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Essential Narrative Motifs?

Gender Power Structures, Categorization of Traditional Ballads and the Stubbornness of Paradigms

Ingrid Åkesson

Abstract

This article discusses the problem of established categorization systems for folklore and other cultural heritage items as preservers of conservative paradigms. Focusing on traditional ballads as a genre, it also proposes a method for highlighting narrative content, which is obscured in the structure of types and categories created by generations of earlier scholars. On the basis of a cross-category rereading of a number of ballads containing gender power issues, aspects of the different levels of categorization are problematized and the idea of motif clusters is put forward as a way in which feminine and subordinate experiences in the ballad universe can be brought to light.

Keywords: categorization, cultural heritage, gender, male gaze, motif cluster, narrative motif, paradigm, power structures, traditional ballad, type

The framework for this article is the ongoing discussion on problematizing and rethinking knowledge regimes, or established thought patterns, which for a long time have shaped our understanding and presentation of cultural heritage items.[1] Old systems for ordering and categorization – in this case of traditional ballads – tend to be built upon underlying, non-verbalized concepts and world views, unchanged for generations. The ordering principles, accordingly, tend to obscure or conceal narrative content characterized by features that were not considered central for the construction of categories. In this article, these problems are exemplified by the incongruity between, on the one hand, themes of masculine domination and female subordination, which stand out in the ballad narratives told by multitudes of singers, and on the other, the categorization and typology applied to Scandinavian ballads. The categorization was codified by Bengt R. Jonsson and others in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (1978), and the type structure constitutes the primary foundation for *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader* in five volumes (1983–2001) as well as the Danish ballad edition, commenced in the nineteenth century, and the twenty-first-century Norwegian digital

publication. The article also sheds light on cross-category content concerning gender power structures that appears through a rereading of ballads, focusing on clusters of narrative motifs across the ballad types. The project *Whose Voice, Whose Gaze*, to which the article is connected, has been presented and discussed at a number of seminars and conferences, and with some colleagues.[2]

Why Are Ballads Important?

Traditional ballads – in a nutshell – are narrative songs about encounters and conflicts, love and lust, marriage, abduction, rape, pregnancy and childbirth, cheating and charity, violence and death. They are set in a fictive, mostly hierarchical, family-centred and paternalistic universe, with certain similarities to pre- or early modern historical European societies. This universe contains, among other things, elements of extreme violence – some of it strongly misogynous. The ballads have been transmitted through a combination of the literary (represented by chapbooks and songbooks) and oral (person-to-person) elements. As the latter kind of transmission plays a prominent role and is clearly discernible as a shaping force when we study the very rich documentation of ballads, I use the term "oral-derived" about this kind of cultural expressions (cf. Åkesson 2012), indicating the roots in oral tradition as well as the varying alternative channels for mediation.

Ballads are included in the repertoire of many singers today; editions of ballad texts and tunes are digitally and physically published in twenty-first-century Scandinavia; research projects produce studies from new perspectives.[3] Among Scandinavian scholars, the medieval roots of the ballad genre have been strongly emphasized, but as the Scandinavian corpora share several main characteristics of the ballads and their universe with other European corpora, and many parallels are found in e.g. the English and Scottish ballads, I here use the term "traditional ballads" instead of "medieval ballads". These songs have been involved in the construction of national as well as Scandinavian cultural identity from the seventeenth century onwards, with a heyday among nineteenth-century collectors and editors.[4] Several scholars have commented on the strong impact of early Romanticism on ballad categorizing and the unifying, nation-building interpretations of the "Volk" concept. In his thesis, Jason Schroeder argues that nineteenth-century Swedish intellectuals and ballad editors "misrepresented their sources and ignored contexts from which the songs emerged in order to create an image of a unitary ancient literary history for Sweden" (2016: 6). James Massengale (2019) discusses the stubborn adherence to ancient origin among Scandinavian ballad editors in general, from Vedel and Syv onwards, as well as the rigid criteria deciding the definition of "ballad", leaving out so many ballad-like songs, in Jonsson's *Svensk Balladtradition*

(1967), *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* and *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader*. In twentieth-century song books and school anthologies, small selections of ballads were presented as heroic, or decorous and romantic, old songs (cf. the term "romance" used as a synonym for ballads, e.g. in Geijer & Afzelius' *Svenska folkvisor* 1814–1818). However, a closer present-day study of the narratives illuminates several non-romantic aspects of the ballad universe, such as gender related violence and male supremacy.

One reason why ballads recurrently attract notice among singers as well as scholars seems to be that this medium has so many interrelated qualities – what has been called intermediality, or four different modalities: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic (Elleström & Kværndrup 2011: 18ff). Ballads may include narrative, poetry, imagery, dramatic tableaux, melodies, pulse and rhythm, dance, and spatial qualities. Another reason for their popularity is probably that many of the stories told in the ballads are well suited to reinterpretation; it is easy to perceive a nuclear content in the stylized, yet linguistically varied narrative of a ballad, that has as much current interest today as two or three hundred years ago, and reflect upon it from a present-day point of view.[5] For instance, plots and motifs bear resemblances to those found in the constantly reinterpreted Renaissance drama, or ancient myths. Over recent years, I have met and talked to several singers in Scandinavia and the British Isles, who have given thought to stories of issues such as out-of-wedlock pregnancy, complicated or fatal childbirth, and sexual as well as other kinds of gender-based violence in the ballads they perform, and how these narratives seem to affect their listeners. One Scottish singer introduced her performance of a version of "Lady Maisry" with the words "now I will sing another of those honour-killing ballads". In that ballad, the woman protagonist is killed by her family for loving the wrong man – a theme that occurs also in the Scandinavian corpus.[6]

Rethinking Categorization – a Current Discussion

One of the roots of the European urge for ordering and hierarchic systematization of the surrounding world, nature as well as culture, goes back to the early days of colonizing other continents and peoples.[7] Other aspects of collection and systematization are class and gender. Since the 1990s there has been an ongoing discussion of how cultural heritage is categorized, described and presented in, for example, catalogues, publications, and exhibitions of museums and other cultural institutions (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Aronsson & Meurling (ed.) 2005; *Arv* 2009; Brenna & Hauan (ed.) 2018). The visibility of the history, work and cultural expressions of women and LGBTI groups is one issue under debate; analysing categorization and general narratives, often characterized by non-questioned male supremacy, is another.[8] Different kinds of bias and blindness in the systems, categories

and public presentations of cultural heritage are problematized within several disciplines. Details and fragments, perceived as deviations and inconsistencies, have often been overlooked or relegated to the margins but are being reconsidered (cf. Constantine & Porter 2003). In addition, folkloristics as a discipline has long been criticized for being gender-blind from Herder onwards, e.g. by Young & Turner (1993). Cultural institutions have updated their public databases to highlight female agency and introduce gender categories such as "other".[9] Research projects have been initiated, tracing objects in collections and finding other origins and gender codes than the established ones, and these issues are brought up at conferences problematizing established knowledge regimes.[10] In accordance with this work, categorization in the form of type catalogues is another structure which needs rethinking.

Songs, tunes, dances, tales, legends – different kinds of what is generally termed immaterial cultural heritage – tend to appear among performers as a rich, motley and unstructured multitude characterized by great variability. Entities of cultural expression, and the elements of which they consist, over time often cross regional, national, and linguistic borders as well as class boundaries; musical, verbal and rhythmical elements and motifs may occur in many different songs, tunes, dances etc. Verbal and musical versions may be individual or local. Traditional ballads, like all oral-derived cultural expressions, appear in a great amount of interpretations and versions, some of them fragmentary, which tend to overlap and criss-cross. Mary-Ann Constantine and Gerald Porter emphasize in their book on fragments and meaning in traditional song "the countless individual narratives that make up the haphazard, polyphonic discourse of oral cultures" (2003: 54). This motley, multivoiced entity has, however, been the object of continuous collection, selection, cleaning, and categorization. To editors and scholars the material has often appeared unstructured and inconsistent. Accordingly, they have applied an ordering gaze and striven to create vertical hierarchies and types out of the horizontal multitude of linguistic, regional, local and individual expressions.

The ordering of the Scandinavian ballads into types, as well as into an intricate structure of categories, is a long process, started by Svend Grundtvig and other early collectors in the nineteenth century. It is manifested and codified in the catalogue *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (hereafter sometimes abbreviated *TSB*) by Bengt R. Jonsson, Svale Solheim and Eva Danielson (1978) with Jonsson as the prime initiator. (The catalogue as well as the whole edition *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader* in five volumes are now available online with free access[11] and an index to the Swedish ballads is available on the website of Svenskt visarkiv.[12]) The overarching structure consists of the main groups: *Ballads of the supernatural*, *Ballads of chivalry*, *Jocular ballads* etc. Within these groups a detailed structure of

categories and sub-categories has been created, containing up to four levels, on the basis of what the authors define as the essential narrative motifs (see fig. 1). One example: among the *Ballads of chivalry* (main group D), category *Courtship*, we find the subcategory *Violent or unwanted courtship* (containing the types D 145–193) with the under-category *Rape and intended rape* (containing the types D 168–187). One of the ballad types in that under-category is TSB D 185 "Gøde and Hillelille"[13] with the heading *Rejected suitor rapes girl and returns to find her dead*. I will return to and discuss these categories and the somewhat problematic use of the concept of courtship. The catalogue also provides a summary for each one of the listed 838 ballad types, or plot types.

However, many ballad versions, collected from individual singers, deviate from the type they are expected to belong to. Alternatively, certain narrative motifs, that is, parts of the content, are found in ballads categorized as other types. What is presented in headings and summaries as the main narrative of a type often excludes several of the narrative motifs that occur in individual interpretations. These incongruities or contradictions are especially conspicuous regarding the hierarchical and violent character of male-female relationships in the ballads, where for example, the consequences of rape for a woman, and the power structures that sometimes include rape in natural masculine behaviour, are obscured. We might say that the categorization of traditional ballads is an example of the result of a hierarchical male gaze.[14]

The Type-Motif Concept – an Excursus

Before I continue discussing the ordering of ballads, I will refer briefly to former discussion among folklorists of the central concepts *motif* and *type*. This discussion mostly refers to verbal/spoken traditions but has a bearing on narrative singing as well. Among the most well-known tools within folkloristics is Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1932), including earlier work by Antti Aarne. Thompson stresses the importance of the single motifs as the basis for classification and systematic arrangement (Thompson 1955: 10) and states that "When the term motif is employed, it is always in a very loose sense, and is made to include any of the elements of narrative structure" (p. 19) – a very practical approach which I will make use of in my analysis. His reasoning concerning types is illuminating but contains a paradox: you need to be able to envision a structure before you can see it. Stith Thompson writes further, in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*:

> The only way in which a tale-type can be formulated is to study the variants of the type. This process is somewhat circular because in order to tell what is the variant

of a type, it is necessary to have some idea of the type. In practice this means that the investigator finds many tales containing so many striking resemblances that he places them in a single category. He then studies these resemblances and notes the common characteristics. Later he brings together as many variations of tales having these characteristics as possible, and eventually he is able to make a satisfactory statement as to the contents of the tale he is studying. His investigation implies a basic assumption, namely that the tale he is studying is an entity, that it has had a history with a beginning in time and place and has suffered certain changes in the course of its life.

(Entry "type" in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach, p. 1137)

Thompson's use of the pronoun "he" is probably not a conscious choice, but indicates nonetheless that he imagines a male scholar who decides what kind of resemblances to study, and what kinds of "common characteristics" make up the entity. But when a scholar studies the items that (s)he considers to be variants of a preconceived type, is (s)he then aware that the selection of narrative elements leads in a certain direction? Other selected elements and another perspective on, for example, masculinity, femininity and power structures might constitute other categories, or at least problematize the categories created. The folklorist Alan Dundes remarks that a tale type "is a *composite* plot synopsis corresponding in exact verbatim detail to no one individual version but at the same time encompassing to some extent *all* of the extant versions of that folktale" (Dundes 1997: 196, italics in original). That is, of course, the intention of creating types, whether the type concept is applied to tales or to narrative songs. One problem concerning the – often not only composite but complicated – plots of ballads is that the appointed type may be irrelevant when variants mix with each other and include elements not belonging to the type.

The motif-type concept and relationship have been discussed and criticized by numerous authors – I will just mention a few examples of relevance for my analysis. Vladimir Propp pointed out that types (he called them "themes") are often closely related to each other and that one scholar may detect a type where another sees a variant (Propp 1968: 9).[15] Further, he observes that "[t]he proximity of plots, one to another, and the impossibility of a completely objective delimitation leads to the fact that, when assigning a text to one or another type, one often does not know what number to choose" (p. 11) and continues: "since types are defined according to the presence of one or another striking incident in them […] and since one tale is capable of containing several such incidents, then one tale can sometimes be related to several types at once" (ibid.). Of course, the creators of *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* were conscious of this, but they do not comment on the fact.

Interesting for my discussion is also the criticism by two Scandinavian scholars, mentioned by Dundes (1997). Anna Birgitta Rooth argued in 1951 that individual motifs tend to be interdependent upon other motifs in a given tale – she proposed the idea of "motif-complex" for this phenomenon. Also Bengt Holbek discussed, among other things, how types are often combined in the collected material.[16] One recent and interesting example of the motif-type discussion is Egil Bakka's article on typology and dance in *Arv* 2019, where he stresses the fact that "the folklorists to such a limited extent discuss their primary classification concepts, motifs, types and genres, when presenting their major typologies and indexes. It seems as if the terms are taken for granted and rather described than discussed if someone writes something in general about them" (Bakka 2019: 162–163). Bakka, like other writers, has noticed the fact that definitions are lacking also in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*.

Perspective and Method

The examples mentioned above show that the weakness of, especially, the type concept has been discussed for a long time, and likewise that the problem of cross-category content has been noticed. An additional basis for my problematization is that categories tend to be created within a certain cultural framework, which is usually not verbalized. In the case of *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* – and the work of preceding scholars – the cultural framework, or the underlying scholarly paradigm, firstly, seems not to be conscious or articulated, and, secondly, takes for granted the male supremacy which dominates the ballad universe as a basis for structuring. A male gaze on ballads, folk tales, literature etc., is representative of the patriarchal idiom that permeates Herder's thinking and Romantic nationalism (Fox 1993: 34). That gaze has played a crucial role in shaping approaches to gender when dealing with cultural heritage, and having been established among generations of European intellectuals it became an invisible, basic structure.

One fruitful theory for analysing gender power relations in the ballad universe – as a fictive structure with similarities to historical societies – is Yvonne Hirdman's double-sided pattern of *separation* between male and female and the *subordination* of the female (2001: 26ff). In later years, several scholars have developed theories of plural masculinities, distinguishing between a dominating, hegemonic masculinity, characterized by violence and control, and more nuanced and varying patterns of behaviour in subordinate masculinities (e.g. Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832ff.) In addition, a continued discussion of how old paradigms manifest themselves, and likewise continued analysis of the ballad universe from new perspectives, might increase the interest in the genre of ballads among future performers, listeners, and scholars. Traditional songs telling in fictional form of e.g.

abductions and honour-related and sexual violence, but also of self-defence and empowerment, have global relevance in the twenty-first century – and, as I mentioned at the beginning of this text, some singers are aware of that. I hope that such a discussion also might connect to a more extensive discourse on the rethinking of scholarly paradigms.

My method for shedding light on gender issues as cross-category content is rereading of a great number of ballad versions[17] in search of a way to single out feminine and subordinate experiences in the ballad universe in a systematic fashion. In my study I focus on narrative motifs, or elements of content, such as honour-related conflicts, forced marriages, pregnancy and childbirth, and – as the examples in this article will show – sexual and other gender-based violence against women. All of these themes are central in gender power relationships, and all of them are common in the ballad narratives. I trace these narrative motifs horizontally, across the vertical concept of ballad types. Thus, ballad content may be analysed as clusters of motifs, and simultaneously, the cross-category content, often illustrating separation combined with subordination as well as the occurrence of different masculinities, can be used as a backdrop for analysing the *TSB* categories. During my empirical rereading and cross-reading of ballads, the concept of motif clusters presented itself as a fitting tool; it was also used simultaneously by another ballad scholar, Michelle Simonsen (2010). In addition, it connects well to the discussion of the motif-type model mentioned above.[18]

I want to emphasize that the idea of motif clusters functions at a different level from the established typology and is intended for shedding light on ballad content with strong present-day relevance, not to be a comprehensive model for ballad categorizing. My aim is not to substitute types with motif clusters but to analyse and emphasize gender related cross-category content, which is obscured in the *TSB* categories and headings – and to propose one possible method for the rethinking of categorization.

In the next section of this article, I present and discuss examples of the hierarchical structure of *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* in more detail: what kinds of narrative motifs have been used as building material for the construction of categories and ballad types; what kinds of narratives have been regarded as secondary or not even perceived; how the structure of categories, types and headings constructs a perspective obscuring feminine experience and agency. The last section of the article provides an example of my analysis. I focus on cross-category clusters of narrative motifs connected to sexual violence and its consequences, appearing in a group of ballads which share motifs, episodes and situations, disregarding ballad types and category headings.

My thoughts have grown out of many years of engagement with ballads and other traditional music as a scholar and lecturer in ethnomusicology, as a research archivist at Svenskt visarkiv/The Centre for Swedish Folk Music

and Jazz Research, as a participant in Nordic and international networks on traditional music, and as a singer and listener.

The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad – Categories and Problems

The matrix for ballad editions in the Scandinavian countries was Grundtvig's ordering of the Danish ballads, *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* (1853–1976), with its established system of ballad types, its settling of a majority of the main *groups* (that is, the overarching category) of ballads, and its extensive comments on the published songs. In the English-speaking world, the work of Frances James Child (*The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* 1883–1898) played a similar role, inspired by Grundtvig. The respective editors (as well as earlier ballad publishers, e.g. Percy and Jamieson for the English and Scottish ballads and Geijer and Afzelius for the Swedish corpus) were well aware of parallels, or similarities, between types collected in the English and Scandinavian language areas.[19] Accordingly, the main groups as well as several types of ballads in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* are built upon the work of earlier scholars, though Jonsson extended and partly redefined Grundtvig's groups. In *TSB* they are *A. Ballads of the supernatural, B. Legendary ballads, C. Historical ballads, D. Ballads of chivalry, E. Heroic ballads,* and *F. Jocular ballads*. These are, according to the Introduction (pp. 16ff), created on the basis of a combination of literary style, geographical origin (West or East Scandinavian), content, and convention practised by earlier scholars.

The catalogue with its different levels of categories and types provides a link between the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian ballad editions (though also including Faroese and Icelandic ballads). *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* was a forerunner to the five-volume publication *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader* (1983–2001),[20] and later also for the Norwegian digital ballad edition *Norske Mellomalderballadar* published in the 2010s at Bokselskap.no as well as the four-volume *Norske Middelalderballader – Melodier* (2011–2016).[21] The *TSB* catalogue is also the structuring principle for a Finland-Swedish project on making accessible a number of unpublished Swedish-language ballad variants collected in Finland.[22]

In the Introduction to *TSB,* Bengt R. Jonsson presents the catalogue as "a practical guide" (p. 13) to all Scandinavian ballad editions. He points out the authors' awareness of problems concerning the structure, e.g. other possible ways of distribution of types between groups. He admits that the concept *type* "presents some very serious problems" (p. 15) and is quite aware that the same story may be treated in many different ballads and that "the dividing line between types dealing with the same subject matter is often rather vague" (ibid.). This conundrum the authors have chosen to solve by

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stressing the practical intention of the catalogue and by characterizing the catalogue as "consciously conservative", connecting to the work of earlier scholars and editorial custom.

Jonsson also comments on the summaries of the 838 ballad types that are "developed from a reading of all the variant texts. They give the principal narrative content of each type. We have aimed at including all of the important traits and motifs without burdening the summaries with a plethora of details" (p. 18). Thompson's circular reasoning concerning types and variants is evident here – the characteristics of the types are decided by the variants which in their turn are defined on the basis of the ascribed types. The "principal narrative" is further commented on: "it should be pointed out that the summaries are of necessity based upon the main motifs of the ballads, and that the way the types are grouped, as well as the numerous cross-references, may to a certain extent serve as a rudimentary key to the essential motifs, those carrying the story" (p. 13).

As the paradigm underlying categorization is absent and not verbalized in the catalogue, there is no definition or declaration of what kind of motifs are considered "main", "important" and "essential" or who has decided, on what grounds, what is essential. The summaries (which I will comment on further below) also provide the basis for the short heading for each ballad type. Summaries, type headings and the different levels of category headings taken together constitute the structure of *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*. Although many narrative motifs, carrying the story as Jonsson says, are included in the summaries, other conspicuous motifs are sometimes completely left out or at least seldom present in the headings, especially those concerning structural gender and power issues or exclusively female experiences. For example, a male gaze seems to have been at work when narrative motifs that abound in many ballad versions, such as forced marriage or pregnancy and childbirth, may be mentioned in the summaries but never occur in the type headings. Assuredly, the undercategory *Abduction* (TSB D 160–167) appears in the subcategory *Violent or unwanted courtship,* in the category *Courtship* among the ballads of chivalry (see fig. 1), but contains only eight ballad types. Different forms of abduction, bride stealing and forced marriage occur in many more ballads, but this is not visible in the hierarchy of the catalogue. The most detailed story of death in childbirth, "Dronning Dagmars død"[23] (TSB C 6), is found among the historical ballads, and we must go to the ballad itself to discover the cause of her death, as the childbirth is not mentioned in the heading.

I will discuss further the large category *Courtship*, including the ballad types TSB D 1–193, as an example of how subordinate femininity and dominant or hegemonic masculinity, including violence, are present in ballad plots but to a great extent invisible in the structure of the catalogue. The creation and treatment of this category seems to represent quite well

the underlying world view or non-verbalized paradigm in *TSB*. The first subcategory, *Mutual love and erotic attraction* D1–144, contains several under-categories[24], some of which show clear traces of an unreflecting male gaze. One such under-category is *Man marries mistress, voluntarily or not* (TSB D 109–123) including some plots telling of rape, or of seduction, followed by the woman becoming pregnant, thereafter abandoned and derided – in either case hardly a question of mutual love. The events are viewed through the eyes of the male protagonist; marrying or not is his choice, not the choice of the raped or pregnant woman. She has no choice if she is to avoid becoming an outcast, but her perspective is not visible in the catalogue headings.

The placing of yet another under-category among the ballads purportedly focusing on mutual love also seems incongruent, namely, the ballads with sibling incest motifs, TSB D 88–96. Only one of the plots about sibling incest seems to depict mutual attraction (TSB D 88); in other ballad plots a sister tries to seduce her unwilling brother (TSB D 91, 92), or a brother rapes his sister and kills either her or their children (TSB D 95, 96). Some Swedish versions of one of the ballads (TSB D 90) tell instead of a brother testing his sister's virtue by pretending to try to seduce her (with the intention of killing her if she should show signs of succumbing), a plot that seems to stress (honour-related) control of female family members rather than incest as the main theme. In all these cases, mutual love or attraction is absent in the summaries of the ballads. The categorizing gaze seems to have rested on a conviction that sibling incest, firstly, must be regarded as an essential motif disregarding the circumstances, and secondly, must be regarded as connected to "mutual love and erotic attraction", whatever story is really told in the ballad plots.

The inclusion of numerous ballads about sexual violence, such as forced abduction and rape, in the category *Courtship* is also problematic. In general discourse the concept of courtship is usually interpreted in two different ways. Either it refers to falling in love and courting as individual initiatives between the parties, or it refers to the historically common, formal procedure where a man (or a representative of his family) seeks a wife, or parents seek a husband for their daughter, through negotiations between the two families. In the latter case, the main issues have been suitability and property – more seldom love or infatuation (Sawyer 1992; Lennartsson 2009). Marriage has seldom been a voluntary affair (and is still not today in many parts of the world), but a question of either bride price or dowry. In historical and present-day reality as well as in ballads, different violent actions also lead to marriage, such as abduction and bride-stealing, including rape. Such marriage customs, however, are usually not associated with the historical notion of courtship. Yet, in *TSB* numerous ballads of rape and other kinds of violence are included in the main category *Courtship* and,

besides, an extensive subcategory is named *Violent and unwanted courtship* (TSB D 145–193), thus purporting that violence is an unquestioned part of courtship, not only of abduction and bride-stealing.

In several ballad plots the raped woman has to marry the rapist as she can no longer be married to a man who expects a virgin – e.g. in the ballad types included in the under-category *Rape leads to marriage* (TSB D 188–193). Is it because sexual violence sometimes leads to marriage that it is included in the category courtship in *TSB*? Obviously not; in most ballads in the under-category *Rape and attempted rape* (TSB D 168–187) the violent act is not connected to any situation of courtship or planned marriage, but is the act of a man convinced that he has the right to a woman's body if he meets her in a place where she is unprotected and accordingly can be accused of putting herself at risk – such as the green wood. In some of these ballads, however, the woman defends herself by killing the man who attacks her, or a rapist is punished with death by the woman's relatives.[25] Further, in both these under-categories several plots include the motif of rape as punishment for pride (in a woman) or rape as revenge for rejection of a suitor (by a woman or by her family). The rapist may come back later and marry the woman, if she has survived, but still, these plots, along with many others in both under-categories, are distant from the notion of courtship.

Motifs of sexual violence also occur in a great number of ballads placed in categories where these motifs are not mentioned at all in headings, sub-headings or summaries. Accordingly, sexual violence, or any kind of gender-based violence, is seldom considered a main or category-building motif, however common it is in ballad plots within different groups and categories. The inconsistencies and bias in the handling of this motif seem to depend on an unacknowledged male gaze, on what categories the authors have wanted to create, and on earlier practice. Another interesting example of how one principal motif might exclude another in categorizing is the well-known Swedish ballad "Liten Karin" (TSB B 14), set among the legendary ballads, subcategory *Generally acknowledged saints*, because the female protagonist has been identified by scholars as Saint Catherine. However, in none of the twenty-five variants printed in *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader* (all of them collected from singers) is there any mention of Karin being anything but a young serving-girl at the local court – that is, the singers do not seem to have thought of her as a saint, just a devout young woman. Karin is accosted by the king, or the king's son, who wants her as his mistress, and when she declines, she is tortured to death. So far, the plot occurs in similar form in other ballads (e.g. the aforementioned Gøde og Hillelille, TSB D 185 as well as Adelbrand och lilla Lena, D 255) where rejected suitors take revenge through torture and/or rape, placed among the ballads of chivalry. In the last stanzas of most variants, however, Karin is taken to heaven and the king to hell. In this case, the inclusion of a miraculous motif in the plot

and the presumed identification of Karin with the saint are the factors that decided the categorizing in *TSB*; thus, the motif of gender-based violence has become obscured.

The examples that I have discussed here show that as women (with some exceptions) are subordinate in the ballad universe, their experiences are mostly not considered "essential"; the extremely common motif of gender-based violence is only treated as a category-building motif when the creators of *TSB* have not found another motif which they have considered more important, or which represents what is considered earlier practice. This way of selecting purported essential motifs represents a gaze that seems to be both biased and blind concerning gender power relations. What seems to be exposed here are the traces of an unacknowledged underlying paradigm that gives prominence to already existing categories and earlier practice without much reflection or analysis of incongruities.

Summaries as a Key to Variability

A positive and useful asset, however, in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* is that the summaries to some extent indicate the existence of different versions and alternative outcomes of the respective ballad plot; mainly differences between variants in the different Scandinavian languages. The *TSB* Introduction states: "Our aim has been to cover the essential deviations (alternatives, exclusions, and additions) from the 'normal' or usual chain of events. Unlike the editors of some other catalogues, we have generally tried to incorporate these variations – duly marked out – in the main summaries; the very number of types and variants has made this manner of presentation necessary" (Jonsson 1978: 19).

One example is the summary of a ballad that I will come back to in the next section, "Brud i vånda"[26] (TSB D 182). The letters *I, D, S* in the summary stand for variants in the Icelandic, Danish, and Swedish languages; the "c" that is sometimes inserted (*cD*, *cS* below) "stands for 'certain variants' and may refer to any number of texts from only one to the majority" (ibid.).

> A bride and a bridegroom are on the way to their wedding. The bride must stop, and she gives birth to twins (*I*: three children). She has been raped (*I*: by another man, *D, S*: by a man unknown to her, *cD, cS*: by a man who turns out to be the bridegroom). The bride is prepared to bury the children in the wood, but the bridegroom offers to take them to a foster-mother. *D, S*: When they arrive at the wedding in his home his mother is suspicious of the bride's weak condition, but the bridegroom finds excuses for her. Asked why he does not sleep by his bride he says that in her country it is customary for a bride to sleep alone for the first six weeks. (TSB D 182, p. 125)

In this way, it is implied that a certain ballad type may include rather different versions of the narrative. For example, we can see that in several Danish and

Swedish variants, the bridegroom turns out to be the rapist (in a few cases the seducer), a fact that complicates those versions of the plot (and, as I will show, means that this ballad turns out to be one in a group of ballads which seem to have been perceived by singers as one narrative). The authors have regarded the alternatives as deviations from the "normal or usual chain of events". Who has decided what plot versions are "normal" or "usual" is not discussed – probably the authors have chosen the most common versions of the chain of events in the text versions that were accessible to them. However, the content of all collected versions may be read and understood in more than one way, depending on the reader's perspective and underlying values, just as folktales or classical dramas may be – and are – interpreted in many ways. Several ballad types documented only in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries in Denmark and Sweden, and many early variants of other ballads soon seem to have gone out of the living repertoire – and later variants, if any, quite often stress other aspects of the content.[27] Then, the most "usual" may not at all be related to the singers' practice in later centuries; it becomes a historical judgement. It is also unclear if the numerous twentieth-century sound recordings have been taken into account, and if and how these late interpretations of the ballads' content might have shifted the emphasis.

But the messages of *TSB* are somewhat mixed. We are also told by Jonsson et al. that the alternatives marked "certain" may be very important, they may refer to the majority of the texts in one of the languages. If one, fairly coherent plot version, differing from those of other languages, dominates in one language, this is a very interesting example of the multivoiced character of the ballads, and it is a pity that such large-scale alternative plots are not clearly perceptible. Still, the indicated variability opens a way to further study of different possible interpretations of a ballad by different singers. We should also remember that a "normal" chain of events is constructed by scholars who have had access to a very large amount of written material, including discontinued versions. That chain of events has not necessarily existed in the living singing milieu, where one or maybe a couple of variants of a ballad were known by a singer, in a family, or among the neighbours. I want to point out, again, that ballads as collected items and ballads as performed everyday culture are not identical.

Considering the enormous amount of work that was laid down in *TSB* – and the even greater simultaneous effort of completing the five volumes of *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader* – it is understandable that an older paradigm was taken over from earlier scholars without much analysis. The result of all this work is immensely useful and a true treasure trove. Still, more than forty years after the publication of *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad,* we need to review and rethink the construction of categories as well as the underlying, unreflected conceptions and views on which it was built.

Gender-based Violence in Cross-category Motif Clusters

In this section, I focus on a cluster of narrative motifs occurring in a group of ballads of chivalry which share parts of their content but are defined as different types and placed in different categories in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*. I use the ballad type titles to identify the different examples, but I do not discuss any separate ballad as a whole. In addition (as stated earlier in the text), I use the term *version* for the individual documentations, not *variant*, as that term is closely connected to the concept type. The examples are selected to illustrate how ballad content exposing gender power structures emanates when we focus on motifs. The following small selection of stanzas from a couple of these ballads highlights these motifs in concentrated form:

Min fader han var en så underlig Man/han byggde min bur så nära intill strann.
Han byggde min bur så nära utmed strann/Der Herrar och Grefvar reste fram.
Elva voro de som min bur bröt/men inte mer än en som min ära njöt.[28]

(From: Brud i vånda (TSB D 182, SMB 106 C) in Wallman's and Grevilli's recording of Greta Naterberg, Slaka, Östergötland, Sweden 1810s)[29]

Lill K[jersti] hó dansa so lengje/hó trota út adde kungens drengjer.
L[ill] K[jersti] hó dansa ti hó va mó/ti båe hennes skóne stó fudde av bló.
So breidde hó ut si kåpa blå/en liten són fødde hó derpå.
Gullsméen talar til datteren sin/hvem er fader til barnen din.
Sant hjelpe meg Gud av all min nø/jeg vet ingen fader anten livande hell dø.
Dei va væl 15 mi dynnæ uppbroút/men en riddar va de som mi ære noút.[30]

(From: Liti Kjerstis dans (TSB D 416), in Sophus Bugge's recording of Gunhild Kjetilsdotter Sundsli, Moland, Fyresdal, Telemark, Norway 1864)[31]

In the catalogue, one of the connected ballads, "Brud i vånda" (Bride in labour, TSB D 182), is placed in the category *Courtship*, subcategory *Violent or unwanted courtship*, under-category *Rape and attempted rape*. The heading for the type is *Man cares for his violated bride* (although the bride stands out as the main character just as much as the groom). The other three ballads are all placed in the category *Ballads with folktale motifs and other novellistic ballads* – a formal category which quite excludes the content. One is "Dankungen och guldsmedens dotter" (The Danish king and the goldsmith's daughter, TSB D 415), another "Riddar Olle" (Sir Olof, TSB D 421) and a third, with principal elements of the plot in common with the others, "Liden Kirstins dans (The dance of young Kirstin, TSB D 416).[32] The latter three share the heading *Woman must reveal having been raped, and her bridegroom turns out to be the violator*. This heading also describes a great part of the plot in "Brud i vånda", and the previously mentioned

categories *Rape and attempted rape* and *Rape leads to marriage* would also include many variants of all four ballads. They were all performed in the living tradition of the nineteenth century and are richly documented.

All these versions taken together tell an ambiguous and many-layered story with a common core consisting of a number of rather complex narrative motifs: 1) A woman has been raped (in some versions seduced), by a man breaking into her bower, and become pregnant; 2) she has just been married, or is going to marry, when she gives birth to her child, or two children (twins were believed to be extramarital), which usually 3) leads to a dialogue concerning who the father is. In most cases this dialogue tells of 4) certain gifts that the bride has received as compensation for her loss of virginity. And, as the heading intimates, 5) in most cases it turns out that she has been raped by the bridegroom. In all the three ballads placed in the novellistic category, she is also 6) forced to dance at the court as a test of virginity, or honour – if she has just given birth or is in the late months of pregnancy she will not be able to dance for hours (we must suppose that, like several other women ballad protagonists, she is tightly laced, trying to conceal the pregnancy) – and the physical exertion triggers the process of childbirth.

In a number of variants of "Riddar Olle" and "Dankungen och guldsmedens dotter", the bride's pregnancy, or non-virgin state, is disclosed by a musician or a magical bedcover; "Riddar Olle" also includes an Iseult/Brangaine motif[33] – the bride asks one of her handmaidens, who is a virgin, to sleep with the bridegroom the first night. These elements can be regarded as "sub-motifs" or variations that enhance the main narrative. The dance test motif occurs in a number of other ballads in different categories, as do the compensating gifts. On the whole, narrative motifs pointing out the importance of marrying a virgin, and the honour-related control of women, abound in the ballad universe. The control motif recurs and is further varied in "Brud i vånda", as the couple arrive at the groom's home where his mother is suspicious of the bride's paleness and tries to test and even poison her – the groom, however, manages to ward off the threat by cunning explanations.

This structure of varied but essentially constant elements, which are combined in different ways by singers, and which cross the borders between the ballad types created by scholars, might be regarded as a *cluster of shorter narrative motifs* (some of them interdependent on each other). Such a cluster might indicate a web of stories with another emphasis than the *TSB* type headings imply, and it may let us perceive the narrative of gender and power as the principal story. What is told in the many singers' versions of the four ballads as one loosely-knit narrative of rape, pregnancy, disclosure, childbirth and marriage has later been organized by collectors and scholars into the ballad types occurring in *TSB*, and sorted according to other elements

than the ones that the singers seemingly perceived as principal.

In the singers' variants, several motif details, stanzas, and personal names cross the boundaries between the four different ballads – for example, the name "Riddar Olle" recurs as a refrain in several variants of the other ballads. In variants of all of them, a number of stanzas focus on the broken-into bower where the young woman obviously was insufficiently guarded by her family. In some variants the woman is explicitly raped by the stranger (or by one among several men who broke in), in a few cases she describes him as very handsome and the text intimates seduction; in others again, it is uncertain what happened.

The dialogue between bride and bridegroom about the gifts may be regarded as an extensive formula that occurs in all four ballads. The question "what did you get for your virginity/honour" is reiterated by the bridegroom several times, and the bride answers: a harp to play on, a silken skirt, a golden ring etc. ending the list with "he gave me a silver knife and I wish I had stuck it into his body". The groom recognizes the gifts he once gave to a woman whom he then left, and the mention of the knife is the cue that makes him confess "it is I who am the father of your child". In the ballads, this leads to a happy ending without shame for the bride – that she probably has to marry her rapist is not problematized in the ballad universe.

The disclosure of fatherhood in these differing versions implies either that a penitent rapist/seducer thinks that he ought to check what happened to the woman and gets back, or that he marries by chance the woman he impregnated nine months ago without realizing who she is – or, he turns out to be an unusually tender husband who takes care of his bride and her children whoever the father is. Today, we perceive many ballad narratives as lacking in logic, but on the other hand, this cluster of gender-power-related narrative motifs – shaped by a large number of singers – may be said to negotiate masculinity in interesting ways, depicting different possible roles, from rapist (representing dominant, hegemonic masculinity and what is today often termed male entitlement, cf. Manne 2020) to caring husband and father (representing an alternative, non-dominant masculinity). The sometimes blurred boundaries between seduction and rape also are negotiated and rendered in quite different ways by singers; however, in the ballad narratives as in history, legally and morally those actions have been regarded as identical as regards the outcome for the woman in question.

After having shown the likeness between the narratives in these four ballads, and how they might be perceived as a cluster of motifs, I want to return to the question why they are placed as they are in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*. I have no information on how Jonsson et al. reasoned when placing three of them in the category *Ballads with folktale motifs and other novellistic ballads,* but one reason might be that "Dankungen och guldsmedens dotter" is considered by Grundtvig to have

a (long-lost) connection with the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag and his occupation of the Swedish island of Gotland in the fourteenth century,[34] a king and an event that have been surrounded by legends. Maybe also the implied Iseult/Brangaine motif of "Riddar Olle" is associated with the Tristan texts. However, although in *TSB* "Brud i vånda" is separated from the other three ballads, Grundtvig in *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* made the connection between "Brud i vånda" and a couple of narratives containing the Iseult/Brangaine motif, or the disclosure of the bride's pregnancy by a musician, and considered these narratives as closely related (*DgF* vol. 5: 304ff). Obviously, Jonsson was not aware of, or did not agree on, these connections.

To sum up this example: if we regard the narratives categorized into the four ballads as I have done above, the story tends to appear instead as a cluster of related narrative motifs dealing with a young woman's experience in a milieu characterized by separation between the sexes and subordination of the female as in Hirdman's theory, and by a contrast between (at least) two kinds of masculinity. She may be a lord's or a rich merchant's daughter, but she is the powerless party in the hands of fathers, husbands, and mothers-in-law. In the twenty-first century, it is likely that singers as well as scholars will look for such latent elements of content in the Scandinavian ballad corpora; it is my hope that they will have some use for the concept of motif clusters.

Several other narrative motifs tend to appear as cross-category clusters, disseminated in different ballad types; some of these motifs are discussed in my published or ongoing research. Accusations (often unfounded) of women for extramarital sexual relationships, pregnancy, and child murder ("hor och mord"), also lead to violent punishment and often death, a topic that occurs in ballads with quite different headings. I have discussed this motif of what might be termed honour-related violence in Åkesson 2014 and Åkesson 2020 (cf. also Herrera-Sobek 1991; Mariscal Hay 2004; Johansson 2005). At the beginning of this article, I mentioned torture of a woman as punishment for rejecting a man as the subject of "Liten Karin" (categorized as a legendary ballad) – the motif occurs in many other ballads in different categories, especially if we include rape perpetrated as punishment (this motif is discussed in a fortcoming article, Åkesson 2022). Again, cross-category re-reading of what the singers actually sang throws light on narratives that are not visible in the structure of *TSB*.

A less sinister cross-category motif is cross-dressing as a method for hiding from violence, or for gaining access to a space reserved for another gender. A woman can dress as a man to escape a rapist, to fight the captor of her brother or fiancé, or become a stable-hand at the court and get close to the prince.[35] A man can dress as a woman to gain access to his love's bower or to be present at his wife's lying in (which may prove fatal), or to help a

woman get away from a would-be rapist.[36] Gender and sexuality even sometimes seem somewhat ambiguous. This cross-dressing and gender-bending motif, in its varying guises, is, again, invisible in the catalogue but appears in ballad versions.[37]

Concluding Reflections

In this article, I have discussed two interrelated themes. One is the need to rethink paradigms and knowledge regimes within the humanities, with the categorization of traditional ballads as an example. The other theme is how to shed light on gender issues as cross-category content in Scandinavian ballads, proposing a method and an alternative perspective on narrative content.

I have discussed the categorization of traditional ballads in Scandinavia as an example of the way that old scholarly, yet non-verbalized, paradigms shape the way in which we perceive such items of immaterial cultural heritage. I have given examples of how a system of categorization, resting upon a hierarchical male gaze, may create a structure where much of the narrative content is concealed. *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*, founded upon the thought patterns of older generations of scholars, is at once a great and useful work, providing a structure for several Scandinavian ballad editions, and an endeavour that is unconsciously as well as consciously conservative. The intricate system of categories, subcategories, types and headings creates a hierarchy where issues such as the structural violence against and subordination of women – that characterize a large amount of the ballad narratives – become invisible or are just glimpsed behind other narrative motifs which have been considered the essential ones. The selection of narrative elements that are considered essential has been made on the basis of that unacknowledged underlying paradigm that gives prominence to already existing categories and a gaze that is blind to issues of gender and power.

It is important to remember that vertical categories represent one kind of structure, which has been superimposed upon the horizontal, motley and unstructured multitude of criss-crossing tales taken down from the singers. And in that multitude it is possible to perceive non-hierarchical patterns of narratives, perceived as trodden paths, or woven threads – a kind of horizontal landscape. In my rereading of traditional ballads I look out for horizontal, cross-category narrative motifs; I focus on those that may be considered essential from a perspective based on gender power relationships – but also counteraction. In this article, some examples of such horizontal narratives have been traced across the vertical ballad types and catalogue categories. These narratives represent one kind of subordinate or subaltern perspective on the ballad universe, recognizing the present-day relevance of

many of these traditional songs. There may be still other narratives carrying other possible new interpretations which also concern us in the twenty-first century. It is my belief that singers as well as scholars will benefit from visualizing two structures simultaneously, shifting our gaze between categories and clusters, vertical and horizontal.

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[1] Cultural heritage is a contested and today much-disputed concept. In this text I chiefly refer to expressions of immaterial cultural heritage, such as traditional songs, regarded as a combination of process and product, of transmission and selection, with performers as well as collectors and others as forming agents (Bohman 2008; Åkesson 2007:21f). My focus is on categorization as one aspect of the wider problematization.

[2] *Whose Voice, Whose Gaze? Gender, Power, Categories, and Multivoiced Narratives in Scandinavian Ballad Tradition* was affiliated before my retirement to the Centre for Folk Music and Jazz Research at the Performing Arts Agency, Stockholm. I would like to thank, among others, my former colleagues at the Centre (Svenskt visarkiv) and at the ethnological seminars at the University of Umeå, and likewise the Nordic network for traditional song scholarship for input and ideas during my work; also, Karin L. Eriksson, Boel Lindberg and Margareta Jersild for their response to an earlier version of this article.

[3] The research project *Intermedialitet och den medeltida balladen* [Intermediality and the Medieval Ballad] was conducted at Linnaeus University 2006–2013 and resulted in several publications. In Denmark Lene Halskov Hansen has published several studies, especially Halskov Hansen 2015, and colleagues in Finland have been working on the project *The Art of Narrative Song* since 2017.

[4] Ballads were considered central in the seventeenth-century Swedish nation-building; later collectors such as E. G. Geijer, A. A. Afzelius, R. Dybeck, S. Grundtvig, J. O. I. Rancken, M. Moe, and M. B. Landstad played important roles in different Scandianvian countries.

[5] Melodic and performative components are immensely important as well but must be omitted from this discussion for reasons of space and clarity.

[6] Child 95 in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Among recordings, see e.g. the performance of ”Bonnie Susie Cleland” (a Scottish version of ”Lady Maisry”) by Maureen Jelks of Bonnie Susie Cleland on YouTube

[7] One early work charting the relation between colonial expansion and the ordering of culture is Dirks (ed.) 1992.

[8] Queer and LGBTI aspects are e.g. represented in the organization *The Unstraight Museum* https://www.unstraight.org/. One recent publication is Laskar 2019.

[9] E.g. at the Centre for Swedish folk Music and Jazz Research, Swedish Performing Arts Agency, in the 2010s.

[10] The network *Genus och kulturarv – nätverket för kulturarv och tvärvetenskaplig genusforskning* http://www.genusarv.se/ was started in 2017. Gender-profiled research has been initiated at several Swedish museums, among them National History Museum, the Royal Armoury and the Maritime Museums. This research was highlighted at the conference *Rethinking Knowledge Regimes: Solidarities and Contestations. Swedish Conference for Gender Research,* Gothenburg, 7–9 October 2019. My project was presented there as well as at *Heroes, Canons, Cults: Critical Inquiries* at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, August 11–14 2021.

[11] *TSB* at carkiv.musikverk.se/www/epublikationer/Jonsson_Bengt_R-The_Types_of_the_Scandinavian_Medieval_Ballad.pdf and SMB at Onlinepublikationer – Svenskt visarkiv (musikverket.se) see Sveriges Medeltida Ballader 1–5:2.

[12] The *SMB* index is found at Medieval ballads - Svenskt visarkiv (musikverket.se) as a part of a web presentation of ballads.

[13] All through the text ballad types are indicated by quotation marks, as is customary with song titles, to separate them from categories and headings in italics.

[14] The concept “the male gaze” originated in art criticism but is generally used within feminist aesthetics - cf. Korsmeyer 2004:51ff. I use it here in a general sense for the non-verbalized,

hierarchical perspective of scholars from Romanticism onwards.
[15] Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* was published in Russian in 1928 but reached an international readership with the English translation first published in 1958.
[16] Rooth 1951:237–240 and Holbek 1964:160, both cited by Dundes 1997:196.
[17] To emphasize that I am not discussing ballad types here, I use the term *version* instead of *variant* for individual collected items.
[18] The term should not be mixed up with Rooth's "motif-complex", associated with the interdependency of motifs in tale types; the term "motif cluster" denotes patterns that cross type boundaries and are detached from the types.
[19] Child's publication also mentions many parallels in other European languages.
[20] https://musikverket.se/svensktvisarkiv/artikel/sveriges-medeltida-ballader/.
[21] https://www.bokselskap.no/boker?sjanger=ballader and *Norske Middelalder ballader Melodier,* vols. 1–4. ed. Astrid Nora Ressem. Oslo: Spartacus forlag, 2011–2016. Both editions contain a rich selection of the Norwegian ballad corpus, formerly published only in a number of separate editions.
[22] *Medeltida ballader i Finlands svenskbygder* (Medieval Ballads in the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland), Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland 2018–2021.
[23] In English: The Death of Queen Dagmar.
[24] In the following text I use the term *category* for the first level of categories within a group (e.g. *Courtship*); *subcategory* for level 2 (e.g. *Violent and unwanted courtship*) and *undercategory* for level 3 (e.g. *Rape and attempted rape*) – see fig. 1 or the digital edition of *TSB*, link in endnote 11.
[25] If we consider the historical society where the ballads have been performed and documented, rape has from early modern times been considered a serious crime and severely punished, although by society. In court cases of rape, however, the crime was considered to have been committed against a male member of the woman's family, as the father or husband was the owner of her body and chastity – see Taussi Sjöberg 1996; Lövkrona 2001; Bergenlöv 2002.
[26] In English: Bride in Labour.
[27] For example, a number of the ballads from early Danish nobility-milieu song books, dealing with violent rape of women who have rejected a man, are discontinued in later sources.
[28] Prose translation: My father was a strange man, he built my bower near the water's edge where the lords travel. Eleven men broke into my bower but only one had his will of me.
[29] The whole ballad is accessible at http://carkiv.musikverk.se/www/epublikationer/Sveriges_medeltida_ballader_band_3.pdf.
[30] Prose translation: Young Kjersti danced for so long, she exhausted all the king's men. She spread her cloak on the floor and gave birth to a son. The goldsmith asks his daughter, "Who is the father of your child?" " So help me God in my need, I do not know him, living or dead, they were fifteen who broke into my bower but only one who had his will of me."
[31] The whole ballad is accessible at https://www.bokselskap.no/boker/riddarballadar2/tsb_d_416_litikjerstisdans.
[32] Sverker Ek (1958) comments on the likeness between three of these ballads, but from an essentially different, literary, perspective that takes no account of the singers.
[33] The motif is known from the medieval Tristan and Iseult literature, where Iseult's handmaiden Brangaine is requested to sleep (disguised as Iseult) the first night with King Mark, whom Iseult has to marry, as she and Tristan are already lovers.
[34] Grundtvig's comment to DgF 245 in *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* vol. 4.
[35] "Riddar Perleman och jungfru Gunnela" (TSB D 153), "Fästmö befriar fästman" (TSB E 31), "Syster befriar broder" (TSB E 32), and "Liten Kersti stalldräng" (TSB D 396) respectively.
[36] Variants of "Skepparen och jungfrun" (TSB D 426), "Riddare på barnsängsgille" (TSB D 358) and "Riddar Perleman och jungfru Gunnela" (TSB D 153) respectively.
[37] Gender ambiguity and cross-dressing are more common in English-language ballads and the topic has been studied by e.g. Dugaw 1989 and Greenhill 1995.

From Oral Prosimetrum to Viking Metal

Katarzyna Anna Kapitan

Abstract
The present study examines the *longue durée* of a medieval literary work through the lens of its transmission, adaptation, and reception, deeply anchored in these processes' historical contexts. It focuses on three stages in the transmission history of a single Old Norse saga, *Hrómundur saga Gripssonar*, and examines them in their historical, socio-political contexts. First, the article discusses the seventeenth-century prose adaptation of the story in the context of antiquarian interest in Old Norse narratives. Then it turns to the nineteenth-century prose adaptation of the story and analyses it from the perspective of the formation of Icelandic identity. Finally, it closes with the interpretation of the most recent performance of the story by the Faroese metal band Týr, and views it in the context of contemporary developments within the Faroese independence movement.

Keywords: Old Norse literature, reception history, adaptation history, medievalism, Viking Metal

Introduction

A number of Nordic legendary heroes have their deeds described in multiple adaptations, in various media and languages. One of the better-known stories that circulated widely through time and space, freely moving across generic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, is the story of Sigurd the dragon slayer (Ice. Sigurður Fáfnisbani), which has an especially rich tradition stretching from the Middle Ages to today (see for example, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir 2012). It is known from Old Norse works such as the *Poetic Edda* and *Völsunga saga*, younger Icelandic poetry, various Scandinavian ballads, and multiple modern adaptations, the most famous being Wagner's opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Among the lesser-known stories that circulated exclusively in Scandinavia throughout centuries is the story of Hrómundur, son of Gripur, which is the subject of the present study. Hrómundur, who is a native of Telemark in Norway and is responsible for, among other things, slaying the berserk Hröngvið and the mound-dweller Þráinn, as well as assisting King Ólafur in defeating Swedish kings, is a relatively obscure character from Old Norse literature. Not many know or realize that the story of Hrómundur in its multiple iterations has been

performed in Scandinavia for almost a thousand years. It was performed at the famous wedding feast at Reykhólar in 1119 described in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða (ÞsH)*, part of the thirteenth-century *Sturlunga* compilation, as well as today: in February 2020, shortly before the start of global lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Faroese Viking Metal band Týr performed a musical adaptation of the story together with the Symphony Orchestra of the Faroe Islands.

In light of the growing interest in the reception of Old Norse literature and its reuses in contemporary culture, which have been the subject of a number of recent publications, such as the collection of essays *The Vikings Reimagined* (Birkett & Dale 2020), there is a clear need for a closer investigation of the circumstances in which certain types of historical and/or literary references are rediscovered and utilized. Arguably, the rediscovery and reuse of historical references can be connected to the ideological and political agendas which they are supposed to serve and reinforce. While many Old Norse sagas exist in multiple adaptations in various media and languages, these adaptations are usually explored from the perspective of intertextual connections, rather than from the perspective of the historical context in which they have appeared.[1] However, analysis of their artistic production from a socio-political perspective can benefit our understanding of the process of adaptation and shed light on the roles these adaptations played in the cultural landscapes of past centuries. Following the paths laid down for Old Norse studies by, among others, Andrew Wawn (1994, 2000), Jón Karl Helgason (1998, 1999, 2001), and Heather O'Donoghue (2005, 2014), the present study examines the *longue durée* of a medieval literary work through the lens of its rewriting, transmission, adaptation, and reception, deeply anchored in these processes' historical contexts. This approach allows us not only to analyse the past processes of cultural production, but also to reflect on the use of Norse motifs in contemporary culture, and to engage critically with the presentation of these historical narratives today.

This study throws a spotlight on three moments in the transmission history of a single Old Norse saga, *Hrómundur saga Gr(e)ipssonar* (*HsG*), and their socio-political circumstances. The history of the adaptation of Hrómundur-related materials includes multiple manifestations in prose and verse, most of which were examined over a century ago by Albert LeRoy Andrews (1911, 1912, 1913). The more recent adaptations have, however, so far escaped scholarly attention. *HsG*, as known from all modern editions and translations, is a seventeenth-century narrative, but due to its presumed medieval origins it gained a unique position in the history of Icelandic literature as the earliest legendary saga to be mentioned by name (Stefán Einarsson 1957:157–58, 1961:195–96). In his history of Icelandic literature Finnur Jónsson wrote the following about *Hrómundar saga*: "Alt i alt hører denne saga til de interessanteste og mest betydende" (Finnur Jónsson

1907:334) (All in all this saga belongs to the interesting and most important sagas). Even though Finnur Jónsson himself in his *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* (Finnur Jónsson 1923:II, 802–803) revised his opinion by omitting the "mest betydende" part of the statement, *Hrómundar saga* remained one of the "most important" legendary sagas. It is listed in major reference works on medieval literature and culture such as *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* (Jesch 1993) and the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (Foote 1982–1989), and it has been frequently referenced in the discussion of the origins of the legendary sagas, oral and written forms of the sagas' transmission, and, indirectly, in discussion of the credibility of the legendary sagas, making it probably the best-known example of a lost Old Norse-Icelandic saga (see for example, Heusler 1914; Liestøl 1945; Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1952; Jón Helgason 1953; Foote 1953–1957; Sverrir Tómasson 1988; Mitchell 1991; Tulinius 1993, 2005; Úlfar Bragason 1994, 2005; O'Connor 2005; Driscoll 2009; Kapitan 2018).

As previously introduced, the saga of Hrómundur is mentioned in the famous description of the wedding feast in Reykhólar from 1119, presented in *Þorgils saga og Hafliða* (Kålund 1906–1911; Brown 1952; Halldór Hermannsson 1945), but the literary form of the lost saga of Hrómundur is a matter of speculation. No other contemporary account of that story has survived, but based on references in *ÞsH* to the many verses that the story of Hrómundur contained, we can assume that saga existed in the form of an oral prosimetrum, that is, a literary composition consisting of alternating segments of prose and verse.[2] The frequently quoted passage from *ÞsH* reads as follows:

> Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi sagði sǫgu frá Hrǫ[n]g[vi]ði víkingi ok frá Óláfi liðmannakonungi ok haugbroti Þráins berserks ok Hrómundi Gripssyni, ok **margar vísur með.** En þessarri sǫgu var skemt Sverri konungi, ok kallaði hann slíkar lygisǫgur skemtiligastar. Ok þó **kunnu menn at telja ættir sínar** til Hrómundar Gripssonar. Þessa sǫgu hafði Hrólfr sjálfr samansetta. (Brown 1952:17–18, my emphases)

> Hrólf from Skálmarnes told a story about Hröngvið the viking and Ólaf liðmannakonungr and the mound-breaking of Þráin the berserk and Hrómund Gripsson, **with many verses in it**. This story was used to entertain King Sverrir and he declared that such lying sagas were most amusing; **men can however trace their genealogies** to Hrómund Gripsson. Hrólf himself had composed this saga. (Foote 1953–57:226, my emphases)

The suggestion that the lost saga of Hrómundur contained verses is confirmed by the account of the medieval poem of Hrómundur in the form of *rímur* (sg. *ríma*, pl. *rímur*, Eng. rhymes). *Hrómundar rímur*, also known as *Griplur*, are believed to be derived from the lost ***Hrómundar saga* and in various places they also refer to stanzas (Ice. *vísur*). Following Finnur Jónsson's (1905–1922) edition of the poem in *Rímnsafn*, *Griplur* stanzas

I:30, I:39, and IV:7 include references to *vísur*, but none of them is quoted directly. This speaks in favour of the hypothesis that **Hrómundar saga* was initially composed and performed in the form of a prosimetrum.

In addition to the information about the many verses that the lost saga of Hrómundur contained, *ÞsH* also states that many Icelanders could trace their genealogies back to Hrómundur Gripsson. Indeed, Hrómundur is mentioned in *The Book of Settlements* (Ice. *Landnámabók*), where he is presented as the great-grandfather of the first settlers of Iceland Ingólfur and Hjörleifur (Finnur Jónsson 1900:6). Here, he is presented as a native of Telemark, an inland region of southern Norway, whose sons Bjornólfur and Hróaldur settled in Dalsfjord in the western part of the country. Their sons, Örn and Hróaldur, were apparently the fathers of Ingólfur and Leifur, who, according to tradition, arrived in Iceland in the second half of the ninth century.[3] This genealogical connection of Hrómundur to many contemporary Icelanders might have played a significant role in the saga's transmission history and its adaptations in Iceland, as the story has appeared in various artistic forms throughout centuries.

While not all of the turning points in the complicated transmission history of this story can be placed in time and space with high certainty, some of them can be easily identified, and this allows for the analysis of the cultural processes that appear to have led to the creation of subsequent adaptations. The present article analyses three snapshots from the transmission history of the story of Hrómundur in the context of different socio-political circumstances. First, it discusses the seventeenth-century prose adaptation of the story (*17HsG*) in the context of antiquarian interest in Old Norse narratives, which could serve the interests of early modern Scandinavian monarchies. The article then turns to the nineteenth-century prose adaptation of the story (*19HsG*) and analyses it from the perspective of the formation of Icelandic identity, which led to a growing interest in regaining independence from Denmark. Finally, it closes with the interpretation of the most recent performance of the story by the metal band Týr, and views it in the context of contemporary developments within the Faroese independence movement. The study concludes that in each case, political or ideological agendas seem to have worked as a catalyst for interest in Old Norse material in the Nordic countries. The article aims to show that regardless of the time period in which the Old Norse motifs were used, their uses can, to a certain extent, be related to the formation or cultivation of national identities through references to national(ized) cultural heritage and/or genealogies.

Royal Genealogies and Danish Historiography

The first early modern prose adaptation of the story of Hrómundur originated in Copenhagen at the end of the seventeenth century (thus henceforth

17HsG). Its appearance was associated with the burgeoning antiquarian movement in Scandinavia, which brought Old Norse literature to the attention of continental Europe.[4] This increased interest in Old Norse material coincided with the period of intense wars between Denmark and Sweden over the *dominium maris baltici* (Baltic Sea dominion) (Kirby 1990; Lisk 1967), when both countries attempted to prove their supremacy by means of military and ideological battles. Old Norse literature played a significant role in this process, providing "ancient sources" for politically motivated scholars on both sides of the Øresund (Skovgaard-Petersen 1993; Lavender 2014; Gottskálk Jensson 2019; Kapitan 2022). As the early transmission history of *17HsG* shows, the circumstances of the saga's appearance lie precisely on the border of Swedish and Danish interests.

One of the antiquarians who was interested in the story of Hrómundur was an Icelander employed at the Dano-Norwegian court, Thormod Torfæus (1636–1719). Torfæus first served as a royal translator tasked with translating Old Norse-Icelandic sagas into Danish. He later worked as a royal antiquarian and was sent to Iceland to collect manuscripts, and, finally, as a royal historiographer, he was tasked with writing a history of Norway in Latin (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952:V, 190–91).[5] Around the same time that Torfæus became royal historiographer, he wrote a letter to his acquaintance in Iceland, Rev. Torfi Jónsson (1617–1689), a nephew of bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson and the pastor of Gaulverjabær (Páll Eggert Ólason 1948–1952:V, 27–8). In the letter, he asked for help to acquire various sagas that he suspected to be potentially useful for his study of royal genealogies. One of the sagas he mentioned is that of Hrómundur, which Torfæus claims in the letter never to have seen.[6]

The antiquarian interest of people like Torfæus in the story of Hrómundur most likely gave an immediate motivation for the creation of *17HsG*. All the earliest manuscripts of the saga are contemporary with the aforementioned letter from Torfæus to Torfi Jónsson, while textual analysis reveals that all the extant texts can be traced back to a single manuscript – Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 601 b 4to – written by Jón Eggertsson, an Icelandic collaborator of the Swedish Society of Antiquities (*Antikvitetskollegium*). It has been argued that Jón Eggertsson probably wrote AM 601 b 4to while imprisoned in Copenhagen in the years 1684–87 (Kapitan & Stegmann 2019). His role nonetheless extends beyond that of a scribe, as he is also believed to be responsible for converting the *rímur* of Hrómundur into prose.[7] Jón Eggertsson's authorship of *17HsG* seems likely given the circumstances, since, as a poet, he had all the necessary skills to complete such an undertaking. Moreover, he had access to a manuscript that he acquired in Iceland in the early 1680s, which contained *Griplur*, among other sets of *rímur*.[8] Therefore, the seventeenth-century saga can be seen as a summary of the contents of the *rímur*, prepared with a scholarly audience in mind.

Textual analysis of the oldest manuscripts of *17HsG* indicates that political agendas played a larger role in the creation of this saga than might otherwise be anticipated. In the manuscripts written by Jón Eggertsson, the name "Denmark" is consistently removed from the text of the saga. A comparison with the saga text preserved in the three oldest manuscripts (AM 601 b to, Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, AM 587 b 4to, and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Papp. fol. nr 67) exemplifies this perfectly. In AM 601 b 4to, the text reads, "King Ólafur sailed from there and goes north to Denmark" ("Sigldi olafr kongr sua þadann, oc norþr til danmerkr", AM 601 b 4to, f. 3r.), but the scribe deleted "Denmark" and replaced it with "his kingdom" ("sinz rijkis", AM 601 b 4to, f. 3r). This emended reading made its way into a transcript of *Hrómundar saga* preserved in AM 587 b 4to, f. 5r–5v, and from there to the modern editions of the saga, starting with *Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum* (Rafn 1829–1830:II, 371).[9] Papp. fol. nr 67, which preserves another text of the saga written by Jón Eggertsson, also omits Denmark and reads, "King Ólafur sailed from there and home" ("Siglde Olafur kongr sua þadan og heim", Papp. Fol. nr 67, f. 108r), with the vague and non-specific "home" replacing the more politically fraught "Denmark". This intentional omission of Denmark may suggest that the saga's Swedish audience, and in particular Jón Eggertsson's employer, the Swedish Society of Antiquities, had little taste for stories about Danish heroes, favouring instead stories of general relevance to mainland Scandinavia.[10] Indeed, *17HsG* describes a battle between King Ólafur and the Swedish kings, both named Hadding, making it relevant to legendary Swedish history. This version of the story made its way to the Swedish edition of the saga in *Nordiska kämpa dater i en sagoflock samlade om forna kongar och hjältar* (Björner 1737).

Even though there is no evidence that *17HsG* was ever directly used as a historical source in any of Torfæus' historical works, and Torfæus himself eventually dismissed it as "worthless",[11] the marginal annotations in Torfæus' hand that appear in the manuscripts preserving the saga reveal his historical interest in the story. His main interest was evidently the saga's presentation of royal genealogies; because of this, Torfæus paid great attention to the intertextual connections between various Old Norse texts and the inaccuracies that appear in them. This is clear from his comments in two manuscripts preserving *17HsG*, AM 587 b 4to and AM 193 e fol. In both, Torfæus comments that the accounts of *17HsG* should be compared to the accounts of other sagas: to *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* in the case of AM 587 b 4to and to *Hálfs saga og Hálfsrekka* in AM 193 e fol. Neither of these texts would be seen as a historical source today, but in Torfæus' time both were the basis of historical research.[12]

The evidence presented here demonstrates the close relationship between the rewriting of *Hrómundar saga* and the political and ideological world through which it moved. The political interests seem to have not only given

an impulse for writing of the saga, but they also significantly shaped its contents, at least with regard to certain geographical references. Moreover, the marginalia found in some of the oldest manuscripts attests to scholarly interest in the royal genealogies preserved in the legendary sagas, thus also bearing witness to the use of these types of sagas as historical sources at this time. Even though *17HsG* never played any significant role in providing evidence for Danish or Swedish supremacy, its early transmission shows that even historically irrelevant texts could not avoid ideological influence. The saga in its extant form came into being as a result of the politically oriented scholarship of the seventeenth century.

Common Men's Genealogies and Icelandic Nationalism

While the oldest manuscripts of *17HsG* bear witness to the historiographical interest in its royal genealogies and the geography of its action, the younger prose adaptation highlights the genealogical importance of its protagonist, the eponymous Hrómundur, by supplying a genealogy of his descendants at the end of the saga. Moreover, when King Ólafur is introduced at the beginning of the saga, he is not immediately attached to any specific geographical location, as he is in *17HsG* and *Griplur*. Scholarship has thus far been completely silent about this younger prose adaptation, and little is known about its origins, dating, and authorship. What is known, however, is that all four manuscripts that preserve this saga can be dated to the first half of the nineteenth century (therefore henceforth *19HsG*).[13]

While much may be said about the stylistic modifications and amplifications that characterize *19HsG* compared to the seventeenth-century saga, the saga's ending is especially interesting from the perspective of the present study. The ending of the nineteenth-century saga has been expanded with the addition of genealogical information concerning the descendants of Hrómundur, thus linking modern Icelanders to this legendary hero. Three out of four manuscripts explicitly name Björnólfur and Hróalfur (mostly likely corrupted from Hróaldur) as sons of Hrómundur.[14] Furthermore, one of them, Lbs 2404 8vo, goes even further and supplies additional information about Hrómundur's grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There, the ending of the story reads as follows:

> Tókoz bráþt meþ Rómundi oc Svanhvit góþar ástir, þau átto bęþi Sono oc Dætr þo hér sé frá atgjǒrþom þeira rítat, oc voru þau in mestu mikil menni oc stórar ęttir frá þeim komnar þeira Synir vóru þeir Birǒnólfur oc Hróalfr Biǒrnólfr var faþir Arnar faþir Ingólfs landnámamans, enn son Hróálfs var Harþmar faþir Hiǒrleifs er Hiǒrleifs hǒfþi er vit kendur. (Lbs 2404 8vo, f. 100v)

> Soon deep love arose between Hromundur and Svanhvit. They had both sons and daughters, even though there is [no] account of their deeds provided here. From

them descended greatest men and great dynasties. Their sons were Björnolf and Hroalf. Björnolf was the father of Örn, father of Ingolf the settler, and the son of Hroalf was Harðmar, father of Hjörleif, after whom Hjörleifshöfði is named.

This information tracing a genealogy from Hrómundur to Ingólfur must originate in *Landnámabók* where, as previously mentioned, both Ingólfur Arnason and Hjörleifur Hróðmarson are listed as Hrómundur's descendants and where Hjörleifshöfði is mentioned as the location where Hjörleifur settled.

There is good reason to assume that the political situation in Iceland at the beginning of the nineteenth century may well have influenced the shape of the younger adaptation of the story. The Alþingi was disbanded by the royal decree in the year 1800, and in 1809 Jørgen Jørgensen declared Iceland independent from Denmark and pronounced himself its ruler (Sigurður Líndal 1974–2016:IX, 5–86). Jørgensen's *coup d'état* was ultimately unsuccessful and can be seen as putting Icelanders' urge for independence from Denmark in question. Nevertheless, it seems quite possible that the Icelandic turn towards medieval sagas may have had something to do with the awakening of an Icelandic national identity. As the Napoleonic wars rolled across Europe and the socio-political conflicts leading to the Springtime of Nations started to appear across the continent, the growing importance of Iceland's past as a nation and of its genealogies for the formation of a distinct national identity may also be rooted in the sagas.

Appending genealogies to saga narratives is not an uncommon practice in the scribal culture of early modern Iceland, as it has been observed in manuscript transmissions of other sagas, for example, the recently discussed case of *Illuga saga* (Lavender 2020:73–76). What is intriguing in this attempt to connect the legendary saga hero to the history of Iceland is the intellectual milieu from which this younger *Hrómundar saga* most likely originates.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, there had been no sustained separatist movement in Iceland, with some Icelandic intellectuals advocating for even closer cultural assimilation with Denmark. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, nationalism dominated Icelandic discourse (see, for example, Guðmundur Hálfdanarson 2006; Halink 2017). The awakening of the nationalistic ideology is often associated with the Fjölnismenn, a group of Icelandic intellectuals in Copenhagen who had founded the journal *Fjölnir: Árrit handa Íslendingum*. The journal was published in Copenhagen between 1835 and 1847 and is considered the first Icelandic journal to be dedicated to literature, although it also published on history, politics, and natural sciences (Þórir Óskarsson 2006; Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson 1999). One of the Fjölnismenn was Konráð Gíslason, later professor at the University of Copenhagen and son of the Icelandic lay historian Gísli Konráðsson. Gísli Konráðsson in turn happens to be the scribe

responsible for one of the four manuscripts preserving *19HsG*: Lbs 2404 8vo, the very manuscript that expands the genealogies from Hrómundur to Ingólfur and Hjörleifur.

The emphasis on the descendants of Hrómundur in Lbs 2404 8vo reflects Gísli Konráðsson's clear interest in genealogy. As he stated in one of his letters to the folklorist Jón Árnason: "I have complied so many genealogies that I cannot count them […] all back to *Sturlunga*, the sagas, and *Landnámabók*" ("Ættartölur hefi eg svo margar saman tekið, að eg man ekki að telja þær, […] allt fram að Sturlungu, Sögunum og Landnámu", Finnur Sigmundsson 1951:80). In this context, it is not surprising that the information from *Landnámabók* regarding the descendants of Hrómundur was added to the saga in a manuscript written by Gísli Konráðsson.

Gísli Konráðsson's interest in Icelandic history and genealogies was formed under the influence of Jón Espólín, for whom Gísli Konráðsson worked as a secretary (Stefán Einarsson 1948). Jón Espólín was a district administrator and lay historian with strong nationalistic sentiments. As Ingi Sigurðsson (1972:100–101) puts it, he "saw history as a means of establishing people's identity" and considered that "it would benefit the nation if people identified themselves with their ancestors, which was impossible without knowledge of history and genealogy." Because of his emphasis on history and genealogy in the formation of Icelandic identity, Stefán Einarsson considers Jón Espólín as an ideological forerunner of the Fjölnismenn, and emphasizes the direct link between Jón Espólín and Konráð Gíslason through Gísli Konráðsson (Stefán Einarsson 1948:18).

The actual extent of Jón Espólín and Gísli Konráðsson's influence on Konráð Gíslason and the Fjölnismenn is a matter for future investigation, but this genealogical addition in Lbs 2404 8vo gives us an insight into the ideological atmosphere in Iceland before the nationalistic Icelandic agenda gained full speed in Copenhagen in the middle of the century. It illustrates the role that medieval genealogies reaching into the settlement period played in the formation of Icelandic identity, which in turn led to the creation of the Icelandic independence movement.

The modification of the ending of the saga becomes even more intriguing when analysed in the context of other modifications that appear in the younger saga, compared to the seventeenth-century saga and the medieval *rímur* of Hrómundur. Table 1 presents a comparison of the opening lines of *17HsG* and *19HsG*, together with the corresponding passages of the *rímur*.

17HsG	*19HsG*	*Griplur*
Sá kongr rieþe fyrir Gordom /i danmorc/ er Olafr hiet	Sva hefr Søgo þessa, at á þeim tímum sem margir Stólkongar voro í Norvegi, Danmorco oc Svíþjóþ, gorþost margir Höfþíngjar oc stormektugir Herrar, Greifar oc Jarlar, sem bruto sic til ricja oc landa, herjuþo sva vel á vetrom sem sumrom, oc öbluþo sér sva fjár oc frægþa. A medal þessara oc þvílíkra var einn micils verþr Kongr, sem Olafr hiet	Óláf nefni eg ítran gram, er átti að stýra Hörðum, Lofðung helt með landi fram Lægis dýrum vörðum. Gnóðar-Ásmundr grams var feðr, Gumna fára líki, Sá bauð jafnan sverða veðr Og svipti af kóngum ríki

Table 1. A comparison of the ways in which King Ólafur is introduced in *17HsG*, *19HsG*, and *Griplur*.

As discussed elsewhere, King Ólafur is presented as a king of Hordaland in Norway in the medieval *rímur* of Hrómundur, while in the seventeenth-century saga he is made into a Danish king (Kapitan 2022). The nineteenth-century saga does not specify Ólafur's domain in the opening of the text, introducing him instead as one of many petty kings that ruled over Norway, Denmark, and Sweden in the distant past. The geographical vagueness of Ólafur's introduction can be seen as an intentional intervention in the saga's text, with the purpose of detaching it from a mainland Scandinavian context. At a time when not only Scandinavian but also German scholars increasingly started to consider Old Norse-Icelandic literature as part of their national heritage, detaching Ólafur from Denmark (or Norway) and explicitly linking Hrómundur to the first settlers of Iceland can be seen as an early attempt to (re)claim Old Norse-Icelandic literature for Iceland. By emphasizing that modern Icelanders are descendants of legendary heroes such as Hrómundur, the writer of the saga and its later copyists seem to be highlighting their cultural superiority over other Scandinavians.[15]

Viking Metal and Faroese Nationalism

The most recent performance of the story of Hrómundur was done by the Faroese Viking Metal band Týr. During their recent concert with the Symphony Orchestra of the Faroe Islands on 8 February 2020 at the Norðurlandahúsið in Tórshavn, Týr performed their track "Ramund hin unge", which is directly related to the lost *Hrómundar saga*. This provides us with valuable insight into the modern reception or reappropriation of Old Norse materials in contemporary popular culture.[16]

"Ramund hin unge" is a Viking Metal adaptation of the Danish traditional ballad *Ramund* (Nyerup & Rahbek 1813:IV, 334–40). This Danish ballad is itself most likely a translation of the Swedish ballad *Ramunder* (Arwidsson 1834:114–120), one of many Scandinavian ballads narrating the deeds of a hero named Ramund, who is also called Ramunder, Rambold, or Ranild in various Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish versions. These are in turn related to the story of Hrómundur and the Icelandic set of *rímur* (Andrews 1912). The relationships between the seventeenth-century *Hrómundar saga* and the Scandinavian ballads was already noted by Erik Julius Björner in his *Nordiska kämpa dater* (1737), but it was Svend Grundtvig (1853:359–372) in his *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* who first presented convincing argumentation for these relationships and identified corresponding characters in various versions. According to Albert LeRoy Andrews, of the four ballad versions that he analysed (two Danish, one Norwegian, and one Swedish), the oldest and the most original is the Danish ballad *Rigen Rambolt og Aller hin stærke*, preserved in Karen Brahe's folio manuscript from 1550–60. He concluded that this version is independent of the Icelandic *rímur* and that its sources may even go back to the lost saga mentioned in the *Sturlunga* compilation. No Faroese variant of this ballad is known to me.

The lyrics of the metal song "Ramund hin unge", detached from its long adaptation history, do not clearly resonate with *Hrómundar saga* in the form we know it today. Only three independent episodes establish the core of the song: the sewing of Ramund's cloths, the killing of seven giants, and the killing of a certain emperor. Out of the 24 stanzas of the traditional *Ramund*, as published in Nyerup and Rahbek's edition, Týr selected only five stanzas for the lyrics of "Ramund hin unge", which were accompanied by a metal adaptation of a traditional Danish melody. It is worth emphasizing that Týr's performances of material based on Norse or Scandinavian motifs are not limited to the single aforementioned local event in the Faroe Islands. Among other Norse-inspired songs, "Ramund hin unge" has been performed throughout Europe and North America: for example, it was included in the setlist of the band's international tour in 2019, during which this song could be heard in venues from the United States, through Europe, to Turkey.

The song was first released in 2003 on the *Eric the Red* album together with one other adaptation of an Old Norse legendary saga, the Faroese ballad "Regin Smiður", which is related to the Sigurður the dragon slayer tradition mentioned in the introduction to this article. *Eric the Red* takes its title from the last song on this album, inspired by the story of Eiríkur Þorvaldsson (known as *rauði*, "the Red"), the first settler of Greenland, an outlaw from Iceland of Norwegian origin, and known for his persistence in following paganism. One of the contributors to the *Encyclopaedia Metallum* described the album the following way*:*

> the authentic Faroese viking metal band Týr follows up with an album about the legendary Eric The Red, along with other famous figures and events in viking history […] These guys don't just talk about vikings, they sing it in the right language, are inspired by actual historical events, and rehash some famous folk melodies and texts on this release as well.[17]

The "authenticity" of the band, "rightness" of the language, and references to "actual historical events" seem to play a significant role in the band's perception and reception by their fans. Comments in a similar vein can be found on various internet forums where metal fans express their opinions about the album. Coming from the Faroe Islands and singing in Faroese about "famous" figures of the Norse past, such as Sigurður and Eiríkur (or the not so famous Hrómundur), gives Týr additional credibility that seems to be valued highly among their fans.

Týr is one of many representatives of the genre known as Viking Metal, in which Old Norse motifs play a significant role. It is a relatively new music genre with its roots in the 1990s when, under the influences of the Swedish black metal band Bathory, Nordic heavy metal musicians started to engage with Old Norse material (Heesch 2010; Helden 2010).[18] The release of Bathory's album *Blood Fire Death* in 1988 marks the symbolic beginning of the genre, with its introductory song "Odens Ride Over Nordland" and the album's cover featuring Peter Nicolai Arbo's painting *Åsgårdsreien* from 1872 (Heesch & Kopański 2018; Trafford & Pluskowski 2007). The painting, inspired by the poem of the same name by the Norwegian author Johan Sebastian Welhaven, depicts the horde of warriors riding out of the dark clouds with a crowned Þór above them, portrayed in his goat-driven chariot and holding his hammer, highlighted by the sun (Huvaere 2018). Nordic metal bands have subsequently drawn on a similar stock of viking imagery and clichés, from depictions of viking warriors to the expansive use of runes and reproductions of actual medieval artefacts, most frequently the Thor's hammer. Týr is not any different in this regard, with their album covers drawing strongly on Norse imagery and promotional photos featuring band members wearing chain mail and carrying swords and axes.[19]

Imke von Helden recently observed that, broadly understood, national identity plays an important role in the Viking Metal scene, where pagan beliefs and viking ancestry are frequently emphasized by various means:

> Nationality and a deep interest in the own country's history are deeply embedded in Viking metal […] The link between Scandinavian musicians and their Viking roots is often stressed in promotion material and in interviews. Many Viking metal musicians turned away from the black metal-linked Satanism of the early 1990s – when young Norwegian musicians burned down medieval stave churches – to Viking motifs and more indistinct allusions to "old gods" and the subject of the Christian oppression of their heathen ancestors. (Helden 2010:258)

Similarly, Trafford and Pluskowski (2007:64–70) pointed out that not only the artists performing within the Viking Metal scene, but also their fans, frequently emphasize their connection to the "Vikings" by ancestry and take pride in their national heritage. While there is sometimes a fine line between the more benign expression of pride in national heritage and the jingoistic expression of white Scandinavian supremacy, one may consider whether turning to Norse motifs in Scandinavia cannot be interpreted as an expression of cultural racism, which is inherently based on history and culture.[20]

While Týr have definitely rejected any accusations of right-wing sentiments,[21] and throughout the years have made a shift from describing themselves as Viking Metal to Folk Metal,[22] they are known for taking pride in the heritage of the Faroe Islands and being in favour of Faroese independence.[23] This is expressed, for example, in their band merchandise. One of the band's T-shirt designs features the Faroese flag together with a quotation from the Faroese national anthem: "at bera tað merkið, sum eyðkennir verkið." Moreover, it is worth noting that one of the band's greatest hits, "Ormurin Langi" (from their first full-length album *How Far to Asgaard*), is a Viking Metal adaptation of a ballad of the same title written by the Faroese poet Jens Christian Djurhuus (1773–1853) who, according to Deeks (2016:104), was known for "expressing views against the ruling Danish authorities in the Faroe Islands".

The Faroe Islands, which have been a part of the Danish kingdom for the past six centuries,[24] have experienced growing interest in self-determination since the Christmas Meeting of 1888, but only after the Second World War did the separatist movement gain momentum (Ackrén 2006; Jacobsen 2012; Hoff 2012; Adler-Nissen 2014). Currently, a number of parties in the Faroese parliament (Løgting) are proponents of Faroese independence, but they do not hold a majority (Krog 2019; Coogan 2019). In this context, it is not surprising that a band originating in a country where "a considerable part of the population […] still feels that they have unresolved national issues within the current constitutional framework with Denmark"[25] – as can be read on the official website of the Faroese government *faroeislands.fo* – seeks inspiration in the local ballad tradition and Norse cultural heritage to build their own national identity. The use of Norse imagery for this same purpose has also taken place in other Nordic countries, especially since the heyday of Romanticism.[26] Even today, as Annika Olsson (2015) recently observed, all the Nordic countries claim the Old Norse-Icelandic sagas to be part of their cultural heritage.[27] When the Danish state does not recognize the Faroe Islands as a separate nation, but rather sees its people as a "community within the Danish nation" (Adler-Nissen 2014:9–10), it is not surprising that this very same community seeks ways of separating themselves from Danish culture.

During the February 2020 performance with the Symphony Orchestra of the Faroe Islands various traditional Faroese and Old Norse motifs

featured strongly throughout the evening. The setlist of this show included, for instance, "Ragnars Kvæði", based on a Faroese ballad about Ragnar Loðbrók; "The Lay of Thrym", alluding to the events described in *Þrymskviða*, one of the most popular of the Eddic poems; and the aforementioned "Ormurin Langi", based on a Faroese ballad about the Norwegian king Ólafur Tryggvason and his famous ship during the battle of Svolder.

The performance of Týr's repertoire with the Symphony Orchestra of the Faroe Islands was a major commercial success, with all shows selling out. A show of this scale, taking place in one of the major cultural institutions of the Faroe Islands,[28] might be interpreted as lending official sanction to nationalistic sentiments among the population of the Faroe Islands.[29] However, the paradox of this appropriation of Norse material to serve political and ideological interests lies in the practice of reaching to a common Nordic heritage to empower local separatisms.[30] The choice of the Danish ballad *Ramund* – believed to be a translation of a Swedish ballad, which in turn has its roots in a medieval Danish ballad – by a band that supports Faroese independence from Denmark, exemplifies this intriguing combination of common heritage and separatist discourses.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to demonstrate how over the course of many centuries, political and ideological agendas have catalysed interest in Old Norse material. This material has been used to legitimize first dynastic claims and later national pride through references to cultural heritage and/or genealogies. By analysing three adaptations of the story of Hrómundur in various media and in different historical contexts, the present study has shown the ways in which socio-political circumstances can influence the cultural production of a narrative, from providing a direct impulse to writing an early modern saga, through modifications and amplifications of the narrative, to serving as inspiration for contemporary artists.

Although not all adaptations of the story can be clearly and precisely associated with particular historical events, the selected cases suggest that the reception of stories about the Scandinavian past is inflected by the ideological atmospheres that characterize certain regions and periods.

The creation of *17HsG* was a response to antiquarian interest in Old Norse literature as historical sources, which could serve the Danish absolute monarchy in its ideological contest with its neighbours across the Øresund and vice versa. This generated scholarly interest in royal genealogy and the geography of the events described in the legendary sagas. This interest is attested in the oldest manuscripts preserving *17HsG*, in the form of marginal notes supplied by the Dano-Norwegian royal antiquarian and historiographer Torfæus.

The reshaping of the saga of Hrómundur in the nineteenth century gives insight into the ideological atmosphere in Iceland in the years shortly before Icelandic nationalistic sentiments were clearly articulated or defined by Icelandic intellectuals in Copenhagen. The vague introduction of King Ólafur as one of many Scandinavian kings at the beginning of the saga shifts the geographical relevance of the saga from Denmark (as in *17HsG*) to an unspecified Nordic region. The genealogical additions at the end of *19HsG*, linking Hrómundur to the first settlers of Iceland, illustrate the importance of medieval genealogies reaching back to the settlement period for the creation of Icelandic national identity and provide a means of accumulating cultural capital for Icelanders, as direct descendants of famous legendary heroes.

The most recent adaptation of the story of Hrómundur into the Viking Metal genre acquires deeper contemporary relevance when viewed from the perspective of the Faroese independence movement. At a time when the Danish state does not recognize the Faroese people as a nation, the harnessing of Norse imagery to foster the national identity of the Faroese population seems to tread the same paths as those laid out in other Nordic countries in earlier centuries.

The present study does not claim that *Hrómundar saga Gr(e)ipssonar* played a special role in the creation of national identities in Denmark, Iceland, or the Faroe Islands in particular, but rather illustrates how historical circumstances can influence the transmission of such an unassuming story. Such a diachronic perspective on the history of its adaptations gives us valuable insight into the mechanisms of cultural production across centuries and sheds light on the role that political and ideological agendas, consciously articulated or not, have played and still play in the creation, dissemination and preservation of cultural artefacts. The value of analysing historical literary transmission in close relation to political history and the history of ideas lies in its potential for expanding our understanding of contemporary modes of cultural production, and in revealing the interests and agendas that underlie comparable artistic expressions today.

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[1] A notable exception is Philip Lavender's monograph from 2020, as well as works by Teresa Lansing (2012, 2016).

[2] This has most recently been rehearsed by Males (2020). On the prosimetrum in Old Norse literature see, for example, Harris (1997) and Sørensen (2001).

[3] The same information is included in *Flóamanna saga* (Finnur Jónsson 1932), but its account is secondary to *Landnámabók*.

[4] The first known official letter issued in Denmark concerning the collection of materials in Iceland was issued on 17 April 1596 by Christian IV. In 1594, Niels Krag became an official historiographer of the Danish crown and received the assignment of writing a history of Denmark in Latin (Jørgensen 1931:103). Only two years earlier in 1592–93, an Icelandic scholar named Arngrímur Jónsson resided in Copenhagen, where he published his *Brevis commentarius de Islandia* and established scholarly networks with influential Danes including Chancellor Arild Huitfeldt, Niels Krag, and Jon Jacobsen Venusin, with whom he discussed the richness of the Icelandic literary tradition. See Jakob Benediktsson (1950–1957), especially volume IV.

[5] For more information on the life and work of Torfæus see, for example, Hedeager (2004), Jacobsen (2004), Erichsen (1786–1788), Roggen (2006), and Skovgaard-Petersen (2001). See also the introduction to the Norwegian translation of his *History of Norway* (Torfæus 2008–2014).

[6] The letter is preserved in Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, AM 285 b IV fol., f. 13v. The transcription of the relevant passage has been published by Kapitan (2022).

[7] Already Árni Magnússon in his notes on various sagas considered *Hrómundar saga* as "impostura […] Jons Eggertssonar" (Jón Helgason 1980:41). Later, Jón Eggertson's role as the author of *17HsG* was suggested by, for example, Bjarni Einarsson (1955), Jón Helgason (1979), and Jucknies (2009), as well as being recently discussed by Kapitan & Stegmann (2019) and Kapitan (2022).

[8] For more information on the manuscripts that Jón Eggertson acquired in Iceland see, for example, Klemming (1880-1882), Jucknies (2009), and Kapitan (2022).

[9] The exception is the 1737 edition by Björner (p. 8, sagas individually paginated), as it is based on another manuscript, Papp. Fol. nr 67.

[10] This has been further discussed elsewhere, in Kapitan (2022). A similar tendency can be seen in the Swedish part of the *Illuga saga* tradition, discussed by Lavender (2020).

[11] Torfæus' opinion about the saga can be extrapolated from the comment that appears in Árni Magnússon's notes: "Saga af Hrómundi Greipssÿni er einskis verd. Þormódur Torfason in Epistola qvadam mihi scripta, ad skilia sú sem eg hafdi sent honum. Et verum est, impostura enim est, Jons Eggertssonar." Árni's notes have been edited by Jón Helgason (1980:41).

[12] On the early modern approaches to legendary sagas and their historicity, see works by, for example, Hedeager (2004), Jørgensen (2008), and O'Connor (2018).

[13] The saga manuscripts are Lbs 2404 8vo, Lbs 1572 4to, Lbs 679 4to, and BL Add 11,109. The first study of the younger adaptation was recently published by Kapitan (2021a).

[14] Based on the tentative stemma of this saga presented by Kapitan (2018:152), it can be assumed that the archetype of this tradition did not include the names of Hrómundur's sons and that this information had been introduced in the common ancestor of the three manuscripts that include these names. At the same time, we cannot overlook the possibility that the fourth manuscript (or its exemplar) actually deleted the names of Hrómundur's sons.

[15] On different ways of utilizing Old Norse-Icelandic literature in Denmark, Iceland, and Germany see Halink (2017).

[16] The concert setlist can be found at https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/tyr/2020/norurlandahusi-torshavn-faroe-islands-439877cf.html (last accessed 8 May 2020). The recording is available on YouTube: https://youtu.be/BkQ8YhLgrqg (last accessed 8 May 2020).

[17] Post by the user kluseba, published on the 14 July 2014 in Encyclopaedia Metallum: https://www.metal-archives.com/reviews/Týr/Eric_the_Red/33053/ (last accessed 25 May 2021).

[18] Recently, Jón Karl Helgason (2017:133–152) drafted an overview of the developments in the use of Old Norse motifs in music ranging all the way from Johan Ernst Hartmann, through Richard Wagner, to Viking Metal.

[19] The use of Norse imagery is a constant feature of Týr's artistic production, but the 2009 album *By the Light of the Northern Star* is an exemplary case, with promotional shots of the band members dressed as medieval warriors (or vikings) – wearing chain mail and carrying swords and axes – and the cover graphic featuring a viking carrying a sword standing on a hill with a longship sailing into a fjord in the background. Images can be found on the band's MySpace profile: https://myspace.com/tyr1/mixes/classic-by-the-light-of-the-northern-star-362273 (last accessed 26 May 2021).

[20] On cultural racism in Scandinavia (with Denmark as the main focus) see, for example, Wren (2001) and the furthur literature therein.

[21] A few years ago, the Berlin Centre for Fascism Research argued that the engagement of Týr and some sections of their audience with white supremacist imagery is troubling (Anonymous 2008). Even though the band rejected accusations of sympathizing with white supremacists, the incident resulted in a number of shows in Germany being cancelled. As a response to the accusations posed by, among others, the Berlin Centre for Fascism Research, the band released on their 2011 album entitled *The Lay of Thrym* a song with the provocative title "Shadow of the Swastika" and with even more controversial lyrics including lines such as, "You who think the hue of your hide means you are to blame / And your father's misdeeds are his son's to carry in shame / Not mine I'll take no part, you can shove the sins of your father / Where no light may pass and kiss my Scandinavian ass". Even though the songwriter, Heri Joensen, considers the song a strong response to the accusations, arguing that "all of those who could read knew that we don't represent any racist values" (Joensen & Metalist NY Magazine 2013), one might ask whether the imagery used in the song actually strengthens their claims, or whether it might trigger the opposite reception. An interview with the other band members might give the impression that the band is attempting to "reclaim" the swastika instead of dismissing it (Týr & WandererOfKalevala 2011).

[22] The band has consciously changed the way it presents itself over time. While the band's biography on their old website, now only available through Wayback Machine, stated that "Almost every song is based on Faroese or Norwegian lore, and is riveted in the garb of the folk metal genre. Its approach unmistakably creates very true Viking metal." (https://web.

archive.org/web/20150325143801/http://www.tyr.fo/biography, (last accessed 20 May 2020), no mentions of vikings appear in the current biography, and only Faroese elements are emphasized. Recently on Týr's use of Faroese ballad material, see Christensen (2019). For Faroese metal music in general, see Green (2014).

[23] The pro-independence stand can be concluded from the interview with the band's front man Heri Joensen published on the *Norse Myth* website (Joensen & Seigfried 2013).

[24] The Kalmar Union from 1397 can be seen as the beginning of the relationship between the Faroe Islands and Denmark, but the Faroe Islands were a Norwegian dependency until the Treaty of Kiel in 1814 (Adler-Nissen 2014:4).

[25] See the article "Faroese Nation Building" at https://www.faroeislands.fo/the-big-picture/history/faroese-nation-building/ (last accessed 20 May 2020).

[26] A good overview of the role of Old Norse in Scandinavian nationalism can be found in Lassen (2008).

[27] While Olsson focuses on literary histories of Scandinavian countries, also popular culture across the Nordics seems to draw widely on Old Norse motifs. As an example of that it is worth mentioning that recently the Swedish folk rock band Garmarna recorded their version of the ballad of Hrómundur in Swedish: song called "Ramunder" appeared on their latest album *Förbundet* released in November 2020. I would like to thank Sheryl McDonald Werronen for bringing this to my attention.

[28] Norðurlandahúsið in Tórshavn is directly under the Nordic Council of Ministers. Further details can be found at https://www.nlh.fo/fo/um-husid/vaelkomin/ (last accessed 22 May 2020).

[29] Perhaps it is similar to the Norwegian case analysed by Taylor (2010:162), where Black Metal was just one of the expression of "ideologies of ethnic and racial nationalism, glorifying a myth of pre-modern, pre-Christian and pre-immigration."

[30] On Scandinavian exceptionalism see, for example, Geyer (2003) and Fochesato & Bowles (2015).

Solitary Colossi and Not-So-Small Men

A Study of the Effect of Translation on the Old Norse Supernatural Concept of the *jǫtnar* in the Translated *riddarasǫgur*

Felix Lummer

Abstract

This paper is part of a project which examines the translation of supernatural concepts in the Old French and Anglo-Norman chivalric literature into Old Norse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the difficulties involved and the potential consequences. This article focuses specifically on the usage of the term *jǫtunn* as a translation for the Old French *jaiant*, considering both the narrative purposes involved in the choice of this word as a translation as well as the possible effects it may have had on later Icelandic literature and folk belief, especially when these works were read aloud alongside other works that formed part of the Icelandic oral tradition.

Keywords: Old Nordic religion, *jǫtnar*, translated *riddarasǫgur*, folklore, translation studies, chivalric literature

Introduction

"Great translations help to break down the barriers of time, place and language of unique customs and traditions" (Friar 1971: 199). This statement by the Greek-American poet and translator Kimon Friar (1911–93) highlights one of the key aspects a translator is faced with when translating both from and into another language – now as well as in the past. The recreation of a given text aptly into another language naturally provides a fertile ground for cultural comparisons of various kinds. This especially applies to the translation of concepts (not least supernatural concepts) from one source culture and language into a target culture and language. Bearing this in mind, it is worth considering the potential effects that such translations or adaptations can have on concepts in the target culture. This article, which follows up on two others relating to the translation of other supernatural concepts from Old French into Old Norse and *fées* into *álfar* and *nains* into *dvergar*, considers especially the results of translating the Old French *jaiant* (pl. *jaiants*; "giant") with the Old Norse *jǫtunn* (pl. *jǫtnar*; "*jǫtunn*") in the translations of Old French chivalric literature of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries

into Old Norse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[1] By illustrating the similarities as well as the differences between these two supernatural ideas in the two cultures and the ways they are used in the various works (both the originals and their translations), I hope to shed some light on the question of whether there was more to the translation of *jaiant* as *jǫtunn* than the use of a "mere" homophone (the use of the Old Norse word *risi* [lit. "giant"] might have made more sense due to the intrinsic size associations in the words *jaiant* and *risi*).[2] In what sense were the words *jaiant* and *jǫtunn* comparable in the mind of a medieval Old Norse translator and later copyists (especially considering Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* (*c*. 1220–25), a work which certainly reflects such changes which have continued into our own time; English-speaking scholars still (arguably incorrectly) using "giant" as a translation for "jǫtunn")?[3]

As hinted above, the basis of this investigation are the translated Old Norse *riddarasǫgur* (chivalric romances), which were initiated under the rule of King Hákon Hákonarson (1204–63, r. 1217–63) and their respective Old French sources. It goes without saying that only those translated texts that feature *jaiants* in the original have been considered. It is worth noting immediately that the word *jaiant* in these stories is always translated with the word *jǫtunn*, although, as will be seen below, these *jǫtnar* are on certain occasions also referred to as *trǫll* rather than *jǫtnar*, something that suggests the two terms were already becoming interchangeable. An examination such as the present one investigates the potential alterations of concepts that might occur when narratives traverse cultural contexts and periods of time (Sif Ríkharðsdóttir 2012: 3).[4] Thus, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir notes:

> Translations not only provide evidence of the cultural conditions of their creators, but are the prime site for cultural encounter. They therefore reveal active engagement with the conceptualisation of linguistic and cultural identity, played out in the reconstruction of foreign or "differing" literary material (Sif Ríkharðsdóttir 2012: 2).

Tracing cultural and religious developments like those noted above over the course of several centuries and in two different cultures naturally poses numerous difficulties, especially when conclusions are entirely based on extant written accounts. Texts can be both lost as well as preserved randomly, meaning that material that might express differing views (and translations) than those preserved might well have existed. Nevertheless, another key problem that must be borne in mind, which naturally accompany any comparative examination of translated medieval narratives, is one relating to the archetypical manuscript. As Marianne E. Kalinke notes with regard to the translated *riddarasǫgur*: "Not a single manuscript from which an Arthurian text was translated in either Norway or Iceland has either been preserved or identified. The translations deviate in many respects from the sources available to us in editions" (Kalinke 2011: 23). Another factor might

be that the Old French narratives are in verse while the Old Norse translations considered in the present article are all rendered in prose. Restrictions in the choice of words that may accompany the respective mode of textual representation may influence the way in which translators engaged with their material. However, it must be noted that particularly Icelandic copyists did not shy away from altering the structure and story of the narratives they worked with: "With but few exceptions, Icelandic copyists seem to have perceived their role, whether consciously or not, more as editors than scribes. They amplified or reduced texts; they modified their plot, distinct style or structure" (Kalinke 2017: viii). In addition, it is important to remember that the worldview of a specific translator may well have differed ever so slightly from that of another, thereby altering the outcome of the translation. Furthermore, when dealing with volatile and multifarious notions such as Old Norse concepts of supernatural entities, it should be noted that these concepts are not homogeneous, and the understanding of what a *jǫtunn* precisely entailed may have differed throughout Scandinavia and may ultimately have come down to the personal point of view of each individual.[5] These and other hurdles mean that the results presented in this paper can only be speculative. They nonetheless open up important questions.

It seems evident that the Old Norse word *jǫtunn* was initially discerned from other Old Norse terms denoting similar supernatural concepts such as *þurs*, *risi*, *bergbúi* or *trǫll* with which it came to merge in later times.[6] The etymology of the word *jǫtunn*, though uncertain, appears to be the following: It seems to have a root in the Indo-European root **ed-* meaning "to eat" (and various other terms related to the semantic field of "to eat" as well as the word "tooth") which evolved into the Proto-Germanic root **etunaz* ("glutton; anthropophagus") (Pokorny 1959–69: 287–89; de Vries 1962: 295–96). From there, various cognates can be found in numerous languages, with Old English preserving related words such as *e(ō)ten* ("etin; monster") and *e(ō)tenisc* ("monstrous"), and Old Saxon featuring *etan* ("to eat) and *āt* ("food") for example, while Old High German has *ez(z)an* ("to eat") and *ezzen* ("to feed"). The word "jǫtunn" is then reflected also in the modern Scandinavian *jætte* (Danish and Norwegian) and *jätte* (Swedish), all of which now mean "giant" in a very general sense. As can be seen, the word *jǫtunn* appears to have originally been essentially associated with voracious beings (possibly related to the world of death) (Alexander Jóhannesson 1951–52: 322; de Vries 1962: 296) with any connections to wisdom or larger-than-human size being later additions. As will be shown below, the former feature (along with the connection to death) is only evident in the oldest Old Norse sources.

The etymology of the Old French *jaiant* (*géant* in the modern spelling) proves to be somewhat clearer than that of the word *jǫtunn*. From the start, it has very different connotations. It appears to have been derived from the Greek

γίγαντες (“gígantes”; sg. γίγας, “gígas”) referring to (more “worldly”) beings such as the τιτᾶνες (“titans”; sg. τιτάν, “titan”) or κύκλωπες (“kýklōpes”; sg. κύκλωψ, “kýklōps”), who are well known in Greek mythology.[7] It seems appealing to suppose that the word might have reached France not only via the Romans, but also through translations of the Bible. The *Septuaginta* (mid-third century BC–400 AD), the earliest Koine Greek translation of the Jewish Bible in Hebrew, translated the Hebrew concept נְפִילִים (“*nefilim*”; English spelling “Nephilim”), only attested in the *Bible* in Genesis 6. 1–4, with γίγαντες (Brenton 1879: 7).[8] This rendition in the Greek *Septuagint* led directly to that in the Latin *Vulgate* (late fourth century) in which the Greek concept γίγαντες was rendered as the Latin *gigantēs* (sg. *gigāns*) (Tweedale 2006: 5). The idea of the *nefilim* being “giants” could thereby easily have been manifested as part of the ecclesiastical teaching canon taught by the French clergy, of which the first ecclesiastical structures are traceable back to the end of the second century (Bresc 1982: 252 and 255; Dupâquier et al. 1988: I, 104–11). As Einhorn notes, “Old French […] derived mainly from Vulgar Latin, the colloquial Latin introduced into Gaul from the second century B.C. onwards as a result of the Roman conquest and occupation” (Wohlgemuth 1906: 49; Einhorn 1974: 1).[9] In the following, the supernatural concepts associated with the *jaiants* and the *jǫtnar* as they existed in the early Middle Ages will now be scrutinized in more detail (in that order) in order to highlight the similarities and differences in their use. Only then can we consider the consequences of one being translated as the other.

The Old French *jaiants*

It is noteworthy that the *jaiant* figure of the Old French romances and *chansons de geste* appears most notably on the side of the Saracens. In all cases, they are “others”. If one wants to follow the scheme proposed by Francis Dubost, these *jaiants* can be roughly grouped into three types: (1) the Saracen champion; (2) the terrorizing giant; and (3) the outlaw knight (Dubost 1978: 300).[10] Only the first two categories are encountered in the material considered for the present study. In the accounts in question, these figures are usually two-dimensional in their portrayal, the focus lying heavily on their physical size and diabolical associations (the latter of which is mostly related to the *jaiants*’ Muslim faith since they pose a threat to Christianity, as is the case with Escopart in the late-twelfth-century *chanson de geste Boeve de Haumtome* [henceforward *Boeve*]; see below) (Dubost 1978: 302–7 and 309; Guidot 2004: 88–89). Other features, which will be discussed below, are, for the most part, dependent on the story in question and its respective narrative needs. These, however, like other individual additional features found in the different *jaiants* here can hardly be said to have contributed to any general *status quo* in the *jaiant* motif inventory.

As said, the most notable feature of the Old French *jaiants* is their larger-than-human size, usually said to range somewhere between seven and fourteen feet (or two to four metres), although outliers in both directions exist (Dubost 1978: 299–300; Houdeville 2000: 81; Guidot 2004: 83–4). Sometimes, however, their size is only alluded to by other references, as for instance, in the case of Corsolt of the twelfth-century *chanson de geste* called *Le couronnement de Louis* (ll. 1050–53; henceforth *Louis*) (Langlois 1984: 33).

The size of the *jaiants* is intrinsically connected to them being heavy-set, generally circumscribed by the idea that they are usually unable to ride on horseback, something which applies, for example, to Nasier in the *chanson de geste Gaufrey* dated to the thirteenth century (ll. 2959–61) (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 90). They also produce enormous noises when they are killed and tumble to the earth, as with Harpin de la Montaingne in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain ou le chevalier ou lion* (henceforth *Yvain*; ll. 4244–47) (Nolting-Hauff 1962: 212). *Jaiants* are naturally depicted as very strong individuals, as with, for instance, Corsolt in *Louis* (ll. 3011–311) or Valegrape in the *chanson de geste Aliscans* dated to the second part of the twelfth century (ll. 6489–90) (Langlois 1984: 11; Régnier et al. 2007: 418).

The physiognomy of the Old French *jaiants* is usually presented as being rather unpleasant, drawing on a large variety of details. They tend to be shown as having dark skin, as with Escopart *Boeve* (l. 1751) and Nasier in *Gaufrey* (ll. 2972 and 3596), something which, again, denotes that they are Saracens (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 90 and 109; Stimming 1899: 66). In numerous instances, the *jaiants* are also described as having a large space between their eyes, as can be seen with Nasier in *Gaufrey* (l. 2971) and Haucebier d'outre Carfanaon in *Aliscans* (ll. 369–72), something which may indicate that they had wide heads as well, a feature which is more closely associated with the Old French courtly *nains* (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 90; Régnier et al. 2007: 84). A handful of *jaiants* are also described as having animal heads: Estragot in the late thirteenth/early fourteenth-century *chanson de geste La destruction de Rome* is for example said to have the head of a boar (l. 1092) while Otifal in *Le Roman d'Alexandre en vers*, dated to the twelfth century, has a dog's head (Michelant 1846; 336; Speich 1988; 142). If their eyes are described, they tend to be fiery red like burning coal, as in the case of Agrapart in the *chanson de geste Huon de Bordeaux* dated between 1260 and 1268 (l. 6499) for instance (Kibler & Suard 2003: 360). Their heads are commonly dominated by a large and ugly mouth with long, white teeth, as with Escopart in *Boeve* (ll. 1761–62) (Stimming 1899: 66). They are sometimes also said to have long ears, as in the case of Machabré in *Gaufrey* (ll. 5963–66), for example, and/or a crooked nose as, again, with Escopart in *Boeve* (l. 1752) (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 180; Stimming 1899: 66). Furthermore, they are said to have loud voices with

which they provoke their adversaries, as with, among others, Tabur in the twelfth-century *chanson de geste La chanson de Guillaume* (ll. 3197–98), voices which may turn into an animal-like grunt or squeal when they are struck and wounded in combat, as is the case of Harpin de la Montaingne in *Yvain* (l. 4228) (Iseley 1961: 93; Nolting-Hauff 1962: 212).

Additionally, Old French *jaiants* are also sometimes described as having long and shabby hair which covers their entire body and may serve for protection, as is the case with, for instance, Nasier in *Gaufrey* (l. 2974) and Escopart in *Boeve* (l. 1759) (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 90; Stimming 1899: 66). Despite their general disregard of armour and shields, some *jaiants* are described as wearing animal pelts, Marmonde in the *chanson de geste Anseïs de Cartage* dated to between 1230 and 1250 (l. 6743) and Harpin de la Montaingne in *Yvain* (l. 4197) wearing bear pelts, while Nasier in *Gaufrey* (l. 3278) and Valegrape in *Aliscans* (ll. 6491–93), for example, are said to wear serpent skins (which may explain their invulnerability) (Guessard & Chabaille 1859: 99; Alton, 1892: 247; Nolting-Hauff 1962: 210; Régnier et al. 2007: 418). These features naturally add to their otherness and animal-like qualities.

As far as weaponry is concerned, as noted above, most *jaiants* shun armour and shields, solely relying on their strength, often carrying heavy, crude clubs (or staves) and whips (see below). Considering their strength, it is only befitting that these weapons are usually so large and heavy that other people have difficulty lifting them, as with Corsolt's branched tree in *Louis* (ll. 631–35) and Escopart's *mace* (ll. 1746–47) (Stimming 1899: 66; Langlois 1984: 20–1).

The narrative function of the *jaiants* in the accounts noted above can best be described with the following quotation from Bernard Guidot:

> les géants sarrasins, personnages chthoniens, projections imagées d'antagonismes manichéens, appartiennent à un imaginaire constamment associé à l'effroi, mais qui va commencer à évoluer dès la fin du douzième siècle, et peut-être avant. De fait, dans les chansons de geste, la peur devrait être au centre de la vie chevalresque. Pourtant, les héros épiques la ressentent rarement et, en fin de compte, la dominant tourjours. Dès lors, la peinture des géants a pour role essential dans le récit de valoriser les chevaliers chrétiens qui triomphent (2004: 83).[11]

As Guidot notes, a change regarding the perception of the *jaiants* seems to have been taking place during the period in question, something that also applies to the *jǫtnar* discussed in the following pages. This is seemingly evident in the five early modern novels that make up *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1532–64) by the French author François Rabelais (1483/94–1553), which tell of the adventures of the two giants Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, figures that are never referred to as giants despite the novels featuring the word over thirty times in first four of the five volumes. It is

also clear that such figures were associated with the construction of megalithic tombs, dolmens and ruins (Dubost 1978: 309–10) (Sébillot 1907: 32–33; Bresc 1982: 247) in later French folklore. Another potentially relevant extra-textual incarnation of the French *jaiants* in the Middle Ages and thenceforth, was the development of the so-called *géants processionnels* ("processional giants"), larger-than-human wooden and beautifully decorated constructions, carried by individuals through the streets during festive processions. Similar traditions can be found in various European countries in the medieval period, but nowhere in Scandinavia, to which the focus will be shifted in the following (Meurant 1963 and 1967).

On the Old Norse *jǫtnar*

The Old Norse *jǫtnar* have been the subject of a long-standing scholarly debate.[12] These investigations have produced a plethora of fascinating observations and spawned interesting ideas regarding the *jǫtnar*, which here can only be summed up in a brief overview due to the limitations of this article. The names of the *jǫtnar* are a good starting point for the following overview, not least due to the fact that their names speak and hint at the functions and features of these beings, indeed there are roughly 200 male names and only slightly fewer female names preserved in Eddic and Skaldic poetry, saga literature and *þulur* recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, all of which seemingly have specific gendered indications (Motz 1984: 105; Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 197–99).

As with the names of female *jǫtnar* discussed below, male names of *jǫtnar* hint at their functions and thus the way in which they were perceived by people at some point.[13] Key elements of many names include elements such as *verkr* ("creator, worker") as in Stórverkr or Fjölverkr, *valdi* ("ruler") as in Þrívaldi or Ölvaldi, or *þrúðr* ("powerful") as in Vafþrúðnir or Þrúðgelmir which underline their connection to power and rulers. Nature, as well as specific parts or aspects of it, also plays a prominent role amongst the names of male *jǫtnar*, as in names such as Svaði ("slide"), Vásuðr ("wetness"), Brúsi ("he-goat"), Vagnhöfði ("whale-headed"), and Leiði (lit. "favourable wind") indicate. Elsewhere, the magical capabilities and knowledge of *jǫtnar* (see below) may be reflected in names such as Mímir (possibly from Old English *māmrian*: "to wonder") or Fornjótr (related to *forneskja* "old lore, witchcraft") as well as names such as Galarr or Gaulnir which may be connected to the Indo-European root **ghel-* ("to sound") and thenceforward to Old Norse *gala* ("to chant") and *galdr* ("spell") (Motz 1987: 306; Pokorny 1959–69: 428), also suggesting a connection to sound. Bodily deficiencies (such as blindness or deformed feet) and notions of death or harming actions are preserved in names such as Hel- and Viðblindi (from *blindr*: "blind") and Rangbeinn ("crooked-legged") and likewise Alfarinn

("worn out"), Dúrnir (from *dúra*: "to sleep") or Dumbr ("weak, mute"). Names of female *jǫtnar* meanwhile include the term *brúðr* ("bride"), as in Hölgabrúðr, as well as *fríðr* ("beautiful"). Interestingly, names constructed with *vör* or *varð* (both of which are connected to guard or watchman) are only found in feminine *jǫtnar* names.

Alongside the two divine families of the Æsir and the Vanir, the *jǫtnar* are one of the most significant actors in Old Norse myths. In fact, it appears as though the *jǫtnar* were not only seen as ancestors but also providers of various items as well as (female) mates for the Æsir and Vanir. However, this provision of objects and brides seems to be essentially involuntarily, the *jǫtnar* being robbed or ravished without consent or without being given anything in return (see below), a relationship Clunies Ross has referred to as "negative reciprocity" (Clunies Ross 1994–98: I, 103–43). All the same, they are regularly shown as having the same desire to rob from the gods as in the cases of Iðunn's abduction by Þjazi (*Skáldskaparmál* G56) or Þrymr's theft of the hammer in order to be given Freyja in marriage (*Þrymskviða*).

The central feature of the *jǫtnar* in the *Poetic Edda*, however, is not so much their size as the fact that they are said to be ancient, so old, in fact, that their existence is said to predate the creation of the first Æsir deities, in the form of the primordial being referred to as Ymir or Aurgelmir (Motz 1982: 80; Schulz 2004: 60–61; Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 213–14). The *jǫtnar* then play key roles as a form of "other" throughout the cosmological and mythological material, and it is only fitting that they are not only key actors in the creation of the world but also play a central part in Eddic eschatological accounts such as those of *Vǫluspá* and, although less pronounced, *Vafþrúðnismál* or *Lokasenna* (Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 227–30). While the mythological *jǫtnar* as a whole are said to inhabit various different worlds (such as Jǫtunheimr/-ar or Muspellsheimr), it is evident that, just like the Old Norse gods, they live in halls as Vafþrúðnir, Gymir or Ægir are described as doing in *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál* and *Lokasenna* respectively.

As has been noted above, the *jǫtnar* are regularly shown to be ancient creatures, and this age seems to directly hint at their intrinsic wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, *jǫtnar* such as Vafþrúðnir are considered to be so knowledgeable of past events that even Óðinn seeks their advice or enters a competition of knowledge with them in order to gain insight. They are also capable of certain kinds of magic such as shape shifting, as in the case of Þjazi in *Skáldskaparmál* G56, while the *jǫtunn* Hræsvelgr sits at the edge of the world in the form of a giant eagle, producing the winds with his wings (see *Vafþrúðnismál* sts 36–37 and *Gylfaginning* 18). Elsewhere, the *jǫtunn* Bǫlþorn gives Óðinn nine magical charms according to *Hávamál* st. 140, while Hlebárðr loses a magical wand to the same god according to *Hárbarðsljóð* st. 20. *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 43 meanwhile mentions certain "jǫtna rúnir" ("*jǫtnar* runes"), once again connecting the *jǫtnar* to magic.

Worth bearing in mind in terms of comparison to the *jaiants* is that, when it comes down to it, the mythological corpus never states that the *jǫtnar* are physically larger than the Old Norse gods (Motz 1982: 70; Eldevik 2005: 85).[14] The first extant work to portray the *jǫtnar* in this way would be *Snorra Edda* compiled by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) (Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 211–13). Indeed, it would appear that Snorri seems to be rather unclear about their nature in general, utilizing various terms for different, albeit adjacent Old Norse concepts to describe them. For instance, *Snorra Edda* introduces the primordial being Ymir as a "hrimþurs" ("frost þurs") in the shape of a human ("manns líkandi"), only later refering to him a *jǫtunn* (*Gylfaginning* 5) implying that there were no apparent differences between *þursar* and *jǫtnar* (Ármann Jakobsson 2006b, 103). Similar confusing statements regarding the taxonomy of the supernatural concept of the *jǫtnar* occur frequently throughout the *Prose Edda*, another example being the statement that the *jǫtunn* Hrungnir (see above) is a *trǫll* (*Skáldskaparmál* 17). Arguably, this intermingling of the various different terms for supernatural beings that could potentially have roots in earlier oral tradition might be said to form part of a process already ongoing in the thirteenth century, in which a blending of various apparently similar concepts was being used with regard to these beings which were gradually losing the differentiation from other beings referred to in mythology (Gunnell 2016: 92–6; Thorvaldsen 2016: 72–90). There is thus good reason to consider whether the use of the word *jǫtunn* for *jaiant* in the translated *riddarasǫgur* had some influence on this process.

"hvat er jǫtunn nema þat"

As as been outlined above, the present investigation has aimed to track the differences in cultural thinking that may have been brought about by translation as the Old French *chansons de geste* and romances were rendered into the Old Norse language and culture. The Old Norse supernatural concept of the *jǫtnar* as a translation for *jaiants* proves to be a pivotal point of interest here, in part because of the intrinsic differences in these concepts (see above), but not least because of the aforementioned inner-Nordic changes this concept was evidently going through from the twelfth century onward (if not before). By the time the Old Norse *riddarasǫgur* translations were undertaken, this process appears to have already gathered considerable momentum, and it is thus interesting to consider whether the translated literature had some impact on this process.

When discussing medieval translation, several points need to be addressed before one can proceed any further with the investigation proper. As is well known, medieval translation, like translation in later times, was a multi-stage procedure which could involve numerous different individuals (including,

for example, a commissioner, a translator and an illustrator). It was thus bound to draw on both foreign and local understandings of concepts. The end result naturally also involved a degree of volatility, meaning that two translators are prone to produce two different translations when working with the same source text (Ástráður Eysteinsson 1996: 193; Glauser 2006: 27). Indeed, the same volatility can apply to originals as well, and not least to medieval ones, as Karin Emmerich has demonstrated (2017).[15] Added to this, one always needs to bear in mind the fact that although the translated *riddarasǫgur* were initially translated in Norway in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they are almost exclusively preserved in later Icelandic manuscripts, dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Kalinke 2012: 172–3 and 2017: 1–18). This is important, because it means that differences in meaning found in the translations may either be the result of the initial translation process, or a result of the later copying procedure which was in the hands of scribes (Vermeer 1996: 263).[16] Thus, one must be cautious about the conclusions one draws about deviations from the original found in the target text.

Be that as it may, however, this leads us to a brief outline of which Old French narratives and translations thereof will be included in the present study. It goes without saying that those Old French narratives that do not have a preserved Old Norse translation (notwithstanding the consideration of whether such a translation ever existed) have been excluded. Furthermore, the studied Old French text must mention *jaiant*/*jaiants* and must have a surviving Old Norse translation. Likewise, those translated *riddarasǫgur* that do not have a discernable extant Old French source or do not feature a *jǫtunn* have not been considered. The present study is thus left with three Old French and Anglo-Norman *chansons de gestes* and romances the feature description of *jaiants* along with their respective Old Norse translations:[17]

- *Boeve de Haumtome* (henceforth *Boeve*) is an Anglo-Norman *chanson de geste*, surviving in two fragmentary manuscripts, the earliest of which is dated to the last decade of the twelfth century. Its translation as *Bevers saga* is generally dated to the late thirteenth century (Stimming 1899, III–V; Sanders 2001, XIII–XC).
- *Erec et Enide*, an Old French romance composed by Chrétien de Troyes (*c*. 1140–90) around 1170, survives in a total of eleven manuscripts and two fragments. Its Old Norse translation *Erex saga* is dated to the mid-thirteenth century, albeit only surviving in three manuscripts that date from the sixteenth century and later (Roques 1968, III–VI and XXVIII–XXXII; Kalinke 1999, II, 219–20).
- *Yvain*, another Old French romance attributed to Chrétien de Troyes, is estimated to have been composed between 1170 and 1180, and survives in twelve manuscripts, some fragmentary, with the greater part being

dated to the thirteenth century. The Old Norse version, *Ívens saga*, is extant in four manuscripts, the earliest of which are dated to the mid-fifteenth century. The transmission history of *Ívens saga* is problematic due to the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts (Nolting-Hauff 1962: 7–14; Kalinke 1999, II, 35–36).

The following investigation will consider the various instances of translations of *jaiants* as *jǫtnar* in the narratives presented above, noting the potential problems that might have arisen in the translation process. The main aim is to present a coherent picture of the potential changes in the concept of *jaiants* in its transmissions via the Old Norse concept of *jǫtnar*, and what influences such translations may have had on the way in which *jǫtnar* were understood at home.

Boeve de Haumtone and Bevers saga

The Anglo-Norman *chanson de geste Boeve* and its Old Norse translation *Bevers saga*[18] offer fascinating insights into not only the problems involved in the translation of the supernatural concept of the *jaiants* (spelled "geant" in *Boeve*) with *jǫtnar* but also the way in which both terms seem to have been associated with various (ecclesiastical) ideas relating to devils and demons. Particularly important is the fact that this narrative offers the longest account dealing with a *jaiant* in the material in question. It thus contains the most detail, thereby offering valuable information about both the nature and effects of translation. It needs to be borne in mind that some elements of the figure in question, Escopart (such as his longer legs, his velocity as well as his durable fingernails), are necessary for the plot to play out and therefore cannot be avoided in translation if the narrative as a whole is to operate. Bearing this in mind it is thus important to give the two descriptions (the Anglo-Norman as well as the Old Norse) of this character in some detail.

The depiction of the *geant* Escopart in *Boeve* runs as follows (ll. 1741–1802; quoted here below are ll. 1743–65):

Il se regarde un petit avant,
Par desuz un tertre vist un veleyn gesant,
ke ben out nof pez de grant:
en sa main tint un mace pesant,
que dis homes a peine ne portassent,
a son geron un bon branc trenchant,
entre se deus oyls un pe out de grant,
le front out large com croupe de olifant,
plu neyr ou la char ke n'est arement,
le nez out mesais e cornus par devant,
le jambes out longues e gros ensement,
les pez larges e plaz, mult fu lede sergant,

plu tost corust ke oysel n'est volant.
Kant il parla, il baia si vilement,
Com ceo fust un vilen mastin abaiant.
Le veylen estoit mult grant e mult fers,
le chivels out longes com come de destrer
e les oyls granz com deus saucers
e les dens longes com un sengler,
la boche grant, mult fu lede bacheler.
E le vilen estoit grant e metailez,
le brace out longes e enforcez,
les ungles si dures […][19]

As will be seen, the corresponding Old Norse passage provides a very close adaptation of its source material, something that applies to all the investigated text passages. In spite of this, the translation contains some interesting variations on the Anglo-Norman *Boeve*. Escopart's description according to *Bevers saga* runs as follows:

Nv sem þau hǫfðu leingi ridit þa sa B(evers) fram firer sik á stofnn eins tres mikinn jotun hann var uel xv feta langr. Jsinni hendi hafdi hann stora klumbu suo þunga ath x. akkr kallar gatu eigi meira borith vid sik hafdi hann einn męki. milli hans augna var þriggia fæta langt han<s> hold var svart sem kol. nasar hans voru leidiligar ok framann á krokr. hann hafdi stor beinn ok lǫng. illa voru hans fætur skapader. hann matti meira hlaupa enn fugl fliuga. hans rǫdd var sem þa er tiu hundar geyia. Harith var suo langt sem hestz hali. Augunn voru stor ok svort sem ketil botn. tenn hafdi hann sem villigǫlltr. munrinn var miok vidr ok ath ǫllu var hann leidiligr skapadr.[20]

As one can see, the *Bevers saga* account is somewhat terser than that in *Boeve*. Of particular interest here is that the original Anglo-Norman version does not refer to Escopart directly as a *geant* at this point in the text, only noting that he is *grant* ("large"). In fact, Escopart is only once referred to as a *geant* in the entire narrative, compared to the seven times that King Brandon's large brother is headed as such (see below).[21] For the most part, Escopart is addressed as *velein* ("peasant, churl, villein"), *paien* ("pagan, heathen"), *bacheler* ("young man"), *garson* ("page, servant boy") and various other, non-supernatural words, as well as being associated with the devil (see below). It is noteworthy that the Old Norse depiction omits various comments about his ugliness and fierceness as well as references to his size in this section.[22] Other important differences in the translation include the following: his size is expanded from nine feet to fifteen; the space between his eyes is three feet as opposed to being one foot in *Boeve*; and his skin is "black as coal", unlike the Anglo-Norman version which has "black as ink". Escopart's eyes in *Bevers saga* meanwhile are as large as the bottom of a kettle rather than the size of saucers as in the original. The overall remark regarding his fingernails has also been shortened; and the description of his nails omitted (despite them playing the same role later in the saga as they

do in *Boeve*). Last but not least, Escopart does not refer to himself as *un fere publicant* (l. 1780; "a fierce pagan") in the Old Norse saga. Interestingly, the weapons Escopart carries in the original (the club and the sword) both figure in the translation. This segment nonetheless includes an interesting aspect of acculturalization, that is, certain features that would make sense to an Anglo-Norman audience which seem to be deliberately toned down (or omitted) for the Old Norse audience (such as the emphasis laid on faith). Otherwise, everything that might have caused misunderstandings seems to have been either deliberately omitted or adapted to help understanding. In spite of this, in *Boeve*, Boeve's question regarding Escopart's provenance (and the subliminal entertainment involved in it) is translated almost verbatim, Escopart having apparently fled his country becauses he was called a "nain" or "dvergr" ("dwarf") by others where he lived.[23] It is nonetheless crucial to bear in mind that the apparent reason for rendering Escopart as a *jǫtunn* in Old Norse seems to stem from his size. The other differences in the passages considered above may ultimately stem from a different Anglo-Norman version being used to craft the Old Norse translation from than the variant that has come down to us.

The introduction and description of Escopart noted above is followed by another scene in which Boeve attacks the *jaiant* as Escopart wants to take Boeve's lover Josiane from him.[24] Escopart proves to be a formidable foe as he survives Boeve's initial attack unharmed, only to snarl terrifyingly before charging Boeve with his enormous club. His attack fails as Boeve dodges, and the club fells a tree which stands close by. Eventually, Escopart falls to the ground wounded at the attempt to cut his head off. Josiane nonetheless interferes on behalf of Escopart, begging for Escopart to be granted mercy if he becomes a Christian and servant to Boeve. Escopart hears this, and "commença done a crier,/ ke tretu le boys fet a resoner" (ll. 1831–32; "began to roar so that the whole wood rang") (Stimming 1899: 69; Weiss 2008: 60), saying that he is willing to become a Christian and serve Boeve if he is allowed to live, to which the Christian Boeve agrees. Once again, the Old Norse translation follows its source text closely. There are however some minor deviations: The entire scene is not as elaborate, Escopart yet again being called "fierce" less often and his first snarl is omitted. In spite of this, the Anglo-Norman statement that the wood shook at Escopart's growl is rendered into Old Norse almost verbatim: "þa æpti hann suo hát ath gall j skoginum".[25]

Directly after the defeat and subsequent subsumption of Escopart, the story continues, telling how Boeve intends to marry his Josiane.[26] However, before they can be wedded, the pagan Josiane must be baptized, and the three thus intend to sail away to carry this out. The Anglo-Norman *Boeve* then tells how during the acquisition of a naval vessel, the Saracen crew refuses to yield to Escopart. Subsequently, Escopart boards the ship and

bludgeons the entire crew to death except for those that jump overboard and drown. The same passage is preserved in *Bevers saga*, albeit that the overall length of the passage has been reduced.

After disembarking, Boeve, Josiane and Escopart head for Cologne/Colonia, where both Josiane and Escopart are to be baptized.[27] While the baptism of Josiane proceeds without any incidents, the same cannot be said for that of Escopart. In the Anglo-Norman source text, the Archbishop of Cologne is terrified at the sight of him, crossing himself three times, and asking who "ceo malfé" (l. 1921; "this demon") is. They then have to baptize Escopart in a tub so heavy and large that even twenty men could not have lifted it (something that again underlines his size). In the end, it is Escopart himself who jumps into the tub, after which he is given the new (and Christian) name Gui. However, the water is so cold that the naked Escopart leaps out quickly, yelling that they mean to drown him, onlookers thinking that "il fust un deble ke vousist manger" (l. 1977; "he was a devil who wanted to eat") (Weiss 2008: 62 note 190). The Old Norse *Bevers saga* also features the astonishment of the Archbishop at the sight of Escopart. Here, however, the Archbishop, after crossing himself more than twenty times (rather than three), asks "hvaðan þat trǫll væri" ("where this *trǫll* came from"), rather than who he is as in *Boeve* (the term *trǫll* here apparently referring to the nature of the person rather its origin). This translation of the word *malfé* ("demon") into *trǫll* in the utterances of the respective Archbishop is interesting and will be discussed in more detail below. Also of interest is the way Escopart's entire behaviour regarding the cold water, the idea of eating and the reference to the devil are all left out of the translated saga.

One of the longer episodes of the narrative, which features Escopart acting on his own volition, is the so-called "Miles episode".[28] After the baptism of Josiane and Escopart, Boeve leaves on a campaign, leaving Escopart behind to guard his newly-wed wife. During this time, a local count/*jarl* by the name of Miles sees Josiane and wants to have her for himself. However, he fears the revenge of Escopart and devises a plot to trap Escopart in an empty tower (*Boeve*) or castle (*Bevers saga*) located on an island in the sea under the pretext that Boeve wishes to talk to him there. Escopart agrees to be ferried there by Miles (his eager acceptance of Miles' "offer" being apparently based more on narrative grounds than the result of Escopart being dull-witted). However, once locked in the building, Escopart becomes furious, clawing away at the walls until they collapse into the sea. He then jumps into the water and tries to board a merchant ship which happens to be sailing past. The reaction of the mariners at the sight of the swimming Escopart is once again of interest, as Eskopart is described both as *deble* ("devil, monster") and *Lucifer* as he boards the ship. The Anglo-Norman *Boeve* describes the event as follows (ll. 2088–91):

"Seignors," dist l'Escopart, "lessés moi o vus entrer."
Kant cil orient le deble si hautement escrier,
Pur verité quident ke se seit Lucifer,
De grant pour sailent tuz en la mer[29]

Bevers saga has the following description: "Nu sem kaupmenn sá hann suo liotliga skapadann ok hann svam mikit j hafinu þa hugdu þeir ath fiandinn sialfr væri ok saker hrælzlu hlupu þeir aller vttbyrdis".[30] It is interesting to see how while the mention of Lucifer in the Anglo-Norman has instigated a translation into Old Norse as "fiandinn sialfr" ("the devil himself"), the Anglo-Norman description of Escopart as "deble" ("devil, monster") has been rendered into "liotliga skapadr" ("shaped in an ugly manner") in the Old Norse translation. One wonders why the word *trǫll* should not have been used here as it was with *malfé*.

In another brief episode, the same skills are seen when Escopart leads a third of a combined army against the emperor who has killed Boeve's father, Boeve and Sabaoth (Boeve's mentor) leading the remaining thirds respectively.[31] Prior to the battle, the emperor refers to Escopart as "un geant mult fer,/ ne resemble pas home, mes le deble d'enfer" (ll . 2265–66; "a very fierce giant – more like a devil of Hell than a man") (Stimming 1899: 82; Weiss 2008: 67). In the heat of the encounter, after Escopart has ravaged his opponents, Boeve instructs Escopart to reach the emperor, to capture and bind him and bring him to a nearby castle owned by Sabaoth. Yet again, and once again despite avoiding translating Escopart's appearance as being like that of a devil, *Bevers saga* appears to contain a close translation of the Anglo-Norman text, conveying the very same information. No attempt is made to align Escopart with the mythological *jǫtnar*.

Escopart's eventual downfall in both the Old French and the Old Norse is a result of his treachery against Boeve.[32] The reason for this is that he is affronted that Boeve does not take him along on an expedition. Although compensated for this by Boeve, Escopart heads straight back to his old master, the Saracen king Yvori de Monbrant/Jvorius, disclosing the whereabouts of Josiane. The lady is subsequently captured by Saracens. The Anglo-Norman *Boeve* then tells of how Sabaoth, grieving about this news, heads straight to St. Gilles in order to repent for his perceived guilt that he was not more vigilant. During the naval passage, Sabaoth, clad in pilgrim's clothing, beholds both Josiane and Escopart, attacking and killing the latter with his pilgrim's staff. *Bevers saga* deviates from the original text only slightly: the city is not St. Gilles but rather "Orliens" in France and the encounter between Sabaoth and Escopart does not occur on a ship but rather in the city itself, as Sabaoth stumbles upon a pagan army led by Escopart. Again, Sabaoth kills Escopart with a staff.

It is worth bearing in mind that, as pointed out earlier, Escopart is not the only *geant* to be called a *jǫtunn* by the translator, underlining that the use

of the term for Escopart was no exception. A far less elaborate *geant* is the nameless brother of the (humanoid) Saracen King Brandon, whose meeting with Boeve (before Escopart's appearance) is only brief (ll. 1271–328).[33] After the battle in which he has killed Brandon, Boeve finds himself wandering thirsty in an unknown countryside where he reaches a castle. Here, he demands food and lodging from a maiden living there. She, however, refers to her husband who is "un geant mult fort e fer" (l. 1289; "a strong and fierce giant"). This *geant*, who carries a javelin, a hunting spear and a club, turns out to be the brother of King Brandon who refuses Boeve any hospitality due to their conflicting religious affiliations. The encounter escalates when the *geant* recognizes Boeve's horse as being that of his brother Brandon and the two opponents fight (ll. 1309–28). Despite a grievous wound sustained in the fight, Boeve manages to overcome his opponent, severing every single limb from the *geant*'s trunk before beheading his opponent whose "anme va a malfez" (l. 1328; "soul went to the devil"). Somewhat later in the narrative, Boeve confesses his sins to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, explaining how he vanquished a powerful giant (l. 1355), making a similar statement later on when he encounters Josiane for the first time (l. 1410).

Bevers saga, once again, preserves a relatively close translation of this encounter. As in the Old French counterpart, the woman in question refers to her husband, who is said to be a "jotunn mikil ok sterkr" ("large and strong *jǫtunn*"), once again refusing Bevers' wish for food on religious grounds. The fight is then described as follows:

> Jot(unninn) s(eger) ath hann skal reyna hvat manna hann er adr einn þeir skilia. Nv tok jot(unninn) geir sinn ok einn storann vǫl […] B(evers) […] hliop vpp á briost honum ok hio af hendr hans ok fætur ok hans hith leiduligha hǫfurth.[34]

As can be seen, divergences mostly refer to the weaponry of the *geant*/*jǫtunn*. The most dramatic, and also interesting, deviation from the Anglo-Norman text is yet another reference to a *jǫtunn* being an "illr fjandi" ("evil devil"), something which seems unprovoked by the source material. The original here runs "Boves saut a pe e tret le branc asceré,/ le geant refert ne li ad esparnié,"[35] not making any mention of the devil or any other religious connotations. If one might hazard a guess at what is going on here, it is possible that the Old Norse translator tried somehow to incorporate (or misunderstood) the idea of the line "l'anme va a malfez" of *Boeve* (a description as such not preserved in *Bevers saga*) in the words "illr fjandi".

Be that as it may, and leaving the *Boeve* narrative for now, this article will turn to these *jaiants* depicted in the works of Chrétien de Troyes which are also translated as *jǫtnar* in their respective Old Norse renditions, noting possible differences as well as potential similarities as has been done with regard to the descriptions of Escopart and the *geant*/*jǫtunn*-brother of Brandon/Brandamon.

Chrétien's *jaiants* and the Old Norse *jǫtnar*

As has been mentioned above, two late-twelfth-century romances by Chrétien de Troyes contain episodes that feature *jaiants*. In *Erec*, the knight Cadoc de Cabruel is saved by Erec from the clutches of two nameless *jaiants*, while *Yvain*, on the other hand, sees the protagonist vanquish the *jaiant* Harpin de la Montaingne who proves to be a thorough menace as he ravages the lands of a local lord. As with *Bevers saga*, the translations given in *Erex saga* and *Ívens saga* provide us with valuable information about the use of *jǫtunn* as a translation of *jaiant* (which happens in both cases), simultaneously allowing us to assess how the Old Norse translators seem to have adapted the Chrétienian texts to suit the mindset of an Old Norse audience and their understanding of *jǫtnar*.

The romance *Erec* shows its protagonist defeating two *jaiants*, rescuing a fellow knight in the process. This segment, which might be called the "Saving Cadoc de Cabruel" episode, runs to over more than 250 lines (ll. 4279–541),[36] and starts with Erec and Enide coming across a maiden running about a forest, crying in distress. Erec approaches her, only to find out that the lady's lover, a knight by the name of Cadoc de Cabruel, has been kidnapped by two of his sworn enemies, who are *jaiants* (ll. 4315–18). During the combat that follows, these two figures are described as being "felon" and "crüel" (l. 4317; "evil, wicked" and "cruel") as well as "fort et fier" (l. 4412; "strong and savage"). Erec vanquishes the first *jaiant* by piercing him through the eye with his lance. The second *jaiant* proves to be more of a challenge, managing to exchange blows with the knight, before Erec manages to cut him in half atop his horse. One notes also various remarks underlining the physicality of the *jaiants* and, once again, their use of clubs (rather than swords) which are swung fiercely. The apparent lack of armour of the *jaiants* is also worth noting. One also notes the mention of a whip which, as with the figure of Harpin de la Montaingne discussed below, does not see use in combat but is rather used for the punishment of prisoners. Oddly enough, these two *jaiants* are capable of horseback riding, a rather untypical skill for beings that in Old French are commonly thought to be too large and heavy to be able to ride horses (see above). One more mention of Erec's exploits against the *jaiants* occurs later in the narrative when Erec and Enide return to King Arthur at Tintanguel (l. 6433), but this section contains no further description of these beings.

This same episode appears in *Erex saga*, which like *Bevers saga*, keeps closely to the original text (with a few embellishments). Here, as in the original, Erex sets off to rescue the knight Kalviel of Karinlisborg, who has been abducted by two *jǫtnar* not far away.[37] He sees the two *jǫtnar*, one of them riding ahead with a horse carrying the spoils, while the other one, straggling behind, leads a horse with the abducted husband thrown sideways over the

horse's back. As in the original, despite the banter and intimidation from the *jǫtunn* leading the captive, Erex kills him with ease, at which point the other *jǫtunn* joins the fray. This specific *jǫtunn* again proves to be more challenging, wielding his iron club, even striking and injuring Erex. This *jǫtunn* is nonetheless also eventually overcome by the knight, who then returns the captive Kalviel to his waiting wife. Unfortunately, despite the fact that these two figures have managed to fight off twenty knights in Kalviel's following (a detail lacking in *Erec*) hardly any information is given about their nature or appearance can be gained from this passage in which Erex disposes of them very easily, something that reduces the overall length of the passage. What is nonetheless evident, as in *Bevers saga*, is that these *jǫtnar*, while large, are evidently more human than godlike.

Moving on to Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, this work tells how after his befriending of a lion, Yvain stumbles across a distressed lord and hears his plight (ll. 3770–4304).[38] A *jaiant* by the name of Harpin de la Montaingne has threatened to have the lord's sons killed if he does not to get the lord's daughter. The sons and daughter in question turn out to be the nephews and niece of Gauvain, a beloved friend of Yvain, and Yvain naturally offers his help. Before Yvain's arrival, Harpin, in acts described as "felon jeu" (l. 3898; "wicked games") and abuse (l. 4152), is said to have laid waste to the lands of the nobleman and already killed two of his sons. At noon the next day, after Yvain's arrival, the *jaiant* appears in front of the portcullis of the castle as promised. He, once again, demands the handing over of the lord's daughter, threatening to have the captive sons executed and, if he receives the daughter in exchange for the men's lives, to have her raped by his lowest ranking servants. Yvain and Harpin, then, meet in single combat, the former ultimately overcoming and killing the latter after Yvain has received crucial aid from his tame lion.

It is worth noting that here Harpin is often simply described as a *jaiant*, the author relying on the connotations of this word alone to give a sense of his appearance and temperament. Elsewhere, however, Harpin is said to be "domagié" (l. 3852; "harmful, damaging"), a "fel jaianz, cui Deu confonde" (l. 3856; "an evil *jaiant*, which God may destroy"), as well as "felon" (ll. 4150 and 6474; "evil, wicked"), "cruël" (l. 4150; "cruel"), a "maufez" (l. 4173; "demon, evil spirit"), and an "anemis" (l. 4173; "enemy"). Like the two *jaiants* of *Erec* discussed above, he is said to wield "un pel […] grant et quarré" (ll. 4092–93; "huge, squared club") which he not only uses to drive the captive sons in front of him (ll. 4090–4) but also employs as a weapon in the struggle against Yvain (ll. 4194–247).

The unavoidable fight that takes place between the two is very detailed and provides interesting information about the way the character is seen: like the two *jaiants* in *Erec*, Harpin, relying solely on his strength, is said to not care for armour, only sporting a bearskin for protection (ll. 4197 and 4224), something which underlines his bestial qualities, suggesting that (as

in the other accounts) a translation as a *berserkr* might have worked better (see below). The same idea is seen when Harpin is attacked by Yvain's lion: his skin is said to be very hairy (l. 4223), and he screams "come tors" (l. 4228; "like an ox"). Harpin nonetheless does not use his whip in the fight against Yvain, only using his staff ("pel") in combat (for example, ll. 4198–99 and 4230). When Yvain finally decapitates and kills his opponent, the *jaiant* falls dead to the ground with such intensity that the narrator comments that he thinks that no oak could have fallen with a greater force, thereby further underlining Harpin's size (ll. 4244–47). Unfortunately, no additional information is given about Harpin when information is passed on to Gauvain about Yvain's victory. Here, once again, Harpin is only referred to as *jaiant* (l. 6480) and as a "felon" (l. 6474).

The translated *Ívens saga* generally follows the Old French template with regard to this adventure, albeit describing things in a less elaborate fashion than the Old French romance.[39] For example, much of the pre-combat banter between Yvain and Harpin does not survive the process of translation into Old Norse. Here, as in the original, Íven encounters the lord of a castle who then explains how his lands have been ravaged by a *jǫtunn* called Fjallsharfir, who has already killed two of the six of the lord's sons and captured the others, demanding the lord's daughter in exchange. When Fjallsharfir comes to the castle he is described as wielding a large iron staff and a whip. When Íven hears of the *jǫtunn*'s arrival as well as his provocation, he prepares himself to fight Fjallsharfir. Seeing Íven ride against the *jǫtunn*, the general public pray to God to help him fight this *trǫll*. In the ensuing battle, the *jǫtunn* proves a formidable opponent and, as in the original, it is only after the intervention of his lion that Íven manages to overcome his opponent.

As noted above, Fjallsharfir is almost always described as being a *jǫtunn*, but one notes how when the common populace transform him into a *trǫll* when they call upon God's help, a more degenerate titulation which underlines that the translator (like that of *Boeve*) sees both words as meaning the same thing. It is also interesting to note that in the corresponding passage in the Old French *Yvain*, Harpin is described as a "maufez" and "anemis", rather than as "jaiant", words which also paint him in a religiously antagonistic light. One is thus brought to wonder whether the Old Norse translator understood a *trǫll* to be a more fiendish personification of a *jǫtunn*.

Be that as it may, however, there are further similarities and differences between Harpin and Fjallsharfir that are worth considering. Interestingly enough, no information is given with regard to Fjallsharfir's clothes or the nature of his skin, and while he certainly wields an iron club, he does not scream like an ox (or any other animal for that matter) when he is ravaged by the lion. All the same, his size as well as his heavy physique are clearly underlined when, upon his death, Fjallsharfir, similar to Harpin, crashes down so hard that the earth shakes. In short, it is interesting to note

that while this episode appears to have been subjected to a fairly accurate translation process, the Old Norse *jǫtunn* Fjallsharfir, in contrast to the Old French *jaiant* Harpin, seems to have lost his animalistic wild features, while simultaneously retaining other shared features of folkloric "giants" in both cultures, such as size and weaponry. Indeed, once again, one is led to wonder whether the Old Norse translator saw the word *jǫtunn* (like *jaiant*) as relating to something fiendish in Christian terms. It should nonetheless be noted that the Chrétienian *jaiants* investigated here all seem to be "terrorizing giants" rather than "Saracen champions", meaning that they subsequently lack a certain demonic aspect found elsewhere.

Conclusion: How "jaiantique" are the *jǫtnar*?

The present study has considered all the instances in which the Old French *jaiant* is translated with the word *jǫtunn* in the Old Norse translations of Old French chivalric romances. All in all, it can be said that the translations in question are all carefully and accurately crafted, with almost all aspects of each individual *jaiant* (relevant to the plot or otherwise descriptive) being effectively passed on into the Old Norse saga. While some aspects have admittedly been lost or added during the process of translation, these instances are isolated, usually involving the omission of an aspect that might have appeared strange to an Old Norse translator/audience, as with the dropping of the initial mention of Escopart's fingernail in *Bevers saga* for example. While the discussion of such interesting deviations falls outside the scope of this article, they may, nonetheless, prove relevant when considered in a broader study which investigates, for instance, the relationship between the source and target cultures involved in the translation process. All the same, the beings in question are shown to be essentially enormous human outsiders with an evil nature, figures that live in our world and interact with humans.

Slight adjustments of the Old French narrative (*malfé* becoming *trǫll*, and *Lucifer* becoming *fjandinn* – if the text of the original was the same as – or similar to – the extant version) may nonetheless indicate various things: (1) that the *jǫtnar* themselves were not (yet?) being seen as the evil/devilish beings they would become in later saga material (such as the *fornaldarsǫgur* or indigenous *riddarasǫgur*); (2) that *trǫll* (used instead of the term *jǫtunn* for translating the devilish qualities) were at this point in time perceived as more diabolical beings that possessed harmful magical skills (a development in itself); and/or (3) that during the translation process of *jaiant* to *jǫtunn*, the aspect of size was a more pivotal feature than any other quality. Indeed, it is significant that the term *risi* is never encountered in the investigated material, even though it is frequently used to describe larger-than-human beings in other translated sagas of (mostly) Germanic background, such as *Þiðreks saga af Bern* or *Karlamagnús saga*.[40]

Be that as it may, it should be remembered that the translated *riddarasǫgur* were composed in Norway at a time where the previously discussed process of merging of various supernatural beings into one, near indistinguishable mass was already ongoing (see above). One can therefore conclude that the *jaiants* image of the *jǫtnar* that appears in the translated *riddarasǫgur* would have both potentially impacted upon the said amalgamation of concepts as well as simultaneously being influenced by it within both the written and oral tradition of Norway and Iceland. As shown at the start, the Old French *jaiants* (in these works and others) clearly lacked the mythical components inherent in the portrayal of the *jǫtnar* in Eddic material and certain key traditional aspects of the Nordic *jǫtnar* they were perceived as having in these texts (features still known in this period in the Eddic poems and *Snorra Edda*) such as knowledge, age, culture and ancient ancestry (see, for instance, Ingunn Ádísardóttir 2018: 39–199). It seems that the new features may very well have contributed to the growing malleability of the concept of the *jǫtnar* in the later saga material, and not least in the indigenous *riddarasǫgur*. A good example of this development can be seen in the (presumably) fourteenth-century indigenous *riddarasaga Ectors saga* which describes a *jǫtunn* as a *trǫll*, a *níðingur* ("scoundrel"), a *þurs* as well as a *risi*, all during one encounter (Loth 1962–65: I, 124). From depictions such as this, it becomes apparent that the *jǫtnar*, having amalgamated with other, similar concepts, have now clearly become of larger-than-human size and started interacting with human beings.[41]

There is little question that some aspects of the *jaiants* and their translated Old Norse counterparts in the *riddarasǫgur* that would have been heard alongside the more local Nordic accounts would probably have appeared odd to many in an Old Norse audience, as with the ideas of their wearing pelts or hides and making animal sounds (as in the case of the threatening Escopart and Harpin de la Montagne and Fjallshafir: see above and their limited range of weapons). Considering these specific aspects, one wonders why such individuals were not translated as *berserkir*, some of whom are also said in later times to be large in size and knowledgeable of (harmful) magic as, for instance, the description of Eirekr's entourage of *berserkir* from the early-fourteenth-century *fornaldarsaga Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga* shows (Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1943–44, II, 362–63).[42]

Ultimately, it appears as though the translation of *jaiant* as *jǫtunn* was clearly beginning to be connected essentially to a "giant's" size.[43] This observation appears to be congruent with the inner-Scandinavian development of the image of the *jǫtnar* away from their mythological origins as they started to blend with other large and supernatural motifs. As noted above, this particular change seems to have been already ongoing by the time the Old Norse translations were undertaken but it might equally have been propelled by them. The portrayal of the *jǫtnar* in the translated *riddarasǫgur* thus clearly represents

another effective steppingstone in the "downfall" of the *jǫtnar* from being wise, culturally acclaimed, social ancestors in Old Norse myth to taking on the role of the mere dumb, devilish, large and brutish trolls that would come to dominate the later *märchen* and folk legend tradition (Uther 2004, II, 7–71).[44]

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[1] The supernatural concepts under investigation here will be referred to in their respective original languages in order to underline the various connotations these ideas had at the time of translation.

[2] According to the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose,* the term *risi* can be found in manuscripts dating to as early as c. 1250–1300 – for example, AM 652 4to (dated to c. 1250–1300; *Jakobs saga postula [hins eldra]*), AM 243 b α fol. (dated to *c.* 1275; *Konungs skuggsjá*), and Holm perg 4 fol. (dated to c. 1275–1300; *Þiðreks saga af Bern*) – and might be therefore roughly contemporary with the composition of some of the earliest translations if we consider the date of 1226 given in *Tristrams saga ok Ísǫndar* to be accurate (for the manuscripts and their dating, see https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o65138).

[3] Similar discrepancies in conceptual translation have already been tackled in adjacent fields, among other things with regard to Greek mythology and the difference between giants and titans. This began more than half a century ago: see Delcourt 1965: 210; Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 13–36; and Grant 2019: 101–2.

[4] Utilizing a comparative approach, it is worth highlighting that the present article does not make any statements about a perceived "value", "superiority" or "purity" of one culture, literature, or concept over the other.

[5] It may suffice here to refer to Kvideland & Sehmsdorf 1988 and how supernatural concepts such as *álfar, huldre* and *vetter* vary in nature across Scandinavia. Further information regarding the variation of supernatural concepts see, for instance, af Klintberg 1986 for Sweden, Kristensen 1892–1901 regarding Denmark and Qvigstad 1927–29 for northern Norway.

[6] It may also be useful here to refer to studies conducted by Ármann Jakobsson with regard to *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss:* see Ármann Jakobsson 2006a and 2008.

[7] See, for instance, Hesiod's eighth/seventh-century BC work *Θεογονία* ("The-ogony") in which he gives an overview of (his understanding of) Greek mythology as well as the genealogy of mythological characters: see Most 2006–7: I, 6–7, 18–21 and 56–57.

[8] Regarding the Hebrew word נְפִילִים ("*nefilim*") and its contested meanings, see their discussion in Koslor 2018.

[9] There appears to be some disagreement regarding potential outside influences that might have acted upon the concept of the *jaiants* in France. Whereas Wohlgemuth can hardly detect any Germanic or Abrahamic and only isolated Celtic influences, Bresc is far more positive with regard to Celtic (especially in Brittany) and Abrahamic influences having an impact on the concept: see Wohlgemuth 1906: 38–40, 46, 51, 57, 61, 79; and Bresc 1982: 251–52.

[10] Granted, there are some exceptions to the rule, in which *jaiants* are described as handsome and helping the Christian cause. These *jaiants,* however, are not encountered in the studied corpus and are thus not further considered here; on this feature, see, for instance, Wohlgemuth 1906: 27.

[11] Translation: "the Saracen giants, chthonian figures, imaginary projections of Manichean antagonism, belong to an imagination constantly associated with dread, but which will begin to evolve at the end of the twelfth century, or possibly even before that. In fact, in the *chansons de geste,* fear ought to be at the centre of chivalrous life. All the same, the heroes of the epics rarely feel it, and, at the end of the narrative, they always dominate it. Thenceforth, the portrayal of the giants has as its essential role in the narrative to enhance the value of the Christian knights who triumph." (Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.)

[12] Unless otherwise specified, all references to Eddic poetry are given in accordance with Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason 2014. Unless otherwise stated, all references to *Snorra Edda* are taken from the editions by Faulkes 2005–7. When not otherwise provided, all references to skaldic poetry are taken from the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* database (accessed via https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php).

[13] For a more detailed list of male as well as female *jǫtnar* names, see Motz, 1981 and 1987 as well as 1984: 105–6 from which the above selection has been taken.

[14] This notion is based on the idea that the world is made from Ymir (which does not mean that he is larger than the gods) and the story of Útgarða-Loki, who is misconceived to be a *jǫtunn:* see Ingunn Ásdísardóttir 2018: 8.

[15] Regarding transtextual relations and the definition of "originals", see Gauti Kristmannsson 2005: I, 19–23; and 2019: 359–65.

[16] For a more in-depth discussion of the intrinsic problems involved with regard to medieval translation, see Lummer forthcoming, 11–78.

[17] While the Old French *Tristan* by Thomas d'Angleterre (fl. 1170s) and its Old Norse translation *Tristrams saga ok Ísǫndar* have also been considered in the present study, the outcome of this study is rather inconclusive. This is partly due to the fragmentary nature of the source material which makes such a comparison problematic.

[18] For the present study, only the manuscript version marked as "B" in Sanders's 2001 edition of the saga has been considered, versions "C" and "S" only offering slight differences (mostly in terms of the spelling of characters or place names), with two main exceptions: "C" mentions in passing at the end of chapter fifteen that Bevers killed "einn sterkann jautunn" ("a strong

jǫtunn") without giving any further detail: see Sanders 2001: 147. "S", a younger rendition of the saga, meanwhile offers a completely different narrative regarding the death of Escopart.

[19] Stimming 1899: 66–68 (see pp. 66–67 for the quotation). Translation: "He glanced ahead a little way and saw, reposing on top of a hill, a churl who was certainly nine feet tall. In his hand he held a heavy club, which ten men could hardly carry, and by his side a good sharp sword. The space between his eyes was a foot wide, his forehead was as large as an elephant's buttocks, his skin was blacker than ink, his nose was misshapen and knobby in front, his legs too were long and thick, and his feet long and flat. He was a hideous fellow, a faster runner than a bird on the wing. When he spoke, he barked as horribly as if he were a vile baying hound. The churl was extremely large and very fierce; his hair was as long as a horse's mane, his eyes as big as two saucers, his teeth as long as a boar's, his mouth large – he was a most ugly young man. And the churl was large and misshapen; his arms were long and strong, his nails so long […]": see Weiss 2008: 58.

[20] Sanders 2001: 173 and 175. Translation: "Now that they have ridden for a long time, then Bevers saw forward in front of him a big *jǫtunn* on a stump of a tree. He was a good fifteen feet long. In his hand he had a big club so heavy that ten farm hands could not carry more. He had a sword with him. [The distance] between his eyes was three feet wide. His skin was black as coal. His nose was hideous and crooked at the front. He had big and long legs. His feet were badly shaped. He could run faster than birds fly. His voice was as if ten hounds bark. The hair was as long as a horse's tail. The eyes were as big and black as the bottom of a kettle. He had teeth like a wild boar. The mouth was very wide and generally he was hideously shaped."

[21] For the reference to the use of this term for Escopart, see l. 2265; for its use for King Brandon's brother, see ll. 1289, 1309, 1314, 1319, 1322, 1355, 1410; the *geant* that is killed by Terri, friend of Boeve, is not further characterized and his mention is only in one single line, see l. 3503. All references are with regard to Stimming 1899: 52–54, 56, 82 and 118.

[22] In fact, the Old Norse account never describes Escopart as being fierce, in spite of the fact that the Anglo-Norman does so twice. Remarks about his ugliness occur twice in the Old Norse but four times in *Boeve*. The account in *Boeve* mentions Escopart's size four times, whereas *Bevers saga* does so only twice.

[23] See ll. 1784–91 in Stimming 1899: 67. Translation: "'Pagan,' said Boeve, 'you look very ugly: is everyone in your land so large and terrifying?' 'Yes, by Tervagant!' said the Escopart. 'When I was in my land, everyone, great and small, mocked me and called me a dwarf and said I'd never grow. I was so ashamed of their mockery that there was no way I would bear it; I came speedily to this land […]'": see Weiss 2008: 59. *Bevers saga* has the following: "B(evers) m(ælti) huort eru suo storer aller jþinu landi. hann sv(arar) þat veitt Maumet ath menn kǫlludu mik þar duerg ok ek skommudumz þar at vera ok flyda ek þui j brott ath ek var suo litil": see Sanders 2001: 175. Translation: "Bevers asked whether all in your country are so tall. He answers: 'That knows Maumet that the people there called me a dwarf and that I was so ashamed to be there, and I fled away because of the fact that I was so little.'"

[24] All information given in this passage is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 68–69 (ll. 1798–840) and Sanders 2001: 175, 177 and 179.

[25] Sanders 2001: 179. Translation: "Then he cried out so loud that it echoed in the forest."

[26] All information given in this passage is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 69–70 (ll. 1841–67) and Sanders 2001: 179 and 181.

[27] For the following passage see translation with Stimming 1899: 71–73 (ll. 1895–987) and Sanders 2001: 185 and 187.

[28] All information given in this passage is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 75–79 (ll. 2051–185) and Sanders 2001: 193, 195, 197, 199 and 205.

[29] Stimming 1899: 76. Translation: "He saw a merchant passing by in a ship. 'My lord,' said the Escopart, 'let me get in with you.' When they heard the monster calling out so loudly, they thought it must surely be Lucifer; out of terror they all jumped into the sea […]": see Weiss 2008: 64.

[30] Sanders 2001: 199. Translation: "Now when the merchants saw him shaped in such an ugly manner and how he swam so quickly in the sea, they thought that [he] was the devil himself and in fear all jumped overboard."

[31] All information given in this passage is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 80–85 (ll. 2193–379) and Sanders 2001: 213, 219 and 221.

[32] All information given in this passage is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 93–96 (ll. 2646–765) and Sanders 2001: 239, 241, 243, 245, 249 and 251.

[33] All information given in the following segments is in accordance with Stimming 1899: 52–54 and Sanders 2001: 139 and 141.

[34] Sanders 2001: 139 and 141. Translation: "The *jǫtunn* says that he shall test the kind of man he is before they part. Now, the *jǫtunn* took his spear and one large staff […] Bevers […] ran up onto his chest and cut off his hands and feet and his ugly head." The "C" variant of *Bevers saga* offers slightly different information. Here, the *jǫtunn* is also said to be "grimmur" ("grim, fierce") and falls into a rage after missing Bevers with a swing. Larger differences can be spotted in "S", where the addressing of the maiden by Bevers is skipped and Bevers calls on the *jǫtunn* directly. The *jǫtunn* asks about Bevers' rich spoils which he apparently recognizes, and the account of the subsequent fight runs slightly differently as here the hands are removed from the *jǫtunn.* Additionally, no description is given of the weaponry of the *jǫtunn.*

[35] Stimming 1899: 53. Translation: "Boeve jumped to his feet and drew his steel blade, returning the giant's blow unsparingly": see Weiss 2008: 51.

[36] The following information is based on the information contained in the lines mentioned above: see Roques 1968: 130–38.

[37] The following description is based on the events described in Kalinke 1999: II, 244 and 246.

[38] The following information is taken from the lines mentioned above: see Nolting-Hauff 1962: 191–216.

[39] The following information is based on the events described in Kalinke 1999: II, 76, 78 and 80.

[40] With regard to *Karlamagnús saga*, see, for example, the *risi* Ferakut in the *Þáttr af Agulando konungi*: see Unger 1860: 277–83. A prominent *risi* in *Þiðreks saga af Bern* is Vaði *risi*, the father of Velentr in *Velents þáttr smiðs*: see Bertelsen 1905–11: I, 73–81.

[41] See, for example, Surtr in *Ketils saga* hængs who is *mikill* ("big"), like Hildir frá Risalandi in *Qrvar-Odds saga*; a nameless *jǫtunn* in a *helli* in *Sǫrla saga sterka* who is so large that Sǫrli has never before seen a man of this size; Kolr *kroppinbakr* in *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* who is said to be "stórr sem jǫtunn" ("large as a *jǫtunn*"); and another nameless *jǫtunn* in *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis* who is simply described as *stórr* ("large"): see Guðni Jónsson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1943–44: I, 249 and 338–39; II, 190; as well as III, 196 and 246. See furthermore Schulz 2004: 141–46. On the development of the *trǫll*, see, for example, Lindow 2014: 33; Simek 2018: 27–92.

[42] Regarding the *jǫtnar* in the indigenous *riddarasǫgur*, see, for instance, Lambertus 2013: 111–17.

[43] The notion of a homophone translation may have been more profound in the translations of translated sagas with predominately Germanic source material, as the Middle High German *rise* ("giant") generally used to denote larger-than-human beings got translated with the term *risi* in the Old Norse sagas. Indeed, here, the understanding appears to predominately rely on size. This question, however, warrants further investigation.

[44] For an overview of legends dealing with trolls in Scandinavia, see, for instance, Kvideland & Sehmsdorf 1988: 301–17.

Vernacular Economics and Stories of Fights

Finnish Folktales through the Lens of the Civilization Process

Eija Stark

Abstract

Using Norbert Elias's theory of the civilizing process, this article explores Finnish folktales about petty trade and markets collected in the early twentieth century. In folktales, the marketplace as the arena of commercial dealings was understood as a distinct zone with its own code of behaviour. It was a public place that differed from the private sphere. As part of folk life, the marketplace required social interaction, which provided both literal and metaphorical spaces especially for masculine performances. One outcome of this performance was aggression. The analysis is based on the exploration of the tale structures where the sequence of events follows the fight tale structure.

Keywords: folktales, fight stories, civilization process, vernacular economics, Finnish folklore

The marketplace has always been a part of folk life. However, when reading Finnish folktales about marketplaces and peddling recorded in the first half of the twentieth century, one soon discovers their violent nature, even though impulsive feuds, fights and homicides had already decreased remarkably over the last few hundred years (see, e.g., Ylikangas 2002). Vernacular forms of economics, such as peddling and trade on annual market days, continued to meet the basic needs of many customers well into the twentieth century in Finland. Trading practices were a form of performance in which potential buyers found pleasure in looking at and examining new, exotic and beautiful items that were something out of the ordinary. Moreover, the marketplaces were the space to buy and sell food. Besides novelties and new wares, markets also offered a hub around which the parish community and vendors from a distance could gather. Petty trade and itinerant trade consisted not only of commercial activities but cultural encounters, too.

In small towns and parish villages, the marketplace was a traditional arena for retail trade, where dealers operated from humble premises and there was a place that could be used by visitors and local residents (see,

e.g., van den Heuvel 2012: 137; Fontaine 2006). The marketplace was a space where internal cultural issues were worked out amidst the exchange of communities (Mullins & Batra-Wells 2019: 13). Besides traditional regular market days, ambulatory peddling increased from the mid-nineteenth century onward in Finland. This kind of petty trade was a response to the growing demand for goods in peripheral and mainly rural settings. More and more demand by consumers was driven by the fact that goods and merchandise offered a better standard of living for rural and working-class customers, many of whom were women, young people or groups in subordinate social positions (see Wassholm & Sundelin 2018: 133–134; Ahlbeck et al. 2022). However, this changing and dynamic context produced tensions and conflicts of interest. In addition to the long tradition of drinking and blows being exchanged in the marketplace, mobile petty trade, which was more private in nature, was also often linked to violence.

Norbert Elias's theory of the civilizing process has been the most prominent and controversial interpretative framework for explaining the apparent changes in patterns of violence. In a broad sense, the term addresses the changing codes of manners and the standards of social behaviour in Western societies. Aggression used to be a manifestation of affect, over which people have subsequently needed to exercise greater self-control. Travelling by road, for example, was dangerous in bygone centuries, and so it remains today, but the nature of danger has changed. While earlier travellers on the road had to defend themselves against violent attacks, today the main danger comes from car accidents, which require more self-control (Elias 1978 [1939]: 233; Mennell 1985: 24). Despite numerous elements of modernization, such as the growing number of literate people, industrialization and the gradual increase of consumption, many people in Finland lived well into the twentieth-century in an economy where they were embedded in fixed social networks (that is, they were dependent on their neighbours and village community). In this context, individual honour was important for social standing.

Through a process of civilization, sovereign states started to gain a monopoly of legitimate violence. I base my article on the idea that this likely transformed expressions of aggressive emotions into a central feature of the narrative world. I discuss in more detail how violent acts or the threat of a fight as the narrative theme were entwined with the social context of economic change. Finnish folktales mainly present two forms of violence that occurred in trade encounters: classic brawls, in other words, physical fights in groups, and individual peddlers who did not belong to the local communities and were vulnerable to conflicts with the locals. Besides physical conflicts, there was also a special space – namely, inns and overnight farmhouses – where the threat of violence recurrently arose; this comprises the third theme of the sample tales.

Folktales as Source Material and Some Critical Remarks

I base my discussion on a corpus of 200 Finnish folktales that touch on petty trade and markets. For the most part, the tales were recorded by lay collectors in the first decades of the twentieth century, being the result of various questionnaires set up by the Finnish Literature Society (SKS: *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*). This narrative type belongs to the genre of legends; strongly localized, it uses straightforward language and has a scattered structure. According to the archive catalogue of the Finnish Literature Society, folktales on trade are categorized as "historical tales" (in Finnish: *historialliset tarinat*), referring to their possibility to resemble real events, places and persons. Trade tales were thus told as if true; that is, the events in the tales may have actually happened in certain villages and with specific people. The recorded tales in the archives have been arranged according to genre (i.e., folktale) and then thematically within the genre under seven topics, such as nature, unusual persons, wars and society.

In what kinds of social and economic reality were these tales narrated and then collected? Narratives came from all parts of present-day Finnish-speaking Finland, in addition to Karelian areas that nowadays belong to Russia. Lay collectors usually wrote down the tales from their own memory or interviewed relatives and neighbours in their home district. Narratives date back to the face-to-face milieu of craft production that nurtured storytelling (see, e.g., Limón 1983: 39; Apo 1995), and as was typical at that time, lay collectors sent their written notes to the archives without too much background information. In general, the loss of context has been a problem for interpreting the pre-industrial mentality of the common people. Therefore, the rise of performance orientation in the 1970s has offered a new chance to study the larger cultural ecology in which folklore was performed (see Paredes & Bauman 1972; Mullins & Batra-Wells 2019: 11). In my analysis, folktales offer comments on the economic structure that people once inhabited.

From the perspective of a researcher studying the archived trade tales, there are several source-critical questions that need to be raised. The first involves the question of whose folktales these particular tales are. Often we do not know much about the relationship between the lay collector and the informants, or if the informant was sending his/her own information to the archives. Second, if the collector had interviewed someone in the locality, one could ask how the collector approached the subject and framed his/her questions. As mentioned above, there is scant contextual information surrounding the performance, setting and function. This is not a minor problem, because in the Finnish Literature Society's archive collection there are approximately 40,000 cards in the genre of historical and local legends. These include stories about gypsies, strongmen and petty trade, to name just a few.

Most of the tales analysed in this article show up as incomplete: although the setting of a tale might be clear, the plot and the characters vary. This is due to lay collectors who knew the circumstances of the stories and had an insider's view of shared events. Laura Stark (2015: 128) has pointed out that because these kinds of insider narratives were often written down as if told to close acquaintances, they tend to leave semantic linkages unexplained and contain more dialogue than commentary. In order to better understand the tales, I take my methodological inspiration from James Leary (1976: 31), who has studied fight stories and structured their sequence of events. For the most part, the Finnish trade tales that contain elements of violent acts have the following types of narrative structures: (1) the *initial situation*, which corresponds to the origin of a conflict; (2) an *exchange of words*, that is, physical conflict is preceded by verbal conflict; (3) an *exchange of blows* that follows talk, although sometimes occurring immediately after the initial situation; (4) the *emergence of a victor*, which means that somebody wins the fight; and (5) *reconciliation* or *resolution*, so that the fight is resolved and the characters react to that resolution.

In my sample, there are also narratives that do not explicitly contain violence. These tales can be abstracted structurally in the following simple way: an introduction of the *setting and characters*; an *exposition* of a turning point; and a *complication*, that is, action and a *resolution* in which the story dilemma is resolved and the characters react to that resolution. Narrative researchers claim that the most important elements in every story must be exposition, complication and resolution (see, e.g., Goldstein 2021: 138; Labov 1997). This observation coincides with both the petty trade stories on the theme of a fight and the stories that present the marketplace as a space of tensions. Although the exploration of the tale structures works here as the methodological tool, my analysis primarily goes beyond structures.

In folktales generally, the marketplace as the arena of commercial dealings was understood as a distinct zone with its own code of behaviour. Above all, the marketplace was a public place that differed from the private sphere. As part of folk life, the marketplace required social interaction, which provided both literal and metaphorical spaces especially for masculine performances. One outcome of this performance was aggression, which cannot be considered a positive aspect but in tales is discussed as such. Because folktales were not aimed at revealing the historical truth, stories can exaggerate events and characters, and it is very likely that they were told with a strong subtext of humour. As a specific genre, however, trade tales overlap the territories of history and fiction. Following Paul Ricoeur's formulation of imaginative variations on the constitution of historical time, Camilla Asplund-Ingemark (2016: 310) has interestingly pointed out that narrators often formulate a fictive experience of time that is not bound by the historian's ambition to represent the past in a scientific way.

As phenomena, petty trade, market-going and growing consumption were a mixture of tradition and modernity. On one hand, markets and increasing economic change represented modern capitalism that, from the perspective of the lay collectors and the Finnish Literature Society's central figures, did not correspond to authentic folk culture. On the other hand, it was very traditional because exchanges of food and services without using money had been practised throughout history. One obvious reason for the absence in the archive collections of folklore on vernacular economics, consumer goods and market entertainments is their modern nature. To put it simply, ethnographic questionnaires did not target these aspects. Out of the entire collection of the Finnish Literature Society's archives on historical legends, tales on trade and market-going comprise only a tiny part.

Folktales and the Reflection of the Civilizing Process

How, then, to understand the tales on petty trade that have a strong element of violence? Drawing on Norbert Elias, the historian Pieter Spierenburg argues that patterns of violence were not only altered by greater levels of state intervention and broad changes in European socioeconomic life but also by increased levels of "affect control" that over several centuries gradually trickled down from the social elite to the masses (Spierenburg 2001: 90–91). In folklore studies, Jack Zipes has approached the literary "bourgeoisification" of the oral folktales from the concept of the civilizing process. In brief, traditional oral tales when textualized into a literary fairytale got different characters, settings and plots aimed at regulating the inner and outer nature of children (Zipes 1991: 28). Following Elias's view of the civilizing process, Zipes has pointed out how folktales shape social expectations (Zipes 1991: 47−49; Elias 1968 [1939]). One may make an educated guess whether Finnish folktales on trade were more brutal when performed orally in the narrating event, and through the practice of textuality, they acquired a smoother and thus "more civilized" style.

Norbert Elias based his theory on a study of the manners of English, French and German court society between the fifteen and nineteenth centuries. For this reason, the civilization process has been criticized as reflecting only a Europe-centred view and, at the same time, ignoring the different phases of development in Europe (see, e.g., Goudsblom 1994). I argue here, however, that some of his main points can be applied in the Nordic countries and precisely the Finnish context, too, where demographics and the livelihoods of the population evolved at a different pace from those of France and England. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Finland was still a country on the periphery; it was not only at the edge of Europe, but the vast majority of its population lived in the hinterlands of the country. In other words, in their daily lives, people lived with their nuclear family,

relatively distant from the nearest parish villages. Moreover, the majority of the people belonged to the social group of free peasants, who had a shared system of values, norms and practices. In sparsely populated areas where people lived in relative isolation, high culture was not able to flourish since the upper stratum was so small.

Without doubt, the concept of shame and embarrassment with respect to violence changed over the centuries. One of the many signs of this was that people became civilized in terms of physical distance between individuals (Elias 1978 [1939]; Linklater & Mennell 2010: 384). Although violence shifted from public places to private premises and homes, everyday forms of violence continued to occur. Interpersonal tensions and hostilities – for example, impetuous slaps dealt in anger, fistfights and petty brawls at marketplaces and weddings, the distrust of other people and an inability to cooperate – continued to exist in traditional communities (see, e.g., Österberg 1996: 48; Balikci 1965: 1456). When addressing fights or the threat of violence, narratives in fact discuss the human body. The central motivation for community violence was honour, which depended on the body. One's physical body and appearance were crucial for one's reputation (see, e.g., Stark 2006: 455; Spierenburg 1998: 4). Often honour was developed and maintained through duels. Duels, which were sometimes attended by dozens of people, especially in fights between young men of neighbouring villages (see, e.g., Haavio-Mannila 1958: 207), were a way for men to publicly prove their courage and manliness.

Although strong emotions such as aggression had to be hidden, they continued to exist in the minds of persons and their oral narratives. Folktales about trade reflect the dichotomy where, on one hand, instant emotions toward "strangers" were aggressive, but on the other, it was no longer appropriate to express these openly. Without doubt, the rural inhabitants whose folktales were recorded based their views and actively formed opinions of economic transactions as part of their everyday life. In conflicted societies, stories, songs and celebrations keep alive memories and the emotions associated with them. They also help define and reinforce disputing groups (Carter 2009: 312). Narrative texts, which the archived folktales are, do not directly reflect real life as it once occurred; instead, they lead us to notions that people in a shared culture had.

Brawls

One of the most recurrent themes in the tales about trade and market-going deals with salt. Prior to refrigeration, salt was one of the best methods for preserving food like herring, salmon and game meat. Besides being a condiment, among other things salt was used for curing and preserving meat, tanning hides, fixing dyes and making soap; it also served as a supplement

in animal feed and as medicine. In the absence of readily available salt, trade networks developed around its distribution over long distances from Russia (see, e.g., Toivanen 2009). Because the demand for salt played an important role in power relations (Antonites 2020), encounters on the trade routes were loaded with tensions, with travelling salesmen often needing to show off their strength. In the next tale, two horse-drawn wagons encounter each other on a narrow path on a frozen lake:

> In the old days, the Pielisjärvi people would travel with horse-drawn carriages to Oulu to buy salt. Once there was also a court judge on the path, but he did not want to move aside to allow the salt buyers to pass, even though their carriages were full, and the path went across a frozen lake covered with a thin layer of water. There they were, the horses standing still, and the men arguing about who should move aside. Finally, both moved over a little bit but one of the salt buyers, whose name was Taavi Kärki, hit the court judge on the ear as he passed by. The judge went on. Soon, however, the court judge's men started to chase the salt buyers and caught them at the drinking pits. Taavi Kärki was taken to Kajaani, where he was tried and fined. This fine money was later used to buy the chandelier for the town church.

The sequence of events follows the fight tale structure quite closely. The *initial situation* in the story comprises the place and the group of men encountering one another on the winter ice. Although the actual text does not include the dialogue of the parties, a reader or listener can easily assume the *exchange of words*. This starts when the salt buyer Taavi Kärki begins pushing, and it makes his men appear as the winners of the fight. This part of the narrative is the *emergence of a victor*, although there is a *reconciliation* part in the end. Taavi Kärki is later caught and fined. It is unclear from whose point of view the story above was told: the salt buyers' or that of the court judge and his men; in the end, the levy was used for the good of everybody.

In fact, the image of the fight resembles a recurrent motif in Spaghetti Western movies, where the two characters face each other, waiting for the other to move aside or give up. In both genres, men can be protagonists or antagonists, and the protagonist is not necessarily devoted to justice or a good-hearted hero (see, e.g., McClain 2010: 60). Male violence or the possibility of reacting physically within the space of economic exchange was a ritualized act of force between two men or groups of men for the purpose of a reciprocal preservation of honour.

Whether the actors are on the move or in a sedentary location, either exact names or places are usually mentioned in the narratives, as in the following case:

> It used to be the strongest men from Oulu who went for salt trading, because during travels there occurred fights and scuffles. Once there were three men from Oulu on their return home. They had fabrics and some spices with them. At the first overnight accommodation, some men wanted to check their load and said that they had

unauthorized items with them. The travelling men were prohibited from leaving and they were threatened with being tied up with ropes. A couple of the travellers were afraid of getting robbed. However, the strongest one of them was brave and encouraged his pals to eat and then leave the house. Soon after eating, he took the tabletop in his hands and started to wave and said: "It is better now that the guests are let alone and we can continue our travel ahead home." He then beat with the tabletop those who tried to attack him the hardest. Meanwhile his friends were saddling their horses so they all could move on. A few sticks of wood they took with themselves – just to have batons in order to fight if the men from the overnight place would have started to chase them. But the men from the house did not give chase because they had seen how strong one of the Oulu men was. Such a heavy tabletop could not have been lifted by the small men.

The tales about salt trade and the theme of violent quarrels in which the salt buyers ended up on their travelling routes underline the value of necessity goods, i.e., the products that people used to buy regardless of their standard of living. However, the essence of the tale is honour. The aforementioned violent encounter on the ice was related to a masculine code, and presumably both parties knew one another. Therefore, following Pieter Spierenburg's (2001: 95) argument, the violence may have been purposeful and, in this matter, a kind of performance of a group's honour.

In the narratives, the vernacular way of doing trade was practised in groups, which also made travelling and modes of transportation more difficult. The farmhouses that offered overnight shelter were not necessarily keen to accommodate traders, since their groups tended to be big. The following extract reflects this kind of situation and how it led to violence:

The inhabitants of Vyborg travelled with 30–40 horses, one after another carrying all kinds of goods. Once, about 70 years ago on the evening of Christmas Eve, a big group of Vyborgians appeared at the house of Kana. The farmhouse was already decorated for the Christmas season with a tablecloth on the table and candles burning, but the farmhouse people themselves were bathing in the sauna. When they got back from the sauna, the table was overloaded with filthy haversacks [travel bags]. Then the farmhand, who was already drunk, got upset … and threw the haversacks into the doorway. When he was driving the Vyborgians away for messing up the Christmas table, they responded: "Oh, we thought the table was ready for us, the guests."

Structurally, many of the tales are incomplete; that is to say, they may lack some narrative components. The story about the boorish Vyborgians above, for example, does not have the exchange of words before an actual clash. The storyteller has put the exchange of words at the end of the tale. However, the victor of the conflict and the resolution at the end of the story are clear. Another variant of the same story expresses their attitude and inflated sense of self in a shorter way: "Vyborgians drove proudly without moving aside from oncoming traffic [i.e. horse wagons], and they drove in bigger groups than the others."

Spaces of Vernacular Economics

Marketplaces were both formal and informal, and folktales concerning petty trade and market-going address the latter context. While formal markets were governed by regulations and the transactions were transparent, informal markets were located at any convenient place, such as the doorstep of a farmhouse or an inn or the street. Furthermore, inns provided storage of goods and shelter of horses overnight. For that reason, itinerant traders often arranged sales at village inns (see, e.g., Casson & Lee 2011: 31). In folktale settings, petty trade could occur at a farmhouse where the group of buyers was staying overnight or, as in the previous tale, on the path somewhere between home and the marketplace. Because there were long distances and sparsely populated villages located here and there, it was logical that social encounters often occurred in peasant households:

> The men from the market often passed by the Karvonen farmhouse and they dropped in to visit, too. After getting some food, it was customary to put some coins [as a voluntary donation] in a dish on the table. One time, these market men stole the dish. The farm master Karvonen went following them with his horse, rode past them and took hold of the harness without removing it from the first horse. The dish was then returned and with good will.

In the story above, the peasant and his role as the innkeeper appear as the good-hearted hero whom the petty traders who needed overnight shelter tried to cheat. The tale resembles the Finnish newspaper writings of that period, where petty trade was associated with the image of dishonest mobile traders deceiving their customers (Wassholm & Sundelin 2020: 124). At the same time, newspapers and authorities resisted the ever-growing consumerism of the peasants, or "the folk".

Interestingly, theft is a rare theme in my source sample. According to Eva Österberg (1996: 49), theft was not a major category of crime in the Nordics before industrialization, since the area was sparsely populated with small-scale family farms and freehold peasants predominating in large regions; in this kind of environment, she argues, people were not tempted to steal to the same extent as in more commercialized and densely populated parts of Europe. As folklore has been proven to have functions (see Bascom 1954), presumably the Finnish folktales about trade and peddling taught listeners to be cautious of itinerant individuals who were not locals. According to the taleteller's logic, there were certain situations where individuals were entitled to strike back or to avenge themselves for an injury. In the trade tales, a listener or a reader was supposed to enjoy seeing a bully get his "comeuppance", as illustrated by the farm master Karvonen above.

Most of the tales in this analysis are framed as occurring in the space of people coming together. Typically, a reader or a listener is not informed exactly how many men there are in the space, but it is usually more than

three. The next tale was collected in 1912, but according to the narrator, it describes the time before the 1870s:

> The itinerant traders faced many dangers in those days, especially in Ostrobothnia. Often there were robberies. For that reason, the farm masters who went to the market-places to sell their agricultural products travelled together in a long line of carriages. When this group of carriages spent the night at some of the Ostrobothnian houses, the men took turns watching over the carriages through the night. The wealthiest farm masters were able to pay the poorer ones to keep an eye on the cargo. According to the travelling petty traders, the people in Ostrobothnia were unfriendly. They did not want to give any hay for the petty traders' horses, not even for money.

Many of the recorded tales in the archives are like the story above. Rather than a classic folktale with clear structural components, it is more of a summarized narrative of the customs of the old days. Although it does not have the element of violence, there is a conflict of interests and thus a possibility of violent behaviour. Without doubt, these narratives worked as cautionary tales for people traveling with money or valuable items. Stories expressed the uncertain aspects of itinerant trade that made it unsafe and even preferable to avoid.

Some of the trade tales deal with the possibility of Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers coming to blows. The relationship between the speakers of the two languages was interesting since, on one hand, Swedish was the language of administration and education until the end of the nineteenth century (Engman 2018: 101–103). On the other, Finnish speakers formed the great majority of people in the country. At the turn of the century, Swedish speakers amounted to 12.9 percent of the population (about 350,000 people) (STV 2016). Humour performed by the members of less powerful groups can be interpreted as a form of resistance against group formations (see, e.g., Vaid 2006: 160). The next tale depicts an aggressive encounter between a Swedish-speaking farmhouse and inn located along the road and Finnish-speaking marketgoers who sought overnight accommodations, food and drink. The perspective is from the Finnish-speaking side:

> The people of Saarijärvi used to go to Karleby market to buy salt, axes, pans and iron nails until the 1870s. Usually it took place in the wintertime. At times, there were even dozens of horses, all driving together. For a group like that, it was difficult to get overnight shelter anywhere. Especially the Swedish-speaking people near Karleby would even hide the bucket for the well [from the market-goers]. The first house on the way to the market the Saarijärvi people called "the backwater of death". People in that farmhouse did not like that pejorative name, and the Saarijärvi ones continued to say it every time they did not get overnight accommodation or water for their horses.

The linguistic dominance that the Finnish-speaking population had – that is, the number of the Finnish speakers was bigger by far – enabled them to

narrate prejudiced stories about their Swedish-speaking neighbours. Such ethnic tales were told and spread where a rough parity between the languages occurred (Davies 1990: 56). In other words, the mockery had to be understood by its targets, too. In folksongs, for example, fights between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking groups were modified so that the opposite side could understand the slurs (Haavio-Mannila 1958: 67).

Under the guise of humour, socially unspeakable topics, such as certain kind of social and cultural dominance in society, were able to be expressed and power relations inverted (see, e.g., Vaid 2006: 153). Without doubt, petty trade was embedded in power relations, and it played an important role in the performance of differing social and linguistic groups as well as gender. The aforementioned tale of the encounter of the local judge and Taavi Kärki is an example of the clashes between the two distinct classes. Male farmhands as the rural working-class ideal type did not hold economic or political power at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in tales they were able to perform and exaggerate their values and identities, which were based on physical strength and virility. Folklore of contestations arose wherever a relationship of dominance prevailed.

Single peddlers

Although small-scale trade was practised in groups, the most common image of a peddler is a single actor or entrepreneur. In 1859, a special law permitted the opening of country shops if the distance to the nearest town was more than 50 kilometres or so. Former ambulatory peddlers – that is, those who had been accustomed to itinerant trade – were often the ones who founded fixed rural shops (Alanen 1957: 214). Although relatively few in number, these country shops not only provided their customers with better access to consumer goods, but they were also generally seen as the cultural outpost of towns in the countryside (Sundelin 2022). Besides these, door-to-door peddling in the rural countryside continued to be one source of a makeshift livelihood. Peddling belonged to the "informal economy", being illegal, unstable and usually sporadic. Petty traders had many names, such as "peddlers", "mongers", "hucksters", "hawkers", "vendors" and "bootleggers"; the epithets attached to these sellers were often pejorative and sometimes referred to their redundant strangeness (Ahlbeck et al. 2022).

Given the fact that the folktales were recorded from rural peasants, whether land-owning peasants or farmhands, they surprisingly often take the side of the powerful. A tale sent by a land-owning peasant in 1935 depicts a tar seller named Köpi who, on his trade route, found overnight accommodation at a wealthy merchant's house. Köpi and his crew were served fish soup in the salon, decorated expensively and boasting a glass vitrine with expensive jewellery. Suddenly a man from the neighbouring village showed up and

took some fish from the soup without permission and with his bare hands. Köpi asked whether he did it on purpose or if he was just so eager to get some fish. When the man answered, "I did it because I dare to," Köpi stood up and pushed the man into the vitrine so hard that he lost consciousness and the glass was broken. The merchant heard this and entered the salon. "I was eating your soup peacefully when he came and messed with the soup. I only slightly pushed him and he banged into the vitrine," Köpi told the merchant. The police were called to the house, and they arrested the man. Later he was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of 100 marks. The merchant was happy that somebody had hit the man, since many in the community feared him.

The moral of the story lies in Köpi's heroism and the "bad guy" getting the punishment he deserved from violating the property of the merchant. In the Finnish version, the fine refers to the damage to the vitrine, not Köpi's violence. This view is an example of *folk crime* that, unlike "proper crimes" such as murders and burglaries, did not tarnish the identity of those who committed them. Perpetrators of folk crimes were usually able to remain in their community after the violation of laws. This is because folk crimes were tacitly approved by the community, but also by the law enforcement agents (Phillips et al. 2016: 282). In the tale above, malicious destruction of property was a sufficient reason to beat somebody up, and a fine served as punishment for the crime.

Generally, the trade in the tales took place in a masculine sphere consisting of rituals that strengthened masculinity. In legal trade, arenas of masculinity transformed into more capitalist and monetary contexts. Rural shopkeepers, for example, offered alcoholic drinks to their male customers in order to get them to buy products, and later the sale of alcohol became common (Alanen 1957: 326). Naturally, women participated in trade, too, but there is surprisingly little talk about them in my sample.

Petty trade was not only loaded with aggressive and suspicious emotions, as the folktales reflect, but historically there also occurred physical violence and even a few incidents where travelling salesmen were killed (Nevalainen 2016: 128–129). Contrary to this, however, there are narratives where itinerant peddlers (usually from Karelia, that is, outside the community) are depicted with warmth. In the next extract, villagers are eager to protect Russian itinerant peddlers against the local police chief:

> In Soukainen of Laitila, there used to be a police chief who caught Russian peddlers; he persecuted and tormented them in multiple ways, and always robbed their cargo. But the villagers were not happy about the police chief's deeds and, therefore, some of the local hags made mockery songs about the police chief.

The tale does not tell further what kinds of songs were made. The folklorist Mervi Naakka-Korhonen has pointed out in her study of Karelian peddlers that, unlike the authorities, rural communities eagerly awaited the travelling

peddlers because they not only brought highly needed products but also luxury goods to the local inhabitants (see, e.g., Naakka-Korhonen 1988). Peddlers had an influence on the distribution of consumer goods, such as textiles, accessories, tableware and popular literature. Itinerant traders were able to distribute the increasing supply of colonial and industrial commodities, handicrafts and drapery. Moreover, all kinds of journeymen and sailors used to tell stories in farmhouses and inns. These tales were generally told to startle, delight and impress the listeners (Zipes 1988: 14). To sum up, mobile traders had intangible social capital that was valued in the remote areas where social contacts were limited.

Historically in Finland, trade was a privilege of town dwellers until the mid-nineteenth century (Alanen 1957). Trade activities were strongly guarded and those who lacked the privilege to engage in trading were quickly denounced to the authorities. For this reason, ambulatory peddlers were subject to intense scrutiny (see, e.g., van den Heuvel 2012: 126; Wassholm & Sundelin 2018), as the following example points out:

> Not so long ago there were Russians going from one village to another selling all kinds of trinkets and buying animal skins. Because peddlers often had a few items to sell without permission, their worst fear was the local sheriff. If a sheriff found something illegal, he seized or simply took the bag from the Russian peddlers. Once in the parsonage of Stenius [in Saarijärvi village], a Russian peddler had arrived. The local sheriff found him and was about to grab his rucksack. The parson Stenius entered the room and asked if the Russian had brought some fabric that he had ordered. The Russian said: "Yeah, I did, but now I think I am losing everything, the fabric and the backpack." Stenius asked the Russian to follow him when the sheriff's assistant, Matti Mannila, started nagging: "You take your stuff that you ordered and we [the sheriff's forces] take the rest." Stenius, who had not ordered any fabric from the Russian, replied: "In my house, no one is robbed."

Since this story is not a fight story, it has a different structure. The construction of the tale is typical in terms of its sequence of events: the *setting* and the characters are presented; the *turning point* is when the local sheriff catches the Russian peddler; the *action* starts when the parson Stenius enters the room and tells a lie to the peddler; and the *resolution* occurs when the police believe the parson, a person higher in the social hierarchy, and the dilemma is resolved. While peddlers may have been liked, they also faced bigoted and offensive joking which, as the unique form of discrimination, characterized their relationship with the local communities. Itinerant peddlers did not belong to the community and this made them vulnerable, not only in the eyes of the authorities but also local people. This bias is reflected in the resulting folklore materials, where economic exchange was presented from the sedentary population's point of view.

There is not a single tale in my corpus where the protagonist would be a mobile peddler. This is due to folklore-collecting practices that were

conducted primarily with an idealized notion of the smallholding peasant majority in mind; industrial and modern ways of life appeared *non-traditional* and hence inauthentic. Consequently, the customs, traditions and views of those from non-peasant occupations were not documented or displayed as part of the existing sociohistorical reality. In fact, it was not until the 1960s that any folkloristic or ethnological materials from urban communities or Finnish ethnic minorities were recorded (Mikkola et al. 2019: 67). Hence, due to the collection and archival policies, the accounts of people who did not fit into the category of sedentary peasant folk only show up in the folklore materials as distinct from the core members of the nation.

Conclusion

Instead of addressing financial profits, economic losses, betrayals or thefts, the primary focal motif in the tales seems to be confrontation between men. As many folklorists have argued, folktales transmit culturally shared views and values that do not necessarily coincide with historical truth. The functions of folklore are different, including validating or justifying institutions and beliefs (Bascom 1954: 346). Therefore, the narratives here have been analysed through the concept of the civilization process. Briefly, this means that the rise of the state from the fifteenth century until the present depended more and more on specific modes and norms of self-restraint, which reinforced the hegemonic groups. The civilization process incorporated all groups of people into an interdependent network through the inculcation of norms, customs, rules and etiquette. Conversely, folktales can be considered as a backlash by the common people, giving voice to inappropriate, obscene and vulgar emotions and approaches that were otherwise out of the question.

Trade tales that address violent acts follow a narrative structure that consists of the initial situation, an exchange of words, an exchange of blows, the emergence of a victor, and finally reconciliation or resolution. There are two recurrent themes regarding violence within the corpus of tales. The first one deals with brawls in groups. Usually this occurred on the road or at overnight accommodations when one group of buyers met another group and the encounter ended up in a duel. The tales describe male honour, which is either violated by a verbal insult or by an argument on the road about who should step aside. Another setting of violence in the trade tales concerns social encounters where single peddlers ended up getting into fistfights with their hosts at overnight lodgings. Those stories, which do not explicitly mention an exchange of blows, follow a slightly different narrative structure, consisting of setting, turning point, action without physical contact, and resolution. Although these stories do not often contain an act of actual violence, there are elements of oppression and a possible fight.

The samples analysed in this article exist in the archives in written form, and although they were meant to be humorous and light in tone, from the contemporary reader's point of view they are rarely humorous. This is probably due to textualization, that is, the ways in which oral performances and orally expressed utterances are transformed into literary representations of orality. Originally, trade tales were performed in real life vis-à-vis situations where non-verbal gestures and pauses in narration gave full richness to the narratives. Moreover, they were probably performed among a group of males, given the tales' strong emphasis on male violence.

On one hand, tales about trade in settings of violence reflect the changes that the peasant communities encountered in the process of shifting from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing. On the other, tales offered a platform to deal with emotions and experiences that were not appropriate to express in normal daily speech. Tales were told and collected by persons who already lived in the changed world, where individuals had already begun to internalize a new level of self-discipline over the body and its physical functions as well as more rigorous suppressions of emotions, desires and impulses (see, e.g., Stark 2006: 24). Although the civilizational shift occurred in daily encounters, that is, spontaneous impulses were gradually restrained, they were still expressed in the oral tradition. In the modern day, fights and confrontations between males have been taken up by the film and television industries. Moreover, films capitalize on references to folk narratives (see Mullins & Batra-Wells 2019: 13).

Because the trade tales often deal with aggressive behaviour, the civilizing process is useful as an analytical tool to better understand the folk views regarding encounters with traders. At the mercy of their natural surroundings, people were dependent upon face-to-face relationships. The daily life of the people was characterized by attitudes towards aggression, emotional displays and bodily impulses that were more common than what we are used to today.

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When the Dog Eats Grass, There Will Be Rain

Eva Wigström and Weather Signs

Gösta Arvastson

Abstract

Among those who laid the foundation for Swedish ethnology and folkloristics in the nineteenth century was the author and folklore researcher Eva Wigström. This article presents some of Eva Wigström's previously unpublished letters between 1881 and 1883. The letters were sent to the professor of meteorology at Uppsala University, Hugo Hildebrand Hildebrandsson. They represented different fields – one natural sciences, the other humanities – but popular culture was their common interest. Since 1878 Hildebrandsson had been professor of a new university discipline, dynamic meteorology, and it was in his interest to explore the scientific history of this subject. In this context, he asked Eva Wigström for her assistance in collecting popular weather signs. She replied that she was happy to volunteer and promised the professor to carry out fieldwork in southern Sweden. The project did not pay the dividends she had hoped for. However, Eva Wigström finally asked the professor to put in a good word for her so that she could receive financial support from the Swedish Academy. A recurring theme in the article is the words and the passing on of oral tradition. At the end of the article there is a discussion of texts in dialect and what Eva Wigström meant by the "right folk tone".

Keywords: folk traditions, history of ethnology and folklore studies, meteorology, weatherlore

Some letters in Eva Wigström's handwriting and with her signature appeared on the table in front of me. They were addressed to the Uppsala University professor of meteorology, Hugo Hildebrand Hildebrandsson, and the six letters from the beginning of the 1880s letters appeared somewhat unexpectedly. A meteorological archive was not where one would expect to find Wigström's letters. Since they are hitherto unpublished and because of the great interest in her life and work in recent decades, this presentation serves as a reminder of the essence of historical studies: there is no end, only additions.[1]

In this article, I will discuss the background to her letters. The first question is how it happened that Eva Wigström, the researcher who collected folklore in the southern Swedish countryside, had contact with a professor

of meteorology at Uppsala University. Eva Wigström (1832–1901) was a significant folklife collector who was later numbered among those who laid the foundation for ethnology and folklore studies. Several writers have devoted themselves to interpreting her life and deeds.[2] Her contacts with academia in Uppsala were at times quite intense. At first, interest in dialects and folklore, known as *demology*, was largely concentrated at Uppsala University, as Gösta Berg noted in *Schwedische Volkskunde* (Svensson & Berg 1961: 22).

In the latter part of this article, I return to Eva Wigström's letters and their contents. Her intention was to carry out extensive fieldwork in southern Sweden, but Eva Wigström had problems with her informants and was unable to collect the fascinating sayings about the weather that she had promised the professor. I end by asking a few questions about the meaning of the words and Eva Wigström's concern about conveying a true image of folk culture.

The letters that I found in the manuscript department of the University Library Carolina in Uppsala revealed that Professor Hugo Hildebrand Hildebrandsson (1838–1925) collaborated with Eva Wigström. Their research areas represented different fields – natural sciences and the humanities – but both were equally interested in popular sayings and weatherlore.

Hildebrandsson was the newly appointed professor of an innovative university discipline at Uppsala University, dynamic meteorology, which corresponded to the latest developments in international meteorology, well anchored in both Europe and the USA. The establishment of this research field was placed in his hands in 1878, and the future of the subject depended largely upon his control. His students learned that science was a continuous endeavour, the purpose of which was to explain the world and that the old astrometeorology no longer had anything to offer. No one believed in the old methods of reading truths about life on earth from the signs of the stars. Astrometeorology was removed from the university curriculum. As a symbolic gesture, one of the country's largest collections of rune staffs, *runstavar*, was handed over by the department to the university's museum of antiquities in 1874. With these runic calendars, the old meteorology went to the grave.

In many countries, old sayings and weather signs were being collected, as interest in folk culture began to spread. One question Hildebrandsson asked himself was how the academic tradition, scientific meteorology, had been coloured by folk traditions. There were obvious reasons to believe that science over the centuries had been interwoven with folk traditions about the weather. Eva Wigström was as interested in traditional predictions and weather signs as Hildebrandsson, as reflections of people's mentality and habits, but her motives were different. She wanted to save them for posterity.

A new era arrived. This was the eye of the needle, the transition, that changed everything. Old traditions were dissolved, the collective and individual world competed for space. It was at this time that the underclass began to be visible in literature. Internationally, the foundation of the Folklore Society in London in 1877 was a significant event. In the spirit of the literary 1880s that developed in the Nordic countries, Eva Wigström went out to the villages of southern Sweden to make records of elves and trolls while there were still inhabitants who could tell.[3]

Eva Wigström travelled the roads and talked to the people she met, defying the cultural norm which stipulated that a woman should not travel alone. She listened and filled her notebook with stories.

What a scholar of my generation is trying to convey through fieldwork and studies in communities is not just the experience of individuals but something much larger. Or, to pick up a key sentence of cultural analysis, originating from the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1992: 136): Every human being lives in concrete surroundings and every individual is influenced by the community that historically represents his or her culture. It is notable how these so-called concrete surroundings controlled Eva Wigström's thinking when she went out to the villages to do fieldwork and collect weather signs and sayings. No one could avoid seeing what the poetics of words meant to her as mediators of existential experiences. And that conclusion is still valid today. When we look at the earth and the sky, we must realize that they are not objects but related to the sensation of being in the world. As an early writer Wigström opened the complex issue of creating the scene that many cultural researchers recognize today.

The Direct, Faithful Record

One of those who shared her interest in depictions of popular life in the countryside was the journalist and author Henrik Wranér (1901), who became known for his rural stories and his "understanding view of human relationships" (Hofberg 1906). Another was the scholar of art and literature, Professor Evert Wrangel at Lund University. In a eulogy, Wrangel mentioned the collections of folklore that coloured Eva Wigström's life, praising her impressive ability to write down what she heard, "through the direct, faithful record of the voice of the people." No one had enriched posterity with such a treasure of folklore. Eva Wigström had listened to everyone, the peasants and the landless labourers on the estates, the poor people of the coasts, the craftsmen on the manor and the workers in the mills. Among the best informants who generously offered fairy tales and stories were the inmates of poorhouses.

Eva was born at Christmas 1832, to the sound of "dance games and fiddle tunes" on a farm in Råga Hörstad, located in the parish of Asmundtorp and

the hundred of Rönneberg in south-western Sweden, as she recounts in her autobiographical *Vandringar* (1887). Her father, Pål Nilsson, was a reputable and wealthy man who enjoyed trust in the area and who was reluctant to let his daughters follow the conventional path of a farmer's daughter through life. That path went through the catechism, the spinning wheel, the loom, the rye harvest, visits from suitors, finally leading to the altar with a man not of her own choice. That is how Henrik Wranér (1901) summarized the conditions in which girls grew up on a farm. Pål Nilsson's girls would acquire knowledge so that they could make a life of their own. It was said that she received her first instruction from him. On Sundays and church holidays she sat in the family library reading works of literature and history, but on working days she was kept busy with the chores of the farm (Hofberg 1906). It was a big farm, with somewhere between forty and fifty people in all. Already as a child, she was fascinated by the stories about the world of elves and trolls she heard from the workers and farmhands.

Eva was not allowed to attend any of the girls' schools in the nearby towns, Landskrona or Helsingborg, as other local farmers' daughters did. Pål Nilsson distrusted the schools. The refinement they taught was alien to him, the embroidery, the cloth flowers, and the girls' long necks. Eva had to stay at home, but even as a child she dreamed of a future as a writer. She composed poems and entertained herself and her siblings with birthday rhymes, and her greatest wish, according to Wranér (1901), was a whole "shipload of stationery".

The Thin Gold Leaf

In 1855 Eva married the manager director of the Ramlösa spa, the petty officer Claes Wigström. The spa belonged to his family at the time. Claes later worked as a prison governor in Malmö. Eva went on writing, and by the time she was the mother of two daughters she managed to have some pieces published in children's magazines. Then came her portrayal of folklife in Skåne, *För fyrtio år sedan: Taflor ur skånska folklifvet* (1870) and a book about the prison system, which caused some sensation, *Brott och straff, eller lifvet i ett svensk straffängelse* (1872). The account was based on her experiences of her husband's work, and her ideas were gaining currency at the time. The threads linking poetry, journalism and politics began to become increasingly important, and the writers of the modern era, particularly in Danish literature, were almost all involved in journalism and politics (Traustedt et al. 1966: 175). Her writing flourished. Then came a time when she concentrated on short stories, but children's culture continued to interest her. Eva Wigström periodically published a children's magazine, *Hvitsippan.* Under the pseudonym Ave, she began to find her readership and the path as a writer opened up. The world was changing, and one of

the great issues of the time, women's right to education and independence, was a matter she took very seriously. That is how she became one of the founders of a folk high school for women in Helsingborg. In addition, she helped out at a private girls' school in Helsingborg where one of her daughters was principal.

Modernization and the construction of an educational system went hand in hand. Eva Wigström's source of inspiration was the Danish folk high school. It was there that her interest in southern Swedish folklore was seriously awakened. The Grundtvig brothers conveyed joy and inspiration.

In *Vandringar* Eva Wigström tells how, in the autumn of 1877, she visited a teachers' meeting at Askov Folk High School in Jutland. During the visit, she was given a printed list of questions about birds. Fredrik Lange Grundtvig (1854–1903) had compiled it and it made her happy because the questions were perfectly understandable even to her. She could answer them even though her mother tongue was Swedish. And the very term *folkminnesforskning*, folklore research, filled her with positive emotions.

Fredrik Lange, one of the two Grundtvig brothers, emigrated to the United States and served as a priest in the Danish congregation in Clinton, Iowa, but retained his interest in birds. Svend Grundtvig (1824–1883) continued to read her texts and became involved in her writing. The circle of acquaintances included the folklorists Evald Tang-Kristensen and Henning Frederik Feilberg and the Norwegian folktale expert P. Ch. Asbjørnsen. It was thanks to Svend Grundtvig's help that her first collection of folklore could be printed in Copenhagen.

Folk beliefs and lore were threatened from several different quarters, but Svend Grundtvig, who laid the foundation for Danish *folkemindeforskning*, remained her friend. Eva Wigström understood that the stories would soon be a thing of the past. She never came to like modern ideas, and she disliked the public elementary schools. The old culture was vanishing, as the ancient poetry was being replaced by grammar and the catechism. From this perspective, it was particularly important, as Wranér put it, to collect folklore and scrape away the "thin gold leaf" of the new era.

Eva Wigström made her way through the countryside on exhausting travels, and sometimes when she reached her destination she was met with silence. On one such occasion in the fishing village of Baskemölla on the south-eastern coast of Sweden, close to the Baltic, it was particularly difficult to speak to the inhabitants. According to a rumour that had reached Baskemölla before her visit, she was not an ordinary woman or a traveller but an evil being, the Antichrist. The last days were approaching. The villagers closed their doors and made themselves inaccessible. No one was supposed to speak to her, but whenever she encountered this kind of attitude it was still possible to seek out other individuals. The best informants were poor people living on the margins of society. An edition of ballads,

fairy tales and legends from Skåne, *Skånska visor, sagor och sägner* was published in 1880, and the idea was that it would launch a series of publications entitled *Folkdiktning*. She collaborated with Artur Hazelius and had several texts published in his *Bidrag till vår odlings häfder*, besides which she published her folklore in the journal of the Swedish dialect associations.

A Misguided Scholarly Passion

It has been said about Eva Wigström that she was not so careful to state the sources of what she published in her books. She added and subtracted in a way that a scholar should not. Such views were heard later in the twentieth century. As a young folklore scholar at Lund University in the 1950s, Anna-Birgitta Rooth took a critical stance when she put her thoughts together under the heading *Eva Wigström och traditionsbärarna* (1953):

> Even in her *Vandringar*, Eva Wigström is extremely reticent about the people who provided her with material. For example, she does not even mention which vicarage she visited at Easter 1881. Since in Mamsell Gustava's stories she often mentions Västra Karup and Hjärnarp alternately, one may wonder which of the rectories housed Eva Wigström as a guest.

Eva Wigström's literary production was rather indifferent and characterized by philanthropic interests and ideas of education, according to the ethnologist, Professor Jan-Öjvind Swahn in *Svenskt litteraturlexikon* (1964). But it was not long before opinions of her changed. A little later, Jan-Öjvind Swahn (1976: 9) wrote that Eva Wigström had made a name for herself through her large and valuable collections of fairy tales: "Even her texts are close to the form of tradition and are among the most important in our country." The tone was now different, and rightly so.

Experience of Fieldwork

Eva Wigström moved in many environments, even on the outskirts of society. During her travels she understood that there were matters that the informants had difficulty talking about. They were usually perceived as pure fantasies and superstitions (Gustavsson & Palmenfelt 2017: 227). The fear of being mentioned as an informant in her books was widespread. She therefore edited her texts to make it hard to identify who had said what. In addition, she skilfully navigated alien environments and learned the hard way the consideration she had to show. In *Vandringar* she mentions the following event:

> A little hint for would-be collectors may be included here. On one of the rainy days when I was in the parish of Konga, and I, together with my kind hostess, the widow of a parish clerk, was invited to coffee in a large farmhouse. To protect my poor

hat, which I had just cleaned after the previous tribulations, I tied a shawl around my head. This was taken by the young farmer's wife as a sign of my disdain for her house, and she expressed her displeasure over this to my hostess. It was not the first time, nor the last, when I was forced to realize the need to sacrifice a couple of modern costumes annually for the memories of the forefathers.

Did Eva Wigström meet resistance? Of course she did. Everyday life was filled with situations that required presence of mind and that had to be resolved. But she did not feel any social disadvantage because of her common background and she had, as the folklorist Bengt af Klintberg (2004) noted, a solid self-esteem. She was secure when she met the residents of the farms.

There were occasions when Eva Wigström was welcomed as a famous writer by the locals in the villages. There were times when the inhabitants came to meet her and explained that they had read what she had written and recognized her stories, but these were rare exceptions. It was more often the opposite. She frequently met people who avoided her or showed their discomfort about answering any questions.

Often, sitting on a stone, a tree stump or the edge of a pit, I have secretly noted what I have heard in houses and farms. I have been allowed to listen to many legends only on the condition that the name of any informant, village or parish is not revealed. This explains why I have not given the full details of places in my collections as the scholars would like.

Svend Grundtvig understood. It was better to rescue legends and superstitions for posterity than to set boundaries through some kind of misguided scholarly zeal.

Whether Eva Wigström applied a well-thought-out methodology may be left unsaid, but one thing is clear. She wanted to reproduce what people had said as accurately as possible. Therefore, it was important for her to write down what she had been told immediately after the conversations while the impressions were still fresh. Accuracy was a high ideal.

Uppsala Contacts

By the end of the 1870s, when Eva Wigström had enjoyed her first success as a writer and collector of folklore, her name was not unfamiliar to some of the professors in Uppsala. There was a growing interest in *demology*, as the subject was called for a time. This was a part of language research at the university, belonging to dialectology, but the subject had a lustre that foreshadowed its forthcoming glory days. Young researchers gathered in dialect associations, and there was a genuine interest everywhere in collecting words, sayings and folklore. One of those drawn to *demology* in Uppsala was Sven Lampa, who used to travel to his native district in Västergötland

in the summers to collect material. In another context, I have described the academic environment that he encountered when he came to Uppsala and took his place in the Nordic department in 1889 (Arvastson 2000). It soon became evident that psychology would be used to shed light on popular belief. Johan August Lundell (1851–1940) and Professor Adolf Gotthard Noreen (1854–1925), both prominent names at Uppsala University, served as Eva Wigström's guides in academia.

Eva Wigström's contacts included Albert Bonnier and Artur Hazelius in Stockholm (Bringéus 1985: 241). In an attempt to find a way to publish her records she travelled to Stockholm in the summer of 1882 to meet them. While she was in the capital, she took the opportunity to make a detour to Uppsala to meet her new partner, Professor Hildebrandsson. But the professor was out of town. "I hope to return to Uppsala at Christmas," she said, sending him regards in a letter.

As early as the 1870s, Hildebrandsson had become known for his knowledge of the clouds. During a stay at the Paris Observatory in 1869 he learned the basics of the new dynamic meteorology. This was a prestigious name for a scientific subject that had abandoned the celestial bodies and fixed state of the universe. When he was on his way back from Paris in the summer of 1869, leaving his supervisor, a famous astronomer at the time, the mathematician and director of the Paris Observatory, Urbain Jean Joseph Leverrier, Hildebrandsson decided to make a detour to Oslo where he was greeted with open arms by his friend Henrik Mohn, the enthusiastic director of the new Norwegian Meteorological Institute. They shared an interest in the Atlantic weather systems, which affected the climate in Sweden and Norway in much the same way. One of their first joint projects was to map "Scandinavian thunderstorms". Mohn was known for his interpretations of air masses and fronts; in fact he was the first to detect fronts, and his knowledge was highly valued in the international scientific community.

Weather Knowledge and Weatherlore

Long and continuous lines of development were an advantage for any subject represented at a university. A long history gave respect. A venerable background provided security. The subjects sought their paths by looking back and examining what they had been. Any question directed towards ancient times generally ended up with the classical philosophers. But dynamic meteorology was a novelty. Some lines could be traced back to Aristotle, others to Seneca and Thales, but the way in which they could be reconciled with the modern dynamic meteorology was far from obvious.

As the country's first professor of dynamic meteorology in 1878, Hildebrandsson had begun to investigate the basis of his subject. The archives with their manuscripts, calendars, sayings and proverbs were his

laboratory, and it was in that environment he developed his thoughts about the history of weather knowledge (Hildebrandsson 1883, 1894; cf. Klintberg 1996). Outside Sweden, weather folklore was being collected, and it was neither ethnologists nor linguists who went out into the countryside to ask questions about the weather signs; it was natural scientists.

Hildebrandsson himself had helped to create a network of weather observers and informants in rural areas in the 1870s in collaboration with *Hushållningssällskapen*, the Swedish agricultural societies. *Phenology*, the study of seasonal variations in nature, was then a new feature at the University of Uppsala. Interest in nature increased when industrialization began to be perceived as a threat to both humans and animals. An increasing number of people wanted to follow the periodical phenomena of the plant and animal world, the time of the breakup of the ice in rivers and lakes, the arrival of the wagtail and the flowering of the rye.

Hildebrandsson enjoyed his subject. He enthusiastically took on the role of building his academic subject. Theories were what he lacked, he wrote, turning his eyes to folk culture. When he published a collection of weather signs and predictions in a well-reputed journal (*Antiquarisk tidskrift för Sverige* 7:2, 1883), he had achieved one of his goals, namely, to contribute to the history of popular weather forecasts and signs. Traditional sayings were kept alive in the countryside, sometimes with striking parallels in the older literature. Hildebrandsson's collection of signs and sayings is still the largest ever published in Sweden.

It was not long before the Berlin Professor Gustaf Hellman (1908) took the stage as an important historian of science. He made his name through a lecture at the Royal Meteorological Society in London on 11 March 1908. But there were American and British meteorologists who had shown the same burning interest in collecting traditional sayings in rural areas as early as the 1840s (Inwards 1898). The first US meteorology at the Signal Office in Washington, a military institution, was based collections of folklore and the diaries of the first farmers and settlers.

About the Letters

A lot was going on abroad when Hildebrandsson turned to Eva Wigström and asked for help. The rumours about her folklore research had reached Uppsala. He knew that popular culture was an interesting area for those looking for popular weather signs and sayings and the history of meteorology.

Professor Hildebrandsson was not in good health and could not personally travel around the countryside collecting material. Eva Wigström replied cheerfully and announced that her collections were extensive. She also took the opportunity to enclose some popular expressions as samples.

Helsingborg, 11/12 1881

Dear Professor,
I shall be glad to give what you ask, for there is a great deal of that kind in my collections. I should dearly like to know, however, whether everything concerning folk beliefs and predictions about the weather is of interest to you. The people "foretell the weather" from many different signs, for example:
"Morning brightness and old women's dancing rarely last till noon dinner."
"When it rains and the sun shines, there will be rain tomorrow too."
"When the cat sleeps on its brain, he expects a storm."[4]
"When the dog eats grass, he foretells rain."
"When the soot from the pots and pans glows, there will be a storm."
In addition to these samples there are also predictions concerning red-letter days, etc. If you immediately give me the necessary signal, you will receive what you wish within a few days.

Respectfully yours,
Eva Wigström

(Helsingborg, 11/12 1881

Herr professor!
Med nöje skall jag lemna det begärda, ty i mina samlingar finnes en hel del i den vägen. Det skall dock vara mig kärt att få veta om allt som rör folkets tro och spådomar om väderleken är af intresse för Eder. Folket "spår väder" af många olika tecken, t.ex.
"Morgonglans och kärringdans vara sällan till middag."
"När det regnar och solen skin blir det regn i morgon med."
"När katten sofver på hjernan, väntar han oväder." [4]
"När hunden äter gräs, spår han regn."
"När sotet från kokkärlen glöder, blir det storm."
Till dessa prof komma äfwen märkedagarnes spådomar o.s.v. Vill Ni med omgående gifva mig en nödig fingervisning, skall Ni Derefter inom några dagar erhålla hvad ni önskar.

Högaktningsfullt
Eva Wigström)

A few days later, Eva Wigström sent a letter to the professor and declared that she would make a trip to the villages around Trelleborg in January 1882 to collect traditional folklore. She promised that she would ask questions about weather predictions. Her proposal seemed credible, yet a little strange because it was so unreservedly positive. It was difficult to get around on the muddy roads between the villages in winter, but that mattered little. Her promise to collect material took priority.

Helsingborg 15/12 1881

Dear Professor,
With my husband's help, I have now extracted from my collections, both the folklore that was printed last year and that which is now coming off the press any day now, all that I believe may be of benefit to your work; and I have also taken anything of that kind from my unprinted notes. I hasten to send you this, but since it is likely that I will use the first half of January for a collection trip to Trelleborg, I will be pleased to inform you of any weather predictions and the like that I may find. The intended journey, however, depends on weather conditions (and my health, of course) because walking in wet weather on the fat plains is too arduous even for someone like me who has been accustomed to it since childhood.

I would have preferred to put what I am sending in better order; but as I assume that urgency may be more important to you than careful order in the manuscript, I leave it as my husband has written down the folklore and proverbs as I dictated. I hope you will be reasonably satisfied with the contribution.

With the utmost respect,
Eva Wigström

(Helsingborg 15/12 1881

Herr professor!
Med min mans tillhjelp har jag nu ur mina samlingar, både den folkdiktning, som trycktes i fjor, som ock den som nu i dagarne lemnar pressen, utplockat allt som jag tror kan vara af gagn för Edert arbete; äfven ur mina otryckta anteckningar har jag tagit hvad som finnes i den vägen. Jag skyndar att sända er detta, men då det är troligt, att jag kommer att använda första hälften af instundande januari till en samlingsfärd till Trelleborgsorten, skal jag med nöjde meddela de väderleksspådomar o.d. som jag möjligen der kan finna. Den tilltänkta färden beror dock sjelf på väderleksförhållanden (och helsan naturligtvis) ty vandringar i vått väder på den feta slättbygden äro för besvärliga t.o.m. för mig, som från barndomen varit van dervid.

Gerna skulle jag velat något bättre ordnat det sända; men då jag antager att skyndsamhet vore Eder kärare än en noggrann ordningsföljd i manuskriptet låter jag det gå såsom min man nedskrifvit det som jag dikterat folktron och ordspråken. Måtte Ni, herr Professor bli någorlunda belåten med bidraget.

Med största högaktning
Eva Wigström)

The weather around Christmas and the New Year 1881–82 was not suitable for any fieldwork on the south coast of Sweden. It took time before she could travel. It was not until midsummer that she accomplished the journey, which began by rail. Everything was uncertain because Eva was not acquainted with any farmers in these southern areas. However, she knew that the poorhouses were worth visiting. There one could hear fairy tales and ballads. In the poorhouse in the parish of Västra Alstad, she arranged coffee for the inmates. It also turned out, as she had anticipated, that they had a lot

to tell, far more than the farmers who lived on their large farms and mostly avoided her. They were wary of their reputation. Oddly enough, the children in Skanör were as difficult as their parents. Not even the stories that Eva Wigström told them could get them to talk. Eva was met with total silence.

Eva Wigström's temporary host in these areas, not far from the south coast, was the priest in the parish of Räng, Carl Jacob Collin. The local population appeared to be rather unfriendly. Her presence was unwelcome in their village. She discovered many obstacles when trying to get them to open up. Collin comforted her, explaining that the silence of the parishioners was a manifestation of a local taciturnity, what he called "Falsterbo dumbness". The villagers had become his enemies. The reason was his stubborn struggle to plant pines on the sand heath and the vast area called Ljungen. The hostility between him and the parishioners "was ruinous for his nerves", but before his death Collin was victorious, as Gunnar Carlquist (1951) explained, a well-known biographer of practising theologians. As a visitor to the vicarages, Eva Wigström had little to complain about. The priests received her and gave her food and shelter, but the farmers in these prosperous parts of southern Sweden disappointed her. They turned their backs on her.

Her travels to the villages in the area close to Trelleborg initially filled her with pleasant feelings, but the outcome was not what she expected. The weather predictions, the rhymes and sayings that she had promised the professor of meteorology, had vanished from the face of the earth. The people in the villages had nothing to say. What she was told were just familiar things about trolls, ghosts, ghouls and other fantasies, she wrote to the professor. Even the people who lived down on the coast, the fishermen and the sailors, had nothing to give. The people were "dead, sluggish and stupid," she explained, and these were harsh words. Perhaps she thought the comment would delight a learned man.

Helsingborg 25/9 1882

Dear Professor,
It would have been a great pleasure to me if I had been able to make additional contributions to the work in question, but among the finds I have managed to make there is nothing of that kind. The people in these areas (Skanör, Trelleborg, etc.) were too dead, sluggish and stupid to even realize that we have such a thing as weather; they are content with trolls, ghosts, ghouls and more such fantasies. Not even sailors or fishermen could tell me any weather predictions other than those I knew before, which I have previously communicated to you. When I spent a few days in Uppsala in July I called on you, but was told that you were travelling.

It is my intention, perhaps at Christmas time, but certainly, if I have health and strength, next summer, to continue my research, but then perhaps you will not have any special benefit from what I might find?

With the utmost respect,
Eva Wigström

(Helsingborg 25/9 1882

Herr professor!
Det skulle varit mig ett stort nöje ifall jag hade kunnat lemna ytterligare bidrag till ifrågavarande arbete, men bland de fynd jag lyckats göra finnes ingenting i den vägen. Folket i dessa trakter (Skanör, Trelleborg o.s.v.) var allt för dödt, trögt och dumt för att ens se, att vi har något sådant som väder och vind; det nöjer sig med troll, spöken, gastar m fl. dylika dimbilder. Icke ens sjömän och fiskare kunde förtälja mig några andra väderleksspådomar, än sådana som jag kände förut och hvilka jag förut meddelat Eder. Då jag i juli månad några dagar vistades i Uppsala sökte jag Eder, men fick veta, att Ni företagit en resa.

Det är min mening att kanske vid jultiden, men säkert, om jag har helsa och krafter, nästa sommar fortsätta mina forskningar men då har kanske icke Ni något speciellt gagn af hvad jag då möjligen kan finna?

Med största högaktning
Eva Wigström)

She wanted to forget what had happened after that mishap. She did not mention these collections of weatherlore in the Trelleborg area in her autobiographical *Vandringar* (1887). Apparently, this was deliberate because the mission had ended in defeat. It could not be carried out as intended, and the "finds" that she had hoped to convey to the professor were meagre, which disappointed her greatly.

Eva Wigström collected material for her books in rural areas, but their aim was to reach readers in the towns and cities. The literary scholar Maria Ehrenberg (2003) has written about how fairy tales were transported from the countryside to the towns. This movement took place along several paths, spatially, socially and culturally. In this case, it must be added that rural areas were also an innovative environment. The social effects of "Verbürgerung" were a well-known aspect of cultural change at the time. The attitudes of the nouveau riche were similar, wrote the professor of ethnology, Sigfrid Svensson (1974). Farmers were keen to appear modern, they were conscious of their wardrobe and wagons, and their new lifestyles resulted in new buildings and gardens, sometimes designed by architects. Dwelling houses were erected by skilled craftsmen and hired workers, replacing the communities of labourers that formerly took part in the building projects. There was no doubt for a literary work by Eva Wigström on the bookshelf even in the shining new houses of the farmers. To this picture we can add an interesting comment made by Professor Nils-Arvid Bringéus (1985). Literary storytelling, such as Hans Christian Andersen's stories, gained a positive reception in all social classes because they were beautiful. This was what readers demanded, apparently longing for wonderful dreams and elegant fairy tales, but the tales that originated from the countryside, anchored in folk traditions, were not always beautiful. Eva Wigström had to stand firm against the male world that accused her of crudity and frivolity.

Rejected

Hildebrandsson seemed satisfied. He had finished collecting popular weather forecasting and the result was an impressive survey. The professor's collaboration with the female folklore researcher Eva Wigström came to an end (Hildebrandsson 1883;1894). There was just one thing that remained. As the project was coming to an end, Eva Wigström had one last query. It was about the Swedish Academy. Her highest wish was be to work as an author with financial support from the Academy. She therefore asked the professor, aware of his contacts in these fields, to put explore the possibility of obtaining a grant from the Academy, and to put in a good word for her.

The whole idea made her happy. Imagine working with a grant from the Swedish Academy! The finest of congregations! That would make it easy to be a writer. She would travel around the countryside as the Academy's representative and collect folklore! And the money would give her security and publishers would treat her with respect. This was how she described herself in a final letter, as a respected researcher who had good contacts with Johan August Lundell in Uppsala and foreign scholars, among them the German folklorist Felix Liebrecht in Munich, one of the big international names among the folklore scholars at the time. Liebrecht used to send her postcards. She also included the Grundtvig brothers who had so clearly contributed to her development as a writer and researcher. Unfortunately, Svend had recently passed away, but his brother in America gave Eva the courage to live, she explained. Now it was a matter of supporting her continued writing, primarily the publication of a third collection of folklore. She then added: "Preferably summer holidays with a secure economy for herself and her husband.

Helsingborg 30/11 1883

Dear Professor,
Since I know that you are aware of my collecting activity, I dare to turn to you in a matter which is closely related to this activity.

You will understand, Professor, that the fee that our publishers pay for such work cannot cover even half the costs and *the long time* [underlined] devoted to it, as a consequence of which people without the means cannot pursue it in the long run without subsidies. I have admittedly received a few small grants, intended to cover the travel costs, and I have spent them all on travel; but now I am without, in the midst of my work on a third collection of folklore. This is doubly heavy, as Professor Grundtvig's death also deprived me of some of the cheerful courage that his advice and encouragement always gave me; and I can say that only his brother's letters along with Prof. Felix Liebrecht's small postcards have encouraged me to continue the work if possible. Would the Academy possibly be able and willing to give me an annual subsidy?

Docent Lundell, Uppsala, who recently contacted me for his journal, believed that I was already among the chosen ones last year; from this I dare to conclude that

my request is not entirely unreasonable. But should I ask the relevant people to grant me such support?

If you agree, Professor, with the foreign scholars who have eagerly urged me to continue to work of collection, that this work is of great importance to many, then I know that you will put in a good word for me, so that, without too many qualms of conscience, I can once again accept my husband's generous offer of new summer holidays away from work in the home.

I hope you will not find this a presumptuous request!

With the utmost respect,
Eva Wigström

(Helsingborg 30/11 1883

Herr professor!
Då jag vet, att Ni känner till min samlarverksamhet, vågar jag vända mig till Eder i en sak, som noga sammanhänger med denna verksamhet.

Ni förstår nog, herr professor, att det honorar, våra förläggare betala för sådant arbete, ej kan ens till hälften ersätta de kostnader och den långa tid (understruket), som derpå nedlägges, hvadan det af obemedlade personer ej i längden kan drifvas utan understöd. Några smärre sådana, ämnade att betäcka reskostnaderna, har jag visserligen fått och – rest upp; men nu står jag utan, midt i arbetet på en tredje samling folkdiktning. Detta är dubbelt tungt, som professor Grundtvigs död äfven beröfvade mig en del af det glada mod som hans råd och uppmuntran alltid gaf mig; och jag kan säga, att endast hans i Amerika bosatte brors bref jemte prof. Felix Liebrechts små brefkort hos mig upplifvat föresatsen att, om möjligt är fortsätta arbetet. Kan och vill månne Akademien gifva mig ett årligt understöd?

Docenten Lundell, Uppsala, som i och för sin tidskrift, nyligen satt sig i förbindelse med mig, trodde, att jag redan i fjol var bland de utvalda; deraf vågar jag sluta, att jag icke framställer en rent af orimlig fråga. Men skall jag hos vederbörande rent av bedja om dylika understöd?

Om Ni, herr professor, är ense med de utländska vetenskapsmän, som ifrigt uppmana mig till ett fortsatt samlingsarbete, deruti, att detta arbete är af vigt för många, så vet jag, att Ni lägger ett godt ord för mig, så att jag, utan alltför stora samvetsbetänkligheter, kan ånyo antaga min mans offervilliga anbud om nya sommarferier från arbetet i hemmet.

Måtte Ni nu bara ej tycka att det hela är en förmäten begäran!

Med största högaktning
Eva Wigström)

Professor Hildebrandsson forwarded the question to his uncle, the former custodian of national antiquities member of the Swedish Academy, Bror Emil Hildebrand. The answer, dated Stockholm 16 December 1883, was truly disappointing. His uncle was clearly negative, with a low opinion of her. If he is to be taken at his word, he thought that Eva Wigström was a poor writer. The former national antiquarian wrote:

Forgive me for having taken so long to return Mrs Eva Wigström's letter, which cannot give rise to any action on my part. Her concern to collect folk poems and fairy tales is worthy of respect. But I must admit that the only samples I have seen appear to me to testify more to good will than to ability.

The Swedish Academy was not the right place for Eva Wigström. Better to pass the question on to the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Hildebrand suggested, for the following reasons: financial problems at the Swedish Academy. He added that the Academy had money, but the work on the dictionary was devouring huge sums. Of course, the Swedish Academy had supported another writer exploring the same subject, folklife and traditions, August Bondesson, but that was something else. Bondesson belonged to another class, "since his fairy tales are also of great value in terms of language".

The verdict was harsh. Hildebrandsson had to pass on what his uncle, the national antiquarian, one of the authorities in the field, had said. Eva Wigström's answer came a few days later:

Helsingborg 22/12 1883

Dear Professor,
Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the letter with the information. In such circumstances, I think it is both right and wisest to simply make the most recently collected finds ready for printing, to find, if possible, a publisher for this third collection and to completely terminate my collection work.

Wishing you a good, merry Christmas, I have the honour to remain your most respectful

Eva Wigström

(Helsingborg 22/12 1883

Herr professor!
Emottag mitt hjertliga tack för brefvet jemte de deri bifogade upplysningarne. Under sådana förhållanden anser jag det dock vara både rättast och klokast, att blott göra de senast inbergade fynden färdiga till tryckning, om möjligt söka finna en förläggare till denna tredje samling och derpå helt och hållet nedlägga mitt samlingsarbete.

Med önskan om god, glad jul för Eder, har jag äran tekna, med största högaktning

Eva Wigström)

The tone of the reply was black. As an investigator of popular culture, she was offended. There would be no more books, and with that announcement her cooperation with Hildebrandsson ended. She was finished as a writer. It was not her fault; it was due to the national antiquarian and the uncomprehending Academy.

But soon new books appeared. Eva Wigström evidently got over her disappointment.

The comments that Bror Emil Hildebrand sent to his nephew, the professor of meteorology, testified to Eva Wigström's great difficulty in being accepted by those who represented good taste, in terms of literature, history and folklore. His views were obviously a reflection of what was said in the Swedish Academy. In these sophisticated circles no one could support her request. The strange thing was that the cliché of "more good will than ability" used by Hildebrand was propagated through the twentieth century. The question asked in the undergraduate course in ethnology in the 1960s when I started my studies in the discipline was: Should we trust her investigations? The question was not new. It came as a legacy of a time when women were not supposed to walk the roads, let alone allow people in poorhouses and prisons to serve as sources of fairy tales and legends.

The Flight of Words

A story that moves from one place to another loses colours and smells. Eva Wigström was aware of the problem. Therefore, it was important to hit, as far as possible the "right folk tone" when reproducing the oral narratives, according to Eva Wigström. Folk speech, the local dialect, was so much richer in nuances and emotions than the standard written language, she said, and tried to convey in her writings the music of popular sayings. The literary scholar Louise Vinge (1999) noted that "texts in dialect have a profound problem". They are based on the melodies of the spoken language and the sound of the words, they reproduce a specific tone in writing. What the eye perceives is a written image that is actually intended for the ear, Vinge continues. Sometimes it got to the point where she tried to use deliberate misspellings of words to evoke the sound of the conversations in the villages. The sound of dialects was the basis for a very special form of reading that fascinated many in the last part of the twentieth century. The music of words was a special tone, a musicality and an insight that reflected the concrete surroundings of the words. Eva Wigström was a master of that genre. The idea of performing the melodies of the narratives goes back to a classic wedding story that she published in 1882 together with Artur Hazelius, *Aitt bröllop i vaura böjder*, "A wedding in our district".[5]

Conclusion

Eva Wigström intrigued me. She has been accused of many things, including lack of order in her handling of the recorded material. The explanation may be simple. In a tightly structured environment, socially and culturally, like the late nineteenth century, there were limits to what was possible to depict. It was not possible to write about everything, and one had to make sure that some informants could not be recognized. Big farmers near the

south coast of Sweden, anxious to modernize their profession, did not want to talk about folk culture. My thesis is that Eva Wigström navigated nineteenth-century society with great skill. For her, fieldwork meant a way of being alive and life entailed a more profound experience than the words conveyed. That is how her life could be summed up. Let us look at it in that way. A bold folklore researcher who challenged both herself and others.

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[1] This article is an offspring from my research on the history of weather and meteorology and a manuscript with the working title ”Cloudspotting.” An important theme highlighted in the forthcoming book are the lines that unite ethnology and the natural sciences in a common research history.

[2] To those who shaped the scientific image of Eva Wigström, I would count mainly the following authors: Bringéus 1985; Ehrenberg 2003; Gustavsson & Palmenfelt 2017; Klintberg 2004; Rooth 1953; Swahn 1976; Vinge 1999; Wranér 1901.

[3] In addition to Eva Wigström, there were writers such as August Bondeson, Henrik Wranér, Alfhild Agrell, Victoria Benedictsson, Ola Hansson and August Strindberg (Schück & Warburg 1932: 172).

[4] The dialectical words here probably correspond to an archaic expression meaning that the cat slept with its head or temple against the floor (Hellquist 1948).
[5] As a child in a priest family I was privileged to meet a later generation of writers, the dialect author Daniel Rydsjö, who began his seminar studies as an agricultural worker, and Nils Ludvig, who depicted working-class culture in Lund. I can still hear the melodic loops of their storytelling, which required a certain musicality to understand.

Cosmogony in Vernacular Imagination and Beyond

Textualization of Finnic Origin Myths in the *Kalevala*

Lotte Tarkka

Abstract

Elias Lönnrot's epic the *Kalevala* opens with a cosmogonical poem, the Song of Creation, describing the origin of the universe and the birth of the hero Väinämöinen. When compiling and editing the source material for the opening of his epic, Lönnrot liberally used transcripts of oral epic poetry, lyric songs and incantations. The article examines Lönnrot's textualization as an ideologically and aesthetically governed process of literary imagination, and compares it to the vernacular imagination reflected in the oral sources. Vernacular cosmogony and aetiology combined diverse concrete notions and narratives of creation and emergence such as transformation, growth, spatial movement, agency (such as craftsmanship) or parturition. In building his hybrid epic, Lönnrot distorted the vernacular notions of emergence and introduced abstract notions such as nothingness, void, and creation *ex nihilo*. To solve the irreconcilable tension between vernacular and literary imagination Lönnrot oscillated between abstract and concrete interpretations and invented new myths and deities.

Keywords: Kalevala, cosmogony, imagination, vernacular mythology, aetiology

The hero is newborn and yet ancient and eternal. His name is Väinämöinen. In a smithy, he hammers into existence an iron stallion and a saddle of horn. He mounts the horse and starts riding the glades and the open sea, choosing his own paths and measuring his steps. Then comes a cockeyed villain and, using strands of hair from the Maiden of Death, makes a burning arrow and takes a shot. The arrow pierces the "warm flesh" of the stallion, and Väinämöinen falls into the waves. All this happens before the universe was created. It must be dark, because the sun, the stars and the moon do not exist. A bird enters the scene and nests on Väinämöinen's knee. As the knee gets numb and hot, he shakes it, and the eggs roll into the waves and break into pieces. With the help of Väinämöinen's magical words, the eggs turn into the sky, the celestial bodies and the land. Finally, the hero shapes the seabed and the forms of the shoreline with his movements.[1]

The narrative outline sums up three typical cosmogonical narrative songs sung by Viena Karelian runosingers in the nineteenth century (SKVR $I_1$107, 97, 30).[2] The runosong or Kalevala-metric poetry is a multi-genre, mostly sung, poetic tradition practised in wide areas of Finnic peoples up until the Second World War. The songs are saturated with mythic images. The hero and his birth are extraordinary, common creatures and objects have peculiar characteristics, substances are wilful agents. At the same time, the poems portray a recognizable world with a cultural landscape and everyday routines as well as social bonds and conflicts. The universe both exists and is not yet; it is both familiar and strange. The temporal orders of the hero's life and the lifetime of the cosmos pulsate, shrink and expand. Visuality and apparent contradictions are typical of mythic imageries and narratives (Siikala 2002:48–56; Siikala 2012:53) such as the Song of Creation.

The beginnings and the ends of diverse worlds, or the births and deaths of human beings, organisms and entities pose conceptual, social and emotional questions that can only be answered through imagination, by imagining what the non-existent might be. The qualitative and categorical difference between the existent and the not-yet-existent or no-more-existent is essential in our cognitive set-up. In the mythic imagination, the natural or historical beginnings and ends are verbalized and linked with societal values and premises, and rendered sacred through mythic symbols or narratives, in which phenomena enter and exit the sphere of life. Cosmogonies and eschatologies, or mythic narratives on the beginning and end of the cosmos, offer narrative patterns and imaginaries that reflect and affect the temporal, spatial and social conceptualizations of culture.

Karelian and Finnish oral poems in the *Kalevala*-metre tell about the origins of several worlds. Mythic narratives on the origin of the world and its beings, or cosmogonies and aetiologies, were enacted in rituals that orchestrated the relevant temporal cycles (such as the agricultural year or the human life span) or dealt with times of crises (such as disease); at times when it was necessary to reinforce and legitimate the social order of things by depicting their origin (Eliade 1949 (1974):49–92; Honko 1979). In the ritual of the first sowing starting the agricultural year the villagers sang an epic poem describing the first mythic sowing and thus the "beginning of the world" (*moailman alku*) (SKVR $I_1$91; Tarkka 2013:210–213). Such ritual reiteration is one of the living conditions of oral mythologies and it does merely repeat or imitate the bygones, but, in the words of Stuart McLean (2009:214), entangles humans "in ongoing material world-forming processes". The transitions from the time of origins to the present, the the macrocosm to the microcosm, and the otherworld to the everyday, are depicted in mythic images, narratives and ritual symbolism.

In 1835 and 1849, based on transcripts of oral poems such as the Song of Creation just summarized, the ethnographer, writer, doctor and scholar

Elias Lönnrot compiled the folklore-based epic *Kalevala* (Lönnrot 1835, 1849), also known as the national epic of Finland and Karelia. The *Kalevala* is an oral-literary hybrid: a mythic historical epic based on transcripts of vernacular oral poems and guided by the literary and ideological aspirations of the elite (e.g. Honko 1998:37–39; Siikala 2008:326–327). It opens emphatically at the beginning of time, with Lönnrot's version of the Song of Creation, or the first canto, and ends at the dawn of a new era (Kaukonen 1956:505–506). With the authority of a national epic, the *Kalevala* has been an essential component in the social imaginaries that create possible and politically appropriate realities in Finland. In addition, these symbolic and social orders were maintained through ritual reiteration. Telling about the beginnings, births and creations creates identities: the community is tied to a preferred past through genealogy.

The legitimation of the tales and images on the birth of the cosmos and the nation presented in the *Kalevala* and other canonized heritage narratives rises from the assumption that they are based on vernacular or ancient Finnish-Karelian myths. Although the popular assumption has been challenged repeatedly in research, few detailed analyses have been produced of the textual details concerning the ways in which the *Kalevala* represents the ideologies reflected in the oral sources. Here, I will ask how the tales of origin found in the literary epic and the vernacular oral mythologies differ. How exactly did Lönnrot create the universe in the *Kalevala*, and on what grounds? Who were the creators, and what is creation? I seek to answer these questions by analysing the representations of emergence and creation using the concept of vernacular imagination (see Tarkka 2015:23, 30; Tarkka 2020a:123–127) and by comparing the oral cosmogonies to the tale created by Lönnrot in the *Kalevala*. I will build my argument on the Viena Karelian variants of the Song or Creation, bearing in mind that these very versions were the basis for Lönnrot's compilation (Kaukonen 1979:45). I will concentrate on the outcome of Lönnrot's decades-long editorial work of rewriting the *Kalevala*, the canonized *New Kalevala* (Lönnrot 1845).[3]

Vernacular Imagination and the Question of Beginning

As an expression and outcome of the imagination, myth has been defined in the history of folklore research as the opposite or the original nucleus of rational attempts at explaining the world (Tarkka 2020a:115–119). In this scholarly tradition, aetiological imagination is conceived as pre-scientific thinking built on a distorted understanding of causation (e.g. Haavio 1935:242–243). In the study of Finnish-Karelian oral poetry, the analytical concept of imagination has been employed in three senses: first, as the creative force that gives birth to poems in the process of composition (not performance), second, as the figurative nature of poetic language, and

third, as the primitive creation of magico-religious notions in the process of deciphering observations or percepts (Tarkka 2020a:116–120). In defining myth, the folklorist Jouko Hautala extended the sphere of imagination and the imaginary. For him, myth is by definition a product of imagination, which encompasses religious notions, deliberation over causalities, and the fictive (Hautala 1957:64). Myth is thus situated at the crossroads of religion, fantasy and reasoning: it unites the rational with the irrational (ibid. 65). Furthermore, myths describe formative and unique incidents in which "a phenomenon or a being has once and for all, and for good, come into being or achieved its present shape" (ibid. 65). However, understanding cosmogonical and aetiological images and the chains of reasoning and narration linked to them requires a more complex and flexible notion of the mythic imaginary.

By vernacular imagination I refer to the cultural, collective and traditional dimension of the process of creating, combining, verbalizing and narrating mental images. It is the complex of creative and heuristic practices that involves imageries – ideas that are concrete and visual. Vernacular imagination is not a faculty of the human mind. Rather, it is the complex of cultural practices that includes both imaginaries consisting of individual and collective representations and the strategies of language and conceptual thought that govern the creation and use of such imageries – or imaginaries (Tarkka 2020a:123–125). In an analysis of the cosmogonical narratives in the *Kalevala* and of oral poetry, it is necessary to focus on the qualitative differences in the processes of vernacular and literary imagination. When compared to the literary, vernacular oral imagination tends to be concrete and avoid abstraction (e.g. Goody 1977:150–151); it has this trait in common with mythic images (Siikala 2002:48–49). As something verbalized and thus intertwined with language, vernacular imagination operates within the frames of expressive traditions, genres, and processes of memory and oral reproduction (Tarkka 2020a:112–113, 123–124). Its imageries are historically layered, heterogeneous and often incongruous, and it combines creative variation to the resilient traces of tradition (ibid. 123–125).

Kathleen Lennon (2004:120) has stressed the ability of imaginary worlds to activate both cognitive and affective processes. The concept of vernacular imagination builds on the notion of imagination as the meeting point of emotions, rationality and cognition. For example, Mark Johnson (1987:168) has defined imagination as "a pervasive structuring activity by means of which we achieve coherent, patterned, unified representations" by organizing "mental representations (percepts, images and image schemata) into meaningful, coherent unities" (ibid. 140–141). It plays an essential role in the interpretation of experiences and observations, meaning making and rationality – in making sense of the world (ibid. 168). Imagination does not refer primarily to the creation of mental images or making sense of

and rationalizing our observations. In imagining the beginning of the world and the potentialities preceding this beginning, mental images organize into schematic structures that make it possible to perceive a structured and finite cosmos; a cosmos filled with substances, agents and entities with clearly defined identities. When verbalized, this process of imagination becomes part of the intersubjective, communicable reality (see Tarkka 2020a:112, 133).

In the corpus of mythic and ritual texts in the Kalevala-metre, knowledge concerning births and beginnings was considered to contain special power. Knowledge of the origins, or *synty* (lit. birth), was the nucleus and basis of the practice of the ritual specialist, the sage, or *tietäjä*s (lit. the one who knows), and this knowledge was activated in rituals when it was in contact with the sage's personal power or spirit, his *luonto* (lit. nature). In mythic epic poems, this knowledge was described as "deep", and possessing it brought power over the supranormal and the social realities. This branch of knowledge was clearly masculine, and it was epitomized by Väinämöinen, the prototypic old man (Siikala 2002:86–90, 252; Tarkka 2013:105). For the community, this knowledge was a lifeline: the cognitive and practical control over the world required knowledge of its phenomena and beings with their names and genealogies (see also Siikala 2002:86–90).

The link between the origin or birth and the essence of the phenomenon in question is expressed in Finnish-Karelian vernacular belief system through the conceptual complex nature (*luonto*) – birth (*synty*) – guardian spirit (*haltia*) – force (*väki*).[4] These concepts originate in the notion of a dynamic soul present in every substance, phenomenon, and being (Haavio 1967:283–290; Siikala 2002:250–257; Siikala 2012:196). In his academic dissertation, Lönnrot stressed that origin incantations express a notion of a universe animated throughout:

> Some have translated the word *synty* into Swedish with the word *ursprung* (origin) because it is also used to denote the birth of lifeless things. This distinction is however unnecessary because in the Finnish myth there is nothing lifeless, rather, everything is alive. (Lönnrot 1832 (1991):28)

Knowledge of essences and origins thus did not concern static categories of phenomena but also their mutual power balance, movement and change.

When picturing a state that precedes the creation of the universe, the unfathomable idea of nothingness is replaced or rather filled with concrete images and narratives of all kinds of primary deeds and processes. The egg of a waterfowl that we will return to later is a good example of such a material image that stands for all that precedes materiality and existence. The universe is born out of an egg whose concrete parts and colours (the shell, the air pocket, the white, the yolk) are projected onto the universe. This projection is based on likeness, or iconicity:

"Mi munass' ylini puoli,
peäni om peällä taivosekse!
Mi munass' alańi puoli,
moakse alla jalkojeńi!
Mi munassa valkieta,
se päiväkše taivahalla!
Mi munašša ruškieta,
še kuikse kumottamahe,
tähtilöikse taivahalla. […]"

"Let the top of the egg
turn into the sky above my head!
Let the bottom of the egg
turn into the earth beneath my feet!
Let the egg white
be the sun in the sky!
Let the egg yolk
Be the shimmering moons,
the stars in the sky.[…]"

(SKVR I_1 58a, Miihkali Perttunen 1877)

In the following, I will look more closely at the narratives and ask what the actions and agencies involved in vernacular aetiology and cosmogony were.

In vernacular imagination, things did not simply appear, but they took their form gradually, moved from one place to another, changed their shape and were worked upon. These processes and acts are described in the oral mythic poems and magic incantations (origin incantations) that are filled with aetiological motifs. In the mythic narrative universe, the processes of birth, emergence and creation vary, combine with each other and overlap conceptually. All of them take place at the interface between the otherworld and the historical reality present to the senses.

The multivocal mythic corpus of Finnish-Karelian vernacular mythology offers an insight into the critical dimensions, resources and agents in the people's life world (Siikala 2012:60–62, 462). Satu Apo (2001:50) notes that there is no systematic picture of the phenomena selected as topics for narratives of origin. It is clear, however, that the beginnings and births of the world, man, as well as the animal and plants species, cultural objects and institutions are core topics in any aetiological corpus. The oldest aetiological motifs deal with the origin of the world, the hammering of the sky, the modelling of the seabed, and the sowing of trees and the cosmic tree, or the Great Oak (ibid. 50). Because the central Finnish-Karelian aetiologies can be found in incantations and charms that seek to resolve crises such as disease and afflictions, hazardous phenomena and beings (such as snakes, the fire, and iron) are overrepresented in aetiology because they constantly test man's capability to control the world.

In the mythic narrative universe, the processes of birth and acts of creation vary, and they may combine with each other and interlace conceptually. In her analysis of the narrative patterns of Finnish-Karelian origin myths Satu Apo (2001:51–53) has built a typology on the possible narratives of coming into being. Based on a structuralist analysis of plots, the typology focuses on the want and attempts at eradicating it within the narrative universe, as well as the character, object and outcome of the agents and their actions. In the following, I will modify and supplement Apo's typology, which originally consisted of the categories (1) Metamorphosis (1a) generated by an animal or plant or (1b) caused by a god or a heroic figure; (2) Intentional action by supernatural anthropomorphic, usually male agents (2a) by working on the natural environment and its products, or (2b) by crafting objects out of various materials or (2c) by fighting a monstrous adversary; (3) Action of non-anthropomorphic, e.g. zoomorphic beings (usually arriving from the otherworld). According to this model, the typical actions of the aetiological narrative universe are thus metamorphosis, battle, building or working on elements, materials or objects, and movement in space.

Transformation or metamorphosis is an essential process in vernacular mythic imagination and it characterizes many belief systems or ritual complexes such as shamanism (Siikala 2002:231, 343). In Kalevala-metric poetry, for example Väinämöinen is able to take another form: he passes the river of the land of the dead in the shape of a snake or a bird (e.g. SKVR $I_1$363, $I_1$469). The mythic time is a temporal order in which changes from an animal to a humanlike agent and back are frequent – the categories of beings are not clear or stable, but rather fluid and processual (McLean 2018:219).

Because of this dynamic quality of mythic thinking, the categories of birth or emergence cannot be based on the differential identities of the protagonists. It is often impossible to classify the creative agents on the axis agent – passive substance – active energy. For example, a motif common in origin incantations, in which the wind impregnates a female agent, does not necessarily specify whether the wind is an agent or not. According to cognitivist science of religion, imagining wilful agents as responsible for diverse phenomena and processes is one of the most important factors explaining religious ideas (e.g. Boyer 2007:165–167). Because this study bases its interpretations on poetic language, it is often impossible to ascertain the explanatory or believed-in quality of propositions: poetic strategies such as metaphor and metonymy play on these very categorical differences (see Tarkka 2020a:119). Incantations may describe or address the wind as the "daughter of the air" or the wind's "old man", "old wife" or "christened folks" (SKVR $I_4$2099, SKVR $I_4$2096), and it may be conceived simultaneously as an independent actor and the physical movement of air, the "ramping" "chest of the air" (SKVR $I_4$905).

Metamorphosis is one of the elementary narratives in Finnish-Karelian aetiology. An animal, a plant or a substance may change by itself or in the

hands of a wilful agent into something else. It often takes place in water; as in the Song of Creation or in the origin incantation of the snake in which the spit of Syöjätär, a devouring female devil, drifts, lulled by the wind and hatched by the sun, until it rises on land and is perfected by eyes and a tongue (e.g. SKVR $I_4$374). Such transformations are often aided by cultural heroes who with their skill or might turn secretions into living beings: the Christian God may give eyes and life to the snake, whose body has emerged out of Judas's saliva drifting in the sea (SKVR $I_4$374). Words also may act as tools in these projects – like Väinämöinen's words in the Song of Creation.

The actions of cultural heroes are elementary in processes of transformation, but their roles are not limited to them. These supranormal craftsmen are often anthropomorphic males, and they also hammer the firmament, nail the stars to their constellations, and boast of their superior skills. The products may come alive, and transform from inanimate into animate. The first musical instrument, the *kantele*, crafted by Väinämöinen out of a giant pike's head, not only works as an instrument but also "speaks" (e.g. SKVR $I_1$615); the iron horse hammered by Väinämöinen in his smithy carries the hero and gets hurt. Rather than through battle, the demiurges in Kalevalametric poetry produce things by hunting and fishing. Catching a whitefish results in the appearance of fire. The same motif of catching and piercing a giant fish also appears in a version of the Song of Creation (SKVR $I_1$111), in which a great pike swallows the cosmic eggs, where they only appear from after a fight with the bird.

The third narrative of origin describes a biological process: fertilization, pregnancy and parturition. Anthropomorphic females are impregnated by natural forces (most often the wind) and give birth to beings (such as beasts of prey) or personified phenomena (such as diseases). After parturition, the newborn is categorized by giving it a name and a position in the cosmic order, modelled on the social order (Tarkka 2013:416–420) – the biological process is finalized by symbolic and social acts. In the mythic corpus, giving birth does not generate anything good, rather it brings about diseases and beasts of prey. The legend poem Creator's Song provides the only exception, when the Virgin Mary is impregnated by a lingonberry and gives birth to the baby Jesus (see e.g. Kuusi et al. 1977:551–552).

The fourth category of origination is growth. Growth does not limit itself to the increase in mass, quantity or complexity, since emergent qualities may also appear. A good example of this is the poem on the creation of the mythic sampo that combines several types of origin narratives. Sampo produces all the good there is: harvest, salt, goods, words and wisdom. Its produce is limitless, it is crafted by a mythic smith at the beginning of time, and it encapsulates the ultimate utopian discourse in Finnish-Karelian mythic poetry: the myth of unlimited good and incessant birth (Tarkka 2020a:136–137). In terms of metamorphosis, the sampo is a product of human labour

that becomes a living organism with roots. This transforming object can also be understood as a sign of the supranormal quality of its producer, the smith Ilmarinen, who is able to produce a counterintuitive hybrid (see Hakamies 2012:200; Tarkka 2014:52–53).

Lastly, things and beings also appear simply by moving from one place to another. Here, as in other categories of origin narratives, the site of origins or the place where things may appear from is the otherworld – the imaginary processes concerning birth and emergence are closely linked to the category of the otherworld. This is the border of that what is and that which is not, and it demarcates the temporal order by marking the beginning of time. Incantations for childbirth depict the birth of a human child as a journey from the maternal womb, portrayed with images of the otherworld as a closed and dark place (Tarkka 1994:278–279). The bear descends from heaven in a golden cradle, and in the Song of Creation the bird carrying the embryo of the universe flies from overseas to launch the cosmic chain of creation.

Typical of the different kinds of emergences in vernacular imagination is their conceptual looseness. The categories of action and process – transformation, working or moulding with hands or tools, parturition, growth and movement – supplement each other and together create complex and contradictory narratives. Each of these categories opens a new angle to the conceptual problem of becoming and emergence. In many cases, the creature or phenomenon that is being born already exists in some form – it only has to be brought into the daylight, refined and defined. The protagonists in these origin narratives may be semi-abstract essences, but mythic narratives and rituals required that they are described and addressed as agents and partners in communication. This personification need not imply any ontological or epistemological suppositions; it is a narrative necessity and a poetic strategy.

The contextual nature of vernacular imagination is linked to the heterogeneous and episodic character of mythic corpora. Different narratives and images do not add up to a single coherent narrative with a clear chronology; rather, they throw light upon varying aspects and agencies in the mythic narrative universe (Siikala 2012:60; Tarkka 2015:22–23). The images and narratives of the origin of the world form a rhizome in which a logical starting point or the ultimate original state is neither explicated nor supposed. The philosophical question of the origin of the bird laying the cosmic eggs is not posed. It simply flew from out there.

The Vernacular Song of Creation

Unlike the origin incantations, the most fundamental of aetiological narratives, the epic poem on the origin of the world, has no recorded ritual

context. However, it is often combined with the Sampo-poem,[5] which in Singers situated the narrative chain of poems in mythic time: "You see it was the beginning of the world when they got started with ploughing and sowing" (SKVR $I_1$91) (Tarkka 2013:209– 213). The origins encapsulated the establishment of various spheres of activity, such as agriculture, and the beginning of each yearly cycle of these activities was parallel to the "beginning of the world".

Despite their formative character, the knowledge of the "deepest origins" was relative, even within one community. The narrative universe of Kalevala-metric poetry refers to several cosmogonical myths. In 1822 Jakob Fellman, a Lutheran priest journeying in Viena Karelia, reported on the most significant cosmogonical narrative already known to us:

> When I asked an older man in Vuokkiniemi what he believed to be the world's creation, he answered: "Well, my holy brother, we have the same faith as you. An eagle flew from the north, placed an egg on Väinämöinen's knee, and created the world out of it. That's what you believe too, isn't it. (Fellman 1906:498; SKVR $I_1$66)

This mythic account is a concise abstract of the typical Viena Karelian Song of Creation. Its significance lies in the assertion that it was generally "believed in" still at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in the old man's conviction on the shared nature of this belief, across religious divides (Tarkka 2013:209–210). This conviction reflects the flexibility of the vernacular mythic imagination: it is inclusive in its relationship with various context-specific beliefs and belief systems. This syncretistic quality is also evident in the range of cosmogonical alternatives within speech communities. For example in the parish of Vuokkiniemi, the mythic corpus includes four narratives of the origin of the world. First, the universe originated in the broken egg laid on Väinämöinen's knee; second, the moon and the sun testify that the Christian God created them and the whole universe; third, a group of culture heroes raises the vault of the sky with their hammers; and fourth, the mythic smith Ilmarinen hammers the sky. There is also significant local variation within all of these narrative patterns (Tarkka 2013:210).

The history of research concerning the Song of Creation as well as the mythic patterns of the cosmic egg and the Earth Diver included in it has concentrated on the local redactions of the poem and its international parallels (see e.g. Haavio 1950:59–81; Kemppinen 1957:287–320; Kuusi 1956; Siikala 2012:148–156). In the context of this analysis, there is another, more relevant line of inquiry: the discussions of the ideological base of the poem and its relationship to mythic thinking and imagination. Lönnrot did justify his choices in textualizing the oral poems into a literary epic with comparative evidence, and these comparisons were linked to the politics of the national epic – I will return to these later. Nevertheless, he also pioneered in looking for philosophical justification for the notions about the origin of the

world and the question of emergence. Contemporaneous critique of the epic also joined in the discussion of the vernacular and literary cosmogonies.

The most prominent of these discussants was M. A. Castrén, whose posthumously published lectures on Finnish mythology build on the commentary on the *Kalevala* but also touch upon its vernacular sources (see Ahola & Lukin 2016:18, 20). Castrén was a comparative mythologist who looked for the "original meaning" of the "completely unique" Finnish-Karelian version of the myth of the cosmic egg. According to him, the egg signified the absolute primal essence that had "evolved into the universe driven by its own internal power". This original philosophy was built on the "natural idea", "according to which the world was a living being, and because of this it must have been born out of an egg like other beings of the same kind". Castrén's notion of the origin of the world combines abstract philosophical speculation with a biological or organic interpretation of processes of emergence typical in vernacular imagination. Castrén continues and argues that the "potential to develop" characterizing the primal essence or being – that is, its ability to transform – is lost when the eggs break down. After this incident, they become "unable to create anything by and of themselves". Fuelled by the power of the spirit and the word, the process however continues: "Only a couple of powerful words are needed, and the shattered eggs transform into a complete world."

Castrén thus defines the word as the impetus and the force creating the world, and for him the notion of the cosmic egg is secondary. He concludes by writing that "in the minds of Finns, always pondering on the origin of everything, it was an impossibility to avoid the dangerous question: Where did the egg originate from?" This question led to a concrete chain of argumentation: first, one had to presuppose a cosmic bird; and second, some air that precedes the creation, and third, a place for the bird to nest on (see also Kemppinen 1957:292). Such argumentation "spoiled" the original myth of the perfect embryonic egg (Castrén 1853 (2016), 285–287). Castrén tried to unravel the processes of imagination in which the vernacular, concrete and visual myth lost its philosophical coherence and integrity. Such incoherent myths differed radically from the unified and abstract myths in literary cultures.

Decisive in the origin of the world and Väinämöinen's god-like status is the moment when the eggs break down. What was Väinämöinen's role in the transformation of the egg crumbs? The poems portray this instance in strong and crystallized parallelistic lines that differ stylistically from their textual surroundings. The motif that encapsulates the metamorphosis of the eggs may be realized in the text as a simple descriptive proposition that does not specify who triggered the event. Often, however, the unit is framed as a magic performance by Väinämöinen, as his words that make the world take shape:

Sanoi vanha Väinämöinen:
“Mi munassa alanen puoli,
se on alaiseksi maan emäksi;
Mi munass’ on ylinen puoli,
yliseksi taivoseksi;
Mi on munassa luun muruja,
ne tähiksi taivoselle;
Mi munass’ on ruskiesta,
se päiväksi paistamah;
Mi munassa valkiesta,
Se kuuksi kumottamah
yliseksi taivoselle.”

Said the old Väinämöinen:
“What is the lower side of the egg,
will be the lower mother earth;
What is the upper side of the egg,
the upper sky
What are bone chips in the egg,
they the stars in the sky;
What is yellow in the egg,
it to shine as the sun;
What is white in the egg,
it to glow as the moon.
(SKVR I_1 79, Ontrei Malinen 1825)

With a seemingly minute textual procedure Väinämöinen becomes the creator of the world – the transformation of the egg is not presented as a constative but as a performative, through which the eggs really transform. The line or lines framing a passage of reported speech belong to the most varying and replaceable formulaic expressions in the performance of Kalevala-metric poetry (Saarinen 2018:294), and the performers and their audiences have most probably deciphered the lines as Väinämöinen’s reply even without an explicit framing. Whether Väinämöinen uttered the formative lines or not, he undoubtedly caused the eggs’ breakdown. The focal point in this incidence is Väinämöinen’s knee, the movement of which has drastic consequences.

The art historian Onni Okkonen was one of the first to reflect on visual and fantastic aspects in the Finnish-Karelian myth of the cosmic egg. He concluded that cosmogonies, or “renditions of the birth of the universe” were primitive attempts at explaining the universe and existence (Okkonen 1921:123) – they represented “the imagination and beliefs of naïve nature peoples”, or “naïve fantasy” (ibid. 131). Like many other scholars of religion in the early twentieth century, Okkonen saw imagination as a mediating factor in the primitive argumentative process of deciphering observations of nature (see also Kemppinen 1957:310; Tarkka 2020a:118–119).

Väinämöinen's knee was thus a "core mental image" in Finnish mythology, whose point of origin is the vision of stones that rise from the water's surface or of objects floating in the water. These visual stimuli have engendered the notion of a water god's member poking out of the water. This knee was the "ground for other mental images to build solidly on". Finally, the bird that flew from the horizon was the dynamic factor that united the core images of the knee and the egg (ibid. 126–127).

Anna-Leena Siikala (2012:152, 154) designates the "core mental images" pointed out by Okkonen as mythic topoi or mythemes. She stresses that in mythic corpora, widely known representations such as the primal sea, the egg, and the floating hero form original narratives and combine further with additional "mental images that are mythic or represent fantasy" (ibid.155–156). Siikala pays special attention to Väinämöinen's knee: it is the mythic hero's soft spot and "the crystallization and symbol of the mystery concerning the birth of the cosmos, something beyond time and space, and out of this world." The vulnerability of the mythic hero also proves that he is humanlike (Siikala 1999:46–47).

The Origin of the World in the *Kalevala*

The plot of the *Kalevala* opens with an account of the origin of the world, the Song of Creation in the first canto (lines 103–344). In Lönnrot's preliminary versions of the epic, the so-called *Proto-Kalevala* and the *Old Kalevala* (Lönnrot 1834 (1928); Lönnrot 1835 (1993)), the Song of Creation closely follows the Viena Karelian poems like those summed up in the opening of this article (see Kaukonen 1939:52–53; Kaukonen 1979:45): Väinämöinen falls to the sea, a bird lays its eggs on his knee, and the world is created out of the broken eggs. To make the plot of the epic comprehensible to the audience unfamiliar with the style and narrative patterns of Kalevala-metric oral poetry, Lönnrot added a short prose abstract to each canto of the epic. The first of these sums up the formative incidents like this:

> The singer prepares and starts recounting how Väinämöinen, who had laid thirty summers and winters in her mother's womb, is born into this world. Then Väinämöinen, who has acquired a horse, starts riding. The Laplander, bearing a grudge for some reason, waits to kill him. Sees him ride on the open sea, and shoots his arrow at him. Twice and even three times he shoots, and then falls the horse from under Väinämöinen. From there Väinämöinen himself, swimming around, creates all kinds of things, rocks, islands, islets and fish deeps. An eagle looking for a place to nest on spots Väinämöinen and lays the eggs on his knee. As the knees move the eggs roll into the water and break against a rock. Then Väinämöinen creates the land, the sky, the stars, the moon and the sun out of the egg crumbs. (Lönnrot 1835 (1993):190)

Contemporaneous criticism paid attention to the discrepancies in the passage. Jacob Grimm (1845:74) pointed out that Väinämöinen invokes the stars and

the heavenly bodies "while still in the womb" even if these were not created yet; Castrén (1853 (2016):287; Kaukonen 1956:434) made similar observations. To quote Iivar Kemppinen (1957:308), "already before the creation of the universe there were all kinds of things which should have emerged only at the time of *creation*." The problem lies in the fundamental incompatibility of vernacular and literary cosmogonies: inconsistency only became a problem when printed on paper and made an object of critical inquiry. Lönnrot started to plan major changes but the apparent contradictions that were present also in the oral sources were not easy to sort out. In nine years, he had completed his task. The Song of Creation in the *New Kalevala* has the following outline:

> The Maiden of Air descends into the sea, and, conceived by wind and water turns herself into the Water Mother. A bluebill nests and lays its eggs on her knee. The eggs roll out of the nest, break into pieces, and the pieces transform into the land, the sky, the sun, moon and clouds. The Water Mother creates capes and bays and other shores, deep and shallow places in the sea. Väinämöinen is born out of the Water Mother and drifts for long in the waves, until he finally stops at the shoreline. Lönnrot 1849a (1921):1)

With the world already there, the mythic hero continues the work with his comrades – the world is completed with vegetation, iron, music, and prosperity. Diseases, beasts of prey and scarcity also emerge because of adversaries; the heroes create the sampo and all the luck that comes with it, but they also lose it.

The *Kalevala* also refers to a creative act preceding the birth of the universe. In the 17th canto, the mythic sage Antero Vipunen reveals the deepest origin knowledge to Väinämöinen. As already noted, the contemporaneous critique remarked that the Song of Creation presupposes the existence of the air, water, wind and a bird (see Castrén 1853 (2016):286), and these elements and agents had to be explained. Lönnrot invented yet another new myth, an abstract philosophy of origin by alluding to the primal state like this:

> Kuinka luojansa luvalla,
> kaikkivallan vaatimalla
> itsestänsä ilma synty,
> ilmasta vesi erosi.
>
> Granted by its creator,
> decreed by the Almighty
> air was born out of itself,
> water separated from the air.
>
> (17:543–6)[1]

With an allusion, Lönnrot also identifies the creator or the almighty as "Ukko, the high creator, god of the air himself", who "separated water from

air, and drew the mainland from water" (9:33–35). The creative acts are also remembered in the third canto, when Väinämöinen boasts over being present as one of the craftsmen when the world was created (3:245–254).

Lönnrot explained his notions of the creation and its cultural background in the essay "On primal creation" (*Alkuluomisesta*). The essay was published in 1839, during the interval between the two editions of the epic when the Song of Creation separated from the basic plot of the oral versions. According to Lönnrot,

> each people in the world have their story on the original creation, namely the creation of the land and the world, the emergence of humans and other both animate and inanimate beings etc. All share the notion that before the world was created there was nothing but some formless void or a concoction of matter that was undifferentiated and homogenous. (Lönnrot 1839 (1990), 557)

To prove the plausibility and universality of this notion Lönnrot (ibid. 557–558) presents comparative data from e.g. Indian classic mythology and American indigenous myths.

Air was thus burn out of the primal material – a "void" or "concoction" – independently and without interference from supranormal or mythic agents. The case is different with water, whose emergence was initiated by Ukko, the god of the air. Here Lönnrot refers to the presumed original proto-god of Finns (Kaukonen 1956:458; Kaukonen 1987:156–157). After the articulation of the water and air into separate elements Lönnrot sets out to describe the Maiden of the Air, Ilmatar (from the word *ilma*, 'air' + suffix indicating a female agent), who is drifting and swirling in her own essence, the air: she "was bored in her time, found her life odd, being alone forever" (1:117–119). The description is half-abstract, half-concrete. Lönnrot defined the female protagonists, or the virgins and the mothers in her cosmogony as essences rather than female goddesses: "What gives every substance its maintenance, solidity and strength, is called a mother, a dam, a little mother" – these mothers were the "peculiar forces or roots" of their respective elements (Lönnrot 1839 (1990):560; see Tarkka 2014:38).

In Lönnrot's Song of Creation, various processes of creation or birth follow one another. When the air appears out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, and by itself, we witness emergence in which something qualitatively new is born. In another context Lönnrot proposes that "our forefathers maybe described that formless proto-being, out of which God created the universe and which the Bible names the void" as the egg (Cajan 1839:10).[6] The idea of the differentiation of the elements of air and water is abstract and thus literary; it differs radically from the imagery and ideology behind the oral poems (see Tarkka 1996:71–72).

Creation *ex nihilo* is incompatible with vernacular imagination that operates through concrete images (Tarkka 2020a:136–137, 141, n. 6).

Lönnrot returns to his idiosyncratic image of being born out of nothing in the Sampo-poem, when Ilmarinen boasts that he has hammered the sky out of nothing, "without a beginning to begin with, with no thread being made" (10:278–279). In Lönnrot's sources, the lines that he used as the basis for this passage simply mean nakedness and vulnerability (Kaukonen 1956:75). Interestingly, only one runosinger famous for having absorbed plots, images and stylistic features from the printed epic resorted to this idea, making it even more explicit: in his version, Ilmarinen told how he had hammered the sky "without any matter to begin with" (SKVR $I_2$1022). The idea of nothingness seemed to be of little interest or made no sense for the singers who performed their poems after the publication of the *Kalevala*, even if they were acquainted with the epic.

The origin of the element of air is thus told only retroactively, and at the beginning of the song of creation air is already personified as Ilmatar. The poem starts with a typical opening formula that introduces the main character: "There was a maiden, girl of the air, a pretty lass, nature being" (1:111–112). Personification is a typical form of metaphoric reasoning also in the vernacular imagination; a shapeless element or non-human agent is concretized and rendered humanlike (see Tarkka 2020a:118). The humanity of the agents makes it easier to motivate social actions in the narrative and to project emotions onto the agents. As the Maiden of the Air "turns herself into" the Water Mother she remains anthropomorphic: she does not dissolve into the water but rather descends into the water and starts to "roll around" "as the Water Mother" (1:124, 1:143). The bodily contours and anatomy of the Maiden-cum-Mother are essential in the narrative, which, despite Lönnrot's arguments in the article "On primal creation", stresses her similarity to humans.

"The wind blew her into one with a womb, the sea made her pregnant" (1:135–136). Vignette for the first canto of the Kalevala by Joseph Alanen, 1918–1920. Image: courtesy by the Kalevala Society.

A storm, or an "angry air" rises over the cosmic sea, and the waves join in making the Maiden of the Air pregnant –"the wind blew her into one with a womb, the sea made her pregnant" (1:135–136). Fertilization refers to a biological process, but we also witness a metamorphosis in which the maiden becomes a mother. Lönnrot underlines Ilmatar's virginity ("virginity", "holiness" 1:113–114; see also Lönnrot 1849b (1993):404–405), but does not make a consistent distinction between the virginal and the pregnant – Maiden of the Air and the Water Mother are used also as parallel names (e.g. 1:218). The emotions of the mother nevertheless differ from those of the virgin: in pain, she becomes an agent by putting an end to passive floating and focusing her mind and body on action, namely childbirth. Affects and agency make her humanlike, but the pregnancy itself transcends humanity. It takes years to carry the mythic hero and the epithet for the labour pains, "the fiery birth", refers both to a mythic frame and supranormal force, and to a burning physical pain.

Then enters the bird who flies in search of a place to nest on. For this proto-image without any narrative foreshadowing Lönnrot (1858 (1991):488; see Kaukonen 1987:158, 160) gave an allegorical interpretation: "The nature maiden in the air, the wind and the great bird may originally have meant the creative power of God." The allegory emphatically supersedes the vernacular category of emergence in which things may appear on the horizon quite simply, without any intervention by abstract powers or supranormal agents. The interpretation of the episode is however only partly abstract when the Water Mother raises her knee from the waves, and the bird nests on it. When the bird lays the eggs and the Water Mother moves her heated knee, the eggs break down and "change into something good": the land, the sky, the sun, moon, stars and clouds (1:210–244). Material disintegration thus leads to transformation without any outer force such as word magic. The Water Mother was not presented as a goddess with the ability and power to create.

The creation of the universe is however but an interlude in the narrative that focuses on the birth of the hero. The ultimate act of creation is made explicit in Lönnrot's phrasing: when trying to induce the labour the Water Mother starts to "create her creatures". First, however, she uses her body to shape the earth, the islands, the straits and the bottom of the sea. The episode is forcefully physical, as the Water Mother wakes up, raises her head from the waves, twists and turns her arms, reaches for the bottom with her feet, pops up on the surface, squirms and pushes her head against the shore (1:257–276; Niemi 1910:3). This female agent is far from an abstract nature spirit.

The formation of the landscape and the seabed is followed by Väinämöinen's birth. In the miraculous biological process, the active agent is the baby, not the mother. The Water Mother was already frustrated with the attempts at giving birth and concentrated on other things, and now it

was time for Väinämöinen to agonize and start action. At last the hero is born. He lands in the water and floats in the sea until he rises on land. Lönnrot closes the first canto by naming it a genealogy: this is "the origin of Väinämöinen" and the "tale of his kin" (1:341–342).

The Sources of Lönnrot's Cosmogony

The Song of Creation in the *Kalevala* is not simply a compound of epic episodes that Lönnrot chose from the oral versions at his disposal. The ideological and interpretive aspects of textualization have already become obvious, as we looked at the distortions of vernacular imagination in Lönnrot's version. Lönnrot has complemented the frame of the Karelian oral Song of Creation with various narrative episodes, lyric poems and magic incantations. All of these amplifications had their aesthetic and often ideological reasons and consequences. They concerned the supposed mythological and magical belief system of ancient Finns and the emotive preconditions for the epic's reception.

On the textual level, the bird episode that results in the creation of the celestial bodies is most faithful to the oral sources. There is one major and significant change: Väinämöinen is replaced by female personifications of natural elements. To include the birth of the hero Väinämöinen in the plot of his literary epic, Lönnrot invented the two ladies, the Maiden of Air and the Water Mother, who took Väinämöinen's role as the one who drifts in the primal sea, offers a site for the nest, and breaks down the cosmic eggs. The change deprived Väinämöinen of the role of creator but also liberated Lönnrot for radical new emplotments. It gave the author a sense of literary cohesion and closure: in order to install the narrative universe, one has to recount the origins of the landscape but also the main heroes. Väinämöinen was authorized not as the creator but as the first-born agent.

In his commentary "On primal creation" (1839 (1990):560) Lönnrot argued that the phonetic similarity between the names Water Mother (*Veen emo* or *emoinen*, diminutive for mother) and Väinämöinen had caused the confusion and made the singers replace the allegedly original Water Mother by Väinämöinen. Väinämöinen's god-like qualities were thus the runosingers' misunderstanding, an etymological error. Still in the foreword to the *Old Kalevala* Lönnrot (1835 (1993):179) hesitated and assumed that some godly agent had created the world, but that this act was later assigned to Väinämöinen. In the summer of 1848, in a letter to his friend and colleague Frans Johan Rabbe, he finally told him about the decision: he was replacing Väinämöinen with the Water Mother, whom he explains to be the goddess of the water or the sea ("*Vein (=veden) emonen, vattnets- l. hafsgudinna*"). Lönnrot also sketches out the new plot, in which the Water Mother also has other significant roles: "But the sea goddess herself gave birth to other things,

first an island and other lands, and then lastly Wäinämöinen, Ilmarinen and other primal oldsters [Swe. *urgubbar*]" (Lönnrot 1848 (1990):295).

In the oral sources, mentions of Väinämöinen's birth are rare, and accounts of the origin of the hero are not linked to other cosmogonical themes. A common motif is however an allusive mention of the special nature of the newborn hero: he was born in the night and ready for manly tasks already during the day – the motif may be applied to both Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen. In the Song of Creation, Väinämöinen is described with his epithet "old and steady" already in his "mother's womb" (1:289–290). In addition, his nocturnal birth associated him with the category of the otherworld (Siikala, 2012:249; e.g. SKVR $I_1$107). The motif is common in the world's epic traditions, and it is this generic trait that encouraged Lönnrot to tell about Väinämöinen's birth as a cosmogonic element.

In a poem common in more southern runosinging areas Väinämöinen, Joukahainen and Ilmarinen are born from the maiden Iro who has been fertilized by a lingonberry and who gives birth to three sons – the "primal oldsters" named by Lönnrot. In his source-critical work, Väinö Kaukonen (1987:160; 1956:13) has shown that Lönnrot had one version of this poem at his disposal (SKVR $VII_1$100). He also knew two old manuscripts from Ostrobothnia recounting the origin of Väinämöinen: the hero or his father is born after a miraculously long pregnancy by cutting the womb of his mother open with a knife, and by kicking open "the red vulva" (SKVR $XII_1$1). The other of these poems also contains a remarkable mention of the fertilization leading to the hero's birth: the virginal maiden of the north lands on the sea is fertilized by the "Old Man of the Sea" [*Meren ukko*] (SKVR $XII_1$2). Also the allusions to incantations and the emotions caused by the pregnancy correspond to the Song of Creation in the *Kalevala*.

There are two reasons for Lönnrot's decision to name the woman giving a virginal birth Ilmatar (or the Maiden of the Air). First, it provided the necessary link between the birth of the hero and more abstract images of the elements in the Song of Creation. Second, it reflected Lönnrot's conviction that Ilmatar was the original name of the virginal birth-giver present in the oral poems and folk belief – other names were just late contaminations. The first of mothers in pagan religion was to be Ilmatar, even if there is only one secondary mention of the name in the sources that Lönnrot had at his disposal (Kaukonen 1987:159; see SKVR $I_4$272). This invention of a goddess, however, did not satisfy Lönnrot's contemporaries. M. A. Castrén (1853 (2016):282) had even consulted the runosingers about the matter and reported that none of them recognized Ilmatar as a mythic mother.

As noted earlier, Lönnrot's decision to concretize (in accordance with the oral sources) the primal substances as humanlike agents, maidens and mothers, made it possible to describe them as sentient beings with intentions and emotions. In the guise of a maiden, the "peculiar force or root"

of air was drifting in her/its own substance, with feelings recognized by the readers of the epic: she was bored and puzzled, she longed for a companion, felt pain and cold. These emotions trigger action, initiate world history, and prepare the cosmic landscape for the male hero to enter. When the Water Mother has tried to induce labour without success, she expresses her deepened agony with a lyrical song. The textual strategy is typical of Lönnrot. Niina Hämäläinen (2012:266–267) has explored the role of such textualizations in the politics and reception of the epic: when the protagonists in the epic express their feelings with recognizable expressive genres, they become understandable to the audience. When the cosmogonical acts and processes are fuelled with emotion, the godly creators are rendered human. Simultaneously, everyday emotions show their universal and formative nature. Even if this was not necessarily Lönnrot's intention, the affective displays demystify the mythic universe and the heroes by dismantling their supranormal quality.

Embedded lyric passages are also used in Kalevala-metric oral epic poems, but Lönnrot uses the strategy to the full and in a pointed fashion (Tarkka 1996:53–54). He frames the Water Mother's lyrical song with the flexible formula signalling the start of reported speech: "She cried and purred, uttered a word, spoke thus" (1:151–152). Also the water bird looking for an island to nest on laments her homelessness by "pondering and thinking" her feelings into words (1:190), in other words, lines of lyrical poetry. Lastly, the soon-to-be-born Väinämöinen also feels anguish in the closed womb and expresses this agony with a lyrical quotation (1:295–300). The expressive and emotional mythic protagonists modernized the archaic epic and lent it psychological depth. Later, in an essay called "Three words about and from the Finnish ancient songs" (*Tre ord om och ur finska fornsången* 1858 (1991)), Lönnrot took this tendency to its extreme by elaborating on the motivations, personalities, social status, romantic aspirations and even love letters of the Maiden of Air and her "wooers".

Väinämöinen does not stop at expressing the distress, but starts resolving it. As in the oral sources, the representations of distress do not only trigger lamentations but also magical acts that transform the causes of distress (see Tarkka 2013:120–121, 249; Timonen 2004:43, 355). The narrative strategy to convey this is, again, a generic quotation (see Tarkka 2013:179–182): a magical incantation embedded in the narrative. In his portrayal of the birth pangs of the Water Mother and the distress of baby-Väinämöinen, Lönnrot quoted vernacular incantations of childbirth: the mother has "pain" and a "knot in her stomach" (1:147, 173–174), the baby's abode in the womb is tight and dark (1:297–298); both of these problems could be solved with an incantation easing the parturition. The Water Mother has already tried to induce the labour by appealing to Ukko with a childbirth incantation (1:169–176) but her words are not effective – again, she is presented as

powerless. Väinämöinen's appeals do not work either, and he takes concrete action. The solution is again described with lines from incantations of childbirth, even if they are not framed as incantatory utterances. With his finger and toe, Väinämöinen opens up the "gates" and "locks" holding the birth canal closed and creeps out (1:319–324). The body of the Water Mother is conceived metaphorically as a house: the "cramped abode" is a "castle", with a "gate", a "lock of bone" and a "threshold" (1:308, 319, 321, 323). At the same time it is surrounded and filled with water: Väinämöinen swims "in the maternal womb… on those sweet waters, those misty waves" (1:290, 293–294) until he is born through his mother's "porch door", dives to sea, "amidst the waves" (1:324, 325–328), and lastly rises on land (see also Tarkka 1996:70).

Both the lyric and magic elements used by Lönnrot underline the cosmic scope of the scene. The distress felt in the cramped and dark womb is contrasted to the newly created world under the open air, lit by the celestial bodies (1:297–300). The incantatory words used by Väinämöinen refer to the celestial bodies, too: he summons the moon, the sun and the Big Dipper, so that they will guide him from the dark prenatal space. The world that the hero enters in birth is a space where it is possible to "look at the moon", "admire the sun", "scan the stars", and "learn the Big Dipper" (1:337–379) – again a motif quoted from incantations of childbirth. Lönnrot explained the passage: "The moon and the sun were considered animate, or they had, like any other thing, a guardian spirit [*haltia*], who was cried for help when needed" (Niemi 1910:4). The celestial bodies that had emerged earlier in the narrative were thus animated and rendered potential helpers.

Even if the mythic quality of giving birth is underlined with various fantastic details and the corporeal process is described metaphorically, the scene is strikingly concrete. Lönnrot set up an intriguing landscape in which the macrocosm of the primal sea and microcosm of the womb fused into each other: the Water Mother is floating in the sea, and Väinämöinen is floating inside her, in the mythic amniotic fluid. The supranormal qualities of the hero are evident in the fact that he is able to act independently and intentionally already before his birth – he is a "travelling man" (1:309) before he is born. The mother remains a passive agent capable of only rumination. Even if the birth is extraordinary and the agents clearly supranormal, the quotations from ritual texts dealing with ordinary mortals refer to the humanity of the hero and the mother: surprisingly, the newborn son of water and wind is described as a "child of a human" (1:310).

The incantations that Lönnrot used as his sources were originally performed to ease difficult childbirths. In these too, the female anatomy is described as a cultured landscape: the womb is a tight house or a barn with a door or gate opening to an open space under the sun and the starlit sky (e.g. SKVR $VII_4$3031). In these incantations, the newborn is likewise a hero

described as a travelling man who opens the obstructing doors, often with the aid of powerful helpers, lubricating substances, or mucous creatures. In birth, the child rises on land, as if from water (Tarkka 1994:277–281; Tarkka 1996:69–71). This imagery inspired Lönnrot to situate Väinämöinen's birth in the sea: beings and things are born into the world through water, as in the aetiologies in origin incantations in which the element of water was central. In all cases, the scenery of birth refers to a primal sea: the birth of a human mirrors the mythic pattern and places the birth of a biological individual into a cosmic frame.

Even if the most explicit descriptions of the female anatomy were filtered through traditional metaphors and the overt descriptions of blood, excretions and genitals were censored, the remaining mythic anatomy was striking for the nineteenth-century literary bourgeoisie. In the abridged version of the *Kalevala* that Lönnrot edited for the schools, the detailed description of Väinämöinen's birth was already omitted (Lönnrot 1862 (2005):18–21) and the later editions of the *Kalevala* for schools went even further in the censorship (see Lönnrot 1925 (2002):4). Nevertheless, the naked bodies of Ilmatar and the Water Mother haunted the imagination of Finnish painters when they made their illustrations to the *Kalevala* (see illustrations 1–2).

The Learned Epic Imagination

The nature of Lönnrot's textual modifications and inventions has been noted in research but rarely discussed in detail. To this day, many popular encyclopaedias of mythology cite Lönnrot's version as a Finnish or Finno-Ugric myth and the Maiden of the Air or the Water Mother as the Finnish creator goddesses (e.g. Guirand 1993:304). Väinö Kaukonen (1956:507) who has conducted a line-to-line analysis of the sources of the *Kalevala*, concludes that "the 'Kalevalaic' world history is, as a whole, a creation of artistic imagination", Lönnrot's fabrication. This fiction has had the status of a myth of origin in Finnish culture and society. Mythic-historical cosmogonies bind their present-day audiences to the beginning of time, cosmos and humanity through a genealogy. In the context of the *Kalevala* Väinämöinen, who is born out of Ilmatar is the central agent and the focal point in creating genealogical links to ancient history (e.g. Siikala 1999:42–44). In the foreword to the *Old Kalevala*, Lönnrot (1835 (1993):178–180; Kaukonen 1939:51) portrays Väinämöinen as "the hero of Finland" and the son of Kaleva, the progenitor of Finns.

The historical interpretation of the hero is not consistent, however, and it also varied in the editorial process. The historical interpretation of the hero is never extended to the Song of Creation, because the first canto described mythical time, not the historical time that started to take shape at Väinämöinen's birth. Despite Väinämöinen's ancestry, Finns were not

presented as the people of the air, the water and the wind, and Lönnrot does not make such claims even for the supposed ancient Finns. As Juhana Saarelainen (2011:75–76) has argued, Lönnrot was sensitive to the sophistication with which poetry may refer to history, mythology or ethnographic reality through the lens of poetics and imagination.

Lönnrot's interpretations and textualizing practices rose from the literary European discussion of the time. The range of these discussions was not limited to literature, but extended to religion and philosophy. He was acquainted with the topical discussion on the notion of emergence and he shared Schelling's idea of organisms: the idea that in nature there exists "productive activity or autonomous creation, which is observable in the birth, growth and shaping of animate nature" (Saarelainen 2011:71). These notions cohere with Lönnrot's thoughts on the abstract nature of the female agents in his Song of Creation. Like Castrén, he had the capacity and inclination to speculate on the meaning of the cosmic egg and the vernacular aetiologies in an abstract manner. In his etymological musings, however, Lönnrot conceived creation as something highly concrete, namely the act of "sending or setting apart something from oneself or from others" (Lönnrot 1836 (1990):11).

The attempt at reconciling the different images of God, creation and the world in the literary and vernacular discourses is evident in a discussion he had with a Karelian speaking priest, Onuphrius Rebolsky. The men discussed plausible ways of translating the New Testament into Karelian and came to conclusion that the sentence "God created the whole world" [*Jumala loi kaiken maailman*] was not understandable to the people, because in the vernacular, acts of creation were referred to as simply 'making' [*laatia*, *tehdä*]. The same applied to the word 'world' [*maailma*, a compound of the words 'land' and 'air']. It was problematic for local Karelians, because the world was simply referred to with the word 'air' [*ilma*] (Lönnrot 1836 (1990):12) with the derivatives *tuonilmanen* for the otherworld (lit. 'that air') and *tämänilmanen* for the temporal world of the living (lit. 'this world').

Väinö Kaukonen (1956:458) has shown how Lönnrot deliberately constructed the Song of Creation into a literary myth of the elite culture – the result was "a totally new, Lönnrot's own cosmogonical myth", with significant influences from the Old Testament, especially the Book of Genesis (Kaukonen 1987:156; see also Karkama 2008:136–137). The central issue was the deity of Ukko and other supranormal agents in the vernacular belief tradition and Kalevala-metric poetry. Lönnrot clarified his thoughts on the birth of the notion of god in an essay called "Ancient issues" [*Muinelmia*] (1836 (1990)). When the powers attributed to the sky-god increased in the people's minds, they started asking,

> … who has made all of this world, and since they did not know any greater being to be the maker, they decided that this being will be god. What was already known – that

he prepared and sent from himself multifarious things in his smithy – supported well this thought about the construction of the world. Before the time that human memory reaches, it was he who had prepared and put in its own place everything there is to be seen. And then people started to call the world also by the name nature, and consequently god as the creator. (Lönnrot 1836 (1990):12)[7]

The notion of one creator god is not central or even obvious in the cosmogony presented in the *Kalevala*, but even a rudimentary form of deism and preferably monotheism was a precondition for the future spiritual development of a civilized nation. The author made sure that his philosophical abstractions behind the epic became known to his audience because this made it possible to see the ancient Finns as pagan philosophers worthy and capable of historical, collective agency – and hence a nation. Because the mythology presented in the *Kalevala* was built on pagan religion, it was necessary to describe also the early world history that resulted in Christianity. Lönnrot's epic was thus a description of the history of civilization: the epic stops at the end of the pagan era and the advent of the new faith and a nation state built on Lutheranism (Kaukonen 1956: 505–506; Anttonen 2012:340). The narrative arches between two virginal conceptions and heroic births: Ilmatar and Väinämöinen start the epic, and Marjatta, the vernacular Virgin Mary, and the hero associated with Jesus close it. Väinämöinen, who entered the scene of world history by kicking open the door obstructing Ilmatar's womb with his left toe, exits to the same place where he came from: to the open sea and the windy air (50:501–506).

Lönnrot's reworking of the vernacular oral sources is literary throughout and governed by a literate mind (e.g. Apo 2004). He knew intimately the sources and their imagery, but the elastic vernacular imagination that governed the sources was incompatible with the idea of a coherent epic – this applies to the levels of a chronological plot, consistent imagery and coherent ideology. Lönnrot and the singers of oral poetry worked within the frames of the system of genres, already established (as in oral tradition) or in the state of becoming (as in the case of *Kalevala*). Both were conditioned by the cognitive and social aspects of cultural memory and performing practices. The context-specific, historically layered and largely episodic images concerning the origin of the world and aetiologies did not match a linear plot expected from an epic. The problems are evident in the inconsistencies of the plot that caused wide criticism and resulted in several versions and rewritings of the myth, constant oscillation between the abstract and the concrete, as well as fabrication of mythic incidents and personae with rich humanlike psychology and biology. The irreconcilability of the problems ultimately led to Väinämöinen's double ancestry, to him being a descendant of both the natural elements and the mythic historical people of Kaleva (see Tarkka 1996:77–78). The repeated speculations on the historicity of the epic hero Väinämöinen and the poetic representations of his birth are a contradiction

resembling the elastic vernacular cosmogony: even the formative events and the identities of the protagonists were flexible and they depended on the genre and the context.

The erudite Lönnrot and his close colleagues also created an empirical frame of reference for the Finnish-Karelian mythic corpus: it was to be understood against the prism of international mythic traditions. These contextualizations lent Lönnrot new, sometimes anachronistic, arguments to justify his textualizations. Philosophical debates, cross-cultural comparisons, literary genres and audience expectations, Christian literature and massive folklore collections fuelled Lönnrot's learned imagination. The resulting hybrid is a myth pastiche that changed through the author's five versions and, albeit an idiosyncratic fiction, authorized the epic as mythic history.

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[1] This article is an edited translation of Tarkka 2020b.

[2] SKVR is the acronym for the 34-volume edition of Kalevala-metric folk poetry, *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (The Old Poems of the Finnish People). The series was published in 1908–1948 and the corpus is available online in https://skvr.fi/. References to the poems in the SKVR are as follows: SKVR [number of the geographical series in Roman numerals, here I for Viena Karelian poems] [number of the volume within the geographical series, here 1–4 in subscript]:[number of poem]. In extended quotations, the name of singer and the year of collection are given if they are known.

[3] Lönnrot produced five versions of the *Kalevala:* the short epic cycles Lemminkäinen, Väinämöinen and Songs for Weddings (*Naimakansan virsiä*) (1833), the *Proto-Kalevala* or the Collected Poems on Väinämöinen (*Runokokous Väinämöisestä*) (1834 (1928)), the *Old Kalevala* (1835; Lönnrot 1835 (1993)), the *New Kalevala* (1849; Lönnrot 1849a (1921)) and the abridged *Kalevala* for schools (1862; Lönnrot 1862 (2005)). The editions of 1835, 1849 and 1862 were published during Lönnrot’s lifetime and the *Proto-Kalevala* posthumously.

[4] *Luonto* refers to the essence and the spirit of a living being, *synty* to the origin or ancestry of a living being, object or element, *haltia* to the independent guardian spirit of a living being, object or element and *väki* to the power substance inherent in beings, objects and elements; see e.g. Siikala 2002:250–257; Stark 2006:262–266.

[5] The Viena-Karelian Sampo-poem tells how the smith Ilmarinen made the sampo, how it started to produce endless wealth, and how the heroes stole it from the otherworld – the incident results in the destruction of the sampo, which explains the origin of poverty and want in the human lifeworld – see e.g. Tarkka 2012.

[6] Lönnrot has written the chapters on ancient belief and poetry in Cajan 1839 (see Ahola & Lukin 2016:72, n.7).

[7] Associating nature [*luonto*] with creation and creator [*luoja*] is based on etymology and assonance.

Representations of a Twentieth-Century Swedish Storyteller and His Repertoire

Alf Arvidsson

Abstract
From 1941 up to his death, the storyteller Carl Bergkvist (1885–1960) was visited a several times and his stories recorded, some of them to be published. This study focuses on how the choice of stories to publish presented different images of him according to context; as a dialect comedian, as a storyteller with a style reminiscent of Icelandic sagas, as a local historian and tradition-bearer. This variation is related to different institutional contexts and discourses changing over time. Through the study of the personal narratives in his recordings, yet other possible images can be discerned; however, they would have required other kinds of storyteller discourses to be realized.

Keywords: Carl Bergkvist, storyteller, storytelling, tradition-bearer, repertoire representation, dialect, labour history

During the twentieth century, the public representation of folklore turned from projecting an image of ancient texts and practices spread evenly among a homogeneous collective, towards an appreciation of the competence of individual expressive specialists.[1] The concept of tradition-bearer (von Sydow 1932/1948) drew attention to the individual knowledge and performance skills required, and this reassessment also had consequences in the form of giving persons individual attention in public presentations. However, this can vary in many ways, according to historical contexts, scholarly paradigms, and the immediate context of presentation.

In this article I will discuss public representations of a storyteller and his stories, made during different decades, and compare them with the image I can discern from an overview of the total documentation of his repertoire that is available. The choices of stories presented, the stated relation between storyteller and stories, and the discourses of oral storytelling that are drawn upon are studied, in the tradition of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann 1967, Hall 1997), in order to clarify how the image of a storyteller is constructed. In order to clarify the motivations behind this public exposure, the institutional contexts are taken into account in the analysis.

The Storyteller's Repertoire and Image

The concept of storyteller implies not just one story, but a whole repertoire of stories to draw upon. The representation of a storyteller in public media thus implies a repertoire of a certain character; although seldom consciously outspoken, the selection of stories to reproduce and the accompanying paratexts construct an image of the repertoire.

The Swedish musicologist Gunnar Ternhag, in his studies of the fiddler *Hjort Anders Olsson* (1876–1952), has pointed out that the many documentations of Olsson's playing – staff note transcriptions by musicologists and revival movement amateurs, audio recordings by the Swedish Broadcasting System to make radio programmes, by commercial record companies, by young fellow musicians – do not add up to a complete picture of his repertoire, for many reasons; questions such as: did he know and play a tune all of his life, what was considered too commonplace to document, what did he want to keep for himself, what were the intentions of the persons making the documentation, and so on. Ternhag underlines that it is a *repertoire representation* we can reconstruct, never a reconstruction of an abstract total repertoire (Ternhag 1992: 199). The picture will always be inconclusive, anachronistic and simplifying – notwithstanding the question of what repertoire is meant: the tunes played at public performances, the tunes played in private, or tunes remembered but never played unless prompted by a folklorist with a recording machine.

As for storytelling, a similar chain of reasoning can be postulated but also complicated with the difference that lies in that a folk fiddler has a repertoire of distinct tunes, but a storyteller can also produce new stories within the context of a recorded conversation – especially if the recording is framed as dealing with a specific topic rather than as a documentation of stories. A person's experience and knowledge, in combination with good narrative competence, can generate new narratives immediately when there is an external interest in a topic.

The study of individual storytellers and their repertoires has a long history in folklore studies. Mark Asadowskij's *Eine sibirische Märchenerzählerin* (1926) is usually mentioned as the starting-point, although Carl Wilhelm von Sydow's concept of tradition-bearer (1932/1948) and James Delargy's article on *The Gaelic Story-teller* (1945) seem to have had more impact in underlining the specialist competence that makes the individual stand out. Linda Dégh (1969, 1995), like Asadowskij, discusses the personality of the storyteller (Zsuzanna Palkó) as it formats the text and performance, tendencies and portrayals in her tales. Bengt Holbek in his study of Evald Tang Kristensen's Jutland documentations of folk tales (1987) likewise devotes chapters to a chosen sample of individual storytellers and their respective repertoires, linking their personal life experiences to their choices and styles

of what and how to tell. Altogether, these studies represent how the study of the well-established genre of folk tales (Märchen) turned to the question of the individual *personalities* of tradition-bearers to deepen the understanding of the genre.

The focus on *märchen* that dominated folk narrative studies well into the 1960s then gave way to a broader range of genres, where such documentation had been done.[2] Works by Juha Pentikäinen (1978), Ulf Palmenfelt (1994), and Timothy Tangherlini (1994) in various ways discuss the relation between storyteller and repertoire recorded. Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj's study of Juho Oksanen (1996) draws upon 20 hours of recordings made over a three-year period, thus making it possible to study variation in small details. Oksanen was considered a "good narrator" in his home parish, "a man who knows" (1996: 64), which meant a vast repertoire of anecdotes about local people and events, and memoirs. Anna-Leena Siikala made a suggestion (1980), drawing upon the larger project of which Kaivola-Bregenhøj's interviews were part of that storytellers could be categorized in five types, according to the *egodistance* – "the gap between the tradition and [the storyteller's] self concept" (1980: 168), which can be great, small or have completely disappeared, and the *narrative activity* ranging from performing eagerly and frequently via occasionally performing to performing only when asked.

The question of how "tradition-bearers" or "folk artists" noticed by researchers, museums, and archives are represented to wider audiences has been addressed in some studies, mostly on musicians (Ternhag 1992; Schroeder 2004). Storyteller representations have not been studied to the same extent; however, Richard Bauman's study of Texas storyteller Ed Bell (1986) makes a point of how changing contexts also changed the choices of stories to tell and also, since Bell, who was noticed when he swapped stories with locals in everyday countryside interaction, started to tell stories to young urban visitors and then had to adjust to the new audience. Joseph Sobol, in his study of the storyteller movement in the USA, analyses the "canonization" of Ray Hicks at the annual Jonesborough storytelling festival, which is clearly traceable in the programme presentations changing over the years from underlining the genuine character of Hicks' repertoire to stressing the national distinctions and prizes awarded to him, making himself rather than his stories the important aspect of his appearance at the festival (Sobol 1999: 104–117).

Recording Carl Bergkvist

This study deals with a man whose storytelling was documented primarily because he was recognized as a local public storyteller (just like Oksanen, Bell and Hicks). However, he was not documented in public action; neither

was he documented primarily for his performance skills but rather for his vast knowledge of fading folkways – that is, as a tradition-bearer. Further still, he was not documented in any systematic way but rather occasionally (in terms of situations as well as topics).

Carl Bergkvist was born in 1885 in the village of Överklinten, Bygdeå Parish, in the county of Västerbotten in northern Sweden.[3] His father Anders Berg was a peasant soldier, that is, he was the soldier for a *rote* (rota, a number of farms sharing a public responsibility) in the system that upheld a Swedish army until 1901. Överklinten had three *rotar*; this was the Berg rote, thus his surname. As a soldier he would go to annual training meetings for a couple of weeks, and for the remainder of the year be on stand-by in case of war or other situations; for this he had a small cottage and a small allotment as support from the villagers and could take part-time work whenever needed, and go fishing and hunting on common land. The industrial plant of Robertsfors close by would also provide occasional work. Bergkvist (who changed his surname from Berg to Bergkvist in adult age) stayed with his parents and continued to work in the same way; he married and he and his wife Maria eventually took over the cottage. At some stage in life, he became known for his rich store of narratives and started to perform at local meetings and gatherings.

In this article I will discuss three public representations of Bergkvist and his repertoire, and compare them with the image I can discern from an overview of the total documentation of his repertoire that is available (and thereby, produce a fourth). To begin with, I will present the totality of records of his storytelling. First and foremost, and the way I got to know about Bergkvist, is the audio recordings at the Archive of Dialects and Folklore in Umeå, which initially (1954–1971) was an autonomous institute but was managed from the county museum, Västerbottens museum, in Umeå.[4]

In 1953, the museum curator Evert Larsson bought a tape recorder at his own expense.[5] The reason was that he had met with Carl Bergkvist and decided to arrange for the documentation of his speech and narratives. This soon developed into the foundation of an archive for dialects and folklore for the two northernmost counties of Sweden; the two counties, the Västerbotten county museum and the township of Umeå made up the foundation. From 1953 until 1960, the year of Bergkvist's death, Larsson and fellow museum curator Per-Uno Ågren would make recordings with Bergkvist, either when they passed his cottage on some other duty, or when he visited Umeå for some business. This haphazard way of seizing the opportunity, rather than following any specific plan, characterizes the total contents of the recordings; the topics vary in and between the different sessions – sometimes Larsson and Ågren lead into topics that possibly might be on their contemporary museum agenda, sometimes they ask for further

elaboration on a theme addressed in a previous interview, and a few times they ask him to tell stories. Bergkvist also has opinions on what to speak about and to record, and has his tricks to keep the floor. Besides, the mission of documenting dialects would mean that any topic that would keep Bergkvist talking was sufficient for making a "good" session. "Our interest was primarily in the traditions he bore, not that he could recite *Fänrik Ståls sägner* by heart" (Ågren in interview quoted in Åhlander 2002: 12).

The total recordings amount to some ten hours, made on seven different occasions. According to my analysis the recordings contain 225 different chunks of speech, of which 202 could be characterized as narratives (the remainder are passages where topics are suggested or questions asked by the interviewers but Bergkvist just answers curtly or really has nothing to say). Besides the audio recordings, there are also some ten stories documented in written form only as well as one story published in a newspaper. A rough characterization of the totality makes it clear that he draws upon personal narratives, family lore, local history tradition, belief legends, and print lore; recurring themes are hunting, agriculture, war, murder and violence, strong people, poor people, supernatural beings, popular movements, youth, entertainment. From this variety of themes and sources, different representations have been made that give varying images of a storyteller.

I have made a general analysis of the narratives, and coded them according to geographic sphere (village, parish, county, country), time ("times bygone", specified years or decades, "when I was young"), genre, actors, mode (realism, humour), stated source (parents, personal experience, "it is said"), topics. This has helped me to formulate the different storyteller roles invoked in public representations of Bergkvist, where the interplay of topics, Bergkvist's relation to the content, the supposed reaction of the audience/readers and the presentational context contribute to position him in different contemporary understandings of the relevance of oral storytelling. I call these roles *the humorist, the bearer of traditional knowledge,* and *the local history curator*. Furthermore, in my analysis of the archived recordings I noticed how his self-presentation by personal narratives also exposed yet another side that has not got any public attention. I will discuss this under the heading of *the radical*.

The Humorist Storyteller

Although the recordings made by Larsson and Ågren in the 1950s are the primary source for Bergkvist's repertoire, this was not the first time his storytelling had been documented. Around 1940 Bergkvist was noticed in the county museum circle through the work of female teacher Signe-Maja Barrmo, who was born and worked in Överklinten. In 1941 Barrmo published some stories told by Bergkvist as a chapter in the county museum

yearbook, under the headline *Egna upplevelser* (Personal experiences). Although these are his own experiences, the chapter starts by marking out a temporal position: "Women in the old times…." The chapter contains four separate stories, all of which picture Bergkvist in rather comic situations.

> Women in the old times couldn't wad the quilts. One time when I was out on sales travels, I happened to stay up in the wedge between the Burträsk and Bygdeå parishes, and in the evening when I came to the farm where I was to stay, it was at least twenty below zero, and I was to lie in a chamber and the door was open. But I went in anyway, took off my shoes and stockings, but pulled my winter cap down and went to bed.
>
> But when I had lain there for a while I realized that my big toe had stuck in a stitch in the quilt. I lay for a while and drew and pulled but couldn't get free, so I took the other big toe and tried to scratch myself loose, but it got stuck too, the stitches were so damned long. So I lay toiling and pulling and working and as I went on, I had kicked the quilt down to the end of the bed like a lump, and I froze so hard that I rattled. But there was no chance of getting free, because the quilts were sewn together with bear cotton thread and it withstood everything. And I suppose I would have frozen to death if I hadn't remembered that I had brought along a good knife. I drew it and cut the threads. Then I drew the quilts all over me, but I didn't dare to lie like an ordinary man, instead I lay down on my belly and turned my toes downwards.[6]

In the other stories, he knocks down a large sunflower outside the house in the middle of the night thinking it is an intruding thief, he tries to lead a cow gone astray back to the farm by pulling its tail and ends up in a muddy ditch, and he tries to court a young teacher but she doesn't know the rural patterns of courtship.

Another transcription by Barrmo was accessed by the Archive in 1956. It is dated 1955 by the archivist but could just as well have been textualized in the early forties: "I can't believe that young people nowadays have such fun as we had when we were young. If we wanted to dance in the summertime there was always an empty barn, and in the winter we could use an oven-house. And to have music for the dancers there was no need of a 'swing hot' or a Babs standing drivelling" (DAUM acc 56).

The references to "swing hot" and "Babs" would have been more up to date in 1941 when swing music and the singer Alice Babs were at the centre of a moral panic (cf. Fornäs 2003), rather than in 1955. The archive curator's introduction also states that Barrmo lives in another parish quite far away from Överklinten – perhaps this document is a 1955 rewriting of a 1941 documentation?

The chapter in the 1941 yearbook was placed in a section with other dialect texts, authored by local *landsmålsberättare*, "dialect storytellers".[7] Since the 1890s, dialect storytellers were part of the movement of revitalizing folk culture; the outdoor museum *Skansen* in Stockholm started to have storytelling and singing as a form of edutainment, with humorous stories of

rural life, jocular tales, smart and funny dialogues making up a "good old days" image. *Jödde i Göljaryd* and *Delsbostintan* were some of the personas who became role models for entertainment in the *hembygdsrörelse,* the national movement of regional and local heritage associations (Björkroth 2000); K. P. Rosén who had Jödde as his stage persona died in 1900, but Ida Gawell-Blumenthal, Delsbostintan (1869–1953), was active well up to the fifties, performing regularly on radio from the twenties.[8] Lydia Hedberg (1878–1964), known as Bergslagsmor, performed from 1910 up to the late thirties, Nergårds-Lasse (Sibbe Malmberg) 1895–1946. Fryksdalsmora (Ida Sahlström), and Värmlands-Olle also performed at Skansen in 1909–1910 and continued locally.[9] As for Västerbotten, the journalist Ernst Gavelin in the twenties wrote songs in dialect and also wrote a comic play that was performed at the local museum. It is in this context that Bergkvist could be noticed and gain attention from the educated strata.[10]

What is striking about the texts supplied by Barrmo is how they start by marking a temporal distance. In this way a narrating subject is established which fulfils the genre expectations about the dialect narrator, someone who takes possession of the floor by having a voice that can tell of *förr i tiden* (bygone days), someone who can bring different perspectives on modern life and to younger generations' unreflected adoption of new practices. This way of starting a story is in general absent from the recordings, or not so clearly outspoken. These introductory phrases may be Barrmo's additions, but they may just as well represent Bergkvist's public narrating persona and convey how he designed his stories at local fêtes and gatherings, where this kind of framing, although not mandatory perhaps increased the chances of the audience immediately placing the performance in the right genre.

The Bearer of Traditional Knowledge

After the Second World War, Swedish society was rushing towards modernity. The *hembygdsrörelse*, which at the turn of the century had been part of modernization, was now fading and museums were professionalizing. County museums were reorganized into foundations owned by the county council and the capital city board, and would receive state funding as subordinated to the national board of antiquities. Curators with academic degrees (ethnologists, archaeologists, art historians) were hired, and every county acquired a state-employed county antiquarian. The county museum's yearbook gradually became more of a professional journal, with texts in dialect restricted to specific articles with a scholarly linguistic framing.

In the early fifties, the county museum was making a more systematic inventory of folk culture of the region and was looking for local people with good knowledge and interest. The publication from 1941 led Evert Larsson to Bergkvist. The first recorded interview, made at the museum

in October 1953, swings between different topics: stories of people in the village, customs, popular beliefs, anecdotes about the county governor, and the words to a song that he recites, about a Sami fiddler who was murdered by another fiddler at a wedding. Four stories – three dealing with supernatural beings and one about a local herdsman who speaks back defiantly to the county governor – were transcribed and included in a book in preparation with samples of dialect texts from northern Sweden, edited by linguist Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt and the museum curator Per-Uno Ågren[11] (Dahlstedt & Ågren 1954/1980). As the anthology comprises many extracts, their comments on each number are short and concentrate on explaining the contents and points of vocabulary and pronunciation. Bergkvist is presented as "an extraordinarily good narrator with clear and distinct language". The next time he was interviewed, in May 1954, he also spoke on various topics, but one longer story captured the researchers' immediate interest. This was a story of a murder that was committed in the village in 1786, when the farmer Per Larsson wanted to have his father killed – since he was an economic burden on the farm – and paid off a soldier to do it. This story was immediately transcribed by Dahlstedt who managed to have it published with the title *Li-mordet: Ett stycke folklig berättarkonst* (The Li murder: A piece of popular narrative art) in the monthly journal *All världens berättare* (Storytellers of the world), which mostly published short stories by established writers. In his comment, Dahlstedt first drew attention to similarities to established writers in northern Sweden, but he also underlined the stylistic similarities to the Icelandic family sagas.

> As a storyteller Bergkvist surely has few equals in Norrland today. Before the age of movies and weekly magazines there were probably more of his kind, but they have always been rare. His register spans many genres. He likes to tell humorous anecdotes and stories of ancient supernatural beliefs.
>
> The Li murder represent a rather appreciated genre in local history. From Västerbotten County at least two similar stories are known. One tells of how the farmer Jan Nathaniel in Hössjö, Umeå Parish, killed his father-in-law in the 1850s, the other of how the peasant boy Jon Larsson in Latikberg, Vilhelmina, drowned his brother Abraham in the 1820s. The motive for all three murders was economy. Crimes of passion have hardly been in vogue in the Norrland countryside.
>
> All three stories go to great efforts to describe the execution. The genre as such draws upon the same human curiosity about the terrifying as contemporary horror and murder literature. But the style is distant and withdrawn as in an Icelandic saga.

This was the same year Ernest Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize, and the similarities between Hemingway and Icelandic sagas were noticed in public literary criticism that spoke of the "hard-boiled" style. A story in the same style would thus apply to a contemporary literary audience. But the reference to Icelandic sagas is also a statement about the legitimacy of making dialect recordings, since the similarities between Swedish

dialects and Old Norse, dialects as survivals of ancient Swedish/common Scandinavian culture, have been a strong argument for the value of dialect studies. An excerpt from the story of the murder reveals this distanced, matter-of-fact way of telling.

> There lived a soldier called Flark, his name was Jonas Flark. And [Per Larsson] asked him to shoot his father. This was in the autumn of 1785, and he proposed 50 dalers as a fee for shooting him. And this Flark probably thought that would be a good income, to earn 50 dalers, so he went by here too, and –
>
> To get things in order and not to have it at the farm, he [Larsson] asked his father to take the horse and ride down to the brook. Because he had said where he [Flark] should be hiding, and they had decided that by a barn just by the brook, there he would – it was clear moonlight, so he would shoot him by the light of the moon. So he asked the old man to go down to the barn and fetch a wagon of hay one evening. And the old man would gladly fetch a load of hay for him. And he had trod the wagon so it was full way up half the bows, we say. The old man had filled the wagon and trod down the hay so it was full more than half the way up to the shafts. Then the other one lay on the other side of the brook, and it was moonlight and the brook was frozen over, and there was tiny rapids further downstream with open water. And Flark shot from the bushes where he lay, and the old man fell, but rose again, he fell off the wagon, but rose again. When Flark saw this – it was muzzle-loaders with flintlocks in those days, so it would take too much time to reload, instead –
>
> He was a big, strong man, Flark, and he sprang over the brook and held the old man, and pulled him down into the water, even though he prayed for his life, he wouldn't tell anybody. But it didn't help, he showed no pardon, but pressed him down beneath the ice and smothered him there. Then he took him up and lay him into a bridge caisson, because there was an old bridge there, he took up the planks and put the old man there, and replaced the planks. Sure indeed.[12]

The description of the murderer is distanced – Flark is only interested in the money and shows no pardon. At the same time, the murder is described in detail as if by an eyewitness, or as told by Flark at the inquest – implying an almost verbatim oral tradition at the bottom of Bergkvist's story. The credibility of the storyteller as a tradition-bearer is enforced by the insertion of minor details on loading hay and primitive guns.

In the thirties Evert Larsson had recorded in writing the local murder story from Hössjö for the Uppsala Dialect and Folklore Archive, and in the taped interviews he seems to be keen on recording yet more murder stories. Bergkvist supplied another five stories of murders, all staged in "old times" and some of them complete with the execution or other penalty for the culprit. This is just the tip of the large amount of stories dealing with old times; the taped interviews to a large extent deal with times of hardship, poverty, war, famine, as well as long lists of tramps and impoverished people of the region. In the recordings, the "older times" are pictured as a society of social injustice and poverty, rather than the idyllic rurality of the *landsmålsberättare* movement.

Another theme that Larsson rather than Bergkvist leads the interviews to is his knowledge of agriculture, fishing, and hunting before the recent modernization of Swedish society. In this way, Bergkvist is the perfect informant for the museum, giving detailed knowledge of older times but also recalling when and how changes were introduced. This image of Bergkvist as a living source on older times is underlined when you notice that Bergkvist mixes stories of his own experiences with stories from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but he never tells anything resembling a life story of his own. It is memories from his youth, provided to bear witness to bygone times rather than to explain his life trajectory. The image of Bergkvist's narrator persona that comes out in the recorded interviews is not that of a nostalgic – on the contrary, he stresses the progress during the twentieth century with improved living conditions. The recordings are not situated as "induced performance situations" so Bergkvist would not need to make the kind of introductions that begin the Barrmo texts.

The publication of a dialect anthology and of Bergkvist's murder story in the popular literary journal probably also served to establish Umeå as a site of academic activity. The dialect anthology was published as number 1 of a series of the "Vetenskapliga biblioteket" (Scientific Library) in Umeå – one of the local efforts in the race between cities to get the next Swedish university, which eventually came true in 1965. The recognition of Bergkvist as a storyteller of national importance, which was implied by the publication in *All världens berättare*, would also have given local politicians proof of the rightfulness of starting a regional dialect and folklore archive.

The Local History Curator

As indicated above, the county museum and folklore archive had an interest in Bergkvist for his dialect, for his insight into pre-modern everyday working life, and for his knowledge of local historical events. However, apart from the Li murder story, which was publicly presented for its style rather than its historical content, his stories of local events were not given any special notice. After Bergkvist passed away in 1960, his recordings were used at the archive primarily as examples of the local dialect.

In the 1970s, a rising public interest in folk culture, local history, and history "from below" found many expressions. Besides a vigorous expansion of young generations taking up folk fiddling (Ramsten 1992), a series of radio and television programmes were tied in with a national programme on local history circles, the author Sven Lindqvist's book *Gräv där du står* (Dig where you stand, 1978) on how to do lay research on workplace history, further inspired to local initiatives, and there was a wave of local amateur outdoor theatre plays about strikes and other controversial historical events (Alzén 2011). Interestingly, oral narrative was not specifically noticed. For

instance, Lindqvist never mentions interviews as a possible source category. Although Paul Thompson's *Voices of the Past* was translated into Swedish and published by a commercial publishing company (1980), the concept of Oral History did not receive so much public attention.[13] The focus was on "the hidden history" rather than on the personal perspective, the oral presentation was a case for source criticism but was not ascribed so much value in its own right. Furthermore, oral sources were primarily used for depicting social relations and living conditions, rather than relating specific events.

In the early nineties, however, the folk fiddler and music teacher Thomas Andersson, born in 1956, made a one-man storytelling show about the Sami fiddler who was killed at a wedding in Bergkvist's home parish, a story told in a song Bergkvist recited in 1953. In the late seventies Andersson had done fieldwork all over the county, recording songs and fiddle tunes by older folk musicians for the archive, and had heard stories of the murder still being told among musicians. He was told there was a song about the event, and that Bergkvist had known the song. This led him to the recordings of Bergkvist, and combining this with court records and other sources, Andersson made up this show which he made into a story of envy, grandiosity, honour, and racism.[14]

The show was performed on regional tours but also taken up by national television, and Andersson was given a prize by the Swedish Academy for revitalizing oral storytelling. He has continued working with Bergkvist's stories among other local stories, giving shows on different themes; one including Bergkvist's local traditions of the 1809 war, and another on a sixteenth-century story of highwaymen that fed into legends, besides shows combining several shorter stories, under the heading "The Cultural Heritage Strikes Back".

In contrast to many other contemporary folk fiddlers and singers who also have taken up storytelling, Andersson is not a humorist but rather a moralist. The danger of envy and self-righteousness leading to a lack of judgement, as well as ethnic stereotyping and discrimination, are focused and brought to attention in the form of moralities based on traditional folk narratives. While having a strong feeling for reviving the intangible heritage, he also consciously strove to give Bergkvist's and others' stories contemporary relevance.

Although he has been noticed as a reviver of traditional stories, he clearly makes them his own; his relation to the Bergkvist recordings is to use them as one source that provides stories which can be augmented with knowledge from other sources. He does not reproduce other storytellers' stories and style of performance – when he refers to storytellers in his performances it is to those he actually has met himself. Reflecting on his own storytelling,[15] Andersson expresses a sense of affinity to Bergkvist who for him stands out as a storyteller by having a strong *purpose*; the will to tell of

older generations, of their living conditions, knowledge and experiences. In a recent publication about his views of and methods of storytelling, Andersson supports his claims for genre-specific artistic professional standards by naming Bergkvist as a role model.

> If you spice the story with historical facts, years, names, and details, it gives credibility as well as interesting information for the audience. He treated the listeners with such bits and got everybody to follow intricate and meandering courses of events. Humour was another added spice. (2020: 22)

Elsewhere, Andersson underlines the importance of having good knowledge and doing lots of research when planning a show. Besides noting Bergkvist's skills in keeping the audience interested, he also touches upon the personal joys of telling a story he sometimes can perceive in Bergkvist's deliverance as a "slight ecstasy".

> Sometimes you can hear the tempo increasing, the timbre of the voice changes a bit, the story flows on, almost as if rolling on railway tracks. He has told this before, there is no hesitation about the choice of words and phrases. He almost rattles it off, but it is never vacuous and dull but rather with a feeling of musical swing. It is just momentarily, enough to get the story off the ground and start flying. It gives variation to the narration. I think "slight ecstasy" is a suitable denomination. From my own experience of storytelling there have been moments when I have got into the same state […] If you have experienced that, it is one of the reasons for keeping on. (2020: 22)

The Radical Storyteller

There is yet another side of Bergkvist that has not been fully exposed (although mentioned in Åhlander 2002). He did not just speak of older times as a contrast to modern society. He was also a witness to political change; one story which was recorded twice is a potted chronicle of the Swedish labour movement, starting with how the tailor August Palm introduced the ideas of Karl Marx in southern Sweden, and was followed by other leaders, some characterized in anecdotes. Bergkvist also had a personal story, about when, as a teenager working at the ironworks, he helped the touring agitator Kata Dahlström to arrange a meeting and almost got fired. His story of Dahlström was recorded twice; here it is in his first, more coherent version, with the questions and comments of Evert Larsson.

> EL We read in a newspaper clipping that Bergkvist had met Kata Dahlström, how… what are your memories of her?
>
> CB She was a woman of the breakthrough of modern times, and had to be … as king Charles XII said: for a bad disease you need a strong medicine, it was like that in those times, the old conservatism was very hard on people, almost like feudal times, we know people had to quit their work just for listening to a socialist agitator.

EL You have memories…

CB Yes indeed, I went advertising – I met a stumpy woman – Kata wasn't tall, she was a stump. And a good head. And a sharp tongue, save the people! And I met this woman, I didn't know who she was, and she asked me if I could put up those posters, there was to be a lecture at the sawmill.

EL When would this have happened?

CB In 1902. And then, I took a poster and nailed to the pole in the saw-mill yard, where people would pass by and see it, a place where everybody would take notice. Everybody who passed by could see it, and the steward came and then there were inquiries, and I was summoned to the office. It sounded very harsh, as if I would have to go to prison.

But there was an accountant called Bahr, he said: the boy looks so stupid, he said, we have to temper justice with mercy, he doesn't know what it's all about.

Kata had gathered the people and taken position in the sawmill slope, but the steward came and chased her away. That was company ground. And he got the question if the main road wasn't measured out. Yes, they were building a country road through the village. So she asked if there was a packing box she could stand on. Nobody could drive her off the road, because it was state property. She had the right of every Swedish citizen to say and do what she liked. And she stood there, held an inflammatory speech, she was already angry but now – […] He was so angry, the steward, he came waving his stick: "You're lying, old hag, with every word you say," he said. But then she got deathly pale. "Did you hear, dear audience, what this stripling said?" she said. "He is so young, so you have to get a microscope that magnifies ten thousand times, in order to see if it will grow a beard or if it just will be feathers. And he comes here saying I'm lying. To me, an old agitator. I could speak five languages besides my own mother tongue when this boy hardly could babble some Swedish. And he says I'm lying. No, little boy," she said, "what you say," she said, "should be written on parchment, wrapped in birch-bark, put in a salted oxen hide and be buried three metres down in a frostproof gravel slope with a cross on it, with the inscription: "In remembrance of the world left behind."[16]

As in many of his stories, reported speech plays an important part, indeed provides the reason for the performance. This was not an exceptional story; he told stories of the paternalistic system at the ironworks where the supervisor had the right to sentence workers to physical punishment. His sympathy for the labour movement is clear, so the modern times to which his stories are put in relief are not just times of technical improvements but of political changes. However, this Bergkvist is neither the voice of a different past nor the voice speaking eternal wisdom, and for labour history his stories perhaps are too local and idiosyncratic. He bears witness to oppression and inequity and an admiration for labour leaders, but never positions himself as an activist – his radicalism is performed by the means he had at his disposal, telling stories to a friendly audience. The newspaper interview referred to by Larsson gave Bergkvist the opportunity to speak of his memories but seems not to have been taken up otherwise. The preferred format in order to be noticed as an eyewitness to the social and political changes of the twentieth century would have been the workers' life history, as collected

and published by Nordiska museet (cf. Nilsson 1996); however, this would have included the process of writing as well as adjusting to the conventions of this genre.

Conclusions

The interest in Bergkvist and his stories has from time to time been revived from various standpoints, resulting in varying repertoire representations, depending on which narratives have been chosen to bring to public exposure. The choice of narratives to publish has in turn affected the kind of storyteller personality he is presented to be. All three representations I have identified give Bergkvist a position in contemporary society: as an entertainer for the local heritage movement, as a tradition-bearer with testimony about pre-modern everyday life as well as extraordinary events, and as a storyteller with an artistic agency. The question of who noticed Bergkvist also has bearing on which stories attract attention. The institutional contexts for doing documentation and presenting Bergkvist to a wider audience have to be appreciated for supplying interest, legitimization, media resources and listeners; in return the museum and the dialect archive got a living tradition-bearer, substantiating the validity of institutionalized endeavours in culture history. Also, references to Bergkvist reinforce Andersson's positioning within a contemporary arts field where the concept of cultural heritage has attracted new interest.

I have presented another side of Bergkvist here, where he stands out as a witness to the early days of the labour movement. This is also a potential image that could be launched by drawing upon the recordings made. However, as Åhlander notes (2002: 13), as indicated by the quotation above and also by occasional hints in the recordings, there is yet another side to him. He had also a great interest in reading and would just as happily draw upon his reading in public performances. He is not the only one in folklore documentation interviews who speaks of reciting authors like Runeberg and Geijer (who were preferred reading in the public schools) by heart, but this side of popular literacy has not been of scholarly interest until rather recent times (cf. Edlund, Ashplant & Kuismin 2016).

A comparison with the American storytellers Ed Bell and Ray Hicks would be rather superficial, since the attention bestowed upon him from researchers never resulted in any further interest from a general audience, at least not in the form of changing performance situations. However, what they have in common is the success in representing the "archetypal storyteller" which Sobol, inspired by Walter Benjamin, characterizes as "one who seeks and finds meaning in life, who brings to the chaos of experience the order, connectedness, and redemptive grace of art", combined with the eye-to-eye relation and immediacy of oral performance (Sobol 1999: 33).

Compared with Siikala's typology of personalities, Bergkvist has clearly been identified as the active storyteller with a distance to the tradition. However, as I have shown above, his repertoire also included stories where he was an actor and clearly identified with the actor in the story. Yet other recordings put him in the position of the passive tradition-bearer, responding to the interviewers' questions although the topic doesn't seem to engage him. Thus he fits in with at least three of the suggested types; rather than speaking of distinct personalities, I would say that the variables of situation and agency made several positions available to him. The social arenas where he has been presented favoured the distanced role of a tradition-bearer (where the interpretation of what characterizes "the tradition", as we have seen, can vary). It could be said, in relation to the recent interest in *personal* narratives, that Bergkvist as a storyteller in his own right, speaking from his own personal experience, has been obscured except in the earlier role of entertaining with humorous stories. However, the tendency in this kind of criticism, that he wasn't noticed for "his own story", can be questioned, since listening to older people and reading others' stories also can be counted as personal experiences. To borrow Thomas Andersson's concept, Bergkvist clearly had a serious purpose – for what exactly we do not have any statements of his own to rely on, but it seems that he was self-conscious in taking on the role of transmitter of stories of the common people where his own experiences were a few among many.

The broadening of the concept of folklore to include personal narratives and stories from recent times has also changed the conceptions of what characterizes a traditional storyteller, including how the concept of tradition should be understood – not as an inherent quality of the stories but rather as a process of relations between people. The concept of storyteller can be widened to be an all-inclusive *terminus technicus* for anyone delivering a narrative; still, the self-appointed storytellers, those chosen by their communities, and those "discovered" by previous generations of scholars, are of special interest since they personify collective imaginations of how and why stories circulate in social contexts. The different images of Bergkvist and his repertoire reveal the variability possible with changing times and new audiences.

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[2] See Sedlaczek 1997 on this broadening scope of genres.
[3] His name is spelled in various ways, sometimes even in the same text: Carl or Karl, Bergkvist or Bergqvist. A presentation of him and a folkloristic performance analysis of an extract is available in Åhlander 2002, an abridged version of a BA thesis I supervised.
[4] In 1971, the archive, launched as a regional foundation, was incorporated into the national authority for archives of dialects and folklore. In 2015 it was closed down due to lack of funding on the national level.
[5] Evert Larsson (1898–1964) was a freelancer, a farmer who turned to art work in the thirties, restoring folk art (paintings, furniture, wallpaper prints) for museums, documenting the local dialect for the Uppsala dialect and folklore archives, refusing a permanent position at the county museum but an important collaborator for over twenty years. See Ågren 2000.
[6] Bergqvist 1941:95–96. All translations by the author.
[7] This early folklore revitalization movement in Sweden has not been studied to any great extent. See however Jansson 1975 for a literary perspective, and Karlsson 1981 for dialect storytelling in Swedish Finland.
[8] Jödde is presented in Gustavsson & Palmenfelt 2017:394–404.
[9] Information taken from the database of Swedish newspapers, tidningar.kb.se. Articles on Malmberg's 100th birthday, https://sormlandsspel.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/1955-09-20-Hälsa-gamla-hembygden-budskap-från-100-årige-Nergårds-Lasse.pdf.
[10] The popularization of dialect storytelling also merged with the vaudeville and market entertainment traditions to form the *bondkomiker,* "peasant comedian" performer role, much appreciated in the working classes up through the twenties but despised by the educated strata, see Ericson 1971.
[11] Dahlstedt (1917–1996), docent in Scandinavian languages in Uppsala, 1967 professor of linguistics in Stockholm, a position transferred at his request in 1969 to the recently inaugurated Umeå University. Ågren (1930–2008) was curator, later head of the museum, and eventually professor of museology.
[12] DAUM Bd 5, recorded 1954.
[13] For the relatively scarce interest in oral history among historians in Sweden, see Brändström & Åkerman 1991 and Hansson & Thor 2006. Many studies in ethnology in the 1980s were based on interviews but the concept of oral history was not invoked to any great extent.
[14] This is thoroughly presented in Odell 2009, a master's thesis I supervised. See also Hostetter & Rehnman 2002:134–140 for a short presentation of Andersson.
[15] Interview by the author, 23 November 2018. This is further elaborated upon in Andersson's book on his art, published in 2020.
[16] DAUM Bd 5, recorded 1954.

Three Women of Iceland and The Stories They Told

Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir

Abstract

This article focuses on the repertoires of three female storytellers contained in the audio archives of the folkloric collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland. The women in question were all born late in the nineteenth century and had unusually large repertoires. The article draws together information on their lives and surroundings to consider the context of their storytelling, also paying attention to who they learned their stories from and to whom they are predominantly likely to have told them. Among other things, it considers the close relationship between the women's experiences, and surroundings and their stories, underlining the degree to which such contextual features influence the content of the stories. The article shows that although these women also lived comparatively different lives, they all seem to have had an unusually large circle of contacts for women living in the Icelandic rural community of the past, underlining the importance of this feature for building up the repertoire of an active storyteller. While some elements of these women's repertoires can be considered to be particularly female traits (on the basis of previous research), others are evidently more in line with those witnessed in the repertoires of men in the past, something which, to some extent, can be explained by these women's experiences, which to some degree seem to reflect those of men in their communities.

Keywords: Iceland, women, storytellers, legends, narratives, storytelling, performance, the Icelandic rural community of the past

Iceland is particularly rich in terms of sources on oral storytelling in the pre-industrial rural community of earlier times. These sources come in the form of two particularly large types of folk narrative archives. One is the folk narrative collections published by various collectors in the nineteenth and twentieth century, which in recent years have been digitalized and mapped in the *Sagnagrunnur* database in which special effort has been put into reconnecting the material with its original narrators and its geographical surroundings (see Trausti Dagsson 2014; and Gunnell 2015). This large archive of approximately 10,000 printed legends originating mainly in the earlier rural community has in recent years been the source of several new studies dealing with the sociocultural context of folk narrative traditions of

the past (see, for example, Eva Þórdís Ebenezersdóttir 2010, and Gunnell 2005 and 2012), among others dealing with gender and the image of women in Icelandic legends (see, for example, Dagrún Jónsdóttir 2020). These studies have shown that it is possible to reconstruct many performative features of the legend tradition of the past, among other things by making use of various kinds of archives.

The second Icelandic archive of folk narratives with roots in the earlier Icelandic rural community is the sound archive of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland. This collection has also recently gone through the process of digitalization and is now easily available on the electronic database *Ísmús* (Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir 2013). This collection includes over 2000 hours of audiotaped folkloric material recorded by several collectors in the latter half of the twentieth century, using informants who in many cases were born on the latter half of the nineteenth century. This generation of Icelanders have been referred to as the last generation of the Icelandic pre-industrial rural community, which came to an end unusually late by European standards, around the time of the Second World War (Hastrup 1998: 26; Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson 1983; Magnús Gíslason 1977: 5–8). This collection, due to its audio nature and its rich contextual information about narrators and storytelling traditions, is particularly well suited for considerations of narrators and performance and has already been effectively used by Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir in her studies of the Icelandic narrators of wonder tales and their repertories, a work which underlined the degree to which the mindset and environment of the narrators left its mark on the stories they told (Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir 2011: 154–165). My own studies, which have been aimed at reconstructing various features of women's legend traditions in earlier times, using these audiotaped sources, have been limited to the interviews taken by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson (1934–2005) (see Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir 2018 and forthcoming a and b). In these previous articles, I have concentrated on the role played by women in storytelling activities on the Icelandic turf-farm, and various spatial features reflected in their storytelling; and the general characteristics of women's repertoires, underlining features which can potentially be regarded as female traits.

This present article will focus on three women interviewed by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson who had unusually large repertoires. These women were chosen more and less randomly from the group of women in my sources who were shown to have had unusually large repertoires and belonged to three different social groups of women, one being a married farm housewife, one being a single, childless woman and one a woman who had employment outside the realm of her home. The purpose of this survey is to examine the degree to which these women's experiences and surroundings shaped their repertoires and influenced their storytelling. Here, I follow the lead of

several other folklorists who have focused on the work of individual storytellers by the means of archived material (see, for example, Gísli Sigurðsson 1998; Herranen 1989 and 1993; Holbek 1987; Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir 2011; and Tangherlini 1994 and 2013), reconstructing both their biographical profiles and the context of their storytelling. The three women featured in this article, Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir and Þuríður Stefanía Árnadóttir, who were all born late in the nineteenth century, came of age in the early 1900s, when the rural community of the turf-farm was still in bloom. However, as I will hope to show in the article, these women evidently lived quite different lives which shaped their repertoire in different ways. Among other things, this underlines the degree to which the women of the past in Iceland were far from being a monolithic group, suggesting that the general ideas about Icelandic rural women in the past being homebound and socially restricted may have been somewhat too simple. It also adds further support to earlier research underlining how legend repertoires seem to have developed in close relationship with narrators' surroundings and life experience.

Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir (1892–1982)

In the Icelandic rural community, midwives lived lives that were considerably different from those of most other women at the time. In the late eighteenth century, midwifery had become the first profession for women that demanded a formal education, the first official training having been established in 1761 (Helga Þórarinsdóttir 1984: 19) and was for many years the only public office allotted to women. Being a midwife in rural Iceland was a difficult job in the past, perhaps more difficult than in most other countries because of the absence of roads and bridges, the long distances between farms and the unpredictable weather. The midwives were some of the few very women (outside tramps) who regularly experienced rough winter travelling around their wider communities, having been appointed by the state to cover districts that were often comparatively large in geographical terms and sparsely populated. As in other countries, they are common figures in Icelandic legend tradition, many of them being themselves noted storytellers (Almqvist 2008: 312–316; Elsa Ósk Alfreðsdóttir 2013: 79–84). This implies that there may have been something about the profession of midwifery in rural Iceland that made midwives particularly suitable as active participants in passing on the legend tradition. Indeed, among the informants interviewed by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson one finds several midwives with unusually large legend repertoires, the largest with a total of 69 legends belonging to Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir (1892–1982) from Skógarnes on Snæfellsnes peninsula, who became the midwife for the Ólafsvík and Fróðár municipality.

The source material on the life of Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir is comparatively rich compared with that on most other women of her time. Indeed, she was one of few Icelandic women of her period to have their memoirs published (in 1973, when she was still alive: see Halldór Pjetursson 1973).[1] This book alongside an obituary written about her in 1982 (Helgi Kristjánsson 1982) make an excellent addition to the information she gives herself about her life in the nine interviews with her recorded by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson in Reykjavík over the years 1967–1978. This material provides a valuable context to her extant oral repertoire recorded in Hallfreður Örn's interviews.

As many midwives in the past, Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir belonged to the lower economic stratum throughout her life. She grew up in a poor rural household in Straumfjarðartunga in the municipality of Miklaholt in Snæfellsnes after having been born in 1892, the second oldest of seven siblings. The municipality was a small community on the south of the Snæfellsnes peninsula, containing about 20 farms at the time Þorbjörg was growing up (Halldór Pjetursson, 1973: 16–31). The farm at Straumfjarðartunga was small and could barely sustain the family. Her father, Guðmundur Jóhannesson (1859–1930), therefore had to do small jobs for other wealthier farmers in the neighbourhood to provide for the household, and during the spring, annually left the farm to work as a fisherman on an open boat in a neighbouring region which was better located for fishing (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 9–11; SÁM 88/1514 and 89/1986). He was considered very able travelling under difficult conditions and was often asked to help travellers over the river his farm, Straumfjarðartunga, drew its name from, or to escort doctors and midwives on their journeys (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 32–35 and 43–44; SÁM 88/1552). While Þorbjörg does not tell any accounts of her father's travelling in the interviews taken by Hallfreður Örn, she does this in her autobiography, where, among other reminiscences, she gives an account of how her father escorted a midwife over the ice-covered river when it flooded during the winter of 1906. While the narrative is told as a means of highlighting her father's role as an escort under difficult conditions, it simultaneously provides an excellent insight into the conditions faced by midwives like Þorbjörg in rural Iceland at the time:

> Kristjana [the midwife] was a wise woman with "fortunate hands." My father passed on his message and said how long it had been since the woman had been taken ill, giving all relevant information about the situation. She thought for a moment and then said: "It would be criminal to refuse now; we will attempt this in the name of God, Guðmundur; no one should have to live without mercy." […] They set off and did not waste any time on the way. But when they got to the river, things looked even worse. Cracks had started appearing in the ice, and the river was roaring by like mad. Gestur [who had been called out on the other side of the river] called over to them, saying: "It's hopeless! The ice has burst up there and reached the Gissursvallafljót

river […], and even more has broken off the ice bridge [that had been crossed earlier] since this morning." My father looked at Kristjana and said: "What now?" She answered immediately: "Onwards, for the sake of God." My father swung her up onto his shoulder and set off. When they approached the other side, the water was up to his hips. My father than swung Kristjana and threw her up onto the Ice edge, calling to Gestur: "Make sure you deliver her in no worse a condition than I am delivering her to you! It's a matter of life and death!" He then turned back, but just as he was approaching the other side, then the avalanche reached them, the river cutting its way between the banks. He later said that he was really lucky that he made it, because the avalanche went over both banks. And the midwife made it just in time. The mother had been fighting like a hero for 38 hours before help arrived. Kristjana was a brave woman, she trusted in more than her own abilities, she believed in God. There was no doctor there to assist her, but she managed to save mother and child. (Halldór Pétursson 1973: 63–64).[2]

(Kristjana [ljósmóðirin] var vitur kona og með lánshendur. Faðir minn ber nú upp erindið, segir hvað langur tími var síðan konan veiktist og allar aðstæður þar að lútandi. Hún hugsar sig um andartak og segir síðan: „Það kemur nú úr hörðustu átt að neita núna, og við skulum reyna í Drottins nafni Guðmundur minn, enginn má líknarlaus lifa." […] Þau leggja nú af stað og spöruðu ekki sporin. En er að ánni kemur, er útlitið enn ljótara. Þar eru komnar sprungur í ísinn og áin beljar fram í grimdarham. Kallar þá Gestur [sendimaður handan árinnar] til þeirra og segir: „Þetta er vonlaust, jakahlaupið er komið ofan að Gissursvallafljóti […] og mikið meira brotið úr skaflinum [sem fært var yfir um morguninn] en í morgun." Pabbi segir þá og lítur á Kristjönu: „Hvað nú?" Hún svarar á augabragði: „Áfram fyrir Guðs skuld." Pabbi sveiflar henni þá á öxl sér og leggur út í. Þegar að hinum bakkanum kemur, tekur vatnið honum í mjöðm. Tekur þá pabbi sveiflu og kastar Kristjönu upp á skörina, og kallar til Gests svo segjandi: „Skilaðu henni ekki verr í áfangastað en ég til þín, því líf liggur við." Snýr hann svo til baka, en um leið og hann kemur að bakkanum hinum megin, þá kemur skriðan og áin ruddi sig landanna á milli. Sagði hann frá því síðar, að þá hefði hann átt fótum sínum fjör að launa, því skriðan gekk yfir alla bakka. Og seinna mátti ekki vera með ljósmóðurina. Móðirin var búin að heyja hetjulega baráttu í 38 klukkustundir, þegar hjálpin kom. Kristjana var hugprúð kona, hún trúði á meria en mátt sinn og megin, hún trúði á guð. Þarna var enginn læknir til aðstoðar, en henni tókst að bjarga bæði móðirinni og barninu.)

Þorbjörg herself became a midwife in 1914 and would later experience similar conditions in the rural parts of the municipality she later worked in on Fróðár on the northern side of the Snæfellsnes peninsula. Before leaving for Reykjavík in 1914 to study to become a midwife, she had had a child out of wedlock, a "lovechild" as she herself referred to such children (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 76–72 and 81–87; Helgi Kristjánsson 1982: 38). In 1912, she had become a farmhand on a farm in Staðarsveit on the south of the peninsula, where she had fallen in love with the son of her employee, who became the father of the child.

Unfortunately, his mother had higher expectations for her son, wanting him to marry a woman with a higher economic background, and she succeeded in splitting the couple before the child was born in 1913. Now a single

Figure 1. Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir. Photo: From Halldór Pjetursson 1973.

mother, Þorbjörg was forced to figure out a way to provide for herself and the child. She opted to leave her son with her parents and to study to become a midwife. By the time Þorbjörg entered the newly established School of Midwifery (*Ljósmæðraskólinn*) in Reykjavík in 1914, the training of midwives had been extended from three months to six. Still very poor, she had managed to make a deal with the local municipality of Fróðár before leaving, a small grant being awarded to her for the promise to serve the municipality for one year after her graduation (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 81–87).

Þorbjörg moved to the Fróðár district in 1915, living there on the farm Hrísar for the next four years (Halldór Pjetursson 1973, 88; SÁM 88/1514 and 92/2965). At the time, midwifery was not considered to be a full-time job, the assumption being that, unlike nurses who were supposed to remain single, midwives would be married women who were provided for by their husbands (Margrét Guðmundsdóttir 2010: 129–132 and 155). This meant Þorbjörg had to take on a part time job as a farmhand on the farm alongside her work as midwife. After the first winter, she had to give up having her son with her and sent him back to live with her parents (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 88; SÁM 88/1514 and 92/2965). In 1918, however, she married a local fisherman named Steindór Bjarnason. Since there was no farm available for them in Fróðár municipality, they opted to move further west to Ólafsvík, a small fishing village on its borders (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 105–112).

Ólafsvík is one of the oldest villages in Iceland, having been certified as a trading place by the Danish authorities in 1687. In the 1920s, the village had a population of little under 450 (Hagstofa Íslands: sögulegar hagtölur), most of whom survived on a mixture of fishing and small-scale farming on the very limited farmland allotted to them by the village municipality (Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson 1987: 206–208; Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 111; and Halldór Laxness 1963/1991: 230–231). Despite being a central trading place with several merchants, Ólafsvík did not get a proper harbour until 1920, meaning that fishing was restricted to small boats (Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson 1987: 133). At around the time that Þorbjörg settled down in Ólafsvík with her husband, the village had become known as one of Iceland's most poverty-stricken villages (Halldór Laxness 1963/ 1991: 93). Þorbjörg now took on the role of a midwife in Ólafsvík, while simultaneously maintaining her duties in her former district of Fróðár. Her husband became a good father to her son, and over the next years they had six more children, including one that they lost in childhood. Þorbjörg spent a great

deal of time alone, as her husband often worked a fisherman on larger trawlers based both in Reykjavík and in other distant places. In between these jobs, he would work on smaller fishing boats in their home village (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 105–112). This work along with Þorbjörg's modest salary as a midwife meant they were probably a little better off financially than many other inhabitants in the village at the time.

After the Second World War, Iceland's capital of Reykjavík experienced a strong wave of immigration of people from other parts of Iceland who were seeking new economic opportunities in the city. In line with this, Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir moved to Reykjavík with her husband in 1949, living in the city with their youngest son and his family. Unfortunately, disaster struck the family soon after their arrival when Þorbjörg's husband became disabled following a work accident (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 174–176). Only a few years later, one of her sons suffered the same fate in Ólafsvík (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 177–180). As noted in her obituary, these accidents, and the other hardships Þorbjörg suffered over the course of her life may have caused her to become somewhat judgemental and even ruthless regarding some other people in her autobiography (Helgi Kristjánsson 1982: 39). She and her husband lived in Reykjavík for the rest of their lives on the second floor of a house built by her youngest son (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 175–176; and Helgi Kristjánsson 1982: 39). It is here that Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson met her for the first time in February 1967, when she had recently become a widow. Hallfreður Örn visited Þorbjörg nine times during two distinct periods ten years apart, the former lasting from February 1967 to October 1968 at which time he recorded six interviews (SÁM 88/1514–1515; 88/1552–1553; 88/1564–1565; 89/1761–1762; 89/1752–1753; and 89/1986), while the latter visits occurred over the space of several days in April 1978, during which time he recorded three more interviews (SÁM 92/2963–2967).

The interviews in question provide little information about the wider context of Þorbjörg's storytelling occasions in her former home on the Snæfellsnes peninsula, including when and to whom she told her stories. Other sources, however, such as the obituary written by Helgi Kristjánsson in 1982 (p.39), imply she was well-known and respected for her storytelling skills. Helgi also notes her intelligence and her large repertoire of "amusing and serious materials". In his introduction to her memoirs, Halldór Pjetursson gives a short account about how he came to cooperate with Þorbjörg during their mutual stay at a sanatorium in Hveragerði in 1968. Halldór's wife had come across Þorbjörg outside and told her husband, an author of several books on the Icelandic oral tradition, that this woman was likely to have something interesting to talk about. Upon meeting her himself, he says he too became aware of her intelligence and storytelling skills as well as her frankness, which he makes special mention of in

the introduction (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 7–8). An anonymous review of Þorbjörg's memoirs ("Lífsreynslusaga ljósmóður" 1973: 12), also notes her frankness, saying she is sometimes even somewhat merciless in her narratives about people, meaning that the book is likely to be found controversial by some. The implication here is that Þorbjörg did not tend to hold much back in her narrating, feeling no need to remain polite towards people in her narratives.

As noted above, midwifery in rural Iceland appears to have provided women with a good platform for sharing and learning oral stories. Þorbjörg's midwifery meant she was unusually mobile within her own community, meeting far more people than most other women of the period, something which is likely to have contributed to her ability to adapt new narratives into her repertoire and share her own with new audiences. This feature of midwifery in rural Iceland is highlighted in the following introduction Þorbjörg give to one of her narratives, a story about livestock of the *huldufólk*[3] adopted into her repertoire from a senior midwife who stayed for several days at on Þorbjörg's childhood home when her brother was born:

> It was so much fun hearing the old woman telling stories, everything was so logical for her. But I was so young, no more than five and half when I remember this event occurring, she helped my mother give birth. I listened to various stories that she told although I've forgotten them all now for the main part. […] What she told us kids were mainly outlaw stories, *huldufólk* stories, ghost stories and wonder tales. And she believed steadfastly that *álfar*[4] existed. And then she told our mother this one [a story about the livestock of the *huldufólk*] while we were listening. (SÁM 88/1564).
>
> (Það var ákaflega gaman að heyra gömlu konuna segja frá, það var allt svo rökfast hjá henni. En ég var nú svo ung, ég var ekki nema fimm og hálfsárs þegar ég man eftir þessu atviki, að hún tók á móti barni hjá móður minni. Þá hlustaði ég ýmsar sögur sem hún var að segja þó ég sé búin að gleyma því núna í aðaldráttum. […] Það sem hún sagði okkur krökkunum, það voru aðallega útilegumannasögur, huldufólkssögur, draugasögur og ævintýri. Og hún trúði því statt og stöðugt að álfar væru til. Og þá sagði hún móðir okkar þetta [sögu um búfénað huldufólks] að okkur áheyrandi.)

As Þorbjörg notes herself (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 47–48; SÁM 89/1761), echoing many of Hallfreður Örn's other informants (see, for example, SÁM 85/232; 88/1640; 88/1670; 90/2128; 93/3624), guests were an important source of news and new narratives in the rural community of the past, and especially those who visited came from other regions. This means that Þorbjörg, who was not a native of the district in which she served, is more likely to have been asked to share her stories and give information about ways of life in her childhood region than people who were native to the district. Furthermore, because of her work, she was naturally unusually mobile compared to most women of the period, as earlier noted, something that would give her, like most other midwives, strong social capital, making her a more active participant in the legend tradition than most other women.

Information provided by Þorbjörg in the recordings suggests that she adapted narratives into her repertoire from both men and women living both at her home and in the wider community. Indeed, she notes previous narrators of 16 of the narratives she tells in the recordings, nine women and seven men, suggesting women might have been a slightly more common source for her than men. (Of course, most of her interactions would have been with women.) This gender division is nonetheless somewhat different from the overall pattern witnessed in the repertoires of Hallfreður Örn's other female informants, in which women, and predominantly mothers, tend to dominate as source of the women's narratives, suggesting which suggests that legend tradition of the Icelandic rural community in the past was to some extent transmitted along gender-lines (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b). In the case of Þorbjörg her most common source was not her mother, but rather female neighbours (who are the sources of five of her narratives; seven if we consider her full repertoire, including the nine retellings). While her mother is the source of three legends, her father and male neighbours are noted as being the source of two narratives.[5] The high number of neighbours mentioned here as sources would seem to underline the different social reality that Þorbjörg inhabited and the fact that she had a better platform for learning new stories outside the realm of her home than most other women would have had at the time.

Regarding the subject matter of her stories, while Þorbjörg tells several secular narratives dealing with historical people and events such as a local mass murderer, the secular origins of place names, and accidents on mountain routes, especially in the long interview from April 1967 (SÁM 88/1564–1966), her tradition orientation[6] represented by her complete recorded repertoire appears to focus on supernatural tradition. In short, about two thirds of her narratives make use of supernatural tradition in some form.[7] She also appears to prefer a personal mode of narration to a more detached narrative style. In short, around half of her narratives are first and second-hand personal experience stories, predominantly memorates dealing with supernatural experiences. This line of tradition orientation is very much in line with that of other female storytellers in the recordings of Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b).

While almost all the categories of supernatural tradition known to Icelandic culture in the past (see Jón Árnason 1862–1864) make an appearance in Hallfreður Örn's recordings of Þorbjörg's storytelling, she has several conflicting views about their background in reality. For example, while she certainly tells first and second-hand experience narratives about lake and sea monsters and the *huldufólk* (SÁM 88/1564–1565; and 89/1760–1761) she also makes several remarks mocking other people's beliefs in these beings, including her husbands' belief in *huldufólk* (SÁM 88/1564) and her father-in-law's apparent experience of sea monsters (SÁM

92/2966). Her doubts about existence of *huldufólk* are particularly interesting given her profession: as Bo Almqvist has shown in his detailed study of the Icelandic version of Midwife to the Fairies migratory legend (ML 5070), well-known local midwives tended to be central figures in these narratives in the late nineteenth century and the early 1900s (Almqvist 2008: 307–314). Furthermore, as Almqvist underlines, midwives appear to have commonly told these stories about themselves as an explanation of their calling to midwifery and their general good fortune in this profession, the latter being result of a reward from the *huldufólk* that originally called on them. Þorbjörg, however, makes no attempt to associate her career with the world of the *huldufólk* or claim any supernatural help. She does, however, (on the same occasion) state a firm belief in the spirits of the dead,[8] following this statement up with a long personal experience story about two dead fishermen from her community who guided her when visiting a woman in labour on a bad weather day in Ólafsvík (SÁM 88/1564). Like many other midwives in rural Iceland, she thus still expresses the idea of receiving supernatural help, seemingly exchanging assistance from the *huldufólk* with that of the dead, something that can be said to illustrate how narrators adapt traditional ideas to new challenges and their own personal belief systems.

The content of Þorbjörg's supernatural legends suggest she predominantly draws on three categories of supernatural tradition: the dead, which appear in 13 narratives; the *huldufólk*, appearing in seven; and omens (and especially dream omens), which form the topics of eight[9] Despite Þorbjörg's earlier-noted doubts about the existence of *huldufólk*, she tells four memorates and three second-hand memorates about these beings in the recordings, most of which deal with experiences of alleged enchanted spots associated with the sites where the *huldufólk* lived (see Gunnell 2018) or witnesses of their livestock. It is noteworthy that all these narratives take place in her childhood or before she was born, suggesting that while she may not have been a strong believer herself, she was aware of other people's beliefs and interests and that she had grown up in an environment where this tradition had still been strong. The narratives of the dead and the omens, on the other hand, take the form of both memorates recounting her adult experiences and legends recounting the contemporary experiences of her neighbours in Ólafsvík and Fróðár municipality where she worked. These are evidently the dominant supernatural traditions that she draws on as adult, perhaps reflecting wider trends in Icelandic traditional folk belief at the time in which experiences of the dead were gradually replacing those of the *huldufólk* as the dominant tradition (on this, see, for example, Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir 2008: 297).

Regarding gender emphases, men appear in close to 90% of Þorbjörg's narratives and women appear in little over half. This ratio is very similar to that found in the repertoires of Hallfreður Örn's other female informants of

(Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b). It may simply reflect the fact that men were more involved in the "noteworthy" activities that took place in the rural community of the past, meaning that their experiences tended to form the norm. What is perhaps particularly significant here, is that while half of Þorbjörg's narratives include female roles (other than herself), women seldom take leading positions in her stories. This might perhaps be explained by the fact that her profession meant that she had experiences (including travel, for example) which were more characteristic of men's lives than those of most women. This might also have led to her having more interest in stories that reflected such experiences, which would typically have involved men rather than women.

If one considers mood and style, Þorbjörg is a pessimistic narrator in the sense that her narratives tend to have tragic outcome, resulting in somebody's death, often by accident. Fishermen drowned at sea are common feature of her storytelling, among other places appearing in narratives about haunted routes and other experiences of the dead that occur while travelling on foot (SÁM 88/1565; 92/2963; and 92/2966); in narratives about omens observed before accidents take place on the sea (SÁM 89/1952; and 92/2965); and of hearing "náhljóð" (lit. the sound of a corpse) on land at a time when fishermen are drowning at sea far away (SÁM 89/1952). The strong role played by fishermen and accidents at sea in Þorbjörg's narratives is understandable given the fact that Þorbjörg was the daughter of one fisherman and later a wife of another and lived most of her adult years in a fishing village. This emphasizes the degree to which legend repertories in the rural community of the past were, as they are today, predominantly shaped by the narrator's environment and experience, expressing concerns and fears which take different forms in different communities.

Þorbjörg's experience as a regularly travelling rural midwife may also be responsible for strong emphasis on journeys in her storytelling, and especially those telling of trips often across mountain routes which would have been a common feature of her work in Snæfellsnes. Indeed, more than half

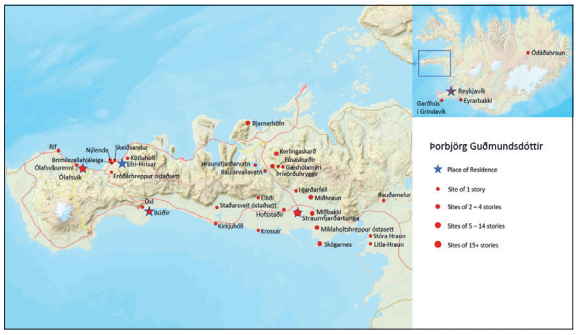

Figure 2: Þorbjörg's residential history and the settings of her stories.[10]

of her narratives take place partly or fully in non-domestic spaces (such as on travel routes, mountains, sea, beaches and so on: see Figure 2). In this respect, as in several others, her repertoire resembles those of men in the Icelandic rural community of the past more than women's. Indeed, studies dealing with the occurrence of place names in the Icelandic legend tradition have shown how legends told by men tend to reflect the routes they travelled as part of their work while women's narratives tend to be limited to the domestic space of their farms (Trausti Dagsson 2014: 8–9; Gunnell 2015: 31–33). Þorbjörg's midwifery naturally meant she shared the experience of travel on foot with the men in her community, giving her plenty of opportunities to experience memorable and tellable incidents that occurred during her own travels. Several narratives she tells deal with adventures that occurred during her work-related journeys, during which she experienced both difficult environments and the contact with the supernatural (SÁM 88/1564–1567; 92/2966; see also the example quoted above). The same spaces are reflected in many of the other historical legends and belief legends she tells in which travellers encounter lake monsters, hauntings, and sometimes tragic deaths because of the elements (SÁM 88/1564–1566; and 92/2965).

One narrative in Þorbjörg's repertory offers a good example of how a narrator's personal experiences are reflected not only in the own memorates but also (less directly) by the narratives they choose to tell of other people's experiences (Holbek 1987; Palmenfelt 1993; Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir 2011). This can be clearly seen in one narrative Þorbjörg tells in a recording from December 1967 as part of a conversation about folk poetry:

> This was a story that I heard when I was a farmhand at Búðir in Snæfellsnes, working for the late Finnbogi Lárusson and his people. Finnbogi's mother-in-law was called Guðbjörg and she was born and brought up in Garðhús in Reykjavík. And there used to be a lot of people and lively activity in her house because her father ran a fishing business. And there were a lot of people staying at the fishing station, and among them a man called Jónatan, a young man. He loved singing and had a good voice, and often chanted *rímur* ballads for the lady of the house, Þuríður Eyjólfsdóttir, an old lady. And once it happened that he was unusually down at heart. So Þuríður said to him: "What's the matter, Jónatan? You're not usually so bad-tempered." And then he said: "A chilly, gripping gust of wind / is causing me anxiety;/ I have lost a maid who was dear to me / so terribly." Then Þuríður said, "Things have evidently come to pass that you will never enjoy Ólöf." He was engaged at the time to Ólöf, who was the daughter of a rich man and never got to marry Jónatan. She was made to marry another man. […] Ólöf married this man and then Jónatan [married someone else] but he had only been married for half a month when her husband died, and then it was too late. Jónatan missed her all his life and had a child named after her. (SÁM 89/1762).

> (Þessa sögn heyrði ég nú þegar ég var vinnukona á Búðum á Snæfellsnesi, hjá Finnboga heitnum Lárussyn og því fólki. Tengdamóðir Finnboga hét Guðbjörg og

hún var fædd og uppalinn í Garðhúsum í Reykjavík. Og á hennar heimili var oft mjög mannmargt og glaðværðin mikil því að hann var útvegsmaður faðir hennar. Og þar voru margir menn í veri, þar á meðal var maður sem að hét Jónatan, ungur maður. Hann var mjög söngelskur, og raddmaður góður, og kvað oft rímur fyrir húsfreyjuna, Þuríði Eyjólfsdóttur, gömlu konuna. Eitt sinn ber svo við að hann er venju fremur daufur í dálkinn. Þá hafi Þuríður sagt við hann: „hvað amar að þér Jónatan? Þú ert ekki vanur að vera svona fúll." Og þá segir hann: Kuldanapur, nauður blær/nú mér skapar trega/mér hefur tapast mærin kær/ mikið hraparlega." Þá segir Þuríður, „nú er það nú komið svo, færð þú nú ekki að njóta hennar Ólafar." Þá var hann heitbundinn, og þau sín á milli, Ólöf og hann, en hún var ríks manns dóttir og fékk ekki að eiga hann Jónatan. En var látinn eiga annan mann. […] Ólöf giftist þessum manni og síðan Jónatan en hann er bara búinn að vera hálfan mánuð í hjónabandi þegar maður hennar dó – en þá var það of seint, en Jónatan tregaði hana alla ævi og lét heita eftir henni.)

As noted by Þorbjörg at the start of the narrative, she had heard this story being told when she was a young farmhand in Búðir, where she lived in 1910–1911 and where she met the father of her first child (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 67–72). While the timing suggests that she heard this story before she experienced her own adversity,[11] the narrative closely mirrors her own experience shortly afterwards, when her boy-friend's mother succeeding in breaking the couple apart after finding that Þorbjörg came from a low economic background. One can understand why this story should have been meaningful for Þorbjörg, who, just like the poet in the story, also composed poetry about her lost love (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 70 and 80). As Palmenfelt (1993) notes, narratives of other people's similar experiences can offer a useful buffer for narrators to refer to their own painful or shameful experiences while simultaneously offering an outlet for the narrator's feelings and the audiences' evaluation of the experiences. While Þorbjörg's frankness about the betrayal of her boyfriend, the rejection by his family and the child she had out of wedlock are all in her memoirs, one can understand that she may have found her own personal experiences difficult to narrate during her audiotaped sessions with Hallfreður Örn, in which she would have had less control of the narrative and its interpretation. The narrative quoted above was thus a useful substitute for her own experience, and its importance in Þorbjörg's repertoire is underlined by the fact that this is one of the very few narratives she tells that does not take place in a familiar environment in which she has resided (see Figure 2) but rather in a community she is unfamiliar with (Grindavík in South-East Iceland).

To summarize, Þorbjörg appears to be a storyteller who took a rather personal approach to the legend and folk belief tradition, specializing predominantly in memorates of a supernatural nature. While she appears to have been familiar with the broad range of Icelandic folk belief traditions, her own personal beliefs, expressed though her personal memorates

and comments on her own experiences of the supernatural (and those of other people), suggest that she was a strong believer in dreams, omens and the spirits of the dead, but had reservations about other categories of the supernatural, such as sea and lake monsters and the *huldufólk*, the latter predominantly appearing in stories learned in her childhood rather than in adulthood. While her repertoire includes certain characteristics commonly dominant in the repertories of other women in the same sources (see Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b), such as a general orientation towards memorates and supernatural traditions, and the inclusion of more female characters in her stories, other characteristics of her repertoire are more in line with those stories more commonly told by men, with an emphasis on leading male characters, and journeys across the wilderness and along highland routes. This emphasis, as well as the close proximity of places mentioned in her stories to her places of residence, and the inclusion of narratives that directly or indirectly reflect her own personal experience, both as a midwife travelling around rural Iceland and as a woman suffering heartbreak, clearly underlines the degree to which legend repertoires are essentially formed around the surroundings and personal experiences of their narrators.

Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir frá Byggðarholti (1887–1971)

Single unmarried women are one of the most difficult social groups to work with when reconstructing the context of oral storytelling in the Icelandic rural community of the past. These women often have thin presence in biographical sources which, until recently, have tended to treat women primarily in connection with their husbands or male relatives rather than as autonomous individuals entitled to their own coverage (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir 2018: 134). The lack of descendants of most single women in the past does not help, as this means they tend to have a shorter afterlife in oral history and cultural memory than other women who have children and grandchildren to pass on information about them. Historically however, single women made up a large social group in the Icelandic rural community of the past, about a third of those women 25 years old and older in 1910 (Hagstofa Íslands: sögulegar hagtölur), and presumably an even higher proportion of women in earlier times when restrictions were still in place on the marriages of poor people (Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson 1988: 108–111). Despite being a difficult social group to approach and reconstruct, these women are one of the most interesting groups to explore regarding the question of how the experiences and daily environments of women influenced their repertoires of legends. These women often lived lives and experienced a social reality that was considerably different from that of married women, having to either provide for themselves

with employment, or live within the shelter of their family into adulthood (if their families could provide such shelter). The following discussion deals with the legends of one such women, Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir (1887–1971), a former housekeeper from Byggðarholt in the Lón valley in South-East Iceland, who was interviewed seven times by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson in the years 1966–1968 when she was a resident in the elderly people's home of Hrafnista in Reykjavík, each one being around 15–25 minutes in length (SÁM 85/259–260; 86/807–808; 86/843; 86/857–858; 88/1573–1574; 89/1782–1783; and 89/1807).[12] Here Ingibjörg tells 29 narratives, several riddles, a number of *þulur* (a form of oral poetry reminiscent in some way of nursery rhymes, see Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir 2020), some descriptions of folklife, and a short, rather holistic autobiographical account.

As with most other single women in the past, written records provide little information about Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir's life. Hallfreður Örn's interviews nonetheless provide some context to her life and storytelling. Ingibjörg was born on the farm Svínhólar in Lón valley in 1887, to Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir (1863–1940) and Sigurður Jónsson (1864–1938) (Austur-Skaftfellingar, 603). Her paternal grandfather was Jón Jónsson (1824–1907),

Figure 3: Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir frá Byggðarholti. Photo: Nicoline Waywadt 1848–1921, courtesy of the National Museum of Iceland.

living at Byggðarholt in the same valley who was also the local sheriff, and when her parents moved to Winnipeg in Canada in 1892[13] along with her siblings, Ingibjörg was left behind in his care (at the age of five). Ingibjörg would live here for most of her life. She began living as a foster child with her grandfather, but her upbringing was completed by her paternal uncles, Benedikt Jónsson (1954–1918) and Guðmundur Jónsson (1860–1944) and the latter's wife Guðrún Antoníusdóttir (1855–1926), who she fondly refers to as her mother in the recordings (SÁM 85/259 and 86/843). The reason why she was the only one of the family left behind is unclear. No explanation is given in the recordings. She nonetheless notes that she went to Canada twice to visit her family, first for a one-year-stay when she was a young woman and then once again for another year, 25 years later, after her parents had passed away (SÁM 85/259). On this same occasion, she notes that she did not like Canada very much at this point, feeling somewhat alienated from her siblings who had scattered across a large area. She therefore opted to move back to Iceland for her senior years.

The Lón valley where Ingibjörg grew up lies on the eastern border of the county of Austur-Skaftafellsýsla in South-East Iceland. The valley is somewhat isolated, surrounded by the highlands east of Iceland's largest glacier Vatnajökull, two large scree mountains, Eystrahorn and Vestrahorn reaching down to the sea and marking its borders to the east and west. 153 metres in height, the passage of Almannaskarð over the latter of the two mountains, was one of the steepest mountain routes in Iceland. The open sea which marks the south-eastern border of the Lón valley has two large lagoons (*lón* in Icelandic), from which the valley draws its name. The southern lagoon, Papafjörður, was serving as a small trading post between the mid-nineteenth century and 1897 (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 15–19). Until the mid-twentieth century, these lagoons were a main source of economic prosperity for the farmers in the valley who hunted seals here for their skins which were sold in markets. The farmers in the valley also had unusually large sheep herds because of how large their common grazing land (*afréttur* in Icelandic) in the highlands was, and because of the good environmental conditions, the region having unusually little snow for Iceland (Jón Bragason, personal communication April 28, 2021). It is therefore safe to say that the Lón valley was a fairly rich region in the past, at least by Icelandic standards. In 1880 (shortly before Ingibjörg was born), it had a population of 278, and 17 main farmlands, many of which provided for more than one farmstead (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 19).

The farm of Byggðarholt, on which Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir lived most of her life, is situated in the middle of the valley, on the eastern riverbanks of the Jökulsá glacial river which divides the valley in two. The main route across the valley passed right by the farm in the past, meaning that the

inhabitants frequently had to offer accommodation and escort for travellers seeking to cross the river. Indeed, the farm was a designated resting place for travellers on their way to the fishing village and trading post of Djúpivogur, east of Lón valley. Here people could rest and graze their horses (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 67–68). This meant that the inhabitants of Byggðarholt probably had frequent social interaction with travellers from other regions, especially those living to the south of the Lón valley, who travelled seasonally to Djúpivogur for fishing seasons or trading.

In the late nineteenth century and the early 1900s, Ingibjörg's foster parents ran the farm at Byggðarholt in partnership with her grandfather and her unmarried uncle Benedikt Jónsson, who passed away in 1918 (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 70). Their estate had been the largest on this farmland since around 1800 according to Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason (1971: 69). According to censuses in 1901, 1910 and 1920 (*Manntöl*, digitalized versions available on http://manntal.is/), Byggðarholt supported a large household, including, in addition to the owners and their families, several farmhands and other non-related individuals.

The recordings with Ingibjörg provide a little more insight into her role on the farm. In the first recording, from October 1966, she tells Hallfreður Örn that it became her job to take care of the farm for her uncle after both of his sons had died from tuberculosis and he himself had lost his vision 30 years prior to his death (SÁM 85/259).[14] This timeframe points to this having taken place in the period between 1910 and 1920, her choice of words implying that her role on the farm involved supervision of the external affairs of the farm and other work that was traditionally done by men, rather than just housekeeping. From the recordings, it also becomes apparent that Ingibjörg received a good education by the standards of the time. She even went on to attend the secondary school for women in Akureyri (in the north of Iceland) for one winter, having to sail around Iceland for almost two weeks to get there (SÁM 85/260). In another recording, she casually admits that her household in Byggðarholt was unusually wealthy (SÁM 86/808), something which is further underlined by her two trips to Canada at times when few people, let alone women, could afford such luxuries.

The latter part of Ingibjörg's life is somewhat less clear although some limited information can be assumed by comparing the information given by herself in the recordings to other sources. Her foster mother died in Byggðarholt in 1926, and in 1934 her foster father moved to another farm in the valley, called Fjörður, where he died in 1944 (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 70). By this time, farming in Byggðarholt had become very difficult owing to repeated flooding of the river (Stefán Jónsson and Bjarni Bjarnason 1971: 68). The new farm had more land and better access to seals in the lagoon. Its main weakness was that it was located at the foot

of the earlier-noted mountain, Vestrahorn, meaning that it was known as one of the farmsteads in Iceland that had the least sunlight, the sun not being visible for four months during the winter (Jón Bragason, personal communication April 28, 2021). As Ingibjörg is listed as living on this farm in the genealogical database *Íslendingabók* it can be assumed that she must have moved there in 1934 along with her foster father, and that she took care of him for the remainder of his life. It is likely that Ingibjörg's second trip to Canada took place after the death of her foster father in 1944 which must have resulted in an existential crisis for Ingibjörg who suddenly found herself living alone and without immediate family in Iceland. Exactly where she settled after returning from her second trip to Canada is uncertain, but it is likely that it was in Reykjavík, contextual information in one of her stories suggesting that at some point in her life she worked as a housekeeper for an old man (SÁM 86/807).

Ingibjörg recounts 24 legends and personal experience narratives for Hallfreður Örn during the years 1966–1968, 29 if we include five retellings of narratives. One noteworthy feature of her repertoire is that, like Þorbjörg's repertoire noted above, it reflects several traits that are more commonly associated with men's storytelling than women's. One logical reason for this might be the overly male environments in which she lived, both in her personal household, which was ruled by her grandfather and two uncles, and in her interactions with other individuals, who are likely to have been predominantly male neighbours living to the south of Byggðarholt and Lón valley, people who stopped by the farm on their seasonal journeys to Djúpivogur.[15] In this respect, the previous narrators of the stories told by Ingibjörg, who are sometimes noted by her, are particularly interesting: She cites her grandfather as the source of two narratives; her foster mother as the source of one; male and female farmhands living in the household as a mutual source of one; and then various non-domestic friends or neighbours as the sources of seven, five of them being men and only two women. This ratio is somewhat unusual among Hallfreður Örn's other female informants, since, as has been previously noted (see Þorbjörg above), women in Iceland seem to have predominantly adopted narratives from other women, mothers being the most common source. One possible explanation for Ingibjörg's repertoire might be her greater exposure to men's narratives rather than those of women. Another might be her experience as single woman, which could potentially have resulted in her having less interest in legends dealing with household matters than women who were housewives and mothers. One thus wonders whether there was possibly a difference between the repertoires of single women and those of women who were married or actively running a household. This seems likely but needs further research to establish whether this is actually the case and if so, how such repertoires would differ.

One of the features that characterises Ingibjörg's repertoire as being more in the line with men's storytelling than that of women is her tradition orientation, that is, the types of narratives she prefers to tell. The most common type of narrative in her repertoire is the historical legend (accounts of historical events) which accounts for eight of her narratives,[16] a field that men are said to be more prone to specialise in (Dégh 1995:66–68; Kiliánová 1999: 103–104), something that has received support from by my own analysis of the repertoires of Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson's informants (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b). While Ingibjörg does indeed tell several belief legends and even two memorates about her own supernatural experiences (a field that tends to be more popular amongst women both in Iceland and elsewhere), one notes that she tends to express reservations about the truth of the alleged experience and, in some cases, carefully avoids interpreting and labelling the experiences to make them fit pre-existing traditional categories of belief. A good example of this is a long memorate she tells about certain strange visions she had when she was a housekeeper in Reykjavík, in which the house next door, as seen through a window, seemed to transform from being a small shoemaker's work shop into a large office populated by people in strange clothing one summer's evening (SÁM 86/807). She makes no attempt to classify the people she saw as being either *huldufólk* or ghosts, the two most common forms of supernatural beings in human form in Icelandic tradition.[17] Further, at the end of her story, she notes that she has never told anyone this story before, since she did not want to be known for telling tales of wonder ("undrasögur"). In another interview, Ingibjörg notes that people in her region did not talk much about the *huldufólk*, and that those who did were considered stupid (SÁM 857260). This suggests that Ingibjörg had experienced at least some form social pressure about the need to remain rational in her former storytelling environment of the Lón valley, either because of her upbringing or because of her most common audiences, who are likely to have been predominantly men given the composition of her household in Byggðarholt and its strategic location on the main route.[18]

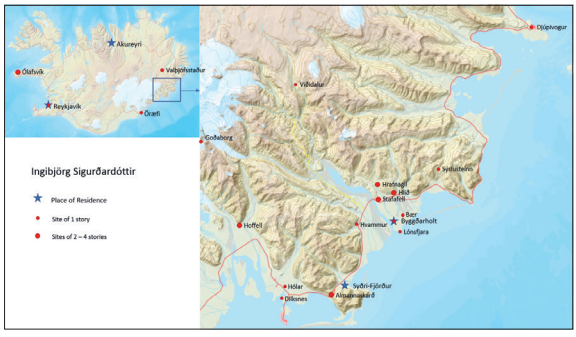

Figure 4: Ingibjörg's residential history and the settings of her stories.

The form of supernatural experience that Ingibjörg appears to have been most willing to narrate is essentially related to interactions with the dead, that is, ghost stories. Her repertoire includes five narratives about this subject.[19] As I have noted elsewhere (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming b), it is apparent that men and women in the Icelandic rural community appear to have focused (at least to some extent) on different categories of the dead in the narratives that they passed on, women tending to tell more stories about the harmless appearance of *svipir* (ghosts that appear only once or twice) of often newly dead individuals in their family and the wider community, whereas men tended to tell stories of "older" and more malicious ghosts, often with deep roots in tradition. Another example of this female approach to the tradition of the dead can be seen in Þorbjörg's repertoire noted above, another woman who predominantly tells stories about the spirits of newly dead individuals from her community. As can perhaps be expected, given the other male traits of Ingibjörg's repertoire, the dead in her stories appear to be predominantly of the latter type. Her narratives contain two stories about Halla, a vengeful female murder victim from previous centuries back, and a well-known revenant in the Lón valley (SÁM 86/807), and then stories about unnamed ghosts who haunted buildings in Ólafsvík and Djúpivogur (SÁM 85/260). One particularly interesting narrative in her repertoire, once again left uninterpreted by Ingibjörg, deals with the problem of corpses of foreign seamen which have been washed ashore, a common theme in the Icelandic tradition (Gunnell 2005). The story in question, which appears to have played an important part in Ingibjörg's repertoire, given the fact that she tells it at two different occasions in her sessions with Hallfreður Örn (SÁM 86/843 and 89/1807), follows in both cases another narrative relating to the drowning of 42 French fishermen whose bodies were washed up on the shores of the Lón valley in 1873, something that was considered to have initiated a series of events that later came to take place in the cemetery of Staðarfell. It recounts the experience of Þorsteinn, a farmhand at the church of Stafafell in the Lón valley who found himself wrestling with an unknown supernatural being in human form one evening shortly before the shipwreck. While Ingibjörg does not try to classify the nature of the supernatural being, the narrative itself follows closely an ancient Icelandic motif about people wrestling with ghosts which is also found in Old Icelandic saga literature (Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1987). This narrative, like the others she tells about revenants and ghosts, suggests that while Ingibjörg certainly enjoyed telling ghost stories, she chose to use a degree of personal distancing in her narrations of this kind, telling only stories about well-known traditionally rooted "old ghosts" rather than more personal narratives dealing with recently dead people from her own local community.

Another feature that gives Ingibjörg's repertoire a rather masculine flavour relates to the persons involved and the points of view expressed in her

narratives. In short, male characters appear to dominate in her narratives,[20] many of them being male neighbours from the Lón valley or men from regions south of Lón valley who traditionally would been travelling to the trading post in Papós or to Djúpivogur. The emphasis on neighbours from the south rather than from north-east may potentially underline the degree to which legends are connected to geography, among other things underlining routes of communication and connections between people and places (on this, see Gunnell 2009). This can also be seen on the map of the sites of Ingibjörg's narratives in Figure 4, which underlines how her stories take place almost exclusively either in the Lón Valley and the regions south of it, none occurring in the bordering region of Álftafjörður to the north-east, reflecting the fact that people from this region and further to the north of Lón valley seem to have had no good reason to travel south, thus share their narratives and socialize with those living in Byggðarholt.[21] As for the characters in her stories, they tend to be men from her contemporary community highlighting them as being champions or showing them in a humorous light (see especially SÁM 86/858). Of particular interest is a narrative about an unusual childbirth which took place in the neighbouring region of Nesjar, south of the Lón valley, in which the hero of the story is neither the woman giving birth or the midwife, but rather a local blacksmith who puts together forceps with which the baby is successfully saved (SÁM 86/858). One of Ingibjörg's more humorous legends involving men from her local community deals with an accident that took place in Almannaskarð, the mountain pass marking the southern border of Lón valley, in the late nineteenth century, at the time in which Papós in the Lón valley was still the central trading post for the Skaftafell:

> They were in the store in Papós, three men from the Mýrar district who were shopping, and had been drinking. And they went along the Klöpp ridge and one of them came off the ridge and went down, horse and all. But there was so much snow as he went down that he wasn't injured, they just slid down the snow, he and his horse. But the others thought that he was dead; of course, they went down to check on him and assumed that he was dead. And so they piled a lot of stones on top of him, stones they had picked up from the Mýrar landscape. And then they went to Þingnes and got some accommodation there and didn't say anything about what had happened. And in the morning when they meant to set off, they went over and told Jón, the farmer at Þinganes about this thing. And it's said that Jón reacted pretty quickly and set off and found the guy. He was just sitting up, rocking back and forth, singing, totally unhurt. And so he took him home with him. And it's said that one of the man said when Jón leapt on the back of his grey-red horse that he was using: "Uh oh, there goes my grey-red horse!" (SÁM 89/1807).
>
> (Þeir voru þá á Papós versluninni, þeir komu þrír menn frá Mýrarhreppi og voru að versla, og höfðu fengið sér svolítið neðan í því [voru fullir] karlarnir. Svo fóru þeir fram á Klöpp og einn þeirra reið fram af Klöppinni og niður, hestur og allt. En það var nefnilega svo mikil fönn, þegar hann komi niður, að hann skaddaðist ekki, þeir

hröpuðu þarna á fönninni, klárinn og hann. En hinir héldu að hann væri dauður, fóru niður fyrir náttúrulega að vita um hann og héldu að hann væri dáinn. Svo hlóðu þeir að honum grjóti, þá steina sem þeir náðu upp úr þarna á Mýrunum. Svo fóru þeir út að Þinganesi og fengu gistingu þar, og nefndu þetta bara ekkert. En um morguninn þegar þeir ætluðu að fara, þá fóru þeir að segja Jóni bónda í Þinganesi frá þessu. Þá var nú sagt að Jón hefði nú tekið svona heldur hart á því [rokið hratt af stað] og fór og sótti karlinn. Hann sat þá og röri sig fram í gráðið og var að syngja, alveg ómeiddur. Og hann fór með hann heim með sér. En það er sagt að annar karlinn hefði sagt þegar Jón snaraði sér á bak grárauðum hesti sem hann var á: „Ó, hann tekur þá grárauð minn.")

The key point about Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir's repertoire for the present survey is that it shows that women in the Icelandic rural community of the past were far from being a monolithic group. When dealing with women's storytelling in the past, we tend to focus on roles and themes that are specific to women such as housewifery and motherhood, often overlooking the fact that not all women went on to assume such roles when they grew up. Ingibjörg is a fine example of a woman who did not share such "typical" female experiences, living and thriving in a male-dominated environment in which she seems to have been disproportionately exposed to men's storytelling rather than that of women, and seems to have customed her repertoire of narratives to suit male audiences. This is highlighted not only in her emphasis on rationality, worldly matters, and a personal distancing from certain folk beliefs, but also in her choices of subject and point of view, highlighting the world of men and their experiences. Her repertoire shows that there is obviously plenty of room for further surveys into the different kinds of social reality experienced by women in the rural communities of the past, and the role this played in the formation of women's repertoires.

Þuríður Stefanía Árnadóttir (1888–1982)

The two women dealt with so far in this discussion are in some ways relatively unusual representatives of women in the Icelandic pre-industrial rural community. The first represented those women who were educated and had employment outside the realm of the household, something that was certainly far from common for women in rural Iceland at the early 1900s, although this generation of women had more employment opportunities than those in earlier times (Lilja Lind Pálsdóttir, 2012: 18–21). The second was unmarried and childless, and although such women may have been more common in Iceland in the past than their legacy in historical sources may indicate, it was nonetheless common that women in the Icelandic rural community of the late nineteenth century and early 1900s that they would marry and have children. It is therefore fitting to conclude this discussion on the legend repertoires of Icelandic women by considering

the life and storytelling of a woman who can certainly be regarded as having been typical farm housewife. The woman in question is Þuríður Árnadóttir (1888–1982) from the farm of Gunnarsstaðir in Þistilfjörður in north-east Iceland, who told 43 narratives[22] (SÁM 92/2739–41; and 92/2758–2762) in four interviews taken by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson in her home during the summer of 1977. At the time of the interviews, she was still living at Gunnarsstaðir with her son who takes part in the interviews and occasionally alternates with his mother as the storyteller in the sessions.

As is common for this last generation of married women living in the pre-industrial rural community of Iceland, sources on Þuríður's life and environment are relatively rich. An obituary written about Þuríður and her husband, Halldór Ólafsson (1895–1975) by her niece Sigríður Jóhannesdóttir and her husband Sigfús Jóhannesson provides excellent insight into Þuríður's life. She lived almost her entire life on the farm on which she was born, Gunnarsstaðir. She was the second oldest of eight siblings, and when her mother died in 1908, Þuríður (at the age of 20) became the female head of the household. She thus became responsible for the upbringing of her younger siblings, three of whom were younger than ten at the time. When her father died four years later, her brother took over Gunnarsstaðir, and when he married a year later, his wife took over Þuríður's responsibilities on the farm. This gave Þuríður the opportunity to travel to Reykjavík where she attended evening school in handicrafts, learning among other things to use a knitting machine which later provided her with some income. Several days after her return to Gunnarsstaðir in the spring of 1914, Þuríður's sister-in-law died which led her to take over as female head of the household once again in Gunnarsstaðir, until her brother remarried in 1917.

Figure 5: Þuríður Stefanía Árnadóttir from Gunnarsstaðir. Photo: Courtesy of the Þingeyinga Museum of Photography.

Þuríður's husband, Halldór, had been a farmhand at Gunnarsstaðir prior to their marriage in 1921. For the first two years of their marriage the couple lived on her brother's estates at Gunnarssstaðir. The couple then briefly moved to another farm on Langanes, a peninsula to

the east of Þistilfjörður. A couple of years later, they nonetheless returned to Gunnarsstaðir, established a new estate on the farmland there (Sigríður Jóhannesdóttir and Sigfús A. Jóhannesson 1983: 5). The couple had seven children born between 1922 and 1936, and two foster children, born in 1941 and 1947. (Minningar: Gunnar Halldórsson 2011: 43). In addition to this, Þuríður also took on the role of a mother figure to her brother's children when her brother's second wife, died in 1939, leaving behind eight children, four of whom were still in childhood (Sigríður Jóhannesdóttir and Sigfús A. Jóhannesson 1983: 5). It is therefore safe to say that Þuríður was engaged in bringing up children for a close to half a century, and it is likely that children and teenagers were the most common audiences for her storytelling. This assumption is also supported by her own frequent remarks in the recordings about storytelling for her children (SÁM 92/2739; 92/2749 and 92/2762), and by her daughter, who recently informed me that her mother often told her and the other children stories, both legends and wonder tales, when she was working and needed to calm the children down (Brynhildur Halldórsdóttir, personal communication May 21st, 2021). As I have noted elsewhere, such storytelling for children by Icelandic women in the rural community of the past was common, and especially in the *rökkrin* (twilight) storytelling sessions that took place in mutual space of the *baðstofa* (living room) on the farm (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming a).

If we consider the living context of Þuríður's storytelling, Þistilfjörður is a broad bay set between two peninsulas, Melrakkaslétta to the north and Langanes to the east. Today, the farms here are found mostly along the coast but earlier they also reached up into the mountains on the west side the bay. The region is characterized by having extensive stretches of low land and shallow valleys and has long been considered very good for sheep farming. The region has unusually many rivers running through it from the highland into the bay, often separating one farm from another. While many farmers went fishing in the bay in open boats, the bay offered poor conditions for landing larger boats (Jóhannes Sigvaldason et al. 1985: 393–397; SÁM 92/2762). Gunnarsstaðir itself lay close to the sea on the eastern side of the bay and as a farm was unusually large. The river Hafralónsá, which separates Þistilfjörður from the neighbouring Langanes peninsula, runs through the farmland, meaning that the farmers of Gunnarsstaðir were responsible for operating the ferry that ran across the river until it was bridged in 1930. This operation, which was sometimes carried out by Þuríður herself, provided some useful extra income for the household, since everyone travelling from Þistilfjörður to the nearest trade post, at Þórshöfn on Langanes, had to cross this river on their way (SÁM 92/2762). The extensive farmland came in the ownership of Þuríður's parents in 1888, the year she was born, and is still owned by her family's descendants (Jóhannes Sigvaldason et al. 1985: 440–449). When her brother took over the farmland following

the death of their father in 1912 (see above), it had very little cultivated land but supported 300 sheep and was thus considered a large farm by the standards of the time (B.O. 06.10. 1964: 9). The fact that Þuríður's parents managed to come in possession of such a large farm suggests that they must have been relatively wealthy, something given further support by the fact that her father was the chairman of the district council (Minning: Margrét Árnadóttir frá Gunnarstöðum, 15.12.1988: 70).

Like the other women noted above, Þuríður provides information about her sources in several of the recordings, providing useful insight into the social aspects that lie behind her repertoire. Like Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, Þuríður appears to have adopted slightly more narratives from women than men and, like both of the other women featured in this article, more narratives from male and female neighbours than from household members.[23] The high ratio of narratives adopted from neighbours underlines the degree to which they must have formed an important part of her social circle, something that is understandable considering the location of the farm and the family's role in operating the ferry which would have brought about regular contact with neighbours. According to Þuríður's daughter and nephew, farmers in Þistilfjörður commonly stayed overnight at Gunnarsstaðir when travelling to and from Þórshöfn (Brynhildur Halldórsdóttir and Jóhann Sigfússon, personal communications May 21st, 2021).[24] As noted by Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir (see above: SÁM 89/1761) guests staying overnight evidently played a key role in the oral transmission of legends in the Icelandic rural community in the past, storytelling (and not least passing on new narratives) being one way of repaying hospitality.

One of the features that is noticeably different in the repertoire of Þuríður from the repertoire of the other women is the type of landscape and range of settings mentioned in their narratives. As might perhaps be expected given Þuríður's residential history, her narratives predominantly take place in Þistilfjörður and on the Langanes. Others, however, mention places further away, although this is usually as a means of explaining the background of people and events that have relevance to her home region. There is also less emphasis on mountains and mountain routes than in those narratives told by the other women, partly because Þuríður herself rarely left the area. Instead, we find rivers and lakes dominating Þuríður's narratives, appearing in close to one third of her stories. As noted above, this closely reflects the nature of the landscape of Þistilfjörður. Logically Hafrafellsá, the river crossed by the ferry operated by Þuríður's family is the setting for several first- and second-hand personal experience narratives told by Þuríður, recounting memorable journeys across the river, and one historical legend telling of someone who drowned in the river. Another river that appears twice in Þuríður's narratives is the glacial river Jökulsá in Öxarfjörður, the neighbouring region to the north, which is the longest river in Iceland. One of these two narratives

is a ghost story telling of a female ghost called Sólborg who committed suicide while being held in custody for infanticide. The local ferryman is a leading figure in this account, effectively underlining how the occupation and experience of narrators can influence the point of view taken in a story:

> When I was a child, a terrible event occurred in Svalbarði: a woman called Sólborg killed herself, it was called the Sólborg matter. Everyone agrees that she clearly used to appear before the arrival of those leading men that were most involved in this matter. […] Einar Benediktsson was one of those who took this case, and when he went home he had to cross Jökulsá in Öxarfjörður. The ferryman at that time was Vigfús á Ferjubakka, and he took him across. And when he [Einar] was going to pay the toll for his trip, and that of the man who was with him, then he [Vigfús] said: Aren't you going to pay for her? (SÁM 92/2739).

> (Þegar ég var krakki þá kom voðalegt mál fyrir á Svalbarði, þegar Sólborg fyrirfór sér, kona, Sólborgarmálið sem kallað var. Það báru allir það [söguðu allir það], að hún sást ljósum logum á undan höfðingjunum sem mest skiptu sér af þessu máli. […] Einar Benediktsson tók þetta mál fyrir, þegar hann fór heim fór hann yfir Jökulsá í Öxarfirði. Þá var ferjumaður Vigfús á Ferjubakka, og hann ferjaði hann yfir. Og þegar hann [Einar] ætlaði að borga ferjutollinn þegar hann kemur yfir ána, ætlaði að borga fyrir sig og manninn sem var með honum, þá sagði hann [Vigfús]: Ætlar þú ekki að borga fyrir hana?)

The overall orientation of Þuríður's tradition is a little more difficult to establish than those of the other women examined here, largely because no types of narrative show any clear dominance. She clearly tells slightly more belief legends than historical legends in her sessions with Hallfreður Örn, and considerably more secular personal experience narratives than supernatural memorates. Overall, supernatural traditions and secular history seem to be balanced in her repertoire, and the same applies to personal narratives and those that are more detached. What is perhaps most significant here is the low proportion of memorates dealing with supernatural matters. The implication is that she preferred to keep some personal distance from supernatural narratives, tending to rely on third party accounts of such

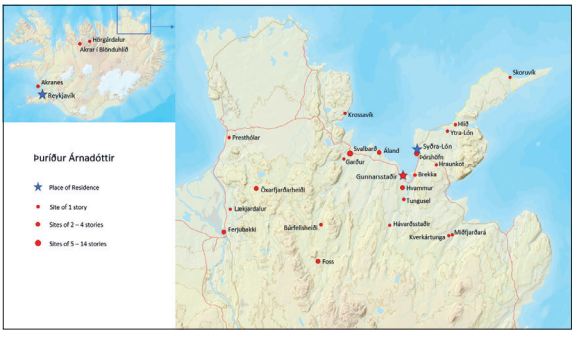

Figure 6: Þuríður's residential history and the settings of her stories.

experiences rather than her own personal experiences or those of her family members, something that of course might be related to fears of negative judgement from others.

This aspect of personal distancing from folk belief can also be seen in the views expressed in the stories or as part of the context given for them. Indeed, Þuríður tells several accounts that appear to express a rather sceptical view towards certain elements of the supernatural tradition, and especially those relating to the earlier-mentioned *huldufólk* and lake monsters.[25] When asked about the former, she states that there was very little belief in *huldufólk* in the region and no known *huldufólk* settlement (SÁM 92/2740). While Þuríður admittedly tells two second-hand memorates about alleged encounters between her neighbours and the *huldufólk* on a later occasion, she always takes a very sceptical approach in her narration, suggesting in one case that that the person in question must have been hallucinating as a result of illness (SÁM 92/2760). Another account telling of a female neighbour who allegedly spotted a lake monster (a *nykur*), in a lake in the region on a foggy day is given a similar treatment by Þuríður, who claims that the *nykur* later turned out to be two rams that were stuck on an island in the middle of the lake (SÁM 92/2740 and 92/72762). Like the other two women discussed above, Þuríður is nonetheless more open to beliefs about appearances of the dead, telling a total of 12 narratives that deal with this theme (SÁM 92/2739–2740; 92/2760), one of them being a personal memorate. The implications of the above are that in Þuríður's social circle, beliefs in ghosts and the dead were seen as being more acceptable than other categories of the supernatural, perhaps reflecting a broader trend that was developing in the Icelandic community at the time, as has been earlier noted.[26]

Þuríður's ghost stories tend to deal with well-known events and famous ghosts from her home region of Þistilfjörður. Some of the events in question took place in Þuríður's own lifetime and include the so-called "wonders of Hvammur" ("Hvammsundrin"), one of the most famous poltergeist occurrences in Icelandic history, which took place at the farm of Hvammur, next to Gunnarsstaðir, in 1913[27] and the earlier-noted Sólborg affair (SÁM 92/2739). One nonetheless notes that the ghosts appearing in her stories are overwhelmingly female, outnumbering male ghost at a ratio of ten to two. While Þuríður mostly avoids taking sides with either the ghosts or their victims in her narratives, the victims of these female ghosts tend to be male authority figures (or their female relatives) who, in the process of criminal investigation, are shown to have indirectly caused the women's deaths, as can be seen in the narrative about Sólborg above, and the following narrative about the origin of the ghost called Hlíðar-Gunna:

She was a housewife at Tungusel. She was lying in bed and had just given birth. There was a pauper who had been placed on her farm, and the local sheriffs had

heard that the pauper was not being treated as well as they should be and came to check things out. They have a word with her, and she got so furious that she started bleeding incessantly, and she bled out, and died. But she came back in style and started haunting the sheriff. Torfi í Hlíð was one of the two sheriffs; the other lived at Heiði, I think he was called Guðbrandur or Brandur. And he had a daughter called Ísabella, and she [Hlíðar-Gunna] troubled her so much that she went mad. And he was advised to take her over three large stretches of water, that would free her from this affliction. So he took her on a trip through all the local districts, he took her over the river Jökulsá á fjöllum and the river Laxá in Reykjardalur, and all the biggest rivers. Maybe also the Skjálfandafljót river. And she was cured when she had been taken far enough (SAM 92/2739).

(Hún var húsmóðir í Tunguseli. Hún liggur á sæng. Það var niðursetningur á heimilinu hjá henni, og hreppstjórarnir voru búnir að heyra að það muni ekki hafa farið eins vel með þennan niðursetning og átti að gera og koma að líta eftir þessu. Og þeir tala eitthvað við hana, nema hvað hún reiddist svo mikið að hún fékk óstöðvandi blóð og blæddi út og dó. En hún gekk svo rækilega aftur og ásótti hreppstjórana. Torfi í Hlíð hét annar hreppstjórinn, en hinn bjó á Heiði, ég held að hann hafi heitað Guðbrandur eða Brandur. Og hann átti dóttir sem Ísabella hét, og hún ærði hana svo hún varð brjáluð. Svo er honum ráðlagt að fara yfir þrjú stór vatnsföll, þá myndi þetta yfirgefa hana. Og hann fór með hana í ferðalag, fór með hana um allar sveitir, hann fór með hana yfir Jökulsá á fjöllum og Laxá í Reykjardal og allar þessar stærstu ár. Og kannski líka Skjálfandafljót. Og hún læknaðist þegar hún var komin nógu langt.)

In Þuríður's narratives, revengeful figures like Hlíðar-Gunna are not the only strong female figures to appear. All in all, human living female characters appear in only about half of her narratives, which is the average ratio in stories told by Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson's female informants as earlier noted. What is particularly striking is that these figures tend to appear in active roles underlining their strength, even though their actions are not always shown as being positive. One of Þuríður's narratives, for example, tells of a female farmhand Rifs-Jóka who steals a sheep from a former employer who failed to pay her properly, and walks back home carrying it on her back (SÁM 92/2762). In another story, telling of a haunting by the locally well-known female ghost Fossskotta on a farm in the region (SÁM 92/2740), the daughter on the farm, Ólöf, is shown to be the only person on the farm to show no sign of fear, and is ultimately the one who can scare the ghost away. The best example of female strength in Þuríður's narratives, however, is the following narrative about a wrestling match that took place between a female ferryman and a male fugitive who was on his way to Þistilfjörður at a ferry site west of Jökulsá in Axarfjörður:

When he reached the west side of Jökulsá in Axarfjörður, he came to a farm and there was no one at home except this woman. And he asked her to ferry him over the river. And she said she could not ferry him, there was no one at home. And things go so far that she refused to take him over the river, suspected that he might be wanted. And things progress in such a way that they start fighting. And he gets her down on

one knee, a little like when [the god] Þórr was wrestling with Elli [Old Age as in the account told in the *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson], when he attacked her. And then she said: "Now it is far from clear that two are better than one." He then realized that the woman was pregnant. And he eventually did manage to get across the river, but that isn´t part of this story (SAM 92/2759).

(Þegar hann kemur að Jökulsá í Axarfirði, að vestan verðu, þá kemur hann þar að bæ og það er enginn heima, nema konan. Og hann biður hana um að ferja sig yfir ána. En hún segist ekki geta ferjað hann, það sé enginn heima. Og það gengur svo langt að hún vill ekki sleppa honum yfir ána, grunaði eitthvað um að hann sé ekki frjáls ferða sinna. En það gengur svo langt að þau fljúgast á. En hann kemur henni á annað hnéð, eins og Þór elli kerlingu, þegar hann flaug á hana. Og þá segir hún: „Nú sannast það þó ekki, að betur megi tveir en einn." Þá tók hann eftir því að kerlingin er ólétt. Svo komst hann á endanum yfir ána, hvernig sem það nú var, það fylgdi ekki sögunni.)

Þuríður's strong emphasis on active female roles, seen in both this narrative and that quoted above, may have something to do with the nature of Þuríður's audiences. As noted earlier, these are likely to have been predominantly made up of children and teenagers of both genders from her and her brother's households, rather than adult males like those noted in the case of Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir above. By placing such a strong emphasis on active female figures in her narration, one can argue that she is offering her young female audiences plenty of good examples of behaviour to follow or avoid, emphasizing the degree to which the legend traditions do not necessarily have to follow male premises and focus on male experience, but can also follow the premises of women. As the accounts noted above show, Þuríður is clearly an example of female storyteller who had strong roots in her local community and was highly knowledgeable about the history and traditions of the area. As noted above, her narratives appear to largely come from her neighbours, underlining the degree to which her home was a form of social hub. While picking up stories from visitors, she herself appears to have predominantly told stories to children and teenagers in her and her brothers' household, keeping a personal distance from supernatural experiences and other accounts of supernatural belief, perhaps to avoid scaring her young audiences as many women that told stories to children in the rural community of the past seem to have done (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming a). Particularly striking is the strong emphasis Þuríður places on rivers and lakes and not least ferry operators like herself, also underlining strong, independent, and active female figures, thereby emphasizing a legend tradition that seems to operate on female premises.

Conclusions

As the above survey of these women and their legend repertoires has shown, Icelandic women living in the rural community of the past can not

be considered to have been a monolithic group that spent their lives in social isolation on the turf-farms, concerning themselves only with "female matters" related to domestic spaces in their storytelling. While it is certainly possible to talk about certain female traits of women's legend repertoires, such as an apparent higher appreciation for women and their roles, and a preference for certain genres such as the supernatural narratives and memorates, or at least certain types of supernatural narrative, these traits do not necessarily all regularly appear together in the repertoires of women, and at least in the case of women who were active participants in legend tradition such as the women discussed in this article. As has been underlined by the considerations of these women's social surrounding, none of the women involved were particularly reliant on their own household for new narratives, Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir being a midwife who regularly visited other households as part of her profession, while Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir and Þuríður Árnadóttir were women who lived on farms that formed social hubs within their local communities. The nature of the farms Ingibjörg and Þuríður lived on draws attention to the fact that although most women may have been homebound in the Icelandic rural community of the past, this did not necessarily mean they were socially isolated and restricted to social interaction with the members of their households. The fact that all these women, chosen randomly from a poll of female narrators with large repertoires, have turned out to have been part of large social circles that, among other things, would have exposed them to narratives of people living outside their own households, suggests this feature seems to have been a key feature in the making of female storytellers that came to be particularly active participants in the legend tradition.

While both Þorbjörg and Þuríður appear to have been exposed to more narratives told by women than men, and to have told stories to people of both genders, thereby highlighting two of the more common features of women's storytelling, it is noteworthy that their repertoires also reflect many features more commonly associated with men's legend telling, as with Þorbjörg's emphasis on journeys and highland routes and Þuríður's choice to keep a personal distance from supernatural traditions. Ingibjörg appears to take particularly strong male-dominated approach in her repertoire, telling predominantly stories she learned from men; choosing a more detached mode of narration more commonly associated with male storytelling; and telling many secular narratives and narratives that highlight male roles and experiences. The fact that Ingibjörg never married, had no children and appears to have assumed a more male role in her household (rather than that of the "typical" female) clearly underlines the fact that women living in the rural community of the past did not all share those experiences that we tend to focus on when exploring their traditions, such as household management, romance, childbirth, the upbringing of children

and storytelling for children. What is perhaps the most significant difference between Ingibjörg's storytelling and that of the other women is the fact that she predominantly socialized with men in her community, and probably told stories predominantly to men, while both the other women are likely to have more commonly told stories to people of both genders, Þuríður predominantly telling stories to children and teenagers. It seems likely that this affected their repertoires.

As has been noted earlier, the narratives in the women's repertoires noted above give strong support to the argument that narrators' personal experiences and surroundings tend to be directly and indirectly reflected in the legends they choose to tell. As has been shown here, the geographical settings of these women's narratives closely reflect their residential history suggesting that the women found little interest in (or felt less right to tell) those narratives that took place outside the familiar landscape of their home regions unless the narrative had some special association with important features of their personal histories, as has been seen in the case of Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir. The role of landscape and experience in their repertoires is also reflected in the way Ingibjörg and Þorbjörg tell many narratives about journeys over mountain routes, while Þuríður's places an emphasis on rivers and lakes and the role of ferrymen in her stories. It is safe to say, that these active female storytellers seem to have had one foot in the world of men and the other in the world of women, giving them not only ample opportunities to learn stories from, and share stories with both men and women in their communities, but also the chance to gain life experiences that would have been found interesting by audiences of both genders.

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[1] The account was recorded and edited by Halldór Pjetursson who is seen as being the author of the book instead of Þorbjörg Guðmundsdóttir herself, as was common practice at the time. While it was common for men who grew up in the Icelandic rural community of the past to publish their autobiographies and memoirs in the latter half of the twentieth century, few such accounts written by women exist (see further Ragnhildur Richter 1997). Þorbjörg's memoir is thus a valuable and somewhat rare source on the life of women in Iceland.

[2] All stories in this article are all translated by Terry Gunnell.

[3] The *huldufólk* (lit. hidden people), sometimes referred to as *álfar* in Iceland, are the Icelandic equivalent of the Norwegian *huldre* or *underjordiske* (lit. underground people), the Irish and Scottish fairies and the Shetlandic *trows* Similar in appearance and size to human beings, they are believed to live in rocks close the settlement areas. See further Gunnell 2007, 2014 and 2017.

[4] See previous note.

[5] Other sources of single narratives include her husband, her grandfather, her father-in-law and a housewife on a farm where Þorbjörg worked as a farmhand.

[6] Tradition orientation refers to the type of narrative tradition that narrators tend to specialize in (see Siikala 1990: 146–169).

[7] This excludes the nine retellings, all of which are rooted in the supernatural tradition (three belief legends, five memorates and one second-hand memorates). These retellings naturally also tell us something about tradition orientation, since it suggests that they were a fixed part of her repertoire, that is, the narratives which she was herself most interested in telling, in this case, narratives of supernatural nature.

[8] In another interview (SÁM 89/1761), however, Þorbjörg also suggests that she does not believe in *"draugar"*, implying that she saw a distinction between types of dead spirits. In Icelandic tradition, *draugar* (pl.) are usually maleficent dead people, often strangers, who appear repeatedly, while the *svipir* that Þorbjörg refers to here are usually the spirits of familiar people who appear once or twice to solve some unfinished business. (On this, see, for example, Simpson 2004: 17–18 and Einar Ól. Sveinsson 2003: 183–188).

[9] While only eight dream narratives are found Þorbjörg's recorded repertoire, her 1973 memoirs suggest that dreams may have been a favourite subject of hers, especially in her senior years, a large number of dream narratives appearing in the narratives she shares with Hallfreður Örn (and especially the later interviews where she tells the most of her narratives about dream omens, which follow a request from Hallfreður Örn, who was probably made aware of her interest in this subject from her memoirs.

[10] The maps in this article all come from the Kortasjá database produced by *Landmælingar Íslands,* retrieved May 24th from https://kortasja.lmi.is/mapview/?application=kortasja. The markings on the maps have been drawn by Ólöf Birna Magnúsdóttir.

[11] The housewife at Búðir was the aunt of Þorbjörg's boy-friend, and in the following winter of 1912–1913, she became a farmhand on his parents' farm in the same region. His parents were unaware of their affair until the summer of 1913, when Þorbjörg could no longer hide her pregnancy and had to move back to her parents because of his mother's hostility (Halldór Pjetursson 1973: 67–69).

[12] Ingibjörg was also interviewed by Helga Jóhannsdóttir (1935–2006) in August 1963, when she was in the Ás nursing home in Hveragerði in Southern Iceland. Helga was an ethnomusicologist, and this interview was somewhat different to those taken by Hallfreður Örn, being almost exclusively centred around musical genres and descriptions of performances.

[13] Ingibjörg was the second oldest of ten siblings, four of whom were born in Iceland and six in Manitoba in Canada (Austur-Skaftfellingar, 1178). The Icelandic emigration to Canada between the early 1870s and the First World War is well-documented. It is estimated that during the period between 1870 to 1914 15.000 to 20.000 Icelanders, about a quarter of the population at the time, moved to Canada, settling down predominantly in Manitoba, where they established the Icelandic colony of Gimli. Many emigrants came from the east fjords of Iceland which had suffered the effects of a catastrophic volcanic eruption in 1875, which had a devastating effect on agriculture in this part of Iceland (see further Guðjón Arngrímsson 1997: 9–13 and 34–43 and Jonas Thor 2002: 3–23).

[14] It seems that Rögnvaldur, who died in 1917, was the only son to be raised on Byggðarholt, while according to the 1901 census, his brother Guðjón (1884–1905) appears to have been living with maternal relatives on the farm of Starmýri in the next valley to the east of Lón, where he is labelled foster son of the masters (*Manntal* 1901; *Íslendingabók;* and Austur-Skaftfellingar: 339).

[15] In the early 1900s and up until 1920, Djúpivogur was arguably the main trading post and fishing station in the southeast Iceland. While there was a small trading post in Höfn, south of Lón valley during this period, many farmers, and especially those living in the Lón valley, were unhappy with it, preferring the trading post in Djúpivogur: see further Arnþór Gunnarsson 1997: 145–152.

[16] These narratives include three of her five retold narratives, suggesting that stories of secular history were among the most stable part of her Ingibjörg's repertoire.

[17] Interestingly In the Ísmús database, this narrative has been labelled as being a story about ghosts and haunting, presumably either by Hallfreður Örn himself or by later archivists classifying the material for the database. It is far from clear whether Ingibjörg herself viewed her experience to be associated with the dead, or *huldufólk,* even though this account follows another about a neighbour's experience of seeing something that might have been related to the *huldufólk.* Indeed, *huldufólk* stories rarely take place in urban settings. Another example of a supernatural experience that Ingibjörg left uninterpreted is a second-hand memorate about her foster mother's experience of seeing strange men in unusual clothing riding out of an uninhabited valley and passing them by (SÁM 86/843). This narrative is more logically labelled in the *Ísmús* database as being a narrative about *huldufólk* or outlaws, underlining the difficulties encountered by an archivist trying to classify narratives that are not interpreted by the narrators themselves and for which we lack knowledge of any original storytelling context. In this case, the narrative follows a story about ghosts, and could thus easily have also been interpreted as a ghost story.

[18] As I have noted elsewhere (Júlíana Th. Magnúsdóttir forthcoming b), social pressure to keep to the rational (and the beliefs accepted by the church) may have affected the genders disproportionately in the Icelandic rural community of the past, making men more reluctant to tell stories about supernatural experiences than women.

[19] As noted above, Ingibjörg also tells several narratives in which she avoids interpreting or labelling the experience involved, some of which could arguably best be interpreted as also being ghost stories.

[20] Women appear in about 44% of Ingibjörg's legends, men appearing in around 90%. This means that, compared to the average repertoires of Hallfreður Örn's female informants in which female characters appear in well over half of the stories told by the women (see above), Ingibjörg, for some reason, appears to tell unusually few stories involving female characters.

[21] Ingibjörg tells one story that takes place in a store in Djúpivogur, which she had learned few years earlier when she was travelling there. Otherwise, other places situated to the east of the Lón valley (and those living in these places) do not appear in her narratives. She does, however, tell several narratives about people living in Ólafsvík, on the opposite side of Iceland, narratives which she learned when the ship she was travelling on to school in Akureyri made a brief stop there.

[22] These narratives include two wonder tales and two retellings of legends told on different occasions. Like Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir (see above), Þuríður was also interviewed by the folklore collector Helga Jóhannsdóttir, who visited Þuríður with her husband Jón Samsonarson earlier in the summer of 1969. Once again, Helga's interview focuses on musical genres and the wonder tale tradition: on this occasion Þuríður tells three wonder tales and no legends.

[23] Þuríður adopts four narratives from female neighbours and five from male neighbours. Three of her narratives are adopted from household members, all of them from women.

[24] Car ownership did not become general in rural Iceland until the second half of the twentieth century. Until then farmers in Þistilfjörður commonly used horses and sledges for their trading trips. Þuríður's daughter, born in 1936 (after the river had been bridged) still remembers being sent outside to count the numbers of sledges that could be seen on the mountain across the river for her mother, who wanted to know how many she could expect for dinner. This, along with the fact that farmers in Þistilfjörður commonly stayed for two nights on the local farms (those of Þuríður and her brother) at Gunnarsstaðir when trading, underlines the incredible hospitality offered to others by the family.

[25] On the Icelandic tradition of lake monsters, see, for example, Einar Ól. Sveinsson (2003: 156–158).

[26] In a survey on folk belief from 2006–2007, about 70% of women and 50% of men admitted finding the existence of *huldufólk* as being possible, likely, or factual while 90% of women and

70% of men found the spirits of the dead as being a possible, likely, or factual phenomenon. The difference was even greater when asked about experiences of these supernatural beings, with only 6% of women and 4% of men admitting having seen *huldufólk* while 20% of women and 13% of men admitted having seen spirits of the dead (Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds et at. 2008: 25; 34; 83 and 89). What is also interesting here is the fact that women seem to be far more likely to admit to both supernatural belief and experience, something which may have roots in gendered ideas of rationality affecting men to a greater extent than women in modern times.

[27] In personal conversation, Þuríður's daughter Brynhildur informed me that her mother usually did not want to talk about this event, as she found it too discomforting. This fact would appear to be reflected in Þuríður's recorded narration of this event, which, for Þuríður, is unusually short and cryptic.

Book Reviews

From Practice of Folklore to Theory of Tradition

Simon J. Bronner: The Practice of Folklore. Essays toward a Theory of Tradition. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 2019. 359 pp. Ill.

It is surely a daunting task that the American folklorist Simon J. Bronner has set for himself, working towards a theory of tradition by way of the concepts of practice and folklore, or to be more precise the practice of folklore. The challenge is further underscored by the fact that in doing this he is invoking three so-called *generalia* words, keywords (to use Raymond Williams' term) with an alarmingly broad set of syntagmatic and paradigmatic possibilities, thereby making them extremely fluid and difficult to pinpoint as to their possible meanings in context, to say nothing of the possibility of making them part of a theory.

What can be said of the three words or concepts is that all three are temporal by nature. They work in time and by time, although in different, often overlapping ways. Of the three the one that is closest to Bronner's mind, most central to his project, it seems, is folklore. It the narrowest of the trio as to its various connotations, although it also has a tendency to slip away into other designations such as folklife, folk culture or just plain folk. Paradoxically, folklore today is a concept which in certain North European countries is retreating (or disappearing) as a disciplinary unit, when neighbouring concepts such as ethnology/ethnography, cultural studies, cultural analysis and popular culture studies are making inroads into its ever more contested field of analysis. When I studied folklore in the 1990s the idea of folklore was one about the mental, immaterial, imaginary aspects of folk culture, both oral and written, often involving questions of superstition and also the performative, even the artistic to a high degree, while ethnology was more about things, materials, everyday life as it was lived by the *ethnos*, the people, groups of people more or less in the present (or in history but not necessarily a folkloristically defined one). Folklore seemed to hold a slightly awkward position somewhere between literature and folk ideas, or indeed as part of a cultural history and a culture in the broadest sense. Today the discipline is under pressure from more "materialist", more "presentist", more "activist" varieties of cultural inquiry, e.g. in the form of ethnographies of various kinds, such as in the Nordic context the one studying "life-modes" as practised by Thomas Højrup and others in Denmark, the phenomenological ethnology of Jonas Frykman, Maja Povrzanović Frykman, Nils Gilje and others in Sweden and Norway, also an experiential form of ethnography which I associate with Orvar Löfgren, Billy Ehn and Richard Wilk, and a more narrative variant of folkloristics pursued e.g. by the Gotlandic folklorists Ulf Palmenfelt and Owe Ronström and my colleague Lena Marander-Eklund at Åbo Akademi, to name just a few of these often quite divergent research variants and their practitioners in the field of ethnology/folkloristics/oral studies.

But as Bronner himself surely is well aware, the names of researchers are of

less importance in trying to establish a way of doing research, although they are important, as he also shows eminently in his book, as ways of refining and stabilizing various research traditions (sic!). This he does by way of an impressive historiographical survey in the book under review, performed mostly on the American side of folkloristics, although his book also gains some traction as a comparative study mainly of different uses of folklore and ethnography as analytical tools, including some interesting takes on Dutch folklore, society and politics.

The book, with its impressive length and breadth is in itself quite a daunting task for a reader to get through, as it is packed with information not only about the three central concepts of the work, but also several lengthy case studies (at least eight if my reading is correct). In this review, however, I will focus on the theoretical questions arising from this task which Bronner has set himself, a task which one, before starting to read the book, might think of as almost impossible to accomplish, working his way from the practice of folklore towards a theory of tradition.

My reflections on the challenge faced by Bronner are meant to encourage further discussion of these topics, and not in any way to argue that his project is doomed from the start or impossible even to consider (though a more circumspect researcher might have thought one or two times before starting such an experience, because of the hurdles it sets up for the writer).

What seems to me to be a possible starting point when one is trying to work out a theory of tradition by way of the practice of folklore is firstly to try to get a fair evaluation of the concepts themselves, their usefulness as explanatory concepts in this case. But where to begin, since, as I indicated, they are in themselves extremely slippery, multifaceted, multivocal. If one starts with the concept of practice as Bronner does with a broad and even-handed brush, one quickly realizes that the concept is heavily loaded with theory from day one. Going back at least to Aristotle's praxis theory in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and continuing via Thomas Aquinas' reworking and refining of the Aristotelian concept as practice, coming up into the era of the great metaphysicians (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and the early "pragmatists" or empiricists (Bacon, Newton, and earlier on Bruno and Cusanus) the concept is in a position of being at the intersection of immanence and transcendence, and at the same time, with the emergence of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century the concept, with its perhaps hidden roots in the other concept under consideration, tradition, it enters a new world, so to speak, a world in which this other concept, tradition, as noted by the sociologist Edward Shils in 1981, was fast disappearing from the scholarly horizon. The Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko, in an essay in 1999 on traditions in the construction of cultural identity, referring to Shils' understanding of the values of traditions, seen as constituents of a worthwhile life, notes that the desire to be free and the inclination for reason coexists with the respect for rules, with the need for continuity with what has gone before, with the sense of the past and an attachment to locality and collectivity. But according to Shils this was no longer so in the era of Enlightenment, which in his view was antithetical to tradition. Instead the Enlightenment became the new tradition. But it did not wholly erase the other older variants, although it became the substantive tradition. A balance was struck between respect for authority on one hand and self-confidence in those exercising authority on the other hand, making it possible for the Enlightenment's ideal of emancipation through the exercise of reason to move forward.

But as noted by Shils and Honko (neither of whom Bronner mentions), the ultimate failure of the programme of total rationalization in our society restores the possibility of substantive traditionality in the setting of moderate individual-

ism and a more limited rationalism. The paradox is set by Shils this way: human beings cannot survive without traditions even though they are so frequently dissatisfied with their traditions.

Practice as a concept then seems closely related to tradition and thereby to various forms of groups, communities – which also goes the other way around – which in my view surely is one of the most interesting and intriguing ones in this respect, namely the question of how practices are related to folk/community/locality, or we-ness, as Bronner calls it. In this way practice is also related to questions of a more "transcendental" nature, the first of which is the one concerning the inherent values and norms in these practices and traditions. If they are valuable, why is this? How are we to understand the questions of normativity in practices and traditions? A radical and much debated thesis has of course been put forward by the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, a scholar who for a long time has been active in American universities, who connects these concepts to a third one, that of virtues. This concept is also one which Aristotle and Aquinas both were busy studying and trying to understand. For MacIntyre (an ex-Marxist turned Catholic) virtue is a key concept when trying to understand what he sees as the ethical difficulties confronting modern rationalist, indeed capitalist society. Or rather, he states that the lack of virtues, such as the four classical ones and the three Christian ones, but more broadly qualities connected to tradition and community, is what ails the post-Enlightenment world. As he states this in his *After Virtue* (written in 1981, the same year as Shils' book on tradition): "The hypothesis which I wish to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described. What we possess, if this view is true, are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack the contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have – very largely, not entirely – lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality."

This kind of reality envisioned by MacIntyre (via Aquinas and Aristotle) is marked by the interconnection of the concepts of community, practices, tradition and a fourth one, *telos*, this latter one establishing an ultimate aim or an arc consisting of the preferred values, norms and practices of a human lifetime. This world view might be seen as a triangle or rectangle in constant movement, not up or down, from side to side, but with constant internal feedback circuits between the different "pillars" or points in the structure, forming and upholding the whole moral enterprise. It is a view which could be called moralistic or anachronistic if one prefers such a critical outlook. But it is one which is not that easy to refute, since it can be shown to have something as a truth value in trying to come to terms with the present situation in the world, not least in the United States.

Bronner's move when confronted with this challenge of the slippery nature of tradition and therefore also of practice, and as I tried to show, inherently also questions of norms and virtues, is a pragmatist one. He acknowledges the normative status of tradition seen in this "folkloristic" way. He does this most eminently in the longest and most thorough of his case studies in the book, the one about the Amish of the American Midwest, especially in the state of Pennsylvania. Here is a close-knit community of "true believers", Anabaptists who have escaped the atrocities they faced in their old homeland of Switzerland and are still to this day living a life which might be deemed highly anachronistic and by some even troublesomely so, with various taboos against the practices of the neighbouring capitalist society. But not wholly, and as Bronner so instructively shows, they manage these

pressures via a shrewd adaptation to this same "fast capitalism" by way of a much slower, more "intimate" form of capitalism in which e.g. owning cars is prohibited as is higher school education, since they both might disrupt the community and its core values.

This example goes a long way to show how important the question of both core values and canon might be to a tradition, but it can't say much about where the critical values and the worth of a canon actually are to be found, how they must constantly be revitalized, re-evaluated, reconstructed in a world which is changing fast and in which the value systems at the same time seem to move at hyperspeed, to use a prefix Bronner is fond of, hyper.

What Simon J. Bronner is trying to achieve in his monumental book is something quite remarkable, namely a great synthesis of several divergent streams when it comes to the conception of folklore. Paradoxically he does this by tapping into the twin concepts of praxis/practice and tradition, which are much older and more established than the concept of folklore, or for that matter even folk which as a concept has a rather quaint history and now has to share semantic space with both *ethnos* (Greek) and *populus* (Latin). But there is a further problem with the folk concept in this case, something Bronner must be aware of but does not address straight on in his theory-building. It is the question of the word *folk* in American English, often understood in connection with radicalism both socially and politically, something which was highlighted in the 1960s with the folk music and civil rights movements which to a large extent converged. Indirectly Bronner acknowledges this, of course, by tying the American folklore concept and its history to a performativeness much less active in the European idea of the concept. Here questions of roots and nationality have instead been at the forefront of the scholarly discussion about folklore, something e.g. Honko's article from 1999 is an example of. The concept of practice and tradition (the latter understood by Bronner as pointing back to its original meaning in Latin, derived from *tradere*, to hand on, as thus related to hand and handiness. He then makes the handiness of tradition the key to the analytical strategy of folklore and folklife studies.

The idea is, Bronner notes, that the way people *perceive* the hand – active, immediate, instrumental, gestural, and visible – particularly in relation to the mind – passive, remote, non-productive, individualized, and unseen – dictates the way scholars *conceive* folklore as pervasive, relevant, contemporary, functional, expressive, and ultimately meaningful. Being a cultural resource *at hand*, he adds, tradition represents everyday processes of social control and expression, and these processes are often set in contrast to modernization associated with standardization, commercialization, discontinuity, and artificiality.

The problem with this kind of analysis is only that a metaphorical explanation, slippery as it is, is not quite sufficient to carry the weight this explanation gives it. But Bronner, being a great synthesizer and a pragmatist, might be well-schooled in an especially American way of dealing with value issues and paradoxes, it seems to me. Another metaphor he brings to his analysis is crossroads, surely one which is often used when it comes to American music, not least in blues and rock'n'roll. But of course it is also convergent with the methodology of intersectionality put forward by black feminist thinkers and scholars in the 1970s, the idea of a cumulative oppression mechanism operating in society in a way which often makes is paradoxically invisible. Therefore intersectionality, a variation of the crossroads theme, is viewed as an apt instrument for highlighting questions of dominance/subservience in human affairs, especially concerning race/ethnology, gender and class, but might also be applied to generation, disabilities and so on.

Bronner is aware of this usage, of course, but it is beside his main point in the book, which is about using prac-

tice and tradition in a new way. Here he is also applying his synthesis-making point of view to the questions of digitality, which he reads as above all a question of speed and presentism. The idea of movement (whether personal or societal, real or symbolic), of progress, of a fast capitalism which holds the whole society more or less in its grip and of an extreme individualism seen by the society as a core virtue, in this type of a relentlessly moving society, is in Bronner's analysis checked and balanced by a contra-move in the other direction, that of folk, of community, of we-ness practised in real life situations, something which he as a folklorist is eager to explore. His inquiry into various forms of community and identity, such as the Amish, but also several other important issues such as school shootings and the question of autism, the symbolism of sailor and sea in bawdy singing events and a praxeological inquiry into the origin, form, and cognition of a troubling folk character, the boogieman, leads him to a kind of stance more or less temporally defined and therefore perhaps movable, concerning questions of imminent or openly visible racism and other forms of inequity, economic, social, political, in "fast capitalism" and an era, as noted, of often extreme individualism.

But questions still unanswered when it comes to the digital revolution and its social, economic and political consequences are those concerning the possible breakup of analogically construed communities and groups by the virtuality factor today, something which social analysts are being made more aware of lately. And the other thing Bronner's take on the digital perhaps does not address forcefully enough is the related question of a possible co-existence between digital and analogue versions of "reality", which the Swedish historian Rasmus Fleischer has called a post-digital society.

To conclude, Bronner's book is a stimulating read and his views on American society have an optimistic bent. He is able to mobilize a more or less calm way of dealing with these difficult questions of e.g. school shootings and toxic masculinity. But at the same time, when reading these essays published in 2019, the question that keeps popping up in my mind is the one about what could be called malicious practices, which Bronner of course is aware of and discusses in a couple of his case studies. I am thinking of the insurrection at the Capitol building in Washington D.C. on 6 January 2021. What was so striking with this explosion of anger and hate and desecration of American democracy, its most "sacred" rooms and settings, was at the same time the parade of various symbols and gestures of community and collectivity the rioters showed off, often with deep historical roots in American society and with openly racist, white supremacist, secessionist or apocalyptic aspirations. The practices of these insurrectionist groups could and should in my mind be analysed in their full symbolic and practical detail, in order to get a fuller understanding of what the American Dream/Nightmare/Mind as of today might be about to some Americans, as a practice, a reality and indeed a form of tradition. I hope Simon Bronner or some of his colleagues will have the time and the energy to dig into this whole complex. I think it would be of great service both to Americans themselves and to the discipline of folkloristics.

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Young Second Home Owners in Sweden in the 2010s

Susanna Rolfsdotter Eliasson: Längtans och drömmarnas hus. Ideal och praktik bland en ny generation stugägare. Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper. Göteborgs universitet, Göteborg 2020. 232 pp. Ill. Diss.

Susanna Rolfsdotter Eliasson's doctoral dissertation in culture studies is about the

owners of second homes in the Swedish countryside during the period 2015–2020. The focus is thus on the present day. The owners, who are all couples, belong to the middle class and live in flats, primarily in Stockholm and Gothenburg. For weekends and holidays they go to their second home in the countryside.

The author is interested in the ideals of the owners and their practice in acquiring and using their country cottages. She has a somewhat diffuse discussion about the concept of generation with regard to second home owners born in the 1970s and 1980s. They live in rented flats or condominiums in the cities but own no properties there.

The author has interviewed the selected couples together and also observed life in the holiday homes, keeping detailed field notes. She is the same age as the second home owners she studies, with a similar class position. She has also owned a country cottage for a time. Here the author could have discussed what her personal experiences meant for the fieldwork. For most of the 24 interviewees, it was the first or second summer in the holiday home when they were interviewed. This means that they had not built up any long-term traditions. She, or someone else, could study how that changes if the study could be repeated after a few years, in what has been called the "ethnography of return". The interview material, and some of the field notes, are presented through long quotations. The reader can follow both the interview questions and the answers. The interviewees are rendered anonymous by the use of fictitious names.

The author has also taken numerous photographs during her visits to the second homes. Many colour photos are reproduced in the dissertation, and although they have an illustrative function they do little for the analysis. Because of the anonymization, the owners are not depicted in exterior and interior images of the cottages, which means that there are no visual illustrations of social life in and around these second homes.

The author discusses the concept of class with reference to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, taste, and symbolic capital. The concept of middle class has a wide range of meaning in the dissertation and is somewhat difficult to pin down. The author applies narrative analysis to the interviews she collected. The study of identity and values is central. She could have referred here to the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, an important research network. When narratives and practice do not agree, the author's interpretations are based on the social psychologist Leon Festinger's concept of cognitive dissonance. The American sociolinguist William Labov's model for analysing personal experience narratives comes in useful for studying the stories of how the second homes were purchased and the activities in these cottages.

The first empirical chapter examines what led to the decisions to acquire a second home. Dreams of autonomy are a prominent motive. However, the owners' personal economy set limits. To find a holiday home at an affordable price, they had to look in places at least a couple of hours' drive from the city, between 150 and 300 kilometres. The stories contrast the high tempo of the city life with notions of calm in a remote cottage in the countryside. Being close to nature was considered to allow a sense of recovery from the hustle and bustle of the city and the strict timetable of everyday life. At the same time, the prospective cottage buyers could have misgivings, or feel cognitive dissonance to use Leon Festinger's term, about having two homes. It could be perceived as luxurious, selfish, and capitalistic when the second home is empty most of the year, at a time when many people have nowhere to live.

The second empirical chapter addresses the question of the perception of time in city life compared to

country life. Cyclical time becomes more noticeable in the holiday home because the owners can follow nature's seasonal changes up close, in a way that is not possible in the city. The author uses the sociologist Alberto Melucci's classification into internal and external times. Internal time is linked to the subjective experiences of individuals, whereas external time can be measured with clocks and thereby be perceived as objective. Internal time can be perceived as fast, slow, or stagnant. Internal time is particularly noticeable in the holiday home because it is perceived as slower than the pace of the city. In the holiday home there is time to wash dishes by hand, which would be out of the question in the city. There is less need to plan time than in the city. The author calls this "holiday home time". When the owners met the permanent residents in rural areas, the pace and the pressure for time seem to be more relaxed than in the city. Rural people are said to be able to "take their time".

The third empirical chapter, "From idea to room", looks at the houses the interviewees ended up buying, how they chose them and how they renovated and decorated them. Questions of strategies and consumer choices are analysed on the basis of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field and symbolic capital. Several of the second homes were built after the 1960s, but there are also two smaller cottages and a disused mission house. Simplicity constitutes an ideal in the interior decoration of the houses. In some cases the inspiration comes from design magazines focusing on reuse. Furnishings are largely bought at flea markets and second-hand on the internet. This gives the impression of a hodgepodge of objects, but it satisfies an ethical need that the owners feel about not consuming newly produced furniture and objects.

The fourth empirical chapter, "Meaning-making practices", deals with the activities that second home owners engage in. The author associates this with the issue of narrative identity creation. The first stage in the activity is the journey to the second home. This can be described as a liminal phase within a passage rite, and it is something that the interviewees have become accustomed to. With one exception, the interviewees travel by car. Here the question of cognitive dissonance arises again, the difference between ideal and practice, as the interviewees, for climatic reasons, express an inner resistance to driving. In the city they try to use public transport, but they say that this is not practicable when travelling to and from the holiday home. The author calls these explanations, which aim to counteract the cognitive dissonance they feel, "personal narrative explanatory models".

Owning a second home involves a great deal of physical work both indoors and in the garden. This is a positive experience for the interviewees because it is self-chosen. Moreover, it is quite different from the less physical work they do in the city. For the sake of children it is meaningful to grow one's own organic food in the garden. With two exceptions, the interviewed couples have children of preschool age. They take photos of some of the physical work they do to post on social media, which the author interprets as a way to showcase their symbolic capital.

The final chapter, "Urban lifestyle with a second home", provides a rich and lucid summary of the main threads of the dissertation.

To sum up, I would say that the dissertation is well written, although the empirical material is presented in somewhat excessive detail. It is easy to follow the author's reasoning and positions. The fieldwork was carefully carried out and is well presented. In her analyses the author applies her theoretical inspiration from Bourdieu, Festinger, Labov, Melucci, and others in a fruitful way. She continues and develops a long tradition of research on tourism at the Department of Ethnology, subsequently of Culture Sciences, at Gothenburg University, with her supervisor Kerstin

Gunnemark as the foremost representative. Research on leisure and tourism in modern Sweden has a major new contribution in this dissertation.

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Norse Mythology, Folklore, and Memory

Myth, Magic, and Memory in Early Scandinavian Narrative Culture. Studies in Honour of Stephen A. Mitchell. Ed. by Jürg Glauser and Pernille Hermann in collaboration with Stefan Brink and Joseph Harris and with the editorial assistance of Sarah Künzler. (Acta Scandinavica, Cambridge Studies in the Early Scandinavian World 11.) Turnhout, Brepols 2021. 451 pp.

In 2021, Professor Stephen A. Mitchell received a *Festschrift*. He is the Robert S. and Ilse Friend Professor of Scandinavian and Folklore at Harvard University. Moreover, he is the curator of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature and holds quite a lot of other commissions. To be honoured with a *Festschrift* is one of the most solemn moments during the career of an academic, for friends and colleagues make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the recipient's scholarly production and try to create texts comparable to the results of those publications. In this way, the recipient's research is seminal.

Being a professor of both Scandinavian and Folklore is demanding. Two wide fields of research should either be combined or kept apart as separate entities, but both must receive equal amounts of detailed attention. Experts in both fields are rare, but in this *Festschrift* the editors achieve this goal because all the scholars are specialists in their fields, some of them in Scandinavian culture, others in Folklore. Consequently, the vast field of Stephen A. Mitchell's research is well covered in the book.

As *Festschrifts* often are, this book is a hotchpotch of different kinds of relevant material categories, methods, and issues. It is interesting to see how, in a relatively limited format, diverse studies of Norse culture and Nordic folklore can be.

Classical methods alternate with ultramodern ways of working. Certainly, familiar approaches such as rereading, concept analysis, and new interpretations of old texts will be found here. Old sources undergo renewed scrutiny and turn out to be open for new ideas. Comparison is also a well-known method among students of culture. For instance, the relationship between Norse myths and later folklore is a fruitful perspective, at least to some degree. In doing these analyses the scholars may concentrate on contemporary research issues, such as space and place, and indeed on past and future, using these concepts as tools for their thinking. Also, what we today know about the senses is a good gateway to understanding old Black Books, especially as it has been demonstrated that the senses can be regarded as making people act and react depending on the situation. Recent theoretical considerations about changes of gender and of liminality contribute to knowledge about women as the Other.

It was interesting to read how one single category of folklore, records of magic, can be used to elucidate quite a lot of different problems in teaching folklore. For instance, the magic texts demonstrate worldviews, ethics, and morals. It is also pedagogically important as a university teacher to be able to provide students with different clarifications of one and the same text. Here *Skírnismál*, in two consecutive articles, serves as an example of this way of conducting research.

The scholars in this *Festschrift* point to some pre-Christian characteristics, but there is also evidence of how nation

builders from later periods, such as the Middle Ages or the nineteenth century, sometimes with little support, endeavoured to collect the folklore that would constitute the ground for, or in other ways influence, the view of contemporary needs for constructing a national culture. Indeed, folklore was an important ingredient, but folklore also contributed to occasional descriptions of everyday life. For instance, in Leonora Christina Ulfeldt's *Jammers minde*, the author shows how the autobiography from the seventeenth century was filled with accounts referring to carnivalesque folklore. It is also fruitful to regard old texts as evidence of speech acts or as starting points for analyses about how the use of folklore changed over time. What once was a story about water spirits *per se* is, nowadays, disguised into a narrative about fear of nuclear energy.

A couple of articles are dedicated to the enormous theme of memory. And, as a contrast, one article deals with how to name forms of nature using folklore, just as formerly in Finland mythological concepts were used to name banks or insurance companies, and computer phenomena, such as Eudora (the mail program) or Ra (a server).

Medieval church architecture is filled with sculptures based on folklore such as the *Judensau*. Here the scholar maintains that this motif reached Uppsala Cathedral via Gotland, one of the centres of old Nordic culture. Often the walls in the churches were painted with religious motifs teaching the people the message of the Bible. Here the article seeks to demonstrate how the listening members of the congregation might have interpreted the pictures.

Geographically the articles cover all of North-Western Europe. The time span is enormous too, from a mythical past to the present day, for folklore even turns out to be the object of efforts to construct computationally and scholarly valid methods to analyse big data. The broad perspective makes for an enjoyable read and does full justice to the *Festschrift* recipient's multifaceted scholarly career. Many of the articles are written in clear and comprehensible English, which makes them useful also to non-experts and young readers.

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Opinion on Alcohol

Anders Gustavsson: Improper Use, Moderation or Total Abstinence of Alcohol. Use of and Opinion on Alcohol Especially in the Western Swedish Countryside and Coastal Regions during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. Strömstad Akademi, Strömstad 2021. 79 pp. Ill.

Some time ago I attended a high school graduation party where very little alcohol was served. The hosts chose not to drink, which disappointed at least one of the guests. At a graduation party people are expected to get tiddly or even drunk. Actually, a Swedish high school student's graduation celebration could be the one occasion when parents buy alcohol beverages (mainly champagne) for their under-age children! Thus, this is an event that highlights the complexity of norms and values connected to alcohol consumption (how much to drink, when, where and with whom), which is an ongoing process that occurs today as well as in the "old days".

In his book *Improper Use, Moderation or Total Abstinence of Alcohol* Anders Gustavsson studies three approaches to alcohol in Bohuslän's coastal and inland areas: that of moderation, improper use and total abstinence and the struggle between the principle of total abstinence and the principle of moderation. The book mainly covers a period of about 150 years from the early 1800s up to the 1970s. Furthermore it tells us about the way in which norms were upheld on different levels,

by national legislation and by control and sanctions exercised between individuals in a certain context. Gustavsson also uses an auto-ethnographic method, by which his own experience as a child growing up in a similar (although not identical) environment gives him a better understanding of his data.

This is a traditional ethnological study analysing a wide range of different data, such as questionnaire responses from the folklore archives, church history archives, doctors' reports, cadastral maps, etc. Also, previous studies of his own provide a basis for discussions. The book contains a large number of pictures: photos of certain individuals, get-togethers and large gatherings, paintings, newspaper cuttings as well as maps and diagrams. I appreciate the many pictures; seeing the stern faces of the local physicians, or men and women posing in front of the temperance lodge brings the material to life. There are also many interesting and sometimes amusing examples of events and colourful people, amongst them several women, for instance Brännvinsbrita (Aquavit Brita), who had a permit to sell alcohol, and Brännvins-Lena (Aquavit Lena), who traded drink illegally to the sailors and was said to have become a ghost for her sins.

The book is organized according to different themes/chapters: moderation in the countryside; the authorities and alcohol; total abstinence within the free church and the temperance movements; and finally a short summary. The headings are numbered, which gives the impression of a report or an essay. Personally I would have chosen not to have numbers, but that, of course, it is a matter of choice.

After a brief introduction Gustavsson writes about the moderate approach to alcohol and the change in attitudes to drinking that occurred during the nineteenth century. The Lutheran attitude towards alcohol was that of moderation; one should not drink too much, writes Gustavsson. However, even in Lutheran Sweden people sometimes drank a lot. Gustavsson describes a wedding party in Röra on Orust, in 1818, when tremendous amounts of aquavit were served. In 1855 a law that forbade people to distil their own alcohol was passed, and a licence was necessary to sell strong spirits. The municipality had a veto against selling aquavit and in Henån there would be no outlet for over a hundred years. Also, there was a change of mentality. In Röra, for instance, where the wedding was held, the Schartauan revival movement started to influence people's ideas of moderation.

On the island of Åstol, the local shopkeeper converted to the Pentecostal church and refused to sell alcohol, snuff or tobacco up until the 1970s. Some of the islanders did not appreciate the total lack of these articles, and it is believed to have been one of the reasons for the island's decreasing population. This shows one of the conflicts described in the book, conflicts between teetotallers and those who wanted to drink. In Småland the Good Templars were said to have hoisted the flag when an innkeeper passed away!

Gustavsson does not only write about changes that have occurred since the nineteenth century, but also studies drinking rituals at funerals and their symbolic change over a long period of time, from the Roman period up until the 1970s. In the Catholic era, before the Reformation in the sixteenth century, people drank to honour God, Christ, the saints, and the Virgin Mary. A couple of hundred years later, the mourners commemorated the dead person by downing a "shot" in front of the coffin. By the 1980s that tradition had disappeared.

As nowadays there was a complex pattern of norms and values connected to who drank, with whom, when and on which occasion. At celebrations you could drink a lot, as long as you did not lose control. Women were expected to drink less than men and people with certain occupations were thought to drink more than others. Furthermore Gustavsson writes about the importance of certain authorities such as

local doctors and priests. The drinking habits of the local vicar was an interesting topic to talk about amongst the locals. A vicar who drank was accepted as long as he could perform his duties. According to statements in the archives, some priest even held better sermons after a drink! If he drank too much, though, he might lose control and fall out of the pulpit. In my own research I have found several stories about drunken priests falling out of the pulpit in front of a staring congregation – it is quite a common theme that probably was amusing to tell at a time when the priest had power over people's morals. It was a way of degrading him to an "ordinary" person. These kind of derogatory stories were also told about people from the temperance movement, Gustavsson writes, and alcohol sold at the pharmacy was jokingly called "Good Templar Aquavit"!

Gustavsson goes on to discuss the way in which norms concerning total abstinence were upheld within the Mission Congregation in Smögen and the New Star Lodge on the island of Tjörn around the turn of the last century. Both practised a kind of informer system to stop their members from drinking. Members were encouraged to report if someone had broken the temperance vow. In Smögen the "accused" person then had to attend an inquiry, almost like a "trial" (being questioned, defending himself), which could result in exclusion from the congregation. Breaking the temperance pledge was one of the reasons for members leaving the New Star Lodge. The number of members fluctuated and around the 1920s many new members joined the lodge. The variation in membership over time is illustrated by diagrams, although these are rather difficult to read. I expect the original curves, representing different groups, may have been in colour. The present curves are black, which makes it difficult to see the difference between them.

Thus, there were different ideas and conflicts concerning alcohol and drinking habits within and between groups, those who chose total abstinence and those who did not. A picture in the book shows an out-of-the-way cabin where young people met to drink in the 1960s and 1970s. It reminds me of my own adolescence when we sneaked off to drink "mellanöl" (medium-strong beer) in the woods. Not the best of memories, but still, it gives me a sense of a certain time and place. Drinking patterns, norms, values, crossing and upholding boundaries are topics discussed throughout the book. It would have been interesting to follow additional perspectives, for instance gender, more thoroughly. All in all *Improper Use, Moderation or Total Abstinence of Alcohol* is an interesting book which in an ethnological spirit describes events from everyday life as well as giving an overview of drinking patterns over time in a certain context. You can look up particular details, for instance about rituals from the old days, performed to cure alcohol addiction, or about alcohol and the dead body. Up to the end of the nineteenth century people were buried with special belongings to prevent them from coming back to haunt their surroundings looking for things they missed. As a result the dead were buried with bottles of alcohol, snuff and pipes, objects that have been found by excavations of graves. Thus, the book is well worth reading, whether you are interested in certain people and events of the past or want to learn more about drinking habits at large.

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Women and Men in Swedish Fishing Communities

Anders Gustavsson: Women and Men in Fishing Communities on the Swedish North-Westcoast. A Study of the Responsibilities of Women and Men and of Cultural Contacts. Strömstads akademi 2021. 53 pp. Ill.

Anders Gustavsson's little book is a brief account of the division of responsibilities and cultural contacts between women and men on the north-west coast of Bohuslän. The book is written in English, which should ensure the author an international audience for his research findings from this area, to which he has devoted much of his research career. The book is published by Strömstad Academy, a non-profit organization that since 2008 offers an academic home to senior researchers, facilitating continued research.

This publication deals with how the duties of women and men have been divided along lines of dominance and dependence in fishing communities. An important part of the material consists of interviews, a method the author has often used in his research. The women worked in and near the home while the men fished in the sea along the Norwegian coast during the summer months. During the winter months the men were at home mending the nets. When the men were fishing, the women's thoughts were with them and they waited impatiently for letters. This was due to love, but also to the worry about becoming a poor widow.

The men had contacts in Norwegian ports where they could sell the catch and get paid, and then buy salt and bait fish. This provided contacts with people of higher social and economic status, who even invited the fishermen to Sunday dinner and various religious activities in the free churches. The latter created problems when the men came home to Bohuslän, where the women believed that only their church had the right doctrine. The Swedish men became more open to different religious movements. It could happen that Swedish men socialized with Norwegian women, which sometimes led to marriage. The Norwegian women who married Swedish fishermen and moved to Bohuslän felt that they were not fully accepted, partly because of their different religious attitudes. When Norwegian women socialized with the visiting Swedish fishermen, the Norwegian men and the women's fathers were suspicious, believing that the women were risking their honour.

Swedish and Norwegian fishermen also came into contact with each other. They discussed the fishing, swapped knowledge, and the Swedish fishing boats often took a Norwegian along because he knew the fishing waters. But competition also led to conflicts between Swedish and Norwegian fishermen.

The women who moved to Bohuslän were perceived as a threat to the Schartauan doctrine. For the Norwegian women, the free churches were more like their Norwegian counterparts. The Norwegian women and the summer guests formed special bonds because both groups felt different from the local Swedish women. The Norwegian women were surprised by Swedish women's belief in the supernatural.

Housing standards in the Bohuslän fishing communities were lower than in Norway's working-class districts, where they had electricity, running water, and indoor toilets.

The Norwegian women were encouraged to learn Swedish, but in Norway it was considered inappropriate to speak Swedish. For Norwegians it was hard to get used to the Swedish diet, while Swedish women and men disliked Norwegian food. Swedish food was the only tradition that the men firmly stuck to despite their close contacts with Norway.

The Norwegian women living in Bohuslän met to talk about memories and about family and friends in Norway. They sang Norwegian songs, cooked Norwegian food, and celebrated the Norwegian National Day. They tried to pass on their Norwegian culture to the children.

The women in Bohuslän, like the men, had contacts outside the coastal community. It was the women who spread religious teachings. The women had contacts with the visitors who rented lodgings for the summer, but these guests belonged to higher social classes.

Conflicts were avoided because the rent was an important source of income. Otherwise, the groups kept their distance.

Women also had contacts with people who were on a more equal social footing. These were artisans and farmers who helped them, for example, to mow the hay on the islands, while the women picked their potatoes, and they bought milk from the farmers' wives. Sometimes fishermen's families and farming families could invite each other to family celebrations.

Gustavsson has divided the text about women's and men's contacts with each other and with other groups into clearly defined categories. This makes for clarity, but the reader should consider whether the social and cultural boundaries were really so clear in reality. Given the small format of the publication, the author has managed to include the most important aspects.

Anders Gustavsson has many examples and quotations from the interviews to elucidate the analysis. The accompanying photographs come from private collections and museums. In addition, the book is illustrated with paintings of folk life by Carl Gustaf Bernhardson (1915–1998). They tell us about everyday life in Bohuslän's fishing communities a hundred years ago.

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A Queer Perspective on Erotic Encounters with Nature Spirits

Catarina Harjunen: Att dansa med de(t) skeva. Erotiska möten mellan människa och naturväsen i finlandssvenska folksägner. Institutionen för folkloristik, Åbo Akademis förlag, Åbo 2020. 230 pp. Ill. English summary. Diss.

We do not need to read further than the third page of this well-written and fascinating dissertation before Catarina Harjunen points out the main direction of the text. The dissertation, she explains, introduces, describes, and analyses Finland-Swedish folk legends about human erotic encounters with nature spirits and how the so-called "normal" is presented in the constructions of sexuality, sex, and gender that we find in the legends. In addition, she studies how these "constructions of sexuality, sex, and gender" are related to notions of nature and culture. The empirical material consists of more than a hundred legends that Harjunen has sought out in archives and collections.

In the first pages of the dissertation, we are also given an important key to the chosen thematic presentation of the material and her own analysis. As the subtitle indicates, the focus is on "erotic encounters between humans and nature spirits", and what Harjunen means by "erotic" is "a spectrum that can be said to begin with the incomprehensible as a feeling and a visual impression, and ends in the result of sexual intercourse, that is, an offspring". This establishes a chronological arrangement that recurs in the structure of the empirical chapters and that also reflects how the society of the time viewed the ideal development in relations between man and woman in the field of sexuality. In the empirical parts of the dissertation, we follow the interaction of the beings and the humans in the following sequence: meeting, courtship, sexual intercourse (and more rarely: marriage), and (also rare) children.

Two major research questions guided the author in her work with the legends. The first is: How are normative sexual desires, practices, and relationships constructed in the erotic encounters in the legends? The second question is: How are sexualities linked to nature?

Added to these two overarching questions is the observation that sexuality has often been described as something "natural", while unwanted forms of sexuality, almost as a rule, have been portrayed as being "against nature". Pointing out this contradiction, Harjunen argues, is

the very essence of *queer ecology*, with its questioning of established structures concerning sexuality and nature that constitutes one of the fundamental theoretical elements of the dissertation. Another equally important basic assumption for the text is that the peasant society was patriarchal, and that this hierarchy helped to consolidate and preserve the heteronormative structures.

Early in the text, we are given another essential key to the structure of the dissertation. Folklore, Harjunen declares, both reproduces and creates cultural norms. By studying legends we can therefore gain an idea of what was considered meaningful during the time reflected by these narratives. But the reverse is also true, she points out, because the legends can also be read in a way that seizes on what is on the margin of comprehensibility, on what can be said to be the *constituent* (and productive) *outside* of normality. In this way, the tales of the nature spirits, and of human encounters with them, make up a sample of the cultural deviations that draw and confirm the boundaries of normality. When Harjunen draws attention to this dual quality of the legends – their inherent meaningfulness and the incomprehensibility that threatens but also complements it – it is a central observation that is often crucial for the analysis.

The reading of the legend material is largely based on the protracted *erotic presence* – from emotion/mood to the conception of a child – that was Harjunen's divining rod when she sought to identify and select legends from the large corpus of collected material to use in the study. The legends were originally collected in the period from the 1860s to a few years into the 1950s, and the geographical area is Swedish-speaking Finland. In this context, the category of nature spirit consists of four supernatural beings popularly believed to have lived in nature: trolls, a female forest spirit called a *skogsrå*, her equivalent in water, the *sjörå*, and a male water spirit called *näcken* or the nix.

The fact that these beings exist at all in an erotic narrative tradition, according to Harjunen, is because they can be perceived as cracks in the heteronormative (and patriarchal) construction that advocates a certain kind of heterosexual life as desirable. The legends and their content therefore open the door to allow prevailing norms and notions of normality to be questioned. What the legends and the erotic encounters implicitly tell us is that there are *other* ways of living one's life than the established way that is culturally exemplary or idealized. In the language of the dissertation, one can thus say that the narratives, like the beings and some of the people who are human parties in the erotic encounters, deviate from expected behaviours and lifelines, they are *queer* (for which Harjunen uses the Swedish word *skev*, "askew").

To examine these constructions of supposed normality, Harjunen combines her queer ecology approach with what she calls a *queer close reading* of the material, which forms the basis for the methodology in the dissertation. This close reading is further specified to include a *contextual close reading*. This close reading is done against the background of the nineteenth-century peasant society, but through a queer, and thus also explicitly critical, lens.

It is also the theoretical queer perspective and the questioning attitude that primarily drive the dissertation. Central building blocks come from Judith Butler, but there are also important posthumanistic influences, primarily from Donna Haraway. This applies not least to two concepts that are useful for the analysis: companion species and natureculture. Other crucial contributions to the analysis come from Sara Ahmed's conceptual apparatus of queer phenomenology, such as orientation, lifelines, and stickiness.

One of the things that can be viewed as a policy statement in the dissertation is that the goal of folkloristic knowledge can be described as both descriptive and

exploratory. It is important, Harjunen aptly writes, to explore terrain that has so far been largely left untouched, using new eyes and new conceptual tools. The dissertation will thereby fill two lacunae. On the one hand, it draws attention to Finland-Swedish erotic folklore which, she says, has hitherto attracted limited academic interest. On the other hand, the analysis is aimed at exposing a non-heteronormative presence in Finland-Swedish folklore.

In this context, it should also be stressed that Harjunen seeks to inscribe herself in a long and venerable tradition as a student of legends and supernatural beings, but also to introduce a new perspective in her dissertation to add to the existing knowledge. The latter opens the study to new ways of researching ideas about normality in relation to Finland-Swedish archival material. It is an exciting objective that there is every reason to applaud. So how does the author tackle the task? Since these are partly new perspectives on old legends, there is good reason to recapitulate the contents and results of the dissertation in some detail.

The introductory chapter "Well met!" is followed by four additional chapters. The second of these, "Framework", is just over fifty pages long, arranged under three main headings. The first of these contains a survey of previous international research on eroticism and sexuality that leads to a presentation of the folk tradition concerning the beings that are central to the dissertation: trolls, the forest spirit, the water spirit, and the nix. Harjunen does not stick to a firm distinction attributing individual legends to each of these beings. The reason is that such distinctions often cannot be found in the legends themselves. In fact, individual motifs, and the descriptions of the appearance or faculties of the different beings, are often interchangeable. What is at the centre is rather the shared ability of these beings to produce both normality and deviation with their "narrated" bodies and desires.

The next, significantly shorter, section in the "Framework" chapter is devoted to the theoretical approaches in the dissertation, with a more detailed presentation of the theorists and concepts introduced in "Well met!" The even shorter section under the third heading discusses the methodological approaches and some of the key choices made during the work process.

The third chapter, "Material", is almost forty pages long, under three headings. The first section focuses on how the legend material came about, that is, how it was collected and the ideas behind it. Harjunen is particularly interested in matters of archiving and publication. This is followed by a section describing the author's own selection process, how she chose legends that she considered most suitable for inclusion in the empirical material for the dissertation. Under the last heading in this chapter she presents various aspects of source criticism about the material and how it is used in the dissertation. This ends with a discussion of the ethical dimensions of the material and of the research.

After these three opening chapters, almost halfway into the actual body of the dissertation, the reader meets the legends that constitute the empirical material. This is done through the five headings that structure the fourth chapter, "Out into nature!" The material is divided here according to what was considered in the historical context to be a desirable course of events in a relationship between two parties of different genders. The ideal was that two young people met, courted within certain social and moral boundaries, then married, had intercourse, and had children. Four sections are devoted to a discussion of the concrete legends against the background of this idealized course of events.

With some variation, the presentation thus reflects the form of heterosexual behaviour that in peasant society was the expected development for a couple on their path to marriage and

reproduction. The only crux, as Harjunen shows, is that this process, however socially desirable it might have been, can rarely be observed in the legends of erotic encounters between humans and nature spirits. On the contrary, the narrated companion-species relationship between human and nature spirit usually places itself at various points on the spectrum between the initial *encounter* and the resulting *child*, even though they can all, technically speaking, be reasonably expected to have started with an encounter.

Under the fifth heading in the same chapter, the author sums up the content of the empirical study. She pulls together the strings of the analysis and reflects from a posthumanistic perspective on the heteronormative constructions she has found in the legends' erotic encounters. Some conclusions and results that can be particularly highlighted are the observation that the *fear* of the queer that often occurs in the legends seems like a socially learned behaviour, something handed down precisely through the kind of traditional material that is studied in the dissertation. There is also room for a discussion of the clearly Christian symbolism of the legends. The supernatural beings were largely un-Christian, they were outside the pact between man and god. Harjunen points out that in the historical context that frames the material, this was momentous: in a society so deeply coloured by Christianity, the lack of religion was in itself something threatening and subversive.

The author also establishes several links to how beings such as trolls, and also vampires, continue to exist in our human imagination by being incorporated into all kinds of modern fiction and popular culture. Referring to Haraway's concept of companion species, Harjunen notes that mankind is a species formed through a process in which other species have been heavily involved. From that perspective, she continues, narratives about nature spirits can be regarded as "a way for humans to create image of themselves and the surrounding world".

What is described is a dynamic relationship between humans and supernatural beings, a winding, jolting – sometimes smooth and sometimes incautious or even hostile – *dance with the queer*, where the action, desires, and bodies of the supernatural beings breach norms through their own deviant nature. But in this dance, the human beings too, through their ways of interacting with the beings in the narratives, often fail to live up to the expected societal and cultural ideals.

The boundaries between supernatural being and human, between ideal, norm, and breach of norm, thus become unstable. The reality of the beings as it appears in the legends and in folk tradition, can thus also be understood as offering a different kind of reality. Tales of erotic encounters, and sometimes even marriage or sexual intercourse, with trolls, forest spirits, water spirits, or the nix are a way of formulating forbidden desires and images of other possible lives.

The fifth and last chapter – entitled "Breakup" as a clear counterpart to the opening "Well met!" – is of a style somewhere between a conclusion and an epilogue. In five pages, it recapitulates the purpose of the book and calls for renewed study of the material that has been partly neglected in the archives and folklore collections. It is, Harjunen argues, in the *human encounter* – understood both as the researcher's encounter with the archival material and as the numerous and ambiguous meetings described there – that we can create a perception of ourselves. It is in encounters with others, with *the Others*, that we can see who we are in relation to other living beings.

The final words are devoted to the return of the irrational and the fantastic. Could it be that we are on the verge of the *re-enchantment* of reality? It is not easy to know whether we are or not. But, Harjunen concludes, the fact that the supernatural may still exist, forgotten and swept aside by the modern world,

is still a good reason to examine folk traditions.

This is a dissertation which is praiseworthy in many respects. The language is fluid, the text flows well, and the reader is easily swept along by a large number of interesting analyses and observations. But it is also a dissertation with some serious shortcomings. Its strength lies primarily in the theoretical arrangement. By examining the old legends against a theoretical backdrop of queer theory, queer ecology, and posthumanism, Harjunen's original method brings new blood to material that has not attracted much research interest in a long time. But it is also here, in the theoretical impetus, that the dissertation manifests itself from its best and its worst side.

The well-found theoretical perspectives and many interesting questions that the dissertation addresses to an older and to some extent thoroughly researched body of legends make what is in several respects an unnecessarily clean cut between older and newer research paradigms. She thus omits to use the opportunities that do exist to point out possible points of contact and connections between older and newer legend research. For that reason, the dissertation would have benefited from more discussion to bridge the gaps and forge more links between different researchers, research issues, and perspectives – not least of all because a broader outlook on the discipline's research history would have helped to clarify what is the dissertation's specific contribution to the subject and to the study of erotic encounters between nature spirits and humans.

In this connection it must also be pointed out that Harjunen fails to convince in her argumentation as to why a particular set of legends should be perceived as "erotic", even though the concrete examples that she discusses in many cases lack explicit sexual elements. The explanation given in the dissertation, that the legends in question can be attributed to a supernatural being surrounded by a general erotic/sexual "atmosphere" or a cycle of motifs, is not sufficient to explain the selection. The interpretation of individual legends thus risks being perceived as tendentious, since the author has given herself a free hand in placing statements and events in accordance with her overall matrix, rather than grounding the analysis firmly in the presented material.

There is also a certain tendency towards circular argumentation in that the discussion of the empirical examples tends in places to repeat what has already been established in the theoretical premises set out in the introductory chapter. Furthermore, Harjunen sometimes lacks the desired precision in handling and evaluating the secondary sources that are the basis for her historically oriented "contextual close reading" of the legends. Given the fundamental importance of close reading for the author's interpretations of her material, it is troubling that this reading does not appear convincing in every respect. Finally, the overall assessment of the dissertation is lowered by recurrent inaccuracies and inadequate references.

That said, there is no doubt that Harjunen has made a significant contribution to her subject with a dissertation that is independent and full of fresh ideas. It presents original reinterpretations and new analyses of legends that have been largely untouched for a long time. Harjunen is thus one of today's researchers who can show that there are still new and exciting questions to be asked about older archival material. This makes her study a welcome and inspiring contribution to ethnological and folkloristic research in this field.

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People, Borders, and Visions

Markus Idvall, Anna Palmehag & Johan Wessman (eds.): Checkpoint 2020. Människor, gränser och visioner i Öresundsbrons tid. Makadam Förlag, Göteborg/Stockholm 2020. 231 pp. Ill.

In the spring of 2000 there were high expectations in the Öresund area. The Öresund Bridge was almost completed, symbolizing the start of a new millennium, and of a Europe where national borders were obsolete. However, the nation state as a political and cultural entity has proved to be a tenacious structure. In the spring of 2020, the Danish government defined all Swedish citizens as a threat to Danish public health and closed the border: the plague, Covid-19, was expected to come by train, car, or ferry over the sound. The transformation of the border thus took place at the time when the Öresund Bridge, the materialization of a borderless Europe, was celebrating its twentieth anniversary. The latest publication from the Centre for Öresund Studies, "Checkpoint 2020: People, Borders, and Visions in the Time of the Öresund Bridge" (published in collaboration with the Øresund Institute), had been sent to the publisher when the pandemic struck, but the book nevertheless gives a praiseworthy account of the heterogeneous, varied character of the bridge, the region, and not least of all, the border.

The volume contains six analytical essays authored by researchers on borders and regions, rounded off by an epilogue by Johan Wessman, head of the Øresund Institute. In addition to these contributions, *Checkpoint 2020* includes interviews with politicians who were involved in the creation of the bridge, and with people who have established a transnational everyday life in the Öresund region. The volume also reproduces short quotations from a questionnaire survey conducted by the Folklife Archive in Lund and the Danish Folklore Collection on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary. The publication, thus, is a dynamic mixture of interviews, short quotations, and critical analytical essays.

In two of the essays the focus is particularly on the national border. The ethnologist Marie Sandberg emphasizes that events in the Öresund region are influenced by politics in Europe and beyond, which means that the Öresund region is well suited as a place to study for anyone who wants to understand the paradoxical border system that permeates the European project; the aim is to have free mobility within the system, but this requires drawing hard borders against the outside world. But even if the boundaries have been toned down within the system, they have by no means vanished. In his contribution the ethnologist Per-Markku Ristilammi directs a critical gaze at the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, when the national border was re-activated in the Öresund region. The essay discusses the bridge as a biopolitical mechanism that defended the sovereignty of the nation state by establishing identity controls and passport checks and by sorting travellers at the railway station in Hyllie, Malmö. The critical perspective recurs in contributions that highlight the tension between, on the one hand, the regional visions of the political and economic elite and, on the other, the everyday lives of the people.

The period around the turn of the millennium was marked by a monolithic obsession with visions, driven by an elite and rarely rooted in people's lived experiences. This resulted in ambivalence and uncertainty as regards identity politics. On the basis of this uncertainty, Christian Tangkjær, expert in regional development, is critical of the idea that the Öresund Bridge creates a uniform regional identity. Instead, it is the diversity of possible identities that gives the region its character and its life. Jesper Falkheimer, professor of strategic communication, does not reject the possibility of creating a uniform identity, but he points out that this presupposes that the people are involved in shaping the region as a project. Popular engagement, however, requires the persistence of a cer-

tain degree of heterogeneity. The Öresund region as a project requires that the border continues to create differences and that there is therefore a reason for people to cross over to the other side of the sound.

In an essay that focuses on the complexity of commuting and the labour market, the human geographers Høgni Kalsø Hansen and Lars Winther stress that the region is imbued with asymmetries and mental boundaries. These asymmetries and borders exist between nations, but also within each country. If a transnational region is to be fully established, both national and transnational asymmetries and mental boundaries must be taken seriously. This critical message has been put forward in numerous studies of the region, but it needs to be repeated.

Tina Askanius, associate professor of media and communication studies, also addresses the issue of transnational regional identity, but from a different perspective. The text is based on the acclaimed television series *The Bridge*, examining how the audience relates to the political dream landscape created in the story. It is a fascinating contribution that reminds the reader of the importance of popular culture for the way people create community and exclusion.

In the epilogue, Johan Wessman sums up what twenty years with the bridge have meant for the transnational project. And unlike the volume as a whole, the epilogue also contains a longer historical perspective, with a description, albeit superficial, of traffic across the sound during 200 years. Otherwise the historical perspective is conspicuous by its absence, which gives the volume a slightly ahistorical feel. Despite this marginal note, *Checkpoint 2020* is yet another important book (number 40 in order) about the Öresund region published by the Centre for Öresund Studies, which thereby consolidates its position as a producer of knowledge about a Europe in constant change.

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Sorcery, Murder, Miracles

Bengt af Klintberg: Trolldom, mord och mirakel. Tio folkminnesstudier. Carlsson Bokförlag, Stockholm 2021. 207 pp.

Ten articles on different folkloristic topics are presented by Bengt af Klintberg in this book, the title of which means "Sorcery, murder, and miracles: Ten studies in folklore". The studies are of very different kinds, which means that the book offers varied reading. It is also an opportunity for those who are curious about the field to form an idea of what folkloristic research can involve. As the title suggests, however, there are three themes that are common to the articles in the book: sorcery, murder, and miracles.

The first chapter, "An old thriller", proceeds from a horror story that August Bondeson recorded as told by the soldier Johannes Glader at the end of the nineteenth century. It tells of how a robber band and later a thieving sorceress try to get into a farmhouse to steal things (in the first case by one of them pretending to be dead in a coffin, and in the second case by the sorceress lighting a magic candle and casting a spell to put everyone on the farm into a deep sleep, except one who manages to hide and then saves the people on the farm). Based on this story, the author explores similar motifs in other contexts. In "The dead mother and her nine sons – a magical binding spell" Klintberg analyses a spell in which nine sons carry their dead mother, and compares it to other contemporary and older spells. "The fern and Midsummer Night" examines how the fern is said in folklore to bloom on Midsummer Night. Chapter four, "The murder of the Lapp in Myckelgensjö", concerns a brutal legend about how a group of Sami suspected of witchcraft are lured into a trap and killed. Based on this, the author discusses legend motifs in which sorcerers are defeated through physical violence, and how these often reflect prejudices against Sami and other groups outside society. In "*Sikstu, skruver i klynna*: On stylistic devices in

the telling of legends" Klintberg has an interesting discussion of the linguistic structure of dialogues in legends and how these are part of the stylistic form of the legends.

The chapter on "The tale of Our Lord and Saint Peter" analyses, as the title indicates, Our Lord and Saint Peter as motifs in folk tradition. "Blessed between stirrup and ground: On an English epitaph and a Scandinavian folk legend" concerns a recurrent theme in popular narrative culture, about how even those who belong to an outcast group can be blessed in death.

Chapter 8, "Wendela Hebbe and folklore", is about the nineteenth-century journalist and author Wendela Hebbe and how in her books she used motifs from the folk narrative tradition. "The Malicious Month of March" discusses how the capricious months when winter gives way to spring are described in sayings from the narrative tradition.

The chapter about "The baby on the railway track" which concludes the book is about the motif of children born in train toilets, slipping down through the hole and ending up on the railway tracks, and how this is used in urban legends and literature.

The articles in the book are all well written and based on solid research. By highlighting and scrutinizing individual motifs from the perspective of a cultural history and folklore, the author conveys an idea of their significance as a reflection of historical events and the colourful narrative tradition of the past. This is popular scholarship in the sense that the author's language is easy to understand and the results of the studies are put across without burdening the text with detailed accounts of the author's methods and underlying theories. That is a strength of this particular book, which can be read by both the interested public and by students of subjects involving cultural history.

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Ritual Rooms and Sacred Places
Rituella rum och heliga platser. Historiska, samtida och litterära studier. Daniel Lindmark & Anders Persson (eds.). Studies on the Religious History of the North. 3. Artos & Norma bokförlag. Skellefteå 2020. 271 pp. Ill.

The historian Daniel Lindmark and the literary scholar Anders Persson at Umeå University have published an interdisciplinary anthology about ritual spaces and sacred places, both past and present. This volume is number 3 in the series Studies on the Religious History of the North, published by the research network Religious History of the North, abbreviated REHN, which was formed in 2015.

The authors in the volume come mainly from Sweden, but also from Finland and Norway. They are historians, church historians, literary scholars, scholars of religion, and sociologists. The book considers both ecclesiastical and secular rites, the latter having developed in our own time.

The Finnish church historian Jakob Dahlbacka discusses a present-day resacralization of a hundred-year-old Lutheran church in Helsinki. It was sold in 1989 to private owners and subsequently served as a restaurant and later also as a nightclub. In 2016, the church came into ecclesiastical ownership again and underwent a rededication ceremony. The church thereby became a sacred place for ritual ceremonies once again. An important symbol of the resacralization was the return of the original altar cross that had been missing since 1989.

The Finnish church historian Kim Groop has studied a Finnish Lutheran missionary church which was inaugurated in 1889 in Namibia and served for a long time as a ritual and cultural meeting place between missionaries and the indigenous population. Different views on the style of dress, especially for women, were evident. The local clothing worn at the services, which the missionaries criticized, gradually became

more Western in style. However, this did not happen without initial domestic resistance. After Namibia gained its independence in 1990, the Finnish Church became a national heritage site and museum in 1995. It thus made the transition from a ritual ecclesiastical church space to a cultural space.

The Norwegian historian Rolf Inge Larsen concentrates on the ritual meeting places of Laestadianism, the religious revival movement in the northern Norwegian city of Tromsø in the 1850s. It was a time of strong revivals in the area. Laestadianism was not a free church but an active movement within the Norwegian state church. The members met both in the home and in church. The purpose of visiting church was to receive the sacraments of baptism and communion. Preaching and the fellowship of revival members, on the other hand, took place in the home, in a more informal way than in the church with its set rituals.

The historian Daniel Lindmark has written about the reconciliation processes of the Swedish state church in relation to the northern Sami indigenous minority. One such act of reconciliation was a ritual reburial ceremony that took place in 2019 at the old cemetery in Lycksele. Twenty-five skulls that had been removed for research in racial biology during excavations in 1950–1951 were returned to the cemetery where they had once lain. During the intervening period the skulls had been stored in various museums. In his analysis Lindmark makes fruitful use of both ritual theory and three different theoretical models of reconciliation.

The sociologist and religious scholar Karin Jarnkvist studies contemporary secular rituals of naming, marriage, and burial. She has conducted interviews with participants in such ceremonies to find out how they create ritual spaces. This can be done virtually anywhere, both indoors and outdoors. The rituals are performed without the involvement of any religious community. Nature can be perceived as a sacred place. Individual choices and a sense of freedom are prominent features. At the same time, the participants can sometimes feel lost when there are no traditions or specific places to start from.

The religious scholar Henrik Olsson is working on a doctoral dissertation about contact with nature and mental and physical health in our time. One line of his research concerns the idea of a reanimated nature placed in a therapeutic context for secularized people. One object of study is an organized movement that issues publications about getting in contact with nature. The author has conducted in-depth interviews in Sweden and Finland with participants and has done observation on site in nature. A prominent feature of the nature contact movement is a perception of nature as being alive and having a soul. There are ritual activities, such as "forest bathing", that express these experiences. The aim is to establish emotional bonds and community with nature. Contact with nature restores the balance, and both man and nature become more alive. There is a great deal of reverence and wonder in the face of nature. Trees can be addressed as subjects, which the author interprets as a form of sacralization without formal rules and rituals.

The religious psychologist and cancer nurse Mikael Lundmark specializes in the borderland between the psychology of religion, pastoral care, and nursing. He has interviewed female cancer patients at the University Hospital in Umeå who are practising Christians. A key question concerns how the cancer has affected their religion. The psychological analysis carried out by the author examines the patients' narratives of experiences of meeting God and Christ in the hospital during the radiotherapy processes. God can be perceived to work through the chemotherapy but is also thought to be inside the drug in a material sense. An informal sacred place can come into being in the hospital. According to the author, this is clearly reminis-

cent of Christian beliefs regarding the eucharist. The sacred is expressed in material form.

The final two chapters of the book focus on literature. Ulrika Lif analyses the rituals of the protagonist of Lars Ahlin's novel *Kanelbiten,* the teenage girl Britt-Mari. Ancient mysticism concerning the numbers three and twelve makes itself felt. The rituals described by Ahlin usually take place in non-religious places. Britt-Mari's rituals are not collective but purely personal and individual. Her thoughts bear the imprint of both Christian belief and shame. She turns away from the city and other people. In the end, she can find no way out other than a ritual suicide by throwing herself off a cliff. She dies because of her alienation from modernity and an unequal society and her aspiration for Christian equality and love.

The literary scholar Anders Persson writes about the church as a liturgical space in the author Beppe Wolger's poems from 1969 to 1986 about the province of Jämtland. It is three small chapels out in the forest districts, not the large churches, that attract Wolger's interest in his poems. He was attracted to the medieval mysticism that he felt he encountered in the small chapels hidden far out in the peripheral forest.

As a concluding assessment, it can be said that this anthology adds much new knowledge about rituals and ritualization, both in older religious environments and in contemporary religious and secular contexts. In the analyses the authors draw on various international ritual discussions. Classics like Victor Turner and Catherine Bell come to good use. The chapters can be read independently. There is no discussion summarizing and uniting the different studies. In the arrangement of the chapters there is no common denominator, but together they provide a great scholarly breadth.

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An Online Tribute to a Scholar of Folk Music and Dance

Folk och musik. Niklas Nyqvist (ed.). Finlands svenska folkmusikinstitut, Vasa. 2020. [https://fom.journal.fi]

Folk och musik is an online journal, published once a year by the Institute of Swedish Folk Music in Finland, based at Vasa in Ostrobothnia. The journal presents itself as focusing on "the practice of folk music and folk dance in Swedish Finland and the Nordic countries". It contains examples of folk music research and ethnomusicology. Of the closest sister magazines, *Puls* from Svenskt visarkiv has more emphasis on ethnomusicology, while *Musikk og tradisjon*, published by Norsk folkemusikklag, is geared more to indigenous folk music. It is also possible to find occasional Swedish-language contributions in *Etnomusikologian vuosikirja* (published by Suomen etnomusikologinen seura), where the title clearly declares that the focus is on ethnomusicology. The journal with most contributions in English is *Puls*, while *Folk och musik* has the fewest.

The current issue of *Folk och musik* is dedicated to Professor Ann-Mari Häggman, who reached the respectable age of 80 during the year of publication. Ann-Mari Häggman has long been a central figure in cultural and musical life in Swedish-speaking Finland. She has had many roles: as a collector, researcher, archivist, popular author, editor, producer, elected official, leader and more. She has a wide-ranging network in Finland and the other Nordic countries. And she is still highly active, currently preparing a critical edition of medieval ballads in Swedish Finland.

Unusually, the journal contains a detailed CV. This lists numerous published texts by Ann-Mari Häggman, aimed at both scholars and general readers, her work on boards and committees, her participation in various editorial boards, her many ceremonial speeches, her awards and prizes, and her teaching in various contexts. Unfortunately, the

résumé only covers "a selection of texts on folk music and folk dance". A complete bibliography should have been a given in this birthday tribute.

The issue begins with an in-depth interview with the subject of the birthday celebration herself. The interviewer is Johannes Brusila, professor of musicology at Åbo Akademi University. The arrangement of his questions is chronological. Ann-Mari Häggman's family background is fascinating as regards the presence of music. In the interview we see some of her characteristic positions as a collector and researcher. She points out, for instance, the interaction between collector and informant, how the informants as personalities and practitioners influence the collectors, but also how the practitioners are influenced by the way collectors relate to songs and tunes. It would have been good to read more about this. Furthermore, she felt great respect for her predecessors, those who did the same kind of work before her. And at the end she expresses her fear that digitization and online publication of the collected material will end the trust that the informants felt for her, which was essential for their openness towards her. She promised them that the recording was "only" for research, but with the new accessibility this is no longer true.

The rest of the issue includes six previously published articles by her, the oldest from 1991, the most recent from 2011. The articles have been scanned so that they are reproduced in the typographical form in which readers of the original publications met them. "Från knutdans till spelmansstämma: Spelmansmusiken under 100 år" is a survey of the modernization of fiddle music in Swedish-speaking Finland, from local dances to organized festivals. "Pärtfiol och blänkande harmonika: De österbottniska spelmännens instrument 1850–1930" is yet another survey, this time of the range of instruments used by folk musicians in the vast province of Ostrobothnia. A central collector of folklore is the subject of the article "Oscar Rancken och österbottningarna" which describes his collecting activities, his collaboration with other collectors, and his view of the collected material. A very special genre in Finland is the nation-building songs created by the Swedish-speaking population in the early twentieth century, the most famous of which are *Plocka vill jag skogsviol* and *Slumrande toner*. "The folk songs that are not folk songs" as she herself so aptly calls them. Ann-Mari Häggman describes the origin and long-lasting importance for Finnish-Swedish identity of certain songs in the article "Sångerna som gav finlandssvensk identitet". The article "En åboländsk balladsångerska och forskningen" is about a well-known ballad singer, Svea Jansson, her career as a singer, but just as much the intervention in her life that resulted from contact with some leading folk music collectors. The last article, "Finlandssvenska Amerikaemigranters musik" deals mainly with two trips Häggman made to the USA to collect music by emigrants from Swedish-speaking Finland.

Nothing is said about how the articles were selected, but one may assume that the recipient of this digital festschrift at least gave her approval. The common feature of the six articles is that they survey and introduce Finland-Swedish folk music. The selection therefore serves as an introductory textbook on the subject.

Of course, it is not possible to review a collection of republished articles, nor an interview about a person's life and work. The only value judgement that can be expressed concerns the idea of paying tribute to a productive and successful colleague. And of this the judgement can be nothing but positive. In short, it is thoroughly justified to devote an issue of *Folk och musik* to a particularly distinguished researcher who has been – and still is – of crucial importance for the visibility of Finland-Swedish folk music. Indeed, she has also had a major impact on the practice itself, in her roles as collector, researcher, popular author,

archive director, and not least during the period when she headed *Finlands svenska spelmansförbund*, the association of Finland-Swedish folk musicians.

As already stated, Ann-Mari Häggman has great reverence for her predecessors. The towering figure among them is undoubtedly the long-lived (in several respects) Otto Andersson. Like him, Ann-Mari Häggman has done both collecting and research. But both are also far-sighted organization builders, and through texts and speeches they have also successfully built an image of Swedish folk music in Finland.

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Handwritten Tune Books

Spelmansböcker i Norden. Perspektiv på handskrivna notböcker. Märta Ramsten, Mathias Boström, Karin L. Eriksson, Magnus Gustavsson (eds.). Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur i samarbete med Smålands Musikarkiv/Musik i Syd, Uppsala, Växjö 2019. 233 pp. Ill.

This edited volume deals with *handwritten tune books* in a Nordic context, musical documents that run from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. The seven articles are based on papers delivered to a conference held on 21–23 November 2017 at Linnaeus University in Växjö, an event that also included a festival where Nordic ensembles performed music from tune books of this type, often referred to in Swedish as *spelmansbok* or "fiddler's book". All the authors in the volume have musicology as their research foundation, three of them working in Sweden, two in Norway, and one in Denmark. The publication is clearly related to similar volumes, *Samlade visor: Perspektiv på handskrivna visböcker* (2008) and *Tryckta visor: Perspektiv på skillingtryck som källmaterial,* likewise published by the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy.

In the introduction, which is almost an article in itself, Mathias Boström prepares the ground for the forthcoming articles by discussing the term *spelmansbok,* a word that also occurs in Denmark and Norway, in the forms *spillemandsbog* and *spelmannsbok* respectively. The term is viewed as controversial because it is really a retrospective construction, not a word that bygone fiddlers themselves used for their tune books, which instead went under the term *notbok* or simply *bok*. *Spelmansbok* thus appears to be a term that arose or spread in the twentieth century, at least in Sweden, possibly introduced by the Scanian musician and folk music collector John Enninger (1844–1908). Perhaps the term therefore says more about the folk music researchers who initially viewed the tune books through their romantically coloured glasses, than about the practitioners who actually used them. There is said to have been an aversion to these tune books in the scholarly community for some time, when their value as sources was questioned. The books were simply not deemed aesthetically interesting enough by researchers, who devoted themselves to studying more serious music, while the books were simultaneously too sophisticated for the idealistic philanthropists who took a stand for what was more obviously "folk" music.

Jens Henrik Koudal writes about tune books in Denmark, their content and function. Based on the practical use of the books, including contemporary interpretation and distribution on phonograms, the author highlights the books in their relationship to dance. Just as Koudal would not dismiss a fiddler as an old country cousin who represents a specific national musical heritage, he would not regard music expressions in the content of the tune books as particularly independent. He therefore advocates the term *dansenodebog* or "dance tune book" as the term for these music

books, although he also observes that they may contain other things, such as arias, military signals, and hymns. He sees the main function of the tune books as having been used in social contexts and does not attach as much importance to them as presumptive sources for the preservation of instrumental expressions, created or performed in somewhat undefinable contexts. The extant Danish source material amounts to about 1,750 known books, about 1,100 of them archived in the Danish Folklore Collection in Copenhagen. Koudal states the period 1700–1950 for the material in the Folklore Collection, the majority of which are from the years 1850–1900. No specific time span is given for the other Danish collections. Many of the books are considered to show traces of practical use, and the author poses the logical follow-up question: who could read music (in Denmark) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? The reason why the ability to read music increased in the Danish musical community is presumed to be complex, but the town musician system, which lasted from the seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, is cited as an important factor. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Danish musicians still seem to have played by ear, at least in rural areas. However, the ability to read music grew steadily among the younger fiddler generation, rendering them able to face tougher competition and to cope with the growing influx of untested tune types.

In the next article Bjørn Aksdal describes the corresponding state of affairs in Norway. He emphasizes the thesis that Boström puts forward in the introduction, that Norwegian research has likewise shown that the tune books have often fallen between two research disciplines, neither of which, at least historically, has been particularly interested in studying the available material closely. Aksdal nevertheless takes the tune books as a valuable resource for understanding the history of music and believes that the view of their low source value is somewhat exaggerated. Because of the former lack of interest, the targeted collection of tune books seems to have started late in Norway, not until well into the twentieth century. The Norwegian material is also said to differ slightly from, say, the Swedish material, in that traditional Norwegian "fiddler books" – those that can be linked to a particular district or an individual fiddler – do not appear until well into the nineteenth century. Aksdal seems reluctant to waste any lines on a critical discussion of terminology, and seems to be perfectly content to use to the term *spelmannsbok*. Furthermore, he judges that the content of the Norwegian tune books presents a good picture of which dance types were widespread at a particular time, while there is simultaneously uncertainty as to whether the music in the books was actually performed, although this may be perceived as a contradiction.

It is then Magnus Gustavsson's turn to ascertain the position of the tune books in Sweden, at least in survey form, in what is rather a complex article. He begins by discussing, almost a routine by now in this volume, the term *spelmansbok.* Gustavsson, however, turns out to be pragmatic, finding it better to examine the contents of the books than to dissect an already accepted term, however controversial it may be. The period covered by the Swedish tune books extends from the seventeenth century to the end of the 1880s, and it is estimated that there are at least 800 unique copies in Swedish archives, libraries, and private ownership. There are 281 in the collections of the Folk Music Commission, of which over sixty were collected by John Enninger. A large share of the tunes in the books were also published in the collection *Svenska låtar (SvL).* The article deals with the repertoire of the books, a major part of which is seen as dance music in the form of polonaises (polskas), minuets, country dances, and quadrilles, and their com-

posers, also considering variations and the dissemination of the tunes. A particularly thought-provoking section concerns the annotations and signatures in the tune books, i.e. inscriptions added by different persons when the books were in use. The books often changed hands or were handed down in the family. Here Gustavsson picks out an expressive quotation from a book dated 1792. It originally belonged to one Magnus Theorin and then changed hands until it finally came into the possession of the respected Scanian fiddler Ored Andersson of Huaröd (1820–1910). In the book there is a note that is interpreted to have been written by Ored, explicitly inscribed in big letters some time in the 1890s: "Contents of no use for the present time."

In an article that seems at first glance to be well demarcated, Eva Hov then examines tune books that are at least partly handwritten, belonging to women with ties to Trondheim, the sisters Ellen and Birgitta Schøller, their younger relative Elisabeth Schøller, and Mary Ann Allingham. Hov's method is to put the context and the people at the centre, where details of biography and local history can provide a deeper understanding of the books, also taking into account that the repertoire in the manuscripts belongs to a different Europe than where Norway was at the time. Hov's approach is not new in itself; the books that are in focus are already judged to have been dealt with in other contexts, although only in passing or from other perspectives. Suddenly the rational demarcation of the text comes to an end. From here on it becomes increasingly difficult to orient oneself in the article due to the constant historical digressions in the form of text and illustrations – admittedly ambitious, rich in information, and artistic, sometimes astute – but at least this reader easily gets lost in all the local genealogical detail. An attentive reader can nevertheless work out the number of manuscripts that Hov analyses: *one* seventeenth-century book, which belonged to the Schøller sisters and contains organ tablature, plus *one* eighteenth-century book attributed to their younger relative Elisabeth, and finally *ten* booklets from the nineteenth century that belonged to Mary Ann Allingham, just over half of which contain music (songs with words and music). In the summary, Hov wonders why these manuscripts have actually been preserved, when others like it have not survived. The two books evidently enjoyed a certain status, since one of them also contained accounts and the other also printed material, while the ten booklets had probably been fortunately overlooked among other material in a farm archive.

The next study is by Märta Ramsten, who scrutinizes two *handwritten tune books*. She declares that it cannot be taken for granted that the owner of a particular tune book was the person who wrote it, that it represents a distinctive repertoire, or that the content was even used in practice. In that respect, these books closely resemble *handwritten song books*. Based on the concept *repertoarbild* or "repertoire picture", Ramsten examines two tune books: "Snickar-Eriks notbok" and "Gammal dansmusik". As for the former, Ramsten compares two earlier possible sources, both music books which can be linked to Snickar-Erik (the carpenter Erik Olsson of Ovanåker, 1824–1905) and concludes that there is no correspondence between them. One of the sources that Ramsten investigates is a reconstruction of "Snickar-Eriks bok", the content of which was conveyed to the *Folk Music Commission* at second hand, and parts of which were also published in *SvL*. The second possible source is music written down by Einar Övergaard (1871–1936), who travelled around Hälsingland in the summer of 1899 and actually met Snickar-Erik and noted tunes from him. One of Ramsten's more cynical points is that Övergaard in all probability convinced the *SvL* compiler Olof Andersson (1884–1964) that the second-hand book was unreliable. The other tune book,

"Gammal dansmusik" (Old dance music), belonged to Per Erik Ohlsson of Hidinge, Närke (1840–1917). Here again the contents have also provided contributions to *SvL*, communicated at second hand. The source criticism, not quite as sharp here, leads Ramsten to the conclusion that this book originally consisted of several small notebooks, compiled at some time into one tune book, a late measure undertaken by Per Erik Ohlsson himself, and that the repertoire as presented in *SvL* is just a selection.

Based on the teaching of *tune courses,* Karin L. Eriksson then writes about selection, paths of dissemination, and performance practices regarding *spelmansböcker*. Eriksson asks which tunes are taught on the courses, how the repertoire "moves" from the manuscript to the performance. The study is mainly based on field studies, conducted between 2013 and 2015 through film documentation and interviews with twelve teachers. There is no information about where the material from the fieldwork is archived (if it is archived), or where the fieldwork was conducted or what professions the twelve teachers belonged to. However, we learn that two of the teachers mainly play music from Hälsingland and two from Västergötland, one each from Blekinge, Dalarna, Skåne, and Västerbotten, and that four others mainly get their inspiration from Småland tunes, which means that tunes from Småland-oriented tune books are overrepresented in the survey. An interesting observation is that Eriksson begins by explicitly placing "handwritten material produced for cultural-historical purposes" – i.e. *collected material* – as opposed to the concept of a *tune book*. This is a distinction that bears some discussion. It can hardly be established with certainty that some of the old handwritten tune books might not have been compiled with the additional purpose of preserving cultural history, or that tunes recorded on paper by some collector might not have been of practical value to a folk musician. In her conclusion Eriksson reflects on how the tunes taught in the study and taken from fiddler's books, unlike tunes from the teachers' stock of "other tunes", were often divided into few tune types, while the selection made by the teachers is nevertheless expected to function in a relevant way for the context in which both the teachers and the pupils felt at home; the selection often consists of polskas, which are not considered to reflect the rich repertoire of other tune types that can actually be found in the tune books.

This volume, which conveys a great deal of knowledge and some healthy source criticism, albeit in a rather formalistic manner, concludes with a biographical article about the folk music researcher Nils Dencker (1887–1963) by Mathias Boström. Dencker came from Västra Broby in Skåne, but is perhaps best known in folk music circles for his collecting work in Södermanland. The material he collected can be found at ISOF – the Institute for Language and Folklore in Uppsala (formerly ULMA). Dencker was actually a natural scientist, but he came from a musical family and took an early interest in folk music. During his studies in Lund, Dencker came into contact with the well-known Nils Andersson (1864–1921). He was also acquainted with the father figure of Swedish musical research, Tobias Norlind (1879–1947), who supported him in his research ambitions. The article focuses particularly on Dencker's studies of tune books and older printed material in foreign libraries, a comparative method that he practised on several trips to places in Poland and Germany, where one of his main aims was to arrive at a deeper understanding of the possible routes by which the polska had spread to Sweden. In this context, Boström is interested in the "cycle of knowledge production" with reference to the French theorist Bruno Latour. Boström argues that Dencker's work can be illustrated in a corresponding model, which can be interpreted, in simplified

form, as proceeding from several cycles working in parallel: initial collection, legitimization, financing, and publicity, and finally linkage to the other cycles. At the same time, Dencker was permanently employed as an elementary school teacher and appears to have done much of his research when he was free from teaching. Thus, he does not appear to have been entirely dependent on external finance, although he received funding early on from *Längmanska kulturfonden* for his foreign trips, and the collecting he did in Södermanland was largely financed by ULMA.

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Joyful Play in Early Modern Sweden
Annika Sandén: Fröjdelekar. Glädje, lust och nöjen under svensk stormaktstid. Atlantis, Stockholm 2020. 423 pp. Ill.

As an ethnobiologist and cultural researcher, I have often been fascinated by the descriptions of young people's festivities and mating games involving plants that I have encountered in source material from the seventeenth century. These games, sometimes with amorous elements, are not characteristic of the zeitgeist that we usually associate with the era when Sweden was a great power; on the contrary, it is generally portrayed as a joyless time, when a sinister social climate, constant crop failures, recurring famines, mass conscription and never-ending wars made life very heavy. Moreover, the seventeenth century was marked by a Lutheran orthodoxy in which God's law had to be interpreted strictly, without much room for any pleasure. Yet young people celebrated various events in the life cycle and the calendar year, with all manner of dances, games, and antics, not to mention the fact that there was scope for courtship (often with the help of fragrant plants) which affirmed the sensual sides of life. One researcher who has undertaken to study conditions in seventeenth-century Sweden, with a focus on the everyday life, habits, and norms of the common people, is the historian Annika Sandén. In several books she has presented a nuanced view of seventeenth-century society as a counter to the usual stereotyped image of the period. The present rich volume is the result of a research project about pleasure, play, and games during Sweden's Age of Greatness, radically qualifying the picture of life back then as a vale of tears that we often find in books and popular descriptions. The common people's pleasures in the form of games and various kinds of revels have so far mostly been studied by ethnologists, focusing on more recent times, but lately culturally-oriented historians have considered playful aspects of life in seventeenth-century Sweden. Sandén mentions studies of charivari parades, dancing, and carnival culture, as well as works examining church contexts.

A study of the games and revels of adolescents and young adults in particular must necessarily be based on scattered data, which Sandén has methodically collected with great success. The Värmland-based priests Per Gyllenius and Erland Hofsten have provided plenty of empirical evidence. Based on this information, and imagining the course of a person's life, she traces joyful play in early modern history, as she so nicely formulates her purpose. People like to have fun, and they obviously did so in the seventeenth century, and they had fun in interaction with others. It is obviously something fundamental in human culture.

In the first chapter, Sandén deals with the peasant children and their games. Was there any room at all for play and joy in their existence? What did they play? The toys were often the same as those that were still used in living memory: balls, simple wooden objects, bark

boats and the like. They engaged in role play, such as mock weddings. Children had to learn the chores of the peasant community, but as they did so they also had time for fun. Young herders, for example, could make carvings on rocks. Preserved examples from Bergslagen reveal not only risqué pubertal motifs, but also squares carved for hopscotch and board games. Mock executions, which the children could amuse themselves with, testify to the gruesome time in which they lived. Mischief in the church was evidently not uncommon. Boys had their pranks back then too. Children threw snowballs, of course, but they were not allowed to do so in the graveyard. Nor could they climb trees. But when they did break the rules, it was recorded in the source material.

Adolescence offered other pleasures. As the children got older, they had to take on a larger share of the chores and duties. But was there opportunity for them to play? Puberty also brought the need for young people to find any chance to get together and socialize. How did they meet? There were joyous, life-affirming games. Seasonal games such as May feasts and Midsummer feasts were important for young people. The delight in Midsummer's abundant flowers gave rise to various revels. They began to approach the age of marriage, but were not yet fully grown up. Boys organized in youth sodalities, and girls may have had similar associations of their own, but we know less about that. Here and there, it happened that these teenagers dressed in distinctive garments, with hints of a kind of youth fashion in this era. Here the authorities and the Church increasingly needed to control the young peasants. Churchmen could complain about hairstyles and various clothing attributes sported by the young people, not to mention all the dance games that challenged church norms. There were special play houses where youngsters could meet and stay up late at night.

The next section deals with night courtship and other ways of forming couples, with many examples. Then comes a section on wedding feasts and certain agricultural feasts. The survey of the evidence concludes with a chapter analysing the joys and pleasures of village life for the adults. These included the celebration of childbirth, the music and worship in church, and not least the festivities related to markets. The chapters abound in examples in this fact-packed book.

In summary, Annika Sandén's book is a well-written study of a fascinating subject that has rarely been considered by historians. It is pleasing to see an author who can handle such a large amount of material and still make it readable, with no unnecessary overload of ephemeral technical jargon and the fashionable clichés that are so characteristic of contemporary academic writing. The book is a delight to read. Sandén has used wide and varied source material to analyse a complex and somewhat elusive aspect of human life. The bibliography is exhaustive. The book has a detailed index. The illustrations are few and thus add little, but Sebastian Wadsted has designed the book to give it an appealing look. *Homo ludens*, "the playing man", as the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga called him, was of course also alive during the Age of Greatness. Our image of seventeenth-century Sweden as a time of hardship is radically qualified here. This is a book that deserves to be read by many people. I hope it inspires more presentations of cultural history like this.

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The Usage of Fables in Early Modern Sweden

Erik Zillén: Fabelbruk i svensk tidigmodernitet. En genrehistorisk studie. Makadam förlag, Göteborg/Stockholm 2020. 672 pp. Summaries in English, German and French.

In recent times fables have not occupied a central position in folkloristic research in the Nordic countries. It is therefore particularly gratifying that the literary historian Erik Zillén has published a monograph of nearly 700 pages about the genre.

As the title indicates, the book deals with the way fables were used in early modern times in Sweden. Since the book is highly systematic throughout, nothing is left to chance. Every concept is elucidated and explained from several different angles, and this applies to the terms *fable, use, early modernity*, and *Sweden.*

We are often taught that fables are characterized by the fact that the actors are anthropomorphized animals. Zillén presents some definitions of the term and finds every reason to question the claim about the humanized protagonists, as it turns out that although these do very often occur they are not always the only human-like actors in the genre. He resolves the problem of definition and demarcation for practical purposes in two ways. On the one hand, he only includes fables that date back to Aesop's two-thousand-year-old collection, and on the other hand, he only considers such stories as were called fables by their authors or publishers or where the title contains words relating to Aesop or variants of that name. This was a wise decision, given that the book deals with the usage of fables and therefore one must pay particular attention to texts that the users themselves perceived as fables.

In connection with the definitions of *fable,* the concept of genre is also discussed. Here the author's background in comparative literature is evident, but he is open enough to other branches of research to permit himself brief descriptions of the folkloristic outlook that was once almost omnipotent – and which is now inspiring new discoveries once again. The term *usage* is, of course, central to the book. After all, it is the use of the word *fable* that determines whether a text is a fable at all. After a rigorous review of several studies of the genre, Zillén concludes that one can find three arenas of usage where it is central: in language teaching, in teaching morality, and as *exempla* in rhetorical situations. This tripartite division of the usage arena structures his entire study. This approach brings him on to the importance of building up a historical context around these stories. The book therefore gives a broad picture of cultural history and educational history, not just in Sweden in the early modern period but in the whole of Europe, from the classical Greek tradition onwards. The task of the book throughout is thus to answer the questions where and why fables are used.

Early modernity is, of course, an imprecise time periodization, but here too the author goes through several relevant historical surveys and eventually declares openly that, in line with many of his colleagues, he reckons that for Sweden the relevant period is 1500–1800. This too is consistent with what is promised in the title of the book, even though the term may mean something different in other countries. Even the concept of *Sweden* is problematized, as it requires a clear demarcation. Zillén uses it to cover the geographical area which constituted Sverige in the early modern period, which means that parts of what we now call the Baltic states and Finland are also included.

The section on the usage of fables in language teaching is largely based on Swedish school ordinances. These regulations cover the period 1571–1724, and it is noted that fables were published in special collections intended specifically for schools. Reading was compulsory, and with fables as exercises the boys learned the basics of the foreign language, the vocabulary and grammar. The reader also learns something about how the actual teaching was done, with the actions of the teacher and the pupils in the form of presentation and repetition. Greek, Latin, French, German, and English are covered in examples taken

from various editions based on Aesop's works and reproduced in variants of them. Learning the foreign language was not the only goal of this fable-based teaching. Christian morality and general knowledge were also drummed into pupils with the help of the fables. The idea was that the boys would be cultivated, lifted out of their animal state to become what God had intended them to be. To demonstrate this overall but not always clearly expressed goal of reading fables, Zillén introduces the reader to the history of ideas and the philosophy regarding the ideals of life at different times in different countries, thus substantiating his reasoning. Changes in time and place are presented in detail and the efforts of Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon in particular are treated as a background to the message that the Swedish schools wanted to convey to their pupils.

Zillén observes that what is written in the school ordinance is one thing and what happened in practice is another. Fortunately, he has access to some documents that illustrate the usage of fables in everyday life. The teacher Johan Wellander has left a description of how Aesop's fables were used in his everyday life (1757); Christina Rosenhane was not very good at French, as is evident from her exercise book where her attempt to retell a fable is covered with all the teacher's deletions and corrections (1650s); and Eric Eklund published a detailed bilingual textbook for private study in French, where the fables were used for exercises and the Swedish and French versions could be followed in parallel (1744). Erik Zillén has done meticulous archival work.

The examination of how fables were used for didactic purposes shows that these fable collections were a crucial factor in the centralization of the state because they were mandatory in schools all over the country. In addition, the usage of the fables was continuous and uniform. When teaching languages was the most important thing, it was necessary to learn to change the linguistic form to suit new learning goals (grammar). The texts were short and stringent but not static. Finally, they were intended for memorization, at a time when improving pupils' memory was a value in itself.

Teach morality through fables is a usage arena, according to Zillén, where the focus was on utility and meaning. Fables exemplified the relationship between the rulers and the subjects in the patriarchal society of the time. The goal was to nurture the ability to distinguish between virtue and vice, which was not questioned until the last decades of the period under study, and this upbringing was Christian in character. In order to put this message across, it was important that the fables were printed in the vernacular, and – unlike those published for school usage – often with the inclusion of paratexts such as prefaces, annotations, mottos, or other words emphasizing proper morality. Zillén notes that the fables not only served as texts, but also served as vehicles carrying moral messages. This function of fables resembles a similar function of proverbs, which can also be used in a wide variety of contexts and interpreted in completely different ways depending on the needs of the situation. This is clarified in a long explanation of contemporary virtues and vices.

Fables often end with an "epimyth" or a moral explaining how one should understand the fable and convert the content into practice. Zillén shows that the fables represent the educational ideals of the time, in that virtues often have to take second place to vices, which are held up as warning examples of how one should not live. He finds that the same epimyth, and the fable itself, could be interpreted in several different ways according to what the situation called for. The fable contained a message that it was necessary to interpret and expose so that the moral message dominated. At different times, people have viewed different elements as important for soci-

ety and the individual. During Luther's time, therefore, fables were interpreted as documents of God's presence, the social order, and patriarchal authority, in short, reason and order, while other aspects were emphasized in other contexts, things that were relevant at the time, such as corruption or nutritional status. Fables in Swedish were printed in collections but also as individual texts in periodicals, thus reaching large numbers of readers. It could be argued that the fables were at times a social force to be reckoned with.

In the arena of usage as rhetorical *exempla*, Zillén first treats the *exempla* genre, the function of which is that the stories help the listener/reader or the narrator/writer to argue their case by recalling a fable situation analogous to the one they are just experiencing. This rhetorical device was well known since classical times, and the reader is taken along on a journey through history to see how the view of rhetoric changed, from first being regarded as a necessary art form in speech to become a negligible component of oral communication. (Today, rhetoric is often perceived as empty talk!) Zillén concludes that *exempla* were used frequently, and often in the form of fables. In this arena too, fables could be interpreted as needed, they were malleable according to Zillén. They could be incorporated as imitations in a speech act but could also be used as contrasts to the current situation in order to further expose its weaknesses. Because the fables were constantly repeated, they gave the users the idea that existence was constant, that people just had to follow the old moral tracks so that they could become what mankind was supposed to be.

Zillén's work also examines an anonymous biography of Aesop – a man who may not even have existed. Above all, however, Zillén examines why this type of story needs to be ascribed to any author in the first place. Aesop is portrayed as a deformed man with animal features, but is also perceived as a king of the beasts, and this is said to have been essential for his status as a fable writer. He had experience of many different worlds.

Fables became aestheticized over time. According to Zillén, Jean de la Fontaine started this process in 1668. He liberated the fables from function of teaching morals by introducing irony into them. In addition, he wrote fables in verse, often lacking a moral, and furnished with many details. They became entertaining rather than edifying. With the famous text about the ant and the grasshopper Zillén shows how this change was carried out, how a fable that was long perceived as an argument in favour of diligence, hard toil, thrift, and planning for the future, was now transformed, as a result of changes in society, to emphasize the artistic grasshopper with its freedom and joy of life. La Fontaine's fables were widely disseminated, printed in newspapers, magazines, calendars, and other similar publications. Teaching solely through school was a bygone stage.

La Fontaine was not the only one to develop Aesop's work. He had many followers, and of these Zillén focuses mainly on Antoine Houdart de La Motte, who extended fables further with prologues and epilogues showing how the texts could be interpreted. In Sweden, however, prologues and epilogues were omitted, as the plot of the fable action was the most important thing. After La Motte it became fashionable to write new fables. One of those who should be mentioned here is Jacob Tengström from Finland, who published in Åbo Tidningar and is considered one of the first to have written pedagogical fables for children in Swedish (not to be confused with didactic fables). Fables could be written in verse or prose, with or without illustrations, of high or low literary quality. Fables were a popular genre by virtue of being elastic narratives that could be filled with different characters and events and interpreted in whatever way was relevant at the time, but for that rea-

son they were also a vulnerable genre. At the end of the early modern era they had little to do with Aesop or his immediate successors, and Zillén shows how the genre eventually underwent inflation and general deterioration, with the result that they eventually declined sharply in importance. A long chapter about how fables in Sweden were reproduced as individual texts and collections concludes the section on the modernization of fable usage.

The author ends by asking whether the fable is an obsolete genre, to which he answers no. Despite the decline at the end of the early modern era, no one can deny that mechanisms similar to those that guided the classical fable can be found today but in new media. Fables are still common property to which one can allude in speech and writing and still be understood, perhaps not least because so many of the words of wisdom with which they end have become proverbs. And in children's literature there is a natural place for objects and non-human beings that can talk and convey a normative moral.

The book concludes with summaries in English, German, and French, a very long bibliography, and several indexes.

Fabelbruk i svensk tidigmodernitet is interesting reading. It is very well and clearly structured – it would be no problem to draw a flowchart of the contents. It is comprehensive in content, following important lines that touch on the whole of European history from antiquity to the present day. There are also sufficient details to enable the reader to understand how the long lines are composed. The book contains many illustrative examples and the language is flawless. It increases our knowledge of fables, but just as much of the history of disciplining in Europe and, in particular, Sweden. It can be warmly recommended, but it requires long continuous reading time for those who wish to tackle this brick of a book.

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Icelandic Birds and Their Folklore

Sigurður Ægisson: Íslensku fuglarnir og þjóðtrúin. Bókaútgáfan Hólar, Reykavík 2020. 472 pp. Ill.

A book about Icelandic birds and their folklore is always likely to arouse interest. We already have surveys from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Estonia. Now Iceland can boast a book that covers virtually all the species found in Iceland, in alphabetical order from Auðnutittlingur (common redpoll) to Æðarfugl (common eider). It is a book rich in content. The author, as I understand it, works as a priest and is a man with many interests, but with a particular focus on birds and other animals, which he combines with a commitment to Icelandic and general folklife studies. In a number of previous volumes and articles he has discussed folklore and popular notions about animals in Iceland, especially birds, but also whales and supernatural beings, with an emphasis on cryptozoology and more besides.

This bird book is based on a large amount of data collected over more than 25 years, testifying to the author's wide reading, both Icelandic and international. He has also gone through a large amount of collected folklore. The extensive bibliography also includes manuscripts. The text about each species is organized in the same way. It begins with the name of a bird species as stated in modern handbooks, with the scientific name followed by a list of different local and historical Icelandic names for the species in question. Each species has evidently been given many local names in Iceland. This is followed by information on beliefs about the particular bird and other cultural aspects of the species. Then come examples of folklore about the same species in the other Nordic countries, in Europe, and, where data are available, in the whole world. Some of the entries can become quite long monographs, such as the one about the whooper, the wren, the golden plover, and, of course, the raven, which

attests to their great cultural significance in Iceland. Barrow's goldeneye, which is found as a breeding bird only at Mývatn in Iceland, but otherwise mainly in North America, does not seem to have generated any beliefs at all and is dealt with on just one spread, most of which is occupied by illustrations of the species and a distribution map. It is interesting that the white wagtail has attracted so much interest. It has quite a few Icelandic local names.

The book is richly illustrated with historical images, maps, and photographs. Poems and verses of songs that mention the bird in question are also included. The illustrations are both creative and surprising, and instead of just showing the usual pictures of species the author reproduces images of the birds as found on stamps, in manuscripts, in provincial coats of arms, on coins and t-shirts, and in paintings, all in colour. Each species is also accompanied by a detailed map of its distribution in the world. In addition, the layout of the book is beautiful.

At a time when birdwatching is becoming increasingly international, the book deserves to be made available to a wider readership, for example in English.

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