3 in the series Acta Lapponica. Between the time of collection and publication, i.e. during the 1920s and 1930s, Tirén gave public lectures around the country where he presented Sámi music, with his recordings and his violin, and then elaborated his thoughts and analysis in a popularizing format.

With the 1942 edition, Sámi music was now documented in Sweden, a kind of counterpart to the works on Swedish music, *Svenska låtar* and *Svenska folkvisor från forntiden.* In practice Tirén's book was the authoritative edition of yoik until the LP *Jojk* released by Swedish Radio in 1969, based on a recording trip in 1953. The choice of German as the language for the introduction and the translation of the lyrics was justified by the fact that the intended audience was the research community, or possibly the academic music world. The fact that it was thereby effectively distanced from the Sámi environment has been pointed out over the years. With this new edition, where Tirén's original Swedish text is reproduced, and with the text corrected instead of listing a full page of errata as in the first edition, this important source work has now become more accessible. Gunnar Ternhag has previously mapped Tirén's collecting journeys in *Jojksamlaren Karl Tirén* (2000/2018, English edition *Song of the Sámi: Karl Tirén – The Yoik Collector*, 2019), and is behind this new edition.

Krister Stoor, Sámi, yoiker, and researcher, has written an introduction that places Tirén and his work in a Sámi context. The title of the piece, "He got three luoðit" refers to the fact that Tirén was greatly appreciated by the Sámi. It should be recalled here that many "Lappologists" who were contemporaries of Tirén and some who came later have been judged much more critically by the Sámi.

In his introduction, Gunnar Ternhag presents Tirén and his sources of inspiration, gives a chronological account of the collection journeys and the processing phase, and discusses various aspects of the edition, which are referenced in what follows.

Tirén's extensive introduction is thus reproduced here in its original version, with editorial comments by Ernst Manker and Björn Collinder incorporated. First come the separate prefaces by the latter two scholars and by Tirén; however, the article by Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, which was included in the original edition, is omitted. Of Tirén's text, it is primarily the passages about his own experiences and the short notices about his interlocutors that are readable today. Tirén's text was a product of its time. We see racial thinking as an explanation for cultural differences, evolutionist ideas about musical form, and the Sámi being placed in the group of "nature" (i.e., primitive) as opposed to "culture" (i.e., civilized) peoples. At the same time, Tirén respectfully emphasizes the musical complexity and the distinctive cultural aesthetic, and makes recurring comparisons with the leitmotif techniques of Berlioz and Wagner. Nor was he afraid to include melodies and references to modern society, thus giving legitimacy to a dynamic music culture instead of treating yoik as "survivals", which would have been the accepted convention in his time. Although he calls himself a "layman",

he was well oriented in contemporary musical research and had discussed various distinctive features with leading international researchers such as Erich von Hornbostel.

Tirén himself briefly describes the collecting work, with a special section on transcription problems regarding rhythm and metre. One chapter is devoted to the melodic semiotics of the yoik, where the attribution of reference and its use in everyday life are understood in terms of the leitmotif concept, and many examples of tone painting are presented. The squirrel's jump from one tree to another is portrayed with a clear pause before the yoik resumes; steep mountains give rise to giant leaps between high and low notes; a calm, meek person is characterized by means of semitone steps; and so on. Tirén reveals himself here as a connoisseur of detail, emphasizing many nuances, drawing attention to intertextual links between different yoiks, and citing good examples of the use and adaptation of musical signs in different contexts. He also emphasizes his own active competence by describing situations where he played *vuolle* melodies on his violin as a greeting, or interpreted the music for non-Sámi listeners. Tirén regards yoiking to animals, mountains, and humans, as well as "magical" yoiks – that is, ritual pieces or those otherwise associated with supernatural phenomena – as "original". The "magical" examples have a chapter of their own; likewise, there is a chapter on "secondary" songs: herding songs, walking songs, songs of greeting and farewell, love songs and suitor songs, drinking songs and satirical yoiks, lullabies, hymns, and more. At the end there is a short chapter about the fiddler Lapp-Nils, "a musical genius". The two latter chapters show that Tirén's ambition was not only to uncover "original" genres; he was also keen to paint an overall picture of Sámi music culture.

The yoik melodies are presented together, geographically ordered from south to north, and with each informant's contributions assembled. Tirén's original order for each person reflected flows of associations and interconnections, but this was broken up by Manker, who instead arranged the melodies according to "a certain system", with no statement of the principles or justifications for this (and no logic at all is evident to a reader today).

It was not only Tirén who collected the included material – some texts are reproduced from Johan Turi's *Muittalus samid birra* combined with Tirén's tunes noted down from Lars Sikku, while a further handful of recordings by other people, pieces noted from non-Sámi informants, some hymns, and other songs come separately.

Ternhag characterizes Tirén's rendering of the tunes as primarily prescriptive, not descriptive; they reproduce melody lines in skeletal form, perhaps with the idea that they could constitute basic material for new generations of Sámi to perform with their own stylistic competence, or what was the initial outcome, material for trained composers and arrangers to transform into symphonies, string quartets, etc. The notation lacks the detailed description that would be needed to capture stylistic devices in an overall performance practice or to achieve variation while performing a *vuolle*.

It may be possible, in my opinion, to trace the leitmotif concept as the underlying principle of Tirén's way of thinking; we have here a catalogue of leitmotifs, but instead of Wagner's musical dramas, it is Sápmi as a musical landscape that serves as a reference. The idea of musical notation as a way of representing "the song itself", and the sheet music as primary in relation to the performance, was also present as a strong figure of thought at the turn of the last century, not least in copyright discourses.

Rolf Kjellström has contributed a chapter on the process behind the publication of *Die lappische Volksmusik*. In 1933 Tirén had established contact with Björn Collinder, professor of

Finno-Ugric languages in Uppsala. In 1935 Tirén obtained funding from the Humanities Foundation, which enabled collaboration in which Collinder travelled around Sápmi in Tirén's footsteps, to collate the Sámi texts that Tirén had written down phonetically. In 1939 the Swedish National Heritage Board conveyed Tirén's manuscript to Ernst Manker, who accepted it for publication in his series Acta Lapponica (which came to be linked to Nordiska Museet when Manker was employed there later that year). By reading the correspondence between Tirén and Manker, Kjellström follows the publishing process in various stages, including lectures in connection with a "Lapland Evening" at Nordiska Museet in 1940 and a public scholarly polemic between Manker and Collinder during the final stage (more fully described by Eva Silvén in *Friktion*, 2021).

On one level, then, this is an edition with an emblematic function, a canonized work, which is made available once again and whose importance is confirmed from the perspective of decolonization. In addition to the significance of this in terms of cultural politics, this edition also opens up for further studies. A concordance between the published edition, Tirén's transcripts, and the existing phonograph recordings can hopefully come about, to facilitate analyses of Tirén's transcription principles and possibly also individual variation in performance. Furthermore, this edition highlights the "reception history", i.e., reviews in newspapers and scholarly journals, but also the relationship to recording trips undertaken by the Uppsala Dialect and Folklore Archive (ULMA) and Radiotjänst and the use of the recordings on the music scene. An especially interesting prospect is that Sámi musicians may use Tirén's edition and the different approaches it invites (from the revitalization of local tradition to emblematic Pan-Sámi depictions, with many possibilities in between). Perhaps this documentation from the first half of the 1910s can also be used as a starting point for studies of transmission processes? Furthermore, the detailed picture of Sámi semiotics that Tirén presents in chapter 4 can be discussed in relation to today's Sámi music-making.

It is gratifying that this publication has come about, although we must heed Ternhag's warning that it is a child of its time. As a documentation of musical performance in the 1910s it has a lasting value; Tirén's many speculations, in addition to his personal experiences, reflect the problematic attitudes of his day.

Besides the corrections, the change of language, and framing texts that distinguish this book from the first edition, there are also three newly compiled indexes: of persons, yoik objects, and places. The illustrations have also been replaced (many of the pictures in the older book had no direct connection to the texts), with several mountain motifs in oil and watercolour by Tirén, reproduced in high-quality print.

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Challenged Authorities

Vernacular Knowledge. Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs. Ülo Valk & Marion Bowman (eds.). Equinox, Sheffield & Bristol 2022. 423 pp.

A couple of decades ago, there was a turn in the study of folklore. Since then, the folklore as such has certainly still been crucial as an object of scholarly interest, but it must be shared with the very strong concentration on the performing human being. This kind of research also touches on the study of folk belief. Today, instead of analysing text in more or less authoritarian regulations and interpretations, it seems natural to pose a set of questions to believers about their values, their

ways of believing, how they explain what they see as religious phenomena and how they use sacred objects. However, there has been a problem concerning how to grasp that kind of religion. Scholars formerly used concepts such as folk religion, folk belief, unofficial religion, private religion, or some such term that represented the opposite of official theology. The world was divided into two, the official, learned, "fine" part, and the private, unsophisticated, lay part. At that time the population likewise was still regarded as being divided into corresponding segments. Urban, educated people were of no interest to average folklorists, who instead concentrated their efforts on peasants, peddlers, and other little people. However, society changes, and nowadays this watertight partition has been removed.

In folklore studies this was a central problem to those scholars who wanted to investigate religion. One of the most influential researchers was Leonard N. Primiano, who created the concept of vernacular religion. "Vernacular" seems to be closely connected to language spoken and written outside the authorities. "Everyday language", "spoken language", "native language", "cant" can be mentioned as explanations for what "vernacular" means. Combined with religion, however, vernacular means something else. It might be preferable to replace it with "lived religion", but this concept has the same weakness as the ones mentioned above, for they express a contradiction: living vs. dead. Primiano would not emphasize any such difference, but advocated embracing both religious experts, or whatever we want to call the authorities, and religious people, regarding them from the viewpoint of religious activity, religious experience, and, perhaps, above all, doing religion. It turned out that even the most pious priest does religion correspondingly to how every other person creates religion when needed. When studying vernacular religion, the divergence between religious "levels" is not important, but the way people create a meaningful whole out of religious components actualized in specific situations is in the centre of interest. This is the starting point for Ülo Valk's and Marion Bowman's recent book about vernacular religion. They call it *Vernacular Knowledge*, and all sixteen articles tackle authority and authenticity in belief.

The book starts with an introduction by Ülo Valk. In a brief and concentrated way, he explains what vernacular knowledge is meant to be in this group of articles. These guidelines are a kind of instruction manual for the participating scholars and, also, for the readers. The first part of the book, "Politics and Vernacular Strategies of Resistance", consists of three articles about religion in the former Soviet Union. Anastasiya Astapova writes about how the complex of legends about a book that has now gone missing helps to create a national identity in times of some other power's predominance. In this case we speak about Belarussian tradition but the motif of the missing piece of heritage is widely spread and has variations concerning the returning dead tsar or emperor who is now sitting somewhere waiting for the right moment to come for redemption. Irina Sadovina looks at the Anastasia movement which is influenced by the New Age. It derives from a series of books by Vladimir Megre written in a utopian style about the correct life from an ecological point of view, i.e., a life back in nature. Different kinds of humour play a role when people try to find out how they should relate their spiritual seeking to Soviet authorities. James A. Kapaló takes the readers to Moldova. According to diverse sources, for example, Romanian popular apocrypha, the protagonists are the martyr Inochentie and his followers. Inochentie is said to return to earth as Elijah, Enoch, the Holy Spirit, or even as Jesus himself to ward off the Antichrist – or the other way round: Christ returns as Inochentie. In these three articles the readers can see how people construct ways out of the

Soviet and Russian demands and instead create a Moldovan kind of belief.

The second part, "Narrating and Creating the Past", concentrates on Asian issues. Martin Wood handles contemporary Hinduism and the changes in the Jalaram tradition. To Wood religion is a chain of memories published in hagiographical works often used for the purpose of instruction. Wood analyses how the collective memory generates means to create individual belief that afterwards permeates collective thinking. This happens through several phases and ends up in a contestation of the authenticity of Jalaram, for instance in films or at court. Ülo Valk takes us to Assam where Madhavadeva (died 1596) is said to have been born. The article talks about several birthplaces claimed for him and about how people come to terms with this. Oral tradition, historical facts, individual memories, and artefacts are taken as proofs when people tell stories about his birthplaces, especially when it comes to creating truth about the authentic place. Reep Pandi Lepcha's contribution is from Sikkim. Through the analysis of three narrative cycles, he demonstrates how people handle the relationship between Buddhism and the native religion of the Róngkups. A skit about this immortal hero also functions as a basis for understanding, and it is the way in which Róngkups create and experience the relationship between Buddhism and their own belief, which is not approved by the institutionalized religion. On the contrary, the Róngkups express a feeling of discrimination in their identity.

Robert Glenn Howard starts the third part of the book. It is called "Renegotiating Tradition and Authority". His article concerns cosmic shifts according to New Age and he demonstrates how important vernacular authority is in this situation. The shift did not occur or, alternatively, it had already occurred. In this article the reader realizes how vernacular authority is produced with the help of networks when people find that they act together with like-minded individuals and how it is the opposite to institutionalized authority. Not being institutionalized guarantees the truth and quality of this kind of belief. Moreover, it seems more important to belong to a community than to ponder over right or wrong. Kristel Kivari concentrates her text on the body and its function as a medium to supernatural reality, with dowsing as an example. This article demonstrates what it is like to write about vernacular beliefs when the researcher herself is a participant in the current organization of dowsing practices. Although most scholars have a private belief, there is seldom any analysis of how it influences their research. In this way the article is a positive surprise. With the help of classical structural folklorists, such as Vladimir Propp and Alan Dundes, Steven J. Sutcliffe compares three vernacular biographies. Lack and lack liquidated was said by Dundes to be the returning structure of certain kinds of narratives and now Sutcliffe adapts this model to the biographical narratives. Two of them solve their problem, one is not able to liquidate his lack but reasons around his problem and creates a way to continue life. Ruth Illman writes about a Jewish mystical means to reach the sacred through wordless singing of *niggunim*. As in many of the other articles in the book, she starts her investigation by interviewing participants and talks to them about their thoughts and experiences of what they do when they sing. Matters of authenticity are central to the scholar, but the participants tell her to be careful about that, for knowledge, needs, and experience are individual influencing factors.

Part four, "Vernacular Knowledge and Christianity", takes the reader to Catholic believers. Melanie Landman studies the Black Madonnas. She refers to several investigations of this strange phenomenon and she gives an account of what explanations she has found in literature about the Great Goddess and the Virgin Mary. Thereafter she analyses

her recent field material and finds that there are almost as many descriptions of what the Black Madonna means to the individual as there are respondents. Moreover, the Black Madonnas make people refer to recent societal phenomena, such as feminism and colonialism. Marion Bowman pays attention to an Argentinian Robin-Hood-like saint called Gauchito Gil. He is beloved but not officially accepted. The article centres around the material expressions of belief, and around the "messiness" that often characterizes vernacular religion, because every believer's voice must be taken into consideration and must not be systematically related to what other believers have formulated. Leonard Norman Primiano, the introducer of vernacular religion studies, published one of his last articles in this book. He passed away in July 2021. In his study he concentrates his thinking on an undergraduate student's dormitory and the way he furnished his holy corner. It turned out that, on the one hand, the corner was furnished with classic holy paraphernalia, on the other, with personal things meaning something for the student. The young man was a keen sportsman and those objects too, along with items of Italian folk religion, had their given spots in the room. The scholar reads the room as a protest against the worldly life of parties, drugs, alcohol, and sex that often characterize the time in college.

The last part is called "Afterlife and Afterdeath". To begin with, Margaret Lyngdoh writes about the Khasi in Northern India and their thoughts about death. In this region the Christian church dominates officially, whereas there is still also a vivid pre-Christian tradition about death. She demonstrates how these two kinds of belief live together, and partly merge in everyday life, underlining that there is no stable and logical system along which this kind of devotion is arranged. Alevtina Solovyeva studies Mongolian vernacular religion in its co-habitation with the official religion when it comes to funeral rituals. The original rites were meant to be a kind of guarantee for further generations to lead a suitable life together with nature, environment, souls of deceased forefathers and other factors that influence life, and the official ways of handling the dead are regarded as a violation of that and hence a great risk. It goes without saying that the contradiction is complete, and it is important to negotiate how one should balance. The last article, by Paul Cowdell, concerns ghosts. Ghosts are important to many believers, and consequently it is crucial for scholars to take them as a serious target of research. However, it turns out that it has remained problematic for scholars (mostly non-folklorists or students of other disciplines than the study of religion) to decide upon whether they should uncritically accept what their colleagues write about supernatural phenomena or simply accept them as one of many research issues. This problem is even more complicated since the wave of reflexive research is common. What a researcher believes and what, if anything, he or she should believe in may collide.

Marion Bowman is the author of the afterword in which she points out that twenty-five years have passed since Leonard Norman Primiano introduced the concept of vernacular religion. To a great extent this concept changed the study of religion, both as official systems and as "folk messes". Concerning the title of the book, *Vernacular Knowledge*, I had expected more about other knowledge than just the religious kind. Today's society generally contests scientific knowledge. Anti-vaccination ideas, ideas about how to lose weight or even if one should lose weight at all, how to attain more or less eternal life, or hateful racist Internet texts are also a kind of vernacular knowledge. I look forward also to reading folklore studies about these serious and dangerous phenomena in our world. Moreover, I hope that somebody will analyse how Reformed and Lutheran adherents formulate their

belief, rather unadorned and inconspicuous as these official religions are.

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Ice from Different Angles

Is – på olika vis. Nils Erik Villstrand & Kasper Westerlund (eds.). Meddelanden från Sjöhistoriska institutet vid Åbo Akademi 37. Forum navales skriftserie 84. Åbo 2022. 172 pp. Ill.

Few question the fact that the modern industrialized and capital-driven society has changed the world's climate conditions. In times of the Anthropocene, cold is for instance no longer a steady northern phenomenon. It is thus no surprise that thawing glaciers, unpredictable snow and shrinking sea ice have sparked growing concern in the North as well as research interest in the cold within disciplines that normally leave the study of those matters to natural scientists. "Ice humanities" is one such newly established interdisciplinary field of research that explores low temperatures and follows the ice with the aim of understanding how "people and societies invent, create, and narrate ice (including snow) so it becomes not just physical but embedded in our minds and identities". The quotation is from the introduction to *Ice Humanities – Living, Thinking and Working in a Melting World* (2022:2), in which the editors and initiators of "ice humanities", Klaus Dodds and Sverker Sörlin, indicate that ice can be understood as a "crisis concept" closely related to the long-lasting and accelerating effects of the industrial revolution, to the accumulated scientific knowledge of glaciers and ice ages, to meteorology and the Arctic region, to today's climate situation where the cryosphere is a critical zone of global environmental change. The essays in *Is – på olika vis* (roughly translated as *Ice – Various Aspects*) contribute in many ways to the objective of "ice humanities", although the term is not referred to in the book. In the introduction, the editors Nils Erik Villstrand and Kasper Westerlund propose "cryo-history" (a concept also used by Sörlin) for the study of cultural aspects of the cold in a world of climate change. The "cryo-history" in *Is – på olika vis* is framed by scholars in history and ethnology who follow the ice in Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian settings during the last two centuries, with an emphasis on the nineteenth century. United by three key concepts in relation to ice – "knowledge", "potential", "challenge" – various experiences and uses of ice in the Nordic countries are brought to the fore.

The scope of the book is however narrowed by the context of its origin – the Institute of Maritime History at Åbo Akademi University – which explains that the discussion of ice is mainly conducted in relation to shipping, trade, and icebreakers: Per Hallén's article on trade and shipping in Gothenburg 1833–1919 delivers new findings about the freezing of the city's harbour, during a period of change from preindustrial shipping which often closed down during cold winters (despite efforts to keep an open passage through the ice sheet) to rapid industrialization and technological development that could keep the trade running all year around (such as a steam-powered icebreaker financed by the city council). Hallén sees a more flexible attitude to the ice in premodern times, with a good readiness in terms of warehousing and seldom economic losses. Surprisingly, the modern industrial society's need of uninterrupted import and export led to a less adjustable outlook on the sea ice – and therefore paradoxically became more vulnerable to weather and wind, relying on technology to master the ice. The essay by Jorma Ahvenainen gives a parallel story from Finland, where a modern infrastructure for winter communication of people and post, and the trade in

goods (such as butter and reels of thread to England) was realized in 1875–1914 through sturdier ships, icebreakers, and a new port in the south of Finland (Hangö). The account of the cold chain to keep the Finnish butter fresh from northern Finland to Manchester is thrilling. So is Per G. Norseng's fascinating chapter on the Norwegian export of natural ice in the modern breakthrough, late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Ice was, next to wood and fish, the country's most lucrative export item, a natural resource successfully exploited to meet the desires of the modern world for democratization, mass consumption, urbanization, and new social habits – for example, the growing taste and demand for ice cream, cold beer, and fresh fish (instead of dried or salted). Ice had been a luxury for the rich but was now turned into a desire for everyone. Accordingly, until the natural ice was replaced by technology that could produce artificial cold, the traffic in ice was essential for modern urban life and the economy – for bakeries, breweries, hospitals, chemical industries, cooling of theatres etc. Martin Eriksson explores the development of the production and use of icebreakers in Sweden and Finland 1867–1977. He makes a compelling analysis of the perceived need to master the ice for the national industry's international competitive edge, while traditional local economies such as the fishing fleet received less help.

The essays by Johan Porsby, Stefan Norrgård and Fredrik Nilsson look upon ice from a slightly different angle, though the maritime aspect is not lost. The ice phraseology at sea is important in Porsby's rich exposé of the language of ice in Swedish (at least 450 words in relation to ice according to Svenska Akademiens Ordbok). Norrgård looks upon the experiences of spring ice (*islossning*) by reading nineteenth-century newspaper observations on the opening of the river Aura in Åbo, which could be unpredictable and difficult to control. Since 1976 the river Aura has not frozen, but by following old series of spring ice and ice blocking the flow of the river, this promises new perspectives on northern climate history. Finally, Nilsson tells the thrilling story of the very cold winter of 1838, when Swedish and Danish students met on the ice in the middle of Öresund (the border between Sweden and Denmark) to celebrate the unity of Scandinavia. The temporary ice bridge played a symbolical role in Scandinavian political history by presenting modern narratives of potential transnational movements. The ice symbolized a new world in which former enemies unite.

To sum up, the everyday interaction with cold, the editors write, has historically been one of the prerequisites for the Nordic countries to establish themselves as knowledgeable regarding snow and ice. Ice has played a central role in northern culture – isolating as well as connecting people; a steady but at the same time transient element; facilitator or hindrance of political and social life in work and play. The essays in *Is – på olika vis* add to the understanding of this cultural history of ice in the North and will inspire new research on the northern climate history, which certainly is important in our times of waning ice.

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Swedish Belief Tradition in a Nutshell
Tora Wall: Folktrons väsen. Encyklopedi. Bokförlaget Stolpe, Stockholm 2021. 255 pp. Ill.

Tora Wall's *Folktrons väsen* is a reader-friendly overview of Swedish folklore concerning supernatural beings. It is properly research-based and provides an accurate view of the pre-industrial Swedish belief tradition. But it starts from the basics and can be recommended to readers who have no previous knowledge about belief tradition.

The book is titled an encyclopaedia but it represents that genre only in its broadest sense. Instead of listing beings in Swedish belief tradition separately in alphabetical order, it includes broader thematic chapters. The book starts with a compact but comprehensive introduction describing the concepts of belief tradition and folklore, as well as the relevant genres and sources. Furthermore, it explains magical thinking and what kind of significance and meanings the supernatural beings once had in the communities. Wall introduces the reader to the world view of preindustrial belief tradition, with the idea of the limited good and the significance of boundaries and exceptions and the difference between black and white magic.

As any scholar of belief tradition knows, national collections of folk belief teem with local fairies, goblins and ghosts with a myriad of names but only slight differences. Wall handles the mess by presenting the creatures in larger groups by type. The chapters are thus about general categories such as trolls, guardian spirits, underground people or death beings. Each chapter first gives information about the category and then describes the variety. This is a justified decision which saves us from a lot of repetition, helps to focus on the important features and gives a better understanding of the beings' relations to each other than mere cross-referencing. Yet even the main groups overlap slightly: trolls, for example, share motifs with the underground people. This is an essential feature of belief tradition, and a research-based representation like this is correct in not trying to hide or deny the fuzziness.

Chapters on the beings also give contextual information and discuss related beliefs and various themes of belief narratives. For example, in the chapter about trolls, we learn why certain people were more prone to be taken into the mountain or hill by the trolls, what liminality had to do with it, and how to prevent such danger. Furthermore, the chapter includes a subsection about changelings, because in folk legends it is quite often trolls that steal a small baby from the cradle and replace it with their own baby or grandfather. Essentially, Wall's work is not only about the beings. It is actually a general view of the whole belief tradition, just organized according to the beings.

In any survey of belief tradition, a crucial point is how the topics and motifs are selected and how they are organized. The distinction between various groups of beings is relatively unambiguous, and Wall applies almost the same pattern as in Bengt af Klintberg's index *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend.* The only difference is that Wall distinguishes trolls from fairies while af Klintberg handles them together. Another question of choice is ontological. Belief tradition includes beings which only exist in the popular imagination, but there are also beliefs which concern real entities, for example conceptions about magical skills or properties of certain people or animals. The distinction between these is not always clear. For example, magical snakes range from dragons and giant serpents to popular beliefs concerning unusually big, yet ordinary snakes. But perhaps sometimes it would be more suitable to note the difference; especially when the question is about people. Here, as in many other books too, the supernatural beings include people who allegedly had special supernatural abilities – people like sorcerers, healers, priests, smiths and even folk musicians. These agents have not been labelled supernatural per se, but I wonder whether it is justified to present them as beings of belief tradition. A similar case is the chapter on trees, including information about sacred groves as well as rituals and healing connected to trees. Yet trees as such are natural entities. These examples illustrate the fact that the book begins with beings, but towards the end, the being-ness of the topics breaks up. This critique does not change the fact that ritual specialists are

a central theme of belief tradition. Trees may not be equally central, but perhaps trees and forests serve the interests of contemporary readership.

Wall has chosen to include figures from Norse mythology in the gallery of preindustrial belief tradition. This requires an excursion to ancient pre-Christian religion and the medieval sources which shed light on the ancient gods and the Æsir cult. Since mythology is not in the focus of this book, characteristics of the gods as they were known in the *Edda* and other ancient poetry are only described briefly. The emphasis is on the fragmentary representations of Thor, Odin and other figures' in legends and incantations in nineteenth-century folklore. These materials look like scarce survivals, and thus the old Norse gods appear in the world of preindustrial belief tradition like special guests who actually belong to some other sphere. The role of Norse gods in this book may be justified on grounds of popularization and the aim of showing their relationship to later belief tradition. The excursion to the *Edda* and its remains demonstrates the temporal depth and layered characteristics of belief tradition.

The twenty-first-century readership and their expectations are considered in all the chapters. For example, contemporary readers probably only know werewolves from popular culture and thus expect the full moon to be involved. Therefore, it is explicitly noted that this was not the case in Swedish vernacular tradition. Likewise, the chapter on death beings begins by explaining how modern society and esoteric movements have shaped our ideas of the dead. In order to understand the preindustrial folklore about death beings, we need to know an older view of death and the dead. The chapter on guardian spirits, in turn, includes a subsection on the development of Swedish Christmas gnomes and Santa Claus. After all, the Swedish word for the guardian spirit – *tomten* – has later been used predominantly in those senses.

Folktrons väsen combines folkloristic accuracy with a popular style which serves the needs of contemporary readers. It guides the beginner to the world of belief tradition and gives enough background information to help understand the point of preindustrial belief legends. For those who are inspired to know more, the book briefly summarizes the work of relevant researchers and offers tips for further reading. As an object, the book is well designed. The rich illustrations include artwork from six centuries, starting from late medieval church paintings and peaking in the variety of legend-based illustrations and paintings by Nordic artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The pictures display artistic interpretations of the beings and also the landscapes and environments in which they lurked.

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